ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING INTEGRATED WITH SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) IN RESPONSE TO STRESS EXPOSURE AT HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract. Under the internationalization of education context and globalization, at tertiary level, students benefit from opportunities for academic and professional development. However, they also face pressures ranging from academic burdens to social life, which cause huge stressors. In responding to this challenge, the suggestion from K-12 education, so-called social emotional learning (SEL) can be integrated in higher education due to its effectiveness in self-awareness, social relation and responsible decision. For supporting evidences, a trans-disciplinary study was conducted at National Economics University, where SEL materials were integrated into English lessons of 100 research participants, including those from traditional and partnership programs. This research aimed at equipping students with SEL knowledge to better deal with their stressors. Successfully, after getting the input of SEL intervention, students changed their stress responses from avoidance-oriented to problem- and emotion-oriented. The SEL knowledge should be delivered to students. Especially, this study also provided other recommended SEL integrated approaches for higher education in Vietnam to help students tackling stressors.

Keywords: Social emotional learning (SEL), stressors, student, National Economics University.

1.   Introduction

Elias et al., (1997) and Conley (2015) demonstrated that for approximately two decades, intra- and inter-personal skills have been intensively researched with a firm linkage established on social emotional learning (SEL) as an effective approach to the best practices of positive development. Especially, this strong relationship was developed by SEL's construction of five core competencies namely self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness and relationship skills, which were integrated into school-based programs (CASEL, 2003, 2012). It should also be emphasized that these values need to be exhibited for the entire lifespan, then, SEL is not only attached with a specific educational situation or developmental phase (Conley,

2015). As a matter of fact, the long-term objectives of those SEL inclusive curriculums were stated in the missions of primary and secondary schools in educating students to be knowledgeable, responsible, socially skilled, healthy, caring and contributing citizens (Greenberg at al., 2003, p.466). At universities, SEL puts highlighted impacts on successful academic achievement, positive interpersonal relations as well as stronger mental health for students at tertiary level (Bar-On, Handley & Fund, 2006; Jordan & Ashkanasy, 2006; Mayer, Salovey & Carusco, 2004).

Noticeably, nowadays, due to tense learning atmosphere, ambitious study outcomes and demanding requirements of employers, students have been under great pressure from numerous stressors (Elias, Ping and Abdullah, 2011). These mental and physical troubles can be managed thanks to the intervention of SEL with the aim of releasing stress, constructing an active environment and developing overall well-being (CASEL, 2012). Therefore, it is highly recommended that SEL should be widely integrated into higher education curriculum.

For the case of Vietnam, although it has been well adapted to primary and secondary schools with active teaching and learning methods through interactive lessons and happy classes, SEL framework has been neither embedded into institutional syllabi nor put into practice as an essential component to the above mentioned achievements as stated in previous studies. In addition to limited Vietnamese researches on the application of SEL framework into institutional programs, studies on SEL and its relationship with stress release for students can hardly be discovered. Therefore, this trans-disciplinary research is expected to figure out the rationales for SEL companion with tackling stress at higher education in Vietnam institutions. Especially, specific approach is introduced for practice in the case of National Economics University (NEU) with the expectation to apply SEL for stress release in wider scale.

In order to measure the effects of applying SEL in teaching English as an innovation to tackle stress, this study was divided into two stages, including the survey stage and the pilot study with the aim of investigating the effect of integrated SEL program in language teaching for students. In the former phase, the research objective was to identify the stressors of NEU students and their common responses. Then, the research questions were "Are NEU students stressful? Why? What are their responses to stress?. At the latter phase, the research objective was to discover the effects of SEL inclusion in teaching English to solve stressful situations. So, the research question was "What are effects of SEL integrated materials in English classes?".

2.   Content

2.1. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) - An overview

According to The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2019), a trusted resource for knowledge and practice of social emotional learning, SEL is referred to as an approach, in which both youngsters and mature people can acquire the identification and management of their own emotions, establishment and achievement of their targets, sympathy and sharing with others, maintenance of constructive connections and announcement of choices with responsibility. This concept apparently covers three noticing points. To begin with, obviously, all ages, from

children to adults, can attain social emotional capacity. Secondly, it can be demonstrated that the process of social emotional exhibition seems to kick off with self-recognition of internal feelings as well as procedure, and displayed through external actions as well as interactive relations. Last but not least, there is an evident bridge connecting acknowledgement to achievement, personalization to socialization and emotions to resolutions. Especially, the underlining point should be stated with key highlight of responsible decisions, which should not only satisfy one's needs and capabilities but also take the positions of surrounding people into consideration for a caring, sharing and constructing environment.

The five components of SEL

Despite various names so-called core competencies, key domains, outcomes; different references on SEL agreed on the five components of SEL wheel defined by CASEL (2017)

Self-awareness: Know your strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset"

Self-management: Effectively manage stress control impulses, and motivate yourself to set and achieve goals

Social awareness: Understand the perspectives of others and empathize with them, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures

Relationship skills: Communicate clearly, listen well, co-operate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed

Responsible decision making: Make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety, and social norms.

