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Gendered Regret in Chinese University English Classrooms: Toward a Five-Dimensional Analytical Framework

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ABSTRACT

This study uses semi-structured interviews to examine the emergence of gendered regrets in Chinese university English classrooms. Reflexive thematic analysis of interviews with 36 teachers and 53 students across 23 universities identifies how pedagogical practices, student psychology, social expectations, pragmatic language use, and intercultural communication interact to shape gendered experiences. Drawing on these findings, the study introduces the 'Regret Pentagon Diagram', a conceptual framework that categorizes the five dimensions contributing to gendered regret. Pedagogical practices, such as gendered grouping or role expectations, can limit student participation and agency. Psychological factors reveal how students experience self-doubt, discomfort, or exclusion when gendered assumptions conflict with individual identity. Social expectations, including teachers' authority and perceived social status, influence students' gendered sense of fairness and opportunity. Pragmatic issues highlight how language choices and framing may unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes, while intercultural communication demonstrates how culturally informed gender expectations can create tension in cross-cultural classrooms. The analysis shows that teachers' unexamined gender assumptions and insufficient cultural sensitivity can lead to student alienation, disengagement, and emotional distress. The study underscores the importance of gender-sensitive pedagogy, reflective teaching practice, and intercultural competence to promote equitable, inclusive, and context-responsive learning environments.

Keywords: Gender; Regret; English; University; China

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1. Introduction

The dynamics of gender recognition within teacher-student interactions in educational settings are undergoing a profound transformation worldwide. This shift is particularly evident within Chinese university English classrooms, where gendered biases and misunderstandings between teachers and students are often overlooked or inadequately explored. International reports have consistently shown that gender-related disparities in participation, emotional well-being, and classroom interaction remain a persistent global concern across different educational systems[1]. Gender, as a fundamental element of social culture, has long influenced various educational fields, including language teaching[2].

Within the Chinese higher education context, gender equality has been widely emphasized as a core educational and social value. However, gender-related misinterpretations continue to surface in everyday classroom practices, especially in language education, where interaction and communication play a central role[3]. These misinterpretations may subtly shape teachers' pedagogical decisions and students' learning experiences, yet they are rarely explicitly addressed in classroom discourse or institutional reflection[4]. This discrepancy between policy-level commitments to gender equality and micro-level classroom practices highlights an underexplored tension in educational research and provides an important background for this study.

This study is motivated by the researchers' long-term observations of English teaching practice, during which the emergence of gendered regrets in classroom interactions became increasingly noticeable. Over time, it was observed that gender biases not only influenced classroom atmosphere and teaching effectiveness but also contributed to students' feelings of unfairness or alienation. In some classroom interactions, for instance, teachers failed to effectively address gender differences, resulting in student confusion or dissatisfaction. Following sustained discussions with colleagues and students, this issue was subsequently examined at an academic level. Accordingly, this study aims to explore, through interviews, the gendered regrets experienced by both teachers and students within the context of university English teaching and learning, and to examine the underlying causes of these regrets.

Regret, as conceptualized in psychological and behavioral research, refers to a negative emotional experience arising from the perception that a choice or action could have led to a more desirable outcome[5]. Individuals are therefore often motivated to avoid decisions that may result in regret, a tendency commonly described as regret aversion[6]. Studies on regret regulation further differentiate regret from related affective states and highlight the conditions under which it is most likely to emerge, including decision context, emotional intensity, and social influence[7,8]. While building on this established body of regret research, the present study adopts an analytically open stance toward the situated and interactional forms of regret that emerge from the empirical data collected by the authors. Specifically, it examines how gendered experiences of regret are articulated, interpreted, and negotiated within everyday interactions in Chinese university English classrooms.

Based on interview data collected from 36 teachers and 53 students across 23 universities in China, this study identifies distinct multidimensional characteristics of gendered regrets in university English classrooms. These regrets influence not only teacher-student interactions but also the overall classroom climate, shaping participation, engagement, and emotional experiences. To theorize these phenomena, the study introduces the 'Regret Pentagon Diagram', an inductively developed model grounded in the empirical data, which categorizes and explains the emergence of gendered regrets across five interrelated dimensions: pedagogical, psychological, social, pragmatic, and intercultural communication. Each dimension captures a specific facet of how pedagogical practices, individual perceptions, social hierarchies, language use, and cultural expectations intersect to produce regret in the classroom context.

The conceptual development and analytical utility of the 'Regret Pentagon Diagram' are elaborated alongside the thematic analysis in the 'Materials and Methods' and 'Discussion' sections, ensuring that the model is data-driven rather than pre-established. By mapping gendered regrets across these five dimensions, the study addresses gaps in prior research that have predominantly conceptualized regret as an individual cognitive or emotional phenomenon, thereby contributing to more nuanced understandings of gender, emotion, and classroom dynamics in China's higher education. The study specifically addresses three research questions: (i) What forms do gendered expressions of regret take within Chinese university English classrooms? (ii) How can these

gendered regrets be categorized across distinct dimensions? and (iii) What factors contribute to their emergence?

2. Literature Review

Studies in behavioral economics, psychology, and marketing have advanced the public understanding of how regret influences decision-making and emotional regulation. Individuals are more likely to regret inaction than action, underscoring the emotional intensity associated with missed opportunities[8]. Building on this, the concept of 'regret regulation' distinguishes regret from related emotions and identifies the specific conditions under which it arises[9]. An interdisciplinary approach integrates insights from psychology, economics, and marketing to examine the behavioral consequences of regret. Regret can disrupt our expectations and reshape how we envision the future[10]. Similarly, the role of anticipated regret and psychological opportunity cost in shaping decision-making[11].

Increasing attention has also been given to how gender shapes the experience and social framing of regret. Studies revealed that older adolescents and individuals who spend more time on social platforms like Facebook are more likely to experience online regret, although gender and Facebook usage do not significantly affect the tendency to regret[12]. The Australian drug education curriculum reinforces gendered stereotypes, portraying young women's substance use as more problematic, focusing on their potential regret and responsibility for harm, while neglecting the actions of young men[13]. Similarly, the persistence of pronatalist ideologies in Iceland, where women are pressured into motherhood and face judgment and social stigma when they regret this choice, despite the country's gender equality efforts[14].

Scholars also explored how regret is shaped by cultural and social norms, adding critical cross-cultural dimensions to the literature. For instance, research utilizing surveys, social media data, and experiments across South Korea and the United States revealed that regret experiences are culturally dependent, particularly within life domains in collectivistic cultures, unlike individualistic cultures, where inaction regrets are more universal[15]. Furthermore, studies found that regret and guilt, as self-conscious emotions linked to self-discrepancies, exhibit cultural variations in their relationship to ideal versus ought self-discrepancies between Chinese and US participants[16]. Regret is further explored by analyzing 113 Chinese teacher narratives, revealing universal attitudes toward regret that are refracted through culturally nuanced, transcultural expressions, underscoring the distinctive public discourse of regret in China[17].

