Discussion Formats for Addressing Emotions: Implications for Social-Emotional Learning

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Abstract

Scholars of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) advocate discussion as a promising instructional method yet rarely specify how such discussions should be conducted. Facilitating classroom discussions is highly challenging, particularly about emotions. Furthermore, the SEL literature contains contradictory discursive imperatives; it typically overlooks the gaps between students' and teachers' emotional codes and how these codes are shaped by culture, class, and gender. The current study explores different ways in which teachers facilitate classroom dialogue about emotions. We analyze data drawn from a two-year ethnographic study conducted as part of a design-based implementation research project aimed at fostering productive dialogue in primary language arts classrooms, looking in particular at two lessons centered around a story about crying. We found two different interactional genres for discussions about emotions: (1) inclusive emotional dialogue, in which students share emotions experienced in their everyday lives; (2) emotional inquiry, in which students explore emotions, their expressions, and their social meanings. Both types of discussion generated informative exchanges about students' emotions. Yet the discussions also put the teacher and students in challenging positions, often related to the need to navigate between contradictory discursive norms and emotional codes.

Keywords: dialogic pedagogy, discourse analysis, ethnography, language arts, social and emotional learning.

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Social-emotional learning (SEL) has been shown to improve students' academic achievement, occupational attainment, mental health, and civic engagement and to reduce depression, anxiety, and risk behaviors (Jones et al., 2017; Domitrovich et al., 2017; Heckman & Kautz, 2012; although for a critical discussion, see Effrem & Robbins, 2019). Advancing SEL in classrooms requires the development of research-based tools and programs (Elias & Moceri, 2012; Jones et al., 2017; Harvard University, n.d.). Classroom discussions have been advanced as a central method for achieving SEL aims (Assor, 2020; Yoder, 2014). However, scholars advocating classroom discussions for SEL rarely specify how such discussions should be designed and facilitated. Furthermore, the SEL literature contains contradictory imperatives: On the one hand, pupils are instructed to 'not bottle things up' (Cameron, 2000) and to accept all emotions (Wilce & Fenigsen, 2016). On the other hand, SEL promotes *hegemonic positivity*, that is, the expectation that pupils 'feel good' (Smith, 2019) and exhibit positive motivation, hope, optimism (Yoder, 2014), and even joy (Gillies, 2011; Stearns, 2017).

We explore how teachers and students navigate discussions about emotional experience through close analysis of two case-study lessons drawn from a two-year ethnographic study of an intervention designed to foster productive classroom dialogue in the language arts. The teachers in the program were not trained for SEL but rather were experimenting with ways to develop dialogic teaching and learning. In the paper, we use this data to gain insight into dialogue on emotions in relation to SEL foci and aims. The two lessons were conducted in the same school, located in a mixed Arab-Jewish socio-economically disadvantaged Israeli city. Each case reflected a different interactional form for discussing emotions: (1) *inclusive emotional dialogue* – a form of dialogue in which participants are expected to share their emotions and to support others' sharing of their emotions; (2) *emotional inquiry* – a form of dialogue in which participants are encouraged to explore emotions and how they and others experience and express them. In this paper, we capitalize on the contextual similarities within which the two discussions unfold to compare the characteristics of these two types of discussions and their affordances for fostering dialogue oriented towards social and emotional learning.

Social-Emotional Learning in Classroom Discourse: Discursive Imperatives

The concept of SEL and its promotion, like other educational trends, emerged within a certain cultural and historical context and should be understood as part of a broader therapeutic turn in education (Cameron, 2000; Ecclestone, 2012; Shoshana, 2017). For present purposes, it is especially important to address (1) educational assumptions about how SEL discussions should be conducted and (2) cultural assumptions about emotions that affect school SEL discussions.

Educational Assumptions Regarding SEL Discussions

We identify in the SEL literature three main discursive imperatives:

'Don't bottle things up.' SEL guidance emphasizes that pupils should learn how to express their emotions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Jones et al., 2017; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010) and advocates sharing emotions as a desired practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2005; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010). Cameron (2000), however, critiques the imperative 'don't bottle things up,' noting that its goal is limited to venting bottled-up feelings and does not include reflecting on those feelings: 'to speak them so that they may subsequently be spoken *about'* (p. 157; see also Anwaruddin, 2016).

Inclusiveness. Inclusiveness relates to the strong emphasis SEL programs place on sharing emotions. Students are guided to share their emotions, and teachers are expected to encourage such sharing without restricting them or further directing them (Gillies, 2011). In their discussion of emotion pedagogies (a theoretical concept that includes SEL), Wilce and Fenigsen (2016) conclude that 'emotion pedagogies evince a need to recognize—and, often, fully accept—all emotions, including "bad" or "negative" ones such as anger or shame' (p. 84). The authors point out that the idea of emotional inclusiveness is historically recent, as many cultures have traditionally tended to direct people toward desired emotions while avoiding and even condemning the expression of others.

Hegemonic positivity. SEL programs tend to promote what Stearns (2017) calls 'hegemonic positivity,' based on 'an assumption that children should feel good in school and about school (p. 265). Hegemonic positivity is expressed in SEL by proclaiming the primacy of joy and by putting a strong emphasis on training pupils to regulate themselves, control their anger and rage, and stay calm. Gillies (2011) calls it a '"feel good" language... that deflects argument and disarms criticism' (p. 188). Similarly, Smith (2019) argues that the 'feel good' imperative sanitizes classroom discourse and distances the discussion from students' real lived experiences. As Dutro (2008) argues, 'if wounds are not welcome, children will correctly sense that what school wishes to hear is the banal, the safe, the bland, and they will leave what matters most muted beneath a sterile, clean bandage' (p. 18).

Hegemonic positivity is clearly in tension with inclusiveness and the call to accept all emotions. Gillies (2011) shows how, despite a declared emphasis on sharing and accepting all emotions, SEL activities are 'structured by unspoken boundaries,' thus limiting 'the feelings and thoughts pupils [are] permitted to voice.' Teachers in a classroom observed by Stearns (2017) explicitly told students that bad feelings 'should only last for a certain amount of time' (p. 277). Stearns asserts that the directive to focus on positive emotions made teachers overlook students' considerable interest in discussing 'bad,' difficult emotional states.

Cultural Assumptions Regarding SEL Discussions

SEL does not only expect and promote a certain emotional code; it also assumes a cultural world in which it wishes to operate, addressing and excluding social identities, discursive genres, and other cultural constructs. Following Stearns (2017), who identified a gap between the rare explicit mentions of race, class, and gender during SEL discussions and their 'ineffable presence' in them (p.152), in what follows, we discuss how emotional dialogues interact with central identity categories.

