

## Indonesian students' social-emotional competencies and their English academic achievement

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### ABSTRACT

In Indonesian secondary schools, young learners might have some difficulties such as lack of motivation, lack of confidence and disengagement in learning English, which contribute to the level of their social-emotional competencies (SEC). This study was conducted to investigate the relations between 103 seventh graders' SEC and their English academic achievement. This study provided not only the correlation but also the results of the students' SEC, their English academic achievement, and the contribution of the students' SEC to their English academic achievement. The collected data from the SEC questionnaire and documentation were analyzed by using Pearson Correlation. The results highlighted that there was a significant weak correlation ( $r$ -obtained=0.367) between the students' SEC and their English academic achievement. Moreover, there was 12.6% contribution of the students' SEC to their English academic achievement. Therefore, it is possible that social-emotional competencies may enhance students' English academic performance.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Students enter secondary school normally in the age 11-13. Learning English in the age 11-13 years old, the students are still considered as young learners because young learners are the children in the range 3-15 years old [1]. In the age 11 children enter the formal-operational stage when they start to develop abstract thinking and generalize beyond their immediate context [2].

Indonesia is one of the countries which consider English as a compulsory subject in the curriculum. Due to the implementation of 2013 Indonesian national curriculum, English is taught since the students enter secondary schools, so most of these students do not have previous knowledge about English, except those who have taken English courses. In other words, for the students who do not take any English course, secondary school is their first step in learning English.

Learning English for the first time, Indonesian young learners are having some problems which prevent them to improve their English language skills. Those problems, which are commonly occurred especially with young learners who have just started learning English, are usually lack of motivation, lack of confidence, and disengagement (high anxiety). Moreover, the learners are also having difficulties in learning English such as; English deficiencies, not suitable learning styles, less confidence, low motivation, high anxiety, and inability to convert input into intake [3]. They consider English as a hard subject which is difficult to understand mainly because the grammar and vocabulary are different from their first language. Other factors such as being afraid of the teachers' anger and afraid of being laughed at by their friends when they made mistake also demotivate the students and decrease their enthusiasm in learning.

Today's schools serve a diverse array of students with varied abilities and motivations for learning. Some are academically successful, committed, and participate enthusiastically in class and extracurricular activities. Others struggle academically and are disengaged. In addition, large numbers of students with mental health problems and deficits in social-emotional competence have difficulty learning or disrupt the educational experiences of their peers [4]. However, these students only need to adapt in order to understand the subject little by little, in which they need to have motivation, confidence, and engagement (low anxiety).

Social-emotional competencies are the abilities to adapt with surrounding situations. Social-emotional competencies are essential life skills that support wellbeing and positive mental health. Those competencies are self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making [5]. Self-awareness is the ability to understand themselves and to build self-confidence. Social awareness is the ability to understand others. Self-management is the skill to control their emotions. Relationships skills are the ability to communicate with others and build good relationships with them. The last, responsible decision making lets the students to create a wise decision in solving a problem. These competencies are needed to build a good relationship not only among students but also between students and teachers. Therefore, those competencies can increase students' motivation, confidence, and engagement because they affect how the students react to the situations around them and help them to create a comfortable situation in order to create an effective teaching and learning activities.

Social-emotional competencies are also important because they can increase the students' academic achievement. According to the latest research, a meta-analysis of 213 programs, primarily covering three decades of research, found that social and emotional learning interventions that address the competencies increased students' academic performance by 11 percentile points, as compared to students who did not participate in such SEL programs [6]. Therefore, it shows that social-emotional competencies are not only good to build the students good behavior but also good to increase their academic achievement. In this study, the academic achievement is specified to English academic achievement.

Academic achievement is the ability of the student to learn and acquire knowledge and apply it in learning activity [7]. It can be inferred that academic achievement is acquired through learning, so there must be factors which affect the academic achievement while being acquired in learning. There are four factor domains which influence the students namely micro system factors, meso-system factors, exo-system factors, and macro system factors. Micro-system factors consist of characteristic of the student himself and also his direct interactions with teachers and other students such as student resiliency, individual student abilities, social and moral development and motivations in learning. It can be seen that the micro-system factors are related to social-emotional competencies where the factors are related to the ability of the students to adapt in any situation in real life [8]. Moreover, teachers educational level, experience, subject matter knowledge, students interest towards education, attendance, parents educational level, parents income, distance of the school from the students home, the availability of materials, text book and language skill of students affect the academic success of students [9].

