

## RECLAIMING EMOTION IN ELT PREPARATION: A PROFILING REVIEW OF STUDENT-TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL TRAJECTORIES (2001–2024)

REAPROPIANDO LA EMOCIÓN EN LA FORMACIÓN DOCENTE EN  
ELT: REVISIÓN DE LITERATURA DE LAS TRAYECTORIAS EMOCIONALES DE  
PROFESORES EN FORMACIÓN (2001–2024)

Original Research Article




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## Abstract

This article explores how emotions have been conceptualized and integrated within English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) from 2001 to 2024. Drawing on a profiling exercise of fifty-seven international and Latin American studies, it analyzes theoretical and methodological trends that have shaped the understanding of emotions in teacher formation. The study identifies a shift from cognitive and regulatory models toward sociocultural, critical, and decolonial perspectives that foreground the ethical and political dimensions of emotional experience. Findings reveal that while emotional awareness has gained visibility, epistemologies from the Global South remain underrepresented. The article argues for an affective-decolonial turn in ELTE, one that reclaims emotion as a form of pedagogical knowledge, a site of epistemic resistance, and a pathway toward affective justice in teacher education.

**Keywords:** emotions; ELT; pre-service teachers; emotional labor; decolonial education; sentipensar

## Resumen

Este artículo examina cómo las emociones han sido conceptualizadas e integradas en la formación de docentes de inglés entre 2001 y 2024. A partir de una revisión perfilada de cincuenta y siete estudios internacionales y latinoamericanos, se analizan las tendencias teóricas y metodológicas que han configurado la comprensión de las emociones en la formación docente. El estudio identifica un desplazamiento desde modelos cognitivos y regulatorios hacia perspectivas socioculturales, críticas y decoloniales que destacan las dimensiones éticas y políticas de la experiencia emocional. Los hallazgos muestran que, aunque la conciencia emocional ha ganado visibilidad, las epistemologías del Sur Global continúan subrepresentadas. El artículo propone un giro afectivo-decolonial en la formación docente en ELT, que reivindica la emoción como saber pedagógico, espacio de resistencia epistémica y vía hacia la justicia afectiva en la educación de profesores.

**Palabras clave:** emociones; ELT; profesores en formación; trabajo emocional; educación decolonial; sentipensar

## Introduction

In recent decades, the role of emotion in language teacher education has emerged as a key element of what it means to teach, learn, and become. However, these emotional dimensions are often treated as side effects (issues of “teacher well-being,” “resilience,” or “burnout”) rather than as central to the pedagogical and ontological experiences of pre-service teachers (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). This article starts from the position that emotions are not secondary to cognition, nor personal challenges to be “managed,” but integral to the construction of teacher identity, agency, and epistemic authority (Zembylas, 2003, 2005; Golombek & Doran, 2014; Benesch, 2012).

In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), most research has historically focused on methodology, linguistic competence, and instructional strategies. Emotional experiences have been largely underexplored or oversimplified through psychological frameworks that prioritize emotional regulation, productivity, or classroom control (Gross, 2002; Li & De Costa, 2018). Meanwhile, the broader socio-political, cultural, and embodied experiences of student-teachers have been eclipsed by a preference for objectivity, neutrality, and standardization. This epistemological hierarchy reflects not only a disciplinary bias but also a colonial legacy that fragments being, silences emotional knowledge, and disqualifies the body as a site of learning (Quijano, 2007; Walsh, 2005).

In English language teacher education, the pedagogical practicum remains one of the least explored arenas of emotional experience. This phase is far from a neutral site; it is where pre-service teachers negotiate their emerging professional identities amid institutional expectations, mentor feedback, student interactions, and their own beliefs about what it means to teach English. Within this emotionally charged terrain, student-teachers encounter a wide range of feelings (Inadequacy, anxiety, exhilaration, anger, confusion, and joy) that reflect both personal vulnerability and systemic pressures. As Cross and Hong (2012) and O'Connor (2008) demonstrate, teacher emotions are not confined to internal or individual states; institutional, relational, and cultural dynamics shape them. Consequently, emotions operate not merely as personal responses but as political, ethical, and epistemic events that reveal the often-unspoken logics of teacher formation (Benesch, 2017; Nguyen, 2014).

This article emerged from a long-standing concern with the invisibility and regulation of emotions in Colombian ELT programs, where the affective life of pre-service teachers has often been treated as something to be managed rather than theorized. While some national studies have begun to acknowledge emotional dimensions, they continue to privilege regulatory or cognitive approaches (Lucero & Roncancio-Castellanos, 2019; Méndez, 2022). Drawing on both personal experience as a teacher educator and a systematic review of 57 studies across international and regional contexts, this article argues that emotions are not pedagogical distractions but central forces in the formation of the *sentipensar* being; a feeling-thinking subjectivity rooted in Latin American

decolonial thought and critical emotional epistemologies (Anzaldúa, 2002; Barcelos, 2015; Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

The objective of this profiling review is to map and synthesize the evolution of research on pre-service teachers' emotions in ELT between 2001 and 2024, tracing conceptual shifts from psychological and regulatory framings to sociocultural and critical-decolonial perspectives. It also identifies epistemic and regional gaps (particularly in Latin American scholarship) and proposes an affective-decolonial framework grounded in epistemologies of the South.

