BUILDING TEACHERS' SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE TO CREATE A SAFE LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT IN HIGHER SCHOOL

DESENVOLVER A COMPETÊNCIA SOCIO-EMOCIONAL DOS PROFESSORES PARA CRIAR UM AMBIENTE LINGUÍSTICO SEGURO NO ENSINO SUPERIOR

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Abstract: The aim of the study was to determine the effectiveness of social and emotional learning (SEL) strategies in the training of foreign language teachers, as well as to analyse the level of their SEC. The research employed theoretical and methodological analysis, content analysis of the curricula of five leading departments, as well as a questionnaire survey of 38 teachers from different regions of Ukraine. Considerable attention was paid to the use of digital tools (Jamboard, Padlet, Quizlet, podcasts), which were integrated into curricula to support students' emotional engagement. The results showed that SEL strategies, in particular the Emotional Thermometer, Pause for Reflection, and Empathetic Restatement, were used weekly by 65%, 58%, and 50% of the surveyed teachers, respectively, demonstrating a high potential for adaptation in multilingual courses while preserving their didactic essence. The practical value of the study is the recommendations for unifying approaches to SEL and implementing digital resources to improve foreign language teaching methods.

Keywords: Social emotional learning. Socio-emotional competence. Safe language environment. Language teachers. Digital tools.

Resumo: O objetivo do estudo foi determinar a eficácia das estratégias de aprendizagem social e emocional (ASE) na formação de professores de línguas estrangeiras, bem como analisar o nível do seu SEC. A investigação recorreu a uma análise teórica e metodológica, a uma análise de conteúdo dos currículos de cinco departamentos principais, bem como a um inquérito por questionário a 38 professores de diferentes regiões da Ucrânia. Foi dada uma atenção considerável à utilização de ferramentas digitais (Jamboard, Padlet, Quizlet, podcasts), que foram integradas nos currículos para apoiar o envolvimento emocional dos alunos. Os resultados mostraram que as estratégias SEL, em particular o Termómetro Emocional, a Pausa para Reflexão e a Reafirmação Empática, foram utilizadas semanalmente por 65%, 58% e 50% dos professores inquiridos, respetivamente, demonstrando um elevado potencial de adaptação em cursos multilingues, preservando a sua essência didática. O valor prático do estudo reside nas recomendações para unificar as abordagens à ASE e implementar recursos digitais para melhorar os métodos de ensino de línguas estrangeiras.

Palavras-chave: Aprendizagem socio-emocional. Competência socio-emocional. Ambiente linguístico seguro. Professores de línguas. Ferramentas digitais.

Introduction

In 2020–2025, higher education in Ukraine underwent significant changes under the influence of the pandemic, war, digitalization, and social challenges. The need to ensure a psychologically safe educational environment has increased, especially in the field of language education, where emotional interaction between the teacher and students plays an important role. In these conditions, building teacher's SEC as the basis for a supportive, tolerant, and stress-resistant educational process has become particularly relevant.

The creation of an emotionally safe language environment, which involves the implementation of SEL strategies in both foreign and state language courses, has become a priority as part of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (Quality Education). Despite the conceptual recognition of the importance of SEL, in educational practice, its methodological implementation has been fragmented and the level of formation among teachers has varied.

The aim of the study was to determine the effectiveness of SEL strategies in language teaching to ensure emotional safety in higher education.

The objectives of the study:
– Analyse theoretical and methodological approaches to SEC;
– Determine the possibilities of adapting SEL to Ukrainian and foreign language courses;
– to investigate the level of formation of SEL among teachers of language disciplines;
– to formulate methodological recommendations for teacher training.

The practical significance was in identifying the pedagogical conditions for building SEC as a factor in a safe educational environment in the context of social vulnerability and intercultural interaction.

Literature review

In 2021–2025, attention to teachers' SEC and its role in education was growing. Lozano-Pena et al. (2021) examined the history and models of teachers' SEC, focusing on assessment tools and recommendations for improving the quality of education. These findings coincide with the position of Savina, Fulton, and Beaton (2025), who developed a more detailed conceptual model of emotional competence (EC), emphasizing its multidimensionality and impact on the educational process. At the same time, Savina did not pay due attention to specific didactic strategies, which were better developed by Gimbert et al. (2023). They emphasized the teachers' role in the development of leadership qualities and motivation, but their analysis was less focused on practical tools for developing these competencies. Nannings et al. (2025) focused on the socio-emotional needs of high-achieving students, which supports the emphasis of Ibarra (2022), who studied the teachers' role in building a sense of belonging through psycho-emotional support. However, unlike Nannings, who considered the educational context more broadly, Ibarra did not analyse structured curricula, which is a significant limitation.

