

Teacher Strategies for Social-Emotional Development in Early Childhood at Nathawee Municipal School, Thailand

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history: Received: July 25, 2025 Accepted: October 10, 2025 Available online on: October 23, 2025 Keywords: <i>Teacher Strategies, Social- Emotional, Early Childhood, Contextual Learning, Local Culture</i> Copyright ©2025 by Authors. Published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang	This study aims to describe teacher strategies in implementing learning that supports the social-emotional development of early childhood at Nathawee Municipal School, Thailand. The study used a qualitative descriptive method with data collection techniques including observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that teachers applied strategies rooted in local culture and consistent daily routines, such as Thai-style greetings, flag ceremonies, morning milk queues, and independence routines like brushing teeth, bathing, and bed-making. Additional strategies include storytelling with Thai folktales, emotional discussions, and collaborative group work. These approaches proved effective in fostering empathy, independence, and emotional regulation in young children.

Introduction

Social-emotional development is a foundational aspect of early

childhood education. It plays a significant role in shaping children's character, ability to interact with others, and readiness for lifelong learning (Hosokawa et al., 2024; Suprijanto et al., 2022). Children with stable emotional regulation are more likely to understand social cues, express empathy, and build positive relationships. Conversely, those lacking such development often face difficulties in managing emotions and social integration (Belfi & Borghans, 2025).

In the context of early education, Thailand has emerged as a model for integrating cultural values into daily learning. Previous studies in Indonesia have demonstrated the importance of using local cultural icons in early education to foster identity, character, and emotional development (Ubaidillah et al., 2025). Nathawee Municipal School, located in southern Thailand, implements strategies that prioritize respectful behavior, independence, and emotional awareness. The school encourages children to participate in structured routines such as traditional greetings, flag ceremonies, and collaborative play. These activities are not merely procedural but are intended to foster the development of social-emotional competencies (Durongkaveroj, 2023).

In addition to instilling discipline and cooperation, Thai teachers also incorporate storytelling, emotional discussions, and role-playing activities to help children understand emotions and build interpersonal skills. Similar to the use of cultural and routine-based strategies in Thailand, reading corner programs implemented in Indonesia have also proven effective in enhancing children's literacy and social engagement

(Khamsuk & Whanchit, 2021; Syahputri & Ritonga, 2025).

Recent studies further strengthen the importance of social-emotional learning in early education. Speidel et al. (2023) found that training programs for caregivers significantly improved emotional awareness and social interaction among young children. Kongthong and Suppakitjumnong (2025) demonstrated that multimedia-based storytelling effectively enhanced emotional intelligence in Thai preschoolers. In a similar context, Iemamnuay (2019) revealed that embedding cultural and historical perspectives within Thailand's early childhood curriculum nurtures creativity and empathy. Moreover, Rohman (2024) emphasized that integrating local cultural values into early education strengthens children's social responsibility and character formation. Complementing these findings, Wongjanta et al., (2024) identified that schools in on of the Thailand's Province still require systematic management of multicultural learning experiences to fully support children's social-emotional growth.

Although these studies have provided valuable insights into social-emotional learning and the integration of cultural elements in early childhood education, research specifically examining how teachers in Thai local schools implement concrete classroom strategies to support social-emotional development remains limited. Most previous works have focused on curriculum design, policy analysis, or program evaluation, while less attention has been given to the day-to-day pedagogical practices employed by teachers in specific educational

contexts. Furthermore, studies on Thai early childhood education often emphasize national or urban settings, leaving rural or municipal schools such as Nathawee Municipal School underrepresented in the literature.

This lack of empirical exploration on teachers' classroom strategies and culturally responsive practices creates a significant gap in understanding how social-emotional competencies are nurtured through everyday teaching in Thai early education. Addressing this gap is crucial for identifying effective, contextually grounded approaches that can inform both local and regional educational development. This study aims to analyze and describe these teaching strategies in depth, particularly how they support children's emotional and social growth in culturally relevant ways.

Methods

The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach conducted at Nathawee Municipal School, Thailand. Participants consisted of the school principal and six homeroom teachers of children aged 3–5 years (Anuban 1 and 2). Data collection techniques included participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and visual documentation of learning activities.

Observation guidelines and interview protocols were developed based on the research objectives. Data were analyzed through Miles and Huberman's flow model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Validity was ensured through source triangulation (teacher and principal interviews) and technique triangulation (observations,

interviews, and documentation), as outlined by Moleong (2019).

Result and Discussions

Based on the analysis of interviews and documentation, five primary strategies were identified:

1. Positive Routine Habituation



Picture 1. Morning greeting and flag ceremony

Children are taught to greet teachers and peers with a traditional Thai gesture (wai), join daily flag ceremonies, greet other classrooms, and line up to receive morning milk. These routines foster social harmony and emotional security (Taha et al., 2024).

2. Promoting Independence



Picture 2. Lunch, utensil washing, bathing

Children are encouraged to eat lunch independently, wash their own dishes, brush their teeth, bathe, and prepare their sleeping mats. These tasks strengthen autonomy and self-regulation (Maknun & Zulfatunnisa, 2022; Mertol Ilgar & Karakurt, 2018).

