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Social-Emotional Learning in English Language Education:
Mapping the Landscape and Reflecting on the Way Forward

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Investigating Problems that Matter for Young People: Reauthoring Possibilities for Social-Emotional Learning in English Language Education

Abstract: This article reports on a qualitative case study with families of young English as an additional language (EAL) children in year 3–4 classrooms in metropolitan Melbourne, Australia. In the context of this inquiry, developmental bibliotherapy, which uses books to “heal the mind,” was operationalized as a social-emotional learning (SEL) tool, using a transactional reader response approach. In this SEL approach, children made life-to-text and text-to-life connections that focused on three topic areas: body image, resilience, and self-esteem through the reading encounter. Findings shed light on the pedagogical implications of developmental bibliotherapy as an SEL tool and an eudaimonic factor in young EAL children’s life worlds.

Keywords: case study, developmental bibliotherapy, eudaimonia, narrative, literacy, home/school partnerships

1. Introduction

For most of our collective teaching careers, in primary and secondary contexts, we have taught in lower socioeconomic communities consisting of migrant and

refugee families, comprising a diversity of ethnicities where English is not their first language. Working with children who are living in homes that are unsettled, complicated by parental unemployment, poor living standards, and who are often recovering from trauma (Bauer et al. 2008) has meant that our pedagogical approaches needed to have a focus on social and emotional well-being. Reading stories with themes that relate to the life experiences of these children has been included in our pedagogical approaches based on the understanding that “a child’s behaviour is a manifestation of a complex inner world” (Hayes et al. 2017, 61).

In this qualitative case study, we explicitly present developmental bibliotherapy as a dual-purpose strategy – both a social-emotional learning (SEL) intervention and a platform for developing English as additional language skills in English. Developmental bibliotherapy is defined as a strategic approach that employs reading and discussion to nurture children’s socio-emotional development, overall well-being, and simultaneous language acquisition. Throughout the study, we emphasize the alignment of developmental bibliotherapy with skills outlined in the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL 2020) SEL framework. CASEL (2020) defines SEL as the process in which children and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, monitor emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain healthy relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. Our focus has been on culturally and linguistically diverse children facing challenging circumstances, including unsettled homes, parental unemployment, poor living standards, and recovery from trauma (Bauer et al. 2008).

The question driving this inquiry is: *In what ways does developmental bibliotherapy foster children’s social-emotional learning related to body image, resilience, and self-esteem, while concurrently providing opportunities for the development of secondary language skills in English?* This case study employs developmental bibliotherapy as a process to understand how children can cope with transitions, challenges, and difficult situations in everyday life in a new language. Notably, developmental bibliotherapy is presented as an SEL activity, operationalized within a Vygotskian approach, where two or more individuals read the same text aloud, fostering shared reading co-relationships, with the role of the adult as “the knowledgeable other” guiding and supporting comprehension and meaning inference for children from families with other-than-English-speaking backgrounds (Lucas and Soares 2013; Rosário 2004).

Rosário’s (2004), and Lucas and Soares’s (2013, 143) proposition aligns with CASEL’s (2020) five interrelated SEL areas of competence, including self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management and responsible decision-making. Developmental bibliotherapy not only serves as an SEL strategy but also provides a unique opportunity for students to develop secondary language skills in English while engaged in SEL activities. This dual-purpose nature of developmental bibliotherapy aligns with the multifaceted goals of supporting

socio-emotional development and language acquisition in tandem or as in an integrated approach. The interactive and dialogic nature of developmental bibliotherapy creates a conducive environment for language development, making it an effective and holistic approach in educational settings with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

2. An introduction to developmental bibliotherapy

Historically, bibliotherapy was conceptualized by Carolyn Shrodes, who had a background in cognitive behavioral therapy, psychology, and psychotherapy methods (Halsted 2009). A review of the literature on the early use of clinical bibliotherapy concluded indicative outcomes, showing reduced anxiety and aggressive behavior in children diagnosed with a chronic illness or disability (Bravender et al. 2010; Gregory and Vessy 2004; McCulliss and Chamberlain 2013). The benefits of bibliotherapy have been noted in systematic reviews conducted by Montgomery and Maunders (2015) and in random control trials (RCT) by McCulliss and Chamberlain (2013). Leyland (2023), in discussing his own experiences, noted the positive effects of bibliotherapy, and Green (2020), writing about home-based developmental bibliotherapy interventions, pointed out that they create therapeutic spaces. Sullivan and Strang (2002), and Cantor et al. (1987) suggest that parents who are closely attuned to their child's present life tasks and challenges are in a prime position to directly support them.