A review of the existing literature reveals both areas of convergence and divergence in how regret has been researched and understood. Across studies, regret is consistently associated with decision-making processes and emotional evaluation. However, research conducted in contexts outside China has tended to foreground individual agency, intrapsychic mechanisms, and moral responsibility, often examining regret in relation to actions taken or foregone in pursuit of personal goals and self-defined standards. By contrast, studies situated in the Chinese context have more frequently emphasized relational dynamics, role-based expectations, and social obligations, with regret commonly framed in terms of having failed significant others or disrupted interpersonal and social harmony.

Despite these contributions, the existing body of research remains uneven in its attention to how regret is constructed across different educational contexts. In particular, there is limited empirical work that examines how gendered experiences of regret are produced and negotiated within University English classrooms in China. To address this gap, this study examines how gendered misunderstandings arise and how they shape teaching, learning, and classroom interactions in Chinese university English classrooms.

3. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology aimed at exploring participants' subjective experiences of gendered regrets in university English classrooms. The methodological orientation emphasizes understanding the meanings and contexts of these experiences rather than quantifying them. Reflexive thematic analysis was chosen as the analytical approach because it enables the identification of recurring patterns and themes while allowing the researchers to reflect on their own interpretive role in the analytic process. This methodological stance guided the selection of participants, data collection procedures, and the development of conceptual categories, ensuring that the study's design, analysis, and theoretical contributions are coherently aligned.

Guided by this methodological orientation, we employed semi-structured interviews to collect and analyze data. The participants in the study primarily included two groups: university English teachers and students. Initially, we interviewed five teachers from the same institution to explore potential gendered regrets in local classrooms. These early interviews revealed that gendered regrets were relatively simple, with some teachers reporting almost none. This led us to expand the study, interviewing students from the same institution, which produced promising data. To further broaden the scope, the study was extended to include teachers and students from 23 universities across China.

The data collection coincided with a national academic conference, providing an opportunity to expand the participant pool through colleague recommendations and on-site snowball sampling. In total, 36 teachers and 53 students from 23 universities nationwide were interviewed. These universities included both prestigious institutions, part of China's '985' and '211' projects, national initiatives aimed at promoting the development of top universities, and non-prestigious institutions. The teachers' backgrounds varied, including professors, associate professors, and lecturers with diverse academic degrees. Three foreign teachers from the U.S., Morocco, and Australia participated. Students were mainly undergraduates, some with study-abroad experience. Postgraduate and doctoral students were excluded from this study because undergraduate English classrooms involve distinct pedagogical expectations and interactional patterns, a distinction that is well documented in prior research on differences in teaching perceptions and preferences across educational levels[18]. However, we acknowledge that the regrets arising from academic interactions between supervisors and postgraduate or doctoral students represent an important area for future research.

During the interviews, we employed open-ended questions designed to encourage participants to share their gendered regrets encountered in classroom teaching and learning, as well as the underlying reasons. This approach enabled a deeper exploration of the specific contexts, impacts, and causes of gender misunderstandings. Through these interviews, we captured participants' subjective experiences, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the contexts and effects of such misunderstandings[19]. The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Commit-

tee of School of Humanities and Foreign Languages, Xi'an University of Posts and Telecommunications (protocol code YJLL2023021, date of approval: March 2023). All interviews were conducted with informed consent, ensuring the protection of participants' privacy and personal information.

In alignment with the study's methodological stance, the interview data were analyzed using the six-phase reflexive thematic analysis approach[20], allowing for an iterative and interpretive exploration of recurring themes and patterns. To ensure a rigorous analytical process, we began with initial open coding, which identified a wide range of emotional, pedagogical, and cultural phenomena, such as feelings of misreading gender roles, misalignments in participation norms, and frustration with institutional constraints. This stage generated a broad set of conceptually significant codes.

Subsequently, we monitored thematic saturation, which was reached after approximately 80% of the dataset had been analyzed, indicating sufficient data coverage and interpretive density. To further enhance data credibility, we employed cross-validation strategies: interview data from students and teachers were internally verified within their respective groups, while intergroup interviews provided triangulated insights from both perspectives. These procedures helped refine the coding framework and validate recurring conceptual patterns. Such multi-layered validation increases both reliability and representational accuracy in qualitative research[21].

Following these stages of open coding, saturation monitoring, and cross-data validation, we conducted cross-case comparisons and thematic synthesis. This iterative process produced ten recurring themes, which were then conceptually organized into five analytical dimensions: pedagogical, psychological, social, pragmatic, and intercultural. These final categories are presented in **Table 1**, illustrating the structured relationship between codes, themes, and dimensions.

The ten recurring themes were represented through ten contextualized scenarios constructed with illustrative characters and dialogues. Drawing on participants' original accounts, their words were synthesized and embedded within these virtual scenarios, allowing readers to engage with gendered regrets as they emerge in concrete classroom contexts while safeguarding participants' privacy and anonymity[22]. This methodological approach enabled a more engaging, in-

tuitive, and nuanced depiction of how gendered regrets are manifested and experienced, thereby enhancing the interpretive depth and analytical significance of the empirical data.

Table 1. Final Coding Results.

Dimensions	Themes	Representative Codes	Associated Cases
Pedagogical	Instructional gender discomfort	Feeling awkward teaching mixed-gender content; mismatch between role and expectations	1 & 2
Pedagogical	Pedagogical role ambiguity	Struggles with enforcing or resisting gender norms in curriculum design; differential expectations for male and female students	1 & 2
Psychological	Gendered self-doubt and reflection	Regret about past gendered actions; fear of being judged for non-conformity; students questioning their competence when teacher expectations conflict with self-perception	3 & 4
Psychological	Emotional strain and role confusion	Anxiety, identity struggles, retrospective questioning of self-positioning; internal tension between personal capacity and gendered attributions	3 & 4
Social	Peer conformity pressure	Fear of peer labeling, deviation from group norms, and social ridicule risk; discomfort from social hierarchies and gendered status signaling	5 & 6
Social	Gendered group dynamics	Experiences of inclusion/exclusion shaped by gendered behaviors, social privilege, or appearance; perceived inequities due to financial and gendered social background	5 & 6
Pragmatic	Language and participation constraints	Conflicts arising from teacher language use, implicit gendered assumptions, and constraints on expressing diverse perspectives	7 & 8
Pragmatic	Leadership and stereotype reinforcement	Differential treatment in leadership or participation expectations; generalizations about male/female capacities affecting classroom dynamics	7 & 8
Intercultural	Cross-cultural expectation conflicts	Misalignment between teachers' cultural assumptions and students' cultural norms; imposition of Western gender ideals on Chinese students	9 & 10
Intercultural	Gendered cultural misinterpretation	Pressure to conform to culturally foreign gender norms; students experiencing discomfort due to stereotyping in leadership or assertiveness	9 & 10

In developing the concept of the 'Regret Pentagon Diagram', our analysis revealed that gendered regrets do not emerge solely from isolated teaching decisions or errors, but from the complex interplay of five interrelated dimensions: pedagogical, psychological, social, pragmatic, and intercultural factors. Each dimension captures a distinct aspect of classroom interaction, highlighting how teaching strategies, student and teacher emotional responses, social hierarchies, language use, and cultural differences collectively shape the emergence of regret. Our findings demonstrate the diagram's flexibility and applicability as a tool for both teacher reflection and the enhancement of classroom interactions in university English education.

