

Research Article

Developing Pre-Service ESOL Teachers' Awareness of and Appreciation for Social-Emotional Learning

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History	Social-emotional learning (SEL) is essential in educational realms for a variety of reasons, particularly considering the fact that students need to be equipped with the skills and strategies necessary to function successfully not only as learners but also as human beings. Although SEL has been increasingly explored in the last several decades at the primary and secondary levels, less attention has been paid to its importance at the tertiary level, specifically regarding pre-service teachers. This article consequently explores the advancement of pre-service ESOL teachers' familiarity with and understanding of social-emotional learning (SEL) and its particular importance for multilingual learners. During the course of the investigation, a multimodule course unit on social-emotional learning was incorporated into a TESOL methodology course for undergraduate teacher candidates. Data for this research were collected via pre-unit and post-unit questionnaires consisting of statements taken from the Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale (SREIS) (Brackett et al., 2006). Findings of this investigation revealed that participants believed that the unit made more effective contributions to their emotional and social competencies in certain areas but was less successful in doing so with respect to others.
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1. Introduction

Smith (2023) defines social-emotional learning (SEL) as “the process of acquiring and applying knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support the development of healthy social and emotional competencies” (p. 187). Likewise, Pentón Herrera (2024) describes social-emotional learning as a “teaching approach that focuses on supporting the development of social-emotional skills that individuals need to be healthy, happy, successful, and responsible” (p. 6). These explanations underscore the notion that social-emotional learning should ideally equip others with the strategies and techniques necessary to not only be successful in understanding and managing their own affective states but also effectively interact with others in interpersonal encounters both in the shorter term within education settings but also in the longer term with respect to their personal and professional lives beyond school. At its core, education is inherently a social and emotional

enterprise in the sense that students must often know how to navigate interpersonal dynamics during the learning process while also being aware of and handling their own affective responses to instruction to such logistics. With respect to educators themselves, social-emotional learning is key to helping teachers understand and manage their own affective states while also equipping them with the strategies and techniques necessary to effectively communicate with learners and other important stakeholders. These skills are particularly important in language education in the sense that students may conceivably experience positive and/or negative feelings depending on their (lack of) success in learning/acquiring the target language. For these reasons, Dewaele et al. (2019) posit that “emotions are the heart of language teaching and learning” (p. 1) and contend that SLA researchers must work to identify those contextual factors which enhance learners’ positive emotional states while also furnishing them with the abilities and dispositions that are needed to overcome affective barriers to their education. Consequently, facilitating the development of learners’ social-emotional proficiencies is not only important for all students since education is inherently a collective, psychological, and sentimental enterprise but more particularly for multilingual learners who, in addition to adapting to a new language, may also be expected to acclimate to a new culture, educational system, and language while also dealing with both the intrapersonal and interpersonal implications and ramifications of engaging in these processes. However, due to the predominant focus on the development of students’ emotional and social competencies, less attention has been thus devoted to advancing the same proficiencies on the part of educators, despite the fact that they play a critical role in designing and implementing environments that can directly affect learners’ social and emotional states and in spite of the crucial need to promote teachers’ understanding of how to effectively navigate the emotional and social terrain of education. This article thus intends to address this fundamental gap in the current literature.

2. Theoretical Framework

One framework that identifies the foundational elements of social-emotional learning is that established by The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, n.d.), a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the importance of social-emotional learning in educational circles. Created in 1994, CASEL strives to promote the inclusion of SEL into primary and secondary classrooms across the United States via policy (collaborating and cooperating with important stakeholders to include SEL into educator preparation standards), practice (resources about and support for integrating social-emotional learning into the classroom), and research (publicizing the latest empirical findings about the implementation of successful

SEL programs) (The Navigate360 Editorial Team, n.d.). The CASEL framework identifies five components of social-emotional learning that are vital for educational success: relationship skills (learners' ability to establish and maintain interpersonal connections in a variety of settings), responsible decision-making (students' capacity to determine and follow the best course of action in a given situation), self-awareness (learners' appreciation of their psychological state and the effects that this can have on their interactions with others), self-management (students' capability in handling and managing their conduct and demeanor in multiple contexts), and social awareness (learners' facility in visualizing and understanding the world from their interlocutor's perspective). These five components should deliberately and strategically be incorporated across multiple environments, including classrooms, schools, households, neighborhoods, and beyond. Despite the fact that each of these features focus exclusively on one specific aspect of students' emotional and social health and well-being, they also work together interdependently and reciprocally in the advancement of students' knowledge and abilities in successfully navigating both their in-school and out-of-school lives. Moreover, although it does not specifically address its pertinence to educators, one might conceivably argue that the framework could equally apply to this audience as well in the sense that teachers must be knowledgeable in how to build successful relationships with students, make decisions conscientiously and strategically, develop an awareness of the positive and negative effects of their affective states on both the learners and themselves, demonstrate an ability to control and govern their own emotional responses, and interact successfully with others in a variety of situations.

