

Research on the Teaching Design of the "Silver Care" Theme Discourse in Junior High School English from the Perspective of Social and Emotional Learning

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Abstract: *This study, based on the background of moral education, focuses on the deep integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) theory with junior high school English teaching, addresses the problem of insufficient systematicity in the cultivation of emotional dimensions in subject teaching, and takes "silver care", which combines traditional virtues with global significance, as the thematic carrier to explore the path of cultivating students' social and emotional abilities in junior high school English thematic discourse teaching. This study first uses the literature review method to clarify the intrinsic connection between the five core competencies of SEL and the teaching of "silver care" thematic discourse. Then, with eighth-grade students as the research subjects, using the action research method, a four-wheel progressive teaching design framework of "perception - understanding - deepening - action" was constructed and implemented. Practice has shown that the framework can simultaneously enhance students' comprehensive English language application ability and social-emotional literacy such as empathy, intergenerational understanding, and social responsibility. This study provides teaching paradigms and case references for the integration of social and emotional education into the English subject, and offers highly valuable theoretical references and practical paradigms for practicing the concept of holistic education.*

Keywords: *Social-emotional learning; Junior high school English; Silver Care; Thematic discourse teaching; Instructional design*

1. Introduction

The fundamental task of education is to cultivate moral character, and social and emotional learning (SEL) as an educational concept for developing students' social and emotional abilities, integrated into subject teaching is an important path to achieving holistic education. The English subject is both instrumental and humanistic. The junior high school stage is a critical period for the development of students' values and social skills, and the English classroom becomes an important field for cultivating students' social and emotional skills. The theme of "Silver Care" is centered on caring for the elderly and exploring intergenerational relationships. It not only aligns with the traditional Chinese virtue of respecting and caring for the elderly, but also echoes the background of the global aging population. Its connotation shows a high degree of isomorphism with the core competence of SEL. Based on this, this study systematically designs discourse teaching on the theme of "Silver Care" in junior high school English, which theoretically enriches the application research of SEL theory in subject-specific theme teaching and provides support for the design of the emotional dimension of discourse teaching; In practice, it can provide front-line teachers with examples of SEL integration into teaching, guide students to understand an aging society, cultivate the virtue of respecting the elderly, enhance their sense of social responsibility, and contribute to the social development of teenagers and the construction of harmonious intergenerational relationships.

2. Theoretical Basis

The core of social and emotional learning theory is to help individuals acquire key skills for recognizing, managing emotions, building positive relationships, and making responsible decisions. It is a systematic educational process that promotes the development of individuals' social and emotional abilities. The theory was first proposed by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning[1] in the United States, and its "five-dimensional competency framework" has become the core guide for

global SEL practice. It includes five dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making.

Self-awareness enables learners to accurately recognize their emotions, interests and strengths, clearly assess their abilities and form a positive self-identity; Self-management, on the other hand, focuses on effectively regulating emotions, impulses, and behaviors in different situations, with resilience to stress and persistence in achieving goals; Social awareness helps learners put themselves in others' shoes, understand the emotions, perspectives and social norms of others, and build an inclusive understanding of multiculturalism; Interpersonal skills are reflected in effective communication, cooperative problem-solving, building and maintaining healthy relationships, and proper handling of conflicts; Responsible decision-making requires learners to make choices that are in the best interests of themselves and society, taking into account ethical norms, safety factors and the well-being of others.

In the educational field, SEL theory emphasizes that the core of education goes beyond mere knowledge transmission and extends to the cultivation of learners' emotional needs and social adaptability. The theory argues that the development of social and emotional skills should be organically integrated into the teaching of various subjects, and through the deep integration of subject content and emotional experience, achieve the coordinated advancement of "cognitive development" and "emotional growth".

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Questions

Based on the above context and literature gap, this study raises the following two core questions:

(1)How can the core competencies of social and emotional learning, the teaching of thematic discourse in junior high school English, and the theme of "Silver Care" be organically integrated?