This study strictly adhered to established ethical guidelines throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the authors' home university. Prior to participation, all participants were informed of the study's purpose and procedures, and written informed consent was obtained. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. Given that the study involved reflections on teacher-student interactions and gender-relevant classroom experiences in a university context, potential psychological discomfort and social risks were anticipated. To mitigate these risks, participants were allowed to decline any question or terminate their participation at any point. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by removing all identifying information, and all data were stored in encrypted files accessible only to the research team.

4. Findings

According to data analysis, gendered regrets in educational settings arise from the interaction of five interrelated dimensions: pedagogical methods, psychological processes, social influences, pragmatic language use, and intercultural communication. To present the findings, this study synthesized the empirical data into ten situated cases (summarized in **Table 2**), with each case illustrating how specific mechanisms within these dimensions generate gendered regret.

Table 2. A Summary of the Ten Situated Cases.

Cases	Dimensions	Regret Types	Gender Bias Sources	Outcomes
1	Pedagogical	Reduction of female students' roles to marriage	Male teacher's adherence to traditional gender norms	The teacher reflects on instructional impact and apologizes to the student and class
2	Pedagogical	Reinforcement of rigid gender roles	Female teacher's binary association of emotional expression with female students and rationality with male students	The teacher acknowledges implicit bias and commits to gender-sensitive teaching
3	Psychological	Gendered trait attribution	Female teacher's praise of patience and attentiveness as feminine traits	The teacher recognizes the exclusionary effect and plans more inclusive language use
4	Psychological	Differential criticism of male students	Female teacher's expectation that males should demonstrate emotional toughness	The teacher adjusts feedback approach to balance critique and emotional support
5	Social	Social and gender-based alienation	Male teacher's repeated references to overseas experiences and egalitarian ideals	Students report feelings of inadequacy; The teacher reflects on reinforcing social and gender hierarchies
6	Social	Idealized advice overlooking financial and social realities	Female teacher's advocacy for travel and study abroad as normative for women	The teacher apologizes and recognizes the need for context-sensitive guidance
7	Pragmatic	Heteronormative and restrictive language	Female teacher's definition of marriage is limited to man-woman relationships	The teacher revises language to incorporate inclusivity and legal/cultural diversity
8	Pragmatic	Male leadership privilege	Male teacher's generalization that men are better leaders	Students challenge assumptions; The teacher reconsiders language and classroom framing
9	Intercultural	Imposition of Western male leadership norms	Foreign female teacher's expectation that Chinese male students should adopt assertive Western leadership styles	The teacher adapts guidance to respect students' cultural context and leadership preferences
10	Intercultural	Imposition of Western female assertiveness norms	Foreign male teacher's expectation that Chinese female students emulate Western extroversion	The teacher recognizes cultural differences and adjusts expectations for participation and expression

4.1. Pedagogical Dimension

Case 1: Male Teacher's Gender Bias toward Female Students

Characters of Case 1

Li: A male teacher in his forties, experienced in teaching, but maintains traditional views on gender roles.

Lin: A female freshman, outspoken, advocates for gender equality.

Scenario of Case 1

During an English class, Li discusses 'female roles' and unintentionally states, *"A woman's primary role is to marry young and view marriage as the most important stage of her life."* Lin feels offended, thinking to herself, *"This reduces women's value to marriage alone."* She hesitates to respond, uncertain if speaking up might be perceived as impolite. After class, Lin expresses her frustration to Li: *"Your comment about a woman's 'primary role' is limiting. Women have many other aspirations and should be valued for more than just marriage."* Li reflects on the instructional impact of his words, recognizes the gendered implications, feels regret, and apologizes to Lin and the entire class.

Case 2: Female Teacher's Different Expectations for Male and Female Students

Characters of Case 2

Zhao: A female teacher in her thirties, who encourages emotional expression in female students and upholds traditional gender views.

Jie: A male freshman, quiet, believes men should be both rational and emotional.

Scenario of Case 2

In class, Zhao discusses 'gender roles and self-identity,' saying, *"Dear female students, you should express your emotions; it can benefit your career and enhance your personal appeal."* Jie asks, *"Why only female students? Shouldn't male students also express emotions?"* Zhao immediately responds, without further reflection, *"Male students are more rational. That's just how men are."* Jie does not reply in class, but later writes in his feedback: *"Gender should not dictate how we express emotions. Everyone should have the freedom to express themselves."* Zhao reviews the feedback, recognizes her implicit bias, experiences regret, and acknowledges the need for a more balanced and gender-sensitive approach in her teaching.

Analysis of Cases 1 & 2

The two cases illustrate how gender bias in classroom discourse produces gendered regrets, not merely as individual emotional reactions but as consequences of pedagogical practice. In Case 1, Li's statement reduces women's roles to marriage, framing a gendered hierarchy that students implicitly internalize. This discursive act functions as a form of instructional authority, shaping what students perceive as normative gender expectations. Lin's hesitation to respond reflects the constraints imposed by this asymmetrical classroom authority, highlighting how pedagogical interactions can limit students' agency and induce reflective regret.

In Case 2, Zhao's linking of emotional expression to female students and rationality to male students exemplifies a binary pedagogical logic that categorizes students along gender lines. This form of instructional positioning constrains individual self-expression and signals normative behavior in the classroom. Jie's feedback demonstrates how students may experience dissonance when instructional discourse conflicts with their understanding of gender, prompting both teacher reflection and pedagogically generated regret. In both cases, teachers' failure to recognize the implicit gendered framing in their discourse leads to limitations on students' identity enactment and interpretive freedom[23].

These regrets can be attributed to the pedagogical dimension, particularly how teachers convey and operationalize gender concepts in their instruction. Pedagogy involves not only content delivery but also the shaping of students' gender cognition through language, attitudes, and classroom behaviors[23]. Li's adherence to traditional gender norms and Zhao's reinforcement of binary assumptions illustrate how instructional practices can unintentionally reproduce gendered social norms, generating regret when teachers later recognize their influence. Both teachers exhibited a lack of flexible and gender-sensitive pedagogical strategies, revealing deficiencies in fostering equitable classroom environments[23].