Gender. Numerous studies demonstrate that teachers' gender assumptions and expectations shape school life (e.g., Jones & Myhill, 2004; Myhill & Jones, 2006). In relation to SEL, Evans (2017) shows how perceptions of gender roles generate different expectations of boys' and girls' participation. Girls are invited to 'suspend affect, and to engage in the intellectual exercise of analysing and articulating emotions … In

contrast, boys [are] … permitted to passively participate, with their docile bodies serving as a signifier of success' (Evans, 2017, p. 198). Similarly, Wood and Brownhill (2018) show how teachers evaluate pupils' needs vis-a-vis gender, depicting boys, mainly those with anger problems, as having a crucial need for strong boundaries.

Race and class. Hoffman (2009) criticizes the common SEL demand that 'children in the elementary grades should be able to recognize and accurately label simple emotions', arguing that 'not all cultures interpret emotional experience in the same way, nor do they assign the same kinds of regulatory or expressive responses (such as talk) commonly shared by the White, American middle class' (p. 540). In Shoshana's (2017) ethnographies of two Israeli schools serving different socioeconomic communities, while students from low socioeconomic communities expressed anger based on their own life experiences of racism and discrimination, their teachers strived to avoid such political discourse and attempted to promote psychological discourse and hegemonic interpretations instead. Similarly, Gillies's (2011) ethnographic study exposes a multilayered gap between the everyday needs of underprivileged pupils and the values promoted by the influential Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) program. The students she studied often discussed difficult events, such as local teenage stabbings, in a 'seemingly emotionless manner' (2011, p. 200). From a SEL perspective, such a response is 'indicative of poor social skills and low emotional intelligence' (ibid). Yet Gillies suggests the students used this emotional code to cope with a reality they could not affect or escape, and it 'effectively worked to defuse difficult feelings while fostering supportive social bonds' (ibid). Gillies further shows how students diagnosed as having an 'anger problem', a problem teachers tend to associate with lower-class students (Wood, 2020; Stearns, 2017), were often personally invested in this diagnosis. Moreover, students effectively used anger to 'negotiate and re-negotiate relationships inside and outside school' mainly with respect to issues such as bullying and other kinds of violence (Gillies, 2011, p. 198). This tension illustrates how children from underprivileged backgrounds are expected to conform to and adopt an upper middle-class emotional code with little regard to how it fits their everyday lives (Figueredo, 2020).

In sum, scholars call on teachers to use discussions to promote SEL but prescribe different and often contradictory discursive imperatives. How are such discussions enacted in practice in classrooms in diverse cultural contexts? We addressed this question by analyzing different formats for discussing emotions in the classroom in light of SEL goals, expectations, and assumptions about students and their emotional codes.

Dialogic Pedagogy: A Grounded Approach

This paper, and the study from which it emerges, are based on an approach to dialogic pedagogy that is informed by educational theory and research in dialogic education (e.g., Burbules, 1993) and dialogic teaching (e.g., Alexander, 2020; Resnick et al., 2015) but that is grounded in and adapted to the actual conditions in which teachers and students interact (Lefstein & Snell, 2014). This approach recognizes that classroom discourse is often structured asymmetrically, such that the teacher's voice and the official voice of the curriculum dominate the discussion, affording limited space for independent student thinking or heterodox ideas. Making classroom discourse more dialogic means creating space for students to share their thinking, to engage critically with one another's and the teacher's ideas, and to construct together new meanings (Alexander, 2008).

That said, we are aware that this vision goes against the grain of traditional school structures and curricula, which teachers and students are not always capable of transforming. Moreover, dialogic imperatives such as opening space for students' ideas, affording multiple perspectives and voices, encouraging critique, and cultivating a safe and caring environment are in tension with one another, and

therefore no strategy or program can or should replace teachers' professional judgment and agency. Consequently, our approach is to share ideas about dialogic pedagogy with teachers and to facilitate them in adapting these ideas to their own goals and circumstances. Often, the result of this grounded approach is not readily recognized by purists as "dialogic," and indeed, the episodes analyzed below may seem out of place in this esteemed *Dialogic Pedagogy Journal*. We argue, in response, that the dialogic education field can learn more from trying to understand what teachers and students actually do with dialogic ideas in the imperfect worlds of existing classrooms than by judging them as insufficiently dialogic.

Research Context and Methods of Inquiry

This comparative case study is based on data collected as part of a design-based implementation research project, in collaboration with the Israeli Ministry of Education, designed to foster productive dialogue in primary language arts classrooms. The program goal is that participating teachers facilitate discussions that afford students opportunities to express their thoughts, build on others' ideas, and reason about their own and others' perspectives (Alexander, 2020; Barak & Lefstein, 2022).

Data collection

During the 2019-2020 school year, when the lessons analyzed in this study took place, the program included ten schools, most of which were located in underprivileged neighborhoods, including the school at the center of this paper, which we are calling Prospects Primary School. The first author conducted weekly observations at Prospects Primary School, documenting teacher team meetings and Hebrew language arts lessons in Miriam's and Osnat's classrooms[2]. The data were collected by direct systematic observation. The observer, a trained ethnographer, arrived at the school two times a week for 6 hours each time. All lessons were videotaped and then transcribed. Prolonged ethnography enabled personal relationships with students and teachers, which helped uncover the social dynamics within and outside the classrooms. Since classroom discourse was video-recorded, the ethnographic fieldwork focused on gathering data that the camera could not capture, such as general class atmosphere, hidden interactions as well as contextual information such as students' social relations and joint history.

Additionally, as part of the intervention program, a co-design team comprised of teachers and researchers met regularly to design the intervention and reflect on its enactment. Osnat and Miriam were both part of the co-design team. Classroom discussions were usually meant to build on selected short stories, touching on more general issues such as social identities, Israeli history, or, in the case of the lessons analyzed here, crying and emotions.

In summary, data collection for this study involved a combination of diverse sources, including classroom observations, ethnographic fieldwork, and team meetings. We also shared our analysis with the teachers in order to take their perspectives into account. This multi-faceted approach enabled triangulation, thereby strengthening the validity of both the data and its analysis.

Participants and setting

The two classes shared similar demographics: most of the 31-32 students in each class were Mizrahi Jews, several pupils recently emigrated from the former Soviet Union, each class contained one Arab student, and 4-5 students were identified as having special educational needs. Both classes had balanced distributions of boys and girls. Most students were 10-11 years old (in Miriam's class, one student was 12 years old). Most students came from lower-middle-class families and, according to the teachers,

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[2] All names are pseudonyms.

some experienced financial difficulties and domestic violence. The two classroom teachers, whom we are calling 'Miriam' and 'Osnat,' were both highly respected veterans.