This perspective to a certain degree echoes Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems framework consisting of an individual in the center of the model along with a collection of a series of concentric circles representing various interconnected systems, including the microsystem (elements within the person's immediate environment), the mesosystem (associations between the various elements composing the microsystem), the exosystem (phenomena exerting an indirect influence on the person), the macrosystem (ideologies, philosophies, and values of the larger society), and the chronosystem (changes experienced by these systems over time). In parallel fashion, social-emotional learning should be a key goal within and across contexts and settings that have both an explicit and an implicit impact on children's in-school and out-of-school lives; interestingly, Harrison and Prado (2019) visualize advocacy in a similar manner in that such efforts commonly occur simultaneously at multiple levels. Additionally, despite the fact that each of the five characteristics outlined above explores a specific aspect of learners' social and emotional well-

being, one could theoretically surmise that they also work together in an interdependent and reciprocal way in developing one's ability to effectively navigate their internal and external worlds.

Numerous scholars have emphasized the importance of social-emotional learning in language education. For instance, Richards (2022) observes that, in contrast to previous formulations of second language acquisition as more of a cognitive enterprise, emotions do indeed play a critical role in language instruction and that, as a result, "teaching and learning a second language as both emotionally-charged activities" (p. 225). This is particularly the case given the fact that schooling necessarily involves encounters with a variety of people, including (but not limited to) children, colleagues, administrators, parents, community members, and stakeholders, which inevitably entails one's affective and psychological being. Both of these phenomena are naturally heightened when learning/teaching another language since expanding students' linguistic proficiency inescapably requires them to engage in interpersonal verbal exchanges in the target language; additionally, they may experience happiness, joy, and/or satisfaction if they are successful in developing their communicative abilities in the language, but they may also feel anger, disappointment, and/or frustration if they are not effective in doing so. As a result, one may conceivably argue that "SEL becomes not only a complement to language instruction but a vital component of it" (Martínez-Alba et al., 2025, p. 3). Moreover, although many psychological processes were initially viewed as individual and personal in nature, researchers have increasingly come to understand that such phenomena are "influenced not only by individual factors but also by social and cultural factors" (Cuocci & Arndt, 2020, pp. 3-4). Similarly, Richards (2022) contends that emotions constitute a "sociocultural experience primarily determined not only by individual characteristics but also by relationships and social contexts" (p. 226). In other words, emotions are often "entangled" (Barad, 2007) with larger ideologies and philosophies but also are largely dependent on the attitudes and perspectives of the linguistic and cultural communities to which one belongs. Thus, "all students learn and develop cognition and emotion within socio-cultural environments" (Cuocci & Arndt, 2020, p. 4). Moreover, some academics contend that, rather than viewing emotion and cognition as two distinct and separate psychological phenomena, they are in fact inextricably intertwined. For example, Billy and Garríguez (2021) contend that "intellect is useless without emotions" (p. 10). In a similar vein, Swain (2013) posits that "by separating cognition and emotion, and sidelining emotions, we lose the possibility of understanding what makes our students tick" (p. 205). That is to say, language acquisition is not only comprised of the cognitive dimension of learning with respect to the development of students' communicative competence in the target language but also the affective dimension as well.

Pentón Herrera (2024) notes that SEL is often characterized by a wide array of terms that are often utilized to describe the approach which inevitably lead to confusion and misunderstanding about the specific nature of social-emotional learning. To that end, the author distinguishes between SEL frameworks (“the structural blueprint[s] that support[Ø] the embedding of social-emotional learning within educational contexts” (p. 7), SEL competencies (“the precise skills and capacities targeted by teachers or institutions”) (p. 7), and SEL activities (“the practical, interactive strategies that educators employ to nurture these competencies within their students”) (p. 7). Simply put, SEL frameworks provide the philosophical and theoretical principles and tenets that guide and support the implementation of the approach, SEL competencies involve the particular dispositions, knowledge, and skills to be ultimately developed, and SEL activities consist of the specific projects and tasks designed to advance learners’ awareness and understanding of the importance of expanding their intrapersonal and interpersonal proficiencies. Furthermore, a number of educational paradigms have increasingly been promoted to stimulate educators to establish and maintain an inclusive and supportive classroom environment that acknowledge, values, and capitalizes on students’ assets, identities, and strengths, including (but not limited to) culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. The author contends that, despite the enormously positive benefits that they offer, these theoretical frameworks do not always consider the social and emotional aspects of learning. To address this issue, the author proposes a culturally, socially, and emotionally relevant pedagogy that simultaneously focuses on the recognition of students’ funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) and the expansion of their affective and collective dimensions of their lives; the purpose of this model would thus ideally be to “not only address the cognitive and linguistic needs of learners but also nurture their holistic development” (p. 15).