The wheel also figures out different layers of supportive facilitators in the process of transforming and acquiring SEL, including the roles of classrooms, schools as well as home and communities. This means that learners should get access to the introduction and recognition of SEL in their classes at first before involving in all activities designed for the whole school. In a broader sense, home and communities play the roles as real environment for SEL to be practiced and maintained, in which there are numerous chances for interactions and exchanges. Together with those wider circles are three stages with SEL inclusive procedure for implementation. Specifically, learners familiarize themselves with SEL theories through teaching curriculum and instruction. In addition, there should be policies for the whole schools and institutions regarding SEL application in order to ensure its spread operation. Finally, in the last stage, SEL is put into effect through family and community partnerships.

Academic SEL frameworks: Following are the two typical SEL models in terms of academic exploration rather than extra-curriculum and social activities.

Social emotional learning model:

Reinert (2019) suggested a model applied for teaching SEL in higher education, especially for first year and undergraduate students. This procedure has been used in US tertiary level and is comprised of three channels. The first strand concentrates on freshmen with explicitly taught skills. As a matter of fact, there have been programs to help these learners overcome various problems in higher school transition to universities. The second tier is launched based on the establishment of counseling center. Working in this center are officers mastering skills and techniques taught in the curriculum to review those tools as intervention tips. The last channel is one-by-one or group counseling for learners suffering from any social or emotional problems. In this case, there must be involvement of psychological specialists or therapists who understand how SEL is attached in the teaching curriculum and understand how the specific problem can be linked with reality for effective solutions.

Social Emotional Development construct (SED)

In this model, there is a linkage between social emotional skills and competence development. In other words, the capacity related to social emotional can be improved based on the theory on development of capability. Also, this model is comprised of dependent elements including social intelligence, emotional intelligence and competence development. (Seal et al, 2010).

The above analyses clarify the importance of SEL in general and its value in higher education. It is expected that the introduction of certain models can help exposing illustrations for the application of SEL in different cases. These might be considered as examples for further imitation in similar settings. Also, they make it apparent that the task of launching SEL is completely feasible with highly encouraging impacts in terms of not only short-term academic field but also long-term practical targets.

2.2. The application of SEL in the school settings

SEL has been popularly used as prevention and intervention program in secondary and high school under various names such as the Second Step program, and the RULLER program. The Second Step can be delivered in classroom as followings:
- *The teacher explains a concept with words, pictures, vide and/or audio*
- *Students practice the concept through skill practice, group discussion, individual writing or partner work*
- *The teacher continues reinforcing the concept throughout the week*
- *The teacher sends information home for students to work on with parents*
- *The teacher checks for understanding*
- *The teacher re-teaches where necessary*

Teaching SEL is a repetitive and continuous process that must be reviewed various times to ensure practitioners' remembrance and in-depth acquisition. Moreover, because SEL is not regarded as one of teaching methods, there would be hardly any lesson plans providing SEL lecture, yet there should be either schemes or frame that SEL is inclusive to be operated in practice and interaction.

An outstanding illustration for SEL evidence-based program is RULER in USA (CASEL, 2020). In particular, this acronym stands for Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing and Regulating emotions. Various researchers carried out studies

to provide review on RULER (Brackett, et al, 2012; Hagelskamp et al, 2012). These references agreed that step by step, SEL brought about opportunities for participants to identify their capabilities and drawbacks. Then, they could know resolutions to improve themselves through settings created in the classroom as well as activities in the whole schools. The impressive point was that these initial interactive contexts built up the bricks for exposure to wider world of the community where students experienced extensive level of emotion management so that they could engage in and co-operate with others in a responsible basis.

In higher education, the application seems to be rare. However, researchers agreed that the operation of SEL at universities is the continuation of counseling service supply for students from kindergarten to high schools (Berkowits, 2017; Paterson, 2018). Nowadays, the demand for consultancy has become greater as it is the psychological key to open one's feelings and emotions, which is the promising factor for one's happiness and life satisfaction. SEL activities have been inclusive in teaching curriculum even from early stages of education ladder, in which, children are helped to understand their capabilities and others' emotions. In accompany with higher grades are more complex academic and personal problems that need support and advice. Therefore, SEL should be maintained and appreciated.

In the literature, the positive impact of SEL on students' psychological development has been well documented. Actually, previous studies proved the relationship between learning capacity and social and emotional health (Berkowits, 2017). It might be supposed that mission of universities and colleges is either enhancing learners' intellectual background or providing them with qualifications for future occupations. In fact, whether it is the former or latter case, the assurance of well-being emotions is the priority, which is the driver for successful achievement of academic knowledge for obtaining the above missions.Additionally, in broader sense, thanks to the comfort and happiness of individual mental health, the campus climate can also be improved thanks to stress release among all students (Paterson, 2018). When SEL is put into practice, it might help raising learners' awareness about their values and appreciation of others'. Consequently, acquaintances on campus can be established based on mutual respect and sharing. It is apparent that students are those creating a healthy environment, and at the same time, they get benefits from that academic setting.

