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THE IMPACTS OF INTEGRATING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING INTO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study examined the impact of integrating Social and Emotional Learning into English language teaching for 110 primary school students in a rural area of Dong Thap Province, Vietnam. During a 12-week intervention using the Grade 5 English textbook (Global Success), the students participated in English learning activities that integrated Social and Emotional Learning competencies. Quantitative data included pre-test and post-test that assessed four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with eight random students from four Grade 5 classes. The findings showed statistically significant improvements in students' academic outcomes and highlighted positive improvements in learning attitudes such as active listening, empathy, helping and cooperating in group work, motivation, and self-discipline. The study confirms the effectiveness of and provides pedagogical implications for integrating Social and Emotional Learning into learning English as a foreign language, especially in rural areas. This study also suggests further research on designing English curricula that integrate social and emotional learning in primary and other levels of education in Vietnam.

Keywords: *English as a foreign language, English language teaching, impacts, primary school students, Social and Emotional Learning.*

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TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA VIỆC TÍCH HỢP HỌC TẬP CẢM XÚC XÃ HỘI TRONG VIỆC DẠY TIẾNG ANH CHO HỌC SINH TIỂU HỌC

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Lịch sử bài báo

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Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu bán thực nghiệm này nhằm đánh giá tác động của việc tích hợp Học tập Cảm xúc và Xã hội vào giảng dạy tiếng Anh cho 110 học sinh tiểu học tại một vùng nông thôn của tỉnh Đồng Tháp, Việt Nam. Trong 12 tuần học, sử dụng sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh lớp 5 (Global Success), học sinh đã tham gia vào các hoạt động học tiếng Anh tích hợp các năng lực Học tập Cảm xúc và Xã hội. Dữ liệu định lượng là các bài kiểm tra trước và sau khóa học tích hợp gồm bốn kỹ năng: nghe, nói, đọc và viết. Dữ liệu định tính được thu thập thông qua các cuộc phỏng vấn với tám học sinh ngẫu nhiên từ bốn lớp Năm. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy học sinh có những cải thiện đáng kể về mặt thống kê trong kết quả học tập và những cải thiện tích cực trong thái độ học tập như lắng nghe tích cực, đồng cảm, giúp đỡ và hợp tác trong nhóm, có động lực và tính tự giác. Nghiên cứu này khẳng định tính hiệu quả và cung cấp các hàm ý sư phạm khi tích hợp Học tập Cảm xúc và Xã hội vào việc học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ, đặc biệt là ở các vùng nông thôn. Nghiên cứu này cũng đề xuất các nghiên cứu sâu hơn về việc thiết kế chương trình giảng dạy tiếng Anh tích hợp Học tập Cảm xúc và Xã hội ở tiểu học và các cấp học khác tại Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: *Dạy tiếng Anh, học sinh tiểu học, học tập cảm xúc và xã hội, Tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ, tác động.*

1. Introduction

In recent decades, research on young students' academic achievement has trendily shifted from cognitive development to social and emotional health (CASEL, 2020). Social and emotional learning (SEL) has a positive impact on academic performance at different levels (Durlak et al., 2011). Especially, it is essential for SEL education for children as soon as possible (Jones et al., 2017; Ramirez et al., 2021). Regarding English language teaching (ELT), in the past five years, many studies explored the experiences, practices, or impacts of SEL in secondary schools (Bai et al., 2024; Pentón Herrera, 2024; Manurung, 2025) and in higher education (Hladka, 2024; Herrera, 2024; Douaa, 2025). These studies have shown increased scholarly attention on SEL in education, especially in ELT.

In Vietnam, ELT is increasingly concerned, and SEL in education has received more attention in theory and practice. According to the Conclusion No. 91-KL/TW, dated August 12, 2024, the Political Bureau required a gradual making English the second language in schools. In addition, Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDDT promulgating the 2018 English General Education Curriculum mentions three general competencies: Learner autonomy, communication and cooperation, and problem-solving and creativity, which have similarities in developing individual social and emotional competencies. However, although there was research on the integration or connection between SEL and other subjects namely Vietnamese language (Tran & Trinh, 2017), soft skills (Tran et al., 2023), Ethics (Tran et al., 2024) at different levels such as in secondary school (Tran, 2024), in high school (Tran et al., 2024; Huynh et al., 2023), and in higher education (Do et al., 2025; Le et al., 2025; Kieu, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2025; Pham et al., 2025), there is still a lack of research on integrating SEL into ELT at the primary level, especially in the Mekong Delta region and Dong Thap province. Recognizing these advantages and challenges, to help students have a better learning attitude, thereby improving their English learning outcomes, the study assessed the impact of integrating SEL into ELT for primary school students. To its goals, this study raised two core questions: (1) What are the impacts of integrating SEL into English classes? (2) What are students' practices and perceptions of integrating SEL into English classes?

