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An Emotional Geography Model of EFL Teachers' Transitional Emotions from Real to Online Classes

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ABSTRACT

Emotions are important in the educational processes, influencing teachers' interactions while trying to teach in real and online classes. Therefore, this study investigated the transitional emotions experienced by English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers as they shifted from real/in-person classroom settings to online teaching, using an emotional geography model. Moreover, we aimed to explore the emotion regulation strategies that they used during their transitioning. Following a descriptive narrative design, we probed the transitional emotions of 10 Iranian EFL teachers while transitioning from real to online classrooms. The findings of the thematic analysis showed five key themes. First, physical geography may enhance cognitive change, resulting in positive emotions. Second, issues with the internet negatively impact classroom quality, leading to negative emotions. Third, situational modifications may help teachers adapt and meet their instructional needs amidst online challenges. Fourth, attentional deployment may serve as a strategy for improving professional geography. Lastly, situation selection and response modulation may aid in the development of moral and socio-cultural geography. These themes illustrate the interconnection between emotion regulation strategies and geographical models of emotions, highlighting their importance in transitioning from real to online teaching. Therefore, we concluded that emotion regulation strategies were helpful in solving the challenges that EFL teachers faced concerning their transitional emotions.

KEYWORDS: EFL teachers; Emotional transition; Emotional geography model

1. Introduction

Teachers' emotions are regarded as critical in the teaching process, particularly within the EFL context, where evaluative reactions are intertwined (Derakhshan et al., 2024). These emotions include various psychological and physical subsystems, which are especially important in specific events and social settings (Frenzel et al., 2021; Schutz & Lambert, 2002). Teachers need to collaborate with students, parents, and colleagues to fulfill a diverse range of responsibilities. Their tasks include ensuring that classrooms run smoothly, promoting student engagement and success, maintaining supportive relationships with parents, and fostering satisfaction and cooperation among colleagues (Haj Seyed Javadi & Meihami, 2024). All such interactions have impacts on teachers' emotions. Schutz et al. (2006, p. 344) defined teachers' emotions as "socially constructed and personally enacted ways of being that emerge from conscious and/or unconscious judgments regarding perceived successes at attaining goals or

maintaining standards or beliefs during transactions as part of social-historical contexts.” Managing these emotions is essential for effective teaching (Lee & Yin, 2011; Richards, 2022), especially in online classes (Meihami, 2025).

EFL teachers must be able to transition between real/in-person and online classes, especially in response to emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic forced teachers to quickly adapt to online learning, posing challenges in technology use and pedagogy (Tafazoli & Meihami, 2023). The shift from real to online classes has significantly impacted teachers' emotions, particularly for EFL teachers who had to quickly adapt to online teaching. This sudden change presented challenges, such as mastering new technology and altering their pedagogical approaches (Kaplan-Rakowski et al., 2021). Without a well-designed syllabus for online instruction, teachers faced both internal barriers (like beliefs about pedagogy and technology) and external barriers (cultural and contextual factors), which influenced their emotional responses during this transition (Bruggeman et al., 2022).

Not understanding the transitional emotions of EFL teachers when they abruptly terminate their real classes and start online classes may lead to some problems. First, the transition from real to online classes and how it influences teachers' emotions is somehow ambiguous and needs clarification. Second, teachers often struggle to adapt to their roles in an ever-changing educational space (Beck, 2020). One factor contributing to understanding these challenges may be the emotion regulation strategies they employ when transitioning between different teaching and learning contexts, such as from real to online classes. Therefore, it is essential to understand these emotion regulation strategies in order to improve our EFL teacher education programs effectively. Third, we lack a clear understanding of the challenges EFL teachers faced while transitioning from in-person to online classes, making it difficult to develop educational policies that could ease this transition.

One critical issue that makes exploring the transitional emotions of EFL teachers from real to online classes worthwhile in a post-COVID-19 era is the preference of EFL learners for learning English through online facilities, which requires EFL teachers to become well-oriented in how to regulate their emotions (Meihami & Esmaeili, 2024). While our experiences during COVID-19 were more akin to emergency remote teaching rather than structured online classes we experienced after COVID-19, there are still instances in the post-COVID-19 period where EFL teachers face the need for an abrupt transition from in-person to online classes. This situation mirrors the conditions we encountered during the pandemic, making this study significant. Moreover, the never-ending advancement of technology forces teachers, including EFL teachers, to be in constant transition from real to online classes, which may present critical incidents for them regarding regulating their emotions in online classes (Yang & Du, 2024). Thus, the findings of this study on the emotion regulation strategies used by EFL teachers are crucial for providing ongoing support in in-service teacher education. By understanding these strategies, we can assist teachers in managing their emotions, helping to reduce negative emotions and promote positive emotions as they transition to online classes.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the EFL teachers' transitional emotions from real/in-person classes to online classes. One more objective was to address the challenges that EFL teachers experienced during their transitional emotions from real to online classes. Finally, we explored emotion regulation strategies that EFL teachers used to address transitional emotions from real to online classes. It is crucial to note that the study aimed to capture experiences during COVID-19. Therefore, we employed narrative inquiry to activate the EFL teachers' autobiographical memories (Smorti, 2011) related to the study's main objectives. This study was guided by the following research questions to address the objectives of the study:

1. What are the transitional emotions experienced by EFL teachers from real to online classes during COVID-19?
2. What are the challenges that EFL teachers experienced during their transitional emotions from real to online classes at the time of COVID-19?
3. What are the emotion regulation strategies used by EFL teachers to address the transitional emotions from real to online classes during COVID-19?
4. How do EFL teachers utilize emotion regulation strategies to address transitional emotions from real to online during COVID-19?

