

**Using Role-play and Narrative Empathy to Explore Social
Emotional Learning Outcomes in English Literature
Lecture Rooms**

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of KwaZulu-Natal in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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2024

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Abstract

This thesis is grounded on the premise that many young people and adults in South Africa lack education in fundamental interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. It explored how role-play and narrative empathy activities in an English Literature lecture room facilitated the development of social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes. The targeted SEL outcomes were embedded into five prescribed texts from the second-year English Literature syllabus at a private higher education institution in South Africa. Through William Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, the participants explored social-awareness skills. The play *Dr. Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe enabled participants to engage with self-awareness skills. The novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen allowed participants to learn relationship skills; the novel *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë served as a vehicle to explore responsible decision-making skills, while the play *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith provided opportunities to develop self-management skills. These five SEL specific text analyses were examined within the framework of five action research cycles in this qualitative study. Each cycle facilitated SEL development through creative activities, including role-play exercises and narrative empathy discussion sessions conducted during literature lectures. The study concluded that integrating literary analysis with SEL outcomes can effectively promote social and emotional learning. Role-play processes facilitated enjoyable and embodied learning of the prescribed texts, alongside increased empathy for different characters. The narrative empathy discussion sessions provided deep reflection on the characters being studied and offered a cathartic experience for participants, who reflected on their personal journeys while considering the characters' experiences. The study's interdisciplinary SEL model indicated that English literary fictional works can effectively explore the human condition, making English Literature studies ideal for exploring, simulating, and reflecting on SEL experiences. This study contributes to discourses on SEL in South Africa, role-play in English literature lecture rooms, and narrative empathy in an oral discussion format for English literature study. Additionally, the study found that culturally responsive SEL can occur through role-play and narrative empathy activities in the English literature lecture room.

Keywords: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL); Emotional Intelligence; English Literature studies; Role-play; Narrative empathy; Drama; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL); Action Research

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List of Abbreviations

4IR Fourth Industrial Revolution

AIDS Acquired Immunodeficiency Virus

AR Action Research

BA Bachelor of Arts

CASEL Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning

CHE Council on Higher Education

COP Communities of Practice

DHET Department of Higher Education and Training

D.I.E. Drama in Education

GCED Global Citizenship Education

HE Higher Education

HEI Higher Education Institution

HEQSF Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework

HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus

KZN KwaZulu-Natal

NELPRO Nigeria's Emotional Learning Project

NQF National Qualifications Framework

NSDP National Skills and Development Plan

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PFA Psychological First-Aid

RDP Reconstruction and Development Programme

SAQA South African Qualifications Authority

SDG Sustainable Development Goal

SEC Social and Emotional Competency

SEL Social and Emotional Learning

SEL4US Social and Emotional Learning Alliance for the United States

SELLit Social and Emotional Learning in Literature Studies

ToM Theory of Mind

UKZN University of KwaZulu-Natal

UK United Kingdom

UN United Nations

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

US United States

WEF World Economic Forum

YCEI Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence

YOLO You Only Live Once

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study focused on exploring the potential of English literature studies to produce social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes for higher education (HE) English literature students through role-play and narrative empathy activities. My purpose was to demonstrate how English literature studies can impart essential human skills, such as social awareness, self-awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and self-management, in addition to traditional skills in critical thinking, reading, and writing. In doing so, I argue that English literature studies may serve as a valuable tool for equipping students with fundamental social and emotional skills, ultimately enhancing their intrapersonal and interpersonal lives and fostering basic mental health skills.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the numerous mental health disorders that are growing exponentially worldwide (Sapien Labs, 2024). In October 2024, South African Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Mmapaseka Steve Letsike, highlighted the need for targeted interventions that integrate the prevention, care, and treatment of mental health challenges, particularly for the youth:

We cannot wait any longer to take action - the mental health and well-being of our youth is at stake! The consequences of failing to safeguard the mental health conditions of the youth extend to adulthood, impairing their physical and mental health and limiting opportunities for them to participate meaningfully in all areas of human endeavour (Letsike, 2024, para 13).

The past decade has seen a rapid increase in mental health challenges in South Africa and society at large (Bhana, 2024; Majokweni et al., 2024). Social and emotional skills training plays an important role in teaching basic intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Traditionally, schools in South Africa do not explicitly teach these skills, which can serve as foundational mental health skills. Some parents leave it to the world to provide their teenagers and young adults with social and emotional skills.

By the time these skills are learned in adulthood, many unprocessed heightened emotions and unaddressed traumas have occurred, resulting in negative developmental cascades (Dyson et al., 2023). Social and emotional skills are essential for developing socially and emotionally conscious individuals. In South Africa, and elsewhere, we need to emphasise the importance of providing our students with a social and emotional education. As Bar-On notes,

If we succeed in raising and educating more emotionally and socially intelligent children, we will help build more effective, productive and humane organisations, communities and societies which is one of the major goals of the positive psychology movement (p. 30).

To be socially and emotionally responsible is an important human skill to cultivate in building a more conscious society. Social and emotional issues are prevalent in English literary texts. Central to the discipline of English literature studies is the cultivation of empathy in the student reader. If the student's empathy is engaged to moderate the social and emotional themes arising from literary analysis, then this discipline can serve as a medium for SEL.

In the act of empathising with a fictional character from a literary text lies the latent opportunity to cultivate and simulate real-world pro-social and emotionally intelligent behaviour, as “Empathy is an essential tool for connection that can spark compassionate action for change” (Kurian, 2019, p.132). Recent developments (Skoog-Hoffman, 2024) in the SEL field following the COVID-19 pandemic have shown that SEL is helpful in building a more collaborative learning environment and, thereby, developing a more conscious individual.

This thesis focuses on exploring how role-play and narrative empathy activities in the English Literature lecture room produce SEL outcomes. A critical discussion is presented on the use of students role-playing characters from literary texts and empathising with the narrative elements through discussion sessions, aiming to identify how these activities help students develop social and emotional competencies. The study demonstrates that role-play and narrative empathy activities

in the English Literature lecture space contribute to the development of social and emotional skills.

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study, outlining its rationale and purpose. The research objectives and questions are clearly stated, providing a foundation for the investigation. An overview of the research process is presented, explaining how the study was conducted. Additionally, my researcher stance is articulated, and the study's delimitations are specified. Finally, the organisation of the thesis is outlined to guide the reader through its structure.

1.2 Rationale

The rationale for this study is based on my personal and professional experiences as an actor, dancer, writer, and lecturer in English literature.

As an actor and dancer, I found value in drama and performance in helping me empathise with people in my life, stemming from the years spent portraying the characters I embodied. The empathy I felt for the fictional characters I played taught me how to empathise with individuals in my life and society, allowing me to understand their unique circumstances. I also felt more confident in initiating new relationships with different people because I became more comfortable with the human psyche through my acting experiences.

As a reserved and insecure child, socialising did not come naturally for me. However, Indian classical dancing, specifically Bharatha Natyam, taught me how to be confident with my body to tell stories. Studying drama in high school and during my undergraduate and postgraduate studies further deepened this transformation, helping me to love myself and appreciate the unique ways my mind, body, and voice can express themselves. Through drama and dance, I discovered that everyone has a story, a realisation that has made building relationships more meaningful and approachable. Portraying various characters on stage – whether antagonist or protagonist, perpetrator or victim, supporting role or lead – taught me that every decision stems from a personal narrative shaped by the spatiotemporal context of one's life.

As a writer, I felt that through writing – whether for personal journaling purposes or for scripting a performance – what emerged was a process of reflection. Whether for performance creation or catharsis, I began to contemplate the social and emotional matters in my life. Writing enhanced my perspective on topics that have affected me. This practice provided me with a renewed outlook on the topics that have influenced my growth. It showed me the importance of studying English literature for my personal and intellectual development.

As a full-time artist turned academic, my transition from the stage to teaching represented a significant shift in industry, one that evoked feelings of doubleness, joy, and displacement. Although teaching literary texts was initially rewarding and enjoyable, I found it challenging to spend my workday detached from the theatre. Eventually, I mustered the courage to act on my artistic skills and core belief: if my art helped me understand society, then it could also help my students comprehend the worlds they were reading about and bring energy and excitement into my lecture room.

Was there a way for me to integrate drama into literature studies? I believed that the disciplines of drama and literature were cognitive equivalents; both involve plots, narrative arcs, and characters under duress, as well as psychological and philosophical elements. So, why shouldn't they merge? What were the possibilities? It seemed worth attempting if I could get my students to experience the pleasure of writing, adapting, and discussing their thoughts on the texts studied, in the same way that I had learned about narratives through drama. The only difference was that my students would not be tested on their performance skills but on their writing skills.

I began slowly by incorporating theatre warm-up techniques when the students were unresponsive to the text, and I found that these games and movement exercises helped them feel more energetic about learning. I also introduced script-writing activities to help them connect more deeply with the characters' minds. The little scenes they created through amateur role-play allowed them to embody the worlds of the texts they were studying, giving them more to speak and think about. It began to 'work' – smiles and laughter filled the lecture space, and they felt more empowered to discuss the texts. A creative atmosphere materialised.

Being introduced to SEL has been life-changing, both personally and professionally. I now possess valuable, pragmatic, and intentional "human skills" to teach, using my two much-loved humanities disciplines: drama and literature.

I want to teach my present and future students that their literary content can facilitate the acquisition of various human skills, such as managing their expressions physically and vocally for self-management, developing confidence in reflecting on their own cultures to foster a healthy identity, and cultivating a curious energy for understanding different people to support their social growth. These skills, among many others, can be derived from the integration of these combined disciplines, which will be presented in this thesis.

These three worlds – drama, literature studies, and SEL – have powerfully converged within my teaching ethos. I can no longer view any discipline without considering the others; this synthesis has become my new normal.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore how role-play and narrative empathy activities can produce SEL outcomes in English literature lecture rooms.

Recent developments in mental health care (Sapien Labs, 2024) have heightened the need for basic mental health care skills to be employed by individuals until a mental health care professional is available for consultation. In recent years, there has been increasing interest in mental health management skills in South Africa due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and the generational trauma stemming from experiences of colonialism in South Africa (Marsay et al., 2021; Mashatile, 2023). The past decade has seen a rapid increase in mental health challenges across the nation (Mashatile, 2023). Traditionally, the lack of education and stigma surrounding mental health care have resulted in the belief that such care is unnecessary. However, the current climate in post-colonial South Africa, coupled with the recent rise in natural disasters, underscores the need for mental health care skills to manage the psychosocial impacts of these issues. A significant development in educational methodology since 1994, stemming from emotional intelligence

research, has been SEL, which facilitates the teaching of basic mental health skills that can address the psychosocial needs of students (Elbertson et al., 2019).

1.4 Problem statement

This study aims to address the gap in psychosocial skill acquisition from formal education through an interdisciplinary approach to teaching SEL competencies via role-play and narrative empathy activities during English literary analysis.

There has been limited discussion on SEL in South Africa, with even less attention given to the potential for SEL development through English language arts education on a global scale. Most existing studies on SEL have been conducted outside of South Africa, focusing primarily on primary or secondary school contexts. These studies often explore SEL as part of standalone programmes or, in some instances, integrated into academic content. However, no research has been identified that examines the teaching of SEL skills within South African HE English literature studies using role-play and narrative empathy activities.

While many studies on SEL education, both in South Africa and internationally, adopt a pedagogical approach, this research takes an andragogical perspective. It targets individuals over the age of 18, utilising creative teaching methodologies to explore SEL in HE. Despite the growing interest in SEL, there remains insufficient data on its implementation in both basic and HE contexts within South Africa.

1.5 Context

In South Africa, the HE landscape is governed by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), which serves as one of the ministerial departments under the presidency. UMALUSI oversees public and private schools by accrediting institutions, issuing and verifying qualifying certificates, conducting research, assuring quality, monitoring examinations, and standardising results.

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is responsible for the development and management of higher qualifications, ranging from higher certificates to doctorate level study. The CHE is a statutory body that advises the Minister of Higher Education

and Training on matters related to HE. It is responsible for quality assurance, as well as monitoring and evaluating HE and training. Additionally, the CHE publishes information regarding HE issues, promotes access to HE, and manages the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), which is part of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (CHE, 2013).

The NQF is an integrated system for the classification, registration, publication, and articulation of qualifications that are approved by the CHE and quality assured. It comprises ten levels:

Level 1 – General certificate

Level 2 – Elementary certificate

Level 3 - Intermediate certificate

Level 4 – National certificate

Level 5 – Higher certificate

Level 6 - Diploma

Level 7 – Bachelor's degree

Level 8 – Postgraduate diploma or Honours degree

Level 9 – Master's degree

Level 10 – Doctoral degree (South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA], n.d.).

The specific HE programme focused on in this study is the Bachelor's Degree, specifically the Bachelor of Arts (BA) Degree, which is classified at NQF level 7. SAQA (n.d.) states that one of the exit level outcomes of the Bachelor of Arts degree is to ensure that the student has “the capacity to interact effectively with others, operate in variable and unfamiliar contexts with responsibility, and become extremely self-directed” (SAQA, n.d.). SEL, being a framework for teaching self and social skills (Stocker & Gallagher, 2019) , can contribute to the development of such an individual and can be important in cultivating BA graduates of the future.

A HE module such as English literature is taught within the BA degree, but English literature has no prescribed syllabus set by the aforementioned governing bodies. As a result, it is at the discretion and choice of the HE institution hosting the module to design the module syllabus based on the content expertise within that organisation

and the module learning outcomes established by the content experts. As long as the discipline-specific module aligns with the exit-level outcomes set by SAQA and is approved by the relevant CHE subject expert auditors, the module can proceed through the relevant accreditation processes and can be open to registration and teaching. The student participants in this study were second-year BA English and Psychology majors. This means that within the three years of their degree, they study a variety of Humanities modules, including English and Psychology modules each year, with these major modules in their third year, which is the exit-level year of the degree.

This study was conducted at a private higher education institution (HEI) located in Umhlanga, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This means that the institution is not funded by the DHET but is accredited by it. This education institution includes a sales department, marketing department, academic department, finance department, human resources department, and a senior leadership team. In terms of demographics, the institution is multiracial and multilingual, hosting students from various races, cultures, and linguistic groups from all over the world. The medium of instruction is English, and the institution is technology-driven, requiring every student to learn and engage through an online student portal. Students must be computer literate or acquire the skill upon enrolment. The institution also offers various clubs and societies to enrich the student experience. The Academic Student Experience department provides academic support, along with extra-curricular and wellness programmes, to enhance the well-being of registered students.

The institution operates 12 campuses across South Africa, located in Bedfordview, Bloemfontein, Claremont, Tyger Valley, Durban, East London, Midrand, Mbombela, Potchefstroom, Nelson Mandela Bay, Pretoria, and Vanderbijlpark. At the time of data generation for this study in 2023, the Durban campus had nine second-year English Literature students. I serve as the sole English literature lecturer on this campus. Together with my students, and with the support of the institution, we designed a dedicated English Literature venue tailored for our sessions. The data for this study were generated in this venue during English literature lectures with all nine second-year students. Data generation occurred between February 2023 and April 2023.

As a lecturer at this private HEI, the teaching methodology for English Literature is not prescribed. However, there is an abundance of training and development programmes for lecturers, but no singular compulsory method. The prescribed texts for English literature studies at this institution are designed by a national content writer for each English literature module (levels 1, 2, 3). The national content writer is a subject-specific expert who designs the content in line with the accreditation criteria. As a result, lecturers do not choose the prescribed texts; instead, they have the freedom to determine how to impart the content. Lecturers can conduct classes in specialist venues, during field trips, outside in the nearby park, or via an online mode of delivery.

Lecturers actively contribute to the content and design of the module through weekly Communities of Practice (COP) meetings, aimed at improving module content and aligning it with the evolving needs of the English Literature discipline. They are also free to design their own homework assignments and in-class activities at their discretion. Over my more than ten years of service at this institution, I have fully utilised these opportunities to teach and enhance English Literature content. It was because of this freedom that I felt a SEL-infused English literature curriculum could work within the boundaries and expectations of the SAQA descriptor for the BA degree, satisfying both the exit-level outcomes prescribed by SAQA (n.d.) and the learning outcomes of the English Literature 2 module:

1. Demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of the core literary and contextual information communicated in the prescribed texts and recommended reading material, as well as via computer-facilitated learning.
2. Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of different forms of knowledge and explanation as they apply to literary texts.
3. Demonstrate an ability to identify, analyse, critically reflect on and address specific analytical, argumentative or discursive approaches in the writing of both short-form and long-form responses.

4. Demonstrate an ability to develop appropriate methods of information gathering based on specific contextual knowledge and analytical criteria and evaluate and manage this information in order to be synthesised and presented in essay responses.

5. Demonstrate an informed understanding of the core literary and contextual information communicated in the module guide, prescribed texts and recommended reading material as well as via computer-facilitated learning. This will include an understanding of and an ability to apply the key terms, concepts, thematic concerns and characterisations within each text.

6. Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of different forms of knowledge and explanations as they apply to literary texts, progressing from a basic foundational knowledge in Block 1 to a more complex application in Block 2.

The emotional value of studying English literature is often implicit, even though broader skills associated with the welfare of general society are the exit level outcomes for BA students who study English literature as a major module in their degree (SAQA, 2021). This study explored an often-overlooked learning outcome of the English Literature lecture room: the potential for students to engage with elements within literary texts as a framework to discuss social, emotional, and even political concerns. These discussions are often prompted by the events, relationships, and characters depicted in the literary texts studied.

In this study, five prescribed literary texts were considered. The first text, by William Shakespeare (2003), is a play about a Prince of Denmark who has to avenge his father's death by committing murder, and this play explores thematic concerns of revenge, existence, mortality, religion, and consciousness. The second literary text, *Dr. Faustus*, by Christopher Marlowe (1995), is a play about a physician and scholar who is bored and wants to explore non-traditional forms of knowledge. He dabbles in alchemy and makes a deal with the devil that leads to his tragic demise at the end of the play. Thematic concerns around tragedy and morality are explored. The third text is the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen (2001). This is a story about a young couple from different social classes who meet and navigate complex social terrain in

order to help each other find love and eventually get married. Thematic concepts include romantic ideals, pride, prejudice, marriage, and class. The fourth literary text is *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë (2012). This is a novel about an orphan who falls in love with his step-sister, who in turn loves him, but their individual socio-economic status and goals prevent them from marrying each other, resulting in generational misery. The themes explored are place, gender, and othering. The fifth literary text is the play *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith (1926). This is a play about a suitor visiting his potential in-laws' home, and having been tricked by his prospective brother-in-law, the suitor is under the impression that the home is actually an inn. His prospective wife also pretends to be someone she is not in order to vet her suitor's character. The play explores themes such as industrialisation, class, and mistakes and deception.

1.5 Overview of key studies dealing with the topic

This study draws upon and builds on various research studies. However, the following studies have been identified and examined as key studies that shaped this research. To answer the research questions, the study explored three main aspects: role-play, narrative empathy, and SEL.

For role-play, foundational research on role-theory (Mead, 1934), play theory (Piaget, 1951) and psychodrama (Moreno & Zelany, 1958) was used to expand the application of role-play beyond drama and performance studies. A variety of studies on the use of drama in education and role-play in learning were utilised in this research. The most significant reference is to Dorothy Heathcote's foundational work in *Drama in Education* (Wagner, 1976), along with several important studies on the use of role-play in teaching and learning (Athiemoolam, 2018; Koushki, 2019; Pillay, 2021; Torrico, 2015).

With regard to narrative empathy, foundational research was conducted on the concept of 'empathy' and how it psychologically developed (Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2018; Ganczarek et al., 2018; Stansfield & Bunce, 2014). The theory of narrative empathy was based on the studies by Suzanne Keen (2006, 2013a). A variety of studies on the use of empathic experiences from reading to produce pro-social

behaviour were also covered (Green & Brock, 2000; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Ndlovu, 2019; Nussbaum, 1991; Oatley, 1999; Pillay & Wassermann, 2017).

The social and emotional theoretical framework of this study was formulated from four domains. Emotional intelligence research (Bar-On, 2010; Brackett, 2019; Goleman, 1996; Salovey & Meyer, 1990) marked the movement that birthed SEL; the CASEL 5 framework (CASEL, n.d.) provided the competencies this study aimed to teach in order to nurture a socially and emotionally conscious individual; reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1982, 1998) examined how SEL could be integrated within the theoretical domain of literature learning; and SEL in teaching and learning (Durlak et al., 2021; Elias, 2019; Marsay, 2019, 2020 a&b, 2022; McCarthy, 2021; Stocker & Gallagher, 2019) which were studies that explored SEL for education and development.

While these studies are explored in detail in the literature review and theoretical framework, they are mentioned here to contextualise the research related to the topic of this thesis.

1.6 Objectives and research questions

The objectives of this study were to:

- 1) Explore how role-play and role-playing extracts from English literary texts support empathic behaviour in students studying literature at a South African HEI.
- 2) Understand what SEL skills students studying literature at a South African HEI learn from narrative empathy.
- 3) Explore the importance of South African students of literature being empowered with SEL.

This thesis sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do role-play and role-playing extracts from English literary texts support empathic behaviour in students studying literature at a South African HEI?
- 2) What SEL skills do students studying literature at a South African HEI learn from narrative empathy?
- 3) What is the role of SEL for South African students of literature?

1.7 Overview of the research process

To address the questions outlined above, a formal academic research process was undertaken.

This study employed the critical interpretivist paradigm to underpin the way the knowledge generated from this study was studied and interpreted. Interpretive research is used to examine complex human behaviour and social phenomena (De Villers, 2005). By raising criticality within the research, the study explores how the participants' creative engagement with the literary texts under scrutiny "entices the participants to reconsider taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs" (Pozzebon, 2004, p. 285) and subsequently examines the changed attitudes of the participants. To honour the emotional complexities of my participants' responses, I chose a qualitative research approach (Gonzales & Rincones, 2013). Qualitative research focuses on the direct experiences of individuals as meaning-making subjects in a research study. The research design of this study is Action Research (AR), which is a systematic and cyclical inquiry focused on improving practice (Hine, 2013). Five AR cycles were conducted, with each cycle exploring a single social and emotional competency (SEC) while studying a different literary text. There were five social and emotional competencies and five literary texts for study.

Each cycle produced data from all the data generation strategies chosen for this study: open-ended questionnaires, observation and field notes, research diaries, writing tasks, and autophotography. These strategies were employed to generate the data that were analysed in the Findings chapters.

Ethical clearance was obtained from both the private HEI where the data were generated and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) prior to data collection. Once approval was granted, participants were recruited for the study. They were thoroughly informed of the ethical requirements, including informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, and the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

These aspects will be discussed in greater detail in the Methodology chapter.

1.8 Researcher's stance

In using the first-person voice in this study, I am declaring that I am acting externally while also being present in the field with my participants, so that any subjective influence of the study and/or implications of bias can be contextually interpreted (Qin, 2006). The participants were guided by me in my dual role as lecturer and researcher. In facilitating the AR cycles, it was important for me to ensure that my participants were comfortable and that I was accessible enough to assist them with the various activities. This level of comfort allowed the participants to express what they wanted and did not want as each cycle progressed. By the end of certain cycles, they expressed a desire for more of one activity while rejecting another formal aspect of a different activity; by the end of another activity, certain SEL concepts became clearer for them while the context for me also became clearer.

As someone who was involved in a prison project in 2009 in a drama module within my Honours programme at UKZN's Drama and Performance Studies department, I felt first-hand the sensitivity and delicate nature of working with vulnerable individuals using theatre methods.

An effective strategy that was implemented involved a group of drama students assigned to work with female inmates, supervised by a lecturer. This experience taught me the nature of stance while researching. Being an outsider who was trying to be sensitive to the experiences of the inmates while also using my subjectivity to work with them was fascinating and proved useful in this study. It was an experience that nurtured and conditioned my approach to using role-play and theatre methods as dialogue with vulnerable individuals.

Within this study, my position as both lecturer and researcher may have impacted the participants' experiences. I could tell when they displayed expressions of confusion, and I would approach them to clarify the task and help them along the way. I had known these participants for over a year, as they were now second-year students at the time of data generation. As their lecturer, I was familiar with their expressions and behaviours.

Although these participants had been acquainted with each other for over a year, it was important for me to remember that they were now working with vulnerable aspects of themselves, using their bodies, voices, memories, and ideologies. I had to ensure that we were all respectful and attentive to each other's role-plays rather than being judgemental. I needed to ensure that we were all patient with each other's re-telling of difficult developmental experiences during the narrative empathy discussion sessions.

1.9 Delimitations

This study has certain delimitations. While some lectures are conducted online, this study did not examine the use of SEL in the context of online learning. I have chosen not to explore the use of SEL online as it is not within my scope of interest. I wanted to investigate the possibilities of live, face-to-face embodied learning of the SEL competencies; therefore, SEL in an online mode of delivery was not explored.

The literature that was not reviewed in detail included an extensive overview of all drama in education strategies and theatre in education teaching methodologies. The focus of this research was on role-play and narrative empathy. Including extensive research on drama in education or theatre in education would have delved into an area that was not explicitly utilised in the SEL-Lit model of learning proposed by this study.

Another aspect of the literature that was not covered was a literary analysis of each of the five texts studied by the participants. This was because conducting a literary analysis did not address the research questions. The research questions specifically focused on SEC acquisition from role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions regarding the texts being studied, rather than on how text analysis alone, without the role-play and narrative empathy activities, could produce the SECs.

I intentionally excluded the participation of first-year and third-year English literature students. The first-year students were new to the institution and HE in general; therefore, expecting them to engage in a research study that could potentially make them vulnerable while they were already trying to acclimatise to a new way of learning was not something I wanted to do. The third-year students were focused on their

work-integrated learning module and a year-long research paper, and their inconsistent presence on campus would have been difficult to manage for this study.

1.10 Outline of chapters

This thesis comprises 12 chapters.

Chapter 1 outlines the research background, purpose, problem, objectives, questions, stance, delimitations, and an overview of the research process.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the origin, overview, and use of teaching and learning role-play and narrative empathy.

Chapter 3 explores the theoretical dimensions of the research, including the origin, literature, and uses of SEL globally and in South Africa.

Chapter 4 describes the methodology used and unpacks the research paradigm, approach, design, and data analysis of the study.

Chapter 5 provides the findings from the pre-study questionnaire, which examined the role-play, empathy, and SEL proficiencies of the participants before the five cycles were conducted.

Chapter 6 explores the analysis and findings of cycle 1 of the study, where social awareness was investigated through role-play and narrative empathy activities in the study of the play *Hamlet*, written by William Shakespeare.

Chapter 7 explores the analysis and findings of cycle 2 of the study, where self-awareness was examined through role-play and narrative empathy activities in the study of the play *Dr Faustus*, written by Christopher Marlowe.

Chapter 8 explores the analysis and findings of cycle 3 of the study where relationship skills was explored from role-play and narrative empathy activities in the study of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* written by Jane Austen.

Chapter 9 explores the analysis and findings of cycle 4 of the study where responsible decision-making was explored from role-play and narrative empathy activities in the study of the novel *Wuthering Heights* written by Emily Brontë.

Chapter 10 explores the analysis and findings of cycle 5 of the study, where self-management was investigated through role-play and narrative empathy activities in the study of the play *She Stoops to Conquer*, written by Oliver Goldsmith.

Chapter 11 provides the findings from the post-study questionnaire, which offered cumulative feedback from the participants regarding their learning of role-play, narrative empathy, and SEL from the five cycles in which they participated.

Chapter 12 serves as the conclusion chapter, summarising the main findings and assessing the implications of the study. It also discusses the contributions of the study.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter, which reviews the literature relevant to this study, consists of two sections. The first section examines the origin and development of role-play, its function in teaching and learning, the use of role-play for teaching and learning social and emotional skills in South Africa, its application in sectors beyond English education, and the importance of role-play for the social and emotional development of adults. The second section explores the origin and development of narrative empathy, its function in teaching and learning, empathic teaching and learning in South Africa, its application in sectors beyond English education, and the importance of narrative empathy for the social and emotional development of adults.

2.2 Role-play

2.2.1 Origin and development of role-play

A considerable amount of seminal literature has been published on role-theory (Mead, 1934) and play theory (Piaget, 1951), which are the foundational theories of role-play. It is important for this study to unpack these originating theories in order to understand the timeline of role-play's origins as established within social science (role-theory), its development as a phenomenon in psychological practice (play theory), and finally its application as an educational approach (role-play). The contextualisation of role-theory and play theory is crucial to understanding how the pro-social origins of these concepts may provide SEL benefits when role-play is utilised as a teaching tool in the lecture room.

A rudimentary understanding of role-theory in social science examines structures, behaviours, and cultural norms related to the roles people adopt to represent specific social orders within a society, such as the roles of a mother, daughter, grandfather, or teacher, among many others (Jackson, 1998). A more developed definition of role-theory has become increasingly complex to establish over time due to the varying

interpretations by scholars with field-specific applications that differ greatly from one another (Biddle, 1986).

Role-theory was used in different disciplines for various purposes, which explains the disparate meanings of role-theory that have prevailed until Biddle's comprehensive United States (US) study (1986) highlighted the dominant five perspectives of role-theory: functional role-theory (the behaviours of people who fulfil social roles), symbolic interactional role-theory (the development of roles through social interaction), structural role-theory (a mathematically expressed theory on role relationships), organisational role-theory (the roles in formal organisations), and cognitive role-theory (relationships between role expectations and behaviour). Biddle's codification into these five perspectives exhibits the multi-disciplinary value of role-theory. These five perspectives showcase the various disciplines in which role-theory is used.

The definition most applicable to this research will be located in symbolic interactional role-theory, as this study focuses on exploring SEL between individuals who share an educational spatial context. Symbolic interactional role-theory emerged from the symbolic interaction field (Mead, 1934), which concentrated on how social interactions between people symbolise meanings that are determined by those involved in the interaction process. The seminal American work on meaning-making by Mead (1934) is fundamental to this study on the development of the student-self in a lecture room, emphasising the evolution of the social and emotional self within the English literature lecture room.

Mead's (1934) work *Mind, Self, and Society* marked the inception of using perspective-sharing as a means to understand how the self and the mind function within the context of society. He noted that "it is the task of not only the actor but of the artist as well to find the sort of expression that will arouse in others what is going on in himself" (Mead, 1934, p. 147). This early reference to 'acting' or role-playing as a form of precursive aptitude for perspective sharing highlights the relevance of Mead's work in the formation of what is popularly known as "role-play". Moreover, Mead's exploration of how a sense of self emerges from both a person's mind and

the surrounding social environment is fundamental to understanding the development of role-theory.

Important to self-development, Mead (1934) noted that the social conditions in childhood, such as children and their attitudes toward play, allowed “the self-conscious human individual to assume the organised social attitudes of the given social group or community” (p. 156). Mead (1934) found that a child’s social environment was imitated during symbolic play. The beginnings of role-theory can be found in the cognitive development of the child during play, where the simulation of adult roles teaches superficial perspective sharing at a young age.

Mead’s work on the origin of perspective sharing, from the child imitating behaviours around them to the adult who will eventually assume a social role, is one of the founding ideas of role-theory that led to scholars like Biddle (1986), who succinctly orientated the idea of role-theory as “patterned and characteristic social behaviours, parts or identities that are assumed by social participants, and scripts or expectations for behaviour that are understood by all and adhered to by performers” (Biddle, 1986, p. 68). This symbolic interactionist definition of role-theory dominates all other definitions for this study, since the meaning-making that occurs between students during critical text discussion in the English literature lecture room is central to the development of the student self during learning.

Thus, role-theory is located in the social script of a particular environment, partly in the domain of children imitating the language and behaviour of what they see around them during symbolic play (Piaget, 1951). Symbolic play is where the ability to mirror, repeat, and practice the actions of others, either immediately or later in life, is a key concept in the development of cognition and pragmatic learning (Piaget, 1951). It is at this point that role-theory and play theory connect in social science, where the learned roles of society are practiced through symbolic play by children during ludic or spontaneous play, underpinned by the work on play theory by Jean Piaget (1951). Symbolic play is also where children use objects or actions to symbolise other objects or actions they see around them (Piaget, 1951). Piaget’s focus on symbolic play is critical in the history of cognitive development because it highlights how children learn by experimenting with behaviours they observe during symbolic play.

Piaget states that play consists of six criteria (Piaget, 1951), namely: *autotelism* – a self-contained activity that has a purpose in itself and requires no external gratification; *spontaneity* – a willingness to engage in an activity; *pleasure* – a ludic activity focused on spontaneity and fun; *lack of organisation* – a play activity that lacks structured organisation; *freedom from conflict* – a play activity that has no friction; and *over-motivation* – an attention to detail in the excitement of performing the activity. These criteria for play are important to consider in the realm of social education because Piaget's play theory demonstrates how a person retains knowledge from infancy to young adulthood. It is in this stage of experimenting with social stimuli via symbolic play that the development of early language and pragmatic behaviour learning has been studied (Ha, 2022). It is at this very young age that play for social understanding occurs in the young child's mind.

Play theory concerns itself with assimilation (Piaget, 1951), which is the blending of previous knowledge with new knowledge; this process continues during symbolic play. The freedom to explore knowledge stems from the autotelian state of play, which makes this simulated play safe, while the fun or ludic element is what makes it interesting to the young child's mind (Piaget, 1951). This symbolic play represents the early stages of learning through repetitive acts, or as Piaget (1951) referred to them, circular reactions. Circular reactions are the repetitive activities of infants that allow them to learn about their bodies, akin to the moments of play among children who imitate the adults in roles around them.

This repetition of movements, object-focused activities, or sound-specific activities is linked to the development of different language components, including phonetics, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics (Há, 2022). These repetitive acts may continue in adult education when emotionally conducive learning environments allow students to engage in their own learning through repetitive perspective-sharing in each learning context, including a literature lecture (Há, 2022). This experiential learning opportunity for adults, who bravely express a variety of views, provides a chance to experiment – similar to the way adult students did in childhood, but this time not with the body, but through circular interactions with the conscious voice in adult learning spaces (Buldu, 2022).

Building on Mead's (1934) and Piaget's (1951) work on the development of the self, observations of the developing child and the experimental adult in the learning space converge in the field of psychology. Romanian-American Jacob Moreno's innovative work (Moreno & Zelany, 1958) in psychodrama catapulted the separate states of role-theory and play theory into a central utilitarian concept known as role-play, which he utilised in clinical psychological treatment.

When role-play is used as a facilitation tool to resolve interpersonal conflict (conflict with another person), intrapersonal conflict (conflict with oneself), or intercultural conflict (conflict with a person from a different culture) during psychological evaluation, role-play transitions from a social science matter to psychotherapeutic theatre (Meisiek, 2004). Moreno's psychodrama revealed that each person's role is assigned by the society surrounding them. Moreno noted that "any consideration of a role must recognise that it is a system of interpersonal relationships in a group rather than the mere enacting of the expectations of one status" (Moreno & Zelany, 1958, p. 642). As role-play progressed in the sociological and psychological fields of research and practice, Moreno's work contributed to the efforts of scholars and psychologists who employed role-play to understand how roles function in society and as an exercise during therapy sessions with patients. Moreno's work paved the way for the use of role-play in group psychotherapy sessions (Giacomucci, 2021).

During the role-play group psychotherapy process, psychodrama helps individuals understand their perceptions of one another and themselves through perspective sharing (Schemer, 2015).

As a result, when an individual adopts a role, it provides opportunities to assume the perspectives of other people, groups, or cultures, which fosters an understanding of the individuals being portrayed and creates a preparatory space for more informed future responses to people who represent those individuals, groups, or cultures (Moreno, 1958). This perspective sharing that occurs during role-playing enhances self-awareness and social-awareness competence (CASEL, n.d.), which are crucial to the social and emotional development of the individuals involved in the role-play. Even though this study does not incorporate any psychodrama techniques in the literature lecture room, it is important to consider how central role-play was to

therapeutic practice and catharsis (Meisiek, 2004). This therapeutic origin may have a far-reaching social impact as a teaching tool in education, including in English Literature lecture rooms. The intricate process of how role-play functions as a perspective-teaching tool in psychodrama will be discussed hereafter.

Beginning at group psychotherapy,

The treatment of a group is based on sociodynamics that involve the interrelationships and interactions of the members of the group, not just the collection of individuals and their personal dynamics (Nolte, 2014 in Giacomucci, 2021 p. 33).

Moreno (1959) preferred treating patients in groups, as he believed that one person could serve as a therapeutic agent for another within this setting (Giacomucci, 2021). Moreno and Zelany (1959) believed in the group's ability to be self-directed during therapy sessions, where members worked together to support one another with the problems they collectively faced under the guidance of a therapist.

Understanding the patient dynamic in group psychotherapy, it is important to define what psychodrama entails. Psychodrama involves using role-play and a series of dramatic improvisations to demonstrate and explore known and unknown emotions, with the aim of clarifying psychological or sociological problems that individuals face (Ardoino, 1964). The type of role-play and dramatic improvisations that Moreno (1959) focused on was not rooted in the scripted tradition of drama but in a form of the improvised tradition that he coined as spontaneous theatre (Schemer, 2015), where there was no playwright and the dramatic scenes were entirely spontaneous. Spontaneity held great significance for Moreno, who believed it was a novel and effective tool for alleviating anxiety. The more anxious a person was, the less spontaneous they became in life; conversely, the more spontaneous a person was, the fewer limits they faced, which is why spontaneous theatre formed the dramatic foundation of his role-playing with patients (Schemer, 2015) – the limitations of the self in role-play were not imposed by the therapist but guided by them.

To conduct a psychodrama session, the five essential elements (Giacomucci, 2021) needed are *a stage* (for the role-play), *the protagonist* (the main patient group member

with a treatment goal), *the director* (therapist/group leader/director), *auxiliary egos* (staff members, students, actors, or group members who fill in the roles of subsidiary characters), and *the audience* (who observe the psychodrama and are also patients in the group). The psychodrama session occurs in three stages: the warm-up, enactment, and sharing (Giacomucci, 2021; Phoenix Trauma Center & Giacomucci, 2022).

In the *warm-up* stage, introductions are made and a sociometric reading of the group is conducted by the therapist/director to clarify the relationship dynamic within the patient group. This allows the therapist/director to identify patient relations and tensions within the group (Giacomucci, 2021). Then, explanations, examples, and theories are shared among the participants to initiate the warm-up session, as the psychodrama sessions involve emotional activities, necessitating that emotions be warmed up before engaging in cognitive, existential, and spiritual work (Schemer, 2015). Examples of warm-up games include body stretching, working with mime, or using the empty chair technique, where a patient can confront an individual not present by speaking to an empty chair, which symbolises the presence of the absent recipient of the confrontation (Giacomucci, 2021; Ardoino, 1964).

During the second stage, called *enactment*, the actual sharing of perspectives occurs through a role-play of the main conflict by the protagonist patient. Here, the themes or topics to be role-played will be suggested by the therapist-director after the sociometric assessment is completed (Ardoino, 1964) and subsequently decided upon by the group of patients. The protagonist patient acts out their role or perspective on the theme or topic, after which the therapist-director may instruct the protagonist to sit and watch while another group member enacts the same scene the protagonist has just performed. This role-reversal with someone else from the group is where the sharing of perspectives takes place.

The third and final stage is the *sharing stage*, where all group patients de-role and share their insights and observations from the role-play activity. It is not an advice-sharing session but rather what Moreno called '*love-back*' (Schemer, 2015) instead of feedback. The therapist-director can also participate in the sharing session while

maintaining boundaries, without any destructive behaviour concluding the session (Hollander, 2002).

Moreno's psychodrama and its psychotherapeutic outcomes via creative outlets like role-play have given theatre, and more specifically role-play, a cathartic reputation in the field of clinical psychology. When patients draw on negative experiences and actively relive them on stage through role-play, the participating patients can develop the creativity needed to find solutions through their own self-work (Meisiek, 2004).

The cathartic and educational roots of role-play in psychodrama represent a significant event in the timeline of role-play, where improving interpersonal relations was at the core of the treatment. Role-play has emerged as an effective learning tool for patients in clinical psychological treatment, gaining significant recognition in formal education as a valuable teaching and learning method beyond psychological contexts. Exploring the function of role-play in psychodrama provides deeper insights into its broader applications in education.

2.2.2 Role-play in teaching and learning

Moreno (1959) highlights that the concept of role-play entered the field of education as a methodology enabling teachers and students to explore various identities, behaviours, and perspectives by immersing themselves in the fictional world of an assigned or chosen character. Through role-play in the lecture room, students engage with different viewpoints, fostering self-awareness and a deeper understanding of the characters they portray. This process, in turn, enhances empathy among students (Adams & Mabusela, 2013). As a teaching methodology, role-play enables students to be active participants in the learning process. When an individual assumes a role, it provides opportunities to embody other people, groups, or cultures, leading to greater understanding and resulting in more informed future responses to real-life individuals who represent the people, groups, or cultures that were role-played (Moreno & Zelany, 1958).

Role-play in education is known by many names, such as acting, improvisation, drama, pretend play, and socio-drama, among others. It can be used for teaching literature, history, science, or for presenting complex social problems (Adams &

Mabusela, 2013). Role-play has the potential to be socially and emotionally valuable for a variety of educational purposes, and its educational impact is significant across a range of disciplines and levels.

As discussed earlier regarding the complexities of defining role-play (Biddle, 1986), the term lacks a precise, universally agreed-upon definition (Abdessallam et al., 2023). Role-play encompasses a wide range of practices in contemporary contexts, including drama, games (both online and offline), and simulations. Its diverse applications across various industries make its definition highly context-dependent (Li et al., 2024). Consequently, in the context of this study, “role-play occurs when someone acts out a role in order to create a piece of drama” (O’Sullivan et al., 2015, cited in Riain et al., 2017, p. 1). Role-play required my participants to engage in a performance to represent a specific human role or character from the prescribed literary text being studied (Idham et al., 2022).

Global studies examining the use of role-play for teaching and learning cover a variety of topics and purposes within the learning environment. Central to the realm of role-play in education is the work of Dorothy Heathcote, a pioneer in the field of Drama in Education (D.I.E.). D.I.E. utilises methods of role-play, characterisation, and world-building in the classroom to teach students syllabus content using performing arts techniques (Wagner, 1976). Among the many popular D.I.E. techniques developed by Heathcote were two well-known approaches called the mantle of the expert and using role in teaching.

In the *mantle of the expert*, students learn about a topic through an imaginary scenario created in the classroom. The students are given professional roles to play in a make-believe workforce, and the teacher acts as an enabling figure who relinquishes the role of know-it-all to become part of the imaginary world as well, subtly encouraging students to question their environment while engaging with it, prompting them to take action whilst in role (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985). The students pretend to be experts in a certain field who must take on the responsibility of solving a challenge together. The professional persona the students adopt allows them to learn how to engage with one another and build the confidence to handle various situations and scenarios, enabling them to “explore the affairs of humankind” (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985, p.

180) collaboratively. In the next technique, the use of *role in teaching* involves the teacher playing a character related to the content or topic being taught to evoke heightened emotion in the classroom surrounding the lesson at hand. The teacher alternates between roles, maintaining the character to elicit a reaction, then stepping out of role to listen to the students' comments with distance and objectivity (Wagner, 1976).

Heathcote's aforementioned techniques and the legacy of her work thrive in the twenty-first century classroom, as role-play is widely used in an array of teaching and learning environments due to the notoriety and accessibility of her work in drama in education. Role-play is commonly used in language learning classrooms, and a study in Boston, United States of America, revealed how role-play helped young language learners develop their phonetics and the pragmatics of language learning (Há, 2022) by role-playing the words to learn. Similarly, a United Kingdom (UK) study involved a secondary school language class that utilised role-play to maximise motivation to speak and interact in the language class (Cockett, 2022). Role-play is particularly suited for language learning classes because the oral/speaking segment of these lessons is enhanced by the pragmatics that underpin role-play, making it a functional tool for teaching a language through students speaking it.

Keezhatta (2020) found that the use of role-play in teaching a class of undergraduate English language students in Saudi Arabia was an effective approach, as it helped transform their "un-inspiring learning atmosphere" (Keezhatta, 2020, p. 550) into a contemporary and engaging environment. This shift allowed the tedious traditional style of language teaching to be enhanced by the interpersonal dialogue and communication required by role-play activities. The ability of role-play to help students cognitively engage with syllabus content in sometimes monotonous learning environments is further supported by Buldu (2022), who found that role-play stimulates the cognitive aspects of child learning. An important finding from this study was that the deep learning experience arising from role-play's practical nature enables children to express their needs and curiosities about life during their real-life pretend play experiences (Buldu, 2022). Additionally, role-play provided experiential learning opportunities for early childhood teachers who needed to hone their imagination activation skills to keep their young students stimulated (Buldu, 2022).

The experiential learning element highlighted in both studies demonstrates role-play's ability to spark imagination in challenging learning environments. Role-play makes educational experiences active, playful, and social (Aura et al., 2023), bringing an element of experience and practicality to learning for both undergraduate language learners and early childhood student teachers.

The trend of using role-play in English language learning is also evident in English literature studies, which is the main focus of this research. The use of role-play in the English literature lecture room allows students to bring fictional worlds to life by embodying the characters and scenarios from their prescribed texts. An Irish study (Riain et al., 2017) commended the use of role-play in the English literature lecture room, where students enacted scenes from a folk-tale short story.

The study lauded the use of role-play in a literature lecture room, where students derived more than just text comprehension from their experiences. These students discovered that role-play extended beyond merely conveying the main message of the story; they successfully enabled the role-played fable to resonate within a modern context. The complex moments in the story became easily comprehensible thanks to the role-play. For these students, role-play transformed the passive activity of reading into an active and creative experience (Rian et al., 2017). I find this study closely linked to the role-play intentions for the participants in my study, who brought their prescribed texts to life by role-playing scenes on their own terms, allowing them to explore the social and emotional aspects of the characters being portrayed.

A study from Kuwait (Koushki, 2019) found that the use of role-playing in literary novels and fairy tales produced profound learning outcomes that transcended narrative comprehension. I consider this study valuable for highlighting the range of presentation and public speaking skills that role-play activities offer participants. Although not a HE study, Koushki's (2019) research focused on the "multiple intelligences" (p. 142) that role-play offered the students involved.

Students seemed to exercise interpersonal skills from working with others, critically thinking about ways to make the narrative accessible and visual to an audience while also being involved in production work. The students remained in a state of flow and

fascination because the role-playing activity was new and “spellbinding” (Koushki, 2019, p. 140). Role-play, in this context, provided more than just the intended value of text comprehension; it also allowed these students to learn new production-making skills.

Rao and Stupans (2012) conducted a detailed study in Australia that highlighted why role-play is often successful in HE. They attributed its success to its activation of three key domains of educational activity: cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude) and psychomotor (skills) (p. 432). These domains were similarly identified as a defining feature of role-play in a Finnish study by Silius-Ahonen and Gustavson (2012). The Finnish study found that role-play transcended its functional and learning outcome value, offering participants unexpected benefits.

In the Finnish study, students training to become social pedagogues, physiotherapists, nurses, and sports instructors role-played scenarios derived from scientific articles, performed for their peers, and were assessed on both the role-play and the subsequent reflection process. This assessment method was celebrated for demonstrating that role-play was not only effective in achieving lesson outcomes but also provided additional value. The researchers noted that “Drama pedagogy offers tools, conventions and narratives to promote imaginative thinking and aesthetic elaboration” (Silius-Ahonen & Gustavson, 2012, p. 441). Beyond preparing these students for collaborative communication in workplace environments, role-play also fostered their ability to think creatively. It is particularly noteworthy that role-play had such a profound impact on workplace skills in non-drama and non-artistic undergraduate settings. Engaging the voice and body in collaboration with a group of strangers is often a challenging task for individuals.

Several studies (Silius-Ahonen & Gustavson, 2012; Keezhatta, 2020; Riain et al., 2017) highlight the initial anxieties participants experienced at the start of the role-play process. However, these anxieties were overcome through the supportive and safe environment created by drama pedagogy, enabling students to complete the role-plays successfully.

As a result of potential nervous tendencies that may arise at the start of the role-playing venture, it is important to remember that asking students to participate in role-play activities cannot be simply given as an instruction. Students cannot access their imaginations or hidden emotional states at the behest of a teacher or lecturer; rather, the role-playing process creates an environment that serves as a safe space for creativity (Stephenson, 2023). This is why role-play was chosen for use in SEL in this study. How role-play creates a safe SEL environment is by focusing on the concept of 'play,' which is explained hereafter.

Play is preceded by an environment conducive to creative and experiential learning. The term 'creative' refers to the opportunity to respond to a moment in a way that is not repetitive of what has always been done before; it encompasses the chance to be divergent and innovative in one's response to familiar or new phenomena (Brackett, 2019). Experiential learning involves students actively participating in their learning and physically engaging with the content (Kolb, 1984). Only when this creative climate is established and students feel comfortable and safe enough to share their experiences and express themselves using their voices and bodies is the atmosphere ready for play.

The state of play is achieved when the *exotelic* (external gratification) aim of impressing an audience or the student 'performer' seeking applause from spectators is relinquished in favour of *autotelic* (self-contained activity needing no external validation) and *ludic* (fun and spontaneous) experiences that accompany role-play activities (Piaget, 1951). This rejection of external validation and emphasis on spontaneity must be explicitly conveyed to the students by the teacher or lecturer. The objective of impressing an audience is then renounced, rendering the learning environment autotelic and, consequently, safe for making mistakes and learning from them (Junior, 2012). The student role-players then explore the content on their own terms, making the exploration of the content ludic and thereby establishing play, as there are no real-world repercussions associated with the role-play about to commence (Junior, 2012).

Role-play offers students a variety of skills, including the ability to remember statistics, content, and emotions they experience (Kilgour et al., 2015). Role-play stimulates

active participation and often motivates players to craft their own narratives or characters, creating an experiential learning atmosphere (Li et al., 2024). As a result, role-play becomes a valuable training tool for social and emotional situations because it is as crucial to preparing social science professionals as laboratory space is for preparing natural science professionals (Chen & Martin, 2014).

The studies reviewed thus far on the use of role-play in teaching and learning at different educational levels and across various faculties worldwide reveal that the perspective sharing, collaboration skills, real-world simulation, creative thinking, personal awareness, multiple intelligence development, and experiential learning that occur during the role-play process have proven to be valuable for preparing students for vocational experiences. Consequently, role-play is recommended for use in HE lecture rooms globally due to the range of practical and personal skills it can provide students. How and whether these skills are present in South African education studies of role-play, both past and present, will now be reviewed.

2.2.3 The use of role-play for teaching and learning social and emotional skills in South Africa

The value of role-play for teaching and learning social and emotional skills to South African students is an important consideration especially during a time when emotional hostility prevails in South Africa from the effects of the pandemic, floods, infrastructural failings (Marsay et al., 2021) and other socio-political challenges in a country under crisis. As Bouchard et al. (2023) notes:

People living in South Africa are already disproportionately exposed to traumatic events that are likely to result in PTSD including sexual assault, domestic violence, hijacking and robbery. Against this backdrop those exposed to flooding events may be more vulnerable to adverse psychological outcomes (p. 238)

A worldwide study (Marsay et al., 2021) revealed that South African educators believe their students experience numerous behavioural problems, and that improved emotional management could foster a more positive learning environment. The reasons for these behavioural issues are linked to the connection between disaster

exposure and deteriorating mental health (Jewkes et al., 2023). Furthermore, the institutionalised colonial apartheid system established a framework of inequity that is deeply embedded in the country's historically racially segregated services, which continue to manifest in non-apartheid South Africa today (Bouchard et al., 2023). As a result of South Africa's complex socio-political landscape and frequent municipal dysfunction, students face a myriad of social and emotional challenges.

Role-play for social skills development in South African educational spaces has been used as an experiential learning tool for a myriad of active learning experiences in the country over the past two centuries. It has created awareness around HIV/AIDS (Dalrymple, 2005, 2006), assisted students with special needs (Adams & Mabusela, 2013), raised awareness among students about teenage pregnancy (Taylor et al., 2012), helped prison inmates with expressions of power (Young-Jahangeer, 2005, 2007), served as an activity in drama education syllabi to resist our colonised past (Pillay, 2021), and been employed as a tool for teaching science (Braund & Ahmed, 2018; Braund et al., 2015).

Findings from these studies indicate that the use of role-play in teaching social skills in South Africa is not new and has been in the secondary and HE space for years.

Preliminary work on the use of role-play "as an applied problem-solving arts practice" for South Africans (Athiemoolam, 2021, p. 163) can be found in the work of Dalrymple. Dalrymple's (2005, 2006) work focused on creating awareness around HIV/AIDS contraction through her organisation called DramAidE (Dalrymple, 2005). DramAidE's focus was twofold, drama workshops and educational theatre:

By a drama workshop we mean an interactive participatory workshop that includes games, different kinds of role-plays and reflection on the theme of the workshop. By educational theatre we mean plays that are devised and presented by young people or community members for their peers. These are sketches rather than plays and usually include songs and dances that reinforce the message of the plays (Dalrymple, 2005, p.163).

Dalrymple's work in DramAidE, which created awareness around HIV/AIDS transmission by collaborating with the community and university students, highlighted drama and theatre practices as not just performing arts but also as a form of social science communication. This approach aimed to address and fulfil "health education and environmental education needs for young people" (Dalrymple, 2006, p. 202). Applied theatre practices became an important tool in shifting the behaviour of young people regarding various issues, such as drug abuse and unsafe sex, among many other social ills in South Africa (Dalrymple, 2006).

Another study (Doesebs, 1998) examined the social skills development that role-play could foster in rural villages in KwaZulu-Natal. The drama researcher and scholar of this study, who referred to herself as a community activist, detailed the vulnerable environment she entered to help the villagers navigate social challenges by creating role-plays focused on communal issues faced by the villagers, who also acted in them. This project was governed by the South African Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which aimed to rebuild all aspects of South African life in the wake of the destruction wrought by the apartheid government. The study concluded with a strong message for all government leaders, asserting that it would take more than an isolated project; rather, it would require years of reflection, expression, and social work projects to address the injustices of the past. Furthermore, it cautioned against superficial changes that are unlikely to be sustainable (Doesebs, 1998). This study served as a cautionary tale for any arts practitioner intending to enter communities with romantic notions of remedying social ills through role-play in under-resourced and poverty-stricken areas without a team of diverse and competent individuals. Despite the study being completed and a fieldworker guide being provided to the community activist, the guide was insufficient, as it did not fully understand the nature of the artistic intention and was not consistently present during the activities. This left the community activist/researcher seeking cultural counsel and feeling isolated at various stages of the project.

Young-Jahangeer's work in theatre for development created personal empowerment opportunities for incarcerated individuals in Westville Prison (2005) and in site-specific performance art pieces in a market. These initiatives raised awareness about the contraction of HIV/AIDS through an art installation and a live production piece (2007).

Another vulnerable group in South Africa is young female teenagers. One study (Taylor et al., 2012) demonstrated the use of role-play to educate Grade 8 students in a rural KwaZulu-Natal high school about unplanned teenage pregnancy. The study illustrated how learners participated in role-plays that explored themes such as choice, self-respect, emotional abuse, partner coercion/negotiation regarding sex, and HIV testing, among many other issues related to sexual education (Taylor et al., 2012). It showed potential for role-play to build self-efficacy among the participants; however, the findings revealed that many social programmes face obstacles. In this case, the patriarchal environment in which the young females lived severely limited their agency over their bodies and their ability to use their voices for independent thinking, which was a significant barrier to developing their sexual consciousness. This study highlights an important gap: while there is value in addressing isolated social concerns, such as teenage pregnancy, through role-play, it is crucial to provide these young teenagers with comprehensive social and emotional education that may address more than just the targeted issue. While role-play activities teach 'model behaviour' (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 446), there remains a gap in overall social and emotional education.

In the context of the above study, integrating social and emotional education into the role-play scenario could further support teenagers by helping them understand how patriarchal norms within their community shape behaviours among both males and females. It is equally important for young teenagers to recognise that, at their age, they are experiencing changes in both cerebral structures and physical development, which contribute to more complex emotional experiences (Castillo-Gualda et al., 2023). These changes may lead to unconscious sexual activity, emphasising the importance of combining role-play with social and emotional education. This approach is particularly crucial for school implementation during the psychologically transformative phase of early high school.

At the high school level, there are many social and emotional experiences to adapt to, which present challenging terrain for teenagers (Vostanis et al., 2022). Homophobia and bullying are among these challenges, as evidenced by two role-play intervention studies conducted in Johannesburg. The first study focused on building tolerance towards homosexuality at a school through role-play workshops (Junior,

2012). The findings reveal that role-play effectively created a sense of empathy towards homosexuals who experience homophobia, due to the role-playing technique that stimulated this kind of empathic reflection among participants. The reflective ability that role-play offered these teenagers is significant, and the outcome of perspective sharing from role-play activities was also noted in many global studies, indicating that perspective sharing is a common and underrated skill gained from such activities. Another study centred on bullying (Brandt, 2020), which involved teachers reflecting on their bullying experiences and participating in role-plays focused on bullying scenarios. This encouraged the ability to act in such situations and promote empathy within their classrooms. The study found that while the role-plays enabled teacher participants to visually and viscerally recognise that bullying is a product of power dynamics, both studies reveal that there remains a considerable need for empathy education in schools. Although these role-play activities highlight scenarios addressing the challenges of homophobia and bullying, there is still a need to teach empathy-building skills both in the classroom and on the playground. SEL provides a focus on empathy in the social awareness competency (Bridgeland et al., 2013).

In recent years, several critical studies by Athiemoolam (2018, 2021, 2022) in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, have revealed the importance of providing education students at universities with social justice knowledge through drama pedagogy. Athiemoolam's work focuses on using tableaux, improvisation scenes, and role-plays from the ten units of theory in the teacher education class to simulate the socio-political context in which these students will one day teach, as he found value in simulating embodied learning through critical engagement and reflective thinking of the theoretical content via role-plays (Athiemoolam, 2022). Athiemoolam's work in this compulsory third-year module serves as a model for university education departments, which should recognise the value of using role-play to promote social justice education (Athiemoolam, 2021), as the simulative ability of role-play to embody the social justice knowledge desired in a transformed South African classroom is realised in this module.

The cited studies highlight the need to understand South African education in terms of its oppressive history (Pillay, 2021), where classroom environments are riddled with adversity due to the poverty and inequality of being a post-colonial society (Marsay,

2020b). This post-colonial state necessitates that South Africans be equipped with “advanced human skills, such as self-awareness, social awareness, interpersonal relationship skills, and effective communication skills” (Marsay et al., p. 3), which can be extrapolated from the pro-social possibilities within literature learning (Nussbaum, 1991) and the development of multiple intelligences derived from role-play (Koushki, 2019).

The South African studies specifically focusing on role-play for social and emotional skills education have highlighted various social issues, including HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, homosexuality, bullying, and a general awareness of our colonised past. However, there remains a gap in our overall understanding of what our emotions, coupled with our social environment, may signal for us on a daily basis. This is why SEL, encompassing its five competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making), was employed in conjunction with role-play activities to teach social and emotional skills in this study. Beyond the global and South African applications of role-play for teaching these skills, we will now review its use in sectors beyond English education.

2.2.4 Role-play use in sectors beyond English education

Beyond the parameters of the education discipline it is worth mentioning the value of role-play in sectors external to English education. Role-play assists in child psychiatry (Blatner, 1995), enterprise development (Josendal & Skarholt, 2007), management training (Gibb, 2004), legal studies (Waters, 2016; Howieson & Rogers, 2018), and in the training of health care staff (Bruggemann & Persson, 2016; Clapper, 2010).

Blatner (1995) asserts the value of role-play in preventative psychiatry involving children. When engaged in role-playing scenarios aimed at building interpersonal skills or developing spontaneity, children take on a wide range of roles that require them to adopt different perspectives in various situations. The findings indicated that the children involved in role-playing activities learned valuable skills, such as being a director or playwright, which were prized for their contribution to perspective-taking and exploring problems through imagination (Blatner, 1995, p. 1). Role-play, in this context, developed a child’s mental flexibility.

Josendal and Skarholt (2006) discuss how role-play was used to develop a company in Norway. The company aimed to create a play to help its employees understand the industrial challenges they faced. The recreation of specific workplace scenarios facilitated communication about significant issues within the company. By using role-play, employees performing on stage and management observing were able to engage in open discussions about business problems. This dramatic approach generated emotions and engagement with the real dramas they confronted in their everyday working lives. The performance contributed to the company's improvement, as the use of role-play evoked positive feelings that encouraged employees to learn from the actors and their messages on stage (Josendal & Skarholt, 2007).

Role-play also helped a group of managers in the UK learn to explore problems and develop solutions on a deep level (Gibb, 2004). Managers were involved in investigating problems and potential solutions via forum theatre (Boal, 1985). In forum theatre, participants are both actors and audience members who are required to actively engage in exploring the problem being role-played (Boal, 1985). The usual outcome is changed behaviour for both the performer and the audience member involved at the end of the forum theatre process, as both parties contribute to deciding on a solution to the problematic scenario being performed before them (Gibb, 2004, p. 748). This mode of training helped the managers-in-training to think and feel about what they observed, enabling them to behave differently and respond to the issues highlighted in the role-play.

Role-play was utilised in the legal studies lecture room in both the UK (Waters, 2016) and Australia (Howieson & Rogers, 2018). The former study illustrated the use of role-play to better understand the legal curriculum, build confidence skills in law students, and promote “safe lawyering” (Waters, 2016, p. 178). Similarly, in the latter study, role-play was employed for the preparation of legal professionals as an innovative method to teach legal practice while simultaneously improving workplace skills due to the collaborative nature of the form (Howieson & Rogers, 2018). Role-play can assist education not only in artistic and linguistic domains but also in non-humanities faculties

Role-play is also used in the medical sector. A Swedish study revealed how role-play was employed as a model for healthcare staff at a hospital clinic to prevent both staff from abusing patients and patients from abusing healthcare workers (Bruggemann & Persson, 2017). It was found that role-play “was found to increase staff awareness of abuse and their perceived ability to take action if they were witnesses to situations of abuse” (Bruggemann & Persson, 2016, p. 218). By watching, discussing, and role-playing situations at the hospital, the staff revealed that many of them had experienced abuse. Breaking the silence through these role-plays was one of the most important steps they took in preventing future abuse in the healthcare system (Bruggemann & Persson, 2016, p. 220). This study highlighted the significance of research in the medical field and demonstrated how role-play can benefit the healthcare sector by ensuring that care, alongside cure, prevails in the health care system (Goleman, 1996, p. 165).

In the United States of America, Clapper (2010) elaborates on the value of role-play for medical students, where the simulation of the patient and healthcare provider dynamic is beneficial to trainee medical professionals. By engaging in role-play scenarios first, they can avoid making mistakes on real patients. The study concluded with a plea to educational leaders to promote the value of role-play for widespread use across disciplines.

In parallel, a Turkish study (Horasen-Dogan & Cephe, 2020) assessed teachers in training before and after a creative drama workshop. The results revealed that the teachers exhibited an increased level of personal awareness and professional skills after the workshop, leading the study to advocate that teaching is a performing art and that teachers should learn acting skills as part of their training. Both the medical and education disciplines in HE have recognised the value of role-play, making it a significant component in lecture rooms. Lecturers are incorporating role-play into their lectures because it effectively teaches students how to respond to future experiences (Rossel, 2005) within their respective professional fields, thereby establishing role-play as a valuable tool for professionals in training.

It is clear that sectors outside English education have benefitted from role-play, highlighting its value as a social and educational tool. The various studies

demonstrating the effectiveness of role-play for prospective teaching have been revealing, showcasing how role-play activities enhance performance in the workplace and develop interpersonal and intrapersonal skills across diverse fields. Role-play has succeeded in providing the protection of fiction while engaging in the simulation of reality (Ackroyd, 2007). The specific social and emotional development of adults through role-play will now be discussed.

2.2.5 The Importance of role-play for the social and emotional development of adults

Getting in touch with one's emotional and physical self is not an easy connection to access, and a lecturer cannot expect a student to enter and critique the emotional domain upon command. One way to engage with and discuss emotions and social experiences is by creating an enjoyable atmosphere, as "laughter wonderfully lubricates the process of communication" (Cockett, 2000, p. 22). Drama and role-play foster a learning environment that is both creative and safe for students to communicate their ideas and thoughts, as they are participating in a fictitious scenario "that offers little by way of repercussions in the real world" (Heyward, 2010, p. 199). The learning that occurs during role-play represents a zone of proximal development for new skills (Lorenzo, 2014), as students are tasked with engaging with challenging content through emotional recall but within a positive climate.

Working with others to depict how a story unfolds in front of an audience is a collaborative act. The negotiation of what stays and what goes in the final role-play performance is a collective decision-making process that allows participants with diverse perspectives to engage in the pre-role-play and post-role-play discussions in a less threatening manner (Rosell, 2005). Role-play requires individuals from different backgrounds to collaborate in producing a short play, and it "helps learners develop a focus on culture and the diversity skills development required for the 21st century workplace" (Clapper, 2010, p. 41–42). The importance of role-play for the social and emotional development of diverse groups of adults who must work together has been demonstrated in studies as a tool for preparing individuals to understand themselves and their responses to stimuli (Howieson & Rogers, 2018), enabling them to work inter-professionally in multi-disciplinary teams (Villadsen et al., 2012).

The perspective learning that occurs during role-play and the perspective sharing that takes place afterward when students comment on the role-play they have just observed is a vital source of learning how to express views and opinions in a group communication context (Brady, 2018), which is a necessary skill in any professional collaborative work environment. The post-role-play discussion teaches an essential small group communication skill (Steinberg & Angelopulo, 2015), enabling students to provide their critical views in an environment that allows them to practise giving feedback. Role-play activities are known to enhance students' sense of self and communicative traits and abilities (Zakaria et al., 2019). The group communication that occurs contributes to the development of social awareness and relationship skills, which are crucial for the SEL (CASEL, n.d.) outcomes of this study. While perspective sharing and content simulation may be the primary aims of the role-play session in class, group communication skills also develop as a result of the role-play experience, both during participation and subsequent discussion.

The self-sufficiency gained through role-play experiences (Goleman, 1996) enables students to engage with the activities while simultaneously developing logical, creative, and interpersonal skills (Kalidas, 2014). The model below, drawn from the World Economic Forum's (WEF) 2016 educational report, highlights how many of the targeted strategies for SEL education align closely with the principles and processes inherent in role-play:



Figure 1: SEL model of character qualities and competencies

(WEF, 2016, p. 8)

I applied the SEL character qualities and competencies outlined above to my existing understanding of role-play processes to illustrate the explicit connection between the WEF (2015) social and emotional traits and role-play experiences. Role-play actively fosters SEL character qualities such as social and cultural awareness by requiring participants to collaborate with a diverse group of peers during the role-play process. Role-play encourages leadership when participants have to make difficult decisions about those who are absent from rehearsals and how to address this as a group. Role-play promotes adaptability and persistence when participants must improvise a scene and think on the spot, say if a prop goes missing or a participant forgets a line. Initiative and curiosity are cultivated when participants make time for rehearsal and explore innovative ways to present a message to an audience. Role-play fosters the

aforementioned SEL competencies, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, when participants receive feedback after each rehearsal and must learn how to take direction before the final showing to their peers. Creativity is developed when participants express a message through the use of voice and body in unique ways. Collaboration is at the heart of role-play because the delivery of the scene depends on the ensemble working together to convey a unified message. From the above model, role-play experiences are aligned with the characteristics of a socially and emotionally literate individual as illustrated in the model above (WEF, 2016).

The English literature lecture room provides the social and emotional content to prepare students for varied social scenarios, and the role-play activities offer students the opportunity to actively perform and experiment with their responses to these scenarios in a simulated role-play, thereby practising their skills in a safe environment (Adams & Mabusela, 2013). While role-play in the literature lecture room involves the act of imitating the character or behaviour of someone different from oneself in order to understand what it is like to be in the other person's situation for either literary analysis or empathy education (Blatner, 1995), narrative empathy (Keen, 2006) also plays a role in the development of a socially and emotionally competent student of literature.

2.3 Narrative Empathy

2.3.1 *Origin and development of narrative empathy*

In order to understand narrative empathy, it is important to comprehend the history of empathy. Empathy is one of the foundational concepts in narrative empathy and is employed in the fields of psychology, education, and social science. Empathy is the ability to imaginatively simulate another person's feelings and emotions (Ganczarek et al., 2018; Stansfield & Bunce, 2014). It is essential to examine the origin and development of empathy before contextualising the use of narrative empathy in this study. The conceptualisation of the term empathy originates from a German concept called *Einfühlung* (Popova, n.d.). *Einfühlung* translates to 'feeling into' and refers to the act of projecting oneself into another body or environment for the purpose of understanding how it feels to be in that body or environment. It can also be described

as an imaginary bodily perspective-taking experience carried out with the intention of grasping what it is like to live in another body or environment (Ganczarek et al., 2018).

Initially, the term *Einfühlung* suggested that humans instinctively project themselves onto objects they perceive (Morgan, 2012), and its origins can be traced back to German philosophical circles, particularly to the aesthetician Robert Vischer in 1873 (Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2018). The term was used to define what it means to perceive optical illusions in a particular way, where *Einfühlung* meant the ability “to not just look at a line but to feel an identity with the line” (Morgan, 2012, p. 35).

In 1903, the German philosopher Theodore Lipps expanded on Vischer’s ideas and determined that *Einfühlung* was the process of imaginatively projecting oneself into another’s situation (Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2018). It was Lipps’ notion of *Einfühlung* as aesthetic projection that would later be regarded as the concept of empathy when British psychologist Edward Titchener, in 1909, coined the term by adapting the previously mentioned German *Einfühlung* into the English language, which means “feeling into”, thereby naming it empathy (Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2018).

The concept of empathy for this study will draw on ideas from *Einfühlung*. Empathy is an important concept for understanding how human psychology functions in social contexts, especially concerning the emotional experiences of others. Specifically for this study, if a student wishes to understand the experiences of a character in a narrative text through literary analysis, the ability to empathise with that character is crucial for analysing characters and their perspectives within a collaborative learning environment. Thus, by making a conscious decision to foster an empathic learning space, social and emotional development in the student may occur.

Besides *Einfühlung*, other affective responses exist. “In fact, *Einfühlung* is only one of a whole set of different kinds of affective responses to objects” (Ganczarek et al., 2018, p. 2). If *Einfühlung* means feeling into, then *Zufühlung* means feeling toward the brightness or colour of an object, whereas *Nachgefühl* means feeling along the motor properties of an object, the actual or potential movement of an object (Ganczarek et al., 2018, p. 2). The aforementioned affective responses to objects in the German vernacular reveal the types of object responses that exist.

Various other empathic considerations have developed over time and are conceptualised as affective empathy, which is the capacity to share another's feelings and emotions (Stansfield & Bunce, 2014). *Cognitive empathy* is the ability to understand the world from another person's point of view and to infer beliefs and intentions (Stansfield & Bunce, 2014). *Somatic empathy* pertains to the role of the feeler's body in responding to an emotion and having a physical reaction to what someone else is feeling (Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2018). *Geo-empathy* involves using geographic descriptions to promote empathic engagement with characters for readers (Sorum, 2011). *Affective empathy* is most applicable to this study's contextualisation of empathic use for the purpose of narrative engagement in the lecture room.

The various definitions and functions of empathy, particularly as a concept for understanding human responses to others, have become a psychological phenomenon due to the spontaneous and vicarious sharing of affect. This sharing can occur through close proximity to another person, hearing about their condition, or even reading about their circumstances (Keen, 2006). This study specifically focuses on the empathetic responses elicited from readers when engaging with the experiences of fictional characters.

The idea that reactions to fictional worlds can influence real-world behaviours (Stansfield & Bunce, 2014) has led to the notion of reading as an inherently empathic experience (Keen, 2006). A key question in exploring the effects of fiction on readers is how a fictional character's experiences can evoke emotions that prompt personal reflection in reality. Two psychobiological studies provide insight into this phenomenon. The first is an Italian study that identified the presence of mirror neurons in the brain, which facilitate empathetic responses (Gallese, 2001). The second is an English study examining emotional activation resulting from lexical exposure, highlighting how language itself can trigger emotional engagement (Miall, 2011).

Mirror neurons enable humans to learn by mimicking another person's emotions, often leading to empathy (Winerman, 2005). When activated during focused fictional reading, these neurons allow readers to experience the perspective of a fictional character as if they were feeling it themselves. Mirror neurons (Keen, 2006) are a class of neurons that activate both when an individual performs a specific motor action

and when they observe the same or a similar action performed by someone else. For instance, mirror neurons are responsible for the tendency to yawn when seeing someone else yawn. They facilitate our ability to feel and sometimes imitate what we observe (Keen, 2006).

