

## AFFECTIVE TEACHING AND TEACHER QUALITY: INSIGHTS FROM MALAYSIAN PRIMARY LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOMS

Flora Crispina Nathan<sup>1</sup>

\*Dorothy Dewitt<sup>1</sup>

Lim Jia Wei<sup>2</sup>

[1] Department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology, Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur 50603, Malaysia

[2] Department of Language and Literacy Education, Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur 50603, Malaysia

\*[dorothy@um.edu.my](mailto:dorothy@um.edu.my)

### ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores how teachers implement emotionally responsive teaching strategies across various literary genres, including poems, short stories, and graphic novels. Through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and member validation, the research investigates how six experienced teachers foster emotional engagement and meaningful student connections in the language classroom. The findings reveal that teachers employed diverse, genre-specific strategies that encouraged student reflection, empathy, and expressive participation. From promoting independent learning and cultural immersion to integrating visual and hands-on activities, these approaches contributed to emotionally rich classroom environments where students felt valued and understood. The study highlights how emotionally attuned teaching practices can enhance students' personal development, classroom engagement, and connection to literature. It concludes by emphasizing the role of teacher responsiveness and reflective practice in fostering supportive and inclusive learning environments that nurture both academic and emotional growth.

**Keywords:** *Affective teaching, language arts, social-emotional learning, teacher professionalism, teacher quality.*

### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Children's Literature (CCL), known as Language Arts (LA) in Malaysia, is vital for developing language skills, cultural awareness, and empathy, aligning with Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) principles (English Language Standards and Quality Council, 2015; Hsu et al., 2024). Despite its importance, literature study in Malaysia is declining, with less than 50% of students meeting reading proficiency in PISA 2022, partly due to a shortage of qualified teachers and limited creative teaching methods (Basree, 2009; Mustakim et al., 2014). However, some passionate educators, termed "torch-lighters," innovate and inspire change in LA teaching, fostering emotional engagement and motivation (Lacina & Block, 2011; Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015). Affective teaching, involving emotional connection and positive communication, supports student well-being and participation (Suen & Hung, 2024; Zhang, 2022). These teachers demonstrate fairness, empathy, care, and student-centeredness, creating inclusive, emotionally supportive classrooms where students feel safe to express themselves (Hooda, 2017; Serin, 2017; Zhang, 2022). This study explores the qualities of such exemplary Malaysian LA educators to enhance effective, supportive, and culturally responsive teaching, aiming to revitalize LA instruction and promote holistic student development (Palaniappan, 1998). While international studies highlight the value of affective teaching and teacher professionalism in LA, there is limited research exploring how these qualities manifest in the Malaysian context, especially from the perspective

of exemplary educators working to revitalize LA instruction. This gap is critical, given the declining reading engagement among Malaysian students and the need for culturally responsive, emotionally supportive teaching practices. For this purpose, this study is guided by one specific research question:

1. What are the key qualities of exemplary Language Arts (LA) educators in Malaysian classrooms that contribute to creating an effective, supportive, and inclusive learning environment?

### ***Affective Qualities of Teachers***

Affective qualities in teaching, such as empathy, enthusiasm, and strong relationships, are crucial yet difficult to measure (Stronge, 2018). These traits foster warm, inclusive environments that enhance emotional connections to learning. SEL emphasizes skills like self-regulation and social awareness, with teachers expected to model emotional intelligence (Ferreira et al., 2020). Empathetic teachers help students manage emotions and build positive relationships, improving credibility and engagement (George et al., 2024; Zhou, 2022). Emotional connection through shared stories promotes cultural awareness and a sense of belonging (Burke et al., 2019; Sen, 2021). Respectful, individual-centred teacher behaviour supports students' emotional well-being and motivation (Coristine et al., 2022; Lashari et al., 2013). Re-establishing teacher-student connections is vital amid growing emotional distance (Zhou, 2022). Affective engagement, feelings of belonging, and interest are as important as cognitive engagement in motivating students (Zhou, 2022). Positive relationships built on trust and care significantly boost achievement and lifelong learning (George et al., 2024). Ultimately, teacher professionalism rooted in emotional and relational competencies is key to effective teaching (Stronge, 2018).

### ***Affective Teaching in Language Arts***

Affective teaching fosters emotionally supportive environments that promote empathy, kindness, and respect, enhancing student motivation and cooperation (Samih et al., 2024). Rooted in SEL principles, it develops emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and social skills. Ibarra (2022) stresses the importance of professional development to boost teachers' social-emotional competence, which supports student well-being. Meirovich (2012) notes that affective environments increase learners' self-worth and engagement, accelerating learning. This approach benefits struggling students by providing emotional and academic support while improving teacher satisfaction. Buric and Frenzel (2023) link positive teacher emotions with better teaching quality. Incorporating personal storytelling deepens emotional engagement; Sen (2021) highlights its role in fostering student self-awareness and teacher growth, while Abdul Aziz et al. (2023) note that identifying with fictional characters helps teachers reconnect emotionally. These connections build trust, empathy, and respect, enhancing academic outcomes and holistic development by valuing emotional and intellectual growth.

