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**Dance/ Movement Therapy's influence on students' social-emotional learning and
academic success: Developing a method in Hong Kong**

Capstone Thesis

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Specialization: Dance/ Movement Therapy

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Abstract

The current study examined the impact of dance/movement therapy (DMT) on students' social-emotional learning (SEL) and academic success. Previous research shows a correlation between SEL and academic success, between DMT and SEL, and between DMT and academic success. As an English teacher and dance/movement therapist, the researcher of the current study is interested in exploring the integration of social-emotional learning and dance/movement therapy techniques in English language curriculum for an after-school class. This thesis outlines the six after-school lessons for a class of Secondary Four students. The results of the methods as facilitated with the class are discussed. By using the non-judgmental approach, students were found to have better emotional awareness and to be willing to engage in creative writing tasks after circle games and non-verbal movement activities.

Keywords: Dance/movement therapy, Social-emotional learning, academic success,

English language learning

Dance/ Movement Therapy's Influence on Students' Social-Emotional Learning and**Academic Success: Developing a Method in Hong Kong**

This paper investigates how the dance/movement therapy can influence students' social and emotional learning SEL and their academic success. As an educator and dance/movement therapist-to-be in Hong Kong, I have the urge to know the correlation between SEL, academic success and DMT. Academic success is always the major concern for teachers and parents in Asian countries. However, limited research has been conducted on the effect of DMT in relation to academic performance especially in Asian countries.

Hong Kong students strive for academic excellence to meet parental expectations, which is deeply rooted in traditional Confucian values. Confucianism has great influence on education and educational practices in Asian families (Huang & Gove, 2015). Chinese defined success by one's social class instead of person's wealth. Scholars, who were highly educated, were the elite class in society. Today, Asian society still considers scholars as higher in social class and that education is the key to reach "scholarly" status (Huang & Gove, 2015). Asian families believe educational success provides a route to a better job and marriage, higher social status and also leads to a better life (Hildebrand, 2008). Asian parents rank educational success as their top priority and the test and exam scores are often used to measure that success (Huang & Gove, 2015). However, competing for that academic success can result in high levels of anxiety and self-doubt (Stankov, 2010). High levels of anxiety in

turn affects students' academic performance. Some researchers have found that higher levels of anxiety are associated with lower marks in examination scores and academic performance (Sena et al., 2007; Mazzone et al., 2007). Different studies revealed that emotional issues are increasingly major concerns for students (Ho & Hau, 2010; Knight & Samuel, 2022). At the same time, teachers are overwhelmed due to their lack of knowledge and skills to deal with students' emotional problems (Chen, 2021). According to Hui and Chan (1996), guiding students with emotional problems is one of the sources of stress. Karrie Dietz, head of Stamford American School Hong Kong, mentioned that social-emotional development is expected to be the key in education (Chen, 2021). Teachers can help students to identify their emotions and cultivate the development of emotional intelligence of students so as to lead to the improvement of academic performance (Elias, 2006). Some studies showed the linkage between social and emotional skills to children's success in both school and life (Elias et al., 1997; Zins et al., 2007). All these findings arouse my interest in knowing if DMT can help in enhancing students' social and emotional skills and then help with their academic achievement. Thus, it is important for this Hong Kong dance/movement therapist in training to explore the relationship between DMT, SEL, and students' academic success to advocate for DMT in Hong Kong.

Literature Review

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning is how we learn to recognize and manage our emotions, care for others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors (Elias et al., 1997). SEL assists students in effectively navigating the social and emotional contexts of the classroom and helps schools to create positive learning environments (Zins et al., 2007). Based on extensive research, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified five competencies in SEL are self-awareness, self- management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Based on CASEL (2013), the definition of each competency is summarized below:

- (a) Self-awareness: the ability to accurately identify a person's emotions, thoughts and their impact on behavior, including an accurate assessment of a person's strengths and limitations, as well as confidence and optimism.
- (b) Self-management: the ability to effectively regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations, including managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating yourself, and setting and working toward personal and academic goals.
- (c) Social awareness: the ability to see and empathize with others from the perspective of different cultural backgrounds, understand social and ethical norms of behavior,

and recognize families, schools, and communities' resources and support.

(d) Relationship skills: the ability to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate and

resist inappropriate behavior to maintain meaningful relationships.

(e) Responsible decision-making: the ability to make choices and plans based on ethical

standards, safety concerns, social norms, the consequences of various actions, and

the well-being of self and others.