Most people who score highly on empathy tests have especially active mirror neuron systems, and fiction writers are high-empathy individuals (Keen, 2006). "There is preliminary evidence that the same neural structures that are active during sensations and emotions are active also when the same sensations and emotions are to be detected in others" (Gallese, 2001, p. 46). The work of Gallese (2001) suggests that a reader's sensory-motor system in the neural structures of the brain becomes active during heightened cognitive experiences. If reading fiction can create heightened cognitive experiences in which the reader's mirror neuron activity allows them to feel the emotions of the character being read about, then reading fiction could be an empathic experience for the invested reader, training the brain like a rehearsal of emotion, eliciting feelings and modifying their significance for potential use in the real world in the future (Miall, 2011).

The emotionality that a word carries makes the lexical experience of a word another inducer of empathy (Miall, 2011). When readers encounter certain words, such as "charity" or "villainy", these terms establish an emotional framework for subsequent processing in the reader's mind, meaning that the words already evoke emotional experiences specific to the reader's mental framework. Miall (2011) notes that a word's emotional effects on the reader can be activated immediately after exposure, thereby making the reading of fictional experiences emotionally charged for the reader and inferring empathic activations from lexical triggers.

The two psychobiological processes described above, which enable a fiction-world character to evoke emotion in the real-world reader, illustrate the empathic potential inherent in the act of reading. This research focuses on the type of empathy that arises during an affective reading experience; therefore, affective empathy is the most applicable concept for this study's contextualisation of empathic use in the context of narrative engagement in the lecture room.

During the English literature lecture, the student has the opportunity to learn about and contest the fictional character's experiences and emotions. This exposure to the character's experiences has the capacity to reveal the effects of a fictional story on the real-world beliefs of the student reader (Green & Brock, 2000). It is within the student reader's cognition of emotionally heightened events in the fictional text that the potential of fictional worlds is harnessed to build empathic abilities in the student, fostering social and emotional consciousness in the real world (Stansfield & Bunce, 2014). This approach brings the study of empathy closer to the development of narrative empathy.

The psychobiological findings of empathy induced by cognitive experiences, such as reading fiction, led to the psychological potential of fictional literature being used to promote moral instruction within society. By recognising that fictional literature has the power to persuade ethical principles, the practice of empathic reading became valuable in public rhetoric (Nussbaum, 1991). The use of fictional literature to draw public attention to moral topics highlighted the impact empathic processes have within fiction. If literature is deemed dangerous enough to be banned or suppressed, it implies that it is not merely frivolous but has the potential to make disruptive contributions to public life (Nussbaum, 1991). The latent esteem for empathic readings of fiction in relation to social disruption and understanding eventually led to the recognition of narrative empathy. The concept of narrative empathy was popularised by the work of Suzanne Keen (2006, 2013a, 2013b) who defined 'narrative empathy' as:

The sharing of feeling and perspective taking induced by reading, viewing, hearing or imagining narratives of another's situation and condition involves readers, texts and authors and it is well suited to interpretation through a transactional theory, in which readers interanimate the words put together by authors (2013a, p. 53).

The definition of narrative empathy provided above is utilised in this study. During the narrative empathy discussion sessions that followed the role-play activities, students sat down and shared their perspectives and feelings about the characters and their decisions, induced by their reading of the prescribed texts. Empathy is evoked not

only through the sharing of opinions and perspectives on the characters being read about but also as a result of the fictional world inducing states of personal reflection for these student readers, which essentially creates an empathic experience for the group that listens and reflects together.

Narrative empathy specifically focuses on the potential of a text to elicit an empathic emotional response from the reader. This empathic response could facilitate the transportability of the narrative, fostering moral and empathic development in the reader (Johnson, 2012). Within narrative empathy, 'transportability' refers to the integration of attention, imagery, and emotion focused on the events of a story, allowing the reader to distance themselves from their world of origin (Gerrig, 1993). The study aims to determine whether the texts studied effectively transported students, enabling them to empathise with the characters' situations and relate these experiences to real-life individuals similar to the characters. Green and Brock (2000, p. 701) explain that "When individuals are transported into a story or into a narrative world, they may show effects of the story on their real-world beliefs". In this study, students discussed and documented the extent to which the narrative influenced their real-world experiences with people resembling the characters in the story. This process helped identify how specific narrative elements prompted empathy in the participating students.

How students commonly associate empathy with fictional texts in the English classroom, alongside the mirror neuron activity (Gallese, 2001) and emotional activation from lexical exposure (Miall, 2011) explained above, is elaborated upon in the work of Keen (2006) and Ally (2015). Ally (2015) states that first-person narration induces a connection between the reader and the character. Secondly, the character's names, descriptive style, speech, and consciousness create a bond with the reader, among many other character identification choices made by the writer. Keen (2006) elaborates on this character identification technique, whereby naming, description, depicted action, plot trajectories, and many other characterisation factors contribute to creating empathy in the reader. Thirdly, point of view and perspective are employed to convey the narrative situation in the novel, linking the reader to the plot. Fourthly, and most crucially, the narrative's ability to "provide high levels of imagery that invite mental stimulation, immersion, and the feeling of transportation or leaving the real

world behind” (Ally, 2015, p. 19) is significant. This fourth way in which readers empathise with the text is clearly defined by Keen (2006) as the narrative situation, which presents the reader with a point of view, perspective, narrator, location of the narrator, and the style of representing the character’s consciousness, among many other narrative traits that induce empathy in a reader. When these features or techniques of narrative fiction are present, they invite narrative empathy to occur.

When student-readers study the characters they read about, their comprehension of the character’s situation, whether good or bad, invites empathy (Keen, 2006). When literary texts can extend a reader’s shared humanity beyond the predictable limitations of reading, building narrative empathy for the student of literature becomes a worthwhile and prized tool for its ability to cultivate empathic tendencies in students outside the lecture room (Keen, 2006).

2.3.2 The function of narrative empathy in teaching and learning

Texts that require students to empathise with characters possess a strong ability to develop engaged readers who can discuss viewpoints together. These types of conversations in class about the text can motivate students to manage similar topical discussions outside the classroom (Edgar, 2020). The sharing of perspectives on the text being studied in a group discussion format is the means through which narrative empathy was actualised and employed in this study. The literature class can inspire students to engage in self-discovery if the social value of the texts is highlighted by the students themselves. Students can then make connections to the text that may broaden their perceptions of themselves and others (Schrijvers et al., 2016). When students bring their empathic responses to the text being studied within the literature lecture room, the class becomes a space for social development, self-development, and self-awareness, which are crucial competencies for becoming socially and emotionally competent individuals.

Emotions are at the centre of literature because the texts can trigger events that may be personally significant but possibly elementary in nature and not yet fully coherent (Oatley, 1999). Emphasising empathy in the literature lecture room ensures that, regardless of the students’ opinions or views, perspective-sharing occurs within a context of compassion. This may happen despite differences among the students, or

between the students and the narrative empathy discussions that may allow the students to develop their perspectives during the sharing that takes place in a group context.

Beyond teacher training or the education of adult students, emotional literacy expands our vision of the role of schools themselves, making schools more explicitly society's agents for ensuring that children learn these essential lessons for life, as "...emotional literacy takes up the slack for families who fail in socialising children" (Goleman, 1996, p. 279). Teaching empathy has been found to cultivate strengths in students such as compassion and gratitude. The imparting of these character skills may be considered an important part of being a parent and should be present in the character-building responsibilities within a school's value system, especially if they are absent at home (Sutton, 2021).

Narrative empathy in educational spaces could have the capacity to build emotionally conscious students, who may become readers capable of empathising with people in the real world who are similar to the characters in their fictional works (Johnson, 2012). The characters in the text that evoke sympathy, sadness, jubilation, mourning, anger, failure, pleasure, or even gratitude in the student reader (Edgar, 2020) serve as a form of emotional simulation, and due to exposure to these emotions through reading, students may learn how to manage these emotional reactions in the workplace, as the literature class simulates these experiences for them first.

When examining significant narrative empathy studies, much of the discourse around this theory within educational practice began with the ethical power of literature as a politically potent tool, notably in the work of Martha Nussbaum (1991). She recognised that if literary fiction is deemed deserving of suppression or banishment, then the narratives possess the potential to make a distinctive contribution to public life (Nussbaum, 1991). This political power in literary texts, as identified by Nussbaum, focuses on the reflective ability inherent in the act of reading, which can provide an alternative narrative urging us to be critical of what we are reading and to consider "our fellow citizens, our fellow human beings with the wonder and generosity that the literary imagination promotes" (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 907). The work of Nussbaum

resonates with the transportability (Gerrig, 1993) of literary narratives, which possesses the potential to change beliefs.

When readers become deeply absorbed in a story, they are transported into a narrative world, and the effects of the story can impact their real-world beliefs due to the attention given by the reader, the imagery used in the writing, and the feelings evoked by the narrative (Green & Brock, 2000). This fictional reading experience thus has the power to alter beliefs about something already present in the reader's mind, encouraging the act of reflection and critique of beliefs for real-life application (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). Narrative fiction has a real-world influence because reading fiction constitutes a simulation that engages the planning processes in our minds, which we use in daily life to attain goals (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). Through the process of simulating the characters' experiences being read about, readers may develop greater empathy for people in the real world. The ethical power of reading, which facilitates empathy as a result of the transportability of a text, then becomes part of the broader concept of narrative feelings (Koopman, 2017).

Brown's (2021) American study advocates for an empathy pedagogy in HE. Empathy pedagogy is "a facilitation framework that can better build active listening, self-reflection, and emotion regulation in students who practice the lessons that correspond with these three" (p. 9). Literary studies have the ability to generate the three empathic elements listed above (Brown, 2021) because of literature's capacity to develop readers' sense of empathy as they interact with stories, characters, and fellow readers (Dias, 2023). Thus, we see the importance of studying literature to prepare professionals who will engage in numerous social interactions.

Another significant function of narrative empathy in HE is its role in developing theory of mind (ToM). ToM refers to the ability to understand and interpret what others desire, believe, or think (Kucirkova, 2019) and to make inferences about their mental states (Shamay-Tsoory, 2007). A pivotal 2013 study by Kidd and Castano demonstrated that reading fiction can enhance adults' ToM. This skill is crucial because recognising both our own and others' emotional states in social settings enables us to better manage unpleasant emotions and navigate interpersonal dynamics effectively. We can use education to provide students with the ability to recognise, understand, and regulate

emotions adequately, thereby effectively reducing impulsive behaviours (Gualda et al., 2023) and nurturing the interpersonal communication professional. Narrative empathy, then, becomes especially valued in literary studies because it extends a reader's sense of shared humanity (Keen, 2006).

The possibilities of narrative empathy in teaching and learning aimed at building social and emotional skills are endless in the literature lecture room, as there are numerous texts and fictional characters to choose from that provide valuable social and emotional models. The options are vast, and incorporating narrative empathy discussion sessions in the lecture room can offer students an empathic experience, enabling them to relate to fictional characters and, in turn, become more socially and emotionally literate in the real world.

2.3.3 Empathic teaching and learning in South Africa

Keen (2006) espouses three varieties of strategic empathising, and the strategy most relevant to infusing narrative empathy in formal education is *broadcast strategic empathy*, where “every reader feels with members of a group, by empathising our common vulnerabilities and hopes” (p. 224). This practice would be facilitated by the educator or lecturer in a group discussion setting.

Empathy is a key part of effective teaching because it is a fundamental component of an educator's social and emotional characteristics, which are relevant to the quality of teacher-student interaction that occurs during the teaching exchange (Aldrup et al., 2022). Literary education can provide the context for social and academic learning (Gasser et al., 2022) through the use of fiction, which allows for the simulation of empathy that can be managed by the educator, experienced by the student, and shared via narrative empathy discussion sessions.

A narrative empathy study was conducted on two South African autobiographies, *Dr. Goonam's Coolie Doctor* and *Zubeida Jaffer's Our Generation* (Hand, 2018), which considers which text produces more of an empathic response in the reader. During my discussion with the researcher Dr Felicity Hand (personal communication, May 19, 2023), she revealed that her usage and understanding of narrative empathy focused on how good literature impacts the reader. She indicated,

Good literature has an effect on you, there are novels that have changed people's ways of thinking. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* written by Harriet Beecher Stowe had a great impact on American people, where readers of the book were surprised to discover what slavery actually involved and that slaves had emotions and even cried when they lost their children. Even today, there are novels that make you think about people you don't really have much contact with. If you're a straight person you might not understand the problems that LGBTQI+ people have, if you are a man you may not understand the problems women have, so it's very important for novels to have an empathic response in the reader for the purpose of teaching a perspective and it is usually the art of the author to put you in positions you have not been before (Hand, 2023).

Dr Hand's relevant stance on the perspective-teaching power of narrative empathy makes its use for educational purposes significant and valuable in a world where complex social issues arise (Gasser et al., 2022). This is especially important for young South Africans and others who require social and emotional competencies to critically reflect on the social injustices and conflicts that continue to hinder the country's growth. Hand's ideas on the perspective-teaching power of literary texts could be beneficial in South Africa, where a myriad of socio-economic factors burden the education system (Ngobeni et al., 2023).

Arguments over the relevance of English studies in South Africa are pertinent (Thurman, 2007). Thurman (2007) notes:

Poverty, inequality, unemployment, housing, land restitution, AIDS, violence, crime and corruption are South African issues... Within the humanities, it is literature, in particular, that affords us 'the opportunity to encounter other minds in their full complexity, to imagine and to empathise with a range of human thought and feeling that it is simply impossible for us to experience directly (p. 163).

When encountering the social ills in the texts studied in the English literary studies lecture room, we are cultivating critical readers who will empathise with these fictional narratives and become adept at identifying and even transforming these social ills and their impact on life outside the lecture room.

Research on critical pedagogy and transformational education within English education in Durban, South Africa, has been extensively explored by Pillay (Pillay, 2013, 2015, 2021). In one study, Pillay (2021) employed critical pedagogy through a "talk-back" design, encouraging both educators and students to identify and critique structures of oppression present in the literary texts studied in class. Her research also highlighted the role of teachers as agents of social change (Pillay, 2013), emphasising the need for empowering teachers to foster transformation and empowerment in their classrooms. Pillay advocates for the inclusion of social justice learning modules in pre-service teaching programs to equip educators with the necessary tools to drive transformation in their teaching practice.

A study by Pillay (2015) detailed five critical pedagogy findings that could strengthen a transformational learning environment in the literature lecture room. Firstly, the engagement of the teacher's lived experiences with the literary text content added value by linking the teacher's cultural capital with the literary text discussion, acknowledging the past and showcasing the real-world connection between text and reader for the students. Secondly, while students interrogated the texts, they were able to identify stereotypical representations in the narratives and reflect on their own biases. Thirdly, the critical reflection of the texts through dialogue resulted in empowering moments, making active engagement in text discussions important for transformative intellectual development. Fourthly, the importance of ideological and social literacy for the personal growth of students led to them feeling empowered enough to make conscious decisions for themselves, realising that by owning their unique socio-historical circumstances, there is power. Lastly, the limitations of critical pedagogy led students to identify that unequal power relations in the classroom may contribute to oppressive experiences in the learning environment. This discourse (Pillay, 2015) was significant in providing insights into the state of transformational learning spaces in South Africa.

In the Eastern Cape, South Africa, a study focused on the promotion of African literature to re-humanise our society (Ndlovu, 2019). Ndlovu (2019) believed that the interdisciplinary connection between African literature and human rights would revive the need to create awareness of human rights. "Given literature's potential to humanise in the dismantling of apartheid, it was inexplicably neglected in the project

of humanising post-apartheid South Africa” (Ndlovu, 2019, p. 109). Such sentiments are urgent and pressing in post-apartheid educational discourse. Ndlovu (2019) states that in South African universities, there are few literature courses that explore human rights, but as Cameroonian public intellectual Achille Mbembe (2016, p. 41) asserts, “Higher education is essential, if not solely regarded as a key target for growth strategies”.

In examining secondary school considerations of empathic education in the South African literature education space, a Port Elizabeth study (Kromhout & Sheckle, 2021) found that when learners are given the opportunity to discuss the different perspectives offered in the texts they study, the active dialogue surrounding what they read can enrich, critique, and expand their knowledge of the world and themselves. However, it is only through fostering a nation of readers that this consciously driven dialogue and empathic discussion regarding the texts being studied can take place. Similarly, Chapman (2022) emphasised the need to involve students' unique thoughts on the texts being studied in the literature lecture room:

Instead of the usual practice in English Studies of spending the full allocation of lectures on dissemination, you might devote three of the six lectures to a workshop format, in which the story is dissected for interpretation, in which you explicitly take students through the stages of the interpretative act (Chapman, 2022, p. 15).

The opportunities within both secondary education and HE literary study highlighted above demonstrate how discussions of texts and interpretive abilities, through empathic engagement with the literary texts under consideration, can cultivate conscious South African students.

The South African-specific studies and conversations surrounding empathic engagement with literary texts for student development showcase research focusing on how literature studies can contribute to education in social consciousness, empathy teaching, transformational education, human rights education, and perspective sharing in the learning environment. Although empathic engagement is evident within narrative studies in South African literature learning spaces, the term

"narrative empathy" has not been widely utilised except in application. Narrative empathy is occurring because there is a need to harness the empathic potential in the texts to teach and share social insights. Beyond the global and South African applications of narrative empathy to teach social and emotional skills, it is also being employed in sectors beyond English education.

2.3.4 Narrative empathy in sectors beyond English education

Fields such as media psychology (Rohm et al., 2022), empathy teaching post-COVID-19 (Bientzle et al., 2021), and narrative medicine (Kelly, 2021; Charon, 2006) have employed narrative empathy to enhance performance and goals related to human psychological well-being and medicine.

Rohm et al. (2022, p. 124) state that "by vicariously experiencing social interactions, individuals can increase their ability to recognise and share someone else's feelings". This study in media psychology focused on how narratives can simulate emotions for the reader or viewer, potentially stimulating real-world empathy. Rohm's work in Amsterdam examines how specific types of media that emphasise sombre and pathos-inducing moments in the text are associated with feelings of appreciation and virtue in the reader or viewer, thereby contributing to the values that a reader or viewer ought to learn in their real lives. Here, we see how narrative empathy has informed an audience-response study within media studies.

A German study (Bientzle et al., 2021) found that individuals could learn the perspective or condition of another person through writing tasks, and these narrative writing tasks could help prevent discrimination against individuals affected by the prejudice associated with contagious diseases like the COVID-19 virus. This study examined how participants who wrote from the viewpoint and circumstances of a person infected with COVID-19 were able to empathise more effectively with a real-life COVID-19 sufferer due to the perspective-taking exercise involved in the writing task. The empathic experience of writing as someone struggling in a particular circumstance led to the finding that a person's empathy and attitudes could be modified through a narrative writing task, suggesting that empathy training for healthcare workers could be beneficial for the healthcare system.

Charon (2006), in her work on narrative medicine, found that “medicine practiced with narrative skills of recognising, absorbing, interpreting and being moved by stories of illness” (p. 4) could improve the quality of healthcare provided to patients. Her work asserts the value of listening to her patients’ stories of illness, from the origins of pain to diagnosis, management or lack thereof, and the reasons as to why they are now in front of her. Her focus is on acknowledging and honouring the stories of her patients during the diagnosis phase and clinical treatment. Charon emphasises the importance of listening to patients’ stories and how to connect the isolated events they share to create meaning within a narrative (2006), which may lead to a more thorough diagnosis. Charon’s work on narrative medicine had a significant impact on occupational therapy students at Columbia University, where an eight-week course on literature and medicine resulted in increased understanding of patient perspectives (Kelly, 2021). The study highlighted the importance of therapists who, during the physical evaluation stage of a patient’s illness, learned to understand their patient’s story. The potential power of the narrative form in stimulating empathic responses through perspective teaching fostered a group of healthcare professionals who integrated care alongside cure in their medical practice (Goleman, 1996).

Examining the sectors outside English education that have benefited from narrative empathy reveals a newfound value in this concept as a social and emotional educational tool. Various studies demonstrating the importance of narrative empathy for teaching perspective and stimulating empathy have shown how the power of narrative can enhance the impact of media on audiences and improve the healthcare system. The use of narrative empathy has enabled practitioners beyond the literary sphere to utilise literature to explore emotional feelings (Brown, 2021), understand perspectives, and gain deeper insights into audience behaviours in media studies, all while striving to provide better quality healthcare.

2.3.5 The importance of narrative empathy for social and emotional development of adults

The focus on narrative empathy by literary scholars is significant (Basseler, 2017). This interest arises from the importance of this perspective-sharing tool as vital for learning about different viewpoints. Empathy induced by reading literature holds value for various reasons, but it is primarily appreciated for its ability to influence a person’s

moral development and even prompt altruistic behaviour in the real world (Lindhe, 2016). “Literature is an empathy tool, and reading literature widely can actually make you an empathetic person” (Worthen, 2020, p. 2).

The numerous social, political, and existential events within literary narratives drive readers to contemplate their true selves and the way they live (Lindhe, 2016). These narrative experiences foster a type of self-reflection prompted by the positive or negative experiences of the characters in the literary text. This is where the value of this tool lies, with the potential for engaging in pro-social behaviour beyond the fictional world (Lindhe, 2016; Koopman, 2017).

The simulations that are novels, plays, movies and so forth can allow people to find out more the ultimate implications of their emotions. They offer a laboratory space that relative to real life is safe and can make relations of emotions to goals and action easier to understand (Oatley, 1999, p. 112).

Oatley (1999) asserts the educational power of literary texts for emotional experimentation and learning. Using narrative empathy discussion sessions in teaching social and emotional skills to prepare students for future emotional experiences is valuable for stimulating moral self-evaluation

2.4 Conclusion

Narrative empathy discussion sessions and role-play allow for deep learning to occur in the English literature lecture room – the kind of deep learning that makes social and emotional competencies easier to identify due to the physical simulation of emotional experiences that role-play offers, alongside the intellectual stimulation that narrative empathy provides during collaborative discussions.

The various literature and discourses on role-play and narrative empathy, aimed at exploring SEL outcomes in the English literature lecture room, have now been contextualised. The resources and research surrounding the CASEL 5 (CASEL, n.d.) framework for developing social and emotional competencies form the theoretical model of this study and will be outlined and deliberated upon in the chapter that follows.

Chapter 3:

The Social and Emotional Learning Theoretical Model

3.1 Introduction

Within English Literature lecture rooms in South African HE, a diverse array of theoretical frameworks informs the literary analysis of selected texts. These include post-colonial theory, existentialism, Marxist criticism, intertextuality, feminist criticism, and various other literary movements and critical approaches. While these frameworks are employed to situate texts within broader theoretical contexts, the primary model guiding the teaching and learning of the texts studied by the participating students was the SEL model (CASEL, n.d.).

This chapter unpacks the theoretical model underpinning the study. It begins by exploring the origins of emotional intelligence theory, which serves as the foundation for the development of SEL. Next, the evolution of SEL is outlined, leading into a detailed explanation of the CASEL 5 framework, which provides the specific SEL structure used in this study. The fourth section examines role-play as a method for achieving SEL outcomes, followed by a discussion on the use of literature and fictional narratives to foster SEL development. The chapter then considers reader-response theory, focusing on how the intentions and interpretations of readers in the lecture room intersect with both literary studies and SEL objectives. Subsequent sections appraise the application of SEL in teaching and learning, while also presenting critiques of SEL as an instructional approach. The chapter further highlights the potential of SEL in promoting global citizenship education. Finally, it addresses the implementation of SEL in South Africa, with reference to this study's aim to integrate SEL into English literature studies and propose a new model for using SEL within English literature lecture rooms.

3.1.1 The origin of emotional intelligence theory

What does "emotion" mean? The linguistic word "emotion", the neuroscientific concept of emotion, and the psychological experience of emotions are distinct in meaning. The linguistic root of the word "emotion," *motere* in Latin, translates to "motion" in English and means to move. The prefix "e" in "emotion" connotes moving

away; therefore, emotion linguistically means the tendency to take action or move towards a decision (Goleman, 1996).

The neuroscientific concept of emotion is not something the human brain possesses or does; rather, it is a convenient label used to discuss aspects of the brain and its mind (LeDoux, 1996, p. 16). The psychological experience of emotion occurs when we appraise an internal or external stimulus (Brackett, 2019); as LeDoux (1996, p. 19) notes, "Emotions are things that happen to us rather than things we will to occur". An emotion is the interpretation we have of an internal or external stimulus; for example, "I am angry". A feeling is our response to that emotion; for instance, "I am angry and I don't want to continue feeling this way" (Brackett, 2019). To understand emotional intelligence, it is important first to grasp the three domains in which emotion can be understood: the linguistic word, the neuroscientific concept, and the psychological occurrence. Secondly, it is crucial to recognise the subtle but important difference between emotion and feeling (Brackett, 2019).

The word "intelligent" refers to an individual's capacity to act purposefully, think rationally, and deal effectively with the environment (Weschler, 1958). In 1990, Salovey and Mayer defined the concept of emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). Without the capacity to mentally understand our emotions, we may only experience the somatic effects of an emotional experience, such as a pounding heart, sweating, trembling, headaches, bowel difficulties, or muscle tension. Without guidance to understand the psychology behind the mental states that precipitate these somatic experiences, we may struggle to self-organise (Irwin & Dwyer-Hall, 2020). Therefore, having emotional intelligence is important for understanding oneself personally, professionally, and socially.

3.2 The development of SEL

In 1994, the non-profit social organisation, the Fetzer Institute, hosted a conference aimed at addressing concerns about the fragmented and disjointed nature of school-based efforts to meet the psychosocial and general health needs of children. A group of individuals came together to develop a field that would address these concerns.

The multidisciplinary collaboration included researchers, teachers, practitioners, and child advocates who believed that schools must attend to all children's social and emotional needs. This led to the establishment of the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the term SEL (Elbertson et al., 2009).

Taking the development of SEL further, the field of psychology saw the rise of emotional intelligence in educational psychology (Bar-On, 2010; Goleman, 1996; Zins & Elias, 2007). In 1996, psychologist and science journalist Daniel Goleman published a bestselling non-fiction book entitled *Emotional Intelligence*, which popularised the concept of emotional intelligence theory, subsequently adapted for educational use and incorporated into SEL frameworks (Glenn, 2022).

Goleman's (1996) work aimed to equip readers with the knowledge needed to harness intelligence in their emotions. The text began by explaining the anatomy of emotions, detailing the neurological processes involved in heightened emotional responses. He then presented the traits of emotional awareness, emphasised the value of empathy, provided tips on socialising emotions, and explored how emotions function within personal relationships and professional settings. The latter sections of the book examined how emotional work should be conducted in healthcare facilities and family environments. It concluded by urging readers to recognise the societal costs of emotional illiteracy on social development (Goleman, 1996). The book and Goleman's research became synonymous with the discourse surrounding emotional intelligence and SEL.

In 2019, Marc Brackett from the Yale Child Study Centre published a book entitled *Permission to Feel*, advocating for the normalisation of acknowledging emotional states to improve mental health strategies across all areas of life. Marc Brackett founded the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence (YCEI) and developed the RULER approach, a comprehensive strategy for teaching emotional intelligence. This approach focuses on five key skills for processing emotional experiences, summarised as follows:

R of the RULER approach is to recognise emotions in oneself and others, U of the RULER approach is understanding the causes and consequences of

emotions, L of the RULER approach is Labeling emotions with a nuanced vocabulary, E of the RULER approach is expressing emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context and the second R of the Ruler approach is to Regulate emotions with helpful strategies (Brackett, 2019, p. 71–139).

Brackett's work continues to promote and advocate for the importance of all individuals receiving an emotional education, as it has a proven performance-enhancing ability for both personal and professional endeavours (Brackett, 2018; Brackett et al., 2023).

Overall, there are four models of emotional intelligence that help to understand the foundations of SEL. Firstly, the Salovey and Mayer model, which states that emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, and to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotions to facilitate thinking (1990). Secondly, the Goleman model (1996), which asserts that humans need a variety of emotional skills to succeed in various aspects of life. Thirdly, the Bar-On model (2010), which defines emotional intelligence as an array of interrelated emotional and social competencies and skills that impact intelligent behaviour. The fourth model is based on the work of Brackett (2019), which provides the RULER approach to processing emotion.

In terms of this study, the aforementioned theories were not the focus of the fieldwork and were not specifically explored in the data generation. However, since SEL is rooted in emotional intelligence, discussions, literature, and discourse surrounding SEL frequently reference these emotional intelligence theories and models. The CASEL 5 framework, which was the focus of the data generated in this study, will now be contextualised and explained.

3.3 The CASEL 5 SEL Framework

SEL is a process through which young people and adults develop the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes needed to build healthy identities, foster positive relationships, manage their emotions, and cultivate social awareness to achieve personal and collective goals. In the SEL process, students demonstrate empathy for others, maintain positive relationships, and make responsible, caring decisions. This

approach fosters a learning environment characterised by trusting and collaborative relationships. Due to the collaborative nature of this learning process, students indirectly reduce forms of inequity and empower themselves, contributing to positive social behaviour within the educational setting that can lead to constructive behaviour beyond the lecture room (CASEL, n.d.).

The case for SEL in this study is important due to South Africa's poor mental health status, as highlighted by the South African Deputy President, Paul Mashatile. Mashatile (2023) noted that South Africa is beset by inadequate living conditions, high levels of violence, poverty, unemployment, and inequality, all of which contribute to poor mental health. These factors lead to mental health disorders such as psychological distress, difficulty concentrating, depression, anxiety, suicide, hopelessness, and feelings of worthlessness (Mashatile, 2023).

The 2023 World Mental Health Report, involving 71 countries, revealed that South Africa ranked among the bottom three countries in the world in terms of mental health metrics, specifically in the categories of mood and outlook, social self, adaptability and resilience, drive and motivation, cognition, and mind-body connection (Sapien Labs, 2024). According to Sapien Labs (2024, p. 12), "Brazil, South Africa and the United Kingdom all show the greatest proportion of respondents who are distressed or struggling". These mental health statistics hinder the construction of social cohesion, the fostering of civic-minded action, and the emergence of a united citizenry committed to community and national upliftment in South Africa (Mashatile, 2023). Community-based care serves as a frontline defence against this scourge of mental ill-health in society. If the cornerstone of social development is educational infrastructure (Javed, 2003; Bouchard et al., 2023), then SEL becomes a vital tool for strengthening social and emotional competencies at all levels of education. Infusing South Africa's national education framework with SEL-focused teaching and learning equips the country's future professionals with the competencies and strategies needed to navigate challenging social and emotional landscapes (Marsay et al., 2021; Gagnier et al., 2022).

This study specifically employs the CASEL 5 Framework (CASEL, n.d.), named for its focus on five core competencies. These five competencies are also referred to as the

“5 SECs” (the five social and emotional competencies). CASEL offers a variety of programmes designed to assist teachers, school administrators, and policy decision-makers in facilitating SEL activities in educational or organisational environments. However, this study has chosen to utilise the main CASEL 5 framework, which comprises the five core SEL competencies that foster emotionally and socially conscious individuals. The framework focuses on two intrapersonal competencies (Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2024): *self-awareness* and *self-management*, and three interpersonal competencies (Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2024): *social awareness*, *relationship-building skills*, and *responsible decision-making skills in students*. These five core competencies may positively impact a SEL student's learning trajectory.

The first of the CASEL 5 competencies is *self-awareness*. To possess this competency, a person should understand their emotions and ideology and how these two entities influence the contexts they are in while recognising their strengths and limitations. A person should be able to identify personal, cultural, and linguistic assets, demonstrate honesty and integrity, examine prejudices and biases, experience self-efficacy, maintain a growth mindset, and have a sense of purpose to be considered self-aware (CASEL, n.d.). Self-awareness also fosters conscientiousness in individuals, self-directedness, awareness of oneself, hard work, and persistence (Schleicher, 2018). Understanding oneself and developing one's sense of identity as part of a broader social arrangement for group integration is also recognised as self-awareness (Cojocaru, 2023). The self-awareness competency involves understanding oneself, including one's limitations, abilities, skills, identity, origin, culture, value system, hopes, and emotional triggers – factors that define a person – and how to utilise this knowledge for goal attainment and harmonious living within society.

The second of the CASEL 5 competencies is *self-management*. To possess this competency, a person must manage their emotions and ideologies effectively in different situations. This entails the ability to delay gratification, manage stress, stay motivated, exhibit self-discipline and self-motivation, set personal and collective goals, utilise effective planning and organisational skills, show initiative, and demonstrate agency (CASEL, n.d.). To manage oneself means being able to make

productive choices in both ordinary and challenging circumstances (Stocker & Gallagher, 2019).

The third of the CASEL 5 competencies is *social awareness*. To possess this competency, a person must understand how to empathise with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. This encompasses the capacities to feel compassion, comprehend broader social and historical issues, and manage behaviour in different settings. The individual should be able to accept other people's perspectives, show empathy and compassion, express gratitude, identify diverse social norms – including unjust ones – recognise situational demands and opportunities, and understand the influences of organisations and systems on behaviour (CASEL, n.d.). The social awareness competency centres on an individual empathising with the people and society surrounding them. At the core of this competency is the ability to put oneself in another's shoes in order to understand a person and their state rather than judging them (Brackett, 2019). Self-awareness teaches a person how to be pleasant to be around (Dyson et al., 2023). To be part of a community and to be cognisant of the display rules (Brackett, 2019) of that community, an individual must understand and be knowledgeable about the community in which they live or work, and social awareness builds these skills.

The fourth of the CASEL 5 competencies is *relationship skills*. To possess this competency, individuals need to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships in their lives. This includes the ability to listen actively, co-operate, work collaboratively to problem-solve, manage conflict constructively, navigate various settings with different social and cultural demands, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when required. This means having the ability to communicate effectively, build cultural competency, practise teamwork, resist negative social pressures, show leadership in groups, and stand up for the rights of others (CASEL, n.d.). The relationship-building competency encourages individuals to engage in active participation, learn assertive leadership techniques, and develop social skills (Schleicher, 2018). The purpose of learning this competency is to cultivate valuable, healthy, and pleasant relationships for personal or professional reasons. Interpersonal relationships are integral to our daily lives (Mukh et al., 2023), and acquiring this skill contributes to an individual's capacity to build relationships. People

need to have their voices heard when they are hurt (Mukh et al., 2023) and must resolve conflicts through dialogue rather than violence; therefore, this skill serves the purpose of building and maintaining effective relationships.

The fifth CASEL 5 competency is *responsible decision-making*. To possess this competency, a person must be able to make caring and constructive choices regarding personal behaviour and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the ability to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, as well as to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various behavioural choices. Students should demonstrate curiosity and open-mindedness while learning how to make reasoned judgements after analysing information, data, and facts. They should also identify solutions to personal and social problems, recognise how critical thinking skills are beneficial both within and outside the educational environment, and reflect on their role in promoting personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts (CASEL, n.d.).

Young people, especially teenagers, may be impressionable and can have their decisions influenced by their peers, with community values and consensus being the strongest determinants in decision-making (Pieterse & Quilling, 2011). Therefore, receiving education specifically focused on decision-making is vital, as it provides the foundation for nurturing independent thinking and accountability skills. Equipping young people to be imaginative and critical thinkers will ultimately enable them to make positive decisions about their own lives and the futures they desire (Stephenson, 2023). The responsible decision-making competency will teach individuals how to make strategic decisions for the future that align with goal attainment.

The CASEL 5 competencies, as outlined above, provide processes through which both adults and children can develop social and emotional competencies in two specific areas: self-skills (self-awareness and self-management) and social skills (social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making) (Stocker & Gallagher, 2019). In this study, I engaged with all five competencies through the activities used when teaching literary texts in the English literature lecture room.

For effective SEL processes to occur, there are four environments that can contribute to SEL for students. These are the classroom, the educational institution as a whole, the home, and the community. The classroom can support SEL by focusing on building relationships between teachers and students. SEL can be taught in the classroom as a topic with an explicit focus on a SEL-specific module, course, or project. SEL could also be integrated into the curriculum by providing students with SEL strategies for use during lessons or in the classroom, for example, how to respond when an unexpected mark is received, or teaching a strategy to use when they get frustrated with another student (SEL4US, n.d.).

The next setting that contributes to SEL for students is the institution, also referred to as school. Here, the school must advocate for SEL by embodying the five SECs through behavioural adaptation by both the staff and student body. This also means the school must provide robust student support services, such as counselling and supportive discipline systems (SEL4US, n.d.; Du, 2024). The third environment that can incite SEL is the home, or the place from which the student comes. If there is an authentic partnership between the family or home space and the school, then SEL programmes are more effective. When a school or teacher can understand and engage with the cultural or domestic context that influences a student's learning process, it becomes an important tool in developing SEL skills for the student (SEL4US, n.d.; Cipriano & McCarthy, 2023).

The final setting that can contribute to SEL for students is the community. Networking with community leaders and organisations to support or sponsor SEL initiatives at the school is one way to involve the community in supporting SEL for students. Effective SEL community partners might include out-of-school time providers (before and after school programmes, such as extracurricular activities), community-based non-profit organisations, healthcare providers, university research centres or colleges of education, mission-driven foundations, governmental agencies, and local businesses (SEL4US, n.d.).

In this study, the environment being focused on is the classroom or lecture room as the mode of instruction for SEL integration within the English literature syllabus.

The model below, known as the CASEL wheel (CASEL, n.d.), outlines the components and reach of the model's implementation.



Figure 2: The CASEL Framework, the CASEL wheel
(CASEL, n.d.)

The CASEL wheel above is an infographic model of the aforementioned five SECs and their corresponding settings. The model and its contents have proved useful in my quest to identify SEL outcomes from the English literature lecture room, which aims to develop future South African humanities professionals to be self-aware, self-managed, socially aware, relationship builders, and responsible decision-makers, as espoused by the CASEL 5 SECs. The CASEL 5 SECs envision all individuals as self-aware, caring, responsible, engaged, and lifelong learners who collaborate to achieve goals, thereby creating a more inclusive, just, and equitable world (CASEL, 2023).

This premise aligns with the national goal outlined in the National Skills and Development Plan (NSDP, 2019) to socially develop skilled individuals in South Africa.

The NSDP (2019) sets a national skills mandate to be achieved by 2030, with the vision of developing an educated, skilled, and capable workforce for South Africa (p. 5). The mission statement of the NSDP is “to improve access to high-demand and priority skills aligned with supporting economic growth, employment creation, and social development whilst also seeking to address systemic considerations” (p. 5). SEL supports the focus on social development, where the intrapersonal skills (self-awareness and self-management) and interpersonal skills (social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making) (Stocker & Gallagher, 2018) from the 5 SECs will aid the student population in acquiring social and emotional skills that serve the mission of social development in the country.

Another notable subsection of the NSDP 2030 is subsection 6.2, “linking education and the workplace” (NSDP 2030, 2019, p. 24), which requires universities to offer work-integrated learning projects before qualification completion. In executing this, it is important to consider the role that SEL education can play in teaching workplace skills prior to obtaining a tertiary qualification. SEL is known to correlate with success in the workplace (Dyson et al., 2023), where interpersonal communication and general communication skills are taught alongside lessons on self-esteem, the importance of listening, and the teaching of integrity (Elbertson et al., 2009). SEL, through its instruction of social and emotional skills at the university level, can provide future professionals with the ability to understand workplace behaviours, contributing to the development of effective organisational leaders (Pieterse & Quilling, 2011). This also aids HE students in acquiring the human skills necessary to thrive in the workplace while fulfilling subsection 6.2 of the NSDP 2030.

Other SEL programmes available for building the five SECs in both adult and child populations will be explored to discuss why the CASEL 5 framework was the most appropriate for this study. One such SEL programme is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) mission to develop policies that assist in improving global living conditions. Their SEL model, called the “Big 5”, is a hierarchical model with five categories: openness to experience (open-mindedness),

conscientiousness (task performance), emotional stability (emotional regulation), extraversion (engaging with others), and agreeableness (collaboration). The OECD's Big 5 model was found to be too specific and subjective for the purposes of literary study. The subjective nature of these SECs may create semiotic complexities when students apply the competencies to the literary texts being studied. Another drawback is that this model's hierarchical structure requires one SEC to follow another, thereby lacking flexibility in the lecture room (Schleicher, 2018).

Another SEL method of instruction developed by CASEL is called the SAFE model, which informs standalone lessons on SEL composed of four elements represented by the acronym SAFE: *Sequenced* – connected and coordinated activities to foster skills development; *Active* – active forms of learning to help students master new skills; *Focused* – activities that clearly emphasise personal and social skills development; *Explicit* – targeting specific social and emotional skills (Durlak et al., 2011). The SAFE method of SEL instruction is principled in nature and serves as a guide for anyone wishing to develop unique SEL instruction for specific tasks. This study found that the CASEL 5 wheel is more versatile and functional for immersion in literary text study.

The PATHS programme, which stands for Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (Villasenor, 2017), is a comprehensive SEL programme designed for young children in primary school as they approach adolescence. The programme focuses on teaching strategies to help reduce aggressive behaviour. The PATHS programme is popular and functions as a standalone programme for imparting SECs specific to children from kindergarten to primary school. However, the PATHS programme is not applicable to this study's intentions regarding SEL in the English literature lecture room, as this research focuses on SEL immersion within the literature curriculum in a HE framework.

There are many programmes that are CASEL designated, such as the programmes mentioned above. However, CASEL's CASEL 5 framework is a fundamental system that most SEL programmes are based on, and its authority in the field of SEL enhances the credibility of the CASEL 5 framework. This makes it a preferred choice in the search for an SEL system suitable for immersion within the prescribed English literary texts that students study at the HE level.

To achieve effective SEL outcomes in the English literature lecture room, this study employed two creative teaching methodologies to foster a SEL-conducive environment. Role-play and narrative empathy were the two key pedagogical approaches used to create a supportive atmosphere in the lecture room.

3.4 Role-play to produce SEL outcomes

Theatre and drama have provided ample stimuli for social commentary, as actors have been using their bodies to perform the “whips and scorns of time in this weary life” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3:1) to audiences on the human condition for centuries. When theatre and drama entered education some decades ago, the ability of arts education to impart multiple intelligences (Koushki, 2019) through students performing in plays and working backstage to create them launched theatre and drama education into non-technical spheres of education, as opposed to the production-focused education it was initially premised on. Theatre and drama, more specifically role-play in education, have become a solid subset of arts education where linguistic, physiological, social, technical, and philosophical skills are developed (Halapi & Saunders, 2002).

In terms of building SECs in students, exposure to theatre productions and performances is especially valued for engaging students in empathy-building experiences, as they observe the expression of emotion performed before them (Edgar & Elias, 2021). When students learn to identify expressions in the performers of the play they are watching or in their own role-play performances, the opportunity to build emotional literacy increases, as various ways of expressing emotion are showcased through theatrical and role-playing experiences (Troxler et al., 2022). The identification of emotions is an important emotional skill, as it guides students' interactions with others in social settings (Yorke et al., 2021), thereby contributing to the development of the social-awareness SEC in the CASEL 5 model. Emotional identification and affective empathy generated during theatre exposure and role-play are central to teaching the social awareness competency.

An underrated value of role-play in education is the way in which working with the body can develop self-awareness and self-management for the student performer. The body serves as the main locus of control for self-awareness and self-

management through internal perceptions of the self; being aware of one's own movements and those of others can impact the success of communication, as reading non-verbal cues is crucial in artistic movement (Eddy et al., 2021). "Just as body awareness is essential to becoming aware of one's thoughts and emotions, body control is essential to the development of behavioural regulation and self-control" (Borowski, 2021, p.7). The learning space is a site where the teacher's and students' bodies "bring competing ideologies into confrontation" (Athimoolam, 2018, p. 57). Therefore, when a student learns how to use their body to send messages and to read non-verbal communication on stage, they are actively simulating non-verbal communication exercises in an educational environment, thereby developing the self-awareness and self-management SECs within the CASEL 5 model.

Another way in which exposure to role-play develops SECs in students is through the relationships built within the ensemble cast performing scenes together, as well as the decisions they make for themselves and their castmates while transporting a story from page to stage (Omasta et al., 2021). Students who forget a prop or miss a cue are expected to improvise to maintain the illusion of the narrative on stage, which requires the immediate activation of decision-making skills backstage. The on-stage and backstage experiences of the student actor will cultivate relationship-building and responsible decision-making skills that align with the CASEL 5 model.

The verbal and non-verbal activities required of student performers during the rehearsal and performance stages of role-play align with an exit-level outcome of the Bachelor of Arts degree. This outcome emphasises the ability to adopt a critical attitude and use communication skills to participate in and contribute to the economy and society. Additionally, it encompasses the capacity to interact effectively with others, operate responsibly in variable and unfamiliar contexts, and become self-directed (SAQA, 2021). Role-play and theatre exposure in the English literature lecture room can produce SAQA-related and SEL outcomes.

The emotional potency of drama (Heyward, 2010) and the various ways in which exposure to role-play builds empathy and perspective are significant aspects of teaching. Additionally, the physical literacy gained from role-play exercises and the ways in which the rehearsal process fosters relationship building and responsible

decision-making skills are noteworthy features that make role-play an effective medium for SEL instruction. The potential to achieve SEL-specific learning outcomes in the English literature lecture room is high, given the multiple intelligences that role-playing characters offers students.

3.5 Literature and fictional narratives to produce SEL outcomes

Stories have served as learning agents for socio-moral development over the centuries (Gasser et al., 2022). Fictional works of literature possess the ability to impart life lessons, and fictional narratives have been employed to develop pro-social behavioural skills in educational settings. Nussbaum (1998) advocates for the socialising power of literature, asserting that it is an essential tool in teaching people to empathise with those around them.

Reading literature triggers a type of imagination that is an essential ingredient of an ethical stance that asks us to concern ourselves with the good of other people whose lives are distant from our own (Nussbaum in Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015, p. 1). The empathic ability of fictional narratives to perpetuate a legacy of socio-moral development through storytelling could be a valuable social and emotional tool in the SEL lecture room. Empathy is a central concept in SEL and emotional intelligence. English literature students encounter human behaviour in a variety of circumstances, spatiotemporal contexts, and through characters who must make choices under duress. In this way, literature becomes an important subject for teaching ethical behaviour such as empathy (Morgan, 2012), which plays a crucial role in building social awareness in the SEC and is a key social skill in the CASEL 5 framework (Stocker & Gallagher, 2019).

Exposure to fictional narratives that provide ample empathic stimulation for students can be found in libraries. Attending brick-and-mortar libraries or accessing online libraries at a young age will initiate the development of SECs during the early childhood stages (Deglan & Leung 2021). Whether children are reading picture books or young children's fiction, the dialogic reading that occurs while reading a book builds an SEC:

Reading literature triggers a type of imagination that is an essential ingredient of an ethical stance that asks us to concern ourselves with the good of other people whose lives are distant from our own (Nussbaum in Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015, p. 1).

When children are being read to, or when a group of children read together, the exchange of ideas and the expression of views are communicated. Children engage in reading, talking, and listening skills that are initiated by the dialogic reading exercise, and this dialogic interaction over a book is a SEL activity specific to the self-awareness and relationship-building skills espoused within the CASEL 5 model.

Additionally, fictional narratives for young adults and adults offer perspective-teaching opportunities that may evoke empathy for the characters being read about, thereby promoting the ability to understand one's own behaviour and that of others concerning personality, ideology, and intentions (Thexton et al., 2019). When such strong perspective teaching occurs through the reading of a fictional narrative, readers may develop the ability to manage their own emotions in response to the people around them, as empathising with a fictional character turns reading into a training ground for behaviours (Anderst, 2015) in social settings, cultivating the CASEL 5 SEC of social awareness and self-management.

The concept of bibliotherapy involves the use of books and stories to support social and emotional needs. This concept has been found to be significant in helping people self-soothe during moments of stress, as opposed to resorting to more damaging coping mechanisms (Heath et al., 2017). There are more nuanced versions of bibliotherapy, known as developmental bibliotherapy and clinical bibliotherapy. The former involves the sharing of books to help people with topic-specific adjustment problems, while the latter consists of recommending books and stories to address specific emotional needs, such as healing from abuse or mental illness (Heath et al., 2017). Reading books as a form of informative therapy contributes to building responsible decision-making skills, another important SEC in the CASEL 5 model.

Exposing oneself to literature and fictional narratives can also simulate the initial stages of building workplace skills. When students carefully craft their opinions before speaking, they activate the intrapersonal skills needed to share a view and build a

generic human rights sentiment (Ndlovu, 2019). The self-supervision of responses made with and among peers is essential for workplace skills (Marsay et al., 2021). As Oatley (1999, p. 112) notes:

The simulations allow people to find out more about the intimate implications of their emotions. They offer a laboratory space that, relative to real life, is safe and can make the relations of emotions to goals and action easier to understand.

The characters represent people, and their experiences simulate social interactions. These simulated abstract experiences allow readers to practice their self-awareness and social awareness of what individuals in different situations might undergo (Kucirkova, 2019). This triggers our mental planning processes (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). As a result, reading literature and fictional narratives enhances self-awareness, which is a SEL competency that will be used in the workplace to manage emotions in social and professional situations.

From the above discussion, it is evident that studying literature and fictional narratives has SEL benefits. This ranges from picture books contributing to relationship building in childhood development (Clark et al., 2021) to adult fiction novels teaching empathy and perspective (Thexton et al., 2019), and developmental and clinical bibliotherapy offering traumatised readers information on how to heal and recover (Heath et al., 2017). Literature and fictional narratives can provide a rich environment conducive to SEL. The potential for SEL-specific learning outcomes in the literature lecture room arises from the socio-moral origins of literature and fictional narratives (Johnson, 2012).

The extent to which these fictional narratives evoke a myriad of emotions from the reader requires consideration of the effect and impact of reading on the reader's response to fictional texts. A discussion on reader response theory will now be examined in relation to how a student can extract a personally didactic experience from fictional texts for the purposes of SEL.

3.6 Reader response theory and SEL

Rosenblatt (1982) developed the reader-response theory which explores what happens when a reader meets a text. This is explained as:

Reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances. The words in their particular pattern stir up elements of memory, activate areas of consciousness. The reader, bringing past experience of language and of the world to the task, sets up tentative notions of a subject, of some framework into which to fit the ideas as the words unfurl (p. 1).

Rosenblatt's work on explaining how readers play a role in the interpretation process of a text is important because it reveals that reading is a dual process. The reader, coming from a specific spatiotemporal context and ideology, interprets the text being studied through schemata (De Vooght, 2018) that are unique to that reader. It is within these unique schemata that the potential to shape the purpose of reading lies. However, the purpose of reading depends on the choices made by the reader regarding how to engage with the content, or the purpose of reading itself. The stances or approaches to reading can be categorised into two types: efferent reasons and aesthetic reasons.

When a reader seeks information, as in a textbook, they may want instructions, such as those found in a driver's manual. This reading stance is termed efferent, derived from the Latin word meaning "to carry away" (Rosenblatt, 1982). On the other hand, if the reader seeks a story, a poem, or a play, their attention will shift inward, centring on what is being created during the actual reading and how the text objects or referents evoke personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes. This kind of reading is called aesthetic, derived from the Greek word meaning "to sense" or "to perceive" (Rosenblatt, 1982). These two stances on reading can be visually understood through a reader-response theoretical model called the aesthetic-efferent continuum:

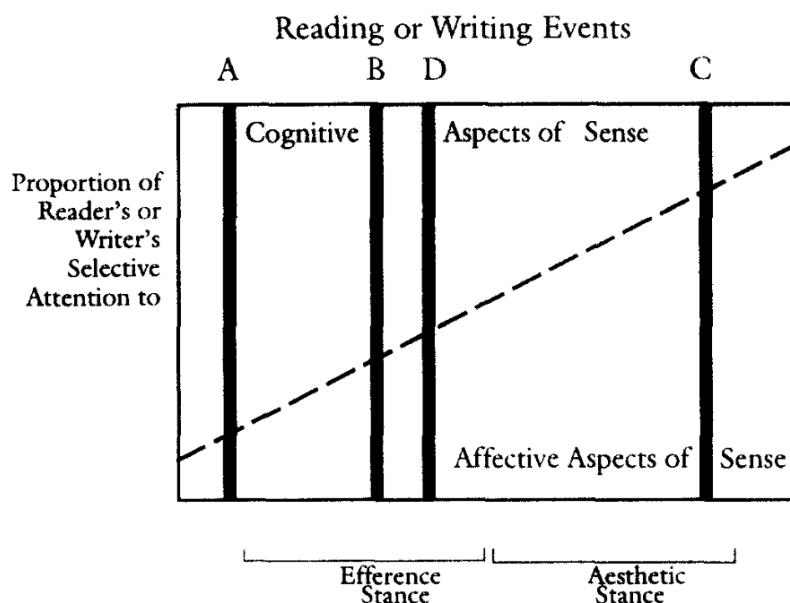


Figure 3: The aesthetic-efferent continuum

(Rosenblatt, 1998, p. 896)

The model above states that the amount of attention given to cognitive or affective aspects of meaning is related to the efferent or aesthetic stance. The relationship is such that the further left on the X-axis the reader goes, the more the reading intention is focused on information retrieval and cognitive engagement (efferent). Conversely, the further right on the X-axis the reader goes, the more the reading intentions are focused on experience, perception, and enjoyment (aesthetic). The Y-axis, representing selective attention, illustrates the relationship between cognitive and affective aspects of meaning in the reading process, as it indicates the proportion of each component (cognitive and affective) that the reader admits into their attention. This shows that there is still room for both cognitive and affective aspects to filter into each stance, but the reader willingly chooses which stance to prioritise. For example, when reading scientific information, we adopt stance A, which predominantly involves cognitive attention and an efferent stance. If there is no specific purpose for reading at the outset, a predominantly aesthetic approach to a text will be experienced in stance C. Ideally, we want our literature students to reach stance D, where the ability to engage with both cognitive and affective aspects of a text allows the reader to grow.

Consequently, what these two stances from reader-response theory mean in the literature lecture room is that when a student approaches a text with a unique

response, their distinct emotional reaction is significant for discourse processing (De Vooght, 2018). It is at this point that they decide whether to approach the textual content with either an efferent or aesthetic stance. When teaching poems, plays, or novels, the aesthetic stance may initiate the reading process, but efferent stances may take over due to the testing expectations of the subject.

The reader-response theory provides a literary teaching ethos for SEL in the literature lecture room, but the various ways in which SEL innovations function in the teaching and learning environment need to be appraised.

3.7 SEL in teaching and learning

SEL has influenced teaching and learning over the years, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. Research has found that purely cognitive or instruction-based teaching failed to address the emotional impact that the pandemic brought to the learning environment. All education stakeholders have since realised the importance of supporting students emotionally and mentally, understanding that social and emotional nourishment is crucial for student success (Penton-Herrera, 2020).

A longitudinal study (Bayley et al., 2022) on Ethiopian schools between 2019 and 2021 revealed that the school closures negatively impacted students' holistic learning and social skills. The study found a need for education systems to promote holistic learning, particularly after the pandemic. An interesting finding was that inequality and already disadvantaged students in 2019 faced greater obstacles in the social setting post-pandemic, as the lack of socialisation widened the inequality gap. Overall, the study highlighted the necessity of promoting SEL for the benefit of students' academic outcomes. There was a call for policymakers to collaborate in incorporating SEL into children's educational experiences (Bayley et al., 2022).

An American study (Durlak et al., 2011) published in 2011 revealed research conducted across 213 schools with 270,034 students from kindergarten to high school. The findings showed that students involved in SEL programmes exhibited increased pro-social behaviour, lower levels of emotional distress, and improved academic performance. These results concluded with an appeal to decision-makers and school stakeholders to help schools identify SEL programmes that best fit their

cultural setting, alongside a need for financial investment in SEL programmes and teacher training to support the healthy social and emotional development of American youth, enabling them to focus on their academic goals (Durlak et al., 2011).

A global study conducted by an education organisation named HundrED in collaboration with the Lego Foundation (Green & Garcia-Millan, 2022) revealed the results of 13 SEL practices from ten countries be the most impactful SEL solutions:

- Bangladesh's *Colours of Kindness* programme helps displaced children with their trauma via an education programme.
- Colombia's *Navegar Seguro* programme was developed to address the SEL needs of children to help them manage life challenges, build positive relationships, and achieve their goals.
- India hosts two SEL programmes: *acSELeRate* and the *Labhya Foundation*.
 - *AcSELeRate* focuses on empowering children from under-resourced and vulnerable environments by providing access to equitable adulthood outcomes. It achieves this through innovative social and emotional development programmes tailored for both children and teachers.
 - *Labhya Foundation* to create and implement state-specific, locally adapted SEL programmes across public schools in India, ensuring relevance and effectiveness within diverse educational and cultural contexts.
- Mexico's *Educating for Well-being* programme supports individuals of all ages in discovering practical, realistic, and constructive ways to understand their inner selves in relation to the outer world.
- Nigeria's *Emotional Learning Project* (NELPRO) is a lead initiative for producing SEL resources, practices, and policies in the country.

- South Africa's *Grassroot Soccer: SKILLZ Core* programme harnesses the power of soccer to help youth overcome health challenges through its three foundational pillars:
 - **Curriculum:** An evidence-based health curriculum
 - **Coaches:** The influence and guidance of local mentors
 - **Culture:** A fun, inclusive environment
- This approach is designed to equip adolescents with essential personal development skills while fostering a supportive and engaging community.
- Spain's *In Their Shoes* programme is a theatre-based SEL initiative designed to foster empathy and compassion among students. Participants engage in performing their own experiences and challenges, followed by reflective discussions in conversation circles. This approach helps students deepen their understanding of themselves and others through creative expression and dialogue.
- The UK features two notable SEL programmes: *Tales Toolkit* and *Brick by Brick*.
 - *Tales Toolkit* provides interactive, child-led resources that use simple, memorable symbols to represent story structure. Children create stories based on their interests using familiar or abstract items such as a spoon, a photo of a family member, or a favourite toy. This storytelling approach empowers young people to understand and contextualise their personal experiences and their relationship with society.
 - *Brick by Brick* engages children in building Lego® models as a team. Each child takes on different roles and responsibilities during the building process, encouraging socialisation, collaboration, and problem-solving. This hands-on, play-based method helps children develop critical interpersonal and teamwork skills.
- The United States of America has two programmes: *GiveThx* in California and *SEL Kernals of Practice* in Massachusetts.

- *GiveThx* was developed in collaboration with students from low-income, high-trauma communities. It aims to support students who are academically behind and struggling to catch up. The programme provides teachers with a structured approach to teaching gratitude, enabling both students and educators to engage in and practice acts of gratitude, fostering a supportive and positive learning environment.
- *Kernels of Practice* is an SEL innovation designed for large-scale implementation. Developed in response to teachers' needs for a unified framework, it organises SEL into five key categories of skills and competencies: cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, character, and mindset. The program focuses on designing and testing pedagogical practices that specifically target skills in each category, providing a comprehensive and adaptable approach to SEL integration
- Venezuela's *Aulas de Paz – Peace Classrooms* programme was developed to cultivate a culture of peace and non-violence among students in educational institutions located in vulnerable areas. The program extends its impact beyond the classroom, aiming to influence the family and social environments, fostering a broader commitment to peaceful coexistence.

The above 13 SEL programmes (Green & Garcia-Millan, 2022), designed for school stakeholders, including students, teachers, and the surrounding community, were the most impactful and scalable SEL solutions globally. These countries revealed the diverse types of SEL programmes tailored to meet the specific needs of each country and demonstrated that collaboration with students, parents, and teachers is essential when creating an SEL innovation for a school or geographic area in order to achieve an effective SEL programme within teaching and learning.

In the teaching and learning environment, SEL, in its core form, teaches individuals how to manage stress and recognise heightened emotions before responding (Durlak et al., 2011; Carpio de los Pinos et al., 2020). As McCarthy (2021) notes,

Teacher's working environments are fraught with challenges that undermine their effectiveness as well as their emotional well-being and physical safety (McCarthy, 2021, p. 288).

It may be very difficult for teachers to walk around every day with a smile if they feel frustrated and are involved in a job that demands emotional labour (Heller, 2017). Therefore, there is a need for teachers to receive SEL training and to have supportive school staff who are emotionally intelligent, creating a healthy environment for managing their own emotions and enabling them to model social and emotional management for their students (Elbertson et al., 2009).

Providing teachers and lecturers with the necessary SEL training to respond to heightened emotional experiences that students may encounter in class due to socio-political events affecting their lives outside the classroom will help cultivate education professionals who are better equipped to deal with adversity. SEL competencies are reported to “reduce inappropriate behaviour, reduce stress and improve achievement” (McCarthy, 2021, p. 288).

Teachers and lecturers trained in SEL can serve as a form of Psychological First Aid (PFA) within the learning environment (Heath et al., 2017). SEL equips education professionals with foundational mental health skills to address emotional crises, such as *emotional hijackings* (Goleman, 1996), especially in situations where mental health professionals are not immediately available to manage heightened emotional events. When SEL is integrated into a school or university's programming, HE students develop improved coping mechanisms for stress management. Their exposure to SEL enhances their stress-appraisal abilities, enabling them to approach stress in more constructive ways (Stocker & Gallagher, 2019). Over time, this leads to the gradual and systematic emergence of a sustainable framework for managing adversity and anxiety, fostering more productive stress-appraisal practices. This progression is illustrated in the figure below:

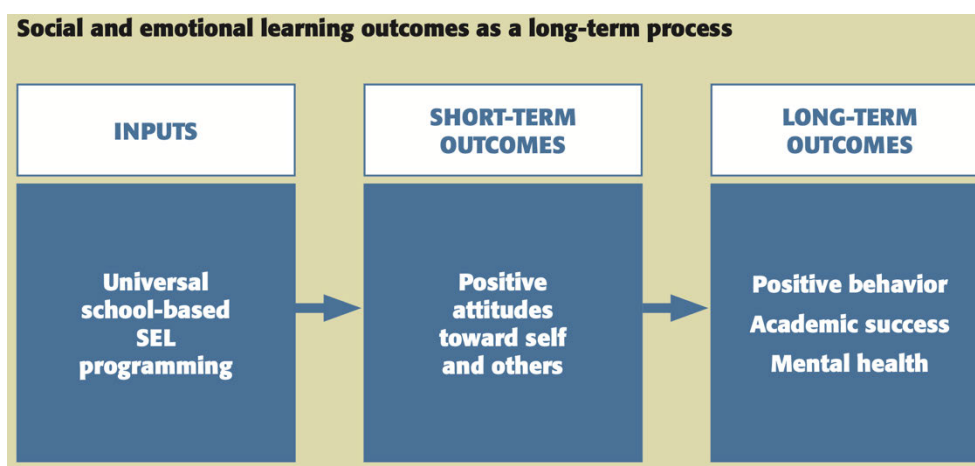


Figure 4: SEL as a long-term process

(Mahoney et al., 2018, p. 19)

As seen in the figure above, when SEL is infused into the school culture as stand-alone training or amalgamated into the curriculum, teachers, lecturers, and students will begin to see valuable outcomes, specifically people displaying positive attitudes towards themselves and those around them. This promotes positive behaviour, thereby contributing to the long-term mental health of both school staff and the student body. SEL can systematically affect a school's behavioural structure and is a useful method for improving students' social and emotional skills while providing a safe working environment for teachers and lecturers (Mahoney et al., 2018).

A 2024 study (Floman et al., 2024) revealed the importance of providing teachers with emotionally intelligent school leadership, which can predict teacher well-being in times of crisis. Emotionally intelligent school leadership refers to those who can be relied upon during crises, who acknowledge teachers' hard work, understand their challenges, and support them during difficult moments by committing to listening to teachers. Brackett (2024) notes that these acts of support have a ripple effect on the emotional climate of the school:

When we give educators permission to feel, a host of positive outcomes ensues. Educators become more emotionally healthy and feel more satisfied and accomplished at work. That has a ripple effect on students, leading to better

classroom instruction, better classroom climates, and higher student achievement (para 28).

The studies cited highlight the importance of incorporating and instilling SEL training in teaching and learning environments.

While SEL creates a safe and academically productive environment for teachers, lecturers, and students, it is also crucial to consider the studies and arguments opposing SEL in formal education systems.

3.8 Critiques against the use of SEL

Debates surrounding SEL have raised concerns about its potential to serve as a tool for ideological coercion (Zhao, 2020), where education stakeholders may resist any framework that imposes a singular ideology or predefined behavioural norms on students:

It is indeed imperative to teach the whole child, attending to their full range of academic, social, and emotional needs, as well as their physical well-being. But I think it's dangerous to view SEL as a panacea for all educational ills, or to translate it into a set of uniform standards that all students are required to master (Zhao, 2020, p. 47).

Zhao (2020) recognises the importance of focusing on students' social, emotional, and academic needs but points out that SEL on its own will not solve all teaching and learning problems. He disagrees with the notion that a one-size-fits-all programme can apply to all students. One of the ideological issues with SEL, as presented by Zhao (2020), is that it is science-based and rooted in the secular ideology of progressive education, which could serve as a substitute for, or pose a threat to, faith-based cultural family beliefs and values. However, SEL competencies can be developed through culturally responsive teaching practices, whereby a student's religion or cultural beliefs can be invoked for connection during the learning process (Attaya & Hilliard, 2023). For example, students could explore ways in which responsible decision-making or any of the five SECs are reflected in stories or lessons from their holy scriptures. Students learn best when the information they receive

reflects their own backgrounds and experiences, and SEL competencies can be infused with the culture of the student.

Some conservative states in America are said to have banned SEL training across their K-12 schools, as they believe it is being used to teach critical race theory and indoctrinate students (Attaya & Hilliard, 2023).

Another political debate about SEL is that it may be seen as hegemonic miseducation (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022), promoting a one-size-fits-all ideology that does not take into consideration the dominant cultural impositions of the West, which do not contribute to decolonial goals of African education strategies (Monroy, 2022). SEL's inadequate analysis of the various oppressions that exist within the unequal power dynamics of communities and schools is a problem that must be acknowledged and adjusted to align with the complexities of the situation.

Shriver and Weissberg (2020) have identified four main problems they foresee with the rise in interest in SEL: ambiguity, hype, equity and culture, and impatience. Firstly, SEL may succumb to ambiguous definitions, leading to misunderstandings and misuse. Secondly, the hype surrounding SEL could be mistaken for a panacea for all social ills, and due to limited agreement on how to test the effectiveness of SEL, it is difficult to determine which programmes are working well. The third constructive criticism lies in the equity and culture aspect of SEL, where the field has traditionally been dominated by white researchers and reformers targeting black and brown students in urban districts. The problem arises from a cultural intention to regulate behaviour according to an un-negotiated cultural code that is not accepted by the recipients of the SEL programme. Lastly, some individuals within the SEL movement advocate for expedited and scaled SEL approaches, which do not result in long-term sustainable social and emotional skills development.

In examining the critiques of SEL, two distinct categories are recognised: firstly, a political critique of SEL, and secondly, an operational critique. The political critique refers to how SEL is not encouraged in certain geographic areas because it appears to foster behaviours and character ethos that contradict the region's political stance, ideology, and culture. The operational critique of SEL is evident in the absence of

country-specific regulatory SEL bodies that can officially appraise SEL programmes for credibility and sustainability, resulting in inconsistent quality assurance of SEL programmes on a global scale.

However, if the critiques are addressed and engaged with in an honest and open manner, the use or adaptation of SEL may be better implemented.

3.9 SEL for global citizenship education

Global Citizenship Education (GCED), developed by UNESCO, incorporates SEL as a key component in its strategy to implement the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to transform education.

GCED is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) response to human rights violations, inequality, and poverty that threaten peace and sustainability. GCED (UNESCO, 2025) empowers learners of all ages to understand that these are global, not just local, issues and encourages them to become active promoters of a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable society. GCED is based on three domains of learning: cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural (UNESCO, 2025). The cognitive domain focuses on acquiring knowledge and thinking skills that help one understand the world and its complexities. The socio-emotional domain is centred on learning values, attitudes, and social skills to develop affectively and psychosocially, enabling individuals to live with others in respect and peace. The behavioural domain focuses on learning conduct, performance, and practical application to develop motivation and encourage engagement.

South Africa is one of the founding members of the UN, and although suspended by the UN in 1945 for apartheid crimes, our membership was reinstated in 1994 due to our transition to democracy. In our international relations agreement with the UN (Gungubele, 2022.), South Africa has pledged to engage with the sustainable development goals outlined by UNESCO. In upholding this pact, we identify with the characteristics and traits of GCED by implementing the socio-emotional domain of GCED through SEL instruction in the education sector. SEL instruction supports the values, attitudes, and behaviours that foster responsible citizenship, which GCED

promotes, such as commitment to peace, human rights, and sustainable development. Such behaviours are encouraged in the SEL learning environment (Williams & Jagers, 2022).

When students implement SEL in the classroom, levels of conflict decrease significantly (Bridgeland et al., 2013). In a transformative context, SEL is about more than building pro-social behaviour; it can be used to dismantle oppressive systems by developing the skills of building, listening, feeling, and thinking, which are essential for responding to people or peers in marginalised positions. This compassionate core is cultivated in lessons designed to achieve SEL-specific learning outcomes (Williams & Jagers, 2022). Consequently, this compassionate core in tolerant and inclusive classrooms, informed by SEL, becomes characteristic of GCED. Narrative empathy discussion sessions and role-play activities informed by SEL-specific learning outcomes may conscientise students and contribute to the development of South African students as responsible global citizens.

Although South Africa may be part of global governance centres like the UN, our education systems are rooted in the trauma of Apartheid and, more recently, the effects of the pandemic. The following discussion will explore how SEL can be used to address South African-specific traumas, both pre-and post-pandemic.

3.10 SEL for South Africa

At present, SEL as an educational method of instruction in basic and HE in South Africa has not been promulgated by the education regulatory bodies – the DBE and the DHET, respectively. It is only when the education authorities accept that SEL is a vital methodology for imparting human and holistic learning (Marsay, 2022) that teachers and lecturers can be officially trained by the South African regulatory bodies in SEL.

The destruction of family life due to apartheid (Mashatile, 2023), particularly in poverty-stricken areas affected by the country's past, has resulted in little to no social support for youth to develop within these under-resourced communities (Marsay, 2019). Stable personal relationships are essential for development in early life (Hoskins & Schweig, 2022), yet many South African students come from backgrounds

that do not provide such stable social and emotional connections (Mashatile, 2023). Consequently, the responsibility for providing social stability and support falls upon schools. However, schools are facing implementation challenges in teaching the subject Life Orientation, which is intended to facilitate the transition from school to work and equip students with the relevant social skills for this transition (Marsay, 2022).

If subjects like Life Orientation cannot successfully impart social and workplace skills (Marsay, 2022), alternative options, such as the CASEL 5 SECs, may be integrated with content across various subjects or learning areas. The lack of exposure to SEL in South Africa (Marsay, 2019) hinders teachers from assisting students in navigating the adverse communities they are born into and the workplaces they will enter. “Studies argued that pre-service teachers should receive more training in SEL in their teacher education programmes to be better prepared to deliver SEL programmes” (Dyson et al., 2023, p. 3). To develop individuals who understand compassion and empathy, programmes that teach the importance of empathy and convey empathic skills are necessary in the training of South African teachers (De Klerk & De Klerk, 2018).

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is premised on the creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills that will not be easily replaced by machines in the future (Monroy, 2022). This is why nurturing pro-social students is more important than ever, as these skills may well be the market-related skills of the future (Cojocar, 2023). A study with South African teachers found that “SEL skills are critical for future readiness and life after school” (Marsay, 2022, p. 222). However, SEL remains fairly “unfamiliar” to teachers (Marsay, 2019, p. 287), which makes its implementation less accessible for use in the classroom or lecture hall. As Pillay (2015) notes,

In the end, if teachers do not recognise that they have the power to exercise agency over who they are, how they teach, and what they hope to achieve, then the cycle of disempowerment and failure will continue and society will replicate itself. Consequently, students become part of an education system that ultimately fails them (p. 5).

This thesis contends that exposure to SEL for South African education stakeholders will contribute to developing empowered teachers and students, as SEL skills serve as a social protection system that can strengthen resilience in individuals (Bouchard et al., 2023). Building strong-minded teachers and students is fundamental to establishing an education system that will emancipate South African students from the harsh legacy of apartheid.

Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, SEL could have been employed to help individuals transition from adverse environmental conditions. The decline in mental health among both students and teachers during and after the pandemic resulted in a notable mental health crisis, as school closures, isolated living, and a lack of human interaction led many individuals worldwide to struggle with depression (Monroy, 2022).