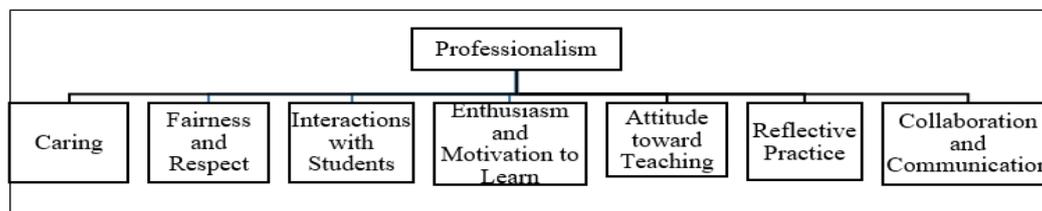
### ***Teacher-Student Relationship through LA Teaching***

Positive teacher-student relationships are essential for supportive learning and foster students' academic and personal growth by nurturing emotional intelligence, empathy, and communication (Ibarra, 2022). These connections form the foundation of an educational ecosystem where knowledge and growth intersect (Wang, 2024). LA instruction, especially through children's literature and storytelling, offers rich opportunities to build these bonds by creating shared emotional spaces that promote empathy, trust, and understanding. Storytelling helps teachers and students explore diverse perspectives and social complexities, enhancing classroom relationships (Egan, 1986). It also strengthens teachers' empathy and interpersonal skills, fostering a greater sense of "connectedness" (Mello, 2001). Integrating children's literature cultivates compassion and trust, supporting students' social-emotional and intellectual development. This approach improves teacher quality by deepening relational dynamics and creating an inclusive, emotionally engaging learning environment.

### ***Teacher Professionalism in LA Teaching***

Affective teaching, which focuses on emotional connections, empathy, and a supportive classroom climate, enhances student learning and aligns with teacher professionalism by promoting engagement and relationship-building. Integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) theory helps teachers develop emotional intelligence, manage classroom dynamics, and address students' academic and social-

emotional needs (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers who use affective strategies demonstrate professionalism by supporting students holistically. According to Stronge (2018), professionalism involves dispositions, values, beliefs, and purpose that influence teaching effectiveness. Given the demands of Language Arts and standards-based curricula, such professionalism is crucial for creating inclusive, responsive learning environments. This study applies Stronge’s (2018) professionalism framework as illustrated in Figure 1, to analyse how affective teaching relates to teacher quality and professional practice in LA instruction.



**Figure 1.** *Theoretical Framework for Professionalism, Adapted from Stronge (2018)*

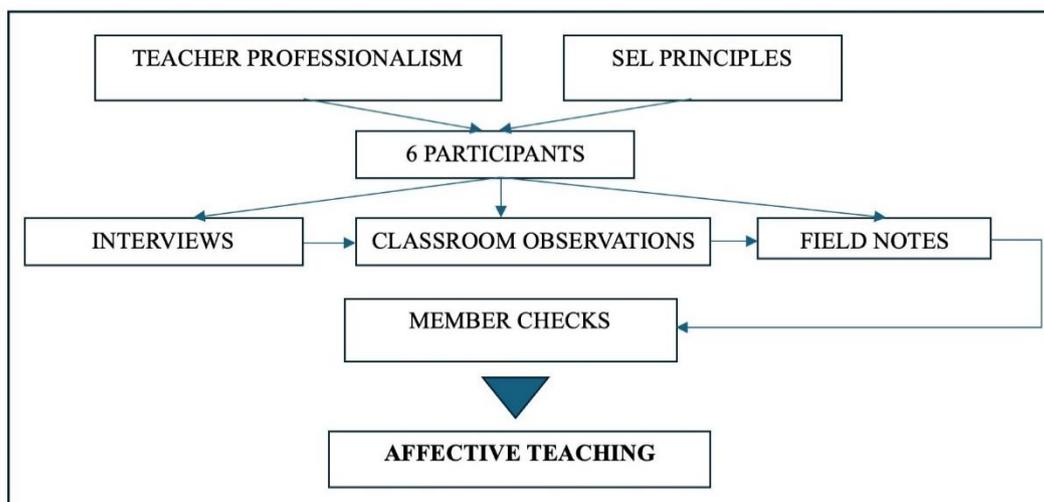
**METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative case study examined affective teaching strategies within the SEL framework using in-depth interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and member checks to ensure validity. Six experienced LA teachers were purposefully selected based on specific criteria as in Figure 2: they taught English as a Second Language (ESL) to Year Four, Five, and Six students for more than 10 years; incorporated LA components, such as poems, short stories, and graphic novels, into their weekly lesson plans; and followed the KSSR-aligned CEFR lesson plan format. All participants provided informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study.