3. Literature Review

Although sometime limited, contemporary research has slowly begun to explore the current state of educators’ perceptions of their own emotional/social competencies along with the perceived impact of these views on their classroom instruction. For instance, in Goegan et al.’s (2017) investigation, both pre-service and in-service educators’ beliefs concerning their own social-emotional learning were examined along with their perspectives concerning the importance of SEL in education. Participants in the research included over one hundred future teachers enrolled in an undergraduate education program at a postsecondary institution in western Canada and over two hundred in-service teachers working in the same geographical area from all

grade levels. During the study, teachers completed an online survey designed to collect information on their demographics, their perceptions regarding social-emotional learning more generally, their perceived effectiveness of their abilities to control and manage the classroom, and their views concerning their involvement with students. Results demonstrated that pre-service teachers who spent in the education program were more willing to be involved with students and exhibited more interest in working with students, thus suggesting possible connections between teacher candidates' social and emotional competencies and their willingness to interact with students, which may ultimately lead to more effective learning. Additionally, the in-service teachers who demonstrated more positive responses to social-emotional learning also felt that they were more effective in managing their classrooms and were more likely to engage with students. Comparing and contrasting both participant groups revealed that, while the pre-service teachers tended to display a higher level of dedication to social-emotional learning, in-service teachers often manifested a higher level of belief in their own SEL and a stronger sense of the importance of incorporating SEL into their own instruction. Otherwise stated, pre-service teachers with higher levels of emotional and social awareness exhibited more inclination to relate to students, and in-service teachers with more competency in these areas were more willing to view social-emotional learning as an essential component of their instruction.

A few investigations have specifically examined the advancement of language teacher candidates' social-emotional learning in an array of settings. For example, Pentón Herrera and Martínez-Alba (2022) explored English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' perspectives concerning the implementation of a variety of course activities related to a course on social-emotional learning in English language teaching (ELT). Eight students enrolled in the graduate-level course offered at a postsecondary institution located in Poland served as participants in the study, who came from a variety of countries of origin and were either pre-service or in-service teachers. During the intervention, participants were engaged in and with a variety of activities, discussions, prompts, and readings with respect to the course topic. Data for the research included field notes collected by the authors, focus-group discussions between the instructor and the students, interviews conducted with participants, and reflective journals completed by the participants. Several important findings emerged from the analysis of the data. First, participants overwhelmingly agreed that learning about SEL was beneficial for them in learning how to navigate the emotional and social challenges associated with language learning and teaching. Second, participants regularly commented on the fact that the course was successful in familiarizing them with the foundation role that emotions play in language

learning and thus became aware of the importance of developing students' social and emotional competencies to better prepare them to deal with these realities. Third, participants began to recognize the state of their own social-emotional learning and expressed interest in learning more about how to further advance their emotional and social health and well-being in order to maximize their interactions with both colleagues and students. The authors make special note of "the lack of professional development on emotions and well-being in language teacher preparation programs" (p. 10) and advocate for inclusion of these topics in the instruction and training of future language educators. They also contend that "research shedding light on how emotions and well-being professional development in language teacher preparation programs affect the EI [emotional] intelligence of teachers...is scant" (p. 14); the purpose of the current study was to address this gap via the Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale (SREIS) (Brackett et al., 2006). Two investigations who have employed the Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale (SREIS) with (language) teacher educators are summarized below.

Kyriazopoulou et al. (2024) explored possible connections between teacher candidates' emotional intelligence and their rationale for deciding to become teachers. Participants in the study included pre-service teachers enrolled in one of eight teacher preparation in Finland. During the study, participants completed the SREIS for the purpose of ascertaining the current level of their emotional intelligence along with the FIT-Choice Scale to understand the reasons for selecting teaching as their career choice. Analysis of participants' responses on the SREIS demonstrated that many of the teacher candidates were either emotionally proficient or emotionally competent. Additionally, Zadorozhna et al. (2018) studied potential relationships between foreign language teacher candidates' emotional intelligence and their ability to reflect on their instructional abilities. Teacher candidates enrolled in a practical English course offered through an educator preparation program located in Ukraine participated in the research. During the study, they completed both the SREIS to establish a baseline measure of their emotional intelligence and the Reflection in Learning Scale (RLS) in order to document their aptitude for considering their learning processes and identifying ways to apply their learning in various contexts. Results of the investigation showed that participants exhibited a substantially higher level of emotional intelligence at the conclusion of the semester. It is important to note that, although these two studies add to our current understanding of the role of emotional intelligence in (language) teacher education, the authors utilized the SREIS in conjunction with other inventories and did not specifically target the development of pre-service teachers' emotional intelligence; the current study attempted to resolve these issues. Moreover, Zadorozhna et al. (2018) analyze participants'

