



Emotional challenges and regulation strategies of pre-service English teachers during their internships in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research investigates the emotional challenges faced by pre-service English teachers, who are currently studying at Hue University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (HUFLIS) during their internships in Thailand, and the emotion-regulation strategies they employed. Twelve Pre-service teacher students consented to participate in semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to identify recurring patterns. The findings reveal that the pre-service teachers frequently encountered negative emotional experiences, such as anxiety, frustration, burnout and feelings of being overwhelmed. Using Gross's (1998) process model of emotion regulation as an analytical framework, the study shows that commonly reported regulation strategies included cognitive reappraisal (positive self-talk), response modulation (breathing/mindfulness), behavioral adjustments (body language and voice control), and support-seeking, particularly, informal digital peer support. The study highlights the contextual specificity of stressors in international placements (especially language-related anxiety) and suggests implications for teacher education programs to include emotional-awareness and regulation training. Limitations and directions for future research are discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Teacher well-being significantly influences teaching quality and student outcomes (Bajorek et al., 2014). Elevated stress among teachers has been linked to burnout and attrition (Johnson et al., 2005), with negative consequences for retention and instructional continuity. Emotional work, particularly emotion regulation, is therefore central to teacher preparation: beyond pedagogical knowledge, teachers require skills to recognize and manage emotional demands in classrooms.

Pre-service teachers, in particular, face heightened vulnerability as they negotiate the transition from student to professional (Tytherleigh et al., 2005). Teaching practicums and internships expose them to real-time emotional challenges such as classroom management, workload pressures, mentor expectations, and, in international placements, cross-cultural and language barriers. For pre-service English teachers in Vietnam, the first step in supporting emotional regulation is acknowledging that knowing and being helpful for students is not enough; knowing how to manage emotions is vitally important to creating a positive learning climate! Emotional regulation is an important aspect of creating the calm, focused, classroom environment you want for students. In addition, if you are able to regulate your emotions, you will have a better relationship with your students and be able to remain professional when under stress. Despite growing interest in teacher emotions, research on pre-service teachers' emotion regulation, especially in non-Western

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contexts such as Vietnam remains limited. This research aims to examine the emotional experiences and regulation strategies of HUFLIS pre-service English teachers during internships in Thailand. The focus will encompass how pre-service English teachers dealt with stressful situations, what obstacles they faced, and the way(s) they used emotional regulation practices to enhance their teaching and minimize burnout. Specifically, it aims to seek for the answers for the three research questions:

1. What emotional challenges do pre-service Vietnamese EFL teachers encounter in their English classes in Thailand?
2. What emotion regulation strategies do pre-service English teachers employ in their English classes during their teaching internships in Thailand?
3. How do pre-service English teachers perceive the influence of these strategies on their teaching effectiveness and interactions with students in Thailand?

This study will provide valuable insights into the emotion regulation strategies employed by pre-service teachers during their English teaching internships. The findings will contribute to the improvement of teacher education programs, particularly in helping future teachers develop emotional resilience and effective classroom management skills. Understanding how pre-service teachers regulate their emotions will also offer practical recommendations for supporting novice teachers in their transition from student to full-time educator.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Emotional challenges in teaching

Teaching is an emotional labor, as teachers take emotional journeys alongside their students, within classrooms that support those experiences. However, teachers often hold back their emotions because of professionalism or to keep the classroom calm, but showing their emotions too much can also cause them to feel very tired and worn out over time (Sutton, 2004). The cost of this emotional labor may impact mental health, burnout and teaching satisfaction over time; therefore, these influences must be recognized as challenges for the teaching profession (as summarized in figure 1 below).



Figure 1. Emotional challenges (adapted from Hargreaves, 2000; Hochschild, 2012, and Sutton, 2004).

As can be seen in figure 1, one of the most prominent emotional challenges teachers face is **anxiety** that can arise from juggling students' learning styles and behaviors while also dealing with the demands of standardized tests in today's diverse classrooms. According to Klassen and Chiu (2010), when teachers feel anxious at high levels, it can be tough for them to manage the class effectively or achieve their teaching objectives; this can lead to feelings of frustration and reduced confidence in their abilities. **Frustration** is another common emotional challenge in teaching when teachers feel that the effort to direct students' learning or behaviors just does not appear to be bearing fruit as effectively as it ought to. Sutton and Wheatley (2003) have pointed out that one reason why teachers go through this feeling of frustration is that both interpretations of student misbehavior deeply hurt human inner emotions, which again occurs when misbehavior occurs in the environment. Besides, **burnout** is perhaps the most serious emotional challenge teachers have to endure. This situation frequently results from prolonged stressors, including difficult workloads and issues in classroom management, together with the emotional weight of developing close connections with students. A study by Chang (2009) revealed that educators facing elevated stress levels are susceptible to mental health challenges and burnout, which can result in heightened job dissatisfaction and, ultimately, a departure from the profession. Moreover, educators frequently articulate a profound **sense of being overwhelmed** by the myriad responsibilities. Research conducted by Day and Gu (2014) indicates that educators burdened by excessive workloads tend to experience job dissatisfaction and a decline in their teaching efficacy levels.