Last but not least, SEL also serves the purpose of meeting employers' requirements (Paterson, 2018, CASEL, 2020). It has been repeatedly announced by enterprises that there is a growing demand for high quality human resource with great skills related to *communication, adaptability, decision-making and problem-solving*. These are essential elements for a constructive, co-operative and comprehensive working environment, rather than a discouraging working place with solo performance and individual benefits.

In short, from both academic and practical perspectives, it cannot be denied that the inclusion of SEL in higher education plays an important role in equipping and educating students with better learning outcomes and skill improvement for their current campus life and future career. Thanks to SEL achievement, learners would not only gain short-term benefits, but also obtain techniques to help themselves balance their own emotions latter in their forthcoming years to enjoy their life at most.

2.3. Stress in higher education context and SEL application to respond to stress in higher education

In universities and colleges, sources of stress for students are usually concerned with non-success in study, non-fulfillment in sports or competition, collapse in financial management, non-achievement of mental and physical health as well as incompetence in social and family relationship (Elias et al, 2011). There have been enormous researches focusing on stressors that undergraduate students face with. As a matter of fact, freshmen normally encounter high level of stress because of new transition from high school to university life with new environment, habits and relationships (Towbes& Cohen, 1996). Problems right in the first year might lay the foundation for continuous failures in the upcoming time in the institutions, which are related to poor academic performance as well as psychological troubles (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001). Clarifying this point, Yusoff et al (2010) proposed a list of ten stress causes for medical students as an example. These stressors included testing and assessment, learning coverage, time management, low scores, self-expectation, poor skill in occupational practice, reading incompetency, overload works, incapability of understanding the lesson and giving answers. Then, it is clear that stress might root from any aspect of academic area, not to mention unsuccessful achievement in establishing and maintaining new social relations (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001). Noticeably, influencing level of those stressors on students depends on how they look into the strains (Elias et al, 2011). If they soon adapt to the new environment and accept the campus challenges and manage to overcome them, stress would quickly run away. Otherwise, they might face with prolonged emotional tension, which can lead to serious effects.

In this study, the description of SEL perfectly fits into the situation of handling stress at tertiary level. This is proved in the following aspects based on the five competencies of SEL. Thanks to the access to self-awareness, SEL helps students in seeking for the derivation of the stress they are facing. By this way, they can figure out the root of the problem, which can later result in appropriate behavior or hopefully task-oriented or emotion-oriented reactions. Self-management skill is the key to supporting learners in adjusting their emotions in order to modify the stressful reality and giving either emotion-oriented or task-oriented response. The introduction to social awareness opens the new door of sympathy with surrounding people to understand and respect their lessons learnt, norms, attitudes and behaviors. Accompanied with the awareness of the society is the management of relationship, which is promising for dealing with the stress in a harmonious atmosphere with other people in co-operative and constructive contribution. At last, all of those factors build up a responsible decision for not only the sufferer but also the whole community. When the stress is coped with great efforts and positive perspective, sooner or later, there would be an effective adjustment for the bright side. This would reduce one's negative impacts on himself/herself as well as others' feelings. Also, the society would no longer experience cases of drug abuse or even suicide at young age due to life pressure.

Due to this linkage, it is advisable for institutions to pay more attention to the utilization of SEL in helping their students cope with stress in campus life.

2.4. Participants, methods and procedures of the study

- *Research participants*: 500 third-year students came from traditional majors and international programs were invited to answer the questionnaire at stage 1. Representing for the former category was 200 students from School of accounting and auditing and 100 others from Faculty of Foreign Languages. Representing for the latter one was 200 students from School of advanced educational program.

- *Methods*: Questionnaire (adopted with 9 questions focusing on exploring stress's causes, impacts, responses and suggestion for further support); semi-structure interviews, and pilot study.

- *Procedures*: The research was conducted with 2 stages: firstly, there was a large-scale survey with 500 third-year students; secondly, there was a pilot study with SEL integrated syllabus for 100 English majors during 10 weeks of innovation.

The pilot study was undertaken on 100 third year students in Department of Business English, Faculty of Foreign languages SEL materials were integrated in English classrooms for self-reading, writing reflection, listening to groups' presentations on SEL related topics during 5 weeks. SEL integrated scheme (An example for a week as table 1 below)

Survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview were employed at baseline and post-test after 10 weeks.