2. Literature Review

2.1. EFL teachers' emotions

Teachers' emotions are important in shaping their beliefs and actions (Benesch, 2012). Influenced by social and historical contexts, these emotions exist within cultural and power structures (Zembylas, 2007). Teachers learn to express positive emotions like empathy while managing negative ones such as anger and anxiety. This emotional landscape significantly impacts their sense of identity and decision-making in the classroom (Nias, 1996). Emotions affect how teachers react to challenges and opportunities, with individual responses often linked to their self-perception and the reactions of colleagues (Hargreaves, 2005). While negative emotions can hinder teaching effectiveness and motivation, positive emotions can inspire creativity and problem-solving (Tajabadi & Meihami, 2024).

The emotional dynamics among colleagues can also influence job satisfaction and perceptions of institutions, with positive relationships fostering support and negative feelings stemming from perceived isolation (Cowie, 2011). Teachers often seek collaboration within the broader EFL profession due to inadequate institutional support (Mendzheritskaya & Hansen, 2019). Benesch (2018) emphasized the need for research on teacher emotions in language teaching, suggesting that awareness of these emotions can lead to pedagogical transformation. By providing EFL teachers with opportunities to explore and articulate their emotions, the transition to effective teaching practices can be better understood.

2.2. Emotion regulation strategies

Emotion Regulation refers to the extrinsic and intrinsic processes that individuals go through in order to evaluate, change, or control their emotions for specific purposes and life's goals (Thompson, 2008). In this study, emotion regulation refers to different types of physical, psychological, and cognitive processes that EFL teachers use to regulate their emotions in order to carry out their duties (Gong et al., 2013). These emotion regulations are achieved through some strategies. Gross (1998) proposed a model for antecedent-focused emotion regulation strategies that contain five families of emotions: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation. These strategies may cause different changes in the way individuals express their emotions (Webb et al., 2012).

A situation selection is concerned with choosing situations on the basis of whether or not emotions are expected in a particular situation (Gross, 2015). It is possible to approach or avoid situations based on the individuals' expectation that, in any given situation, they will be faced with either pleasure or unpleasant emotions. This strategy helps to understand the occurrence of different emotions in various situations based on the level of complexity of the situations. However, the selection of the situation depends on the successful change in life and the facilitation of positive life experiences (Kober & Bolling, 2014).

Situation modification refers to the changes made by individuals to regulate the impacts of emotions (Gross, 2015). It could lead to a new situation based on how much of the current situation is modified. Therefore, it is difficult to clearly distinguish between the change and the choice of situations. Sutton (2004) argued that situation modification is changing the lesson plan when it is not going as planned to handle misbehaving students. Moreover, attention deployment refers to the use of external or internal focus to change emotional responses (Gross, 2015). In doing so, the focus of attention may be diverted to another aspect of the situation or a completely different one. Distractions can be obtained through external factors by shifting attention away from a stimulus that triggers emotions or internally by recalling a neutral and enjoyable experience (Bennett et al., 2007). Teachers have indicated that they utilize distraction techniques to enhance their moods, such as concentrating on positive thoughts prior to class or overlooking the disruptive actions of students (Sutton, 2004).

Another emotion regulation strategy used by teachers is changing the perceptions of individuals about how they think about the emotional impacts of a situation; that is called cognitive change (Gross, 2015). Reappraisal is a type of cognitive change that decreases the intensity of negative emotions (Gross, 1998). When these negative emotions are decreased, the degree of their influence on memory also decreases (Richards & Gross, 2000). Reappraisal is mostly used by teachers to reassess the importance of student misconduct (Sutton, 2004).

Furthermore, response modulation is another emotion regulation strategy that focuses on changing the physiological, experiential, or behavioral aspects of the emotional response (Gross, 2015). Inhibitory suppression is a type of response modulation that aims at inhibiting the psychomotor expression of a feeling emotion (Gross, 2015). The experience of suppressed positive but not suppressed negative emotions has been found to be reduced by express suppression (Gross, 1998; Gross & Levenson, 1997). Faking is a second form of responsiveness modulation in which the act of behavioral expression of an unfeeling emotion is observed (Grandey, 2000).

2.3. Emotional geography

Hargreaves (2000, 2001, 2005) used the term emotional geography to refer to the emotional understanding and misunderstanding of teachers. The emotions teachers experience about themselves, other teachers, or the world relate to the closeness or distance in human interactions and relationships. The term geography is how people interact with and in the places that they walk through on a daily basis, which is influenced by their emotional lives (Crewe et al., 2014). Individuals' emotions can be influenced by the way space is organized and the places it shapes. Emotional geography tries to describe the patterns of closeness and distance regarding individuals' interactions that shape their emotions while they are interacting with each other and with the world around them (Hargreaves, 2001). The emotional geography model has five aspects (Hargreaves, 2001). These five components are physical geography, moral geography, sociocultural geography, professional geography, and political geography.

Physical geography is a term describing individuals' closeness and distance created by time and space. Teaching is stressful because teachers have limited time to work with each other. This is made possible through the time and space a learning community provides, giving each other an emotional understanding of their work (Denzin, 1984). The absence of these opportunities can lead to a lack of understanding of the various aspects of education. Cooperation among teachers can be an

important factor for EFL teachers since it allows them to negotiate their difficulties regarding teaching and learning. In this study, regarding this aspect of emotional geography, we explored whether teachers work together to overcome the difficulties they may face in an online teaching environment concerning their emotions.

Another aspect of emotional geography is moral geography, which could be described as the closeness and distance created by different purposes and senses of achievement in the field of professional practice. When EFL teachers enter a new phase in their career that is considered a virtual environment, they need to deconstruct their beliefs and adopt new ideologies to understand new moral legitimacy. When EFL teachers are in a new environment, such as online classes, they might have different emotions, such as guilt, shame, and doubt, which require continuous emotional work and management (Zembylas, 2007). Moreover, sociocultural geography is how differences in gender, race, ethnicity, language, and culture create distance or closeness among teachers, including EFL teachers (Hargreaves, 2001). The EFL teachers may have different backgrounds regarding their cultural and social values, genders, and perspectives toward teaching. This difference can be manifested through their interactions with students, colleagues, and parents; teachers react differently based on the situation.