2.2 Sources of Emotional Challenges

Several sources contribute to the emotional challenges teachers face, ranging from classroom dynamics to broader systemic issues, as can be seen in figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Sources of teacher's emotional challenges

(adapted from Sutton, 2004; Tsouloupas et al., 2010; Kelchtermans, 2005; Yin & Lee, 2012).

Dealing with classroom dynamics is one of the most difficult emotional tasks teachers have to deal with since every pupil has different abilities, backgrounds and behaviors. Indeed, as Sutton (2004) goes on to highlight, it can be emotionally exhausting dealing with challenging classroom dynamics all day and to maintain a level of energy and enthusiasm over time, something that is necessary for promoting effective learning, they need to have some kind of emotional regulation strategies up their sleeve. Additionally, **student behavior** is another major source of emotional stress, which becomes more intense when teachers feel like they do not have the support or tools to tackle these behavioral challenges effectively. Continual efforts to manage student behaviour can lead to emotional depletion, frustration, and, ultimately, burnout (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Beyond classroom interactions, the demands of **lesson planning and implementation** further contribute to teachers' emotional strain. From a broader perspective, Kelchtermans (2005) argues that teachers' emotions are deeply rooted in the structural vulnerability of the profession and are closely linked to their professional self-understanding. Emotional responses to teaching and reform are shaped by teachers' biographies and working contexts and often take on a micropolitical dimension when externally imposed reforms conflict with teachers' beliefs about good education. Moreover, **external pressures** such as high-stakes testing and rapid policy changes exacerbate teachers' emotional stress, as increased accountability can lead to feelings of diminished professional autonomy (Yin & Lee, 2012).

2.3 Impact on teacher effectiveness and well-being

Teachers often endure struggles that can deeply impact both their personal happiness and job performance. They may face ongoing emotional strain that can lead to mental health challenges, like anxiety and depression, as well as burnout (Kyriacou, 2001). In a study conducted by Ingersoll and Strong (2011), it was discovered that when teachers leave their roles frequently, it can affect students' performance due to the disruption and lack of consistency caused by the absence of educators. In terms of classroom management, emotional regulation (the ability to manage one's emotional arena and emotional expressions; Gross, 1998) is important for all teachers, including pre-service teachers. Many pre-service teachers may struggle with establishing and maintaining order in the classroom and developing a positive learning environment. Therefore, that means these teachers often experience limitations in emotional regulation due to their inexperience and higher stressor related to their teaching internship. These limitations in emotional control

can be detrimental to their mental and physical well-being and may potentially affect their teaching ability. As stated above, limitations in emotional regulation can contribute to burnout, attrition, and loss of cognitive functions, which can worsen the stress associated with the teaching profession (Borman & Dowling, 2008). While there is more interest in the emotional well-being of teachers than ever before, there remains a significant gap in research about Vietnamese pre-service English educators' emotional regulation methods. In addition to that standpoint, facing hurdles may hinder a teacher's ability to excel in the classroom setting. Teachers who feel emotionally drained might find it challenging to manage the class, present captivating lessons and offer the needed encouragement to students. Research conducted by Oberle and Schonert-Reichl (2016) revealed that teachers experiencing levels of fatigue were less inclined to establish favorable classroom atmospheres, leading to a decrease in student participation and educational achievements. Besides, teachers experiencing exhaustion tend to struggle in building connections with their students. This can have an impact on their motivation and academic performance. Research by Jennings and Greenberg (2009) emphasizes how crucial it is for teachers to exhibit emotional skills in creating nurturing learning spaces. Moreover, Le and Pham (2024) examine Vietnamese EFL teachers' perceptions of emotional maturity and its influence on students' learning outcomes. Using a qualitative approach, the study demonstrates that teachers' emotional regulation, empathy, and culturally sensitive emotional support play a significant role in fostering student engagement and effective learning. The findings support established emotional intelligence frameworks, particularly Mayer and Salovey's model, and align with the notion of the prosocial classroom. Importantly, the study situates emotional maturity within the sociocultural realities of EFL teaching in Vietnam, highlighting the need for emotionally informed and culturally responsive teacher education and professional development. Furthermore, this study reflected conclusions in Tsouloupas et al. (2010), who linked emotional exhaustion, particularly related to student misbehavior, with emotional challenges in their class, and moderated by teacher contact efficacy.

