From Emotion to Action: The Impact of Teachers' Affective Attitudes on Intercultural Classroom Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how teachers' affective attitudes toward non-Chinese students relate to their evaluations of learning outcomes, teaching engagement, and perceptions of learning difficulties in intercultural classrooms. Based on 196 valid questionnaires from Chinese primary school teachers in Selangor, Malaysia, the study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional design using descriptive and inferential analyses. Results show that teachers' affective attitudes (like / dislike / neutral) are not significantly associated with their teaching engagement or evaluations, indicating professional consistency beyond emotional preference. Background variables such as age, qualification, and homeroom status show no moderating effects. However, affective attitudes are significantly related to perceived learning difficulties ($\chi^2 = 30.7$, $p < .01$, Cramér's $V = 0.280$): teachers with positive attitudes emphasize expressive and literacy challenges, while negative-attitude teachers focus on memory and uncontrollable barriers. The findings suggest that affective attitudes influence teaching indirectly through attributional perceptions rather than direct behavioral engagement.

Keywords: affective attitudes, teaching engagement, intercultural classroom, learning difficulties, teacher perception

INTRODUCTION

Research Background and Significance

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid globally to how teachers' emotions and attitudes in the classroom influence both teaching effectiveness and students' overall development. Research indicates that teachers' affective states—both positive and negative—directly shape classroom climate and students' learning experiences, thereby affecting instructional quality. For instance, Reference [2]found that "teachers' joyful emotions are positively correlated with teaching quality, whereas anger and anxiety are negatively correlated." Similarly, Reference [10], through a newly developed assessment tool, revealed that when teachers express negative emotions, students' enjoyment and engagement in learning significantly decrease, highlighting the crucial role of teacher emotions in shaping student learning attitudes.

Meanwhile, Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) has received growing recognition as an essential pedagogical approach, with teachers' intercultural attitudes serving as a core component. Reference [1] found

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that teachers who possess positive multicultural attitudes and strong perspective-taking abilities tend to implement socially and culturally sensitive teaching more frequently, with a particularly pronounced effect in culturally responsive practices.

Although prior studies have examined either "teachers' emotions" or "multicultural attitudes," few have explored the behavioral mechanism linking teachers' subjective affective attitudes (such as liking, disliking, or neutrality) to their teaching engagement. In multicultural contexts, especially those involving non-Chinese students, little empirical research has addressed how teachers' emotional attitudes toward such students influence their classroom behavior and level of instructional commitment.

Within research frameworks that often focus on students' learning attitudes and achievements, teachers' affective dispositions are frequently overlooked. This oversight is particularly salient in multilingual and multiethnic educational settings such as Malaysia's Chinese-language schools, where the proportion of non-Chinese students continues to grow. Teachers' emotional attitudes toward these students may have profound, though underexplored, implications. Yet, no study has systematically investigated whether teachers' subjective preferences (e.g., "liking" or "disliking" non-Chinese students) affect their teaching engagement, effort, and evaluation of student performance.

To address this gap, the present study draws on 196 valid teacher questionnaire responses to examine how teachers' emotional attitudes translate into teaching behaviors—i.e., the emotion-to-action mechanism. It further seeks to uncover the underlying pathways and potential moderating factors in this process.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

Examine the relationship between teachers' affective attitudes toward non-Chinese students (like / neutral / dislike) and their evaluations of these students' learning attitudes and learning outcomes;

Analyze whether teachers' affective attitudes influence their level of teaching engagement, such as perceived effort or teaching confidence;

Test whether teachers' background variables (e.g., age, educational qualification, or homeroom teacher status) play a moderating role in the relationship between affective attitudes and teaching engagement.

Through these investigations, the study seeks to uncover the practical impact of teachers' subjective emotional attitudes in intercultural classroom teaching and to provide insights for teacher development and intercultural education practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers' affective attitudes are widely recognized as a key factor shaping classroom climate and students' learning experiences. Previous studies have shown that teachers' attitudes toward students not only vary among individuals but may also differ within the same teacher's perceptions of different students in [13]. For instance, reference[13] revealed that teachers' attitudes are not always directly aligned with students' academic performance but are often reflected through classroom interactions and informal feedback. This suggests that the mechanism through which teachers' affective attitudes influence student performance is complex.