NAME	TEACHING EXPERIENCE	
MEL	32	The teachers were experienced ESL educators (over 10 years) who regularly integrated Language Arts components into their lessons and adhered to the KSSR-aligned CEFR format.
IMAN	27	
PAM	14	
DENA	11	
SUE	10	
HADI	10	

**Figure 2.** *The Participants Were Selected Based on Purposive Sampling*

Interviews explored teachers’ beliefs and emotional engagement strategies, while observations captured the strategies’ real-time application, focusing on teacher-student interactions, emotional climate, and classroom dynamics. Field notes provided additional context, highlighting verbal and non-verbal cues, especially during emotionally significant classroom moments. Member checks allowed participants to review and confirm the researchers’ interpretations, ensuring credibility. These combined methods offered a comprehensive understanding of affective teaching aligned with teacher professionalism and SEL principles across various genres and classroom settings (as in Figure 3). Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Malaya Ethics Committee, Education Planning and Research Development (EPRD) of the Ministry of Education (MOE), state (JPN), and district (PPD) education departments.



**Figure 3.** Methodology to Affective Teaching

## FINDINGS

In this study, the teachers demonstrated varied responses to affective teaching within the SEL theory framework across three genres: poems, short stories, and graphic novels. The teachers' varied responses highlight how they adapted SEL principles to engage students emotionally, fostering personal and social development. Each participant's approach offered unique insights into how affective teaching can be applied across different literary forms to support emotional growth in the classroom.

### Poems

**Participant 1 (Pam).** Pam's approach of having students recite the poem *"The Sandcastle"*, address new vocabulary, and then look up the meanings using a set-up access corner with a laptop reflected a thoughtful application of affective teaching by engaging students both intellectually and emotionally. This strategy aligned with key components of SEL, including self-awareness, self-regulation, and emotional engagement.

Pam: Okay, any volunteers? You can recite the poem 'Sandcastle'. Does anyone want to recite? Oh! Ok good, Danish, come to me.

Pam: You can look up the new words unfamiliar to you, list them down, and go to the access corner at the back. There are my laptops; I've connected them to my WIFI. You can Google it and find out the meaning by yourself, okay?

Reciting poems is an interactive, emotionally engaging activity that helps students connect with the poem's rhythm, tone, and emotions, not just its words. Ferez et al. (2019) highlight its benefits for language skills, pronunciation, and grammar. Pam's approach encouraged self-expression, confidence, and emotional literacy by linking vocabulary to personal experiences and promoting self-awareness and regulation through reflective practice and independent learning with a laptop. While Ferez et al. (2019) emphasize linguistic gains, this study suggests that integrating emotional literacy and self-expression may extend those benefits by deepening student engagement and personal relevance.

Student: We have to find out the meanings by ourselves?

Pam: Yes. Do it by yourself. The laptops are there. Google can be accessed. So help yourselves.

Pam encouraged problem-solving and independence by allowing students to access information on their own, respecting individual learning styles and paces. The use of technology made learning interactive and dynamic, enhancing engagement and outcomes (Duterte, 2024). Her approach fostered emotional

engagement, self-awareness, and intellectual growth by linking vocabulary to personal experiences and supporting independent learning, aligning with affective teaching principles.

**Participant 2 (Hadi).** Hadi's focus on the literary elements of poetry, such as the title, poet, colours, and settings, aligns with affective teaching by engaging students' emotions through a detailed exploration of the poem's structure and artistic components.

Hadi: What is the title of the poem?

Students: Cats.

Hadi: Who is the poet?

Students: John Kitching.

Hadi encouraged students to connect emotionally with the poem by exploring its title, poet, and themes, prompting personal reflections. He also guided analysis of visual elements, such as illustrations and colours, which Edeline (2012) views as integral to meaning, enhancing emotional engagement. Discussing the poem's settings helped students visualize the narrative, fostering empathy and deeper emotional understanding.

Hadi: Look at Gran's backdoor, what colour is it?

Students: Blue.

Hadi: Do you like the blue door? How does it make you feel, the blue door?

Student: Friendly. Like we are welcomed into the house.

Additionally, Hadi's focus on classroom manners created a respectful, emotionally safe environment that encouraged students to express their emotions and engage with the content. By setting clear behaviour expectations, Hadi fostered social awareness, respect for others' ideas, and a sense of community, demonstrating a holistic approach to affective teaching that supports personal and social growth.

Hadi: Oh Wow! That's beautiful. Say, Thank you for the compliment, teacher.

Student: Thank you for the compliment teacher.

Hadi: Class, are you ready?

Students: Yes, Mr. Hadi, we are ready.