In conclusion, emotional struggles pose a concern in the field of education, since they impact both teachers' mental health and job performance significantly. Educators often grapple with the rigors of their profession, such as handling classroom disruptions and student conduct issues while striving to meet standards, resulting in feelings of stress and exhaustion. Neglecting these hurdles may result in adverse outcomes like decreased teaching quality and job fulfilment, or even prompt some teachers to leave the profession. In order to tackle these obstacles successfully and create a learning environment for students' growth and development, schools must ensure that teachers receive resources, support and training to handle their emotions effectively throughout their teaching journey.

2.4 Theoretical framework

2.4.1 Foundational Theories of Emotion

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the interplay of emotional regulation and efficacy in classroom management. Theories such as James-Lange theory (James, 1884), Cannon-Bard theory (Cannon, 1927), and Schachter-Singer theory (Schachter & Singer, 1962) can provide information about the formation and expression of emotion. To understand how pre-service teachers regulate their emotions, it is essential to first consider the mechanisms of emotional formation. Foundational theories provide the physiological and cognitive basis for the regulation strategies observed in this study. The James-Lange theory (James, 1884) posits that emotional experience is the direct result of physiological arousal; essentially, bodily changes precede the feeling of emotion. This perspective is critical as it validates response modulation strategies, suggesting that by controlling physiological symptoms (e.g., through deep breathing), teachers can effectively dampen the intensity of their anxiety. In contrast, the Cannon-Bard theory (Cannon, 1927) argues that physiological arousal and emotional experience occur simultaneously and independently. This theory offers an explanation for the sense of "being overwhelmed" reported by interns, where the immediate onset of stress in a chaotic classroom affects both mind and body concurrently, requiring rapid intervention. Furthermore, the Schachter-Singer two-factor theory (Schachter & Singer, 1962) introduces the role of cognition, stating that emotion is a function of both physiological arousal and a cognitive label. This theory underpins the strategy of cognitive reappraisal, implying that how a teacher interprets their racing heart—whether as "fear of failure" or "excitement to teach" - determines their emotional reality. Together, these models explain why specific regulation strategies are biologically and psychologically effective.

2.4.2 Gross's process model of emotion regulation

Emotional self-control plays a role in achieving success in the workplace, especially in jobs that involve dealing with emotions regularly, as teaching roles do. The process model of emotion regulation proposed by Gross in 1998 provides a framework for comprehending how teachers employ strategies to regulate their feelings effectively. This framework includes five steps: (1) Situation selection (approaching or avoiding

certain situations); (2) Situation modification (changing the external environment); (3) Attentional deployment (redirecting focus, e.g., mindfulness); (4) Cognitive change (reappraising a situation's meaning); and (5) Response modulation (influencing physiological or behavioral responses, such as deep breathing or suppression). A summary of Gross's process model of emotional regulation is illustrated in figure 3 below.

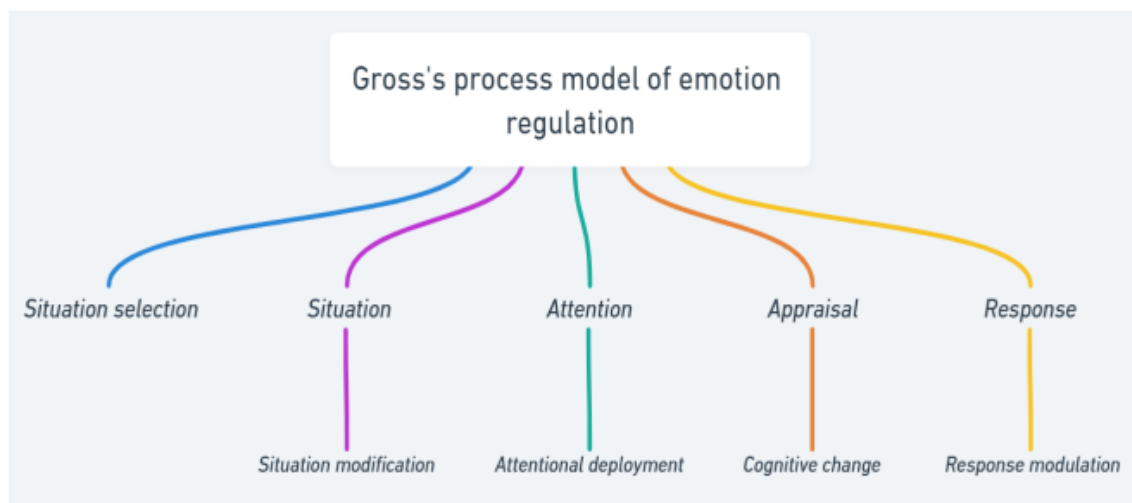


Figure 3. Adapted process model of emotional regulation (Gross, 1998).