Reference [15] found that teachers' negative attitudes and inappropriate instructional practices can lead to decreased student motivation and even feelings of frustration. This finding implies that teachers' attitudes may indirectly affect learning outcomes by shaping students' emotional states and motivation. Similarly, Reference [10]reported that when teachers expressed more negative emotions, students' enjoyment and engagement in learning significantly declined. The impact was particularly pronounced when most teachers displayed predominantly positive emotions, whereas a small number who exhibited negative emotions for as much as 80% of class time caused noticeable harm to students' classroom experiences.

In an experimental study, reference [2] introduced an affective support teaching intervention, which included positive classroom climate, teacher sensitivity, and respect for students' perspectives. The results demonstrated that students' perceptions of teachers' emotional support increased over time, fulfilling their basic psychological needs (such as autonomy and relatedness), and consequently enhancing positive emotions (reduced anxiety, increased enjoyment) and emotional engagement.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) emphasizes that teachers should integrate students' cultural backgrounds and experiences to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of instruction in[7]. Research has also shown that teachers with positive multicultural attitudes and perspective-taking abilities tend to implement CRT more frequently and with higher quality, thereby fostering student engagement and achievement. Reference [6] explored the integration of Social–Emotional Learning (SEL) and CRT, suggesting that incorporating both components in teacher education programs helps teachers develop emotional resilience, maintain psychological well-being, and more effectively support culturally diverse students.

Through qualitative interview analysis, reference [13] revealed that teachers often perceive emotions as both a resource and a burden: on the one hand, they use emotions to motivate teaching; on the other, emotional dysregulation may lead to negative consequences, hindering both teacher and student development.

Teaching engagement, meanwhile, is an important indicator of the effort and energy teachers invest in the instructional process. The meta-analysis by [8] showed that teaching engagement is more strongly related to teachers' self-efficacy, personality traits, and work stress rather than being determined solely by affective attitudes. Similarly, reference[14], in developing the College Teacher Teaching Engagement Scale, pointed out that teaching engagement is a multidimensional construct encompassing time, energy, and cognitive investment.

Overall, existing studies indicate that teachers' expressed emotions have significant effects on students' affect and classroom engagement in [2]&[10]. Multicultural education research underscores the importance of teachers' cultural attitudes; however, the role of teachers' subjective affective preferences (e.g., "liking" or "disliking" non-Chinese students) remains underexplored. Moreover, emotions can serve as both a valuable teaching resource and a potential burden in[13].

Hence, this study focuses on how teachers' subjective affective attitudes (like / dislike / neutral) translate into concrete teaching engagement behaviors, addressing the current gap in understanding the emotion–behavior transformation mechanism within CRT and teacher emotion research.

Research Questions:

1. Are teachers' affective attitudes toward non-Chinese students (like / dislike / neutral) related to their evaluations of students' learning attitudes and outcomes?
2. Do teachers' affective attitudes influence their level of teaching engagement (e.g., "worked hard and achieved good results" vs. "worked hard but results were average")?
3. Do teachers' background variables (e.g., age, educational qualification, homeroom teacher status) moderate the relationship between affective attitudes and teaching engagement?
4. Do teachers' affective attitudes affect how they perceive and interpret students' learning difficulties?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to statistically analyze questionnaire data collected from teachers, aiming to examine the relationship between teachers' affective attitudes and their classroom teaching engagement. The study employs a cross-sectional survey research approach, integrating both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to reveal the correlations and predictive relationships among variables.

The choice of a quantitative approach is grounded in the study's objective—to test and validate the mechanism through which teachers' affective attitudes influence teaching engagement, rather than to explore individual case

experiences. Therefore, statistical testing provides the necessary objectivity and replicability for empirical verification in[5].

Participants and Sampling

The participants of this study were teachers from various Chinese primary schools in Selangor, Malaysia, who have experience teaching non-Chinese students. A total of 196 valid questionnaires were collected, covering demographic variables such as gender, age (below 30, 30–40, 41–50, and above 51), educational qualification (secondary / diploma/bachelor's / postgraduate), teaching level (Grades 1–2, 3–4, or 5–6), and homeroom teacher status (yes/no).