Table 1. SEL integrated scheme: An example for a week

Skills	Topic (in the syllabus)	Content-based (SEL-based) input	Reflective activities
Listening	Intelligence	Emotional intelligence https://www.edutopia.org/video/social-and-emotional-learning-101	-Listen and take notes (provided outline) - Orally reproduce the notes
Speaking	Technology	E-learning Activities for social-emotional learning(SEL) in E-learning mode	-Pair work: ask and answer about assisted learning (E-learning): concepts and requirements - Group work: Design an E-learning activity for sympathy/safety concern/social norm, etc
Writing	Cause and Effect essay	Effects of living positively	-Individual work: Write an essay (200-250 words) about effects of positive living -Pair work: Peer editing and revising
Reading	Communication	Non-verbal language https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Nonverbal-Communication-	-Read the text -Group work: Choose the most favorite language activity, discuss and take notes - Swap those notes among groups,

| | | Activities-Social-Emotional-Learning-4983596 | read the notes and rebuild up the activity instructions |
| | | | -Compare group constructed instructions and initial information in the text |

2.5. Results of applying SEL in response to stress exposure at National Economics University

2.5.1. Reasons causing stress to students

In responding to the questionnaire with the inquiry about reasons for choosing NEU, 63% respondents demonstrated that they expected to get a successful career in the future, another 52% blamed parental expectations on their choice, and 43,2% indicated social life adaptability as the motivation. This revealed that there were external factors influencing students' decision of studying at NEU. These objective drivers might be regarded as the huge burdens on the research participants. Following is the chart representing for the most common reasons for the research participants' stressful life.
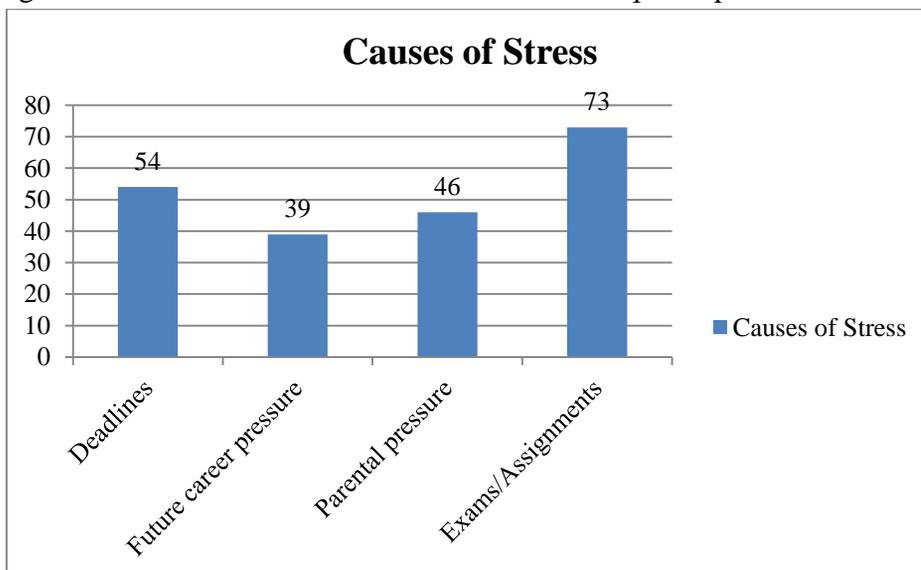

Causes of Stress

Chart 1. Percentages of causes of stress

According to chart 1, exams and assignments is certainly the most popular choice in explaining the reason for students' stress (73%). For those having been spending day by day sitting in the library and reading books, this is the high time for them to further explore relevant materials in order to gain distinction score in open book exams. For those having been busy with jobs and personal habits, it cannot be denied that they would also make great efforts by borrowing others' notebooks, revising the theories and doing more exercises. Especially, all the participants are studying in English-based major, they have to accomplish primary research paper in academic writing course, which is a group work product and requires close connection among members during the whole semester. The minimum length of this assignment is around 300 words in English with contents processing from data collection to data analysis. Therefore,

there would be no chance for being lazy and depending on other members' for the final results.

Deadline was another problem (54%). Students complained about lots of deadline at the same time. In fact, they spend the whole day in school and have few hours in the evening to enjoy themselves. In the case of those doing part time jobs, they might have no free time to finish the assigned exercises on time. The point in this situation has nothing to do with lecturers' highly demanding rules, but the strict timetable with so many subjects and too much knowledge to be covered.

The next common choice was related to parental expectations. In most cases, parents have been the first investors for nearly twenty years of their children. It is, therefore, completely reasonable for them to make wishes about bright future of these sons and daughters since they go to university. This, in return, contributes to another source of stress among students (accounted for 46%).

Worries about future jobs seem to be an easy to understand explanation of students towards their stressfulness (accounted for 39%). Four years at the university with great attempts should deserve a promising career with a well-paid job and promotion chances. This might be the dream of almost every learner. Some interviewees stated that they found it hard to find a job compatible with their majors, while others shared their troubles in pursuing a successful occupation.