What the pandemic demonstrated globally was the necessity for individuals to learn strategies to cope with adversity (Marsay, 2020) and to allocate resources towards bridging empathy divides in education (Deist & Fourie, 2023). If SEL had been utilised to support individuals psychologically (Heath et al., 2017) within the South African education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, skills such as self-regulation when angry, initiating new friendships, respectfully resolving conflicts, making ethical and safe choices, and contributing to community building during times of adversity (Bond, 2020) could have been developed in the country.

As Kounenou et al. (2021, p. 16) notes, "SEL acknowledges that learners may be experiencing intense social and emotional difficulties, which interfere with their ability to concentrate and to learn optimally". The acknowledgment of external aggressors to learning, the confession of loneliness, and the admission of depression in the learning environment make the learning experience all the more rooted in the reality of the student. This contrasts with a non-SEL environment, where students struggle to acquire the academic or technical skills required to pass because they are discouraged from discussing other aspects of their lives that clearly affect their academic performance. SEL, by recognising the social and emotional experiences of students, has the potential to create significant benefits out of difficult circumstances (Bond, 2020). Therefore, this study suggests a more expansive educational approach

that includes humanistic disciplines, such as literature studies and SEL-infused literature studies (Ndlovu, 2019).

In this study, I work with a model for SEL within English literature lecture rooms called the SELLit model.

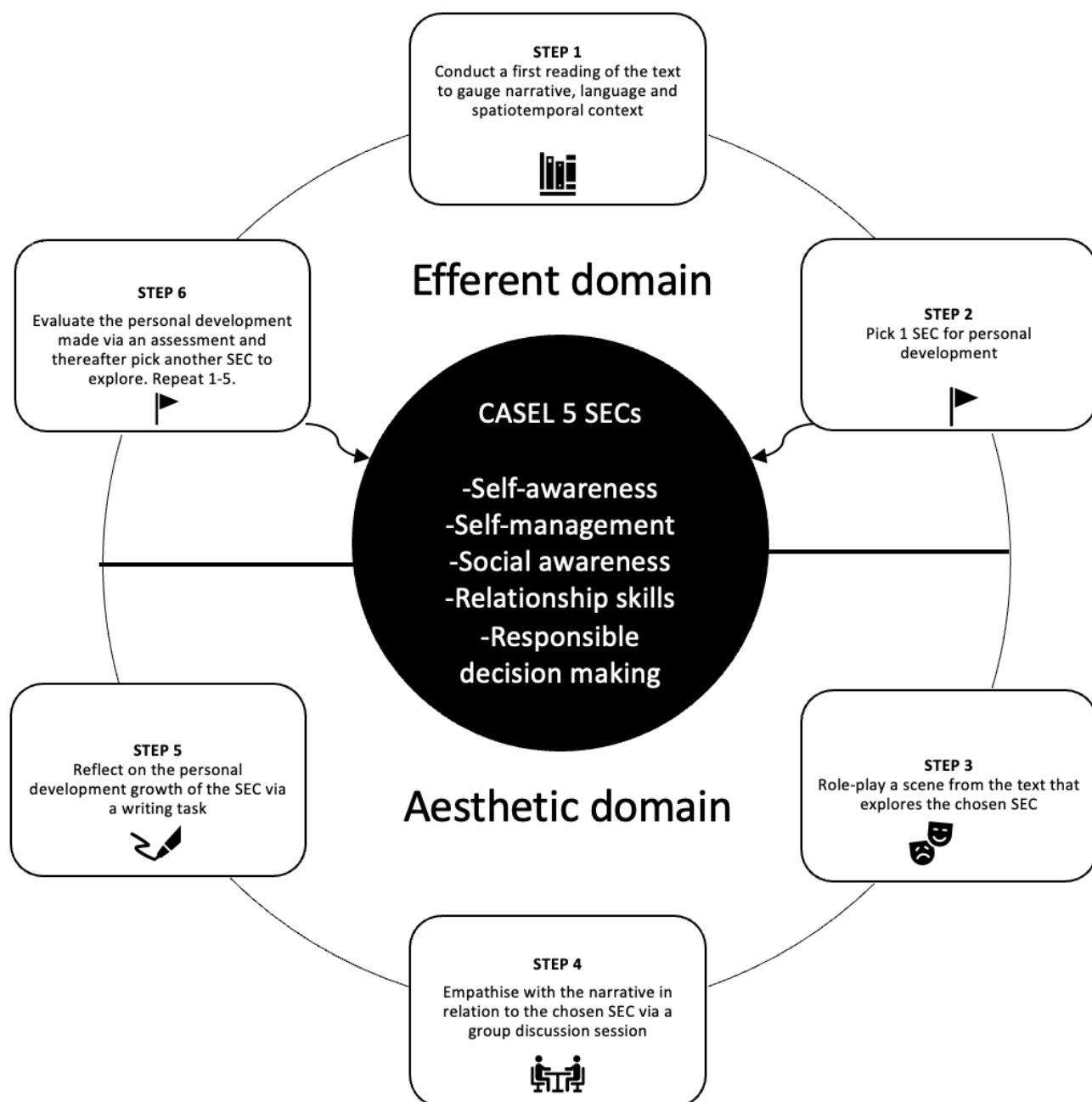


Figure 5: The SELLit model

I propose the diagram above to represent the SELLit model of SEL within English Literature studies, which stands for SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) via Lit (Literature studies). This model for teaching the CASEL 5 in English literature lecture rooms works in five steps, utilising two teaching approaches: role-play (Moreno & Zelany, 1958; Wagner, 1976) and narrative empathy discussion sessions (Keen, 2006), and locating itself within both the efferent and aesthetic reading stances (Rosenblatt, 1998), as discussed previously.

When a student is given a text to study for literary analysis, they begin step 1 by reading the text and making notes in line with literary analysis, focusing on the cultural, linguistic, and spatiotemporal symbols and elements of the text (Kunjanman & Aziz, 2021). Thereafter, in step 2, the teacher selects which SEC to explore based on the most glaringly evident SEC for social and emotional exploration. This is then announced to the class as the chosen SEC, or, in literary terms, the thematic concern they will now textually explore to personally develop in relation to the text. In step 3, the class divides into groups to prepare their role-plays. These role-plays relate to an event within the text that overtly presents or displays matters related to the chosen SEC, allowing the students to learn what it is like to make decisions from the perspective of the character being role-played. In step 4 of the model, after completing the role-plays, the class sits together to discuss the various ways in which they empathised with the characters from the narratives emerged during the role-plays and from the reading of the text. It is here that students begin to share their perspectives on what they have just read and role-played, discussing how the narrative and role-play allowed them to reflect on their own personal lives. In step 5, students are tasked with writing down and reflecting on their experiences in the role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions. In the final step, step 6, students are asked to evaluate how much they have personally grown or developed the chosen SEC through an assessment writing task that reviews all five steps. Thereafter, at the discretion of the teacher or lecturer, students may choose another SEC to explore within the same text or begin a new text to explore another SEC.

The model is divided into two domains. The first, the *efferent domain*, focuses on how steps 1, 2, and 6 enable students to extract and retain information from the literary study. Within this domain, students gain insights into the spatiotemporal context of the

text, the writer's linguistic style, the cultural dimensions of the novel, and their own personal growth as they engage with the selected SEC. This SEC, chosen as the primary thematic focus by the lecturer, aligns with the targeted learning outcomes of the lesson.

Secondly, the *aesthetic domain* of the model looks at how students experience reading, how their feelings about the text are explored via the role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions in steps 3 and 4, which allows them to feel what the characters felt and to discuss those feelings. Step 5 allows students to free-write these experiential moments from the literature lesson for self-reflection. The application of this model is presented in my Findings chapters.

The value of the SELLit model in the literature classroom lies in its structured six-step approach to achieving SEL outcomes through the study of any literary text. It provides a systematic process for teaching the CASEL 5 SECs for the text being studied. Educators or lecturers can identify which CASEL 5 SEC needs development based on the class's psychosocial needs. They can then select a literary text that either directly addresses the identified need or contains thematic elements that highlight it.

The role-play component of the SELLit model fosters embodied learning of the selected CASEL 5 SEC, while the narrative empathy discussion session enhances intellectual development and critical thinking in relation to the literary text. Following these activities, reflection tasks integrate embodied learning (role-play) with intellectual engagement (narrative empathy discussions), allowing students to connect SEC development with literary analysis. In the reflection stage, students actively synthesise their SEL learning with their interpretation of the text. This synergy between language study and psychosocial skill development enables students to cultivate both social-emotional competencies and literary analytical skills as they interact with, adapt to, and analyse the prescribed text.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter presented the CASEL 5 model as a functional framework that is widely used for SEL instruction. The SELLit model builds on the CASEL 5 SECs.

Studies on SEL have shown that it is valuable for teaching human skills across various educational environments in different countries (McCarthy, 2021; Stocker & Gallagher, 2019; Hoskins & Schweig, 2022; Elias, 2019) and SEL is useful in global citizenship education (Marsay, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2022; Marsay et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2025; Williams & Jagers, 2022; Bridgeland et al., 2013). The key pedagogical approaches to achieving a SEL-oriented learning environment in this study – narrative empathy discussion sessions and role-play activities – have proven effective in producing SECs in students.

The Methodology chapter that follows will outline how the SELlit model was applied to the data generated for this qualitative, critical interpretivist AR study.

Chapter 4:

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the process of data generation for this study. It begins with a discussion of the research paradigm, approach, and design, followed by an outline of the five research cycles. Next, the chapter describes the sampling of participants and details the procedural and ethical considerations necessary for conducting the fieldwork. Finally, it concludes with an account of the analysis process, an assessment of trustworthiness, and a discussion of the research's limitations.

4.2 Research paradigm

The paradigm chosen for this study was the critical interpretivist paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), which underpinned how the knowledge generated from the study was examined and interpreted.

The interpretivist paradigm originated from the philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Wilhelm Dilthey's work, alongside the contributions of other German philosophers, in their study of interpretive understanding known as hermeneutics (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The Greek word *hermeneutics* translates to "interpretation" in English. This framework seeks to understand how humans derive meaning from interactions with texts and comprehend situations through language (Cohen et al., 2018). It is particularly suitable for examining how my participants construct meaning from and with the language texts prescribed for them in the English literature lecture room.

The hermeneutic philosophy guided me in interpreting my participants' subjective responses to the text and research activities during the data generation stage. I analysed how they made meaning of the texts by observing their behavioural, creative, verbal, and written responses to the texts, as well as during discussions with other participants about the texts during the role-play activities and narrative empathy discussion sessions.

As an interpretivist researcher, I relied on my participants' responses to the texts being studied to uncover the reasons behind how they constructed meaning concerning their responses to the texts and the research activities (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Consequently, choosing a paradigm centred on how the meaning of texts was interpreted and re-created by my participants was crucial for my research.

The experiences of the participants were placed at the centre of this study. The interpretive focus of this paradigm was employed to study the complex human behaviour of the participants during their exposure to literary texts. The social phenomena produced by the research activities were observed and documented, and the verbal data from the participants yielded insights related to the intricacies of human experience (De Villiers, 2005). As De Villiers (2005) notes:

Interpretive research is an appropriate view for studies of complex human behaviour and social phenomena...and which use verbal data. Qualitative data collection and analysis produce findings related to intricate details where values and human experiences are relevant (pp. 111–112).

As an interpretivist researcher, I gained knowledge through the social experiences and social constructions of language, documents, and other artefacts that demonstrated how exposure to literary texts and related activities created meaning for my participants (Carrim, 2012). I observed how my HE participants interpreted fictional documents, how they re-created extracts from these documents, and how they connected the narratives within them to their subjective social and emotional realities. The interpretivist paradigm proved appropriate for this study as it provided a framework for exploring teaching and learning, which informed subjective knowledge acquisition in a creative learning context where the analysis of prescribed texts fostered critical thinking skills aligned with enhancing the participants' social and emotional development.

In raising criticality within the research, I explored how the participants' creative engagement with the literary texts under scrutiny "enticed the participants to reconsider taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs" (Pozzebon, 2004, p. 285). The inference of a transformative process via the creative role-play and narrative empathy

activities situates this research within a critical paradigm because, firstly, the literary texts prompted the participants to examine the conditions of characters in challenging socio-political circumstances; secondly, the creation of role-plays allowed the participants to construct their own data; and thirdly, the narrative empathy discussion sessions encouraged the participants to uncover their opinions and thoughts, leading them towards a vocal liberation.

The research activities revealed how the participants understood, described, and predicted the educational phenomena that occurred during the creative research processes. The critical aspect of the research enabled a qualitatively new understanding of social reality and provided new alternatives for social action aimed at changing the prevailing views the participants held on social and emotional topics (Pozzebon, 2004), which stemmed from their exposure to the prescribed texts.

By critiquing prevailing understandings of phenomena, the participants engaged in a transformative process where their critiques of social and emotional phenomena emerged from literary text study through the research activities, resulting in changed attitudes towards existing understandings of social and emotional phenomena outside the lecture room, indicating altered stances on social injustice.

The participants' new preparedness, attitude changes, and uncovered agency (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) regarding social occurrences following the research activity experience formed the critical component of this interpretivist study, where the goal was to cultivate a more socially and emotionally conscious HE learning process within the English literature lecture room.

4.3 Research approach

In order to honour the emotional complexities of my participants' responses I chose a qualitative research approach (Gonzales & Rincones, 2013). Qualitative research meant that I would study and interpret phenomena in their natural setting, observing the interactional, visual, and verbal experiences of my participants. In action, they displayed how meaning was constructed during the research activities and how this meaning impacted their lives (Mertens, 2016). Implementing a qualitative research approach allowed me to focus on the direct experiences of my participants as

meaning-making subjects in the study. It would have been difficult to present the intricate findings of the participants' emotional responses during the narrative empathy discussion sessions or to showcase their behaviour or creative choices in the role-play activities using a quantitative research approach. Therefore, a descriptive presentation of the data using words rather than numbers was chosen for this research project.

When the participants brought the texts they were studying to life through role-play activities, and when the words of the texts sparked opinions that were explored during the narrative empathy discussion sessions, these experiential and discourse-driven moments justified the choice of a qualitative approach. Creswell and Creswell's (2017) qualitative recommendations were applied in this research, with the daily literature lecture room of the participants serving as the site for conducting the research activities. I, as the researcher, was key in driving the research activities; my field notes proved crucial in documenting the behavioural, verbal, and textual data from the participants. Additionally, the participants' diaries, writing tasks, autophotography, and questionnaires provided the multiple sources of data characteristic of qualitative research. Given that these elements occurred during the data generation stage, it was imperative to adopt a research approach that acknowledged the potential of words to create more visceral observations from the creative research activities, making the qualitative approach the most suitable for this study.

This research focused on understanding participants' perspectives on the emotional and social experiences evoked by the texts being role-played and explored through the discussion sessions, echoing Bargate's (2014) assertion that "Qualitative research is an inquiry process aimed at understanding social or human problems based in a natural setting" (p. 11). Specifically, this study examined the views of participants as they constructed their own understandings of the individual social and emotional experiences arising from the collaborative creative educational exploration of the texts under study. Qualitative research proved to be a valuable means for exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups assign to social or human issues, supporting research focused on generating individual meaning and comprehension within the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2009).

The qualitative researcher “aims for a holistic picture from historically unique situations, where idiosyncrasies are important for meaning” (Ospina, 2004, p. 4). Qualitative researchers immerse themselves in the specific setting under study because they are concerned with context. They believe that action can be best understood in the setting that reflects the historical context of the institutions to which they belong (Biklen & Bogdan, 1998). Consequently, documenting what my participants said, wrote, and did (Carrim, 2012) during the research activities allowed this qualitative approach to generate and capture data centred on the social and emotional responses that participants had towards the prescribed texts.

4.4 Research design

The research design used for this study was AR, a model attributed to Kurt Lewin. This systematic and cyclical inquiry focuses on improving practice and addressing social issues that affect the lives of everyday people (Hine, 2013). AR was developed by Lewin, who had a background in social psychology and sought democratic social change after fleeing Nazi Germany. He argued that the goal of social change was the responsibility of all participants who desired a transformed society (Efron & Ravid, 2013). With its origins deeply rooted in a socially transformative ethos, the AR design was well-suited to the SEL outcomes that this study aimed to develop.

In its titular form, the ‘Action’ in AR is connected to exploring a problem or challenge within a certain field or organisation (Burns, 2009). The ‘Research’ in AR comprises a more systematic and structured approach to generating data associated with qualitative studies (Burns, 2009). Essentially, these two concepts work together when the planned ‘Actions’ are implemented and subsequently reflected upon and evaluated during the period following the action, known as the ‘Research’. This process gives rise to the AR cycle. Trip (2005, p. 2) defines a cycle as:

Systematically oscillating between taking action in the field of practice, and inquiring into it. One plans, implements, describes, and evaluates an improving change to one’s practice.

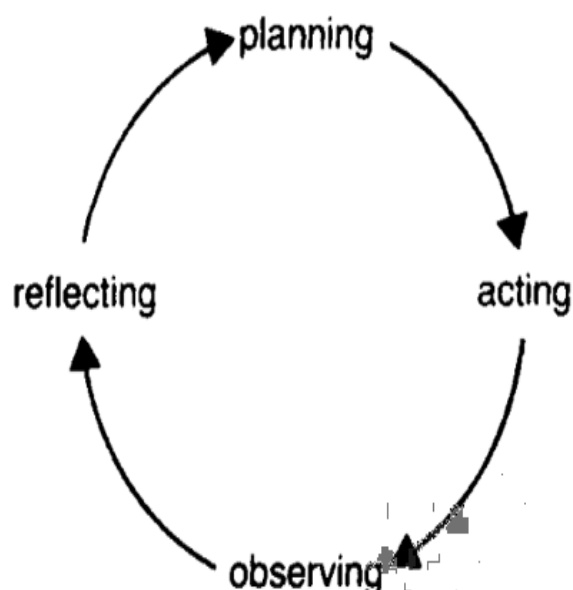


Figure 6: A single AR Cycle

(McNiff & Whitehead, 2002 p. 40)

The data documented and reflected upon from the first cycle is improved for active implementation in the second cycle, and this process continues for as long as the researcher deems it necessary, across as many research cycles as required. This is how the AR process occurs (Burns, 2009). The figure below outlines a visual diagram of how a single AR cycle functioned in this study:

The above model states that an AR cycle will occur in a series of steps such as planning, fact-finding, and execution, which later came to be understood as an action-reflection cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). As a researcher seeking structured approaches to improve and inform my practice as a lecturer, AR encouraged a reflective exercise for me through its cyclical implementation and evaluation process during the data generation stages (Rossouw, 2009). AR was not solely focused on understanding the social dynamics of SEL development in literature lectures for my participants; it also aimed to effect socially transformative change during knowledge generation via the “action” phase of the research (Huang, 2010).

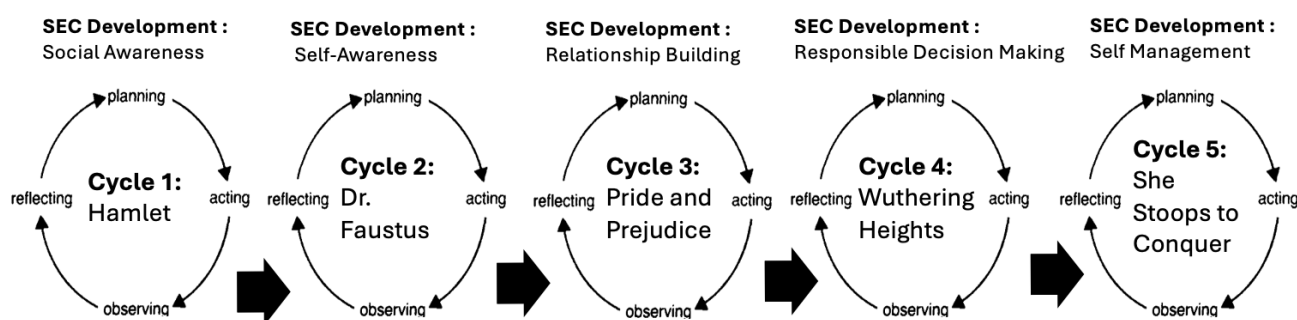


Figure 7: The five AR cycles in this study

This particular study's AR design was implemented in five cycles, as depicted in the figure above. The five cycles corresponded with the five SEL competencies: *social awareness*, *self-awareness*, *responsible decision-making*, *relationship building*, and *self-management*. Each cycle explored one of the five SEL competencies. Another reason for deciding on five cycles was to cater to the operational dynamics of the second-year literature lecture teaching block. The data generation was carried out throughout Block 1 of 2023, during which the second year students were prescribed five literary texts: William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, Christopher Marlowe's play *Dr. Faustus*, Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights*, and Oliver Goldsmith's play *She Stoops to Conquer*. While the texts were not of my choosing, I knew they would work well in my engagement with the SEL competencies. Each text was assigned a relevant SEL competency to explore and develop, such as exploring social awareness in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. These two reasons underpinned the decision to choose five cycles for the research.

The SEL outcomes that the research aimed to investigate in the literature lecture room comprised the social inquiry explored in the study. The research focused on developing social and emotional skills through role-play activities and narrative empathy discussion sessions with the participants, which constituted the intervention strategy. AR in education is a collaborative research design used to generate information by "studying a school situation to understand and improve the quality of

the educative process" (Hine, 2013, p. 152). As the researcher, I worked alongside the participants to address the problem of social and emotional management in the lecture room during the 'action' of a research activity session (Tran, 2009).

The participants in this research project collaborated to document their social and emotional development by observing their own responses and reacting to each other's responses during the playmaking of role-plays and narrative empathy discussion sessions. Monitoring their behaviour and observing each other's actions aimed to evaluate the development of SEL skills, thus forming the intervention component of AR. AR intentionally "ascribes a position of power" to participants (Gonzales & Rincones, 2013, p. 6), empowering them to take ownership of their learning and, in turn, be accountable for decisions made both within and beyond the research group. According to Blair and Minkler (2009, p. 652), "Action Research thus contributes to capacity building and systems change, not only on the individual level but also, ideally, on organisational and community levels". In an educational context, AR acknowledges that teachers hold powerful positions; if society values knowledge as power, a teacher can step down from their position of authority to be as curious as all the stakeholders in the research, demonstrating a commitment to growth by both the teacher and the students (Jacobs, 2016).

The AR design of this study aligns with its qualitative nature, as AR focuses on generating data centred on participants' independent insights into their SEL aimed at growth in both academia and social citizenship. The reflection process undertaken by the participants at the end of each cycle involved their research diaries, written tasks, autophotography, and open questionnaire analysis. This analysis indicated the participants' social and emotional growth in the preceding cycle, which informed the following cycle with the aim of enhancing the participants' SEC development. In this regard, content and process reflection were crucial for reviewing and evaluating the progress made by participants within each cycle (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005).

Each research cycle revealed different experiences and requests from the participants to clarify the SEL competency learning experience for the next cycle. The responsive and revisionary nature of the cycles allowed the emerging ideas (Dick, 2000) of SEL to develop within the participants. The cyclical foundation of this AR

study represents a piece of academic work aimed at fostering growth in the field of SEL within South African English literature lecture rooms.

4.4.1 Outline of the research process

This section outlines the five AR cycles.

4.4.1.1 Pre-cycle questionnaire

Before the research activities began, participants completed a pre-cycle questionnaire to document their existing SEL competencies. This activity assessed any prior knowledge or understanding of SEL (see Appendix A: Open-Ended Questionnaires).

CYCLE 1

Duration:

Three lectures:

- Monday, 27 February
- Tuesday, 3 March
- Friday, 7 March

Text studied:

Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Compulsory lecture activities (90 minutes):

- Narrative summary exercise, quiz, and module expectations
- PowerPoint lecture presentation
- “Gut reaction” discussion

SEL learning outcome:

Social awareness

Role-play warm-up activities (30 minutes):

1. **Blind Walk Trust Exercise** (Annarella, 1992)

- Participants paired up and stood beside one another. Using scarves or shawls as blindfolds, one partner wore the blindfold while the other led them around the lecture venue. Afterward, roles were reversed.
- **Purpose:** This activity fostered trust between partners.

2. **Electricity Circles Focus Game** (Casdagli, 1998)

- Participants formed a large circle. One participant began by tracing an imaginary zigzag (symbolising a lightning bolt) in the air. The next participant replicated this zigzag, passing it around the circle. Upon reaching the last participant, the zigzag was sent back in reverse, with each participant modifying its pattern or speed.
- **Purpose:** This exercise encouraged concentration and group focus.

3. **The Magic Box Imagination Exercise** (Marsden, n.d.)

- Seated in a circle with desks, each participant imagined a box in front of them. Over five minutes, they visualised an item, object, or entity to place inside the box. Afterward, participants mimed opening their boxes and removing the item, while others guessed the contents based on the mime.
- **Purpose:** This exercise stimulated imagination and mime skills.

•

• **Role-Play Activity (60 minutes):**

- Participants were instructed to divide into two groups and perform role-plays of selected scenes from *Hamlet*.
 - **Selection Criteria:** Scenes had to resonate with the SEL competency of social awareness, focusing on Hamlet's behaviour in society, his responses to his father's instructions, and his interactions with other characters.
 - **Adaptation Option:** Participants were allowed to modernise the language to suit a contemporary context, given the original text's Early Modern English style.

To produce the role-play, participants followed a structured six-step plan:

Step 1: *Selecting a Context*

The group chose a setting for the role-play, such as a contemporary South African context, a university campus, or a family event (Torricon, 2015).

Step 2: *Script Preparation*

Participants linguistically adapted the chosen scene, rewriting the Early Modern English into a concise script suitable for a short role-play. The focus was on exploring the SEL competency of social awareness (Torricon, 2015).

Step 3: *Role Assignment*

Group members assigned roles, ensuring that each participant had a specific part to play (Torricon, 2015).

Step 4: *Rehearsal*

Participants rehearsed their loosely scripted role-play, practicing their movements and interactions while refining the scene (Torricon, 2015).

Step 5: *Capturing Social Awareness Through Photography*

During rehearsals, participants used autophotography to capture a moment that illustrated social awareness within their role-play. These photographs were later analysed (see Appendix E: Autophotography) (Glaw et al., 2017).

Step 6: *Presentation*

Once rehearsals were complete, participants presented their role-play to the other group, showcasing their interpretation and understanding of social awareness (Torricon, 2015).

Narrative empathy discussion sessions (45 minutes):

Participants gathered in a circle to reflect on both the play and the role-play activity. The aim was to develop empathy for the characters in the prescribed text. During the discussion, participants also shared their emotional responses to portraying specific characters, considering how these experiences connected to their personal lives. The session emphasised exploring how their own experiences resonated with the SEL competency of social awareness.

Instruments used (30 minutes):**1. Field Notes**

I documented participants' activities and interactions through detailed observations recorded in field notes (Pacheco-Vega, 2019). (See Appendix B: Observation Schedule).

2. Research Diaries

After the role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions, participants completed their research diaries independently, outside of the lecture room. This activity took approximately 10 minutes (Wolfinger, 2002). (See Appendix C: Research Diary).

3. Written Task

Participants also completed a written task on Hamlet independently, outside of the lecture room. This activity focused on reflecting on the themes of the play and took approximately 20 minutes (Kayaalp et al., 2022). (See Appendix D: Written Tasks).

- **CYCLE 2**

Duration:

Three lectures:

- Friday, 10 March
- Tuesday, 14 March
- Friday, 17 March

Text studied:

Dr. Faustus by Christopher Marlowe

Compulsory lecture activities (90 Minutes):

- Narrative summary exercise and viewing of a film snippet
- PowerPoint lecture presentation
- "Gut reaction" discussion

SEL learning outcome:

Self-awareness

Role-play warm up activities (30 mins):

1. **Honey, I Love You, But I Just Can't Smile Trust Exercise** (Trinity College, n.d.)

Participants stood in a circle, and the first volunteer entered the middle. They approached a random peer in the circle and said, "Honey, if I love you, give me a smile." Without laughing or smiling, the receiving participant had to respond, "Honey, you know I love you, but I just can't smile". If the participant in the middle successfully got their peer to smile, they switched places. The initial receiving participant, who succeeded in not smiling, then repeated the exercise with another participant in the circle. If the participant in the middle repeatedly failed to elicit a smile, they had to try the line with each person in the circle. The game tests the ability to maintain focus during eye contact and the capacity to enjoy receiving compliments while remaining composed.

- 2. **Incy and Falloon Focus Game (Casdagli, 1998)**

Participants were asked to spread out across the lecture room. When I announced the word 'incy', participants were expected to walk in the smallest manner possible. Some participants walked very slowly and took tiny steps, while others crouched. When I announced the word 'falloon', participants were expected to walk across the venue as large as possible. Some participants adopted elephantine walks and took giant steps. This exercise made the participants conscious of how they appeared when choosing to walk—either feeling big and confident or small and unnoticed.

3. **Hot Seating of Character (Bell Foundation, n.d.)**

Participants gathered in front of a chair, and a volunteer was called upon. The first volunteer sat on the chair, and I asked them to pretend to be the titular character from the prescribed text of the cycle, *Dr. Faustus*. The other participants then asked Dr. Faustus various questions about why he made the decisions he did and why he chose not to be good. This activity provided

participants with the opportunity to embody Dr. Faustus and empathise with his choices.

Role-play (60 mins)

I then instructed participants to subdivide into two groups to role-play a scene from *Dr. Faustus*. The participants could choose any moment or scene from the play to enact. The only requirement was that the scene they selected needed to resonate with the SEL competency of self-awareness, particularly in relation to the character of Dr. Faustus and how he might have affected the lives of those around him. Participants were encouraged to adapt the language to suit their contemporary context, as the original text was written in early modern English.

To produce the role-play, participants followed a structured six-step plan:

Step 1: *Selecting a Context*

The group chose a setting for the role-play, such as a contemporary South African context, a university campus, or a family event (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 2: *Script Preparation*

Participants linguistically adapted the chosen scene, rewriting the Early Modern English into a concise script suitable for a short role-play. The focus was on exploring the SEL competency of social awareness (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 3: *Role Assignment*

Group members assigned roles, ensuring that each participant had a specific part to play (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 4: *Rehearsal*

Participants rehearsed their loosely scripted role-play, practicing their movements and interactions while refining the scene (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 5: *Capturing Social Awareness Through Photography*

During rehearsals, participants used autophotography to capture a moment that illustrated social awareness within their role-play. These photographs were later analysed (see Appendix E: Autophotography) (Glaw et al., 2017).

Step 6: Presentation

Once rehearsals were complete, participants presented their role-play to the other group, showcasing their interpretation and understanding of social awareness (Torrico, 2015).

Narrative empathy discussion sessions (30 mins)

Participants sat in a circle and reflected on the play and the role-play activity, aiming to empathise with the characters from the prescribed text. During this discussion session, participants also considered their emotions while portraying certain characters and how these role-plays prompted them to think about experiences in their own lives. The discussion also focused on how their experiences resonated with their self-awareness.

Instruments used (30 minutes):

1. Field Notes

I documented participants' activities and interactions through detailed observations recorded in field notes (Pacheco-Vega, 2019) (See Appendix B: Observation Schedule).

2. Research Diaries

After the role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions, participants independently completed their research diaries outside the lecture room. (See Appendix C: Research Diary) (Wolfinger, 2002).

3. Written Task

Participants also completed a written task on *Dr. Faustus* independently, reflecting on the themes and SEL outcomes of the cycle. (See Appendix D: Written Tasks) (Kayaalp et al., 2022).

- **CYCLE 3**

Duration:

Two lectures:

- Friday, 24 March
- Tuesday, 28 March

Text studied:

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Compulsory lecture activities (60 minutes):

- Narrative summary exercise and viewing of a film snippet
- Partial film viewing
- "Gut reaction" discussion

SEL learning outcome:

Relationship building

Role-play warm up activities (30 mins):**1. Precious Object Show and Tell Trust Exercise** (Casdagli, 1998)

Participants were asked to bring objects that were precious to them to the activity session. They were to show the object to the rest of the participants and share the story behind its sentimental value. This exercise was chosen because it simulated the emotions associated with strong relationships for the participants before the role-play activity, which focused on relationship building, began.

2. Yes and No Focus Game (Bell Foundation, n.d.)

I asked the participants to stand in a small group in the middle of the venue. I then instructed them that the "yes" side of the venue was to my right and the "no" side was to my left. I asked the participants a series of questions, such as "Do you like chocolate?" Participants stood on either the yes or no side of the venue according to their responses. This activity allowed

participants to identify with whom they shared similarities and with whom they had differences. This exercise highlighted that they study with people who have both commonalities and varying perspectives.

3. Lie About How You Got Here Game (Marsden, n.d.)

Participants were asked to sit in a circle, and one by one, each participant was invited to lie about how they arrived at the lecture. Some claimed to have arrived by flying car, others by unicorn, or whatever their imagination inspired in the moment. Participants also role-played their arrivals; some physically enacted their methods, with one arriving on a broom like in Quidditch, while others rollerbladed. This exercise allowed participants to engage their bodies and imaginations before the role-play activity began.

Role-play (45 mins)

I then instructed participants to subdivide into two groups to role-play a scene from *Pride and Prejudice*. They could choose any moment or scene from the novel, with the only limitation being that it had to resonate with the SEL competency of relationship building between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Participants were required to adapt the language to suit their contemporary context, as the original was written in Regency English.

To produce the role-play, participants followed a structured six-step plan:

Step 1: *Selecting a Context*

The group chose a setting for the role-play, such as a contemporary South African context, a university campus, or a family event (Torricco, 2015).

Step 2: *Script Preparation*

Participants linguistically adapted the chosen scene, rewriting the Early Modern English into a concise script suitable for a short role-play. The focus was on exploring the SEL competency of social awareness (Torricco, 2015).

Step 3: *Role Assignment*

Group members assigned roles, ensuring that each participant had a specific part to play (Torrico, 2015).

Step 4: *Rehearsal*

Participants rehearsed their loosely scripted role-play, practicing their movements and interactions while refining the scene (Torrico, 2015).

Step 5: *Capturing Social Awareness Through Photography*

During rehearsals, participants used autophotography to capture a moment that illustrated social awareness within their role-play. These photographs were later analysed (see Appendix E: Autophotography) (Glaw et al., 2017).

Step 6: *Presentation*

Once rehearsals were complete, participants presented their role-play to the other group, showcasing their interpretation and understanding of social awareness (Torrico, 2015).

Narrative empathy discussion sessions (30 mins)

Participants sat in a circle and reflected on the novel and the role-play activity with the aim of empathising with the characters from the prescribed text. During this discussion session, participants also contemplated their emotions while portraying certain characters and how these role-plays prompted them to consider experiences from their own lives. Additionally, there was a focus on how their experiences resonated with relationship-building.

Instruments used (30 minutes):

1. Field Notes

I documented participants' activities and interactions through detailed observations recorded in field notes (Pacheco-Vega, 2019). (See Appendix B: Observation Schedule).

2. Research Diaries

After the role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions, participants independently completed their research diaries outside the lecture room, reflecting on their experiences in Cycle 3. (See Appendix C: Research Diary). (Wolfinger, 2002).

3. Written Task

Participants also completed a written task on *Pride and Prejudice*, focusing on the themes of the text and the SEL competency of relationship building. (See Appendix D: Written Tasks). (Kayaalp et al., 2022).

- **CYCLE 4**

Duration:

Two lectures:

- Friday, 31 March
- Tuesday, 4 April

Text studied:

Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë

Compulsory lecture activities (80 Minutes):

- Narrative summary exercise and viewing of a film snippet
- “Gut reaction” discussion
- PowerPoint lecture presentation

SEL learning outcome:

Responsible decision-making

Role-play warm-up activities (45 mins)

1. Torpedoes Trust Exercise (Trinity College, n.d.)

Participants were instructed to stand in a circle. The first volunteer was then tasked with picking another peer from the circle, saying their name aloud, and running as fast as they could towards them. Essentially, the first participant 'torpedoes'

towards the second, prompting the second participant to 'torpedo' towards another participant in the circle. This continues until the reactions and movements become more efficient. The game serves to enhance concentration and physical response, as a lack of focus or alertness could result in someone being accidentally shoved to the side, an incident we aim to avoid.

2. Wink Murder Focus Game (Arts on the Move, n.d.)

Participants were instructed to spread out across the lecture room, maintaining comfortable distances between themselves, and to close their eyes. I announced that I would come around and tap the shoulder of the individual chosen to be the murderer. This participant, once everyone opened their eyes and began to move around, would secretly wink at a peer, who would then fall down and pretend to die. If anyone in the group could identify the murderer by saying their name aloud, that person would win, and the game would start again. This game tested focus, observation skills, and the ability to keep a secret.

3. What I Wanted to Be When I Grew Up imagination exercise (Boal, 2002)

Participants were each tasked with writing down the name of a profession their younger selves aspired to. These pieces of paper were then folded and mixed in a hat. Participants were asked to come up one by one to pick a piece of crumpled paper from the hat. Each participant then enacted the profession written on the paper they selected. Once the profession was acted out, the other participants guessed what it was and chose who they thought this childhood dream belonged to. Participants enjoyed this game as it highlighted the aspirations of their peers, which were still cherished, and reflected their dreams and how they presented themselves in the minds and bodies of those around them.

Role-play (50 mins)

I then instructed participants to sub-divide into two groups to role-play a scene from *Wuthering Heights*. The participants could choose any moment or scene from the novel to enact. The only limitation was that the scene they selected needed to resonate with the SEL competency of responsible decision-making and illustrate the effects of Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship on those around them. They

were required to adapt the language to suit their contemporary context, as the original was written in Victorian English.

To produce the role-play, participants followed this six-step plan:

Step 1: *Selecting a Context*

The group selected a setting for the role-play, such as a contemporary South African context, a university campus, or a family event (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 2: *Script Preparation*

Participants linguistically prepared the script by rewriting the scene, translating the Victorian English into a concise version suitable for a short role-play. The focus was on exploring the SEL competency of responsible decision-making (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 3: *Role Assignment*

Each group member was assigned a role in the scene to ensure full participation (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 4: *Rehearsal*

Participants rehearsed their loosely scripted role-play, practicing their movements and interactions while refining the narrative (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 5: *Capturing Moments Through Photography*

During rehearsals, participants used autophotography to capture a moment in the role-play that illustrated responsible decision-making. These photographs were later analysed (see Appendix E: Autophotography) (Glaw et al., 2017).

Step 6: *Presentation*

After rehearsals, participants presented their role-play to the other group, showcasing their interpretation and insights (Torriconi, 2015).

Narrative Empathy Discussion Sessions (30 minutes)

Participants gathered in a circle to reflect on the play and the role-play activity. The purpose was to empathise with the characters from the prescribed text. During the

session, participants shared their emotional responses to portraying specific characters, considering how these experiences connected to their own lives. The discussion also emphasised how their personal experiences resonated with the SEL competency of responsible decision-making.

Instruments used (30 minutes):

1. Field Notes

I documented participants' activities and interactions through detailed observations recorded in field notes (*Pacheco-Vega, 2019*). (See Appendix B: Observation Schedule).

2. Research Diaries

After the role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions, participants independently completed their research diaries outside the lecture room. This allowed them to reflect on their experiences during Cycle 4. (See Appendix C: Research Diary). (*Wolfinger, 2002*)

3. Written Task

Participants also completed a written task on *Wuthering Heights*, focusing on the themes of the text and the SEL competency of responsible decision-making. This task required approximately 20 minutes. (See Appendix D: Written Tasks). (*Kayaalp et al., 2022*).

• CYCLE 5

Duration:

Two lectures:

- Friday, 7 April
- Tuesday, 11 April

Text studied:

She Stoops to Conquer by Oliver Goldsmith

Compulsory lecture activities (70 minutes):

- Narrative summary exercise and viewing of a film snippet
- “Gut reaction” discussion
- PowerPoint lecture presentation

SEL learning outcome:

Self-management

Role-play warm-up activities (60 minutes):**1. The Plain Mirror (Boal, 2002)**

Participants were asked to sub-divide into mini groups of two and three and mirror the hand gestures, bodily movements, and facial expressions of their group members. Everyone in the sub-groups had a turn to lead and follow. This exercise aimed to create synchronised movement among the groups and was chosen to warm up the imagination and mimicry indicative of what occurred in the play *She Stoops to Conquer*.

2. Elephants Focus Game (Casdagli, 1998)

Participants were asked to stand in a circle. When I pointed at one participant, that participant immediately created an elephant's trunk with their hand, while the participants on either side of the trunk simultaneously formed the left and right ears of the elephant with their arms. In essence, these three participants together resembled the face of an elephant: the middle participant represented the trunk, the left participant the left ear, and the right participant the right ear. The task was then performed with increased speed. This activity developed relatedness and quick coordination skills.

3. Image of the Hour Imagination Activity (Boal, 2002)

Participants were asked to stand anywhere in the lecture room. When I announced a specific time of day, for example, 7:00 am, participants needed to enact with their bodies what they would typically be doing at that time. For instance, 8:00 AM on their birthday or 10:00 am on their wedding day. This activity exercised imagination and prepared the body for role-play.

4. String Puppet (Boal, 2002)

Participants had to pair up, with one volunteering to be the puppet and the other the puppeteer. Puppeteers were tasked with linking an imaginary string to the limbs of the puppet participant. The puppeteer then began to move the strings, and the puppet participant had to act accordingly, moving their limbs in response to the direction of the puppeteer. This exercise strengthened synchronisation, observation skills, and physical movement skills.

5. Complete the Image (Boal, 2022)

Participants were asked to group themselves into twos or threes. Each group or pair was required to think of an image to freeze, such as handshaking or driving a bus. The groups then presented their frozen images to the other groups, who were asked to guess the activity depicted in the frozen image. This exercise warmed up imagination, acting skills, and concentration skills.

6. Tell Your Own Story (Boal, 2022)

Participants were asked to think of a recent personal experience involving others in their lives. Once participants had identified their scenarios, each had the opportunity to direct their story in a live-action role-play with the other participants. The participant directing their story chose the number of participants they required, and while narrating the story, the chosen actors improvised moments as they heard it being narrated. This activity warmed up acting, listening, focus, and presentation skills with speed.

Role-play (45 minutes)

I then instructed participants to subdivide into two groups to role-play a scene from *She Stoops to Conquer*. They could choose any moment or scene from the play, with the only limitation being that it needed to resonate with the SEL competency of self-management. The scenes selected should demonstrate how the characters had to 'keep up appearances' in front of others. Participants were required to adapt the language to suit their contemporary context, as the original was written in Georgian English.

To produce the role-play, participants followed this six-step plan:

Step 1: *Selecting a Context*

The group selected a setting for the role-play, such as a contemporary South African context, a university campus, or a family event (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 2: *Script Preparation*

Participants adapted the scene by translating the Georgian English into a concise script suitable for a short role-play. The focus was on exploring the SEL competency of self-management (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 3: *Role Assignment*

Group members assigned roles, ensuring everyone had a specific part in the scene (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 4: *Rehearsal*

Participants rehearsed their loosely scripted role-play, practicing their interactions and refining their delivery (Torriconi, 2015).

Step 5: *Capturing Moments Through Photography*

During rehearsals, participants used autophotography to capture moments in the role-play that demonstrated self-management. These photographs were later analysed (see Appendix E: Autophotography) (Glaw et al., 2017).

Step 6: *Presentation*

After rehearsals, participants presented their role-play to the other groups, showcasing their interpretation and understanding of self-management (Torriconi, 2015).

Narrative empathy discussion sessions (30 minutes)

Participants sat in a circle and reflected on the play and the role-play activity, aiming to empathise with the characters from the prescribed text. During this discussion session, participants also considered their emotions while portraying certain characters and how these role-plays prompted them to think about experiences in their own personal lives. The conversation also included a focus on how their experiences resonated with self-management.

Instruments used (30 minutes):

1. Field Notes

I documented participants' activities and interactions through detailed observations recorded in field notes (Pacheco-Vega, 2019). (See Appendix B: Observation Schedule).

2. Research Diaries

Following the role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions, participants independently completed their research diaries outside the lecture room. These reflections captured their insights and experiences during Cycle 5. (See Appendix C: Research Diary). (Wolfinger, 2002).

3. Written Task

Participants also completed a written task on *She Stoops to Conquer*, reflecting on the themes of the text and the SEL competency of self-management (See Appendix D: Written Tasks). (Kayaalp et al., 2022).

4.4.1.2 Post-cycle questionnaire

After the research cycles concluded, participants documented the SEL competencies they had developed or enhanced during the process. (See Appendix A: Open-Ended Questionnaires).

4.5 Recruitment of participants

The second-year English literature participants were chosen for this study because, at this level, they were familiar with the academic system and could focus on developing their SEL skills. In contrast, first-year students were still acclimatising to HE, while third-year students were distracted by the need to secure work and internship opportunities for the following year.

The nine second-year English literature participants of 2023 were recruited during the orientation week. They were informed about the study and what would be required of them, as well as their rights. They were told that the study would be integrated into their lectures, and only the information from participating students would be used as data. If there were any non-participants, I would have encouraged them to engage

with the activities without using their input in the study. These second-year literature students, who were potential participants in the study, had different demographic characteristics, but all shared the same learning experience as they studied English literature Level Two with me in early 2023. Once ethical clearance for this research was approved, the informed consent forms were explained to them and handed out for completion (see Appendix G).

4.6 Sampling

Sampling is a process of selecting participants to take part in a research study based on the relevance of the information they provide (Oppong, 2013). This research employed purposive sampling, which focuses on selecting information-rich participants purposefully. Purposive sampling aims to identify cases that meet predefined criteria (Denieffe, 2020). The potential participants from the second-year literature studies were the best choice for a study aimed at exploring SEL outcomes from an English literature lecture room. This study established effective inclusion and exclusion criteria by selecting a pool of participants who could provide the most valuable data, specifically within English literature lecture rooms (Hornberger & Rangu, 2020). The inclusion criteria (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) consisted of participants enrolled in the second-year English literature studies module, while the exclusion criteria (Creswell, 2017) included students who were not enrolled in this module.

The research also utilised convenience sampling, which involved participants who were readily available (Moser & Korstjens, 2018), as the participants were my students, to whom I already had access. The entire second-year English literature class participated in the research activities and signed the consent forms (see Appendix G).

What follows is a descriptive list of all nine participants in this study, referred to in the table below by chosen pseudonyms. All nine participants were members of my second-year English literature Block 1 class for 2023, and all chose to participate in the research activities.

Table 1: Participant description table

No	Participant pseudonym	Degree Majors	Age	Language	Sex	Race
1	Participant A	Psychology and English	22	Speaks English and isiZulu	Male	Black
2	Participant B	Psychology and English	20	Speaks English	Male	Indian
3	Participant C	Psychology and English	20	Speaks English	Female	Indian
4	Participant D	Psychology and English	22	Speaks English and isiZulu	Female	Black
5	Participant E	Psychology and English	20	Speaks English and Afrikaans	Female	Coloured
6	Participant F	Psychology and English	23	Speaks English	Female	Indian
7	Participant G	Psychology and English	20	Speaks English, isiZulu and isiXhosa	Female	Black
8	Participant H	Psychology and English	20	Speaks English	Female	Coloured
9	Participant I	Psychology and English	20	Speaks English and isiZulu	Female	Black

The participant table above lists the descriptions of each of the nine consenting participants in the study. The participants were randomly assigned pseudonyms represented by letters, in accordance with the consent form they signed, which protects their identities (see attached: Appendix G). The homogeneity of this group is characterised by the fact that all nine participants are second-year English Literature students enrolled in a three-year BA degree programme, majoring in Psychology and English Studies. All participants were in their early twenties. One participant was

multilingual, speaking three languages; four participants were bilingual, and four participants spoke only English. While it was important for all participants to speak English, it was not a strict criterion, as they had already been academically vetted to study Level Two English Literature. There were two participants who self-identified as men and seven participants who self-identified as women.

4.7 Ethics, gatekeeper approval, informed consent

The rights of participants in this research study were protected by adhering to the consulting guidelines outlined by Murray and Beglar (2009), as well as the ethical protocols of both the institution where the degree is being pursued and the institution where the study took place.

Before commencing the study, and following the approval of the research proposal, ethical clearance was sought from both institutions. After completing the required processes, ethical clearance was granted by both institutions.

Participants were recruited during the institution's orientation week, where they were invited to join the study. Upon accepting the invitation, participants were provided with informed consent forms to review and complete. All participants were over the age of 18 and gave their consent independently.

The informed consent forms (see Appendix G) outlined key aspects of the study, including the confidentiality and secure storage of participants' data. In this thesis, participants are referred to by pseudonyms, as listed in the table above.

Participants were explicitly informed that their participation was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

4.8 Data generation strategies

Qualitative research allows participants' voices to be heard. In this research study, the qualitative approach not only gave voice to my participants' opinions on the research topic but also enabled me, as the researcher, to delve deeper into the behaviours of my participants during the research activities (Cohen et al., 2018). The

data generation strategies employed for this study allowed me to observe my participants' behaviours during the role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions. These strategies provided clear data for analysing the participants' oral and written responses to the SEL competencies focused on in each cycle.

The five data generation strategies selected for this research project facilitated the capture of clear and helpful responses throughout the cyclical processes of AR (Tran, 2009). Through these strategies, I was able to identify specific moments within a cycle that required improvement for the subsequent cycle (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). The five data generation strategies chosen for this project included open-ended questionnaires (Appendix A), observation and field notes (Appendix B), a research diary (Appendix C), a writing task (Appendix D), and autophotography (Appendix E). A Table no.2 detailing how these instruments functioned within the cycles, will follow the discussion of the instruments below.

i) Observations and Field Notes (see Appendix B)

Observations with field notes were carried out by me at the beginning, during, and at the conclusion of every cycle. In research, observation involves viewing the behavioural patterns of participants placed in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomena they are experiencing, ensuring that the observer (the researcher) does not affect what is being observed (Johnson & Christensen, 2019).

To monitor how the participants socially and emotionally interacted with each other during the role-play and discussion sessions, I observed their behaviour, tone of voice, and attitudes when communicating. I assessed their social awareness, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship-building, and self-management abilities through field notes, as qualitative observation required me to observe phenomena and document my observations during the research activities and the reflection process after the participants left the lecture room.

Qualitative observation is typically conducted for exploratory purposes and is often carried out in natural settings (Johnson & Christensen, 2019, p. 198). In the context of my study, the participants engaged in the research activities within their usual

English literature lecture space. The research field notes I compiled became the instrument used to document the observations I made during these activities.

The research field notes recorded occurrences relevant to the study, and in addition to documenting the expected moments of the activities, which were prioritised in the documentation process, I also determined what was important to include and what was not (Wolfinger, 2002). The field notes reflected my private thoughts, ideas, and queries regarding the research observations (Phillipi & Lauderdale, 2018), which assisted me in the AR process, as I could review my field notes at the end of each cycle to decide on my course of action for the next cycle. The data generated from this instrument enabled me to identify how role-play and narrative empathy fostered empathic behaviour in the lecture room and how these methods contributed to developing social and emotional competencies for the participants.

ii) Research Diary (See Appendix C: Research Diary)

Research diaries were available for participants at the beginning of each cycle, allowing them to make entries throughout the cycle. “Diaries can be regarded as a generic term that encompasses logs, journals, and memoirs” (Jones & Woolley, 2015, p. 3). The research diary enabled me to read and reflect while making choices for the next cycle. It became a reflection-in-action (Annick, 2016) resource, serving the AR nature of this study.

I wanted the participants to reflect on their experiences from the research activities in which they participated, facilitating independent reflection. Documenting their thoughts, emotions, and ideas regarding their individual social and emotional development through diary entries provided valuable insight into their unfiltered thoughts on the research activities. Diaries are characterised by introspection, allowing me to understand the participants’ insider meanings and their thoughts and emotions related to the SEL research activities (Alamri, 2019).

I shared a document via an online cloud drive so that each participant’s research journal was accessible to them whenever they needed to write, while also being available to me. They were aware that I would be reading their diaries.

The diary structure was not limiting; it provided a free space for participants to record whatever they wished regarding their SEL and development journey. This decision was underpinned by the idea that the less structured and more free-form an unstructured diary could be, the richer and more meaningful the qualitative data it could provide (Jones & Woolley, 2015). While participants had the freedom to write down their thoughts and reflections, they were also given basic prompts to respond to and a general thoughts section where they could free-write their reflections on the cycle.

The instrument allowed me to identify the social and emotional skills the participants were developing during the research activities each cycle, and how these competencies were, or were not, impacting their identity as South Africans. This particularly assisted in answering research question three: “What is the role of social emotional learning for South African students of literature?”

iii) Writing Task (See Appendix D: Written Tasks)

The writing tasks were available to the participants only at the end of each cycle, as the focused prompts required them to take a cumulative look at the research activities from each cycle. Writing enabled the participants to think about specific activities they experienced and to respond to those activities through writing. “By writing, students can also develop new insights into and about the subject they have been studying” (Beyer, 1982, p. 101). The writing tasks required participants to reflect on what they had learned or experienced regarding SEL through their prescribed texts in literature studies, in order to identify how the research activities were linked to the growth of social and emotional competencies.

The writing task was an exercise in contemplation about a subject, in this case, the text studied in each cycle. It allowed the participants to review their learning experiences (Kayaalp et al., 2022) from the role-playing activity and the narrative empathy discussion sessions. The task served as a form of cross-checking between the information presented in the research diary and the responses in the writing task. While the research diary offered participants freedom in their responses, the writing

task contained specific questions requiring more targeted answers related to their experiences of the research activities.

This instrument enabled me to identify which social and emotional competencies the participants were developing based on their exposure to the text, the role-play activity, and the narrative empathy discussion session, and it assisted in answering all three research questions of this study.

iv) Open-Ended Questionnaires (See Appendix A: Open-ended Questionnaires)

A questionnaire is a document containing questions that solicit information relevant to the research (Acharya, 2010). One open-ended questionnaire was distributed to participants for completion before the research activities began, and another was handed out at the end of the research activities. Questionnaires were used to obtain information about participants' emotions, thoughts, experiences, opinions, values, expectations, attitudes, and personalities (Johnson & Christensen, 2019, p. 183) in relation to the SEL outcomes focus of the research.

I chose to use open-ended questionnaires that required short answers from the participants, allowing them to answer the questions using their own words (Lee, 2006). Such questionnaires generated in-depth and expressive responses to the research phenomena (Rowley, 2014).

The first questionnaire was administered to the participants one day before the five research cycles commenced. This questionnaire required the students to brainstorm the SEL CASEL 5 competencies. It allowed both the participating students and me to identify any existing awareness of social and emotional skills before the research activities began, providing a general picture of the participants' SEL proficiencies (Wei & Moyer, 2008) and serving as the baseline information required.

The next open-ended questionnaire was administered at the end of the study. It required the participants to make final judgements about using role-play and to reflect on their understandings of empathy, narrative empathy, and social-emotional skills.

Additionally, it asked participants to evaluate the role of social-emotional learning when studying literary texts, and this final questionnaire assisted in answering the three research questions.

v) Autophotography (See Appendix E: Autophotography)

Photography serves as a data generation tool, where the images captured become the data that is analysed and interpreted (Fang, 1985). Autophotography, a visual methodology in qualitative research, involves participants photographing their own activities within their environment. These photographs are then used by the researcher as data (Glaw et al., 2017).

In this study, autophotography was employed to allow participants to capture tableau-style photographs during the role-play rehearsal process. A tableau, short for *tableaux vivant*, represents a clear message conveyed through a single, staged visual display (Bussels, 2019).

The photographs captured by participants were selected to illustrate the SEL competency in focus for each specific cycle. Participants then appropriately captioned and reflected on the images, incorporating them into their research diaries. This methodology provided a unique perspective by capturing the activities through the participants' own lenses (Glaw et al., 2017).

The participants used their mobile phone cameras to photograph each other during the role-play rehearsal activities. The focus was on capturing moments in the role-play that clearly depicted tableaux of an SEL competency being enacted by the participants in role.

The participants were asked to write two or three sentences describing the image they took to identify how this image may or may not represent the SEL competency in focus for that cycle. These tableau moments caught on camera resulted in the participants documenting how they interpreted certain behavioural attitudes from the images they created. This exercise prompted the participants to examine potential

social and emotional markers from the photographs they took, which were documented in the research diaries and in the writing task.

These photographs, along with the accompanying two- to three-sentence captions written by the students, were uploaded to a cloud drive as part of their research diaries. This approach enabled me to consolidate my field notes with the images they captured, facilitating a more comprehensive analysis. The combined data provided a rich basis for my own reflection process as I prepared for the subsequent research cycle.

The photographs provided a chronological visual reference to the behavioural journey of the participants during the research activities. They served as proof of the facial and gestural behaviours of the participants, contributing to an analysis of how participants were interacting with one another. This visual marker of attitude change moved away from the linguistic imperialism of text-based data and embraced a visual methodology that was apt, considering the participants were digital natives. The autophotography instrument aligned with their everyday activities, such as social media usage and selfie documentation, among others (Cleland & MacLeod, 2021).

What is also an important consideration about autophotography is the autonomy it gives participants in choosing images and SEL representations from the role-play themselves. This independent work by the participants generated more authentic data because it allowed me to view the research phenomena through my participants' eyes (Noland, 2006).

The photographs provided me, as the researcher, with the time and space to reflect on the images critically. They enabled me to spend time comparing the images with the students' descriptive captions from their research diaries alongside my field note observations. The photographs served to support the observations made in the field notes. This instrument was used to answer research questions one and two, which were: How do role-play and role-playing extracts from English literary texts support empathic behaviour in students studying literature at a South African HEI? What SEL skills do students studying literature at a South African HEI learn from narrative empathy?

The five outlined data generation strategies provided valuable insights into the extent to which the role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions facilitated the development of SEL outcomes in the English literature lecture room for my participants.

The following table illustrates how data were generated across the five AR cycles:

(Planned) Pre-Cycle Questionnaire – Each participant completed a pre-cycle questionnaire to establish a baseline of their existing SEL skills and knowledge prior to the commencement of the research activities.

Table 2: Data generation table – Cycle 1

Cycle 1 – *Hamlet*: Social-awareness

(Planned and Acting) Research activities data generation	1. Before and during the role-play warm-up activities, I, as the researcher, documented observations and field notes on the number of participants present, their interactions, participation, and behaviour in relation to the development of SEL skills. 2. During the role-play creation process, participants generated autophotography data by capturing images with their mobile phones. These photographs depicted tableaux from the role-play that connected with the concept of social awareness. 3. During the narrative empathy discussion sessions, I documented field notes on the participants' views and interactions throughout the discussion.
(Observing) Instruments completed by researcher	4. Throughout the first cycle, I, as the researcher, documented observations and field notes during every stage of the research cycle. These notes were reviewed and reflected upon at the beginning and end of each cycle.

(Observing) Instruments completed by participants	5. Participants began writing in their research diaries on 27 February, continuing until the end of the cycle on 7 March. 6. At the conclusion of the cycle, participants independently completed written tasks focused on the SEL competency of social awareness as it related to the play <i>Hamlet</i>.
(Reflecting) Instruments completed by researcher	7. As the researcher, I reflected on the field notes, autophotography, research diary entries, and written tasks completed by participants during Cycle 1, focusing on the SEL competency of social awareness. Based on these reflections, I made necessary additions and adjustments to ensure that the learning of self-awareness in Cycle 2 was approached more innovatively and effectively for the participants..

Table 3: Data generation table – Cycle 2

Cycle 2 – Dr. Faustus: Self-awareness

(Planned and Acting) Research activities data generation	1. Before and during the role-play warm-up activities, I documented observations and field notes on the number of participants present, participant interactions, and their behaviour in relation to the development of SEL skills. I also made notes on how to implement the newfound findings from the previous cycle in this new cycle. 2. During the role-play creation, the participants generated autophotography data by taking pictures with their mobile phones of a tableau in the role-play that connected with self-awareness. 3. During the narrative empathy discussion sessions, I, as the researcher, documented field notes on the participants' views and interactions.
(Observing) Instruments completed by researcher	4. The observation and field notes throughout the first cycle were documented by me as the researcher during every moment of the research cycle and were reflected on at the beginning and end of each cycle.

(Observing) Instruments completed by participants	5. The research diary for this cycle began on 10 March, written by the participants, and was completed at the end of the cycle on 17 March. 6. The written tasks on self-awareness in the play <i>Dr. Faustus</i> were completed by the participants independently at the end of the cycle.
(Reflecting) Instruments completed by researcher	7. I, as the researcher, reflected on the field notes, autophotography, research diary entries, and written tasks of the participants for self-awareness in cycle 2. I then made the necessary additions and changes to ensure that relationship building in cycle 3 would be learned more innovatively by the participants.

Table 4: Data generation table – Cycle 3

Cycle 3 – *Pride and Prejudice*: Relationship Building

(Planned and acting) Research activities data generation	1. Before and during the role-play warm-up activities, I documented observations and field notes on the number of participants present, participant interactions, and their behaviour in relation to the development of SEL skills. I also made notes on how to implement the newfound findings from the previous cycle in this new cycle. 2. During the role-play creation, participants generated autophotography data by taking pictures with their mobile phones of a tableau in the role-play that connected with relationship building. 3. During the narrative empathy discussion sessions, I, as the researcher, documented field notes on the participants' views and interactions throughout the discussions.
(Observing) Instruments completed by researcher	4. The observations and field notes throughout the first cycle were documented by me as the researcher during every moment of the research cycle and were reflected upon at the beginning and end of each cycle.

(Observing) Instruments completed by participants	5. The research diary for this cycle was initiated by the participants on the 24th of March and completed at the end of the cycle on the 28th of March. 6. The written tasks on relationship building in the novel <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> were completed by the participants independently at the end of the cycle.
(Reflecting) Instruments completed by researcher	7. As the researcher, I reflected on the field notes, autophotography, research diary entries, and written tasks of the participants related to relationship building in Cycle 3. I then made the necessary additions and changes to ensure that responsible decision-making in Cycle 4 would be learned more innovatively by the participants.

Table 5: Data generation table – Cycle 4

Cycle 4 – *Wuthering Heights*: Responsible decision-making

(Planned and acting) Research activities for data generation	1. Before and during the role-play warm-up activities, I, the researcher, documented observations and field notes on the number of participants present, their interactions, participation, and behaviour in relation to the development of SEL skills. I also made notes on how to implement the newfound findings from the previous cycle in this new cycle. 2. During the role-play creation, participants generated autophotography data by taking pictures with their mobile phones of a tableau in the role-play that connected with responsible decision-making. 3. During the narrative empathy discussion sessions, I, as the researcher, documented field notes on the participants' views and interactions throughout the discussion.
(Observing) Instruments completed by the researcher	4. The observations and field notes throughout the first cycle were documented by me as the researcher during every moment

	of the research cycle and were reflected upon at the beginning and end of each cycle.
(Observing) Instruments completed by the participants	5. The research diary for this cycle was initiated by the participants on the 31st of March and completed at the end of the cycle on the 4th of April. 6. The written tasks on responsible decision-making in the novel <i>Wuthering Heights</i> were completed by the participants independently at the end of the cycle.
(Reflecting) Instruments completed by the researcher	7. As the researcher, I reflected on the field notes, autophotography, research diary entries, and written tasks of the participants regarding responsible decision-making in cycle 4. I then made the necessary additions and changes to ensure that self-management in cycle 5 would be learned more innovatively by the participants.

Table 6: Data generation table – Cycle 5

Cycle 5 – *She Stoops to Conquer*: Self-management

(Planned and acting) Research activities for data generation	1. Before and during the role-play warm-up activities, I, the researcher, documented observations and field notes on the number of participants present, their interactions, participation, and behaviour in relation to the development of SEL skills. I also made notes on how to implement the newfound findings from the previous cycle in this new cycle. 2. During the role-play creation, autophotography data was generated by the participants, who took pictures with their mobile phones of a tableau in the role-play that related to self-management. 3. During the narrative empathy discussion sessions, I, as the researcher, documented field notes on the participants' views and interactions during the discussions.
(Observing) Instruments completed by the researcher	4. Observation and field notes throughout the first cycle were documented by me as the researcher during every moment of

	the research cycle and reflected upon at the beginning and end of each cycle.
(Observing) Instruments completed by the participants	5. The research diary for this cycle began being written on the 7th of April by the participants and was completed at the end of the cycle on the 11th of April. 6. The written tasks on self-management in the play <i>She Stoops to Conquer</i> were completed by the participants independently at the end of the cycle.

(Reflecting) Post-Cycle Questionnaire – After completing all five cycles of the research activities, each participant completed a post-cycle questionnaire to reflect on the SEL learning outcomes they had developed throughout the process.

Table 7: Participant instrument completion

Participant	Cycle 1 27/02/2023– 07/03/2023	Cycle 2 10/03/2023– 17/03/2023	Cycle 3 24/03/2023– 28/03/2023	Cycle 4 31/03/2023– 04/04/2023	Cycle 5 07/04/2023– 11/04/2023
	TEXT: <i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare SEL COMPETENCY L.O: Social-awareness	TEXT: <i>Dr. Faustus</i> by Christopher Marlowe SEL COMPETENCY L.O: Self-awareness	TEXT: <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> by Jane Austen SEL COMPETENCY L.O: Relationship building	TEXT: <i>Wuthering Heights</i> by Emily Bronte SEL COMPETENCY L.O: Responsible decision-making	TEXT: <i>She Stoops to Conquer</i> Oliver Goldsmith SEL COMPETENCY L.O: Self-management
Participant A Pre & Post quiz	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	Absent
Participant B Pre & Post quiz	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography

Participant C Pre & Post quiz	-Observation and field notes	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography
Participant D Pre & Post quiz	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography
Participant E Pre & Post quiz	-Observation and field notes	Absent	-Observation and field notes -Writing Task -Autophotography	Absent	-Observation and field notes -Writing Task -Autophotography
Participant F Pre & Post quiz	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes	-Observation and field notes	Absent	Absent
Participant G Pre & Post quiz	-Observation and field notes	-Observation and field notes	-Observation and field notes	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography

Participant H Only Post quiz	Absent	-Observation and field notes	-Observation and field notes	Absent	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography
Participant I Pre & Post quiz	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography	-Observation and field notes -Diary -Writing Task -Autophotography

4.9 Data analysis

The pre- and post-cycle open-ended questionnaires were analysed before the first cycle commenced and after all five cycles were completed. The analysis followed three main stages: data preparation, data description, and interpretation (Munn & Drever, 1990).

Firstly, *data preparation* involved arranging the questionnaire data to ensure it was manageable and easy to work with. For this study, the data were managed using NVivo software, which housed and organised all the data from the five data-generating strategies/instruments employed. Secondly, *data description* required the categorisation of the questionnaire responses; in the pre-questionnaire, there were five categories of coded responses, while the post-questionnaire included seven categories. Lastly, the *interpretation* of the questionnaires necessitated examining the responses within the context of the specific questions asked, followed by an analysis related to the study's three main research questions.

These open-ended pre- and post-questionnaires provided textual responses to the specific research questions concerning role-play, narrative empathy, and SEL-specific concepts in the study. The participants' textual responses to the open-ended questionnaires resulted in narratives that emerged from the data-generating strategy employed.

A narrative is a series of related events or experiences (Thuv, 2023), and the analysis method chosen for this research project was narrative analysis. Narrative analysis focuses on how people use stories to construct the meaning of life experiences (Oliver, 1998). This method organised the participants' stories concerning their research activity experiences through codes of data that were structured to create core narratives, which display and provide insights into the impact of the research activities (Dovetail, 2023) on the participants' lives.

Narrative analysis is a qualitative method focused on interpreting human experiences from the stories participants share in a particular context. In this study, it centred on their SEL realisations derived from interactions with the prescribed fictional narratives (Gradcoach, 2023). Researchers recognise that personal, social, and cultural

experiences are constructed through the sharing of stories (Schuttler, 2023). When the participants shared their stories from discussions about the prescribed text they studied, they also conveyed personal social and emotional realisations gleaned during the text analysis. Consequently, narrative analysis proved relevant to this study for its ability to acknowledge the stories expressed through the participants' unique experiences and opinions prompted by the prescribed text and the narrative-specific research activities (Oliver, 1998). Narrative analysis required the use of data from field notes, research diaries, autophotographs, writing tasks, and questionnaires, which captured the human experiences of the participants (Dovetail, 2023).

Narrative analysis required me to produce a core narrative from the data to generate a plot, thematic line, temporal sequence, and structure (Cohen et al., 2018) for each data cycle. The analysis process according to narrative analysis unfolded in a series of steps (Efe, 2023).

Step 1 – Choose relevant data sources

The five data generation strategies chosen for this research project were open-ended questionnaires (Appendix A), observation and field notes (Appendix B), a research diary (Appendix C), a writing task (Appendix D), and autophotography (Appendix E). Each instrument was found to be suitable and relevant for obtaining data to answer the research questions.

The observations depicted in the field notes enabled me to draw inferences about the participants' interactions with one another, which could not be documented exclusively through any other instrument (Deggs & Hernandez, 2018). During my reflection on the field notes, I broke the observations into different pieces of stories, resulting in the narratives that emerged from the field notes and the observation data generation strategy/instrument of this study.

Regarding the participants' research diaries, the data in both text and autophotograph forms provided rich stories for interpretation and analysis (Newbury, 2001). I began by reflecting on the experiences of students based on their textual responses to the captions they made for the images inserted into the diaries. Their textual responses and autophotograph captions related to the research activities within the research

diary resulted in the narratives that emerged from the research diary data generation strategy/instrument of this study.

The writing tasks provided textual responses to the activities, and those responses were refined answers to the questions posed in the text-specific writing task (Kayaalp et al., 2022). This was a comprehensive response targeted at identifying what the students' storied responses were to very specific moments within the research activities. The participants' textual responses to the writing tasks resulted in the narratives that emerged from the writing task data generation strategy/instrument of this study.

The instruments' data provided the narratives for each participant's interpersonal and individual experiences during the research activities (Frost, 2011, p. 94). It was these documented experiences that produced the narrative data for the study, which then needed to be coded.

Step 2 – Coding the data

After each cycle's instruments were completed, I began to open code (Cohen et al., 2018) the data by attaching a code to the narrative each participant documented from their experience per activity. Open coding generates categories and defines properties. In this study, the participants' storied responses presented from the instruments were broken down into discrete parts of meaning; for example, 'calm, enjoyment, perspective sharing, and relatability' were some of the open codes that I attached to the narratives documented in the instrument responses. This inductive method of coding resulted in paragraphs of the participants' narratives being assigned one code so that the narrative would be kept intact (Delve, 2021).

Step 3 – Generating themes

After the open coding was complete, axial coding (Cohen et al., 2018) was used to generate the themes. Axial coding is a category label ascribed to a group of open codes whose referents share meaning. These connected sub-groups resulted in a more generalised category around which the open codes were categorised to become the themes. As a result, the narratives that were open-coded then underwent thematic analysis (Bearman et al., 2019). For example, open codes such as acting, enjoyment,

collaboration, game, and trust were axially organised into the thematic category “Theme 1: role-play for social and emotional learning”.

Marshall and Case (2010) note that narrative analysis may be conducted in many ways and that it can use thematic analysis to identify categories and themes of data (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 695). Thematic analysis focuses on the categorisation and review of data, while narrative analysis evaluates the thematic data to find a concluding, core narrative (Dovetail, 2023). This narrative analysis is more concerned with the organisation of the themes that will feature in the conclusive core narrative of what the participants experienced during the five AR cycles. Whereas thematic analysis focuses on the patterns of the themes, narrative analysis utilises themes in order to focus on the structure and meaning of the themes (Efe, 2023) to generate the conclusive core narrative for each cycle. The image below provides a visual representation of how core narrative generation takes place.

