

PRACTICING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

ПРАКТИКУВАННЯ ПОЗИТИВНОЇ ПСИХОЛОГІЇ У ВИКЛАДАННІ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

The paper introduces positive psychology to the study of a foreign language by describing its key tenets. It is based on the statement that positive psychology has important implications for the field of foreign language acquisition. Its potential contribution is connected with the humanistic movement in language teaching, models of motivation, studies of the good language learner. There are reasons for both encouragement and caution as studies inspired by positive psychology are undertaken. Using positive psychology as a guide may enhance the meaning of the learning and emphasize the accomplishments in foreign language acquisition. Positive psychology is based on such pillars as positive institutions, positive personality characteristics, and positive experiences.

The purpose of the article is to get acquainted language education researchers, instructors, and learners with the main principles of positive psychology and their application in foreign language education process. Seven instances of positive psychology factors, namely enjoyment, well-being, resilience, emotion regulation, academic engagement, grit, and loving pedagogy are introduced and conceptualized. Furthermore, the contribution of these positive factors to desirable foreign language learning and teaching experiences are presented and explained.

Psychological aspect of communication is getting more and more important in order to enhance communication in a classroom. Language education can benefit a great deal from positive psychology principles and their professional application on the facilitation and promotion of well-being in a classroom. The common goal of positive psychology and language education is to provide an evidence-based practice supported by the theories and re-search of positive psychology for the enhancement of achievement and academic progress in a foreign language.

The significance of applying positive psychology in foreign language re-search and practice can hardly be exaggerated. The issue under consideration can serve as a springboard for future research in foreign language acquisition under the umbrella of positive psychology.

Key words: *positive psychology, foreign language acquisition, principles of positive psychology, language education, psychological aspect of communication.*

У статті висвітлено застосування принципів позитивної психології у вивченні іноземної мови, описуючи її ключові положення.

Вона базується на твердженні про те, що позитивна психологія має важливе значення для вивчення та викладання іноземної мови. Її потенційний внесок пов'язаний з гуманістичним спрямуванням у викладанні мови, моделями мотивації, визначенням характеристик хорошого учня. При проведенні досліджень, які залучають позитивну психологію, є причини як для заохочення, так і для обережності. Використання позитивної психології як орієнтира може покращити зміст навчання та наголосити на досягненнях у вивченні іноземної мови. Позитивна психологія базується на таких стрижневих опорах як позитивні інституції, позитивні характеристики стики особистості та позитивний досвід.

Мета статті – ознайомити дослідників мовної освіти, викладачів та тих, хто вивчає мову з основними засадами позитивної психології та їх застосуванням у процесі викладання та вивчення іноземної мови. Представлено та сформульовано сім прикладів позитивних психологічних факторів, а саме: насолода, благополуччя, стійкість, регулювання емоцій, академічна залученість, твердість, любов до педагогіки. Окрім цього, описано внесок розглянутих позитивних факторів для досягнення бажаного рівня вивчення іноземної мови та досвіду викладання.

Психологічний аспект спілкування стає все більш важливим для покращення комунікації на заняттях. Мовна освіта може отримати велику користь від принципів позитивної психології та їх професійного використання для створення доброзичливої атмосфери в класі. Спільна мета позитивної психології та мовної освіти полягає в тому, щоб забезпечити практику, що базується на фактичних даних і підтверджується теоріями та дослідженнями позитивної психології, для покращення досягнень і навчального прогресу з іноземної мови.

Важливість застосування принципів позитивної психології в дослідженнях і практиці іноземної мови навряд чи може бути перебільшена. Досліджувана проблема може слугувати вихідною точкою для майбутніх досліджень вивчення іноземної мови під орудою позитивної психології.

Ключові слова: *позитивна психологія, оволодіння іноземною мовою, принципи позитивної психології, мовна освіта, психологічний аспект спілкування.*