(2)How to construct a systematic teaching design framework for the "Silver Care" theme discourse in junior high school English from the perspective of social and emotional learning?

3.2. Research Methods

This study selected a natural class (45 students) of grade 8 in an ordinary public junior high school in a certain city as the research subjects. Students of this age group tend to have stable abstract thinking and values, have certain concerns about family and social issues, and have the cognitive and emotional basis to participate in the exploration of the theme of "Silver Care".

This study adopts the methods of literature review and action research: The literature review method is used to define the core concepts, clarify the theoretical connections of SEL and the corresponding relationships between the themes and the five dimensions of SEL, providing theoretical support[2] for instructional design. The action research method follows the "plan - action - observation - reflection" cycle, practices, collects data, reflects and optimizes in the context of junior high school English teaching, forming a dynamic research process.

This study mainly uses three types of tools: classroom observation to record students' emotional attitudes, engagement and SEL ability display in the classroom; The pre-test diagnosed students' relevant English foundation and initial SEL level, and the post-test examined their language application ability and SEL literacy improvement; Interviews with students and teachers respectively focused on students' cognitive feelings and teachers' teaching feedback to provide qualitative basis for research analysis.

3.3. Research Implementation

3.3.1. Research Process

This study uses People's Education Edition Go for it! Based on the extended teaching in Unit 7 of Grade 8 lower semester, the theme micro-unit "Understanding and Caring for the Silver Generation" was developed, integrating the core competencies of SEL and the concept of silver care into the instructional design to construct a coherent teaching system. The research first clarifies the unit objectives, and in language, conducts listening, speaking, reading and writing training around the life, contribution, challenge and intergenerational communication of the elderly; SEL literacy is developed in five dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making. Multiple discourses are then integrated, including stories of senior volunteers, aging

data charts, short English poems and interview templates, to embed SEL education into the dimensions of emotion, cognition, expression and communication. Teaching follows the "perception-comprehension-deepening - action" logic, gradually enhancing students' language skills and social-emotional literacy through progressive activities such as video introduction, discourse reading, poetry appreciation, reflection logs, and interviews with elders in the family. Finally, a combination of process and outcome evaluation methods is adopted, focusing not only on language use but also on the development of emotional attitudes and values to ensure the effective implementation[3] of teaching objectives.

3.3.2. Goal setting

1) Language proficiency goals

Be able to engage in listening, speaking, reading and writing activities using relevant vocabulary and sentence patterns around topics such as the lives of the elderly, contributions, challenges and intergenerational communication.

2) SEL literacy goals

Guide students to clearly perceive their own perceptions and attitudes towards the elderly, clarify their intergenerational care roles, learn to manage negative emotions in communication, and actively participate in relevant activities. They will understand the living conditions and social values of the elderly, establish intergenerational perceptions of respect and inclusion, and enhance communication skills such as listening and empathy in interactive practice. Moreover, they will be able to make responsible decisions based on what they have learned and translate their understanding of care into practical actions to help the elderly.

3.3.3. Content integration

Indent the first line of all paragraphs in the body by 0.5cm. Select and compile a multilingual discourse related to the topic, such as: a narrative about an elderly volunteer; A data chart expository on the current situation of population aging in China and abroad; A short English poem expressing insights about the passage of time; A template for an interview with an elderly person at home.

Emotional resonance and role model learning (social awareness) can be focused on through narrative; Data charts trigger awareness and reflection on social issues (social awareness, responsible decision-making); Poetry guides emotional experiences and expressions (self-awareness and self-management); Interview tasks directly train relationship skills as an SEL entry point.

4. Research findings and discussions

4.1. Organic Integration of SEL core Competencies, junior High School English Thematic Discourse Teaching and the "Silver Care" theme

Through literature research and theoretical analysis, this study identified five core competencies of SEL (based on the CASEL framework) and found their close convergence points with the emotional objectives of junior high school English thematic discourse teaching and the "Silver Care" theme.