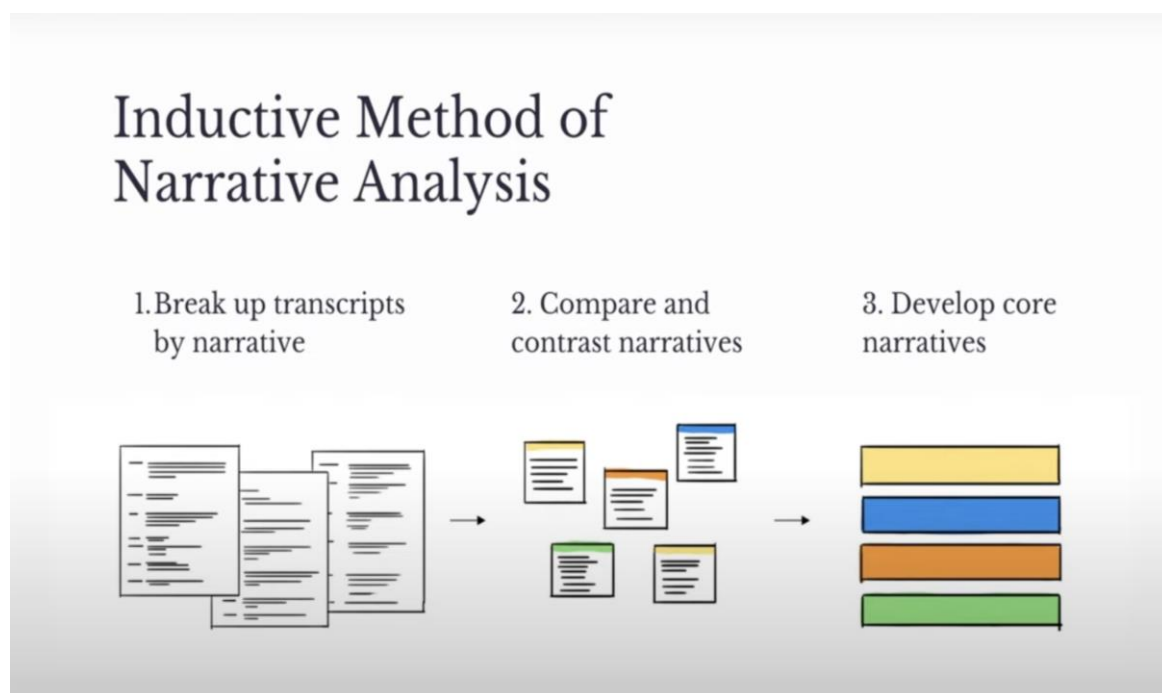


Figure 8: Inductive method of narrative analysis

(Delve, 2021)

Step 4 – Comparing the data

After each cycle was completed with new open codes generated, comparing the data from each cycle became an important step in gaining consistency and understanding

the research (Efe, 2023). This process allowed me to examine the new experiences that emerged for the participants with each cycle.

Step 5 – Interpreting and reporting the data in a core narrative

All the themes from the cycles were analysed and interpreted to produce a core narrative for each cycle, which served as the outcome of the analysis. Each research cycle was re-storied, involving the process of reorganising and analysing the key elements of the story, and rewriting it within a chronological or structural order (Nasheeda et al., 2019). The findings from each cycle were then arranged into a core narrative, which comprised the structural order of a skeleton plot (Richmond, 2002) made up of four categories (Richmond, 2002)

Orientation – Describes the setting and the characters within the cycle

Abstract – Summarises the events that took place within the cycle and looks at the experiences of the participants via the thematic categories.

Complicating action – This offers an evaluative commentary on the themes and conflicts in relation to the theoretical framework and research aims.

Restoration – Prescribes the outcomes of the story.

The four categories that comprise the narrative plot per cycle are the end product of a narrative analysis. In utilising this method, I examined what was happening, identified the main features reported from each cycle, explored why the participants behaved as they did based on the evidence documented in the instruments, inferred additional information from the provided data, and determined what types of other data were needed to support or refute the inferences made in the explanations (Cohen et al., 2018).

Choosing narrative analysis allowed me to focus on the interpersonal relationships that participants formed or did not form during the research project. This facilitated a first-person narrative account of whether social and emotional development occurred,

as reflected in the field notes, research diaries, autophotographs, writing tasks, and questionnaires.

The participants were made aware of their experiences and what these experiences meant for them individually and collectively throughout the research activities via my in-person updates with them at the end of each cycle. At the conclusion of the study, I shared my findings with the participants.

4.10 Storage and disposal of data

All data generated for this study are securely stored on my personal hard drive and personal cloud drive, with access limited to my supervisor and me. These include sensitive documentation such as research diaries, questionnaires, written tasks, photographs, and field notes.

In compliance with the University's ethics requirements, all sensitive data will be permanently deleted from these storage locations five years after the completion of the research project.

4.11 Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is recognised for its insights grounded in human experience (Nowell et al., 2017). Readers and researchers of qualitative studies will approach the interpretation of my findings with varying experiences and interpretations. In qualitative research, “the scientific ideal of objectivity is usually rejected in favour of a holistic approach that acknowledges and takes into account the diverse perspectives, values, and interpretations of participants and evaluation professionals” (Lennie, 2006, p. 27). Therefore, it is essential to demonstrate that the reader, writers, and participants share some commonality in the constructed approach undertaken by the research (Stahl & King, 2020). Adopting this meaning-centred and subjectively declarative approach to interpreting the data will yield truthful interpretations for all stakeholders involved in this study and demonstrate that the research aims to be trustworthy. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that to establish a trustworthy research study, the researcher must indicate that the research is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable.

To establish *credibility*, the research first demonstrated prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in the field. Due to the five cycles of the AR design, I was with my participants for an extended period. This time allowed me to strengthen my existing relationship with the participants, fully immerse myself in their world, and interpret new experiences from the research activities. I observed my participants engaging in new types of activities and sharing personal experiences arising from these activities. The prolonged interaction with the participants built rapport, increased trust, and allowed me to see beyond any preconceptions I might have had if I had spent a shorter time with them.

Methods triangulation (Patton, 1999) was another way I established the credibility of the findings, ensuring that the results among the different instruments were consistent, even though varied data generation tools were employed. I analysed the field notes in conjunction with the research diaries, autophotographs, and written task responses to identify resonances in the data. This resulted in a rich, robust, and deeper understanding of the research findings, thereby rendering the data credible as it revealed connections among the different instruments.

To demonstrate that this research was dependable, the findings were made clear and easy to follow for an external researcher by “allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process” (Moon et al., 2016). My detailed documentation of the research methodology enables the reader to assess whether the research practice was adhered to, so that if a different researcher audits the analysis, similar results should be produced. The dependability of a research project is also indicated by minimising bias; such potential bias has been disclosed by stating my positionality as an external insider in the field. By clarifying my positional stance in relation to the study, I have made it evident that I am acting externally while also being present within the field with my participants, so that any subjective influence on the study and/or implications of bias can be contextually interpreted (Qin, 2016).

Establishing confirmability demonstrates that the research is derived from the data, as shown through the processes used to generate an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Raw data and process notes from the fieldwork are presented in the findings chapters to illustrate to external researchers that the research findings are based on

data-driven analyses rather than biased or untrustworthy sources. Extracts from the field notes, research diaries, written tasks, and questionnaires are included in the findings chapters to ensure accuracy. Additionally, the autophotographs taken by the participants further enhance the accuracy of the corresponding data. The various data generation instruments, timely storage and organisation of information, and detailed documentation of the methodology ensured the trustworthiness of the data and upheld the rigor of the research. This approach aimed to accurately present the narrative responses from the participating students and how they learned social and emotional skills in the literature lecture room.

To enable transferability, I provided thick, rich descriptions of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I explicitly outlined the patterns of cultural and social relationships during participant interactions and contextualised them (Holloway, 1997) to ensure the research could be applicable to different times, settings, situations, and people (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By detailing what occurred in the field during data generation in the documentation of the data analysis, the research offered thick descriptions that allowed for the identification of patterns that could be replicated in future inquiries by other researchers, albeit in different contexts and with different participants.

4.12 Limitations

Owing to the fact that qualitative research is concerned with aspects of reality that cannot be quantified, with the focus on explaining the dynamics of social relations within the research (Queiros et al., 2017), there were three possible limitations to this study.

Firstly, the participants were my students, and there were moments when they sought ways to align with the research aims. This is known as the Hawthorne effect, which is said to be caused by the subject's awareness that they are in an experiment and the object of special attention (Serhat, 2010).

The Hawthorne effect can be prevented and managed, as outlined by Oswald et al. (2014), by providing a non-threatening, non-aggressive demeanour to participants. I achieved this by ensuring that I was an outsider guiding the participants and not forcing any specific outcome or opinion. I also aimed to create an environment of trust

and inclusion. In addition to Oswald et al.'s (2014) suggestions on how to prevent the Hawthorne effect, I reminded the participants that there was no single correct answer expected of them and that their opinions, whether deviant or compliant with the social and emotional aims, were valuable and valued. Despite these measures, I am uncertain if the Hawthorne effect played a role.

A potential second limitation was that the participants were not drama students and may have felt apprehensive about using their bodies and voices during the role-play. To address this limitation, I ensured that participants understood this was an experimental and improvised role-play activity, where their performances were not being assessed, but rather their interpretations of the social and emotional elements within their role-plays were being considered. This is why the trust, focus, and imagination games were so important as emotional and physical warm-up processes in preparation for the research activities; they helped create a psychologically and physically safe environment for the participants to use their bodies and voices.

The third limitation of the research was that some participants did not complete their documentation exercises at the end of every cycle, resulting in inconsistent data generated from the instruments. Referring to Table 7, the instrument completion table above, it was clear that not every participant completed every instrument per cycle. While this led to incomplete data being generated, it is important to note that most participants completed their tasks per cycle, leaving only a minority of undocumented responses. There was no solution to this limitation, as I did not compel any participant to fill in the documentation. There is an average of 75% instrument completion rate per cycle, so it is not an inadequate representation of the data.

4.13 Conclusion

This chapter explored the critically interpretivist paradigm, qualitative approach, and AR design employed in the study. It detailed the five data generation strategies, explaining how they were utilised and analysed. Additionally, issues of trustworthiness and limitations were addressed.

The findings are discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5: Baseline Findings

5.1 Introduction

This study investigates how role-play and narrative empathy can facilitate SEL outcomes in English Literature lecture rooms. This chapter analyses data from the pre-study questionnaire, which serves as the baseline for the study, using a narrative analysis approach.

The narrative findings are organised around three main themes that emerged from the pre-study questionnaire data (Appendix A). This chapter establishes the baseline information required to evaluate participants' social and emotional capacities before engaging in the SEL research activities during the five action research cycles.

To better understand participants' perceptions of role-play, narrative empathy, and the CASEL 5 SEL competencies, their responses were categorised into three levels: *Primary Understanding*, *Good Understanding*, and *Inaccurate Understanding*. This preliminary categorisation provided insights that guided the structuring of the subsequent action research cycles.

5.2 Participants demonstrated a primary understanding of role-play, empathy, and the CASEL 5 SECs

The participants' responses, analysed in this section, were coded under the first of three thematic concerns: a "primary understanding" of the concepts.

5.2.1 A primary understanding of role-play

The pre-study questionnaire (Appendix A) required participants to identify and explain their current understanding of the term "role-play". Their responses were categorised as a primary understanding of the concept. The participants demonstrated rudimentary interpretations of role-play, as illustrated by Participant I, who stated, "*Role-play is an exercise that requires one to assume a role and to act it out, or simply the act of putting yourself in someone's shoes*". Here, Participant I indicates her awareness that acting is a component of role-play.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Participant F, who shared her understanding of role-play as:

“Being able to act out or perform a piece of art that is interpreted by oneself. You can relate to the emotions of the performer in which you are role playing. It gives you a unique perspective into the feelings and emotions they might have experienced”.

In a response similar to Participant I, Participant F’s definition of role-play is introductory. Participant F also states that acting is involved in role-play, thereby demonstrating the primary understanding of role-play shared by both Participants I and F. However, Participant F further asserts that the individual engaging in role-play can relate to the emotions of the ‘character being played,’ indicating an awareness of the dual emotional states present: those of the performer/actor and those of the character. This understanding is significant as it suggests that Participant F recognises that different emotional states of the character can be relatable to the performer/actor portraying those emotions.

Participant F’s reference to the emotional simulation of the character being played is another key understanding of role-play. However, the fact that the participant links the content to be role-played to something deemed ‘art’ indicates that she believes the piece or extract to be role-played should be established material or classified as ‘artistic’ according to certain criteria. The specific criteria that constitute ‘art’ for this participant were not elaborated on. This lack of context is important as it suggests that for her, role-play has functionality only within the artistic domain. While there is some truth to this view, it is somewhat limited. Role-play is also used for corporate and demonstrative purposes, as revealed by studies on role-play extending beyond the English learning space (Blatner, 1995; Bruggemann & Persson, 2016; Gibb, 2004; Josendal & Skarholt, 2007).

Participant F also indicated that role-play can facilitate emotional experiences. The term ‘performer’ seems to refer to the ‘character’ being role-played. This misnomer reveals a limited understanding of role-play terminology, showing a basic grasp of the concept. Participant F did not elaborate on the types of emotional experiences she

believes occur during role-play, leaving it unclear whether these experiences are those felt by the performer role-playing the character or those felt by the audience watching.

A different response to the understanding of role-play was shared by Participant C, who stated that role-play is “simulating a person's situation. Role-play allows you to view things from a new perspective. Role-play can be used in counselling to improve communication”. Here, Participant C did not provide her definition of the concept but rather explained its function for perspective learning and as a tool for counselling. All participants were majors in Psychology and English Studies, so perhaps this participant's recognition of role-play as a counselling tool stemmed from her reflections on how to apply the concept throughout her degree. Participant C's understanding indicates that role-play can provide a “new perspective”, and she appreciates the benefits of the concept without offering a foundational definition. While the participant may have some experience with its functionality, this cannot be confirmed without her providing a definition and a source for the functional use of role-play based on her lived experience. The participant also mentioned how role-play can serve as a tool for effective communication in counselling; however, her lack of elaboration on how she perceives role-play as an effective communication tool during a live counselling session reflects only a primary understanding.

The primary definitions of role-play according to Participants I and F are consistent with Idham et al. (2022), who stated that role-play often requires students to participate in a play to represent a specific human role or character from the content being studied. From this theoretical definition, we can infer that these two participants' responses are correct. However, what I found lacking in these participants' definitions was an in-depth understanding of how role-play actually works, including the processes involved, such as setting up the situation to role-play, choosing a context, gauging competencies and talents among the cast, linguistic preparation, role descriptions, role assignment, role-play presentation, and debriefing of the role-play (Torrico, 2015). The inexperience of these participants with the processes behind role-play is significant because it suggests they can identify what role-play is but do not know how to initiate it themselves. It revealed to me where my work as a role-play instructor would begin for them when the research activities commenced.

Participant C's interpretation of role-play, where she highlighted its functional usage, seems consistent with Lim et al. (2011), who stated that role-play is a powerful tool when dealing with social and ethical topics. Perhaps Participant C found it useful for counselling due to the ability of role-play to support experiential learning. Instead of merely imagining a future encounter or session with a prospective patient, the counselling student may role-play that potential encounter, simulating a future session. These findings from Participant C reinforce the ideas of Rosell (2005), who stated that role-playing may be adapted in various ways to help people promote empathy towards individuals with psychological disorders. While Participant C shared her use of role-play in counselling, she did not specify how it would be implemented, thereby limiting her understanding to a more primary level.

5.2.2 A primary understanding of empathy

Participants' responses to the question regarding their understanding of empathy were summarised as a primary comprehension of the concept and indicated introductory interpretations of empathy.

The following responses reflect six participants' understanding of the concept of "empathy":

"The ability to understand and share the emotions of someone"
(Participant A).

"Empathy is when a person has the ability to understand and feel the other person's emotion" (Participant D).

"Empathy – the ability to put oneself in another's situation even if they were not in the same or similar situation" (Participant B).

"One's ability to understand and share the feelings of another person"
(Participant E).

"

Empathy: Sharing the feelings of others people and understanding better"
(Participant G).

“This is the ability for one to understand and also share another person’s feelings” (Participant I).

All responses indicate that the participants recognise that empathy involves sharing and understanding another person’s feelings. This suggests that there is a prevailing view among the participants that empathy entails understanding another’s emotional state and potentially sharing the same feelings. The similarity in these responses may stem from the fact that they are all psychology majors, where empathy is a valued and sought-after skill in the field of developmental and social psychology (Nakao & Itakura, 2009). The consistent responses revealed that empathy is a familiar concept to them, but no further commentary on the topic was provided, indicating a basic understanding of the concept. This finding aligns with Stansfield and Bunce (2014), who noted that affective empathy is the capacity to share another’s feelings and emotions.

Participant F shared a more elaborate understanding of empathy:

“Being able to understand and share the feelings with another person. Being able to either relate or put yourself in another person’s situation and understanding their emotions and feelings. Empathy is the ability to recognise another person’s emotion”.

The concept of empathy, as explained by Participant F, refers to the act of placing oneself in another’s situation. This participant seems to recognise the empathic process, as her choice of words – “understand, share emotion, recognise another’s emotion” – indicates that when one shares feelings with another, when emotions are relatable, and when one’s perspective of a situation can be felt by another, empathy is taking place.

Participant F’s response suggests that she can identify and perform empathy, as she understands how it works and can recognise empathic engagement when she sees it (“share feelings with another person”). This implies that she is familiar with the concept and may already be engaging with it, indicating that empathy is not entirely foreign to her. Participant F’s understanding is reinforced by Ganczarek et al. (2018),

who stated that the originating concept of empathy, *Einfühlung*, refers to “some kind of imaginary bodily perspective taking, which is aimed at understanding what it would be like to be living in another body or another environment” (p. 141). The response from Participant F, which resonates with *Einfühlung*, demonstrates that she has a foundational understanding of the concept of empathy.

5.2.3 A primary understanding of the CASEL 5 SECs

This research focuses on SEL outcomes. Before the research activities commenced, I needed to identify the terminology regarding social and emotional competencies that the participants understood. The participants were asked to explain their understanding of the five social and emotional learning competency (5 SECs) terms: *self-awareness*, *social awareness*, *relationship skills*, *responsible decision-making*, and *self-management*.

5.2.3.1 Self-awareness

In the following three responses, it is clear that the participants believe self-awareness involves having self-knowledge and the ability to control one's behaviour in a situation.

“Self-awareness is knowledge of your character and feelings” (Participant E).

“Self-awareness: Being aware about yourself and your surroundings. Self-awareness is all about knowing yourself” (Participant G).

“Self-awareness is one's ability to focus on themselves with regard to their own thoughts, actions and emotions and their ability to be able to control them within any given situation” (Participant I).

The responses exhibit a common thread of self-attention, self-focus, self-knowledge, and self-control. These three participants demonstrate a foundational understanding of the concept of self-awareness, as their responses align with the idea of redirecting focus and attention towards self-education and self-management. This is significant because it indicates that during the research activity cycle of self-awareness, there will already be an initial understanding of this SEC, eliminating the need for me to

teach the basics. Their responses reflect a fundamental understanding of self-awareness, defined as the recognition of one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours within different contexts (CASEL, n.d.).

In the next two responses, Participants C and D provide an expanded view of self-awareness compared to Participants E, G, and I. Participants C and D assert that self-awareness involves self-knowledge, and possessing this self-knowledge offers value to the individual:

“Self-Awareness means to pay attention to your own mind. Helps shape and control your emotions and the actions you carry out. I feel self-care is an important factor in self-awareness. By giving yourself the time and space to self-care you can improve mental and physical health, therefore have better self-awareness” (Participant C).

“Self-awareness to me is knowing yourself and being aware of how you treat others and how your actions affect other peoples' moods and feelings. Self-awareness is also being able to see if your actions align with your personal beliefs and standards” (Participant D).

Participant C states that, for her, self-awareness involves paying attention to one's own emotional state and overall well-being, as her understanding of self-awareness pivots around self-care at the centre of this concept. Participant D's understanding of self-awareness is also multi-faceted; she asserts that self-awareness is about the knowledge one has of oneself, how one treats other people, and whether one's actions align with the ideology one sets for oneself. Participants C and D's responses were similar in that they both regard self-awareness as knowledge directed towards oneself for the purpose of enhancing personal and social experiences. The participants' primary focus on the self in relation to internal and external experiences reflects a rudimentary understanding of the self-awareness SEC.

Participant C noted that time spent caring for oneself is also time spent being aware of one's mental state through care. However, the definition or criteria for what constitutes care is unclear. Participant D mentioned that self-awareness involves self-

knowledge and a sense of credibility, as an individual's "actions align with personal beliefs and standards". This claim of credibility is not contextualised, leaving it unclear whether being credible is a trait that manifests in a social setting when one is self-aware or whether credibility is self-proclaimed. Both participants begin their initial sentences with references to knowledge of oneself and awareness of one's mood and behaviour, which is accurate and is supported by the literature on self-awareness, defined as the ability to recognise and identify one's emotions and their impact on one's behaviour (Bridgeland et al., 2013).

5.2.3.2 *Social-awareness*

Participant B stated that social awareness is "understanding and knowing how you act in social settings". Their response focused on managing oneself in social environments, emphasising an individual's social orientation. This perspective aligns with the literature on social awareness, which suggests that it involves understanding social norms and recognising situational demands (CASEL, n.d.). It is important to note that Participant B's response pertains to the presentation of the self in society and may reflect their understanding of SEC as being rooted in assumptions about social behaviour.

Participant I states:

"Being able to pick up on social clues, paying attention to other people's feelings and how certain things make them feel and being self-aware in social settings".

Her view on social awareness builds on Participant B's response, as Participant I's perspective focuses on how individuals navigate the social terrain and how they make others feel, in contrast to Participant B, who emphasises displays of behaviour in a social setting. Participant I suggests that reading social cues and paying attention to the behaviours around her would enhance social awareness. However, the absence of the terms 'empathy' and 'compassion', which are vital for social awareness (CASEL, n.d.), renders her understanding as primary.

5.2.3.3 *Relationship building skills*

The following five responses from the participants refer to a fundamental understanding of relationship-building skills, which are based on the establishment and maintenance of relationships:

“Working to build and maintain ethical relationships as well” (Participant A).

“Growing and maintaining relationships with others” (Participant E).

“Relationship-building – to what degree a person can make and maintain relationships with others” (Participant B).

“Working to build and maintain a relationship whether it is an intimate relationship or a platonic relationship” (Participant I).

Relationship-building: Building any relationship which has a meaning behind” (Participant G).

It appears that all five responses are steering towards the importance of relationship-building skills, specifically the ability to build and maintain relationships with others. However, each participant has differing ideas about which relationships should be built and the reasons for their maintenance. Participant A states that this SEC is focused on building and maintaining ethical relationships, but what constitutes an ethical relationship remains unclear. Participants E and B suggest that this SEC pertains to building and maintaining relationships with generic ‘other people’. Participant I indicates that this SEC focuses on building and maintaining relationships with both sexual and non-sexual individuals, also alluding to a group of generalised people. Participant G asserts that this SEC is centred on building and maintaining meaningful relationships, possibly those that hold a sense of value. These responses are significant as they indicate that making and maintaining relationships is a recognised factor in the understanding of relationship-building SEC among these participants.

The above responses are reflected in O'Connor et al. (2017), which reinforces the participants' primary understanding of relationship building as the establishment and maintenance of healthy relationships. However, they do not provide a refined definition of the skill that details the techniques required to maintain relationships based on cooperation and communication (O'Connor et al., 2017); therefore, the aforementioned understandings were deemed primary.

The below three responses build on the above primary definitions of relationship building:

“Relationship building emphasises how people connect and learn to maintain relationships. It allows you to develop ways to get along with people and make strong relationships. Building trust with the people you have relationships with” (Participant C).

“Relationship-building is making sure you have authentic relationships with the people around you and making sure you respect them as well” (Participant D).

“Being able to put time and effort into building an ethical relationship or network. Being able to create sustainable relationships with other people. Creating a connection through a specific type of job, passion, and happy, betters and strengths a relationship” (Participant F).

Participant C explains that this SEC is about building relationships, with trust at the centre of a strong relationship. To build a strong relationship, one must foster trust with others. The insight from this response is that this specific SEC can lead to a value exchange for either party in the relationship, which could be the value that this participant sees in having a trusting relationship. Participant D states that the relationship-building SEC will serve to create an authentic relationship; however, it is unclear whether 'authentic' refers to a real relationship rather than a parasocial one or to a truthful relationship. What remains significant is that respect is something this participant is willing to give in a relationship, indicating an interest in offering value rather than just receiving it. Participant F's perspective on relationship building

focuses on forming a sense of community or a reliable network of people, leading to long-lasting connections that enhance overall lifestyle. All three responses regarding what the relationship-building SEC entails align with the notion of giving some level of value in order to receive value in return.

These responses resonate with Heath et al. (2017), who state that relationships require the ability to listen and understand one another. While these relationship aims are important, good relationships also require effective communication, conflict resolution strategies, and cultural knowledge (CASEL, n.d.). This criterion for forming good relationships is missing from the above responses, thereby rendering the understanding incomplete.

5.2.3.4 *Responsible decision-making*

The following four responses from the participants regarding their understanding of responsible decision-making skills reveal that they believe one should be informed or possess some form of knowledge to make the right decision.

“Making the right decision” (Participant E).

“Responsible decision making: Making smart decisions which will be useful at the end” (Participant G).

“Along with decision making, it is a level of maturity that needs to be obtained in order to accomplish responsible decision making” (Participant C).

“Responsible decision making and making a decision which is well informed and won’t lead to any bad results” (Participant D).

Participant E describes responsible decision-making as making the “right” decision, while Participants G and D suggest it is a form of intelligence. Participant D's understanding implies a level of maturity and wisdom regarding responsible decision-making. The four responses reflect a primary understanding, as the criteria behind the participants' use of terms such as “right”, “smart”, “maturity”, and “well-informed

decisions” were not elaborated upon. The participants did not provide the core rationale behind why an individual might warrant responsible decision-making, particularly under pressure or in challenging circumstances, as discussed by Muller et al. (2019). The lack of consideration for when responsible decision-making is most needed and what constitutes a responsible decision is absent here, leading to the conclusion that these understandings can be categorised as primary.

5.2.3.5 *Self-management*

The responses below indicate that controlling one’s behaviour and emotions is indicative of the self-management competency. These findings reinforce those of Mukh et al. (2023), who found that self-management involves controlling one’s impulses and regulating behaviour and emotions.

“Self-management is how a person manages their emotions and how they act” (Participant E).

“Self-management is a reflection of how one controls their own thoughts. Mental discipline to control your mind and yourself. To self-manage you must apply behavioural change strategies” (Participant C).

“Self-management is the ability to have self-control or being able to have self-regulation over your feelings, thoughts and behaviour in different situations. This also means being able to handle yourself in difficult situations” (Participant D).

Participant E states that self-management is centred on emotion management, which is significant because all five SEL SECs involve emotion management, as SEL was developed out of the emotional intelligence framework (Goleman, 1996; Brackett, 2019; CASEL, n.d.). It is noteworthy that emotion management only becomes apparent in the self-management SEC for Participant E, highlighting that the other SECs may focus on external behavioural management, while this SEC may pertain to self-behavioural portrayal, mainly due to the titling and usage of the word ‘self’ in the self-management SEC. Participant E explains that this SEC is centred on mental discipline and applying strategies to develop the ability to control one’s own mind, with

the subtle implication of policing oneself. Participant D states that self-management is situational, and the need to regulate or initiate control is context-specific, indicating that this SEC should only be implemented or accessed in specific scenarios.

The above responses are accurate but somewhat limited, as they lack the exploration of reasons behind self-management. In some cases, it is in the attainment of a goal that one must exercise control and emotion management, yet no specific goal was mentioned (CASEL, n.d.).

In two other responses, Participants B and G share their understanding of self-management, which is specifically concerned with task creation:

“Self-management – a person’s ability to organise and complete tasks that involve themselves” (Participant B).

“Self-management: Managing your time very well and being conscious about what will happen next” (Participant G).

The two responses above on self-management consider the self-management competency valuable for task and time management. This is reinforced by McCraty et al. (1999), who stated that emotional self-management is the ability to work cooperatively, find motivation for tasks, and improve work management skills. The participants' responses were deemed primary understandings, as they lacked consideration of more challenging aspects of task completion, such as stress management and the postponement of gratification.

5.3 A good understanding of empathy and the CASEL 5 SECs

The participants' responses analysed here were coded as the second of three thematic concerns: a "good understanding" of the concept of empathy and the CASEL 5 SECs.

5.3.1 Good understandings of empathy

I needed to identify the responses from participants that demonstrated a more advanced understanding of empathy skills. The pre-study questionnaire (Appendix A) required participants to define and explain their current understanding of the term 'empathy'. The following responses were considered strong as they aligned with the work of Stansfield and Bunce (2014), whose studies focused on the relationship between empathy and reading fiction. These responses expanded or contextualised the participants' perspectives on the concept of empathy without any prompts to do so.

“Empathy is when a person has the ability to understand and feel another person’s emotion” (Participant D).

“Empathy – the ability to put oneself in another’s situation even if they were not in the same or similar situation” (Participant B).

Participant D’s response aligns with the definition of cognitive empathy as the ability to understand the world from another’s point of view (Stansfield & Bunce, 2014), while Participant B’s response aligns with the definition of affective empathy as the capacity to share in another’s feelings and emotions (Stansfield & Bunce, 2014). These were the only two participants whose responses on empathy were considered strong, as they closely matched the literature of Sutton (2021), who stated that being an empathic person involves putting oneself in someone else’s shoes and showing care and gratitude for others.

5.3.2 Good understandings of the CASEL 5 SECs

I needed to identify the responses from participants that demonstrated a more elevated understanding of the CASEL 5 SEC terminology. The pre-study questionnaire (Appendix A) required participants to identify and explain their current knowledge or understanding of the five SEC terms: self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship building, responsible decision making, and self-management. The following responses were deemed good because they were more aligned with the literature on the value of SEL SECs for pre-service teacher training

(Mukh et al., 2023), adolescent education (Ross & Tolan, 2018), and implementation in schools as a result of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kounenou et al., 2021). These responses expanded or contextualised participants' points of view on four of the five SECs.

No participant demonstrated a 'good understanding' of the SEC relationship building, and therefore this specific SEC is missing from this section.

5.3.2.1 Self-awareness

These two participants presented a good understanding of self-awareness:

"Being able to understand and identify yourself, through your emotions and your actions. It is being able to identify your character traits, be conscious of the way you present yourself to society and knowing your own personality. You can understand yourself and your emotions" (Participant F).

"A person's ability to understand their personality or self through their actions, thoughts and feelings" (Participant B).

The above two responses are deemed good for several reasons. Firstly, Participant F's response aligns with the CASEL literature on self-awareness (CASEL, n.d.), which emphasises the integration of personal and social identities and the identification of one's emotional state. Participant F's remarks on the consciousness of actions, the presentation of the self in social situations, and the importance of self-knowledge demonstrate a strong understanding of self-awareness. Similarly, Participant B's focus on the comprehension and expression of one's personality aligns with Mukh et al. (2023), who state that self-awareness involves recognising and reflecting on one's own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

5.3.2.2 Social-awareness

The four responses below demonstrate a good understanding of the concept of "social awareness":

“Ability of being able to be conscious of your surroundings. It also highlights being able to manage social situations and relationships that you develop”
(Participant C).

“Social awareness is the ability to build positive relationships and also make rational decisions in different situations. This also refers to knowing how you interact in different social situations. Social awareness is also being able to understand people’s emotions and how to cater to them”
(Participant D).

Participant C’s response focused on being conscious in a social setting and managing oneself in such contexts, as well as the value this has for relationship building. Participant D’s response also partially emphasised the importance of interaction in social settings for relationship development. While these two responses overlap in relation to the relationship-building SEC, they only constitute part of their social-awareness responses and can therefore only be evaluated against the social-awareness SEC. However, it is encouraging that these participants perceive an eventual goal for good social awareness, as it indicates that being socially aware leads to a growing understanding of the people around them. This notion is reinforced by Ross and Tolan (2018), who state that being socially aware involves understanding the people, cultures, and feelings of those around an individual.

“Being able to have the ability to recognise or to take a perspective and emphasise. To those that are from diverse backgrounds and cultures as oneself. To have an understanding of social and ethical norms of behaviours” (Participant F).

“Being aware of one’s surroundings and knowing how to behave and control one’s emotions in a social setting” Participant E).

Participant F’s response highlights important criteria for social awareness, namely empathy and perspective taking. This aligns with Kounenou et al. (2021), who state that social awareness requires individuals to engage in perspective taking and to be empathetic towards others in order to foster good citizenship. In contrast, Participant

E's response emphasises the importance of being conscious of one's behaviour in social settings. This understanding is also supported by the CASEL criteria (CASEL, n.d.), which require a socially aware individual to demonstrate concern for the feelings of others in these contexts.

5.3.2.3 *Responsible decision-making*

The three participant responses below share a common understanding that making responsible decisions involves a process of introspection and thoughtful deliberation aimed at achieving a well-considered outcome.

"This is being able to make decisions responsibly, meaning that the decisions one makes are ones that are good and yield a good outcome for those involved in the decision-making process" (Participant I).

"Is a well thought out decision that is made after one analysis, it is the advantages and disadvantages of the situation. One can make a constructive choice based on valid information gathered and one does not get influenced by peers or overwhelming emotions. One can think clearly when deciding which will be beneficial to oneself" (Participant F).

"Responsible decision making- a concept which involves weighing the pros and cons of a situation before making a decision that would affect themselves or others positively" (Participant B).

Participant I's response focuses on an outcome that is agreeable to all parties involved in the decision-making process. Participant F's response states that making a decision should be based on the information gathered rather than overwhelming emotion, while Participant B asserts that it is important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of an action before deciding to act. All three responses are regarded as valid, as responsible decision-making involves thinking, considering, and deliberating all the necessary variables before determining how to proceed. This interpretation is supported by Mukh et al. (2023), who found that responsible decision-making requires making constructive choices, considering all concerns related to the decision, and evaluating potential consequences.

5.3.2.4 *Self-management*

The two responses below demonstrate a good understanding of self-management, as both highlight the high level of accountability required for effective self-management.

“The ability for one to control/ regulate their thoughts, emotions and actions” (Participant I).

“Is being able to recognise that other people are not responsible for me achieving my goals. I need to acknowledge that I should take full responsibility for myself. Me being able to effectively regulate my behaviour is something I can classify as being self-aware” (Participant F).

Participant I’s response to self-management, defined as the control of one’s thoughts, emotions, and behaviour, indicates that it involves not only managing emotions but also the ability to both control and regulate thoughts and actions. This demonstrates that self-management extends beyond mere emotion regulation; it encompasses a holistic supervision of thoughts and behaviours. Participant F’s emphasis on the necessity of taking responsibility for one’s actions, behaviour, and goal attainment further highlights the importance of being accountable for one’s own ambitions and actions, accurately reflecting the essence of self-management. These ideas are reinforced by Bridgeland et al. (2013), who state that the ability to self-manage involves maintaining control over one’s behaviour and regulating emotions in challenging circumstances.

5.4 **Inaccurate understandings of role-play and the 5 SECs**

The participants’ responses analysed below were coded as “Inaccurate understandings” of the concepts of role-play and the CASEL 5 SECs.

5.4.1 ***Inaccurate understandings of role-play***

The following responses were deemed as inaccurate. I drew on the definitions of role-play by O’Sullivan et al. (2011, as cited in Riain et al., 2017, p. 1) to be what

“occurs when someone acts out a role in order to create a piece of drama” and none of the responses below aligned with this quote:

“Role play: Playing a role in a person’s life or in your life is very important”
(Participant G).

“An activity which people do and say things while pretending to be someone else” (Participant A).

“Role play is a form of understanding about where a person is coming from in a situation that the other person fails to understand” (Participant D).

Participant G’s response examined role-play from the perspective of the various roles one plays in society, which is not aligned with the role-play that will be used for the research activities, as outlined by O’Sullivan (2011) above. Participant A’s response to role-play was deemed superficial because it conflated two concepts: acting and lying, and it inaccurately represents how role-play will be approached in the research activities. Participant D’s response is also inaccurate, as this participant is implying perspective-taking rather than role-play.

5.4.2 Inaccurate understanding of the CASEL 5 SECs

The following responses were deemed inaccurate because they did not align with the literature on SEL or were superficial in nature.

5.4.2.1 Self-awareness

The response below is considered inaccurate because it is overly broad and reflects the participant's interpretation of a lived experience rather than a clear understanding of self-awareness.

“Self-awareness – The personal experience of one's personality and individuality” (Participant A).

5.4.2.2 *Social-awareness*

The response below demonstrates an inadequate understanding of this SEC. Although SEL originates from emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 1996), one of the competencies of emotional intelligence is social awareness. However, the definition of social awareness was not clearly articulated.

“Social awareness – Being socially aware, is a form of emotional intelligence” (Participant A).

5.4.2.3 *Responsible decision-making*

The following response is deemed inaccurate because responsible decision-making was not unpacked, and the participant made a superficial, blanket statement about this SEC that involves taking responsibility for all actions taken in life.

“Responsible decision making – Being responsible for the things which you do in life” (Participant A).

5.4.2.4 *Self-management*

The following response to this participant’s understanding of self-management is inaccurate because it is misguided. The participant notes that self-management means having the ability to evaluate one’s emotions, behaviours, and thoughts. However, there is no indication of the measure or context of this response.

“Self-management – Ability to rate your emotions, behaviours and thoughts” (Participant A).

5.5 **Reflections on the baseline findings**

When the participants began their interest in this research study, none of them had any formal education in SEL as an educational approach in the lecture room. They were aware that they would be participating in a study focused on SEL, and I had provided them with a brief explanation of SEL upon recruitment. However, none of them possessed any prior formal knowledge of SEL. Upon reading through their responses, I noted a variation in their understandings. Most participants had a basic

grasp of the concepts, some had a good understanding of specific ideas, and a few had inaccurate interpretations of certain concepts. The majority of participants with a basic understanding indicated that they had some general knowledge of the concepts in isolation from the research aims. This meant that if the participants were required to use these concepts in any of the research activities, or when I employed them in my vocabulary, they would be able to comprehend my instructions and discussions.

Participants with a basic understanding of role-play recognised that it involved some form of acting and the representation of another person within a scenario.

Those with a basic understanding of empathy understood it to mean grasping another person's point of view to the extent that one could feel what the other was feeling. Therefore, a foundational understanding of empathy was established before the research activities. This may relate to the fact that these participants were psychology majors, and the widely held belief among them that empathy involves experiencing another's feelings (Whalen, 2010) contributed to their basic understanding of the concept, as it is a prominent topic in psychology studies.

Participants with a basic understanding of the CASEL 5 social and emotional competencies recognised that the upcoming research activities would require them to engage in some form of self-reflection. Five out of nine participants had a basic understanding of self-awareness; one participant had a basic understanding of social awareness; eight participants had a basic understanding of relationship-building skills; four participants had a basic understanding of responsible decision-making skills; and five participants had a basic understanding of self-management skills. Additionally, three participants had a basic understanding of role-play, while seven had a basic understanding of empathy.

These responses regarding the participants' understanding of the SEL skills facilitated the exploration of the research activities, as these preconceived notions of the SEL concepts, despite being basic, were correct. The three basic understandings of role-play may be attributed to the fact that none of the participants had engaged in acting or studied drama before, which resulted in only the aforementioned basic responses

regarding role-play. It is also possible that the seven basic understandings of empathy stemmed from its frequent mention in psychology studies.

Figure 9 below displays the primary understandings of the concepts outlined above.

Primary understandings of the CASEL 5 SECs, Role-play and Empathy

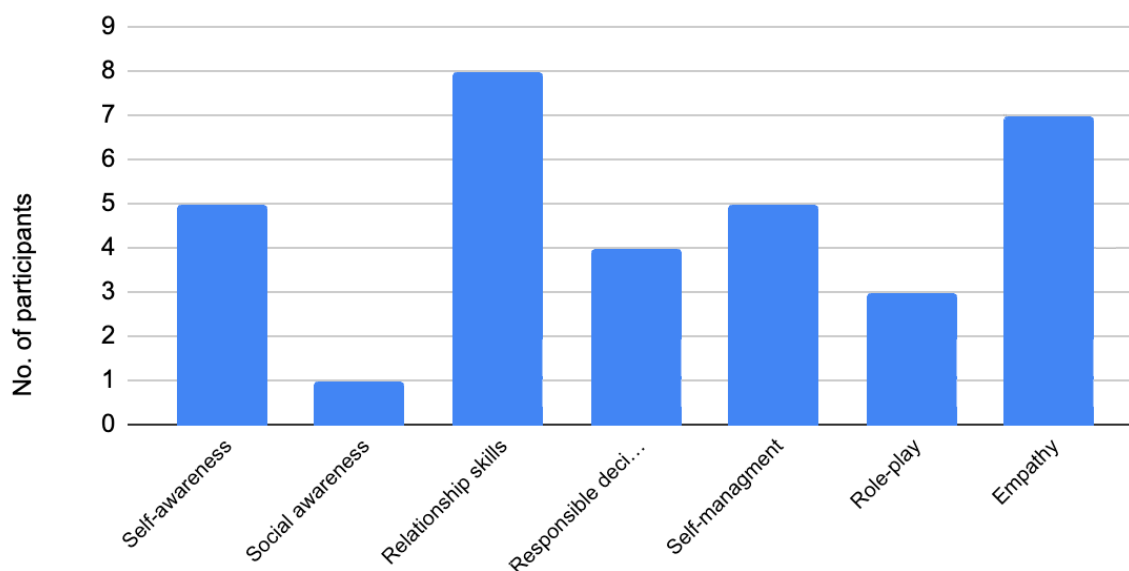


Figure 9: Primary understandings of the CASEL 5 SECs, role-play, and empathy

There was a solid understanding of the concepts among the participants. Two participants demonstrated a good understanding of self-awareness, four had a good understanding of social awareness, three understood responsible decision-making, and two showed a good understanding of self-management. However, no participants had a good understanding of relationship skills or role-play. Additionally, two participants demonstrated a good understanding of empathy. Figure 10 below illustrates these understandings of the concepts.

Good understandings of the CASEL 5 SECs, Role-play and Empathy

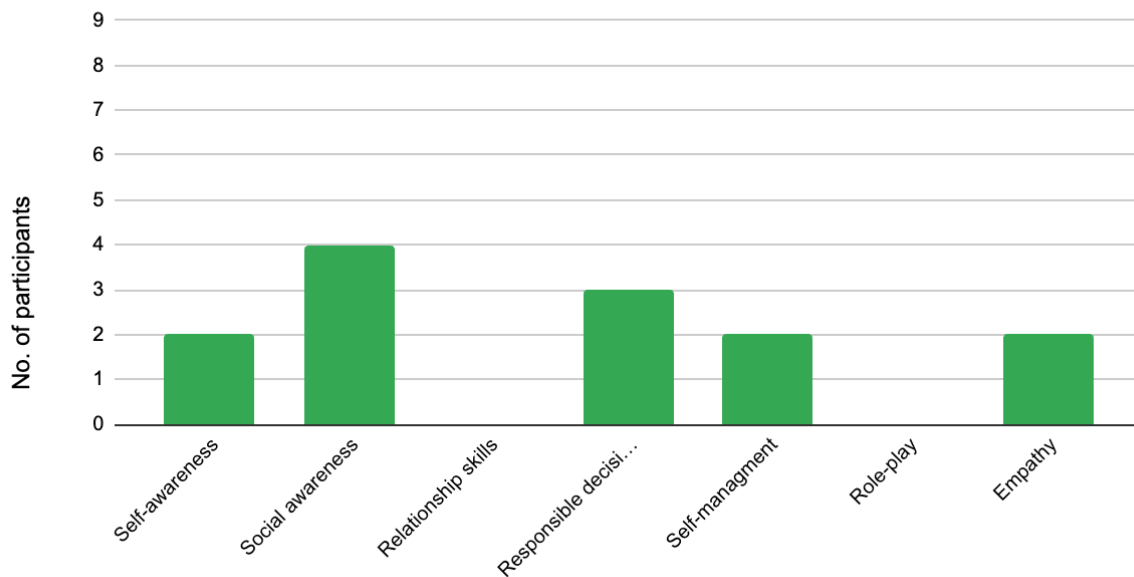


Figure 10: Good understandings of the CASEL 5 SECs, role-play, and empathy

Overall, the participants' good understanding of empathy and the CASEL 5 SECs meant that when I announced a task or gave an instruction using empathy or the CASEL 5 SECs, some of them questioned, added to, or challenged the tasks. This was beneficial for the research aims, as their ability to apply their understanding of the concepts helped to advance the study; their responses and suggestions prompted changes for the next cycle.

There were a few misunderstandings of the concepts. One participant had an inaccurate understanding of self-awareness, another of responsible decision-making, a third of social-awareness, and a fourth of self-management. Additionally, three out of nine participants exhibited inaccurate understandings of role-play. None of the participants had misunderstandings of empathy. Figure 11 below displays these incorrect understandings of the concepts.

Incorrect understandings of the CASEL 5 SECs, Role-play and Empathy

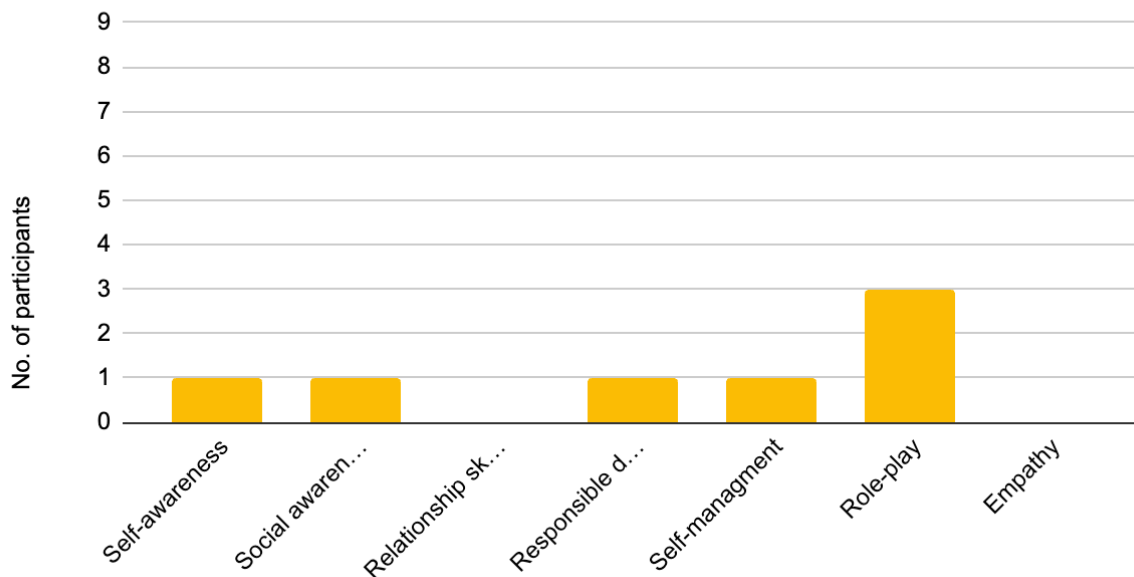


Figure 11: Inaccurate understandings of the CASEL 5 SECs, role-play, and empathy

Some of the participants briefly glanced through the questions and provided answers based on a surface-level understanding of the concepts. This may have contributed to some inaccuracies in their understanding, in addition to the fact that some participants did not know the answers.

Finally, the pre-study questionnaire (Appendix A) revealed that participants were prepared to engage with the baseline questionnaire and indicated their readiness to participate actively in the study. The varying understandings of the concept definitions among participants served as a guide for me, highlighting the need to spend time

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presents an analysis of the baseline information from the pre-study questionnaire. These findings assisted me as I embarked on the research activities that commenced after the pre-study questionnaire.

The next chapter will examine the analysis and findings of Cycle 1 of the research activities, where the participants explored the SEC of social awareness through role-play and narrative empathy activities based on Hamlet, written by William Shakespeare.

Chapter 6:

Analysis and Findings: Cycle 1 – *Hamlet* – Social Awareness

6.1 Introduction

This study explores how role-play and narrative empathy can facilitate SEL outcomes in English Literature lecture rooms. This chapter focuses on the analysis of data from Cycle 1, which explored how participants engaged with the research activities to develop social awareness (CASEL, n.d.) through their study of *Hamlet*.

The narrative findings are organised according to the research questions guiding this thesis. The data analysed include my observation and field notes, as well as the students' research diaries, written tasks, and autophotography.

This chapter presents an analysis of three themes:

6.2 Theme 1: Using role-play and role-playing extracts from *Hamlet* to support empathic behaviour

At the start of Cycle 1, the participants began the social awareness research activities with the role-play warm-up activities as per the methodological design of each cycle. The participants undertook the blindfold trust exercise (Annarella, 1992), thereafter played the electricity circles focus game (Casdagli, 1998), and lastly performed the magic box imagination exercise (Marsden, n.d.).

In the photo below, we see two participants performing the blindfold trust exercise, where each partner in the duo took turns to lead and be led. The aim of this exercise was to start building trust with each other by allowing one's partner to lead when one is vulnerable (blindfolded):



Photo 1: Blindfold warm-up 1 – Cycle 1

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants D and E)

My written observations and field notes (Appendix B) of this moment revealed that *“Participants D and E were the most silent pair, and they were able to complete this exercise quietly. Participant D felt that Participant E was very gentle and calm with her”*. This was a good sign that the participants had begun to observe each other's sensitivities and embody the spirit of cooperation and interaction (Shahbazi & Yazdani, 2017). The excitement on their faces served as proof that the activities were both enjoyable and were building trust among participants. The next two participants performing the same blindfold task were interesting because Participant A took special care not to allow harm or obstruction to come to his blindfolded partner, Participant G.



Photo 2: Blindfold warm-up 2 – Cycle 1

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants G and A)

My written observation notes stated that:

Participant A is very cautious and bold in his instructions and participant G is super attentive. They have reverted to talking in isiZulu. Participant A said it's because he knew that participant G was more comfortable with isiZulu and therefore he switched to a mode of instruction that would comfort her and therefore make her possibly trust him more.

This was significant because, with the goal of ensuring his partner would not collide with a wall or table, Participant A decided to code-switch. This demonstrated his confidence in handling the instruction using his instincts. The idea to revert to Participant G's home language was innovative and showed me that this game was good preparation for the forthcoming activities, as they both managed the situation with reason and smiles on their faces.

In the image below, we see three participants in a particularly testing situation:



Photo 3: Blindfold warm-up 3 – Cycle 1

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants C, B, and F)

As much as this was an interesting group to observe due to the clear obstruction and the way they managed the challenge, which would serve as the foundation for how they supported each other going forward, it was also a revealing moment for me. One leading partner (Participant F) had to relinquish leadership in favour of the more effective partner's instructions (Participant C). The ability of these two leaders to make a decision in the moment was commendable, as it demonstrated that participant G was willing to prioritise goal attainment over ego and learn something in the process. She stated later in her research diary (Appendix C), "*Very interactive and doing something different was exciting*". Participant C showed that she was now the only active leader and remained focused until the end of the activity.

All three of the above observations from the first role-play warm-up activity affirmed the work of Annarella (1992), who stated that relationships can be created through group participation during creative drama games. Watching the research participants help, care for, and laugh with each other whilst engaging in these new activities, which included body work and voice work, revealed the power of these warm-up games in facilitating group cohesion. Cultivating group cohesion was essential, as socio-psychological factors, such as the emotional climate of the group, were crucial for the

forthcoming activities that required a level of trust and emotional exploration together (Ronke, 2004). The first warm-up activity nurtured the empathic abilities of the participants.

When the participants moved on to the second warm-up activity, the electricity circles focus game, they stood in a circle and each participant created circles in the air. When another participant changed the direction of the circle, everyone had to follow suit. This continued rapidly throughout the group for about two rounds. In my Observation Notes (Appendix B), I noted that there was:

Lots of murmuring and clarifying of what each other is doing, this group maybe all over the place. They said they have to really pay attention with this exercise. They showed how conscious they were of the fact that they were not concentrating.

This was significant because, although task completion was challenging for the group due to the tricky nature and speed of the game, they reached a consensual decision about their awareness of not concentrating on the task. This resonates with the literature of Howie and Bagnell (2015), who stated that these types of pre-drama warm-up activities are designed to prepare the actor's voice and body and to assist acting ensembles in working effectively as a dramatic team. The latter purpose was fulfilled by the end of the electricity circle focus games, where an ensemble effort became apparent, and I observed group communication and awareness emerging. The group was becoming more empathetic to one another's levels of focus on the task and were alert when there was a lack of concentration. The last warm-up activity of this cycle was the magic box game.

The magic box game required the group to sit at a table and mime the action of taking out an object from an imaginary magic box. The observing participants then had to guess what was being taken out of the box based on the actions of the participant opening their box. If the observers guessed incorrectly, the magic box opener could correct them and announce what object they had picked from their box. This exercise was chosen to develop the non-verbal communication skills of the participants and

served to warm up their mime and imagination abilities. My observation notes (Appendix B) indicated:

Participant D – revealed a guitar, some thought her actions mimed putting on a sari.

Participant E – revealed a bird cage – everyone described the bird cage correctly.

Participant C – revealed putting on a necklace very well and clearly.

Participant F – revealed putting on a crown – her crown was quite obvious.

Participant B – revealed opening a new box of shoes which was very obvious since he is sporty guy he chose something similar to his personality.

Participant G – revealed a parker pen box, people saw the same thing.

Participant A – revealed a gun but the group thought it was pepper at first.

When the participants had the opportunity to guess what each peer was removing from their respective boxes, some actions were obvious and clear, while others were unclear and confusing. Regardless of whether the guesses were accurate, the aim of this warm-up game was to encourage the mimetic abilities of the participants to surface, rather than to achieve correct guesses. As Hoetker (1975, p. 6) states, “drama is noncompetitive; it is unconcerned with correct answers; it encourages imagination and invention”. This game, along with others, allowed the participants’ imaginations to warm up. It not only introduced an element of play and fun before the role-play activities commenced but also demonstrated the empathy the participants had for one another as they sought to support each other’s amateur mimetic abilities, rather than ridicule or judge them.

After the warm-up activities concluded, the participants were ready for the role-play immersion. They followed these six steps of the role-play activity:

- Step 1** – The group chose a context for the role-play, such as a contemporary South African setting, a university campus, or a family event (Torriconi, 2015)
- Step 2** – Participants linguistically adapted the script by rewriting the scene, translating the Early Modern English into a concise version focused on exploring the SEL competency of social awareness (Torriconi, 2015)
- Step 3** – Group members assigned roles, ensuring each participant had a specific part in the role-play (Torriconi, 2015)
- Step 4** – Participants rehearsed their loosely scripted role-play, practicing their delivery and interactions (Torriconi, 2015)
- Step 5** – During rehearsals, participants used autophotography to capture a moment in the role-play that exemplified social awareness (Glaw et al., 2017) – See Appendix E: Autophotography.
- Step 6** – After rehearsals, participants presented their role-play to the other group, showcasing their understanding of the SEL competency (Torriconi, 2015).

The scripts were prepared in Steps 1, 2 and 3. During Step 4, I observed and documented their rehearsal in my observation and field notes (Appendix B). The participants completed Step 5 (Appendix E) in their research diaries (Appendix C) and recorded it in their own diaries. Step 6 was viewed by everyone and documented by both myself (Appendix B) and the participants (Appendix D).



Photo 4: Linguistic preparation of the script – Cycle 1

(Participants F, E, B, A, I and D)

In the above image, the participants were divided into two groups and began following Steps 1, 2 and 3 of the role-play activity. While observing their interactions as they developed their script, I noted the following in my observation and field notes (Appendix B):

Some are taking time to write the script, some are rushing. I can see that they are mindful of time in creating the role-plays. 30 mins have gone by and they are still on step 2 of the role-play creation. I asked both the groups if they need my help and both said “no no no”. So, I gave them 5 more mins to sort out the linguistic prep of the script and then announced that they need to start rehearsing.

What is significant about the above is that the participants were delayed in their script creation but still did not feel the need to ask for help. Their independent work revealed that the participants were willing to read through the Shakespearean dialogue and adapt their chosen scenes to contemporary language without my usual class assistance, where I would normally aid in translating the Shakespearean language for them. The warm-up activities may have built this curiosity, as drama games are known to create a sense of drive among an ensemble cast. Sagues (2021) noted that group activities foster cooperation, and the group's aim of a common goal requires negotiation of meaning, which eventually creates an interdependent and positive

working environment. The warm-up activities may have encouraged the participants to be excited to engage in these tasks independently and may have informed their enthusiasm.

When it was time to start rehearsing for the role-plays, participant B reflected in his research diary, *“It was interesting. I found rehearsing the play puts the certain scenes we do in a more modern manner, which allows us to compare the difference in time periods”* (Appendix C).



Photo 5: Rehearsal of the script – Cycle 1

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants F, E, B, A, I and D)

Noting Participant B’s response in his diary and comparing it with his appearance in the above image – where he stands in a white hooded jacket at the back left, talking to his scene partners – reveals an invested expression that shows he is engrossed in the task at hand.

I walked to each group and asked how the rehearsals were going, and my observations and field notes (Appendix B) indicated:

So the groups were not clear about how the pictures they will take will show social awareness, so I had to explain it and describe it to them and

provide an example such as If you take a picture of someone patting someone's back, that shows compassion and can be interpreted as a characteristic of social awareness.

With my previous explanation, I realised I needed to take action before the next cycle commences: to have a definition of the cycle-specific CASEL 5 SEC available on the whiteboard for them throughout the activities. These SECs are not familiar to them, and I had to keep reiterating the definition during their rehearsal. The autophotography task required them to take a photo of one moment in the rehearsal where they captured a social awareness tableau. While the groups did not know how to do this initially, after I explained, they were able to take photos of their social awareness moments. This is significant because it reminded me that they were not performers and may not know how visual moments in a play translate to imagery and therefore convey meaning. They may have been able to identify these in literary analysis, but when they had to use their bodies to create the moment and then document it, they required help. This reminded me that these were not drama students but psychology students who were willing to learn.

Each group then presented their role-play scenes. Group 1 performed Act 1, Scene 3 of *Hamlet*, where Polonius, Ophelia, and Laertes had a family conversation, and Laertes said goodbye to his father and sister as he left for France. Group 2 performed their own versions of Acts 4, Scenes 3 and 4, when Hamlet found out about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's plot to murder him.

My observations and field notes (Appendix B) on group one and group two's role-play showcased the following:

Group 1 Presentation: *Nice introduction of scene and characters. Very bold and strong performance of participant F's portrayal of Laertes. They adapted certain lines very well. Participant B shows his back to the audience which is okay because the adaptation of the text and how it shows social awareness is more important.*

Group 2 Presentation: *Nice acting skills for psych students, they seem enthusiastic and I noted each actor has an intention. Participant D is playing Hamlet who feels like he is going crazy. Hamlet feels overwhelmed and there is a lot going on and participant D is showing this in her performance.*

With regard to group one, their role-play was clear and coherent in terms of the narrative they chose to communicate. We could see who was playing which character, and we noted that participant F, who portrayed Laertes, effectively conveyed the narrative arc of Laertes interacting with his sister and father, saying goodbye with a strong investment in ensuring that each moment of Laertes' farewell resonated with the audience. I was not concerned about the participants not performing well, as that was not the aim of the role-play activity. What was important was how the participants interpreted the scene in their own way. This aligns with the focus of drama in the English literature class: "not to teach theatre but to use drama as a way into literature...a smooth polished performance is not the ultimate objective but rather the creative and critical path students take" (Beck & Warrow, 1997, p. 26). Participants F and E later reflected on their role-playing of Hamlet and Ophelia in their writing tasks (Appendix D).

Participant F

In the roleplay I was imparting guidance and giving advice to another member in my group as Laertes gives advice to Ophelia to stay away from Hamlet. In the same way I was giving the same guidance, being someone who is motivated when I encourage and guide another I felt very alike the speech of the Laertes.

Participant E

I role played Act 1 scene 3 and what I found common was that not all the time do people actually listen to us and understand us especially as woman. Some people lack awareness and disregard other people's feelings

What is significant in both of these responses is the power that participant F had in playing Laertes and the relatability that participant E experienced while portraying Ophelia. Participant F states that when she played Laertes, giving guidance to Ophelia, it reminded her of how she motivates and guides others in her life. This demonstrated that role-playing a foreign character brought her awareness of her own nurturing abilities. This finding aligns with Muslam (2023), who stated that drama activities stimulate empathetic ability when students understand and discuss their own and others' emotional states. Participant E's experience involved relating to the suppressive state of Ophelia, who was warned and admonished by her brother and father, respectively. Playing Ophelia allowed participant E to recognise the same lack of empathy that women face in reality. The ability of drama activities to highlight social injustices is also noted by Sun (2023), who stated that they create spaces for critically reflecting on topics concerning power, culture, and inequality. The role-play experiences for both characters resonated with moments in their real lives, and they were able to pinpoint exactly how Laertes and Ophelia reminded them of their own experiences.

In Group 2's role-play, the participants took on some archetypal roles. For instance, participant D, who played Hamlet, had to portray the madness he experienced upon discovering Claudius' plot to kill him via Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. She had fun acting out 'madness'. The participants laughed a lot, and although no coherent blocking was applied, the group expressed their experiences later in their diary entries (Appendix C).

Participant A

The acting of the scene that shows social awareness, we got to explore a different and fun side of the module prior to us actually starting to type our assignments for English Literature.

Participant D

My favourite moment was the role play, I like to perform so it was fun to perform while also learning about social awareness and how I can use it in my life.

Participant A expressed how different the role-play activities were compared to the usual purely written language immersion of literary analysis and noted the enjoyment and fun he had with role-play. This was significant for me as a teacher because it revealed how a psychology group could appreciate a more artistic learning approach, whereby they had fun exploring a character's journey. This idea is echoed in Dora To et al. (2011), who recommended that teachers consider the importance of creating a non-threatening classroom ambiance through enjoyable activities.

The work of Mart (2019) was important in understanding Participant D's response to having fun while performing. By revisiting her interest in performance, she linked it to her own experience of reading the text. This emotional reaction to performing a scene from the text illustrates how it supported her learning outcomes, particularly in relation to learning about Hamlet and social awareness. This reveals possible reasons why the 'madness' she portrayed as Hamlet in front of his friends was enthusiastically executed. Participant D discovered her individual talents, which allowed her to explore new possibilities within herself and gain confidence (Demircioglu, 2010). Both participants enjoyed the role-play activity and experienced fun while empathising with Hamlet as they learned about his 'social' quirks.

6.3 Theme 2: Narrative empathy to learn social awareness

After the role-play activities, the participants began their narrative empathy discussion session. All the participants gathered in a circle and shared their feelings and perspectives induced by the narrative and character journeys within the play *Hamlet*.

A noteworthy response emerged from my observation and field notes (Appendix B) based on Participant A's comments:

Participant A said that the mentality you explore in the outside world is different to what you were taught. He says Hamlet's situation reminded him about a race issue. He said he is sad to admit it but whilst being brought up he was taught how to behave as a black man. If you are coloured this is how you should behave, which brings up the clashes of upbringing that happen during the raising of men that affected him in school. This is the topic that should be taught more in school "how we are

taught to be in our different races” he says. Participant A mentioned that by Hamlet being brought up as a Prince ready to become king and how Hamlet is treated in the world outside his kingdom (possibly with reference to how Hamlet was treated on the boat when he found the letter to instruct Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to murder him) reminded him of how he feels about being brought up as a young Zulu man at home and how this clashes with his experiences at school.

When Participant A shared his sentiments about the upbringing of Hamlet being similar to his own, he drew a connection between the isolation Hamlet faced as he was raised to be a future king and the isolation he felt when he was with friends. These experiences of Hamlet reminded the participant of how different his upbringing was in a traditional Zulu home compared to his student life in the more developed areas of Durban. The participant went on to say that the isolated and racially distinct upbringing styles are serious aspects of nurturing masculinity that need to be addressed in schools. This participant’s ability to make connections between Hamlet and his own upbringing is an important finding, as it highlights a social issue that many black South African males may experience. This unpleasant emotional recall from Participant A is significant because it demonstrates that when participants have the opportunity to empathise with the experiences of characters within the text, connections with real life begin to emerge.

Kromhout and Sheckle (2021) discussed the importance of talking about literature to understand it better, noting that students often do not fully grasp what they have read until they engage in discussion. Here, we see Participant A recognising that “literature that excites the imagination prompts learners to reflect on themselves as human beings as they shuffle back and forth between literature and life” (Kromhout & Sheckle, 2021, p. 3). More importantly, it has prompted Participant A, an undergraduate psychology major and potential future mental health care worker, to consider how he could assist young black South African males in making sense of their identities as they navigate between their ancestral homes in the countryside and their formal education in the more metropolitan areas of South Africa.

Participant A continued his deliberations on *Hamlet* later in his written task (Appendix D):

It made me realise that there are things in the context of social awareness, the things that I took very lightly. It was actually an eye opener, by the things which I have experienced in my life. I lost a lot of people in a very short space of time more than 5 family members, I knew who caused their demise, but I didn't act on it. I had a stepfather who was in a relationship with my mother who was treating me like I'm inhuman but for the sake of my mother I didn't go and tell her as she has BP. So my advice to anyone out there is do not seek to do bad to someone that did you bad as well. What benefits will you get for doing evil on evil? Rather be the bigger man and show maturity in some situations in life, so that is how I became socially aware.

It was very interesting to read Participant A's continued outpouring of difficult experiences that arose as a result of empathising with Hamlet's narrative. Here, the participant engages in narrative empathy: "When texts invite readers to feel, they also stimulate readers' thinking" (Keen, 2006, p. 213). As this participant expresses the very difficult emotional experiences he has had in his life, he reflects on his past, including the possibility of losing his life and the abuse he endured from his stepfather.

Participant A also expresses that, for his mother's sake, he continued to self-manage his experiences for fear of sharing his real emotions with her and potentially exacerbating her ill health. His responses also convey a proud moment of realisation for him as he discovers the level of emotional awareness with which he acted. From his newly discovered thoughts on the CASEL 5 SEC social awareness, Participant A may not have actually understood that he was being socially aware in those past emotionally testing situations. However, now, having learned about the concept of social awareness, he is conscious of being socially aware and appreciates his past self for embodying it. As Ndlovu (2019, p. 116) found, "literature can offer psychological insight into emotional identification with victims of human rights abuses", and Participant A's reflection on his past traumas is indicative and representative of what Ndlovu (2019) discusses. Participant A provided significant

data on the recall of unpleasant emotions through his empathy with moments in the play *Hamlet*, which resulted in the participant self-evaluating and self-reflecting on his social demeanour, thereby deeming himself as already possessing social awareness skills.

Further difficult emotional recall was revealed by Participants D, I, F, and E from their writing tasks, where their answer to the question, “How did Hamlet’s behaviour in and outside the castle during the mourning period of his father and the marriage of his mother remind you of your own experiences with grief and anger in a social/public space?” (Appendix D):

Participant D

Hamlet’s behaviour towards his father’s death and his mom remarrying is relatable to the time when I lost my uncle. When Hamlet was having a difficult time to process the change and resulted in him acting out and looking insane to people it reminded me when I couldn’t function at school and had a hard time doing my school work.

Participant I

It reminds me of my grandmothers passing in a way because i felt alone and that i just had to be strong in order to be there for my mother and just like in Hamlet no one cared to ask how one felt because of that. Within my social group in school they did not seem to be bothered as people that I am close to which helped me to become more socially aware.

Participant F

My behaviour changes resulted in a brief period but had a ripple effect of words being said that were not meant to. A distinct memory was the death of an uncle due to medical staff not treating him properly, which resulted in loss and grief to many family members but also engaged anger towards medical staff and the loss of trust in medical staff.

Participant E

When we are going through a difficult time in our lives or experiencing loss, we are often overwhelmed with emotions especially anger. Hamlet portrayed a behaviour many would have, such as being angry at the world and the people around him. When my uncle whom I was really closed to died unexpectedly in an accident not far from home, I often remember the last words he said to me which were "if I died tomorrow, you won't remember me". I find it strange how those were the last words he said to me, and that the incident took place the next day or in that week. Sometimes I wonder how others just pick up what's left and move or try to move on. Just like Hamlet was upset about his mother remarrying i was upset that everyone just went on with their life as if he never existed but i know that they did grieve, but their process of grief may have been rushed by their responsibilities and just life in general.

Participant D recalls how Hamlet's insanity at losing his father and observing his mother quickly remarry reminded her that just as Hamlet's grief was not socially acceptable, her grief was deemed a distraction at school when she lost her uncle. Participant I explained that when she lost her grandmother, she did not have the opportunity to process her loss, just as Hamlet did not get to properly process his father's death. Like Hamlet, she had to accept her mother's choice to remarry and be emotionally available for her mother; in doing so, her grief was not respected or acknowledged by her loved ones. Participant D's empathy with Hamlet's grief made her acutely aware of how she was judged for her own grief at school. Participant I's empathy with Hamlet's emotional resilience during his time of grieving reminded her that her grief was not properly acknowledged by her social circle, helping her to understand her society better through her empathy for Hamlet.

Participant F stated that Hamlet's anger at his father's death reminded her of the anger her family members felt towards the hospital staff who did not treat her uncle well. Participant E recalled how certain family members swiftly moved on from the death of her uncle, which made her think of Gertrude's quick remarriage to Claudius, as if Old King Hamlet had not very recently been buried.

They were all supportive, gentle and allowed each other to have a turn to speak on matters that they felt from the play. They volleyed off each other quite easily during the session.

Participants demonstrated empathy for Hamlet by understanding better his upbringing and family life and how that led to him having major trust issues and having no freedom or control of his mind. The participants also showed empathy in agreeing with each other about certain life lessons they learnt from the play.

Participant F said that Hamlet does not know how to make decisions because his whole life he has always had someone make a decision for him. So this is why, he is finding it difficult to make a decision.

Participant D said that Hamlet is probably mentally trapped because his whole life he has not had freedom, now he battles with freedom of thought.

Participant D says that she sees the perspective of a child loving his father and wanting to do anything for his father.

Participant I said Hamlet does not know who to trust especially after his mother married his uncle.

Participant B asks is justice for his father avenging his father? Because Hamlet did end up killing 4 other people?

Participant F said in his brain, that's how it was supposed to be done.

Participant B said Hamlet could have survived if he killed Claudius while he is praying and that the ghost said kill him and Hamlet added a whole lot of extra steps. Participant B went on to further say that he learnt some lessons from Hamlet "take a bit of a leap, don't just procrastinate".

All participants present demonstrated empathy for Hamlet by understanding better his upbringing and family life and how that led to him having major trust issues and having no freedom or control of his mind. The students also showed empathy in agreeing with each other about certain life lessons they learn from the play.

When the participants began going around the discussion circle, each taking a turn to express their moments of empathy, they were all very curious to share with one another. Later on, Participant B stated in his diary entry (Appendix C) that he enjoyed “the discussion amongst ourselves as I enjoy hearing others' opinions.” The discussion started with them talking about Hamlet’s indecisiveness regarding the ghost’s instruction and how his predetermined life resulted in him having no decision-making muscle memory, which was why he always delayed and doubted his actions. Hamlet’s indecisiveness was confirmed by Participant D, who stated that the reason why Hamlet is indecisive is that he has been trapped, possibly by his fate as future king and as a son tasked with revenge.

Thereafter, the group probed the extent to which a son’s love should result in committing murder. As the participants sat with one another and different views on the morality of Hamlet’s actions emerged, the session revealed that they were taking on new perspectives of the characters. The participants did not feel intimidated by the reputation of the text; it was no longer a canonical play exempt from scrutiny. Their identification and familiarity with Hamlet’s story (Koopman, 2017) made the characters individuals whose intentions and ambitions were discussed. Dias (2023) stated that empathising with stories leads to perspective taking, which is a crucial skill in the student experience. Perspective taking allowed simulated experiences for the readers (the participants), who connected the characters’ lives with those of human beings in general.

The participants were able to empathise with Hamlet and understand his varying loyalties and the reasons behind the many murders he committed. This exercise facilitated perspective taking and empathy among the participants.

6.4 Theme 3: Importance of social awareness

The findings below reveal how the participants' diary entries (Appendix C) and writing tasks (Appendix D) indicate the emergence of social awareness developing within them. The diary entries (Appendix C) noted:

Participant A

One has to be very aware of what kind of character he or she possesses in front of people and that also one has to be very aware of the things that we say.

Participant B

Everyone has a different way to show social awareness. Rehearsing the scene taught me this.

Participant A reveals that being aware of one's behaviour and speech in front of others is indicative of social awareness. Participant B states that everyone has a different way of expressing social awareness, and participating in the role-play made him realise how various presentations of awareness are exhibited by different individuals. Their responses illustrate the ways in which social awareness can be identified and applied in real life. As Cojocaru (2023) noted, being socially aware involves recognising one's external environment and resonating with the needs of others. Each of these participants has considered how they behave in comparison to others in a social context, which supports their understanding of this SEC.

The diary entry below from Participant I (Appendix C) reveals how social awareness was learned or explored through the role-play:

Participant I – Hamlet diary

I found these activities to be interesting and enjoyable as they allow one to engage with everyone that is participating, and you also get to witness and understand the different perspectives from the individuals with regards to the tasks.

I enjoyed the role playing as it allowed me to put myself in the character that i was playing's shoes and to also understand the other characters as well and why they reacted how they did to the situation at hand.