Data and Methods of Inquiry

Following the logic of the extended case method (Burawoy, 1998; Mitchell, 1983), we focus on two cases that shed light on how SEL discourses expose and interact with diverse cultural codes and how this interaction produces different forms of emotional dialogues in classrooms. We chose our two case study lessons since, by focusing on the same story but adopting radically different approaches to teaching it, they bring into stark relief the pedagogical affordances and constraints of different ways of engaging in SEL discussions.

Our cases, taught in the two fifth grade classes, were dedicated to a preparatory discussion conducted prior to reading the short story 'The King Who Could Not Cry'. The story tells of a king whose kingdom is extremely prosperous and whose subjects are wonderfully happy. Yet one thing bothers the king: he cannot cry. The story follows the king's futile attempts to cry, helped by his advisers who try to make him cry mainly by showing him sad sights: a sunset, black clouds, dry thorns, colorless flowers, rude children, fish with eyes on their sides, a bird with a scary beak, a man with a gleaming bald head, and a lizard that has lost its tail. These attempts fail one after another. Finally, after many years, upon reaching old age, the king sees a young couple in love; this reminds him of his youth and evokes his tears.

We chose to focus our analysis on the lessons dedicated to 'The King Who Could Not Cry' as the classroom discussions revolved around crying and the emotional states related to crying, thus lending themselves particularly well to SEL topics and aims. Although SEL was not the main objective of the lessons (the goal was the promotion of dialogue about the story), the discussions focused on crying, and the students expressed their thoughts and habits regarding crying. In this way, the discussion, de facto, revolved around SEL contents by promoting students' self-awareness (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Dusenbury et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2017; The Aspen Institute, 2019) and, more specifically, their 'emotion knowledge and expression' (Jones et al., 2017, p. 18).

We analyze the data by applying principles and methods of linguistic ethnography (Rampton et al., 2015), studying actors' immediate actions, and asking how these interactions were embedded in wider social contexts (Copland & Creese, 2015). We repeatedly viewed the video-recorded lessons and associated transcripts and asked what was happening in them, what especially interested us, and why. We then slowly and closely examined the interactions. For each utterance, we asked: What is the speaker doing here and why? How does this utterance respond to the ones before it and lead to the next? What do the speakers' lexical, tonal, and grammatical choices reflect? What else could have happened here but did not, and why (Rampton, 2006)?

Finally, before teaching the story, the design team met to plan the lessons. In the analysis, we examined the relationship between teachers' expectations expressed during the team meeting vs. the actual emotional understandings verbalized in class. We used the design team meeting, especially the teachers' reasoning about emotion, to identify participating teachers' preferred emotional codes.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Chief Scientist of the Israeli Ministry of Education and our University Ethics Committee. Teachers and all video-recorded students (and their parents or guardians) gave informed consent to participate in the study. Pseudonyms are used to protect participants' privacy. We shared our analysis with the teachers in order to take their perspectives into account.

Findings

Design Team Meeting

Before we present our analysis of the classroom discussions, we analyze data from the design team meeting that took place before the lessons. These data are relevant to the subsequent analysis of the classroom discussions mainly since they capture teachers' expectations and ideas regarding pupils' emotional worlds.

Competing guiding questions to prompt discussion. The meeting opened as the facilitator, a teacher herself, introduced the question with which she proposed to open the preliminary classroom discussion: 'I have a wand here ... anyone I touch, with this wand of mine right now, which is like, in my hand, will never cry again … Who wants me to touch him with my wand?'[3] Two of the participating teachers suggested an alternative question as a prompt for discussion: 'What makes you cry?' arguing that this alternative question would link the discussion to students' lives, echoing a common SEL notion that emotions should be related to personal experiences. This suggestion was rejected decisively by the more dominant team members. Therefore, the question and the discussion it might have promoted were barely discussed during the team meeting. The prompt's detractors embraced the 'feel good' imperative (Smith, 2019), reasoning that the prompt would 'take the discussion to this place of personal tragedies [disasters]', and such a discussion would obscure an important lesson for the students: that crying can express a variety of feelings including 'good' feelings. Eventually, most of the teachers, including Osnat, used the magic wand question as their prompt. Other teachers, including Miriam, decided to use 'When did you last cry?' as their prompt for classroom discussion.

The teachers respond univocally to the wand question. The facilitator opened the team meeting by presenting the question. This was followed by ten consecutive speaking turns in which six of the seven participants enthusiastically said it is very important to cry: 'Alas for those who do not cry' - 'Right, both of sadness and joy'; 'Crying is liberating'; 'to take such a thing from a person is to punish him' - 'Right. Because you also take the happy moments'; 'Can I get the opposite wand? Is it possible to reverse it? Do you have such a wand?'

Note that their answers bridged hegemonic positivity and inclusiveness. They wanted to cry because crying is good. If emotional states that initially seem bad, such as crying, are ultimately deemed positive, we naturally need to accept and include them. The teachers' answers reflect the white, middle-class emotional code Hoffman (2009) identifies in SEL programs. They evidently identify with this code or at least assume that it is valued by the design team members. They also likely learn from this meeting that this code should be promoted in their classrooms.

The teachers surmise that children, boys, in particular, will respond differently. The facilitator explained the teachers' univocal response, saying it is 'because you are adults,' thereby implying children's reactions would be more diverse. This statement was affirmed by several participants. Moreover, the teachers surmised that boys would reject crying. Rachel thought boys would say '"no way," to come out as—' Tami finished Rachel's sentence with '—men,' thereby indicating agreement, and Sara added 'strong.' Their intuition is supported by the limited available data on crying in these age groups, which indicates that

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[3] The interactions examined in this research were conducted in Hebrew. The data presented in the article have been translated into English. However, in the translation process, we made an effort to preserve the original forms and language choices as much as possible. For instance, unlike English, Hebrew is a grammatically gendered language, so we have maintained the use of masculine forms in our English translation.

girls report crying at rates 2 to 4 times higher than boys (Madison et al., 2021). The teachers also expressed concern that this expected reaction could 'halt the discussion.'

Two Genres of Emotional Dialogue

We examined how two classroom discussions, prompted by the two different guiding questions, unfolded vis-à-vis teachers' anticipations and SEL goals, cultural assumptions, and contradictory imperatives. Two types of discussion relevant to SEL emerged in our analysis: (1) *inclusive emotional dialogue*, and (2) *emotional inquiry*.

Many SEL scholars argue that participants in an SEL discussion should 'talk about how an SEL theme relates to their own lives' (Jones et al., 2017, p. 19; see Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Department for Education and Skills, 2005; Jones et al., 2017; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010). In this view, all answers are accepted, and participants are encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings. Following Wilce and Fenigsen (2016), we call this type of discussion '*inclusive emotional dialogue.*' In the classroom, the teacher's main role is to ensure the students are being heard and are respectful to others, and to approve students' contributions by responding supportively and empathetically.