These five interrelated competencies in CASEL model impact students' short and long-term outcomes in the following aspects: positive attitudes and social behavior, conduct problems, emotional distress, academic success, graduation rates, mental health, criminal behavior, substance abuse, and engaged citizenship (Durlak et al., 2011; Zins et al., 2007). The growing number of SEL programs is not only the trend in Western and European countries, but also the direction of Asian countries like Singapore, Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong.

SEL in Hong Kong

Asian education systems place a strong emphasis on social comparison and test scores.

Hong Kong students are under a lot of social and emotional pressure as a result. The social and emotional problems of children aged 6 to 16 in Hong Kong, such as anxiety, boredom, aggressive behavior, ranked sixth among thirty-one countries and regions (Rescorla et al., 2007). In the study of cultural differences in emotional expression, it was found that suppressing emotional expression is dominant for Chinese and other Asians in order to

maintain group harmony (Tsai et al. 2002). Chen et al. (2005) examined Chinese children's social development and found that both aggressive and withdrawn Chinese children were at risk of social isolation and peer exclusion. Children in Hong Kong are generally facing the same problem (Duong et al., 2009).

Traditional education in Hong Kong focused on academic training rather than personal development. Over the past 10 years, mental health problems such as suicide, substance abuse, and school violence have been increasing among Hong Kong students (Sun & Shek, 2010). The Hong Kong government's Education Bureau (EDB) noticed the need and implemented different curriculums for whole person development and life-long learning in 2000 (Education Commission, 2000). Personal, social and humanities education (PSHE), and moral and civic education (MCE) were included in school curriculum from 2001 (Curriculum Development Council, 2001). Since 2003, the Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (APASO) was introduced. From 2010, all Hong Kong schools have the right to use APASO-II to obtain objective data to gain insight into students' emotional and social development. In 2015, life-wide learning was promoted in all local schools in Hong Kong (Education Bureau of the Government of the HKSAR, 2015). However, SEL programs are still optional for schools and there is no government policy on SEL programs in Hong Kong. This has also aroused researchers' interest in looking into the SEL development in Hong Kong or piloting SEL in Hong Kong local schools.

Studies on SEL programs in Hong Kong

After applying APASO-II as school's self-evaluation tool, more researchers are interested in knowing the effect of SEL programs in Hong Kong schools though SEL programs are not compulsory in Hong Kong local schools. Kam et al. (2011) carried out a pilot study on a US-developed evidence-based SEL program, called PATHS Curriculum, for three hundred and sixteen first grade students in three different schools in Hong Kong for about four months. First grade teachers in the three participating schools were trained to carry out sixteen out of thirty lessons from the PATHS Curriculum. Basic emotions and the topic of self-control were the focus. Different activities, including group discussion, role-playing art activities, stories, and educational games, were used in the lessons. Each lesson was about thirty-five minutes. Child Behavior Questionnaire, Pre-Intervention Behavioral Risk Score, and the Assessment of Children's Emotions Scales and Emotion Recognition Questionnaire were used to collect data in this study. Though the outcomes from three schools were different, the study still showed positive effects on children's emotional understanding and social competence, emotional expression and prosocial behaviors.

Another group of researchers, Wong et al. (2014), evaluated the effect of a social emotional learning program for twenty-seven students from Grade 1 to Grade 3 facing difficulties in social and emotional management in Hong Kong. Fourteen and thirteen students were randomly assigned to treatment and control group respectively. The researchers

found that it is difficult for schools or parents to arrange a course beyond 6 sessions; thus, they carried out a six one-hour-session program called Spooks of Emotions (Wong et al., 2014). The topic for each session was: (1) Introduction; (2) Awareness and expression of emotions; (3) Emotions, thinking, and actions; (4) Managing stress and anxiety; (5) Clear thinking; and (6) Power of positive thinking. Play activities, storytelling, role plays and case studies with examples from Hong Kong were included in the sessions. There were two sessions each week. The result showed significant improvement in social skills and decrease in children's problematic behaviors (Wong et al., 2014). Two studies also support the possibilities and effectiveness of implementation of SEL programs in Hong Kong. It is worth examining how school teachers can impact SEL programs in school setting.