Gender roles are reinforced through both language and educational practices. Li's statements mirror traditional expectations that constrain women's societal roles[24], whereas Zhao's remarks demonstrate the persistence of binary thinking in instructional discourse. Teachers function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as mediators of values and social norms[25]. When teachers lack gender sensitivity or fail to integrate gender equality into pedagogy, they risk perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Educational speech thus operates as both a medium for information and a tool for constructing students' gendered identities[23].

The persistence of gender bias in teaching reflects systemic gaps in gender education within China's educational system. As both knowledge transmitters and socialization agents, teachers' gender awareness directly shapes how gender roles are communicated and enacted in the classroom. Insufficient gender-sensitive pedagogy reinforces traditional stereotypes, influencing students' perceptions, behavior, and self-concept[26]. These dynamics are compounded by the broader educational context, which has historically under-emphasized gender equality[27]. In classroom interactions, teachers' gendered framing subtly shapes students' academic engagement, performance, and self-perception[28]. Gendered content and differential expectations may affect students' academic choices, career aspirations, and personal development[29], reflecting entrenched cultural, social, and historical biases within the education system[30].

4.2. Psychological Dimension

Case 3: Female Teacher's Gendered Expectations and Students' Psychological Responses
Characters of Case 3

Liang: A female teacher in her thirties who frequently uses gendered language intended to motivate female students.

Hao: A male sophomore, sensitive to gender bias and stereotypes.

Chen: confident in class but psychologically unsettled by Liang's remarks.

Scenario of Case 3

During a team presentation session, Liang addresses the female students and remarks, *"Dear female students, you should make use of your patience and attentiveness in group tasks, as these qualities often lead to better outcomes."* While framed as encouragement, the comment implicitly associates these learning traits with female students. Hao feels psychologically excluded and quietly says to Chen, *"Does this mean patience and attentiveness are not expected from male students? It makes me feel overlooked."* Chen agrees that the comment is somewhat uncomfortable but reassures herself that Liang is merely emphasizing female students' strengths rather than intentionally excluding male students. Nevertheless, Chen feels momentarily confused

about whether her academic abilities are being recognized as individual competencies or as gendered traits. After class, Hao articulates his discomfort in written feedback to Liang: *"I feel uneasy when patience and attentiveness are repeatedly linked to female students. Male students can also have these qualities, and being overlooked makes me question my place in group work."* Upon reading the feedback, Liang becomes aware that her instructional language may have produced unintended psychological pressure. She reflects on how her words may have shaped students' self-perceptions, experiences regret, and resolves to adopt more psychologically inclusive language in future instruction.

Case 4: Male Student's Psychological Distress Triggered by Gendered Corrective Practices

Characters of Case 4

Zhan: A female teacher in her thirties who adopts a direct approach to error correction and tends to expect greater emotional toughness from male students than from female students.

Ming: A male sophomore, introverted and emotionally sensitive to public criticism.

Scenario of Case 4

During an English class, Zhan corrects a grammatical mistake made by a female student, saying, *"There's a small error here. It should be 'I have been working here for two years.' Don't worry; this is easy to fix."* The correction is brief and accompanied by a reassuring tone. Later in the same class, Ming makes a similar grammatical error. Zhan responds publicly, *"This was a very basic mistake. You really need to be more careful."* Unlike her response to the female student, the correction is firmer and lacks mitigating language. Although the feedback is linguistically accurate, the contrast in tone causes Ming to feel embarrassed and psychologically exposed. As the class continues, he becomes increasingly self-conscious and begins to doubt his competence. He silently wonders whether male students are expected to tolerate harsher criticism and whether showing discomfort might be interpreted as weakness. Over time, these feelings led him to withdraw from classroom participation and avoid speaking in front of peers. In his written feedback to Zhan, Ming explains, *"The way mistakes are corrected makes me feel anxious and discouraged. I wish there were more encouragement, not just criticism."* After reading the feedback, Zhan reflects on her instructional assumptions and realizes that her differentiated responses may have placed greater emotional pressure on male students. She experiences regret for overlooking students' emotional needs and acknowledges the importance of balancing correction with emotional support, regardless of gender, in her teaching practice.

Analysis of Cases 3 & 4

In Cases 3 and 4, the teachers' regrets emerge primarily from the psychological consequences of their gendered language and differentiated instructional responses, rather than from explicit pedagogical actions. These cases demonstrate how subtle gendered expectations embedded in classroom discourse can shape students' emotional experiences, self-perceptions, and sense of identity, thereby generating gendered psychological distress. In Case 3, Liang's repeated association of patience and attentiveness with female students functions as a form of gendered encouragement that unintentionally produces psychological exclusion. While intended to motivate, this framing implicitly constructs these learning dispositions as gender-specific rather than universally accessible. Hao's response reflects a psychological reaction to this implicit boundary-making. As a male student sensitive to gender bias, he experiences discomfort and marginalization when valued academic traits are discursively aligned with femininity. This reaction is not merely cognitive disagreement but an affective response tied to his academic self-concept and sense of belonging in collaborative learning contexts. Hao's unease indicates how gendered expectations can undermine students' self-recognition by signaling that their abilities are less visible or less valued within the classroom.

Chen's response further reveals the psychological ambiguity produced by such gendered discourse. Although she initially interprets Liang's comment as supportive, she nevertheless experiences momentary confusion regarding how her competence is being evaluated. Psychologically, this reflects an internal tension between individual achievement and gender-based attribution. Rather than feeling unequivocally affirmed, Chen is left uncertain whether her academic strengths are recognized as personal capacities or as extensions of stereotypically feminine traits. This uncertainty illustrates how even seemingly positive gendered language can destabilize students' self-perceptions and generate latent psychological discomfort.

In Case 4, psychological distress arises through Zhan's differentiated corrective practices toward male and female students. Zhan's more direct and uncompromising response to Ming's error reflects an implicit assumption that male students should possess greater emotional resilience. For Ming, an introverted and emotionally sensitive student, this public and blunt correction triggers feelings of embarrassment, anxiety, and self-doubt. His reaction illustrates how psychological pressure is intensified when students perceive that emotional vulnerability is incompatible with gendered expectations. Ming's distress is shaped not only by the criticism itself but also by his internal struggle to conform to the socially constructed ideal of male toughness and emotional restraint.

