

# Exploring Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) Strategies of Pre-Service English Teachers

Maerelle C. Barcena<sup>1</sup> and Kaceline N. Castaño<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Staff, Passi City College, Passi City, Iloilo, Philippines

<sup>2</sup>Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology, Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo, Philippines

**Abstract**— This study explores at socio-emotional learning (SEL) in connection with the emotional regulation, empathy, and stress management of pre-service teachers in a language classroom. The research was undertaken through a quantitative survey of thirty (30) pre-service teachers coming from the Philippines; it focused on the different components of SEL such as self-awareness, empathy, and decision-making. The results revealed very high standards of socio-emotional awareness in the components of empathy and interpersonal relationships; however, greater issues still remain concerning stress management and emotional regulation, particularly in high-pressure situations. The findings suggest that SEL should be considered extremely significant especially in association with fostering interaction and academic success. Furthermore, it draws out targeted interventions in stress management as well as empathy and recommends the further integration of SEL skills in the curricula of future educators.

**Keywords**— Socio-emotional learning, language acquisition, holistic education, student well-being, emotional regulation, stress management.

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to Child Education International (2024), Social-emotional learning (SEL) teaches the life skills we all need at any age. It protects and nurtures the development of resiliency skills, attitudes and behaviors that enable resilience in the form of recognizing and managing emotions, managing actions, making responsible choices, developing and maintaining positive relationships, setting and achieving individual and collective goals, showing empathy and appreciation for others, overcoming adversity, and so much more.

Furthermore, the child's social interaction towards other people will certainly impact his whole being. As stated, when adults engage children in conversations about emotions, it enables children to better recognize and understand their own feelings as well as the emotions of those around them (Im et al., 2019). Therefore, when adults actively elaborate emotions with children such as putting a name to a feeling, explaining why they occur and the factors why a person behave like that, or guiding them on how to handle them it helps children develop emotional awareness. This will not only improve their ability to identify and understand their own emotions but also it can enhance their capacity to empathize with other people and interpret the emotions of others. Essentially, it will cultivate emotional intelligence and social understanding. A child will have a grasp more as to why people is behaving the way they behave. As a result, a child's ability to regulate his emotion and control of behavior among children become better that

facilitate positive and meaningful relationships with their peers (Im et al., 2019).

In addition, emotional competence, the ability to realize, label, express, and regulate emotions, is strongly linked to attachment security according to Mónaco et al. (2019). Attachment, thus, makes children feel secure in all kinds of settings with or without trusted caregivers, and builds cohesion with others as well as thriving in environments perceived to be safely supported.

A conceptual framework integrating emotional competence and social-emotional learning (SEL) was first introduced in 1994. SEL is defined as the ability to identify and label emotions, express feelings, assess their intensity, manage them effectively, delay gratification, control impulses, and cope with stress, as outlined by CASEL (Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning) (Im et al., 2019).

CASEL, as cited in Im et al. (2019), developed five interconnected sets of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills. The five main parts of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision-making. Self-awareness which means you understand your own emotions and you were able to recognize your strengths and weaknesses. Self-management is about controlling your emotions, staying calm in every situation, and working towards your goals no matter how challenging

the road is. Social awareness is about understanding how other people feel, respecting different cultures, and knowing where to find support. Relationship management involves building good relationships, listening well, and able to handle conflicts. Responsible decision-making means making choices that are good not only to yourself but for others as well, and keeping safety and respect in mind at all times.

### **Objective of the study**

The purpose of this study explored the role of emotional regulation in students' academic and social interactions, to assess the impact of empathy on students' collaboration and relationships with peers and to investigate how stress management and decision-making skills influence classroom dynamics and the overall learning environment. In completing this study, the researchers examined the impact of socio-emotional learning (SEL) on students' behavior and interactions in a language classroom.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research sought to investigate how socio-emotional learning (SEL) competencies shape students' behavior, interactions, and overall learning experience in the language classroom, with a particular focus on emotional regulation, empathy, and stress management. Specifically, it sought answers the following research questions:

1. How do students' abilities to identify and regulate their emotions influence their learning and interactions in a language classroom?
2. How does students' capacity to empathize with others impact collaboration and peer relationships in the classroom?
3. How do students manage stress, anxiety, and decision-making to create a positive learning environment?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study shows how Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) can improve education, particularly in language classrooms. SEL helps students do better in school while also developing important social skills, like understanding their emotions, showing empathy to other people, and managing stress at all times.