Teacher Role in SEL

Teachers play a very important role in the social-emotional development of children under their care (Durlak et al., 2011). They create a social and emotional atmosphere in the classroom. Not only do they help students increase prosocial behaviors such as kindness, sharing, and empathy, but they also improve students' attitudes toward school and reduce students' depression and stress (Durlak et al., 2011). Students can equip with the skills for regulating their emotions and expressing their emotions appropriately through a proper socialization process (Denham et al., 2012). It is because students can learn from teachers when teachers apply a positive and supportive attitude and manner in responding to students'

negative emotions (Morris et al. 2013). Positive interaction with teachers can develop students social competence and emotional understanding. Teacher-student interactions support SEL when they result in positive student-teacher relationships, enable teachers to model social-emotional competencies for students and promote student engagement (Williford & Wolcott, 2015). Thus, teacher can naturally enhance SEL skills in students through everyday interactions during school days. Within educational settings, teachers have great responsibility in not just students' academic or cognitive development, but also social and emotional development. More and more studies investigate how the SEL impacts students' academic performance, which is after all the major concern of teachers and parents, especially in Asian countries.

SEL and Academic Success

“Academic success” can also be named as “student success” (York et al., 2015). It is always directly linked up to “student achievement” reflected in students' performance in test and exam scores. Plant et al. (2005) indicated academic success is associated with high academic achievement. Finn and Rock (1997) defined “academic success” as students with high grades, test scores and persistence levels. However, whether students are successful or not is not just limited to school performance, but how they navigate their life. Dr. Ladson-Billings (2014) mentioned that “academic success” must center “the intellectual growth that students experience as a result of classroom instruction and learning experience” (p. 75). York

et al. (2015) defines academic success as inclusive of academic achievement, attainment of learning objectives, acquisition of desired skills and competencies, satisfaction, persistence, and post- college performance, which is not just limited test and exam scores.

Fostering students' academic success is undeniably the goal of every school. However, schools will be most successful in their educational mission when they integrate efforts to promote not just children's academic learning, but also social and emotional learning (Elias et al., 1997). SEL has a critical role in improving children's academic performance and lifelong learning (Zins et al., 2007). Jones and his colleagues (2017) have demonstrated the benefits of social and emotional skills, documenting effects on positive academic, interpersonal, and mental health outcomes in their report. Zins and colleagues (2007) illustrated that SEL can not only improve students' social development and mental health, but can strengthen their academic achievement. Durlak et al. (2011) reviewed more than 200 school-based SEL curriculum studies from kindergarten to middle school and reported that compared with students who did not participate in the SEL program, students who participated in the program got significant improvement in academic standardized achievement tests and the positive effects were sustained consistently.

SEL and English Learning Achievement

Bai et al. (2021) noticed that there is a severe lack of SEL research in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning for Asians. The researchers tried to map the

SEL competency levels of secondary school students in Hong Kong and examine the complex relationship between four SEL competency clusters (i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management) and English learning performance with 315 Secondary one to Secondary three students (i.e. Grade seven to Grade nine) with low English proficiency. Students were asked to complete a SEL competence questionnaire for English learning and report their own average English exam scores on a 10-point Likert scale. The quantitative data from the study showed that the four SEL competence clusters were positively correlated to the English scores (Bai et al., 2021). The study found that high level of students' self-awareness skills does not directly link to better English performance. However, the mediation effects of self-management skills on self and social awareness skills can lead to better English learning achievement (Bai et al., 2021). Bai et al. indicated that it is necessary to cultivate student's self-management skills in order to help students to enhance their SEL competence and English learning results, which has provided a great reference on EFL teaching implication and pedagogies (Bai et al., 2021).

The above studies evidence that SEL has positive effects on students' learning and academic performance. Even for EFL learners, SEL can enhance students English learning results through cultivating their self-management skills, which is one of the five competencies of SEL suggested by CASEL (2013). In the following sections, I will examine how dance/movement therapy (DMT) impacts students' learning.

Dance/ Movement Therapy (DMT)

The American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) defines DMT as “the psychotherapeutic use of movement to further the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of the individual” (ADTA, n.d.). According to Koch and Fischman (2011), “dance/movement therapy may be conceptualized as an embodied and enactive form of psychotherapy” (p. 57). The core belief of DMT is one’s mind and body are interrelated, which means what happens in one’s mind can affect one’s body directly and vice versa (Levy, 2005). Dance movement therapy programs focusing therapeutic and expressive activities can promote nonverbal communication and language development (Capello, 2008).

Different practices of DMT are used with children who are suffering from physical and mental illness throughout the world (Capello, 2008). Dr. Suzi Tortora (as cited in Capello, 2008) mentioned that “dance/movement therapy embraces a felt-sense knowledge of working. It provides us with information and methods of knowing that are body-based” (p.36). Not just for children, adolescents benefit from DMT sessions in expressing emotions, learning to follow rules and control behaviors, improving social skills and developing academic content learning (Anderson, 2015; Panagiotopoulou, 2018).