Professional geography is defined in terms of the closeness and distance formed by various understandings concerning professionalism and occupational practices (Hargreaves, 2001). There are different cultures of teaching, learning, and professional practice in various cultures, and standards are defined in various ways. Teachers can not apply one teaching method to all of their classes. Because of this, they may have to deal with different emotions like frustration, anxiety, and stress. This is related to the EFL teachers who transitioned from real to online classes during COVID-19 since they might have problems with the methods they could use to teach in online classes.

Finally, political geography refers to the fact that different understandings of power result in a degree of closeness and distance (Hargreaves, 2001). A power structure, which determines the sequence of interaction and practice, underpins professional communities. EFL teachers are part of a community, and being part of this community requires them to understand the roles and identify their own identities in this community. Misunderstanding these concepts can lead to negative emotions like guilt, shame, and embarrassment from themselves and others. Therefore, we tried to understand this emotional geography while they had an abrupt transition from real to online classes during COVID-19.

2.4. Third space

The third space was created to overcome the boundaries and deal with system dynamics such as education systems (Beck, 2020). Bhabha (1994, p. 37) introduced the concept of third space as a homogenizing equalizer, which "challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a unifying force". There is a contradiction in the third space; each individual is in both spaces at the same time. Consequently, individuals on both sides of the equation are prevented from establishing their identities through participation in this space (Bhabha, 2012). Rubin (2020, p. 5) explained that the third space is "a space of in-betweenness, a borderline, neither here nor there". The third space theory re-conceptualizes human interaction's first and second spaces (Moje et al., 2004). The binary space comprises two distinct categories, often competing to allow for physical and social interaction. The third space merges the first and second spaces that produce new forms of knowledge, discourse, and literacy. While teachers are in the transition from real classrooms to virtual classes, they are in the space called the third space. Bhabha (1994) originally defined the third space as a place of hybridity. Specifically, the person is neither in the first space nor the second one. This may change the feelings of a person experiencing this environment and form the person's recognition.

The features of the third space can help individuals "begin with new forms emotions and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Bhabha, 2012, pp. 1-2). When EFL teachers are transitioning to online classes, they are in the third space and experience different kinds of emotions. Somehow, they still have emotions from the first space, which is taught in real classes, and they are experiencing new emotions while transitioning to the second space. Bhabha (1994) explained that negotiation tensions exist between the two areas owing to incommensurable tension within the first and second zones. To manage tension, resisting in the third dimension may be helpful to enable individuals to move more easily across this transition zone.

2.5. Empirical studies on EFL teachers' emotion in real and online environment

The literature review of the current study on EFL teachers' emotions in a real and online environment is done in the following paragraphs. Makhwathana et al. (2017) studied teachers' emotions in teaching and learning English in real and online classes. The research sought to explain the emotions teachers experience during teaching and learning. A qualitative method was employed for this study, involving six primary teachers. Data were gathered using open-ended questions and analyzed by identifying themes. The results indicated that positive emotions enhance teaching effectiveness, while negative emotions can lead teachers to yell, lose control, and act carelessly in their communication.

Park and Ryu (2019) investigated the teachers' emotional experiences when interacting within a virtual scenario-based teacher-training system. In their study, there were three types of interaction: no interaction, unexpected interaction, and expected

interaction. The participants of the study were fourteen preservice teachers who had four years of experience. The Emotient software was used to collect data on participants' emotional expressions. The results of the study indicated that participants were exposed to unexpected interactions. They experienced higher positive and neutral emotions, higher emotional engagement, and higher feelings of joy than when they were exposed to expected interactions or no interactions.

Naylor and Nyanjom (2020) studied the emotions of educators involved in the transition to online teaching. Teaching has a strong connection with one's beliefs, values, commitments and relationships with students. These deep and intimate connections might be disturbed by changes in pedagogical practices and teaching methods, giving rise to a passionate response. In this investigation, the researchers applied Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The outcomes of the study revealed that emotions facilitate the way educators adapt themselves to new situations, such as the online environment.

Pham and Phan (2023) conducted a study on Vietnamese university language teachers' emotions in online teaching. The study examined the emotional orientations of ESL teachers in Vietnam and their reactions to online learning environments during COVID-19. The participants of the study were seven ESL teachers in Vietnam. The findings of the study indicated that features of online classes caused great challenges, and teachers experienced new emotions and came up with new strategies to cope with different emotions. The study highlights the role of institutions in teachers' transitions to online teaching.

Although the studies reported thus far have contributed to our understanding of teachers' emotions during COVID-19, there remains a significant gap in research concerning the transitional emotions experienced by teachers, particularly EFL teachers. Additionally, there is a lack of research on the emotion regulation strategies that EFL teachers employ to cope with the challenges of transitioning from in-person to online classes. Therefore, this study aims to address these gaps by 1) Exploring the transitional emotions experienced by EFL teachers as they shifted from in-person to online classes, 2) Investigating the challenges that EFL teachers faced during this transition, 3) Examining the emotion regulation strategies employed by EFL teachers to manage the challenges associated with transitional emotions from in-person to online classes, and 4) Exploring how teachers utilized these emotion regulation strategies during the transition to online teaching amidst COVID-19.

2.6. Conceptual framework

We created a space for EFL teachers who were forced to change the environment of their classes. These EFL teachers were teaching online classes. In the third space, we used the emotional geography model to explore the transitional emotions of EFL teachers from real to online classes. As seen in Figure 1, there is a transitional space where EFL teachers struggle with transitional emotions since they are in between spaces and their emotions are vague. The emotions that these EFL teachers experienced were unclear to them. EFL teachers were those who teach general English in public schools, and due to COVID-19, they were forced to switch to online classes. In between, a transition happens between real and online classes. This study aimed to analyze how EFL teachers' emotions were in transition through the emotional geography model.