We called the second type of discussion '*emotional inquiry.*' The term 'inquiry' is drawn from Walton's (1998) classification and represents a type of dialogue in which 'a group of people get together to collect and organize all the relevant evidence on some particular proposition, both for and against. Then they assemble and organize this evidence … so that each conclusion can be definitely proved' (Walton, 1998, p. 69). This type of discussion is especially compatible with how scholars of dialogic pedagogy envisage classroom discussions (e.g., Asterhan et al., 2020; Reznitskaya & Wilkinson, 2019). During inquiry, teachers are expected to use open-ended questions, afford opportunities for students to voice their ideas, probe students' answers, and encourage them to draw connections between thoughts and ideas (Asterhan et al., 2020; Barak & Lefstein, 2022). While emotional processes during dialogic pedagogy are increasingly attracting scholarly attention (e.g., Asterhan, 2013; Näykki et al., 2021), emotional learning through dialogue has rarely been investigated directly. The current study addresses this gap.

Each form of dialogue sheds light on different aspects of the challenges facing classroom discussion to promote SEL. *Inclusive emotional dialogue* is based on the imperatives to 'accept all emotions' and not to 'bottle things up'. At the same time, however, this practice can challenge 'hegemonic positivity', the expectation that children should feel good in school and about school and express those positive feelings. *Emotional inquiry* calls on students to theorize about crying. Allowing children to theorize emotions through their own experiences and ideas entails the risk that their theories may conflict with the SEL discursive imperatives of 'inclusiveness' and 'hegemonic positivity'. Both types of discussions ask students to share personal emotional stories or to theorize emotions and their expressions. Therefore, their analysis may expose gaps between SEL-preferred emotional codes and how students from diverse backgrounds experience, express, and understand their own and others' emotions. Furthermore, both discussion formats are driven by dialogic principles, which include creating opportunities for students to express their ideas, incorporating multiple perspectives and voices, encouraging critical thinking, and fostering a safe and supportive environment. However, as we demonstrate in the data analysis, the realization of each of these dialogic ideals varies between the two discussion formats, resulting in distinct pedagogical affordances and constraints.

Miriam's Case: Inclusive Emotional Dialogue

Miriam conducted the classroom pre-reading discussion as an inclusive emotional dialogue. She opened the discussion by asking the class: 'OK, is there someone who is willing to share when he cried last? And why?' She thus opened a round-robin discussion in which students shared their personal experiences of crying in turn. Each turn was followed either by clarification questions or empathetic approval. This discursive genre encouraged personal exposure, something less common in other group conversation genres.

The 'When did you last cry?' question aroused the class. General excitement was expressed by indistinct chatter around the classroom. The first four students shared short anecdotes (customary among Israeli pupils (Netz & Segal, 2021)), and Miriam replied cheerfully, playfully bantering with them. She signaled to her students that their contributions were welcome. At this point, students were continuously involved in side discussions, whose topics related to but diverted from the main classroom discussion. For example, they enthusiastically shared stories of a time when they got hurt.

Letting go and being moved. Yonatan, a fairly tough and popular boy, was the fifth to speak. 'It's a bit embarrassing', he said. At the same time, a girl said, 'Boys cry because when they lose in something'. A boy commented, 'I've never seen a boy cry'. Yonatan told Miriam that he cried on his birthday when he heard that his friend's mother had a baby. The other students' focus was elsewhere, however, as boys told stories about how they were hurt by being kicked or tackled.

Noa, the sixth student to take the floor, said she cried yesterday just to let things out. Here, for the first time, Miriam built on a student's talk to express a general argument:

> You say that you had something, that was kept inside, very, very much, and you did not let it out. Not by talking or by crying, and it just came out. Because it was night. I can understand what she's saying. At night, it's quieter around us and we slowly, slowly gather into ourselves towards – towards the night and sleep and dreams, and then many thoughts well up within us.

At this point, Miriam went to Yonatan: 'Wait a minute, I want to go back to what I heard Yonatan say earlier. You [addressing the class] were at Yonatan's birthday party, right? And Zohar was there, too, right? And then they told Zohar his mother had given birth? So why did this make you cry?' 'It's moving,' Yonatan replied.

In these two interventions, while abiding with the inclusive genre norms of sharing and approving, Miriam accentuated ideas she wished to promote, that is, ideas that aligned with the emotional code she wanted the pupils to learn was desirable. The conversation with Yonatan also demonstrated that while the conception that boys don't cry was present in the discussion and was even being expressed directly, some boys, including tough and popular boys, talked about crying openly, even in the traditionally "feminine" context of a friend's significant life event. This is an example of how a school environment, which is predominantly female, may at times promote looser gender role distinctions (Keddie & Mills, 2009). It also illustrates dialogic affordances as well as constraints. On the one hand, the classroom environment appears to be sufficiently safe and supportive, allowing students to express their voices and perspectives. On the other hand, the teacher tends to emphasize ideas that align with her own preconceived notions, which occasionally results in underdeveloped exploration of ideas that do not align with the teacher's perspectives. This pattern becomes even more pronounced in the subsequent interaction in Miriam's class.

Domestic violence and defensive teaching. Liron continuously asked for the floor for seven minutes, starting as soon as Miriam posed the 'when did you last cry' question. When Miriam finally gave him the floor, the following exchange took place:

Excerpt 1

1	Miriam	Yes, Liron.
2	Liron	>I cried this morning.<
3	Miriam	Why?
4	Liron	I get up in the morning, it's my birthday and everything-
5	Miriam	Happy birthday, yes.
6	Liron	Then, when I came out, my mother got upset with my brother because he kept asking her for money.
7	Student	Exactly like me.
8	Liron	Then my mother drove anxiously to work, and then I said to him ah (.) 'Dean why are you annoying her', then h:::e grabbed me, and choked me ((Rasoul: gasping loudly)) and told me, 'You bug me again I'll cut you with a knife.' ((laughter, indistinct chatter)) And then he told me, and then I told him, 'leave me alone already' and (.) that's it.