To achieve this, the article first presents the methodological strategy employed to select and categorize the literature. Then it outlines the major theoretical frameworks that shape current discussions on emotions in teacher education, ranging from cognitive science to critical emotional theory and decolonial epistemology. It then offers a profiling analysis of the global research landscape, highlighting the concentration of studies in the Global North, the limited presence of Latin American voices, and the methodological tendencies that dominate the field. An in-depth thematic review follows, organized around five analytical clusters: cognitive-emotional framings, emotional labor and practicum struggles, emotion and agency, sociocultural and embodied emotionality, and the affective/decolonial turn. The article concludes by reflecting on Latin American experiences and the colonality of emotional erasure, and by advocating for a redefinition of teacher professionalism that

centers emotions at the heart of pedagogical practice, knowledge production, and political struggle.

Finally, this work aims not only to document what has been said but also to affirm that emotions are not merely what student-teachers feel; they are integral to how they know, relate to, and construct their professional selves. Recognizing emotion as an epistemic dimension of teacher formation requires analytical rigor and methodological coherence. The following section, therefore, outlines the design of this profiling review, detailing the criteria, corpus, and epistemological stance that guided the identification and analysis of the 57 studies included in this review.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations: From Emotional Cognition to Decolonial Feeling-Thinking**

Emotions have long held a contested place in educational research, often regulated by paradigms that prioritize cognition, rationality, and behavioral control (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). In language teacher education, early literature reflected this orientation, framing emotions as private states to be managed or minimized to ensure effective instruction (Gross, 2002; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). These views aligned with psychological theories that categorized emotions as positive or negative and emphasized control or suppression, particularly in teacher preparation contexts.

Over the past two decades, however, the field has experienced a theoretical shift that reclaims emotion as epistemic, social, and political. The

sociocultural turn in emotion studies (Zembylas, 2003; Golombek & Doran, 2014) reframed emotions as discursively produced, contextually shaped, and power-laden. Within this view, emotion is inextricably linked to teacher identity, positionality, and professional becoming (Nguyen, 2014; Li & De Costa, 2018). Emotions are no longer seen as distractions, but as generative sites for reflection, agency, and resistance. This reconceptualization has widened the methodological landscape. Ethnographies, narrative inquiry, and arts-based models have gained prominence, allowing researchers to treat emotion as lived, embodied, and storied rather than abstracted or quantified. Zembylas (2003) emphasized that teacher emotions are not just internal states, but are regulated by broader sociopolitical structures that define what teachers are expected to feel and what they are permitted to express.

One of the most critical contributions to this shift is the integration of emotional labor theory into ELT. Scholars such as Benesch (2017) have examined how teachers perform or resist institutional demands for emotional regulation, especially in neoliberal educational systems. Emotional labor becomes a lens through which to interrogate the affective cost of “professionalism,” revealing how norms of care, composure, and neutrality are deeply gendered, racialized, and classed. While this framework has been pivotal in unveiling the power dynamics embedded in teachers’ affective work, it remains situated mainly within Western critical traditions. Emotional labor theory exposes the politics of emotion but often stops short of engaging in the colonial histories and epistemic asymmetries that underpin those politics.

Nevertheless, despite these advances, explicit decolonial approaches remain scarce. Only a few Latin American scholars have begun to explore relational and embodied affectivity, often without fully naming coloniality or mobilizing frameworks such as *conocimiento* or *sentipensar*. This absence signals an epistemic gap. The decolonial-affective lens adopted in this article responds to that silence, not as an extension of the literature, but as a necessary disruption. Grounded in Anzaldúa's (2002) *conocimiento* and Fals Borda's (1984) *sentipensar*, this framework reclaims emotion as a form of political, ethical, and pedagogical knowledge. Here, emotion is not residue; it is method, theory, and intervention.

In Latin America, scholars such as Méndez (2022), Lucero & Roncancio-Castellanos (2019), and Castañeda-Londoño (2021) advocate for affective approaches rooted in relationality, decolonial critique, and embodied knowing. They reject narratives that portray student-teachers as emotionally deficient or immature and argue that emotions (particularly those marked by vulnerability, rage, or joy) are essential to ethical pedagogy and identity formation. These perspectives challenge the colonial legacy that equates emotional restraint with competence and rationalism with authority. In response, this article draws on a hybrid theoretical triad that integrates three complementary traditions. First, psychological-cognitive models of emotional regulation (e.g., Gross, 2002) have historically informed understandings of affect as an individual process. Second, sociocultural theories of identity and affective practice (Zembylas, 2003; Golombek & Doran, 2014) reposition emotions as socially constructed

and relationally mediated. Finally, decolonial epistemologies of *conocimiento* and *sentipensar* (Anzaldúa, 2002; Walsh, 2005; Mignolo & Walsh, 2020) offer radical alternatives to modern/colonial logics by reclaiming emotion as both a mode of knowing and a practice of resistance.

This integrative framework is intentionally non-neutral. It centers emotional justice, relational knowledge, and the *sentipensar* being as correctives to the silencing of affect in ELT research and practice. Emotion, in this view, is not a variable to control but a dynamic space of transformation, resistance, and meaning-making.

This theoretical groundwork shapes the interpretive lens of the profiling analysis. It allows us to evaluate emotional framings not as neutral taxonomies but as ideological and epistemological positions. As the next section shows, while most studies remain situated in regulatory or reflective paradigms, very few confront the colonial underpinnings of emotional discourse in ELT. What follows is an empirical mapping of these trends and silences, reinforcing the need to reimagine teacher education through a lens of emotional decolonization and epistemic justice.

### **Methodology: Design and Epistemological Positioning**

This study employs a profiling review methodology designed to map and synthesize research trends on the emotions of pre-service English language teachers between 2001 and 2024. The purpose is not only descriptive but interpretive; to identify the theoretical, methodological, and epistemic patterns

that shape how emotions have been conceptualized in ELT teacher formation. The design draws on principles of systematic qualitative synthesis (Booth et al., 2016) and critical-interpretive review frameworks (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006; Noblit & Hare, 1988), while explicitly rejecting positivist neutrality. Instead, this review aligns with *sentipensar* (Fals Borda, 1986; Walsh, 2005), approaching the literature as an emotional-intellectual terrain that reveals both recurring patterns and epistemological exclusions.