In language learning, SEL helps students communicate better, work well with others, and solve problems, students do not act base on their impulse. The study suggests that SEL should be included in the curriculum

as part of everyday learning to help students grow both emotionally and intellectually, creating a positive and engaging classroom environment. This will not only benefit the learners, rather the institution and community as a whole.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

This study sought answer as to how students' socio-emotional learning influences their emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and academic performance in a classroom ranging from language learning.

Quantitative research is a method that tests objective theories by examining the relationship among variables (Creswell, 2003), it "explains phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods" (Aliaga and Gunderson, 2002). In this study, quantitative survey-based research design was utilized, initiatives include the collection of numerical data through structured surveys to measure changes in students' SEL competencies.

The research focused on key SEL components such as self-awareness, empathy, stress management, and decision making how they impact behaviors in the classroom, peer interactions, and participation in overall academic activities.

This analyzed the statistical data and demonstrated how the area of SEL had an impact on learning and classroom experience levels. It helped design evidence-based effective practices for incorporating SEL into language teaching. The study was conducted with purposely chosen thirty (30) pre-service teachers from first year to third year of local college in the Philippines.

The interpretive scale used to assess SEL competencies ranged from 1.00 to 5.00, with scores of 4.21-5.00 interpreted as "Strongly Agree" (Very high awareness), 3.41-4.20 as "Agree" (High Awareness), 2.61-3.40 as "Neutral" (Average Awareness), 1.81-2.60 as "Disagree" (Low awareness), and 1.00-1.80 as "Strongly Disagree" (Very Low Awareness).

The scale was used to evaluate students' abilities in emotionan regulation, empathy, and stress management, and their influence on learning, peer relationships, and creating a positive classroom environment. The scale forms the basis for understanding the data presented in the table 2.

*Table 1. Mean Range, Responses and Interpretation of Socio-Emotional Learning according to the Five-point Likert Scale*

Mean Range	Responses	Interpretation
4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Very High
3.41-4.20	Agree (A)	High
2.61-3.40	Neutral (N)	Average
1.81-2.60	Disagree (D)	Low
1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Very Low

The goal is to evaluate the socio-emotional learning (SEL) levels of pre-service teachers based on their responses. To achieve this, the weighted means and standard deviation of the data collected from the sample

were computed and compared with the arithmetic mean of the five-point Likert scale. The interpretation of SEL levels was then determined based on the pre-service teachers' responses.

### III. RESULTS

*Table 2.1 Weighted Arithmetic and Standard Deviation of the levels of Socio-Emotional Learning (Part I)*

Socio-Emotional Learning Strategies	M	SD	Ranking According to Socio-Emotional Learning	Interpretation
1. I always try to comfort my friends when they are sad.	4.533	0.628	1	Very High
2. I stand up for myself without putting others down.	4.366	0.556	2	Very High
3. I know when I am moody.	4.33	0.606	3	Very High
4. I will always apologize when I hurt my friend unintentionally.	4.233	0.727	4	High
5. I know what I am thinking and doing.	4.166	0.698	5	High
6. I am aware of how my mood affect the way I treat other people.	4.066	0.520	6	High
7. I ensure that there are more positive outcomes when making a choice.	4	0.643	7	High
8. I understand my moods and feelings.	3.9	0.844	8	High
9. I understand why I do what I do.	3.866	0.628	9	High
10. When making decisions, I take into account the consequences of my actions.	3.733	0.583	10.5	High

*Table 2.2 Weighted Arithmetic and Standard Deviation of the levels of Socio-Emotional Learning (Part II)*