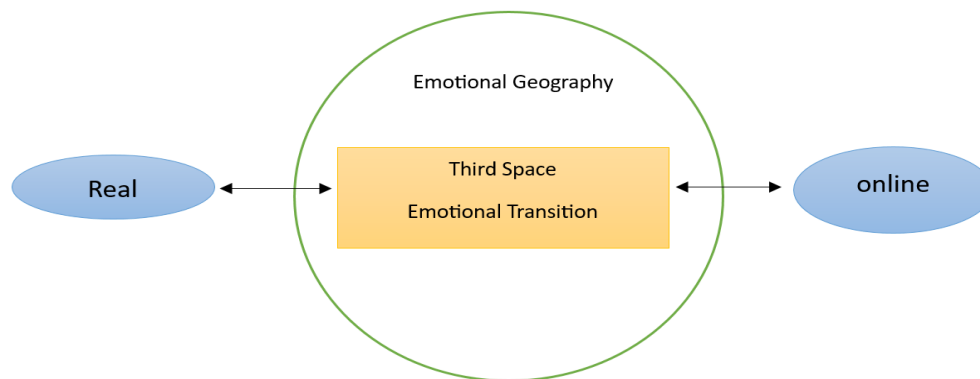


Figure 1. The conceptual framework of the study

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design: Descriptive narrative inquiry

In order to fulfill the study's objectives, we used a descriptive narrative design. The descriptive design entails the explanation of the following characteristics: (a) narration of what happens in individual's lives by individuals, (b) the setting or

circumstantial factors supporting the phenomena, (c) the interaction between individual stories and the culture they are happening within, (d) how certain life experiences impact individual's storyline. The nature of certain events and the definition of what is available to participants in relation to their experiences are thus subject to descriptive design (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017).

The first stage of descriptive narrative design is to identify a phenomenon: in this study, we examined the EFL teachers' transitional emotions from real to online classes. To identify the phenomenon (transitional emotions), we reviewed the literature to find a comprehensive overview. The second stage is to use purposeful sampling: the participants of this study were EFL teachers transitioning from real to online classes during COVID-19. Consequently, they had the required life stories related to the topic. The third stage is to collect stories. To address this stage, we collected the narratives of each EFL teacher's experiences about their transition. The fourth stage is about re-storying and re-telling. In this stage, we were trying to re-tell their stories, aiming to prepare the narratives for analysis. The fifth stage is about cooperation with the participants to validate the data. We went through this stage by giving the re-told stories to the participants to see if they verified them. In this stage, we worked with participants to clarify the ambiguous points in the narratives. In the sixth stage, we wrote a story about the experiences of the participants, created a narrative and observed the participants' experiences. In order to develop the study's credibility, trustworthiness, and reliability, the final stage is to validate the accuracy of the narrative account that we addressed the study's rigorously.

3.2. Participants

The participants in this study were 10 EFL teachers who had the experience of transitioning from real to online classes. These teachers were selected from the public educational system and private institutions. The participants were both male (N=6) and female (N=4). They had a different range of ages from 23 to 40. These EFL teachers participated in this study with their consent. As Ary et al. (2018) mentioned, the sample size is rather small in qualitative studies because of the depth and extent of information. Data saturation is to cease sampling when new participants do not provide new information. Consequently, it should be stated that the first group of participants were eight teachers; when the 8th teacher repeated the previous points provided by the seven teachers, the two other teachers were asked to participate in the study, and they provided the same information, so the data saturation was confirmed.

3.3. Data sources

3.3.1. *Autobiographical narrative*

The autobiographical narrative is one of the most personal types of data collection. The participants were asked to write essays about their experiences and how their emotions changed during this phase. Autobiographical narratives were about participants' own experiences, helping to activate their autobiographical memory about the topic (Smoriti, 2011). Since emotions are a trait, only the person who is experiencing them can fully talk about how those emotions affect the way they teach. Autobiographical narrative refers to a portal through which their experience of the situation affects their personal lives. They explained their experiences through stories (Clandinin, 2006). They brought stories of how they feel as teachers and how they feel when they are in transition.

3.3.2. *Semi-structured interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study as one of the data sources. In this data collection method, the first author prepared some questions in advance. These were questions that had been scheduled but not planned. Semi-structured interviews are a mix of structured and unstructured interviews. The second researcher asked some open-ended questions that were also flexible. It was difficult for the participants to ask questions that were not prepared, making them uncomfortable in the interview. These interviews were recorded with the participant's consent and were analyzed by MAXQDA 24.

3.4. Data analysis

We used thematic analysis to analyze the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The purpose of thematic analysis is to identify, analyze, and report patterns in the data. We followed deductive-inductive thematic analysis to address the objectives of the study. The deductive thematic analysis helped us associate EFL transitional emotions with emotional geography and emotion regulation strategies. The inductive thematic analysis was helpful in obtaining the challenges of transitional emotions and answering how EFL teachers used emotion regulation strategies.

4. Results

4.1. Research question 1: The transitional emotions experienced by EFL teachers from real to online classes

We used the Code Matrix Browser in MAXQDA 24 to see the transitional emotions experienced by EFL teachers while transitioning from real to online classes. This is a matrix obtained by assigning segments represented by each code to the related codes. Figure 2 shows the Code Matrix Browser results.