### **Databases and Search Protocols**

A multi-database search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Elsevier, and Latindex, as these databases were selected for their relevance to education, applied linguistics, teacher formation, and critical pedagogy. Boolean combinations included:

“pre-service teacher” OR “student-teacher”) AND “emotion” AND (“ELT” OR “English language teaching”)

“emotional labor” AND “teacher identity”

“pedagogical practicum” AND “emotion”

“socio-cultural emotions” OR “decolonial emotions” OR “sentipensar”

These strings captured both mainstream framings and emerging critical/decolonial vocabularies. Searches were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers, published between 2001 and early 2024, in English and Spanish. Citation mining and snowballing were conducted to



- Engaged directly with ELT contexts (EFL/ESL, bilingual education, language teacher education).
- Demonstrated a conceptual or empirical methodology (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed).

Excluded studies:

- Focused solely on K–12 learners without addressing pre-service teacher identity
- Treated emotion as a behavioral response only, absent epistemological framing
- Were pure opinion or anecdotal, lacking methodological rigor.

This selection framework emphasized research that foregrounds emotions as ontological and epistemic components of teacher formation (Zembylas, 2003; Benesch, 2017; Barcelos, 2015).

### **Data Selection, Profiling, and Coding**

The initial search yielded 159 entries. After three filtering stages (title screening, abstract review, and full-text appraisal) a final corpus of 57 studies was retained for profiling. Each entry was manually analyzed and entered into a coding matrix, where rows represented individual studies and columns were structured according to five analytical dimensions:

1. Publication year and region (e.g., Latin America, Asia, Anglophone North).

2. Publication type (journal article, book chapter, dissertation).
3. Theoretical framework (psychological, sociocultural, critical/ decolonial).
4. Emotion types (e.g., fear, confidence, anger, empathy, hope, anxiety).
5. Methodology (e.g., narrative inquiry, ethnography, survey, discourse analysis).

This coding system was informed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis and Schutz, Nichols, and Schwenke's (2018) emphasis on emotional episodes in teacher identity. The profiling sought not only to map thematic patterns, but also to track epistemological framings (Zembylas, 2003; Benesch, 2017) and disciplinary silences (Barcelos, 2015; Cross & Hong, 2012). To enhance rigor, the profiling was supported by memoing techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and narrative configuration strategies (Polkinghorne, 1995), enabling conceptual convergence across paradigms.

The outcome of this process (namely, the profiling tables, figures, and thematic clusters) is elaborated later in the analytical and interpretive sections, where visual representations support the development of key arguments. Ultimately, this approach viewed coding not as a neutral task but as a critical, reflexive, and affective practice (Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

## Researcher Positionality and Epistemic Reflexivity

As a researcher-educator embedded in Latin American teacher education, my positionality is inseparable from this analytical process. I approach the literature not from detached neutrality but from a situated, embodied, and politically conscious stance (Bhattacharya, 2009; Anzaldúa, 2002). The emotional struggles and silences experienced by the student-teachers I have accompanied over the years inform both the focus of this review and the interpretive lens through which the field is read.

The decision to center *sentipensar*, emotional justice, and decolonial critique arises from ethical commitment as much as from theoretical orientation. This review thus becomes an act of epistemic resistance and emotional accountability. Following critical qualitative paradigms (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011), partiality, affect, and reflexivity are treated not as biases to be minimized, but as methodological virtues that reveal situated knowing.

The interpretive grounding of this analysis draws deliberately on *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2002) and *sentipensar* (Fals Borda, 1986); not because they dominate the corpus, but precisely because they are absent from it. Their inclusion functions as an epistemic intervention that challenges the dominance of Eurocentric paradigms in emotional research on ELT. This positioning echoes Walsh's (2005) call to delink from colonial knowledge systems and resonates with Mignolo and Walsh's (2020) view of decoloniality as a practice of epistemic disobedience.

In this sense, the emotional constructs explored here are understood as politically and pedagogically charged, embedded in broader structures of power, knowledge, and resistance. The following section builds upon this stance to trace theoretical trajectories that have shaped the conceptualization of emotion within ELT teacher education.

### **Mapping the Field: Trends, Absences, and Emotional Frameworks in the Literature (2001–2024)**

This section presents a mapping of the emotional paradigms that have emerged in the literature on pre-service teachers' emotions in ELT. A total of 159 articles were initially identified through search engines such as Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC. After a series of screening and filtering processes (including title screening, abstract review, relevance to ELT education, and full-text reading), a total of 57 studies were retained and manually profiled using six analytical dimensions:

1. Author(s) and Year
2. Region
3. Publication Type (journal article, chapter, book)
4. Theoretical Framework (psychological, sociocultural, critical/ decolonial)
5. Emotion Types (e.g., fear, confidence, anger, empathy, hope, anxiety)
6. Methodology (e.g., narrative inquiry, ethnography, survey, discourse analysis)

This profiling approach allowed for the identification of thematic clusters, regional silences, and epistemological gaps. Tables and figures were developed to represent these patterns visually and are introduced in this section.

### Regional and Temporal Distribution

Table 1 presents the geographical and temporal distribution of 51 studies with defined regional origins (e.g., Latin America, Asia, Anglophone North). These figures illustrate an increasing trend in the last decade, with particular growth in Asia and a still limited but emerging contribution from Latin America.