Studies show dance therapy has great impact on developmental disorders like autism and learning difficulties, Down syndrome, and attention deficit hyperactive disorder (Lamond, 2010; Wengrower, 2010, Apello, 2008). Dance therapy can prevent loss of self-esteem, help

students deal with violent and aggressive incidents, and most importantly can play an important role in preventing such incidents (Wengrower, 2001).

Dance/ Movement Therapy and SEL

Dance or movement, like other artistic activities, are focused on body and non-verbal expression and can also foster development of students' social and emotional skills because physical and emotional development are closely related (Nummenmaa et al., 2014).

Nummenmaa et al. (2014) examined how emotional experiences triggered bodily sensation changes using a self-report embody tool. Participants were asked to colour the blank body regions to indicate their bodily sensations when experiencing activations and deactivations in emotions. The researchers suggested that emotions can trigger bodily sensation changes and embodiment helps for emotional processing (Nummenmaa et al., 2014).

Another study showed that therapeutic dance program provided young people experiencing social, emotional and behavioral difficulties with a safe space for their personal and social development and a physical release for their challenging emotions (Goodgame, 2007). Goodgame (2007) incorporated circle and group games, trust building exercises and creative activities for participants to explore the safe expression of feelings. The written and spoken feedback from evaluations and interviews from teachers, students and researchers showed that dance is a channel for students who experience anxiety and frustrations to have a physical release and to deal with their emotions non-verbally (Goodgame, 2007).

A number of studies incorporate dance education or DMT in development of SEL in school settings. Pereira and Marques-Pinto (2018) assessed students' social and emotional needs and their interests in educational dance program for twenty-two Portuguese middle school students. Among the students, fifteen students were Portuguese while the remaining students were other nationalities. During each session, participants went through three main stages: (1) warm-up dance exercise to prepare the body and promote group cohesion, second; (2) body and non-verbal expression and communication using movement and music; and (3) group discussion reflecting the process and the content. The result showed that students found music and dance useful in learning emotions regulation and self-management strategies.

Another researcher, Panagiotopoulou (2018), aimed to investigate the impact of dance therapy on students' social and emotional skills in two Greek public schools. Twenty-three students, aged 16-17, engaged in the study. Eleven students in experimental group were assigned to participate in twelve dance therapy sessions while twelve students in control group were asked to follow the regular school curriculum. The result confirmed that DMT sessions can improve students' social and affective skills. The quantitative analyses from questionnaire related to psychological attributes showed that emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity or inattention and peer relationship problem of students were all reduced, while students' prosocial behavior increased (Panagiotopoulou, 2018). The qualitative analyses also confirmed that students were able to manage expression of feelings, follow rules and control

their behavior (Panagiotopoulou, 2018).

Another study proposed a theoretical framework for promoting emotion regulation for maltreated children based on DMT principles (Betty, 2013). This framework suggested by Betty (2013) focused on cultivating interpersonal rhythms and support the concept of mind and body working together. This also matches with DMT pioneer Trudi Schoop's methodology, in which she introduced rhythm and repetition in her educational approach. She believed externally prompted rhythmic action through expressing emotions physically can help to direct release of emotions (Levy, 1988). In her study, Betty (2013) organized her framework into four phases: (1) safety, (2) emotional awareness, (3) internal emotional coping; (4) external expression management. Sample exercises were discussed in her study.

DMT and Academic success

Research on the direct relationship between DMT and students' academic performance is quite limited. However, the impact of DMT or dance practices on student learning can still be found. Deasy (2002) reported that dance/movement practices enhance student learning and engagement. Anderson (2016) applied kinesthetic learning elements into multiplication learning, area of a shape, and measurement in Mathematics curriculum. Besides learning Mathematics, the researcher also investigated the influence of DMT in social-emotional skills with a 4-week program. Data showed "the integration of dance/movement contributed to the development of students' social skills and their academic content learning" (Anderson, 2016,

p. 241). Result from another study also suggested that dance education not only improves students' academic success, but also improves their career preparedness, social skills, and wellbeing (Petrie, 2018).