In addition, analysis into the number of stress sufferers in different departments demonstrated that representing from traditional program, 78/100 English majors and 169/200 accounting-auditing students had experienced extremely stressful situation. Similarly, 187/200 students from Advanced Educational program (international program) stated that their stress was at "extremely" level. These were alarming numbers. As a matter of fact, students in all of these departments have to study English and specialized subjects in English with foreign lecturers for specific occupational oriented workshops. This can explain why the stress level for both groups (nearly 80%) and three departments was considerably high.

Also, the exploration of data categorized into gender of stress sufferers showed that 46% of them was male and the rest of 54% was female. So, both genders confronted the same problem.

To conclude, based on the above mentioned evidences, the most popular causes of stress among students should focus on exams/assignment, deadline, future career and parental expectation.This revealed that study pressure on third year students was a concerning issue. Also, the stress was linked with post-graduation jobs. These confirmed that study was the root of the problem. Noticeably, the number of stress sufferers in all categories and two genders was extremely high. Therefore, it was believed that changes in the teaching method attached with social emotional learning would help decreasing study stress for students.

2.5.2. Effects of stress on academic performance and life

It can be stated that because the stressors come from all aspects of their life, not to mention studies, students have to deal with them in every areas ranging from schools to workplace and families. As a result, they might find themselves suffering from a challenging life without no bright life.
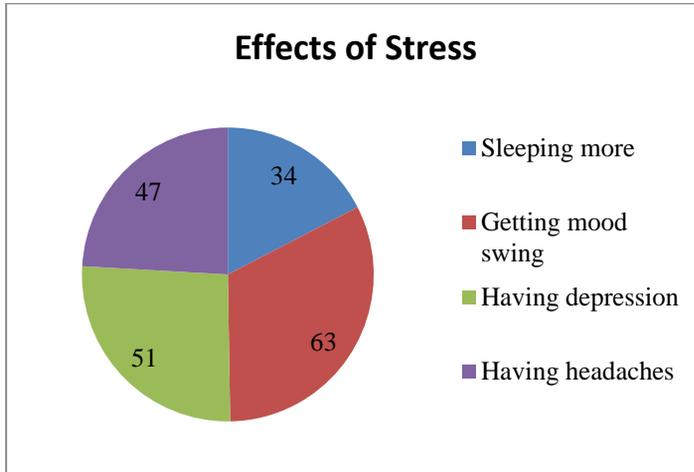
Effects of Stress

Chart 2. Percentages of effects of stress

In the case of being stress sufferers, 63% students confessed that their mood had changed in different emotions, other 51% felt depressed and 47% got health problem. It is apparent that stress made leaners experiencing negative emotions. Consequently, their mental and physical health was both affected. Then, they could neither feel excited nor well-prepared for their study.

Analysis into the effects of stress on international students revealed that they experienced different consequences at the same time. In specific, 80% of them got headache, 76% felt disappointed and 58% changed their moods variously. Similarly, in the group of traditional students, the most problematic effects were headache, depression and moody behaviors with 78%, 75% and 48% respectively.

All these numbers confirmed that all students had been experiencing the same effects of stress, which were discovered in all aspects of their life, ranging from physical health to emotional health.

2.5.3. Stress coping strategies

In the questionnaire, the list of choices for stress responses was not obviously categorized. However, it could be inferred that there were three groups of approaches as illustrated in the first column of the following table:

Table 2. Classification of stress coping strategies

Stress coping strategies	Symptoms
Task-oriented	Finding the causes
	Talking to someone about the problem
	Reading about the symptoms
	Asking academic consultant
	Seeking for an answer
Avoidance-oriented	Using drugs
	Watching social media
	Playing games
	Ignoring reality

	Denying the fact
	Shopping
	Going out
	Drinking
Emotion-oriented	Thinking about positive points
	Reframing the problem
	Doing meditation
	Doing exercise

Though students were not aware of particular techniques above, most of them chose the second approach (51%), which was comprised of negative activities and could not help solving the problem.The noticeable point in the above list of stress responding was related to the difference between the avoidance-oriented and emotion-oriented. Particularly, the former one refers to the activities to leave the truth behind and neglect the challenges. In other words, this shows the reluctance to directly face the trouble and search for any possible solutions. The latter one is linked with options to change the stressors' emotions and feelings in a positive basis so that they can recover from failure and recycle the problem. In contrast to large number of ticks for the avoidance-oriented approach, there were limited choices in the category of emotion-oriented (38%). Especially, there was extremely low percentage of options relating to task-oriented coping strategy (11%).

Analysis into responses to stress of students in the two different groups indicated a worrying fact. Specifically, in the traditional group, 249/300 (83%) participants selected behaviors with emotion and avoidance oriented. Although this number in the international group was slightly more modest (156/200 students, equivalent to 78%), it showed that the two groups negatively reacted to stressful problems.

Looking into the data of stress responses related to genders, 57% female and 43% male ticked symptoms of avoidance and emotion rather than task-based actions.