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Stating the problem. Positive psychology is a rapidly expanding subfield in psychology that has important implications for the field of foreign language acquisition. It is a branch of psychology that focuses on the development of individual strengths instead of

weaknesses. It focuses on how the positive events in a person's life form their identity. Positive psychology is the empirical study of how people thrive and flourish, it is the study of the ordinary human strengths and virtues that make life good. The goal of positive

psychology, expressed simply, is to help people lead better lives. It is focused on positive emotions and teachers that enable students to achieve academic success in language learning. Using positive psychology as a guide may enhance the meaning of the learning and emphasize the accomplishments in language acquisition. As a defined scholarly area, positive psychology has been said to have a short history and a long past [13, p. 155]. It aims to contribute another perspective to psychology by studying what we can do to increase strengths and attributes such as resiliency, happiness, optimism and the like in the general population. Foreign language acquisition rarely deals with these topics at present, however, their relevance in the field is immediately apparent when one considers the practical, human, and social dimension of language learning. Research on positive psychology has identified several strategies and skills that foreign language teachers can implement to help learners deal with difficulties such as prioritizing good relationships, cultivating kindness, engaging with activities, and discovering strengths. Many language educators are aware of the importance of improving individual learners' experiences of language learning by helping them to develop and maintain their motivation, perseverance, and resilience, as well as positive emotions necessary for the long-term undertaking of learning a foreign language [13, p. 156]. Besides, foreign language teachers also widely recognize the vital role played by positive classroom dynamics amongst learners and teachers, especially in settings in which communication and personally meaningful interactions are foregrounded. Language education can benefit a great deal from positive psychology principles and their professional application on the facilitation and promotion of well-being in the classroom.

Analysis of the research and publications on the issue under consideration. Positive psychology is a fairly new branch of general psychology and not much has been done in terms of its application in learning and teaching languages. Psychological aspect of communication is getting more and more important to enhance communication in a classroom. Papers in this field by Gabryś-Barker D., Gałajda [3], Khajavy G. H. [7], MacIntyre P. [9], MacIntyre P. D., Gregersen T., and Mercer S. [10], Oxford R. L. [15] cover a range of quantitative and qualitative methods with implications for theory, research, and teaching practice. There are several books written by positive psychology researchers for a general audience, including MacIntyre P. D., Mercer, S. [13], Seligman M. E., Csikszentmihalyi M. [18]. These books strive to mobilize the empirical research into practical actions that have empirical research support. Today few would dispute such core principles and their importance for understanding language learner psychology and ways

of behaviour. The study conducted by Aoyama T., Ouchi R. [1] aims to bridge the gap between psychological theories and their applications to language teaching offering rich insights into issues regarding language learners' engagement with learning opportunities. The authors [1, p. 619] state that learners' motivation has been a major topic of interest among teachers and researchers for more than 60 years. However, insufficient attention has been paid to the notion of engagement which concerns learners' active involvement with learning.

Positive psychology was first introduced in the work of Seligman M. E., Csikszentmihalyi M. [18], aiming to advocate a shift in the focus of psychology from a mere concern with fixing the negative and problematic things in life to developing positive qualities. A few years later, positive psychology was defined as the scientific study of what goes right in life, from birth to death and at all stops in between. Positive psychology confronts human problems and difficulties from the perspective of strengths rather than weaknesses [6, p. 35]. As Lopez S. J. states [8] positive psychology searches for the best in each individual, is concerned with strengths in each person, and fosters individuals' flourishing and well-being. Accordingly, positive psychology is concerned with not only individuals' happiness but also development, fulfillment, flourishing, and resilience in any aspect of life including education [18].

For these reasons, we feel that studying the role of strengths, along with the institutions, such as classrooms, schools, and language policies, that explicitly enable the expression and development of strengths would represent a valuable addition to current perspectives on language learning processes [13, p. 156]. The common goal of positive psychology and language education is to provide an evidence-based practice supported by the theories and research of positive psychology for the enhancement of achievement and well-being in a foreign language classroom.

The purpose of the paper is to acquaint language education researchers, instructors, and learners with the main tenets of positive psychology and their application in foreign language education process. Then, we introduce and conceptualize seven instances of positive psychology factors, namely academic engagement, emotion regulation, enjoyment, grit, loving pedagogy, resilience, and well-being and explain how these positive factors contribute to desirable foreign language learning and teaching experiences. Our objective is to emphasize that individuals' positivity can result in their flourishing and development in any aspect of life, including foreign language learning and teaching.

Presentation of the main material. However, it was not until rather recently that, following the emergence and rapid flowering of positive psychology in general education, an explicit positive renaissance happened in

the domain of language education. This change urged language researchers and practitioners worldwide to switch their focus from studying negative emotions such as anxiety, boredom, and burnout, to the investigation of both negative and positive factors involved in the process of language teaching and learning [19, p. 3].