The junior high school English curriculum standards emphasize the cultivation of students' cultural awareness, thinking quality and emotional attitude, which is highly consistent[4] with the ability dimensions of SEL such as social awareness, responsible decision-making and self-management. The "Silver Care" theme provides a highly valuable vehicle for developing these abilities. Specifically: Understanding the experiences of older people helps develop social awareness (empathy, respect for diversity); Reflecting on intergenerational relationships promotes self-awareness (personal emotions, values); The design of interactive communication tasks involving the elderly enables students to practice core relational competence; Exploring solutions to an aging society involves responsible decision-making.

This finding confirms the natural affinity of SEL theory with the humanistic goals of English. Introducing social issues such as "silver care" into English teaching avoids the emptiness of emotional education and anchors it to specific, socially meaningful discourse content and language practice, making the cultivation of SEL ability more contextualized and effective. It shows that the English classroom can be an important base for cultivating students' civic literacy and social emotions.

4.2. From the perspective of social and emotional learning, a teaching design framework for the "Silver Care" thematic discourse applicable to junior high school English

4.2.1. The content and implementation effect of the four-wheel progressive instructional design framework

Based on the "perception-comprehension-deepness-action" logic, this study integrates the five dimensions of SEL and conducts multi-round progressive teaching design of the "Silver Care" theme discourse in junior high school English from the perspective of social and emotional learning. The four-stage progressive teaching design framework is shown in Figure 1.

Round 1: Perceptual Initiation - Anchoring self-awareness and breaking cognitive biases

Activity: To organize students to watch English short videos covering various scenarios such as elderly people's dedication in the workplace, artistic creation, and public service, and then carry out the "vocabulary association + cognitive comparison" activity. Students first list words and impressions related to "the elderly" in English, and teachers categorize and record the content (such as "stereotypical" and "real scene"); Teachers then guide students to contrast video footage with their prior perceptions and produce written cognitive reflections.

This round focuses on activating self-awareness. Junior high school students' perception of the elderly is easily influenced by inherent stereotypes. By presenting the real and diverse life of the elderly through short videos, combined with vocabulary association and cognitive reflection, students can clearly perceive their own biases or one-sided perceptions of the elderly, laying an emotional and cognitive foundation for the subsequent formation of objective intergenerational attitudes and understanding of the connotation of "silver care". At the same time, it naturally lays the groundwork for English words related to the theme and connects to the language target. Judging from the students' classroom participation, emotional expression and cooperative task completion, this 'Silver Care' thematic discourse teaching achieved the set emotional and language dual goals.

Round 2: Understanding Inquiry - Strengthening social awareness and permeating Self-management

Activity Content: The first step is to read the English narrative of "Elderly Doctors Supporting Rural Healthcare after retirement". Through the "Character Quality Map" task, students will label in English the professional spirit, sense of responsibility and other qualities of the protagonist. Group discussion: "What contributions can the elderly make to society?"; the second step is to study the English data charts and supporting reports on "The current situation of local aging", focusing on "What difficulties do the elderly meet in daily life? How should society respond?" Teachers organize group debates and design a set of "interaction rule cards" for this activity. Sample rules include "Do not interrupt others while they are speaking" and "Frame viewpoints with the phrase 'I think... because...'" to articulate personal opinions". During discussions, teachers prompt students promptly to manage negative feelings like impatience and resolve interpersonal disputes appropriately.

This round focuses on the dual cultivation of social awareness and self-management. Through the deep decoding of narrative essays, students were able to visualize the social value of the elderly group, thereby deconstructing the stereotype that "the elderly are a burden." At the same time, the analysis of data charts effectively drives students' rational examination of the real problems of an aging society, achieving a leap from superficial perception to deep social awareness. At the same time, setting interactive rules and guiding emotional regulation in the debate scenario enables students to learn to manage their own behavior and emotions through the collision of ideas, enhance their self-management ability, and the task design is always centered around the interpretation and expression of English discourse to implement language goals.