These figures resulted in the conclusion that NEU students were aware of their stressful situation as well as their challenging sources. However, the problematic aspect was in the identification of their stress responses. It was discouraging for them to avoid the troubles without any efforts in either changing them through new perspectives or confronting them with different actions. Consequently, there should be interventions to help students improve their coping strategies.

2.5.4. Changes in the pilot group

2.5.4.1. Competency of emotional control

As it was demonstrated in the literature review, the explanation of self-awareness and self-management as the core competencies in social emotional learning (SEL) would help the practitioners raise their confidence and a growth mindset. As a result, it would be more effective for students to look into the stress from different dimensions with a positive attitude.
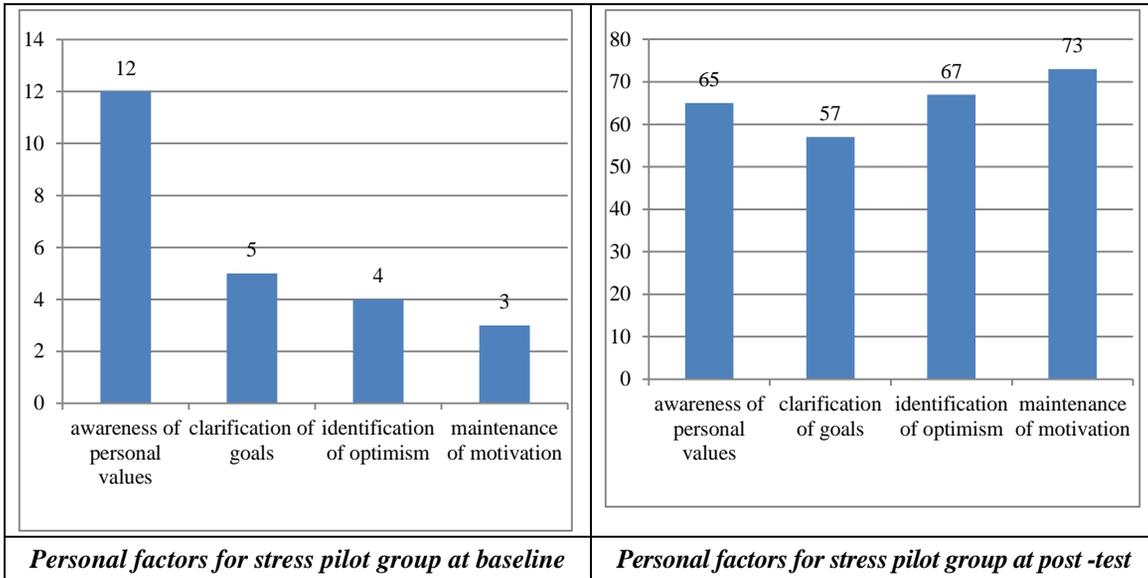
| Personal factors for stress pilot group at baseline | Personal factors for stress pilot group at post -test |

Chart 3. Contrastive analysis of pilot group pre and post test

These numbers indicated that thanks to SEL access, the most apparent changes were keeping a positive outlook and having a respectful insight into the students themselves. These are, in fact, the expressions of two SEL components, which are self-management and self-awareness. It is obvious that SEL integration helped students in understanding and motivating themselves.

2.5.4.2. Changes in stress coping strategies

In the questionnaire for the pilot group, the question related to different responses dealing with stress provided numerous options. Although these choices were not clearly categorized into 3 types of strategies, they actually belonged to the following classification:
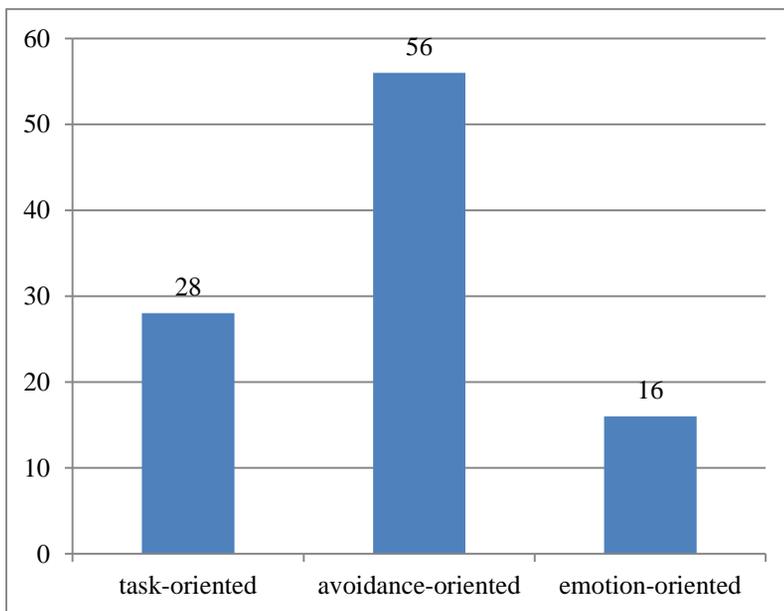

Chart 4. Stress -coping strategies at baseline

The task-oriented responses referred to actions being directly linked with the stress and solutions effectively supposed to change them. Avoidance-oriented responses related to behaviors refusing the fact and keeping away from the current problem. Emotion-oriented responses meant activities taken to redirect and transform the mood in a positive way which can later change the view into the trouble. The literature review stated that except for the avoidance based approach, the other two are more encouraged in facing stress.