responses to the scale as a whole and do not explore their responses beyond this; in contrast, Kyriazopoulou et al. (2024) do represent the study's findings by overall category but do not analyze participants' responses at the granular level of the statement, which the current study does.

In summary, despite the importance of previous research in contributing to our current understanding of the pivotal role of social-emotional learning in public school education, few studies have explored ways to familiarize teacher candidates with social-emotional learning and its importance for the development of students' psychological and mental health and well-being. Furthermore, less research has been conducted to document and understand the relevancy of a course unit on social-emotional learning on pre-service teachers' views of their own SEL, particularly with respect to those in ELT contexts. The current study attempts to address these gaps in the literature.

4. Institutional Context

This investigation was conducted in the fall semester of 2023 at a small four-year college in the southeastern United States; fifty-three undergraduate elementary-education teacher candidates enrolled in two sections of a TESOL methodology course for which the author was the instructor. Purposeful sampling was utilized in the study since the ultimate objective was on "identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest" (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 534). Within the context of the current study, participants were intentionally sought out who were prospective teachers at the primary level who were also striving to learn about ways to work effectively with multilingual learners of English.

4.1. Instructional Context

Table 1 below designates the content of the three modules that constituted the course unit.

Table 1. Social-Emotional Learning Course Unit Modules

	Module	Content
Module Description	1	SEL (Introduction)
	2	SEL (Theory)
	3	SEL (Practice)

The first module consisted of an instructor-led presentation and discussion in which teacher candidates were (1) invited to consider what they thought social-emotional learning was and why it is important for both teacher and students, (2) introduced to the CASEL framework outlined above and reflected upon the importance of each component of the paradigm, and (3) explore the relevance of SEL particularly for multilingual learners.

Tables 2 and 3 below indicate the readings that constituted the second module. The purpose of including these readings was to familiarize participants with the theoretical and philosophical tenets undergirding social-emotional learning and its pertinence to multilingual learners in an accessible and approachable manner (Module 2) while also providing them with concrete examples of ways to integrate SEL activities into their own instructional contexts (Module 3). The pre-service teachers read and explored the readings for the second and third modules in a jigsaw format with the purpose of establishing and maintaining a classroom community in which participants would have multiple opportunities to teach and learn from each other in a cooperative and supportive environment. First, students were randomly assembled in one of four groups (A, B, C, and D) with a different reading assigned to each group. Second, teacher candidates completed the readings at home before the class session. Third, students initially gathered into home groups with classmates who have completed the same reading during which they shared their personal response to the reading along with a summary of important points contained in the reading. Fourth, teacher candidates were reassembled into expert groups which contained one member from each of the home groups in which they shared essential information from their respective reading with their other groupmates who had completed different readings. Finally, students returned to their seats, received a blank index card on which they identified several points of information they gained from the group discussions, and shared their responses initially with their tablemates and subsequently with the entire class.

Table 2. Course Unit Readings

	Group	Reading
Module 2	A	Breiseth (2022)
	B	Breiseth (2023)
	C	Kinsella (2022)
	D	Scott (2015)

Table 3. Course Unit Readings

	Group	Reading
Module 3	A	Dresser (2012)
	B	Lucido (2022)
	C	Nall (2020)
	D	Nanquil (2021)

4.2. Empirical Context

Table 4 indicates the demographic information of the study's participants. It is important to note that the predominance of young White females in the participant pool was a random outcome and was not an intentional design on the author's part.