Erwin-Grabner (1999) studied the effectiveness of DMT in reducing test anxiety symptoms among twenty-one graduate and undergraduate students at the average age of 29 from an urban health sciences university in the United States. The study was a simple outcome study, using quantitative data from pre and post-test scores on the Test Anxiety Inventory, and treatment and control groups. Participants in the experimental group attended at least four thirty-five-minute DMT sessions in two weeks during lunch hour. Body-oriented skills and expressive movement activities were used in each session. The result showed that DMT could effectively reduce self-reported symptoms of anxiety in this university population. This study did not investigate if reducing anxiety can lead to better academic achievement. However, Ader and Erktin (2010) studied that teaching students' self-regulation can reduce students' anxiety and improve their mathematics achievement. Although we need optimal level of anxiety in order to attain peak performance, too high anxiety level can negatively impact children and adolescence well-being, social-life and academic performance (Hooda & Saini, 2017). Hooda and Saini (2017) concluded that it is necessary to apply different ways to manage students' academic anxiety in order to improve their academic performance. Quite a lot of research showed that DMT has proven to reduce and manage

stress effectively and significantly (Bräuninger, 2012; Wiedenhofer & Koch, 2017).

To conclude, the above studies showed a positive correlation in the following three aspects: 1) SEL and academic success; 2) DMT and SEL, and 3) DMT and academic achievement. The attempts to establish the relationship between DMT, SEL and academic performance would be worth making due to the following reasons: 1) Hong Kong parents, students and schools emphasis on academic performance, 2) SEL programs are not compulsory and systematic in Hong Kong educational curriculum, and 3) DMT is relatively uncommon approach in Hong Kong. Based on the above studies, as an English teacher and dance/ movement therapist-to-be in Hong Kong, the current study will focus on applying DMT techniques in enhancing students SEL competence, especially in self-management skills, to improve students' English language performance.

Methods

Target Group

In Hong Kong, all secondary schools are allocated into three bandings based on their academic result in primary schools. The group with the highest academic result will be streamed into band 1 schools and the lowest group in band 3 schools. As an English teacher and dance/ movement therapist in training, I presented a social-emotional learning program with the integration of DMT techniques and English teaching for after-school classes in a band 3 secondary school based on the above articles and studies, named this English after-

school class as “Move your way to SEL.” Sixteen Secondary Four (Grade 10) students with low to medium overall academic performance but low English achievement participated in the “Move your way to SEL.”

Design of the Program

The design of “Move your way to SEL” is mainly based on the six one-hour-session of social emotional learning program from Wong et al. (2014) and the DMT theoretical framework for promoting emotion regulation suggested by Betty (2013). It was planned to have one-hour session per week. Each session is developed using one of the phases suggested by Betty (2013): (1) safety, (2) emotional awareness, (3) internal emotional coping, and (4) external expression management. A topic suggested by Wong et al. (2014) in the program of Spooks of Emotions was chosen to fit into each phase based on my understanding of the needs of Hong Kong students: (1) awareness and expression of emotions, (2) emotions, thinking, and actions; (3) managing stress and anxiety. The phase and the related topic are summarized in Table 1.

Lesson	Phase	Theme
1	Safety	Creating safety space
2	emotional awareness	Awareness and expression of emotions
3 - 4	external expression management	Managing emotions
5 - 6	internal emotional coping	Emotions, thinking, and actions

Table 1. Summary of the program “Move your way to SEL”

Session structure

The structure in each session will be divided into 3 parts based on the findings of Goodgame (2007) and Pereira and Marques-Pinto (2018):

First Part: Circle game

Each session will start with warm-up exercise in circle setting in order to prepare and activate students' body and build group cohesiveness. Circle formation is an essential structure in DMT intervention. Bräuninger (2014) found Chacian circle is a successful group DMT technique because it “places the participants in the group and the therapist in equivalent democratic positions, which enhances therapeutic relationships through movement” (p.446). This echoes with the belief of roundness in Chinese culture. There has been a saying from a painter in Qing Dynasty that *Roundness is full of vitality, fullness is full of spirit. In harmony with the light, all things are magnificent. In order to create the vigorous and fresh, one must first think of round.* This is the reason why Chinese mainly uses round tables as roundness represents harmony, peace and happiness, which leads to prosperity. The circle structure by

Marian Chace can effectively create a supportive environment and sense of satisfaction and resolve (Levy, 1988).

Second Part: Non-verbal movement activities

Followed by circle games, non-verbal expressive movement activities would be the second part of the class. Traditional English language classes focus on verbal communication. However, Chinese learners of English as a foreign language are very likely experience anxiety and embarrassment in English language classrooms (Shao et al., 2013). Liu and Jackson (2008) reported that Chinese students experienced anxiety with speaking in English in classrooms and most of them did not like to risk speaking English in class. This hinders their engagement and learning in class. Thus, non-verbal expressive movement activities as suggested by Pereira and Marques-Pinto (2018) could be a way to lessen students' anxiety in class. Surkamp (2014) supported that when teaching non-verbal communication, it is important to provide opportunity to develop students' awareness of their own body and its forms of expression. Surkamp's study (2014) suggested different activities, for example, mirror game, guessing emotions, identifying freeze frames, to teach students body language and the use of non-verbal forms of expression. Dance and movement non-verbal activities could help students explore their thoughts and feelings without the barriers of words (Goodgame, 2007).