2. Literature review

2.1. Social and emotional learning

SEL can be defined as “an integral part of education and human development”. SEL is the process by which people acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop a healthy identity, manage emotions and achieve goals, feel and empathize with others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make caring and responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020). SEL competency refers to the set of capacities that help individuals manage emotions, build relationships, and make responsible decisions. CASEL (2020) identified five core domains of SEL competency, consisting of (1) Self-Awareness is the ability to accurately identify one's own feelings, thoughts and values and their influence on behaviour in a variety of contexts, (2) Self-Management is the ability to regulate one's feelings, thoughts and behaviour effectively in a variety of situations, as well as to set and work towards achieving goals, (3) Social Awareness is the ability to recognise and empathise with people from different backgrounds and cultures, understand social and ethical norms of behaviour, (4) Relationship Skills is the ability to establish and maintain positive relationships with a variety of individuals and groups, and (5) Responsible Decision-Making is the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions. By forming core competencies, SEL not only helps improve learning outcomes but also nourishes confidence and empathy, which enables individuals to interact with the world around them meaningfully and purposefully.

2.2. The role of SEL in foreign language teaching for primary school students

SEL interventions have shown remarkable improvements in primary schoolers' emotional well-being, academic achievement, and social development in foreign language classes. School-based SEL interventions have a positive impact on primary schoolers' well-being, which can be a strong self-perception, positive attitudes, and low levels of emotional distress (Durlak et al., 2011; Zins & Elias, 2007). Primary school students who developed SEL skills in their foreign language classrooms would become happy, motivated, and socially active children (Ariyan et al., 2022). In addition, students in SEL intervention groups had an average increase of 11 percentile-point gain in academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011), scored 11 to 17 percentile points higher on academic tests (Payton et al., 2000). A meta-analysis by Cipriano et al. (2023) emphasized that students who participated in SEL interventions had significant improvement in skills, attitudes, behaviors, peer relationships, and academic achievement. Moreover, the integrated SEL-English curriculum in primary schools based on the CASEL framework resulted in significant improvements in student engagement, peer collaboration, and language participation (Zhang & Meng, 2025). Thus, studies have shown the positive impact of SEL in foreign language teaching for primary school students in many aspects: emotional health, academic achievement, and social development.

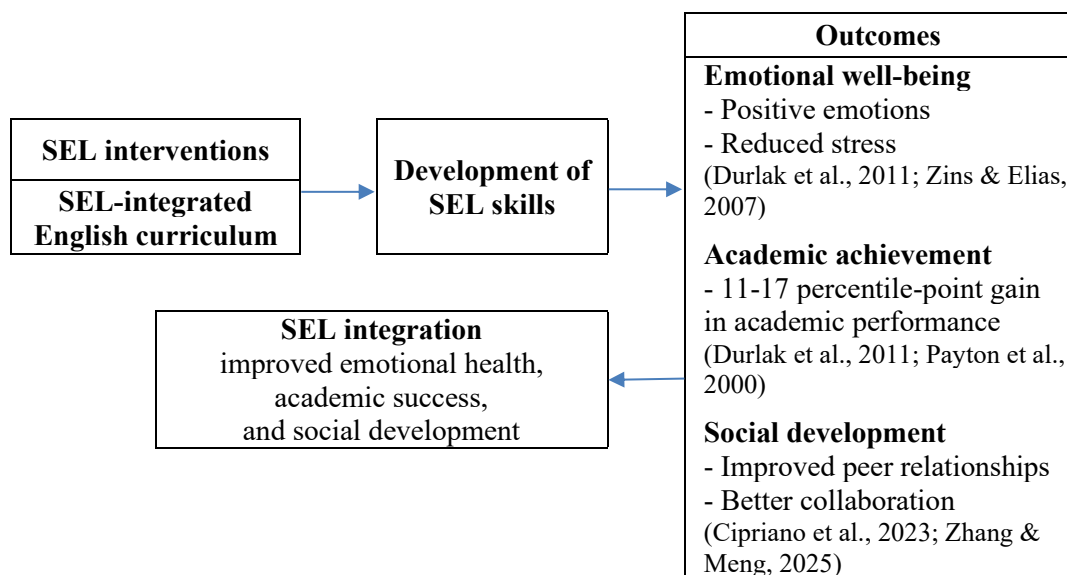


Figure 1. Model of the role of SEL interventions on primary school students' social, emotional, and academic development

2.3. Previous relevant study

Many recent studies have focused on integrating SEL into ELT for elementary school students. A study conducted in Russia by Ariyan et al. (2022) listed the conditions for children's socio-emotional development in foreign language classrooms, including an effective educational environment, personality-oriented teacher behavior, emotional states of teachers and students, and emotional nuances in teachers' speech. Yaburova (2023) analyzed foreign strategies within the framework of teaching English to primary school students from Ukraine using the SEL approach. The author identified five key elements (safe and supportive learning environment, self-awareness, social awareness, decision-making skills, and relationship skills) as an integral part of implementing SEL in the process of teaching English speaking to primary school students. The author described different strategies (building a family tree, emotional identification cards, art projects, portfolios, role-playing, mindfulness

activities, storytelling) integrated into the process of teaching English speaking to primary school students to improve their communication skills. A qualitative study conducted by Coli et al. (2024) investigated English as foreign language (EFL) teachers' efforts in an Uruguayan primary school to integrate SEL into their instruction. Twenty-two teachers were observed using the SEL Coaching Toolkit during a three-week online SEL course. Findings revealed teachers' commitment to integrating SEL, but there was still inconsistency and limited explicit SEL activities. A mixed-methods study by Zhang and Meng (2025) examined integrating SEL principles into English-language instruction at a Chinese primary school. The study conducted in-depth interviews with three English teachers from grades 1 to 3 and identified three main challenges: lack of student engagement, proficiency gaps, and outdated teaching methods. An integrated SEL-English curriculum based on the CASEL framework was implemented, and classroom observations showed significant improvements in student engagement, peer collaboration, and language participation.