These students' reactions can be understood within the psychological dimension of gendered regret, where emotional responses are shaped by the interaction between individual personality traits, gender role cognition, and affective needs[31]. Hao's discomfort in Case 3 reflects his resistance to restrictive gender norms that conflict with his self-identity, while Ming's shame in Case 4 reveals the psychological burden of failing to meet gendered expectations of maturity and emotional strength. In both cases, the students' emotional responses signal disruptions to their self-concept and emotional regulation processes.

The psychological roots of these regrets can be traced to teachers' unconscious adherence to culturally embedded gender roles. Teachers may unintentionally reproduce gender-based expectations by imposing different emotional and behavioral standards on students according to gender[32]. Liang's assumption that patience and attentiveness are inherently feminine traits, and Zhan's expectation that male students should endure harsher criticism, reflect deeply ingrained beliefs about appropriate gendered dispositions. Such assumptions intensify students' identity conflicts, particularly in educational contexts where teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' self-concept and emotional development[33].

Moreover, the failure to attend to students' differentiated emotional needs contributes to gendered psychological strain. When teachers overlook how gendered expectations intersect with individual vulnerability, they risk reinforcing internalized confusion and discomfort related to gender identity and emotional expression[34]. Over time, these psy-

chological effects can influence students' classroom participation, academic confidence, and willingness to engage, as well as their broader patterns of gendered behavior and self-regulation beyond the classroom[35]. In this way, gendered instructional practices not only affect immediate emotional experiences but also contribute to the reproduction of traditional gender roles within educational settings[36].

4.3. Social Dimension

Case 5: Teacher's Display of Social Superiority and Its Impact on Students' Gendered and Socioeconomic Perceptions

Characters of Case 5

Xi: A male professor in his forties who frequently references his overseas experiences as exemplars of academic and social success.

Yang: A junior female student, ambitious but sensitive to implicit social hierarchies and gendered expectations.

Bin: A junior female student from a less privileged background, alienated by Xi's stories and aware of gendered social norms.

Scenario of Case 5

During a lecture on cultural differences, Xi recounts his time studying in Australia: *"During my studies in Australia, I was inspired by many outstanding scholars. The education system there promotes equal opportunities regardless of gender or background. My Ph.D. supervisor valued my contributions, not my origins. This kind of fair and competitive atmosphere is hard to find in China."* Yang, sitting in the front row, frowns slightly. Coming from a modest financial background, she has never considered studying abroad. Xi's repeated emphasis on 'equal opportunities' triggers subtle feelings of inadequacy, as she perceives both the dual pressures of gender and socioeconomic status. She whispers to Bin, *"Whenever Xi talks about his overseas experiences, it makes me feel like we're not good enough. Especially when he says 'regardless of gender,' but here in China, opportunities for women are already limited. It feels like men have a head start, and female students like us need to work even harder to be noticed."* Bin nods wryly, responding, *"Exactly. Every time he shares these stories, it feels like he assumes we all start from the same baseline. But female students from ordinary families face so many extra barriers, both financially and socially. Even if we work hard, we're still judged*

differently than male students with the same opportunities." In their feedback, Yang writes, *"Your frequent references to foreign experiences pressure me, as I don't have the same opportunities, and it makes gendered inequalities more visible."* Bin adds, *"It's hard to relate when you discuss your success abroad. It reminds me that female students from less privileged backgrounds have to overcome more than just financial constraints."* Reflecting on these reactions, Xi experiences regret, recognizing that his social display unintentionally reinforced both gendered and socioeconomic hierarchies among students.

Case 6: Female Students' Discontent with Teacher's Gendered and Idealized Advice

Characters of Case 6

Wang: A female teacher in her forties, who encourages idealistic lifestyles such as travel or studying abroad to broaden perspectives.

Ling: A senior female student under financial pressure, aware of social expectations for women to "maximize life experiences."

Na: A senior female student from an ordinary background, concerned about employment and financial constraints, and sensitive to societal expectations of female achievement.

Scenario of Case 6

Wang advises her class: *"After graduation, don't rush into a job. Do something you love first. For example, after I graduated, I traveled in Europe for six months, which broadened my horizons."* Ling and Na exchange uneasy glances. Ling thinks, *"My family cannot afford to travel as Wang suggests, and I feel like I'm falling behind compared to female peers who can pursue these opportunities."* Na feels that Wang's advice assumes women can freely invest time and money in personal development, overlooking those with financial responsibilities. In their feedback, Ling writes, *"You often talk about traveling or studying abroad, but I am under financial pressure and cannot pursue those ideals. It also feels like women who don't follow this path are judged as less ambitious."* Na adds, *"Your suggestions assume all women can take time off and travel, which ignores the real-life pressures we face. It feels gendered because it sets an ideal that women should prioritize personal experiences over practical responsibilities."* Wang reflects on their feedback and experiences regret, realizing that her guidance, although

well-intentioned, unintentionally imposed gendered expectations on female students and failed to consider the social and economic realities shaping their choices. She acknowledges the need to balance aspirational advice with sensitivity to students' diverse circumstances and gendered social pressures.

Analysis of Cases 5 & 6

In these two cases, the teachers' regrets stem from their display of social superiority and gendered advice, which disregard students' diverse social and economic backgrounds, reinforcing gendered expectations and influencing students' self-identity and psychological well-being. In Case 5, Xi frequently references his overseas experiences, presenting them as universally accessible and egalitarian, inadvertently emphasizing a social and gendered gap between himself and his students. Yang and Bin perceive his statements as reinforcing an unattainable standard of success, compounded by the gendered barriers they face as female students from less privileged backgrounds. In Case 6, Wang advocates for travel and studying abroad as idealized pursuits, neglecting the financial constraints and societal expectations faced by Ling and Na. Her advice, though aspirational, fails to acknowledge these practical realities, fostering feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt among the students.

These scenarios illustrate the social dimension of gendered regret, where teachers' social status, personal experiences, and implicit gendered assumptions directly shape students' perceptions of opportunity and fairness. In Case 5, Xi's repeated references to overseas experiences convey a sense of social superiority and establish a benchmark of success rooted in privilege. This alienates students like Yang and Bin, who confront both socioeconomic constraints and gendered societal expectations, heightening their awareness of structural inequities. In Case 6, Wang's idealized lifestyle advice reflects her social privilege and implicitly communicates gendered expectations about women's capacity to pursue self-fulfilling experiences. Ling and Na, constrained by financial pressures and familial responsibilities, experience tension between these ideals and their lived realities, resulting in feelings of exclusion and disempowerment.

The underlying cause of these regrets lies in the teachers' limited awareness of the intersection between social background, gender, and economic realities in shaping student experiences. Teachers often unconsciously evaluate students through the lens of their own experiences, cultural

capital, and gendered assumptions, neglecting the diverse contexts that influence students' choices and self-concept[37]. Xi's overseas references, intended to inspire, inadvertently amplify perceptions of social inequality when students cannot replicate such experiences. Similarly, Wang's guidance, while well-intentioned, assumes access to financial and social resources that are not universally available, thereby reinforcing gendered and social hierarchies. Sociological research underscores the critical role of gender and socioeconomic conditions in shaping opportunities and aspirations, highlighting that overlooking these factors can induce psychological distress and social anxiety among students[38].

