

A Literature Review on English Language Teaching to Promote Health Awareness and Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT Teachers and students in English language classrooms face increasing mental health challenges due to academic pressure, emotional demands, and limited support systems. This literature review aims to explore how English Language Teaching (ELT) can be utilized to promote health awareness and support the well-being of both learners and educators. The study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, analyzing 16 peer-reviewed journals and academic books published between 2020 and 2025. These sources were selected based on their relevance to ELT, mental health, teacher well-being, and health education. The review identifies three key findings: first, ELT offers a reflective space for emotional expression through drama, storytelling, and project-based learning; second, teacher well-being significantly influences instructional quality and student outcomes, yet many educators lack training to address mental health topics in class; third, institutional support and policy alignment—especially with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3)—are essential for the long-term success of mental health promotion in education. The study concludes that integrating health topics into ELT is both feasible and impactful, but requires systemic backing, teacher empowerment, and context-sensitive approaches. Further empirical research is needed to assess implementation strategies across diverse educational settings.

Keywords: English teaching, mental health, well-being, literature review, education

38 Introduction

The issue of mental health and well-being has received increasing attention in education, including in English language learning. The impact of the global pandemic, socio-political instability, and academic and emotional stress experienced by students and teachers have shown the importance of integrating health and well-being awareness into language teaching practices. English language learning is no longer focused solely on language acquisition, but also becomes a strategic space to build self-awareness, emotional resilience, and healthy living values for students and educators.

Language learning, in particular, has great potential in shaping students' understanding of complex social and psychological issues. Bondarenko and Haieva (2025) stated that well-being theory can be used as a basis for designing English learning that not only develops communication competence but also forms meaningful life values and students' social awareness. Learning strategies such as philosophical discussions and the jigsaw method based on the theme of well-being have been shown to deepen students' understanding of concepts such as happiness, meaning of life, and social relationships.

Furthermore, Ludwig et al. (2024) emphasized that English language learning has great potential in supporting students' mental health literacy. Authentic materials such as multimodal

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novels, songs, dramas, and even video games can be used as educational tools to help students understand mental health issues, express their emotions, and develop emotional regulation skills. With this approach, English classes become a safe space for students to explore their identities, understand their emotions, and build psychological resilience amidst the challenges of the times.

In addition, teacher well-being is also an important aspect in this context. Pentón Herrera et al. (2023) emphasized that English teachers often face high emotional burdens, both from professional demands and interpersonal engagement with students. Therefore, an ecological approach to teacher well-being—which considers personal, institutional, and social factors—is an important foundation in creating a healthy and sustainable learning environment.

Through this literature review, the authors aim to explore how English language teaching practices can be utilized to promote health awareness and well-being for both students and teachers. This study will highlight relevant theories, effective teaching practices, and the contribution of English as a platform to support learners' social-emotional development and safeguard educators' well-being amidst the challenges of 21st century education.

Mental health and well-being are increasingly important issues in education. English language teaching (ELT) is now considered an effective means to raise awareness of mental health for both students and teachers (Ludwig et al., 2024; Yang, 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health challenges have increased, especially for teachers who are experiencing additional work pressures and emotional burdens (Alzahari et al., 2025).

On the other hand, the English classroom can also be a positive place to express feelings, build self-confidence, and develop social skills (Ludwig et al., 2024). Many new approaches to teaching, such as the use of authentic texts, drama, group projects, and digital media, can support learning while reinforcing awareness of the importance of health and well-being (Haycock et al., 2020).

This article aims to review research and practices in English language teaching that support mental health. It will also highlight the role of teachers, curriculum, and institutional support in creating emotionally healthy learning.

39 Literature Review

Mental Health Challenges in Education

Teachers face high levels of stress in their work, such as administrative burdens, high expectations, and lack of emotional support. This leads to stress and burnout, which impacts their teaching quality and health (Alzahari et al., 2025). In Malaysia, thousands of teachers have chosen to retire early due to psychological reasons. Similar conditions have also been found in other countries (Yang, 2022). Students also experience emotional stress, especially adolescents who face identity crises, the influence of social media, and academic demands. In the context of learning English, anxiety about speaking in public or facing a foreign culture can also be a burden (Gao, 2022).