The process model of emotion regulation proposed by Gross in 1998 provides a framework for comprehending how teachers employ strategies to regulate their feelings effectively. This framework includes five steps: selecting the scenario, adjusting the scenario, focusing attention, reinterpreting cognitively, and adjusting responses.

Several investigations have acknowledged the emotional challenges and emotion regulation strategies of teachers, including pre-service teachers, across contexts. Chang (2009) examined emotional labor and teacher burnout, indicating that types of stress and emotional exhaustion complicated teacher performance and well-being. Sutton and Wheatley (2003) reviewed teacher emotions and found that properly managing emotions is crucial for retaining classroom control and satisfaction of teachers.

The notion of emotional competence is outlined in Jennings and Greenberg (2009), who claimed that emotional competence is essential for developing positive classroom climates, as well as fostering engagement for students in their classrooms. The work of Jennings and Greenberg makes clear that developing emotional regulation is an important skill for teachers, and particularly, for pre-service teachers about to enter the profession.

Gross's (1998) model of emotion regulation, known as the process model is often cited in educational studies as a basis for understanding how teacher's ticket responsibility for emotions including emotion regulation, and how they deploy a variety of strategies for various means of emotion regulation including, situation selection, cognitive reappraisal and response modulation (Fried, 2011; Yin et al., 2013). The conclusion drawn from these studies is that emotion regulation strategies may protect against negative experiences, improve outcomes of teaching, while simultaneously reducing the negative impact of stress or emotional challenges as they arise.

While the amount of research available is increasing, the emotional experiences and emotional regulation strategies of pre-service teachers are still considered under-researched, especially in the context of Vietnam. The current study makes a strong case for the continued research on how Vietnamese pre-service English teachers manage their emotional challenges when they face them during their teaching placements or internships.

2.5 Gaps in previous research

Although there has been an increasing body of literature related to teacher emotions, stress, and burnout, there is a notable absence of literature specifically focused on the emotional regulation strategies of pre-service teachers (especially apposite to the Vietnamese context). Existing literature tends to include studies on the emotional wellbeing of teachers and classroom management; however, there have been few studies on how pre-service teachers in Vietnam, in particular, respond to emotional challenges during their internship, or how pre-service teachers engage in the emotion regulation strategies to increase teaching effectiveness.

For example, literature like Chang (2009) and Kyriacou (2001) have extensively studied teachers'

emotional burnout and stress. There are few studies specifically on pre-service teachers, while having even less connection occurring in a non-Western society like Vietnam. Notably, most of the studies on emotional regulation strategies have been drawn from Western countries (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), which may not adequately illustrate an appropriate response for emotional regulation in a Vietnamese educational setting in terms of the variances across cultural and systems issues related to the general structure of the educational system.

Substantial research has been conducted on the impact of emotional regulation on teacher-student relationships and engagement in the classroom context of Vietnam. Research such as Hargreaves (2000) and Klassen & Chiu (2010) demonstrated positive teacher-student relationships and classroom engagement related to emotional regulation in a Western context. However, similar investigations in the context of Vietnam, and specifically with pre-service English teachers, have been very limited.

This study will seek to fill these gaps by conducting an exploration of the emotional challenges faced by pre-service English teachers at Hue University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (HUFLIS) and the strategies they use to regulate those emotions. This investigation is positioned to glean some productive understanding about the emotional experiences of pre-service teachers in Vietnam in terms of their emotional challenges, and to offer pedagogical recommendations based on these experiences to expand teacher education programs in Vietnam.

3. METHOD

3.1 Research setting

The study took place in the context of the Hue University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (HUFLIS) pre-service English teacher training program. In their fourth year of the English pedagogy program, all students are required to complete a teaching internship as a core component of their academic program. The internship is an essential part of professional learning where preservice teachers apply what they learned in real classrooms.