Participant I's response is significant because her experiences in the role-play allowed her to learn about another person's perspective (the character) and understand how others respond to the same task (the role-play focused on demonstrating social awareness). The participant's dual realisations reveal social awareness in two domains: firstly, as an actor empathising with a character, and secondly, as a participant working in a team with different views and portrayals of social awareness. Her experience is further explored in the literature by Islam and Dias (2024, p. 48), who stated, "Students are encouraged to embody characters from literary works through role-playing activities, enhancing their understanding of character motivations and perspectives". This participant's response highlights the effectiveness of role-playing narratives as a teaching tool for perspective-taking, which is a characteristic of social awareness (CASEL, n.d.). Therefore, social awareness learning occurred as a result of the role-play experience.

The writing task response below (Appendix D) reveals what Participant B thought regarding his relationship with his mother and the lessons he personally learnt about social awareness from these character observations.

Hamlet became private and kept to himself while mourning his father and the marriage of his mother. He was also rather rude to others, especially his mother as he felt she remarried too fast and the fact that he considered the relationship incestuous as she married her brother-in-law. I did not go through any experience close to what Hamlet went through however I also acted in a similar matter when i am stressed, anxious and/or angry, much like how he was short with his mother in the opening scene.

Hamlet was not troubled by how much damage his revenge plan caused as long as it succeeded in killing his uncle. I will also occasionally put myself and my goals in front of others and their feelings and this reminded

me to the fact that you should always be aware of how your actions can affect others.

Participant B's response revealed that he understood the reasons for Hamlet's rude behaviour. He also demonstrated self-awareness, acknowledging that he had never been in the same position as Hamlet in his own life. Participant B stated that certain stressful moments in his personal life provoke him to behave erratically towards his own mother. The emergence of another SEC self-awareness is apparent in this response. This indicates that different SECs may work together, or one SEC may enable the emergence of another.

Participant B made another significant personal realisation from his thoughts on the play: he too can be selfish when striving for his goals, and this reminded him of the need to be aware of how his actions can affect others. Reader response theory (Spirovska, 2019) considers how the reader is involved in a process of personal discovery, where the events in the text can prompt reflection. In this case, Participant B's life, experiences, and values created a personal meaning of Hamlet's experience in terms of how he wants to impact others, leading him to reflect on his own life. This participant's responses are significant because, in empathising with and evaluating Hamlet's behaviour, he also evaluated his own behaviour, demonstrating self and social awareness. As a result, Participant B shows ownership and accountability for his social and emotional development process, in line with Kurian's (2019) findings.

Participant B

The play made me appreciate the difficulty of not procrastinating and has made me want to start doing tasks in advance.

Participant I

I learnt that it is important to be socially aware as it will help you to understand other people and why they react a certain way to certain things.

Participant B learnt the importance of not procrastinating, as the effects of procrastination became evident to him when studying Hamlet. Participant I

recognised the significance of social awareness as the ability to understand the reactions of others.

Their responses revealed the SEC learning that occurred through role-playing and empathising with the characters in the play Hamlet. Lindhe (2016) stated that a novel reminds us that we are not innocent and that, instead of showing us how to live, it offers a perspective on how we do live and what we truly are. The participants' realisation of the unflattering portrayal of Hamlet's past behaviour led to a moment of self-reflection as they introspected and compared Hamlet's actions with their own.

The response below from Participant F's written task (Appendix D) illustrates that the emotional education she gained from role-playing and examining Hamlet's lack of social awareness was a crucial lesson for her in:

Our emotions are an especially important part of us that we cannot ignore or push away. There are many experiences in life where grief and anger might have consumed me as a person, and it resulted in a change in behaviour.

I became more aware of my body movement and actions while I was role-playing after understanding what social awareness was. But was also a slight reminder that in life how we perceive ourselves there are people who are aware of us and our behaviour and the same way we depicted Hamlet in the role-play, our behaviours are being noticed by others. So, learning to be aware socially is important.

The response above is significant to findings regarding embodied learning in the literature lecture room. Role-play has the ability to simulate another human's experience, allowing the actor or student embodying the role to learn something about that character's behaviour and decision-making within a given circumstance. This highlights the work of Wells et al. (2023), who stated that embodied cognition, which occurs during drama, allows the body and mind to unite through a simulated emotional experience, thereby deepening understanding and learning. This is illustrated in the case above, where Participant F sees the importance of being socially aware.

Taking a look at the autophotography (Appendix E) below, we can view the moments and tableaux of social awareness that the participants photographed and documented themselves.



Photo 6: Group 1 autophotography captions – Cycle 1
(Appendix E)

Participant B

This scene shows Laertes, Ophelia and Polonius saying their goodbyes as Laertes leaves for France. In this scene Polonius expresses concern for his son's wellbeing and gives him advice as a father. He then proceeds to insult Ophelia's intelligence and relationship by saying Hamlet has a fleeting interest in her. This scene shows both his ability to show social awareness to Laertes and how little social awareness he has for Ophelia, viewing her more as an object than person.

Participant F

The moment of one being happy to leave, while others evoke the same similar feelings. The body movement and hand gesture showing how one character waves goodbye to the others.

Participant B's reflection on this moment from his group's role-play revealed how social awareness was taught to him through the imbalanced parenting style Polonius implemented when he treated Laertes differently from Ophelia. Participant B stated that Polonius showed social awareness to Laertes (calmly explaining and teaching him) but did not display social awareness to Ophelia (warning and belittling her). A literary analysis would consider that the gender conventions of Denmark during this period would prevent Polonius from being a father who treated both his son and daughter the same. However, SEL outcomes prioritise the social and emotional elements within the scene as the more favoured lesson to take away, rather than the socio-political criticism of the exchange between parent and children, which seemed to emerge in the participant's response. This is significant because it shows that Participant B can identify a moment of social awareness and a moment that lacks social awareness through the more efferent socio-political issues of the play, via the recognition of social awareness. When Participant B drew this socio-political dynamic from the reading of *Hamlet* and the role-play, he was experiencing the more efferent aspect of reading outlined in reader response theory (Mart, 2019). This finding is also echoed by Keezhatta (2020), who advocated for role-play as an effective technique for imparting human relation skills in students to assist subject-matter learning by dramatising the syllabus content and revealing the ability to learn about social awareness and socio-political thematic concerns from creative engagement within a literary text, such as *Hamlet*.

Participant E's reflection on the photo was her recognition of Laertes, the character she portrayed, being happy to leave his father and sister behind to embark on his journey. She noted the body movements and gestures that signalled an exit. However, this reflection was descriptive and lacked depth. Participant I did not complete this autophotography caption activity.



Photo 7: Group 2 autophotography captions – Cycle 1

(Appendix E)

Participant A

The people that are next to you might be the people that might be laughing at your back and may cause your demise. Be careful of the people you call your friends they might be your foes without you knowing.

Participant D

In this picture Participant A who played Rosencrantz and Participant I who played Guildenstern and myself I played Hamlet. The roles we played shows a lack of social awareness in Hamlet as he was mentally going insane and the people around him were starting to get worried to a point where his close friends thought it would be okay to end his life. However, Hamlet was not aware of how his behaviour was affecting others around him. The picture shows Rosencrantz and Guildenstern “backstabbing” Hamlet because they were sent to do so and Hamlet being unaware as to what was going on.

Participant I

In the image above we were depicting part of Act 2; Scene 2 of the play Hamlet. What is captured here is how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are

friends of Hamlet yet they still stab him in the back as they were told by Claudius to murder him. This shows a lack of social awareness as Hamlet is not aware of what his friends were sent to do to him until it was late.

Participant I acknowledged the disloyalty and the lack of social awareness in this scene of the play, where Hamlet learns about the treacherous plot of Claudius, who instructed Hamlet's friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to kill him. This allowed Participant I to recognise the importance of reading between the lines and being cautious, which is a characteristic of social awareness, as reinforced by CASEL (n.d.) as "Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones". Here, Participant I sees the significance of being aware of one's surroundings and staying alert, even among long-lost friends, as these may present potentially threatening scenarios. This is evidenced by her response above, which highlights the need to be socially aware even among 'allies', a realisation that emerged from her experience of playing a deceptive friend to Hamlet in the role-play.

Participant D and I both acknowledge betrayal between friends and demonstrate an understanding of Hamlet's cluelessness in the scene. The betrayal of friends when one is vulnerable is an important lesson in social awareness, as it reveals what can happen when others exploit one's weaknesses. In this particular scene, Hamlet is displaying his pain, grief, and confusion to his friends, and these emotions are being exploited by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for their selfish gains. This was the moment when both participants were able to recognise the betrayal from Hamlet's two friends who were weaponising his vulnerability.

6.5 Reflections on Cycle 1

At the start of Cycle 1, I was excited and nervous to embark on this first cycle with the participants. I did not know how my planned actions would fare throughout the cycles or how they would change by the end of each cycle. I was unsure whether the participants would be paralysed by fear while performing or showcasing the role-plays, or if the narrative empathy discussion sessions would lead to an overwhelming amount of personal information being shared.

The warm-up activities and the role-play activities were directly related to the first research question regarding how role-play and role-playing activities can support empathic behaviour among participants studying the play *Hamlet*. The warm-up activities were completed successfully, and I felt that the participants were emotionally and physically prepared to begin the role-play preparations, having warmed up their bodies, voices, and empathic abilities towards one another.

When the two groups rehearsed for their role-plays, I noticed that they all wanted to work independently as they prepared their scripts. This was interesting for me, as I was accustomed to assisting them during their usual group work activities. Nevertheless, I waited for them to ask for help when they were unsure how to capture a moment that demonstrated social awareness.

In the role-plays, I found that Group 1 learned about perspective-taking, power dynamics, and the relatability of the characters to their own lives as they communicated these themes in their socially aware yet imbalanced scene. Group 2 concluded that Hamlet's madness prevented him from recognising his backstabbing friends, thus illustrating a lack of social awareness.

During the role-playing activities, the participants displayed empathy for each other (as evident in the warm-up activities), for themselves (reflected in their diaries and writing tasks), and for the characters they embodied during the role-plays (documented through my observations and field notes).

The second research question, which focused on what SEL skills participants could learn from narrative empathy, was explored during the narrative empathy discussion sessions. Participants recalled difficult emotional experiences, and some personal traumas began to emerge from their diary entries and their live sharing within the group. One participant, through empathising with Hamlet's isolated upbringing, recognised the need for identity and masculinity education in South African schools to help Black South African men grapple with the differences between life at home and in the city or central business districts. Other participants discovered that empathising with Hamlet's anger allowed them to understand the consequences of unmet and unprocessed grief after loss, which can lead to uncontrollable revenge. In

other instances, participants found that empathising with Hamlet helped them recognise how they had already demonstrated social awareness during their own moments of past trauma as they recalled times of grief and loss.

In addressing whether or not SEL skills can be learned by students who engage in narrative empathy within the literature learning space, it became clear that participants successfully empathised with Hamlet. They each took turns sharing their thoughts on Hamlet's motives and decisions during the discussion session. They learned to consider the perspective of another human as they debated and defended Hamlet's choices, all while questioning their understanding of social awareness in relation to Hamlet's lack of it.

The third research question focuses on the importance of SEL skills for the participants, which was revealed in how they began to develop SEL traits and demonstrate their SEL learning through various activities. The participants started to exhibit SEL traits when they recognised that having social awareness in a social context facilitates interaction. They believed that social awareness served as an effective perspective-teaching tool, which allowed them to take ownership of their own past social experiences and develop accountability for their social awareness growth.

The participants revealed that, through the destructive social interactions Hamlet experienced, they recognised the need to learn this SEC. They also praised the value of embodied learning through role-play, which facilitated a deeper understanding of social awareness. Additionally, they employed literary criticism to highlight social injustices between male and female children in the scene they role-played, aligning the research objectives with the syllabus learning outcomes. Participants noted that vulnerability, especially when least expected, could be mitigated by being armed with social awareness, which serves as a protective defence mechanism even in seemingly comfortable social scenarios.

In addressing whether SEL is important for these participants in this cycle, they indicated that they learned valuable social tools – what to say and what not to say – how to identify danger (particularly while role-playing the boat scene with deceptive

friends), and how to manage intense emotions, particularly during grief or when recalling heightened unpleasant emotions from past trauma.

Finally, Cycle 1 revealed to me that my psychology and English major participants could effectively role-play scenes from the texts they studied. The non-threatening classroom ambiance, created through enjoyable activities, provided a significant teaching moment for me; I will remember to adopt this fun and creative approach when teaching literature to future students. The participants were able to discuss their emotional experiences responsibly and safely, empathising with the character Hamlet, and they learned the benefits of possessing the SEC of social awareness.

I learned that when students have the opportunity to reflect on literary texts and their personal impact, significant self-realisation can occur. Witnessing Hamlet as a cultural trigger for one participant and observing how Hamlet's grief elicited feelings of grief in others was an eye-opening experience for me. The SEC-targeted narrative empathy discussions appeared to provide participants with an introspective tool, even without explicitly instructing them on the connection between Hamlet and concepts such as 'culture' or 'grief'. As a teacher, this discussion session clarified the participants' personal connections with the text.

In the next cycle, I will display the SEL competency definitions for each cycle on the whiteboard for easy reference by the participants. I need to ask more open-ended questions to facilitate a more efficient narrative empathy discussion. Additionally, I must teach the participants how to convey an SEL competency through a still photograph for their autophotography tableaux, as they have requested my assistance. It is also important to instruct these participants not to turn their backs on each other during their role-plays; this is not only a theatre convention but also discourages engagement with the scene they have prepared for their observers.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of Cycle 1 of *Hamlet*, in which the participants explored the social awareness skills they could gain from role-playing and empathising with the play.

The next chapter will examine the analysis and findings of Cycle 2 of the research activities, where the participants investigated the SEC of self-awareness through role-play and narrative empathy activities based on Christopher Marlowe's play, *Dr. Faustus*.

Chapter 7:

Analysis and Findings: Cycle 2 – *Dr. Faustus* – Self-awareness

7.1 Introduction

The research changes mentioned at the end of Cycle 1 needed to be actioned at the beginning of Cycle 2. Below is an example of how the cycle-specific definition was displayed for Cycle 2. The participants in Cycle 2 now had quick reference to the meaning of self-awareness from the CASEL 5 framework (CASEL, n.d.), which was found to be missing in Cycle 1.



Photo 8: The self-awareness SEC definition – Cycle 2

One action noted from Cycle 1 and implemented to improve the experience for participants in Cycle 2 was to ensure that during the role-play preparation, participants do not turn their backs to the audience.

7.2 Using role-play and role-playing extracts from *Dr. Faustus* to support empathic behaviour

At the start of Cycle 2, the participants began the self-awareness research activities with the role-play warm-up activities, in accordance with the methodological design of each cycle.

During the first warm-up game, "Honey, I Love You, but I Just Can't Smile", a trust exercise, I observed that whenever each participant had a turn to make their peer smile, most succeeded in doing so. I noted the following in my observations and field notes (Appendix B):

I could also not stop smiling watching them make each other smile. There was some sort of inside joke when Participant G approached Participant A. Participant A is finding it difficult to mouth the words. Participant B tried very hard to keep the smile inside but he just could not hold it. NONE OF THEM COULD STOP SMILING, THEY ALL JUST found this game super funny and super awkward so they all smiled.

This game was specifically chosen to test the participants' ability to maintain focus during eye contact with their peers and to assess whether they could enjoy receiving compliments without flinching. What was important was that the participants could enter an emotional space with their peers that had previously been unfamiliar. They were now able to make each other laugh and smile during eye contact, which I believed was an important simulation game before the self-awareness role-play began. The ability of this game to help peers notice each other and become accustomed to being looked at was crucial in emotionally and mentally preparing them for the self-awareness SEC development. Williams (2011, p. 6) stated that "the warm up might be seen as a part of a change in mental behaviour that could encourage the initiation of a flow state". Immediately after this game, the participants were more aware of 'being seen and seeing their peers' as the eye contact required close focus on each other in ways that were new.

The next game the participants played was the *incy and falloon game*, which focused on preparing the body. When I announced the word 'incy', participants were expected

to walk in the smallest manner across the room. Some participants walked very slowly and took tiny steps, while others crouched. When I announced the word 'falloon', participants were expected to walk across the venue as large as possible. This exercise made the participants conscious of how they appeared when they chose to walk, either feeling big and great or small and unnoticed. The observations and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the following picture and notes:



Photo 9: Incy and falloon warm-up – Cycle 2

(Participants A, F, C, D, B, I, G doing a 'falloon' walk)

In the incy and falloon game, so many students had grand walks when I told them to walk like they were getting married and when I told them to walk like they were getting an Oscar. Their walks were small when I told them to walk like they are going home after curfew and when I told them to walk like they are going to a funeral.

Some participants chose elephantine walks, and giant steps were taken across the space while I announced that they should walk as if they were getting married or walking up the stage to receive an Oscar. The participants walked very slowly, with their bodies contracting when instructed to walk as if they had broken curfew or when told they were attending a funeral. The purpose of this exercise was to help participants understand and observe their own movements and those of their peers

when feeling bold or discreet. This was aimed at increasing awareness of one's own and others' bodily movements during different psychological states. Sambanis et al. (2013) noted that movement warm-up games allow students to enhance self-perception, concentration, and group awareness.

The diary excerpt below from Participant C (Appendix C) provides further elaboration on the pleasurable experiences she had from the two warm-up activities mentioned above:

The activities today were so amazing in a sense that I could get a glimpse of my true self. It made me think spontaneously and I was shocked by the confidence I found within myself. Having to just flip my hair and pretend to walk down the red carpet reminded me of how much I practiced doing this as a little girl. Even pretending to walk down the aisle gave me butterflies as I know deep down, I cannot wait for that day. Putting myself in the space I was in just gave me nostalgic vibes as it reminded me of the little girl I was and that she still lives inside of me living those dreams.

Seeing how close my friends are when we told each other we want to see their smile. I've always loved making people laugh and smile and it's a memory I'll always cherish. It's also a game I took home to my loved ones just to see their smiles.

This participant really enjoyed the warm-up activities today as they reminded her of her childhood dreams during the moments when she performed the 'falloon' styled walk. Participant C also shared that the first warm-up exercise was something she did with her family. This is significant because the warm-up activity likely evoked parts of her self-confidence that had been forgotten, as well as aspects of being vulnerable and observant with loved ones that had also faded. These activities entered the private domain of the participant voluntarily, which is significant because it shows that the warm-up activities were being contemplated outside the research space. The emotions the warm-up activities stirred up reminded her of the exciting moments in her future, making them worthy of being shared with her family members. Sambanis et al. (2013) state that the learning environment can be relaxed and merry,

encouraging positive emotions when students enjoy the activities. For Participant C, these activities fostered joy that she took home, reminding her of the hope she should have for her future.

The last game was the hot seating game, where participants took turns pretending to be Dr. Faustus. The group asked the peer playing Dr. Faustus many questions about why he made the decisions he did and why he did not choose to be good. This game provided the participants with the opportunity to embody Dr. Faustus and empathise with his decisions while stepping into his imaginary shoes.

The observation and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the following picture and notes on the different participants' experiences of hot seating:



Photo 10: Hot seating warm up – Cycle 2

(Participant D playing Dr. Faustus in the hotseat who was questioned by participants, F, C, B, G and A)

In the hot seating game participant D got her chance to play Dr. Faustus and they are asking her questions like 'how do you like it down there in hell?' 'can you have more than grapes down there?' 'do you like feeling empty?' 'How does it feel to sit with Lucifer?' 'Why do you hate humanity?'

Here, Participant D portrayed Dr. Faustus with a deep understanding of the character and a hint of nervousness. As the first participant in the hot seat, she answered to the best of her ability.

Participant B playing Dr. Faustus

'Why did you not use your power for something useful?' – 'I did not feel like it'.

'Why didn't he get what that he initially wanted?' – 'Ya'll be crazy' 'What's it like having all the knowledge?' – 'amazing, I like to know everything'.

'Would you say you are selfish or selfless person' – 'selfish'.

Here, Participant B plays Dr. Faustus with character knowledge and humour. Dr. Faustus's sense of entitlement and arrogance comes through in this participant's portrayal.

Participant H playing Dr. Faustus

'How many angels does Lucifer have?' – 'many'

'If you are going to make the deal again, how would you change it?' – 'I would not have taken the deal'

'For what would you have taken the deal?' -no response

'Would you have taken the deal if the devil gave you immortality?' – no response.

Here, Participant H plays Dr. Faustus with a blend of character knowledge and hesitation. Dr. Faustus's late idea of repentance is evident in this participant's portrayal.

Participant I playing Dr. Faustus

'Were you always evil?' – 'Just a way of my life'

'Who do you relate to? The good angel or the bad angel? – 'bad'

'Would you advise others to make the same deal?' – 'Yes, maybe if they were better people than I am'.

Here, Participant I plays Dr. Faustus with character knowledge and confidence. Dr. Faustus's self-awareness comes through in this participant's portrayal, as she states that someone with a moral compass would actually do better with the powers that Dr. Faustus bargained for.

Participant G playing Dr. Faustus

'What do you think of humanity today?' 'I think Humanity is good'

'Tell us what hell looks like?' – 'hot'

'Which celebrities are down there?' – 'Singing and dancing'

Here, Participant G plays Dr. Faustus with a strong understanding of the character and logical reasoning. Dr. Faustus's ability to reason is evident in this participant's portrayal.

Participant C playing Dr. Faustus

'In hell, how do you do your washing?' – 'I make other people do it'.

'Are you allowed to go outside of hell?' – no answer

'Are you paying for your sins?' – 'Lucifer is my friend'

'Are you allowed to visit earth in a different form?' – 'I am allowed to go as a ghost'.

Here, participant C plays Dr. Faustus with character knowledge and conviction. Dr. Faustus's ability to defend and explain his lifestyle is evident in this participant's portrayal.

Participant A playing Mephistopheles

'What is it like running around with lucifer?' – 'It's very nice, because you get to deceive humans into thinking they are bad'.

'What made you feel so comfortable working with Lucifer?' – 'Lucifer was the most clever angel it was nice to work for him'

'Did he ever tell you why he betrayed god?' – 'no not actually, but what I can say is he wanted to be higher than God but God threw us out, we really hate humanity'.

Here, Participant A opted to play a different character, taking on the role of Mephistopheles with self-awareness. This participant's representation of Mephistopheles was deliberate, as his answers reflected a biblical narrative surrounding Lucifer's origin story, enabling him to empathise with someone who loathed humanity. Character awareness was strongly evident in this participant's portrayal.

Participant F playing Dr. Faustus

'Do you have medical aid?' – 'Yes it depends on your sins'

'Did it hurt when your body exploded?' – 'It felt like something rather than nothing'.

'How did it feel like getting dragged to hell?' – 'like a baby dragged out of a candy store'.

'If you had a second chance, would you choose the same?' – 'no, because I don't think it is great, the first deal is not that great'

'Would you change the contract to be better suited to you?' – 'probably 24 years is a limited amount of time'.

'Why did you sign in blood?' – 'that is what you expect of the devil'.

Here, Participant F plays Dr. Faustus with character knowledge and acting ability. Dr. Faustus' capacity to reason and explain certain events from the play emerges through this participant's introspective portrayal of the character.

The purpose of this exercise was to help the participants warm up their imaginative states before the actual role-play activities began. This activity allowed the participants to suspend their disbelief and view their peer as a character from the play *Dr. Faustus*, enabling them to ask the character all the questions they wished. The responses from participants playing a character allowed them to test their knowledge by either giving feedback that demonstrated narrative understanding or by allowing the role-player to create information that suited the context of the period in which *Dr. Faustus* was written. Shabazi and Yazdani (2017, p. 7) stated that cultivating imagination skills within drama activities helps students "improve their imagination, memory, the power of expression, cheerfulness, and the spirit of cooperation and interaction". The hot seating game enabled participants to use their imagination and

act within an imaginary circumstance in a real-time scenario, exercising their improvisation, collaboration, and empathy skills as each peer was hot-seated.

In the two images below, the participants were divided into two groups and began linguistically preparing their scripts.

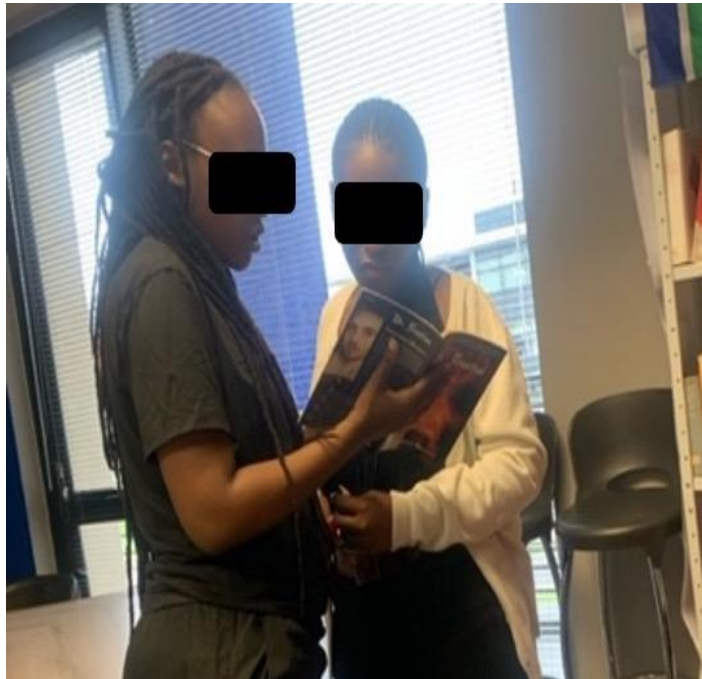


Photo 11: Linguistic prep of the script by Group 1 – Cycle 2

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) - Participants I and D)



Photo 12: Linguistic prep of the script by Group 2 – Cycle 2

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants C and B)

As the participants prepared their scripts, they examined their chosen scenes for ways to translate the scene to convey the theme of self-awareness that their role-plays focused on. I found it significant, while observing the participants linguistically prepare their scripts, how much micro ‘production’ development occurred in just a few minutes. Each group had to identify a relevant scene, read through it, understand the plot, look for a moment that made it translatable to the self-awareness SEC, and rehearse the scene. These various steps are characteristic of the multiple skills that script development offers the participants and are highlighted in the work of Orkibi (2018, p. 105), who stated:

The cultivation of all of these abilities (text analysis, interpretation, memorization, characterization, improvisation, emotional expression, and so forth) serve the ultimate purpose of portraying a believable character under imaginary circumstances.

My observation and field notes (Appendix B) on Group 1’s role-play included the following notes and image:

Group 1 Presentation:

Participant D is playing Dr. Faustus performing Magic, participant I plays the old man. They chose the scene where the old man berates Faustus for not repenting and not living his life carefully and the old man ‘fears for his distressed soul’. Faustus then talks about introspecting about what he did, considering what he did, something he did not do in the play. It seems like these participants added a few lines of their own, changing the narrative of the actual play to make Faustus seem more self-aware. They ended with ‘what if I do repent?’. They changed the scene and added a moment where Faustus contemplates what he is doing. They added the last bit because they wanted Faustus to be aware of his own actions because if he introspected then the feeling of guilt is like a gateway to responsibility. If he goes to the old man and repents he could feel guilty about his actions and possibly do better.



Photo 13: Role-play showcase Group 1 – Cycle 2

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) - Participants I playing the old man warning Dr. Faustus and participant D playing Dr. Faustus)

What was significant about this group's role-play is that they changed the scene to suit the characteristics of self-awareness within the SEC. For them, there was nothing in the original scene of the play that showed Dr Faustus being self-aware, so they decided to alter the narrative of events. In the original scene, the old man approaches Dr Faustus and gives him one last reminder to repent, but Dr Faustus is distraught and does not heed the old man's message. In the participants' version of the scene, Dr Faustus actually repents, thanking the old man and expressing his guilt for all he has done, stating that he could have done better regarding the crimes he committed while utilising the powers he bargained for. The two observations made here were, firstly, the participants' loose use of forum theatre, and secondly, their realisation that the emotion of 'guilt' could trigger acts of duty and responsibility and, by extension, create the emotional conditions for self-awareness.

Forum theatre is an applied theatre approach commonly associated with influencing changed behaviour through collaborations between performers and audience members (Gibb, 2004). Forum theatre requires participants to be active in solving the problems presented in the initial play. When forum theatre participants perform a role-

play, they present a problematic scenario and then, collaboratively, the audience and performers work to solve the issues. The audience and the players can take on roles from the initial role-play to recreate moments witnessed in the first role-play, thereby changing the outcome of the original scenario. This is what the participants did. They recreated the interaction between Dr Faustus and the old man so that, at the end of their scene, Dr Faustus was not taken away or ‘damned forever,’ but was instead wrought with guilt and processed all his wrongdoings by speaking to the old man.

The group noted that by portraying a guilty Dr Faustus, the emotion of guilt could lead him to develop a sense of responsibility, which could then create the conditions for acting with integrity and self-efficacy – foundations of self-awareness (CASEL, n.d.). This was a significant insight from the group as it shows that by activating a sense of responsibility in Dr Faustus, the character could introspect on his guilt and foster a mental state conducive to self-awareness. When an emotion (guilt) is appraised with the aim of cultivating another (responsibility), this is known as a cognitive reframing strategy, whereby people are encouraged to seek different ways of viewing their emotional challenges in order to better understand and address their emotions (Brackett, 2019). By reframing an emotion, one can interpret the emotional challenge from a new perspective. When the participants identified that by presenting Dr Faustus as guilty, they could create a character with the potential to be responsible, they were reframing his emotion of guilt to develop into responsibility. Their forum theatre approach, which showcased the guilt speech and the guilt-laden address to the old man, led them to create a more responsible and self-aware protagonist.

My observation and field notes (Appendix B) on Group 2’s role-play include the following notes and image:

Group 2 Presentation:

Participant B who is playing Dr. Faustus was using South African slang to call forth his loyal servant Wagner played by Participant C. The participant playing Dr. Faustus made a joke about wanting to free OJ Simpson, bringing in popular culture humour to the character. Participant B felt like he was a leader of a gang, who can sort things out on the street and Wagner was treated like his right hand lackey. Participant B felt Dr. Faustus

was a bit too hated, he was a cool dude that was reckless because he could be. These two participants showed a lack of self-awareness in order to comment on the self-awareness in the scene they chose from Dr. Faustus. They made Wagner closer to Dr. Faustus like a right hand man, they felt like Wagner was a bit more modern with him speaking in slang with Dr. Faustus, they presented a more relaxed Wagner. Wagner in this scene was the modern version of a guy you make fun of in order to do your dirty work.



Photo 14: Role-play showcase Group 2 – Cycle 2

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) Role-play showcase – Participants C playing Wagner and B playing Dr. Faustus)

Participant B found a shawl as a prop and decided to wear it as a cape to portray Dr. Faustus. What was interesting about this group was their linguistic adaptation of the dialogue and their ability to relate the relationship between Dr. Faustus and Wagner to the familiar dynamics of trusted gang members. Their portrayal of a reckless duo revealed behaviours that were the opposite of self-awareness. They aimed to showcase this lack of self-awareness by creating a scene where their versions of Wagner and Dr. Faustus exhibited behaviours contrary to self-awareness, thereby

commenting on it. Their exchange opened with Dr. Faustus claiming that he is such a good physician he could have ‘cured the COVID-19 pandemic’ and that he is so knowledgeable of the law ‘he could have gotten OJ Simpson off the hook’. These contemporary adaptations of the scene translated the power that Dr. Faustus had in the Renaissance period to 21st-century events and topics, demonstrating their adaptability skills and highlighting how humour can provide social commentary, as the audience laughed at their humorous handshake and the participants’ familiar friendship dynamic.

Their choice to create a humorous scenario of no self-awareness aligns with the work of Costa et al. (2014), who stated that the effectiveness of theatre lies in its ability to promote change by capitalising on the cathartic and performative functions of the medium. In doing so, Group 2 was able to provide the audience with comic relief (catharsis) and create a familiar duo through colloquial dialogue adaptation (performance), all in service of showcasing a partnership wholly unaware of their socially maladaptive intentions.

7.3 Narrative empathy to learn self-awareness

After the role-play activities, the participants began their narrative empathy discussion session. All the participants gathered in a circle to share their feelings and perspectives induced by the narrative and character journeys within the play *Dr. Faustus*.

Despondent and unpleasant emotions emerged in my observations and field notes (Appendix B) below:

Lots of anxiety in the air because of the upcoming 20 March national shutdown threats on social media and some participants are not on campus. The mood is sombre. Only Participant F, Participant C, Participant D, I and Participant B are present and Participant F had to leave early due to family responsibility, Not the same number who did the research activities in cycle 1. Students were generally tired today. So, it affected their critiquing abilities and they were not very happy with the play chosen as they had personal issues with Dr. Faustus which caused some

hesitancy at the beginning but they all 'woke' up' with the "honey I love you", warm up and hot seating games.

This cycle began with the participants feeling anxiety and apprehension for two reasons. The first was the announcement of the 20 March 2023 South African national shutdown protest threats (Baloyi, 2023), which made participants feel unsafe coming to campus. The second source of apprehension involved participants' reading of Dr Faustus. The Christian participants expressed discomfort with the incantations in the text and the exchanges between Dr Faustus and Mephistopheles. One of the aims of reader-response theory is "to elicit the attitudes and personal reactions of the reader to a certain text" (Spirovska, 2019, p. 25), helping participants understand that there is no ideal interpretation of a text. As a result, I did not interfere with their strong feelings but instead observed their dislike for certain scenes. This was a valid response, as the text touched on sensitive beliefs, and reader-response theory allowed me to understand this reaction and provide a platform for them to share it.

To move forward with the activities, I reminded them that this play is a product of the Renaissance period, a time when religion and most organised social structures were being questioned by artists. It is important to locate this play within its socio-political context and analyse it as a product of that time, rather than as a challenge to their personally held belief systems. I asked them to remember why they were studying it and to view it as a phenomenon of the Renaissance context. They appeared to accept the explanation, and we moved on. Additionally, the warm-up games helped uplift the atmosphere and prepare them for the skills being explored. This aligns with Marquez-Segura et al. (2021), who assert that warm-up games serve as preparation for socially and mentally exploring new skills.

The following recall of unpleasant emotions was noted in the participants' diary entries (Appendix C):

Participant C

When we were told to act as if we were by a grave, we all experienced losses and was sad to see everyone keep quiet and i remembered my own loss.

Participant B

There was nothing in this lesson that I particularly disliked, but my least favourite moment was perhaps choosing a scene to act out.

Participant C recalled that during the incy and falloon warm-up exercise, she was instructed to walk as if passing a grave. This prompt made her reflect on the losses she experienced in her own life. This is significant because the warm-up activities may not always lead to fun experiences; instead, they may evoke difficult moments and emotions for the participants. Acknowledging different emotions is a vital part of self-awareness, as Stranska (2022) notes. Students go through a whole range of emotions and feelings that are not possible to explore in traditional teaching environments, which may encourage the suppression of emotion. However, in the drama learning environment, they experience compassion for emotions and recognition of different kinds of feelings, which are essential skills for life and for developing self-awareness.

Participant B stated that he disliked the process of choosing a text to act out. Reasons for this dislike were not provided, but possible explanations may stem from the fact that this task involves more delayed gratification. The recent warm-up activities may have given him a rush of energy, only for him to have to contain it a couple of minutes later. This participant may have enjoyed the energy from the warm-up activities and found this process an unwelcome standstill compared to the physical activities that preceded this literary task. Nevertheless, the literariness of the process must occur, even though this participant may momentarily feel that choosing a scene from the text is a “barrier to his newfound agency” (Buldu, 2022, p. 4), causing his playful behaviour to come to an abrupt halt. This is significant because it shows that this participant is eager to move swiftly ahead with the next step of the playmaking process, but the linguistic preparation is causing him to pause and feel impatience.

To implement a Cycle 1 observation, which involved giving participants more open-ended questions to initiate the narrative empathy discussion sessions, I was prepared to begin with some discussion prompts but realised that I did not need to prompt them. The participants seemed to have naturally progressed from watching each other's

role-plays to commenting and sharing their thoughts on what they had viewed. They began empathising with the characters from each group's role-play portrayals on their own. During the middle of the session, when I noticed hesitancy or a lull, I asked them to comment on more specific moments of the role-plays and play. This was how I acted on the narrative empathy observations made in Cycle 1.

My observation and field notes (Appendix B) noted the following moments in the narrative empathy discussion session:

The students are starting the Narrative Empathy discussions on their own. Students demonstrate empathy via giving each other chances and listening to each other's responses. Participant C said that Faustus reminded her of when she wanted to drink for the first time. He felt like Faustus did what he wanted for the first time. Participant C asks if "Do you guys think he was religious?" They are responding to their own questions; they feel Faustus is only doing things for the value of it not for the fear of it. Participant C says he does not believe in God, he just uses God.

In trying to understand the inner workings of Dr. Faustus' decision-making, the participants realised that he reminds them of themselves when they engage in new risky experiences, such as drinking alcohol for the first time or writing an assignment on the due date. It is significant that participants can see a human element in a character who has been highly criticised. During their discussion, the participants noted that they too are familiar with his reckless behaviour. These findings reinforce those of Qhogwana (2022), who stated that stories have the power to challenge prejudices, and that listening to others' narratives allows for more attentive interpretations. This was evident in the participants empathising with Dr. Faustus' reckless choices and recognising parts of themselves, establishing a sense of relatability with a highly criticised fictional character.

The participants also questioned each other about whether they felt Dr. Faustus was religious, holding mixed views. Some agreed that he made a 'deal with the devil', while others contended that he only understood 'God to use God'. This resulted in a complicated and incomplete discussion about what being religious actually means.

Ultimately, the participants agreed that being religious is not synonymous with being a 'good person', acknowledging the distinction between doing good to 'avoid ending up in hell' and doing good to be a good person. This was significant as it suggested a new perspective on religion as moral instruction, as reflected in Gasser (2022, p. 1451), who stated that "narrative fiction can bolster readers' socio-moral development". Participants exhibited greater thought and perspective on the differences between goodness/morality and religiosity than they had prior to this discussion.

Participant C, in her diary entry (Appendix C), states that she experienced self-compassion after empathising with Dr. Faustus, noting:

It was so interesting speaking fusing Dr. Faustus' eyes. I realised I never want to be placed in situations where people judge the mistakes I've been through. Just trying to control my emotions and actions have been something I always struggled with and after certain moments of that interview I realised maybe I am making progress in becoming more self-aware because I listen to what my inner self wants to say first rather than just openly speaking.

The participant speaks about the moment she played Dr. Faustus in the hot seating warm-up activity. She felt that being questioned and judged as Dr. Faustus made her aware that she is a flawed human too, and the realisation of her fallibility through role-playing Dr. Faustus highlighted her own flaws. This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, critical thinking in English literature studies is valuable in terms of evoking emotion in learners, as suggested by reader response theory (Qamar, 2016). This participant was able to reflect on herself without bias through her assessment of Dr. Faustus's many mistakes. Secondly, by empathising with Dr. Faustus's constant moral dilemmas, she was able to recognise her own mistakes and confront her personal challenges in managing her emotions. This led her to realise that she is improving each day in her ability to listen to her inner self. Here, Participant C's ability to empathise with Dr. Faustus and see herself as flawed like the character she portrayed aligns with Basseler (2017), who stated that narrative empathy allows us to be sensitive to the experiences and perspectives of others. "Character identification

often invites empathy, even when the fictional character and reader differ from one another in all sorts of practical and obvious ways” (Keen, 2006, p. 214). Participant C’s sensitivity to the flaws of the foreign and fictional Dr. Faustus enabled her to see the flaws within herself, providing her with a newfound perspective on both the character she was studying and her own self-awareness journey.

The following writing task (Appendix D) entries, in which the participants considered their empathic responses to Dr. Faustus, revealed the following:

Participant B

I was very empathetic to Faustus as I believe I would also aspire to do many great things with my powers but would inevitably just mess around with them.

Participant C

He did have an understanding on the consequences of his actions, but he had no regard for external entities. Otherwise, if he was aware of the impact of his behaviour, he would not have sold his soul to the devil. Yes, i did feel empathy for Faustus. We all have temptations and make mistakes and that’s something Faustus did do. He explored his curiosity which is something I do.

Participant D

The story created empathy by making me realise that everyone is human and nobody is perfect, people are doing life for the first time and won’t have the answers so therefore we must be open minded and patient with one another.

The relatability that Participants B and C felt with Dr. Faustus, along with Participant D’s patience regarding the human condition, echoed Dias (2023), who stated that reading fiction and engaging in narrative imagination fosters the development of compassion. This self-development aligns with the personal growth model of studying literature within reader response theory, where the reading event focuses on the “personal development of the learner’s emotions and personal characteristics”

(Kunjanman & Aziz, 2021, p. 253). These participants' sense of empathy matured as they interacted with Dr. Faustus's story and exchanged perspectives during the narrative empathy discussion sessions. They further reflected on their empathic experiences of self-awareness in their diary entries, where they imagined being in his position, discovering that it resonated more closely with their lived experiences than they had previously thought.

7.4 Importance of self-awareness

The findings below indicate how the diary entries (Appendix C), writing tasks (Appendix D), and the observation and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the emergence of the CASEL 5 SECs social awareness and self-awareness competencies developing within them. The writing task entries (Appendix C) indicate:

Participant B

I believe he was not aware of the impact his behaviour had on external entities since he believed himself to be almost omnipotent after making the deal with Mephistopheles. Dr. Faustus believes himself to be above divine law. I believe the old man made me feel immersed into the narrative as I have similar wise elders who tell me the correct course of action and I like Faustus also do not follow their advice.

Participant D

Just understanding Dr. Faustus from a different point of view and putting myself in his shoes and not judging his decisions but understanding them. Yes it did, made me look at aspects of my life where I made an idol and I subconsciously serve it and sometimes I even get lost in it and I lose who I am. For example being a people pleaser.

Participant I

I think that he was well aware of his behaviour and all that he was up to because even the people around him were showing him that they are concerned for him but he seemed not to care at all until it was way too late.

Participant B states that Dr. Faustus was not self-aware regarding the negative impact he had on the lives he affected, and that his superiority complex led to grave disillusionment and his eventual downfall, reminding this participant of when he rejects advice from his elders. Participant D mentions that Dr. Faustus made her aware of various parts of herself that she wants to re-evaluate, while Participant I notes that Dr. Faustus was well aware of his deviant behaviour because he was warned; however, his determination triumphed over the warnings, and he proceeded with his impulsive decisions. All three responses differ, but they demonstrate the ability to recognise when self-awareness is absent, how self-awareness prompts self-reflection, and how to identify when self-awareness is externally initiated. Being able to identify this SEL competency in oneself or others is an important life management skill (Bridgeland et al., 2013), and this finding reveals that these participants understand how and where to recognise this in themselves and in others.

The diary entries (Appendix C) note:

Participant B

Going over the beginning of the play taught me that self-awareness is not something that people are born with, and it is in fact a skill that can be learnt and myself and everyone else can always learn something from increasing our self-awareness. After Faustus starts to doubt his decision, I was taught that even as you age you can always improve this skill, sadly sometimes it is not enough.

Participant D

Today's research activity taught me to see things from someone's perspective and put myself in their shoes and it encouraged me to not judge someone else. My favourite moment was the role play, it's so much fun to act out different situations from different perspectives.

Participant I

I learnt that sometimes you can do something thinking it is the right thing to do but the people around you will observe it and interpret it in a different

light. It was also interesting to know that at different times one can be aware of themselves and in other times they are not.

Participant B recognises that self-awareness is not an innate skill but one that can be taught. Participant D acknowledges that through self-awareness she has learned the value of sharing perspectives and considering a situation from another's viewpoint rather than judging others. Participant I points out that self-awareness can lead to varied interpretations, as what one person deems acceptable behaviour may be seen as unacceptable by another. This awareness opens her up to the many moral perspectives that self-awareness has revealed to her. The responses from these participants indicate signs of developing self-awareness (Heath et al., 2017) as they illustrate how they can enhance their self-awareness. Their words also demonstrate how thoughts and emotions can result in behavioural outcomes, similar to the reckless actions of Dr. Faustus.

My observation and field notes (Appendix B) reveal the following:

THERE WAS A BIG MOMENT - A student was passing by the class, and the participants looked at him through the door and said 'this guy is not self-aware and socially aware at all, he starts singing and starts screaming whenever and wherever he is, he is a funny dude but he is just not self-aware, does not know his own emotions'. THIS IS VERY INTERESTING, the participants are seeing the competencies outside the research classroom. I asked them if they are doing this often - if they are seeing the SEL competencies outside the class often and one student says "Ya, of course"... so I told them if you are reminded of the competencies again, write about it in your diaries.

To know that the participants were recognising the SEC self-awareness on their own outside the research space was significant because they were seeing the applicability of the research competencies in environments beyond the literature class and outside the research context. This finding revealed that these participants were beginning to apply the SEC knowledge in their lived experiences; they were identifying self-aware peers as well as peers displaying deficient self-awareness in their day-to-day learning

environment. This is significant because it prompted me to add another question to their diaries about when and how they were observing the SECs outside of the literature class or research activities. The work by Cipriano and McCarthy (2023) states that it is important to view students as products of their environments, as social and communal influences shape the learning process. This served as an actionable point for Cycle 3, which was to add another question to their diary entries so that the participants could document when they were noticing the five SECs outside of the research space within their learning environment.

The findings below reveal how the observations and field notes (Appendix B), diary entries (Appendix C), writing tasks (Appendix D), and autophotography moments (Appendix E) illustrated experiences of SEL for the participants. My notes indicated:

The conversation during the role-play planning session segued into the students engaging in some gossip about the behaviour of the current first years. Participant B said the whole text is an example and is a lesson of what happens when one is not self-aware. He said the lesson for 2023 is when doing something, do it properly, don't take the easy way out. Participant D says we make subconscious contracts with being a people pleaser, or having the feeling of being somewhere even if we don't want to. The play is a warning that it is not a good thing to be signing contracts that do not align with your ideology and values. Another lesson from the play is to read contracts before signing it. 'Read the signs' you shouldn't be signing something in blood. 'curiosity kills the cat'.

The banter that the participants engaged in regarding the behaviour of the first years passing by the venue during their discussion is representative of their evaluation of younger peers, possibly based on their newfound SEC knowledge. This is significant because it indicates that the participants are engaging in voluntary social assessment. Although this was not an intention of the research activities, it is an observation that may be part of the growth mindset associated with self-awareness, as indicated by Eddy et al. (2021), who stated that self-awareness is the ability to assess one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence. In assessing themselves, they are also evaluating their peers.

The writing tasks below (Appendix C) revealed clear moments of self-evaluation that the participants underwent:

Participant B

It made me feel self-aware as Faustus was so unaware of the consequences of his actions that it made me question how I view certain aspects in my life. I enjoyed putting myself in the Doctor's perspective as it showed me that I also would not have made good choices with the power bestowed upon me.

Participant C

Yes, it made me realise that there is always a consequence for your actions.

Participant D

I learnt that I should be careful of how I portray myself towards other and this hit me when we were doing role plays. Made me realise that I normally do things without thinking.

Participant I

I learnt that sometimes you can do something thinking it is the right thing to do but the people around you will observe it and interpret it in a different light. It was also interesting to know that at different times one can be aware of themselves and in other times they are not. My least favourite moment was when we had to rehearse our scene because i was not sure how one would show that one is self-aware and it made me wonder whether or not I am.

Participant B understood that the lack of self-awareness displayed by Dr. Faustus made him more conscious of his own self-awareness. Seeing life from Dr. Faustus's perspective led him to realise that he too would have been careless if the same power had been bestowed on him. Participant C learnt about the consequences of actions from Dr. Faustus's experience, while Participant D felt she should be more careful

when portraying herself in front of others, as it made her realise she usually acts without thoroughly thinking things through. The participants appear to have become more self-aware after discussing and playing Dr. Faustus. Bai and Shen (2024) note that when students are self-aware, they begin to identify their feelings, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and become aware of how to use this knowledge to achieve their goals. This was evident in the findings, as the participants' critique of Dr. Faustus's lack of self-awareness made them aware of how to be self-aware to improve their social and emotional growth.

Participant I presents varying experiences in her journey of self-awareness development, recognising that what is right for one person may not be seen as right for another, revealing that for her, morality is specific to an individual's ideology. She understands that awareness is not a consistent behaviour; sometimes one is aware, and sometimes one is not. She shares that during the role-play rehearsal stage, she felt lost and confused about whether she was showing self-awareness. This finding reveals that the journey of self-awareness is multi-faceted. This participant considered various aspects of self-awareness, discovering that morality is individually developed, self-awareness is impermanent, and identifying and demonstrating it is not simple. By labelling her feelings, thinking deeply about her thoughts on self-awareness, and being aware of her own challenges in developing and displaying self-awareness (Marsay, 2022), she demonstrates self-awareness while deliberating on it. There is a meta-experience of self-awareness displayed in Participant I's consideration of all the aspects that make her realise what self-awareness is about.

The autophotography (Appendix E) below reflects the moments and tableaux of self-awareness that the participants photographed and documented.



Photo 15: Group 1 autophotography captions – Cycle 2

(Appendix E)

Participant D:

The photo which captures a moment in the role play rehearsals captures self-awareness in a way where Dr. Faustus is starting to realise how his actions and behaviour have been affecting others around him to a point where an old man comes to him to advise him to repent his sins because he was getting out of control.

Participant I:

In the image above self-awareness is shown by the confusion on the actresses face as well as the hand on her head. She is showing how she is aware of her decisions and how they have and still will impact her.

Participant D's understanding of self-awareness reveals a Dr. Faustus who is scratching his head in newfound realisation of the error of his ways. The participant's caption, which states that self-awareness comes at the moment of realisation, is significant and relevant to the work of Fransen (2004), who argued that drama allows for the exploration of the human condition. Whether in a university class or a production, we expose the complexities of being human and heighten awareness of

our humanity. Here, through role-playing Dr. Faustus, the participant's knowledge of self-awareness is heightened by portraying a character who has just realised his mistakes.

Participant I's interpretation of self-awareness, based on the image she commented on, is illustrated through her identification of the emotion of confusion displayed on her scene partner's face and body language. Through the description of the 'hand on the head', this participant sees that this moment of realisation for Dr. Faustus makes the character newly aware of his decisions and their impact. Noting Participant I's emotional literacy is an important finding, as it resonates with the work of Gray et al. (2023), who stated that exploring feelings and identities in the learning space is crucial for the emotional and empathic development of a student. By recognising confusion, Participant I becomes aware of what confusion looks like on another person and how this spark of realisation from her scene partner, playing Dr. Faustus, has provided her with a lesson on others' emotions, which is characteristic of building self-awareness.



Photo 16: Group 2 autophotography captions – Cycle 2

(Appendix E)

Participant C:

Here Participant B is portraying Dr. Faustus and his moment of realisation when he decides to explore the world of magic. This highlights self – awareness as he connects with his emotions and realises what he wants to do.

Participant B:

The photo shows Dr. Faustus convincing himself that he knows all that there is to learn from mortal knowledge. The image shows Faustus contemplating all that he knows and how he can pursue other areas of knowledge. The Doctor was not self-aware as he believes he knows everything, and this showed me that even the most intelligent people can lack self-awareness.

The moment described by participant C in the caption above reflects her perception of her scene partner playing Dr. Faustus. She characterises this moment as depicting a character who has newly realised his curiosity and eagerness to learn about magic and the more sinister studies of alchemy. This participant demonstrates a capacity to connect emotion and ambition, illustrating how emotion drove Dr. Faustus to become the excessively ambitious magician he ultimately was. According to the work of Brackett (2019), an important part of an emotion scientist's skill set is the ability to comprehend and empathise with the emotions of others. When this participant recognised the connections between excessive curiosity and impulsive behaviour, she exhibited signs of emotional intelligence, characterised by self-awareness and emotional competence.

Participant B's response to his portrayal of Dr. Faustus in the above image reveals an individual who has identified the arrogance that Dr. Faustus displays. This finding is significant as it demonstrates this participant's ability to recognise Dr. Faustus' arrogance as indicative of a lack of self-awareness. Dr. Faustus' arrogance regarding his own power and knowledge reflects a delusion that led to his hubris and eventual tragic downfall. The recognition of one emotion (arrogance) led the participant to realise the absence of self-awareness in Dr. Faustus, highlighting the development of

self-awareness SEC for this participant. He successfully identified that by Dr. Faustus displaying the emotion of 'excessive pride', he was already demonstrating a self-awareness trait by recognising emotion in others (CASEL, n.d.) and observing its impact.

7.5 Reflections on Cycle 2

When Cycle 2 commenced, I wanted to ensure that all my concerns, outlined at the end of Cycle 1, would be addressed and actioned at the beginning of Cycle 2. I began by ensuring that the self-awareness SEC definition was displayed on the whiteboard for the participants. I made a note to remind the participants not to turn their backs to each other during their role-play showcase, and I would prompt them should I identify moments of silence during the narrative empathy discussion sessions. I started this cycle knowing that these would be the actions I implemented to improve the research activity experience for my participants in Cycle 2.

The warm-up activities and the role-play activities related to the first research question regarding how role-play and role-playing activities can support empathic behaviour among the participants. The first game shifted the participants' mental focus and placed them in a space of light-heartedness with each other. This game effectively disarmed them from any previous mental state, allowing them to relax with one another before the activities commenced, resulting in moments of joy and consistent laughter.

The second game encouraged the group to experience moments of power and pride, as well as moments of insignificance or solitude. This game allowed the group to observe each other in these juxtaposed moments. It was important for the participants to observe how each group member walked and moved their body during experiences of abundant presence or private withdrawal. This activity also helped participants personally comprehend how they looked and felt during these different emotional prompts.

The last warm-up game required the participants to begin character work and engage in a hot seat exercise with a character from the play *Dr. Faustus*. Responses varied from apprehension to displays of extensive character knowledge, from improvised

witty remarks to moments of silence in response to certain questions. This game cultivated the participants' ability to improvise, build cooperation skills, and foster character empathy, as they each supported one another in the hot seat.

When each group began to linguistically prepare their scripts, I observed participants adapting the text to suit a contemporary scenario. They focused on self-awareness (SEL SEC) by taking a photo of a moment in the scene that demonstrated self-awareness and, ultimately, rehearsing their scene to ensure it was translatable to an audience. These efforts, which they were now becoming accustomed to, were commendable. This was significant because the warm-up activities encouraged them to work more quickly, knowing that an 'audience' would be waiting to see how the role-plays illustrated 'self-awareness' from a scene in *Dr. Faustus*.

Group 1's role-play recreated the scene to show what a more self-aware Dr. Faustus would do, which was indicative of a loose forum theatre experience. This group also demonstrated the psychological emotion management strategy of cognitive reframing. Their intention to make Dr. Faustus feel guilty in order to access a mental framework for responsible behaviour was another noteworthy observation, as it illustrated how associated emotions of duty and responsibility can create the conditions necessary to develop and cultivate self-aware behaviours. Group 2's role-play demonstrated their ability to frame a scene of absent self-awareness using humour and stereotype.

In addressing whether role-play and role-playing activities can support empathic behaviour among participants in this cycle, the participants displayed acceptance of each other's emotional displays during the warm-up activities. They learned to empathise with the characters they portrayed, feeling empowered to re-create the scenes to convey their own messages, rather than feeling intimidated by the original text. Additionally, the participants built self-confidence and utilised scene recreation and humour to comment on self-awareness.

The second research question, which focused on the SEL skills participants can learn from narrative empathy, was revealed in the narrative empathy discussion sessions.

Participants discussed their concerns regarding morality versus religion and were able to shift their opinions and views based on the themes that emerged from the play.

In addressing whether SEL skills can be learned by students engaging in narrative empathy within the literature learning space in this cycle, participants began with a judgement of Dr. Faustus. However, this judgement gradually evolved into critique, which then transformed into empathy, enabling them to relate to their own reckless behaviours and impulsive decision-making. Their role-play of Dr. Faustus and the discussions on his motivations resulted in them recognising more similarities with the character than differences. They demonstrated self-awareness and acknowledged their own flawed human condition.

The third research question focused on the importance of SEL skills for the participants, which was revealed through how they began building SEL traits and demonstrating their SEL learning in various activities. The participants started to exhibit SEL traits when they began to recognise and identify self-awareness, or a lack thereof, in themselves and those around them. They discovered a link between heightened emotions and impulsive decision-making, highlighting that self-awareness allows for the evaluation of emotions before making important decisions. Participants then began to notice the lack of self-awareness in their peers on campus, prompting me to introduce a new question in their diaries for Cycle 3, asking whether they were observing SEL skills outside the research activity space and to document these moments.

In addressing the importance of SEL for these participants during this cycle, they revealed that they had uncovered new insights about their own reckless behaviours, their struggles with emotion management, and how identifying emotions in themselves and others could indicate the extent of their self-awareness. Their empathy for Dr. Faustus' lack of self-awareness made them more aware of their own emotional journeys.

Finally, Cycle 2 demonstrated that my Psychology and English major participants could not only role-play scenes from the texts they studied but could also recreate scenes to convey the intentions and messages they had for their audience. These

participants could discuss their social and emotional experiences of self-awareness with one another and were starting to extend their SEL observations beyond the research space. Empathising with Dr. Faustus and role-playing his character provided these participants with new markers of progress on their self-awareness journey. I learned to be patient with the participants because, although I have taught the 'controversial' text of Dr. Faustus for many years, they were engaging with it for the first time. This group's strong emotional response to the text taught me that what is familiar to me may not be for each new group of students I teach. I realised the importance of allowing participants and future students to experience their emotions authentically as they approach a text they have not read before.

The next chapter, Cycle 3, will require the participants to learn about relationship skills through the study of the text *Pride and Prejudice*. To help them access the emotional climate of healthy relationships, I asked all participants to bring special objects that symbolise important relationships in their lives.

Thereafter, for the next cycle, I need to add a question to their Cycle 3 diaries:

"Are the competencies coming to your mind outside of the research activities and outside the classroom?" How are you being reminded of it? Do you think it is something you are conscious of more outside the classroom now that you know it exists? During the role-play I should tell the participants that they should do what they want with the text they are adapting. If they feel it is going to allow them to explore that cycle's specific SEL competency better, they should go ahead and adapt the scene. It should not affect their knowledge of the text being studied since they need to have correct narrative knowledge of the text in order to change/adapt it anyway. I have to ask the participants if they feel the warm-up games teach them any competency because I am noticing some SECs emerge from their enjoyment of the warm-up games as well. I will add this question to their Cycle 3 writing tasks. I need to consider if by the end of all the five cycles the participants can role-play SEL competency scenarios without a prescribed text to frame and locate the scene in. This will be considered only if they have time. I would like to take the narrative empathy discussion sessions outside the lecture room. This would be an interesting space to

identify how the behaviours of people around the participants influence their competency development.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of Cycle 2 of *Dr. Faustus*, where the participants explored the self-awareness skills they could gain from role-playing and empathising with the play.

The next chapter will examine the analysis and findings of Cycle 3 of the research activities, focusing on how the participants developed SEC in relationship building through role-play and narrative empathy activities based on the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.

Chapter 8:

Analysis and Findings: Cycle 3 – *Pride and Prejudice* – Relationship skills

8.1 Introduction

The research changes mentioned at the end of Cycle 2 needed to be implemented at the beginning of Cycle 3. Below is an example of how the cycle-specific definition was displayed for Cycle 3. The participants in Cycle 3 also had quick reference to the meaning of the CASEL 5 SEC relationship building.



Photo 17: The relationship skills SEC definition – Cycle 3

I wanted to change some initial processes for the participants. For this cycle, I gave them the option of using the specific six steps of the role-play process. I felt that they no longer needed the rigidity of following the initial six steps as an instructional crutch. The participants enjoyed their own processes of creating SEC-specific role-plays around the scenes they chose, so I allowed them to enjoy their own role-play creation process. I added a new question to the participants' diary entries: "Are the SEL competencies coming to your mind outside of the research activities and outside the classroom?" I also added a new question to the participants' writing tasks: "Do you

feel like the warm-up games you play teach you any SEL competency? What have you learnt from the warm-up games in this cycle?”

I wanted to see if the narrative empathy discussion sessions would occur naturally again during this cycle, so I did not prompt the participants about when the sessions should begin.

8.2 Using role-play and role-playing extracts from *Pride and Prejudice* to support empathic behaviour

At the start of Cycle 2, the participants began the relationship-building skills research activities with role-play warm-up activities, as outlined in the methodology design for each cycle.

The first game, called the 'Yes and No Game', required the entire group to participate in an activity where they were asked yes or no questions or given statements to which they had to respond accordingly. Participants who answered 'yes' to a question moved to one corner of the venue, while those who answered 'no' moved to another corner. Participants who were undecided remained in a separate designated corner. The observation and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the following insights:

In the yes and no game the participants moved to different parts of the venue based on their individual answers to the questions.

“Do you like chocolate?”: Some negotiation and teaching of each other for doing the wrong things in the game. Very opinionated with their moves.

The group starts to have their own conversations around the question “Is South Africa in a crisis?” : some movement to each side.

During the statement “racism is alright” : everyone moved to the ‘no’ corner of the venue. During the statement “women should not drive” – everyone said no.



Photo 18: Yes and no warm-up – Cycle 3

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) - Participants D, C, A, B, F, G, E and I in their respective yes/no corners)

This activity was chosen to ensure the participants have a good understanding of their own and their peers' likes and dislikes. It allowed them to see with whom they shared common responses and with whom they had differences. The foundation of relationship skills is cultivating and applying effective communication abilities to build positive relationships with others (CASEL, n.d.). When participants identified their peers' responses, they were able to accept those views as valid. There was no pushing or pulling of a 'yes' participant into a 'no' zone or vice versa. This simulation of accepting varying viewpoints without challenge demonstrated that these participants were tolerant of each other, even if only in a game.

Another finding was that participants helped each other understand where to go for their preferred responses, providing direction to the 'no' participants who mistakenly stood in the 'yes' zone. These behaviours displayed tolerance and collaboration. This is significant in light of Miller et al. (2017), who stated that when peer relationships are positive, motivation to perform academically and engagement with the content occur. This was precisely the goal of the activity: to encourage participants to engage

positively with each other in a respectful, tolerant, and collaborative manner, facilitating learning about relationship skills in this research cycle.

The second game was 'lie about how you got to campus'. In this activity, each participant had to imagine and share a scenario about how they arrived at campus. They could waltz into the class like a dancer, which could mean they entered straight from performing on stage, or they could swing the door open and pretend to hold a water hose, as if they had arrived from a fire truck ready to put out a fire. Whatever scenario they chose, it was up to the remaining group members to guess what they did and where they had come from. My observations and field notes (Appendix B) indicated:

Participant F – *Rollerblading, quite easily done. Everyone got it.*

Participant I – *Got of a broom, like in quidditch, everyone was confused.*

Participant C – *Arrived to class kissing. Very unique movement of hands and good imagination usage. Everyone got it.*

Participant B – *Drove to campus, simple idea, everyone got it*

Participant G – *Running to class, came in exhausted. Everyone got it.*

Participant E – *Motorbike driver, everyone guessed it correctly.*

Participant D – *Everyone was stumped trying to figure out the 'arriving to class via private plane', her mime wasn't very effective*

Participant A – *Struggling to identify character, unclear mime, he had a headset because he was the pilot coming off a helicopter.*

What emerged from this game was the observation of participants using their mime abilities to demonstrate to their peers where they were arriving from in relation to class. Some participants were very effective communicators, while others were not. Warming up the body for role-play activities was crucial for physical preparation; pretending or miming a scenario for the audience provided an important simulated experience to enhance the body language abilities of the participants. Sambanis et al. (2013) state that when a student engages their whole body during a drama warm-up activity, the whole person learns, resulting in multisensory and holistic learning.

Engaging in an activity that bridges the mind and body to communicate a message born from a participant's imagination is vital for fostering full investment in the activity. The final game was called 'precious object show and tell trust exercise'. Participants were asked to bring objects that were precious to them to the research class and to take turns showing the objects to the rest of the group while sharing the story behind their sentimental value. This exercise was chosen because it simulated emotions of strong connection within existing relationships among the participants. This kind of game was important for cultivating and valuing relationships before the role-play activity, which focused on building relationship skills, began. The observation and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the following picture and notes:



Photo 19: Precious object show and tell trust warm-up – Cycle 3

(Participants C, B, E, H, D, I, A and G posing with their respective precious objects)

Participant E: Brought a ring. She wears the ring often, it was her late granny's ring and she wears it thinking that her granny is with her and watching over her.

This participant demonstrates her appreciation for her relationship with her grandmother. She shares her feelings with her peers and visibly clutches this treasured possession.

Participant C: *Brought a bottle of Panado tablets. She brought the first thing her boyfriend bought for her during their first date. The Panado reminds her of the date, when he ran all over looking for tablets for her when she got sick during the first date and it holds sentimental value for her.*

This participant displays eagerness and excitement as she shares the value of her relationship with her boyfriend. She conveys her enthusiasm for this romantic relationship to her peers and speaks with pride while gazing fondly at the item she brought, visibly smiling and reminiscing about the moment when she felt loved and cared for.

Participant B: *Brought a hoodie that his mum bought for him in Germany. It's the thought that counts even though his mum bought a hoodie that represented the wrong team.*

This participant demonstrates the value he places on his relationship with his mother. He laughs at the thought of her buying him a hoodie representing a team he does not support; however, he still wears it because he appreciates that she carried it all the way from another country for him. He displayed a look of affection for this bond with his mother.

Participant D: *Brought an American Swiss Jewellery box, her mom bought this gift as a gift for herself, she said her mum likes nice things and good taste and the item should remind this participant that she should take care of herself and buy nice things for herself as well. The item reminds her of her relationship with her mom, she fights with her mum often but after high school the relationship improved and she admires her mum for taking care of herself.*

This participant is expressing admiration for her mother. She conveys to her peers her feelings about her mother's ability to value herself, and in doing so, she is reminded to value herself as well. She states that, despite their relationship being filled with highs and lows, she appreciates the lesson of self-care that her mother has instilled in her while growing up.

Participant I: Brought merchandise from an NPO that her mom and sisters started. This NPO empowers women and holds prayer gatherings, “their NPO is like the SEL space in class” these were the words of the participant, it allows women to help each other the NPO is called “sisters make best friends”. This participant was able to make relations with SEL and what her family is doing.

This participant values her relationship with her mother and sisters, as they have all started a women's empowerment organisation of which she is very proud, especially having founded it with her family. She voluntarily stated that their NPO is akin to the SEL space in class. This is an interesting finding, as this comparison indicates that she feels a sense of safety and empowerment from the SEL activities, seeing a likeness between these activities and her family-founded community prayer NPO. The literature of Duckworth (2021) states that when the learning environment is positive, students feel safe and open to learning. Reader response theory further suggests that a non-pressured atmosphere encourages an aesthetic stance towards reading, fostering pleasant anticipation and reducing worry (Rosenblatt, 1982). Essentially, by comparing her SEL experiences with her NPO, this participant conveys that the safety she feels during SEL activities is similar to the safety she experiences at the NPO, suggesting that SEL activities create a positive and safe learning environment.

Participant H: Brought a photo of her great granny, who is 89 today who is like a mother to her. She feels like she can't tell her parents about certain topics but her granny is her best friend whom she can discuss anything with.

This participant demonstrates the value she places on her relationship with her grandmother. She shares with her peers what her grandmother looks like and

expresses her pride in the openness of their relationship. By proudly displaying the photo for everyone to see, she conveys her gratitude and love for her grandmother.

Participant G: Brought BTS stickers, she is a big fan of the popular music group BTS and her friend bought her a pack of BTS stickers.

This participant demonstrates the value of her relationship with her friend. She displays her stickers with joy and excitement on her face. She takes pride in being recognised by her friend for who she truly is and for what she truly loves. Observing this participant hold her stickers reveals that she feels seen for who she truly is and is grateful to have friends who support her passions.

Participant A: Brought a R10 Swazi note, given to him by his uncle. He states that his relationship with his uncle is more than an uncle and nephew relationship, his uncle taught him lots in life.

This participant demonstrates the value he places on his relationship with his uncle. He holds the foreign currency cash note, reminiscing about his uncle as he gazes down at it. His eyes seem to look past the note, possibly reflecting on other significant moments he shared with his uncle while conveying the importance of the note to him. He shows his peers that he is grateful to have someone who cares about him and who taught him so much while growing up.

This activity effectively prepared the participants emotionally to focus on building relationship skills. After describing their precious objects to their peers, they entered a positive emotional state that allowed them to discuss, explore, and comment on topics related to relationship skills. The newly added questions in their cycle three diaries (Appendix C) and writing tasks (Appendix D), which required participants to reflect on whether the warm-up games were enhancing their SEC skills, revealed the following responses:

Participant D – Diary

The research activities were fun to do as it was nice to use my creativity to think of different ways to explain myself to my fellow classmates. The

different activities also activated different sides of myself so I can express myself. My favourite moment was doing the role play and also doing the warm games. It is fun to do activities that challenge my thinking.

Participant C – Writing task

Yes, most of the games we play teaches us the competency we are exploring. It allows me to see the competency in a more imaginative view

Participant B – Writing task

Yes, it helps me understand perspectives of others and it is a nice way to teach basic concepts of the text,

Their responses provided feedback regarding whether the warm-up activities were teaching the SECs to the participants. It is clear that they believed the warm-up activities were putting them in the correct imaginative and mental state needed to navigate their imaginations and focus their mindsets on cultivating relationship skills. While the games themselves may not have directly taught them about relationship skills, connections were shared and made, accessing their instincts about what a good relationship should feel like. Likewise, Itani (2023) found that warm-up theatre games are important in developing intuition, a crucial trait in a learning situation. When the participants were able to understand and access positive relationships in their personal lives through the warm-up games, their intuition for positive relationship references emerged, which is the appropriate mindset needed when beginning to explore the components of relationship-building skills.

After the warm-up games, the participants began the linguistic preparation and rehearsals for their role-plays on relationship skills from scenes in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

The two images show the participants, who were divided into two groups, beginning to prepare and rehearse their scripts linguistically.



Photo 20: Linguistic prep and rehearsal of the script by Group 1 – Cycle 3

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B)-Participants B,C,E and H)



Photo 21: Linguistic prep and rehearsal of the script by Group 2 – Cycle 3

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants D, I, A and G)

As the participants linguistically prepared their scripts and rehearsed their role-plays, what stood out was the joy with which they approached this specific novel's role-play process. Whether it was the romantic nature of reconstructing and re-envisioning a

fairytale-esque ball scene, or the fact that some participants had to switch gender identities to play their assigned characters, they found props – such as a tiara on Participant B and bunny ears on Participant C – amusing as they rehearsed their ballroom scene.



Photo 22: Linguistic prep and role-play of the script – Cycle 3

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) - Participants B, E, C and H)

In the image above, the participants laugh while creating a scene that they have most likely only seen on TV or reminisced about in fictional escapist media. Stephenson (202) states that when students learn through drama, feelings of positivity emerge as they embrace risk. This is evident in the image above, as the participants enjoy bringing this romantic ballroom scene to life in their own localised version.

My observation and field notes (Appendix B) on Group 1's role-play highlight the following observations and image of the role-play:

Group 1 presentation

Participant B played Mr. Darcy, Participant C as Mr. Bingley, Participant H as Elizabeth Bennet, Participant E as Jane Bennet. Participants in this group were playing the scene whilst smiling because they were having fun romanticising the ball scene, pretending to do the dance that they remember seeing from the movie version of this scene. Mr Darcy and Elizabeth were arguing about sitting next to each other. Elizabeth says to Mr. Darcy “you are too close to me” re-creating their own localised version of that moment in the novel when Mr. Darcy realises that he doesn’t like dancing and he is trying to make conversation with Elizabeth but it is awkward. Then there is lots of friction communicated by quizzical brows and judgy stares between their versions of the Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth characters. The participants drew on the stereotypical “hard to get” relationship with Participant H using localised defensive head movements showing an unimpressed attitude when she antagonises Mr. Darcy sitting so close to her as he tries to make conversation, basically making him feel inferior and creepy. They are constantly in conflict with one another, the more they spoke the more divided they appeared to be.

After this interaction happened, focus moved to the participants dancing, Mr. Bingley is already smitten with Jane Bennet, they were dancing together and having fun. After the dance Mr. Bingley left the dancing to go over and check on his isolated friend Mr. Darcy and says to his lonely friend in local slang “I smaak (has a crush on) Jane, I’m gonna marry her”. To which Mr. Darcy nods his head in agreement and states that this is a nice decision, he agrees. Mr. Bingley asks Mr. Darcy what he thought about Jane’s sister whom he was just talking to: “What about Elizabeth? She’s a hot one!” to which Elizabeth overhears the next response as Mr. Darcy gives his reply to Mr Bingley, “Nah, she’s a little bit average eh” which is a clear adaptation of the infamous line from the original novel “she is barely tolerable and not handsome enough to tempt me”. Elizabeth is then very upset with overhearing this evaluation of her and when Mr. Darcy re-approaches Elizabeth asking her: “so, uh, what do you do for fun?” she replies with the witty “Dancing and clearly dancing with

average people” to which Mr. Darcy responds with a resigned sigh and turns his head away knowing she overheard his judgement of her and is clearly embarrassed.



