

Do Emotions Teach Us How to Teach? Emotional Insights from an International EFL Practicum in Thailand

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explores the emotional geographies experienced by Indonesian pre-service teachers during an international EFL teaching practicum in Southern Thailand. Using Hargreaves' (2001) framework, which includes moral, sociocultural, political, professional, and physical geographies, this study examines how emotional dynamics influence the practicum experiences of two pre-service teachers over six months. Data were gathered through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed with Braun and Clarke's Thematic Content Analysis and the Miles and Huberman model. The findings indicate that three emotional geographies, moral, sociocultural, and political, were most prominent. These emerged through emotional challenges such as managing student behavior, navigating cultural and linguistic differences, and dealing with hierarchical structures that hinder open communication and emotional expression in the classroom. Despite these challenges, participants also experienced emotional growth, increased cultural awareness, and development of their teaching identities. The study highlights the importance of affective experiences in shaping teacher development, particularly within intercultural and multilingual educational settings. It contributes to the expanding body of literature on international teacher education by emphasizing the need to include emotional preparation and intercultural competence in pre-service teacher training. Addressing emotional aspects of teaching through structured reflection, emotional literacy, and mentoring can better prepare future educators for global teaching assignments. The findings suggest that policy and curriculum reforms in teacher education are essential to foster emotional resilience and intercultural adaptation during international practicums.

Keywords: Emotional geographies, international teaching practicum, pre-service teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is more than just transmitting knowledge; it is a profoundly emotional and interpersonal act, especially in language education, where communication, identity, and cultural context are central. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, these emotional aspects become even more prominent, as teachers must navigate linguistic limitations, classroom diversity, and sociocultural expectations. These challenges grow more complex

when pre-service teachers participate in international teaching practicums, where they face not only pedagogical demands but also cultural dissonance and emotional strain (Jin et al., 2020; Marvell & Simm, 2018). In Southeast Asia, initiatives like the SEAMEO Pre-Service Student Teacher Exchange offer opportunities for student teachers to engage in cross-border teaching experiences. While such programs promote intercultural understanding and global competence, they also expose novice teachers to emotionally charged situations that affect their teaching practices, self-efficacy, and developing professional identity (Lu et al., 2024). Understanding how emotions work in these transnational spaces is essential, supporting teacher growth and improving the design of international practicum programs, which are becoming more common in globalized education systems.

The emotional aspects of teaching have received growing scholarly interest over the past twenty years, especially concerning teacher identity, classroom practices, and intercultural adaptation. Hargreaves (2001) introduced the concept of emotional geographies, outlining five areas—moral, sociocultural, political, physical, and professional—that influence the emotional closeness or distance between teachers and others in educational environments. His framework has been used to explore how emotions affect teacher-student relationships, decision-making, and institutional interactions (Bondi et al., 2012; Berrens, 2016). Research by Yuan and Lee (2014) and Zembylas (2005) further highlighted that teachers' emotional experiences are deeply connected to their changing professional identities. These feelings influence how teachers connect with students and view their roles.

Several studies have documented pre-service teachers' emotional complexities in international teaching practicums when teaching in foreign educational environments. For example, Marvell and Simm (2018) found that international fieldwork promotes professional growth and emotional vulnerability. Jin et al. (2020) observed that cross-cultural misunderstandings and language barriers often produce mixed emotional responses, ranging from pride and empathy to frustration and insecurity. Similarly, Widodo et al. (2025) emphasized how pre-service teachers develop emotional narratives during their teaching practicum to negotiate their professional identities. Despite these findings, most studies broadly focus on emotional experiences without systematically applying Hargreaves' framework in cross-cultural EFL settings, particularly among Southeast Asian pre-service teachers working in other Asian countries.