In this study, the pre-service teachers (interns) were provided an internship experience in several schools in Thailand. This international context also allowed for a unique opportunity to examine the emotional challenges and regulation strategies of pre-service teachers. The internships were organized through several universities in Thailand, namely Buriram Rajabhat University, Kalasin University, and Ubon Ratchathani University. The internship took place over one month, during which the interns engaged in teaching and learning experiences across diverse classroom contexts in different provinces and cities in Thailand.

The interns were provided with accommodation and other cross-cultural support services during their time abroad. The interns had daily responsibilities that were determined by each specific school and supervising teacher. In addition to observing lessons, interns were required to create learning plans in order to deliver English classes. The school system also provided recommended activities for interns, mainly to participate in cultural and social activities so they could better learn about the host country's culture and experience personal growth.

This research context allowed for a detailed examination of the experiences of pre-service teachers in managing emotional stressors internationally where language limitations, cultural differences, and unique classroom dynamics contributed to stressors beyond those in a typical teaching internship domestically.

3.2 Research design and participants

Using a qualitative research approach, this study employed semi-structured interviews to explore the emotional experiences of 12 pre-service English teachers during their professional training. Participants were 12 fourth-year students, studying at Hue University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (HUFLIS) who had recently finished their teaching internship in Thailand in 2025. The semi-structured format allows for conversations and interactions to develop around the participants' emotionality and experience, while also capturing the importance of culture and contextual factors in emotional well-being. Participants were selected via purposive sampling to ensure they had direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation. The cohort consisted of 8 females (An, Duong, Truc, Mai, Hoa, Lan, Linh, Nhi) and 4 males (Dat, Hung, Quan, Huy), all aged 22.

3.3 Data collection instruments and analysis procedures

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, either in person or via Zoom, allowing participants to express their emotions comfortably in their first language. The interview protocol consisted of ten open-ended questions focusing on emotional challenges, emotion regulation strategies, and perceived emotional impacts

on teaching. The semi-structured format enabled the interviews to develop as reflective conversations while remaining aligned with the study's aims.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. A combined deductive–inductive approach was adopted. Gross's (1998) process model of emotion regulation guided the deductive coding of regulation strategies, while inductive coding was used to identify themes related to emotional challenges and the perceived influence of emotions on teaching practice.

The data analysis followed a two-phase coding process to ensure systematic rigor. In the first phase, a *deductive approach* was applied to identify emotion regulation strategies, using Gross's (1998) process model as a pre-defined coding framework. For instance, segments where participants described changing their internal perspective were coded under "Cognitive change". In the second phase, an *inductive approach* was used to capture emotional challenges directly from the participants lived experiences. Raw interview transcripts were broken down into initial codes (e.g., "lack of student attention"), which were then grouped into broader themes such as "Classroom management".

To illustrate the transparency of the coding process, table 1 provides examples of how raw data extracts were transformed into specific codes and overarching themes:

Table 1. Examples of the coding process

Raw Data Extract (Translated)	Initial code	Theoretical Category
"Some students were still doing other things like using their phones ... I reminded them many times, but they kept doing it".	Student non-compliance	Emotional challenge: Classroom management
"I often reminded myself, 'You are still learning. You don't have to be perfect'".	Positive self-talk	Regulation strategy: Cognitive reappraisal
"When I feel tired or worried, I take deep breaths and focus on the lesson".	Controlled breathing	Regulation strategy: Response modulation
"There were times when I accidentally used complex terms ... I blamed myself."	Linguistic barriers	Emotional challenge: Language proficiency

3.3 Trustworthiness

To enhance trustworthiness, multiple strategies were employed. Credibility was supported through triangulation across participants and member checking, with interview transcripts returned to participants for verification. Peer debriefing was also conducted, allowing colleagues to review the coding and emerging themes. The use of Gross's (1998) established theoretical framework further contributed to the consistency and transparency of the analysis.

In brief, employing these strategies this study aims to provide an outcome that credibly measures the consistency and accuracy of the findings to provide conclusions that are both endorsing and pronouncing.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Emotional challenges faced by pre-service teachers

Participants reported a range of emotional challenges during the teaching practicum. Three interrelated thematic areas emerged from the data: (1) classroom management and student behaviour as primary stressors; (2) workload demands and mentor expectations; and (3) language proficiency and perceived self-efficacy in the international teaching context. These challenges generated emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and feelings of inadequacy, particularly among participants navigating unfamiliar classroom norms and instructional expectations.