In their review, Yadati, Thomas, and Rajan (2025) emphasized the key teachers' role in implementing transformative SEL, emphasizing the need to adapt the methods to diverse educational and cultural contexts. This approach correlates with the findings of Marinda et al. (2025), who emphasized the positive impact of SEL programmes in elementary school on the development of students' academic competencies and SEC. Main et al. (2025) applied Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, emphasizing the importance of socio-emotional skills in adolescence for the formation of a positive social identity.

A meta-analytic review by Gebre et al. (2025) confirmed the significant impact of teachers' SEC on student engagement, which enhanced their motivation and academic performance. In this context, Algan and Huillery (2025) considered socio-emotional skills as a fundamental factor of future education, ensuring adaptability to socio-economic changes. At the same time, Alonso-Rodríguez et al. (2025) demonstrated in a systematic review the effectiveness of restorative practices in reducing school violence, emphasizing their positive impact on students' emotional well-being. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports, in

particular Steponavicius et al. (2023), summarized the current evidence on the learnability of socio-emotional skills and their importance for life outcomes, emphasizing the need to integrate these skills into all levels of educational programmes.

So, research into teachers' SEC and the implementation of SEL in various educational contexts intensified during 2023–2025. The emphasis was on adapting methods to the specifics of educational environments, developing digital literacy, and supporting students' emotional well-being. The results indicate an increasing focus on interdisciplinary approaches that combine pedagogy, psychology, and technology to improve the quality of education and ensure the inclusiveness of the educational process.

Methodology

The study was divided into three stages to determine the effectiveness of SEL strategies in building of SEC of foreign language teachers and their impact on the creation of a safe language environment in higher education. The main focus was on comparing approaches to the implementation of SEL in foreign language courses in the context of teaching methodology. The theoretical framework was the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) model, OECD recommendations on emotional well-being in education (SQE, 2025), the Professional Standard of a Teacher in a General Secondary Education Institution (2024), as well as Typical Programmes for Advanced Teacher Training (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023).

The study was conducted from November 2024 to April 2025. The first stage involved a theoretical and methodological analysis of the conceptual framework of a teacher's SEC, typical strategies for its development, and emotional support practices in language teaching. Such SEL tools as the "emotional thermometer" (ChildDevelop), the "pause for reflection" technique, the "language mirror", the "empathetic restatement" strategy (for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses) and emotional framing lesson formats were considered. The extent to which these strategies can be universalized (adapted to different languages of instruction while maintaining the didactic essence) was analysed.

The second stage was a content analysis of the curricula and didactic materials of the five departments that became the objects of the study.

At Kyiv National Linguistic University (KNLU), bachelor's and master's educational programmes were analysed under the guidance of guarantors Zieńa and Boretska, which corresponds to the actual titles: Bachelor's Programme "Secondary Education (English Language and Foreign Literature)" (Kyiv National Linguistic University, n.d.) and Master's Programme "Professional Training of Foreign Languages and Foreign Literature Teachers in the Context of Digital Transformation" (Zieńa; Boretska; Svyrydyuk, 2024).

The Penitentiary Academy of Ukraine (Penitentiary Academy of Ukraine) implements the programmes for the subjects Foreign Language for Specific Purposes, English Language, and English for Specific Purposes, which are taught at the Department of Foreign Languages (Penitentiary Academy of Ukraine, Department of Foreign Languages, n.d.).

At T.H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" (T.H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium", n.d.) — the course programme Methods of Teaching Ukrainian Language in Higher School (Hrona; Khomych, 2024). The analysis comprised work programmes, methodological instructions for classes, didactic complexes with elements of emotional diagnostics, instructions for online classes, video workshops, interactive assignments such as Jamboard, Quizlet, Padlet, as well as podcast recordings used as materials for developing reflection in the audience (Goleman, 2020).