Liron shared a story exposing violent familial relationships. Perhaps this is what the design team teachers referred to when they feared students would share personal tragedies. As Liron talked about the violence directed toward him, many of the students reacted, by talking to others around them but not to Liron, the teacher, or the entire class. The content Liron shared, in our eyes, was troubling. In class, Rasoul was the only participant who explicitly signalled unease, gasping loudly to mark his bewilderment (in line 8, above, after Liron said 'choked me'). Rasoul then looked around the classroom for clues on how to act. Seeing no other student overtly express a similar reaction, he quickly went back to behaving 'regularly'. At this point, Miriam stepped in and, as if she were SEL-trained, probed Liron's emotional state:

Excerpt 2

9	Miriam	So, was it out of anger or out of?
…	…	…
12	Miriam	So basically-
13	Student	I wouldn't back down. ((a tune pupils sing to fuel disputes and fights))
14	Student	Out of anger.
15	Miriam	Hush ((makes a silence gesture with her hand. The class keeps being noisy)). So basically, what we saw here, really, thank you very much for sharing, first of all, but what we saw here is actually that (1) crying can come from many reasons, it can be a matter of physical pain.
16	Yali	Miriam, I cry every day.
17	Miriam	We got hit, it could be from excitement, enthusiasm, joy, frustration, nerves.

18	Yali	From anxiety, out of anger.
19	Miriam	Nerves, anger, there really are lots and lots,
20	Lucy	Or you can cry with joy.
21	Miriam	wide range of emotions, a wide range of emotions following which we can, ah, a person can ah, come to cry.

In our view, the most distinct aspect of Miriam's response was that she distanced the discussion from domestic violence, an obviously central element of Liron's story. She did this using two discursive moves. First, she focused on his abstract emotional state. This echoes one of the key principles of SEL and emotional knowledge: focusing on naming emotions and reflecting on them. By so doing, Miriam turned Liron's story into a story about his internal emotions as opposed to the external concrete events to which he was exposed. As Smith (2019) argues, 'the teachers end up addressing the students' imagined, normative, and expected problems through discussions of abstract universals, not through the discourse of lived reality" (p. A133). This again shows how dialogue develops in relation to its immediate context and setting, i.e., school classroom, and also how actors hold differential power to shape dialogue and how it unfolds. Miriam's choice to divert the discussion away from violence was probably affected by the combination of violence being a complicated and threatening issue and her pastoral responsibilities toward the children in her care. This choice, in turn, shaped how the dialogue continued to unfold and the students' understanding of what they should and should not discuss in class.

When turning to his emotional state, Miriam suggested Liron was angry, and anger made him cry (line 9), not more passive emotional states, such as sadness, fear, anxiety, distress, or sorrow, which would reflect an innate helplessness. Evans (2017) and Wood and Brownhill (2018) show how the construction of gender identities shapes SEL implementation. Miriam's interpretation of Liron's emotional state as 'anger' might have been affected by a gender-based perception of emotions and their expression, which sees anger as an active masculine emotional response to getting hurt (although we cannot know whether Miriam would have treated a female student differently).

Miriam built on her focus on Liron's emotional state to conclude the entire discussion by pointing to the range of emotions that may bring people to cry, one of the main goals the design team set for the preliminary discussion. Turning a story about domestic violence into a discussion on the varied emotions that may evoke crying may be thought of as a form of defensive teaching (McNeil, 1982). In this case, it was not intended to create as little student resistance as possible (McNeil, 1982), but was aimed to defend the teacher, as well as the students, from public exposure of and discussion about students' hardships.

The defensive reshaping of Liron's story was also evident in how Miriam thanked Liron. Other than Liron, Miriam explicitly thanked only the first speaker. To Liron, she said, 'Really, thank you very much for sharing' (line 15). We see this as a discursive substitute for addressing the content of Liron's story as if thanking him in this way counter-balanced the intensity of his words. An unintended consequence of this defensive move was that Miriam either normalized Liron's story or signaled to her students that such stories do not belong in classroom discussions.

The issue here is not Miriam: she is a highly dedicated, experienced, and even brilliant teacher. Similar dynamics have been identified in the sparse ethnographic literature on SEL in other classroom discussions. Coe and Nastasi (2006) documented a similar interaction during a classroom discussion that was part of an SEL intervention. In the discussion, a student told her classmates that her grandmother 'sometimes used a stick or cable wire' to beat her. The teacher replied by asking her if the situation was stressful and if she was upset. Miriam was not trained for SEL, but she used the same 'name-your-

emotional-state' practice and by doing so, like the teachers documented by Coe and Nastasi, overlooked and perhaps even normalized a story about domestic violence (see also Gillies, 2011; Stearns, 2017). To understand why this happens, we need to examine the structural conditions of emotional classroom discussions; we return to this issue in the Discussion.

Moreover, although Miriam had not received specific training in SEL, she was actively undergoing training to facilitate dialogic classroom discourse. The data gathered from Miriam's class indicate that while her implementation of dialogic pedagogy successfully encouraged students to share personal life experiences Netz & Segal, 2021), the potential for these stories to evolve to include more productive dialogic elements was not fully realized.

In conclusion, Miriam facilitated *inclusive emotional dialogue* while enacting diverse teaching roles. She generalized and thematized some thoughts and ideas. She also used defensive teaching to avoid ideas and content she deemed problematic or irrelevant. Between these two stances, there were more 'neutral' responses, such as supportively saying, 'thank you', or joking with the sharing students (e.g., by saying, 'ouch'). These choices reflected and communicated to students a certain emotional code that Miriam appreciated, taught, and encouraged: crying is a way to let things out (don't bottle them up); crying expresses diverse emotional states, including good ones, such as enthusiasm and joy; boys cry, and it is good that they cry, but they usually cry because they have been hurt, physically or emotionally – it is an expression of anger rather than anxiety or fear.

Osnat's Case: Emotional Inquiry

Osnat prompted the preliminary classroom discussion using the question suggested in the design team meeting: 'Imagine that I have a magic wand and anyone I touch will never cry again. Who wants me to touch him?'

Students skillfully express the teacher's emotional code. The question yielded eight responses, with students saying they did not want to stop crying. The students' answers thus aligned with the design team teachers' answers when they enthusiastically said in the preliminary team meeting that they would never give up crying. As mentioned above, facing the design team's consensus, the facilitator in the team meeting said, 'It's because you are adults', implying that children would respond differently. Furthermore, the teachers assumed boys would deny that they ever cried because they would want to seem masculine, and this denial might hinder inquiry.

Osnat's class showed that, at least in this case, the design team members' expectations were erroneous. The students, including the boys, reacted in the same way as the adult teachers: they all said they would not want to give up crying. Some students supported this position using the same logic employed by the teachers in the design team meeting. The first student who answered the question explained that we can cry because of joy or happiness. While she spoke, several students offered additional examples of positive experiences that generated crying. One said 'laughter', which the speaking student embraced and repeated, and at least two others said 'emotions'. 'Crying out of emotions' is vague and abstract. One possible interpretation for using such a formulation is that it enabled the students to avoid a more meaningful discussion, settling for something vague enough to meet the teacher's expectations.