Third Part: Reflection / Processing

The closing of the class is led by the teacher or the therapist to help students to reflect on the process and the content in form of group discussion, drawing or creative writing. In order to reduce students' pressure and encourage students' responses, speaking in Chinese or English would be allowed during the process. It is reported that the use of first language can provide additional cognitive support to second language learners and allow them to work at a higher level than restricting them to pure use of second language (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003).

My observation record, journal, and students' responses and feeling after each session will be used to keep track of my work and the progress. The lesson design and the sample activities used in the program are attached in Appendix A.

Results

Due to school timetabling constraints, the researcher conducted only three sessions with the target group. At the beginning of the first lesson, the purpose, content, and format were introduced. I explained to them my role as dance/ movement therapist in training and carried out a series of pilot lessons incorporating SEL skills in English lessons using dance/movement therapy technique. The students were initially shocked by the word "dance," but I explained the meaning of movement to reduce their worries and anxiety. The following sections report my observations and students' responses in each session.

Session 1

After explaining that actions can help me remember students' names, students were generally willing to create actions to introduce themselves. From my observation, most used their hands and fingers, with only two students stretching their arms to the front. The actions were done with slow and light movements close to their bodies, with no sustained movement. Students hesitated and felt embarrassed, and I had to remind them to repeat the movement and name together.

The non-verbal movement game improved the atmosphere, with students using different body parts to complete the task, but not their hands. Heads, shoulders, and legs were dominant though some of the students still touched the balloons using their hands naturally and uncontrollably. During the game, students smiled, laughed, and felt happy, fun, and relaxed as they had not had group activities for a long time. Especially during Covid period, students had their zoom class for more than two years.

After activating their body movement, the mirror game was introduced, and female students had a larger range of movement diversity, while males focused on hands and arms. Some students found it challenging to think of new movements, preferring to be followers, while others enjoyed being leaders, especially when they saw the partners failed to follow. During the mirror game, I observed that students struggled to attune to their partners. Most of them could not follow the movement dynamics and qualities from the leaders. Some students

felt good when moving in their preferred way as they did not need to concentrate on each other. The session ended with students drawing and using an adjective to describe their feelings for the session, with all students giving an English word.

Session 2

At the beginning of class, students were asked to express their feelings with a sound, but many found it difficult and asked to use words. About two-thirds of the class used sounds, while the rest used words or phrases to express feeling tired. In the non-verbal expressive movement activity, one student embodied an emotion from a bilingual cartoon card while the other acted as a remote control to control the intensity of the emotion. The demonstration was done before the students tried out the activity. The activity was challenging for students, with most producing only small movements like bigger eyes to show shock. They struggled to expand their movements from near reach to far reach and often repeated the same movement. Some pairs tried to increase the speed of hand movement to show the difference in intensity.

During the second half of the session, students watched a dialogue-free animation. Due to time constraints, I skipped the acting out part and instead asked students to focus on a specific scene and pick emotion cards to show the change of emotions. With over 100 emotion cards on the table, each pair picked their preferred cards and sequenced them based on the scene. They were then asked to create a new dialogue using the emotions they had chosen. Some students wrote the dialogue, while others used a comic-style format with simple

dialogue in speech bubbles from newly created characters. Students were more engaged in creating dialogues and allowed to use their phones to check English vocabulary or ask questions when struggling to write in English. At the end of the lesson, most students expressed a preference for showing their emotions with both action and dialogue, while a few preferred using dialogue only.

Session 3

The class kicked off with a game of tossing and catching an imaginary ball. After a few rounds of throwing the ball back and forth to me, the students were encouraged to toss the ball to any participant in the circle. A male participant initiated the game by throwing the ball to the person next to him, who caught it and threw it back with greater force. This sparked an increase in the group's energy and dynamics. The boys began to toss the ball at a faster pace, fueling their excitement, while the girls observed and laughed with delight.

During the non-verbal movement activity, one student stood in the middle of a circle while the others sat in a circle with an extra chair. The goal was for the student in the middle to sit on the empty chair to win the game. The seated participants moved clockwise towards the empty chair, and those who didn't want to move could clap on the chair, signaling the group to move in the opposite direction. The previous circle game had warmed up the students, thus they got into mood quickly in this game. They moved faster and faster, successfully avoiding the student in the middle. The game brought out more laughter and

faster movement from the participants. After the game, students named their emotions using a bilingual emotional wheel chart and colored in a body outline to show how they felt on different body parts. Most students used three to four colors to represent their emotions, and they were able to label the colors with the emotion words from the chart.

