

Integrating CRTWC's Anchor Competencies Framework into an ESP Syllabus for Fostering Social Emotional Learning Skills

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Abstract : The Centre for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child (CRTWC) worked on integrating the seven anchor competencies such as building trusting relationships, facilitating self-reflection, fostering growth mindset, cultivating perseverance, creating community, promoting collaborative learning, and responding constructively across differences with the social-emotional competencies. The 'CRTWC's Anchor Competencies Framework' was developed with a culturally responsive teaching lens (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020) based on the CASEL's (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Intelligence) five social, emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. The present study, situated in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classroom of 120 engineering students at NIT Trichy, India, explores the need for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and how language learning activities designed based on

CRTWC's anchor competencies framework and corresponding teacher moves assist in developing the SEL skills of the learners. Learners' assignments, their self-reflection reports, and the learner-feedback obtained through a 7 week-intervention, served as the primary data. Teacher-researchers' diary entries were also analysed to corroborate the findings. Visual narrative analysis and narrative thematic analysis were employed to explicate the data. Findings of the study suggested the importance of SEL skills and the ways in which these skills could be incorporated into the existing ESP course-plan. The study also underscored that those activities designed within the anchor competencies framework along with the corresponding teacher moves, support the SEL of the learners even in an online classroom environment.

Keywords : English for Specific Purposes; English language teaching; Multiple Intelligences; Anchor Competencies; Social Emotional Learning.

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1. Introduction

With the onset of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns, learners encountered innumerable difficulties related to their mental well-being, which affected their academics (Torales et al., 2020). Managing social-emotional well-being helps the learners to cope with the stress caused by the online classes, resultant screen-time, continuous lockdowns, and limited socialisation. The need for social

emotional learning in the school curriculum is emphasised in the education policies of many countries including with India. The learners were under the pressure of passing the semester examinations and they lacked a safe environment to express their emotions. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2019 realised the urgent need to implement Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in the curriculum. Despite the suggestions proposed by the educational reports, the efforts to integrate SEL skills in the classes are often ignored due to the unwavering attention towards academics. This study considered the immediate need to support the mental well-being of undergraduate students who were taught online. The activities analysed in the study were implemented to enhance the students linguistic proficiency and were developed to suit their emotional intelligence requirements. This study recommends a framework by the Centre for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child (CRTWC) to be practised by the teachers in an online setting. They were driven to communicate their emotions as they were subjected to a friendly environment by using the 'teacher moves' (Markowitz et al., 2020) in accordance with the framework. It envisions to support and enrich the students' academic learning abilities and strengthen their emotional intelligence during the distant mode of virtual learning necessitated by the pandemic. The National Education Policy 2020 of India asserts the importance of inculcating SEL skills in learners to prepare them to be global citizens and to help them become employable. Thus, the new education policy emphasizes the importance of SEL skills along with the development of cognitive capabilities of the learners.

2. Literature Review

Gardener (1983) proposed the Multiple Intelligence theory (MI) and identified that there are mathematical-logical, verbal-linguistic, musical-rhythmic, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, visual-spatial, naturalist and existential intelligence. "Therefore, people with various intelligences may adopt different learning styles and have distinct demands (Chapman and Freeman, 1996). Hence, it is essential that classrooms should be open to a variety of teaching and learning methods in order to accommodate students' diverse intelligences (Achamma, 2012). In relevance to that, language teaching demands the teachers to be facilitators, observers and lesson designers who design a syllabus

according to the students' intelligence needs (Ma'mun, 2012). Meanwhile, MI theory can be used to facilitate EFL learning as proven by previous experimental research (Lei, 1999; Shofiana, 2019). Derakhshan & Faribi (2015) in their study proclaim the importance of MI theory in acquiring the LSRW skills. The learners have diverse intellectual capabilities; hence, the English curriculum must address all segments of intelligence equally, as referred to by Gardener (Mahmoud & Alaraj, 2019).

The National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development recommended that social and emotional competencies are indispensable to the growth of learners in schools, careers and life (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Emotions, anxiety, and stress can impede the learning environment and hence, the academic success of students (Durlak et al., 2011; Foley et al., 2017; Skinner and Brewer, 2002). Thus, the MI theory aligns with Social Emotional Learning Skills as the learners are encouraged to understand their own intellectual strengths. Social emotional skills are vital skills that must be addressed in an educational environment for the students' academic success. These skills help them manage stress, accomplish their set goals, overcome challenges, and maintain a positive relationship with their peers (Schanzenbach et al., 2016). They also aid in assisting the learners to overcome the pressing global challenges and succeed in the global economy by being engaged citizens (Duraiappah, 2019). Therefore, there is an inevitable need for the teachers to integrate SEL in their teaching strategies with online and blended modalities (Baran & Al Zoubi, 2020; Rice & Deschaine, 2020). Research shows the importance of SEL in a classroom but, the implementation of SEL through technological tools has not been explored widely (DeRosier, 2014; Slovák et al., 2015). Hence, the teachers are struggling to discover the possibilities of implementing the SEL skills in online classrooms (Rice & Deschaine, 2020).