In Vietnam, SEL has also been implemented in education. However, up to now, research on SEL at the primary level has only focused on the subjects such as Ethics (Tran et al., 2024), and Vietnamese language (Tran & Trinh, 2017). Regarding EFL, to date there have only been studies on SEL into ELT at high school level (Tran et al., 2024), and university level (Do et al., 2024; Le, 2020; Le et al., 2025; Huynh & Le, 2025). Currently, there has been no research integrating SEL into ELT at the primary level. This is a big gap in SEL research in Vietnam up to this point.

In conclusion, studies on SEL integration in ELT for primary school students in the world mainly focus on theoretical analysis, proposing strategies and techniques. Up to now, there has been very little research on SEL intervention in real classrooms. Especially in Vietnam, specifically in the Mekong Delta or Dong Thap province, there has not been any research on SEL integration in ELT for primary school students. Therefore, this study differs from most previous studies in terms of participant characteristics, SEL-integrated topics, English tests, and SEL interventions applied in the current context of a primary school in a rural area of Vietnam. These aspects are presented in the following sections.

3. Data and research methods

3.1. Research design

In this study, a quasi-experimental design was used to evaluate the impact of integrating SEL into English classrooms. Participants were 110 fifth graders (60 males and 50 females) from a rural primary school in Dong Thap province, southern Vietnam. Their ages were from 10 to 12. They all learned EFL from Grade 1. This study had three phases: (1) a pre-test was administered to assess to students' learning outcomes before applying measures; (2) a twelve-week English course, which was integrated SEL, was run; (3) a post-test and interviews on the impacts of integrating SEL in learning English were conducted.

3.2. SEL Intervention

The 12 weeks of SEL-integrated experimental learning linked SEL components with themes and topics in the 2018 general education program for English for primary school students, specifically Grade 5. The course had a total of 2 themes (Me and my family, Me and the world around) and 7 topics (Holiday, Festival, Health, Health and common diseases, Seasons and weather, Stories, and Tourist attractions) integrated with five SEL domains (Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, Relationship skills, and Responsible decision-making). The main materials in the course were the textbook *Tiếng Anh 5 Global Success*, published by Vietnam Education Publishing House in 2024, which focuses on communicative skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In these lessons,

students were divided into random pairs or groups to complete requirements such as drawing pictures about Tet, playing question-and-answer games about suitable clothing, etc. Through these activities, students practice not only communication skills but also teamwork and collaborative problem-solving.

3.3. Data collection instruments

3.3.1. Pre-test and post-test

The pre-course and post-course test was conducted according to Circular No. 27/2020/TT-BGDDT of the Ministry of Education and Training, including 3 levels: Level 1: Recognize, repeat or describe learned content and apply it directly to solve some familiar situations and problems in learning; Level 2: Connect and arrange some learned content to solve problems with similar content; Level 3: Apply learned content to solve some new problems or give reasonable feedback in learning and life. The tests were designed on a 10-point scale with a total of 40 questions numbered from 1 to 40, divided into four skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Each skill had 10 questions. The test materials are taken from the contents of textbooks, illustrated periodic test sets, and the website hoclieu.vn of the Vietnamese education publisher. Both the pre-course and post-course tests, matrices, and speaking skills assessment criteria were completed and submitted for comments and corrections to the instructor, an expert from the Foreign Language Faculty of Dong Thap University.

3.3.2. Interview

After the SEL intervention, 8 students were chosen randomly to participate in the interview. The interview questions were organized into three major areas: students' experiences of the SEL-integrated English learning environment, how they practiced their language skills through SEL integration, as well as their suggestions for controlling emotions and improving their English proficiency. The interview questions are based on the research framework that the researcher proposed. The interview consisted of 10 questions divided into 2 groups, of which 5 questions related to students' practice process, and 5 questions explored their perceptions during the SEL-integrated English course, who directly experienced the SEL-integrated English course. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Table 1. Interview questions

<p>Students' practice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What did you do to control your emotions when presenting in English? 2. While completing the health goals chart, did you actually apply those things to your life? Did it help you? 3. Have you ever had difficulty writing about historical sites? What did you do to overcome them? 4. When you were working in a group in learning English, did you help your friends? How did you help? 5. Can you tell me about a situation where you gave advice to a friend about an activity that suited his interests in English class?
<p>Student's perception:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. What are your emotions when learning English (i.e., feeling happy, fantastic, exciting, sad, angry, stressed, etc.)? 7. What helps you stay self-motivated and self-disciplined in learning English?

8. How does making a healthy plan help you improve your self-awareness and motivation to learn?
9. Why is it important to show empathy when listening to your friends?
10. How does working in groups in English class help you develop cooperation and problem-solving skills? Can you share any examples?