Photo 23: Role-play showcase Group 1 – Cycle 3

Participants H and B seated playing Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy talking to each other at the ball and participants E and C playing Jane Bennett and Mr. Bingley dancing at the ball.

Here, the participants demonstrated empathy for the characters they portrayed by first stepping into the literal dancing shoes of Mr. Bingley and Miss Jane Bennet, and subsequently immersing themselves in the awkward scene where they played Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet as she overhears Mr. Darcy's judgement of her. The participants grasped the discomfort of attending the ball while searching for a potential spouse and empathised with the characters' challenging situations and goals. Participants B and C understood that they were playing desirable bachelors being gawked at by imaginary onlookers. While one character, Mr. Bingley, found what he wanted in a wife (Jane), the other character, Mr. Darcy, was confused by his emotionally charged interaction with Elizabeth and his prideful conscience. These participants accurately conveyed both Mr. Darcy's ego – where Elizabeth was not good enough to tempt him – and Mr. Bingley's immediate infatuation with Jane. By embodying characters caught in complex social situations, the participants illustrated

the intricacies of being in a public space while trying to establish a new relationship. This is significant because they simulated the experience of having an unpleasant new relationship encounter (Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth) as well as what it would be like to have a pleasant new relationship encounter (Mr. Bingley and Miss Jane Bennet). These findings support those of Cojocar (2023), who noted that sociability and the ability to interact with others in a collaborative process, such as this imaginative ball scene in Regency England, allowed the participants to engage, share, and experience the social world of early 19th-century England.

I asked the participants after their role-play what they thought they had learned about relationship skills from playing their respective characters and noted their responses in my observation and field notes (Appendix B):

Participant C as Mr. Bingley stated what she learnt from playing Mr. Bingley, that all he wanted was to dance with Jane and talk to his friend about her. Mr. Bingley didn't really communicate with Jane and he fell in love, not something Participant C would do in reality. Participant E as Jane stated what she learnt from playing Jane is that Jane goes with the flow, she's a goody two shoes character, she listens to her sisters' stories. She has 'okay' communication skills, she doesn't voice her opinions. Participant B stated what he learnt from playing Darcy was that "first interactions are not always that important. Your first interaction can be trash and you can still end up marrying the person". Participant H stated what she learnt from playing Elizabeth was that, "sometimes you can be stuck in your own ways and you end up making rash decisions because they weren't actually what you wanted, but something you did in order to keep up an image of yourself that you may outgrow later on".

Participant C stated that playing Mr. Bingley reminded her that she would not want to pursue a relationship or instantly fall in love with someone with whom she did not really talk. Participant E, who played Miss Jane Bennet, noted that Jane is not someone who is assertive; she is spontaneous and has adequate communication skills. Both Participants C and E learned that, for them personally, initiating relationships is smoother with like-minded individuals. Participant B, who played Mr.

Darcy, mentioned that one could still end up marrying someone with whom they had a bad first encounter. His response was interesting because the original title of *Pride and Prejudice* was *First Impressions* (Mulder, 2013). It is an important coincidence that the participant managed to tap into this historical fact surrounding the text, as their construction of the 'first encounter' between Elizabeth and Darcy resonates with the initial title and aligns with what reader response theory explores. Here, the reader's personal response (Spirovska, 2019) corresponds with the author's original titular thoughts on the text.

In addition, this participant was able to recognise the journey of growth a person can experience in a relationship if one is willing to work on it, as he stated that the first encounter is not necessarily the only encounter. Participant H, who plays Elizabeth Bennet, explained that what she learned from playing Elizabeth is that who someone is in a single circumstance may be outgrown later on in another circumstance, teaching her that people are subject to change in relationships based on events, both good and bad, that affect them. The participants who played the couple of Mr. Bingley and Miss Jane Bennet realised that they were not going to repeat the impulsive behaviour of the characters they portrayed in real life, as they learned that intense new relationships may not work for them in a 21st-century dating context. The participants who played Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth understood that relationships require growth and learning. What all four of these participants learned from role-playing these characters is that relationships are neither fleeting nor static, as highlighted in the literature of Borowski (2019), who stated that making principled choices in personal social situations and making ethical and careful decisions is a crucial social and emotional skill, which these participants understood from the relationships they simulated in this role-play.

My observation and field notes (Appendix B) on Group 2's role-play

Group 2 presentation

Participant A played Mr. Darcy, Participant G as Mr. Bingley, Participant D as Elizabeth Bennet and Participant I as Caroline Bingley.

Participants played this scene with commitment to their characters, serious approaches were observed. This is the scene where Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley and his sisters were in the drawing room while Mr. Darcy is writing a letter to his sister Georgiana. This scene is taken from chapter 8 of the novel. The scene started with Caroline Bingley very casually and alluringly walking around a makeshift drawing room and then she begins to talk to Mr. Darcy who is very busy writing a letter to his sister. Mr Darcy is pretending to be distracted. Caroline then endlessly and overbearingly compliments the absent Georgiana stating to Mr. Darcy that she is beautiful and she walks like a model and she dresses very nicely unlike some people “who don’t dress nicely and have their dresses drag in the mud” – a subtle attack on participant Elizabeth Bennet who earlier on in the novel walked 4 kilometres to visit her sick sister and messed her hems with mud. This was a subtle attack on Elizabeth Bennet who is also featured in this scene. Mr. Bingley is the yes man sitting in the corner merely watching in passive agreement the scene that is happening in front of him between Mr. Darcy, Caroline-his sister and Elizabeth Bennet. In the participants’ version of this scene Elizabeth actually confronts this Caroline. This does not happen in the novel. The participants have changed the novel to suit their message and intentions with this scene.

Here Elizabeth states that she is against the male gaze and berates Caroline for playing to the Male Gaze with her alluring walk around the room. Elizabeth berates Caroline for dressing, walking and living according to the male gaze and for living according to the ideals of “what men want”. Elizabeth says to Caroline that “you need to change her mindset as it is very damaging”.



Photo 24: Role-play showcase Group 2 – Cycle 3

Participant D on the black couch playing Elizabeth Bennet and Participant A playing Mr. Darcy sitting at the table writing to his sister. Participant G playing Mr. Bingley seated directly in front of the camera watching the characters in conflict. On the far right in the black T-shirt participant I playing Caroline Bingley who is looking for the attention of Mr. Darcy.

From this role-play, the participants in Group 2 showed empathy for the characters they were portraying by behaving according to the imaginary Regency period circumstances and then breaking this illusion by referencing the contemporary literary criticism concept of the 'male gaze' and the colloquial term 'pick me girl.' The male gaze refers to the way women in film are constructed to be looked at by male counterparts or audience members (Mulvey, 2001). The 'pick me girl' concept is described as "a feminist response to certain women's inclinations to defer to men or appeal to the male gaze" (Rosida et al, 2022, p. 9), and is commonly used in social media to refer to females who behave and dress in ways that attract the male gaze. When these participants chose to go against the narrative in the novel to 'teach' the character Caroline a lesson about 'being herself,' they adapted the scene to produce a version that would impart relationship skills to the audience, with the lesson being 'be yourself' in a relationship. When the participants state that simply being oneself means a relationship will not be built on a lie, they are tapping into a fundamental characteristic of the relationship skill SEC, which is "resisting negative social pressure" (CASEL n.d.).

I asked the participants, after their role-play, what they thought they had learned about relationship skills from playing their respective characters and noted the following via my observation and field notes (Appendix B):

Participant I who played Caroline Bingley says that taking on the role of Caroline was different, because she is a “pick me” person who will do anything to get attention and that was different for Participant I to play. Playing Caroline taught her that you don’t have to do things to get attention from other people, playing Caroline made her not want to seek validation from anyone else. Participant D who played Elizabeth said playing Elizabeth Bennet was very freeing, she does not want to play the male gaze, and does not want to get Darcy. She understood that whoever wants to be with you will be with you if you don’t change yourself. Playing Elizabeth Bennet also taught her to be herself and not to change herself, because if you are just who you are in the long run you won’t have to keep up the lie in order to be in the relationship. Participant G who played Mr. Bingley, said he is all about teamwork and solving conflict. Participant A who played Mr. Darcy says that he learnt to approach a woman who is conservative and not choose a “pick me” woman.

What each of these participants learnt was that their characters taught them about the person they want to be when initiating and being in relationships in their personal lives. Participant A specifically chose not to date someone desperate for his attention and wants to choose someone who is more conservative, showing that the role-play provided him with the opportunity to learn about the type of person he is not attracted to. This finding is significant in the work of Keezhatta (2020). who stated that role-play is widely used for imbibing human relation skills in students as they learn how to behave and be with one another for a variety of social and personal reasons. The simulation of an awkward flirtation event in the role-play taught Participant A how to regulate himself should he encounter a similar situation, providing him with relationship skills for his real life.

8.3 Narrative empathy to learn relationship skills

After the role-play activities, the participants began their narrative empathy discussion session activity. Their discussion was documented in my observation and field notes (Appendix B), as noted below:

Participant D says that at the beginning Darcy and Elizabeth both did not like each other but they ended up helping each other. Participant I says it was interesting seeing the scene in a way that wasn't so dated, it showed relatability to the characters. Bingley was trying to be Darcy's wingman, she saw real friends having each other's back in this scene. Participant A says that "when Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy showed how back in the old days men used to approach woman, they would just go for it, now men have to date first. Now you are forced to get to know people. It ties with social awareness, today because you have to see how you come off to people around you". Participant E says "in today's society social media is the downfall of many relationships because people hide behind DMs (direct messages) they see that many conflict interpretations happen because of miscommunication in these messages".

Participant B was excited by Caroline posing all over Darcy, participants. Participant H said that "Caroline may lack something about herself and self-awareness and she is trying to find who she is in someone else-Darcy, thinking she could gain something out of it. Back then Caroline had to get married, so she had to shoot her shot. She was sucking up to Darcy about his sister, impressing third parties to attract the second parties to show that there is a lack of something in a person" according to Participant H. Participant B said he is learning not to "like kissing ass". "Some people can't handle rejection" says Participant D about Caroline, "she is lowkey sucking up". Participant C says even with Elizabeth Bennet, you can be yourself, if you like someone doesn't mean you have to do everything they tell you or constantly impress them.

Participant D and Participant I learned about the value that can be gained from relationships, regardless of unpleasant beginnings or outcomes from the characters they shared views and opinions about.

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Participant B brought up how getting to know one another in a relationship is also indicative of someone's social awareness ability, which they covered in detail in Cycle 1. This comment highlights this participant's recall of Cycle 1's SEC social awareness, which appeared in this cycle focused on relationship skills. This is significant because the participant was able to understand the progression of relationships when he compared 19th-century and 21st-century relationships. This is present in the literature of Silius-Ahonen and Gustavson (2012), who stated that drama processes have the ability to grasp future and past in the present, as dramatic play sees the flexibility of time and space. The participant was also able to recognise other SECs as important in a relationship, as he mentions that social awareness is an attractive trait when getting to know someone new.

Participant E may have equated Caroline Bingley's pretension with social media and the common hidden identity issues that occur with fake profiles created to gain attention and increase followers.

When Participant B pointed out Caroline's posing and walking around to seek attention but being ignored, Participant H realised that there must be something lacking in Caroline Bingley – a sense of her own self-worth that she desperately seeks validation for from Mr. Darcy. This participant is recalling a lack of self-awareness in Caroline Bingley, an SEC focused on in a previous cycle. The ability to recognise previous SECs indicates that the participants have a clear understanding of those SECs and can identify them even when they are not the focus of the cycle. Participant B's observation of Caroline appearing desperate and being ignored is empathised with by Participant H, who sees that Caroline Bingley may actually have a self-esteem issue or an identity crisis, as she constantly seeks the attention of others to validate

her value. This is significant because this student went beyond judging an unlikable character and chose to understand her, looking deeper at who she is rather than merely at the arrogant demeanour presented. This may be due to the participant discussing this character with her peers and, in doing so, seeking an alternative view of a character that most participants seem to find unpleasant. This suggests that the participant is attempting to be empathetic towards a character typically recognised as being disliked. Kurian (2019) states that empathy is necessary in education as a means of respecting the perspectives of others and is an essential tool for sparking compassionate behaviour.

Participants B and D speak about Caroline Bingley as someone who willingly exploits herself in order to gain attention or obtain something she wants. Participant C then states that, just like Elizabeth Bennet, a person can simply be themselves without everyone liking them. These participants discuss the contrasting nature between Caroline Bingley's conformance and desperation, and Elizabeth Bennet's independent thinking and self-righteous mindset.

The following writing tasks (Appendix C) and diary entries (Appendix D) indicate participants' empathic responses to *Pride and Prejudice*:

Participant C – Writing task

When Elizabeth refused a marriage proposal. Many times parents force relationships onto their children for the wrong reasons. Her refusing it showed courage.

Participant I – Diary

My favourite moment was when we were all discussing our observations of each other's re-enactments of the novel and getting all the different and similar feedback from each other and how even though this is a dated novel, we could still relate to some elements of it, like how arranged marriages are still a thing in some families and also how society will say that women cannot do a man's job and they should just be married off and carry on their husband's legacy but today women are slowly but

surely becoming a better version of themselves. They are taking up space and defining themselves in society.

Participant I – Writing task

It created feelings of empathy in a way that I understood both Darcy and Elizabeth. Darcy was not really interested in Elizabeth in the beginning because of the family that she comes from, and that just like every other family in that society they wanted their daughter to marry rich and not actually marry because they genuinely want to and have feelings for the person that they are to marry. With Elizabeth, I could empathise with her in terms of understanding how hard it is to be treated as a trophy, being raised and taught that your purpose in life is to marry wealthy and you have no say in that because it's just normal for a woman to live that way at that time. It's really liberating to be a woman in this day and age that is able to think for themselves, make their own decisions and live freely and not care about what the society expects from them.

When playing the role of Caroline it got me thinking of how some women really conform to what society wants them to be and some like Elizabeth don't, and also that our upbringing does have a major impact to who we become tomorrow because Elizabeth is the way she is also because her father encouraged it other than comparing her to his other daughters and force her to act the same way like Mrs Bennet would.

Participant C shared that she enjoyed Elizabeth's refusal to conform to a convenient marriage proposal. For her, this demonstrated the courage a woman needed in the early 19th century, when women had few rights. Participant I highlighted that the novel addressed topical matters like arranged marriage, which still exists today. For her, this comparison made her realise the value of living in a society where women have rights and opportunities to develop and achieve. She further disclosed that she empathised with both Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth's reasons for initially disliking each other, which made her appreciate living in her current society, where women can think for themselves. The relatability both participants felt towards Elizabeth, who serves as a poster child for female empowerment in a time when this concept did not exist, is

reinforced by the work of Warren (2005). Warren stated that stories have the power to cause one to stop, notice, question, and search for new meanings and possibilities in life, which is what these participants recognised in Elizabeth Bennet's courage to assert herself in a time when this was not encouraged.

Participant C – Writing task

I could relate to the relationship journey of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth as I encounter some of their situations in my own relationship. I learn a lot from Elizabeth such as her being a strong headed woman and resolving conflict in her relationship.

Participant C shares that she was able to relate her own personal relationship to Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's journey of growth together. She learned to be strong and manage conflict from Elizabeth. The narrative arc of Elizabeth and Darcy, which commenced with friction, escalated into conflict, then climaxed with care and kindness, ultimately concluding in love, made this participant more conscious of her own relationship ups and downs. Narrative empathy states that "first-person fiction most readily evokes feelings of responsiveness" (Keen, 2006, p. 215). Her response also aligns with Carolina Fernandez-Quintanilla (2018), who highlighted how reading involves a personal relationship between real people in the world and fictional characters within the text. This finding is important because the participant was making connections between her real relationship and the fictional relationship presented in the text.

8.4 Importance of Relationship skills

The writing tasks (Appendix C) and diary entries (Appendix D) that the participants completed reveal the emergence of relationship skills developed from *Pride and Prejudice*:

Participant E – Writing task

Sometimes when we meet new people and start of on the wrong foot it does not mean that we cannot learn from that person or that that person cannot become a close friend. The role play did make me conscious of how we communicate with people when we first meet them and how we

need to be aware of what we say and how we say it. I also picked up on how relationships are gradually built on trust overtime.

Participant D – Writing task

By doing role play. It made me look at things from a different perspective and really understand why they acted a certain way.

Participant C – Diary

In the role play, I played Mr. Bingley, a character who was pleasant and gentlemanlike. When we acted out the play, we also made him humorous and very flirty in the sense that he couldn't wait to continue dancing. This reminded me of people in my life who portrayed similar characters and tried to impress me. I also enjoyed the yes or no question game as it reminded me a lot of what I believe in and have a liking to, very much like Elizabeth.

Participant B – Diary

I found it quite fun as the scene of the ball was very fun to act out, it was a very interesting scene as Elizabeth and Darcy and Jane and Bingley were opposites, Jane and Bingley were love at first sight while Darcy and Elizabeth disliked each other. And yet both couples ended up marrying. Not all relationships start off the same and can have many different starting interactions. Acting out the scene taught me this as we acted out the ball scene.

Participant C – Diary

The activity that stood out the most was the warmup activity in which we had to portray the way in which we entered class. It brought out some imaginative thoughts and responses that i could have done, but I like being comedic and I chose to come into the classroom like I was kissing my partner. I thought it would relate to the concept of relationship building too as it's a reminder that love is always a beautiful thing.

All five of the cited participants experienced a relationship skill learning outcome from their role-play experiences. Participant E became aware that relationships are not

formed overnight; they are a gradual growth experience for both parties involved. Participant D understood perspective-sharing as she played different characters. Participant C found that playing Mr. Bingley brought her a sense of enjoyment as she reminisced about people in her life who tried to impress her. She also enjoyed the warm-up game, as it provided her with the opportunity to speak her truth and share her independent thoughts on what she likes and dislikes. Participant B learned that relationships do not all start the same way. In fact, relationships can begin with friction and yet end up in marriage, much like the character he portrayed in the role-play. Participant C noted that during the warm-up activity, she entered the class pretending to kiss someone; this laughter was part of her intention to highlight that being in a love relationship is a light and beautiful experience. Participant C expressed her understanding of how positive a relationship can be. However, she also recognised how to engage her relationships with her peers by eliciting laughter from them. She used her activity to prompt an emotional reaction from her classmates. Costa et al. (2014) shares that drama offers the ability to promote change and encourages people to desire societal change due to its capacity to capitalise on the strong social and emotional components within drama, which allow for cathartic and performative experiences to be memorable and teachable to both audience and performer.

The following diary entries (Appendix D) reveal how the participants were starting to recognise SEL skills or the need for SEL competencies outside the class as a result of their study of *Pride and Prejudice*:

Participant I – Diary

It is a very eye-opening experience for me as I will be reminded of these competencies even outside of the classroom. When it happens I always think to myself that literature is so cool because as much as the novels and plays we use are from a long time ago, we still see things that they wrote about happen in the present.

Participant C – Diary

The subject that stood out to me was the fact that Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy both could learn from each other and build each other making their relationship stronger. This is a trait I will continue out of the classroom as

it reminded me that you can always learn from others in your relationships with them. Seeking help also builds relationships. Sometimes I observe other children's behaviour and it reminds me of things we speak about in class. One of the main competencies I see is people not being socially aware.

Participant D – Diary

I deal with people from my daily life. I look at it in a different way and also analyse people from a different perspective.

Participant B – Diary

Certain competencies are clearer than others, relationship building is one of them. I have friends who are building relationships with others.

Participant I states that she finds literature studies relatable to her current social context and is reminded of the SEL SECs even outside the classroom. Participant C explains that through exploring the characters of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, she learned that a relationship can develop over time and that individuals in a couple can learn from each other to strengthen their relationship. She notes that this represents a skill or lesson in relationship management that she will continue to apply in her life. Additionally, she observes a significant lack of social awareness outside the classroom. The cycle on social awareness was conducted in Cycle 1, highlighting an ongoing awareness of the SECs that have already been covered. Similarly, Participant D notices SECs emerging in her daily life, allowing her to view people from perspectives she had not considered before. Participant B mentions that he is noticing certain SECs outside the classroom more than others, particularly the relationship skills SEC, as he observes his friends embarking on new relationships. This is why this SEC is particularly important to him. Their responses, which indicate an increased awareness of SECs outside the classroom, are supported by Numanee et al. (2020), who state that when creative activities like role-play teach reflection and perspective-taking, emotional development occurs. This is what these participants are experiencing as they learn about relationship skills through empathising with the characters from the novels they performed and then transfer this knowledge to their observations in daily life.

With the auto-photography (Appendix E) below, we view the moments and tableaux of relationship skills that the participants photographed and documented themselves.



Photo 25: Group 1 autophotography captions – Cycle 3

(Appendix E)

Participant C

Here Mr. Bingley was dancing with Jane. It shows his flirty attitude and tries to develop a relationship with Jane. He is also very eager to go back and dance with her which shows he is enjoying her company.

Participant E

Jane and Mr Bingley are sharing a dance at the ball. This was their first encounter and the beginning of their relationship. They shared a few words and instantly fell in love.

Participant B

The image portrays Jane and Bingley dancing together at the ball, the start of what turned out to be a very good and profitable marriage for each partner, and both loved each other.

The moment described by Participant C, when she played Mr. Bingley in the image above, illustrates her recognition of relationship skills from her dance with Participant E, who played Jane. This dance signified the first step in building a relationship with Jane. For this participant, she is now able to see that dance can encourage spontaneity, even for an introverted character like Mr. Bingley, and that dance can be used as a form of communication when initiating new relationships. As Gray et al. (2023) note, the embodied nature of the performing arts is an important teaching tool and allows for the physicality of a learning experience to take place.

Here, Participant E states that playing Jane Bennet made her realise that this first dance highlighted how an initial encounter through dance led them to begin their relationship and share a brief conversation, which made the two instantly fall in love with each other. This participant seems to share in the romance of this relationship; she has learned that love at first sight is possible during a first encounter and at the beginning of a relationship.

Participant B shares that this first encounter turned out to be profitable and valuable for both parties within the couple. For this participant, he was able to see how a relationship can provide value in two ways, rather than one party merely giving and the other receiving. His takeaway on relationship skills from this task was that both Mr. Bingley and Ms. Jane Bennet suited each other because they provided value to one another and to their relationship.

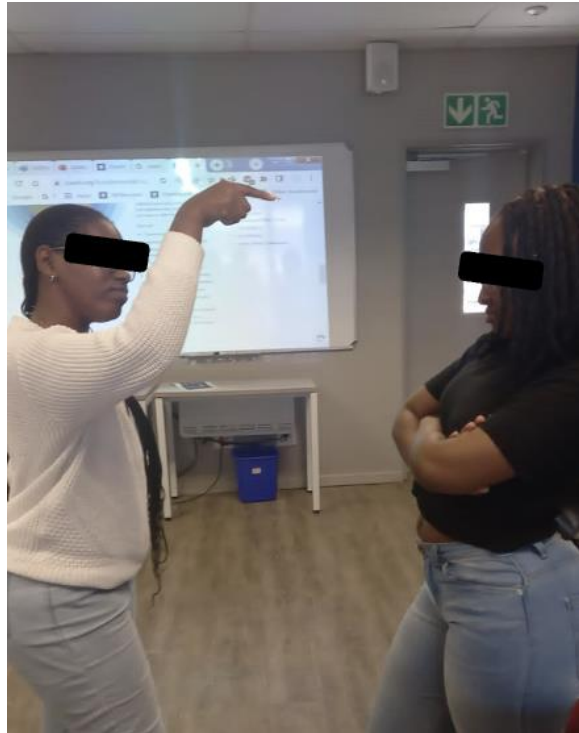


Photo 26: Group 2 autophotography captions – Cycle 3

(Appendix E)

Participant A

Although we fight a lot but at the end of the day we are still building towards a healthy relationship.

Participant D

The photo shows the relationship building between Elizabeth and Caroline. At first they bicker with each other and get into an argument as Elizabeth doesn't agree with the thoughts of Caroline. Eventually later on in the play they get along and put their differences to the side.

Participant I

In the image above we find Elizabeth (left) and Caroline (right), who are arguing about whether women should conform to societal norms or that they can do whatever that they see fit for themselves and be their own people. Furthermore, this shows how during that time and today as well there are some females that will remain in the box that other people have put them in when others will want to live their lives according to their own

free will. This image shows a lack of relationship-building as these two women are arguing instead of resolving their conflict.

Participant A, while commenting on the image taken in his group, shared that when he played Mr. Darcy, he was aware that Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy would often fight, but he also recognised that it ultimately built towards a healthy relationship. The participant could be referring to the conflict portrayed by Participant D, who played Elizabeth, to the left, and Participant I, who played Caroline Bingley, to the right.

Participant D, who played Elizabeth Bennet in this group's role-play, shared that she was aware of the animosity between Elizabeth Bennet and Caroline Bingley; however, she was incorrect in her caption when she stated that they eventually put their differences aside. The student misrepresented a narrative moment in the text, as these two characters never made amends or discussed their differences. This is significant because, while the participant misunderstood a narrative detail, she did grasp that it is possible for two people who have differences and dislike for each other to eventually get along and accept one another. "Drama is concerned with making meaning of experience" (Silius-Ahonen & Gustavsen, 2012, p.438). Here, although the participant may have got her facts wrong, the experience of being in conflict with someone in the role-play helped her remember that such conflicts can be worked through, indicating that this type of conflict management is achievable.

Participant I, who played Caroline Bingley in this group's role-play, stated that what she learned about playing Caroline Bingley is that two people can continue to escalate an argument without resolving their issues in a relationship, as seen between Elizabeth and Caroline Bingley. She further noted that playing Caroline Bingley taught her that some women choose to live according to the gender or social conventions of their societies, which made her realise how limiting this can be. This is significant because this participant has now demonstrated that she understands the difference between living according to free will and adhering to social convention. Horasen-Dogan and Cephe (2020) state that this form of creative drama allows a person to develop independent thinking, imagination, and flexibility. Furthermore, reader response theory posits that a nurturing environment valuing creative freedom fosters natural curiosity about the world (Rosenblatt, 1982). This participant illustrates her

awareness of the various social dynamics to which women are subjected after playing Caroline Bingley.

The following diary entries (Appendix D) revealed that the participants recognised the flawed human condition in the characters of the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, which taught them to view relationships differently, acknowledging that no human is perfect within a relationship:

Participant A – Diary

All relationships have their flaws, no relationship is perfect we must work together if we want this thing that we want to be able to work for the better for the both of us. When Caroline was looking for attention from Mr. Darcy he was busy with something, he didn't entertain her. It goes to show us that we should stay focused on the woman that we want to have in our lives rather than focusing on other women who are looking for attention but these are women that we do not want.

Participant D – Diary

What I learnt is that don't judge a book by its cover, get to know the person and also be open minded because we could be meeting people at the wrong time and we sometimes need to give people a second chance.

Participant I – Diary

I found the research activities to be quite informative as we got to see the different relationships of the characters and how I did not really notice it until we were tasked with performing a scene from it. When the other group was performing they made me notice Mr, Bingley and Mr. Darcy's relationship and how they were good friends that have each others' backs because Bingley encouraged Darcy to talk to Elizabeth and gave him space to do so by going to dance with Elizabeth.

I learnt that you actually have to make conversation with someone and get to know them as a person before you conclude on the kind of person that they are based off of what you hear from other people because we

all are different and will experience each other differently. And this is evident with the relationship between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth and how they started off, they immediately assumed the worst of each other just because of what's on the surface but ended up falling in love as they got to know each other better.

Participant E – Writing task

Yes, in a way they did since they got to know each other and were exposed to the worse parts of each other and learnt from each other. Which then made them better people.

Participant A recognises that no relationship is perfect and that his experience of playing Mr. Darcy made him realise he should focus on the type of partner he desires, rather than just on the type of person demanding his attention. Participant A has directly connected the classroom activity to his awareness of his current relationship skills. Of significance is his recognition that he needs to change. Participant D shared that when getting to know people and embarking on new relationships, it is essential to understand that not everyone makes a good first impression, often due to the circumstances of the situation. She learned not to judge people based on a first encounter, as they may not have control over their behaviour in that initial moment. By recognising the flaw in judging someone without knowing more about them, she demonstrates potential growth and an understanding of the importance of not judging hastily. Participant I notes that while watching her peers portray the characters of Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley, she observed a good supportive relationship unfold before her. She indicated that interaction and communication in a new relationship are crucial for its growth. She learned that it is unproductive to assume the worst of someone. Muslam (2023) stated that nurturing empathy requires individuals to understand their own and others' emotional states. The participants recognised that to understand someone's emotional state is to appreciate their timing, acknowledging that every person experiences emotions born from unique circumstances within a specific context. This understanding is vital when interpreting a person's emotional state while building a relationship.

Participant A recognises that no relationship is perfect and that his experience of playing Mr. Darcy made him realise he should focus on the type of partner he desires, rather than just on the type of person demanding his attention. Participant A has directly connected the classroom activity to his awareness of his current relationship skills. Of significance is his recognition that he needs to change. Participant D shared that when getting to know people and embarking on new relationships, it is essential to understand that not everyone makes a good first impression, often due to the circumstances of the situation. She learned not to judge people based on a first encounter, as they may not have control over their behaviour in that initial moment. By recognising the flaw in judging someone without knowing more about them, she demonstrates potential growth and an understanding of the importance of not judging hastily. Participant I notes that while watching her peers portray the characters of Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley, she observed a good supportive relationship unfold before her. She indicated that interaction and communication in a new relationship are crucial for its growth. She learned that it is unproductive to assume the worst of someone. Muslam (2023) stated that nurturing empathy requires individuals to understand their own and others' emotional states. The participants recognised that to understand someone's emotional state is to appreciate their timing, acknowledging that every person experiences emotions born from unique circumstances within a specific context. This understanding is vital when interpreting a person's emotional state while building a relationship.

The following writing tasks (Appendix C) that the participants completed reveal the emergence of relationship skills that developed as they answered a question about whether they believed Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy had a strong foundation for their relationship in *Pride and Prejudice*:

Participant D – Writing task

They did build their relationship on a strong foundation as they took time to get to know each other and didn't rush anything or try to be with each other for benefits for example Elizabeth didn't want Mr Darcy for his money. It did make me conscious of how I build relationships and how I treat those around me, also if I'm building authentic relationships.

Participant I – Writing task

I think that they did not build their relationship on a strong foundation but the foundation was made when they started to talk to each other and actually get to know what the other is like as individuals. At first they couldn't tolerate each other even for the sake of the people around them as they were too fixed on their own conclusions about each other.

At first they did not speak to each other much as they were judging each other from a distance and Darcy was too full of himself to let himself try and get to know a bit about Elizabeth. Sometimes judging someone off of their surface is not the way to go and you should at least try to get to know them first.

Participant E – Writing task

They got to know each other and were exposed to the worse parts of each other and learnt from each other. Which then made them better people.

Participant D believed that Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy had a strong foundation for their relationship because it was not rushed; they took the time to learn about one another before deeming it significant and worthy of marriage. Their relationship dynamic made her more conscious of her own relationships and inspired her to build authentic connections. Participant I learned that one must get to know a person before passing judgement. Participant E found that the fact that Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy were exposed to the worst parts of each other allowed them to learn who they truly were. This raw honesty made them better people and potentially provided a more genuine foundation on which to build their relationship. The social and emotional ability to recognise that strong relationships do not always appear robust initially, and can manifest through honesty, teaching, vulnerability, and patience, is important in acknowledging the English classroom as a dynamic platform for imparting education in empathy (Numanee et al., 2020).

The following writing task (Appendix C) and diary entry (Appendix D) completed by the participants reveal the emergence of relationship skills from responses that emphasise the importance of female empowerment in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*:

Participant E – Writing task

Elizabeth has a strong character which can inspire other women to want it all. To be loved, respected and have your thoughts and opinions being heard. She did not settle for a man who did not share the same values as her and someone that she did not love. She was well educated and seems to want to be with someone who she could share her thoughts and opinions with.

Participant A – Diary

I learnt that women are a very special breed given to us by the good Lord and that we have to give special attention to these people because especially here in this century right now that they are being ill- treated. A lot of it is up to us men to treat them as the queens that they really are in order for them to feel like they are women again.

Participant E states that she learnt that a strong-minded woman like Elizabeth Bennet, whom she deeply admires, voiced her opinions and did not settle for men who did not possess the qualities she wanted in a partner. She shares that this type of female character is inspirational to other women because Elizabeth stayed true to herself and was able to be in a relationship with someone who is like-minded. Participant E recognised her own personal goals in a relationship and clearly defined what would comprise a healthy identity and a healthy relationship.

Participant A shared that he learnt to appreciate, protect, and care for women in South Africa, as he is attuned to the many difficulties and oppressive situations regarding gender-based violence that women are subjected to in the country (Brandt, 2020). While he comes across as potentially patronising in his choice of words, he is able to empathise with the struggles of women and wants to contribute to a safe, emotionally healthy, and just community. Ndlovu (2019) states that literary modes of thinking play an important part in the emergence of modern human rights ideals and sentiments,

and here we see the participants' understanding of female empowerment from the novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

8.5 Reflections on Cycle 3

In Cycle 3, I was able to implement most of the decisions made at the end of Cycle 2. These included enabling greater autonomy in participants' decisions through their role plays and narrative empathy discussions, as well as extending their understandings through additional questions. While I believed that moving out of the lecture venue would facilitate greater discussion, I was unable to do so.

The warm-up games worked well and helped to address the research questions surrounding role-playing activities that support empathetic behaviour. The games and role-play activities also fostered tolerance and acceptance. These activities activated their imaginations and triggered memories upon which they drew. Participants also made some decisions about how to approach relationships in the future.

The rehearsals within the groups reflected a range of approaches, from laughter and amusement to seriousness. Similarly, the role plays showcased different interpretations of the chosen scenes.

The cycle indicated that role-play and role-playing activities can support empathic behaviour among participants. They displayed tolerance and assistance during the warm-up games as they welcomed differing points of view; they learned how to have fun in a relationship and that first encounters do not always determine the final outcome of a relationship. They also learned that being in a healthy relationship requires a proper understanding of oneself.

The second research question focused on the SEL skills participants can learn from narrative empathy, which was evident during the narrative empathy discussion sessions. Participants indicated that, regardless of the outcomes, relationships should be dependable. They recalled the importance of being socially aware in a relationship. The participants were able to clearly see the dynamics of relationships that evolved from 19th-century conventions to 21st-century norms. They began empathising with Caroline Bingley, a character without any redeeming qualities, but they put their

judgments aside and recognised that she might be lacking in self-esteem, which could explain her behaviour. The participants also respected characters who asserted themselves.

The participants learned many relationship-building skills from the character portrayals and observations in *Pride and Prejudice*. They understood that good relationships may start off pleasantly or unpleasantly, recognised the importance of being honest with oneself when embarking on a new relationship, and noted that self-awareness and social awareness are necessary for building a good and healthy relationship. Participants acknowledged that a healthy relationship can be developed through discussion, care, honesty, and communication.

The participants shared that the role plays changed their perspective on relationships in society, allowing them to observe relationships with a more introspective eye. They began to notice the SEL skills, or lack thereof, in people outside the classroom and referenced how the relationship skills discussed in class could be applied to their own personal relationships.

Finally, Cycle 3 revealed that the participants not only role-played scenes from the texts they studied, but also re-created scenes to suit the intentions and messages they had for their audience. They shared their social and emotional experiences of self-awareness with each other and extended their SEC observations beyond the research space, recognising SEC deficiencies and the presence of SEC in their own lives and within the people around them. Empathising with characters from *Pride and Prejudice* and role-playing scenes from the novel provided the participants with skills for managing relationships in their daily lives.

For the next cycle, I would like to ascertain whether the participants know the order of the research activities and if they could complete them independently without my prompting. I also wonder if the participants could take their activities outside onto the turf, in the hope that more SECs could emerge from observing people in that environment. I may change the warm-up order to include some activities at the beginning of the cycle and after the role-play, allowing the participants to emotionally acclimatise anew just before the narrative empathy discussion sessions. Since the

participants are familiar with the SECs, I must ask them for suggestions on developing the SECs themselves, using their own role-play and narrative empathy ideas. I am learning that the participants are taking ownership of the research activities, and there is now room to grow, change, or even add activities.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of Cycle 3, focusing on *Pride and Prejudice*, where the participants explored the relationship skills they could gain from role-playing and empathising with the characters and scenes in the novel.

The next chapter will examine the analysis and findings of Cycle 4 of the research activities, in which the participants explored the SEC of responsible decision-making through role-play and narrative empathy activities based on the novel *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë.

Chapter 9: Analysis and Findings – Cyle 4 – *Wuthering Heights* – Responsible Decision-Making

9.1 Introduction

In Cycle 4, the literary text *Wuthering Heights* was used to teach the CASEL 5 SEC, focusing on responsible decision-making.

For this cycle, I decided not to prompt the participants regarding the order of the activities. I wanted to see if they could take ownership of the session and if they were aware that the correct order was: warm-ups, role-play preparation, autophotography, role-play showcase, narrative empathy discussion session, and finally, research documentation activities.

9.2 Using role-play and role-playing extracts from *Wuthering Heights* to support empathic behaviour

At the start of Cycle 4, the participants began the responsible decision-making skills research activities with role-play warm-up activities, as outlined in the methodology design for each cycle.

The first game, called the ‘Torpedoes exercise’, required the entire group to participate together in an activity where they all began by standing in a circle. In the observation and field notes (Appendix B), I note:

After they “torpedoed” at each other. I asked them what they felt about the game. Participant B felt like he had woken up from class. Participant C felt rushed and happy. Participant D felt like she was running an errand. Participant A felt like he was playing rugby. Participant I felt excited. Participant G felt smiley and active, she is usually passive. There is generally more concentration when making eye contact during the torpedoes, there was some chaos during the eye-contact when they torpedoed at each other but eventually they understood each other.



Photo 27: Torpedoes warm-up – Cycle 4

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants from left to right G, A, C, D, I and B in a circle. Participant B in the white T-shirt and Participant I in the black top and jacket “torpedoing into each other”)

When the participants played this game, the aim was to ensure that they engaged in this fast-paced, physically risky activity with focus and caution. To establish the parameters for responsible decision-making, the participants needed to be in the mindset of making reasoned judgments and being aware of each other’s impact (CASEL, n.d.). They had to multi-task, moving swiftly towards a targeted peer while ensuring that the speed at which they “torpedoed” did not result in a collision and that, at the end of the game, they remained safe. They were all exhilarated by the activity, as their smiles indicated their pleasure and their bodies revealed a renewed sense of energy.

The observation and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the following images and notes about the second game.



Photo 28: Wink murder focus warm-up – Cycle 4

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants A, D, I and B)

Participants from left to right: Participant A is lying on the floor, acting as a murder victim; Participant D is standing in a dress and revealed as the murderer. Participant I is falling against the wall during her pretend murder. Sitting up, "already murdered", is Participant B, who is watching the humorous scene of Participant I being murdered in front of him.

Participant B said he died by being hit by a bus. Participant C felt that she fell and died. Participant D felt like her death was dying of pain and heart break. Participant A felt a heart attack type of death. Participant I pretended to die from a gunshot.

This game tested focus, observation skills, and the ability to keep a secret. As much as the participants laughed towards the end, the majority of those playing "murderers" adhered to their secret instructions. Participants chose quite dramatic ways to pretend to die on cue from the wink. It was an enjoyable game, as Participant D stated in her diary entry (Appendix C), *"The research activities were fun to do. I like to use my mind in different ways for different situations. And it's fun to have those moments with my classmates. My favourite moment was the warm-up games; those are always fun"*.

The fun and newfound memories with her classmates suggest that this participant values the game as it strengthened bonds with her peers. This finding demonstrates how the games alone have the potential to nourish existing relationships.

While it was enjoyable and created energy among the group, maintaining focus in this game was important in preparing the participants' mindsets to grapple with risky behaviours later on during the roleplays. 'Risk' is a significant experience to include when teaching responsible decision-making because an individual who is a responsible decision-maker will choose not to engage in risky behaviours when trying to improve themselves (Martin & Gerben, 2021). As the participants risked revealing the wrong name of the murderer or risked getting physically hurt while dying dramatically, they were in a mindset of risk, which is a behavioural trait to avoid when trying to make responsible decisions.

The last game was the 'what I wanted to be when I grow up' imagination exercise. The observation and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the following image and notes regarding the third game. In this final game, the participants were each tasked with writing down the name of a profession their childhood selves aspired to be. Those pieces of paper were then folded and mixed in a hat. The participants were asked to come up one by one and pick a crumpled piece of paper from the hat. Each participant then took a crumpled piece of paper with a profession listed on it and enacted the profession they saw. After the profession was enacted and the other participants guessed what it was, they had the opportunity to choose who they thought this childhood dream belonged to.



Participant A



Participant C



Participant D



Participant B



Participant G



Participant I

Photo 29: What I wanted to be when I grow up imagination warm-up – Cycle 4

Each rectangle in the image above features a single participant posing in a profession. Each participant embodies the profession that represented their peer's dream job as a child: Participant A as a Bollywood dancer, Participant C as a nurse holding up an injection, Participant D as an investigator holding up a magnifying glass, Participant B as a cop brandishing a gun, Participant G as a medical doctor holding a stethoscope, and Participant I posing as a pirate.

Participant B wanted to be a pirate but played a cop, this was Participant I's dream. Participant C wanted to be a Bollywood Dancer but played a nurse this was Participant G's dream. Participant D wanted to be medical

doctor but played an investigator this was Participant A's dream. Participant A wanted to be an investigator but played a Bollywood Dancer this was Participant C's dream. Participant I wanted to be a cop with a dog but played a pirate this was Participant B's dream. Participant G wanted to be a nurse but played a medical Doctor this was Participant D's dream.

They were "supportive of each other's mime abilities". As each participant saw their childhood dream acted out by their peers. This resulted in the students creating a very emotionally supportive and sensitive environment as they were all acting out each others' childhood dreams. There was affection and perspective teaching as they saw their dreams being realised in the bodies and voices of their peers.

The participants enjoyed this game as it highlighted the aspirations of their peers, which were still cherished, and demonstrated how they empathised with one another's dreams. The excitement and care with which the participants portrayed each other's dreams revealed what it means to have something precious acknowledged in the mind and body of someone else. This type of simulation allowed the participants to show empathy and respect for one another's childhood dreams, and they exhibited responsible behaviour in portraying those dreams with dignity and honour (Schwab & Elias, 2014).

After the warm-up games, the participants began the linguistic preparation and rehearsals for their role-plays on responsible decision-making from scenes in the novel *Wuthering Heights*. The two images below present the participants, who were divided into two groups, as they began linguistically preparing and rehearsing their scripts.



Photo 30: Linguistic prep and rehearsal of the script by Group 1 - Cycle 4

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants A, C and D)



Photo 31: Linguistic prep and rehearsal of the script by Group 2 – Cycle 4

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) - Participants B, G and I)

As the participants prepared their scripts linguistically and rehearsed their role-plays, it was significant to note how each group focused on depicting a moment of irresponsible behaviour from the characters they portrayed. Each group used props. In Group 1, Participant A used a sweater to cover his head as a substitute for long, fancy hair to pretend to be a noblewoman. In Group 2, Participant B used a bottle as a stand-in for an alcohol bottle and a cushion to represent a baby.

My observation and field notes (Appendix B) on Group 1's role-play showcase include the following notes and an image of the role-play showcase:

Participant D played Catherine Earnshaw. Participant C as bad angel/noblewoman. Participant A as good angel/noblewoman Catherine was confused about who she was going to marry. Catherine was defending Heathcliff but was swayed by social suggestion from the bad noblewoman that she should marry for social reasons. Eventually Catherine chooses comfort even though she is confused about what decision to make, she goes with the socially acceptable decision of marrying for class and status. The Good and bad angel in the form of the two noblewomen sipping tea and listening to Catherine's difficult decision, each gave Catherine advice to help her make the decision on who to marry. Eventually Catherine chose to marry Edgar and for social status.



Photo 32: Role-play showcase group 1 – Cycle 4

Participant D is standing and playing Catherine Earnshaw, contemplating whether she should marry Edgar for money or Heathcliff for love. Participants C and A are seated, portraying two noblewomen – two elegant ladies who are offering her advice. Participant C plays a sort of ‘bad angel’, coercing Catherine to marry Edgar for money, while Participant A takes on the role of a ‘good angel’, providing reasons why she should marry for love and choose Heathcliff. This scene is adapted from a portion of Chapter 9 of the novel.

In Group 1’s showcase, the participants demonstrated empathy for the very complex decision-making that Catherine was subjected to. Participant D, who portrayed Catherine, had to convey the distress that Catherine Earnshaw experienced while deliberating between marrying Edgar for wealth and status or Heathcliff for love and happiness. As Participant D weighed the pros and cons, Participants C and D sipped tea and listened as she proclaimed aloud whom she should choose. The participants

highlighted through this scene that the decision-making Catherine was contemplating was socially driven. Catherine needed an audience to make a decision, as she did not trust herself enough to resolve this internally or introspectively. Despite Catherine (Participant D) hearing the good angel noblewoman (Participant A) sipping her tea and advising her to marry for love, she was ultimately persuaded by the bad angel noblewoman (Participant C) to marry Edgar for social status and wealth. This group's portrayal of the characters in Chapter 9 empathised with the very difficult, socially driven decision-making that Catherine Earnshaw faced in the novel. Catherine had to make a decision based on her social circumstances and her self-doubt, which the participants explored in their rendition of this scene from Chapter 9 of *Wuthering Heights*. These findings reinforce those of Schwab and Elias (2014), who stated that the goal of this skill-building is to make the transition from external control reinforcement to internal motivation, responsibility, and self-control. When the participants portrayed Catherine's decision as one influenced by the coercion of the bad angel noblewoman, they made a judgment that her choice was external and not Catherine's first option; rather, it was driven by external factors, social status, and wealth, which ultimately led to her regret and tragic end in the novel.

I asked the participants from group two immediately after group one's role-play what they thought they had learned from it. Here is what group two shared, based on my observations and field notes (Appendix B):

Making choices of marrying for the wrong reasons. Participant C from group one said that she wanted to show the perspectives of both sides of the decision that Catherine had to consider.

Group two felt that they witnessed what marriage for the wrong reasons looked like from watching group one's role-play. Participant C, who was in group one's role-play, responded to them, saying that it was important for them to show both sides of the decision that Catherine Earnshaw had to consider when choosing whom to marry. What is significant about the observation by group two is that they now had the ability to identify what a regrettable or poor decision-making scenario looked like. What was significant about Participant C's feedback to the comment made by group two is that empathising with both sides of Catherine's

needs and ego was important for them to display. This is significant in the work of Ashton-Hay (2005), who stated that the reflective power of drama allows people to observe and take others' perspectives on a singular matter. Here, the observing participants in group two learned how to identify what the decision-making of an incorrect life partner looks like. The role-player in group one responded to group two, stating that empathising with both the desire and the longing that Catherine endured in making a decision on whom to marry was important for them to portray.

My observation and field notes (Appendix B) on group two's role-play note the following:

Participant I played Catherine Earnshaw. Participant B as Hindley and then as Nelly Dean. Participant G as Heathcliff. In their adaptation of Chapter 9, they role-played two scenes from this chapter. Firstly, they portrayed that moment in chapter 9 when Hindley is drunk and he drops baby Hareton over the balcony but luckily Heathcliff caught the baby. Secondly, they role-played the scene where Catherine was discussing who she should marry between Edgar and Heathcliff and this conversation was overheard by Heathcliff when Catherine told Nelly she decided to marry Edgar.

In their version of the scene Catherine comes across like a confused school girl who does not know who to marry and Nelly comes across as someone who is passive and another childish accomplice to Catherine's misguided decisions. Catherine mistakenly said yes to Edgar, a decision she looks regrettable about. The participant B playing Nelly shows that he is trying to help Catherine who was happy about her decision to choose Edgar who 'bought her a Bugatti'.

In Group 2's showcase, both scenes highlighted the reckless decision-making of the Earnshaw siblings. Hindley was reckless with his child, while Catherine was reckless in her choice of whom to marry. Group two's adaptation of the scene portrayed Catherine's marriage decision as one set in what resembled a high school. In this scene, two high school teenagers contemplated which boy would be better for

Catherine to date, reflecting a significant adaptive stance as it illustrated how these participants interpreted and translated reckless decision-making in young romantic monogamous heterosexual relationships prevalent among today's teenagers. Group two's portrayal of Catherine Earnshaw depicted her settling on a superficial reason for her choice of partner. Here, Catherine opted to date the boy who bought her a Bugatti, paralleling the Catherine in the novel, who chose to marry a man who offered her greater wealth and social standing. Group two's ability to translate the value of an expensive car today to the value of marrying into wealth in the Victorian period demonstrated the superficial and reckless decision-making evident in their role-play. These findings align with Butchart (2017), who found that the social environment of some South African learners may be perceived as reckless, influencing behaviours within the microsystem from which students arise. A microsystem, also known as the friends and family unit of a child (Dyson et al., 2023), is the ecological structure that partly influences an individual's basic socio-moral programming. Consequently, group two's portrayal of reckless siblings Catherine and Hindley exposed the reckless socio-moral programming of Catherine Earnshaw and Hindley Earnshaw. The reckless decision-making in this scene may resonate with the reckless domestic situations faced by some young South Africans.



Photo 33: Role-play showcase Group 2 – Cycle 4

(Appendix B)

The image above showcases Group 2, in which Participant B portrayed Hindley, holding a bottle and a cushion to represent a bottle of alcohol and a baby, respectively. Participant G played Heathcliff, who caught the baby that a drunken Hindley dropped 'over a balcony'. This scene was from the first part of Chapter 9 of the novel.



Photo 34: Role-play showcase group 2 – Cycle 4

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants G, B and I)

Participant G standing in the corner pretending to be Heathcliff overhearing Nelly Dean played by Participant B and Catherine Earnshaw played by Participant I discussing who Catherine should marry. This was the second part of chapter 9 from the novel

I asked the participants from group one immediately after group two's role-play what they thought they had learned about it. Here is what group two shared, based on my observations and field notes (Appendix B):

Participant D says that they saw no responsibility because Hindley was drinking and holding a baby. She saw that in group one it was wrong to marry for status and in group two it was okay to marry for status. It was

responsible decision making from the second group's portrayal because Catherine was thinking about her kids, herself and she does not want to be a burden to anyone else when her father passed away. Participant D further goes on to say that the characters were blameless because back then people had to conform to the rules of society. Even though some people have the option right now to go to school they would rather get married rich for the sake of their children. It's not wrong to marry for comfort. They don't want to go down for the name of love.

What Participant D observed was a lack of responsible decision-making from the first scene in the role-play, where Hindley dropped the baby. She also compared the two role-plays. In group one, it was deemed unacceptable to marry for status, whereas in group two, it was considered acceptable, as Catherine deliberated the fate of her unborn children when trying to decide whom to marry. It was important that Participant D linked the actions and decisions in the novel to contemporary issues. The Victorian decisions resonated with her in the present day. Later, as the participants reflected on the role-play and the narrative empathy session, I noted that Participant I perceived the situation in the same way as participant D.

Participant I – Writing task

In a way when Catherine had to choose between Edgar and Heathcliff, it seemed as though she did it for having a life of luxury and class but it was probably deeper than that, like what if she did that because she was thinking about her life in the long run, such as what will happen when she loses her dad and her brother marries and also if she married Heathcliff and they have children, how will they even be able to provide for them properly, and this is probably what pushed her to marry Edgar even more.

The fact that women had little power during the period in which the novel is set resulted in both participants empathising with Catherine's financial dependence. They stated that women were trapped by the social and legal conventions of the Victorian era, including the law of entail, which stipulated that property could only be inherited through male lineage. She empathised with Catherine, who did not want to live a miserable life in the name of love or jeopardise the well-being of her unborn children.

Back to group one's response to group two's role play, based on my observations and field notes (Appendix B):

Participant I says this conversation reminds her of a meme she once saw "Once you see a guy through the storm, you will never see the sunshine". This meme Participant I mentioned related to the tough decisions women have to make around marrying for money or love.

Participant C said that some women want to marry extremely rich and it is counteractive to what Participant D said which was in the name of love, date below you because you come from a certain background.

Participant A said "what about your happiness?" to the girls (Participants D, C and I). Participant C says there is a few group of people who fall in love and if you build each other you can still marry for love. Participant A said that some women are "something else" he has seen women in relationships with men who are not rich as well, they both come from nothing and can build each other up. Like having a small shop in the neighborhood and then from there they build up to having a small store in the town and then that's how they develop each other. The other participants laugh at him. Participant A is defensive. Participant D disagrees. But Participant I understands what both of them are saying even though she doesn't agree with one and agrees with the other.

Participant I's mention of a meme that reminded her of Catherine's decision-making sparked a new conversation among the group about the morality of choosing a life partner for money or for love. Participant C explained that certain people marry to ascend to a higher social class or to maintain their current social class. Participant A countered this explanation, stating that it is very possible for two people who love each other to financially support one another to a point where they can collaboratively move up a social class, as he had witnessed in his own town, where a couple was able to start a thriving business in the area from a small shop. The participants became defensive, disagreed, and also empathised with each other's varying views. The fact that their deliberations and differing viewpoints on the role-plays prompted

the participants to draw on real-life decisions and observations made these role-plays a significant reference for responsible or irresponsible decision-making in relationships. Their engagement echoes Ackroyd (2007), who notes that the power of drama allows people to freely discuss movements within fictional worlds and contemplate their implications for real life, just as these groups were did together.

In the following writing tasks (Appendix C) and diary entries (Appendix D), the participants considered their empathic responses to the role-playing characters *Wuthering Heights*:

Participant B – Diary

Acting as Hindley being drunk and dropping the baby as if it was funny.

Participant G – Writing Task

Love is a prevailing theme in Wuthering Heights but filled with hatred, revenge and social class. The journey of Catherine growing up in Wuthering Heights then moving to Thrushcross Grange is interesting because she had a fear of what she will do when her father dies and decided that she will marry Edgar just so she can have some properties under her name and have a future that she dreamt of. Heathcliff, showed me that it is good to move because you can't be holding onto things that no longer have purpose in your life.

Participant G – Diary

I am an overthinker when doing something that is out of my comfort zone but at the same time, I like exceeding my abilities and fitting into somebody's shoes and feel their emotions through their character. Role play provides real world scenarios, and it is always interesting to learn more about how the writer felt when portraying the character.

Participant B, who played Hindley in this scene, stated that his favourite moment in the research activity was role-playing a drunken Hindley who dropped baby Hareton, as he found this amusing and funny. The participant may have found behaving recklessly amusing because he possibly does not have the opportunity to behave

recklessly in reality. Participant G, who played Heathcliff, shared that in portraying Heathcliff, she could also empathise with Catherine's decision to marry Edgar to attach monetary value to her; if she married Heathcliff, her father's assets would pass to her brother Hindley, not to Heathcliff, the stepson and her adopted brother. Playing Heathcliff, who truly loved Catherine, gave this participant the perspective to recognise that Heathcliff loved Catherine enough not to let her future be left to chance by being with him, as he did not serve Catherine's social and economic goals. She noted that playing Heathcliff, who fled the scene when Catherine chose to marry Edgar instead of him, taught her not to hold on to things that no longer serve any purpose. Participant G remarked that while she is an overthinker in reality, playing a character like Heathcliff provided her with the ability to empathise with a character who possessed different characteristics from her own. She recognised that role-play provided real-world scenarios. The role-play experiences of these two participants are significant because they reflect how both participants were able to portray characters who were different from themselves and empathise with individuals in those roles. The role-playing and empathy allowed them to understand a different perspective, one which they may not have considered previously. These findings reinforce those of Paschall and Wustenhagen (2012), who found that role-plays are more engaging in learning than the typical lecture format, and in many cases, students tend to have fun. These participants empathised with their characters, enjoyed role-playing, and learned about personality traits that differed from their own through role-play and empathy.

9.3 Narrative empathy to learn responsible decision-making

After the role-play activities, the participants commenced their narrative empathy discussion sessions. The first of their discussion points is documented in my observation and field notes (Appendix B) below:

Participant C said don't marry in the family "This is a norm for Muslims to marry within the family". To this I asked the participants how they feel about making this assertion knowing there is no Muslim participant in the group. Participant B said that he has many Muslim friends and all of them have said and experienced the norm of marrying within the family. Participant C stated that it is not just Muslim people. It's any wealthy family who wants

to keep wealth in the family who end up marrying second, and third cousins. Participant A then said that it happens especially in the Zulu nation, in the royal family. Participant A said that if he marries 3 women, his youngest brother inherits the wives which may be hard to maintain, but then the youngest brother has all the responsibilities of the dead brother. It's a tough decision. Participant C noted that this inheritance of wives is reminiscent of how women are objects to be owned. Participant A says it is the female/bride's family who coerces the Zulu woman to be a second wife of a man who has lots of money and wealth.

Participant C started the discussion about the lesson she learned from responsible decision-making in the novel, which was not to marry within the family, since Heathcliff and Catherine were step-siblings. This prompted the participants to think about real-life marriages that were forged within families and made them question the reasons why such 'within the family' marriages take place in South Africa. Participants stereotyped certain cultures in South Africa that they claimed commonly marry within the family. These may be subjective experiences shared by the participants, as there were no facts to substantiate these broad claims. However, the narrative empathy process acknowledges that "readers are likely to make category-based judgments about fictional characters, and to emphasise attributed dispositions of characters over their actual behaviour in situations" (Keen, 2006, p. 218). This is not morally conscious behaviour but is the first step readers take in engaging with the novel. Additionally, by reflecting on the characters and their marital motives, the participants discussed the nuances of 'marriage within the family' in their realities and from the communities they collectively understand.

What is significant about these responses regarding marriage in South Africa was the segue discussion point from Participant A's initial remark about Zulu marriages, specifically that when the elder brother dies, his wife or wives and their children must be 'given' to the youngest brother. Participant C responded that the inheritance of women represents the objectification of women who are passed from one man to another. Participant A noted that it is often the Zulu women who sometimes endorse polygamous marriage if it is advantageous. What is noteworthy here is that the participants were making connections with marital decisions in South African society

as they evaluated the decision-making of the characters who made poor marital choices in the novel *Wuthering Heights*. The discussion indicated that the participants began to question and evaluate gender conventions, cultural conventions, and marital conventions in South Africa as they reflected on the marital decisions presented in *Wuthering Heights*. This provided them with the ability to approach cultures with new knowledge and fresh perspectives. It is hoped that the participants recognised that while each culture is unique and makes decisions based on its own complexities, it is not acceptable to stereotype cultures without a full understanding. Whalen (2010) states that in many cultures, fictional narratives were a primary means of communicating norms and values regarding the formation of relationships. Here, these participants were using the characters from *Wuthering Heights* to debate the formation and dynamics of real-world relationships based on discussions of the fictional relationships within Brontë's novel.

As the narrative empathy discussion session continued, more realisations about responsible decision-making emerged, as noted in my observation and field notes (Appendix B) below:

Participant A says that the novel showed him that you never know what the future holds "so don't taste all sorts of chicken, you have to think it through first, is she the person you really want to spend the rest of your life with". Participant A says Heathcliff and Edgar never really thought about their wife options and chose what was available. Participant B says the novel made him think about who he should choose to date. He says that Heathcliff and Isabelle taught him who to date, and not to marry out of desperation. Participant G says it taught her that she should love someone and not just marry for property or money. Participant I says people say don't marry for class. Sometimes besides the class and the materialistic things you have to be realistic and know what you want and what will benefit you in the long run.

Participant A indicates that the marital relationship choices in the novel reminded him to date carefully instead of marrying the first person for whom he has feelings. Participant B agreed and pointed out the dangers of marrying out of desperation or a

lack of choice, as seen with the characters in the novel. While Participant G wanted to marry for love, Participant I recognised that it is acceptable to be realistic and marry to improve one's living conditions. What all of them were saying was that the decision on whom to marry should not be made hastily and that choosing a life partner is a longer, more deliberate decision. These findings are significant in relation to Gasser et al. (2022), who state that from an efferent perspective, the readers' attention is focused on finding the moral message and the lesson within the texts and then applying this lesson to real-life situations. These findings on careful deliberation and responsible decision-making were the moral takeaway of the participants from their discussion on the text.

In the following observation and field notes (Appendix B) and writing tasks (Appendix C), the participants considered their empathic responses to the social coercion in *Wuthering Heights*:

Observation and field notes

Participant C says that 'something South Africa has to deal with now is coming out of circumstance' like how Catherine came out of her circumstance by marrying Edgar. Participant C also says the decisions you make in marriage are like Maslow's hierarchy of needs: you have to satisfy the basics first. Participant D says that you can't walk around freely with the partner that you love- it reminded her of the film Clueless where you can't be with the guy in skates (Heathcliff) you have to be with the guy who is proper (Edgar).

Participant C – Writing Task

I did have a feeling of empathy for Catherine when she was forced to conform to marrying for money and class rather than for love. It shows how women are pressurised into this norm.

Participant A – Writing Task

Catherine chose money over love which what is very common these days. Women tend to choose money over love. It could be that the person from the very beginning was after your money. One can never really find true love these days. It is up to the people that are caught up in the middle to make the next group of us young vibrant men and women to believe in the power of love

Participant G – Writing Task

The storyline of all characters in the novel really took me back to that time and made me wonder why the characters did what they did and the reason behind it. The society is a big influence in this novel because people are expected to behave in a certain way.

Participant C compares South Africa's position to that of Catherine's. While South Africa is attempting to rise out of its current circumstances, Catherine elevates herself by recognising Edgar as her way out and upward. She acknowledges that Catherine needs to meet basic human needs first before considering other needs, such as romantic ideals. Participant C references Maslow, who posits that a person's survival needs must be met before contemplating aspects like love and belonging, which typically fall under level 3 of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Poston, 2009). Her recognition of Catherine's needs versus wants resonates with her understanding of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, highlighting the practical value of this theoretical framework in real-life relationships. This understanding fosters responsible decision-making for Participant C, who may draw upon Maslow's hierarchy when reflecting on the decisions Catherine made in her own life.

Participant D references a film character who is considered to have social standing. The character was told not to date her love interest of choice (a skateboarder) but to date a popular character with good social standing. Ultimately, she decides to choose her love interest. Participant D compared the skateboarder to Heathcliff and the popular alternative to Edgar, a complete mismatch but one where social expectations would have been met.

Whether it is marrying for money and having one's basic living needs met or marrying for social acceptance, participants A and G recognise the impact that socially driven decisions have on people. Their responses demonstrate an understanding that decisions surrounding social expectations play a role in whether individuals marry for love, money, or social status. For these participants, the novel taught them to identify potential needs to consider when choosing a life partner. Reader response theory posits that a broad range of elements rise into the consciousness of the reader, such as the story stirring up personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes, as seen in this case with newfound perspectives on life partner decision-making (Rosenblatt, 1982). Weighing the consequences of their decisions was a significant finding from their discussion of the novel. These findings are reinforced by O'Sullivan et al. (2015), who explored how the emotions and experiences of imperfect characters provide a lens through which to view the sociocultural context of the characters. By engaging with this text, the participant readers learned to consider human social complexity, as it offered them a possible model for their own more complex, situation-specific human issues.

My observations and field notes (Appendix B) reflect the participants' empathetic responses to the fabricated femininity that women have to endure:

Participant I says that as much as women today don't want to be seen as objects, they portray themselves as these objects I asked for examples of how women portray themselves as objects and Participant D says your wigs, makeup and nails need to be done and that is how women are expected to appear in front of wealthy men. A 13 year old girl can't be like Billy Eilish; she has to be like Rihanna. Nowadays, Brazilian butt lifts are done to attract men and was likened to when Catherine stayed with the Lintons to learn how to become more like a lady.

Participant I shared that while women do not want to be objects to men, they make decisions to perform rituals that satisfy the male gaze and thereby objectify themselves in the process of satisfying their male partners. The participants indicated that sometimes the grooming practices prescribed by men, such as plastic surgery, can be dangerous and undesirable for the women who have to endure them. I made

the connection to the moment in the novel when Catherine decided to repress the wild instincts she embraced with Heathcliff as they ran together in the Yorkshire moors all day. Catherine sacrificed this carefree lifestyle for the sake of learning the etiquette of a lady so she could impress and marry Edgar. The participants nodded in agreement, and no one challenged this. This is significant because the participants may have seen parallels with the identity that Catherine sacrificed to appear attractive and wifely to Edgar Linton. Participants began to identify the patriarchal impact on a woman's decision-making regarding her rights to shape her femininity. They may have started to realise that, in order to attract the male gaze, a woman would consciously decide to remodel her body and mind, resulting in objectifying herself in the pursuit of finding a spouse. Pillay and Wasserman (2017) explored how issues of gender inequality and gender roles in literary texts can be extrapolated and understood in the literature classroom. Gender conventions are largely shaped by the socio-economic norms of the societies in which people are born, and society places specific demands on men and women (Pillay & Wasserman, 2017). Through discussing the various ways in which women decide to change their bodies to suit their male counterparts, the participants were grappling with the decisions surrounding the gender conventions of their own society.

In terms of the role and treatment of children in the novel, the participants and I made certain observations. These responses were shared in the observation and field notes (Appendix B) and writing tasks (Appendix D), as shown below:

Observation and field notes

Participant B says “don’t treat your laaitie (son) like how Heathcliff treated Linton. He treated Cathy swaak (badly) but ell (hell) that man tchoons (treats) his laaaitie offside (unfairly)”. Participant B says he knows that some South African fathers treat their sons badly like Heathcliff treated Linton and Cathy badly. Participant D says it is different and similar for African families. It reminded her of how the daughter has to take the burden and when she starts working she has to put the family first. Her mothering nature must be seen. It reminded her of when Catherine says she doesn’t want to be a burden when her father dies, she can’t marry for

love, she has to marry for status. Some women have to put the needs of others first.

Participant I – Writing task

I felt really bad for what Cathy and Hareton had to endure because of Heathcliff's "obsession" with Catherine. They were dragged into something that they had nothing to do with. It was unpleasant that no adult could really help them get out of that situation because Cathy's mother has passed away and her father was very ill as well, and could not even help her when she was kidnapped.

Participant B – Writing Task

I felt empathy for young Cathy as she was not responsible for any of Heathcliff's misfortunes yet he still treated her very poorly, as well as his own son Linton, who was born sickly and instead of Heathcliff looking after him, he abused him.

From the above responses, it was clear that the participants were critical of the roles of sons and daughters, both in the novel and in South Africa. Participant B contemplates the poor treatment of Heathcliff's son and daughter-in-law and compares it to the lack of compassion and care that South African sons endure. Participant D added that she feels there is an inherited financial burden that black South African women have to bear when they start working. Participants I and B express their pity and empathy for young Catherine Linton and Hareton Earnshaw, who were children of very insecure and distraught adults that bequeathed their childhood trauma onto their children. All these responses resonate with the oppressive experiences endured by the offspring in the novel due to irresponsible parenting decisions. This is significant because the participants' comparison of the treatment of sons and daughters in the novel allowed them to identify the mistreatment of youth that can occur within the South African family unit. By empathising with the plight of the protagonists' offspring, these participants now have the mental capacity to recognise acts of oppression (Warren, 2005) in South Africa and in their own lives through discussions of oppression as depicted in the novel.

9.4 Importance of responsible decision-making

The writing tasks (Appendix C) and diary entries (Appendix D) completed by the participants reveal how they experienced lessons on responsible decision-making from the role-plays and warm-up games:

Participant C – Writing Task

The warmup games did make me understand SEL competencies. When I had to play the murderer I had to carefully make my decisions on who to wink at without getting caught. Overall, each of games highlight something you can learn about each competency and as an aspiring psychologist it amazes me how much I can learn about people and their behaviours through the games

Participant C – Diary

The role play was very fun to perform as it reminded me of conversations woman still have today on which guy to date and how they weigh their options. Also playing the murderer and deciding which person to kill without getting caught improved decision making.

Participant B – Writing Task

Yes it showed me how to consider the actions of other people before I make my own decisions. The other game taught me how to understand others without vocal communication.

Participant B – Diary

During the role play I realised how many problems can be avoided if one considered the consequences of their actions before doing anything important, even actions that may not seem important but can snowball into a catastrophe.

Participant B – Writing Task

I have realized due to the role play that I tend to act rashly when I am emotionally hurt and act out without thinking. I am not as bad as Heathcliff however I can empathise with his situation.

Participant A – Diary

They were very fun; they taught a lot especially about the whole narrative, which was responsible decision making. It was also very nice hearing the different perspectives of everyone. The moment when Catherine couldn't make an informed decision about her future, it was because this play is almost a whole enactment of the things that are happening today and are very relevant to this day.

Participant I – Diary

Today's research activities were entertaining and new, as were some of the games I was not familiar with. When we were busy with the activities, I noticed that most of the SEL competencies were present in the games such as social awareness which was evident in the game "Torpedo" because we were required to read each other's facial expressions and act accordingly.

Participant G – Diary

For me the activities we do in class relieve the level of stress I've been feeling this week. It helps me with my cognitive level and prepares me for class and to learn more about my classmates.

The participants above reveal what they learned about responsible decision-making from the warm-up games and the role-plays. Participant C shared that the games allowed her to observe the behaviour of people in a way that would assist her as a future psychologist. This is significant because this participant recognised the importance of managing her own behaviour and saw the value of observing others to help with her future career through simulating a fictional scenario where an important decision is deliberated. She further stated that her part in the role-play reminded her of conversations women have today around dating. The act of simulating these experiences with others was preparing her for conversations she would engage in as a woman and as a future mental healthcare worker. The finding resonates with Orkibi (2018), who explored the value of drama therapy in psychodrama student training, highlighting that theatre and drama skills are essential in training psychodramatists. Although my participants were not training to become psychodramatists, it is

important to note the ability of these role-play experiences to teach future mental healthcare workers skills of spontaneity, animation, and self- and social-awareness, which are vital in clinical social work, a field in which this participant will one day be involved.

Participant B wrote across the diaries and writing tasks about his experience and the value he gained from the role-play and warm-up games, noting that the warm-up games taught him how to understand people without verbal communication. He further learned from the role-play that careful consideration of one's actions could avoid serious consequences. In empathising with Heathcliff, he recognised his own impulsive behaviour in emotionally heightened situations; however, he clarified that his behaviour was not as extreme as Heathcliff's. The role-play allowed this participant to observe weaknesses in himself and areas for improvement he could address. It also enabled him to evaluate his impulsive decision-making against those of the radical Heathcliff.

Participant A enjoyed the role-play and felt it mirrored reality. He recognised real-life moments in his fictitious role-play, which in turn made him see how he could make more responsible decisions if he were in this real-life scenario. Ronke (2004) resonates with Participant A's experience of relatability and reality from the scene, as drama allows language learners to learn non-verbal language, improving cultural and social awareness.

Participant I recognised the SEL skill of social awareness, as she had to predict the next move of her peers by being physically and mentally alert before torpedoing towards the next individual. Participant G experienced the warm-up games as a stress reliever and felt her cognitive abilities were recharged, enabling her to focus on her lessons and classmates. Both participants felt a sense of mental reset from the warm-up games. It is significant that Participant I accessed her social awareness knowledge while torpedoing, as she recognised another SEL competency assisting her behaviour. It is also significant that Participant G needed the warm-up games to help her focus on the lessons, as they calmed her. The action of play, along with concurrent physical and mental activity, helped her release pressure and concentrate on her priorities, revealing a possible emotional tool for mental reset in the warm-up games.

Segura et al. (2021) found that warm-up games may be used to set the tone for working with very specific skills and competencies, and these games allowed Participant G to access the focus and concentration needed to be mentally present for the SEL training activities at hand.

The following writing tasks (Appendix C) and diary entries (Appendix D) that the participants completed reveal how they processed Heathcliff's revenge, discussing whether it was helpful or harmful to him and the people around him:

Participant A – Diary

I learnt that every action, you have to think it through. Firstly ask yourself if it will benefit you in the long run or will it be your demise.

Participant B – Writing Task

Heathcliff has taught me what a lack of good decision making looks like and why it is important to consider the consequences of all actions and whether or not action is really needed.