Inquiry questions, discussion prompts, and follow-up activities are central to the bibliotherapeutic process, promoting an understanding of thoughts, emotions, beliefs, assumptions, intentions, and behavior (Cheu 2001). These can occur before, during, and/or after reading to draw out focused responses that emphasize a character's thoughts and feelings and contribute to the children's comprehension of the story (Britt et al. 2016). It has, however, been advised that any questions asked by adults that are directed toward a child's feelings and experiences should be constructed carefully to ensure they maintain an emotional distance.

Suvilehto et al. (2019) argue that the goal of developmental bibliotherapy is to achieve optimum eudaimonic SEL as the child reflects on memories and compares their experiences to others vicariously via the characters in a story. The use of a developmental bibliotherapy framework in the context of eudaimonic well-being has been informed by research from the last two decades, indicating the beneficial effects of reading fiction on personal well-being (Kuijpers 2018; Kuiken and Douglas 2017; Oliver et al. 2017). As a concept, eudaimonic learning deals with feeling good while explicitly considering our sense of meaningfulness in life (Bauer et al. 2008). Important for this study is how eudaimonia includes the obtainment of eudaimonic perspectives at life's earliest stages, offering long-term social and emotional benefits for children from families who speak English as an additional language (EAL).

Eudaimonism is positioned within psychodynamic and humanistically oriented psychological perspectives, and calls on respondents to live in accordance with daimon, a concept coined by Norton (1976) that describes the state of realizing a person's full potential. With its origin positioned within Aristotelian, psychodynamic, and humanistically oriented psychology, including the person-centered approach of Carl Rogers (1952), the six main characteristics of eudaimonic well-being are: "self-acceptance, personal growth, relatedness, autonomy, relationships, environmental mastery, and purpose" (Deci and Ryan 2008, 4).

3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are situated at the juncture of academic conversations about developmental bibliotherapy, Rosenblatt's (1988) transactional theory of reader response, and CASEL's (2020) SEL framework. In aligning with CASEL's SEL competencies, the study explores the integration of a developmental bibliotherapy framework within the context of eudaimonic well-being, while considering English language development. CASEL's competencies align closely with the identified main characteristics of eudaimonic well-being presented in this study: self-acceptance, personal growth, relatedness, autonomy, relationships, environmental mastery, and purpose (Deci and Ryan 2008). The integration of a developmental bibliotherapy framework is designed to facilitate the development of these characteristics through a four-stage process: identification, catharsis, insight, and universalization.

In the identification stage, readers make connections with the characters in a non-threatening way, fostering self-awareness and relatedness. This aligns with CASEL's self-awareness and social awareness components (CASEL 2020). As readers progress through the narrative, they connect to characters, imagery, and plots, promoting relationship skills. The catharsis stage, where emotional tension is released as characters work through problems, corresponds to the self-management aspect of CASEL's framework. Readers observe how characters navigate challenges, providing a model for regulating emotions. This stage allows individuals to process emotions and contribute to responsible decision-making. Insight, the stage where discussion and knowledge come together, encourages critical thinking and problem-solving, contributing to responsible decision-making. Through discussions and activities based on reading, readers gain insights into their own lives, aligning with the CASEL component of responsible decision-making. Universalization, the final stage of developmental bibliotherapy, fosters a sense of relatedness and empathy as readers recognize that their difficulties are not unique. This aligns with social awareness and relationship skills, encouraging an understanding of others' experiences and the development of positive relationships.

Furthermore, the present study's focus on using developmental bibliotherapy and Rosenblatt's (1988) transactional theory of reader response provides opportunities for parents (i.e. participants) to explore and have conversations about life challenges with their children that integrate English language development. Reading and discussing literature contributes to language acquisition and communication skills, supporting parents in engaging with their children in meaningful conversations. Even if the literature and discussion are conducted in the home language, this provides a foundation for students with the skills and content needed in their home language to facilitate transfer into English during instruction at school.