3.4. Data collection and analysis

3.4.1. Pre-test and post-test

The pre-test was administered in the second week of the research after the personal information sheets and consent forms had been returned. The listening, reading, and writing tests were taken on paper, and the speaking test was oral. The paper test lasted 35 minutes and was administered simultaneously to all students in the classrooms and was monitored by the homeroom teacher. The speaking test, which lasted about 5 minutes per student, was administered individually in the English room over several class sessions. Students were divided into small groups and scheduled on different days to ensure an adequate duration and avoid duplication. All speaking tests were recorded for later analysis. Another English teacher from the same school was invited to supervise and grade the test together to ensure its seriousness. The post-test was conducted in the seventeenth week of the research under the same conditions of duration and environment, observed and scored by the same teachers as the pre-test.

Pre-tests on listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills were used to compare with the corresponding post-course tests. The tests were scored independently by the researcher and another English teacher at the school. These initial independent test scores were then averaged to produce each student's final test score. These final test scores were coded, and a paired-sample T-test was run using SPSS 26 to examine whether the difference between test scores was statistically significant.

3.4.2. Interview

Eight students were selected randomly from 4 classes, 2 students per class, to conduct an interview. Because students reviewed and took their year-end exams in the second and third weeks of May, the interviews were conducted in the last week of May. Each interview lasted 20 minutes and was recorded by two mobile phones. The interview was conducted in the English room in a comfortable environment. The interview table was near the podium, and there were 3 rows of waiting chairs at the back of the classroom where cakes, candies, and soft drinks were served. Students participating in the interview are accompanied by their parents or guardians to attend, wait, and listen to the interview.

Qualitative data was collected and used in the Content Analysis Model of Elo and Kyngäs (2008) for analysis. First, the researcher coded the recordings by name: student 1 was S1, student 2 was S2, etc. All interviews were transcribed originally to ensure accuracy. The researcher read the transcripts many times to become familiar with the data and begin identifying ideas. A manual coding method was used to analyze the interview data. Responses were categorized based on the structure of the interview questions. Each transcript was reviewed line-by-line, and meaningful segments were assigned initial codes. These codes were then grouped into larger themes that reflected common patterns of participants. Themes were developed inductively from the data. Each theme was then clearly described, accompanied by illustrative quotes from participants. Finally, the significance of each theme was analyzed in answering the research question.

3.5. Ethical considerations

To ensure ethical research standards, the researcher obtained consent forms from all relevant stakeholders, including the school administration, students, and their parents or guardians. They were also all informed about the objectives, procedures, activities, and the time of the study. Moreover, all class and participant names are coded and secure. The test scores were not disclosed to anyone other than them. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting their grades or school performance during the current school year. Even during the interview, students participated with the supervision of their parents or guardians. In this study, every step was taken to ensure the confidentiality of the students to minimize any impact on their academic activities, and the students' participation was completely voluntary.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Pre-test and Post-test findings

The researcher used IBM SPSS 26 to analyze the data from the pre- and post-course tests. Paired sample t-test was used to compare the differences between the pre- and post-course test results on the total scores of listening, reading, writing, and speaking tests.

Table 2. Comparisons between pre-test and post-test scores (N=110)

Skill	Mean (SD) (Pre-test – Post-test)	Mean difference	Correlation (r)	p-value (sig.)	95% CI of difference
Listening	1.76 (0.43) - 2.04 (0.39)	- 0.28	0.87	0.000	- 0.32, - 0.24
Reading	1.69 (0.50) - 1.94 (0.43)	- 0.24	0.89	0.000	- 0.29, - 0.20
Writing	1.31 (0.57) - 1.81 (0.53)	- 0.49	0.87	0.000	- 0.54, - 0.44
Speaking	1.45 (0.47) - 2.00 (0.36)	- 0.55	0.80	0.000	- 0.61, - 0.50
Total	6.21 (1.71) – 7.82 (1.47)	- 1.60	0.92	0.000	-1.73, - 1.47

As shown in Table 2, the results of the paired samples t-tests compare students' performance in Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking between pre- and post-test. Results showed significant improvements in all four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) as well as the total score. Reading and Listening skills showed less improvement than Writing and Speaking skills, with MDs of 0.24, 0.28, 0.49, and 0.55, respectively. Among them, speaking skills improved the most with MD=0.55. The correlation coefficients (r) between pre- and post-test scores for all skills were quite high, ranging from 0.80 to 0.92, with p-value < 0.01, indicating relatively stable rankings of participants and significant progress in everyone. Additionally, the narrow 95% confidence intervals suggested that the differences were reliable and not due to sampling error.

4.2. Interview findings

Eight students who participated in the interview were coded S1 to S8. This qualitative data not only provides insights into how students practiced and their perceptions of SEL during classroom activities but also offers a space for the voices of those who experienced learning English with practical SEL integration.

4.2.1. Students' Practices of SEL-Integrated English Learning

Self-awareness

Some students reported how they recognized their own emotions, especially when preparing to present in front of a group or the whole class. S1 said, *"I felt a little nervous when I was going to speak. I took a deep breath, when I started speaking, I was a little nervous, but after a while I felt less nervous"*. Another student shared that positive self-talk helped them gain confidence and participate more actively. S5 shared: *"I usually thought to myself: I can do it, so I boldly raised my hand to speak"*. Students not only recognize their emotions; they also self-regulate their emotions.