While previous research has dramatically improved our understanding of teachers' emotional experiences, there are still significant gaps in how emotional geographies are empirically studied within international EFL teaching contexts, especially from the perspective of Southeast Asian pre-service teachers. Much of the existing literature either highlights general emotional responses (e.g., stress, anxiety, or satisfaction) (Gebhard, 2012; Liu, 2016) or concentrates on in-service teachers working within familiar cultural settings (Yildirim & Orsdemir, 2019). Studies that use Hargreaves' emotional geography framework usually focus on Western or institutional contexts, leaving less explored how emotional distances and closeness appear in intercultural, multilingual classrooms across Asia. Additionally, emotional geographies are rarely studied as dynamic entities that change throughout the practicum, especially when novice teachers face unfamiliar school hierarchies, language barriers, and cultural or religious norms.

Specifically, few studies have explored how moral, sociocultural, and political emotional geographies develop when Muslim-majority Southeast Asian pre-service teachers teach in

neighboring Asian countries like Thailand, where the educational and cultural systems differ significantly from their home institutions. This gap limits our understanding of how emotional negotiations influence the development of teaching identity, resilience, and intercultural competence in transnational contexts.

This study addresses the mentioned gaps by providing an in-depth look into the emotional geographies experienced by Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers during an international teaching practicum in Southern Thailand. Using [Hargreaves' \(2001\)](#) five-domain framework, the research offers a structured, theory-based analysis of how emotions function within moral, sociocultural, and political aspects of teaching in cross-cultural settings. Unlike previous research that often emphasizes general emotional responses or experiences of in-service teachers, this study captures the lived emotional realities of novice teachers working in a multilingual, religiously diverse, and hierarchically structured environment. Combining emotional geography with international practicum analysis in an intra-Asian context, especially involving Southeast Asian Muslim teachers teaching in Thai Islamic schools, is a rare and timely contribution. This research documents emotional challenges through qualitative data from open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and shows how these emotions shape professional identity and intercultural adaptation. It enriches discussions on teacher education, emotions, and international mobility from a perspective largely missing in current research.

Neglecting the emotional aspects of international teaching practicums risks weakening teacher preparation programs and the well-being of pre-service teachers. When the emotional challenges inherent in cross-cultural teaching placements are ignored, new educators may face emotional dissonance, isolation, and reduced self-efficacy, which can hinder their professional development and classroom effectiveness ([Evans, 2011](#); [Liu, 2016](#)). Additionally, without explicit focus on the moral, sociocultural, and political factors influencing emotional experiences, teacher education curricula might fail to prepare future educators with the adaptable and reflective skills needed to succeed in diverse global environments. This is especially important in the Southeast Asian context, where regional exchange programs like SEAMEO are rapidly growing and rely on the intercultural competence of participating pre-service teachers. If emotional landscapes remain unexplored, the transformative potential of international practicum programs may be limited, leading to superficial engagement rather than meaningful professional and intercultural growth. Thus, addressing this issue is not only a theoretical necessity but also a practical need for creating emotionally aware, culturally responsive teacher education frameworks.

In response to these gaps and challenges, this study aims to explore the emotional geographies experienced by Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers during an international teaching practicum in Southern Thailand. Specifically, it examines how moral, sociocultural, and political emotional dimensions arise throughout the practicum and influence the participants' classroom interactions, intercultural adaptation, and professional identity development. Guided by [Hargreaves' \(2001\)](#) emotional geography framework, the research centers on the following main question: What emotional geographies do Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers encounter during an international teaching practicum in Thailand, and how do these emotions impact their teaching practices and professional growth in a cross-cultural setting?

METHOD

Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study approach to examine the emotional geographies experienced by Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers during an international practicum in Thailand. A qualitative approach was chosen because it provides a deep understanding of participants' lived experiences, especially those that are emotionally complex and context-dependent (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design was selected to capture the layered and situated nature of participants' emotional responses within a specific institutional and intercultural setting (Yin, 2018). The unit of analysis was a bounded system involving two pre-service teachers who taught English in Thai Islamic schools for six months. Data were collected through two qualitative methods: open-ended written reflections and semi-structured interviews. These methods allowed participants to share their experiences openly while enabling the researcher to explore specific emotional aspects guided by Hargreaves' (2001) emotional geography framework.