Hadi: Ok class. Thank you and Goodbye class. See you tomorrow.

Students: Thank you, Mr. Hadi. See you tomorrow.

Hadi: Have a nice day.

Students: Have a nice day, Mr. Hadi.

### **Short Story**

**Participant 3 (Dena).** Dena's focus on the cover and synopsis of the short storybook as part of the instructional approach aligned with affective teaching by fostering emotional engagement and setting the stage for deeper connections with the text. Affirmed by Strnad and Hewitt (2021), book covers contain illustrations and information that are vital to the sequence and message of the story because the text may not be the sole purveyor of information. Supporting Strnad and Hewitt (2021), this study shows how guided use of visuals can deepen emotional and textual connections.

Dena: Why is the cover important? When you look at the cover what does it make you feel? When you pick up the book and look at the front cover, does it make you want to feel like you want to read it?

By encouraging her students to reflect on their emotional responses to the visuals on the cover and the brief plot summary in the synopsis, Dena tapped into students' self-awareness, a core component of SEL. This strategy helped them identify and articulate their initial emotional reactions, namely curiosity, excitement, or even apprehension, before engaging with the text.

Dena: 'Akhbar's Dream', okay. So then you look at the back, usually at the back of the book, what do you have?

Student: The synopsis.

Dena: Yes, the synopsis. What is a synopsis? It's like a summary of the story and the synopsis is very important.

Furthermore, Dena's approach promoted social awareness by encouraging students to empathize with characters' emotions and perspectives. Through pre-reading activities that set the emotional tone, she prepared students to engage thoughtfully with complex themes, fostering emotional connections and enhancing their learning. This approach effectively supported SEL competencies, such as self-awareness and social awareness.

Dena: Very good Shah Jahan. He was the king, who built the Taj Mahal for...?

Student: His wife.

Dena: His wife was Mumtaz. Why did he build the Taj Mahal?

Student: He loved his wife.

Dena: The prince fell in love with the common girl. She was just a common girl, commoner selling things at the stall. And then the prince saw her and then fell in love with her.

#### **Participant 4 (Sue)**

Sue's enthusiastic entry, use of Indian music, and hands-on kite-making in teaching *The King of Kites* exemplified affective teaching by emotionally engaging students and fostering self-expression. Frommelt et al. (2021) support that motivated teachers use such practices to boost student motivation. Echoing Frommelt et al. (2021), this study shows that teacher motivation is most effective when paired with culturally and emotionally relevant strategies.

Students: Wow! Teacher you look beautiful.

Sue: Oh! Thank you. I feel beautiful. Now by the way who dresses like this?

Student: Indian ladies.

Sue: Yes, the shawl covering the head. The *bindhi* on the foreheads and colourful earrings.

Sue: Can you hear the Indian music in the background?

Students: Yes.

Sue: Ok. Today, we are going to focus on the short story *The King of Kites*, which is set in an Indian village. That is why you can hear the soft Indian music in the background.

Sue's bubbly and enthusiastic demeanour immediately set a positive and emotionally inviting tone for the class. This kind of energy helped her students feel comfortable and eager to participate, as emotions can be contagious in the classroom. The teacher's enthusiasm is a key component of affective teaching, as it emotionally engages students and encourages them to connect with the lesson content in a meaningful way. This approach invited the students to experience the lesson with excitement and curiosity, making them feel more emotionally safe and open to learning.

Sue: Anil's mother knew how to sew. She knows how to cut cloth and stitch seams. She knew how to work beautiful patterns in bright silk. Who do you stay with, darlings?

Students: My parents.

Sue: So here Anil stays with his mother, who takes care of him and loves him dearly.

Sue's expressive portrayal of the mother character through body language and tone supported students' emotional connection with the story, promoting empathy and social awareness, key elements of SEL and affective teaching. The Indian music enriched the cultural context, deepening emotional understanding. Title analysis encouraged critical reflection and emotional literacy, helping students connect personal experiences to the story's themes.

Sue: We are going to read the book and talk about the cover of the book. All right. Make sure everyone has a book. All right. Okay. we are going to describe the character and their characteristic. Okay, darlings. Okay. Everyone look at the cover of the book. What can you see? A boy is holding a kite. Right? Why is he called *King of Kites*?

Students: Because he is an expert at making kites.

Sue's kite-making activity supported creativity and personal connection to the story's themes. By providing materials and ensuring all students could participate, she fostered self-expression, inclusivity, and emotional safety. Her empathetic approach reflected care and promoted engagement, aligning with Monteiro et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of teacher support in student motivation. Monteiro et al. (2021) highlight the role of teacher support in motivation, which this study further explores through empathy-driven teaching practices.

Practitioner-researcher notes: The teacher prepared materials such as bamboo sticks, coloured papers, and sequins.

