



## RESILIENCE OF HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS AT AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN CHINA: THE TEACHERS' VOICES

**Jie Liu<sup>1</sup> and Anchalee Chayanuvat<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Master of Bilingual Education – Rangsit University, lj19951101@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Master of Bilingual Education – Rangsit University, chayanuvata@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Teachers' resilience is the ability of teachers to overcome difficulties and recover quickly in the face of problems and difficulties, and even to seek development from difficult situations. This study aimed 1) to examine the aspects of resilience of effective high school English language teachers and 2) to explore how they cope with the difficulties and challenges in their jobs. The study adopted a mix-methods approach. By using Krejcie and Morgan formula to calculate the sample size, 30 teachers were selected from a population of 36 high school English language teachers at an international school in China to fill out the questionnaires, while 8 teachers were the semi-structured interviewees. Quantitative data and qualitative data analysis methods (Descriptive statistics and Litchman's 3 Cs framework) were adopted. The findings of the questionnaire revealed that all the teachers gave high scores in all items which broke down into 4.47/ S.D.= 0.51 for personal competence, 4.42/ S.D.= 0.59 for peer support, 4.41/ S.D.= 0.59 for spiritual influences and 4.38/ S.D.= 0.57 for family cohesion. Semi-structured interview results indicated that they needed to have pride of being a teacher, creative problem-solving solutions, positive attitude at work and continuous development of their teaching activity through life-long learning as significance to develop teachers' resilience. Recommendations for enhancement of high school English language teachers' resilience are: firstly, the teachers must be aware of the difficulties they face and secondly, schools, peers and family members should find ways to support them.

**Keywords:** resilience; high school English language teachers; an international school; life-long learning



## 1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the economy, the cultivation of high-quality talents has become the key, and the cultivation of teachers with various outstanding talents has become the top priority (Liang, 2021). The key to national competition is talent, the key to talent training is education, and the quality of education depends on teachers (Shi, 2012). Therefore, improving the quality of teachers and reforming teacher education has become a very urgent issue in all countries, especially the concept of teacher education is gradually being replaced by more accurate and richer concepts of teacher education (Shi, 2011). Therefore, in the new era, our country attaches importance to whether teachers feel happy in the teaching process, so as to cultivate happy talents for the country and build a happy country (Qiao, 2005). The proportion of education expenditure to household expenditure is also increasing, and people are pursuing higher quality education. International schools have also flourished in the past decade, but they also face many problems that need to be solved in the development process, especially teacher pressure (Meng, 2014). International school teachers face special management and school management systems, and compared to public schools, students and parents have higher and more complex requirements for schools and teachers (Huang, 2013). They feel that the difficulty of work is increasing, the pace of work is accelerating, and the work pressure is constantly increasing. The resulting work problems deserve the attention and research of the entire society (Zhang, 2016).

The society and parents have given international school teachers too much expectations and requirements for this profession, and the image of them is too idealistic. It is reasonable to sacrifice their lives for students. However, they are only a very common profession. They are also people in society. They have their own families and worries, and they will encounter various problems and setbacks. Under various problems, setbacks and pressures, teachers from international school have various psychological problems, such as job burnout, reduced teaching efficiency, lack of happiness, anxiety, depression and so on (Shi, 2018).

Different teachers face different difficulties and challenges. This study focused on English language teachers of an international school. Based on the conjecture that the characteristics of English teachers' resilience are different and the main influencing factors are different, it studies the characteristics and influencing factors of different English teachers' resilience, and tries to put forward some targeted improvement strategies for English language teachers in English teaching and self-development.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

- 1) To examine the aspects of resilience of effective high school English language teachers.
- 2) To explore how they cope with the difficulties and challenges in their jobs.



### 3. Materials and Methods

The mixed-method approach was used in this study. Quantitative and qualitative research approach were adopted using the questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The study collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The main purpose of the questionnaire survey was to explore the aspects of resilience of high school English language teachers at an international school and how they cope with difficulties and challenges in their jobs.

The questionnaire design was based on Zhang's (2016) research and response analysis of resilience and countermeasures of high school English language teachers and how they cope with difficulties and challenges in their jobs. The 33-item questionnaires were filled out by 30 respondents. The structure of the questionnaire is presented briefly in the following table.