Socio-Emotional Learning Strategies	M	SD	Ranking According to Socio-Emotional Learning	Interpretation
11. I stop and think before doing anything when I get angry.	3.733	0.944	10.5	High
12. I recognize how people feel by looking at their facial expressions.	3.7	0.534	11.5	High
13. I weigh the strengths of the situation before deciding on my action.	3.7	0.651	11.5	High
14. It is easy for me to understand why people feel the way they do.	3.5	0.682	12	High
15. I stay calm and overcome anxiety in new or changing situations.	3.433	0.935	13	Average
16. I know how to disagree without starting an argument.	3.4	0.674	14	Average

<b>17. If someone is sad, angry or happy, I believe I know what they are thinking.</b>	3.3	0.595	15	Average
<b>18. I try not to criticize my friend when we quarrel.</b>	3.133	0.860	16	Average
<b>19. I can stay calm in stressful situation.</b>	3.033	0.718	17	Average
<b>20. I stay calm when things go wrong.</b>	2.966	0.718	18	Average

Overall Mean = 56.2 SD= 0.82

The results in Table 2.1 indicate that learners generally perceive socio-emotional skills in the language classroom as "High" in their abilities, with most items rated as such, except for a few categorized as "Average."

The highest-ranked item, "I always try to comfort my friends when they are sad," has a mean of 4.533 and a standard deviation of 0.628, reflecting a very high level of competence and empathy among learners in this aspect of socio-emotional awareness. Similarly, the item "I will always apologize when I hurt my friend unintentionally" ranks second with a mean of 4.233 and a standard deviation of 0.727, highlighting learners' strong sense of accountability and interpersonal awareness.

In contrast, the item "I can stay calm in stressful situations" is ranked as the most challenging, with a mean of 3.033 and a standard deviation of 0.718, categorized as "Average." Similarly, "I stay calm and overcome anxiety in new or changing situations" also has a relatively low mean of 3.433 and a standard deviation of 0.935, indicating that learners find managing emotions in unpredictable or stressful contexts to be moderately challenging.

Overall, the findings suggest that while learners demonstrate high levels of socio-emotional awareness in areas such as empathy, accountability, and decision-making, there is room for improvement in managing stress and staying calm in challenging situations. Targeted interventions focusing on emotional regulation strategies could help strengthen these aspects of socio-emotional learning in the language classroom.

On the other hand, the data provided in the table 2.2 gives an insight into individuals' emotional awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills. The average scores range from 2.97 to 4.37, suggesting variability in self-assessment across different aspects of emotional intelligence.

Higher-ranking items, such as "I understand my moods and feelings" (3.9) and "I stand up for myself without putting others down" (4.37), reflect strong self-

awareness and confidence in managing one's emotions and maintaining positive interpersonal interactions. These participants report high self-regulation and emotional control in various situations.

On the other hand, items like "If someone is sad, angry or happy, I believe I know what they are thinking" (3.3) and "I try not to criticize my friend when we quarrel" (3.13) indicate moderate self-reported abilities in understanding and navigating the emotions of others and resolving conflicts.

The standard deviations suggest that responses were somewhat varied, with values ranging from 0.52 to 0.94. This variability points to differing levels of emotional awareness and regulation across participants. For example, "I know when I am moody" (4.33, SD = 0.61) reflects strong self-awareness, while other items, such as "I stay calm when things go wrong" (2.97, SD = 0.72), show room for improvement in emotional control during stressful situations.

In summary, the results indicate participants have a high level of confidence in emotional self-awareness and in emotional self-regulation, particularly in their ability to recognize their belief systems, attitudes, and moods and in their ability to manage conflict. At the same time, there are areas for improvement such as empathy and emotional regulation, which is suggestive of a potential development needs with respect to this socio-emotional skill domain.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were drawn from participants' answer based on the prepared survey-questionnaire from the researchers in socio-emotional learning, particularly in emotional awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills. Additionally, a study published in the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology examined the relationship between children's SEL skills, their ability to regulate behavior, and the competence of their social interactions. The findings suggest that while children may exhibit strong emotional awareness and self-regulation, there remains



room for growth in managing stress and anxiety during challenging situations. The majority of items in the table fall within the "High" range, indicating that participants feel confident in their socio-emotional capabilities, though some areas show that there is a room for development and growth. The overall data suggest a strong awareness of personal emotions and an ability to manage emotions in various situation, but with coping the challenges in handling stress and anxiety during difficult situations.