Table 1. Geographical and Temporal Distribution of Studies (2001–2024)

Region	2001–2010	2011–2020	2021–2025	Total
Asia	2	9	6	17
Anglophone North	3	6	5	14
Latin America	1	2	4	7
Europe (non-UK)	1	2	3	6
Middle East	0	2	2	4
Africa	0	1	2	3
Total	7	22	22	51

Table 1b complements this distribution by including the six global or transregional

Table 1b complements this distribution by including the six global or transregional studies that did not report a specific national or regional affiliation but offered broad theoretical insights across contexts.

Table 1b. Global or Cross-Regional Studies (2001–2024)

Author(s)	Title	Region Scope	Year	Emotion Focus	Framework
Zembylas (2007)	Theory and Research on Emotions in Education: The Case of Teacher Ed.	Global	2007	Emotional knowledge	Sociocultural
Golombek & Johnson (2004)	Narrative Inquiry in Language Teacher Ed.	Global	2004	Emotion, identity	Sociocultural-narrative
Benesch (2017)	Emotions as Critical Teaching Tools in ELT	Transregional	2018	Emotional labor, resistance	Critical discourse
Barcelos & Aragão (2018)	Emotions in Language Teaching: Broadening the Horizon	Global	2018	Varied	Dialogic-emancipatory
Schutz & Zembylas (2009)	Advancing Emotion Theories in Teacher Ed.	Cross-contextual	2011	Emotional understanding	Interdisciplinary
Tsang (2020)	The Affective Lives of Language Teachers	Multinational	2020	Identity, anxiety, care	Poststructural-critical

This imbalance mirrors observations in recent meta-reviews of language teacher emotion research, which note that Latin American and African contributions remain largely underrepresented in mainstream journals (Barcelos & Aragão, 2018; Joubert & Jacobs, 2024; Derakhshan & Nazari, 2022)

## Profiling Studies by Analytical Dimensions

Before delving into the specific studies, it is useful to summarize how the corpus reflects regional and epistemological diversity. The following tables present the analytical profiling of the 57 studies retained for review, categorized by region, emotional focus, theoretical framework, and methodological approach. This segmentation makes visible the asymmetries between Global North and Latin American scholarship, as well as the varied conceptualizations of emotion that have emerged over time.

Table 2a profiles the Latin American studies included in the corpus, highlighting their distinctive attention to relationality, vulnerability, and socio-political consciousness within pre-service teacher formation.

Table 2a. Profile of Latin American Studies on Pre-Service Teacher Emotions (2001–2024)

Author(s)	Year	Region	Emotion(s)	Theoretical Framework	Methodology
Lucero	2015	Colombia	Care, vulnerability	Narrative inquiry	Autobiographical narrative
Castañeda & Aguirre	2018	Colombia	Anxiety, identity	Critical reflective	Discourse analysis
Méndez L, M. G.	2022	Mexico	frustration, joy	Socio-emotional	Attribution theory
Trujillo et al.	2022	Colombia	Resilience, empathy	Humanistic	Reflective journaling
Barahona and Toledo-Sandoval	2022	Chile	Hope, emotional dissonance	Sociocultural	Survey + interview

Table 2b. Profile of International Studies on Pre-Service Teacher Emotions (2001–2024)

Author(s)	Year	Region	Emotion(s)	Theoretical Framework	Methodology
Benesch	2017	USA	Emotional labor	Critical dis-course	Textual anal-ysis
Cowie	2011	UK	Anxiety, tension	Sociocultural	Longitudinal case study
Xu	2013	China	Identity, emotion trajectories	Narrative in-quiry	Narrative re-fection
H. Li and Liu	2021	Hong Kong	Resistance, stress	Critical-emo-tional	Mixed methods
Golombek & Doran	2014	USA	Identity and medi-ation	Sociocultural	Teacher logs + discourse
Heng et al.	2024	China	Vulnerability, em-pathy	Narrative	Teacher autobi-ography
Alhebaishi	2019	Japan	Emotional regu-lation	Psychological	Reflective dia-ry + interview
Ji et al	2022	Egypt	Shame, anxiety	Cultural-emo-tional	Interviews
Joubert and Jacobs	2024	South Africa	Empowerment, care	Critical peda-gogical	Life history

To better understand how these studies conceptualize emotions in ELT teacher formation, the 57 retained studies were categorized by:

Author and year

Region

Emotional paradigm

Emotion types addressed

Theoretical and methodological lenses

These dimensions are fully presented in Table 2a (Latin American studies) and Table 2b (International studies). Together, they help visualize

the uneven regional focus, the evolution of theoretical frameworks, and the growing interest in emotions as situated, relational, and epistemic resources in ELT research.

These studies also demonstrate increasing methodological diversity. While earlier research emphasized control and regulation (Gross, 2002; Chen, 2019), more recent work employs narrative, ethnographic, and arts-based methodologies to capture the complexity of emotional experiences in teacher development (Golombek & Johnson, 2017; Barkhuizen, 2016).