Students were then invited to continue the dialogue between characters from last lesson. Students developed the dialogues mainly based on the emotions they experienced in this lesson. Each group created their own conversations, with some students writing directly in English and a few students receiving help from me to translate from Cantonese to English. All groups completed the task in class.

The three sessions involved various non-verbal activities to help students express their emotions. These included creating actions to introduce themselves, non-verbal movement games, mirror games, emotion card sequencing, and writing dialogues. The sessions improved student engagement and showed that most students preferred showing their emotions with both action and dialogue. The sessions were successful in encouraging students to express themselves and engage with their emotions.

Discussion

The literature review provided the need for and framework of social and emotional learning in school setting. More importantly, the method developed and outlined in this thesis aims to explore the possibility of applying DMT techniques in a Chinese cultural school

setting to enhance students' emotional awareness and management when using a second language.

Implementing the program in a Chinese cultural setting was relatively challenging due to cultural norms discouraging emotional expression, strict classroom rules and discipline, and low English proficiency and motivation in low banding schools in Hong Kong. First, Chinese parents do not encourage students to express emotions, especially for males. They often view emotional expression as a sign of weakness or disrespect towards elders, leading to emotional suppression. Second, Hong Kong students are trained to follow strict rules and disciplines in classrooms. Willingness in sitting properly, listening to teachers, and following instructions means good behavior of students. Movement-based activities are also not commonly encouraged in classrooms. Lastly, in low banding schools in Hong Kong, students' proficiency is low. They have low interest and motivation in learning and using English. Most band three students are reluctant to take English classes. Despite these challenges, the thesis provided an opportunity to explore a new method in the Hong Kong school setting. After the exploration for three sessions, I have the following observation:

Classroom Setting

The Chacian circle setting provided a more relaxed atmosphere compared to the traditional classroom environment, with all students and the teacher sitting in the same circle in a parallel relationship. This allowed students to see each other and feel the emotional

changes during circle games, leading to increased motivation and engagement in activities.

Despite meeting the group for the first time, I was able to build a good relationship with the students after the first session. This was further demonstrated in the third session as one student stayed back and discussed his burnout problems with me.

Non-verbal movement activity

Motivating secondary school students to express themselves through movement was challenging, as many felt uncomfortable and resistant to moving their bodies. Students often looked at each other for guidance or validation. Thus, significant preparation was required to help them feel more comfortable moving. Creating a non-judgmental environment was critical, as Chinese students are often afraid of making mistakes and seeking definite right or wrong answers. Acknowledging and accepting attempts at participation without judgment helped reduce stress and encourage greater engagement in movement activities.

Another effective approach observed during the classes was to guide students to interpret movement as playing a game. For example, when introducing mirror game, the following instructions successfully engaged students:

"I would invite you all to play a game together. In this game, for those who can successfully imitate your partner's exact movement will be the winner. If you can only imitate the gesture, but not the speed, you still cannot win the game."

Framing movement activities as playing games is more relatable and accessible approach for students, leading to decreased embarrassment and increased participation. When more active students began to engage in the activity, passive students felt less stressed and were more likely to join the game.

Creative writing

Following the movement activities, each class concluded with a creative writing task and verbal reflection on the experience. It was surprising that all students were able to complete the writing task in class and were willing to discuss their feelings and experiences during the activities. Using emotional words helped students create dialogues between characters more easily. After three sessions, students had a greater variety of emotional vocabulary beyond primary emotions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis represents a valuable initial exploration into integrating social and emotional learning into English teaching using DMT techniques. Through the use of movement-based activities and circle games, this study observed enhanced emotional awareness and engagement in English writing amongst students. Additionally, the non-judgmental atmosphere created by these activities helped to reduce anxiety and increase participation. The strategy of framing movement activities as games offers a practical solution to enhance student engagement, while also promoting body awareness and facilitating a

positive learning experience. Moving forward, further research and study is necessary to modify the "Move the way to SEL" program to better fit Hong Kong school settings for Chinese learners. Ultimately, investigating the impact of DMT techniques on students' academic achievement, particularly in English language learning through social-emotional learning, is crucial for future educational development in Hong Kong.