Participants

The study involved two purposefully selected pre-service teachers from the English Language Education program at an Islamic university in Bogor, Indonesia. Purposeful sampling ensured participants had rich experiential knowledge of teaching in a cross-cultural EFL context (Palinkas et al., 2015). The first participant, a 22-year-old female, was placed at Singhanakhon Wittayanusorn School, where she taught Kindergarten (Anuban) and Elementary (Prathom) levels five days a week. The second participant, a 23-year-old male, taught Junior High School (Mattayom) classes at Darulaman Mulniti School with the same weekly teaching schedule. Both were selected for the International Teaching Practicum program after institutional screening, including academic performance reviews, interviews, and pre-departure cultural training.

Research Setting

The international practicum was arranged through a partnership between the participants' home institution in Indonesia and partner schools in Songkhla Province, Southern Thailand. The home university has established an International Teaching Practicum program to give student teachers practical teaching experiences in culturally diverse environments. Before deployment, participants attended preparatory training, including classroom simulations, intercultural communication workshops, and language familiarization sessions. The host schools were Islamic institutions that used Thai as the primary language of instruction and incorporated Islamic values into their curriculum. These settings offered a unique sociocultural and religious context that influenced the participants' emotional teaching experiences and helped shape their professional identity.

Data Collection

Data collection took place in June 2024 using two complementary qualitative methods: open-ended written questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The open-ended questionnaire acted as a first-stage elicitation tool, prompting participants to share their emotional experiences based on Hargreaves' (2001) five emotional geography domains: moral, sociocultural, political, physical, and professional. These narrative prompts were

intentionally non-restrictive to promote genuine emotional expression and minimize researcher bias. Participants had one week to complete the questionnaires in Indonesian, their native language, to ensure fluency and deeper reflection.

Responses from the questionnaires were then thematically analyzed to identify recurring emotional themes and patterns. This informed the development of the following interview protocol. The follow-up semi-structured interviews provided a more profound, dialogic exploration of the emerging themes, allowing for elaboration, clarification, and introspection. Interviews were conducted individually in Indonesian, lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, and were audio-recorded with informed consent. The interview guide included open-ended questions starting with general inquiries about participants' teaching contexts, followed by probes aligned with each emotional geography. To improve consistency and trustworthiness, the interview guide was reviewed by two qualitative research experts before implementation. Additionally, pilot testing with one external participant (not involved in the final study) was carried out to refine question clarity and sequencing.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process followed the [Miles et al. \(2014\)](#) interactive model, which involves three concurrent stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. All written questionnaire responses and interview transcripts were compiled, translated into English, and analyzed thematically. Analysis started with open coding to allow the emergence of inductive themes, followed by axial coding to connect codes to Hargreaves' emotional geography framework. Deductive mapping of data against the five emotional geographies enabled theoretical alignment. At the same time, [Braun and Clarke's \(2021\)](#) Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was used to guide theme development and refinement based on recurrence, importance, and coherence.

Multiple strategies were used to ensure validity and reliability in the qualitative process. Credibility was improved through data triangulation across instruments (questionnaires and interviews) and extended engagement with the data. Peer debriefing involved a senior qualitative methodologist reviewing coding consistency and thematic interpretations. Member checking was done by sharing summarized findings with participants for confirmation and clarification. An audit trail supported dependability and confirmability, including detailed documentation of coding decisions, analytic memos, and reflective journaling. To support transferability, detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and contextual factors were provided so readers can assess relevance to their contexts ([Nowell et al., 2017](#); [Tracy, 2010](#); [Lincoln & Guba, 1985](#)).

FINDINGS

This section presents the empirical findings from open-ended written reflections and semi-structured interviews with two Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers during their six-month international teaching practicum in Southern Thailand. The analysis is organized thematically based on [Hargreaves' \(2001\)](#) framework of emotional geographies, focusing on three key dimensions: moral, sociocultural, and political geographies. These emotional domains appeared prominently in the participants' narratives and were crucial in shaping their teaching practices, professional identities, and intercultural adaptation during the practicum.

Each thematic subsection highlights recurring patterns, tensions, and emotional experiences reported by the participants, supported by direct quotations to maintain the authenticity of their voices. While all five emotional geographies were examined in the data collection instruments, the findings show that only three, moral, sociocultural, and political, were significantly experienced and emotionally charged. The themes are presented individually, each followed by an interpretive synthesis that connects to the next discussion section.