Self-management

The majority of the 8 students reported applying what they had learned in class to their daily lives. For example, when completing the health goal chart, some students found that they had started to adopt healthy habits outside of school. S2, S3, S6, and S8 talked that they practiced going to bed early. One explained, *"I practice going to bed early, I usually go to bed at 10 p.m., but now I go to bed at 9 p.m. or even earlier"*. S1, S3, S4, S5, and S7 shared that they drink more water every day. An interviewee said, *"After completing the health plan, I set a goal of drinking 1 to 1.5 liters of water per day"*. S2, S2, S7 said that they try to get up early to do morning exercise, one said: *"I used to be lazy to exercise, but now I wake up early every day to exercise before having breakfast, because I wrote it on the health board, so I can't do it if I don't do it"*. These answers showed how the learning activities encouraged self-discipline and self-regulation.

Social awareness

Students reported that they learned to care for and empathize with others. Some interviewees shared how they encouraged their friends to participate in the lessons or observed and listened carefully to their classmates' opinions in group work. S3, S5, S6 shared: *"When my friend wanted to speak but was afraid to raise his hand, I told him not to be afraid of making mistakes, the teacher wouldn't scold him, if he made a mistake, the teacher would correct it"*. S8 said: *"When my friend told me about the Tet holiday at his family, I saw that he was very happy, I listened carefully, and I also felt happy"*. These responses illustrated a supportive classroom atmosphere.

Relationship skills

Interviewees noted helping each other with learning tasks. For example, someone reported helping friends in learning or suggesting suitable activities. S1 shared: *"When the teacher asked to write about a historic site, my friend didn't know how to write some words in English, so I helped him. When sharing about the write, I forgot some vocabulary, my peer helped me pronounce them"*. S4 and S7 told: *"When playing the weather circle game, my friend didn't know how to choose suitable clothes, maybe because he didn't remember how to say the words, I helped him remember it"*. These back-and-forth exchanges promote collaboration and mutual learning among students.

Responsible decision-making

Interviewees were able to make responsible choices not only regarding their health and learning, but also about how to handle emotions in real-life situations. Some mentioned adopting healthier behaviours. S3, S7, S8 explained: *"I tried eating vegetables because the teacher said to eat more vegetables and fruits to be healthier when studying the lesson on Staying Healthy"*. Some practised English in their daily lives, S2, S5 said: *"I tried speaking English with my brother, he is in grade 9, so I should talk to him to improve my English"*.

Some made decision to regulate emotions, S1, S4 told: *“When my friend read some sentences but pronounced a word wrong, instead of laughing at him like I used to, I told him read better today, keep it up”*. Planning a health chart not only helps students make appropriate choices for good health but also indirectly helps them relate to how to learn English better and be aware of their emotions and made thoughtful decisions.

4.2.2. Students’ Perceptions of SEL-Integrated English Learning

Emotions in learning English

Interviewees admitted to experiencing different emotions while learning English. When playing games or learning new words, many students experienced joy or excitement. S3, S5, and S6 stated, *“I feel very happy when I play games in English. The games are very funny, and I can learn new words at the same time”*. Students also expressed their confidence. S1 and S7 shared, *“I feel very confident and happy when I answer the teacher’s questions correctly”*. However, the feelings weren’t always good. Speaking in front of the class caused some students to feel nervous and stressed. S2, S8 acknowledged *“I often tremble when I have to read aloud because I am afraid of making mistakes”*. These indicate that during the learning process, they have started to become conscious of their own feelings.

Self-motivation and discipline

Students said that encouragement and praise from teachers and friends were important factors in helping them stay motivated and disciplined. S2 and S4 said: *“When my teacher praised me for doing well, I wanted to study more”*. S3, S7, and S8 shared: *“There were times when I wanted to play games on my iPad, but I told myself that I had to finish my homework tomorrow for the team leader to check before I could play games”*. In addition, some students set small goals to maintain their studies, for example, S6 said: *“I wrote on the board that I would learn 3 new words every day. Whenever I learned 3 words, I ticked the board and felt very happy”*. These responses demonstrated students’ self-management skills and intrinsic motivation.

Healthy plans and self-awareness

Health planning helps students improve their awareness not only of their lifestyle but also of their studies. S1 said: *“When I wrote down my goal of drinking more water to be healthy, I also thought that I could learn more vocabulary every day to be better in English”*. S5 and S6 said: *“I go to bed earlier so that I can wake up early in the morning to review my English lessons, and I find it easier to remember”*. Some students even saw a connection between healthy habits and their studies: *“When I have a full breakfast at home, I concentrate better in class”*. These responses show that small activities in class can have a positive impact on both their health and their studies.

Empathy in listening

Most students showed that encouragement and patience when listening would help their friends gain confidence. S3 shared: *“When my friend answered wrong, I didn’t laugh but said ‘it’s okay’, to make them feel less upset”*. Many students agreed that expressing empathy is important when listening to their friends. S2, S5 said: *“I nod and smile at my friend when he speaks, to make him feel comfortable”*. Some also realized that listening attentively helps build better relationships. S6 shared *“When I talk to my friend, I feel happy that he listens to me, so I want to do the same for him”*.