Sue's thoughtful preparation and inclusive approach reflected her commitment to social awareness and relationship skills, key aspects of affective teaching. By minimizing material requirements, she fostered creativity, collaboration, and emotional security. Her consistent use of the affectionate term "darlings" contributed to a nurturing classroom climate. As Garcia-Peinado (2024) notes, such environments improve interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal skills, enhancing students' sense of belonging and emotional engagement.

Practitioner-researcher notes: Sue praised the student for providing the correct answer.

Sue: That's it, darling. That's the correct answer.

Sue's approach demonstrated affective teaching by emotionally engaging students through enthusiasm, empathy, creative expression, and creating a nurturing classroom environment. The combination of enthusiasm, affectionate language, cultural immersion, critical thinking, and hands-on activities fostered an emotionally rich and supportive learning environment where students connected deeply with the material and each other.

### ***Graphic Novel***

**Participant 5 (Iman).** Iman's approach, which began with guessing the sounds of the animals in the graphic novel *The Jungle Book* and led into a discussion of the animals and Mowgli's life in the jungle compared to modern-day living, demonstrated affective teaching by engaging students emotionally and fostering both self-awareness and social awareness. As the researchers observed the class and its environment, they noted:

Practitioner-researcher notes: Iman skilfully got the students settled comfortably on the carpeted floor of the library and imagined themselves as being in the jungle, surrounded by the sounds of wildlife, the rustling of trees, and the calls of distant animals.

Starting with animal sound guessing immediately captured students' attention and sparked their curiosity, an emotional engagement that makes the lesson interactive and fun. By encouraging students to think about and mimic animal sounds, Iman activated the students' imaginations and helped them connect to the material in a visceral, emotional way, in which (Joelsson, 2022) the role of the imagined in children's spatial and mobile experiences is highlighted and developed. This type of engagement fostered a stronger emotional connection to the characters and events in the graphic novel, making the story more relatable and accessible for the students.

Iman: Do you like the guessing game?

Students: Yes.

Iman: Ok. Before we start, since all of you are seated in groups, appoint one of your friends to jot down the answers. You are not just going to guess the sound of the animals but categorize them into wild or tame animals. So divide your paper into two columns and label them wild and tame on each side, ok? I'm going to give each group an A4 paper. Please work together and guess the correct answer. Okay. Are you ready?

As Iman transitioned to discussing Mowgli's life in the jungle in contrast to modern-day living, the teacher invited his students to engage in self-reflection and social awareness. The comparison between Mowgli's simple, nature-based existence and the complexities of modern life encouraged his students to reflect on their own lives and values, prompting them to consider the differences between their experiences and those of fictional characters. Per Santi et al. (2024), readers' dispositions, existing knowledge, and past life and literary experiences will also influence their experience with a text. This promoted self-awareness, as students considered their own emotions, preferences, and how they related to the world around them.

Iman: Do you like to live in the jungle?

Student: No, teacher. There are lots of mosquitoes in the jungle.

Students: There's no internet in the jungle.

Practitioner-researcher notes: Everyone laughed at the student's answer, but there is truth in this response. The student's comment about the lack of internet in the jungle, though playful, revealed an underlying awareness of how integral modern technology has become in daily life.

Furthermore, this discussion invited the students to explore the concept of empathy by thinking about Mowgli's experience as an outsider in the jungle and how parallel feelings of being disconnected or isolated in today's society. This discussion cultivated social awareness as students examined the lives of others, whether fictional or real, and considered different ways of living, understanding diverse perspectives, and fostering empathy for those who may feel alienated.

Iman: So if you were Mowgli, would you like to spend your life in the jungle?

Student: No, teacher. I like my home, my family, my school and friends.

Iman: Good, good answer. So you must appreciate what you have, ok?

Iman's use of playful animal sounds followed by a deeper comparison of lifestyles promoted emotional engagement, critical thinking, and empathy, core elements of affective teaching and SEL. This approach fostered a safe, stimulating environment where students felt encouraged to reflect individually and participate in meaningful group discussions, as noted by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), demonstrating that culturally relevant, creative activities are crucial for fully engaging students' emotions and higher-order thinking.

**Participant 6 (Mel).** Mel's approach demonstrated strong affective teaching by engaging students emotionally and connecting the content to their experiences. By accepting all student guesses and discussing the illustrations in the graphic novel, she created a safe, inclusive environment where students felt valued. Linking concepts like cyclones in "The Wizard of Oz" to real-world natural disasters fostered empathy and social awareness while encouraging self-expression and building students' confidence and emotional connection to the subject matter.

Mel: What do you think this story is about?

Student: It's about animals.

Student: It's about a girl going on an adventure.

Student: It's about wizards.

Mel: Alright! All your guesses are correct. Good job!