Crying as a means of communication. Students also offered original arguments that did not come up in the teachers' team meeting. They repeatedly addressed crying as a means of communication. The first speaker who promoted this line of thought said that if she did not cry, others would not understand how she felt. A boy who spoke after her said that when he cries, 'everyone rushes to me and asks me what happened', thus attributing a specific message to crying: it calls for and generates positive attention. This was supported

by other students. The next student (male) to speak said, 'If someone does something to you then… crying says, like, leave me alone. I did not do anything to you, and… uff, crying saves us sometimes'. He emphasized a different message: crying is a socially legitimate way to stop a fight or a quarrel. Once again, other students expressed support.

Although the students did not respond to one another directly, their answers built on each other's content, thereby fulfilling the dialogic principle of cumulation (Alexander, 2008; Alexander, 2020). Furthermore, they jointly portrayed possible communicative meanings crying may carry: it may generate caring attention, and it may signal to others that aggression has reached its limit and should be stopped. These answers indicate that children use crying in unique ways (Junehui 2010). Reflecting on students' emotional tools is a central aspect of SEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Jones et al., 2017), and the current case study suggests that emotional inquiry is an especially productive way to promote such reflection.

A challenging line of thought. After eight turns of students indicating they would not want to stop crying, Yotam, a student who often expressed provocative positions during classroom discussions, offered a heterodox response:

Excerpt 3

26	Yotam	I actually ((*davka*)) do want because-
27	Osnat	To touch you?
28	Yotam	Yes. Because,
29	Osnat	Okay, why?
30	Yotam	I am more sensitive.
31	Osnat	More what?
32	Yotam	Sensitive.
33	Student	He is sensitive.
34	Osnat	You are sensiti:::ve. Wait a minute, try, try explaining to me.
35	Yotam	Like, when, when others insult me, I like,
36	Student	I have never seen you cry.
37	Osnat	Wait a minute, but I cannot hear Yotam.
38	Yotam	Because let's say uh I'm just saying, let's say that when others insult me so hmmm (.) I kind of take it to heart, I think that maybe it is true.
39	Osnat	And then?
40	Yotam	And then I cry.
41	Student	Oh:::
42	Osnat	Okay (1) and you would not like to cry anymore?
43	Student	But if he won't cry,
44	Yotam	Let's say that-

45	Osnat	Wait a minute, wait a minute, one second, no, no, I cannot hear Yotam.
46	Yotam	And let's say, like Hana and (.) Ariel and May have said. I never, like, cried out of excitement or something like that like they have.
47	Osnat	Oh so you don't cry out of excitement or out of joy ((Yotam shrugs his shoulders)), only out of pain ((Yotam nods)) or insult ((nods again))? Wow, that is really interesting what you say.

Yotam's answer, as we understand it, touches on a fundamental question about the relationship between emotions and expression. Yotam cries when two things happen: others insult him, and he takes it to heart and believes what they say about him to be true. Although he mentioned crying after believing what others say about him to be true, his answer may suggest that for him, crying is a transformative act, part of an internalization process. This may entail that not crying indicates he did not internalize offending statements others directed at him, and he was able to defend himself.

This echoes Gillies' (2011) discussion on emotions vis-à-vis social class (discussed previously), and the need of some students from lower socioeconomic class backgrounds to suppress rather than express their emotions, as their structural position grants them limited power to affect their realities. Gillies asserts that they use this 'suppressive' talk to defuse difficult feelings. Yotam said his self-esteem was sometimes attacked when he was insulted, and the strategy he developed was trying not to cry. This was perhaps why one of the students indicated that he had never seen him cry (line 36).

Yotam first said he wanted Osnat to touch him with her magic wand. But by using the word *davka* (line 26), he indicated that his choice contradicted something - the atmosphere in the classroom or the generally expected answer (for an account of the 'inherent counter-expectation' nature of Hebrew *davka*, see Ariel & Katriel, 1977). Yotam also described himself as never crying 'from excitement or anything like that,' referring to what previous speakers had said and thus performing, for the second time, a rare act in classroom discussions, but one which aligns with dialogic principles: expressing a position which opposed a teacher-approved answer. Osnat encouraged Yotam's voice, which differed from previous speakers' voices and also from the dominant voices in the teachers' meeting. This contributed to his emotional knowledge and to that of other students, as it brought to the discussion a different understanding of crying: crying is not positive and should, therefore, be avoided. It is plausible that Osnat's focus on dialogic pedagogy and her effort to promote its principles in classroom discussions contributed not only to Yotam's expression of a unique, heterodox understanding of crying but also to Osnat's willingness to embrace unexpected responses that diverged from her own position.

Controversy over the social meaning of crying. Iris, a student who tended to adopt Yotam's ideas and follow him when he spoke in class, particularly when he challenged Osnat, raised her hand as Yotam's turn ended. After getting the floor, she said: 'I do want you (Osnat) to touch me (.) because when you cry, I think it's not for good reasons, for example, for example, if you are shouted at, you cry, then it is something that also hurts you (.) and I do not want to be hurt.'

Excerpt 4

59	Osnat	So, does this mean that if you would stop crying then you would not get hurt?
60	Iris	Yes.
61	Osnat	You think it goes together.
62	Iris	Yes, and I also-

63	Osnat	So you are saying, Iris is saying 'Osnat, I do want you to touch me because, usually, when I cry, it comes, usually, with things that are not always positive'. Right? Ok? And she thinks that if she would stop crying that the negative things would go away.
64	Iris	For example, you cry out of things, like, when people come and yell at you, or, and, and threaten you, so you are-
65	Osnat	But we heard here something slightly different, that sometimes I cry also, that there are different types of crying. It is something we should think about.

Iris tried to follow Yotam's logic (64), but she left out the more complicated part of his argument, the focus on the internalization process. This resulted in what Osnat might have heard as a logically inconsistent answer. Perhaps this is why Iris was the only student Osnat did not respond to supportively: 13 out of 14 speakers, including Yotam, received approving comments, and each short dialogue was closed by Osnat saying 'very interesting.' Osnat responded differently to Iris. She transformed the generic second person singular 'when *you* cry' (line 58) into the first person singular 'when *I* cry' (line 63), thus denoting a personal feature. Iris insisted on the generic form and meaning (line 64), describing harsh situations in which *you* cry. Osnat explicitly opposed her, saying, 'But we heard here something slightly different' (line 65), thereby closing Iris's turn.