ELT as a Means of Improving Well-Being

English language teaching can be a tool to support students' emotional well-being. For example, reading stories, writing journals, role-playing, and discussing health themes can help students understand and manage their emotions (Ludwig et al., 2024). Research also shows that learning projects involving teamwork can increase self-confidence and empathy (Gao, 2022). Some programs, such as "Tackling the Blues" in the UK, combine PE and English lessons to build mental health awareness among students. The results show that learning that is fun and

relevant to everyday life can have a positive impact on students' mental health (Haycock et al., 2020).

The Role of Teachers and Curriculum

Teacher well-being is crucial because it affects the classroom atmosphere and relationships with students. Teachers who feel emotionally supported are better able to create a positive learning environment (Yang, 2022). Unfortunately, many teachers feel unprepared or inadequately trained to address mental health topics in the English classroom (Ludwig et al., 2024). Mental health-friendly teacher training models and curricula are urgently needed so that teachers can integrate these important topics into everyday learning (Department of Education, 2022).

Framework and Future Directions

The integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially goal number 3 on health and well-being, is a promising approach in education (Alzahari et al., 2025). In addition, digital media and social awareness campaigns can be utilized to support health literacy and shape positive attitudes of students towards mental health (Haycock et al., 2020).

40 Research Methods

This writing uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method by reviewing scientific articles and academic books published between 2020 and 2025. These sources were selected based on their suitability to the themes: English teaching, mental health, teacher well-being, and health awareness. The analysis was carried out by identifying key themes and comparing findings between studies.

41 Result and Discussion

The results of this literature review indicate that English language teaching (ELT) has great potential as a means to promote mental health awareness and well-being for both students and teachers. First, ELT can serve as a reflective and creative medium to increase students' emotional awareness. Activities such as reading stories, writing journals, role-playing, and discussing health themes in the context of English lessons have been shown to help students understand, manage, and express their feelings in a healthy way (Ludwig et al., 2024). This approach can also increase empathy, self-confidence, and create a safe space to talk about mental health in the educational environment (Gao, 2022). Second, teacher well-being greatly influences the effectiveness of teaching and the successful implementation of a mental health-oriented approach. Teachers who feel emotionally supported are better able to create a conducive learning atmosphere, establish positive relationships with students, and deliver meaningful learning (Yang, 2022). Unfortunately, many teachers still feel they lack the knowledge, training, and resources to integrate mental health issues into their English classes (Ludwig et al., 2024; Department of Education, 2022). Therefore, structured and ongoing professional training is urgently needed to equip teachers with the competencies to support their students' and their own well-being.

Third, systemic support from educational institutions and national policies are key factors in ensuring the sustainability of mental health promotion efforts through ELT. Research by Alzahari et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of a policy-based approach that is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 3 which focuses on health and

well-being. Initiatives such as integrating health topics into the curriculum, providing relevant learning materials, and awareness campaigns through social media can strengthen students' health literacy and create a school culture that cares about well-being. In addition, synergy between teachers, school management, and government institutions is needed to overcome implementation challenges in the field and create sustainable change.

Overall, this study confirms that ELT is not only about language acquisition, but can also be a vehicle to educate students holistically, including emotional and social aspects. However, to maximize its role, strong integration between pedagogical approaches, teacher readiness, and support from the education system as a whole is needed.

42 Conclusion

Based on the results of literature observations, it can be concluded that English teaching has great potential in supporting mental health awareness and well-being of students and teachers. ELT can be a learning space that not only develops language skills, but also social and emotional skills through a reflective, creative, and collaborative approach. However, to optimize this role, comprehensive support is needed from teachers, curriculum, and education policies.

Teachers need adequate training and resources to be able to effectively integrate mental health topics into the learning process. In addition, strong institutional support, including policies that are aligned with sustainable development goals, is essential to ensure the sustainability of programs that focus on well-being. In the future, further research and evaluation of the impact of implementing ELT oriented towards mental health are needed to produce best practices that can be applied in various educational contexts.

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