Round 3: Deepening Empathy - Integrating self-awareness and self-management to deepen emotional experience

Activity Content: First, appreciate English short poems on the theme of "Silver Care" such as "A Letter to Grandma", and carry out the "Emotional Annotation" activity. Students mark the lines that touch them in English and write down their inner feelings (such as "Your hands are rough but warm reminds me of my grandma's hands when she holds mine"); Then there are "Time Story sharing sessions," where students speak in English or write reflection diaries, sharing warm moments with elders at home or regrets about neglecting their needs, and the teacher guides students to face up to their complex emotions towards elders (such as dependence, guilt, and concern).

This round of activities aims to deepen self-awareness and strengthen self-management. Through

poetry appreciation and personal story sharing, students can go down from the "social level" to the "personal emotional level", deeply perceive their true feelings and attitudes towards elders, and further improve their self-awareness. At the same time, in public expression, students need to regulate emotions such as nervousness and shyness, and when facing regretful experiences, they need to manage negative emotions such as guilt. This process can effectively enhance self-management ability and achieve a deep integration[5] of language expression and emotional experience.

Round 4: Action Transfer - Linking interpersonal skills with responsible decision-making

Activity: Carry out the "Silver Age wish Practice Project" : Step 1: Work in groups to design an English interview outline (including "Your biggest wish now?" "What can we do for you?" (such as questions), teachers guide communication skills such as polite questioning and empathetic response; In the second step, students are grouped to interview elderly people in the community or elders at home, using the skills they have learned to complete the interviews and record the needs of the elderly; In the third step, the group will integrate the interview content, develop an "action plan for the elderly" in English (such as "Teach the elderly to use smart payment", "Share a little English story once a week"), present the plan in class, implement the action in groups after class, and record photos or videos of the process.

This round of activities focuses on the implementation of interpersonal skills and responsible decision-making. Real interview scenarios allow students to practice communication skills such as listening, polite expression, and empathetic response, and enhance interpersonal skills; The formulation and implementation of action plans for the elderly require students to make reasonable decisions based on the needs of the elderly and their own abilities, transform classroom cognition into concrete actions, cultivate responsible decision-making abilities, and ultimately achieve the organic unity of language learning, SEL ability development and life practice.

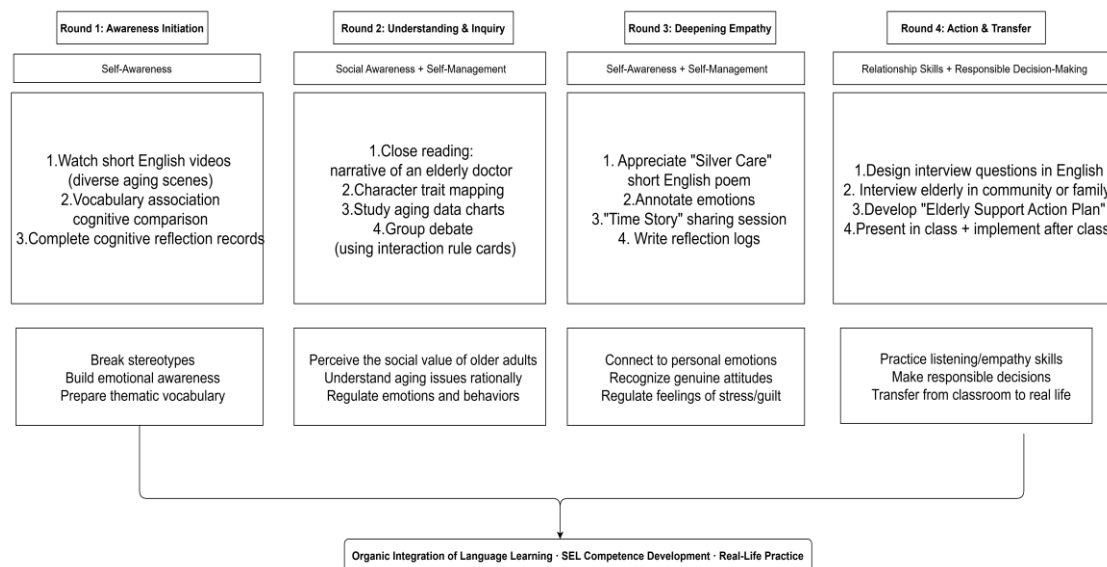


Figure 1: A Four-Round Progressive Teaching Design Framework for the "Silver Care" Theme from a SEL Perspective.