The third stage of the study provided for a semi-structured questionnaire survey of language teachers conducted in March 2025 using Google Forms. The study involved 80 respondents from different regions of Ukraine who taught English (82%) and Ukrainian (18%), including Business English, Legal English, ESP, and Academic English. The gender composition was 76% women and 24% men. The geographical distribution was as follows: Kyiv region – 58%, Chernihiv region – 26%,

employees of the Penitentiary Academy from other regions – 16%. The sample included teachers of bachelor's, master's, and advanced training courses who had direct experience in implementing socio-emotional strategies in language teaching. The sample included teachers of bachelor's and master's programmes, as well as participants in advanced training courses who had direct experience in implementing socio-emotional learning exercises in the language environment.

The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions grouped into three blocks. In the first block, the respondents assessed the level of development of their own social and emotional competence (for example: "Can I detect signs of anxiety in students by their behaviour?"; "Do I regulate the pace of the lesson taking into account the emotional state of the group?"). In the second block, they indicated the frequency of use of specific SEL strategies ("How often do I use an exercise that helps students become aware of their emotions, for example, an "emotional thermometer"?"; "Do I practice exercises to analyse the emotional content of language texts?"). In the third block, they assessed barriers ("Is the lack of official methodological recommendations the main obstacle to the implementation of SEL?"; "Does the large number of students in the group make it difficult to use SEL?"). In 5 cases, the questionnaire was filled out offline on paper – for regions with unstable Internet connections.

Methods

The study employed five methods. The method of theoretical analysis was used to study academic foundations of SEC in language teaching. Content analysis identified SEL-oriented components in curricula, didactic exercises, and digital materials. The comparative method was used to compare approaches to integrating SEL into English-language and Ukrainian-language courses. A semi-structured survey was used to study practical strategies and barriers directly from the teachers' perspectives. Descriptive statistics provided an analysis of frequency indices, average values, and structural visualization of responses.

Sample

The study involved five departments that provide systematic language training for future teachers and have already implemented SEL elements in their educational programmes. The selection of institutions was based on clear criteria: specialization (teaching Ukrainian or English), innovation (availability of interactive approaches, soft skills programmes), readiness for cooperation, and geographical coverage. The empirical sample was formed from 80 teachers of language subjects, who were selected based on the principle of voluntary participation and compliance with the criteria of experience and professional training.

The age of the respondents varied, and their teaching experience ranged from 5 to 27 years. Out of the total number, 40 people had advanced training certificates of Emotional Competence in Teaching. The ratio of language load was distributed as follows: English – 82%, Ukrainian – 18%. The sample was representative by regional and educational level, covering undergraduate, graduate, and in-service teachers from different regions of Ukraine. This expanded composition of respondents allowed for a more reliable assessment of the effectiveness of socio-emotional strategies and their impact on building of competence in a multicultural learning environment.

Instruments

The survey was conducted via Google Forms, chosen for their flexibility and secure data storage. The questionnaire was tested on three experts to check the wording. The data was processed in Microsoft Excel, the results were visualized using Datawrapper. A paper format was used in the absence of digital access. The responses were anonymized, and the ethical support complied with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2023–2024) and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2020), agreed with the academic coordinators of the departments.

Result

Systematization of SEL strategies in language teaching identified five universal techniques: "emotional thermometer", "pause for reflection", "language mirror", empathetic restatement (ESP), and emotional framing of the lesson. All practices were provided in Ukrainian-speaking and English-speaking contexts, but with different levels of adaptation. For the Ukrainian language, they were implemented through intonation modelling, reflective questions and work with emotionally coloured texts, while clear structures for typical situations with simulations and role-playing dialogues were used in ESP. Three strategies had a high level of adaptability, two required additional linguistic interpretation or visual support (for example, "language mirror"). The assessment of their coverage of emotional competencies correlated with the basic elements of the CASEL model. Table 1 presents five universal SEL strategies with a description of their purpose, application in Ukrainian and English language courses, and adaptation potential.

