

Positive Psychology in the Language Classroom: What is all the hype?

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Background

Positive psychology has contributed to:

- 1 encourage awareness of the importance of the well-being of students and teachers to make learning more effective (Kao & Oxford, 2014),
- 2 increase learning and teaching potential by challenging the traditional roles of guided instruction by switching the focus of learning to one of personal fulfilment and enjoyment (Dörnyei, 2009), and
- 3 transform learning experiences aiming at empowering teachers and students to develop an understanding of their own feelings for self-regulation, developing positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011).



Applied positive psychology is concerned with facilitating good lives, enabling people to be at their best.

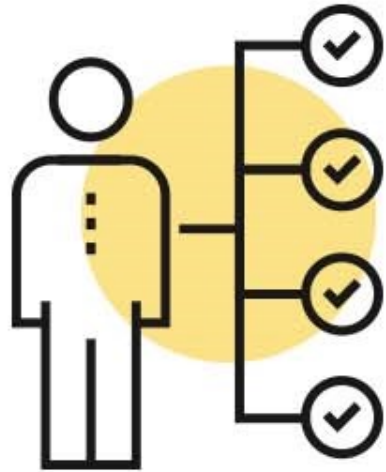
It is as much an approach as a domain of inquiry.

In clinical psychology, counselling and psychotherapy, applied positive psychology builds on the traditions of humanistic psychology and Carl Rogers' client-centred therapy (Robins, 2008).



Applied Positive Psychology and Education

Positive psychology has contributed to:



- 1 motivation (van Grinsven & Tillema, 2006),
- 2 identity development (Gonzalez, 2009),
- 3 health outcomes (Forrest, Bevans, Riley, Crespo, & Louis, 2013), and,
- 4 overall academic success (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral 2009)

Longitudinal studies have found that:

- 1 students who report more positive school experiences also report higher levels of mental and physical health as young adults (Reynolds & Ou, 2010; Wickrama & Vazsonyi, 2011),
- 2 are less likely to engage in risk behaviours such as illegal substances use (Locke & Newcomb, 2004), and
- 3 report that they were better prepared for their future (Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997).



Methodology

Provide an updated account of the research published in Europe by undertaking a systematic literature review in relation to the three themes presented earlier, namely:



- 1 awareness of the importance of the well-being of students and teachers to make learning more effective,
- 2 challenge the traditional roles of guided instruction by switching the focus of learning to one of personal fulfilment and enjoyment, and
- 3 the transformation of learning experiences for teachers and students to develop an understanding of their own feelings to develop positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.

Approach

- The review followed a protocol indicated by the three purposes identified earlier as they provided the scope of the search whilst also establishing its boundaries.
- Focus on studies published in Europe between 2012 and 2017 as per the increase of the popularity of positive psychology in education.
- As part of the screening stage, different databases were used mainly EBSCO, Web of Knowledge, Cambridge Journals Online, Highware and Jastor, amongst others.
- The eligibility criterion was given by the identification of key words such as positive, psychology, learning, flow, well-being, anxiety, gratitude, compassion, self-esteem, hope and elevation.
- Boolean operators (OR, AND, NOT) were used to avoid truncated searches.
- Qualitative stance centred on the contributions of positive psychology to classroom practices within instructed language classrooms.



Procedure

The information from key texts (called 'guidance') was initially tallied following a simple tabular structure made up of four entries:



- a** guidance document,
 - b** Year and place of publication,
 - c** Core focus, and
 - d** reference -i.e. where the guidance was reported.
- Thematic analysis interpreted by means of a qualitative analysis software (NVivo).

Conclusions

- A significant number of learners showed low levels of psychological distress but also low psychological well-being (Keyes, 2016). However, their well-being reports would indicate otherwise (Suldo & Shaffer, 2017).
- Well-being in the classroom is based on the theory of positive emotions i.e. positive experiences broadens the way the language learner student experiences the world and how well-being builds resources for the future (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).
- Resilient language learners develop the condition of 'hardiness' and findings demonstrate that the cognitive, emotional and behavioural qualities of such a condition can help teachers unravel why certain individuals are less likely to quit when they encounter setbacks (Maddi, 2013).
- Fulfilment and thriving involve more than just the absence of negative affectivity; thus, the significance of hope can transform the lives teachers and learners (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012).



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