**This shift is illustrated in the following visual synthesis.**

Figure 2. Shifting Emotional Paradigms in ELT Pre-Service Teacher Literature (2001–2024)

Figure 2: Authors' creation

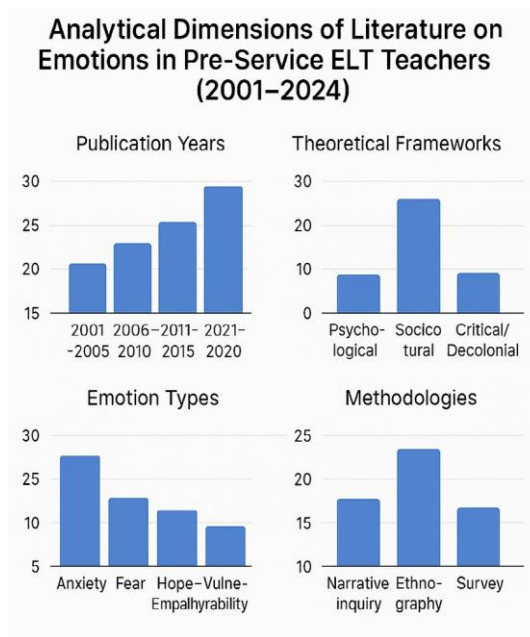


Figure 2 illustrates the chronological evolution of three major emotional framings in ELT pre-service teacher research. While earlier studies predominantly emphasized emotional regulation as an individual responsibility, a progressive shift is observed toward identity-based perspectives and, more recently, a focus on emotional labor and critical awareness. These trends reflect broader epistemological changes in how teacher emotions are understood in relation to institutional power, vulnerability, and sociocultural positioning.

### Frequently Addressed Emotions

Emotions most commonly explored in the literature included anxiety, fear, frustration, and hope. However, recent work has expanded the repertoire to include empathy, vulnerability, emotional labor, and care. These trends are summarized in Table 3 below and are visually synthesized in Figure 2. Anxiety and fear remain the most frequently reported emotions, especially in East Asian and Anglophone contexts (Xu, 2013; Cowie, 2011). However, recent studies explore complex affective states, such as vulnerability, care, and emotional labor, pointing toward a shift in the emotional grammar of teacher identity (Benesch, 2017; Zembylas, 2018).

Table 3. Most Frequently Studied Emotions Across the Corpus (2001–2024)

Emotion Type	Number of Studies	Representative Studies
<b>Anxiety</b>	18	Cowie (2011); H. Li and Liu (2021); Xu (2013)
<b>Fear</b>	12	Alhebaishi, S. M. (2019); Cowie, N. (2011)
<b>Hope</b>	10	Trujillo et al. (2022); Barahona and Toledo-Sandoval (2022)

<b>Empathy</b>	8	Lucero (2015); Heng et al. (2024)
<b>Vulnerability</b>	7	Lucero (2015); Cowie (2011)
<b>Emotional Labor</b>	6	Benesch (2017); H. Li and Liu (2021)
<b>Frustration</b>	5	Méndez L, M. G.(2022)
<b>Care</b>	4	Lucero (2015); Joubert and Jacobs (2024)

Taken together, these findings confirm that anxiety, fear, and frustration continue to dominate the emotional landscape of pre-service ELT research, particularly in studies framed within psychological or regulatory paradigms. However, the increasing attention to emotions such as empathy, vulnerability, and care reflects a gradual epistemic shift toward relational and ethical understandings of teaching. This evolution signals not only a diversification of emotional vocabularies but also a movement toward recognizing emotion as a site of professional becoming rather than as a variable to be managed. These trends pave the way for a deeper discussion of how emotional paradigms themselves have shifted over time, a focus further illustrated in the following figures and critical perspectives.

### **Critical and Regional Perspectives on Emotion**

Three dominant research trends were identified across the reviewed corpus. The first trend conceptualizes emotions as individual traits to be regulated. Particularly visible before 2015, this framing understands emotions as internal psychological responses to practicum stress, performance pressure, or classroom management challenges. Studies within this orientation often

propose personal coping strategies such as mindfulness, resilience training, or reflective journaling. This view aligns with neoliberal and managerial discourses in teacher preparation, privileging control and adjustment over transformation.

A second body of work frames emotions as integral to identity formation and reflective practice. From around 2014 onward, scholars increasingly examined how emotional experiences shape professional becoming, positioning emotions as catalysts for reflection, vulnerability, and growth. Narrative inquiry and longitudinal qualitative designs became prominent, emphasizing teaching as an affective and relational process.

Finally, a more recent trend (emerging after 2018) foregrounds emotional labor and critical awareness. This line of inquiry investigates how institutions regulate and commodify teachers' emotional expression, questioning normative expectations of care, composure, and professionalism. These studies expose the political dimensions of feeling in teaching, revealing the affective costs of neoliberal educational cultures and the possibilities for resistance within them.

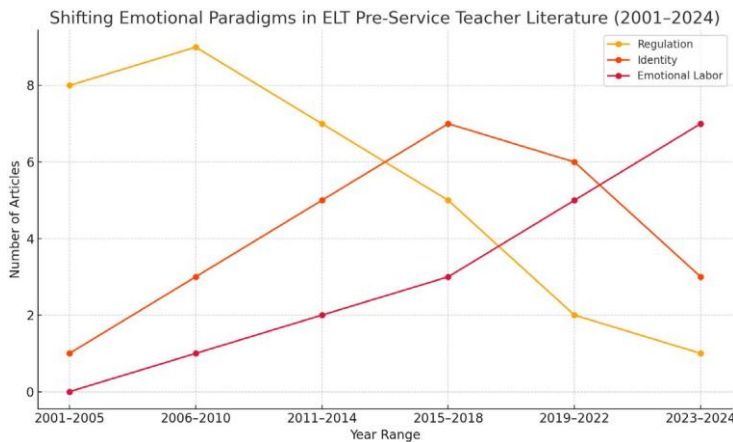
These evolving framings are not merely theoretical, they signal shifts in how pre-service teachers are expected to manage, embody, and negotiate emotion within increasingly complex, and at times oppressive, educational systems. This typology is consistent with earlier framings identified by Schutz & Zembylas (2009) and Li & De Costa, (2018), but it adds a fourth layer by foregrounding the epistemic and political potential of emotion, particularly in Global South research contexts (Castañeda-Londoño, 2021). It is in this fourth

paradigm that concepts like *sentipensar* and *conocimiento* begin to emerge as decolonial alternatives to Eurocentric emotional regulation.