Table 4. Demographic Information of Participants

	Category (in years)	Number (of students)
Self-Identified Age	20	3
	21	12
	22	18
	23	7
	24	3
	25	2
	26	1
	27	1
	28	1
	30	2
	31	1
	32	2
Self-Identified Gender	Female	46
	Male	7
Self-Identified Ethnicity	African-American	1
	Caucasian/White	41
	Hispanic/Latinx	9
	Hispanic/USA	1
	Other	1

Both before and after the course unit, participants completed a questionnaire consisting of statements taken from the Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale (SREIS) (Brackett et al., 2006), an empirically-validated inventory consisting of nineteen Likert-scale statements designed to measure the level of their emotional intelligence along with their ability to accurately perceive and identify others' social-emotional states as well as their own. The nineteen statements are organized into five separate categories related to various aspects of a given person's emotional intelligence: perceiving emotion (identifying and determining the emotional states of others), use of emotion (combining emotions and deductive logic when making decisions), understanding emotion (utilizing appropriate vocabulary to describe their emotions and to determine those factors which contribute to them positively and/or negatively), managing emotion (addressing, controlling, and handling one's emotions), and social management (helping others monitor and negotiate their own emotions). The quantitative data collected during the study were analyzed via descriptive statistics. Fisher and Marshall (2009) understand descriptive statistics as "numerical and graphical techniques used to organise, present and analyse data" (p. 95). Borg and Gall (1989) affirm that this procedure is frequently utilized to "describe" quantitative data (p. 336) and review overall trends occurring in the data. More specifically, in the field of applied linguistics, Dörnyei (2007) contends that the goal of descriptive

statistics is to provide a summary of findings and describe general tendencies in the data in order to provide a global picture of the behavior of the participants. During the data analysis phase, both a mean score and a percentage were calculated for each statement. The mean score for a given statement was tabulated by identifying the total of participants' responses to the statement and dividing this total by the number of participants in the respective section of the course; the percentage for each statement was computed by dividing the sum of participants' responses to the statement by the maximum total response each statement could potentially receive.

5. Results

This section summarizes the findings obtained from the analysis of participants' responses to the statements included in both the pre-unit and post-unit questionnaires. It is important to note that, since the quantitative data collected during the study were explored using descriptive statistics, the purpose of this section is to provide an overview of general tendencies occurring in the data rather than attempting to show the statistical significance of teacher candidates' responses to the statements. Moreover, since their responses on the pre- and post-questionnaires between and across both sections demonstrated little numerical variation, participants' response scores across were amalgamated together. Table 5 below summarizes the mean scores and percentages for each category of the questionnaire.

Table 5. Mean Scores and Percentages by Category

Category	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Difference
Perceiving Emotion	3.42 (68.5%)	3.54 (70.8%)	+0.14 (+2.3%)
Use of Emotion	3.15 (63.0%)	3.28 (65.7%)	+0.13 (+2.7%)
Understanding Emotion	3.13 (62.7%)	3.30 (66.0%)	+0.17 (+3.3%)
Managing Emotion	3.08 (61.6%)	3.36 (67.2%)	+0.28 (+5.6%)
Social Management	3.31 (66.2%)	3.25 (64.9%)	-0.06 (-1.3%)

Analysis of the mean scores and corresponding percentages across all five categories reveals that the category that increased the most was Managing Emotion, with a +0.28 (+5.6%) growth in participants' responses with respect to this category on the post-unit questionnaire. This finding suggests that teacher candidates felt slightly more able to control and handle their own affective states at the conclusion of the unit. In contrast, the category that decreased the most was Social Management, with a -0.06 (-1.3%) reduction in participants' responses with reference to this category on the post-unit questionnaire. Although the decrease is slight, this result nevertheless intimates that pre-service teachers may have considered themselves somewhat less capable of supporting others in governing their own emotions. This result do align with Pentón

Herrera and Martínez-Alba (2022) to some extent in the sense that the course on SEL and ELT that formed the basis of their study positively increased participants' views towards social-emotional learning more generally but also towards their own SEL more specifically.

A comprehensive examination of the mean scores and percentages for all nineteen statements reveals that statement #09 ("I can handle stressful situations without getting too nervous.") showed the most positive growth, with teacher candidates indicating over 10% more agreement with the statement upon the completion of the course unit. Although this result may be due to a variety of factors, it is nevertheless plausible that the unit may have made some contribution to the pre-service teachers' sense of resilience and strength in the face of certain obstacles. Statement #06 ("I am aware of the nonverbal messages other people send.") demonstrated the least variation in participants' views with only a 0.4% positive change at the conclusion of the course unit. The fact that the unit did not specifically address this topic may possibly explain the lack of the teacher candidates' perceived growth in this area. Statement #15 ("I am not very good at helping others to feel better when they are feeling down or angry.") exhibited the least negative growth with participants' ratings at the end of the unit remaining virtually identical to their responses at the beginning. Even though the unit did not provide teacher candidates with explicit information regarding this topic, this finding is somewhat concerning given the fact that they will need to regularly deal with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents who may be in a highly agitated state and must learn to successfully negotiate these emotionally-charged circumstances. Additionally, statement #10 ("I know the strategies to make or improve other people's moods.") demonstrated the most negative change with participants indicating more than 7% less agreement with the statement at the end of the course unit. This finding is similarly alarming given that these pre-service teachers will need to know how to effectively diffuse tense encounters and situations with others on a systematic basis. Consequently, these results will certainly be taken into consideration when designing and implementing future iterations of the course unit.