Group work, cooperation, and problem-solving

Group work is an opportunity for many students to collaborate and solve problems

together. S1 explained: *"In a group, I remember vocabulary well, so I often give my friends many words to choose from, and other friends are good at speaking, so they correct my pronunciation"*. Students learn to work together to complete tasks faster. S6 shared: *"When making posters, the group leader assigns tasks, and my friends and I share them, so my group finishes the fastest"*. Students also said that working in groups helped them learn to cooperate and share to improve together. S4 said: *"When I didn't understand the exercise or sometimes, I didn't understand what the teacher said, my peers explained it to me, and I found it much easier to understand"*. These experiences show that working in groups helps students develop skills in cooperation, sharing responsibilities, and learning from each other.

4.3. Discussion

The results answered the two research questions. Regarding the impact of integrating SEL in ELT, the quantitative results, specifically the pre- and post-test, showed that this experiment had an effect on students' learning outcomes. Statistical results showed that SEL integration in English classes had positive impacts in improving students' learning outcomes, as the mean scores increased and the t-test results were also statistically significant. Specifically, speaking and writing showed the largest gains, suggesting that the instructional approach had a particularly strong effect on students' productive skills. Listening and reading also improved significantly. Strong consistency between pre-test and post-test scores implied that the observed improvements were systematic rather than random. This suggests that the intervention in all four skills may have benefited the majority of participants. The study demonstrates that actively participating in integrated SEL activities has helped students improved their learning outcomes, especially language skills. This aligns with previous studies on SEL in improving academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011).

In terms of students' practices and perceptions, integrated SEL activities about self-management promoted students' motivation and self-discipline in learning English. Self-management was evident when students connected classroom activities, such as planning a health goal, to practical habits such as exercising regularly or eating healthily, which in turn reinforced their academic discipline. These examples show that SEL is not isolated from learning in the classroom but is integrated into daily routines, strengthening both personal growth and language acquisition. Studies by Bai et al. (2021) and Huynh and Le (2025) on the impacts of SEL on English learning achievements also showed similar results, that self-management ability helps to transform cognition into academic achievement. This suggests that SEL acts as a bridge between affective factors and cognitive outcomes in EFL learning.

Furthermore, SEL helped to improve awareness and the ability to regulate emotions in the classroom. Students reported that they were more aware of their own emotions, such as anxiety and shyness, and applied ways to control these emotions, namely deep breathing and talking to themselves. This shows that self-awareness and self-management skills support language learners to overcome anxiety and participate actively in communicative activities (Durlak et al., 2011), and highlights the role of emotions in learning (CASEL's, 2020). Additionally, the integration of SEL promoted social awareness and relationship skills. The way in which group activities helped students learn to listen, express empathy, and support their peers reflected the collaborative nature of language learning, in which peer interactions are important for developing foreign language communication skills. The interviews also confirmed that students valued group learning and wanted such group interaction tasks to be organized more frequently. This underscores the importance of social connections to students' learning (Durlak et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2017; Cipriano et al., 2023) that helps improve social skills. In addition, integrating SEL encourages responsible decision-making both in and out of the classroom. Students learnt to make healthy choices and recognized how these

choices affect their study habits. In their English learning, they also learnt to apply their study habits to their daily lives. This shows that there is a meaningful transfer between classroom learning and real-world contexts.

The discussion highlighted that SEL not only supported students' social and emotional development but also enhanced their motivation and confidence in learning English. The study also confirms that SEL can be effectively integrated into English language instruction without the need for a separate subject, making it both practical and relevant to the primary school context. Therefore, the findings suggest that SEL has a positive impact on student academic performance and personal development and provide valuable insights for teachers seeking to create supportive, engaging, and inclusive English language learning environments.

5. Conclusion and policy implications

The study makes both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, the results strengthen the scientific basis for the holistic education perspective, in which social and emotional development is closely linked to learning outcomes. In practice, it provides insights into how SEL can be integrated into ELT through meaningful tasks and interactive activities. The quantitative and qualitative findings showed that integrating SEL into teaching, especially in ELT, not only helps students enhance their learning outcomes but also improves their attitude, such as self-awareness, emotional management, and builds positive relationships. This confirms that SEL is an important and closely linked component of cognitive development in education. Despite its contributions, the study also has certain limitations in terms of sample scope, which need to be further expanded in future studies.

Based on the findings, there are several implications for maximizing the benefits of SEL intervention. First, for English teachers, it is important to design integrated SEL activities that are appropriate to students' ability levels and learning abilities. SEL's activities, including group work, role-playing games, or emotional reflection, can be flexibly applied daily to encourage students' empathy, cooperation, and self-regulation. Second, schools and educational stakeholders should organize regular workshops on integrating SEL in English teaching for teachers and students to enhance their awareness, implementation skills, and ability to address challenges in the process of integrating SEL into teaching. Finally, at the policy level, education administrators should consider integrating SEL into the mainstream English curriculum at the elementary level, where SEL is considered a core part of the program rather than a supplementary activity. However, implementation also needs to consider practical challenges such as limited time, uneven teacher capacity, and cultural differences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Pre-test

PRIMARY SCHOOL Full name: _____ Class: 5/ ____	THE FIRST TEST ON ENGLISH SCHOOL YEAR: 2024-2025 TIME: 35 MINUTES
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POINTS:	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking

Teacher's comment:

LISTENING

Part 1: Questions 1-4. Listen and number from 1 to 4. There is one example. (1pt)



Part 2: Questions 5 - 8. Listen and circle. There is one example. (1pt)

Example: Who is Mai's friend?

