

PROMOTING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS THROUGH PAULO COELHO'S *THE DEVIL AND MISS PRYM*

Giftsy Dorcas E., Research Scholar, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore
Dr. (Mrs.) Raichel M. Sylus, Assistant Professor (SG), Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore

Abstract:

*Education plays a pivotal role in shaping not only the intellectual ability but also the personality of the beneficiaries. The modern world which is entangled in emotional turmoil can be enlightened only when education is amalgamated with life skills. Among the many challenges faced by educators, the most striking is the psychological problem among students which occurs as a result of emotional imbalance. This leads them to take extreme steps which costs their life. In India, emotional instability is evident among students who are in the portals of higher education and therefore socio-emotional intelligence is a prerequisite. Hence, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is gaining paramount attention and needs to be inculcated among students. It is an intervention method that assists students in handling challenges, along with being a prevention and promotion strategy that enables cognitive development. SEL aids in the enhancement of analytical skills, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, negotiation skills, improved relationships, better empathy skills and improved communication skills. The paper highlights the significance of SEL and how it can be taught in English classrooms. It can be included in English classrooms with the help of literature, especially novels, as they deal with contemporary issues, relatable characters and are easily accessible. So, Paulo Coelho's *The Devil and Miss Prym* is used as a primary source to illustrate on how SEL can be applied in classroom teaching. The novel revolves around the battle that the character Chantal Prym ensues between good and evil. Through SEL, students can identify and work with their own emotional struggles through analysis and application with reference to the characters and incidents in the novel. The method adopted is collaborative learning through interactive sessions based on activities like reading, pictorial design and feedback (RPF) that facilitate practical application of SEL. Accordingly, this method of learning is the need of the hour to develop socio-emotional competencies in the younger generation to mold them as socially responsible and emotionally balanced individuals.*

Keywords: *Social Emotional Learning, Social Emotional Competencies, Paulo Coelho, The Devil and Miss Prym.*

Introduction

By maintaining a sound system of education and upbringing, you produce citizens of good character.

- Plato in *The Republic*

The education system has evolved through the ages based on the needs of the learners. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is an approach to inculcate and enhance social-emotional skills as a life skill. Maurice Elias, Professor of Psychology at Rutgers University defines SEL as “the process through which we learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors” (qtd. in Edutopia, par.3). It has

been implemented as part of school curriculum in many countries and has received positive outcomes. Victoria Clayton has quoted that “in 2011, a meta-analysis published in the journal *Child Development* showed an 11 percentile gain in academic achievement for students who participated in a well-implemented SEL program versus students who didn't” (par.4). SEL can also be extended to the level of higher education since students tend to face many challenges when they are exposed to a new environment of education and at times have social and emotional meltdowns. This approach will work as a prevention and intervention module to assist students. It is a student centered method of learning, in which the teachers are facilitators and co-learners. Hence, SEL is imperative in higher education.

Why English classroom?

The English classroom is more suitable for social emotional learning due to the following reasons:

- In the English classroom there are students who have a basic level of reading, listening, writing and speaking skills in English, in comparison to students of other major.
- With regard to science and commerce subjects, the scope to disseminate the skills is less due to time constraint and since the subjects are technical, the concepts require more explanation. Further, there is considerable pressure both on the teacher to complete the given syllabus and the students to learn them with comprehension.
- On the other hand, major genres in English literature like fiction, poetry and drama, help in understanding human nature better and thereby assist in teaching the social emotional skills better to the students. Students of English major are able to answer the questions based on the works from different genres well in their exams, since they have a better understanding of characters and situations.
- Students have a conducive setup without pressure to learn, along with opportunities to bring out their latent potential in the English classroom.