Teachers, directly or indirectly influence the student behaviours on a large scale, both in positive as well as negative ways (Jones et al., 2013). Villaseñor (2017) rightly argues that a lack of teacher training in fostering the social-emotional skills of the learners can result in negative outcomes in the classroom. This can be rectified by providing the teachers with proper training, support, and positive work environments (Montgomery & Rupp 2005; Johnson et al., 2012). SEL frameworks are being designed and modified by different education systems globally to meet the

demands of the prescribed curriculum. Among many frameworks that have been introduced for SEL, only some have a strong foundation to incorporate the necessary skills, as the others are devoid of a holistic outlook (Brush et al., 2021). The five competencies proposed by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a systematic framework which is used by educators for a “systemic, equitable, evidence-based social and emotional learning for students” (Weissberg, 2015). The framework of CASEL is chosen by academicians and researchers across the world as a model, and yet it is largely built on the educational systems of the United Nations (Jones et al., 2019).

Grounding on the CASEL’s competencies, the Centre for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child (CRTWC) which functions as a guide for the teachers and teacher educators developed another framework with a ‘cultural lens’ (the teachers place the learners in their cultural environment to understand their background) to be practiced in the classrooms.

This assists the teachers to incorporate SEL in English language classrooms as learners from diverse backgrounds have language learning difficulties. It also assists them with their emotional skills which is central to the development of their learning capabilities (Pentón Herrera et al., 2021).

In the case of adolescents, according to Stallman (2010) and Stewart-Brown et al., (2000) their mental well-being is disrupted more when compared to other age groups. Adolescent learners suddenly encounter a shift away from constant parental monitoring to taking responsibilities on their own, which demands the implementation of SEL in higher education (Conley, 2015). In the context of the pandemic, CASEL survey report (Yoder et al., 2020) stated that 84% of respondents agreed that SEL must be prioritized after COVID-19. Mintz (2022) also found that SEL enables the students to deal with the pandemic-induced anxiety, grief, a sense of loss and stress. Stocker & Gallagher (2019) enlist that “learners may experience stress related to family dynamics, financial pressures, navigating their friendships and romantic relationships, or work or academic responsibilities and pressures” (p. 2). Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) rightly pointed out that most of the studies address the ‘stressors’ that the college learners deal with whereas, there are no noteworthy studies or empirical data examining the efficacy of SEL in college students. The research

conducted so far focused on the single components of the SEL and not as a holistic approach (Hoyert and O’Dell 2006; Stocker, 2018). This paper records the implementation of the holistic CRTWC framework by the teacher-researchers in an online classroom and proposes that language learning activities designed within the anchor competencies framework and their corresponding teacher moves not only develop language skills but also the SEL skills thereby contributing to the holistic development of the learners.

The present study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the need for Social-Emotional Learning in undergraduate ESP classrooms?
2. How do language learning activities, designed based on CRTWC’s anchor competencies framework and corresponding teacher moves, assist the learners in enhancing their SEL skills?

3. Method

Designed as a qualitative study, this classroom research was conducted for a period of 3 months at the National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli with B.Tech. students as participants. The students were informed about the study and their consent to use their assignments, discussions, transcripts and video recorded classes was obtained.

4. Setting of the Study and Profile of the Learners

Due to the COVID-19 lockdowns and the temporary closure of institutions, the classes were conducted online through MS Teams. These online teaching sessions were video recorded and analysed.

The data collected were from a classroom of 124 learners, aged between 19 to 21. The learners are admitted to this institute based on their scores in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE Main), a national-level entrance exam which demands greater Intelligence Quotient levels to qualify. Immediately after their admission, owing to the onset of COVID-19 and its subsequent lockdowns, the learners were to attend online classes and take their examinations online. In the light of the classroom interactions the teacher-researchers had with the learners, it was inferred those longer hours of screen time and being confined to their rooms at home all day had a negative