Table 1. Characteristics of universal SEL strategies in language teaching (type, purpose, adaptability)

Strategy Name	Strategy type	Main didactic goal	Language adaptation (Ukrainian/ English)	Level of adaptability to another language
Emotional Thermometer	Self-observation and evaluation of emotions	Determining emotional state at the beginning/ end of the lesson	Universal, does not require translation	High
Pause for Reflection	Cognitive stopping / mental regulation	Developing the skill of conscious emotional response	Universal, with possible localization of phrases	High
Language Mirror	Feedback / emotional correction	Reflecting students' emotional reactions through language patterns	Requires flexible adaptation to language norms	Medium
Empathetic Restatement	Empathic communication / interpersonal interaction	Teaching empathic listening and paraphrasing	Requires the teacher's high language level	Medium
Emotional Framing of the Lesson	Expectation modelling / emotional background structuring	Setting the emotional climate of the lesson	Universal, depends on the teaching style	High

Source: created by the author based on CASEL (n.d.); Child Develop (n.d.); EdCamp Ukraine (n.d.); Zhang (2022).

As the CASEL model was used as the basis for the conceptual framework of the study, the SEL strategies presented in Table 1 were grouped according to its five key components. The analysis showed that the most universal were strategies aimed at developing self-regulation and social awareness, in particular the "pause for reflection", "language mirror", and "empathetic restatement" techniques, which demonstrated high adaptability to both English- and Ukrainian-language courses. At the same time, such tools as the "emotional thermometer" require sensitive tuning to the audience and are more suitable for small learning groups. In general, all analysed strategies revealed the potential for interdisciplinary integration, which gives grounds to consider SEL as a flexible methodology suitable for implementation in courses with different language loads. Analysis of the obtained data showed an uneven distribution of SEL strategies according to the key components of the CASEL model.

The greatest attention was paid to the development of self-awareness and social awareness, which reflects the emphasis on reflection and empathy in language teaching. In particular, strategies such as the "emotional thermometer", "pause for reflection" and "language mirror" actively contributed to the identification of one's own and others' emotions. At the same time, the formation of responsible decision-making and self-regulation skills remained less represented, which indicates insufficient methodological support in these areas in the language context. The "empathetic restatement" strategy deserves special attention, which is universal, as it covers all five components of the model, demonstrating high adaptability to different learning formats. This distribution emphasizes the need for targeted strengthening of methods for the comprehensive development of SEC in language teaching.

The content analysis of the programmes of the five departments revealed an uneven distribution of SEL components depending on the level of education, language focus, and institutional specifics. The bachelor's programmes of the KNLU and the National University "Chernihiv Colehium" contained episodic elements of emotional support in the topics of psycholinguistics, intercultural communication, and work with emotionally coloured texts. The master's programmes of the KNLU included emotional framing modules and reflection tools.

The most structured SELs were implemented at the Department of Foreign Languages of the Penitentiary Academy, where empathetic restatement exercises, a "language mirror," and analysis of emotionally charged discourses were used in the Legal English and Public Administration courses. The programme of the Institute of Advanced Training included the development of soft skills and reflective thinking through trainings and exercises. Some programmes used SEL fragmentarily, without methodological explanations. Only 3 out of 5 departments systematically implemented socio-emotional elements, which indicates the potential for unification and dissemination of SEL strategies in the training of language teachers. Table 2 systematizes the availability of SEL components in the work programmes and methodological materials of each department.

Table 2. Presence of SEL components in the curricula and methodological developments of five departments

| Department / institution	Availability of SEL strategies	Digital tools (Jamboard, Padlet...)	Emotional diagnostics/ reflection	CASEL-oriented content
KNLU (bachelor's programmes)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
KNLU (master's programmes)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Penitentiary Academy (foreign languages)	Limited	Limited	No	Limited

Penitentiary Academy (ESP techniques)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
T.H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium"	Limited	No	Limited	No
Institute of Professional Development (soft skills)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: created by the author based on Kyiv National Linguistic University (2024); Penitentiary Academy of Ukraine (n.d.); T.H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" (n.d.); EdCamp Ukraine (n.d.).

Analysis of Table 2 showed that the highest density of implementation of SEL components is demonstrated by the master's programmes of KNLU and advanced training at the Institute of Professional Development of the Penitentiary Academy. In these programmes, emotionally oriented practices are integrated both at the level of subject content and in formal methodological developments. In contrast, bachelor's programmes contain SEL components mainly at the level of individual exercises or topics.