Scholarship has been conducted on how the reading of narrative is central to the human experience and acts as a key site and intersection of language, thought, and culture (Benton 2006; Hunt 2005; Lobo 2015; Iser 2008; Robinson 1997). While not a conceptually unified critical position, reader response theory has generated a wide array of models that differ in perspectives. Some reader response theorists focus on the reader and the aesthetic reading process, and others on the text and its influence on the reader (Lobo 2013). Holland (1980) initiated a psychological model of reader response theory that positioned the reader as being intertwined within the reading experience and provided insight into the applied use of developmental bibliotherapy (Lobo 2013).

Louise Rosenblatt's (1988) transactional theory of reader response theoretically articulated a triadic relationship between a text and a reader and defined a reading transaction whereby the meaning of a text is determined and located in the efferent experience and the aesthetic experience. Efferent reading is reading for information where "the primary concern of the reader is with what he will carry away from the reading." Aesthetic reading is "where the reader's primary attention is centred directly on what he is living through during their relationship with that particular text" (Rosenblatt 1994, 25). While efferent questions enable readers to gather information "to use in some manner in the real world" (Galda and Liang 2003, 269), the more aesthetic interaction between the text and the reader induces affective and cognitive responses (Britt et al. 2016). This study used Lucas and Soares's (2013, 143–144) framework to scaffold the bibliotherapeutic encounter:

... *What is ...? Where did ...? , When ...? . Then, make questions that allow argument construction How did you know that; Why that ...? . Consequently, make questions aimed to finding solutions What could happen if ...? Where do you think that ...? . Finally, make questions that exercise decision-making How do you solve this problem ...? Why? What would you do if ...?*

As argued in *Anti-Oedipus*, there can be no separation between personal and social experience: the interior is political, and the connection between word and action and wish and action are one (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). When a reader makes a connection to a narrative, the efferent and the aesthetic readings are "intrinsic

to narratives of social and emotional learning as our identities constructed in the real world [are] through our relationships [with] cultural practices” (Hall 2004, 3). As readers actively relate to the characters via their own personal experience, cognitive theory refers to this process as “‘misattribution’: we attribute our own emotions to those of fictive characters” (Sparkes 2000, 276). Misattribution can become “inextricably bound up with ideas about subjectivity” (McCallum 1999, 3) as the reading process includes reflection on our personal selves and how we are positioned and viewed by a wider community or society.

4. Methodology: Storied research

Case study is an established qualitative approach and holds its own as a well-known and accepted framework in various research fields (Thomas 2013). Etherington and Bridges (2011, 21) explain that applying a narrative approach to case studies offers a technique to explore and represent the “rich layers of information and understanding about the particularities,” which in this context are the shared reading interactions taken and interpreted from the participants’ point of view. Case narratives look to make meaning of lived experience, seeking to understand the significance of the events and scenarios described in the field texts such that essentially “we gain entrée to various dimensions of therapeutic process” (Brandell and Varkas 2001, 297).

Case narratives are also able to integrate theoretical perspectives using constructivist approaches. Through constructivist principles, case study narrative illuminates and reveals the narrative detail (Riessmann 2002), forging a way to understand and learn about the encounters of the participants. Within this approach by focusing on the voices within each narrative and with awareness of the content in the telling and the told (Josselson and Lieblich 2014) and by working within case study, our aim was not only to paint a picture, but also to reproduce the lived experience of the participants for others to connect with (Stake 2005).

Dwyer (2017, 3) has requested that the researcher carefully consider how “the underpinning theoretical drivers” and the researcher’s position will have an influence on the study. Our methodological approach was underpinned by the understanding that “a child’s behaviour is a manifestation of a complex inner world” (Hayes et al. 2017, 61), and we utilized storied fiction, from specifically selected books, to solicit the informants’ personal stories that attested to how their sense of place in the world was being acquired (Bauer et al. 2008; Deci and Ryan 2008).