Participant B – Writing Task

Heathcliff's revenge was unjustified and I believe Heathcliff was unnecessarily cruel to Catherine. Hindley may have deserved the revenge Heathcliff bestowed upon him however due to this Catherine also suffered a great deal of pain. Catherine could not choose to marry Heathcliff as he did not have any Properties or wealth in his name, as Hindley took over Wuthering Heights.

Participant C – Writing Task

His revenge is justified, he felt betrayed and therefore decided to take revenge. Love can compel people to make irrational decisions. It reminded me that it is important to evaluate your decisions before acting on them. The role play allowed me to think about how making conscious decisions is important for lifelong benefit

Participant D – Writing Task

No Heathcliff's revenge was not justified, as it shows that a person who struggles to learn to cope with their emotions can be dangerous just to prove a point.

Participant G – Writing Task

Heathcliff's revenge is unjustified. Looking at the novel, Heathcliff was an orphan who was taken by Mr Earnshaw and needed love from his family. He was treated badly by the Earnshaw family especially Hindley. He fell in love with his stepsister Catherine and later found that Catherine wants to marry another man to be financially stable. His act of revenge is driven by his hunger for power so that he can show the people who mistreated him that he can do better or be better. In my opinion Heathcliff's revenge is not justifiable because he hurt people who are dear to him and made them hate him because he was after money. As for Hindley, I think his revenge comes from the relationship with his father. His father favoured Heathcliff ever since he came to the house so there is a void of how an adopted son can just take his place from his father. He is driven by a loss of attention that he seeks from his father and turns it to revenge.

Participant I – Writing Task

Heathcliff's revenge is not justified because he is just ruining the lives of the poor children for his own personal gain and they do not even have anything to do with what happened before they were born.

Participant A states that observing Heathcliff's revenge on the younger family members made him consider his actions before acting on them, as one's actions could lead to a future downfall. For Participant B, Heathcliff's actions provided a picture of what irresponsible decision-making looks like and taught him the importance of deliberating on a decision before acting on it. Both participants have learned the importance of responsible decision-making from observing a character who was irresponsible and impulsive in his choices. Heathcliff serves as a model of how not to make decisions. As Gasser et al. (2022) state, classic stories instruct the reader by providing fictional modes for both virtuous behaviour and by highlighting

the consequences of negative behaviour. The participants here learned from Heathcliff a model of irresponsible decision-making, which resulted in irresponsible behaviour.

Participant B pointed to Heathcliff's seemingly justifiable decision-making because he was previously tortured by Hindley. Participant C also empathised with Heathcliff's decision to seek revenge for Hindley's childhood torment, noting that when people are emotionally driven by strong feelings of love, irrational decisions can take over. However, she also views this behaviour as an example of how not to behave. She recognises that evaluating a decision before acting on it is important for long-term consideration. Both participants are able to empathise with Heathcliff, even though they disagree with how he manages his childhood trauma. The novel thus allows them to understand the trauma of others through these empathic connections (Brown, 2019). By empathising with both the good and bad decisions of Heathcliff, the participants are cultivating their own abilities to identify childhood trauma and responsible and irresponsible decisions in others.

Participant D sees the danger in behaviour that is born from aggressive revenge. What is significant about this response is that this participant recognises the need to manage heightened emotions; otherwise, this could result in dangerous outcomes. The importance of recognising emotions before they lead to reckless behaviour is a key takeaway and a core skill in emotional education. Goleman (1996) stated that in order to prevent neural hijackings – those moments when someone's emotional outburst evolves into violent rage – it would be wise for children and adults to learn to manage their emotions and develop a set of skills that would help them gain essential life lessons from emotional self-awareness, reading emotions, and handling relationships, among other emotional learning categories that parallel the CASEL 5 SECs. It is significant that this participant was able to see a link between uncontrolled heightened emotions and destructive behaviour, highlighting her ability to identify potentially dangerous behaviour in individuals who do not manage their emotions.

Participant G, in empathising with various characters and their reasons for revenge, demonstrates that every character has a motive for taking revenge on their significant foes. By identifying this, Participant G shows the ability to empathise with Heathcliff

because of his need to impose his newfound power on the family members who abused him when he was young. At the same time, she was also able to empathise with Heathcliff's perpetrator, recognising that his revenge on Heathcliff stemmed from jealousy of Heathcliff's position in their father's eyes. The participant observes that for both victim and perpetrator, revenge was born from a strong need to address pain from the past. She is making connections between unprocessed unpleasant emotions that coerce these individuals (Hindley as a child and Heathcliff as an adult) into making irresponsible decisions. Goleman's work further addresses the mental consequences of unprocessed painful memories, stating that our "emotional faculties may guide our moment-to-moment decisions, working hand in hand with the rational mind, enabling or disabling thought itself" (Goleman, 1996, p. 28). The participant, who will one day be a mental health care worker, is able to see the important link between unprocessed emotions and irrational decision-making.

Participant I views Heathcliff's revenge on the new generation of Lintons, Earnshaws, and Heathcliffs as unjustifiable because they were forced to participate in a feud for which they were not responsible. This participant perceives Heathcliff's selfish motives, as he imposes his past feud onto the children. This is significant because exposure to Heathcliff's abuse of power and exploitation may illustrate to this participant how generational trauma impacts individuals. As this participant may also become a mental health care worker in South Africa, it is important for her to be able to identify patients with stories of generational trauma stemming from South Africa's apartheid past (Brandt, 2020). In return, exposure to generational trauma and empathy for victims may enhance her mental healthcare training for service in South Africa.

The following writing tasks (Appendix C) that the participants completed reveal how they understood Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship:

Participant D – Writing Task

The novel made me feel sorry for Heathcliff because at the end of the day he is a person who just wants love and he didn't get that.

Participant G – Writing Task

The relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine shows toxicity. At the beginning of the novel it seems like they love each other but their love has a dark side. When Heathcliff and Catherine are by the moors, he said that if there are storms your future will not be good and if the sun comes out it will be bright. This scene made me think about how I should be aware of my surroundings and their actions. Sincerity fosters trust in relationship.

Participant A – Writing Task

It has taught me to be very cautious of the kinds of women I approach. It has taught me that women must be treated well in every aspect as well.

Participant D – Writing Task

When making decisions we need to weigh the pros and cons, and Catherine not marrying Heathcliff was a good decision because if she did Lord knows what will happen to her if she goes against him in their marriage since he struggles to manage his emotions.

Participant D empathises with the love that Heathcliff lost when Catherine decided to marry Edgar, and she empathises with the unrequited love that Heathcliff suffered. Participant G recognises that the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff was toxic, and she makes connections between their relationship and the gothic elements that underpin Brontë's writing in the novel. The weather resonated with their love story, which had an impact on the participant, who saw the stormy and sunny weather symbolising the joyous and dreadful moments in their relationship. This is significant because the literary technique seemed to have alerted the participant to being socially aware of her surroundings before making an important decision or taking action on it. The descriptions of extreme weather in the novel, traditionally used in gothic writing to symbolise negative characters or introduce supernatural entities like ghosts (Qiao, 2019), made Participant G more aware of her context before acting on decisions. Participant G's observations show that an aesthetic choice (gothic landscape and weather) by the writer led to an efferent (Mart, 2019) learning outcome (increased awareness of physical surroundings) for the participant.

Participant A shared that he became more conscious of the type of woman he should pursue in a relationship and learned to apply responsible decision-making when it came to personal and interpersonal relationships (CASEL, n.d.).

Participant D's assessment that the marriage between Heathcliff and Catherine could be toxic illustrates her ability to notice the warning signs of a potentially abusive partner, as demonstrated by her identification of Heathcliff's lack of responsible decision-making.

The following writing tasks (Appendix C) and diary entries (Appendix D) completed by the participants reveal how they learned about responsible decision-making for real-life application:

Participant A – Diary

After the research activities most of the things which I do in my life I am more cautious of my decisions. I think it through thoroughly and I look at the pros and cons of certain decisions that I take.

Participant B – Diary

After the research activities I have started doing my work earlier and completing more tasks further away from the due date.

Participant C – Diary

The discussion circle opened my mindset about how people have different perspectives about decision making and how different circumstances influence it.

Participant A indicates that he is now more aware of how he makes decisions, taking care to be more cautious and weighing the advantages and disadvantages of a situation before taking action. Participant B seems to have become more aware of his procrastination regarding assignments and now endeavours to start them before the impending deadline. Participant C shared that the narrative empathy discussion session alerted her to how different people make decisions, with each individual's

choice stemming from their unique circumstances. The participants are recognising the value of intentional and introspective decision-making, thereby learning that making one's decision-making a conscious, voluntary, and responsible activity could serve their personal goals.

Participant D – Diary

The SEL competencies are coming to my mind outside the classroom. It makes me look at life with a different perspective and be more respectful and responsible. I have learnt from the research activities to be more responsible in my decision making in my personal life. It's always the little things in your life, like what I will eat and wear and who I hang out with.

Participant D – Diary

I learnt that I need to think properly before I speak and this came to me while discussing the book. Made me realise our lives depend on these decisions.

Participant D recognises that the SEL competencies extend beyond the lecture room, reminding her to be more respectful and responsible in her behaviour. She understands that even basic daily decisions require responsible decision-making, including being more conscious of her speech. The moment when Catherine judged Heathcliff as unsuitable as a husband alerted this participant to the importance of choosing her words carefully for the well-being of her role within the family (CASEL, n.d.). This is significant because the SEC-focused literary lesson provides this participant with emotional tools to apply outside the research activities, aiding her in both major and minor moments of decision-making in her personal life.

Participant G – Diary

The SEL competencies are coming to my mind outside the classroom especially at Campus. Me and my friends had a tough time deciding between going home and or staying in at the resource centre to doing our work. We find ourselves being indecisive of what to do and at the end we advise each other and make a good decision to finish the work then

leave late than leaving early with no work done. Decision making led us to finish their work on time.

Participant G states that she is also applying the SEL competencies outside of the lecture room, particularly in a scheduling decision that led her to choose to finish her work before leaving campus, rather than leaving early and returning the next day with no work completed. This kind of granular impact on her decision-making demonstrates how the responsible decision-making competency is being considered beyond the research activity and applied in her personal life. The moment Participant G chose to take steps to improve her time management and set goals for her afternoon was when she applied responsible decision-making to make healthy life choices (Conley, 2015).

Participant I – Diary

My favourite moment was when we all were discussing how the novel relates to life as we know it and hearing how it is relatable in the different cultures was really nice.

Participant I – Diary

I learnt that responsible decision-making does not have to involve many people and that when taking responsible decisions, you also need to be realistic with your decisions and not make them just to please the next person as we are all responsible for ourselves. I've learnt that I should always calm myself down whenever I am facing something and not take decisions impulsively as they will most probably lead to dire consequences, and to be realistic with those decisions as well.

Participant I – Writing Task

The destructive love between Heathcliff and Catherine has made me more conscious about my personal emotional experiences because it showed me that if you take decisions while your emotions are elevated it is very likely that you will make bad decisions other than responsible ones as your judgment is clouded by whatever elevated emotion you are feeling.

Participant I shares her enjoyment of the narrative empathy discussion sessions, where she felt that everyone had the opportunity to express how the novel related to real life. She observed that there were moments in the story that resonated with all their lives. She learned many aspects of responsible decision-making, including that a decision needs to be authentic and not made for the satisfaction of another person; that decisions should be made with a calm state of mind, rather than impulsively; and that decisions must be made realistically. These facets of responsible decision-making demonstrate that this participant understands the nuances involved in developing this competency. The destructive relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine taught her an important lesson about the necessity of being in a rational mental state when making significant decisions.

The auto photography (Appendix E) below highlights the moments and tableaux of responsible decision-making that the participants photographed and documented themselves.



Photo 35: Group 1 autophotography captions
(Appendix E)

Participant A

There is a constant argument between the heart and the brain of an individual, whether to go for love or power which is a very difficult decision to make.

Participant C

In this picture Catherine is deciding whether she should marry for love which is Heathcliff or marrying for stability and social class which is Edgar. This decision determines her future.

Participant D

The picture explains the hard time Catherine had when it came to making a decision on who she must marry. Marry for love or marry for status.

In this image, Participant A, who played the 'good angel fancy noblewoman' giving Catherine advice on whom to marry, shares that there was conflicting dialogue between logic and emotion in this scene. He likens the decision Catherine needed to make to a challenging choice between marrying for power or for love. The participant is smirking in the image above, showing an expression of satisfaction for being the good angel and possibly guiding Catherine towards the romantically ideal decision of choosing Heathcliff, even though he knew she was facing a very tough choice. As the participant introspected on the image, his caption revealed that the scene reminded him of the difficulty in making a decision between one's impulses and rational thought. This is significant because the tableau the participant presents suggests that the role-played scene may have appeared fun, but the image serves as a bearer and marker of a more serious concept: choosing between marrying for love or for wealth. Reader-response theory promotes critical thinking in the reader regarding the text, as it is essential in helping higher education students make sense of their world and consider how things have come to be (Qamar, 2016). The more aesthetic experience of the role-play here did not detract from the more efferent learning of crucial marital decision-making.

In this image, Participant C played the 'bad angel fancy noblewoman' and, from this scene, she was able to understand the difficulty that Catherine encountered in making

a marital decision on whether to marry for love or for financial and social security. Participant C can visualise what a difficult decision feels like while giving advice to her peer playing Catherine. The participant captions this image with her memory of the moment being a strenuous decision-making process for Catherine, thereby teaching her the importance of making decisions not just for the present but for the future.

In this image, Participant D, who played Catherine experiencing difficult decision-making, shared that she understood the challenging time Catherine had when it came to deciding whom to marry. As a result, role-playing the character taught the participant about the difficulties a person might face when making a crucial life-changing decision.



Photo 36: Group 2 autophotography captions
(Appendix E)

Participant B

The picture shows Catherine deciding to marry Edgar for money rather than Heathcliff for love. While the happier choice would have been to marry Heathcliff I believe Catherine made the right choice in marrying Edgar at the time as if she married Heathcliff the duo would not have any property and marginal wealth, all coming from Catherine. At the time the novel was

written, the wiser choice would be to marry above your class, as it promised a comfortable life.

Participant G

This picture shows how Catherine is indecisive with her decision of believing in love or marrying for class. Nelly gave her an ear for what she wanted to say and ask her if she thinks it is a good decision she want to take. Nelly is quite responsible in this case because she is giving Catherine a chance to speak from her heart and share her feelings.

Participant I

This image shows rather the lack of responsible decision-making as we find Catherine (right) showing indecisiveness as she is still not sure whether or not should she marry Edgar as he is rich and is from an upper class and not follow her heart by being with Heathcliff.

In this image, Participant B, who played an adapted high school version of the character Nelly Dean, was listening to Catherine discuss her decision about whom to date. Participant B shared that while the happier choice for Catherine would have been to marry Heathcliff for love, she was right to choose Edgar for wealth and social power, as this was the currency of the Victorian period. Marrying someone wealthy would have promised her a comfortable life. Participant B demonstrates an understanding of making decisions that align with the social norms of the society one is constrained by. This awareness of one's social context is echoed in the work of Van Huynh (2018), who stated that responsible decision-making involves the capacity to choose positively regarding one's personal behaviour while adhering to the social norms of a given environment and showing respect towards others. By empathising with Catherine's decision-making, Participant B recognised the social norms of the time in which Catherine had to make her choice and simultaneously learned that this type of dilemma may not be an issue today, as it is now common practice for women in the 21st century to earn their own living and choose whom to marry. This caption is significant as it teaches participants that sometimes decision-making is externally motivated and not solely an internal process.

In this image, Participant G, who played Heathcliff, watches one of the most painful moments in his story – when Catherine states that she cannot marry Heathcliff and must marry Edgar. Participant G shares that she recognises what responsible behaviour looks like in the actions of Participant B, who plays Nelly Dean. Nelly Dean provided Catherine with the platform to express her feelings about the complex decision-making regarding whom to marry. Participant G observes what support looks like through the role of Participant B as Nelly Dean. This is significant because, when making a difficult decision, one may require the counsel of another person. Participant G reflects on what support during challenging decision-making entails, as illustrated in the role-play tableau she captioned.

In this scene, Participant I, who played Catherine, voices her difficult decision to Participant B, who played Nelly Dean, without noticing Participant G, who played Heathcliff, listening in the background. Participant I expressed that Catherine displayed a lack of responsible decision-making, as she was indecisive about whether or not she should marry Edgar. By playing Catherine, Participant I empathised with her indecisiveness and gained insight into the feelings associated with making a regrettable decision. Portraying Catherine allowed this participant to develop a better understanding of responsible decision-making (Keezhatta, 2020).

9.5 Reflections on Cycle 4

At the beginning of Cycle 4, I did not prompt the participants regarding the order of the research activities, and they seemed to carry out the routine of the activities they were accustomed to from the previous three cycles. This indicates that they were now taking ownership of the research activities, similar to how they would in a routine lesson, knowing what to do when. We did not have time to take the narrative empathy discussion sessions outside the research space, as we were so focused on the activities that this aspect became secondary. This is something to carry forward to the end of Cycle 5. However, the responses regarding whether the participants were noticing the SEL competencies outside the classroom were frequent in their research diaries, showing that they were recalling and labelling the SECs beyond the research space. When I asked the participants if they had any suggestions for better integrating the SEL competencies using the role-play and narrative empathy discussion

sessions, they requested one more game for the warm-up sessions in Cycle 5, and I agreed.

The warm-up activities and the role-play activities addressed the first research question concerning how role-play and role-playing activities can support empathetic behaviour among the participants. The first game, which cultivated an atmosphere of mental concentration paired with physical speed, was important in preparing the participants for the cycle focused on building the responsible decision-making competency.

The second game allowed the participants to experience risk, which is an important behavioural trait to assess when teaching about responsible decision-making.

The third game the participants played aimed to encourage them to empathise with and show respect for the childhood dreams of their peers. The participants portrayed their peers' dreams with respect and empathy, which was an important mindset for them to adopt before engaging in tasks that explore the responsible decision-making competency through the novel *Wuthering Heights*.

Group one's role-play depicted Catherine's decision-making as complex and influenced by socially driven circumstances. For them, Catherine's choice of whom to marry became a decision she had to make in order to improve her social class. Once they deliberated on Catherine's decision-making in this scene, they concluded that it was an incorrect choice that ultimately led to her tragic end.

Group 2's role-play was a more colloquial adaptation of the scenes from chapter 9. By showing a drunken Hindley throwing his baby and Heathcliff catching young Hareton, they illustrated an Earnshaw child who was reckless in his drunken state. In portraying a high school-like Catherine making a decision between dating a poor guy or a rich guy, they again depicted an Earnshaw child making another reckless decision based on reasons that reflected the irresponsible socio-moral programming of these siblings.

In addressing whether role-play and role-playing activities can support empathic behaviour for the participants in this cycle, I found that they were able to identify that some individuals were trapped by the social and legal conventions of the time, and their decision-making was influenced by these factors. By empathising with the characters they portrayed, the participants recognised that irresponsible decision-making can stem from socially driven pressure and reckless behaviour.

The second research question, which focused on what SEL skills participants can learn from narrative empathy, was revealed in the narrative empathy discussion sessions. These sessions were stagnant at certain points, and I had to prompt them with questions on several occasions, unlike previous cycles where they would seamlessly progress to discussion after the role-plays. I recognised that not every competency is going to result in a free-flowing discussion. The responsible decision-making competency may have compelled the participants to evaluate their own decisions in their personal lives, which could explain their reluctance to share naturally.

The participants highlighted several moments that prompted them to share and discuss the concept of responsible decision-making from the novel. They began by critiquing instances in the story where characters married within the family, which led them to comment on 'within the family' marriages that occur in South Africa. Participants discussed instances of 'within the family marriage' that they believe commonly occur in isiZulu and Muslim cultures in South Africa, and they stereotyped these cultural occurrences in order to comment on them. Although there were Zulu participants present who could confirm this assumption, I made the participants aware that they were making these assumptions about Muslim people in their absence. In hindsight, I should have pointed out during their discussion that they were actively stereotyping. Perhaps I felt it was necessary to hear their discussion fully without intervening, or maybe I was distracted by documenting what they had to say; regardless, this was a flaw in my practice and an oversight. Participants made connections to real life regarding decision-making surrounding marital partners and parenting.

In addressing whether or not SEL skills can be learned from students who engage in narrative empathy in the literature learning space from this cycle, it was clear that the participants learned how to identify what irresponsible decision-making looks and feels like through the role-playing of irresponsible characters who made reckless choices, as well as through discussions about marital and dating choices in real life. Participants learned that socially driven decisions are not necessarily responsible decisions, but in certain societies, these are unavoidable. They also recognised that irresponsible decision-making in parenthood could result in traumatised children.

In responding to whether or not SEL is important for these participants in this cycle, I found – and the participants shared – that the warm-up games made them realise the importance of being socially aware, managing their behaviour, and identifying the behaviour in others. Participants felt that evaluating Heathcliff's radical decision-making prompted them to reflect on their own behaviour during emotional outbursts. They learned that by evaluating both the good and bad behaviour in Heathcliff, they could identify someone carrying childhood trauma, an important skill for anyone but especially for future mental health care workers. Participants began to connect dangerous behaviour with unprocessed painful emotions. They now had a model of an individual who made irresponsible decisions (Heathcliff), which in turn motivated them to make better choices in their own lives. Participants learned to be responsible with their choice of words when speaking to others and that in order to make responsible decisions, one needs to be in a rational state of mind. They also learned how to visually identify what irresponsible decision-making looks like.

Finally, Cycle 4 revealed to me that the participants can not only role-play scenes from the texts they study, but can also re-create scenes to suit the intention and message they have for their audience. Participants were able to see the SECs learned thus far outside the research space as they used the responsible decision-making competency to schedule their time better in order to reach their academic goals. Empathising with characters and role-playing scenes from *Wuthering Heights* provided these participants with newfound understanding of the limitations and inner workings of becoming responsible decision-makers themselves.

For the next cycle, I would like to identify if there is time for the participants to create their own role-play based on any of the SECs that are not linked to the prescribed texts. I need to prepare more warm-up games for the participants, as this is what they requested. I would like to take the participants outside the research space for the narrative empathy discussion session activity.

I would like to conduct two narrative empathy discussion session activities in the next cycle. One will take place before the role-play to gauge their understanding of the competency in relation to the text being studied. The other session will occur after the role-play to identify whether any of their views and opinions on the text and the competency have changed following the role-play.

I would like to add a question to their diaries to explore what they felt about their overall experiences of the role-play and narrative empathy discussion session in relation to learning about SEL from all five cycles. This could serve as their final individual reflective writing experience before the post-study questionnaire is given to them.

9.6 Conclusion

This chapter presents an analysis of Cycle 4, focusing on *Wuthering Heights*, where the participants explored the decision-making skills they could gain from role-playing and empathising with the characters and scenes in the novel *Wuthering Heights*.

The next chapter will examine the analysis and findings from Cycle 5 of the research activities, where participants explored the SEC of self-management through role-play and narrative empathy activities based on the play *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith.

Chapter 10:

Analysis and Findings – Cycle 5 – *She Stoops to Conquer* – Self-Management

10.1 Introduction

In Cycle 5, the literary text *She Stoops to Conquer* was used to learn the CASEL 5 SEC self-management skills.

For the last cycle, I aimed to implement five sets of actions. Firstly, I wanted the participants to explore a SEL competency of their choice through a role-play of their own creation. Secondly, I added more warm-up games as requested by the participants. Thirdly, I sought to take the narrative empathy discussion session outside the research space to see if they could identify SEL competencies in their campus environment. Fourthly, I wanted to assess whether the participants' views and opinions on the text being studied and the SEL competency being explored changed before and after the role-play. To achieve this, I decided to conduct two sets of narrative empathy discussion sessions: one before the role-play and one after. Lastly, I included a question in their diaries to capture their feelings about their overall experiences of the role-play and narrative empathy discussions in relation to learning about SEL throughout all five cycles.

10.2 Using role-play and role-playing extracts from *She Stoops to Conquer* to support empathic behaviour

At the start of Cycle 5, the participants began the self-management skills research activities with role-play warm-up exercises, following the methodology design of each cycle. The participants engaged in six games for this cycle, with an additional three games conducted at the participants' request.

The first game was the plain mirror game (Boal, 2002). This exercise aimed to create synchronized movement among the groups and was chosen to warm up both the body and the imagination. In my observation and field notes (Appendix B), I noted, "*I ended up playing this game with the participants because we were short one participant for this partner-specific game. Participant B was weirded out by certain*

moves I made him mirror, probably because I was his teacher and he felt odd being off guard with me". There are no images of this activity because I had to participate. The participants appeared focused while playing this game, with most partners mirroring simple hand, leg, or body gestures. The mirror game was an appropriate start to the final warm-up session, as it served to prepare both bodies and minds for the next five games. It also focused on self-management – or the lack thereof – identified in this cycle. I followed Howie and Bagnell's (2014) suggestion that the degree to which a subject warms up reflects the subject's ability to be autonomous in a learning situation. For all these participants, the actions of leading and being led in the mirror game, as well as performing unusual movements under someone else's leadership, indicated their development of autonomous states in preparation for the learning to come.

The observation and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the following image and notes regarding the second game.



Photo 37: The Elephant focus warm-up – Cycle 5

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participant H is gesturing as the left ear of an elephant, Participant I represents the face and trunk, and Participant G portrays the right ear. Together, they form the complete face of an elephant)

The group demonstrated their love for the game through great enthusiasm and focus as they prepared to become ears and trunks for one another.

The activity developed relatedness, self-management, and quick coordination skills. The participants' focus and speed were tested when I pointed at different participants one at a time and observed how their neighbouring peers rushed to become the ears of the newly created trunk. This exercise warmed up their mental and physical impulses, echoing Itani's (2023) finding that each drama game has a unique focus that participants need to concentrate on in order to succeed. It also helped them develop the ability to manage their bodies and minds in rapid moments.

My observation and field notes (Appendix B) yielded the following insights and observations regarding the third game.



Photo 38: The image of the hour imagination warm-up – Cycle 5

All participants are shown sleeping at 1 AM, except for Participant D (far left, green dress), who is the only one awake and on her phone.

3am – *Most participants showed that they were sleeping.*

6am – *Most participants were brushing their teeth and getting ready for the day.*

12 – *Most participants showed how they dance and eat chocolate in my class whilst drinking Redbull.*

4pm – *Most of them showed how they are on their phones.*

6pm – *Most participants were eating.*

8pm – *Showering, eating, stalking – Participant D. Participant E, relaxing Netflix, Participant I – eating while working and TV, Participant C – music and working, Participant B – studying and self-loathing, Participant G – writing and notes and music Participant H- on my home, podcast and working.*

11pm – *Some participants are working some are sleeping.*

1am – *Participant D is always on the phone. Everyone else is sleeping.*

In this game, participants were asked to stand anywhere in the lecture room. When I announced a specific time of day, participants needed to enact with their bodies what they would typically do at that time. For example, 8 am on your birthday or 10 am on your wedding day. This activity exercised imagination and prepared the body for role-play. Participants had fun mimicking their various activities at different times of the day and felt comfortable showcasing their routines. While participating in the game, one participant, H, shared a thought that I noted:

Participant H mentioned that at 6am a radio DJ shared, “I don’t wash my legs”. The radio DJ asked people about whether or not they washed their legs when they bath. The participants judged those people who did not wash their legs while bathing stating that these people were filthy and used interjections of disgust. She stated that “We dismiss people for not doing things that we do”. She is showing social awareness because she is aware that she is being discriminatory. It is also a perspective teaching moment drawing attention to self awareness.

The participant was able to evaluate her feelings and subsequently make an informed decision about what those emotions meant for her. Brackett and Rivers (2014) emphasise the importance of being consciously aware of one's own feelings and those of others. When Participant H realised that her dismissive attitude toward a person, due to their grooming procedures not being similar to hers, led to the understanding that making such judgments could result in her excluding people from her life. Her empathy for someone different from her, along with her evaluation of her opinion, reflects a moment of emotional intelligence.

The observation and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the following image and notes regarding the fourth game.



Photo 39: The string puppet warm-up – Cycle 5

Participant E (left) and Participant D (right) were one of the pairs in this activity. Participant D acted as the puppeteer, while Participant E played the role of the puppet. As Participant D pulled on the imaginary string attached to Participant E's leg, Participant E had to move her leg in the direction of the string that was imagined to be connected to her leg.

The game was designed to strengthen synchronisation, observation skills, and physical movement abilities. Participants demonstrated focused physical engagement. Some were brave enough to experiment with various bodily movements, making larger gestures and more precise actions directed toward the string. In contrast, other participants, as shown in the image above, opted for simpler limb 'pulls.' What is significant here is how this warm-up game fostered an atmosphere of trust, collaboration, and participation within the group (Stranska, 2022). This game allowed the controlled participants to place their trust in the puppeteer participant, who guided their bodies in unfamiliar directions.

The observations and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the following image and notes related to the fifth game.



Photo 40: Complete the image warm-up – Cycle 5

Participant C (left) and Participant I (right) were one of the pairs in this game. Participant I, on bended knee, pretended to propose marriage to Participant C, and her shocked expression indicates that a significant question was being posed.

Pair 1 – *Participant E and Participant H high-fived each other because they had not seen each other in a long time. The others thought it was because they had won something. This led to a significant learning lesson about how texting can create major perception issues.*

Pair 2 – *Participant B, Participant G, and Participant D were involved in a circle at an AA meeting. The group interpreted it as a friend intervention or a serious discussion session.*

Pair 3 – *Participant C and Participant I both saw that one was proposing to the other. What was read here was what was intended to be read.*

This game required participants to group themselves in pairs or trios. Each group or pair was tasked with thinking of an image to freeze, such as handshaking or driving a bus, among others. The groups then presented their frozen images to the other groups, who were asked to guess the activity depicted in the frozen image. While some frozen images were very easy to interpret, like the one above, others necessitated a negotiation of meaning, and participants recognised the perceptual issues they faced when texting. The game aimed to enhance acting and concentration skills but also developed the participants' ability to understand that they can derive different meanings from the same message. As Ronke (2004) notes, physical movement can stimulate intellectual movement, and the interpretation and misinterpretation of these frozen physical movements by the participants broadened their perceptual abilities.

The final game was the "Tell Your Own Story" game. The observation and field notes (Appendix B) revealed the following insights regarding the sixth game.

In this game, participants were asked to think of a recent personal experience involving other people in their lives. Once all the participants had thought of a personal scenario, they had the opportunity to sit in a 'director's chair' and, one by one, direct their personal experience in a live-action role-play using their peers as actors. The participant directing their story chose the number of participants required, and while narrating their personal story, their chosen actors improvised moments as they heard it being narrated. This activity quickly warmed up acting, listening, focus, and presentation skills.



Participant I directing



Participant D directing



Participant B directing



Participant H directing



Participant C directing



Participant G directing

Participant E directing



In the image above, we see each participant as a director, guiding their personal experience in a live retelling of their memorable narrative.

Participant B's story – *Narrated a story about an elaborate car accident with his uncle who threatened to shoot the neighbouring car because he ran through the red traffic light.*

Participant D's story – *Narrated a story about going on a drinking adventure with her cousins. From being in a mall to going on a drinking spree and travelling in Ubers to different peoples' houses. Her brother went straight to work drunk.*

Participant G's story – *Narrated a story about submitting an assignment late to the teacher.*

Participant C's story – *Narrated a story about her dad mistakenly hitting her with the tennis ball. She found it funny and noted that Participant I's enactment looked like her.*

Participant E's story – *Narrated a story about her being lost in the mall. Her dad was irresponsible, she was only 6 years old and did not want to be found immediately.*

Participant I's story – *Narrated a story about her with her uncle who was driving intoxicated after buying pizza.*

Participant H's story – *Narrated a story about a child running into the house with muddied hands and the evil aunty inside the house shouted at him for this reason. The child then replies by saying "you can't hit me you have arthritis and cankles".*

The group found this exercise quite funny and enjoyed seeing their personal stories acted out by their peers.

The participants found this game exhilarating, and each had the opportunity to share their memorable experiences with their peers. The intention of this exercise was to build their ability to listen carefully, take charge of scene creation, and simultaneously act on what they heard to create a live scenario. The game tested the participants' ability to listen, use their bodies to tell a story, and feel empowered enough to direct a narrative. One of the characteristics of self-management is the ability to show

courage and take initiative (CASEL, n.d.), and this is precisely what the participants demonstrated in this game, where they directed their own stories as collaborative role-plays.

The following diary entries (Appendix C) reveal what the participants felt about the warm-up games.

Participant D – Diary

I found them entertaining as usual, a lot of physical movement.

Participant B – Diary

Sharing the stories as it was quite fun to act out.

Participant I – Diary

The research activities today were enjoyable like the ones from the previous cycles. There was one game that we played where we had to tell a funny story and have some members of the class act it out, which was so much fun.

Participant G – Diary

The activities were fun and challenging. The one that we did about completing an animal using our body was really challenging for me because the exercise required fast pace and focus. I am unable to focus when I am under pressure and end up having anxiety about certain things. The other activities were fascinating to me because I learned about how other people manage their time when at home and in public. When you see a comparison of what you have been doing versus what others do really does change the mindset sometimes. As people, we learn something new every day which helps us look at and observe the decisions we make now and in the future.

Participant D enjoyed the abundance of physical movement and felt entertained by it. Participant B had fun acting out the different stories shared by his peers, while Participant I enjoyed the last story, where they had to act out the narratives being

narrated to them. Participant G shared that using her body in a time-intensive game was challenging for her because it triggers her anxiety. This was not present during the activity, so it is an interesting observation to note that she felt anxious at the moment this game was happening. It points to the fact that the other participants and I were not socially aware of what was occurring around us, as we were in the midst of an enjoyable activity. The mime exercises and the creative work seemed to have masked her anxiety with a veneer of confidence (Stranska, 2022). She further stated that she found it interesting to observe what her peers did at different times of the day, as she felt it gave her perspective on her decisions for the future. Overall, the games seemed to provide the participants with enjoyment, growth, and the ability to learn about the perspectives and experiences of others.

After the warm-up games, the participants began the linguistic preparation and rehearsals for their role-plays on self-management from scenes in the play *She Stoops to Conquer*. The two images below present the participants, who were divided into two groups and began linguistically preparing and rehearsing their scripts.



Photo 42: Linguistic prep and rehearsal of the script by Group 1 – Cycle 5

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) Participants B, I, E, and G)



Photo 43: Linguistic prep and rehearsal of the script by Group 2 – Cycle 5

(Observation and field notes (Appendix B) – Participants C, D, and H)

As the participants linguistically prepared their scripts and rehearsed their role-plays, it was significant to note how each group had very different ideas for showcasing self-management using this text. Group 1 appeared to enjoy the fun and laughter surrounding their chosen scene, which included a box of chalk symbolising the box of jewellery from the play and a miniature dinosaur representing the silent character Hastings. In contrast, Group 2 were very strategic about what they said and how their presentation would convey a message about self-management.

My observation and field notes (Appendix B) on Group 1's role-play showcase include the following notes and an image of the role-play showcase:

Participant B played Tony. Participant I as Mrs. Hardcastle. Participant E as Constance. Participant G as Mr. Hardcastle. They did the scene with Mrs. Hardcastle and Tony with the jewels. Mrs. Hardcastle laid down the law with her son stating what she wanted her son to do. In this scene all the participants showed a lack of self-management in the play. Mrs. Hardcastle could not manage herself she wanted to force a marriage

between her son Tony and Constance for the sake of taking the jewels that Constance would inherit. The group found that this scene was a mix of (a lack of) social awareness and self-management. The lack of social awareness would have consequences for others. Self-discipline was absent in Mrs. Hardcastle which related to self-management as well. Participant I says social awareness and self-management were present in their role-play.



Photo 44: Role-play showcase Group 1 – Cycle 5

Participant B is standing, playing Tony, who is being rebellious and excitable with his mother. Participant I is seated as Mrs. Hardcastle, indulging in the 'jewellery box'. Participant E, standing in the white t-shirt at the back, holds a miniature dinosaur representing her lover. Hastings enters the conversation, asking for her jewels. Participant G, to the far right, plays Mr. Hardcastle, who enters their conversation, exposing his wife's selfish plan to take the jewels for herself. He tells Tony that he is now over 21 years of age and does not have to listen to his mother.

The participants in this group created a role-play that displayed their empathy for the victims of Mrs. Hardcastle's manipulative plan: Constance and Tony. They chose to

portray an adapted moment from the play when Mr. Hardcastle entered the scene and told Tony that his mother had lied to him, and that as he is 21, he can marry whomever he wants. The purpose of their scene was to demonstrate that Mrs. Hardcastle's greed and need for control reflected a lack of self-management and social awareness, as her impulsive and selfish behaviour had a significant impact on many people.

When the participants depicted Mrs. Hardcastle as melodramatically greedy, digging her fists into a make-believe bowl of jewellery, they illustrated someone who could not manage her emotions, thereby failing at self-management (CASEL, n.d.). This is significant because the participants were able to identify and recreate a scenario where an individual's greed and selfishness escalated to a point that could adversely affect the lives of their loved ones. By creating a role-play that highlighted the empathy for Constance and Tony, the participants exposed the greed and uninhibited behaviour of Mrs. Hardcastle, sharing their observations of self-management (or lack thereof) in the play.

I asked the participants from group two immediately after group one's role-play what they thought they had learned from it, and here is what group two had to share, based on my observations and field notes (Appendix B):

We could see a lack of self-management, nobody paused to re-think the situation, they all just reacted. Participant C said that people who find out that they are about to turn 21 are just ready to run away. Participant C said that people think that at 21 you can do everything because you are grown, the self-discipline is lost at 21, this group showed a lack of self-discipline. Participant H said that people who turn 21 seem to have their mindset on YOLO (you only live once) and forget about consequences to their actions.

Group 2's response to the showcase focused on the lack of discipline displayed by individuals when they turn 21. Self-discipline is another characteristic of self-management (CASEL, n.d.), and the participants, through their observations, identified that if an individual is too reckless with their newfound freedom, as portrayed by Tony, then that person exhibits a lack of self-management.

My observations and field notes (Appendix B) on Group Two's role-play showcase include the following notes and an image of the role-play showcase:

Participant D as Mr. Hardcastle. Participant H as Marlowe. Participant C as Sir Charles. They look like serious actors. Participant H plays Marlowe apologising to Hardcastle for treating him like an innkeeper. Hardcastle plays the hard to impress father in law. Marlowe is showing that he is deserving of Kate and he loves her. Participant D plays Mr. Hardcastle who is terribly hard to impress and who doesn't want just anyone for his daughter Kate. Participant C plays a more light hearted father of Marlowe, Sir Charles, the father of the son who wants to wed Kate. He comes across as a very laid back friend of Mr. Hardcastle. Mr. Marlowe listens to his son's plea to his potential pursual of Kate for a wife. Sir Charles then tells Mr. Hardcastle to "Give them a chance". The participants said that in this scene they chose to show Marlowe showing self-management to apologise for his misconduct at treating Mr. Hardcastle as the innkeeper and Mr. Hardcastle was chosen to show no self-management, he did not want to hear Marlowe's apology and he reacted out of emotion and protection for his daughter instead of listening for reason. Marlowe showed self-management and Mr. Hardcastle did not and this was the group's aim with their role-play.



Photo 45: Role-play showcase Group 2 – Cycle 5

Participant C, wearing a white T-shirt, portrays a laid-back and relaxed Sir Charles, appealing to his friend Mr. Hardcastle, played by Participant D in a green dress, to give the young couple a chance at a relationship. Meanwhile, Participant H, in a black T-shirt, observes as both his father and prospective father-in-law determine his fate based on the apology and proposal he has just expressed to them.

Group 2's showcase involved their own scenario where they took the characters and elements of the narrative to create a scene that illustrated what self-management and a lack of self-management look like. Participant H, who played Marlowe, profusely apologised and explained his wrongful deeds to Mr. Hardcastle; this character displayed the group's version of how a self-managed individual behaves in a conflict management scenario. Participant D, on the other hand, played the overbearing and overprotective father of Kate. He refused to listen to Marlowe's apology and instead interjected, hurling insults and passing judgment. This character exemplified the group's interpretation of an individual who cannot self-manage during a conflict management scenario.

What was significant about this scenario was that the participants utilised a neutral character to empathise with both parties. Participant C, who played Sir Charles, entered the scene and helped diffuse the tension by asking Marlowe what his true feelings for Kate were, and then motivated Mr. Hardcastle to give the young couple a chance at a new relationship. Participant C represented another characteristic of self-management: the ability to manage stress (CASEL, n.d.), which Sir Charles effectively demonstrated in this scenario. The participants' ability to create their own scene showcasing self-managed behaviour, lack of self-managed behaviour, and a character who empathised with both individuals was significant. By presenting all three characters, the group identified, created, and displayed a moment where self-management could be useful in a potential real-life conflict management scenario. This finding resonates with Buldu (2022), who stated that providing students with scenarios and conflict situations serves as a cognitive tool and makes their learning experiences more meaningful.

I asked the participants from group one immediately after Group 2's role-play what they thought they had learnt from it, and here is what group one had to share via my observation and field notes (Appendix B):

Participant B said it was a creative interpretation. Mr. Hardcastle could not manage his emotion. Participant C says because he was angry and felt whatever he wanted to, he has power over his daughter, it was not okay, Mr. Hardcastle lacked self-management because Kate is supposed to choose for herself as she has her own brain and mind to think for herself. He should be guiding her and not trying to control her.

Participant B observed someone who could not manage their emotions in group two's portrayal of Mr. Hardcastle, while Participant I perceived group one's Mr. Hardcastle as a controlling father. Both participants, through their exposure to group two's Mr. Hardcastle, were able to identify an individual who is emotionally unstable and controlling as someone who lacks self-management.

The following writing task (Appendix D) from Participant G revealed a significant reflection on her experience with the role-play activity:

The role play we did as a group was about a scene where Mrs. Hardcastle is happy about getting Constance's fortune and Constance popping out of nowhere as they thought she left the city. We also included the part where Mr. Hardcastle tells Tony that he is 21 years old and can make his own decision regarding marriage matters. The way Mrs. Hardcastle was happy about her niece's fortune showed that she lacks self-discipline as an elder and someone who is supposed to be leading by example to her family. Mrs. Hardcastle does not respect nor appreciate Constance in any way. During the role-play, Tony was told that he can make his own decisions when it comes to marriage, and he was overjoyed by the news. In the play, Oliver Goldsmith states that Tony was never educated so this makes sense on when he needs to be told about significant things in his life like how old he is and what decisions should he make for his own good. Tony's mischievous behaviour can be seen as a problem but at the end, his deceptions create the plot and make it possible for the characters to reach a happy ending leading to being responsible and showing his emotions.

As we did role-play in class, it was interesting to be in another person's thoughts and feelings at that particular time. Understanding the character's feelings and how the writer portrayed the storyline for that certain character and it made me realize that I shouldn't judge a book by its cover because you would never know what someone is going through until you walk in their shoes.

Participant G shares her thoughts on the role-play she participated in and what the experience taught her. She recognised that Tony was a flawed character, and his flaws incited the rising action of the play. Despite his flaws, she noted that Tony took responsibility for his irresponsible behaviour and became more accountable by the end. The participant demonstrates her understanding of a character arc through her aesthetic experience of the text. By participating in the role-play, G was able to empathise with characters like Tony. Rosenblatt (1982) stated that aesthetic experiences of a story, where readers engage with moments that present an image of life or deal with human situations, can enhance a reader's cognitive ability. A solely

efferent reading of a text, which mechanically tests narrative or linguistic structure, is not the only way to build cognitive skills in a reader. Through role-play, Participant G was able to empathise with characters like Tony, validating Rosenblatt's (1982) assertion that an aesthetic experience of a story can teach a reader to understand complex human processes, such as how an irresponsible person like Tony can develop redeeming qualities.

10.3 Narrative empathy to learn self-management

Before and after the role-play activities, the participants engaged in narrative empathy discussion sessions. During the pre-role-play discussion, they shared their thoughts on the play and self-management while sitting outside the research space on the turf (an outdoor green space that students use for breaks). The participants enjoyed the change of scenery, as it allowed them to reflect on the play and their thoughts and feelings about the text from a different physical setting, fostering a more relaxed perspective. For the post-role-play narrative empathy discussion sessions, the participants gathered in a circle and shared their feelings and perspectives inside the research space.

The pre-role-play narrative empathy discussion sessions revealed the following points, as documented in my observation and field notes (Appendix B), as well as in their writing tasks (Appendix D) and diary entries (Appendix C) below:

Participant D said she understood Mr. Hardcastle because he got stuck in his old ways because as you get older, it is very hard for to change ways. She likes Marlowe because he encourages change, for a better life and better people.

Participant C said Kate is not just managing her emotions but is teaching Marlowe management and making him a better person. Participant D says Kate has good self-management because she has to manage her father and his interpretation of Marlowe in a good way. She could have gotten angry but she managed herself well.

Participant B felt Tony is an agent of chaos. Participant D says it is typical for men at 21 to cause chaos. Participant C says “mens’ thinking is different to womens’ thinking”, and that men have different perspectives. Participant B said he looks for every perspective in a situation where he is a mediator in the conflict management of a relationship.

Participant D said women don’t have a chance to be immature, it’s not okay for them to make mistakes, which is why they mature quickly. Women like to see women progressing, but women have to stoop their maturity level lower to cater to men and to please men. It’s common for older black women to say “Don’t nag him, don’t ask him questions about where he went on Monday”. We create a world for men to be themselves, but we don’t create a world for women to be themselves.

Participant D says women have to manage emotions especially with PMS and the menstrual cycle and women manage their emotions well. Participant B said to his close friend Participant C “What must we do if you are on your period? I let you chill in my car with the aircon remember?”. Participant I says women want to be heard. Participant D says women just want depth in a relationship. Participant B said men don’t know how to understand their emotions. Participant C says men don’t know how to understand their emotions and we want to show them that they can show their emotions in front of us and with us. Participant C says why men do not want us to be there when they are having emotional episodes. The situation turned into a relationship counselling session for Participant C. Participant B said 85% of men lack self-management.

Participant D states that Mr. Hardcastle was resistant to change, whereas she appreciates Marlowe because he understands that change is necessary. Participant C recognises how Kate is forcing Marlowe to grow through her trickery, and Participant D admires Kate for her management of the brewing conflict between her father and Marlowe, citing Kate's appeasement of her father's humble nature through her clothing choices. She attempts to gain access to Marlowe by pretending to be a barmaid, allowing him to speak to her more easily, as she knows that Marlowe is not

comfortable speaking to noblewomen. Kate strategically uses her appearance to satisfy and groom the men in her life. These participants seem to understand that it took intentional planning and organisational skills on Kate's part (CASEL, n.d.) to help the headstrong Mr. Hardcastle and the docile Marlowe move beyond their single-mindedness.

Participants B and D seem complicit in young men making irresponsible decisions at the age of 21. Participants B and C pointed out that men and women have different perspectives on various matters. Participant B stated that, as a man, he strives to consider multiple perspectives and is sometimes a conflict mediator. This conflict, stemming from the attitudinal differences between the genders, prompted Participant D to interject regarding the nurturing of women. She stated that women do not have the opportunity to be irresponsible or immature and sometimes have to pretend to lower their maturity, as Kate did, in order to satisfy men. This observation led her to realise that this phenomenon is prevalent in her community, where older black women prevent younger black women from asking their partners questions about their whereabouts. This made her feel that her upbringing had programmed her to make life easier for men, prompting her to question why women are not offered the same ease. In empathising with the constant compromises women have to make for men, these participants realised that there seems to be an unequal socio-moral programming in the upbringing of men and women in society. This is significant in Rosenblatt (1998), who stated that reading critically is important for citizens of a democracy, as it allows people to reflect on social and political arrangements in order to evaluate them. Here, the participants critically discuss the different lived experiences of women and men, spurred on by the treatment of male and female characters in the play.

Participant D highlighted that women have a high tolerance threshold regarding their ability to manage menstrual cycles while continuing with their daily tasks and managing their emotions. Participant B appeared to become defensive, stating that he understood the pain women endure on a monthly basis and citing the help he offered a friend. The discussion then seemed to spiral into a conversation about emotions and their importance in relationships, touching upon how men often struggle to access and understand their emotions, and how they need to learn to engage with

them. At this point, the conversation digressed into a pseudo-counselling session for Participant C, who indicated that this was a real-life relationship challenge for her. Participant B acknowledged these sentiments as valid. This was a significant realisation for the group, as it resonates with the work of Brackett and Rivers (2014), who stated that many emotions have gender-specific norms of expression. For example, anger is generally considered unacceptable for girls, while sadness is often deemed unacceptable for boys. The participants' recognition that emotional expression is limited to certain gender identities and is constructed during childhood development is a significant finding, as it may inform their parenting choices and counselling work in the future.

Participant I – Diary

My favourite moment was when we had the first discussion session on the turf. I felt it was good to have a change of scenery and see whether our responses are affected by the location of the discussion and having a second discussion session was quite nice as we also got to see our perspectives change after the role-playing, which shows that when you put yourself in someone else's shoes you get to see where they are coming from and not see it from a spectator's point of view.

Participant I shared her enjoyment of having the discussion sessions outdoors and appreciated being able to track the shifts in her perspective on the play between the pre-role-play discussion outdoors and the post-role-play discussion indoors. To truly ignite the empathic responses of the participants, changing the setting was important because empathy is a spontaneous, vicarious sharing of an affect that can be provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, hearing about another's condition, or even reading about it (Keen, 2006). As the participants sat outside and shared their feelings of self-management in the play, their responses may have been influenced by the behaviours of the people around them.

The post-role-play narrative empathy discussion sessions revealed the following points, as documented in my observation and field notes (Appendix B) below:

Participant B said Self-management was harder than he thought. He was judging people in the play but in hindsight he could not judge Constance and Hastings for wanting to elope, as he would have stolen the jewels and run away with his love if he could. Participant B said if he was responsible in the 1800s he would have had Hastings go and actually meet Constance's parents to come to some sort of agreement. Participant B shows that he understands the difficulty of self-management and he also recognises a responsible way of dealing with the matter.

Participant D says the role-play really takes you into the person's shoes and she looked at the situation from Mr. Hardcastle's point of view Mr. Hardcastle was brought up a certain way which led to him treating his daughter's marriage in a certain way. She said before the role-play she was angry with him for making decisions for his daughter, but now she empathises with the father for wanting to do the best for his daughter.

After the role-play showcase was completed, participants shared their new perspectives and feelings on the text in relation to self-management. Participant B stated that the harsh judgement he directed towards Constance and Hastings before the role-play changed after the role-play; having played the characters, he felt as though he would behave similarly. Participant B noted his understanding of the difficulty of self-management and how situations might be dealt with more effectively.

Participant D's stance on Mr. Hardcastle changed as she had been angry with him for his resistance to change prior to the role-play, but after embodying the character, she understood and realised the reasons for his resistance. Participant D learnt from playing the character that Mr. Hardcastle operated from his socio-moral upbringing, which differed from that of Kate and Marlowe. She also empathised with him as a father, as all he wanted to do was protect his daughter from an unworthy marriage.

Role-play had the ability to change these participants' perspectives and views of the characters. It allowed the participants to realise that, from a distance, characters can be judged, but by embodying the character situated in the socio-political context of the play, the participants learnt that the character could only make decisions based

on their circumstances. The involvement in the role-play clarified matters for the participants, leading to a change in opinion. These findings reinforce those of Chen and Martin (2015), who stated that role-play is a form of active learning that enables students to reflect on the simulations experienced, as it is a transformational method of education with the potential to transform understandings of phenomena.

Participant B said there are many love stories that lacked self-management in the 1800s. Participant C replied that even in the 21st century, people lack self-management. Participant D noted that people don't want to process what they are going through. Participant C added that young men treat their girlfriends the way their fathers treat their mothers. Participant B made a psychological example about nature versus nurture, explaining how an abused dog does not forget the abuse from its owners and remembers the generational trauma of abuse.

The situation shifted from critiquing each other to expressing pride in one another. They kept referring to the CASEL self-management definition to discuss their behaviour outside campus. The narrative empathy discussion sessions led the students to talk about how their emotions were not acknowledged due to a lack of emotional management in their childhood and throughout their lives. They discussed how their emotional management should or should not occur. They spoke about how they cry alone and on schedule because their emotions are neither heard nor treated seriously at home.

Participant B's comment on 1800s romantic relationships lacking self-management led to discussions about self-management in contemporary romantic relationships. Participant C pointed out that young men often use their fathers as role models for husband behaviour. In response, Participant B stated that it is difficult for men to unlearn the abuse they experienced, leading them to inevitably treat their partners as they observed their parents behaving, which is how generational trauma occurs. The participants recognised that by managing their emotions, they can address their pain and frustration stemming from past stress, which could help them live healthier lives (Brackett, 2018). They began to honour each other by expressing how proud they are of one another, having discovered that they all managed to handle their emotions despite not being taught any emotional management in their upbringing. This led to

discussions about their emotional management off campus and the challenges of expressing emotions at home. The participants' understanding of the importance of emotional education, despite its lack of encouragement or teaching at home, is the key finding here. They see that emotional education is beneficial for fostering civility in public spaces and nurturing care in communal life (Goleman, 1996).

The writing tasks completed by the participants (Appendix D) reveal their responses and opinions on Kate's trickery. When Kate disguised herself as a barmaid to test Marlowe's character before agreeing to marry him, the participants had various views on whether this trickery was justified:

Participant H – Writing Task

Kate wants a guy to marry her for love, not for social status. She can learn about Marlowe's actual nature by pretending to be a barmaid. Sexual harassment was frequently directed at barmaids and lower-class women. Marriage, especially in this scenario, was a formal, business-like arrangement rather than one based on love. For this reason, Kate does not want just anyone to marry her. Marlowe has feelings for "barmaid" Kate. They form an infatuated friendship. Marlow eventually realizes that he loves her and wishes to marry her despite her social standing. He is well aware that his family will not accept it. Finally, Kate creates a means for everyone to understand that Marlow actually loves her, rather than her proper social level. Kate would not have experienced her husband's authenticity if she had not sunk to lying, thus I believe she is justified in her trickery.

Participant G – Writing Task

Kate fooling Marlow into believing that she is a house cleaner could be seen as a cruel and humiliating prank, but Kate's intentions are good. Kate wants to woo Marlow, but Marlow's fear of embarrassment leaves him intimidated by the upper-class women. She realises that she can only get his attention by deceiving him about her class background. In my opinion, I would do the same thing to get what I desire but in an effective way. Her portraying herself like that has helped Marlow break out of his

comfort zone and somehow learn self-management. Their relationship grew from Kate's trickery which is remarkably interesting because the courtship blossomed into love.

Most of the characters taught me more about making the right decisions and how important it is to show my emotions. Expressing my emotions helps me increase my confidence and boost my self-esteem to a certain extent depending on the situation I'm facing.

Participant H noted that Kate's trickery is justified because her disguise and grand plan ultimately benefitted everyone by the end of the play. Participant G concurred that Marlow grew from Kate's trickery, which enhanced their relationship. She further indicated that Marlow's emergence from his metaphorical shell, spurred by Kate's trickery, inspired her to boost her own self-esteem.

Participant I – Writing Task

This story created feelings of empathy in me because I felt bad for Kate because for her to be with Marlow, she had to change who she was and dumb herself down just to get validation from a man. She does this just to “convince” Marlow that he likes her which also begs the question - was she really in love with him or was she just infatuated and felt she needed to be with someone before her father arranges someone for her. I also believe that Kate was simply not being true to herself.

Participant E – Writing Task

I empathize with Kate and Marlow. Due to their different statuses in society Kate cannot become his wife since his family would not approve. The difference between the two is fortune. Kate says she will do anything in her power to keep them from parting which is sad since something like this shouldn't be so complicated.

Participant I empathised with Kate and pitied the fact that she had to change who she was, essentially appearing foolish and untruthful in order to vet her prospective husband. Participant E similarly empathised with both Kate and Marlowe, noting that

Kate would have been seen as an unworthy spouse for Marlowe if she truly was the barmaid. They both felt that Kate was not being true to herself and questioned whether her 'stooping' was merely to indulge the marriage choice her father had made for her, and whether it was worth the reputational risk. Both participants were unhappy with Kate's decision to alter her appearance and identity for the men around her. They did not believe that the sacrifice and risk were worth Kate undertaking. In empathising with Kate's sacrifice, the participants felt that her sense of self, her identity, and what she risked were too valuable to have been subjected to such an arduous experience.

The following writing tasks (Appendix D) and diary entry (Appendix C) reveal the participants' thoughts and feelings on the relationship between Kate and Marlowe:

Participant C – Diary

During the discussion I learnt different opinions about gender stereotypes and other important points about relationships. This shows self-management as everyone was strong in their thoughts and opinions and we all had the ability to portray our emotions.

Participant C – Writing Task

She Stoops to Conquer highlights romance and the challenges couples face on their route to marriage. The play offers dating advice such as don't be afraid to be yourself, give new people a chance, and remember to forgive and forget when problems arise. With this I empathise and can relate, bringing these messages into my personal life.

Participant C learned about different perceptions of gender stereotypes from her peers during the discussions. She also gained relationship-specific lessons by empathising with Kate's handling of her relationships, which she felt would help her in her own life. Participant C took away real-life lessons to reference in her personal life, including how she would view gender-specific behaviour and how to build the confidence to meet new people.

10.4 Importance of self-management

The writing tasks (Appendix C) and diary entries (Appendix D) completed by the participants reveal how they empathised with the characters in the play *She Stoops to Conquer*:

Participant H – Diary

My favourite moment was how we all saw how certain characters lacked self-management and others did not. It was interesting to see how those characters who lacked self-management did not maintain many healthy relationships with others in She stoops to conquer.

Participant C – Writing Task

The play demonstrates that the difficulties to intimacy within a person can be just as difficult to overcome as the intense, exterior impediments that the world places in the path of love. It demonstrates that a courtship is not always a process of two fully grown and self-assured people meeting and then battling to be together. The most difficult aspect of falling in love is letting someone you respect get near enough to know who you truly are. This is something that we recognise in our relationships

Participant H observed that the characters in the play who lacked self-management did not have healthy relationships, possibly alluding to Tony and Mrs. Hardcastle. Participant C learned that a relationship is not merely about two people coming together who are fully knowledgeable; it is similar to Marlowe, who needed an extra nudge from Kate. Participant C emphasised the importance of finding someone with whom you can truly let your guard down in a relationship. Both participants learned that managing oneself is crucial for maintaining healthy relationships. What is significant in their responses is that the intrapersonal competency of self-management helped them recognise the importance of an interpersonal competency like relationship building. Their connection with these two competencies resonates with the work of Thompson (2014), who stated that challenging and disruptive behaviours can influence those around a person, including their relationships.

Participant G – Diary

I can say that the characters in She Stoops to Conquer taught me about decision-making. Most characters in the play made decisions for their own gains and some took decisions to run away from the patriarchy in their families. Self-management has played an important role in my life by teaching me the importance of letting my emotions out. In the past years, it was hard for me to show emotions because of the way I grew up in a rural area in a Zulu household. The way the elders taught me how to deal with my emotions helped me sometimes but didn't in some cases. At home, everyone was taught to deal with whatever they were going through alone because they thought intervention from other people will show weakness. Many black people, especially in Zulu households, don't believe in psychologists when dealing with emotional or psychological issues. They just let the problems deal with themselves. As I grew up I saw how better and happier people are who seek help when needed and it encouraged me to seek help, so I could be able to focus and be a self-disciplined person. I learned that emotions are meant to be expressed to understand others.

Participant G shared that being exposed to characters in the play who spoke to their entrapment eventually helped her make decisions for herself. This made her realise the importance of expressing her emotions, even if it meant rebelling against her isiZulu upbringing, which did not encourage the expression of emotion or the professional treatment of emotional challenges by mental health care services. She noted that she learned the importance of seeking emotional help when needed, as it helped her focus and become more self-disciplined in achieving her goals. In gaining this insight about herself, her family, and her life through comparisons with characters in the text, this finding reveals that the characters enabled her to make comparisons with her personal experiences of rebelling against value systems that were not conducive to her growth. Exposure to the lack of self-management in the play was a way for this participant to develop her mental health (Elbertson et al., 2009).

The following writing tasks (Appendix C) and diary entries (Appendix D) completed by the participants reveal how they discussed specific knowledge gained from self-management throughout this cycle:

Participant D – Diary

I learnt that I need to find better coping mechanisms when it comes to myself because the current ones aren't healthy.

Participant B – Diary

I have realised that I occasionally lack self-management needed to study and compete my work.

Participant G – Writing Task

Learning about how self-disciplined other people are and how they manage their time was really fascinating in today's warm-up games. I also learned some interesting facts from my lecturer about how sleeping late is unhealthy for our body and mind and have considered that I will change my habits and be a responsible human being to keep my body healthier.

Participant D learnt that she needed to find healthier coping mechanisms; Participant B learned that he needed to manage his studies better; and Participant G gained insights about sleep habits from a tangential lesson on sleep hygiene that I provided based on my personal reading (Walker, 2017). What emerged for her regarding self-management was a newfound understanding of the importance of sleep. All three participants learnt that self-management is crucial for their health, goals, and task attainment, as it has the ability to enable success in school, work, and life (Pagel, 2021).

Participant I – Writing task

What motivates me to make sure that I achieve my goals no matter the circumstances is to never bring myself down just to please people but simply be myself and still accommodate others, and not treat them badly just because of the differences in class, background etc.

Participant C – Diary

I learnt to express my feelings in a more appropriate manner and to apologise. I feel that people prefer to fight rather than learn to understand and process emotions first. It also reminded me that you are in control of your own emotions, and you should feel how you want to regardless of other people.

Participant H – Diary

I learnt that self-management is a crucial factor that one needs to have and include within their life. It was shown that if one lacks self-management, it affects their relationships with those around them. Self-management is especially important for an individual to have as it motivates one to respond instead of react in trying situations.

Participant I – Diary

I learnt that there is more to self-management than I thought such as skills like, managing your emotions and stress, being self-disciplined, setting your goals and controlling your impulses and I think this is a very important competency to have. I learnt this during the discussion session that we had after the role plays were done.

Participant B – Diary

I learnt how everyone has their own opinions and while it may be different from mine they are not always wrong. I learnt that self-management is not easy for everyone and that one cannot self manage all the time. Putting myself in the position of the characters taught me this.

Participant I shared that she learned that she would not shrink her identity or play inferior just to please other people. Participant C recognised the importance of processing her emotions before it leads to unnecessary conflict, and participant H learned that self-management helps a person respond to a situation instead of impulsively reacting. Participant I learned through the discussion sessions after the role-plays that developing self-management skills would result in the ability to manage her emotions, including her impulsive emotions, and set goals. She felt she would

gain many life skills from this competency. Participant B recognised that different opinions should not be immediately rejected as wrong and that self-management is not easy to perform at all times; role-playing the characters taught him this. Overall, the participants shared a real-life takeaway from exploring and learning about the self-management competency, which is something they could apply to their lives and find useful in attaining their goals.

The following writing tasks (Appendix C) and diary entries (Appendix D) that the participants completed reveal the ways in which they began to see the SEL competency emerge or take shape outside the research space and in their own realities.

Participant G – Diary

I usually notice when I'm at home or around my friends it often links to social awareness or relationship building. When my friends are going through an emotional breakdown, I tend to be more confident about what to say or do to support them during that time. The ability of empathizing with others really made me think that I'm doing great.

Participant I – Diary

I have been practicing self-management without even knowing it, because instead of acting impulsively I would rather think about the situation and how it made me feel, then think about how it made the next person feel and respond to the situation in a way that will benefit both parties.

Participant C – Diary

I do notice many people are not socially aware. They disregard the space of others. I also see a lack of self-management when people speak to me about things that happen in their lives. Some people just lack the ability to regulate emotions and their behaviours. I do however see a lot of responsible decision making.

Participant G shared that she is now more confident in helping her loved ones navigate heightened emotional experiences and knows how to manage those

situations with them. Participant I realised that she has been unconsciously practising self-management when she thinks before acting on a decision, when she remembers to consider how a situation made her feel and how it affected the other person, ensuring that there is overall value for both individuals involved. What Participant I shared resonates with the core purpose and intention of SEL, which is to process thinking, feeling, and behaviour in order to become aware of oneself and others (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). Participant C noted that she observed a lack of self-management when people approach her and randomly emotionally offload; however, she does notice that some individuals can regulate their behaviour and demonstrates responsible decision-making around her. The participants seemed confident in their abilities to find SECs outside the research space and shared moments of how they use them to help and understand themselves and others.

Participant B – Diary

I see a lack of social awareness in others such as saying things without meaning to in front of others. I also see a lack of self-control in myself as I find it hard to start studying and completing work as I just want to complete my own personal stuff.

Participant I – Writing Task

The changed behaviours of the characters do make me think about my own self-management. I have noticed that the people we are around, and our surroundings really do affect us in terms of how we speak and behave. People in rural areas behave in a different way than people from the city. Everyone in the world has a different “personality” according to who they are around. If you are around your colleagues you will act in a different way as compared to when you are with your friends because you know that you must be more professional in the workplace and when you are with your friends you can let loose.

Participant B noticed a lack of social awareness in others and within himself, he recognised a lack of self-control and discipline necessary to focus on his tasks. Participant I made a connection with Mrs. Hardcastle, who exhibited specific behaviours for the town and the countryside. This participant observes similar

behaviour in people and their identities. She might notice that, in reality, people's identities are influenced by their circumstances; different scenarios require individuals to behave differently with various people in different places. The emerging understanding of how identity develops or changes is an intrapersonal skill that arises from exposure to this social-emotional context (Bridgeland et al., 2013). Both participants acknowledged the need for social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies to address personal needs and the various ways these competencies could help those around them lead more manageable daily routines.

Examining the autophotography (Appendix E) responses, these capture moments and tableaux of self-management that the participants photographed and documented themselves:



Photo 46: Group 1 autophotography captions – Cycle 5

(Appendix E)

Participant G

In this role play, the characters lack self-discipline but do show emotions. Mrs. Hardcastle in this scene lacks self-discipline as she is happy to keep something that doesn't belong to her, but her greediness took over her, and she made selfish decisions. Tony was just happy after being told

that he could make his own decisions. His joy shows that his current rebellious behaviour will continue and result in poor decisions in his life and lacking self-management.

Participant I

This image shows the lack of self-management in Mrs Hardcastle (seated) as her reality of being the new owner of Constance's jewels is altered by her walking into the room looking quite pleased with herself as she comes to take her jewels, after they thought that she had left with Hastings. Mrs Hardcastle fails to manage her emotions and shows that she was very angry and shocked to see Constance walk in which meant that she is in danger of losing her newly acquired jewels.

Participant E

There was a lack of self-management since the characters were unable to contain themselves and their behaviour. The characters are surprised and annoyed to see Constance. The jewels rightly belong to Constance, and Mrs. Hardcastle has difficulty finding a reason to refuse to give them to her.

Participant B

The role play shows Constance confronting her aunt when she thought Constance had run away with Hastings. It shows how her aunt had no self-control with regard to her greed and only cared about the jewels and not Constance's feelings.

Participant G, who played Mr. Hardcastle in the scene, noticed how her peers, who portrayed Mrs. Hardcastle and Tony, displayed a lack of discipline while still being able to express emotion. It is intriguing that she can identify that expressing emotion, coupled with the inability to manage one's emotions, results in a lack of self-discipline. Here, she demonstrates the ability to recognise the difference between expressing emotions and managing them, which reflects emotional literacy (Schoolnet, 2022). The participant also illustrates how the absence of one SEC (responsible decision-making, resulted in the lack of another SEC, self-management. The findings indicate

that the absence of one SEC can have repercussions on the development of another SEC.

Participant I, who played Mrs. Hardcastle, conveyed how her character lacked self-management as she attempted to steal jewellery that was not hers and subsequently expressed anger when the rightful owner, Constance, reclaimed it. This experience of portraying a character overwhelmed by anger and selfishness, to the point of publicly revealing her scheme, helped this participant understand what a person lacking self-management looks like. The participant learned that the extremity of unpleasant emotions, such as greed and jealousy, can prevent one from managing their emotions in a social setting.

Participant E, who played Constance, expressed how her character returned to reclaim her property – the bowl of jewellery. Her entrance revealed the shock and lack of self-control from the characters, who had strong emotional reactions upon realising they had to relinquish their newfound treasure. Here, the absence of behavioural restraint by the perpetrating parties resulted in their public guilt, demonstrating to the participant that wrongdoers can be caught out simply by failing to manage their emotional behaviour.

Participant B, who played Tony, was also able to empathise with the wrongful treatment of Constance, even though he portrayed a character who would have benefited from the jewels his mother attempted to steal. Role-play has the ability to elicit empathy, allowing this participant to explore a different perspective (Junior, 2012) beyond the limitations imposed by his character's perspective and goals. The participant learned to consider the consequences of his character's actions on others and was able to shift his viewpoint. This empathic response to the character in the text aligns with reader-response theory, which posits that whenever a reader attempts to understand a character in more complex terms, they analyse not just the character's actions, but also the consequences of those actions (Spirovska, 2019). In recognising a lack of self-management in Tony, Participant B empathised with his – and Tony's – impact on Constance.



Photo 47: Group 2 autophotography captions – Cycle 5

(Appendix E)

Participant C

In the picture Marlow is apologising for his behaviour. This shows self-management as he is aware of his behaviour and takes responsibility.

Participant D:

The photo shows the moment of self-management as Marlow is being remorseful of his actions and is apologizing to Kate's father.

Participant C, who played Sir Charles, shared how Marlowe apologised to Mr Hardcastle for his behaviour and took accountability for his mistakes, demonstrating the ability to recognise a person who is self-managed. This finding revealed that Participant C was recognising model self-managed behaviour through the maturity of Marlowe in this conflict mediation scene.

Participant D, who played Mr Hardcastle, noted that even though she portrayed the stubborn Mr Hardcastle in this scene, she could see that Marlowe was remorseful and apologised to Kate's father, the character she played. This finding suggests that role-playing allowed her to adopt the perspective of a character she was not playing and to empathise with someone her character was in conflict with. This participant learned skills in behavioural management even during conflict.

The following writing task (Appendix C) and diary entries (Appendix D) that the participants completed reveal their feelings during the last cycle of research activities as they reflected on the five cycles from the previous weeks. These responses served as their final diary entries and writing task responses.

Participant G – Diary

Warm-up games taught me to be more self-conscious, they taught me the importance of how to behave around people. I enjoyed role plays because it is all about teamwork and improving communication skills with people around me. Role-plays are all about critical thinking and observation of my fellow teammates. For some of the texts we did so far it was easy to get into character and some were not. Paying attention to what was happening in each scene really helped me to be focused and self-aware of the people around me. After the discussions of each text, as I was listening to others speaking about how they felt about that play changed my perspective. It is interesting to hear other people's thoughts because at that time I am exposed to opinions that do not exist in my mind. I learn new things when I'm listening to others' opinions. As for SEL competencies, they boosted my confidence and taught me to be mindful when taking decisions and being responsible. Self-awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management, and social awareness. Overall, I enjoyed all the activities we did, and all the role plays we did even though I faced some challenges when attempting it. It was a fun experience.

In reflecting on her experiences during the research cycles, participant G shared that she primarily learnt how to behave around other people, and self-awareness seemed to have been the stand out SEC gained by her. She recognised how role-play ignited her critical thinking abilities and allowed for interesting observations of her peers. She also noted the significance of the narrative empathy discussion sessions, which enabled her to hear opinions other than her own. Despite the challenges and novelty of these experiences, she found them to be enjoyable. Her summative assessment of the research activities indicates that both role-play and narrative empathy exercises improved her confidence and empathic abilities. The SEC knowledge she acquired

provided her with the confidence to implement these skills in her own life for personal reasons.

Participant H – Diary

I have learnt that it is important to be aware of your self-competencies as well as implement them within your everyday life. The warm up games and role-plays have assisted me to understand the importance of our SEL competencies. Overall, I enjoyed this experience as it was self-reflective as well as a learning curve for me as an individual. I had lots of fun and I would love to do it again.

In reflecting on her experiences during the research cycles, participant H shared that her main takeaway was the significance of understanding the SEL competencies. The warm-up games and role-plays allowed her to recognise this importance. She had fun while learning and would gladly repeat the experience. This participant's experience is significant because it highlights that enjoyable and self-reflective activities, such as role-play and narrative empathy, provided her with valuable social and emotional tools for everyday life. Creative activities can produce important SEL experiences.

Participant I – Diary

I honestly feel much richer in knowledge than before, empowered and really happy that I got to study these texts and learn of the SEL competencies at the same time. This really showed me how powerful literature is and how it can definitely change one's view of things and lead you to grow and view them in many perspectives which will also lead you to respond to the situation in a way that will not negatively affect the situation at hand.