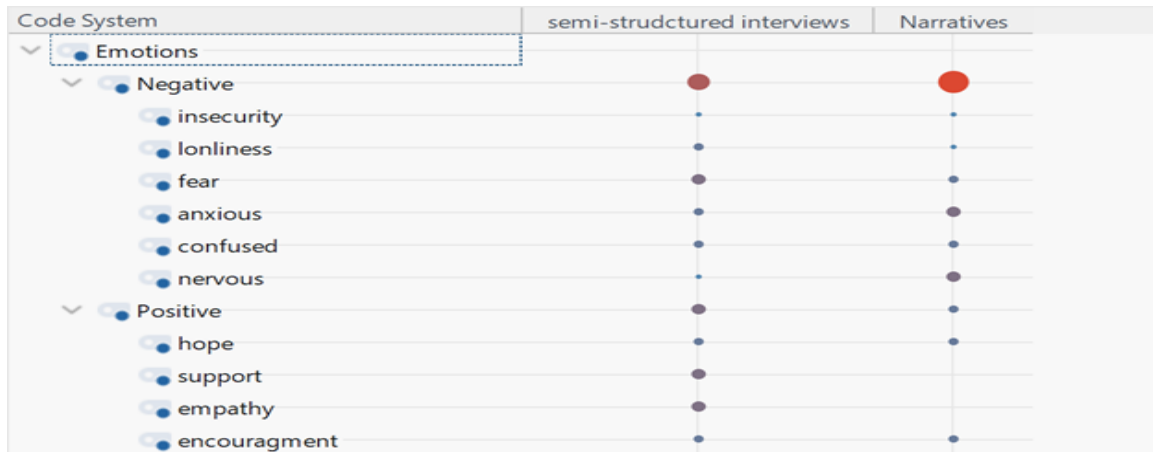


Figure 2. Code matrix browser: The transitional emotions experienced by efl teachers

Since EFL teachers were in transition from real to online, their emotions were also in transition. The transitional emotions that EFL teachers have are positive and negative. EFL teachers had problems letting go of their past. They were nervous, confused, and anxious to deal with the new environment. They thought that they were not ready enough to handle the problems of the new situation. Some of the teachers were reluctant to be here since this was an unknown environment for them, and this stimulated negative emotions like fear, loneliness, and insecurity. EFL teachers were in this together. They used each other's advice and help. They benefitted from this communication, which stimulated their positive emotions toward this environment. These positive emotions were encouragement, empathy, support, and hope. EFL teachers found it extremely hard to adapt themselves to the new environment, and they did not have enough knowledge to deal with the challenges. They stated, "[they] experienced anxiety as [they] navigated the challenges of adapting to a new environment ... This led to increased stress as [they] struggled with uncertainties and constantly strategized on how to address potential issues that may arise".

Some challenges caused these EFL teachers to be unsatisfied with what they did and feel nervous. Since teachers were unable to regulate these emotions, they totally avoided online classes. EFL teachers were confused about how to manage the class, what they should teach, and how to find suitable strategies to deal with this unfamiliar environment. The positive emotions that teachers had were the result of regulating their negative emotions. When they are new to the environment, they feel overwhelmed and confused; after a matter of time, it will be easier to regulate negative emotions and change them into positive ones. The negative emotions of these EFL teachers changed into positive ones.

4.2. Research question 2: The challenges experienced by EFL teachers while transitioning from real to online classes

We utilized the Code Matrix Browser in MAXQDA 24 to see the challenges that EFL teachers face from real to online based on an emotional geographical model. Figure 3 shows the code Matrix Browser Results.

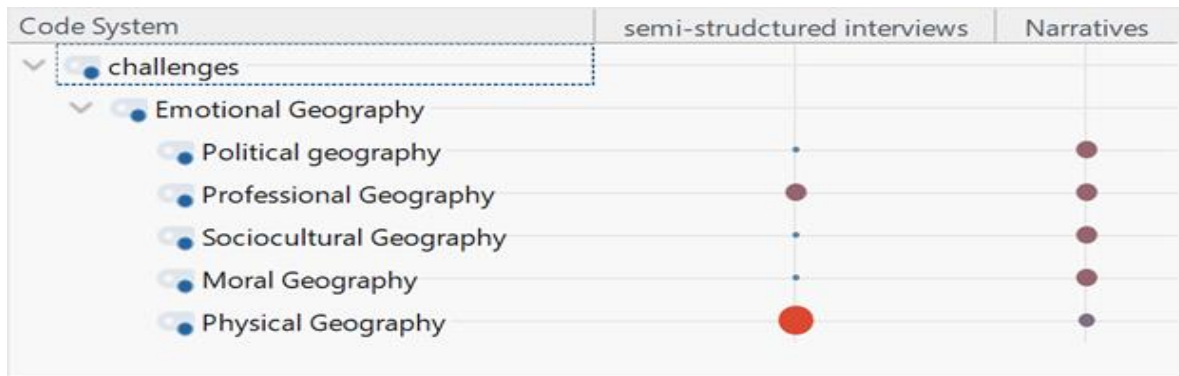


Figure 3. Code matrix browser: The challenges based on emotional geography model

The challenges that EFL teachers face in this transition are based on the components of the emotional geography model presented in the second chapter. These five sub-categories shaped the emotions of EFL teachers in relation to themselves, their colleagues, and the world around them. EFL teachers had challenges in regulating these emotions. These five components are physical geography, moral geography, sociocultural geography, professional geography, and political geography. Each of the components is discussed below.

As shown in Figure 3, one of the primary difficulties faced by EFL teachers is related to the subject of physical geography. The start of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a shift to online classes, resulting in teachers feeling isolated and navigating an unfamiliar teaching environment independently. Therefore, lack of communication and collaboration is a significant challenge in this new setting. Engaging in discussions and interactions with colleagues can aid in enhancing their comprehension of the circumstances. One of the participants stated,

“prior to the transition to online classes, [he] had established strong connections with [his] colleagues ... They were supportive and provided valuable feedback on [his] teaching methods and approaches. However, the shift to online classes disrupted this connection, leading to a significant loss of communication and interaction with my colleagues. Therefore, [he] was left alone in this unknown environment”.