Moral Geographies

The first dominant emotional geography that emerged from the data was the moral dimension, which concerns the emotional implications of shared or conflicting values and behavioral expectations between teachers and their school communities (Hargreaves, 2001). As shown in Table 1, both participants encountered moral dynamics that shaped their emotional responses, ranging from a sense of alignment and appreciation to disillusionment and stress.

Table 1. Thematic Findings on Moral Geographies

Code/Subtheme	Description	Illustrative Quote
Respectful Classroom Norms	Participants observed strong respect and courtesy among Thai students and teachers, influenced by cultural practices such as the wai greeting and formal speech.	<i>"Students listen attentively and try not to disrupt the teaching process." (P1)</i>
Student Disengagement & Classroom Management	Frustration arose from low student attendance, disengagement, and lack of attention during lessons, mainly when students used mobile phones or disrupted the class.	<i>"Only a small proportion of students attended class regularly... Some students are disengaged." (P1)</i>
Welcoming Community & 'Namjai' Culture	Thai communities were perceived as helpful and inclusive, welcoming foreign teachers with sincerity and emotional warmth.	<i>"They are sincere in providing assistance, hospitality, and support... even to foreign teaching staff." (P2)</i>
Disruptive Student Behavior & Passive Learning	Participants experienced difficulty handling students who refused to participate, misbehaved, or resisted learning activities in the classroom.	<i>"Not a few students behave unpleasantly—running, fighting, or refusing to learn." (P2)</i>

One of the most prominent shared experiences was the respectful moral atmosphere in the classroom. Participant 1 (P1) observed that Thai students and teachers consistently demonstrated courtesy and formal communication. Cultural practices such as the wai greeting, polite language, and ritualized classroom behaviors reinforced these values. P1 appreciated this moral environment, noting that *"students listen attentively and try not to disrupt the teaching process."* Participant 2 (P2) agreed, describing the school culture as infused with the spirit of namjai, a Thai concept representing kindness, helpfulness, and emotional generosity toward others. She explained, *"They are sincere in providing assistance, hospitality, and support... even to foreign teaching staff."*

However, this surface-level harmony often concealed deeper emotional tensions. Both participants expressed frustration with student disengagement and classroom management problems. P1 described how classroom attendance was frequently well below expected levels, and those present were often distracted, *“only a small proportion of students attended class regularly... Some students are disengaged.”* Similarly, P2 dealt with disruptive behaviors such as *“running, fighting, or refusing to learn.”* These behaviors clashed with the participants' expectations of moral responsibility in the classroom and triggered feelings of disappointment, doubt, and helplessness.

To navigate these moral-emotional tensions, both participants adopted emotionally responsive strategies. P1 emphasized using interactive games and play-based learning to engage students in a more relaxed environment, reducing the pressure to conform to authoritative classroom norms strictly. P2 took a similar approach, encouraging more open and flexible communication styles to bridge the emotional distance between teacher and student. These efforts to adapt pedagogically show the participants' attempts to realign moral expectations and rebuild emotional connections within the classroom. Thus, moral geographies in this study were shaped by a tension between respect and rigidity, order and indifference. While the school culture provided a moral framework rooted in harmony and mutual regard, students' unpredictable behaviors and learning challenges created emotional complexities that required adaptive, empathetic responses from the pre-service teachers.

Sociocultural Geographies

Sociocultural geographies refer to the emotional dynamics that result from cultural, linguistic, religious, and societal differences between teachers and their school environments (Hargreaves, 2001). These geographies were especially evident in the participants' experiences, as both pre-service teachers had to adapt to the cultural fabric of Southern Thailand, which was markedly different from their Indonesian backgrounds. Table 2 shows four interconnected subthemes: cultural and religious adjustment, language barriers, appreciation of cultural immersion, and strategic use of the local language to establish rapport.