A convenience sampling method was employed to ensure feasibility while securing a sufficient sample size for statistical analysis, meeting the requirements for detecting medium effect sizes in[4]. The detailed demographic distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table I Distribution of Teachers' Demographic Information (N = 196)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage（%）
Gender	Male	14	7.1
	Female	182	92.9
Age	Below 30	33	16.8
	30-40	100	51.0
	41-50	37	18.9
	Above 51	26	13.3
Educational Qualification	Secondary/Teacher Training	44	22.4
	Diploma	129	65.8
	Bachelor's Degree	22	11.2
	Postgraduate	1	0.5
Homeroom Teacher	Yes	175	89.3
	No	21	10.7
Teaching Level	Grades 1-2	30	15.3
	Grades 3-4	50	25.5
	Grades 5-6	99	50.5
	Others	17	8.7

The sample consists predominantly of female teachers (92.9%), most of whom are aged between 30 and 40 years (51.0%) and hold a diploma-level qualification (65.8%). A large majority serve as homeroom teachers (89.3%) and teach upper primary levels (Grades 5–6).

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a self-designed and revised questionnaire titled "Teacher Questionnaire on Teaching Chinese to Non-Chinese Students." The questionnaire consisted of three sections:

1. Section I: Demographic Information — including teachers' gender, age, educational qualification, teaching level, and homeroom teacher status.
2. Section II: Teaching Evaluation — assessing teachers' overall evaluation of non-Chinese students' learning attitudes, learning methods, and learning outcomes. A four-point Likert scale was used: Excellent, Good, Fair, and Poor.
3. Section III: Learning Context and Affective Attitudes — covering teachers' affective attitudes toward non-Chinese students (like, dislike, or neutral), difficulties encountered in teaching, and their self-perceived teaching status (e.g., "worked very hard and achieved good results" or "worked very hard but results were average").

The questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in language education and one expert in psychology to ensure the content validity of all items.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through a combination of paper-based questionnaires and online forms over a two-week period. The process strictly adhered to principles of anonymity and confidentiality, and participants were not required to provide any personally identifiable information.After data collection, responses were organized and imported into SPSS version 26.0 for statistical analysis. The following analytical methods were employed:

1. Descriptive Statistics — to present the overall distribution of teachers' demographic information and affective attitudes;
2. Chi-square Test — to examine the association between teachers' affective attitudes and their evaluation of students' learning outcomes;
3. Correlation and Multiple Regression Analyses — to explore the predictive effect of teachers' affective attitudes on their teaching engagement, while controlling for variables such as gender, age, educational qualification, and homeroom teacher status;
4. One-way ANOVA — to test whether differences exist in affective attitudes and teaching engagement across teachers with different background variables.All statistical tests were conducted at a significance level of $p < .05$

FINDINGS

Distribution of Teachers' Affective Attitudes

Table II Distribution of Teachers' Affective Attitudes Toward Non-Chinese Students (N = 196)

Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Like	89	45.4
Dislike	3	1.5
Neutral / Acceptable	106	54.1
Others	3	1.5

The majority of teachers reported a neutral or generally positive attitude toward non-Chinese students. Specifically, 54.1% indicated a neutral ("acceptable") stance, while 45.4% expressed that they liked teaching non-Chinese students. Only a very small proportion (1.5%) reported a dislike, suggesting that overall teacher affective attitudes in intercultural classrooms are largely positive.

Relationship Between Affective Attitudes and Student Learning Evaluation

Table III Cross-Tabulation of Teachers' Affective Attitudes × Evaluation of Students' Learning Outcomes

		Evaluation of Students' Learning Outcomes				
Teachers' Affective Attitudes	χ^2/p/φ	Excellent n (%)	Good n (%)	Fair n (%)	Poor n (%)	Total
Like	16.0/<.001/0.286	1(1.1)	12(13.5)	66(74.2)	10(11.2)	89
Dislike	4.4/0.187/0.15	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(33.3)	2(66.7)	3
Neutral	13.3/0.004/0.260	0(0.0)	2(1.9)	78(73.6)	26(24.5)	108
Others	1.13/0.770/0.0759	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3(100)	0(0.0)	3
Total	1.90/0.929/0.0697	1	14	143	38	196

Significance: Chi-square test results show that teachers in the "Like" and "Neutral" groups demonstrated a significant association with their evaluation of students' learning outcomes ($p < .01$), whereas the "Dislike" and "Others" groups did not reach significance.

Effect Size: Cramer's V coefficients ranged between 0.260–0.286, indicating a moderate effect size (where 0.1 ≈ small effect, 0.3 ≈ medium, and 0.5 ≈ large effect).