One of the challenges teachers faced concerning their transitional emotions was related to professional geography. The professional geography of teachers is related to professionalism and occupational practices. Teaching, learning, and professional practices vary across cultures, each with its own set of standards. Teachers must adapt their teaching methods to suit the specific needs of each class, leading to a range of emotions such as frustration, anxiety, and stress. One participant stated, *“... however, there were many obstacles in choosing a suitable teaching method for online classes; some of these methods were not practical in real classes. Therefore, [she] was totally frustrated to choose the best method for my online classes, especially since there was no real feedback in online classes ...”.*

Moreover, teachers’ challenges are related to political geography. Political geography is within professional communities, and a power structure shapes the dynamics of interaction and behavior. EFL teachers are integral members of such communities, necessitating an understanding of their roles and identities within this framework. Misinterpretation of these concepts can evoke negative emotions such as guilt, shame, and embarrassment, both internally and externally. A participant mentioned, *“since [he] thought [he was] the only one who was struggling with problems, [he was] ashamed to ask my colleagues or communicate with them about [his] problems ... The embarrassment of expressing my feelings was so much that [he] tried to solve all [his] problems by [himself].”*

Figure 3 also showed that there were some challenges concerning the moral and sociocultural geographies when EFL teachers were in transition from real to online classes. The moral challenges were related to the sense of guilt and shame due to their inability to construct an effective classroom environment in terms of teaching materials. They stated, *“...due to the abrupt transitions, we were unable to become fully oriented about how to teach in online classes, making us feel guilty ...”.* Furthermore, concerning the sociocultural geography, it was revealed that the EFL teachers had problems managing the cultural incidents in online classes. This was due to the fact that they did not know how to address and deal with cultural issues in online classes. They stated, *“... students have their own conceptualization of online classes, sometimes not based on the cultural norms of the educational definitions; thus, we were of different cultural sides. ... we try to teach, they [student] to evade the instructions ...”.*

4.3. Research question 3: Emotion regulation strategies used by EFL teachers to address transitional emotions from real to online classes

The emotions EFL teachers experienced while transitioning to online classes were, to some degree, challenging for them. These emotions make them feel overwhelmed and baffled about this new situation. In this study, teachers utilized emotion regulation strategies to regulate their emotions to carry out their duties. The emotion regulation strategies that EFL teachers use affect various points in the emotion-generative process, resulting in different immediate and long-term effects of social, cognitive or affective factors. As it is shown in Figure 4, all the codes of emotion regulation strategies are available within the collected data.



Figure 4. Code matrix browser: The emotion regulation strategies used by efl teachers

Situation modification refers to a change in a situation in order to adjust the emotional impact. EFL teachers were trying to modify the class rules or change the lesson plan if needed. Sometimes, unexpected incidents happen in the class, and teachers need to change the situation. In this study, teachers used mostly situation modification to regulate their emotions. A participant stated, “...but I tried all the methods, and nothing worked. Therefore, I decided to allocate most of the grade to class activities...”

Another strategy that teachers can use to regulate emotions is situation selection. Individuals can approach or avoid situations based on their expectations of experiencing either pleasure or unpleasant emotions. This strategy involves predicting the emotions likely to arise in a given situation, which can be challenging due to the complexity of the situation. Teachers are likely to use this strategy to avoid any negative emotions. One of the strategies that is extremely helpful for teachers to regulate their emotions is attentional deployment. Teachers may focus on positive thoughts before class and ignore all the negativity. Therefore, they can improve their moods. These distractions are helpful for teachers since they can focus all their attention on the lesson plan and other things that are related to the class. A participant mentioned in his narrative that “... one of the ways that helped me a lot was when I got angry in class, I would turn off my microphone and drink water to calm myself and have a better class ... These thoughts helped me to ignore the negative emotions and embrace all the positive ones because of my students...”. Cognitive change refers to the reappraisal of a whole situation. When teachers assess the situation all over again, they may realize the intensity of negative emotions decreased. Therefore, they may use this method to reassess the students' misconduct. The teachers in this study used the method to regulate their negative emotions and look at situations differently. Response modulation is the act of modifying the emotions that are fully generated. In this current study, teachers try to fake positive emotions, or they modify these emotions to have a better experience and ignore all the negative emotions. One of the participants was talking about her experience in class. She said, “although [she] was stressed and anxious about teaching in online classes, [she] tried to hide those emotions so that [her] emotions do not influence [her] students' experience of online classes.”

Although Code Matrix Browser helped us understand that EFL teachers utilized these strategies to regulate their emotions, it fails to show how codes are related and happened together to construct the themes. Therefore, we used a Code Map to achieve this goal.

4.4. Research question 4: How EFL teachers utilized emotion regulation strategies to address transitional emotions from real to online

After we confirmed the presence of codes related to the emotion regulation strategies within the data, we employed the thematic analysis that was introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006) with the help of Code Map. This Code Map represents how codes happen together through different clustering. The intersections among the segments of the data form these clusters. Therefore, we understood how EFL teachers utilized emotion regulation strategies to regulate their emotions. Based on the Code Map, codes within the same cluster have stronger relationships and are more related. The researcher discovered five themes according to the co-occurrences of the components of emotion regulation strategies and emotional geography from real to online.