In reply to this question, at baseline most students in the pilot group selected the avoidance approach with 56%, then the task-oriented and finally was the emotion-oriented coping strategy (16%).

Luckily, at the post test after 10 weeks, students in the pilot group received teaching method with the use and concentration on SEL materials at different skills including reading, writing, listening and speaking as earlier mentioned in table 1. The values of this idea was represented in this chart and described in the upcoming quantitative results:
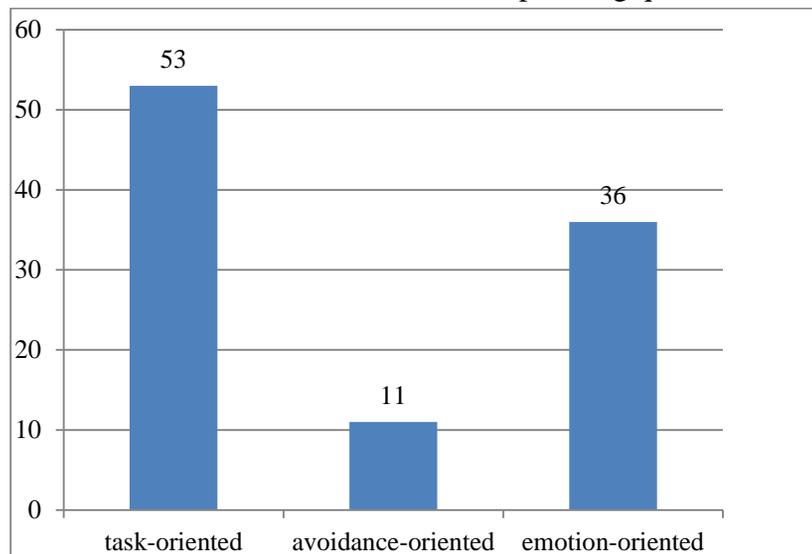

Chart 5. Stress -coping strategies at post-test

The above diagrams showed that after there was SEL intervention, the number of students avoiding stress was significantly smaller (11% compared with 56% at pre-intervention stage). Noticeably, there was much larger percentage of participants with task orientation, which was 53% whereas this number beforehand was 28%. This alteration was a surprising result, confirming the value of SEL in helping students to take actions rather than to ignore and avoid the problem. With the purpose to confirm this changes at post -test, an one way ANOVA was performed with scores on coping strategies of the pilot group at two intervals revealed that there was a statistically significant change in scores of three copping strategies, in which task -oriented coping strategies had dramatic increase with $p=0,001$, then the emotion -oriented (with $p<0,05$) whereas there was a sharp decrease with the avoidance coping strategies.

Exploring the number of students divided into two groups of genders to find out their changes of reactions. It should be emphasized that 67% of male changed from avoiding (like playing games, sleeping, going out, etc) to acting. At the same time,

around 58% of female chose tasks of confronting, solving the problem rather than watching film, shopping, etc.

These findings helped to prove the fact that SEL materials opened new doors for students when their life went wrong with different problems. Thanks to the integration of these inputs in English classes, learners not only produced output of general understanding to meet the lessons' requirements but also applied it into their own cases. Therefore, it should be recommended that this teaching approach should be integrated into English classes of the whole university, or SEL materials can be specifically taught to students in a tailor designed course.

2.6. Discussion

The research results showed that students at National Economics University had regularly and seriously been suffering from stress, which rooted from study pressure. Especially, this was common among third-year students. However, despite its great impact on students' feelings, health and study, it had not been tackled in a positive basis. In fact, the most popular responding ways to stress were avoidance or emotion oriented. The reasons for this came from the lack of instructions for social emotional learning (SEL). In specific, the 5 components of SEL would help motivating self-control capability. Only when students understand their weaknesses and strengths, they would know how to control themselves to deal with their own problems and negative feelings (Paterson, 2018). In addition, the data of the two genders suffering from stress indicated that both of them equally experienced this problem. This means tension happened to all aspects of students' life and existed within both sexes.