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Appendix A - Lesson design and sample activities

The following tables show the sample activities used in the program:

Lesson 1		
Phase: Safety		
Theme: Creating safety space		
Goals	Part of the lesson	Sample activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To get to know each other - To develop safety and trust within the group - To develop a judgment-free space to encourage expression of ideas or feelings 	Circle game	Introduce our name with a movement. Others repeat the name and the movement together.
	Non-verbal movement activities	Use different body parts other than hands to hold the balloon in the air. Start from small groups to challenge the whole group to hold all the balloons at the same time in a big circle.
	Reflection	How do you feel when playing with the balloon(s)? Which body part(s) did you use most / did you prefer using?
	Non-verbal movement activities	Work in pairs. One is leader, another is follower. The follower mirrors the movement from the leader. Exchange roles. Try the best to mirror the qualities of the leader's movement. Start another round. The follower cannot follow the leader. Have to move with different body parts or different qualities.
	Reflection/ Processing	How do you feel when you are the leader / follower? Which role do you prefer? Do you prefer mirroring or moving differently? Describe the difference of feelings for both roles? Reflect on feeling safe in your body in the group when you speak in Cantonese as compared to English.

Lesson 2		
Phase: Emotional awareness		
Theme: Awareness and expression of emotions		
Goals	Part of the lesson	Sample activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To activate body parts to enhance awareness of bodily sensation - To enhance the awareness of bodily expressions - To expand knowledge on feelings and emotions vocabulary 	Circle game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take turns to express feeling/ mood state with a sound. If the sound is accompanied with a gesture or movement, the others mirror the sound together with the gesture /movement.
	Non-verbal movement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work in pairs. Pick an emotion cartoon card with bilingual vocabulary. Student A does an action representing the emotion. Student B acts as remote control to control the intensity of the emotion action from Student A. Take turns to embody the emotion. - Watch an animation without dialogue. Each pair chooses a short scene and acts out the scene with the change of emotions.
	Creative writing	Following the sequence of the change of emotion. Create a scene with dialogue using the emotions. Students can choose to use the scene in the animation or create any setting.
	Reflection	What's the difference when expressing emotions in action with or without dialogue?

Lesson 3 - 4		
Phase: External expression management		
Theme: Managing emotions		
Goals	Part of the lesson	Sample activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To further enhance body awareness - To explore emotions from self - To develop coping skills for uncomfortable emotions 	Circle game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pass an imaginary ball along the circle. The ball can be in different sizes or materials. The student can choose how to pass it the one sitting / standing next to him/her.
	Non-verbal movement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All students sit on a chair in a circle. Choose one student to stand in the middle of the circle. There is one empty chair in the circle now. - The one in the middle targets to sit on the empty chair while the others sitting on the chairs need to move together in clockwise direction to avoid him getting the chair. - If one doesn't want to move, s/he can tap on the empty chair, all the others need to change and move in anti-clockwise direction.
	Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What emotion(s) did you notice when playing the game ? - Which body part(s) did you have the strongest feeling? - Body-mapping coloring: A body outline given to students and invite students to illustrate the emotions on different body parts they have just gone through by using different colors
	Creative writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Act out the dialogue created last time with the awareness of the bodily sensation. - Continue the dialogue with the emotions experienced in this lesson - Suggest ways to help the character to cope with his/ her emotion in the created scene.

Lesson 5 - 6		
Phase: Internal emotional coping		
Theme: Thoughts, feelings and behavior		
Goals	Part of the lesson	Sample activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To awareness the relationship of body language and emotions - To develop Internal emotional coping skills - To understand the emotion experience through thoughts, feelings and behaviors 	Circle game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take turns to move like an animal to express the feeling or mood state
	Non-verbal movement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work in pairs. Students pick a dialogue prepared by the therapist. Practice having conversation without words. Try a few rounds. - Start from a volunteer pair and start the movement dialogue. The pair next to them continue the movement dialogue.
	Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you think body movement can help to express emotions?
	Creative writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add in a character called "calmness" in the dialogue created by the students last lesson. Develop a conversation between "calmness" and the main character with strongest emotion.
	Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss how the character of "calmness" help to manage uncomfortable emotions. - Discuss the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behavior

THESIS APPROVAL FORM

**Lesley University
Graduate School of Arts & Social Sciences
Expressive Therapies Division
Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling: Dance/Movement Therapy, MA**

Student's Name: Poon Tik Yee, Teresa

Type of Project: Thesis

Title: Dance/ Movement Therapy's influence on students' social-emotional learning and academic success: Developing a method in Hong Kong

Date of Graduation: May 20, 2023

In the judgment of the following signatory this thesis meets the academic standards that have been established for the above degree.

Thesis Advisor: E Kellogg, PhD