Special attention was paid to the analysis of digital tools that support students' emotional engagement. Jamboard is actively used to visualize emotional states in Ukrainian language courses, Padlet is used for collective reflection at the stage of post-text discussion in ESP, and Quizlet is used as a soft testing tool with elements of self-support. Podcasts, in particular those that reveal the topics of emotional intelligence and the experience of interpersonal interaction, are integrated into master's courses as audio exercises on interpretation and empathy. So, a clear relationship was found between the level of programmes (master's/advanced training) and the depth of inclusion of socio-emotional elements in the structure of educational products. This indicates their relevance for the targeted training of mature teachers. Figure 1 demonstrates the frequency of use of these tools in courses of different levels and language areas.

Figure 1. Frequency of use of digital and reflective tools in language training courses
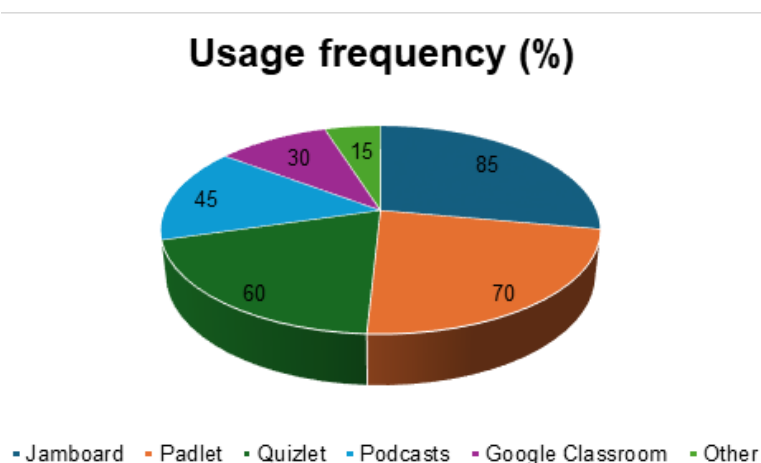
Source: created by the author based on Google Jamboard (n.d.); Padlet (n.d.); Quizlet (n.d.); Goleman (2020); Kyiv National Linguistic University (2024); Penitentiary Academy of Ukraine (n.d.).

The analysis of the data in Figure 1 showed that the most popular digital tools for implementing SEL in language courses are Jamboard and Padlet, which were used in 85% and 70% of cases, respectively. They served as a basis for interactive visualization of emotions and collective reflection. Quizlet was also widely used, providing soft testing and supporting self-monitoring. Podcasts, although less common (45%), were used as an effective means of audio reflection and developing empathy. Google Classroom and other platforms were less actively integrated, which indicates different levels of technological readiness of departments and individual teaching preferences. Overall, the data confirms the importance of digital resources for supporting students' emotional engagement in modern language learning.

As part of the questionnaire survey, teachers self-assessed their level of SEC based on the five main components of the CASEL model: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, interaction skills, and responsible decision-making. Table 3 shows the average scores of teachers' self-assessments for each component of SEL.

Table 3. Integral assessment of SEL components based on teachers' self-assessments

CASEL components	Low level (1-2), %	Medium level (3), %	High level (4-5), %	Number of respondents who rated highly
Self-awareness	5	15	80	64
Self-regulation	10	20	70	56
Social awareness	8	22	70	56
Interaction skills	12	25	63	50
Responsible decision-making	18	30	52	42

Source: created by the author based on CASEL (n.d.); Savina, Fulton, and Beaton (2025); Kyiv National Linguistic University (2024); Penitentiary Academy of Ukraine (n.d.).

Analysis of the data in Table 3 shows that most teachers (80%, or 30 people) rated their level of self-awareness highly, indicating the ability to recognize their own emotions and internal states. At the same time, self-regulation was rated highly by 70% of respondents (27 people), which demonstrates a slightly lower, but still significant level of ability to control emotions and behaviour.

Regarding social awareness, 70% of teachers (27 people) indicated a high level, showing the ability to understand the emotions of others and show empathy. Interaction skills were rated at a high level by 63% (24 people), indicating some difficulties in maintaining effective communication or cooperation in groups. The lowest score among the five components is observed in responsible decision-making: only 52% (20 people) felt confident in their ability to make informed choices taking into account ethical and social aspects. At the same time, this area was characterized by the highest percentage of teachers with a low level (18%), indicating the need for additional support and development of this competence. Table 4 shows how often certain strategies were used by teachers in their courses.