Overall, sources of emotional strain stemmed from three main domains: in-class interactions with students, external pressures related to workload and supervisory obligations, and internalized negative self-evaluations of teaching performance. Together, these domains highlight the complex interplay between contextual demands and personal emotional responses in shaping pre-service teachers' practicum experiences.

Classroom management and student engagement

A prevalent emotional problem encountered by the participants was classroom management. Multiple participants reported feeling powerless when students were misbehaving or just not learning. An, for instance, reflected on a moment when her lesson failed to capture students' attention: "*When I taught in class, some students were still doing other things like using their phones, talking, or watching movies. I reminded them many times, but they kept doing it*". This helplessness seemed to be a common experience. Mai also pointed out the emotional strain caused by uncooperative students: "*Situations where students do*

not cooperate in class, especially those who talk or do not complete their tasks, make me experienced a sense of helplessness... ”.

Student behaviors

Another major challenge is student behaviors, including uncooperating or disruptive talking, which often made participants feel helpless when students were uncooperative or disruptive in class. *“When I created group activities, many students didn’t join. I tried to encourage them, but they just sat silently or talked to friends. It made the class atmosphere very heavy”*, said Hoa. In contrast, Hung faced challenges with noise control, noting that he had to “raise voice just to be heard” and constantly remind himself “not to let the anger take over”.

Pressure from mentors and workload

There were some participants expressed anxiety about meeting high expectations. Lan expressed her feeling: *“I always worry about whether I can meet expectations, whether I’m teaching well enough...”*. Duong also shared her thought on how anxious she felt when it came to mentors’ expectation: *“I lean more towards the expectations of the mentor, sometimes I worry if I can meet the expectations”*.

Additionally, many participants reported experiencing workload stress, feeling overwhelmed by lesson planning and the expectations of their internships. Linh highlighted the tension encountered when handling her duties:

“I was responsible for 3 internship classes, ... during the final week of my internship. I had to spend a lot of time preparing lesson plans, rehearsing lessons, and I didn’t have much time for rest, which led to stress and increased anxiety”.

Language proficiency and self-efficacy

Several participants pointed out the struggles with language barriers, especially those who interned abroad, where communication difficulties with students added to their emotional stress. Dat reflected on the emotional strain caused by not being able to communicate clearly with his students: *“There were times when I accidentally used complex terms, and I could see the confusion in their eyes. In those moments, I blamed myself and felt pressure because I couldn’t communicate the knowledge effectively”*.

4.2 Emotion regulation strategies employed by pre-service teachers

To manage the emotional challenges, the participants employed various ways to regulate their emotions during stressful teaching moments.

Cognitive reappraisal and self-talk

The most common technique utilised was positive self-talk for comfort in challenging circumstances. Lan explained her strategy for emotional regulation by consciously maintaining an optimistic mindset: *“I often reminded myself, ‘You are still learning. You don’t have to be perfect.’ That stopped me from being too self-critical”*. Similarly, Nhi viewed setbacks as temporary, noting, *“It’s not the end of the world. Tomorrow is another chance”*.

Behavioral adjustment and preparation

Many participants also practiced body language adjustments to project confidence and stay composed. For instance, Quan mentioned how he would focus on their body language and tone of voice to manage his emotions: *“When I feel anxious, I try to smile a little more, and make my voice softer. Additionally, I adjust my gestures to avoid appearing too tense when standing in front of the class”*.

Mindfulness and emotional suppression

Deep breathing and mindfulness were other strategies that participants found beneficial, especially in overwhelming situations. Hung articulated: *“When I feel tired or worried, I take deep breaths and focus on the lesson. I realize that this helps me concentrate better and control my emotions more effectively”*.

Seeking social support

Seeking support from mentors and peers was acknowledged as an effective method for relieving stress and enhancing confidence. Duong highlighted the importance of informal digital support: *“I usually messaged my friends who were also doing internships. We shared our stories and laughed about some of the stressful things. It helped me not feel alone”*.

Reflection and reframing

Reflection and reframing enabled participants to reconsider challenging situations and convert negative emotions into opportunities for growth. Huy shared: *“Instead of thinking I failed, I think of it as an*

opportunity to learn and improve”.

4.3 Perceived impacts of emotion regulation on teaching effectiveness and teacher–student relationships

The way individuals controlled those emotional expressions had substantial impacts on the participants' teaching, and relationships with others.

