

**Novalina Sembiring**

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta Indonesia  
novalinasembiring.2023@student.uny.ac.id

DOI: 10.4312/vestnik.17.365-367

Recenzija

**Margana**

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta Indonesia  
margana@uny.ac.id



**Jamilah**

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta Indonesia  
jamilah@uny.ac.id

## MENTAL HEALTH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Christian Ludwig, Theresa Summer, Maria Eisenmann, Daniel Becker, and Nadine Krüger (2024): *Mental Health in English Language Education*. Dischingerweg 5 D-72070 Tübingen: Narr Franke Attempto. 259 pages. ISBN 978-3-381-11461-0 (Paperback, Price USD 122.02); 978-3-381-11462-7 (e-book, price USD 52.99).

Mental health has long been an important issue for health professionals and in educational settings. In their recently published book, *Mental Health in English Language Education*, the authors explore the urgent need for mental health education to be integrated into the school curriculum, and support their argument with various theoretical, empirical, and practice-oriented perspectives. Unlike other books that are organized in chapters, this book uses sections to help readers navigate the work. The first two sections provide a theoretical basis for adolescents' mental health in the context of English language learning. The last two sections discuss the practical tools readers – and especially educational institutions, educators, and learners – can use to protect and improve mental health.

The book begins by first summarizing the content of each section in the book, and then presents some interviews with experts. It explores the various types of mental health illnesses in adolescents, the importance of taking immediate action against them, and the reasons why adolescent mental health should not be neglected, all of which is clearly explained. However, despite the well-presented theoretical part, it would be better if the mental health pyramid, which the authors mention when explaining the terminology around mental health, were included in the book.

Section 1, *Curriculum and Competencies*, consists of four papers written by different authors that explore how mental health-related issues can be linked to core competencies and learning objectives in English language education. The first paper in this section explores some points of departure with regard to how English language education can be connected to mental health education. Following this, the second paper explores climate change as a threat to both students' and teachers' mental health and well-being, and recommends the use of creativity in English language teaching in this context. The next paper discusses the contribution of foreign language education to building learners' resilience related to adolescents' gender, particularly with regard to addressing gender inequalities and protecting adolescent mental health. The chapter concludes by giving suggestions, based on interviews, of music and songs that can be used to foster learners' well-being and emotional self-regulation. As the basis for the following sections, this first one has been written systematically. However, more research findings related to the topics of climate and gender would help readers to better understand the aim of this part of the book.

Section 2, *Texts and Materials*, explores how authentic texts and materials on mental health issues can be integrated into English language education in the classroom. The first article explores the advantages of multimodal novels in dealing with mental health issues and the taboo topic of dying and death in an EFL classroom, by presenting a teaching concept for Sally Nicholl's multimodal novel *Ways to Live Forever* (2008). Following this, the next paper describes the uses of video games such as *Hellblade* in ELT to let students critically engage with mental health representations, since video games and the surrounding discourse are now part of many students' lives. The third paper in this section then elaborates on how eating disorders can be addressed in English language classrooms through Katie Green's novel *Lighter Than My Shadow* (2017), which is used to illustrate the potential of graphic narratives to address adolescent eating disorders. While this section is comprehensive, more research findings with regard to texts and materials related to adolescent mental health in different countries would make it more effective.

Section 3, *(Digital) Culture and Communication*, focuses on the influence of digital media on young users. To begin with, the first article elaborates the findings on the effects of digital media use on isolation, loneliness, stress, and boredom. The author proposes a model that focuses on positive core mental health domains that can not only be used as a guideline for teachers, but also discussed with learners in the classroom, trying to identify factors they can work on by themselves, or that teachers and students can work on together. A brief explanation of "Down at the End of Lonely Street", mentioned in the first paper, would probably help second-language readers to understand this. Following this, the next contribution argues that conspiracy theories are ubiquitous in the digital age and readily available to teenagers. It then argues that the English classroom provides an opportunity for teachers to immunize students against conspiracy theories while offering some initial ideas on dealing with them in English lessons. To conclude, the last article

in this section elaborates on empirical research findings on cyberbullying and the role of online safety in the context of digital competence acquisition in teacher training and English language teaching. This section is successful in addressing the issue of using digital media to train students to better handle mental health and English language learning.

The volume concludes with Section 4, *Teachers and Teachers Education*, which discusses not only the fact that teachers can suffer from mental health problems as much as students, but also that teachers need training to enable them to better address any mental health issues in their classrooms. The first contribution describes the research findings that have shown teachers with high well-being experience greater job satisfaction and better work-life balance, are more engaged, cultivate better relationships within their professional lives, and tend to have students who achieve higher grades. Following this, the next contribution presents the authors' project findings, which show that language classes in higher education are particularly suitable for supporting students with practical, social-emotional, and academic problems. This can be done by following 12 principles they outline, or at least some of them that comprise the personal acronym MENTAL HEALTH; Motivation- meaningful interactions can motivate; Energy- engage in reflective practice to stay energised; Names- try to remember students' names; Trust- promote an atmosphere of trust and respect; Ally- be one for vulnerable students; Listening- listen to students' concerns; Happiness- boost happiness in your classroom through random acts of kindness; Emotions- do not underestimate the role of emotions; Adults- treat your students as such; Learning- learn from your students; Teachers- teachers matter as they can influence students' lives; Health- health literacy matters. Finally, the last contribution presents various practices of critical literacy and lesson plans on mental health as deconstructive reflections on the problematic narratives around mental health.

This book discusses the importance of addressing the issue of mental health in teaching foreign languages, especially English, and for both students and teachers. Further, this book also provides practical examples to apply, which are based on the research findings and interviews. However, despite its many contributions, there are some limitations. Some findings may not be relevant to other countries, and there is no list of tables or figures in the book, both of which could be addressed in a future edition of the work.