The highest-scoring item, "I always try to comfort my friends when they are sad" (Mean = 4.533, SD = 0.628), indicates a very high level of empathy and emotional support skills among participants. This aligns with existing research that emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering positive social relationships and well-being (Goleman, 1995). Participants also demonstrated a strong sense of accountability, as reflected in the item "I will always apologize when I hurt my friend unintentionally" (Mean = 4.233, SD = 0.727), suggesting that learners are conscious of their actions and are committed to maintaining harmonious relationships.

However, some items reveal more moderate self-reported abilities. For instance, "I can stay calm in stressful situations" (Mean = 3.033, SD = 0.718) and "I stay calm and overcome anxiety in new or changing situations" (Mean = 3.433, SD = 0.935) indicate that participants face challenges in emotional regulation under stress. This aligns with the findings of studies by Gross (2002), which highlight that emotional regulation can be particularly difficult in unpredictable or high-pressure environments.

Additionally, the item "If someone is sad, angry or happy, I believe I know what they are thinking" (Mean = 3.3, SD = 0.595) reveals a more average level of ability in understanding others' emotions. This may suggest that while participants are relatively good at recognizing emotional cues, their ability to fully empathize or predict others' emotional responses could be enhanced through targeted practice and development.

The relatively low standard deviations, particularly for items like "I understand my moods and feelings" (SD = 0.698) and "I know when I am moody" (SD = 0.606), suggest a general consistency in responses across participants, with most individuals reporting similar levels of self-awareness. This consistency indicates that

the group generally shares similar experiences and perceptions of their emotional intelligence.

Overall, the findings indicate that while learners demonstrate strong self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal skills, there is room for improvement in emotional regulation, particularly in stressful or anxiety-inducing situations. Future interventions could focus on providing strategies for managing emotions in challenging contexts and enhancing the understanding of others' emotions. These results also highlight the potential for further research into the development of socio-emotional skills, particularly in relation to how emotional regulation can be fostered through targeted interventions.

This study contributes to the broader understanding of socio-emotional learning, underscoring the importance of emotional awareness and regulation in personal and academic success. By addressing the identified gaps, educators can better support learners in developing a well-rounded emotional skill set that will serve them in various life situations.

## V. CONCLUSION

In this study, participants present socio-emotional learning capabilities, including some areas of self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills. They had strong emotional awareness, empathy, and the ability to keep up positive relationships, which coincides with what the literature suggests in investigating the emotional intelligence benefits concerning social wellbeing and harmony.

But, there were problems with handling pressure, anxiety, and stress, which warranted the need for further intervention to develop much needed emotional regulation under the unexpected conditions. Moderate abilities in making sense of the emotions of others indicate room for more development in empathy and perspective-taking, improving effectiveness with others. There was strong consistency in participants' responses, indicating that they might have somehow experienced similar life events or education settings.

This indicates the need for such socio-emotional learning programs. Such programs may assist learners to overcome barriers, build emotional resilience, and also further develop and heighten students' emotional intelligence. Eventually, this would benefit both personal as well as social growth for the participants. On the other hand, good social interaction helps group members feel connected, work well together, trust each

other, and show mutual respect, making it easier to share responsibilities. Researchers found that some students use methods like encouraging others and organizing tasks to improve how their group works together. (Andriessen et al., 2013).

The findings indicate the importance of socio-emotional learning in personal and academic development. While participants demonstrate strengths in areas such as empathy and self-awareness, there is room for improvement in emotional regulation, particularly in high-stress situations. Future interventions and educational programs should focus on strengthening these skills, helping learners become more resilient, empathetic, and effective in managing their emotions.

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