Table 2. Thematic Findings on Sociocultural Geographies

Code/Subtheme	Description	Illustrative Quote
Cultural and Religious Adjustment	Participants had to adapt to different cultural, religious, and social practices in Thai schools, including various community customs and events.	<i>“The social, cultural, and linguistic differences between Thailand and my home country are striking.” (P1)</i>
Language Barriers and Communication Challenges	Both participants struggled with Thai language proficiency, creating barriers to classroom interaction and student understanding.	<i>“Because I have minimal Thai language skills, I had difficulty understanding and interacting with students.” (P2)</i>
Appreciation of Cultural Immersion	Participants reflected positively on the cultural immersion experience, noting that it enhanced their adaptability and intercultural sensitivity.	<i>“These differences... provide both challenges and opportunities to understand different perspectives and develop adaptability.” (P1)</i>

Code/Subtheme	Description	Illustrative Quote
Strategic Use of L1 (Thai) to Build Rapport	Using Thai selectively in class was perceived by students as respectful and supportive, improving motivation and engagement.	<i>"Students appreciate the ability of foreign teachers... to switch to Thai when explaining difficult things like grammar." (P1)</i>

Both participants expressed initial cultural dissonance upon entering the Thai school system. P1 remarked that *"the social, cultural and linguistic differences between Thailand and my home country are striking,"* referencing unique school activities, such as cooking classes, and the deeply embedded norms of hierarchy and formality. Similarly, P2 noted the necessity of adjusting to religious diversity, particularly in a region where Islam and Buddhism co-exist, which impacted both social life and school culture. Despite being a Muslim herself, P2 emphasized the importance of cultural tolerance and adaptability, especially in navigating unfamiliar rituals and customs.

A central theme in this emotional geography was the persistent language barrier. Although both participants were assigned to teach English, they found communication challenging due to the students' limited English proficiency and their limited Thai language skills. P2 reflected, *"Because I have minimal Thai language skills, I had difficulty understanding and interacting with students."* This barrier led to feelings of disconnection and occasional frustration, particularly during classroom instruction and assessment.

Despite these challenges, both participants viewed the practicum as a meaningful cultural immersion experience. P1 articulated this well: *"These differences... provide both challenges and opportunities to understand different perspectives and develop adaptability."* Rather than resisting the unfamiliar, the participants demonstrated emotional resilience by embracing new customs and forming respectful relationships with local communities.

Interestingly, P1 also identified a strategy that helped bridge the sociocultural divide—the selective use of Thai (L1) during teaching. While English remained the primary language of instruction, occasionally switching to Thai for clarification was pedagogically effective and emotionally affirming for students. As P1 explained, *"students appreciate the ability of foreign teachers... to switch to Thai when explaining difficult things like grammar."* Students interpreted this gesture as an act of cultural respect and responsiveness, which in turn fostered trust and increased classroom participation. This study's sociocultural geographies were characterized by emotional strain and growth. The participants' willingness to adapt, learn, and respect local norms enabled them to navigate the complexities of cultural difference and cultivate emotionally supportive teaching environments.

Political Geographies

Political geographies pertain to the emotional effects of hierarchical power structures and institutional roles in shaping interpersonal dynamics in educational settings (Hargreaves, 2001). In this study, political dimensions were prominently experienced by both participants, particularly concerning school hierarchies, communication patterns, and the perceived legitimacy of foreign teachers. Table 3 summarizes the key themes that emerged.

Table 3. Thematic Findings on Political Geographies

Code/Subtheme	Description	Illustrative Quote
Hierarchical School Culture and Status Distance	Schools were characterized by rigid power hierarchies, where title and position influenced emotional closeness and communication patterns.	<i>"There is a clear hierarchical structure, where position and title influence how people interact."</i> (P1)
Limited Student-Teacher Interaction Outside Class	Communication with students and teachers was formal and episodic, limiting the emotional connection beyond academic tasks.	<i>"Teachers usually communicate in formal, structured contexts... students are passive."</i> (P1)
Lower Perceived Authority of Foreign Teachers	Participants noted that local students often showed more respect and compliance toward native Thai teachers than foreign pre-service teachers.	<i>"Students respect native Thai teachers more... foreign teachers are seen as guests or outsiders."</i> (P2)
Individualized Approaches to Reduce Power Distance	Participants implemented tutoring and informal interaction strategies to humanize their teacher roles and reduce emotional distance.	<i>"Individual tutoring sessions should be held regularly so students can interact well and not always be formal."</i> (P2)

The participants' experiences reflected a clear awareness of hierarchical school cultures, affecting how they emotionally positioned themselves within the teaching environment. P1 noted that *"there is a clear hierarchical structure, where position and title influence how people interact,"* indicating that communication within the school was highly stratified and formalized. These structures also extended to classroom interactions, where students appeared cautious or restrained in the presence of teachers, reinforcing emotional distance.