Table 4. Frequency of use of SEL strategies by language teachers

SEL strategy	Weekly use, %	Monthly use, %	Less frequent use, %
Emotional Thermometer	65	20	15
Pause for Reflection	58	22	20

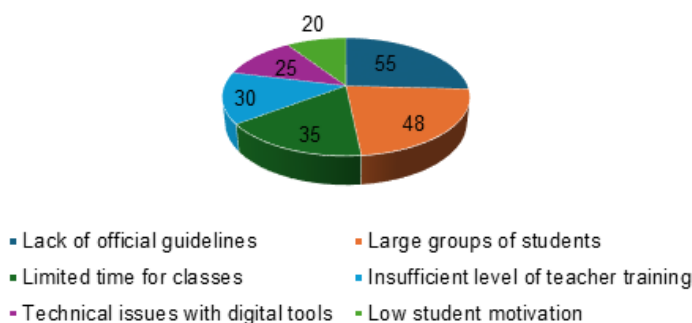|			
Language Mirror	43	35	22
Empathetic Restatement	50	30	20
Emotional Framing of the Lesson	40	40	20

Source: created by the author based on EdCamp Ukraine (n.d.); ChildDevelop (n.d.); Kyiv National Linguistic University (2024); Penitentiary Academy of Ukraine (n.d.).

Analysis of the data in Table 4 showed that the Emotional Thermometer strategy was used weekly by 65% of teachers, which indicates its popularity as a tool for assessing students' emotional state at the beginning or during the lesson. The Pause for Reflection strategy also had a high frequency of use: 58% of respondents implemented it weekly, and 22% – monthly, which confirms its importance for forming a conscious attitude towards the learning process. The Language Mirror and Emotional Framing of the Lesson were less common, which were used weekly by 43% and 40% of teachers, respectively, while the majority used these strategies less often, which indicates the need for additional methodological support for their regular implementation. Empathic Reframing occupied an intermediate position – 50% of teachers used this strategy weekly, which indicates its significance for the development of interpersonal skills in language courses. Figure 2 summarizes the main barriers that hinder the effective implementation of SEL.

Figure 2. Main barriers to implementing SEL in teaching

Percentage of respondents who noted a barrier (%)

- Lack of official guidelines
- Large groups of students
- Limited time for classes
- Insufficient level of teacher training
- Technical issues with digital tools
- Low student motivation

Source: created by the author based on a questionnaire survey of language teachers (EdCamp Ukraine, n.d.; GDPR.org.ua, 2023–2024; Kyiv National Linguistic University, 2024).

Analysis of the data in Figure 2 showed that teachers recognized the lack of official guidelines as the main barrier to the implementation of SEL (55%). A significant part of the respondents (48%) indicated the difficulties of working with large groups, which complicates the individual approach and application of SEL techniques. Limited time for classes (35%), insufficient level of training (30%), and technical problems with digital tools (25%) also had a significant impact. Low student motivation was noted as an obstacle by 20% of respondents. These barriers emphasize the need for systematic methodological and technological support for the successful implementation of SEL. It is important to consider how the level of SEC depends on the language orientation of teaching and teachers' participation in professional development. Table 5 demonstrates how the level of SEC changes depending on these factors.

Table 5. Level of SEC by language area and participation in advanced training

Teacher groups	Self-awareness (average score)	Self-regulation (average score)	Social awareness (average score)	Interaction skills (average score)	Responsible decision-making (average score)
English-speaking, without advanced training	3.87	3.62	3.79	3.43	3.12
English-speaking, with advanced training	4.39	4.07	4.28	3.97	3.76
Ukrainian-speaking, without advanced training	3.81	3.53	3.65	3.18	3.05
Ukrainian-speaking, with advanced training	4.05	3.91	4.02	3.79	3.47

Source: created by the author based on the results of a questionnaire survey of language teachers from Kyiv National Linguistic University, Penitentiary Academy of Ukraine and other involved institutions (EdCamp Ukraine, n.d.; GDPR.org.ua, 2023–2024; Kyiv National Linguistic University, 2024).