4.2.2. Evaluation methods

To achieve the goal of "synergistic development of language proficiency and SEL competencies," an evaluation system integrating process-based, outcome-based, and diversified feedback mechanisms is established, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Teaching Evaluation Scale

| Evaluation Dimension (Process/Outcome) | Evaluation Indicator (SEL Competency / Language Competency) | Evaluation Method (Teacher / Peer / Self) | Weight Distribution |
|---|---|--|---------------------|
| Process + Outcome | Language: classroom expression, pre/post test, interview outline / proposal writing; SEL: participation, empathy and communication, needs identification, responsibility and decision making. | Teacher evaluation: observation records, task and outcome scoring. | 60% |

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|----------------------|--|---|-----|
| Process | Language: group expression, written records in English; SEL: collaboration and contribution, mutual help and communication, rule compliance. | Peer evaluation: group member peer scoring. | 20% |
| Outcome / Reflective | Language: self-evaluation expression in English; SEL: five-dimension reflection, improvement and action planning. | Self-evaluation: 50 - 80 word summary in English. | 20% |

Note: Weights are assigned based on a comprehensive evaluation of teacher assessment, peer review, and self-assessment.

5. Conclusions

In the context of social and emotional learning, this study systematically explored and practiced the instructional design of the discourse on the theme of "Silver Care" in junior high school English, and reached the following main conclusions: First, the five-dimensional competency framework of SEL is highly consistent with the humanistic goals of the junior high school English curriculum and the connotation of the theme of "Silver care", providing a clear competency development orientation and solid theoretical support for the teaching of this theme. Second, the four-wheel progressive teaching design framework constructed in the logical sequence of "perception - understanding - deepening - action" and integrating the five dimensions of SEL has shown strong operability and effectiveness in teaching practice, and can significantly promote the improvement of students' comprehensive language application ability while developing their empathy, intergenerational understanding ability and social responsibility. Third, the key to teaching success lies in creating a safe and supportive classroom atmosphere, selecting multilingual texts rich in emotional value, and designing real or realistic communicative tasks to ensure that language goals and SEL goals are achieved in a deep integration and synergy.

Based on the research findings, the following suggestions are proposed for frontline junior high school English teachers:

1) Boost teachers' own SEL literacy, systematically identify and deeply unpack social-emotional educational elements embedded in textbooks and extracurricular resources, particularly topics bearing social practical significance such as elderly care.

2) Design well-structured sequential teaching activities including project-based learning, reflective writing and scenario simulation. Such activities guide students to gain genuine, in-depth affective engagement and complete cognitive construction through language practice, thus realizing the fundamental shift from knowledge acquisition to the internalization of core competencies.

3) Adopt diversified assessment approaches to integrate students' affective attitudes, value judgments and demonstration of social-emotional skills into the assessment framework, so as to align teaching, learning and evaluation as an integrated whole.

The limitations of this study lie in the concentrated scope and short period of action research, with only one eighth-grade class as the research subject, and the effectiveness and universality of the teaching framework still need to be verified over a broader scope and longer period; At the same time, the study assessment was mainly qualitative analysis, and quantitative data could be supplemented with standardized SEL measurement tools in the future. Further research could explore the integration of SEL with other social themes in English, innovate interactive scenarios with information technology, conduct cross-regional and multi-stage comparative experiments, and focus on its impact on teachers' professional development and teaching beliefs.

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