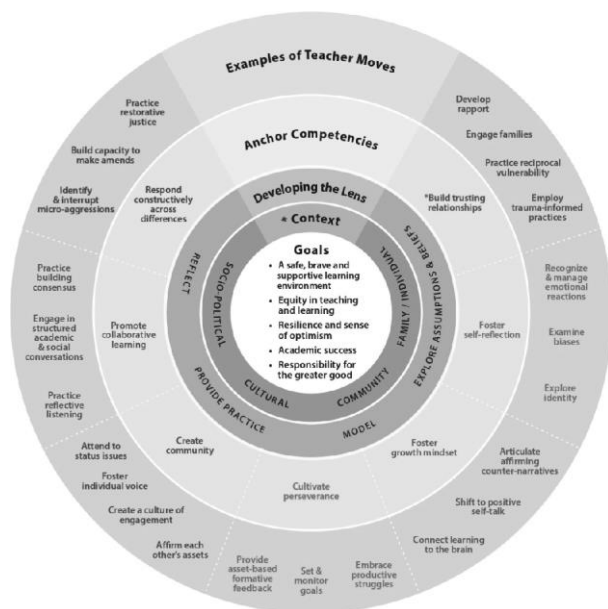


Fig.1: CRTWC Anchor Competencies Framework

impact on their stress levels. The teacher-researchers also observed that the learners were emotionally traumatised due to loneliness, confinement and needed support to manage their emotions. Moreover, the rigorous academic preparations that they undertook for JEE-mains made them further stressed as they did not have the ‘privilege’ of on-campus education which could have been a relaxing measure for them owing to the exposure and interactions with peers, teachers and others on campus.

5. Data Collection Tools

The Video-Recorded sessions (coded as VR) served as the major source of data for thematic-analysis. The teacher-researchers also maintained a Researchers’ Diary (coded as RD) in which they took notes of the most important episodes from the classroom along with their reflections. Thirdly, Learners’ Assignments (coded as LA) were collected and analysed for identifying their importance in their language learning. Learners’ Reflections (coded as LR) were also obtained through informal discussions after every class.

6. Procedure

The 20 hours of classes conducted were a part of the ESP syllabus of the Engineering students. Since it is an engineering institute, there were two divisions of classroom procedures such as theoretical and lab sessions. During the COVID-19 times, the English lab was also conducted in the same distance mode over

MS Teams. The syllabus was executed as classroom exercises during the lab sessions after they were introduced to the learning points in the ‘theory’ hour.

The following infographic sums up the stages in the intervention strategy.

The intervention phase involved activities such as

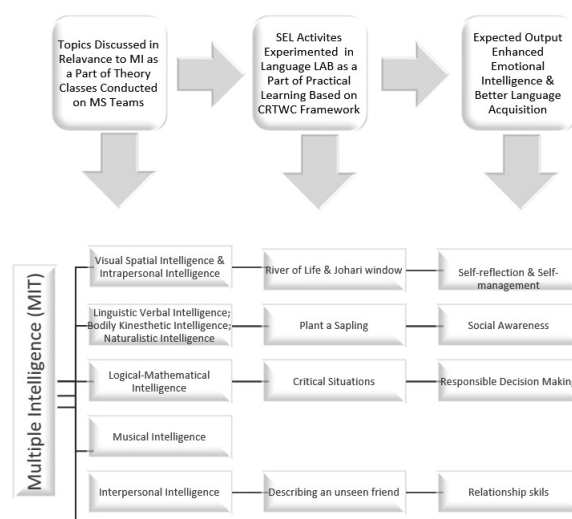


Fig. 3 : Stages of Intervention

‘River of Life, Johari Window, Plant a Sapling, Critical Situations and Describing an Unseen Friend’. These activities were compiled from diverse academic sources and modified in compliance with the requirements. The following table illustrates the nature of the activities and the skills which were focused.

The data collection procedures involved classroom observation, analysing the teacher-researchers’ diary, learners’ reflection as well as examining the assignments and answer scripts of the learners. The teacher-researchers compiled the necessary data, organised them thematically and assigned codes. Data coding was done manually, without using any software. Learners were coded as L1, L2, L3, and so on. Both teacher-researchers read and re-read the written scripts to interpret them based on recurring ideas, words, and patterns to obtain a general sense of the data. A visual narrative analysis was done to interpret the words and images on the scripts along with the spoken dialogues during presentations. The teacher-researchers adhered to narrative thematic analysis to interpret the content within the text.

7. Data Analysis

Table 1: Activities and their corresponding language & SEL skills (See Appendix A)