Aim of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in English Classrooms

- The aim of SEL in English classrooms are:
- to enable students to identify their positive and negative emotions and choose them pragmatically
- to develop life skills such as negotiating, problem-solving and decision-making, that can be used in real life situations
- to improve communication and interpersonal skills, that can be applied to enhance relationships in life
- to inculcate social emotional skills through activities based on listening, reading, writing, speaking

Five Competencies in SEL

CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) an organisation established in 1994 and the forerunner to establish and define SEL has identified five connected sets of competencies (along with their benefits) as given in Table 1

Table 1: Five Competencies of SEL given by CASEL

Competency	Purpose	Benefits
Self-Awareness	To recognize one's emotions, strengths and challenges	Less emotional problems and better cognition of oneself
Self-Management	To control one's emotions and impulses, motivate self, manage stress, set and achieve goals	Lesser internal crises and enhanced motivation, perseverance that is goal oriented
Social Awareness	To identify other's emotions, show empathy, understand the perspective of others	Lesser emotional meltdowns and positive social behaviour
Relationship Skills	To build cordial relationships, work, play and learn with others along with conflict resolution and communication skills	Lesser relationship problem and enhanced communication and interpersonal relationship
Responsible Decision making	To make wise choices and evaluate potential consequences.	Lesser risky behaviour and better achievement drive

Methodology for Implementing SEL in English Classroom

Barbara Fatum in her article “Healthy Classrooms, Emotional Intelligence, and Brain Research” believes that the best possible way for the brain to learn is through stories. The following method may be used as a model to impart SEL through novels in the English classroom at the Under Graduate level. The method will be substantiated with examples based on *The Devil and Miss Prym* by Paulo Coelho.

Warm Up

In the first class, the teacher can introduce the novelist and the novel by giving interesting background information about the novelist and the novel.

Example:

Brainstorming is done to give details about the author Paulo Coelho

<p>(i) Which country is famous for the following: Football, Samba, The Christ Redeemer Statue? <i>Answer:</i> BRAZIL (Birth place of Paulo Coelho)</p> <p>(ii) Who is called as The Alchemy writer? <i>Answer:</i> Paulo Coelho</p>	<p><i>An Introduction about Paulo Coelho</i> Born in 1947 Written a trilogy based on seven days Was addicted to drugs Joined magic and occultism At 39 years had a spiritual awakening Took to full-time writing Has written 30 books, translated into many languages Now he resides in Switzerland.</p>
---	--

In the subsequent class, students can recall the progress of the storyline that was dealt in the previous class.

The warm up can be followed by a variation in reading, listening, writing and speaking activities that have interest, variety and avoids boredom, redundancy. Only a few sample activities are discussed below to explain SEL method through Paulo Coelho's *The Devil and Miss Prym*.

Step 1: Listening

Purpose: To demonstrate the ability to listen and observe keenly, since they are essential for social emotional development

Input: (i) Students listen to the reading of the novel

(ii) Students can see the movie adaptation of the novel (if available).

Output: Improved concentration, observation, analytical skill.

Competency: Develops Social Awareness

Step 2: Reading Wizards

Purpose: To enhance reading ability

Input: Students are divided into groups. All the groups are given a passage from the novel. The group members have to read the passage and then frame statements that could either be true or false, or choice based questions (they will retain the answers). The prepared set of statements are interchanged between the groups and each group tries to identify the true or false statements and answer the questions from the new set of questions given to them. After all the groups have completed answering, the answers are checked and revealed by the original group that framed the statements.

Example:

Sample passage from *The Devil and Miss Prym* (pp. 115-116)

'I'm telling you the story for one simple reason: gold itself has no value. Absolutely none. We cannot eat it or drink it or use it to buy more animals or land. It's money that's valuable, and how are we going to turn this gold into money?' 'We can do one of two things: we can ask the blacksmith to melt the bars down into 280 equal pieces, and then each one of you can go to the city to exchange it for money. But that would immediately arouse the suspicions of the authorities, because there is no gold in this valley, so it would seem very odd if every Viscontant were suddenly to turn up bearing a small gold bar. The authorities would become suspicious. We would have to say we had unearthed an ancient Celtic treasure. But a quick check would show that the gold had been made recently, that the area round here had already been excavated, that the Celts never had this amount of gold - if they had, they would have built a large and splendid city on this site.'