Based on an observation conducted in some secondary schools in Palembang city in Indonesia, it was found that most of the students were not really active while learning English. Many of them were reluctant to ask the teachers or their friends when they did not understand the material. It shows that the relationships between students-teachers and between students-students were not really close. In other words, the students' relationship skills and social awareness were still low. The writer also found some students who were not motivated to learn. It shows that their self-awareness is still low, because they might not be motivated because they do not know the importance of learning English for themselves or they have not found the best strategy for learning English for themselves. Therefore, it can be inferred that these secondary students were having problems with their social-emotional competencies and the writer would like to find whether it affected their English academic achievement.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relation between the seventh graders' social-emotional competencies and their English academic achievement. The seventh graders were chosen because they are in the first year of the secondary school. Most of them had just known each other for a short time, so their ability to adapt with their new situations around them was based on their existing social-emotional competencies or in other words, in this state, it was easier to recognize the students' social-emotional competencies since there is a positive correlation between emotional competencies and the degree of self-perceived of relationships with friends [10].

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a correlational study which was conducted in one private secondary school in the city of Palembang, Indonesia during the academic year of 2017-2018. The total sampling technique was used for the selection of all the 103 seventh graders as the subjects of the study. The Social Emotional Competence

Questionnaire (SECQ) and documentation of students' English academic achievement were used to collect the data. The SECQ was used to obtain the information of the students' social-emotional competencies. It consists of 25 items divided into the five competencies, namely self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. The Likert scale with five options (very frequently, frequently, sometimes, seldom, and almost never) was applied in this questionnaire [11]. The questionnaire had been validated and tried out with 5% significance and 25 items (N), and the value of r-table is 0.396. The result of the corrected item-total correlation showed that all items' r-counted are over the r-table, meaning that all items are valid. Further, the value of Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire is 0.898, meaning that it is reliable. Meanwhile, the documentation in the form of the students' English semester examination results were the data representing the students' English academic achievement.

To analyze the data, analysis of frequency was used to reveal the mean score, the standard deviation, and the data distribution. This study used Pearson Product Moment Correlation to describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between the students' Social-Emotional Competence (SEC) and their Academic English Achievement (AEA). Prior to the analysis, normality and homogeneity tests were conducted.

### 3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In analyzing the data, the statistical procedures were done. First, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the students' responses to social emotional competence questionnaire and students' English academic achievement. Next, Pearson product moment correlation was completed to check the relationship between social-emotional competencies and English academic achievement of the students. Lastly, regression analysis was done to examine the contribution of social-emotional competencies to English academic achievement of the seventh grader samples.

Prior to the data analysis by using parametric tests, it should be ensured that the data were normal and homogeneous. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed to test the normality of the data and the Levene's test was applied to see whether the data had the same variance. The results of normality test for the social emotional competencies and English academic achievement show that the significance values of social emotional competencies and English academic achievement were .200. It means that the data of SEC questionnaire and English academic achievement are distributed normally because the significance values are higher than .05. The results of the homogeneity test between social emotional competencies and English academic achievement show that the significant value was .052, meaning that the two data sets have the same distribution, which means they are homogeneous.

#### 3.1. Results of social-emotional competence questionnaire

The statistical data were classified into two: the score distribution of social-emotional competence and the five aspects of social-emotional competence. As shown in Table 1, the mean score for students' SEC (in total) is 84.62 and the standard deviation is 12.418. There are 9.7% students in low category, 76.7% students in moderate category, and 13.6% students in high category.

Table 1. The score distribution of students' SEC<sub>Total</sub> (N=103)

Interval	Category	Number of Students	Percentage	Mean	Std.
25 – 71	Low	10	9.7%		
72 – 97	Moderate	79	76.7%	84.62	12.418
98 – 125	High	14	13.6%		

There are five aspects of social-emotional competence: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Among the five SEC, Table 2 shows that the students' highest mean score was responsible decision making (M = 3.55), followed by self-awareness (M = 3.52), self-management (M = 3.34), social awareness (M = 3.28) and relationship skills (M = 3.24). It means that the majority of 103 sample students had higher responsible decision making and self-awareness competencies than other three competencies.

Table 2. Overall mean score of the five SEC (N=103)

Social-Emotional Competencies	Mean
Self-awareness	3.52
Social awareness	3.28
Self-management	3.34
Relationship skills	3.24
Responsible decision making	3.55

### 3.2. Results of English academic achievement

The results show that the lowest score of the English academic achievement is 10 out of 100; and the highest score is 98 out of 100. The students' average score was 49.77, and the standard deviation was 18.305. As seen in Table 3, there are 1.9% students in very good category, 2.9% students in good category, 2.9% students in sufficient category, 67% students in poor category, and 25.2% students in failed category.