Activity	Language Skills	SEL Skills
<p>Activity 1: River of Life</p> <p>Draw a map of your life imagining it to be a river and state the most important incidents in short and crisp sentences. Compare the river with your life. For example, the smooth flow of the river would mean positive relationships, growth and other positive scenarios in life. On the other hand, waterfalls, tumbling waters and floods would represent your inner turmoil and difficulties faced in your life. You can draw, click a picture and upload on the class Teams.</p>	<p>Writing: Brevity and clarity in writing, appropriateness, writing effective sentences</p> <p>Listening: Listening process & practice</p> <p>Speaking: Extempore speech practice, Building self-confidence and fluency</p>	<p>Self-reflection</p> <p>Self-awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose.</p>
<p>Activity 2: Johari Window</p> <p>Phone a person whom you trust the most. The chosen person must be able to describe you and your relationship convincingly. You can give the person, the list of adjectives that we discussed in class. The person may choose from this list or use her/his own adjectives.</p>	<p>Speaking: Barriers to speaking, Conversation practice, improving responding capacity</p> <p>Listening: Problems in comprehension and retention, importance of listening in the corporate world</p>	<p>Self-management</p> <p>Self-management: The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivated and agency to accomplish personal and collective goals.</p>
<p>Activity 3: Plant a Sapling</p> <p>Plant a sapling of your choice at your house premises. Touch and feel the soil and use any recycled objects as planter. Display your plants to your classmates after two weeks and write the process of planting descriptively. Include how you took care of the plant and how you felt about this experience. Also mention the difficulties you had if any.</p>	<p>Speaking: Extempore speech practice, Speech assessment</p> <p>Listening: Listening process and practice, exposure to recorded & Structured talks</p> <p>Writing: Report writing, vocabulary</p>	<p>Social Awareness</p> <p>Social awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.</p>
<p>Activity 4: Critical Situations</p> <p>Think critically and find solutions to the following problem during a critical situation. Find constructive solutions for the well-being of others also.</p> <p>There was a corporate office where one of the team leaders Arya was always praised by the MD for her work whereas the co-workers were jealous of her. Arya was a high headed person who ignores and hence was disregarded by her colleagues. One day, she got drunk and confessed to her colleague Teja in private that she betrayed the organisation by revealing its secrets to the competitor. The next day morning Arya enters the office and ignores Teja as usual. What would you do if you were Teja? Would you keep it a secret or expose that she betrayed the organisation?</p>	<p>Speaking: Barriers to speaking, improving responding capacity, speech assessment</p> <p>Listening: problems in comprehension and retention, listening tests</p> <p>Writing: effective writing practice, paragraph writing</p>	<p>Responsible decision-making</p> <p>The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being.</p>
<p>Activity 5: Describing the 'unseen friends'</p> <p>Describe the characteristics of a random classmate using some adjectives.</p>	<p>Vocabulary: Vocabulary expansion</p> <p>Speaking: conversation practice, improving responding capacity</p> <p>Listening: Listening process and practice</p>	<p>Relationship Skills</p> <p>The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups. This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to solve problems and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed.</p>

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective is to develop in the under-graduate students of engineering a level of competence in English required for independent and effective communication for academic and social needs.

COURSE CONTENT

Theory: Language and communication-reading strategies: skimming, scanning, inferring, predicting and responding to content – Guessing from context – Note making – Vocabulary extension - speed reading practice – use of extensive reading texts.

Analytical and critical reading practice- critical, creative and lateral thinking- language and thinking – thinking process and language development.

Effective writing practice – Vocabulary expansion - Effective sentences: role of acceptability, appropriateness, brevity & clarity in writing – Cohesion & coherence in writing -Writing of definitions, descriptions - Paragraph writing.

Reciprocal relationship between reading and writing -thinking and writing - Argument Writing practice – Perspectives in writing -professional writing - Narrative writing.

Lab: Listening process & practice – Exposure to recorded & structured talks, class room lectures – Problems in comprehension & retention – Note-taking practice – Listening tests- Importance of listening in the corporate world.

Barriers to listening: Physical & psychological – Steps to overcome them – Purposeful listening practice – Active listening and anticipating the speaker – Use of technology to improve the skill.

Fluency & accuracy in speech -Improving self-expression – Tonal variations – Listener oriented speaking -Group discussion practice – Interpersonal Conversation -Developing persuasive speaking skills.

Barriers to speaking – Building self-confidence & fluency – Conversation practice- Improving responding capacity - Extempore speech practice – Speech assessment.

COURSE OUTCOME

The students will be able to express themselves in a meaningful manner to different levels of people in their academic and social domains.

Reference Books

1. M. Ashraf Rizvi, *Effective Technical Communication*, Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi, 2005.
2. Strunk, William, and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Pearson Edition, 1999.
3. Garner, Bryan A, *HBW Guide to Better Business Writing*, Harvard Business Review Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 2013.

Fig. 2: Syllabus for HSIR-11 English for Communication at NIT Trichy

The five activities were examined by the teacher-researchers to identify common themes. The following five core competencies were the basis for the analysis.

1) Self-Reflection: Learners learned to manage their stress and emotions with exercises including ‘River of Life’, ‘Plant a Sapling’, and ‘Johari Window’. They participated in thorough self-reflection, which served as a foundation for them to express their emotions in various circumstances. Additionally, in the classroom and the larger community, connections of trust between learners and instructors as well as others were forged. The learners agreed that these exercises aided in their ability to reflect on themselves and aided them to express their suppressed emotions. The RD entries revealed that the learners managed their time and diverted their attention towards being productive. Learners started to consciously practice self-

awareness and were able to communicate their emotions. “L8 has started making his own fertilizers for the plants from the kitchen waste. He explains his observations of the natural environment with elevated enthusiasm. (RD2, 01.10.2021).”