Mel's question about the illustrations' attractiveness encouraged students to explore the emotional impact of images and colours, enhancing their emotional literacy. Visual elements convey mood and

evoke feelings (Gupta, 2020), and this discussion supported students in identifying their emotional responses, deepened engagement with the text, and reinforced affective teaching principles.

Mel: Do you find the pictures or illustrations, attractive?

Student: Yes, teacher. They are very colourful.

Mel then used the imagination exercise about cyclones and the climate in "The Wizard of Oz", which sparked the students' imaginations and emotional involvement with the content. This exercise encouraged creative thinking and helped the students connect emotionally to the concept of natural disasters, making the learning experience more engaging and impactful.

Mel: Alright! After reading this chapter on 'The Cyclone', what does it make you feel?

Student: Scared, worried, and pitiful.

Mel: Pitiful, for whom?

Student: For the people experiencing the cyclone.

The juxtaposition of the cyclone incident in "The Wizard of Oz" with real-world natural disasters, such as those occurring frequently in Malaysia, brought the lesson to a personal and emotional level for the students. By discussing natural disasters that they can relate to, such as floods, wildfires, landslides, and tsunamis, Mel made the lesson more relevant and prompted her students to reflect on their own experiences, fostering empathy for those affected by such disasters as they were able to apply prior knowledge while processing new knowledge (Sugiarti & Prihatini, 2023).

Mel: Ok. Close your books. Now you have imagined what a cyclone would feel like. Now let's talk about Malaysia. What natural disasters does Malaysia experience?

Students: Floods, landslides and tsunamis.

Mel: Very good. I'd like to talk about something that has happened here not long ago. Yes. About flood that happened around Puchong itself, the people who lived in this area, like you and I. What was the situation like during the floods? What happened?

Student: It was chaotic teacher. We were so afraid because the water level was rising continuously.

Student: It was a horrible, scary feeling teacher. No money. No electricity. No food.

Participant-researcher notes: Students seemed overwhelmed and there was chaotic noise in the class.

Mel: Shh! Shh! Now listen. You are going to sit in groups and discuss what you expressed and how you can help the situation.

The reference to the great floods in Puchong in 2021 further strengthened the emotional connection by allowing the students to reflect on an event that personally impacted their community. This personal connection deepened their empathy and reinforced the importance of social awareness, as students thought about how natural disasters affected communities and how they might contribute to relief efforts or support others in times of crisis.

Participant-researcher notes: Students were very engaged in the group discussions as every one of them had something to say. There was excitement as well as intense curiosity about each other viewpoints.

Mel's approach exemplified affective teaching by emotionally engaging students with complex themes and connecting literature to real-life experiences. Their emotional responses reflected deep intellectual and empathetic engagement. By fostering self-expression and community awareness, Mel supported students' emotional development and helped them link literary content to broader social issues, enriching both understanding and social consciousness.

## DISCUSSION

This study explored how teachers implement affective teaching strategies within the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) framework across poems, short stories, and graphic novels. Findings show that teachers' affective pedagogies are multifaceted, context-sensitive, and closely linked to SEL competencies like self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social awareness. Using Stronge's (2018) framework of teacher professionalism, the discussion highlights how caring, fairness, enthusiasm, reflective practice, and collaboration support effective affective teaching in literacy education.

### ***Integration of Affective Teaching, SEL Competencies, and Teacher Professionalism***

Teachers demonstrated professionalism by fostering caring and respectful relationships, foundational to SEL and Stronge's (2018) concept of effective teaching. For instance, Pam's use of technology for independent vocabulary learning encouraged self-regulation and autonomy, reflecting respect for students' ownership of learning as claimed by Duarte (2024). Hadi's use of visual cues and questions about feelings promoted emotional safety and social awareness. These strategies confirm Elias et al.'s (1997) view that SEL and literacy instruction reinforce each other. Teachers' passion, sensitivity, and responsiveness allowed students to engage with literature cognitively and emotionally, adapting instruction to students' social and emotional cues.

### ***Genre-Specific Strategies and Emotional Engagement***

Teachers tailored affective teaching to the literary genre and classroom needs. Pam's poetry lessons fostered self-expression and emotional literacy, supporting Ferez et al. (2019) on poetry's role in language and personal voice development. Sue's use of costumes, music, and activities in short story lessons created inclusive, emotionally secure spaces, reflecting enthusiasm and caring as supported by Garcia-Peinado (2024). Iman and Mel's graphic novel lessons used imagination, role-play, and real-world connections to develop empathy, self-awareness, and collaboration strategies supported by Joelsson (2022) and Sugiarti and Prihatini (2023).

### ***Fostering Empathy, Social Awareness, and Reflective Practice***

Teachers consistently fostered empathy and social awareness through the moral imagination of literature. Dena's short story lessons encouraged emotional investment and fairness through guided reflection. Teachers also demonstrated reflective practice by adjusting teaching strategies to support students emotionally, echoing Monteiro et al.'s (2021) emphasis on ongoing reflection to motivate learners.