Social context, gender norms, and economic constraints are fundamental in shaping students' self-perception, behavior, and future trajectories. Teachers' remarks influence not only academic performance but also career aspirations, life decisions, and psychological well-being within broader sociocultural frameworks[39]. For instance, Xi's statements may heighten social and gendered anxiety among students like Yang and Bin, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, by reinforcing an idealized success standard tied to overseas opportunities. Likewise, Wang's advice underscores how social privilege shapes perceptions of achievable life goals, illustrating that economic and gendered realities constrain the pursuit of such ideals.

4.4. Pragmatic Dimension

Case 7: Teacher's Language Use Overlooks Gender Diversity, Leading to Misunderstanding
Characters of Case 7

Liu: A female teacher who, when discussing "marriage," presents it exclusively as a legal relationship between a man and a woman.

Bei: A sophomore male student, introverted, feels uneasy with narrow definitions.

Er: A sophomore male student, outgoing, questions the teacher's limited perspective.
Scenario of Case 7

During a translation lesson, Liu explains the term "hunyin (marriage)": *"A legally recognized relationship between a man and a woman with a marriage certificate is described as 'marriage.' Without the certificate, terms like 'relationship' or 'partnership' apply."* Bei, sitting in the back, quietly

questions: *"Not all marriages involve a man and a woman. If two men obtain a marriage certificate, shouldn't their relationship also be called 'marriage'?"* Er adds, *"This explanation seems limited to the laws of China and a few other countries, ignoring the legality of same-sex marriage elsewhere."* Liu's language, although factually correct in certain legal contexts, conveys a heteronormative assumption that implicitly excludes non-heterosexual relationships. In pragmatic terms, Liu's word choices and framing reinforce a stereotypical association between marriage and gender, limiting students' understanding of marriage as a socially and legally diverse institution. After reading feedback from Bei and Er, Liu realizes the gendered implications of her explanation and resolves to adopt more inclusive language in future teaching, considering both legal variations and diverse gender identities.

Case 8: Female Students' Discontent with Teacher's Implicit Gendered Remarks in Leadership
Characters of Case 8

Zhang: A male teacher who, in discussing leadership, implicitly privileges men over women.

Xu: A second-year female student, academically strong but uncomfortable with Zhang's gendered assumptions.

Rao: A second-year female student, independent, perceives Zhang's remarks as limiting women's potential.
Scenario of Case 8

During a lecture on teamwork and leadership, Zhang states: *"Men are often better leaders; they make quicker decisions."* Xu and Rao feel frustrated and challenged by this stereotypical framing. Xu notes, *"Your comment suggests women are less capable leaders,"* while Rao adds, *"Women can excel in leadership just as much as men."* From a pragmatic perspective, Zhang's language implicitly conveys gender bias and perpetuates leadership stereotypes. The phrasing *"men are often better leaders"* presupposes male superiority and constrains female students' perceptions of their potential. This subtle bias in word choice and generalization not only communicates an unequal social expectation but also influences classroom dynamics by signaling whose contributions are valued. Surprised by the feedback, Zhang reflects on the gendered assumptions embedded in his language and recognizes the need to reframe discussions to promote equitable perceptions of leadership among all students.

Analysis of Cases 7 & 8

The regrets in these cases emerge from teachers' constrained language use and the unintentional reinforcement of gendered stereotypes, which directly impact students' perceptions, engagement, and social positioning in the classroom. In Case 7, Liu's definition of 'marriage' exclusively as a legal bond between a man and a woman overlooks both legal and cultural diversity. This narrow framing triggers psychological and social responses among students: Bei, an introverted male student, feels uneasy and questions the applicability of the definition to same-sex relationships, reflecting his awareness of gender diversity and his sensitivity to inclusive representation. Er, more outgoing, explicitly challenges the cultural and legal limitations of Liu's explanation, noting its narrow applicability beyond China. Both students' feedback illustrates how teacher language, even when factually correct in one context, can implicitly convey heteronormative assumptions, signaling to students whose identities are valued or excluded in classroom discourse[40]. Liu's subsequent recognition of this feedback demonstrates the pragmatic dimension: her word choices unintentionally marginalized students and overlooked the social and gender diversity in the classroom.

In Case 8, Zhang's comments about male superiority in leadership provoke immediate frustration and resistance among female students. Xu, academically capable, perceives Zhang's statement as minimizing women's potential, while Rao interprets it as an unjust social evaluation that implicitly constrains female agency in leadership roles. Their written feedback makes these perceptions explicit: Xu emphasizes the limiting impact on women's abilities, and Rao critiques the stereotypical framing. From a pragmatic perspective, Zhang's use of generalizations, phrases like *"men are often better leaders"*, encodes implicit social and gendered hierarchies. Xu and Rao's responses highlight how students interpret, negotiate, and challenge these embedded assumptions, revealing that language in educational contexts is not only informative but also evaluative, signaling social norms and expectations[41,42].

Together, both cases illustrate that pragmatic failures in teaching, through word choices, implicit assumptions, and unexamined generalizations, can amplify gendered and social inequities. Students' reactions are crucial evidence of this impact. Bei and Er demonstrate sensitivity to gender and cultural inclusivity, voicing cognitive and ethical concerns about restrictive definitions. Xu and Rao show critical awareness of gendered hierarchies, responding to the embedded stereotypes in leadership discourse. Their feedback exemplifies active negotiation of classroom meaning, indicating that students both perceive and are affected by the social and gendered implications of teacher language[43,44].

4.5. Interactual Dimension

Case 9: Cultural Differences and Gendered Expectations between a Foreign Female Teacher and Chinese Male Students

Characters of Case 9

Mary: A foreign female teacher from a cultural background in which men are expected to demonstrate leadership.

Yan: A second-year male student, introverted, feels uncertain about Mary's gender perspectives.

Qing: A second-year male student, outgoing, but uneasy with Mary's gender expectations.