3. Emotional Literacy through Storytelling



Picture 3. Teacher storytelling and emotional check-in

Teachers use Thai folklore to illustrate emotional experiences, followed by discussions on feelings. Children learn to name emotions and express them constructively (Hosokawa et al., 2024)

4. Group Learning and Cooperation



Picture 4. Children doing crafts together

Collaborative craft projects and role-play activities promote teamwork, turn-taking, and problem-solving. Children are also taught to share and communicate during these interactions (Heritage Centre, 2019). This aligns with prior research showing that collaborative learning not only enhances children's cognitive development but also strengthens their ability to communicate and work cooperatively in group settings

(Risnawati et al., 2024).

5. Mutual Help and Empathy Building



Picture 5. Children helping each other

Children assist peers in organizing materials and express concern for classmates' well-being. This promotes a culture of empathy and collective responsibility (Heritage Centre, 2019)

The consistent use of culturally meaningful and developmentally appropriate strategies supports social-emotional learning naturally, aligning with theories of constructivism and contextual pedagogy (Hosokawa et al., 2024).

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that teachers at Nathawee Municipal School apply a combination of culturally grounded and developmentally appropriate strategies to promote children's social-

emotional development. These strategies—routine habituation, independence promotion, emotional storytelling, collaborative learning, and empathy-building—reflect a holistic approach that integrates social, emotional, and cultural dimensions in early childhood learning.

1. Positive Routine Habituation

Daily practices such as the *wai* greeting, flag ceremonies, and structured routines cultivate respect, emotional stability, and a sense of belonging among children. These findings align with Taha et al. (2024), who argue that consistent social-emotional learning (SEL) routines can enhance emotional regulation and classroom harmony. The integration of Thai cultural rituals not only builds discipline but also reinforces moral values embedded in national culture. Similar to Rohman (2024), the findings underscore how the inclusion of local values in early education strengthens children's social identity and civic responsibility.

2. Promoting Independence

Encouraging children to complete self-care tasks—such as eating, washing, and preparing for rest—supports the development of autonomy and self-control. These results are consistent with Maknun and Zulfatunnisa (2022) and Mertol Ilgar and Karakurt (2018), who emphasize that teacher guidance in independent activities fosters confidence and self-efficacy. Independence is a crucial foundation for emotional resilience, as it allows children to experience mastery and self-worth through daily achievements.

3. Emotional Literacy through Storytelling

Storytelling sessions using Thai folktales enable children to identify emotions, express feelings appropriately, and develop empathy. This supports Hosokawa et al. (2024), who found that social-emotional interventions based on narrative experiences effectively enhance emotional understanding and regulation. Furthermore, the integration of culturally relevant stories, as observed by Kongthong and Suppakitjumnong (2025), promotes both emotional intelligence and moral comprehension, making learning experiences more meaningful and contextually resonant.

4. Group Learning and Cooperation

Collaborative craft and role-play activities were observed to improve communication, sharing, and teamwork among children. This finding corresponds with Risnawati et al. (2024), who noted that cooperative learning not only improves social interaction but also enhances children's problem-solving abilities. The constructivist learning environment created by teachers allows children to learn from peers, negotiate meaning, and build interpersonal competence, consistent with the principles of Vygotsky's social development theory.

5. Mutual Help and Empathy Building

Encouraging children to help peers and express concern promotes empathy and collective responsibility. These practices align with the perspectives of the Heritage Centre (2019), which highlights the

importance of community-based learning in shaping pro-social behaviors. By embedding empathy within classroom culture, teachers nurture children's capacity for compassion and moral reasoning—key aspects of social-emotional growth.

Overall, the strategies observed demonstrate that social-emotional learning in Nathawee Municipal School is not treated as a separate curriculum component but as an integral part of daily classroom life. This contextualized approach reflects the constructivist and sociocultural learning theories, where children's development is influenced by interaction, routine, and culture (Hosokawa et al., 2024). Moreover, the findings extend prior research by providing concrete classroom-based examples of how Thai educators translate cultural values into pedagogical actions—a topic previously underexplored in early childhood education literature (Wongjanta et al., 2019).

Importantly, the study highlights that culturally responsive teaching contributes to children's holistic development by bridging emotional learning with identity formation. Through localized practices, teachers serve as mediators of culture and emotion, preparing young learners to participate responsibly in their communities. Thus, the integration of local cultural traditions, emotional expression, and collaborative learning can be viewed as a sustainable model for nurturing social-emotional competencies in Southeast Asian early education contexts.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the teachers at Nathawee Municipal School successfully implement social-emotional development strategies through culturally responsive teaching, daily routines, emotional storytelling, and collaborative activities. These efforts have led to the emergence of empathetic, independent, and emotionally literate children. The strategies highlighted can serve as valuable references for early childhood educators in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries. Integrating local values with routine-based and emotional learning activities proves effective in nurturing holistic development in young learners.

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