### ***Challenges and Considerations in Affective Teaching***

Despite benefits, affective teaching poses challenges. Pam's technology-based strategies rely on students' digital skills and motivation, which can lead to inequity. Sue's cultural immersion tactics raise concerns about cultural sensitivity, requiring critical reflection to avoid stereotypes. Mel's emotionally intense lessons on disasters can overwhelm students, highlighting the need for emotional preparedness and supportive classroom climates as noted by Garcia-Peinado (2024). Finally, sustaining affective teaching demands collaboration among teachers, parents, and support staff, underscoring the importance of ongoing professional development in SEL theory and practice (Monteiro et al., 2021). These findings suggest the need to integrate SEL into curricula, train teachers in affective methods, ensure equity, support collaboration, and assess emotional growth alongside academics.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the strong link between affective teaching within SEL frameworks and teacher professionalism. Teachers intentionally use affective strategies to foster emotional engagement, empathy, and social awareness, supporting both academic and emotional growth in inclusive classrooms. To apply these insights, teacher training programs should integrate SEL-focused modules on emotional intelligence, relationship-building, and reflective practice. Curriculum designers can embed SEL objectives into LA units by using emotionally rich texts and promoting empathy-driven discussions.

Support from school leaders and policymakers is essential for sustained professional growth and culturally responsive teaching. With only six teachers in a specific setting, findings may not fully apply across different cultures or school types. The study also focused on teacher perspectives, limiting insights into SEL's impact from the student viewpoint. Future research should explore affective teaching across regions and subjects beyond literature and include student voices for a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, the role of technology in supporting or challenging SEL deserves further attention.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Part of the findings of this paper have been presented at the 'Seminar Kebangsaan Pendidikan Negara (SKEPEN, 2023) held in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia from the 28 to 29<sup>th</sup> October 2023, and also at the 16th English for Specific Academic Purposes Symposium (ESAP, 2024) held in Sunway University, Selangor, Malaysia on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 2024. This manuscript is original and has not been published or submitted for consideration in any other journal. The researchers would like to thank the organizing committee for the opportunity to present the results of this study.

## REFERENCES

- Abdul Aziz, R., Wan Mohd Saman, W. S., Shaifuddin, N., Syed Mustafa, S. M., & Wan Mokhtar, W. N. (2023). Exploring affective bibliotherapy features in children's literature for emotional healing and growth. *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 8(SI12), 3–8. <https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v8iSI12.5001>
- Basree, A.R.S. (2009). The implementation of contemporary children's literature program (CCL) in Malaysian primary school: Feedback from stakeholders. *The International Journal of Learning Annual Review*, 16(8), 325-334.
- Buric, I., & Frenzel, A.C. (2023). Teacher emotions are linked with teaching quality: Cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence from two field studies. *Elsevier*, 88, (101822). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2023.101822>
- Burke, A., Snow, J., and Egan-Kiigemagi, C. (2019). Children's literature as a vehicle for indigenous diversity awareness and inclusion in the classroom. *Education in the North*, 26(2), 66-81.
- Cristine, S., Russo, S., Fitzmorris, R., Beninato, P., & Rivolta, G. (2022). The importance of student-teacher relationships. *Classroom Practice in 2022*. <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/educ5202/chapter/the-importance-of-student-teacher-relationships/>
- Duterte, J.P. (2024). Technology-Enhanced learning environments: improving engagement and learning. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 8(10). <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8100111>
- Edeline, J.M. (2012). Beyond traditional approaches to understanding the functional role of neuromodulators in sensory cortices. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience*, 6(45). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2012.00045>
- Egan, K. (1986). *Teaching a storytelling: An alternative approach to teaching and curriculum in the elementary school*. University of Chicago Press.
- English Language Standards and Quality Council. (2015). *The Roadmap 2015–2025: Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025*. Ministry of Education, Malaysia.
- Ferez M.P.A., Coyle, Y., & Maurandi L.A. (2019). The use of poetry for EFL: Exploring the beliefs of primary school trainees. *Revista Signos*, 53(102). 56-79. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-09342020000100056>
- Ferreira, M., Martinsone, B., & Talic, S. (2020). Promoting sustainable social emotional learning at school through relationship-centered learning environment, teaching methods and formative assessment. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 22(1), 21-36. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jte-2020-0003>
- Frommelt, M. C., Schiefele, U., & Lazarides, R. (2021). Teacher enthusiasm, supportive instructional practices, and student motivation in mathematics classrooms. *Interdisciplinary Education and Psychology*, 2(3), 5. <https://doi.org/10.31532/InterdiscipEducPsychol.2.3.005>