This hierarchical formality often led to limited student-teacher interaction outside class. As P1 described, *"teachers usually communicate in formal, structured contexts... students are passive,"* suggesting that institutional norms discouraged open dialogue or collaborative learning. The lack of informal engagement hindered the development of emotional rapport, particularly in an intercultural teaching context where connection is crucial.

A related emotional challenge involved the lower perceived authority of foreign teachers. Both participants said they were often treated as outsiders or temporary figures within the school community. P2 noted that *"students respect native Thai teachers more... foreign teachers are seen as guests or outsiders,"* influencing students' classroom behavior and willingness to follow instructions. This perceived lack of legitimacy diminished pre-service teachers' emotional influence, reinforcing feelings of isolation and marginalization.

To mitigate the effects of institutional rigidity, participants employed personalized strategies aimed at reducing power distance and fostering relational warmth. P2, for instance, advocated for informal engagement through one-on-one tutoring sessions, emphasizing that *"individual tutoring sessions should be held regularly so students can interact well and not always be formal."* These tailored interactions served to humanize the teacher's role, cultivate mutual trust, and establish emotional proximity within an otherwise hierarchical educational setting.

The political geographies illuminated in this study reveal the extent to which institutional hierarchies and cultural expectations around authority mediate emotional engagement in transnational teaching contexts. Although such structures initially

engendered emotional distance and ambiguity in teacher–student roles, participants actively negotiated these constraints by adopting relational strategies that promoted openness, empathy, and connection within rigid systems.

Taken together, the emotional geographies encountered by Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers in Thai classrooms were shaped by a dynamic interplay of context, culture, and agency. Moral geographies manifested in the tension between internal teaching ideals and external classroom realities; sociocultural geographies reflected both the challenges of linguistic barriers and the opportunities embedded in cultural immersion; and political geographies revealed how power structures shaped emotional accessibility. Across these domains, participants consistently demonstrated emotional resilience and pedagogical adaptability, highlighting the indispensable role of affective dimensions in shaping meaningful teaching and learning experiences during international practicum placements. These insights form a crucial foundation for the interpretive analysis offered in the subsequent discussion.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the emotional geographies experienced by Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers during their international teaching practicum in Thailand. The findings demonstrate that emotions are not peripheral to teaching but relatively central to constructing teacher identity, particularly when shaped by cross-cultural encounters. The emergence of moral, sociocultural, and political geographies underscores the emotional complexity of navigating unfamiliar educational environments. While prior research has acknowledged emotional dissonance in teacher development (Yuan & Lee, 2014; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010), this study advances the discourse by applying Hargreaves' (2001) emotional geography framework to a Southeast Asian transnational context, thereby broadening its empirical and cultural relevance.

The moral geographies identified in the findings emerged through tensions between the participants' pedagogical ideals and the behavioral realities they encountered in Thai classrooms. Such tensions resonate with Zembylas' (2005) assertion that unreciprocated moral commitments can elicit emotions like frustration, guilt, or resignation. Despite their initial enthusiasm, participants were emotionally tested by situations in which students were disengaged or resistant, challenging their internalized beliefs about what effective teaching should look like. This reinforces the view that moral emotions are intricately tied to teachers' sense of purpose, efficacy, and ethical responsibility (Łodzikowski & Jekiel, 2019).

The findings related to sociocultural geographies further highlight the emotional labor required to bridge linguistic and cultural divides. Communication barriers, unfamiliar rituals, and divergent classroom norms often strained participants' ability to form emotional connections with students. These experiences align with the work of Jin et al. (2020) and Lou & Noels (2019), who argue that limited language proficiency and cultural unfamiliarity can hinder interpersonal trust and emotional engagement in multilingual classrooms. However, participants also found that working through these dissonances cultivated a heightened intercultural sensitivity. This affirms the idea that when critically reflected upon, emotional discomfort can serve as a valuable pedagogical resource in teacher identity formation.