Those who have adopted a storying within their research accounts speak of the messiness of not always knowing how to move forward in the research story (Vicars 2017). However, Nardi (2016, 4) explains how we need to look at the data to identify the stories told from the participants’ experience, and acknowledge how

the researcher’s insight is “interwoven in the construction process.” Bochner and Riggs (2014, 212) suggest that such a process is dependent on “empirical, conceptual, and theoretical issues with which the analyst is engaged,” enacted through the use of a “toolkit of methodological resources” to re-story participants’ experiences. As Nikolajeva (2014, 23) explains, “fiction is a complex structure of arbitrary signs, signifiers, as opposed to referents, the actual objects and phenomena that they signify,” and the ideas and concepts contained within the narrative have the power for the reader to negotiate life’s meaning and explicate comprehension of the world. The experience of engaging with fiction extends to a phenomenological understanding of how, through narrative engagement and absorption, we identify with characters and view the world from their perspective, deepening our ability to both infer others’ emotions and empathize (Calarco et al. 2017). Fitzgerald and Green (2017, 49) explain this as “if you have ever encountered the phenomenon of being swept away by a story, you are among many others who have experienced narrative transportation, which is a similar experience to flow (Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie 1979).

Table 1. Anonymized case study schools

School 1: Rose Primary School	School 2: Amyfield Primary School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 parents agreed to participate in the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 parents agreed to participate in the program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 journals were collected at the end of the data collection process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 journals were collected at the end of the data collection process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No parents agreed to an interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 parents agreed to an interview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher focus group 4 teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher focus group 5 teachers

In the implementation of a storied research study, we refuted any a priori hypothesis. By working with the four concepts of “contestability, challengeability, uncertainty and unpredictability” (Barnett 2000, 415), we focused attention on everyday life experiences, aligned with small-story research more commonly presented in conversation and discourse analysis (Andrews et al. 2013). Small-story situations are authentic natural interactions, conversations, and social connections that are “closer to the action and enmeshed within the interactive, especially conversational, dynamics of social life” (Freeman 2007, 156). For a small-story researcher, the focus is on informal daily interactions and conversations as a source of meaning-making (Georgakopoulou and Bamberg 2005). The context of families is suited to small stories, with the collection of conversations through everyday routines (Bamberg 2020; Gordon 2015; Spector-Mersel 2010). For this study, 10-year-old children who speak EAL and their parents were purposively selected

from two primary schools based in Metropolitan Melbourne, Australia, as explained in Table 1. In addition, classroom teachers from each school were invited as participants, and they agreed to a group interview.

4.1. Method and analysis

A high-risk ethics application for the study was submitted to the Ethics Board at our university, and was approved in 2019. Consent and participation forms were distributed to a purpose sample of EAL children, their parents/guardians, and school teachers. Once the consent documentation had been received back from the participants, the study commenced. For the duration of one school term of 10 weeks between January and December of 2019, the participating children took home one book per week from the collection of pre-selected texts (with up to 10 books read by each child across the duration of the fieldwork). Social in nature, the fictional stories detailed human emotions and interactions between individuals, with realistic nuances of social situations portrayed; thus, a dialectical connection related to the complex process of reading fiction and making meaning from the narrative was facilitated. The book collection consisted of 38 purposefully selected books that were reviewed against the key messages developed from the informants' desire to seek information and to make sense of their world. The selected titles reflected diverse life experiences and daily life occurrences of the children's age (i.e. 10 years of age) connected to the three themes of body image, self-esteem, and resilience. Aligned with the applied developmental bibliotherapy framework and intended to foster an aesthetic narrative relationship with the child reader, the book plots included ideas and concepts that encouraged them to look at socio-cultural situations of being and belonging from other perspectives.

The children read their selected book with their parents, responded to the developmental bibliotherapy discussion prompts that were included at the back of each book, and recorded their responses to reading picture story books in a journal. The data included a total of 54 journals drawn from two schools (see Table 1). The journals were completed by participants in the home setting, forming naturally occurring data (Dwyer 2017). The journals served as the primary field texts and were a naturally occurring source of data completed in the home setting (Silverman 2007). Mueller and Pentón Herrera (2023), in their discussion on journaling, provide illustrative guidelines for how it can be used as an SEL tool for teaching and data collection. Collected at the end of the term, the journals were supplemented by interviews with parents and teachers, who provided opinions, observations, feedback, invaluable validation, and converging evidence.