Due to the mentioned facts and figures, I carried out a pilot study among English majorswith English teaching syllabus attached with content-based of SEL. This was helpful for students in getting access to SEL fundamental theories and practices so that they could be able of controlling and reducing their stressful problems through effective coping strategy. The encouraging results of the study illustrated that the innovation adopted above was the smart choice, which indicated the possibility of integrating SEL into teaching methodology. If the RULER program can be integrated into literature, SEL components can also be integrated into different subjects in different education level. This might be the first study on applying SEL to ESL (English as a second language) for higher students, which aims at reducing their stress, improving their academic performance as well as their mental and physical health.

It is believed that there should be different human resources in helping students to reduce stress. For instance, senior students as mentors can help in this situation. They have got first hand experiences in similar situations. Therefore, they know what to do and how to do to get the best results. Also, they are in the same generation, which makes them co-operatively work with other students.It is essential to establish a group of academic consultants. These are lecturers from students' departments. They can provide suitable suggestions with long-term vision. By this way, students can also feel that lecturers also sympathize with their difficulties and they are willing to share the troubles with the learners. The most effective approach is certainly asking for support from psychological specialist. In each university, there should be several consultants. The department of student affairs should not only cover the organization of extra

curriculum activities, but is also in charge of providing personal help for students in need of recommendation. As far as I'm concerned, University of Languages and International Studies has run this model. However, this institution has mobilized assistance from their lecturers, whose job is teaching and researching rather than consulting psychological problems. Lecturers should be invited to join in some courses focusing on SEL and its vital role on campus. They should recognize that universities only serve the purpose of providing knowledge for students to get jobs in the future, but these make up environment for learners to enjoy studies as well as themselves so that they can prepare the best for the forthcoming years. It cannot be denied that most lecturers working in universities are those with outstanding academic achievement and requested to teach at those institutions. They might be specialists in their field. However, they can be lack of psychological background in teaching. Of course, there are courses on teaching methodology specifically designed for lecturers, they target at general teaching methods rather than any specific issue. The instruction on SEL can be delivered through a summer course or an online course. If it is possible, lecturers can be invited to join in a consulting session carried out psychological specialists to experience how it goes. However, these activities are planned to raise the awareness of lecturers about SEL integration, not to train them as specialists in this field.

Besides, as "prevention better than cure", it would be necessary if a separate source on SEL right at the first year in the universities for the freshmen. They are those completely new to the campus, some of them even get culture shocked due to the strange learning and teaching style largely based on self-study and exploration. This course should provide participants with basic concepts related to SEL so that student can thoroughly understand its value and effectiveness in handling emotional problems and improving positive outlook. The course should also present and discuss possible causes of stress in tertiary level so that students can be well-prepared. Some solutions can be given for students to consider the most appropriate way for them.

The limitation of this study is the lack of a specific tool to measure stress level of all students rather than only the third-year ones. Also, as a matter of fact, in the context of globalization, to become global citizens, all students should be equipped with essential skills stated in the SEL model, especially, they should be aware of emotion self-control. These concerns should be further studied.

An insight into previous resources on SEL in tertiary level in Vietnam demonstrates that this topic is still a research gap due to its largely limited relevant studies. Noticeably, in the case of applying SEL to stress release in university context, there has been neither excavation nor guidelines. Therefore, this study should be regarded as a valuable reference proving this strong connection. Especially, this trans-disciplinary research exemplifies the integration of SEL-based innovation into ESL (English as second language) teaching and learning setting. The study indicated specific reasons for students' stress, which mainly focused on academic requirements. This resulted in the follow-up concerns about any feasible solutions to help stress sufferers. After the introduction of SEL-based input in language classes, the pilot study proved the positive influence of SEL awareness on stress mitigation. In this stage, the pilot study was carried out. Specifically, data related to the pilot group revealed SEL contribution to

better self-control of emotions and task-based stress coping strategy. In comparison with the negative findings at baseline, these results brought into the light that SEL integration has helped students in solving the stress by themselves. This also means that SEL should be highly recommended as the content-based approach in academic contexts as a tool to help students deal with emotional problems.

3.   Conclusions

This study provides an in-depth insight into the facts and figure related to social emotional learning (SEL) and stress in higher education setting. The research findings brought about answers to the research questions in discovering effects of SEL integration to release stress. In particular, the discussion about SEL reveals thorough analysis into all aspects of its concept, competencies and implementation approaches. Stress, a normal mental problem, is also excavated from different dimensions to demonstrate a comprehensive definition, symptoms and coping strategies. The highlighting point of this study is its concentration on stress in the universities in order to exemplify certain suggestions for appropriate techniques designed for students. In addition, the stressors are put into relation with SEL, which might be a trendy approach to be attached to the teaching syllabus for the long-term objectives of educating citizens understanding themselves and appreciating surrounding people to live and work together in harmony. SEL in the universities is the continuation of its application from kindergarten to high school. SEL in response to stress shows the practical benefits of this approach in improving students' life. Based on the context of education in Vietnam, general suggestions are given to orient the employment of SEL. Hopefully, further data related to the implementation of those recommendations can be analyzed in further studies to confirm the benefits well stated in this study.

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