Residual Analysis: Cells corresponding to "Like × Good" and "Neutral × Fair" showed observed values significantly higher than expected. This suggests that teachers with positive affective attitudes were more

inclined to give students better evaluations, whereas those with neutral attitudes tended to rate students' learning Summary: Overall, the cross-tabulation analysis revealed no significant overall relationship between teachers' affective attitudes and their evaluations of students' learning outcomes ($\chi^2 = 1.90$, $p = .929$, $\varphi = 0.0697$). However, when examined by subgroup, a clear pattern emerged: teachers with "Like" attitudes were significantly more likely to rate non-Chinese students as "Good", while those with "Neutral" attitudes were more likely to assign "Fair" or "Poor" evaluations. Due to the small number of teachers in the "Dislike" group (n = 3), no statistically meaningful difference could be established for that category.

In sum, these findings suggest that teachers' affective attitudes play a meaningful role in shaping how they evaluate students' learning performance, even if the overall statistical association is modest.

Relationship Between Affective Attitudes and Teaching Engagement

Table IV Cross-Tabulation of Teachers' Affective Attitudes × Teaching Engagement Level

		Teaching Engagement Level				
Teachers' Affective Attitudes	χ^2/p/φ	Very Good n(%)	Moderate n(%)	Beginning to Try n(%)	Casual n(%)	Total
Like	3.76/<0.289/0.138	35(18.3)	91(47.6)	57(29.8)	8(4.2)	191
Dislike	6.93/0.074/0.188	0(0.0)	1(25)	2(50)	1(25)	4
Neutral	5.32/0.150/0.165	0(5.7)	1(100.0)	0(0)	0(0)	1
Total	6.5/0.370/0.129	35(17.9)	93(47.7)	59(30.1)	9(4.6)	196

Percentages in parentheses represent row percentages. The original questionnaire contained five options for teaching engagement, but one option was not selected by any respondent and is therefore omitted from the table.The Pearson Chi-square test results indicate that the overall difference between teachers' affective attitudes and their level of teaching engagement was not statistically significant ($\chi^2(6, N = 196) = 6.50$, $p = .370$, $\varphi = .129$). The effect size falls within the small-to-moderate range. Sample Size Consideration:The "Dislike" (n = 4) and "Neutral" (n = 1) groups had extremely small sample sizes, so their results should be interpreted with caution.

Most teachers who reported a "Like" attitude toward non-Chinese students described themselves as "working hard but with average results" (47.6%), followed by "working hard and achieving good results" (18.3%) and "beginning to put in effort" (29.8%). This pattern suggests that while teachers generally demonstrated high engagement levels, affective attitudes did not significantly predict differences in engagement intensity.

Overall, the cross-tabulation results indicate that although teachers tend to invest substantial effort in teaching, their affective attitudes toward students did not significantly influence their self-perceived level of teaching engagement.

Table V Regression Analysis of Teachers' Affective Attitudes on Teaching Engagement

Dependent Variable	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	.519	.643	-	.807	.421
Teachers' Affective Attitudes	.347	.279	.088	1.244	.215
Gender	.152	.220	.050	.692	.490
Age	.076	.065	.087	1.174	.242
Educational Qualification	.090	.099	.067	.910	.364
Teaching Grade Level	.098	.067	.106	1.466	.144
Homeroom Teacher Status	-.493	.184	-.194	-2.682	.008

Note. Statistical significance was determined at $p < .05$.

The results of the multiple regression analysis (see Table 5) indicate that the overall model had limited explanatory power for teachers' teaching engagement levels ($R^2 = .062$, adjusted $R^2 = .032$). The model showed marginal significance ($F(6, 189) = 2.065$, $p = .059$).

Among the predictor variables, only homeroom teacher status emerged as a significant predictor of teaching engagement (B = –0.493, β = –.194, t = –2.682, p = .008), suggesting that non-homeroom teachers exhibited significantly higher levels of teaching engagement compared to their homeroom counterparts.

Other variables—including teachers' affective attitudes (B = 0.347, β = .088, p = .215), gender (B = 0.152, β = .050, p = .490), age (B = 0.076, β = .087, p = .242), educational qualification (B = 0.090, β = .067, p = .364), and teaching grade level (B = 0.098, β = .106, p = .144)， did not show significant predictive effects on teaching engagement.