After the ‘River of Life’ activity, a student admitted that it helped him reflect on his life. “This allowed me to know where I stand today. It was very nostalgic to do the activity[sic]” (LR, L2). The act of taking care of plants had a positive impact among the learners and instilled a sense of satisfaction. I felt better watering and taking care of the plant[sic]” (LR, L5). Such sharing of experiences in the classroom induced other learners to do the same. The learners started displaying more interest in narrating their experiences. The teacher-researchers perceived that it was a good initiative for making the class more interactive. It was also observed that the learners did not make superficial observations but delved deeper into farming concepts. They set goals for themselves as they are involved in activities such as growing plants (spinach) and preparing fertilizers (from kitchen waste). “The student has grown spinach on his apartment’s terrace. He exclaims how wonderful he felt while his mother used it for the curry that day. It is a special moment for him (RD1, 04.10.2021).”

These activities encompassed the core communicative skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also rendered in developing their aesthetic sense of drawing and enhanced their life skills such as responsibility, problem solving, caring and decision making. The learners acknowledged that caring for a plant provided them with a sense of responsibility and that they developed an emotional attachment to the plants. “I didn’t know I could take care of a plant this well. I was surprised [sic]” (LR, L15). The teacher-researchers also learned about how activities that engaged them to interact with nature developed their ‘Naturalistic-Intelligence’ where they interact with nature and engage themselves in observing the environment.

2) Self-Management: The SEL competencies, self-awareness, and self-management are closely linked. They involve an understanding of one’s own emotions as well as regulating one’s own behaviours. As a result, the activities modified for the classroom had similar observations and outcomes. “River of Life” and “Plant a Sapling” activities gave the learners a break from their monotonous routine where they concentrated only on their academics. Teacher-

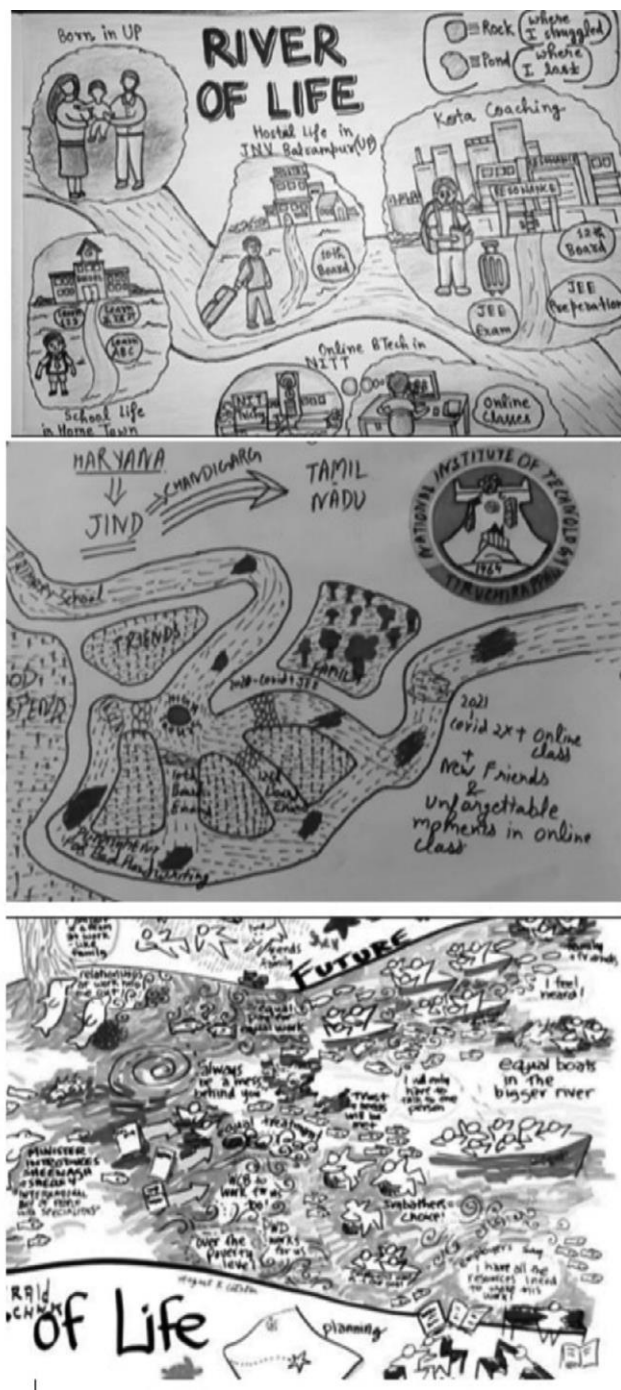


Fig. 4 : Assignments Submitted by the Students

researcher 1 stated in the diary that “L17 used to love painting, but she had to put aside all her entertainment and concentrate on passing JEE. It is the same case with most of the students (RD1, 24.09.2021).” The learners were habituated to spending a significant amount of time in front of the computers and attending lectures, whereas they neglected to exercise their hobbies. They had not effectively managed their schedule to devote the same amount of time to their