Preservice teachers' teaching performance

A majority of participants indicated a very positive impact or positive influence on their teaching effectiveness as a result of emotional regulation. Mai expressed how regulating her emotions helped the preservation of a productive classroom atmosphere: *“I think if I regulate my emotions well, the class becomes more comfortable, and students can absorb the lesson better...”*. Similarly, Dat emphasized that staying emotionally balanced allowed him to manage the classroom and maintain authority: *“Regulating my emotions helps me manage the class and maintain my dignity as a teacher in front of the students”*. However, certain participants, such as Quan, felt the impact was neutral, stating he was *“not sure if it made a big difference”*.

Preservice teachers' teacher–student relationships

Likewise, emotion control significantly affected the dynamics of teacher-student relationships. Educators who maintained calmness and optimism in the classroom were more successful in fostering robust relationships with their learners. Nhi observed that when she remained calm, *“students find it easier to communicate... and are more likely to listen”*. Conversely, 1 participant, Huy, reported a deteriorated relationship with his students due to emotional regulation: *“Although I try to stay calm, students may feel that I am too distant and unable to connect with them as I did before”*.

This suggests that while regulation is generally beneficial, excessive suppression may hinder authentic teacher-student connection.

4.4 Summary

This chapter analyzes interviews with 12 pre-service English teachers regarding their emotional experiences during internships. Findings reveal that participants managed stressors - such as classroom management issues, mentor pressure, and language barriers - through strategies like positive self-talk, mindfulness, and peer support. While these techniques generally enhanced teaching effectiveness and student rapport, the study cautions that excessive regulation can hinder authentic connection, highlighting the need for a balanced approach to emotional training in teacher education.

5. DISCUSSION

The main themes of this study, to some extent, both corroborate and extend existing literature on teacher emotions and emotional regulation, particularly within the Vietnamese EFL context. Consistent with the findings of Le and Pham (2024), Vietnamese pre-service teachers in this study identified classroom management and student behaviour as significant sources of emotional stress. These challenges reflect the emotional demands associated with maintaining classroom order and responding to diverse learner needs, especially for teachers at early stages of professional development (Tsouloupas et al., 2010).

However, this study advances the work of Le and Pham (2024) by foregrounding the contextual specificity of emotional challenges in an international teaching internship. While Le and Pham (2024) highlight emotional regulation and empathy in managing classroom dynamics within domestic EFL settings, participants in the present study did not emphasize peer-related tensions as a major emotional stressor. Instead, language emerged as a distinctive source of emotional strain. In the absence of persistent classroom conflict, perceived limitations in linguistic fluency became a salient site of stress, intensifying the emotional labour of teaching. This finding suggests that teaching in a foreign educational and linguistic environment adds an additional layer of “foreign language anxiety”, positioning language proficiency as both a pedagogical and emotional concern. In this respect, the study extends existing work on emotional maturity by illustrating how emotional challenges are reshaped under cross-cultural and transnational teaching conditions.

With regard to emotion regulation strategies, the findings align closely with Gross's (1998) process model of emotion regulation. Participants reported frequent use of cognitive reappraisal, such as positive self-talk, as well as response modulation strategies, including controlled breathing, to manage emotional challenges during teaching. Beyond these established strategies, an important contribution of this study lies in identifying informal digital peer support as a central coping mechanism for Vietnamese pre-service teachers. Participants relied heavily on instant messaging applications and online peer communication to seek emotional reassurance, share experiences, and negotiate emotional challenges in real time during their

internship.

This reliance on informal, digitally mediated support extends existing literature that has tended to emphasise formal mentoring relationships and institutionalised support systems, particularly in Western educational contexts (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Rather than structured mentorship, participants in this study demonstrated a strong dependence on immediate, peer-based digital networks. This pattern may reflect a generational shift towards forms of “networked individualism”, in which emotional coping is embedded in flexible, technology-enabled social connections rather than solely in formal professional relationships.

The specific context of the internship in Thailand - encompassing the host universities, the local students, and the program structure - served as a primary catalyst for the participants’ emotional formation. Firstly, the linguistic landscape of Thai classrooms created a unique “double barrier”. Unlike domestic internships where teachers can resort to their mother tongue (Vietnamese) for classroom management, the interns in Thailand were stripped of this linguistic authority. This inability to “code-switch” during moments of student disruption (e.g., noise or passivity) significantly amplified feelings of helplessness and frustration, as pedagogical instructions had to be filtered solely through English. Secondly, the institutional expectations from Thai mentors and universities added a layer of “performance anxiety”. The pressure to conform to the high standards of the host institutions (as noted by Lan and Duong), combined with the unfamiliar curriculum, intensified the fear of negative evaluation. Finally, the cultural distance inherent in the program necessitated a reliance on “networked individualism”. Being physically removed from their familiar support systems in Vietnam compelled the interns to cultivate the “digital peer support” mechanism discussed earlier, transforming their smartphones into essential tools for emotional survival rather than just communication devices.