The domain of political geographies revealed how hierarchical school structures and cultural perceptions of teacher authority shaped participants' emotional positioning. As [Parr et al. \(2017\)](#) observe, rigid hierarchies in many Asian educational settings can inhibit collaborative, emotionally reciprocal relationships between teachers and students. Participants in this study experienced such constraints, noting how their status as foreign, temporary educators limited their authority and deepened their emotional distance from students. These dynamics reflect broader institutional power asymmetries that often marginalize novice teachers' voices and emotional agency ([Evans, 2011](#)). The findings suggest that international practicum programs must extend their preparation beyond cultural awareness to include strategies for navigating institutional politics and power relations.

The study affirms that emotional geographies are not static or universal, but fluid, negotiated, and profoundly shaped by place, culture, and institutional context. The participants' narratives reveal how emotional tensions and connections are embedded within their teaching sites' moral, sociocultural, and political structures. This reinforces the growing scholarly consensus that emotions are fundamental to teacher learning, resilience, and professional agency ([Zembylas, 2007](#); [Benesch, 2018](#)), particularly in globalized education contexts where emotional labor intersects with cultural adaptation.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by extending [Hargreaves' \(2001\)](#) emotional geography framework to a less-examined setting—an Indonesian-to-Thai transnational practicum. While most applications of this framework have been situated in Western or domestic EFL contexts (e.g., [Yin & Lee, 2012](#)), this study provides empirical insight into how emotions manifest differently across cultural and institutional boundaries. It offers a critical perspective on how the emotional dimension of teaching is shaped not only by interpersonal factors but also by systemic and spatial configurations of power.

Practically, the findings have implications for the design of pre-service teacher education, particularly those involving international placements. They point to the urgent need for emotional preparedness, not just pedagogical or cultural. Structured emotional reflection should be embedded into pre-departure orientations, ongoing mentoring, and post-practicum debriefings. Equipping future teachers with metacognitive and affective strategies to process emotional dissonance is vital to building resilience, empathy, and intercultural competence. Echoing recent calls by [Widodo et al. \(2025\)](#), this study underscores the importance of treating emotional labor as a legitimate and essential domain of teacher development. Schools and universities must collaborate to ensure that emotional challenges are not pathologized or overlooked but embraced as integral to becoming ethically responsive and globally minded educators.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the emotional geographies experienced by Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers during their international teaching practicum in Thailand, drawing on [Hargreaves' \(2001\)](#) conceptual framework. Through the lens of moral, sociocultural, and political geographies, the findings reveal that emotions are not merely byproducts of teaching but core components of how teachers make sense of their roles, relationships, and environments, particularly in transnational contexts. Participants navigated emotional tensions from conflicting classroom expectations, cultural unfamiliarity, and hierarchical school structures. Nevertheless, they demonstrated resilience and adaptability by

developing emotionally responsive strategies to sustain connection, trust, and pedagogical efficacy.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the expanding body of research on teacher emotions by contextualizing emotional geographies within a Southeast Asian international practicum, an underrepresented area in the literature. It underscores the situated and relational nature of emotional experiences, shaped by the intersection of cultural norms, institutional hierarchies, and personal values. Practically, the study highlights the need for teacher education programs to move beyond a focus on cognitive or technical preparation and instead include structured emotional scaffolding, particularly for those engaging in intercultural teaching. This includes creating reflective spaces where pre-service teachers can process their emotional experiences and develop strategies to respond ethically and adaptively to diverse classroom realities.

Future research should build on this work by investigating emotional geographies across transnational teaching contexts and involving larger participant cohorts. Longitudinal studies could also show how emotional experiences during practicum evolve and influence long-term teacher identity formation. By continuing to center emotion as a critical dimension of teaching, scholars and practitioners alike can better support teachers in becoming competent instructors and emotionally literate, interculturally aware, and socially responsive educators.

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