Scenario of Case 9

Mary encourages male students to demonstrate leadership, stating, *"You guys [Male students] should show more leadership, which will benefit your future careers."* While she intends to motivate, Yan feels psychologically pressured, thinking, *"Mary places heavy expectations on me. In China, stability and cooperation are valued, and not every male student is expected to lead."* Qing, although more outgoing, also perceives Mary's words as culturally imposing, whispering to Yan, *"Her expectation assumes all men should behave like leaders, but that doesn't align with our cultural norms."* Both students' feedback highlights discomfort not only with the leadership expectation but also with the gendered stereotype that men are naturally leaders. Yan writes, *"This expectation pressures me because it assumes male students must be assertive, which clashes with our cultural values."* Qing adds, *"Mary's focus on male leadership feels imposed and culturally insensitive."* Reflecting on this feedback, Mary recognizes that her assumptions about gender roles, influenced by her cultural background, may unintentionally impose stereotypes and cultural biases. She expresses regret and resolves to adjust her teaching to better respect Chinese cultural norms and students' diverse approaches to leadership.

Case 10: Foreign Teacher's Misreading of Chinese Female Students' Cultural Norms and Gendered Expectations

Characters of Case 10

John: A foreign male teacher who emphasizes the confidence and outgoing nature of Western women.

Xia: A second-year female student, introverted, prefers listening over speaking.

Xun: A second-year female student, outgoing but uncomfortable with John's expectations.

Scenario of Case 10

John encourages female students to participate more actively, stating, *"Western female students are often confident and outspoken. You [Chinese female students] should speak up and express yourselves."* Xia feels pressured, thinking, *"John expects me to act like a Western woman, but in our culture, modesty and humility are valued for women."* Xun, while more socially active, shares Xia's discomfort, whispering, *"Even though we can be confident, we are culturally encouraged to be low-key. John overlooks these norms."* Their feedback illustrates how John's statements not only fail to account for cultural norms but also reinforce gendered stereotypes, implying that women should be assertive to succeed. Xia writes, *"Being told to behave like Western women makes me feel inadequate and misunderstood."* Xun adds, *"Your expectation rests on an assumed universal female standard, thereby disregarding cultural context and individual comfort levels."* John reflects on this feedback, experiences regret, and acknowledges the need for cultural and gender sensitivity in his classroom discourse.

Analysis of Cases 9 & 10

In these two cases, gendered regret arises from foreign teachers' misreading of Chinese students' gender roles and the imposition of culturally inappropriate expectations. In Case 9, Mary emphasizes Western ideals of male leadership, overlooking the Chinese cultural preference for a more reserved, steady, and collaborative male identity. This misalignment generates stress for students, particularly Yan and Qing, who perceive a conflict between Mary's expectations and their own cultural identity. Yan, as an introverted student, experiences discomfort and self-doubt, feeling pressured to adopt a form of assertiveness that contradicts his cultural upbringing. Qing, though more outgoing, also feels uneasy, recognizing that Mary's assumptions impose a foreign standard of masculinity that may not be suitable for all male students in the Chinese context.

Similarly, in Case 10, John encourages female students to emulate the confidence and extroversion typical of Western women, disregarding the Chinese cultural values of modesty and restraint. Xia, as an introverted student, feels pressured and misaligned with her cultural norms, while Xun, though naturally more expressive, recognizes that these expectations impose a culturally foreign ideal of female assertiveness. Both students experience subtle psychological pressure as John's remarks reinforce gendered stereotypes by implying that women should be outgoing and outspoken to succeed, neglecting the nuanced cultural and individual variations in behavior.

These regrets can be understood within the intercultural communication dimension, where teachers' cultural assumptions shape gendered expectations and influence students' experiences. Mary and John both fail to account for the cultural context of their Chinese students, leading to inappropriate classroom expectations. Cultural differences profoundly shape gender perceptions, particularly in educational contexts where teachers' cultural backgrounds can lead to misinterpretation of students' behaviors [45]. In Case 9, Mary's focus on Western male leadership overlooks Chinese cultural values of steadiness, rationality, and cooperative behavior, confusing and pressuring Yan and Qing. In Case 10, John's imposition of Western female norms neglects the importance of modesty and culturally endorsed restraint for Chinese women, causing Xia and Xun to feel that their identities and learning styles are undervalued.

The roots of these regrets lie in the intersection of gender studies and cross-cultural communication theory. Western cultures often valorize male leadership and female assertiveness, while Chinese cultural norms emphasize reserved male behavior and modesty for women [46]. Teachers who do not adapt to these cultural nuances risk imposing inappropriate gender models, creating confusion and discomfort for students. The high-context nature of Chinese culture, which values subtlety, indirect communication, and relational harmony, contrasts with the low-context, direct, and extroverted expectations common in Western classrooms [47]. Mary's and John's failure to recognize these differences and their subsequent imposition of Western gender ideals produce

gendered misunderstandings and cultural friction.

Both cases also illustrate how intercultural communication breakdowns disproportionately affect students' self-perception and engagement. Yan and Xia experience tension between internalized cultural norms and externalized expectations, while Qing and Xun negotiate between personal tendencies and imposed ideals. This highlights that gender, intertwined with cultural context, can become a source of conflict and psychological discomfort when foreign teachers fail to recognize cultural variations[48]. Cross-cultural teaching requires sensitivity to individual and collective gender norms, as well as awareness of how differing social expectations, power distance, and behavioral assumptions may shape classroom interactions[49]. The regrets expressed by Mary and John underscore the importance of cultural and gender sensitivity in globalized educational contexts.

5. Discussion

Through a comprehensive analysis of the ten situated cases, this study theorized the 'Regret Pentagon Diagram' (see **Figure 1**) as a conceptual framework for understanding gendered regrets that emerged in Chinese university English classrooms. The diagram moves beyond descriptive accounts of individual cases to provide a theoretical lens that illustrates how pedagogical, psychological, pragmatic, social, and intercultural dimensions interact to produce reflective regret among teachers and students. Its primary function is to highlight the relational and interactional mechanisms through which routine classroom practices can unintentionally reproduce gendered exclusions, while simultaneously offering a tool for professional reflection and pedagogical adjustment.
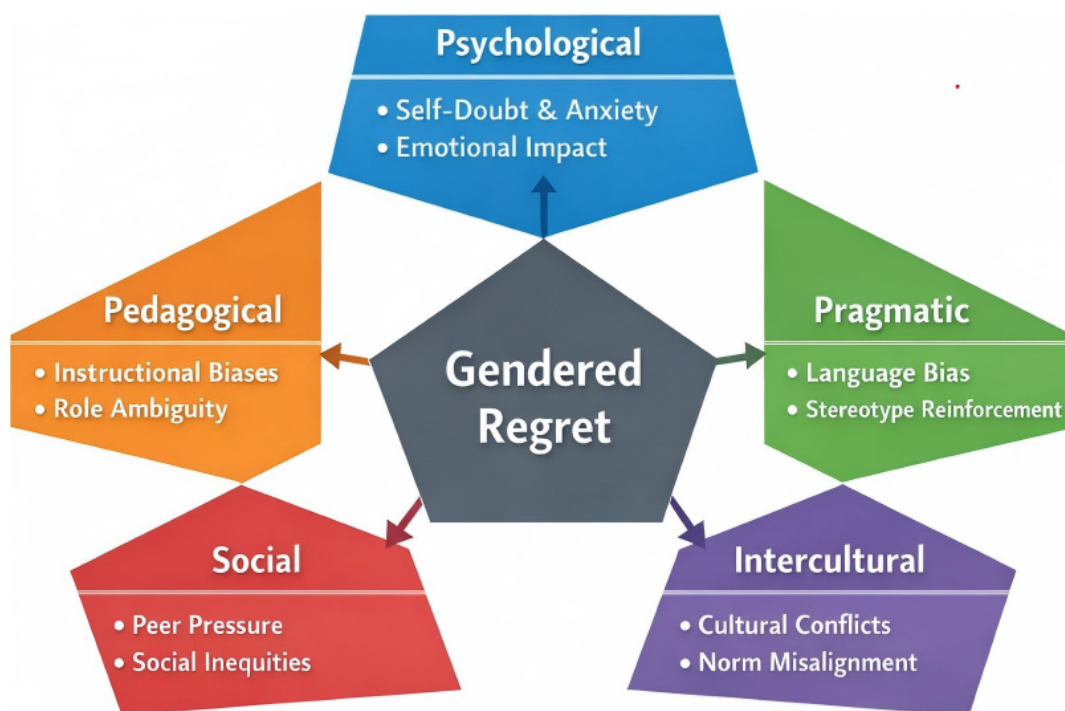