However, two core gaps persist in the field. The first concerns limited regional diversity. Most studies originate from Anglo-European contexts such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, while only a small subset represents voices from Latin America, Asia, or Africa. This geographical imbalance continues to constrain the epistemic scope of ELT emotion research. The second gap relates to the lack of explicit decolonial theorizing. Although some studies discuss emotions like vulnerability or relationality, few mobilize frameworks such as *conocimiento*, *sentipensar*, or coloniality. This absence confirms the need for a complementary epistemic stance; one that this article seeks to advance through a decolonial-affective perspective grounded in Latin American thought.

To visualize these patterns, the following figure (Figure 3) presents a time-based distribution of the three major framings identified:

Figure 3: Author's creation



### Figure 3. Shifting Emotional Paradigms in ELT Pre-Service Teacher Literature (2001–2024)

This figure visually confirms the temporal shift across the three dominant emotional framings identified in the literature. During the early 2000s, regulation-oriented models prevailed, reflecting a strong focus on emotional control and individual coping strategies. From 2011 onward, identity-based perspectives gained momentum, emphasizing reflection, vulnerability, and professional becoming as central to teacher formation. In recent years, the concept of emotional labor has gained significant attention, highlighting the political and institutional dimensions of emotional experience. Together, these trajectories illustrate a gradual movement from regulation to resistance, and from emotional management to emotional justice in ELT teacher education.

While psychological and regulatory models have dominated earlier phases of research, a growing body of literature highlights emotions as culturally situated, ethically charged, and politically meaningful. This shift is particularly evident in studies that move beyond individual regulation toward a critical engagement with the relational, institutional, and ideological dimensions of emotion in teacher education.

Table 4 presents selected works that exemplify this shift. These studies (spanning both Latin American and international contexts) adopt critical, sociocultural, or narrative frameworks to interrogate how emotions intersect with identity, power, and resistance in ELT formation. For instance, Lucero

(2015), Castañeda & Aguirre (2018), and Bonilla et al. (2020) foreground emotional vulnerability, positioning, and resistance in the Latin American context, while Benesch (2017), H. Li and Liu (2021) and Cowie (2011) explore emotional labor and agency in Anglophone and Asian settings. As shown in Table 4, the convergence of emotion, power, and identity is central to this emergent paradigm of emotional justice.

Table 4. Selected Studies with Critical and Regional Perspectives

Author(s)	Region	Emotional Focus	Theoretical Frame
Lucero (2015)	Colombia	Care, vulnerability	Narrative inquiry
Castañeda & Aguirre (2018)	Colombia	Tensions, positioning	Critical reflective practice
Benesch (2017)	USA	Emotional labor, injustice	Critical discourse analysis
Cowie (2011)	UK	Tension, agency	Sociocultural, narrative
H. Li and Liu (2021)	Hong Kong	Emotional labor, resistance	Critical
Golombek & Doran (2014)	USA	Emotion-identity interplay	Sociocultural, mediation
Xu (2013)	China	Identity, emotion trajectories	Narrative inquiry
Heng et al. (2024)	China	Emotion and vulnerability	Narrative inquiry

The expanded vision reflected in this table connects emotional dynamics to broader themes of social justice, identity politics, and teacher resistance, paving the way for a deeper exploration of how these dynamics inform ELT teacher formation and the pursuit of emotional justice in education.

To further emphasize the significance of these findings, it is essential to discuss the representative studies within each identified emotional paradigm

briefly. Studies like Xu (2013) and Alhebaishi conceptualize emotions primarily through regulation, framing them as psychological traits to be optimized for classroom effectiveness. In contrast, works by Lucero (2015) and Heng et al. (2024) emphasize identity and reflective becoming, acknowledging the role of vulnerability and relationality in the formation of teacher subjectivities. Recent contributions from Benesch (2017) and H. Li and Liu (2021) advance the emotional labor paradigm, interrogating institutional expectations placed upon teachers and highlighting the sociopolitical dimensions of affective work. These evolving framings are not merely theoretical; they signal shifts in how pre-service teachers are expected to manage, embody, and negotiate emotion within increasingly complex, and at times oppressive, educational systems.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that most studies (especially those situated in Anglophone or East Asian contexts) still operate within Eurocentric epistemologies. While they may explore vulnerability or emotional agency, very few adopt explicitly decolonial lenses. Notably, Latin American scholarship (e.g., Zuluaga., 2021; Méndez L, M. G., 2022) begins to hint at resistance and socio-political awareness, but the framework of *conocimiento* or *sentipensar* remains underused. This absence reinforces the urgency of reimagining emotional theory in ELT beyond regulation and reflection, toward a justice-oriented, epistemically plural vision. The following section proposes such a vision.

## **Toward Emotional Justice and a Sentipensar Framework in ELT Formation**

The systematic profiling of emotional framings in ELT pre-service teacher literature (2001–2024) reveals not only shifting paradigms but also profound epistemological tensions. Section 4 demonstrated how the field has evolved from individual psychological framings of emotional regulation toward more socially constructed, politicized, and situated understandings of emotion. Yet, even in the most progressive studies, two significant silences persist: limited representation of Global South contexts, and an under-theorization of emotions through decolonial lenses.

This section draws on the critical insights from the profiling to propose a re-centering of emotion as epistemic, political, and pedagogical in ELT teacher formation. The concept of the *sentipensar*, as proposed by Escobar (2020) and Anzaldúa (2002), is offered as a decolonial alternative to the Cartesian, rationalist framing of teachers as emotionally neutral professionals. Instead, it recognizes feeling-thinking as foundational to teaching identities, practices, and resistance.