extracurricular activities as given to academics. As informed by the learners, these activities helped them to revive their hobbies and manage their time efficiently. “It was so good when I drew these. I had an opportunity to sit and draw, use my colours. It used to be my hobby. Thanks for this task [sic]” (LR, L21). A learner acknowledged that he created a timetable to organise his daily tasks and that he incorporated watering and caring for the plants as a habit. “Since I am living alone, I had to manage my time just to water the plants. I even made a mesh and netted the plant to protect it from the cattle that tries to eat it while I am away [sic]” (LR, L10). The student’s decision to construct a mesh around the sapling demonstrated his capacity for problem-solving when he had to resolve the problem of cows eating the plant. It is evident from the statement that the learner’s problem-solving abilities and a sense of responsibility for managing one’s own time also developed by means of practicing these activities.

The ‘River of Life’ activity allowed the learners to know each other’s journeys of life. It offered them an opportunity to be mindful of the progress in their lives as well as to be empathetic and value one another’s differences. “So many different stories and beautiful journeys. The learners have mentioned their most important happenings in their lives like accidents, losing a loved one, achievements, failures and so on (RD1, 27.09.2021).” The learners were aware of their thoughts, emotions and behaviours during each stage of their life while engaging themselves in the activity.

3) **Social Awareness:** The panel discussions allowed learners to listen to as well as express their opinions on several environmental issues. It presented them with an opportunity to positively contribute to their



Fig. 5: Harvest Picture Shared by a Student

surroundings and demonstrate their awareness. They were able to empathise, listen to various perspectives, and reflect on ideas. “I enjoyed doing this assignment. It was good to see everyone’s river of life [sic]” (LR, L3). They had the chance to be aware of what was going on around them, and it helped them to both understand and accept the differences. They had a plethora of ideas to share and were capable of contributing to societal interactions among their communities. The issues of gender equality, environmental concerns, online bullying were all discussed, and many learners were able to give examples and provided innovative solutions to the existing problems. The activities made the classes interactive, and the learners volunteered to contribute to the interactions. “We liked English classes because it’s more interactive. It is more engaging[sic]” (LR, L10). A considerable change in the classroom, where the learners began to help their classmates despite the differences occurred. There were instances where the learners who were proficient in English volunteered to help the intermediate speakers. “The classmates are very encouraging, and they tend to help each other by giving the presenter the right vocabulary when he/she stammers (RD1, 08.10.2021)”. “I’ll translate to the class; you can speak in Hindi [sic]” (LR, L9). The teacher-researchers also noticed that offering linguistic support to peers increased during the course of the study. Although the learners were hesitant to form groups with their classmates whom they do not know well, responding and interfering to help when the fellow learners face difficulties in voicing their ideas were observed.

The learners sought help from the teacher to enhance their skills. Teacher-researcher 2 had noted down how the learners approached her for help. “The students stated that they are from villages and that their friends will make fun of them if they speak in English. I think, creating a safe environment is necessary for a better learning experience (RD1, 08.10.2021).” In the classroom, learners demonstrated SEL characteristics such as being excellent listeners, non-judgemental and proactive in providing help.

4) Responsible Decision Making: The classroom activities involved the learners in identifying the given problems, analysing those situations, solving problems, considering ethical responsibilities, evaluating, and reflecting. Panel discussions on varied topics helped the learners to look at various points of view for the same problem. “It makes them think

considering not only their own perspective but also for the common cause (RD2, 11.10.2021).”

During the activity, teacher-researchers formulated the questions in order to observe the learners’ thoughts and decisions on the given problems in the form of critical essays. Questions on negotiation dialogues, crucial decision-making, ethical dilemmas, and moral dilemmas were asked as a part of ‘Critical Situations’ activity. Eventually when different prompts were given in the class, the learners critically analysed the pros and cons of issues and discussed them. “The discussions reflect their thoughts on finding the right solution by identifying the potential consequences of the prompts (RD2, 11.10.2021).” Thus, problem-solving skills were focused where the learners responsibly engaged themselves in finding solutions to the existing problems and making constructive and respectful choice considering the well-being of others. During the class hours when the learners tried to contribute to the discussion, they faced difficulties in using English. They struggled to produce a grammatically perfect sentence. Learner 8 stated: “My English is not very good. I cannot speak what I want to tell. But I want to tell [sic]” (LR, L8). In such cases, the learners tried to contribute to the discussions in their more enabled language and such productive struggles were encouraged to cultivate perseverance. Cultivating perseverance is a by-product of embracing productive struggles, setting, and monitoring goals, providing asset-based formative feedback. “I’ve never talked in any other classes, no one knows me [sic]” was the response of L7. The teacher-researchers encouraged the learners by giving constant feedback and providing a friendly environment which led the learners to volunteer and contribute to the classroom discussions.