To begin the analysis process, an initial review of the 54 collected journals included a consideration of the quality and depth of information of the recorded responses by the parent/child in each journal. On reviewing each journal, a rating was given on a value scale of one to five, with one given to journals that had

responses that were not in the context of the discussion prompts and others that were difficult to read and could not be included as evidence given a zero to one rating. A five was given to journals that were thorough in detail and provided insight and context to the discussion questions.

Polkinghorne (1995) refers to this form of analysis as the search for pieces of information that collectively contribute to a story and provide an explanatory answer to the research question. Enacted within the narrative research process, the intent of the thematic analysis was to discover themes and alignments that “unify the story and that commented on or disrupted the main themes” (Josselson 2011, 226). We drew upon Lieblich et al.’s (1998) classification model to draw connections and meanings between the researcher’s and participants’ personal, social, and cultural systems (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Broad in design, this model has four intersecting but independent modes that serve as a way to organize a narrative analysis. These modes are outlined as follows:

Holistic content: the focus is the interview as a whole, and specific narrations within it are interpreted with regard to the whole interview.

Holistic form: the focus is on the whole interview’s structure and plot.

Categorical content: the narrative is structured by categories, and the contents of categories are analyzed and compared.

Categorical form: the analysis focuses on discrete stylistic and linguistic characteristics of defined units of narrative.

Lieblich et al. (1998, 113) explain that the point is to collate the subtexts collected in each category and use these “descriptively to formulate a picture of the content universe.” During this step, the sentences and sections of subtexts in each content category were considered by frequency and in relation to the research aims and questions. This was achieved through reading and re-reading the subtexts in each content category. The process provided a means to articulate, explain, and interpret the collective meanings and experiences of the participants. The process of conducting the four-step classification of the narrative analysis model then evolved a re-storying of the narrative evidence. The re-storied story narratives aimed to offer insight into how parents and children engaged in the developmental bibliotherapy discourse and provide a reconstructed illustration of the lived experiences of the shared reading process (Nardi 2016).

5. Findings: Lida’s story

Due to the expansive scope of this inquiry, one representative example of a developmental bibliotherapy narrative and a re-storied account was derived from the data. We have selected one 10-year-old participant from the study, whom

we have called Lida (pseudonym), and have situated Lida’s reading of the book *My Two Blankets*, which considers migration and refugee themes (Dolan 2013; Lilliss 2013). *My Two Blankets* provided an opportunity for Lida to remember her experience of migrating to Australia and her concern about wearing a hijab to school. The discussion she had with her father allowed for self-reflection and the opportunity to share experiences. When Lida shared her feelings about moving from her country to Australia, she said that she was scared and felt she was different from the other children at school because she wore a hijab. The following re-storied account was written based on the eliciting of efferent and aesthetic responses from the narrative in the book during the developmental bibliotherapy narrative process.

Aisha Wears a Hajib

The story *Aisha Wears a Hajib* (Table 2) was created by re-storying Lida’s experience about a Muslim girl who is starting life in Australia and is aggressively bullied and teased during an incident in the school toilets where her hijab is pulled off her head. This rewritten story was read with Lida in order to help her articulate her feeling scared, vulnerable, and alone, and her reluctance to go outside at recess. In the rewritten story, when Aisha finally shares what is happening, her teacher is able to action support through the school-based policy of no tolerance for bullying behavior.