### ***F/om Emotional Regulation to Emotional Justice***

Early literature (e.g., Cowie, 2011; Xu, 2013) framed emotion as a personal trait to be regulated, with a tendency to medicalize or depoliticize emotional experiences. This aligns with neoliberal discourses of accountability and professional comportment (Benesch, 2017; Golombek & Doran, 2014). Pre-service teachers were often advised to cope with anxiety or stress without

questioning the systemic conditions producing such emotions. Emotional reflexivity, while encouraged, was largely individualized.

In contrast, later works, particularly Ji et al. (2022), Nazari et al. (2023), and Joubert and Jacobs (2024), emphasize emotional labor, vulnerability, and resistance, shifting attention from regulation to transformation. These studies highlight the affective demands placed on teachers to perform care, calmness, and compliance, often without institutional support or recognition. Emotions become political: shaped by gender, race, class, language ideology, and institutional culture.

Recent research by Nazari, Karimpour, and Ranjbar (2023) further frames emotional labor as a form of professional development, especially when teachers engage in action research. Their study illustrates how critical emotional reflexivity and collaborative inquiry can foster both teacher agency and epistemic growth.

A turn toward emotional justice is thus necessary. Zembylas (2018) defines this as recognizing the unequal distribution of emotional burdens in educational spaces and attending to the ethics of feeling. In teacher education, this means acknowledging how structural forces shape pre-service teachers' affective lives, particularly in marginalized and under-resourced contexts.

### ***Sentipensa/ and Conocimiento as Decolonial Epistemologies***

Few of the 57 studies profiled explicitly adopt decolonial frameworks. Exceptions include Barcelos & Aragão (2018), Joubert and Jacobs (2024),

and Barahona and Toledo-Sandoval (2022), who gesture toward emotions as relational and culturally embedded. However, most literature (even that which critiques normative emotional regulation) remains anchored in Eurocentric paradigms.

To fill this gap, this article draws on Gloria Anzaldúa's (2002) concept of *conocimiento* and the Latin American epistemology of *sentipensar* (Fals Borda, 1986; Escobar, 2020). These frameworks reject Cartesian mind-body dualisms and emphasize the intertwining of feeling and knowing. *Conocimiento* arises from embodied reflection, intuition, and experience. *Sentipensar* frames knowledge as emerging from emotional, situated, and communal engagement.

The inclusion of Colombian and Latin American studies in Tables 2a and 4 shows the transformative potential of these epistemologies. Castañeda & Aguirre (2018) and Lucero, E., & Roncancio (2019) surface emotional tension and resistance in teacher identity work. These studies signal the beginning of a decolonial-affective agenda, though the field remains in its infancy.

This conceptual figure (see Figure 4) illustrates the evolution from regulatory framings of emotion in ELT to transformative, decolonial approaches grounded in *sentipensar* and *conocimiento*. It visually contrasts dominant emotional paradigms with emergent, justice-oriented frameworks proposed throughout this review.

Figure 4. Pathways Toward Emotional Justice in ELT

Figure 4: Author's creation

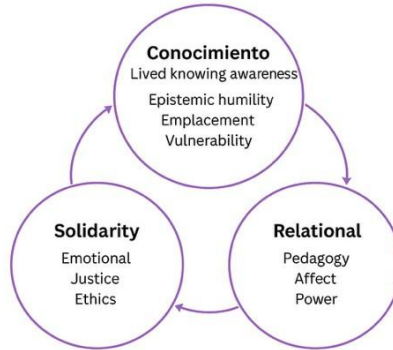
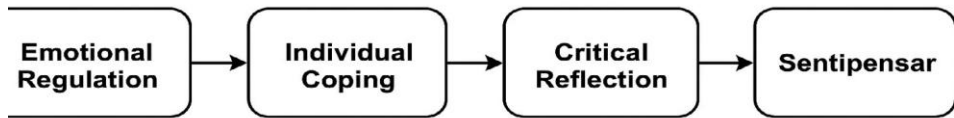


Figure 4. Senti-Pensar in ELT Formation

Figure 5: Author's creation



**Figure 5. From Emotional Regulation to *Sentipensar*:  
A Conceptual Map for ELT Teacher Formation**

Table 5. Matrix of Emotional Framings and Epistemologies

This table synthesizes the three dominant emotional paradigms found in the literature and their implications for the sentipensar being. It supports the arguments presented throughout Section 5 by mapping key conceptual

tendencies, clarifying their epistemological roots, and evaluating their transformative or limiting potential.

<b>Emotional Paradigm</b>	<b>Epistemological Basis</b>	<b>Metaphors &amp; Language</b>	<b>Key Authors/ Studies</b>	<b>Transformative Potential</b>
Emotion as Individual Trait to Regulate	Psychological, Neoliberal	Stress, control, coping	Cowie (2011); Xu (2013); Benesch (2017)	Low
Emotion as Identity and Reflection	Sociocultural, Constructivist	Vulnerability, becoming	Golombek & Doran (2014); H.	Medium
Emotion as Political/Relational Labor	Critical, Decolonial	Labor, resistance, care	Zembylas (2018); Joubert and Jacobs (2024); Nazari, Karimpour, & Ranjbar (2023)	High

### *Toward a Humanizing and Context-Aware ELT Formation*

By foregrounding *sentipensar* as an ontological and pedagogical stance, teacher education programs can challenge colonial legacies of emotional neutrality and rational mastery. This involves valuing emotional narratives and metaphor as tools for reflection and inquiry (Golombek & Johnson, 2004), encouraging collective emotional inquiry rather than isolated self-regulation (Ji et al., 2022; Nazari et al., 2023), and situating emotions within their social, historical, and political contexts (Barcelos & Aragão, 2018; Zembylas, 2018). Through this perspective, emotions become not only pedagogical resources but also epistemic and ethical acts that reshape how teachers understand, connect, and transform their practice.