5) Relationship Skills: ‘Describing an Unseen Friend’ led to the learners building stronger connections with each other. The learners, when entrusted with group assignments that needed collaborative efforts, tried to build consensus, listened to their fellow learners, and could communicate effectively for academic purposes. There were difficulties in grouping the learners together as they were comfortable with only a particular well-known group of friends. They were hesitant to join as groups with other classmates whom they were unfamiliar with. “I only talk to two friends in the class. They are from my group. I don’t have any idea about them so I can’t say anything[sic]” (LR, L15). Despite those, the

outcome of the group activities was always appreciated.

The activity provided them with opportunities to realise various perspectives, different cultures, languages, and histories. Learners who were reluctant to participate in activities and found the online mode as a conventional excuse to evade active engagement in classroom interactions gradually evolved as self-driven, active individuals willing to take risks in learning. The activity presented an opportunity for the learners to interact among themselves who belonged to diverse language groups, ethnicities, and lifestyles. Thus, they were able to construct meaningful relationships among themselves. In an online setting, they tried to build rapport among themselves by trying to observe the other person's character only by means of their virtual presence. When the teacher-researchers asked them to describe a random fellow student, they tried using some adjectives and it helped the learners know about each other better. The learners stepped in voluntarily and spoke about their fellow learners and this contributed to enhancing relationship skills.

In addition to these, the focus on enhancing the language competencies was not compromised. The confidence level of the learners increased, and the classes began to be more interactive in comparison with the initial stages. When the environment was supportive and conducive, it was easier for them to push boundaries and acquire the language without fear of rejection. In such situations, activities were done enthusiastically, and learning occurred in an enjoyable manner.

The learners expressed their feelings of disappointment, anxiety, loneliness and day-to-day struggles. During the pandemic, the lockdowns left emotions pent up in them and it was difficult for the student to cope with it. "I wake up in the morning and immediately sit in front of the screen for my classes. The classes are never interactive and are boring [sic]" (LR, L8). It was certain that the learners did not have a chance to interact with anyone or express their feelings. The interactive classes and the activities made the learners look forward to the classes. "We have never entered a lab. We do all the lab activities online. We just touch a button, and the experiments are virtual. It feels meaningless[sic]" (LR, L17). They were capable of expressing their suppressed emotions as a result of the 'Johari Window' activity. "(sobbing) It's been three to four years since I talked to my mom.

I asked her to describe me and the adjectives she used to refer to me made me overwhelmed[sic]" (LR, L6). The activities helped the learners maintain healthy relationships with others and it is affirmed with the RD entry "Johari Window made the learners communicate with their loved ones clearly and realise the importance of the relationship. It appeared to be cathartic for them to have their experiences shared (RD2, 15.10.2021)." More than half of the class resolved conflicts in their relationships and vowed to be more aware of their emotions during complex situations and respond constructively.

Research on the importance of SEL and its positive impacts on individuals has been done by various researchers and proved over the years (Mahoney, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2018). Contrary to the popular studies that were done on the importance of academics, contemporary research revolves around integrating life skills with academics for the betterment of individuals. These activities given to the learners during the sessions helped them with their emotional well-being. The feedback from the learners proved that these activities helped them "feel better".

8. Results

The results of the study indicated that a majority of learners perceived SEL components as useful and efficient in managing their attitude. The engineering learners were dissatisfied with their classes and termed it to be "boring" due to the monotonous nature of scientific lectures. The classes were also not as interactive as they may have been in a more conventional setting. According to them, the scientific experiments conducted in the hands-on lab sessions were also done online and were mere simulations. "It is not exciting. We just touch buttons. The simulations happen on their own [sic]" (LR, L20). The learners yearned to be present in a traditional classroom but did not have any alternative choice due to the lockdowns that negatively affected not only their emotional stability but also affected their academic enhancements. As opposed to that, the language classes provided them with opportunities to express themselves and to reflect on their current state of mind "I heard that the classes are good. That is why I woke up this early in the morning and attended the class[sic]" (LR, L12). The learners utilised the recommended classroom activities in their real life and benefitted from it. The demand for social-emotional learning and its value in undergraduate ESP classes are evaluated based on student feedback.