Table 2. Lida’s story

Aisha Wears a Hajib
<p>Aisha came from Afghanistan and settled with her family in Australia last year. She likes her new home; she has learned English well and likes to go to school every day to be with her friends. Well, most days, some days are not so good at all. Her teacher Eve is very nice, she helps her with all her learning. It’s playtime... that’s the problem. Sometimes, she tells Eve that her stomach hurts and asks if she can stay inside. That works occasionally, but only when Eve is planning to do her work in the classroom: other times, it doesn’t, and she sends her out anyway. “If it gets worse,” she says, “go and tell the teacher on yard duty, and they will look after you.”</p> <p>Aisha is nearly at school, and she can see those mean girls who tease her in the distance. Her stomach sinks; she feels sick and hopes they won’t come over today. The first time it happened, she was so shocked; she had come out of the toilet, and they were waiting for her. One girl was sitting on the bench with her legs across the taps, so she couldn’t wash her hands. The other was blocking the doorway, so she couldn’t get out. Aisha tried to get away, but she couldn’t.</p> <p>“You rag head,” the girls sniggered.</p> <p>“That thing on your head is so stupid.”</p> <p>“What is it, a tea towel?”</p> <p>They started tugging at her hajib. Aisha tried to stop them.</p> <p>“You’re in Australia now, take it off!” One of the girls pulled at it so hard that it yanked her head back against the toilet door and she yelled out in pain.</p>

Table 2. (continued)

“Ha ha!”

“OMG, she’s got hair.”

“Ooooooh, it’s long, look at it.”

The girls poked at her head.

Aisha was crying, she tried to pull up her hijab.

Then the girls pushed her onto the toilet seat. “You dare tell anyone about this, next time will be worse,” they said as they left the toilets.

Aisha, sobbing, closed the toilet door and fixed her hijab. Then she washed her hands and face and headed for the back of the school where the vegetable garden was. She stayed there until the bell went.

Other times they would come over to the playground and just sit and stare at her and say nothing. Or they would snigger at each other and point at her, talking loudly about tea towels or how Muslim people are weird.

Aisha begins feeling very alone, scared, and anxious. Sometimes, when the bell rings to go outside, she can hardly breathe, she is so scared, and she doesn’t know what to do.

At night-time, Aisha is finding it hard to go to sleep.

“Okay, everyone, it’s time to put away your writing things and get your lunch,”

Aisha is starting to panic, tears welling up in her eyes.

“Aisha, are you okay?” asks her friend Asal, an Afghani muslim, who wears a hijab, too.

“No, I am not okay.” Aisha starts to cry, tears rolling down her cheeks.

“What’s the matter, Aisha?” asks Eve.

“I don’t feel well,” says Aisha.

Eve has been concerned about Aisha for a while and once Aisha has calmed Eve asks her to talk about what is making her feel this way.

Slowly, Aisha finds the courage to explain what happened with the girls in the toilet and also what they are still doing.

Eve asks them how often it happened and if they know of anyone else involved.

At the school, there is a no-bullying policy.

“Everyone has a right to feel safe at school.”

Before the end of school that day, the girls involved are called to the principal’s office. Eve is there, and they talk about what she has found out. The girls try to deny it and tell Eve that they were just joking around. The school principal talks to them about the school’s no-bullying policy and their parents are also called to tell them what they have done. They are then given specific tasks to do for the children they have hurt.

A few days later Aisha receives 3 letters, one from each girl. They apologize for what they have done and the letters say they have learned about why Muslim girls and women wear hijabs; that it is a symbol of their religion and how women are proud to wear them. They promise they will never bully her again.

Aisha feels relieved, she looks forward to being out in the yard with her friends and not having to worry that she will be bullied. She shows the letters to her parents, who are pleased that the matter has been dealt with properly. Aisha puts the letters in her treasure box as a reminder that being resilient and standing up for [sic] something that is wrong is very important.

After a few weeks, her stomach does not feel so sick anymore, and she is sleeping at night. As she is preparing to go to bed, brushing her teeth in the bathroom, she looks at herself in the mirror, smiling. She is happy and she is proud to be a Muslim girl living in Australia.

Table 2. (continued)**Discussion question**

How do you think Aisha would have felt when the bullies were pulling at her hijab in the toilets?

Suggested response

Aisha would have been very scared; she went to the back of the school to be safe after it happened.

Has something like this ever happened to you, like what happened to Aisha?

Has someone been mean to you about the way you look?

Suggested response

Give your child some time to think about anything that may have happened to them. This may be new information to you, so allow them to speak freely and recount what happened.

Aisha began to feel more and more scared at school. What did her friend do to help Aisha?

Suggested response

Aisha's teachers and friends noticed that she was not herself. She finally told a friend what was going on, and her friend did the right thing by telling a teacher. Her friend was not a bystander.

When we talk to adults and friends about something that is worrying us, they can help us solve the problem. Who can you talk to?