Table 6. Mean Scores and Percentages (Perceiving Emotion)

Statement	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Difference
01. By looking at people's facial expressions, I recognize the emotions they are experiencing.	4.02 (80.4%)	4.17 (83.4%)	+ 0.15 (+ 3.0%)
06. I am aware of the nonverbal messages other people send.	3.81 (76.2%)	3.83 (76.6%)	+0.02 (+0.4%)
11. I can tell when a person is lying to me by looking at his or her facial expression.	3.59 (71.8%)	3.76 (75.2%)	+0.17 (+3.4%)
16. My quick impressions of what people are feeling are usually wrong.	2.27 (45.4%)	2.40 (48.0%)	+0.13 (+2.6%)

After completing an examination of participants' responses to the statements overall, the section will now explore the results of the data analysis by classification. Table 6 below summarizes the mean scores and percentages given by participants across both classes with respect to the first category (Perceiving Emotion).

Participants generally responded to the statements concerning this category relatively positively, with three of the four statements receiving some level of agreement beyond a neutral stance; this finding tends to suggest that, in most cases, teacher candidates possessed a certain level of confidence in their ability to judge the emotional state of others through nonverbal means and to accurately discern others' sentiments in a rapid fashion. A good number of participants genuinely believed that they were able to correctly identify the feelings of others through observations of their interlocutors' bodily appearance. It is important to note, however, that the pre-service teachers' views relative to their capabilities in this area changed little over the course of the unit, intimating that the readings and discussions may not have had much impact on the development of their aptitude in relation to discerning others' feelings nonlinguistically.

Table 7 below outlines the mean scores and percentages given by participants across both classes regarding the second category (Use of Emotion).

Table 7. Mean Scores and Percentages (Use of Emotion)

Statement	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Difference
02. I am a rational person and I rarely, if ever, consult my feelings to make a decision.	3.06 (61.2%)	3.12 (62.4%)	+0.06 (+1.2%)
07. When making decisions, I listen to my feelings to see if the decision feels right.	3.48 (69.6%)	3.56 (71.2%)	+0.08 (+1.6%)
12. I am a rational person and don't like to rely on my feelings to make decisions.	2.91 (58.2%)	3.17 (63.4%)	+0.26 (+5.2%)

Analysis of the teacher candidates' responses to these statements demonstrates that these pre-service teachers were inclined to take a neutral position with respect to their decision-making powers and seemed to employ both emotion and rational thought equally to initially guide them in selecting the best option in a given situation. However, once a selection had been made, they tended to rely on their intuition to confirm their original choice. This finding appears to be positive in that, in most cases, decisions should not necessarily be based on either logic or sentiment exclusively but that both together play a fundamental role in helping people make important decisions in their personal and professional lives. In this sense, teacher candidates suggested that they took a balanced approach when attempting to determine the correct course of action. Despite this result, the data also show that these student teachers' responses to the statements in this area varied little over the course of the unit.

Table 8 below summarizes the mean scores and percentages given by participants across both classes with respect to the third category (Understanding Emotion).

Table 8. Mean Scores and Percentages (Understanding Emotion)

Statement	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Difference
03. I have a rich vocabulary to describe my emotions.	3.15 (63.0%)	3.27 (65.4%)	+0.12 (+2.4%)
08. I could easily write a lot of synonyms for emotion words like happiness or sadness.	3.38 (67.6%)	3.47 (69.4%)	+0.09 (+1.8%)
13. I have the vocabulary to describe how most emotions progress from simple to complex feelings.	3.11 (62.2%)	3.34 (66.8%)	+0.23 (+4.6%)
17. My “feelings” vocabulary is probably better than most other persons’ “feelings” vocabularies.	2.89 (57.8%)	3.11 (62.2%)	+0.22 (+4.4%)

Teacher candidates’ responses to the statements in this area indicate slight agreement with the notion that they possess the adequate language to express and convey their emotional state to others; however, their position with respect to this category changed little over the course of the unit. Despite this outcome, it is nevertheless crucial to have the words and phrases at one’s disposal to clearly articulate their feelings, particularly in the case of future educators who must not only be able to effectively communicate their emotions to others but must also model such behavior for their own students. One way to address this concern is through the Feelings Wheel, a framework consisting of three concentric circles which begins with six core emotions in the center circle and which contains increasingly sophisticated adjectives to describe one’s feelings with each successive circle. Therefore, future iterations of the course unit will include more information about the importance of possessing and utilizing appropriate vocabulary to accurately indicate one’s emotions.