Table 1 Construction of Survey Questionnaire Index Dimensions

Dimension 1 <sup>st</sup>	Questionnaire
Basic Information (1-3)	Part 1 of the Questionnaire
Spiritual Influences (4-13)	Part 2 of the Questionnaire
Personal Competences (14-23)	
Peer Support (24-28)	
Family Cohesion (29-33)	
Additional Comments and Remarks	Part 3 of the Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire were used to identify English language teachers at the school, who were invited to participate in the interview. Eight English language teachers (based on Creswell (2003) were identified as the study's research participants for one hour each and day by day. The interview used the online application and the following questions were used:

- 1) Could you tell me about your teaching experiences?
- 2) Do you like to be a teacher?
- 3) Do you find any challenges in teaching at the present time?
- 4) What is your plan for the job?
- 5) What keeps you in the job?
- 6) How do you cope with the difficulties and challenges in the job?
- 7) Do you consider yourself an effective teacher?
- 8) What type of professional development do you need?



In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews. For qualitative data derived from the semi-structured interviews and the teachers' journals, thematic analysis was adopted. It is a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting the themes found in a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was an inductive way of analysis from a large number of data which were not sorted out into topics or themes to a central concept which can be used to explain how the various elements are grouped together. The three analysis steps were adopted from Litchman's Three Cs (Coding-Category-Concept) Process. With the consent of the respondents, the researcher recorded the interviews and listened their voices carefully. The whole process is following the figure below.

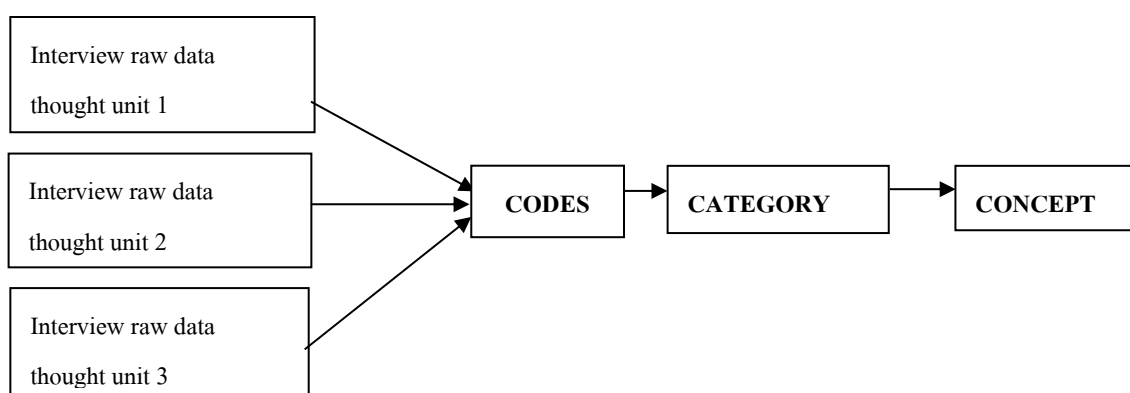


Figure 1 Data Analysis Process based on Litchman's Three Cs process

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Responses to Research Question 1

What are the aspects of resilience of effective high school English language teachers?

The data from the questionnaires collected from 30 high school English language teachers found the aspects of resilience. The questionnaire findings revealed that the teachers obtained a high average score of all the sections. It shows that the most important thing for good English language teachers is to engage in other social activities and finding new sustenance for overcoming difficulties (Mean=4.63; S.D.= 0.42) and to have positive thinking on spiritual influences, and to have an optimistic and active attitude towards things in order to perform well in work (Mean=4.59; S.D.= 0.46).

The qualitative data were analyzed from semi-structured interviews with 8 high school English language teachers at this school were found: good English language teachers always have an optimistic and active attitude towards their work and engage in finding many ways for facing challenges.



#### 4.2 Responses to Research Question 2

How they cope with the difficulties and challenges in their jobs?

The data from the questionnaires collected from 30 high school English language teachers found that an effective English language teacher is good at seeking help from others, expressing their ideas to others, and good at communication (Mean=4.48; S.D.= 0.56). another questionnaire result shows that becoming an effective English language teacher have the support of family members, and the family atmosphere is harmonious, and the parents' words and deeds have a certain impact on children, and this influence will be reflected in work (Mean=4.49; S.D.= 0.54).