Positive emotions can make foreign language instruction and learning more enjoyable and personally meaningful and aid language instructors and learners to be more resilient in the face of various challenges in the instructional context. The special issue on positive psychology edited by MacIntyre P. D., Mercer S. [13] made the foundations of positive psychology in foreign language education more solid. In this respect, the emergence of foreign language enjoyment paved the way for applying positive psychology in language acquisition and later other positive factors were addressed in this direction [13, p. 160]. As identified by Seligman M. E., Csikszentmihalyi M. [18] positive psychology is based on the pillars of positive institutions, positive personality characteristics, and positive experiences including emotions. Positive psychology seeks to develop tools to build positive emotions, greater engagement, and an appreciation of meaning in life and its activities [13, p.154]. Good communication and positive communication skills are extremely important in language learning and teaching.

Language teachers should master professional techniques to foster positive communication in a class. Questions instead of telling. The questions are to confirm our thoughts. We expect the students to answer in the way we know this information. There is little creativity in it. Try to ask questions that will be new for both of you, that will be a discovery for both a teacher and a student. Negative feedback in a positive way is better than positive feedback in an ignorant way. This is how we turn negative feedback into saying it in a positive way. It is really valuable. Student achievement is valued for being specific and unique. Teacher achievement is valued for being specific and helpful. Use "We statements" rather than "I statement". Both teachers and students should say "Let's discover something together". "We statements" are all about us being the same team. You are a leader as a teacher but you are an equal of this learning process.

Components of positive psychology include positive emotions, positive traits, and positive institutions. Positive traits tend to develop positive features which are resilience, leadership, etc. Positive institutions start from families and friends, community within the classroom, the classroom itself, the schools. Turning them into the safe places where students have positive emotions and are treated according to their strengths. Now that the origin, the main tenets, and main foci of positive psychology have been touched upon, it is time to consider the potential applications of positive psychology in foreign language learning and teaching practice.

Having explicated the prominence of positive psychology in the domain of language education, we will introduce and review seven instances of positive psychology factors, which are in need of special attention by researchers in the domain of foreign language learning and teaching.

Enjoyment. Macintyre and Gregersen [12, p. 193] introduced the concept of foreign language enjoyment, arguing that enjoyment, as an instance of positive achievement emotion [18], can help learners build resources for better language learning, broaden their perspectives, and increase their engagement in the language learning process [5, p. 1–15]. Through building on positive emotions, language teachers can concurrently decrease foreign language anxiety and increase foreign language enjoyment in their learners. Reviewing the existing literature can lead to better academic achievement, language motivation, and social-behavioral learning engagement. In this respect, teacher variables such as emotional support, use of humour, level of friendliness, respect toward students, tone of voice, and positive mood were found to influence learners' foreign language education. Thus, teachers play a significant role in building enjoyment in the foreign language education ecology.

Well-Being. Another main factor within positive psychology is well-being. In his research Oxford R. L. accentuated its importance by stating that "positive psychology is all about human well-being" [15, p. 21]. Within the domain of language education, understanding and promoting teachers' and students' well-being, whether at its emotional or psychological level, is very important since it lies at the heart of language teaching and learning [14]. Increasingly, scholars are recognizing the importance of well-being in education more broadly, and evidence shows that when teachers experience positive well-being, they teach more creatively and their learners achieve more. Similarly, when learners experience positive well-being in their schooling, they are more motivated and more successful in their studies [14, p. 14]. Increases in students' wellbeing have shown the increase of quality and quantity of student learning as a more positive mood boosts attention and motivation in students. Well-being is the first thing we need to be responsible when we start the lessons. It should be noted that compared to teacher well-being, student well-being is a less investigated topic. Thus, it is a promising avenue for future studies in domain-specific research areas like language learning.

Resilience. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines *resilience* as "the ability of people or things to feel better quickly after something, such as shock, injury, etc." [16, p. 1086]. As a latent intrapersonal positive quality with great contribution to general and language education domains, resilience refers to a dynamic, modifiable developmental process happening overtime reflecting the capacity to adjust

to different circumstances or situations and enhance one's effectiveness when confronted with unfavorable conditions [2, p. 202]. In the instructional context, resilience can be defined as one's employment of all resources at his/her disposal to sustain his/her well-being and productivity in the face of daily hardships. Language teaching profession is essentially relationship-based, where teacher resilience can be developed in the interactions of the teacher with students, and as a result, teachers can find purpose and meaning in their profession and engage in meaningful actions.

Emotion Regulation. Another variable within positive psychology that helps language teachers and students to function more effectively in the classroom ecology is emotion regulation. Teachers or students' knowing how to skillfully regulate both positive and negative emotions in the language classroom contributes a lot to effective teacher-student interpersonal relationships, students' learning gains, and teachers' successful teaching. Regulating emotions enable teachers to skillfully face conflict situations and find practical solutions for them. In the instructional domain, emotion regulation strategies are recurrently employed by effective teachers and students.