'You're just an ignorant young woman,' the landowner said. 'We'll take in the bars exactly as they are, with the mayor at a bank and divide the money between us.' 'That's the second thing. The mayor takes the ten gold bars, goes to the bank, and asks them to exchange them for money. The bank cashier wouldn't ask the same questions as if each of us were to turn up with our own gold bar; since the mayor is a figure of authority, they would simply ask him for the purchase documents for the gold. The mayor would say he didn't have them, but would point out - as his wife says that each bar bears a government hallmark, and that it's genuine. There's a date and a serial number on each one. 'By this time, the man who gave us the gold will be far from here. The cashier will ask for more time because, although he knows the mayor and knows he is an honest man, he needs a authorisation to hand over such a large amount of money. Questions will be asked about where the gold came from. The mayor will say it was a present from a stranger after all, our mayor is an intelligent man and has an answer for everything. 'Once the cashier has spoken to his manager, the manager - who suspects nothing, but he is nevertheless a paid employee and doesn't want to run any risks - will phone the bank headquarters. Nobody there knows the mayor, and any large withdrawal is regarded as suspicious; they will ask the mayor to wait for two days, while they confirm the origin of the gold bars. What might they discover? That the gold had been stolen perhaps. Or that it was purchased by a group suspected of dealing in drugs.'

Statements:

1. The Celts had enough gold to build a splendid city. (FALSE)
2. Gold itself doesn't have value. (TRUE)
3. The _____ can melt and share the bars equally. (a) goldsmith (b) blacksmith (Ans: b)
4. Who would represent the villagers at the bank? (a) blacksmith (b) landowner (c) mayor (d) mayor's wife (Ans: d)

Output: Improved critical thinking, in-depth reading

Competency: Develops Social Awareness

Step 3: Writing

Purpose: To demonstrate writing ability, creative ability that will help bring out and decipher individual's social emotional intelligence

Input: Activity based tasks are given to students

Task 1: Draw it out/ Spell it out

Students can represent the emotion (i) the character feels in the novel (ii) the student feels for the character and (iii) the student substitutes himself as the character, and represents it through diagrams (even

emoticons), words/phrases that represent emotions like anger, fear, etc., in tabular columns like the one given below

Name and Emotion of the character in the novel	Student's Emotion towards Character(s) in the novel		
Student's Emotion as the Character(s) in the novel	Evaluation Write down all emotions, then tick (✓) if emotion is positive or negative		
	Emotion	Positive Emotion	Negative Emotion

The activity may be done as an individual activity or in pairs.

Note: This can be maintained as an individual journal by the student, where he/she records the different emotions throughout the novel.

Output: Helps student to name and define emotions

Competency: Develops Self-awareness.

Task 2: Paragraph Writing

Students can write short compare and contrast paragraphs or cause and effect paragraphs based on incidents and emotions read in the extract from the novel. It is an individual activity and can be given as assignments.

Example:

- (a) Bring out the comparison between the villagers of Viscos in about a paragraph of 250 words.
- (b) Write a paragraph of 200 words on the outcome of "one man's [the stranger] madness".
- (c) Write your views on the evils of weapons based on the novel in about 150 words.

Output: Improve writing technique, vocabulary usage, analytical thinking and critical thinking, self-management skill

Competency:

Develops Self-awareness

Task 3: Work Sheet

(a) Match Making

Input: Students are given worksheet where they have to match terms/concepts in Column A with statements, dialogues of character in Column B that are taken from the novel.

Example:

S. No.	Column A	Column B	Answer
1.	Fear	Berta felt happy because she would reunite with her dead husband	3
2.	Anger	Chantal acknowledged the bitterness she carried around inside her day and night	5
3.	Joy	"Your heart is dead, your soul is in darkness, you want revenge", Chantal said to the stranger.	6
4.	Sadness	Berta spent her years sitting in her front door waiting	7
5.	Acceptance	Chantal was astonished at the quantity of gold she saw before her	8
6.	Disgust	Chantal became increasingly nervous, afraid	1
7.	Anticipation	"I travelled to the four corners of the earth with my grief", said the stranger	4
8.	Surprise	"You are the irresponsible ones, mixing lead with blood", Chantal said to the villagers	2

Output: To understand the eight basic emotions- fear, anger, joy, sadness, acceptance, disgust, anticipation and surprise, as given by Robert Plutchik

Competency: Promotes Self-awareness

(b) Word Collocation

Input:

Students are given a set of words that are related to emotions and they can identify words/expressions that are related to them from the novel.

Example:

Write words that relate to given emotion from novel		
S.No	Emotion	Words
1.	fear	nervous, anxiety, worry
2.	anger	irritation, frustration
3.	love	affection, compassion
4.	sadness	unhappy, grief, depression

Output: Builds vocabulary and students are able to know about the different terms related to the different emotions.