In summary, the regression results suggest that while the model only explains a small proportion of variance in teaching engagement, the role of homeroom teachers may entail additional responsibilities that reduce their perceived teaching investment, whereas affective attitudes and demographic variables do not significantly account for variations in engagement levels.

Analysis of Differences Based on Background Variables

To examine whether teachers' background characteristics influenced their affective attitudes and levels of teaching engagement, a series of independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were conducted for gender, age, educational qualification, teaching grade level, and homeroom teacher status.

Table VI Effects of Teachers' Background Variables on Affective Attitudes

Background Variable	Category	M	SD	t/F	df	P	Effect Size
Gender(t-test)	Male（n=14）	1.0000	.0000	t=-.593	194	0.554	0.1644
	Female（n=182）	1.0330	.2076				
Homeroom Teacher (t-test)	Yes（n=175）	1.0343	.2117	t=.741	194	0.460	0.1711
	No（n=21）	1.0000	.0000				
Age (ANOVA)	Below 30 (n=33)	1.0303	.17408	F=0.277	192	0.842	η^2=.03
	30–40 (n=100)	1.0400	.24288				
	41–50 (n=37)	1.0270	.16440				
	Above 51 (n=26)	1.0000	.0000				
Educational Qualification (ANOVA)	Secondary/Teacher Training (n=44)	1.0000	.0000	F=.791	192	0.500	η^2=.095
	Diploma (n=129)	1.0465	.24560				
	Bachelor (n=22)	1.0000	.0000				
	Postgraduate (n=1)	1.0000	-				
Teaching Grade Level (ANOVA)	Grades 1–2 (n=30)	1.1000	.30513	F=1.743	192	0.160	η^2=.207
	Grades 3–4 (n=50)	1.0000	.0000				
	Grades 5–6 (n=99)	1.0303	.22381				
	Others (n=17)	1.0000	.0000				

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation; t = independent-samples t-test value; F = one-way ANOVA value; d = Cohen's d; η^2 = Eta squared. $p < .05$ indicates statistical significance.

Independent-samples t-tests revealed no significant gender difference in affective attitudes (t(194) = –0.593, p = .554, d = 0.16) and no significant difference **between** homeroom and non-homeroom teachers (t(194) = 0.741, p = .460, d = 0.17).

Similarly, one-way ANOVA results showed no significant differences in affective attitudes across age groups (F(3, 192) = 0.277, p = .842, η^2 = .03), educational qualifications (F(3, 192) = 0.791, p = .500, η^2 = .10), or teaching grade levels(F(3, 192) = 1.743, p = .160, η^2 = .21). Although minor mean differences were observed—for example, teachers of Grades 1–2 scored slightly higher in affective attitudes (M = 1.10)—these variations did not reach statistical significance**.**

The analyses indicate that teachers' gender, age, educational qualification, teaching grade level, and homeroom teacher status did not significantly affect their affective attitudes toward non-Chinese students. These findings suggest that teachers' emotional attitudes are relatively independent of demographic and professional background factors, reflecting a generally stable emotional orientation in intercultural teaching contexts.

Table VII Effects of Teachers' Background Variables on Teaching Engagement Levels

Background Variable	Category	M	SD	t/F	df	P	Effect Size
Gender(t-test)	Male（n=14）	1.0000	.87706	t=-.593	194	0.554	-0.0628
	Female（n=182）	1.2308	.78066				
Homeroom Teacher (t-test)	Yes（n=175）	1.2629	.78017	t=2.526	194	0.012	0.0363
	No（n=21）	.8095	.74960				
Age (ANOVA)	Below 30 (n=33)	1.1515	.87039	F=0.412	192	0.745	η^2=0.774
	30–40 (n=100)	1.1800	.75719				
	41–50 (n=37)	1.3243	.85160				
	Above 51 (n=26)	1.2692	.72430				
Educational Qualification (ANOVA)	Secondary / Teacher Training (n=44)	1.1591	.71343	F=.143	192	0.934	η^2=.269
	Diploma (n=129)	1.2248	.80273				
	Bachelor (n=22)	1.2727	.88273				
	Postgraduate (n=1)	1.0000	-				
Teaching Grade Level (ANOVA)	Grades1–2 (n=30)	1.2667	.86834	F=1.446	192	.231	η^2=2.673
	Grades 3–4 (n=50)	1.0800	.77828				
	Grades 5–6 (n=99)	1.2121	.77292				
	Others (n=17)	1.5294	.71743				

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation; t = independent-samples t-test value; F = one-way ANOVA value; d = Cohen's d; η^2 = Eta squared. $p < .05$ indicates statistical significance.