Figure 1. Regret Pentagon Diagram.

The diagram was inductively derived from patterns observed across the ten cases, demonstrating that gendered regrets do not result from isolated errors but from mismatches between teachers' instructional assumptions and students' situated gendered expectations. Gendered regret emerges where pedagogical intentions, communicative practices, or cultural assumptions fail to align with students' experiences and identities. This relational perspective highlights that classroom regret is contingent upon the interaction between teachers' actions and students' cognitive, emotional, and social responses, rather than solely on individual teacher oversight[50].

In this framework, regret is conceptualized as a reflective and relational process that is distinct from immediate affective reactions or moral emotions. It involves the retrospective reassessment of prior instructional or communica-

tive actions in light of perceived consequences for self and others[5–7]. The analytic visibility of regret arises through feedback, silence, or written reflections that prompt recognition that alternative actions could have fostered more equitable classroom outcomes. This process-oriented understanding allows the study to link teacher behavior, student response, and broader socio-cultural dynamics, emphasizing that regret is embedded in interaction rather than existing solely within individual cognition[7,8].

The 'Regret Pentagon Diagram' advances existing models of regret by situating it within the relational and contextual dynamics of classroom practice. Unlike psychological or economic models that focus on individual action or inaction and subsequent behavioral adjustment[9,49,51], this framework highlights the intersection of instructional design, social norms, and communicative expectations in shaping gendered emotional experiences. The analysis underscores that gendered regret can result from multiple dimensions that interact to influence students' self-concept, engagement, and emotional well-being[52].

The intercultural and social dimensions emphasize that gendered expectations are culturally and contextually mediated rather than universal. In cases involving foreign teachers, misalignments between Western pedagogical assumptions and Chinese cultural norms produced unintended pressures and reinforced gendered stereotypes[45–47]. The framework treats culture and gender as internally diverse and negotiable, highlighting the importance of adapting instructional approaches to account for the variability of student experiences. Similarly, the social dimension illustrates how teachers' social positioning and personal experiences, when unexamined, may unintentionally communicate superiority and reinforce gendered hierarchies, generating reflective regret[37–39].

Finally, the framework foregrounds teacher reflection as a professional practice rather than a moral obligation. The diagram demonstrates that reflective engagement with gendered, social, and cultural dynamics can recalibrate classroom interactions and reduce misalignments between instructional intent and student experience[53]. By integrating pedagogical, psychological, pragmatic, social, and intercultural dimensions, the 'Regret Pentagon Diagram' provides both an analytical tool for research and a practical guide for teacher development, supporting more inclusive, context-responsive,

and gender-sensitive instructional practices.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the emergence of gendered regrets in Chinese university English classrooms and developed the 'Regret Pentagon Diagram' as a conceptual framework for understanding how pedagogical, psychological, pragmatic, social, and intercultural dimensions interact to shape these experiences. The analysis revealed that gendered regrets are not isolated occurrences but relational outcomes arising from the intersection of instructional practices, student responses, and broader social and cultural expectations. The diagram provides a systematic tool to conceptualize these interactions and their implications for classroom dynamics, teacher reflection, and student engagement.

This study has limitations. First, its analytic emphasis on teachers' reflected moments of regret may underrepresent students' longer-term emotional experiences, including strategies of resistance and less visible forms of dissent. Second, the use of broad cultural descriptors such as 'Chinese' and 'Western' functions as analytical shorthand and may obscure internal diversity as well as the situational and intersectional variability of gender norms. Third, the reliance on self-reported data raises the possibility of social desirability bias and retrospective distortion.

To address the three limitations, future research could adopt longitudinal and student-centered designs that foreground students' sustained emotional trajectories, including silence, withdrawal, and subtle forms of resistance over time. To mitigate the risk of cultural essentialization, subsequent studies might employ more fine-grained, context-sensitive analytical categories and attend to intra-cultural variation. In addition, methodological triangulation, such as combining interviews with classroom observations, interactional data, reflective journals, or institutional documents, would help reduce the limitations associated with self-reported data and enhance the robustness of empirical interpretation.

The study offers actionable implications for educational practice and professional development. Teachers are encouraged to adopt gender-sensitive pedagogies, critically examine implicit instructional assumptions, and strengthen intercultural competence. Employing the 'Regret Pentagon Diagram' as a reflective tool enables educators to identify potential

sources of gendered regret and to adjust classroom discourse, learning design, and authority practices accordingly. Creating environments in which students are able to participate, or choose silence, without penalty, can promote more equitable engagement and support psychological well-being[54]. Professional development initiatives that foreground gender sensitivity, cross-cultural awareness, and inclusive communication may further equip educators to navigate gendered challenges in classroom interaction, ultimately contributing to more equitable and responsive educational practices[55].

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All authors contributed equally to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and writing of this study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study involving human participants was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the School of Humanities and Foreign Languages, Xi'an University of Posts and Telecommunications (protocol code YJLL2023021, date of approval: March 2023).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study. Written informed consent has been obtained from the participants to publish this paper.

Data Availability Statement

Due to the inclusion of sensitive information related to gender, the full interview transcripts cannot be publicly shared. However, anonymized excerpts and detailed analytic descriptions supporting the findings are included within the manuscript. These materials are sufficient for readers to evaluate and understand the study's conclusions while ensuring participant confidentiality.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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