Competency: Develop Self-Awareness

Step 4: Speaking

Purpose: To demonstrate speaking ability to express emotions and feelings to others through activities and social interaction.

Task 1: The Expressionist

Purpose: To demonstrate ability to highlight emotions through reading

Input: The chosen novel must be read to the entire class. Students can take turns to read different chapters in the novel.

Output: Improved intonation, stress and pause while reading

Competency: Better Self-Management**Task 2:** Role Play

Input: Students can enact important incidents in the novel with the guidance of the teacher. It can be a group activity.

Sample situations

1. The first meeting of Chantal Prym and the stranger.
2. The villagers meeting in the Church.
3. The conversation between Ahab and St. Savin.

Output: Helps student express the emotions felt by the character, empathize with them along with social awareness.

Competency: Develops Social Awareness**Task 3:** The Spokesperson

Input: Each student expresses and justifies his views to the full class based on questions asked by the teacher or his peers.

Sample Questions:

- (a) What emotion do you feel towards the stranger?
- (b) What emotion does Berta in the novel feel?
- (c) What do you think triggered the emotion you (or the character in the novel) felt?
- (d) Where do you feel the emotion in your body? or In the novel, where do you think Chantal feels the emotion in her body?
- (e) What attitudes, beliefs or values are connected to the actions of Chantal?
- (f) Why do you think fear is felt?
- (g) How do you think your family will react if you were in a similar situation as Chantal?
- (h) Do you justify the actions of the villagers of Viscos?

Output: Boosts confidence level, exemplify speaking skill.

Competency: Develops Self-awareness and responsible decision making skills.

Task 4: War of Opinions

Input: The teacher divides the students into groups of equal numbers. Each group can choose a name. They can exchange and express their views about important events and characters of their choice in the novel. The group has to give an outcome of their discussion.

Example:

Discuss in groups on the following topics:

- (a) Do you agree with the stranger that “Good and evil have the same face”?
- (b) “Tragedy always happens, nothing we do can alter by one jot the evil that awaits us”. Do you agree or disagree?
- (c) Who is the protagonist- the stranger or Chantal Prym?

Output: Develop communication along with relationship skills, social skills, decision making skills

Competency: Social Awareness, Responsible Decision Making

The above tasks are only some of the sample activities that can be used in English classrooms to enable Social Emotional Learning.

Teacher's Evaluation:

The teacher can evaluate the students based on their performance in the various tasks and maintain a record of their progress. There is no set scale to measure the outcome of the learning, so the teachers can design their own format.

Benefits of SEL in English classroom

The following are some of the benefits of SEL in English classroom

- Teachers are aware of the emotions of their students, which will assist them in handling the student's better
- Students are aware of their own emotions, which will make them confident individuals
- Better understanding and relationship within students of a classroom, which will avoid negative group formations and create congenial atmosphere for learning
- SEL improves the performance of students in class through various tasks.

Conclusion

SEL learning can make the English classroom an interactive one, wherein it “aspires to teach (our) students to be good citizens with positive values and to interact effectively and behave constructively” (Elias et al., ch.1). However, there is a need to develop an effective scale to measure SEL in classrooms. But still, it can be an effective approach to enhance the emotional stability of the younger generation by teaching them to acknowledge their emotions, choose the appropriate emotions and use them efficiently for the betterment of themselves and the society around them.

Works Cited

1. Clayton, V. (2017). *The Psychological Approach to Educating Kids*. The Atlantic. Retrieved from www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/03/the-social-emotional-learning-effect/521220/.
2. Coelho, Paulo. (2014). *The Devil and Miss Prym*. translated by, *Amanda Hopkinson & Nick Caistor*, HarperCollins.
3. Fatum, B. (n.d.). *Healthy Classrooms, Emotional Intelligence, and Brain Research*. SixSeconds. Retrieved from www.6seconds.org/2013/05/29/healthy-classrooms-emotional-intelligence-and-brain-research/.
4. Elias, Maurice J., et al. (1997). *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning*. ASCD, ASCD75, www.ascd.org/publications/books/197157e4/chapters/The-Need-for-Social-and-Emotional-Learning.aspx.
5. _____. *Social and Emotional Learning: A Short History*. (2011). Edutopia. Retrieved from www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning-history.