Moreover, it requires a redistribution of epistemic authority: recognizing Global South contributions not as footnotes, but as frameworks. *Sentipensar* and *conocimiento* invite a shift from emotional training to emotional transformation, from surveillance to solidarity.

The next and final section outlines how these insights can inform both future research and the redesign of teacher education policies and curricula in ELT. It calls for an affective-decolonial turn grounded in justice, humility, and relationality.

### **Policy Recommendations and Future Directions for Affective-Decolonial ELT Education**

Drawing from the epistemic insights and critical gaps identified in the previous section, this final segment offers strategic recommendations for ELT policy, curriculum design, and research. These suggestions foreground *sentipensar* as a transformative axis, challenging prevailing technocratic, neoliberal, and Eurocentric paradigms in teacher education. This approach is not supplementary but foundational to equitable and emotionally just teacher formation.

### **Curriculum Design: Embedding Emotions as Pedagogical Praxis**

Teacher education programs must move beyond isolated well-being modules and embed emotional praxis throughout the curriculum. This involves integrating emotional inquiry (Zembylas, 2005; Benesch, 2012; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009) across practicum, reflection, and language methodology

courses, while employing narrative and arts-based approaches (Barkhuizen, 2016; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to explore emotional experience as a source of pedagogical insight. Equally important is the need to position Global South epistemologies (Barcelos, 2015; Anzaldúa, 2002) not as peripheral or exotic perspectives, but as central frameworks for curriculum design and reflection. Curricula should therefore create space for vulnerability, contradiction, and ambiguity as productive elements of teacher identity rather than problems to be solved. As Hargreaves (1998) reminds us, emotions are not only inherent to teaching but also pivotal to educational transformation.

### ***Policy Recommendations: Structural Recognition of Emotional Labor***

Educational policies in both the Global North and South often reinforce emotional neutrality, accountability metrics, and resilience discourses. In contrast, this review calls for institutional recognition of emotional labor as a core component of teacher work (Nazari & Karimpour, 2022; Zembylas, 2018; Benesch, 2017). It also advocates for the development of affective mentoring programs that enable pre-service teachers to share and reflect upon their emotional experiences collaboratively with peers and mentors (Ji et al., 2022; Farrell, 2012). Furthermore, evaluation criteria should be redefined to include emotional reflexivity, relational ethics, and care-based pedagogies (Hargreaves, 1998; Cross & Hong, 2012; O'Connor, 2008).

Affective justice must therefore be written into the architecture of teacher education, rather than left to individual coping mechanisms. As Golombek and Johnson (2017) demonstrate, narrative inquiry offers a powerful methodology for capturing and legitimizing the emotional complexity inherent in teacher preparation.

***Future Research: Decentering Eurocentrism and Expanding the Archive***

The literature analyzed reveals significant regional and epistemological asymmetries. Future research must therefore seek to decenter Anglophone dominance by prioritizing Latin American, African, and Asian voices (Barcelos & Aragão, 2018; Joubert & Jacobs, 2024; Derakhshan & Nazari, 2022). It should also explore the intersectionality of emotions with gender, race, migration, and language hierarchies (Zembylas, 2003; Beijaard et al., 2004; Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008; Norton, 2013), recognizing how emotional experiences are shaped by broader systems of inequality and power. Likewise, advancing decolonial-affective frameworks such as *conocimiento* and *sentipensar* is essential, not as thematic niches, but as theoretical engines capable of reorienting global debates on emotion, pedagogy, and identity (Escobar, 2020; Anzaldúa, 2002; De Sousa Santos, 2018).

Moreover, scholars such as Nguyen (2018) and De Costa et al. (2018) have shown how emotional-political tensions operate within ESL/EFL policy environments, offering fertile ground for further inquiry into how institutional discourses continue to shape affective possibilities in teacher education.

## **Closing Reflection: A Call for Humility and Relationality**

Rather than finalizing a model, this article offers a relational invitation; to sense, think, and teach otherwise. The findings of this profiling review highlight that emotions in ELT teacher education are not peripheral but constitutive of teacher identity, pedagogy, and epistemic positioning. The dominance of cognitive and regulatory models continues to limit the emotional agency of pre-service teachers, particularly in contexts where colonial legacies still dictate what counts as knowledge and professionalism.

Recognizing this, the study calls for concrete transformations in teacher education. Programs must move beyond the regulation of emotion toward its cultivation as a pedagogical, ethical, and political force. This means reimagining the practicum as an affective laboratory where vulnerability, care, and discomfort are treated as essential to teacher becoming. It also implies institutionalizing emotional justice; through mentoring structures, assessment criteria, and policy frameworks that acknowledge emotion as a dimension of epistemic power and professional legitimacy.

If ELT is to remain relevant and transformative, it must reckon with its affective landscapes, colonial inheritances, and epistemic exclusions. As Anzaldúa (2002, p. 39) reminds us, “Conocimiento comes from opening all of your senses to experience, learning to see from new angles.” (This is not merely poetic; it is a political imperative for teacher education reform). By centering *sentipensar* as both praxis and epistemology, ELT can move toward a more

humanizing and contextually grounded vision, one that teaches not only to think critically but also to feel ethically and collectively.

### **Ethical implications**

This article is a literature-based study. It does not involve human participants or empirical data collection. Ethical considerations were followed through the responsible citation of sources, academic integrity, and respect for intellectual property. The work aims to contribute to the ethical reflection and emotional awareness in teacher education research.

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The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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