Anat, the fourteenth speaker, a student Iris often mocked during classroom discussions, asked to respond to Iris. This was the only instance when a student critically addressed a previous speaker during this classroom discussion:

Excerpt 5

80	Anat	Can I address what Iris said?
81	Osnat	Yes.
82	Anat	So, she said that if she stopped crying, others would stop hurting her, but if she stopped crying, they would hurt her more because they would think she did not care.
83	Rona	Most of the time it is the other way around.
84	Anat	She said-
85	Iris	Like, I will not get hurt.
86	Anat	In my opinion, if I stopped crying, people would hurt me and think that I do not care that they say things about me so they-
87	Osnat	So with the help of crying what does she do?
88	Anat	She's like, telling people 'stop hurting-
89	Student	Like, she drags attention ((goreret tsumi)).
90	Osnat	Attention maybe, maybe attention ((tsumat lev)), maybe this is how she manages to better express her emotions, in this way, with the help of crying.

Anat built on an understanding of crying that was already established in the discussion – a signal to others to stop hurting you – to refute Iris's argument. However, we want to focus on lines 83 and 89. Rona turned to Anat and said, 'It is usually the other way around' (line 83), meaning that usually if you cry when others hurt you, they do not leave you alone but bother you more. In a different classroom discussion in the same school year, Rona told the class that in her past she was bullied and ostracized, and Iris responded in a dismissive and disparaging manner. Here, Rona expressed a take on crying that was

possibly drawn from her experience of being bullied – if you cry, they harass you even more. This interpretation, like Yotam's, did not appear in the teachers' preliminary discussion, but it resonates with ethnographic data on students' perceptions of and reactions to bullied students who cry (Hakim, 2021; Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003).

Anat continued her answer, treating crying as an action that signals to others to stop hurting you, but when Osnat asked her, 'So with the help of crying what does she do?', one of the male students said, 'She drags *tsumi*' (line 89), a slang phrase that indicates something along the lines of pitifully asking for socially undeserved attention. Although he did not address Rona directly, his train of thought continued hers, thus establishing something similar to a counter script (Gutierrez et al., 1995), as they together produced a coherent line of answers that were overlooked or even blocked by the teacher. Osnat transformed *tsumi*, a derogatory phrase, into 'asking for *tsumat lev*,' a neutral phrase (sharing the same root) meaning 'asking for attention.'

The case analysis shows how emotional inquiry produces authentic (Schaffalitzky, 2022) valuable emotional knowledge. First, the students thought of crying as a means of communication, even a social request, but each student attributed a slightly different meaning to this request: making others react to how I feel, making everyone rush to me and ask me what happened, or signaling to others to leave me alone as 'crying saves us sometimes.' Second, students highlighted the relationship between expressing emotions and feeling them when they said they preferred not to cry so as not to get hurt. Third, the inquiry produced an opportunity to further discuss crying as communication while distinguishing legitimate and illegitimate social requests embedded in crying. These answers demonstrate that the students in Osnat's class see crying primarily as a means of interaction rather than as an expression of inner emotional states. As such, the children's uses of crying differ from those of adults, who are expected not to cry in public arenas.

Furthermore, the case from Osnat's class illustrates discourse that aligns more closely with dialogic principles. As demonstrated, the discussion format referred to as "emotional inquiry" fulfilled several dialogic principles (Alexander, 2008), including 'cumulation' (teachers and students building upon their own and each other's ideas), 'reciprocity' (teachers and students actively listening, sharing ideas, and considering alternative viewpoints), and 'support' (students feeling comfortable to express their ideas without fear of being embarrassed by "wrong" answers). In addition, the discussion that ensued was arguably more 'purposeful' (i.e., leading to specific learning outcomes) than merely sharing anecdotes that engender very limited further reflection.

Discussion

Before discussing our findings, we remind readers that the teachers' focus was on dialogue and literacy skills, and SEL was not an explicit part of their agenda or their training. However, in both cases, students' and teachers' emotional knowledge was voiced and explored, and we identified opportunities, along with challenges, to contribute to students' SEL. In the subsequent discussion, we explore the varying degrees and manifestations of implementing dialogic principles and how they contribute to the facilitation of social and emotional learning.

Genres of Classroom Discussions about Social and Emotional Issues

Within SEL literature, discussion is seen as a favorable instructional method. However, we found the term 'discussion' to be somewhat ambiguous in the SEL literature. In our data set, we identified two very different types of discussion, each with distinct goals, norms, affordances, constraints, and challenges.

In *inclusive emotional dialogue,* students were encouraged to narrate personal, sometimes difficult stories, thereby enabling students' sharing of emotions as experienced in their everyday lives. The act of sharing personal experiences potentially aligns with principles of dialogic pedagogy, such as 'reciprocity' and 'support'. However, as indicated by Liron's story of how his brother choked him on his birthday, this genre can put teachers and students in challenging positions. Sharing personal stories entails exposing fears and hardships in the class plenum, an environment in which it is hard to ensure that students receive an appropriate response. Yet if the teacher glosses over these issues, she implicitly conveys that it is either not important or not suitable for discussion, should be kept secret, are not the school's business, and so on (Dutro, 2008). Moreover, since the objective of this genre is for each student to share their own experiences, without reference to other students' experiences, the opportunities for fulfilling the dialogic principle of 'cumulation,' which involves actively engaging with and collectively constructing shared meanings, are relatively restricted. As such, this genre can expose participants to multiple voices and perspectives but is limited in its capacity to bring those voices into dialogue.

Emotional inquiry promoted the exploration of children's understandings and expressions of emotions. It generated informative discussions about emotional states related to crying and its diverse social meanings and may thus be considered especially compatible not only with principles of dialogic pedagogy but also with SEL goals. However, norms of hegemonic positivity can limit or silence the expression of emotions that deviate from official school expectations, thus sanitizing the discussion and distancing it from students' lived experiences (Smith, 2019).

Faced with these challenges, the teachers we observed reacted in various ways. One reaction was to casually acknowledge the content of students' experiences by thanking them for sharing, indicating that what they shared was important, and modeling 'appreciating others' (Morcom, 2015). In other instances, teachers playfully bantered with students, thereby suggesting that sharing was in and of itself the end goal of the discussion. However, when sharing does not lead to reflection, the dialogic potential is not realized and SEL's effectiveness is questionable (Cameron, 2000; Nils & Rimé, 2012). A second reaction was to probe students' responses, exploring together what made them cry or why they wished to continue or cease to cry. A third reaction was to emphasize, generalize or otherwise endorse certain answers. Finally, in some cases, the teachers chose not to discuss sensitive issues such as domestic or school violence.

To be clear: our analysis should not be taken as implying that emotional inquiry is the best practice for discussing emotions. Rather, the findings show that diverse discussion approaches exist and that we can gain valuable insights by examining how different discussion formats influence how students and teachers engage in conversations about emotions.