Finally, while emotional regulation was generally perceived as enhancing teaching effectiveness and emotional stability, the findings also revealed an important counter-narrative. The experience of Huy, who reported feeling emotionally “disconnected” from students as a result of maintaining excessive emotional control, highlights the potential limitations of emotion regulation. This observation aligns with research suggesting that over-regulation or emotional suppression may undermine authenticity and interpersonal rapport in teaching (Gross & John, 2003). By incorporating this counter-example, the study offers a more nuanced understanding of emotional maturity, emphasizing that effective teaching requires not emotional neutrality but a balanced and context-sensitive engagement with emotions.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined Vietnamese pre-service EFL teachers’ emotional experiences and emotion regulation strategies during an international teaching internship. The findings reaffirm that classroom management and student behaviour remain central emotional challenges in early teaching practice, while also revealing context-specific stressors related to linguistic insecurity and foreign language anxiety. These results reinforce the view, analyzed in the discussion section, that teacher emotions are shaped by the interaction between pedagogical demands and cross-cultural teaching conditions.

Consistent with the discussion, the study highlights the use of both intrapersonal regulation strategies and interpersonal coping through informal digital peer support. At the same time, the findings caution against viewing emotional regulation as uniformly beneficial, as excessive emotional control may undermine authenticity and teacher–student rapport. While these insights are grounded in participants’ self-reported experiences within a small, context-specific sample, they nonetheless contribute to a more nuanced understanding of emotional maturity in EFL teaching.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of incorporating emotional awareness, regulation, and culturally responsive support into teacher education programmes, while also pointing to the need for future research that combines self-reported data with classroom observations and learner perspectives to deepen understanding of teacher emotionality across contexts.

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Những thách thức cảm xúc và các chiến lược điều chỉnh cảm xúc của sinh viên ngành Sư phạm tiếng Anh trong thời gian thực tập ở Thái Lan

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
<i>Quá trình xử lý:</i> Ngày nhận bài: 16/01/2026 Ngày nhận bản chỉnh sửa: 11/4/2026 Ngày nhận đăng: 17/4/2026 Ngày xuất bản: 20/8/2026 <i>Từ khóa:</i> Sinh viên sư phạm tiếng Anh; Thực tập giảng dạy; Thách thức cảm xúc; Điều chỉnh cảm xúc; Mô hình điều chỉnh cảm xúc của Gross. <i>Tác giả liên hệ:</i> Trần Thị Thảo Phương Địa chỉ e-mail: ttthuong@hueuni.edu.vn	Nghiên cứu định tính này khảo sát những thách thức về mặt cảm xúc mà các sinh viên ngành Sư phạm Tiếng Anh, hiện đang theo học tại Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ Huế (HUFLIS), phải đối mặt trong quá trình thực tập tại Thái Lan, cũng như các chiến lược điều chỉnh cảm xúc mà họ đã áp dụng. Mười hai sinh viên năm thứ tư đã tham gia vào các cuộc phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc. Phương pháp phân tích theo chủ đề của Braun và Clarke (2006) được sử dụng để xác định các mô hình lặp lại. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng các sinh viên sư phạm tiếng Anh thường xuyên trải qua những trải nghiệm cảm xúc tiêu cực như lo âu, thất vọng, kiệt sức và cảm giác bị quá tải. Dựa trên mô hình quy trình điều chỉnh cảm xúc của Gross (1998), nghiên cứu cho thấy các chiến lược điều chỉnh thường được sử dụng bao gồm: đánh giá lại nhận thức (tự thoại tích cực), điều chỉnh phản ứng (hít thở/thực hành chánh niệm), điều chỉnh hành vi (ngôn ngữ cơ thể và kiểm soát giọng nói), và tìm kiếm sự hỗ trợ, đặc biệt là sự hỗ trợ phi chính thức từ bạn bè thông qua các nền tảng số. Nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh tính đặc thù về ngữ cảnh của các tác nhân gây căng thẳng trong các kỳ thực tập quốc tế (đặc biệt là lo âu liên quan đến rào cản ngôn ngữ) và đưa ra các đề xuất thực tiễn cho chương trình đào tạo giáo viên, trong đó cần lồng ghép nội dung đào tạo về nhận thức và kỹ năng điều chỉnh cảm xúc. Những hạn chế của nghiên cứu và hướng đi cho các nghiên cứu trong tương lai cũng được thảo luận.