- Garcia-Peinado R. (2024). The impact of classroom climate on emotional development in childhood. *Environment and Social Psychology*, 2024, 9(1), 1868. <https://doi.org/10.54517/esp.v9i1.1868>
- George, S., Baskar, T., Pandey, D. & Karthikeyan, M.M. (2024). The emotional connection: Exploring what makes a great teacher. *Partners Universal Multidisciplinary Research Journal (PUMRJ)*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13730591>
- Gupta, J. (2020). Colors: The emotions and impressions they evoke. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 8(11), 1374–1377. <https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/11402>
- Hooda, M. (2017). Determinants of teacher enthusiasm. *International Journal of Research in Engineering, IT and Social Sciences*, 7(8), 1-3.
- Hsu W-C, Fuh L-J and Liao S-C (2024) Tickling the heart: Integrating social emotional learning into medical education to cultivate empathetic, resilient, and holistically developed physicians. *Frontiers in Medicine*. 11, Article 1368858. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmed.2024.1368858>
- Ibarra, B. (2022). Understanding SEL to create a sense of belonging: The role teachers play in addressing students' social and emotional well-being. *Current Issues in Education*, 23(2). <https://doi.org/10.14507/cie.vol23iss2.2049>
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491-525. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>
- Joelsson, T. (2022). "I get a whiz in my body as I walk past it": Visceral imaginaries in children's everyday mobilities. *Elsiever*. 45(100912). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2022.100912>
- Lacina, J. & Block, C.C. (2011). What matters most in distinguished literacy teacher education programs? *Journal of Literacy Research*, 43(4), 319-351. <https://doi.org/10.1177/108629x11422033>
- Lashari, T. A., Alias, M., Kesot, M. J. & Akasah, Z. A. (2013). An affective-cognitive teaching and learning approach for enhanced behavioural engagements among engineering students. *Engineering Education*, 8(2). *The Higher Education Academy*. <https://doi.org/10.11120/ened.2013.00011>
- Meirovich, G. (2012). Creating a favorable emotional climate in the classroom. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 10(3), 169–177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2012.06.001>
- Mello, R. (2001). Building bridges: How storytelling influences teacher/student relationships. *Institute of Education Sciences*. ERIC.
- Monteiro, V., Carvalho, C., & Santos, N. (2021). Creating a supportive classroom environment through effective feedback: Effects on students' school identification and behavioural engagement. *Frontiers in Education*, 6, Article 61736. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.661736>
- Mupa, P. & Chinooneka, T. I. (2015). Factors contributing to ineffective teaching and learning in primary schools: Why are schools in decadence? *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(19), 125-128.
- Mustakim, S.S., Mustapha, R. & Lebar, O. (2014). Teacher's Approaches in teaching literature: observations of ESL classroom. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Science (MOJES)*, 2(4).
- Palaniappan, R. C. (1998). *The magic of making training FUN*. Specialist Management Resources.
- Samih, M. A. K., Tawalbeh, H. M. & Qassrawi, R. M. (2024). Teachers' affective approaches in social studies learning environments of late-childhood education during COVID-19, *Cogent Education*, 11(1), Article 2370201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2370201>
- Santi, E., Cebula, K., & McGeown, S. (2024). Understanding teenagers' experiences of reading fiction. In C. E. Loh (Ed.), *The reading lives of teens: Research and practice* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032619804-5>
- Şen, E. (2021). Children's literature as a pedagogical tool: A narrative inquiry. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 8(3), 2028-2048.
- Serin, H. (2017). The role of passion in learning and teaching. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 4(1), 60-64. <https://doi.org/10.23918/ijsses.v4i1p60>
- Strnad, B., & Hewitt, G. M. (2021). Reading a book through its cover: The importance of preserving visual and tactile information in children's and young adult literature in the academic library. *Collection Management*, 46(3–4), 332–346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01462679.2021.1907008>
- Stronge, J.H. (2018). *Qualities of effective teachers* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Suen, H.Y., & Hung, K. E. (2024). *Enhancing learner affective engagement: The impact of instructor emotional expressions and vocal charisma in asynchronous video-based online*

- learning*. Education and Information Technologies: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-024-12956-w>
- Sugiarti, & Prihatini A. (2023). Fiction vs. reality: How students discover real-life representations in prose using engaged reading. *Journal of Language and Education*, 9(4), 85-98. <https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2023.13287>
- Wang, F. (2024). The relationship between students and teachers and its implications. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 29, 390-395. <https://doi.org/10.54097/rzvpb402>
- Zhang, Z. (2022). Toward the role of teacher empathy in students' engagement in English language classes. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 880935. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.880935>
- Zhou, S. (2022) Research on affective cognitive education and teacher-student relationship based on deep neural network. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 991213. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.991213>
- Zhou, Z. (2022). Empathy in education: A critical review. *IJ-SoTL*, 16(3), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsoTL.2022.160302>