Table 3. The result of students' English academic achievement

Score Interval	Category	Number of Students	Percentage
92 – 100	Very good	2	1.9%
84 – 91	Good	3	2.9%
75 – 83	Sufficient	3	2.9%
38 – 74	Poor	69	67.0%
0 – 37	Failed	26	25.2%

### 3.3. Correlation analysis

The statistical analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was done in order to find out whether there was any significant correlation between the students' social-emotional competencies and their English academic achievement.

Table 4. Correlation between social-emotional competencies and english academic achievement

Variables	N	r-obtained (Pearson Correlation)	p-value Sig (2-tailed)
Social-Emotional Competencies	103	0.367	0.000
English Academic Achievement	103		

Table 4 shows that the value of r-obtained was 0.367 and p-value = 0.000. Because the p-value (0.000) was lower than 0.05,  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_1$  was accepted. Therefore, there was a statistically significant correlation between the students' social-emotional competencies and their English academic achievement. It was a positive direction correlation and according to the table of absolute value of  $r$  according to Evans (1996) r-obtained=0.367 was considered as significant weak correlation.

Table 5. Correlation among each SEC and english academic achievement

Social-Emotional Competencies	r-obtained (Pearson Correlation)	p-value Sig (2-tailed)
Self-Awareness	0.335	0.001
Social Awareness	0.242	0.014
Self-Management	0.313	0.001
Relationship Skills	0.239	0.015
Responsible Decision Making	0.166	0.093

Table 5 shows the p-value of self-awareness (0.001), social awareness (0.014), self-management (0.001), relationship skills (0.015), and responsible decision making (0.093). Because every competence p-value except responsible decision making were lower than 0.05, it means that self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills had a significant correlation with the students' English academic achievement. While the responsible decision making was considered as having no significant correlation to English academic achievement.

### 3.4. Regression analysis

Because there was a significant correlation between the two variables, the regression analysis was used to calculate the data in order to find out “How much is the contribution of the students’ social-emotional competencies to their English academic achievement?” as seen in Table 6.

Table 6. The regression analysis between social and emotional competencies and english academic achievement

Variable	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Sig. F Change
SEC to EAC	0.367 <sup>a</sup>	0.126	17.108	0.135	0.000

It was found that the significance F change (0.000) showed that social-emotional competencies significantly influence the students’ English academic achievement ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). Then, since the adjusted R square is 0.126, it means that social-emotional competencies explained 12.6% of the variability in English academic achievement. In other words, the contribution of social-emotional competencies to English academic achievement was 12.6%. Based on the correlation statistic, all competencies of social-emotional competencies, except responsible decision making, had a significant correlation with English academic achievement. Therefore, the contribution of each competence to English academic achievement was checked.

The adjusted R square of self-awareness was 0.103 meaning that the contribution of self-awareness to English academic achievement was 10.3%. The adjusted R square of social awareness was 0.049 meaning that the contribution of social-awareness to English academic achievement was 4.9%. The adjusted R square of self-management was 0.089 meaning that the contribution of self-management to English academic achievement was 8.9%. The adjusted R square of relationship skills was 0.048 meaning that the contribution of relationship skills to English academic achievement was 4.8%.

### 3.5. Discussion

Firstly, the result of social emotional competence questionnaire of 79 students (76.7%) having moderate social-emotional competencies shows that the majority of the students had enough competencies to maintain their emotions and adapt in any kind of situation in the class. Therefore, it helped the students in creating a conducive and effective learning activity especially in learning English. The questionnaire also showed that the competence which is acquired most by the students was responsible decision making ( $M=3.55$ ). Then, the second highest was self-awareness ( $M=3.52$ ), followed by self-management ( $M=3.34$ ), social awareness ( $M=3.28$ ), and relationship skills ( $M=3.24$ ). It shows that the students had high responsible decision making and self-awareness skills compared to the other three skills. It is assumed that the students had started to think carefully before taking an action and considered the positive and negative impact of that action to themselves and other people, in which being a better decision-maker is similar to being an effective learner [12]. Moreover, the students had high self-awareness skill which indicated that they understood themselves quite well. This is good because it means that they do not prioritize their ego while doing anything and the students also know their strengths and weaknesses and their own motivation in learning. Meanwhile, the students had enough competencies in self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills. It means that they had enough competencies in understanding others, also in maintaining their own emotions and friendship. Overall, the students’ social-emotional competencies are categorized as enough to create a conducive and effective learning atmosphere. However, there are also other aspects, such as teacher’s behavior, good infrastructural, excursions, and methods of teaching which were found out to be the stimulants and/or important factors leading to a conducive learning atmosphere in the schools [13].