The qualitative data were analyzed from semi-structured interviews with 8 high school English language teachers at this school were found: good English language teachers always have supporting from their family, friend, peers and so on. And they always have good communication skill and get along well with others.

#### 5. Discussion

The findings of the study from both the quantitative and qualitative data are shown the figure below.

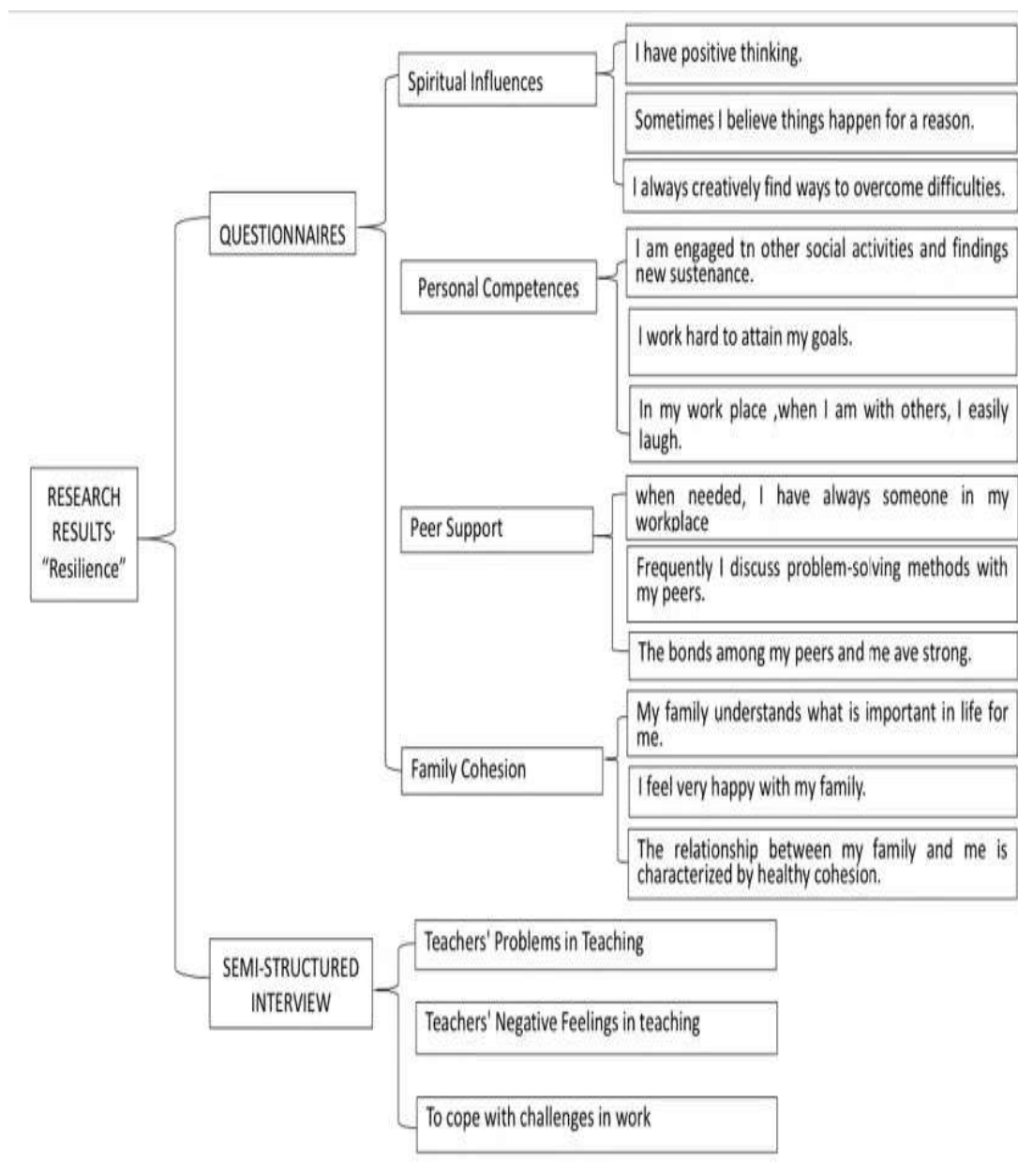


Figure 2 Research Results of Resilience

Based on the research on the characteristics and influencing factors of different English language teachers' resilience, this paper proposes more feasible strategies to improve the resilience of different teachers. Enhancing is divided into strategies to enhance the impact of protective factors in environmental characteristics and strategies to enhance the impact of protective factors in personality characteristics. Among them, strategies proposed to enhance the impact of protective factors in environmental characteristics include actively seeking help from peers and family members; Strategies proposed to improve the impact of protective factors on personality traits include: learning to adjust spiritual influences and improving personal abilities.