Table 9 below outlines the mean scores and percentages given by participants across both classes regarding the fourth category (Managing Emotion).

Table 9. Mean Scores and Percentages (Managing Emotion)

Statement	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Difference
04. I have problems dealing with my feelings of anger.	2.27 (45.4%)	2.39 (47.8%)	+0.12 (+2.4%)
09. I can handle stressful situations without getting too nervous.	2.99 (59.8%)	3.55 (71.0%)	+0.56 (+11.2%)
14. I am able to handle most upsetting problems.	3.48 (69.6%)	3.74 (74.8%)	+0.26 (+5.2%)
18. I know how to keep calm in difficult or stressful situations.	3.57 (71.4%)	3.75 (75.0%)	+0.18 (+3.6%)

Participants’ responses to the statements in this area indicate that, in some cases, teacher candidates do not necessarily feel that they possess the ability to effectively control their temper or competently handle their feelings of displeasure or aggravation. However, their responses also suggest that they feel somewhat

confident in managing their emotional reaction to tense environments and relatively convinced of their skills in maintaining a composed demeanor in such circumstances. While these results are somewhat encouraging in that the teacher candidates exhibit some conviction in their capacity to handle their sentiments in a variety of situations (which will serve them well as future educators), the findings are also concerning in that they felt less able to deal with their feelings of exasperation and frustration. Consequently, moving forward, the unit will specifically address this issue since it is likely that they will find themselves in settings during which they will experience anger and will need to demonstrate composure and control. Additionally, the pre-service teachers' ratings of these statements remained essentially constant throughout the duration of the course unit.

Finally, Table 10 below summarizes the mean scores and percentages given by participants across both classes with respect to the fifth category (Social Management).

Table 10. Mean Scores and Percentages (Social Management)

Statement	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Difference
05. When someone I know is in a bad mood, I can help the person calm down and feel better quickly.	3.44 (68.8%)	3.68 (73.6%)	+0.24 (+4.8%)
10. I know the strategies to make or improve other people's moods.	3.51 (70.2%)	3.15 (63.0%)	-0.36 (-7.2%)
15. I am not very good at helping others to feel better when they are feeling down or angry.	2.38 (47.6%)	2.36 (47.2%)	-0.02 (-0.4%)
19. I am the type of person to whom others go when they need help with a difficult situation.	3.91 (78.2%)	3.79 (75.8%)	-0.12 (-2.4%)

Participants generally responded to the statements regarding this area relatively positively, with many teacher candidates indicating that they felt a certain level of confidence in helping others successfully negotiate their own emotional states and supporting them in dealing with complicated circumstances in their lives. However, the pre-service teachers also expressed less certainty in their ability to do so at the conclusion of the course unit in comparison with their responses to these statements at the beginning of the unit. Although this finding is somewhat concerning, it is also not entirely surprising given the fact that, while the modules did promote student teachers' awareness of their own emotional states, equip them with specific techniques for handling and managing their emotions, and familiarize them with various activities to promote learners' own social-emotional learning, the unit did not explicitly address how to assist others in dealing effectively with their own sentiments. This is an important topic to explore and integrate into teacher preparation programs, especially since education is a social enterprise in which interactions with administrators, colleagues, parents, students, and other stakeholders routinely occur, and teachers will likely find

themselves in emotionally-charged situations that they will need to successfully negotiate. Thus, future iterations of the course unit will include strategies to assist pre-service teachers in developing their expertise with respect to helping others competently manage their own emotions.