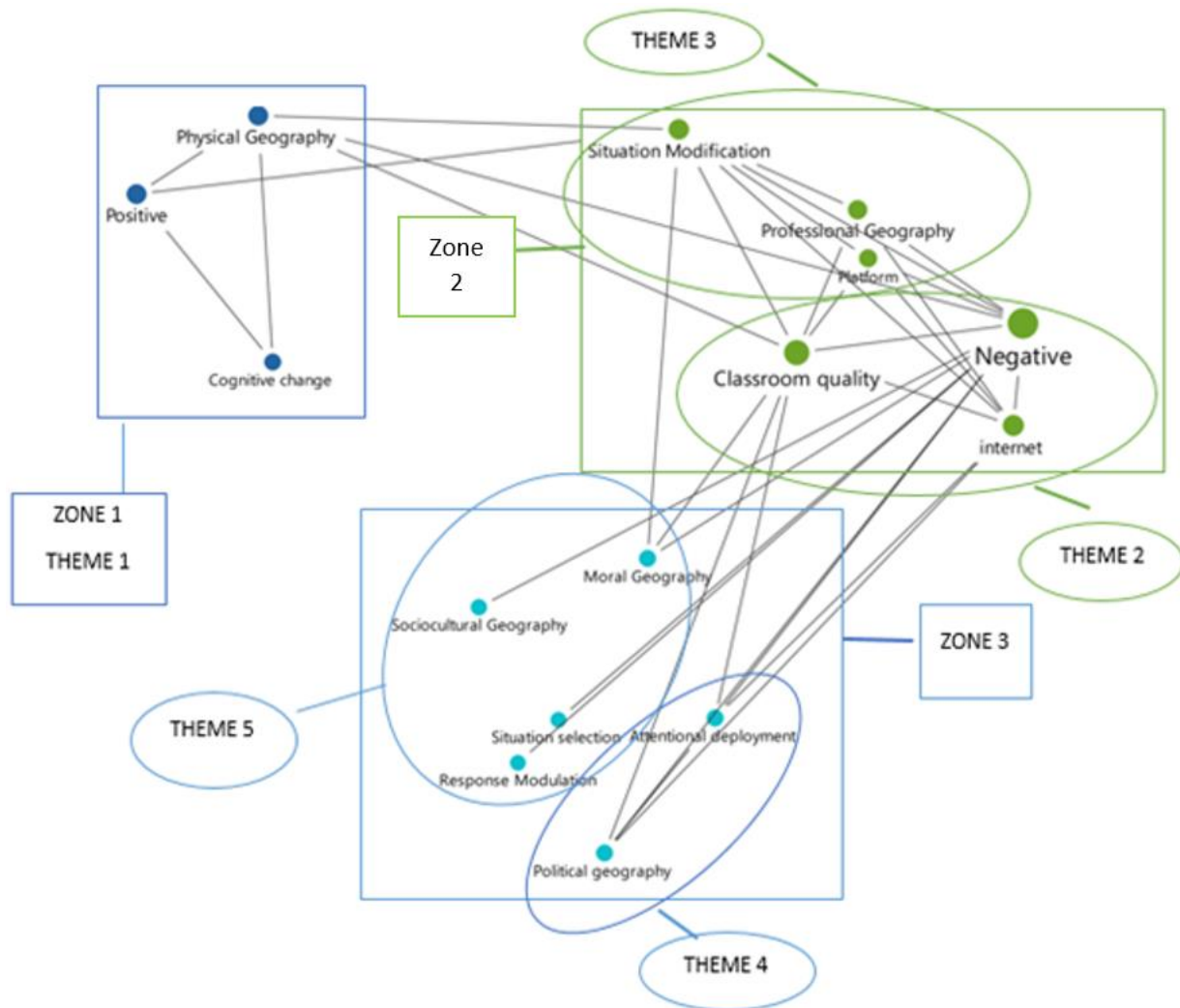


Figure 5. Code map: How EFL teachers used emotion regulation strategies

As it is shown in Figure 5, these codes are divided into three different zones. The zones are based on the clustering provided by MAXQDA 24 according to the co-occurrences of the codes. Each of these zones is divided into different themes. In the first zone, which is also the first theme of the current study, we found a close relationship between physical geography and cognitive change that leads to positive emotions. This theme was found based on the co-occurrences of these sub-codes of emotion regulation strategies and the emotional geography model. This theme is called “*physical geography helps teachers to develop cognitive change which results in positive emotions*”. The participants stated, “... [they were] thinking to [themselves] that [they] could not do this individually. [they] felt lost, like [they were] in the middle of nowhere, which led to disappointment and discouragement toward the new situation”.

In the second zone, two themes are created. The first one is the connection between classroom quality and the internet, which leads teachers to have negative emotions; that is, the internet causes classroom quality to decrease, which results in negative emotions. This theme is named teachers who had a problem with the platform since it affected their professional geography, which was solved by situation modification. Since choosing a suitable platform is essential for online classes and affects professional geography, EFL teachers utilized situation modification to fix the problem. The teachers mentioned, “... *online classes rely heavily on internet connectivity ... despite [their] efforts to address internet issues daily, students, particularly children, did not make similar attempts to resolve connectivity problems ... despite these efforts, there were days when [they were] unable to connect to the class, leading to class cancellations*”.

The third zone consists of two themes. The first one is that teachers utilize attentional deployment to develop their political geography. The teachers stated, “... *the lack of knowledge in this situation was a real burden for [them]. [they] could not communicate with students. When [they were] talking to in the class, it felt like [they] talking to [themselves]*”. The second theme of the third zone is about how situation selection and response modulation help teachers develop moral geography and

sociocultural geography. The participants believed that “[D]espite feeling angry, frustrated, and desperate, [they] chose to conceal these emotions from [their] students by pretending to be happy and energetic. Over time, this act of faking [their] emotions led [them] to internalize and reflect on these feelings, ultimately reshaping [their] perspective on online teaching”.

5. Discussion

The thrust of this study was to explore the EFL teachers' transitional emotions from real to online classes during COVID-19. The findings of the study revealed that teachers can regulate their transitional emotions through emotion regulation strategies. The findings of this study are in line with previous studies about the regulation strategies that are beneficial for teachers in managing their emotions (Ngo, 2021). In the current study, we derived five themes from the Code Map generated by MAXQDA 24, showing how EFL teachers regulate their transitional emotions from real to online classes.

5.1. Physical geography helps teachers to develop cognitive change, which results in positive emotions

Emotions are an important part of being a teacher, and they affect the way teachers teach in the classroom (Nias, 1996). The teachers find ways to boost positive emotions to have better classes. Based on the conceptual framework, while teachers are in the third space, they feel different emotions. Cooperation among colleagues helps them to negotiate their problems, their understanding of online classes, and their difficulties concerning their emotions (Hargreaves, 2005). Based on this theme, teachers worked together to overcome the difficulties they may face in the online teaching environment. This cooperation led to the development of cognitive change that resulted in positive emotions. The participants of the study explained in their narrations how cooperation with colleagues had a role in developing their cognitive change and boosting their positive emotions (Hargreaves, 2001).