The independent samples t-test results revealed that there was no significant difference in teaching engagement levels between male and female teachers ($t(194) = –0.593$, $p = .554$, $d = –0.06$).

However, a significant difference was found between homeroom and non-homeroom teachers ($t(194) = 2.526$, $p = .012$, $d = 0.36$). Specifically, homeroom teachers ($M = 1.26$, $SD = 0.78$) reported significantly higher levels of teaching engagement than non-homeroom teachers ($M = 0.81$, $SD = 0.75$). This finding suggests that the additional responsibilities associated with managing a class may enhance teachers' perceived investment in teaching activities.

The one-way ANOVA results showed no significant differences in teaching engagement across age groups ($F(3,192) = 0.412$, $p = .745$, $\eta^2 = .01$), educational qualification levels ($F(3,192) = 0.143$, $p = .934$, $\eta^2 = .00$), or teaching grade levels ($F(3,192) = 1.446$, $p = .231$, $\eta^2 = .02$). Although teachers who taught "other grades" recorded the highest mean engagement score ($M = 1.53$), the overall differences did not reach statistical significance.

Among all background variables, only homeroom teacher status significantly influenced teaching engagement levels. Gender, age, educational qualification, and teaching grade level showed no significant impact. This suggests that administrative and pastoral responsibilities associated with being a homeroom teacher may increase teachers' perceived engagement in instructional tasks.

Affective Attitudes and Perceived Teaching Difficulties

Teachers generally reported that non-Chinese students in Chinese language learning face several key challenges: difficulty understanding teachers' explanations, inability to express themselves, reading and writing difficulties, limited collaboration skills, memory retention problems, and fast forgetting rates.

Table VIII Cross-Tabulation of Teachers' Affective Attitudes × Perceived Learning Difficulties (N = 196)

Teachers' Affective Attitudes	Perceived Learning Difficulties						
	Cannot Understand n (%)	Cannot Express n (%)	Reading Difficulty n (%)	Poor Collaboration n (%)	Forget Easily n (%)	Others n (%)	Total n (%)
Like	1	65	64	31	29	1	191
	0.5	34.0	33.5	16.2	15.2	0.5	100.0
Dislike	0	0	2	0	1	1	4
	0.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	25.0	25.0	100.0
Neutral	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Total	1	65	66	32	30	2	196
	0.5	33.2	33.7	16.3	15.3	1.0	100.0

Note. $\chi^2 = 30.7$, df = 1, $p < .01$; Cramér's V = 0.280 (medium effect size).

shown in Table 8, there is a significant association between teachers' affective attitudes and their perceptions of non-Chinese students' learning difficulties ($\chi^2 = 30.7$, df = 1, $p < .01$; Cramér's V = 0.280), indicating a moderate effect size.

Overall, teachers most frequently identified "inability to express" (33.2%) and "reading difficulties" (33.7%) as the main challenges faced by students, followed by "poor collaboration" (16.3%) and "forgetting easily" (15.3%).

When analyzed by affective attitude group: Teachers with a "Like" attitude emphasized expressive difficulties (34.0%) and reading problems (33.5%), reflecting a more constructive and improvement-oriented perception of students' challenges. Teachers with a "Dislike" attitude focused more on reading difficulties (50.0%) and forgetting easily / other issues (25.0% each), indicating a tendency to attribute students' struggles to more persistent or less controllable obstacles.

These results suggest that teachers' affective attitudes not only influence how they evaluate student performance but also shape how they interpret and attribute learning difficulties. Positive-attitude teachers are more likely to focus on skill-based and remediable issues (e.g., expression, reading), while negative-attitude teachers tend to perceive students' difficulties as inherent or difficult to overcome. This finding underscores the emotional lens through which teachers perceive student ability and classroom challenges in intercultural teaching contexts.

DISCUSSION

This study found no significant correlation between teachers' affective attitudes toward non-Chinese students (like / dislike / neutral) and their evaluations of students' learning attitudes and outcomes. This result suggests that teachers' emotional preferences do not directly translate into their academic evaluations of students. Similarly, reference [12] noted that teachers' attitudes toward different students vary both across and within individuals, but such differences may not necessarily appear in grades or formal assessments; rather, they tend to manifest in informal interactions and classroom climate. Accordingly, this study aligns with previous literature in suggesting that teachers' evaluations are more strongly constrained by institutional and professional norms than by personal emotions.