Suggested response

Talk with your child about the people in their life who can give them support when they need it most.

How did the teachers and school principal help Aisha? What does your school have that would help you?

Suggested response

Talk about the meeting with the bullies and how this stopped the problem. Your child's school will also have a process and policy that stops bullying behaviors.

Follow-up activity

It's important that we seek help from adults when we need it, otherwise we can get very sad and unwell. Draw a picture of the people in your life who love and support you and will listen to you when you have a problem you can't solve on your own.

6. Discussion

In Lida's reading of the book *My Two Blankets*, which considers migration and refugee themes, the discussion prompts related the characters and narrative scenarios to Lida's autobiographical memories (Nestlog and Ehriander 2019; Mantei and Fahy 2018; Nikolajeva 2014). The suggested responses enabled the parents to enact guidance on Lida's identification with the text by asking her to draw connections to characters' personalities, information, concepts, and experiences or situations she may have previously come across. For instance, in Lida's re-storied

narrative (i.e. *Aisha Wears a Hajib*), with the support of her parent, Lida was able to make text-to-text and text-to-self connections. This led to Lida's attainment of eudaimonic social-emotional learning, which was steered by the shared parental discussions supporting her ability to:

- celebrate the diversity of appearance
- promote functional achievements of the body (things your body can do)
- question/analyze messages' images in the text
- make no negative comments about appearance
- understand and manage our emotions in a positive way
- talk about our feelings with our friends and adults
- focus on our strengths, not our weaknesses
- accept that you are you and that you are unique
- face challenges
- focus on our strengths to create a growth mindset and rebound from setbacks

With the current discourse around educative mental health priority areas such as SEL, positive education, and trauma-informed teaching (Brunzell et al. 2019; Pentón Herrera 2020; Waters and Higgins 2022), this study provides promising evidence that developmental bibliotherapy, when facilitated through shared parent-child reading encounters, can effectively foster SEL competencies. Aligned with the CASEL (2020) framework, which identifies five SEL competencies, i.e. self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and responsible decision-making, Lida's experience demonstrates that developmental bibliotherapy effectively fosters SEL competencies in children when facilitated through shared parent-child reading encounters.

The aesthetic reading experience created a platform for children to not only enjoy literature but also see themselves reflected in the texts. The study engages in broader discourses on educative well-being priorities by normalizing challenges and envisioning positive outcomes through carefully selected literature. The aesthetic reading experience allowed Lida to make sense of the social-emotional aspects presented in the stories, see herself reflected in texts, normalize challenges, envision positive outcomes, and make broader discourses on SEL well-being priorities.

The detailed exploration of human emotion and interactions in the selected children's literature fosters vicarious connections for the children, enabling them to articulate concerns and fears, engage in problem-solving, and develop a sense of well-being. The shared reading opportunity acts as a dialectic connection between the complex process of reading fiction, making meaning from narrative, and initiating further connections and sense-making in the world around them. These conditions are critical for both SEL and English language development.

7. Conclusions

The case study of Lida also provides insights into how we can increase capacity with parents/guardians in cultivating SEL through bibliotherapy and the strategic selection of books that address topics related to social-emotional well-being. Lida's experience reveals that the enactment of the four stages of developmental bibliotherapy provides an intimate, safe, and supported way for parents to unlock their child's lived experiences. The reading of specifically selected children's literature detailed human emotion and interactions between individuals, with realistic social situations portrayed. Through vicarious connection to the characters in the stories, the children were able to articulate concerns, fears, problem-solving, and positive well-being. The shared reading opportunity also facilitated a dialectic connection between the complex process of reading fiction and making meaning from the narrative, ultimately initiating further connection and sense-making of the world around them.

Building on these findings, further research could fruitfully examine how schools might leverage developmental bibliotherapy and link literacy instruction with social-emotional learning. Looking ahead, future research could also explore how schools might leverage developmental bibliotherapy, integrating it with instruction in the English language classroom and linking it explicitly with social-emotional learning. This intersection offers potential avenues for enhancing both academic and socio-emotional outcomes in students, providing a holistic approach to education that acknowledges the interconnected nature of English language teaching, SEL, and student well-being.

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