6. Discussion

Analysis of the mean scores and corresponding percentages of participants' responses on both questionnaires demonstrates that the course unit may conceivably have promoted teacher candidates' awareness of and appreciation for certain areas of their social-emotional learning but not necessarily others. For instance, the pre-service teachers reported that they felt slightly more able to detect and understand their own emotions. A critical first step in SEL is to acknowledge and recognize one's affective responses in order to manage them, particularly in the case of teaching/learning in which these future educators must deal with the emotional responses of others in effective ways. Participants indicated that they tended to rely somewhat more on logic than emotions when making decisions in their personal and professional lives. This finding is encouraging in the sense that teacher candidates likely perceived the importance of achieving a balanced perspective when using emotion and/or logic when determining the best course of action in a given situation and that exclusive reliance on one or the other is not necessarily beneficial or helpful. Participants also noted that they felt moderately more comfortable in handling their own emotions at the conclusion of the unit, a result which is promising in the sense that these teacher candidates will be constantly interacting with students, colleagues, administrators, parents, etc. on a regular basis and that some of these encounters may be less than positive; in response, educators must be able to successfully manage their affective state in order to negotiate these situations. However, participants also observed that they felt somewhat less capable of assisting others in understanding and governing their own emotions. This finding is somewhat concerning given that an important responsibility on the part of educators is to support others in understanding and supervising their own affective and psychological responses. Furthermore, in contrast to the participants in Goegan et al.'s (2017) who appeared a certain degree of willingness to be involved with students and who exhibited an established level of interest in working with students, the participants in the current study seemed to be less inclined to help students understand and manage their own emotions. Among other possible factors, it is somewhat conceivable that this result may be due to the fact that such behaviors were not specifically addressed in the course unit. Future iterations of the course unit should thus include more information in this area to not only advance students' awareness of the importance and necessity of assisting others with their emotions but also familiarize them with a variety of strategies and techniques for doing so.

Additionally, the results of the investigation appear to align with the findings of Pentón Herrera and Martínez-Alba (2022) in the sense that these prospective teachers seemed to develop a greater awareness of their own emotional/social states and a deeper understanding of the importance of social-emotional learning for multilingual learners, although these perspectives were not explicitly documented or analyzed as part of the research.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to explore the relevancy of a course unit on social-emotional learning on pre-service ESOL teachers' views concerning the evolution of their own SEL. The article began with a review of the fundamental principles underlying social-emotional learning and offered a synopsis of previous research on the development of (ESL) teacher candidates' perceptions of the role of social-emotional learning in education as well as their level of awareness of their own emotional and social competencies. The article then provided details concerning the logistics of the course unit, outlined the data collection and analysis procedures, and summarized the major findings of the investigation, namely that the course unit appeared to strengthen participants' awareness of others' social-emotional states as well as their own and felt somewhat more capable of understanding and handling their emotions but did not necessarily equip them to do so for others.

Despite the ever-increasing impetus placed on educators to advance students' social-emotional skills and the pressing need to prepare future educators to support learners in developing their emotional and social competencies, Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019) argue that "there is currently a dearth of attention cultivating social-emotional competence in teacher preparation programs in the United States (p. 153). Similarly, Katz et al. (2020) note that "despite the demands for teachers to have SEL competencies, our colleges and universities are behind the curve in providing coursework to develop these skills" (p. 3). The current study presents one viable avenue for counteracting this trend, specifically in ELT contexts.

8. Limitations and Future Research

The purpose of the current study was to explore the relevancy of a course unit on social-emotional learning. While the current investigation does shed important light on the pivotal role of social-emotional learning in ESOL teacher education, the study nevertheless possesses several limitations. First, although the course unit may potentially have contributed to participants' understanding of and appreciation for the importance of SEL and may have promoted the development of their own social-emotional learning, there is no direct evidence to substantiate this; future research should thus establish more clear and direct connections

between similar interventions and the direct impact of these experiences on the advancement of pre-service teachers' emotional and social competencies. Second, data for this research were obtained exclusively from teacher candidates' self-reports concerning their perceptions of the evolution of their own social-emotional learning; despite the fact that this is indeed important information, their responses do not necessarily have any basis in reality, nor do they explicitly indicate that they are able to successfully implement this knowledge in their personal and professional lives. Future research should consequently include a variety of data points and sources in order to determine the extent to which teacher candidates' views on SEL do (not) align with their instructional practice. Third, the utilization of descriptive statistics revealed important overall tendencies and trends with respect to participants' views concerning their social-emotional learning, but these numerical procedures do not specifically indicate whether the findings of the study are statistically significant. Researchers are therefore encouraged to make use of various inferential procedures in order to establish both the correlational and statistical relevance of the effect of similar training efforts on future educators' perspectives. Finally, the investigation was conducted in a particular institutional context; readers should thus keep this in mind when attempting to extrapolate the results of the investigation to their own settings.

In spite of these limitations, however, the study does suggest potential implications for both educators and researchers. Teacher preparation programs should incorporate social-emotional learning into their curricular and programmatic offerings in order to help students navigate the challenges of educator preparation (e.g., assessments, coursework, field experiences) in the short term and also equip them with the approaches and methods necessary to successfully negotiate the emotional and psychological complexities of their future teaching positions in the long term. Future research should explore educators' implementation of SEL in their own contexts along with an identification of best practices when designing and delivering SEL professional development for both pre-service and in-service teachers.

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