The findings also revealed that teachers' affective attitudes did not significantly predict their level of teaching engagement. In other words, even teachers who hold neutral or negative attitudes toward non-Chinese students maintained a consistent level of professional investment in teaching. This finding echoes the work of [14], who reported that university teachers' "teaching engagement" is largely driven by institutional and professional expectations rather than by affective preferences. Likewise, reference [8] meta-analysis emphasized that teaching engagement is more closely associated with psychological factors such as self-efficacy and work stress,

rather than with simple emotions or attitudes. This indicates that teachers' professionalism may serve as a buffering mechanism, reducing the influence of affective attitudes on their instructional commitment.

Further analysis examined whether background variables such as age, educational qualification, and homeroom teacher status moderated the relationship between affective attitudes and teaching engagement, but none of these effects were significant. This finding corresponds with [9], who grouped teachers according to their attitudes toward differentiated instruction and found that while attitudes varied, teaching performance did not consistently differ across attitude types. This suggests that teachers' personal backgrounds and attitudinal profiles cannot be used as straightforward predictors of their teaching engagement patterns.

Although teachers' affective attitudes were not significantly related to teaching engagement or learning evaluations, they showed a notable association with perceived teaching difficulties. The present study revealed that teachers with positive affective attitudes were more attentive to students' expressive and literacy-related challenges, whereas those with negative attitudes tended to focus on issues such as forgetting and uncontrollable learning barriers. Reference [15] likewise observed that teachers' negative affective orientations may reinforce students' sense of helplessness through negative attributions, thereby undermining their learning motivation. This finding suggests that the influence of affective attitudes may not manifest directly through teaching engagement, but rather indirectly by shaping how teachers perceive and attribute students' learning difficulties—ultimately affecting instructional quality.

Nevertheless, the cross-sectional design of this study limits its ability to establish causal relationships or trace how teachers' affective attitudes evolve over time. While a longitudinal design would provide stronger evidence of the dynamic interplay between affective attitudes and attributional perceptions, such an approach was not feasible due to time and resource constraints. Future research could adopt longitudinal or mixed-method designs, incorporating classroom observations and interviews, to investigate how affective attitudes and attributional tendencies develop over time and influence long-term teaching practices as well as student learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Based on 196 questionnaires collected from teachers in ten Chinese primary schools in Selangor, this study examined the relationships among teachers' affective attitudes toward non-Chinese students, their evaluations of students' learning outcomes, teaching engagement levels, and perceptions of learning difficulties, while also testing the moderating effects of age, educational qualification, and homeroom teacher status.

The results revealed no significant relationship between teachers' affective attitudes and their evaluations of students' learning outcomes or teaching engagement levels, indicating that teachers maintained objectivity and stability in their professional evaluations and commitment, independent of personal emotions. Background variables likewise showed no significant moderating effects on the relationship between affective attitudes and teaching engagement. Notably, teachers' affective attitudes were significantly associated with their perceptions of students' learning difficulties ($\chi^2 = 30.7$, $p < .01$, Cramér's $V = 0.280$): teachers with positive attitudes focused more **on** improvable challenges such as expression and literacy, while those with negative attitudes tended to attribute learning problems to less manageable factors such as memory and forgetting. These findings suggest that while affective attitudes do not directly affect teaching engagement or evaluation, they may indirectly influence teaching practices through differing attribution patterns regarding students' learning difficulties.

Overall, this study offers new empirical evidence on teachers' affective attitudes within intercultural education contexts, suggesting that their influence operates primarily through teachers' cognitive interpretations of students' learning difficulties rather than through direct effects on engagement or assessment. From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the importance of teacher training programs that cultivate positive attributional styles and prevent emotional preferences from lowering expectations of students' potential. Furthermore, educational administrators should monitor the workload of homeroom teachers and provide structural support to maintain their teaching engagement.

Despite certain methodological limitations—namely the cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data—the present findings yield valuable insights for future research. Subsequent studies could adopt

longitudinal or classroom-based observational designs to examine the long-term dynamics of affective attitudes and explore how teaching beliefs, self-efficacy, and school culture mediate or moderate the relationship between emotion and behavior.

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