Participant I expressed feeling more knowledgeable than before the research activities. What is significant about her response is that she recognised the safety of learning about the SEL competencies through literature studies, which had no real-world consequences (Junior, 2012).

Participant C – Diary

Each competency has taught me something different. The different plays and novels each had a competency to learn from and the characters in the play highlighted each competency. The warmup games not only brought me closer to my friends and helped us bond but it taught us relationship building and how to be socially aware. The discussion sessions portrayed everyone's true feelings and emotions about certain topics. Everyone taught each other important lessons during that time.

In reflecting on her experiences of the research cycles, participant C learned a new SEL competency from each of the different novels. The warm-up games strengthened their relationships, and the narrative empathy discussion sessions revealed everyone's true feelings on various topics, with all participants learning during these sessions. Her response is significant in illustrating why the reflection process after fiction reading is important for producing potential ethical effects from the reading (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015).

Participant E – Writing Task

The warm up games allowed me to interact with the other students and I learnt more about them and how to communicate better , solve problems and we processed emotions in a safe space. Each role play taught me a different aspect of SEL competencies and how one can lack the competencies without even acknowledging it.

In reflecting on her experiences during the research cycles, Participant E expresses that the warm-up games allowed her to interact with the other students, helping her learn to communicate better, solve problems, and process emotions safely. Reader response theory posits that whenever a reader connects a text to their own experiences, emotional reactions occur, and this newfound bond with the text can assist in classroom instruction (Mart, 2019). She felt that the role-plays provided her with a safe space for emotional exploration, equipping her with the knowledge to recognise what happens when people either possess or lack certain competencies. The emotional outcomes of the role-play activities emerged for this participant; her SEC centred experience seemed to be highlighted by both the warm-up games and

the role-plays. This finding suggests that while both role-play and narrative empathy activities fostered social and emotional development for some participants, for this participant, only the role-play activities taught her about safe emotional exploration and highlighted the SECs more explicitly.

Participant B – Diary

I have enjoyed doing the research activities as they have shown me how others behave and act in certain situations and has helped me improve my own life as I am more aware of what I say socially and with my self-management skills.

Participant B shared that the research activities have exposed him to the behaviours of others and taught him how to act in certain situations. He also felt that the competencies enabled him to make more informed decisions in his personal life regarding what he says and how to manage himself in pursuit of his goals. For this participant, the SEL outcomes of social awareness and self-management skills appeared to be his biggest takeaway. His reflection led to the conclusion that, for some participants, the development of social and emotional competencies was the most memorable and useful aspect of the experience.



Photo 48: Participants at the end of Cycle 5 posing after their last research activity cycle

When I asked the participants to pose for a picture reflecting how they feel in the research space, as this was their last cycle, they posed as shown above. This reveals a group that appears both pleased and tired. They managed to balance their usual English literature module-specific assessments with completing their research activity tasks, and it was heartening to see their smiles still present on their faces.

10.5 Reflections on Cycle 5

At the beginning of Cycle 5, I experienced a bittersweet curiosity, as this would be the last research cycle with the participants. I accommodated their request for six warm-up games instead of three. They also participated in two narrative empathy discussion sessions instead of one. Additionally, the participants responded to a reflection question I included in their diaries regarding their overall thoughts on their research experience thus far. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to observe the participants create their own role-plays that were not based on the prescribed texts, as we had reached the final cycle and the additional warm-up games took up most of the research activity time. However, I was pleased to have had the chance to take them outside for one of the narrative empathy discussion sessions.

The warm-up activities and the role-play activities addressed the first research question regarding how role-play and role-playing activities can support empathic behaviour among the participants. They helped to energise the participants and initiated the autonomous learning that they would experience in the self-management cycle.

In reflecting on the ways in which the participants enjoyed their warm-up games, evidenced by their requests for more in the last cycle, I realised that these games functioned as emotional climate-shifting tools for the learning space. The participants' moods, regardless of what they were when entering the research space, almost always transformed with the warm-up games. I believe these activities served to synchronise the mental states within the learning environment. If each participant entered with a different mental state, the warm-ups allowed them to be present in the game together, triggering a unification of mental states through their shared curiosity and efficiency. The collaborative games appeared to create a unified mental state for

the participants, enabling the cognitive engagement required for the lesson, facilitated by the collective cognitive activation from the games.

In addressing whether role-play and role-playing activities can support empathic behaviour among these participants from this cycle, they stated that they were able to identify the importance of self-management through playing characters who lacked self-discipline, exhibited greed, or displayed emotional outbursts.

The second research question, which focused on what SEL skills participants can learn from narrative empathy, was revealed during the two narrative empathy discussion sessions.

The participants shared their views on the characters and relationships in the play after performing their role-plays. Their attitudes towards certain characters shifted, and the role-plays helped them understand why some characters behaved as they did. They began to empathise with these previously disliked or misunderstood characters.

In addressing whether SEL skills can be learned by students who engage in narrative empathy within the literature learning space from this cycle, it became clear that the participants learned how to identify what self-management looks and feels like through role-playing characters who struggled to manage their emotions, stress, conflict, and discipline. They also recognised the importance of processing difficult emotions, even when their home environments did not encourage emotional processing.

In considering the significance of SEL for the participants in this cycle, it was evident that they realised the importance of managing oneself and one's behaviour for the sake of relationships. The intrapersonal ability to manage emotions and stress is crucial for maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. Participants also felt that certain characters in the play, who challenged regressive value systems, taught them to confront oppressive value systems in their own lives. Overall, participants believed that learning about self-management would be an essential tool for improving their mental and physical health and for achieving their life goals. They felt that self-

management emphasised the importance of being responsive in situations rather than being reactive.

When looking at the participants' overall experience of the five research cycles, they revealed some significant takeaways from their warm-up, role-play, and narrative empathy discussion session experiences. They had fun, found that the role-plays highlighted the importance of the SECs for use in real life, and discovered that the narrative empathy discussion sessions allowed for honest conversations with each other. The participants felt that learning about the SECs through literature studies was a safe way to engage with them. They also believed that the warm-up games fostered bonds and trust among the participants within the research group. Although participants did not have the time to write a full reflection piece, I appreciated their responses to this additional question in their diaries and noted with satisfaction that nobody had an overall unpleasant experience from the research cycle activities. Given that these cycles simulated emotion, accessed personal feelings, and discussed emotional experiences, the possibility of unpleasant experiences was to be expected; however, the communicative safety that role-play offered, together with the opportunity to engage honestly with a peer through the narrative empathy discussion sessions, revealed that SEL outcomes for students who role-play literary text extracts and discuss literary texts can indeed occur.

10.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of Cycle 5 of *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith, where the participants explored the self-management skills they could gain from role-playing and empathising with the characters and scenes in the play.

The next chapter provides the conclusive information needed to ascertain the participants' social and emotional capacities at the end of the five research cycles. An analysis of the post-study questionnaire follows.

Chapter 11:

Post-questionnaire – Analysis and Findings

11.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data derived from the post-study questionnaire, which explored participants' learning outcomes and experiences following the research cycles. The analysis is presented using a narrative approach.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences with role-play, narrative empathy, and the CASEL 5 SELs, I categorised the responses into three sections: (1) using role-play to achieve SEL outcomes in English literature lecture rooms, (2) using narrative empathy to achieve SEL outcomes in English Literature lecture rooms, and (3) the significance of SEL outcomes in English literature lecture rooms. The post-questionnaire data provided valuable insights into how participants experienced the role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions throughout the five research cycles, specifically in relation to SEL.

11.2 Using role-play to produce SEL outcomes in English Literature lecture rooms

The following responses from the post-study questionnaire revealed the various ways in which role-play assisted the participants in gaining a better understanding of the literary texts they were studying:

Participant C

Using role plays allowed us to engage more with the text and gather a better understanding of what the characters feel and how they portray themselves throughout the novels or plays. The role plays allowed me to understand the characters better and it made me use my imaginative thoughts to connect with what messages the authors were portraying. It gave me a better insight to analysing the texts.

Participant H

It taught me how to trust in my interpretation of different texts and be confident in writing and role-playing. It has allowed me to be more comfortable and confident when giving my point of view or opinions to the class when asked to do so by the lecturer.

Participant D

I feel as if it allows us as the reader to get to understand the texts in a different way than reading. Allows our imagination to be free when it comes to understanding the text.

Participant F

I find it extremely helpful and engaging as this is a great way to understand the literature texts but to also be a part of the narrative. When you are in character and are playing the part of a specific person you tend to see things differently and understand why they did or said the things they did. You also get the experience to be a part of the writer's mind and how she or he wrote the literature texts. Roleplay also allows us to work and interact in groups, which helps us to understand our peers' perspectives and how they view the literature texts. This is a wonderful way to learn literature.

Participant B

I did enjoy doing them. When could not complete the texts it was quite nice to see certain acts being played out. It gave me a brief description of the text that I would be studying. It also helped me improve my acting skills and helped me get over the little stage fright I had. It taught me certain general themes of the texts and how certain characters would have acted in present times and how situations could have been dealt with better than how they were.

Participant C shared that role-play helped her understand the characters in the text better, allowing for a profound connection between her imagination and the author's intention. Her response aligns with Koopman and Hakemulder (2015), who found that

one is unlikely to feel another's experience without considering their perspective. This is how Participant C was able to make the connection – by stepping into the shoes of the character to understand authorial intentions through the role-play.

Participant H felt that the role-plays gave her more confidence regarding her views on the text and made her feel more comfortable sharing her opinions. The warm-up exercises before the role-play showcase, designed to foster confidence and comfort and to build an atmosphere of trust and safety, are important factors that influence the learning experience (Sambanis et al., 2013).

Participant D pointed out that the role-plays allowed her an alternative experience and greater freedom to understand the text, as opposed to just reading it. This response is significant as it resonates with Buldu (2022), who found that providing higher education students with the ability to recreate conflict situations is an important cognitive tool for engaging their imagination while making the learning experience experiential through role-play, thereby creating a more meaningful lesson on the characters being studied.

Participant F found that role-playing the characters within the text was an engaging way to understand and be part of the narrative. Playing the characters allowed for an increased understanding of the perspectives and circumstances from which the characters made decisions. She recognised that role-play enabled her to comprehend the writer's intentions and allowed her to develop an ensemble way of working, as she got to understand her peers' perspectives. She found role-plays to be a wonderful way of learning literature. The multiple experiences she reflects on from her role-play activities exemplify the multiple intelligences that Koushki (2019) writes about, where reading, writing, casting a script, and teamwork involved in bringing a small production to life produce the multiple intelligences that dramatising a narrative provides to students, bringing literary texts to life.

Participant B pointed out how the role-plays helped him understand the texts he did not finish reading, as seeing certain scenes played out enhanced his narrative comprehension. He also felt that he improved his acting skills and overcame his stage fright. Itani (2023) explains the significance of drama warm-up games in alleviating

stage fright by creating a relaxed environment focused on the game at hand. These games may have assisted this participant in overcoming his nerves. Ultimately, Participant B found that the role-plays helped him compare how situations were handled in the spatiotemporal context of the text and how they could have been dealt with better today. His responses are reinforced by Riain et al. (2017), who emphasise the importance of role-play for literature teachers due to its ability to engage students in active learning through embodying the narrative. In the current digital world, where students prefer visual immersion, it is vital for literature teachers to explore imaginative methodologies (Riain et al., 2017); thus, the role-play experience may have helped this participant immerse himself in the world of the text.

The following responses from the post-study questionnaire revealed the various ways in which role-play assisted the participants in improving their understanding of the characters they were studying:

Participant I

They taught me that there is more to putting yourself in someone else's shoes than just doing so psychologically, because you get a more in depth understanding of why someone is behaving like that in the situation when you take on their role.

Participant F

That one story can have many different perspectives. When you engage with the text the first time you only understand it. It is hard to formulate your own perspectives or even relate to the characters from the literature texts. Roleplay has taught me to formulate my own thoughts about the texts.

Participant A

I felt like we got to experience the way in which the characters were feeling about the circumstances or the instances that were happening at the time. We actually got to have a grasp on the message that the authors were trying to bring across as well as the themes that were highlighted in each of the plays and the novels. Personally for me these roleplays have

taught me to value the power of art as the medium that is not really expanded upon and these roleplays have also helped me to unlock my acting talent.

Participant G

Feeling of empathy. Role-playing allows open communication without feeling threatened and vulnerable. For me, role-playing opened a space for discourse and feelings. The feeling of empathy in the five texts we did helped me understand the characters better and why they took certain decisions, and not judge them. I was socially aware of what I thought they were going through and did not compare it with today's era because things change over time. What was forced or believed to happen in that period is not the case anymore.

Participant I shares that participating in the role-plays provided her with an in-depth understanding of the characters' decision-making and psychological states. Participant F notes that a single narrative can ignite various perspectives among its audience, and she felt that role-playing the characters enabled her to formulate her own understanding of both the characters and the text being studied. What participants I and F express aligns with Stephenson (2023), who stated that creativity through drama stimulates emotional sensibilities and encourages openness to multiple perspectives of a scenario, as well as various interpretations of a character's experience.

Participant A was able to grasp what the authors were conveying through the circumstances in which the characters found themselves, and he felt that role-play helped him unlock his acting abilities. Participant A's textual and physical experiences during the role-plays resonate with Wells et al. (2023), who highlighted the value of embodied learning through drama to promote "embodied cognition" (Wells et al., 2023, p. 3), where learning involves the body and mind uniting through the lived emotional experiences of the student, thereby deepening content understanding. When participant A stated that his acting abilities were accessed alongside empathy for the characters he portrayed, he merged both body and mind in the learning

process, experiencing an embodied cognition of content through role-playing the characters he was studying.

Participant G expressed that the role-plays helped her empathise with the characters and felt that they improved her communication without feelings of vulnerability or threat. Participant G's experiences resonate with Costa et al. (2014), who found that using drama allows for both a cathartic and performative experience. When she experienced the ability to safely communicate her feelings, it was cathartic for her. Through role-playing her characters, she simulated their experiences through performance, thereby highlighting that using drama techniques like role-play is a strong social and emotional tool for learning about characters in a situation that is both safe (Junior, 2012) and engaging.

Participant G also felt that role-playing enabled her to discuss feelings about the characters and why it is not advisable to judge them. This comment is significant because her willingness to understand someone's decisions, rather than hastily judging them, echoes Brackett's (2019) work on encouraging people to become emotion scientists rather than emotion judges. When a person is an emotion scientist, they have the ability to pause during heightened emotional experiences and ask themselves why they are having strong physical responses to specific stimuli. At this point, the emotion scientist reviews those moments of stress and asks questions about why stress is emerging from a certain scenario. The discussion of feelings before conclusively labelling a feeling is a key finding of this participant's character learning and indicates that emotional education (Brackett, 2019) is taking place through role-playing a character during literary analysis.

The following responses from the post-questionnaire revealed various ways in which role-play assisted the participants in regulating their behaviour better:

Participant D

Has taught me not to be judgmental and put myself in that person's shoes and be open minded when it comes to different situations and things.

Participant A

Role playing has taught me how to express certain emotions and how to regulate my own behaviour personally on a certain level. And it has also taught me how to put myself in the shoes of a character by entering into a character and being another kind of person and not just being myself which is a very powerful thing. This goes to show us the power of art in our lives on how it actually connects to most of the things we experience in our daily lives.

Participant E

The role plays taught me to work better in a team and I feel like my classmates and I have a better understanding and have grown together in the previous weeks. It was fun debating and co-operating with the other students. It felt good to get out of my comfort zone sometimes. While preparing for the role play the groups I was in always made it fun and that took pressure off presenting the role play. It was also a lot of fun to step into the shoes of characters

Participant D shares that role-play taught her not to judge others and to be open-minded in different situations. Participant A stated that role-play taught him how to express his emotions and regulate his behaviour, and it helped him understand the perspectives of others. He finds role-play to be a form of art that connects him to daily life. Both their responses resonate with the work of Silius-Ahonen and Gustavson (2012), who noted that art goes beyond what is formulated and is concerned with making meaning from experiences born out of the art form. In this case, role-play was the art form from which the participants derived meaning. Participant D learned another's perspective from role-playing a character, while Participant A discovered that role-play is an art form that taught him about various aspects of everyday life. Role-play taught these participants the value of an artistic approach to fostering social awareness.

Participant E expressed that role-play taught her to work in a team, which helped to strengthen her relationships with her peers. She stated that participating in role-play was fun and alleviated her fear of performing, allowing her to step out of her comfort

zone and learn about the characters she read about. Sambanis et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of a non-threatening atmosphere for the growth and creative development of students, and drama provides a secure environment for learning in which a student's need for autonomy can emerge. The drama warm-up games allow for productive ideas to flourish in the learning space (Sambanis et al., 2013), and in Participant E's case, the ability for creativity to triumph over fear was evident. Role-play helped her manage her fear and, consequently, address a behaviour she had previously accepted.

11.3 Using narrative empathy to produce Sel outcomes in English literature lecture rooms

The responses from the post-questionnaire revealed the various ways in which all the participants demonstrated improved understandings of empathy after the five research cycles:

Participant G

Empathy is the ability to understand and experience another person's feelings, thoughts, and experiences without having their own expressed.

Participant A

I would say being able to put yourself in a certain feeling or emotion that someone may be feeling at a certain time when someone is experiencing something at a certain time.

Participant B

The emotion that one has for another person as one has gone through a similar ordeal in their life and then treating the person according to how one would have liked or had been treated.

Participant H

Understanding another person's thoughts and feelings in a circumstance from their perspective rather than your own. In basic terms, I believe it is about putting yourself in the shoes of others.

Participant D

My understanding is trying my best to understand what the person is going through and being open minded so I can't say the wrong thing and help them.

Participant I

I understand empathy to being able to understand, be sensitive to and aware of how the other person feels and how the given situation may have affected them.

Participant F

It is when you can relate or understand a person's emotions and feelings.

Participant E

Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings of another person. It's when you consider the feelings of other people when they are going through difficult times or just in general.

Participant C

Empathy allows you to understand the perspectives of someone else. It allows you to share their feelings and relate to them. Empathy is a building block to enhancing relationships and creating deeper bonds with people.

All the above responses are compliant with this study's definition and use of affective empathy, which is the capacity to share another's feelings and emotions (Stansfield & Bunce, 2014). These responses indicate a significant growth in the participants' understanding of empathy after the five research cycles. Participants now have a good grasp of empathy and how it can assist them in understanding the emotions someone else may be experiencing. This improved understanding of empathy may enhance their social awareness and self-awareness.

The following responses from the post-questionnaire reveal the various skills the participants learned from the narrative empathy discussion sessions:

Participant G

I think I have learned to be more thoughtful as a person and be more responsible than I was. Social-emotional learning skills taught me all types of behaviour human beings display around people. I have been battling with anxiety for the past few years and I can proudly say that social-emotional learning skills taught and guided me to build my character. Learning how to control my feelings and emotions, and positive social behaviour. Setting and achieving my goals, feeling and showing empathy to others.

Participant C

I learnt to react to people with a positive and compassionate response to build on relationships. Since learning this ability of kindness and empathy, I've been able to work cooperatively and make responsible judgments, resulting in productive problem solving.

Participant A

To be able to have self-control and also self-awareness, most of the plays which we have learned during this block have been highlighting both these social emotional learning skills.

Participant D

Self-awareness made me aware how I come off towards people and if I make them feel comfortable

Participant G has learned to be thoughtful and responsible, managing her behaviour socially. As someone battling with anxiety, she feels that SEL has helped her build her character. Participant C shares that she has learned to respond to others, which has allowed her to be cooperative, make responsible evaluations, and solve problems. Participants A and D state that empathy has improved their self-awareness. Overall, these participants recognise the valuable role that empathy plays in their social and emotional development. Kurian (2019) notes that empathy becomes necessary in education, as it can spark compassionate action for change. These participants

demonstrate that empathy has enhanced their self-awareness and relationships, two important SEL competencies.

Participant I

I have learnt that it is actually good that I do not react impulsively to situations, and it is better to respond to them after understanding what is going on not just on my side but on the other persons as well. It has also taught me to be able to read the room much better by using the SEL competencies.

Participant F

I think it is important to be aware of your social skills and to create relationships that are understanding. There are these skills that we will be able to take with us through every walk of life as well as pass them down. Being able to be understanding and sharing in people's feelings and emotion is a skill which I believe is not the easiest.

Participant E

I learnt that although my fellow classmates are in class and happy doing what they doing, they also are affected by external factors in their life and so am I. We show each other empathy and are very supportive of each other. I personally learnt how to manage myself and my emotions better. I also learnt to take what I say in to account before saying it because it might hurt someone else's feelings.

Participant B

I have learnt not to judge others for their actions and first to put myself in their position, not only their current predicament but also the build up to the specific issue. I have realized that even if someone does not handle a situation well it may not only be the stress of the situation that is affecting their judgement, it could also be other aspects of their life that I do not know of.

Participant I shares that empathy has taught her that it is better to respond to a situation by understanding the perspectives of all parties involved. Participant F states that empathy has taught her to build relationships based on understanding, and that grasping someone else's perspective is not easy, but it is valuable. Participant E realised that everyone is dealing with their own challenges, and it is important to be supportive of one another and to be mindful of one's words, as they may evoke unpleasant feelings in others. Participant B learned not to judge others until he is able to empathise with their circumstances and the factors that led them to their challenges, as it is these surrounding influences that impact a decision, not solely the inciting event. Their responses resonate with Dias (2023), who stated that perspective-taking in a character's social and emotional scenario, which is different from one's own, becomes instrumental in developing a student's empathic abilities. The participants' responses reveal a heightened social awareness, stemming from their empathic skills learned through cycles of empathising with characters in the texts being studied and through engaging with the views of their peers.

11.4 Importance of SEL outcomes in English literature lecture rooms

The following responses from the post-study questionnaire revealed the various ways in which the English literature classroom provided the participants with a comprehensive understanding of SEL:

Participant G

The English literature lecture room taught me about the SEL competencies, and each lesson was interesting when the scenes were played out because figuratively, I was taken back to when the play or novel was written. Literature has helped me with looking at the writer's thoughts, asking myself why she/he portrayed this character like this, and what was the meaning behind each storyline. The in-depth analysis of each literary text made me more self-aware at things from different perspectives. Role-playing taught me more about a certain scene in a play/novel than just reading it out. It was all about critical thinking about controversial and complex subjects seen in the five texts we did in class. When doing role-plays I'm practicing empathy and perspective learning.

Participant G responded that role-play and empathy helped her with perspective learning and the ability to understand a scene beyond merely reading it aloud. She felt that studying literature has enabled her to grasp the writer's intentions behind each text's plot. This participant's empathetic responses to reading and studying a text incited narrative feelings in her (Koopman, 2017). These narrative feelings, which accessed empathy and sympathy for the characters she read about, discussed, or even role-played, seemed to have allowed her to gain a better understanding of herself. According to reader-response theory, these feelings of empathy enhance character identification, as the character's experiences and mental state evoke a sense of empathy in the reader (Keen, 2006). From the different perspectives of the characters she studied and empathised with, this response revealed the self-awareness and social-awareness competencies she developed.

Participant A

For us to be able to teach people the different SEL competencies and for us to be able to apply these competencies in our daily lives as well, the role of SEL helps us to be more creative in the English literature space, it allows us to have open minds and lives as well.

Participant A shared that SEL helped him to be creative in the literature learning space and allowed him to have an open mind. He felt that the creativity sparked by this environment prompted him to reflect on life with an open mind. His response resonates with Kromhout and Scheckle (2021), who found that reading and discussing literature enables the reader to navigate between literature and real life. The participant's creative perspective, ignited by literary study, allowed him to enhance the intrapersonal SEL competency of self-awareness.

Participant D

The role of SEL is to make us more aware of ourselves and how we manage our emotions. It also caused us to be open minded towards different situations and stop being close minded. Also allowed us to see the texts from different perspectives which helped with understanding.

Participant F

This educational opportunity helped to understand and bring awareness to SEL. It is a fantastic way of creating skills and opening a new avenue for how we see education. Literature students would have the utmost advantage using these skills in their career. It is a door that should be explored and brought into the classrooms.

Participant E

Social emotional learning is important because it teaches students crucial life skills, including the ability to understand themselves, develop a positive self-image, take responsibility for their actions, and create meaningful relationships with the people around them.

Participant B

To help other people, if they want it, on how their emotions are affecting them and how it could affect them later on in life.

Participant G

Let us be kind to each other and make good decisions for the future by managing our emotions, creating and achieving goals, and treating others with kindness.

Participant D expressed that the role of SEL is to make her more aware of her emotions, be open-minded, and learn about the perspectives of others. Participant F recognised the advantage of using SEL to learn literature. Participant E acknowledged that SEL is important because it imparts life skills that can be learned and applied in real life. Participants B and G emphasised the significance of SEL in helping individuals manage their emotions and make decisions for their futures. These participants recognised the value of SEL for social awareness (CASEL, n.d.), for studying English literature, and for managing emotions. Similarly, research on SEL has revealed that it is central to development in terms of physical and mental health, moral judgement, citizenship, academics, and achievement motivation (Elbertson et al., 2009). These participants are recognising the multi-faceted value of SEL within their formal higher education literature studies module.

The following responses from the post-questionnaire revealed the various ways in which the participants see value in SEL for South Africa:

Participant G

As a South African student, the role of social-emotion learning is all about being there for others and not judging them even though you don't know the full story. In this country we live in, I think we are all facing problems like environmental, social, and economic issues. A good example would be when Covid 19 happened in South Africa. Everyone was losing their mind thinking about how they are going to feed their families and how are they going to maintain their lifestyles. All these questions circulating in their minds caused some people to take drastic decisions to put food on the table, not because they wanted to but because the situation, they were facing led them to do what they did to survive. Back to social-emotional learning, this scenario taught many South Africans to be considerate of one another. Social emotional learning skills also assist adolescents to learn how to navigate and negotiate their interpersonal activities in ways that help them reach desirable results, which serves as a foundation for healthy mental health and well-being.

Participant G pointed out that SEL can help South Africans manage mental strain and pressure similar to that experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. This type of pressure is important to alleviate, as it may incite dangerous behaviour from individuals who might resort to extreme measures for survival. The COVID-19 pandemic saw a significant increase in the distress felt by educators (Brackett, 2024), the discrimination experienced by patients (Bientzle, et al 2021), and the economic stress suffered by most South Africans (Jewkes et al., 2023). Therefore, meaningful investment in the cornerstone of social development, including the education system, can serve as a social protection mechanism that strengthens social resilience to economic vulnerability in the event of future disasters (Bouchard et al., 2023).

Participant G

South Africa is facing major issues of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Interventions in social and emotional learning skills for

improving the learning environment may aid young people become more future-oriented. In South Africa, unemployment is among the highest in the world. Youth must be employable, self-sufficient, and self-assured to find possibilities to earn a sustainable living. This means they should have workplace and advanced human skills like self-awareness, social awareness, interpersonal interactions, and effective communication abilities. As a literature student in South Africa, I think the implementation of SEL programmes can provide the skills people need to empower them to make a successful transition from school to adulthood and the world of work. SEL taught me to prioritize personal organizational skills and self-control, as well as the capacity to create objectives, manage time, be self-disciplined, and regulate and manage my emotions

Participant G shared that SEL skills would be valuable to South Africa due to our major challenges with poverty, inequality, and unemployment. She notes that SEL skills are important for the employability opportunities of South African professionals in the future and that the CASEL 5 SECs are essential workplace skills. For her, SEL skills would aid the social transition from student to worker, and she shares how SEL has benefitted her. The kinds of skills that SEL develops, such as conflict management, problem-solving, collaborative work, and social skills (WEF, 2016), are increasingly valuable in the labour market. Participant G's reflections on the value of SEL in the workplace also resonate with Dyson et al. (2023), who found that a wide range of SEL competencies is connected with students' success later in life, whether in education or in the workplace.

Participant C

South African students need to be exposed to social emotional learning to become more responsible and empathetic. It will teach different competencies and skills that can be practised outside of the classroom.

Participant I

I think the role of SEL for South African students is to help them be able to build meaningful relationships with people around them and be able to manage their lives as well. The beautiful thing about SEL is that the

subskills are inter-transferable whether it is at school, home, or the workplace.

Participant C states that South African students could learn empathy and responsibility through SEL and these skills could be applied outside the classroom. Participant I highlighted the importance of relationship skills that people in South Africa could acquire from SEL experiences, noting that these skills are transferable from personal to professional domains. SEL has the potential to prepare young people for civic engagement, build integrity in students, and foster teamwork and problem-solving skills (Cojocar, 2023). These skills are essential in the workplace, at home, and in school.

The following responses from the post-questionnaire revealed the various ways in which participants perceive the importance of English literature studies for SEL:

Participant H

I felt extremely excited and included. It allowed me to become more interested in the literary text and gave me the opportunity to paint a physical image of the text and therefore helped me to understand the text much more. I would recommend this method to many other lecturers; it also helped me to remember important key notes that were given by my lecturer.

Participant I

I feel it is very necessary as you get a broader understanding of not just the text but the characters as well. You also get to understand how and why things were the way they were when those texts were written and how they can be linked to or relate to life today.

Participant H felt that the inclusion of SEL helps to improve the English literature learning experience. She recommends using SEL to teach English literature. Participant I believed that learning SELs through the English literature lesson allowed her to gain an in-depth understanding of the characters in the text, and that this understanding could be relatable to real life today. Both their responses resonate with

the work of Ndlovu (2019), who found that literature studies as a discipline is part of the birth and development of a human rights discourse and practice. Similarly, these participants recognised the value of SEL for real-world humanitarian comprehension. English literature students studying texts with the aim of SEL outcomes could begin to empathise with characters that are suffering and translate that empathic experience of acknowledging struggle into a more meaningful citizenship education, whereby the stories studied could open their minds and hearts to broaden their understanding of the world around them (Kromhout & Scheckle, 2021).

11.5 Reflections on the post-questionnaire findings

After the five action research cycles concluded and the participants completed their post-cycle questionnaire, a glaring finding was that all participants had learned something valuable for real-world implementation from their experiences with role-play and narrative empathy for SEL development.

I also noted that none of the participants had unpleasant experiences with the research activities.

From the post-cycle questionnaire (Appendix A), three themes emerged.

Theme 1 considered how the use of role-play to produce SEL outcomes in English literature lecture rooms was reflected upon by the participants. Participants indicated that role-play with SEL outcomes provided them with an improved understanding of the literary texts they were studying, as well as a better comprehension of the characters within those texts. Additionally, it assisted them in learning how to regulate their behaviour. Role-play supported the participants in achieving module-specific aims in the domain of literary criticism, including narrative comprehension and character analysis, which are important for writing specific learning objectives in their study of English literature. It is interesting that an art form like role-play facilitated this very analytical and text-based learning objective. Furthermore, the fact that the participants also learned about regulating their behaviour while role-playing characters is another significant finding. This connects to the notion that the embodied learning and simulation of character experiences may have taught the participants how to regulate their own emotions, either by playing characters with poor emotion

regulation or by creating characters with better emotion regulation than what was originally written in the source text. This first theme from the post-cycle questionnaire revealed that role-play can produce emotional regulation experiences and assist in the literary criticism component of English literature studies.

Theme 2 examined how the use of narrative empathy to produce SEL outcomes in English literature lecture rooms was reflected upon by the participants. The participants demonstrated a good understanding of empathy and revealed that the narrative empathy discussion sessions and the empathic reflections on the characters in the texts taught them self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills that they could apply in real life. It became clear that narrative empathy activities can teach empathy as well as self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills.

Theme 3 explored how the participants reflected on the importance of SEL outcomes in English literature lecture rooms. The participants acknowledged that many skills are gained from SEL in the English literature classroom and that they have learned to see different perspectives of people, acquiring self and social awareness competencies. The participants expressed their recognition of the value of SEL for South Africa and acknowledged the significance of English literature in teaching and learning SEL.

The post-cycle questionnaire (Appendix A) revealed the participants' overall responses to the role-play and narrative empathy activities for SEL outcomes in the English literature classroom after the completion of the five research cycles. The participants' varied responses gave me insight into their key takeaways from the role-play and narrative empathy activities for SEL outcomes in English literature lectures.

11.6 Conclusion

This chapter presents an analysis of the post-cycle questionnaire. It provides the information needed to ascertain what the participants felt and learned from the five research cycle activities focused on role-play and narrative empathy for SEL outcomes in English literature classrooms.

The next chapter will examine the findings of the study. The research findings will be structured according to each of the research questions. Thereafter, the study's overall contribution to the field will be discussed.

Chapter 12:

Summary, Implications, Further Research and Conclusions

12.1 Introduction

This study explored how using role-play and narrative empathy can produce SEL outcomes in English literature lecture rooms. Firstly, the study aimed to identify if and how role-play simulations of characters in a literary text could foster empathic behaviour among students studying literature at a South African HEI. Secondly, the study sought to determine if and how narrative empathy discussion sessions could enhance social and emotional skills for those students. Lastly, the study intended to identify the role of SEL for South African literature students.

There were five action research cycles used to generate data to address the above three questions. Each action research cycle aimed to engage with one SEC from the literary text being studied within that cycle. The SEC from the literary text was taught and explored through role-play and narrative empathy activities.

While the syllabus-specific English literature studies learning outcomes focused on teaching critical thinking, effective communication, writing in a long response format, and the ability to identify and critique different writing styles and spatiotemporal contexts, I believed that the literary texts had the potential to provide more than just language and philosophical learning outcomes. The infusion and integration of SEL in literary analysis offered opportunities for students to examine social systems and gain an emotional education through the literary text being studied via role-play and narrative empathy activities.

The study was important in providing a possible model for how English literature studies could serve as a medium for offering South African students of English literature – and, by extension, future Humanities professionals – a social and emotional education. Such an education has not been effectively or singularly provided in mainstream secondary or higher education in South Africa, yet it is crucial during the psychologically adjusting phases of both the teenage and early adulthood

years. The study addressed the opportunity to teach essential psychosocial skills through the English literature discipline.

In this study, I drew on my knowledge from three Humanities disciplines. Firstly, from drama and performance studies, specifically role-play, warm-up games, and playmaking. Secondly, from English literature studies, I focused on narrative empathy, reader response theory, and literary analysis. Thirdly, from Education, I drew specifically on SEL, particularly the CASEL 5 competencies. This thesis contributes to the discourses on SEL, English Literature Education, Drama in Education, Narrative Empathy, action research, and the critical interpretivist paradigm in producing SEL outcomes.

In this final chapter, the research findings will first be outlined by providing the question-specific outcomes of this study. Thereafter, the theoretical and methodological implications will be discussed. Thirdly, the implications of the research findings for my professional practice will be explored. Fourthly, the limitations of the research will be declared, and fifthly, suggestions for further research will be made. The chapter will then conclude by discussing how this study contributes to knowledge in the various fields related to this research.

12.2 Main Findings

The presentation of the research findings is shaped by the three research questions that guided the study.

12.2.1 How do role-play and role-playing extracts from English literary texts support empathic behaviour in students studying literature at a South African HEI?

This study has shown that using role-play in the literature lecture room cannot be separated from the warm-up games. To implement the playmaking steps of the role-play process, the warm-up games were crucial in getting the participants physically and emotionally activated for the role-play. Expecting the participants to use their bodies and voices without preparation was unlikely to succeed, as these were not drama students who were comfortable using their bodies to communicate the SEL-specific message. Therefore, for effective role-play to occur in a non-drama

environment, the warm-up games served as effective activators for embodied and experiential learning. The warm-ups also acted as targeted emotion stimulation tools for each specific SEC I aimed to teach.

A significant finding was the enjoyment and fun that the participants experienced from the warm-up games. These games were designed to prepare the participants' physical and emotional states for the experiential learning in role-play and for the careful, safe introspection in the narrative empathy discussion sessions. However, the outcome was that the warm-up games provided the participants with enhanced energy and allowed me to alter the emotional climate of the learning space to suit the lesson I had planned.

Another significant finding was that the warm-up games alone had the potential to teach intrapersonal (self-awareness and self-management) and interpersonal competencies (social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making). As the participants engaged in the warm-up games, they were able to have fun together, feel and show empathy, be trusting, courageous, supportive, and respectful, build confidence, be tolerant, collaborate swiftly, be loud or silent, and observe each other's behaviour for the game to proceed.

The study showed that the participants enjoyed the warm-up games, and as the cycles progressed, they expressed a desire for more of these activities, as they proved to be both mood enhancers and activators of the learning space. Once the warm-up games were completed, the participants felt confident enough to implement the playmaking steps and showcased their role-plays to each other.

A valuable finding regarding the use of role-play to support and teach empathic behaviour was its ability to help participants empathise with fictional characters from a different spatiotemporal context. Role-playing the characters within the literary texts transported the participants to a time and place foreign to them, yet they were able to develop empathy for these fictional individuals. The participants who stepped into the shoes of characters in the universe of the play became more empathic and compassionate towards different social norms and societies.

When the participants role-played specific moments from the texts they were studying, they chose events, relationships, or instances that supported and highlighted the literary thematic concerns outlined in their syllabus. The major moments in the character arcs of the protagonists or antagonists in all the cycles were voluntarily selected for role-play by the groups. These role-plays then became an exploration zone for both literary elements and SEL, demonstrating that role-play serves both language-specific learning outcomes and SEL outcomes in the English literature lecture room.

The findings suggest that role-plays taught the participants different ways of being in a relationship and establishing one. The role-plays taught the participants that decision-making is sometimes dependent on the ecological system in which a person is raised, as well as on their ideological and psychological background. The role-plays taught the participants that there will be interpersonal consequences for an individual if their intrapersonal skills are not developed, and there will be intrapersonal consequences if their interpersonal skills are lacking.

The most notable finding regarding the use of role-play in this study is that it is visceral in its presentation of what potentially changed behaviour can look like. Consequently, in simulating people's experiences, role-play becomes a valuable experiential and embodied learning tool in teaching transformative value systems, empathy, and perspective-taking. If role-playing unpleasant character traits prevents the participants from mimicking these traits in their real lives, then role-play can be a valuable tool in identity shaping. It was also shown that the "playing the part" aspect of role-plays is highly emotive and forms part of a people-focused preparation skill for personal and professional use.

The conclusion regarding the role of role-play in supporting empathic behaviour in the literature classroom is that what laboratories are to the natural sciences, role-plays can be to SEL. The various ways in which the participants used their role-plays to feel empathy for the characters they portrayed and to demonstrate certain social and emotional competencies were experimental and didactic. Role-play is a valuable tool for empathising with others, understanding their spatiotemporal contexts,

comprehending their personal circumstances, accessing others' emotions, and learning about their social norms.

12.2.2 What SEL skills do students studying literature at a South African HEI learn from narrative empathy?

This research has shown that narrative empathy in an oral discussion format can serve as an effective reflection exercise for the connection between the characters in a text and a reader's real life. Important self-realisations emerged for the participants as they shared their opinions and thoughts about the characters, their decision-making, and their character traits. The narrative empathy discussion sessions made the participants politically aware of themselves within the broader social and economic conventions of their societies as they understood the various challenges facing the characters they were studying.

It was also found that the narrative empathy discussion sessions became a collaborative space for each participant to reflect on local social norms, how they perceived these norms, and the opportunity to vocalise their opinions on them. The sharing of their interpretations of local cultures and social norms allowed them to discuss what they had observed about various cultural practices, enabling them to comment on stereotypes, clarify interpretations, and understand what others may think about the same topics. The narrative empathy discussion sessions served as an introspective tool in a collaborative setting. The participants' various ideological inferences converged in this discussion session, demonstrating that a literary text-induced discussion can become a forum for examining social systems.

It was also shown that narrative empathy, when conducted in a discussion format, allowed the participants to clarify the meaning of commonly confused concepts emerging from text discussions. The participants' ability to correctly interpret conflated terms with one another in this format demonstrated that there is still an opportunity for language learning through a non-written task, such as this oral narrative empathy discussion format.

The results of this study show that when the participants reflected on the experiences of the characters, they were able to see the progression of social norms from a

chronological perspective. They discussed the gender conventions and social and economic norms specific to the text's spatiotemporal context, which enabled them to derive a reflective perspective on their present gender conventions, as well as social and economic norms.

A significant finding was the participants' ability to empathise with characters in the texts who were generally viewed as perpetrators or immoral within the narratives being studied. The narrative empathy discussion sessions equipped the participants to understand the motives behind characters' behaviours that resulted in immoral and perpetrating actions. This indicates that the narrative empathy discussion sessions can cultivate critical thinking skills in students of English literature, allowing them to move towards impartiality when understanding the human condition.

An important finding of the narrative empathy discussion sessions was that they provided participants with a deep reflection space, enabling them to make connections with their learning from other modules. As the participants discussed the various needs of the characters in the text, they began to link these needs with concepts learned in their psychology and communication science modules. Sharing their opinions and views on the characters' lives allowed them to connect and revise the knowledge acquired from other modules in their degree. Thus, the narrative empathy discussion sessions became a general reflection space for the participants.

Ultimately, the narrative empathy discussion sessions served as a cathartic space for the participants. When they reflected on the pleasant and unpleasant experiences of the characters, it encouraged them to share their own challenges, traumatic experiences, and both pleasant and unpleasant memories. These personal stories were shared voluntarily as participants reflected on their thoughts about the characters' journeys and what these journeys revealed about themselves and others.

*12.2.3 What is the role of **SEL** for South African students of literature?*

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that the CASEL 5 SECs provided the participants with valuable psychosocial tools to help them learn about themselves and their society. Self-awareness, self-management (intrapersonal competencies), social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (interpersonal competencies) taught the participants the importance of understanding themselves and others to achieve their personal and collective goals. The CASEL 5 SECs also taught the participants to empathise with others and learn how to manage emotions in a social environment. These CASEL 5 SECs provided the participants with essential psychosocial skills that will assist them in their personal and professional lives.

This study has shown that SEL through the examination of literary texts made the participants realise the importance of their psychological state. When the participants recognised that the emotional outbursts, unpleasant relationships, or impulsive behaviour of the characters they were studying led to unfortunate circumstances for those characters, they understood that this was due to a lack of social understanding or a deficiency in emotional processing. The teaching of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, which SEL focuses on, highlights the impact that a person's psychological state has on their choices and on the lives of their friends and loved ones.

Another major finding of the study is that the participants felt their learning of social and emotional skills could enhance their own specific SEC development. This indicates that their SEL equipped them with the ability to identify psychosocial areas that required development within themselves. The opportunity for SEL to highlight psychosocial weaknesses and strengths in the participants was evident.

These findings also suggest that, in general, SEL enabled these participants to recognise that their own and others' maladaptive behaviours may be caused by internal or external developmental challenges and traumas, or by challenges and traumas in adulthood. Participants were able to see that a character's deviant, violent, or impulsive behaviour could stem from either unattended and unaddressed challenges in childhood or from internal or external circumstances in adulthood that went unacknowledged, undiscussed, or emotionally unprocessed. This is important because, for these psychology major participants, recognising that people are products of specific

circumstances will teach them to become emotion scientists and understand why a person's behaviour is what it is, rather than being emotion judges.

It was also demonstrated that SEL through literary texts is crucial in teaching these participants the power and value of responding before reacting to emotionally charged events. Participants were able to grasp the importance of thinking, processing, and understanding an occurrence before reacting and possibly regretting it later. The general significance of contemplating an action before acting was a vital skill imparted through SEL.

Another significant finding is that culturally responsive SEL occurred naturally through the role-plays and the narrative empathy discussion sessions. When participants chose to explore an SEC through a role-play, they adapted characters familiar to South African stereotypes and personality tropes, using local colloquialisms in their role-plays. This demonstrates that their social and emotional education was relevant to their societies and cultures. When the participants made connections with their Black, Indian, or Coloured racial experiences, as well as their Christian, Muslim, or traditional isiZulu ancestral religious backgrounds during the narrative empathy discussion sessions, they were ensuring that their social and emotional education resonated with their own ideologies and worldviews. Having a culturally responsive SEL experience is important in a postcolonial society because it makes SEL work for the participants' culture rather than coercing or culturally programming a foreign ideology into the SEL activity.

The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that SEL outcomes may be effectively integrated into academic content, specifically English Literature. All English literary fictional works explore the expression of the human condition through a specific conflict, climax, and eventual new equilibrium. As long as there is a representation of a human's narrative arc, there is the potential to teach about that human's social and emotional experience, making English literature studies a rich site for social and emotional education.

12.3 Theoretical implications

The SEL model (CASEL, n.d.) proved significant in this study. The use of the CASEL 5 competencies served as both thematic concerns in literary analysis and as SEL

outcomes. When a person acquires the CASEL 5 competencies, they are deemed capable of managing themselves socially and emotionally. While the most common application of the CASEL 5 competencies is in the context of teaching SEL alone, in this study, the competencies served both as SEL competencies to be learned and as a theme to explore in the analysis of the literary texts.

Alongside the SEL outcomes, the findings regarding narrative empathy suggest that when participants sat together and vocally shared their empathy for the characters, along with their thoughts, ideas, and opinions on the text they were studying, they demonstrated a collaborative empathy with the narrative characters. By sharing their individual empathy for the characters and hearing others' empathy, the oral expression of narrative empathy proved to be powerful.

The use of SEL outcomes and narrative empathy emerged as a consequence of employing role-play for literary analysis, leading to a more visceral understanding of the experiences of the characters being read. Traditional literary analysis focuses on imaginative simulations of the text to empathise with and understand the circumstances and spatiotemporal contexts of the characters in the narrative. However, the introduction of role-play into the literary learning space allowed for embodied learning to enter a previously written and imaginative domain, deepening the understanding of the characters' experiences.

Theoretically, the results of this study indicate that a drama-in-education method of teaching literary studies, combined with a more reader-focused, oral narrative empathy approach, yields positive SEL outcomes. The interdisciplinary theoretical concepts worked in synergy, leading to a greater understanding of the texts being studied and of the participants' social and emotional ways of living and being.

12.4 Policy implications

The findings of this study suggest that a scaled implementation of SEL outcomes in the study of literature in English (or any other language) at both Basic Education Level and Higher Education Level, such as in the Arts, Social Sciences, or Education programmes, could result in a large-scale social and emotional transformation in the South African education system. The findings in this research indicate that promoting

SEL competencies like the CASEL 5 SECs as thematic concerns alongside the more text-specific philosophical themes involved in literary study is one way to encourage a social and emotional transformation in the education system. Making the study of social and emotional skills explicit in the subject or module outline ensures that the SEL outcomes in English literature studies are intentional from the outset of the subject or module. Not only should the SEL competencies be explored in the learning environment, but also in the testing environment. Formative and summative assessments requiring students to write about the text should incorporate SEL competencies as thematic topics. The scaling of SEL-integrated English literature studies through the syllabus, teaching methodology, and assessment procedures would facilitate a social and emotional transformation in our education system.

Another important practical implication of the proposed scaling of SEL outcomes is ideological. Currently, English literature studies are seen as a bearer and marker of colonial education in South Africa. However, culturally responsive SEL outcomes integrated into English literature study can counter colonial discourse and stigma surrounding English literature. This can be achieved by transforming this intellectual subject into a psychosocial training discipline for South Africa, incorporating decolonial social objectives as well. English remains the language of the global economy, presenting an opportunity to make this colonial subject matter resonate with global language competencies while also serving local citizenship goals, as outlined in the 2019 NSDP. The NDSP's mission statement on page 11, which partly focuses on "social development whilst seeking to address system considerations", can be realised through the intrapersonal and interpersonal competency development that SEL aims to foster. The participants in this study were able to make connections between their traditional upbringing, the characters in the text, and social and emotional competencies. Integrating SEL with English literature studies could address significant gaps in the psychosocial training of young Humanities professionals, render foreign stories relevant to the South African lived experience, and decolonise English literature studies while teaching standard critical thinking, philosophical, language, and writing skills.

12.5 Methodological implications

The use of the critical interpretivist paradigm proved effective because the participants' attitude changes and newfound learning regarding social and emotional skills were highlighted by the critical aspect of this interpretivist study. The participants' altered attitudes towards social and emotional phenomena resulted in a transformation of their understanding of SEL. The SEL competencies that the participants acquired provided them with new behavioural approaches to social situations and emotional experiences.

A qualitative approach allowed me to honour and understand the complex nature of the participants' emotional responses to the characters and events in the text being studied, as well as the intricate nature of their individual understandings of society. Capturing the nuanced interpretations that the participants had of their social and emotional experiences and responses to the literary text was crucial for teaching them social and emotional skills. The qualitative approach facilitated a thorough understanding of the social and emotional issues that arose from both the text and the participants, ensuring that these were represented appropriately.

The choice to use an AR design indicated that the cyclical nature of the research, comprising five cycles, allowed participants to shape how they would acquire social and emotional skills in the follow-up cycles. The cyclical nature of action research facilitated improved cycles of inquiry as the cycles progressed. This approach was effective because what I had initially designed was built upon, refined, and implemented in each cycle, allowing the changes to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the five cycles. The participants then exercised their intellect and learning by identifying certain activities they wanted more of and certain aspects they felt were missing. The action research empowered the participants to be active in both the research activities and their SEL.

The decision to choose both the writing tasks and the research diaries as data generation methods positively impacted the study, as the diaries produced written reflections of feelings and overall experiences related to the research activities, while the writing tasks generated written responses to specific experiences of the text, role-play, narrative empathy, and SEL outcomes. The diaries allowed for more reflective and unrestricted responses, whereas the written tasks required targeted literary analysis.

The two writing tasks per cycle enabled me to ascertain their SEL experiences from both an overall experiential perspective and a literary intellectual standpoint.

The decision to use autophotography, observation, and field notes as visual-specific data generation methods was beneficial to the study, as autophotography enabled participants to capture their visual representations of the social and emotional competencies explored in each cycle. In contrast, the photographs I took during my observations and the field notes allowed me to examine the representation of the social and emotional competencies as perceived by the participants. Similarities and nuances in both the participants' and my visual data were identified through the overlapping visual data generation strategies of autophotography and the photography from observations and field notes.

The choice to distribute pre-study and post-study questionnaires as data generation methods was also advantageous, as it revealed the progression of the participants' SEL from before the research activities to after the completion of all five cycles. The post-study questionnaire provided insight into what participants had learned and the depth of their understanding regarding the use of role-play and narrative empathy in English literature classrooms for achieving social and emotional education.

12.6 Professional practice implications

As an English literature lecturer, I realised and came to value the rich social and emotional potential within English literature studies to teach empathy, raise awareness of social systems and their impact on people's lives, and create a learning environment that is safe, creative, experimental, and reflective.

As an English literature lecturer I have seen firsthand how the teaching of SEL through literature studies has made my participants acutely aware of how the characters' social and emotional experiences influence their personal and collective goals within the narrative of the text. As a result, the participants began to make connections with their own social and emotional competencies and how these affected their abilities to achieve personal and professional goals. This integrated approach to social and emotional education through English literature studies has taught my participants a great deal about themselves and their societies.

SEL is not a panacea for all social ills and cannot treat clinically diagnosed mental health conditions. However, if students recognise the value of being socially and emotionally competent, they could at least possess a basic set of social and emotional tools to help them manage social circumstances and heightened emotional experiences. The use of SEL tools as a form of psychological first aid became important for me as someone who continues to teach emotionally stimulating content. I now understand the value of SEL tools in a lecture room because I need to create a secure learning climate, as I am constantly teaching sensory-laden literary content that may trigger social and emotional responses in my students.

What I recognised from the findings of this study is that my professional experience as a drama practitioner made me expect all students to feel comfortable using their bodies and voices to take on a role. However, I learned from this study that when teaching students of English literature, this might not be the case. I realised that I needed the help and emotional support of warm-up games to build a safe and creative environment for the participants to feel comfortable using their bodies and voices. Shifting my expectations when teaching English literature students, as opposed to drama students, was a significant professional teaching moment for me.

As an English literature lecturer, I can see the value of using role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions to understand the text being studied, and I will be utilising these teaching approaches in my English literature classroom going forward. Even if SEL outcomes are not prescribed for study in the module guide that dictates what I teach, I can integrate SECs into my English literature lectures through role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions in my future classes because I recognise how it benefited my research participants' social and emotional abilities.

12.7 Limitations of the study

Some important limitations of the study need to be considered. Firstly, not all the cycle-specific documentation activities were completed and reflected upon by every participant. Not every participant was able to complete the instrument documentation. However, this was not detrimental to the research findings because there was participant reflection in every cycle, even though there was not 100% completion. The cycle-specific documentation and the pre- and post-study questionnaires produced

significant data that was representative of every participant's experience, regardless of how often they attended the lectures or how much documentation they completed.

Secondly, the current study was limited by the fact that the participants studied and reflected on their social and emotional competencies solely from European English literary texts. This limitation was the focus of the syllabus as set nationally by the institution and served the requirements of the module for degree attainment. I did not have the freedom to change the texts. Other syllabus blocks focused on African colonial and post-colonial works, but locating the data generation for this study in that block did not fit the time constraints of my research plan. Therefore, this operational limitation resulted in the participants being unable to explore their SEL outcomes from African or more local South African texts. I do not believe that this decision affected the findings because the participants still made links with their South African realities and specific social and emotional experiences, which came from their empathy with characters from a different country and time period. The participants also adapted their European characters to fit South African character traits, colloquialisms, and personality tropes during the role-plays, so South African experiences of society and emotions were included in the research activities and reflected in the findings.

In retrospect, a third limitation of the study was that it did not explore the use of a long response format as a data generation strategy. Having the participants produce an essay on their SEL in addition to the literary text's thematic concerns would have yielded valuable findings regarding whether it was possible for participants to write comprehensively and at length about their social and emotional understandings via a standard form of formative literary assessment, namely, the literature essay format. This limitation was also due to operational constraints involving time limitations and the understanding that participants had other module-specific assignments to complete beyond the research activities. However, I am satisfied that the research activities produced enough data to draw conclusions.

12.8 Suggestions for further research

This research has raised many questions that require further exploration.

- Further work needs to be done to establish whether role-play in the English literature lecture room can be facilitated by a teacher or lecturer who does not have drama qualifications or experience. Identifying whether the role-play processes outlined in this study – from warm-up games to playmaking to role-play showcases – can be replicated in a classroom or lecture room where no drama expertise is present would be an interesting approach to testing the effectiveness of using role-play to teach SEL outcomes through literary text exploration.
- It might prove significant for a cross-national and cross-level study involving a variety of private and public secondary schools and higher education institutions to replicate this study. Having English literature students at both secondary school and higher education explore SEL outcomes through role-play and narrative empathy discussion sessions would be valuable in ascertaining whether this approach to SEL has the potential to be scalable across different levels of education and various types of educational institutions.
- Research is also needed to explore the pro-social effects of narrative empathy on South African readers. Whether in written responses or via oral and then reflective responses, there need to be more studies on the social and emotional impact of narrative empathy in literary studies on the personal lives of readers.
- Future research could explore this model implemented in a secondary school English literature class or a higher education literature lecture room for the teaching of a film text, a short story, or a poetry text, which were literary formats not examined in this study.
- It would be interesting to ascertain whether the SEL-lit model is compatible with online learning. Could an English class using virtual reality headsets allocated per student enable the students to role-play characters and thereby replicate the role-play showcase conducted in this study, albeit remotely? Could an online instant messaging chat forum simulate the narrative empathy

discussion sessions that were held in person during this study? Could future Humanities professionals, who may need to work from home or solely online, still achieve SEL outcomes from a completely gamified approach to English literature studies?

12.9 Contribution to knowledge

This study makes several noteworthy contributions to the fields of role-play in English literature classrooms, narrative empathy in English literature classrooms, and the use of English literature studies to cultivate socially and emotionally competent higher education students. This interdisciplinary approach to SEL through English Literature Education offers a new perspective on scaling SEL for South African basic and higher education.

Thus, this study fills a research gap and expands the current body of knowledge on SEL in South Africa, narrative empathy in South African English literature classrooms, and the use of role-play in English literature studies.

This study also produced a new working model for SEL implementation in English literature studies, called the SEL-lit model for SEL.

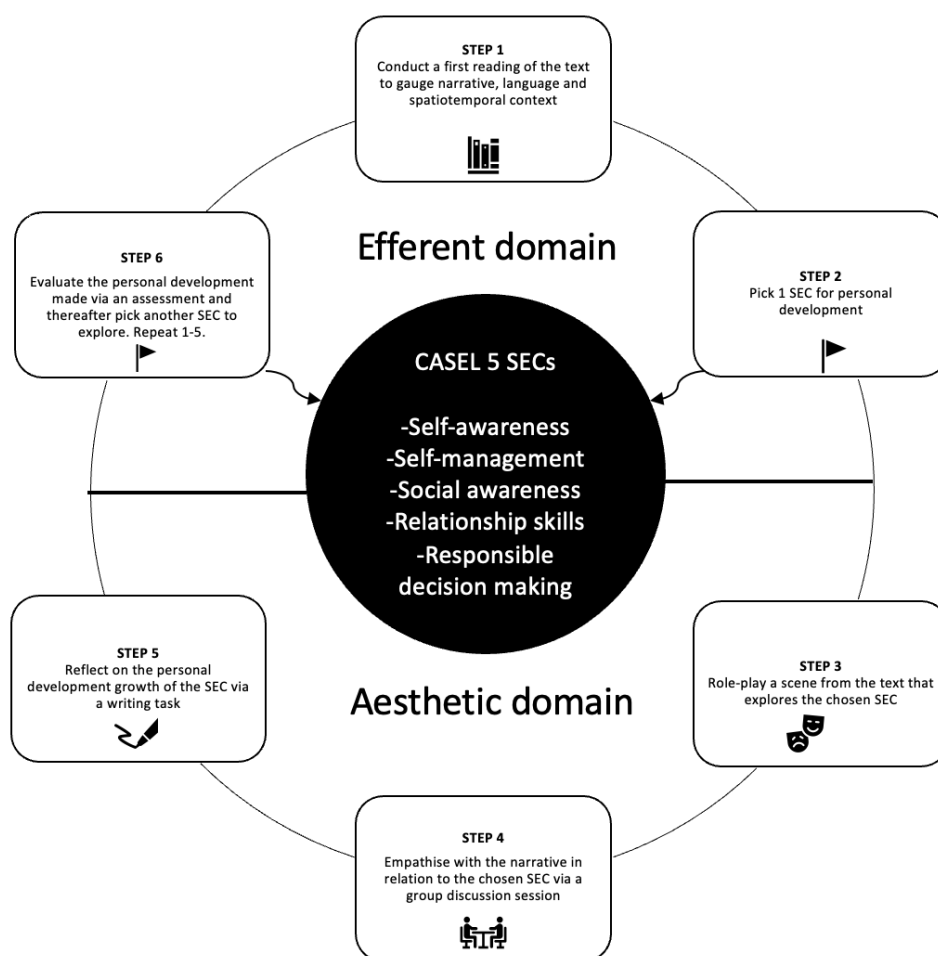


Figure 12: SELLit model B

To reiterate, this SELLit model of SEL within English Literature studies stands for SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) via Lit (Literature studies).

When a student is given a text to study for literary analysis, they begin with Step 1 by reading the text and making notes. Thereafter, in Step 2, the teacher chooses which SEC to explore. This is then announced to the class as the chosen SEC, or in literary terms, the thematic concern they will now textually explore. In Step 3, the class divides into groups to begin preparing their role-plays. These role-plays relate to an event within the text that overtly presents or displays matters related to the chosen SEC. In Step 4 of the model, after the role-plays are completed, the class sits together to discuss the various ways in which they empathised with the characters from the narratives that emerged from the role-plays and from the reading of the text. In Step

5, students are tasked with writing down and reflecting on their experiences. In the final Step 6 of the model, students are asked to evaluate how much they have personally grown or developed the chosen SEC through an assessment writing task.

The model is divided into two domains. Firstly, the efferent domain looks at how Steps 1, 2, and 6 allow students to take information away from the literary study. Secondly, the aesthetic domain of the model examines how students experience the reading and how their feelings about the text are explored through the role-play and narrative empathy activities.

The SELLit model contributes to knowledge on teaching SEL outcomes in English literature lessons. It is valuable for its six steps, which provide a process for SEL through literary analysis. The SELLit model serves as a strategy to implement the learning outcomes of both the language aspect of literature study and the psychosocial skill acquisition offered within it. This model is crucial for institutions that wish to merge language skill development with psychosocial skill acquisition during the teaching of stories. If literature teaching continually requires defence and justification in the political arenas where educational decisions are made, then the SELLit model presents a procedure for how the study of language can equip students with the human skills that future global workplaces will demand (Lieberman, 2025). The SELLit model addresses the gap in education regarding the integration of psychosocial skill acquisition into a common subject, English literature. It incorporates the teaching of both language skills and human skills.

12.10 Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic, the various natural disasters that followed, and the social and political events in South Africa before and after 2020 highlighted a dire need for basic social and emotional management skills to cope with the challenges brought on by these events.

The education sector may be reluctant to introduce a new learning area. While implementing a new learning area may be radical and time-consuming, South Africa can utilise what it already has in its education system. The study of literature in English (or any other language) can be employed to teach socially and emotionally rich human

skills, as literary texts of any genre potentially contain powerful social and emotional content.

Where mental health care is inaccessible for many people in South Africa and beyond, psychological, social, and emotional health and well-being may be achievable through the social and emotional education found within literary studies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: UKZN Ethics Clearance Letter



09 February 2023

Derosha Moodley (206501689)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear D Moodley,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00005204/2023

Project title: Using role-play and narrative empathy to explore social emotional learning outcomes in English literature lecture rooms

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 16 January 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 09 February 2024.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT'S INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research entitled:

Using Role Play and Narrative Empathy to Explore Social Emotional Learning Outcomes in English Literature Lecture Rooms

Date:

Dear Student

My name is Derosha from the Language and Media Studies specialisation in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am a PhD student and may be contacted at [REDACTED] 206501689@stu.ukzn.ac.za

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research focused on exploring the potential of English literature studies to develop social and emotional skills for South African students via role-play and narrative empathy activities in the literature lecture room.

The aim and purpose of this research is to explore whether the literature lecture room can produce social and emotional learning outcomes from the rich social and emotional content that lies within the various plays and novels taught in the second-year literature syllabus. The study is expected to enroll all second-year literature students, approximately 10 participants only from the Durban campus.

It will involve the following procedures:

During class time, participants will be required to participate in research activities such as:

1. Complete a research diary
2. Complete questionnaires
3. Complete writing tasks

4. Create simple role-plays
5. Engage in a discussion session about the texts being studied
6. Take pictures of yourselves doing the research activities

All procedures are experimental. There is no right or wrong answers/responses. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to last the entirety of block 1. The study is currently funded by myself.

We hope that the study will create the following benefits such as:

1. Provide you with building your competencies in self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship-building skills and responsible decision-making skills.
2. Expose you to formal academic research procedures.
3. Teach you role-playing skills which may develop your presentation skills.
4. Teach you skills in the field of narrative empathy which may allow you to identify the social value from the literary texts you read for both leisure and academic purposes.
5. The broader benefits of this study hope to generate data that may inform educational policies and practice of literature education which may produce more emotionally literate South African humanities professionals of the future.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number_____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me (please see details above), my supervisor, Prof Ansurie Pillay, or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The details are provided below:

Prof Ansurie Pillay
Tel: 27 31 2603613

Email: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001, Durban, 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Please be assured that participation in this research is voluntary and that participants may withdraw participation at any point, and that in the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty or loss or other benefit to which they are normally entitled.

Please note that there are no material incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study. I would be pleased to provide you with a summary of my findings at the end of the study, should you wish to receive it.

All information will remain confidential and your identity will be protected at all times. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms will be used. All data will be stored in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office for a period of 5 years, after which all data will be destroyed.

CONSENT (Edit as required)

I _____(Name) have been informed about the study entitled Using Role Play and Narrative Empathy to Explore Social Emotional Learning Outcomes in English Literature Lecture Rooms by Derosha Moodley.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at [REDACTED] 206501689@stu.ukzn.ac.za

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact the supervisor, Prof Ansurie Pillay or the Research Ethics Committee as follows:

Prof Ansurie Pillay

Tel: 27 31 2603613

Email: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001, Durban, 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable (choose what is appropriate for your study)

I hereby provide consent to: (use whichever is appropriate for your study)

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Video-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Use of my photographs for research purposes YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)

Date

Signature of Translator
(Where applicable)

Date

Appendix 3: Data Generation Strategy A

Appendix A: Instrument: Open-ended Questionnaire:

Pre-cycle Questionnaire: To be administered at the beginning of the study

Please brainstorm what you understand by the following concepts below. Please feel free to relate the concepts to your lives. You may be as detailed as you wish.

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-management
3. Social awareness
4. Relationship-building
5. Responsible decision making
6. Empathy
7. Role play
8. Any other thoughts regarding the above?

Post-cycle Questionnaire: *To be administered at the end of the study*

Please be as detailed as you wish to be when answering the questions below. There are no right or wrong answers. These are your personal responses to the questions.

- 1) How did you feel about using role-play and role-playing extracts when studying your literary texts?
- 2) What do you think role-play and role-playing extracts taught you?

- 3) What is your understanding of empathy?
- 4) What social-emotional learning skills do you think you learned from your experiences with narrative empathy?
- 5) What do you think is the role of social-emotional learning for South African students of literature?
- 6) Any other thoughts regarding the above?

Appendix 4: Data Generation Strategy B

Appendix B: Observation Schedule (to be used in each cycle as a field note template)

Researcher to look out for:

1. What behaviour, tone of voice, and attitude does/did the participating students display in class when communicating with each other?
 -
2. How does/did role play support empathic behaviour?
 -
 -
3. How does/did role-playing extracts support empathic behaviour?
 -
4. What social-emotional skills social awareness, self-awareness, decision-making, relationship building, and self-management abilities are demonstrated by the participating students?
 -
 -
5. How does/do students demonstrate empathy?
 -
 -
6. How do social-emotional skills enhance students' understanding of literature?

INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS

CONCERNS FROM RESEARCH ACTIVITIES:

WHY IS THIS A CONCERN?:

WHAT EXPERIENCES HAVE LED TO THIS CONCERN?

FINAL ACTION I WILL BE TAKING REGARDING THIS CONCERN?

Appendix 5: Data Generation Strategy C

Appendix C: Instrument: Research Diary Prompts

Research Diary Prompts per cycle

To be distributed to students digitally so they can document their research activity experiences during the cycle-specific activity sessions. They will also serve as a reflective tool as the research activity sessions are completed.

Cycle 1:

How did you find the research activities today? Explain in as much detail as you like

What did you learn about social awareness from today's lecture? What moment in the lesson taught you this skill?

Insert the photograph of the Role Play tableau showing social awareness into your research diary. Please caption the photograph and write 2 to 3 sentences to explain the image in relation to social awareness.

What was your favourite moment in the research activity today? Why?

What was your least favourite moment in the research activity today? Why?

Cycle 2:

How did you find the research activities today? Explain in as much detail as you like

What did you learn about self-awareness from today's lecture? What moment in the lesson taught you this skill?

Insert the photograph of the Role Play tableau showing self-awareness into your research diary. Please caption the photograph and write 2 to 3 sentences to explain the image in relation to self-awareness.

What was your favourite moment in the research activity today? Why?

What was your least favourite moment in the research activity today? Why?

Cycle 3:

How did you find the research activities today? Explain in as much detail as you like

What did you learn about relationship-building from today's lecture? What moment in the lesson taught you this skill?

Insert the photograph of the Role Play tableau showing relationship building into your research diary. Please caption the photograph and write 2 to 3 sentences to explain the image in relation to relationship-building.

What was your favourite moment in the research activity today? Why?

What was your least favourite moment in the research activity today? Why?

Cycle 4:

How did you find the research activities today? Explain in as much detail as you like

What did you learn about responsible decision-making from today's lecture? What moment in the lesson taught you this skill?

Insert the photograph of the Role Play tableau showing responsible decision-making into your research. Please caption the photograph and write 2 to 3 sentences to explain the image in relation to responsible decision-making.

What was your favourite moment in the research activity today? Why?

What was your least favourite moment in the research activity today? Why?

Cycle 5:

How did you find the research activities today? Explain in as much detail as you like

What did you learn about self-management from today's lecture? What moment in the lesson taught you this skill?

Insert the photograph of the Role Play tableau showing self-management into your research diary. Please caption the photograph and write 2 to 3 sentences to explain the image in relation self-management.

What was your favourite moment in the research activity today? Why?

What was your least favourite moment in the research activity today? Why?

Appendix 6: Data Generation Strategy D

Appendix D: Writing Tasks

To be distributed to students to answer in the lecture room after the role-play and narrative empathy discussion session activities are completed per cycle.

Cycle 1:

1. How did Hamlet's behaviour in and outside the castle during the mourning period of his father and the marriage of his mother remind you of your own experiences with grief and anger in a social/public space? Provide an example.
2. In what ways, if any, did the role-playing of Hamlet's experiences make you socially aware in your own life? Please explain with examples.
3. Comment on the photo of the tableau from the role play. How do you think this photo showed social awareness?
4. In what ways, if any, did the story in the text create feelings of empathy in you?
5. In what ways, if any, were you immersed and transported into the narrative enough to have your attitudes influenced by the characters and their journey of events?

Cycle 2:

1. Do you think Dr. Faustus was aware of the impact his behaviour had on external entities? Provide reasons for your answer.
2. Did you feel that Dr. Faustus' experiences in the role-play made you self-aware in your personal life? If so, how?
3. Comment on the photo of the tableau from the role play. How do you think this photo showed self-awareness?
4. In what ways, if any, did the story in the text create feelings of empathy in you?
5. In what ways, if any, were you immersed and transported into the narrative enough to have your attitudes influenced by the characters and their journey of events?

Cycle 3:

1. Do you think Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy built their relationship on a strong foundation? Provide reasons for your answer?
2. Do you think that Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's many interactions in the role-play made you more conscious of the way you build relationships in your life? If so, how?
3. Comment on the photo of the tableau from the role play. How do you think this photo showed relationship building?
4. In what ways, if any, did the story in the text create feelings of empathy in you?
5. In what ways, if any, were you immersed and transported into the narrative enough to have your attitudes influenced by the characters and their journey of events?

Cycle 4:

1. Do you think Heathcliff's revenge on Hindley and Catherine are justified? Provide reasons for your answer?
2. Do you think that the destructive love between Heathcliff and Catherine from the role-play made you more conscious about the decisions you make when it comes to elevated emotional experiences in your own life? If so, how?
3. Comment on the photo of the tableau from the role play. How do you think this photo showed responsible decision making?
4. In what ways, if any, did the story in the text create feelings of empathy in you?
5. In what ways, if any, were you immersed and transported into the narrative enough to have your attitudes influenced by the characters and their journey of events?

Cycle 5:

1. Do you think Kate's trickery is justified? Provide reasons for your answer?
2. Do you think that the changed behaviours of the characters in their town and city 'personalities' from the role-play you just did, make you think about your own self-management when you are in different places around different people? If so, how?
3. Comment on the photo of the tableau from the role play. How do you think this photo showed self-management?
4. In what ways, if any, did the story in the text create feelings of empathy in you?
5. In what ways, if any, were you immersed and transported into the narrative enough to have your attitudes influenced by the characters and their journey of events?

Appendix 7: Data Generation Strategy E Autophotography

Appendix E: Autophotography (Instruction to participants)

The instructions to take these photographs will be re-iterated verbally by the researcher during the research activity and is also one of the instructions in the research diary template.

Cycle 1: Take a photo of one of the moments in the role-play rehearsal that shows social awareness. Please caption the photograph and write 2 to 3 sentences to explain the image in relation to social awareness.

Cycle 2: Take a photo of one of the moments in the role-play rehearsal that shows self-awareness. Please caption the photograph and write 2 to 3 sentences to explain the image in relation to self-awareness.

Cycle 3: Take a photo of one of the moments in the role-play rehearsal that shows relationship-building. Please caption the photograph and write 2 to 3 sentences to explain the image in relation to relationship-building.

Cycle 4: Take a photo of one of the moments in the role-play rehearsal that shows responsible decision-making. Please caption the photograph and write 2 to 3 sentences to explain the image in relation to responsible decision-making.

Cycle 5: Take a photo of one of the moments in the role-play rehearsal that shows self-management. Please caption the photograph and write 2 to 3 sentences to explain the image in relation to self-management.

Appendix 8: Turnitin Report

Turnitin Originality Report

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Appendix 9: Proofreader Letter



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26 November 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: LANGUAGE EDITING

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis titled:

Using Role-play and Narrative Empathy to Explore Social Emotional Learning Outcomes in English Literature Lecture Rooms

By

Derosha Moodley

This certificate does not cover any alterations made subsequent to the editing process.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lee-Anne Roux