As seen in Figure 5, physical geography has co-occurrences with cognitive change. Physical geography helps teachers to develop cognitive change that results in positive emotions (Hargreaves, 2005). When teachers talk to each other, they can utilize each other's expertise, ideas, and experiences to overcome the challenges (Hargreaves, 2001). The teachers developed their cognitive change, and this feature helped them decrease the intensity of negative emotions (Gross, 1998). When their negative emotions toward online teaching decrease, they become more optimistic toward these online classes and boost their positive emotions.

5.2. Internet caused classroom quality to decrease, which results in negative emotions

The Internet is a crucial aspect of online education. Both students and teachers encountered difficulties in establishing a reliable server connection and accessing classes, leading to varied emotional responses. Technical issues can prevent students from accessing materials and submitting assignments, potentially heightening feelings of anxiety (Paul & Jefferson, 2019). Poor internet connection has an impact on the quality of the classroom and the emotions of both teachers and students. When students are faced with challenges regarding internet reliability, the ability to effectively engage in virtual learning activities is compromised, which affects the educational outcome and the emotions of the individuals involved. The participants narrated that the problems with internet connection decreased the classroom quality and caused negative emotions.

Based on the findings of this study, classroom quality and the internet have co-occurrences that are connected to negative emotions. Teachers' emotions are essential to working with students and having a class with the best quality (Farouk, 2012). The inability to have a stable internet connection disrupts the flow of the class, which leads to difficulties in participating in class, having good communication and accessing resources. All of these problems lead teachers and students to have anxiety, stress and frustration that decreases the classroom quality.

5.3. Teachers had a problem with the platform since it affected their professional geography, which was solved by situation modification

Teachers face various challenges when using online platforms for classes. There is a variety of platforms that teachers can choose from. The struggle between choosing a suitable platform for students and the class was hard. They were unfamiliar with the platform features, and teachers struggled with adapting their teaching methods to suit an online environment and ensuring that all students have equal access to resources and support. Teachers were anxious, frustrated and stressed about all these changes. As Sutton (2004) argued, situation modification is changing the lesson plan when it is not going as planned. Teachers struggled to modify the situation, which led to a new outcome.

The findings of the study indicated that the aspects of emotional geography and emotion regulation strategies have a close relationship. The challenges teachers had with the platform were addressed through situation modification. Teachers

adjusted their teaching strategies to deal with these challenges. Through these modifications, teachers were able to enhance their professional geography by expanding their reach, engaging with students in innovative ways, and creating a more inclusive and interactive learning experience (Gross, 2015).

5.4. Teachers utilized attentional deployment to develop their political geography

Teachers utilized attentional deployment to develop their political geography by focusing on key aspects of their professional environment and relationships (Gross, 2015). Teachers are part of a community, and they need to direct their attention to power dynamics within educational institutions. Teachers experienced emotions like shame, guilt, and embarrassment while understanding their roles in this community. Attentional deployment helped them to better understand these concepts. Teachers use external or internal focus to change emotional responses (Gross, 2015). The teachers were avoiding situations that triggered their emotions (Bennett et al., 2007). Through intentional attentional deployment, teachers were able to strengthen their political geography and contribute to a more equitable and socially responsible educational system.

5.5. Situation selection and response modulation help teachers to develop moral geography and sociocultural geography

Teachers choose situations based on whether or not emotions are expected in a particular situation (Gross, 2015). First of all, they tried to approach situations that were more pleasant for themselves and did not trigger any negative emotions. If they were in a situation that was not based on their expectations or they felt any negative emotions, these teachers failed to be happy and satisfied with the situation. Teachers have different backgrounds, years of experience, and perspectives on the situation they are currently dealing with experiences (Kober & Bolling, 2014). These emotion regulation strategies helped them to deconstruct any negative feelings and adopt new ideologies to understand the practice's new moral legitimacy.

Based on the findings of this study, situation selection and response modulation play an important role in helping teachers develop their moral geography and sociocultural geography. By carefully choosing the situations in which they engage and modifying their responses accordingly, teachers can navigate ethical dilemmas and cultural differences effectively experiences (Kober & Bolling, 2014). This process involves making conscious decisions about how to approach challenging situations, considering the impact on students' moral development and cultural awareness (Richards & Gross, 2000). Through thoughtful reflection and intentional actions, teachers can cultivate a strong moral compass and foster a supportive sociocultural environment in their classrooms. By incorporating these strategies into their teaching practices, educators can enhance their professional growth and create a more inclusive and empathetic learning community.

6. Conclusion and implications

The purpose of this study was to explore EFL teachers' transitional emotions from real/in-person classes to online classes, addressing the challenges they experienced during this transition. Additionally, we aimed to examine the emotion regulation strategies that EFL teachers employed to manage their feelings during the shift from real to online classes. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that EFL teachers' use of emotion regulation strategies was helpful in solving the challenges they faced and addressing transitional emotions. When teachers experience different emotions and face different challenges, these emotion regulation strategies aid them in experiencing more positive emotions and dealing with challenges.

The findings of the current study have implications for EFL teacher education programs. These programs can use regulation strategies to regulate the transitional emotions of EFL teachers. As shown in the findings of the study, the factors of emotion regulation strategies helped EFL teachers regulate their transitional emotions. When there is a transition, teachers experience different emotions and face different challenges. They can benefit from these factors of regulation strategies. The emotional well-being of teachers is crucial to understand, especially while they are in transition, and it leads to better support systems for teachers, promoting their mental health and job satisfaction. Institutions need to consider implementing mental health resources or counseling services for each teacher. The findings of this study highlighted the need for professional development that helps teachers acquire skills relating to technology and their field of work. Workshops can focus on teachers' emotional status, digital pedagogy, and stress management. The insights from this study suggest that curriculum designers consider the emotional aspects of teaching when developing online materials.

This study has its limitations. First, our findings focus on the transitional emotions of EFL teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research could replicate this study in a post-COVID-19 context. Additionally, the participants were drawn from both public and private schools/institutions. Other researchers may wish to differentiate between these two groups to determine if there are any differences in their transitional emotions. Moreover, further research is needed to explore the differences in transitional emotions between novice and experienced teachers.

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