Academic Engagement. Academic engagement has some domain-general characteristics such as psychophysiological arousal, attention and meta-cognitive awareness. Domain-specific aspects of engagement can provide you with a deeper insight about the domain itself. Concerning this aspect, many studies have been focused on examining engagement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), while research on engagement in foreign language acquisition has not received much attention among the researchers of this field [11]. Exploring this important positive psychology factor within the domain of language acquisition is necessary to shed more light on its application in education process.

As language teachers, you might have observed different behaviors from your students in the class. While some students are actively involved in the class, answer teachers' questions and do their homework, the others might not be interested in the classroom activities. One possible reason for these opposite types of behavior might be that the first group is engaged in the classroom activities, while the second one is not. Khajavy, G. H. affirms that a better understanding of engagement can help us to involve all students in the class [7, p. 241]. Engagement has been proved to have links to many positive learning outcomes.

One of the desirable students' aims in the language learning domain is their academic engagement [7], which is conceptualized as encompassing the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. At this stage considering and distinguishing between different types of engagement is necessary. Behavioral engagement refers to

learners' actual inclination to participate in tasks and lessons. Emotional engagement is conceived as students' feelings of devotion and attachment to a task. Cognitive engagement happens when one is adequately, mentally challenged, and absorbed in one's work. Hiver P. [4] conceptualized language engagement as the degree that a language learner is mentally or physically involved in doing a language learning task.

Grit. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines grit as "the courage and determination that makes it possible for somebody to continue doing something difficult or unpleasant" [16, p. 566]. Grit can also be understood as persistence, passion, and effort for long-run goals. It is regarded as a high-order factor encompassing the two dimensions of consistency of interest and perseverance of effort. The former dimension refers to maintaining interest in an activity even in the face of failures and hardships, while the latter pertains to the inclination toward working hard and making effort even when confronting obstacles and challenges. While this non-cognitive concept has recently grabbed the attention of language education researchers [7], the number of studies in this domain is still scanty and more investigations are demanded to expand our understanding of the role of this factor in language learning, which is a prolonged process replete with trial and errors, challenges, and difficulties.

Loving Pedagogy. Love is one of the desirable emotions propounded by positive psychology, having a great potential to promote humans' flourishing, development, and fulfillment [18]. It can also be asserted that successful instruction only happens within a loving context. Similarly, we can state that learning and teaching are acts of love. The concept of loving pedagogy mainly reflects the concern with satisfying students' needs. For doing so, teachers need to be caring, supportive, and sensitive regarding their students as well as respecting and understanding them. A loving instructor has this ability to strengthen students' functioning and potentials. Love can also potentially create effective coping mechanisms, motivate learners, and be the driving force in language learning.

Overall, Figure 1 provides a brief visual representation of the seven positive psychology factors discussed above.

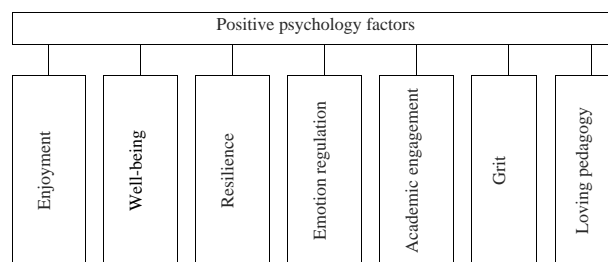


Fig. 1. Potential positive psychology factors

Conclusion. In this paper, we analyzed the essence of the concept of positive psychology and its main tenets, provided seven instances of positive psychology factors (i.e., academic engagement, enjoyment, grit, emotion regulation, loving pedagogy, resilience, and well-being), and emphasized the significance of its applying in language education process. We have shown how positive psychology pedagogically contributes to language education as it potentially enlightens the functioning of different participants in this domain. Effective language teaching is not just a matter of conveying the content and pedagogical knowledge and using all the novel teaching methods and techniques but also is an emotionally-charged undertaking where language instructors interact and communicate with each learner as they teach the subject matter in a positive learning environment. Thus, the present paper can serve language teachers and trainers as they can integrate positive psychology and its positive factors in the teacher education programs, workshops, and courses that they run. Such integration can help them achieve desirable academic outcomes. The issue under consideration can serve as a springboard for future research in foreign language acquisition under the umbrella of positive psychology.

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