☒ A. Sofia

B. Mai

C. Mary

D. Linh

5. Where is Mai's friend from?

A. Britain

B. Viet Nam

C. Malaysia

D. Italy

6. Which class are they in?

A. 5A

B. 5B

C. 5C

D. 5D

7. Why do they enjoy surfing the Internet?

A. Because they want to share cultures

B. Because they want to find recipes

C. Because they want to share hobbies

D. Because they want to watch cartoons

8. What's their favourite activity in their free time?

A. Talking about cultures and hobbies

B. Making pizza, pasta and cakes

C. Cooking Vietnamese and Italian food

D. Watching cartoons on the Internet

Part 3: Questions 9 and 10. Listen and complete with NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS. There is one example. (0,5 pt)

Example: Mary lives in King Tower.

9. Mary's favourite sport is _____.

10. On Sundays, Mary _____ in her free time.

READING

Part 4: Questions 11 to 15. Read and choose the best answers. There is one example. (1.25 pts)

Hello! I'm Emily, and I'm from America. I love trees and basketball. I often play basketball with my friend, An. She's from Canada. She loves gardening, playing sports and playing the violin. In our free time, we usually water the flowers in the garden together. I would like to become a gardener, while An dreams of becoming a musician. We live in a big tower near STARS International School in Ha Noi. We are in Grade 5 there.

Example: Where is Emily from?

- ☒ A. America
 ☐ B. Australia
 ☐ C. Viet Nam
 ☐ D. Canada
- What does Emily like?
 A. Trees and basketball B. Trees and violin
 C. Violin and basketball D. Sports and violin
 - What's An's nationality?
 A. Vietnamese B. American C. Canadian D. Australian
 - What do they both like doing?
 A. Playing the piano and cycling B. Playing basketball and watering flowers
 C. Playing the violin and cycling D. Playing basketball and the violin
 - What would Emily like to be in the future?
 A. A gardener B. A teacher C. A musician D. A footballer
 - What is true about Emily and An?
 A. They live in the same house. B. They go to the same school.
 C. They both have the same garden. D. They share the same dream jobs.

Part 5: Question 16 to 20. Read and fill in each gap with one word. There is ONE extra word. There is one example. (1.25 pts)

favourite	town	because	yourself
growing	walk	Emma	

Dear penfriend,
 My name's (0) Emma. I live in a small (16) _____ in Australia. I love being outside, especially going for a (17) _____ in the park. I want to be a doctor (18) _____. I want to help people when they don't feel well. My (19) _____ animal is a dog. I have a nice dog, Max, and I take good care of him. In my free time, I enjoy (20) _____ flowers in the garden. It helps me relax after a busy day. What about you? What are your hobbies?

Write to me soon.

Best,

Emma

WRITING

Part 6: Question 21 to 24. Look at the pictures and write the words.

There is one example (1 pt)

				
0. <u>doctor</u>	21. _____	22. _____	23. _____	24. _____

Part 7: Question 25 - 27. Reorder the words to make correct sentences.

There is one example (0.75 pt)

Example: do /What /last/ did /weekend ?/ you

→ What did you do last weekend?

25. She / Australian girl. / an / is

→

26. is / food / My favourite / sandwich.

→

27. At the / campsite, / danced / campfire. / the / happily / around / we

→

Part 8: Question 28 to 30. Fill in the form about your favourite activities. Write NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS for each gap. There is one example (0.75 pt)

MY FAVOURITE ACTIVITIES	
Free time activity:	0. Going swimming
School activity:	28. _____
Outdoor activity:	29. _____
Indoor activity:	30. _____

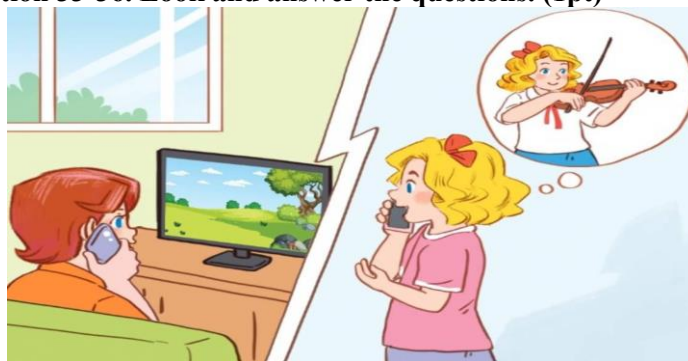
SPEAKING

PART 9. Question 31-32. Getting to know each other (0.5pt)

Teacher asks **2 questions** of the following questions below:

- + What's your full name?
- + What's your address? / Where do you live?
- + What's your favourite subject?
- + Did you go to school yesterday?