Analysis of the data in Table 5 shows that teachers who have completed advanced training programmes demonstrate higher average scores for SEC across all five components of the CASEL model, regardless of language focus. In particular, English-speaking teachers who have completed advanced training rated self-awareness at 4.3 points, while it was 3.8for those who did not complete training. A similar trend is observed in self-regulation (4.0 vs. 3.5), social awareness (4.2 vs. 3.7), interaction skills (3.9 vs. 3.3), and responsible decision-making (3.7 vs. 3.1). Comparison of language groups revealed that, in general, English-speaking teachers have slightly higher scores for SEC than Ukrainian-speaking teachers, which may be due to a greater emphasis on integrating SEL into professionally oriented English courses.

Therefore, the results indicate the positive impact of advanced training on the development of teachers' socio-emotional skills, as well as the need for more active support for Ukrainian-language courses in this area.

Discussion

The results confirmed the effectiveness of SEL strategies in building language teachers' competence, which coincided with the findings of Hon et al. (2024). They emphasized the need to integrate SEL into educational programmes to improve professional competence. A systematic approach to developing teachers' emotional literacy, which contributes to a safe learning environment, was key. The relationship between SEL and the problem of cyberbullying revealed in the study of Güçlü-Aydoğan et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of developing empathy and self-regulation, which is confirmed by the frequent use of the Emotional Thermometer and Pauses

for Reflection in our study. The theoretical foundations of inclusive SEL reviewed by Dussault and Thompson (2024), coincide with the difficulties identified in our study in adapting some strategies, such as the Language Mirror, which requires a more flexible approach depending on the linguistic and cultural context.

A systematic review by Molina-Moreno et al. (2024) emphasized that teachers' personal competencies are the foundation of effective teaching. This which is fully consistent with our results, where SEC correlated with teachers' willingness to implement SEL strategies. The findings of Horen et al. (2024) on the integration of early childhood mental health confirmed the importance of early application of social-emotional practices. This emphasizes the need for continuous teacher training at all levels of education, including advanced training, which supports the positive impact of training recorded in our study. The considered digitalization of education in the study by Konishi et al. (2025) showed that digital technologies significantly contribute to the development of equality, diversity, and inclusion through SEL. This finding correlates with the results of a study that documented the active use of interactive tools, such as Jamboard and Padlet, to support student engagement and create a safe language environment in multicultural groups.

The importance of emotional self-regulation in preschool age is emphasized in the study of Nilfyr and Ewe (2025). This coincides with the emphasis on the formation of self-regulation as a key component of teachers' SEC, given their role in modelling student behaviour. A systematic review by Amadori et al. (2023) showed that socio-emotional skills play a key role in preventing homophobic bullying and creating a safe educational environment, which corresponds to the goal of the study - creating a safe language environment. A theoretical review by Subardhini et al. (2025) pointed out the importance of social skills in child development. This is reflected in the study through the integration of soft skills in teacher training. The research findings by Mian et al. (2025) showed the positive impact of social intelligence on reducing anxiety and increasing stress resistance among schoolchildren. This has something in common with findings about the need to develop teachers' SEC to support students in challenging educational situations.

Therefore, comparison with contemporary research confirmed the relevance of the applied SEL strategies, and also emphasized the need for further development of digital and pedagogical resources to ensure inclusiveness and safety in higher education.

Limitations

The study covered only five institutions and did not take into account the influence of cultural or socio-economic factors, as well as the long-term impact of SEL on students.

Recommendations

It is recommended to expand the sample, include longitudinal studies, develop formal methodological guidelines, and improve teacher training with a focus on SEC, as well as integrate digital tools to make SEL more effective.

Conclusions

The conducted research showed that the effectiveness of implementing SEL strategies in language teaching in higher school in Ukraine has significant potential, but requires systematic development and methodological support. Universal strategies were identified that successfully adapt to Ukrainian- and English-language contexts, however, the level of their application and depth of integration vary significantly depending on the type of programme and language focus. The difference between bachelor's and master's programmes is especially noticeable. At the first level of education, SEL elements are found more often, which is associated with the pedagogical focus of the curriculum. Analysis of teachers' self-assessments showed a high level of basic SECs, while there are challenges in the development of responsible decision-making and interaction skills.

The academic novelty is the comprehensive study of SEL taking into account theoretical, programmatic, and practical aspects. This gave grounds to outline the key factors for the successful integration of these strategies into language education.

The practical significance of the results is provided recommendations for the development of unified methodological materials, teacher training, and optimization of the use of digital tools to support SEL in higher education. Further research may focus on comparing programmes with the same level of education to maintain methodological balance.

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