SEL Cultural Assumptions Reflected in the Classroom Discussions

We found SEL imperatives regarding emotions that some authors critically identify as a white, middle class cultural *code*, (Hoffman, 2009), at times conflicted with students' cultural codes. For example, the SEL literature emphasizes inclusiveness (Wilce & Fenigsen, 2016). From this perspective, crying is encouraged. For Yotam, however, crying entailed internalizing bad things others had said about him, which gave him a solid reason to refrain from crying (see also Gillies' [2011] discussion of anger). Yotam was strong enough to insist on his perspective, and the classroom culture allowed him to take a critical stance on the teacher's position. In other instances, students may learn that their emotional code is inadequate, even when it serves important functions in their lives.

Our findings also indicated that *gender-based assumptions* can interact with classroom emotional dialogues in multiple ways. In the design team meeting, the teachers argued that the boys would deny crying so as to appear manly. The conception that 'boys don't cry' was present in the classroom discussions

and was even expressed directly. However, many boys actually reported having cried, and some even reported crying in stereotypically 'feminine' contexts, such as the birth of good friend's baby brother. The findings thus demonstrate that while teachers may assume a stereotypical relationship between gender and students' talk about their emotions, the dialogic SEL discussions produce diverse manifestations of the relationship between gender, age, and the way emotions are expressed and discussed. Since dialogue encourages students to voice their views it can helpfully expose gaps between teachers' assumptions and students' perspectives.

We found the teachers were guided by *hegemonic positivity* (Stearns, 2017; Stearns, 2018), in that they avoided talk about negative experiences and emotions and attempted to (re)interpret these as positive or neutral events or feelings. This phenomenon was manifested in several ways. First, in the team meeting, the teachers unanimously agreed that they should refrain from discussing 'personal tragedies' in class. Second, a teacher's response to a student's story about domestic violence, while aligned with the SEL agenda of focusing on students' emotional responses, did not touch on some disturbing aspects of his story - his brother fighting with his mother over money and then choking the student for interfering. Third, in an instance of teacher-pupil miscommunication (McDermott & Gospodinoff, 1979), a student's description of crying as 'asking for *tsumi*,' a slang phrase that indicates pitifully asking for 'socially undeserved attention,' was reframed by the teacher as 'asking for *tsumat lev*,' a neutral phrase meaning 'asking for attention.'

The contradiction between hegemonic positivity and inclusiveness was reconciled by the general insistence that crying is essentially good. Teachers and students repeatedly addressed crying as desired using two main arguments: we also cry because of joy, and by crying, we 'let things out.' This may indicate a broader trend to affirm all emotions; if emotional states, which initially seem bad, are ultimately deemed positive, then, naturally, we need to accept and include them.

When hegemonic positivity and inclusiveness were disregarded, the teacher took a negative position on a student's stance (Osnat and Anat). This generated a classroom discussion in which students jointly inquired into the social meanings of crying. This finding suggests SEL could benefit from taking into consideration the dialogic potential of encouraging conflicting voices when discussing emotions in the classroom (Lefstein & Snell, 2014; Segal & Lefstein, 2016).

Supporting Teachers to Discuss Emotions

Miriam and Osnat are both highly dedicated and experienced teachers who care deeply about their pupils. Why didn't Miriam develop the discussion on Liron's story of domestic violence (much like the teachers documented by previous ethnographers, such as Coe and Nastasi, 2006; Gillies, 2011; Stearns 2017)? Why did Osnat miscommunicate with her students (McDermott & Gospodinoff, 1979) and transform *tsumi* into *tsumat-lev*? Why didn't Miriam develop a cumulative discussion (Alexander, 2020) about crying based on Yali's idea that he too cried out of anger (Excerpt 2 lines 16, 18), perhaps referring to similar situations occurring in his house?

Dialogic classroom discourse, particularly discussions in which pupils express original and unexpected ideas, complicates the conventional teaching genre. Dialogues increase uncertainty and reduce teachers' control of discourse, as students' thoughts and ideas are expressed in them, not just the teachers' (Cohen, 2011). In emotional dialogue, which aims to discuss students' emotional codes, it is not only students' thoughts and ideas but also the content itself that is determined by students. In these discussions, almost any topic can emerge. The study shows that emotional dialogue requires teachers to facilitate extremely challenging discussions while encouraging students to share, supporting them when they share difficult stories, and defending them from exposure to criticism, threats to their status, and other

social implications. To exploit the full potential of dialogic discussions, teachers also need to identify when students express emotional codes that differ from the teacher's and to encourage these expressions.

Since each combination of teacher-class-story will likely yield different learning opportunities and unique challenges, supporting teachers to facilitate dialogic discussions requires that they develop their judgment by reflecting on their practice, their expectations, and their concerns. Supporting teachers' judgment involves discussion of teachers' ideas and concerns – including ideas that, to colleagues and/or researchers, may seem like sub-optimal practice – in an open and non-judgmental discursive space. For example, in this study, some of the teachers in the design team had anticipated that students might share stories about personal tragedies. Other members of the design team rejected such a discussion as irrelevant and unproductive. However, by rejecting these teachers' ideas outright, the team missed out on the opportunity to consider and prepare for precisely the sort of challenging interactions that Miriam eventually encountered.

Overall, the findings indicate that promoting SEL through classroom discussions has many merits and may induce fascinating discussions to which students' knowledge and their everyday experiences are inherently relevant. However, the study also sheds light on some of the challenges and even risks of conducting whole classroom discussions on emotions and students' emotional experiences while portraying a pathway to cope with these challenges.

Dialogic principles and social-emotional learning

In the context of social and emotional learning, classroom discussions can take various forms. In the current study, we have identified two distinct formats for addressing emotions in classroom discourse: *inclusive emotional dialogue* and *dialogic inquiry*. At first glance, *inclusive emotional dialogue* may seem to offer significant potential for dialogue, particularly within the context of social-emotional learning, as it fosters the sharing of personal experiences—an aspect often lacking in classroom discussions. However, our study findings indicate that while *inclusive emotional dialogue* does promote sharing, it does not develop other crucial dialogic principles, such as 'cumulation' and 'purposefulness,' as teachers prioritize a 'feel good' imperative and avoid addressing challenging topics. Conversely, *dialogic inquiry*, while not explicitly seeking to elicit personal experiences, frequently becomes intertwined with students' lived experiences. Moreover, this form of discussion aligns more closely with dialogic principles such as 'cumulation' and 'purposefulness,' making it potentially more effective in promoting social and emotional learning within the classroom setting.

Appendix A: Transcription conventions

Symbol	Meaning
!	exclamatory intonation
>increased<	speech is delivered at a faster pace than surrounding talk
(1)	pause, timed (duration in seconds)
(.)	brief pause (less than 1 second)
wor–	truncated/cut-off word
((words))	analyst comment or Hebrew transliteration in Italics
:	elongated speech

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