Secondly, the result of the students’ English academic achievement showed that about 90% of the students got below the standardized score (75) which had been adjusted by the school to determine whether the students pass the examination or not. It means that the students understanding on English was low and it is still needed to be increased by enhancing the students’ SEC and improving teachers’ teaching strategy as well as parents’ support. It is in line with the 2017 meta-analysis of 82 kindergarten to high school-based Social Emotional Learning programs which found long-term (between 6 months and 18 years) improvement in four areas: SEL skills, attitudes, positive social behaviour, and academic performance [14]. There is growing recognition that teachers make a crucial contribution to the social and emotional development of their students that has lasting effects on their lives well into adulthood [15] because highly effective language teachers have personal qualities and skills in a range of teaching methods that create a positive classroom atmosphere, acknowledge and stimulate the learners’ ideas, provide extensive practice and constructive feedback and encourage learner self-efficacy [16]. In addition, parents’ involvement in their child’s education increases the rate of academic success of their child [17].

Thirdly, there was a significant correlation between social-emotional competencies and English academic achievement, in which the correlation direction was positive meaning that the higher the students’

social-emotional competencies, the higher their English academic achievement. However, the  $r$ -obtained 0.367 was categorized as weak correlation [18], in which the students who have higher emotional intelligence have a higher chance of succeeding academically than the students with lower emotional intelligence and students' social and emotional development is an important aspect for the students' success in school and life [19]. However, because social-emotional competencies had five competencies; self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making, the writer tried to correlate each competence to English academic achievement and found that only four out of the five competencies which were correlated to English academic achievement. Those were self-awareness ( $p$  value= 0.001), social awareness ( $p$  value= 0.014), self-management ( $p$  value=0.001), and relationship skills ( $p$  value= 0.015). While responsible decision making was considered as no correlation because the  $p$  value= 0.093 > 0.05. Here, the writer found that even responsible decision making was the competence which most of the students acquired most, but in fact it had no significant correlation with English academic achievement. This might happened because the student have not learnt English in elementary school and just learnt English in secondary school, so even if they have high responsible decision making competence but they were not really acquainted to English due to the length of time in learning English, in which the reason why decision making skills did not have any significant correlation with academic achievement might be because of other factors such as areas of specialization, personal experience and level of education [20]. However, it was different from the statement saying that rational thinking and decision making, which are the factors that increase attention and engagement, are related to academic achievement [19].

Lastly, the result of regression analysis showed that the contribution of social-emotional competencies to English academic achievement was 12.6%. The contribution might not really high but it can be concluded that social-emotional competencies significantly contribute to English academic achievement (sig.  $F$  change= 0.000<0.05). In addition, the two highest contribution of all the social-emotional competencies to English academic achievement was self-awareness which contributed 10.3%, followed by self-management which contributed 8.9%. This indicated that in order to increase the students' English academic achievement, the students need to know themselves better and try to find out by themselves what their strengths and weaknesses are, what they like, what their motivations are, and how their best way of study. Moreover, they also need to know the way to control their own emotions, so they can increase their English academic achievement. In short, the biggest contribution to the students' academic achievements comes from self-awareness and self-management, meaning that it comes from within the students themselves, in which interest in learning and attitude toward school gives a big contribution to academic achievement [7]. However, students' relationship skills and social awareness were needed to build a good relationship with other friends and teachers. Therefore, how students manage themselves as well as their relationship with other people in their surroundings can contribute to the English academic achievement.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It is necessary to identify the students' social-emotional competencies and their academic achievement in order to suggest the social-emotional learning as a solution to overcome the common problems, such as lack of motivation, lack of confidence, and disengagement (high anxiety), which are commonly found in today students' life. This study revealed that there was a significant influence of students' social-emotional competencies to their English academic achievement. The students' social-emotional competencies contributed 12.6% to their English academic achievement. However, among the five competencies, it was found that responsible decision making did not have a significant correlation with English academic achievement. Thus, when the competencies of SEC were measured separately, self-awareness and self-management gave the first and the second biggest contribution to students' English academic achievement, followed by relationship skill and social awareness. This could mean that students' determination to succeed academically comes from within the students themselves first, including how they manage themselves in terms of setting motivation and controlling emotion as well as how they maintain positive relationship with other people in their surroundings.

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