Activities were designed based on the anchor competencies to improve their language skills as well as their SEL skills. To implement these via academic syllabus, the CRTWC anchor competencies framework was used to construct language learning activities that contribute to the improvement of the desired fluency skills. By focusing exclusively on each aspect of the anchor competencies, the teacher follows the framework's suggested 'teacher moves' to encourage the development of SEL abilities. The framework enables teachers to maintain an emotional connection with their learners despite challenging circumstances, such as when they are unable to enter a typical classroom. The teacher moves stated in the framework such as 'fostering individual voice', practising 'reciprocal vulnerability', 'developing rapport' or 'embracing productive struggles' to mention a few facilitates the teachers to reassure their pedagogical practices. The classroom activities rendered the desired results of fostering the anchor competencies proposed by the framework by aligning with the prescribed syllabus.

The table below represents the interrelatedness among the CRTWC anchor competencies, the SEL competencies and the corresponding teachers moves.

The teacher moves are instances for the teachers to handle the learners in the classroom based on the CRTWC anchor competencies. These instances enabled the teachers to enhance the learners' SEL skills.

Table 2 : Anchor Competencies and Corresponding SEL Core Competencies & Teacher Moves

CRTWC Anchor Competencies	SEL Competencies	Corresponding Teacher Moves
Building Trusting Relationships (BTR)	Relationship skills	Reciprocal Vulnerability
Foster Self-Reflection (FSR)	Self-reflection	Recognize and manage emotions
Foster Growth Mindset (FGM)	Self-management	Encourage positive self-talk
Cultivate Perseverance (CP)	Self-reflection	Helping students identify how they practice perseverance by narrating model situations.
Create Community (CC)	Relationship skills	Foster individual voice, encouraging discussions
Promote Collaborative Learning (PCL)	Relationship skills, social awareness	Teaching and practicing harmony, engaging in positive conversations
Respond Constructively across Differences (RCD)	Relationship skills, responsible decision making, social awareness	Responding and interfering when students face discrimination or bullying

9. Discussion

The present study stands consistent with the findings of earlier research (Schanzenbach et al., 2016; Duraiaappah, 2019; Baran & Al Zoubi, 2020) that reiterated the importance of SEL skills in

academics. The responses from the ESP teaching sessions indicate that the undergraduate learners were under escalated levels of stress as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns. The research also found that these deliberately created language learning activities can aid in the development of SEL competencies in learners. The innovative approach of embedding SEL into the syllabus addressed the issue of managing the time constraints that hindered the teachers from practicing SEL when it demanded more time than the syllabus permitted. The activities were executed in such a manner that the academic curriculum was not displaced but were complemented with SEL skills. The classroom activities offered them with opportunities where they could collaborate with each other, express their opinions, share their concerns, and debate for a better community. The MI theory proposed by Gardener (1983) was also taken into consideration, and the activities were tailored to suit each learners' modalities of intelligence. As a result, the classroom exercises improved the students' emotional intelligence and engaged their multiple intelligences while also promoting language learning.

There are many frameworks as mentioned by Brush et al., (2021) that could be used to integrate the SEL competencies into the classroom teaching. Those frameworks are not comprehensive and do not concentrate on all the desired skills. CASEL, after decades of research, had constructed the essential competencies needed for the enhancement of an individual's emotional intelligence. The CRTWC framework used those selected five competencies as its roots and developed the seven anchor competencies which could be practiced by the teachers in the classroom. This helps the teacher to stay on track and focus on all the skills equally without ignoring any skills.

Hence, this study supports the assertion made by De Rosier (2014) and Slovak et al., (2015) that there is a lack of a guidebook for teachers to use when designing activities to strengthen learners' SEL skills in a digital environment. The present study exemplifies how educators might design exercises that will enhance learners' SEL abilities in a virtual setting. It provides a solution to the assertion by Rice & Deschaine (2020), which highlights the challenges that the teachers experience while integrating SEL skills online. Most of the teachers use the same methodologies they have already employed in their offline classrooms which might not extract the desired

outcomes. This study illustrates the framework being used for developing the activities where the SEL skills and the linguistic skills complement each other even in an online environment.

10. Conclusion

This study validates the need of teacher-training for implementing SEL focused language learning activities in the English classrooms. The framework used in this study proves to be effective in helping teachers to harness opportunities in the classroom to enable the learners to handle emotions, build stronger relationships and foster self-reflection. This study is an example for tertiary-level teachers of English for effectively developing and fostering SEL skills in their classrooms by embedding these skills into the usual language learning activities.

However, the study does not engage a large number of participants and a prolonged period of intervention. Nor does it use any quantitative data. To generalize the results, further interventions can be made with larger student groups, for a longer period than that of the current study, and in a hybrid and onsite contexts as well.

This study, despite being a small-scale one, provides a model for teachers to incorporate the CRTWC's anchor competencies framework into the ESP syllabus for developing and strengthening the SEL skills of their learners. Similar interventions can be strategized and executed in both onsite and hybrid classrooms. The SEL skills can be qualitatively measured through the learner responses and this can also assist the teachers to further improve their course-plans. In that sense, this model helps the teachers to navigate towards their continuing professional development.

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