### 5.1 Actively Seeking Help from Peers and Family members

When teachers with less teaching experience encounter difficulties, the most effective and convenient way is to seek help from experienced colleagues, leaders, and family.

These teachers are relatively lacking in the ability to apply various teaching techniques, making it difficult to grasp appropriate and effective solutions to the problems that students encounter in school. If we can receive guidance from colleagues, especially experienced teachers, it will be very beneficial for problem-solving. This is similar to Zhang's (2019) study, which shows that 'to improve the resilience of teachers, we should correctly understand the pressure and difficulties, and form a positive attitude and evaluation: a work group that can provide effective support, a harmonious campus atmosphere that can give teachers a sense of belonging, a work group that can provide effective support, and a harmonious campus atmosphere that can give teachers a sense of belonging.' Li and Wu (2014) put forward in the article,

'we should improve teachers' resilience in mutual trust and open interpersonal relationships, and teachers can effectively cope with challenging environments through the support of school interpersonal relationships.' Therefore, high school English language teachers can communicate with their peers and family members when facing difficulties and challenges in order to have an active atmosphere at work.

### 5.2 Learning to Adjust Spiritual Influences

Teachers are prone to negative emotions such as anger and anxiety when encountering problems, difficulties, and setbacks. As a teacher repeatedly emphasized in an interview, whether in work or life, when encountering difficulties and setbacks, one must learn to adjust their mindset. The first thing to adjust their mindset is to maintain a calm heart.

Teachers are also ordinary people and may encounter various troubles. Teachers are just an ordinary profession, and as teachers, one must first realize that whether they are teachers or other professions, they will encounter various problems and should be treated with a calm heart. According to Luo (2014) and Jia's (2021) studies,

'Teachers may encounter various problems in their interactions with students. Therefore, when encountering any problems, teachers should not put too much pressure on themselves, nor take all the responsibility onto their shoulders. They should tell themselves that encountering difficulties is normal and does not require unnecessary anxiety, which is not conducive to solving the problem.'

Therefore, when facing difficulties and setbacks, teachers should actively respond, actively seek solutions, and not have a negative mentality of muddling through. They must use various methods to try to solve problems.



### 5.3 Improving Personal Abilities

The personal abilities of teachers include teaching ability, problem-solving ability, and emotional regulation ability. The improvement of teachers' personal ability enables teachers to handle both teaching problems and student problems with ease, thus improving teachers' resilience level. This is similar to Meng (2013) and Zhang's (2015) studies, which shows that 'teachers need to observe and learn from other teachers' classes more frequently, actively participate in various teaching and research activities, and promptly seek advice from experienced teachers when encountering problems. So that teachers can update their teaching methods in a timely manner and use advanced teaching equipment to carry out teaching.'

When teachers encounter problems that they find difficult to solve, they can seek advice from experienced and mature teachers or seek help from school leaders: they can help themselves choose more effective solutions by reading and learning books and literature on education and psychology.

## 6. Conclusion

With the society and more and more experts and scholars pay attention to teachers' psychology and health, the research on teachers' resilience has also received more attention. This study explored the level, characteristics, influencing factors of teachers' resilience at different stages and strategies to improve teachers' resilience. The study found that the level of resilience of different teachers is different because each teacher's resilience has different influencing factors.

### 6.1 Major Findings

This study believes that as a teacher, the research on teachers' resilience, especially the research on the resilience level of different teachers, can help different teachers understand their own understanding of resilience, and with some methods and strategies, improve their resilience ability. Therefore, this study is of great significance for teachers to improve the level of resilience and promote professional development.

### 6.2 Suggestions for the Future Research

Because this research has certain limitations, it only focuses on the research on resilience of English teachers in one school, so in the future research, other researchers can also try to carry out more in-depth research on teachers' resilience from other perspectives of multiple schools, and study its formation process and impact on different teacher groups.





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