PART 10. Question 33-36. Look and answer the questions. (1pt)



33. Who are they?

34. What does Mary like doing in her free time?

35. What does Lucy like doing in her free time?

36. Imagine you are Mary, and I'm Lucy. You want to watch a cartoon with me. What would you ask?

PART 11. Question 37-40. Talk about your summer holiday. (1pt)

37. Where did you go?

38. What did you do?

39. What was your favourite activity?

40. How did you feel?

Appendix B. Post-test

PRIMARY SCHOOL Full name: _____ Class: 5/ _____	THE SECOND TEST ON ENGLISH SCHOOL YEAR: 2024-2025 TIME: 35 MINUTES
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POINTS:	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Teacher's comment:				

LISTENING

Part 1: Questions 1 - 4. Listen and number from 1 to 4. There is one example. (1pt)



Part 2: Questions 5 - 8. Listen and circle. There is one example. (1pt)

Example: What festival is coming up?

- ☒ A. Tet Festival
☐ C. Teachers' Day

- ☐ B. Christmas Festival
☐ D. Children's Day

5. Where will Lan go to prepare for the festival?

- ☐ A. Flower festival
☐ C. Fun fair

- ☐ B. Flea market
☐ D. Fireworks show

6. What will she do before the festival?

- ☐ A. Decorate the house
☐ C. Do the shopping

- ☐ B. Make special foods
☐ D. Clean the house

7. What will she eat at the party?

- ☐ A. Spring rolls and seafood
☐ C. Spring rolls and banh chung

- ☐ B. Banh chung and seafood
☐ D. Banh chung and moon cake

8. What does she think about the special foods?

- ☐ A. They'll be perfect for the festival.
☐ C. They'll be good for her grandparents.

- ☐ B. They'll be cheap for the festival.
☐ D. They'll be fat for her grandparents.

Part 3: Questions 9 and 10. Listen and complete with NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS. There is one example. (0,5 pt)

Example: Mary lives in King Tower.

16. Jack collected some _____ on his trip.

17. Bill and his classmates will sing the songs at _____ Festival.

READING

Part 4: Questions 11 to 15. Read and choose the best answers. There is one example. (1.25 pts)

My new friend is Sofia. She is from America. Last summer, Sofia and her family drove to Nha Trang Beach for their trip. It was wonderful. On the first day, Sofia built sandcastles and collected some seashells, while her parents enjoyed swimming in the sea. The next evening, they all watched the beautiful sunset together before eating delicious seafood in a local restaurant. On their last day, Sofia planned to buy some souvenirs for her friends, but she spent too much time taking photos of the beautiful sunrise, so she ran out of time. Instead, she brought some pretty seashells home for them.

Example: Where is Sofia from?

- ☒ A. America B. Australia C. Viet Nam D. Canada
18. Who did Sofia go on the trip with?
A. Her family B. Her classmates C. Her mother D. Her teacher
19. How did they go to Nha Trang Beach?
A. By train B. By plane C. By car D. By bus
20. What did they do on the first day of the trip?
A. Collected some seashells B. Built a sandcastle
C. Played some games D. Ate delicious food
21. What did they do on the second day of the trip?
A. Did the shopping B. Enjoyed the sunset
C. Watched the sunrise D. Bought some souvenirs
22. What is TRUE about Sofia's trip?
A. It was not enjoyable. B. It had delicious drinks.
C. It had indoor activities. D. It took three days.

Part 5: Question 16 to 20. Read and fill in each gap with one word. There is ONE extra word. There is one example. (1.25 pts)

explore nice ~~amazing~~ hiking market travel campfire

Dear Emily,

I'm having an (0) amazing trip at the mountain resort! The views are wonderful, and the weather is so (16) _____. Today, I went (17) _____ with my family, and we saw beautiful waterfalls. We also enjoyed fresh fruits from the local (18) _____.

In the evening, we sang and danced around the (19) _____.

I can't wait to (20) _____ more places tomorrow! This trip is full of adventure, and I'm excited to share everything when I return home!

Love,

Johnny

WRITING

Part 6: Question 21 to 24. Look at the pictures and write the words. There is one example. (1pt)

				
0. <u>doctor</u>	21. _____	22. _____	23. _____	24. _____

Part 7: Question 25 - 27. Reorder the words to make correct sentences. There is one example (0.75 pt)

Example: do /What /last/ did /weekend ?/ you
→ What did you do last weekend?

25. should / to / dentist. / the / You / go

→

26. We / milk tea / at / have / the / party. / will

→

27. are / the / main / grasshopper / The / and / ant / the / characters.

→

Part 8: Question 28 to 30. Write a short letter to your friend about your favourite place of interest. (0.75 pt)

You should answer the questions:

- What is your favourite place to go on holiday?
- What is it like?
- What can you do there?

Hi _____,

Let me tell you about my favourite place to go on holiday.

What about you?

Love,

SPEAKING

PART 9. Question 31-32. Getting to know each other (0.5pt)

Teacher asks **2 questions** of the following questions below:

- + What's your full name?
- + Where do you live?
- + What's your favourite food/drinks?
- + How do you stay healthy?

PART 10. Question 33-36. Look and answer the questions. (1pt)



33. Where is Trang's family?

34. What is Trang doing?

35. What are her brothers doing?

36. Imagine your family is going to have a picnic like Trang's family. You want to ask her for some advice for the picnic. What would you say?

PART 11. Question 37-40. Talk about your healthy lifestyle. (1pt)

37. Do you like eating fast food?

38. What healthy food do you eat every day?

39. What healthy drinks do you have every day?

40. What sport(s) do you play to stay healthy?