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2 Emotions in the Making: The Temporal Spectrum of Emotion Research in Applied Linguistics

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In this chapter, we present a historical overview of how emotions have been understood and conceptualized within the field of applied linguistics from the 1930s to the present. We propose three pivotal phases of classification: the emotions-as-disturbances phase, the emotions-as-something-to-lower phase and the emotions-as-a-binary phase. Then, we advocate for a new direction in the study of emotions – a phase we propose to call the *emotion literacy phase*. This new approach aims to fully integrate emotional literacy as a crucial component of successful language teaching, learning and research, while moving away from the pervasive positive–negative binary that has become prominent in the field of applied linguistics. Building on this point, we argue that it is harmful to label emotions strictly as positive or negative, since all emotions have a purpose in our lives: to guide, teach and inform us. We end this chapter by arguing that, as technology continues to reshape how we interact, learn and communicate, emotional concerns must also apply to non-human entities, including artificial intelligence (AI), which we need to address as a field to adequately capture and advance our 21st century applied linguistics educational landscape.

Introduction

Emotions, a ubiquitous yet complex facet of the human experience, have long intrigued scholars across various disciplines, from psychology to neuroscience, and, more recently, applied linguistics. And yet, agreeing upon a universal conceptualization and operationalization of emotion remains difficult to achieve (Scherer, 2005), with cognitive-psychological and sociocultural perspectives primarily leading the conversation. On the one hand, *cognitive-psychological perspectives* see emotions as

arising from our thoughts, beliefs and interpretations of situations (Lazarus, 1991). That is, from a cognitive-psychological perspective, emotions are considered to be psychological states or processes that arise from the appraisal of specific situations or events, evoking distinct physiological and cognitive responses (Frijda, 2007; Scherer, 2005). On the other hand, *sociocultural perspectives* emphasize how cultural norms and social contexts shape what emotions are felt, how they are expressed and even how they are experienced (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, sociocultural scholars consider emotion to be intricately tied to the values, expectations and norms of the society or culture in which one is situated, arguing that these social elements not only inform our emotional experiences but can also serve to regulate or modify them (Mesquita, 2022).

A general belief that is widely accepted by both cognitive-psychological and sociocultural perspectives is that emotions are connected to our existence; there is no 'human being' without emotions, and no emotions (as we understand them) without human beings (Scheer, 2012). Emotions emerge in situations when we navigate tensions, contradictions, environments or circumstances in our lives, and are intertwined with our motivational systems, often driving our behaviors and decision making (Damasio, 1994; Ekman & Davidson, 1994). As such, some consider emotions not to be something we have or feel, but something we *do* (Scheer, 2012). The complexity of emotions extends beyond their individual nature, deeply influencing social interactions, including those in educational settings. Although the nature of emotions is universally accepted, their conceptualization, operationalization and acceptance can differ dramatically across cultures and societies, rendering the topic of emotions highly debated and subject to various interpretations and categorizations (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Russell, 1991).

In applied linguistics, understanding emotions is particularly crucial, given that they play a pivotal role in the language learning and teaching process (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Dewaele, 2015). Both desired emotions, like joy and motivation, and undesired emotions, such as anxiety and frustration, can profoundly affect language acquisition, retention and utilization (MacIntyre *et al*., 2019). Therefore, a nuanced understanding of the role of emotions in applied linguistics not only sheds light on the emotional aspects of language learning but also contributes to effective teaching strategies and learner outcomes. In the remainder of this chapter, we will delve into the historical context of how emotions have been considered within the field of applied linguistics from the 1930s to the present. We will take you on a journey through three pivotal phases conceptualized by us: the emotions-as-disturbances phase, the emotions-as-something-to-lower phase and the emotions-as-a-binary phase. We will conclude with a call for a new direction in the study of emotions within applied linguistics – a phase we propose to call the *emotion literacy phase*.

This new approach aims to fully integrate emotional literacy as a crucial component of successful language teaching, learning and research.

Emotions in Applied Linguistics

In the realm of applied linguistics, the consideration of emotions has evolved significantly over the decades, mirroring broader academic trends and agreed-upon empirical findings on individual differences or (instructed) language acquisition, for instance, yet presenting unique challenges and opportunities specific to language learning and teaching (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Dewaele, 2015; Shao *et al*., 2020). The study of emotions within this interdisciplinary field has undergone various transformative phases, reflecting not just the academic currents but also the sociocultural and pedagogical contexts in which language is taught and learned (MacIntyre *et al*., 2019). Recognizing that one chapter alone is not sufficient to fully encapsulate the discussions and evolutions throughout the span of almost 100 years, we present three distinct but interrelated phases: the emotions-as-disturbances phase, the emotions-as-something-to-lower phase and the emotions-as-a-binary phase. Each phase has contributed significantly to our understanding of how emotions interact with language acquisition, yet they also present limitations that pave the way for future research and the future of emotions in the field of applied linguistics as a whole.

'Emotions-as-disturbances' phase (from around 1930s to 1960s)

The study of emotions in applied linguistics from the 1930s to the 1960s was not as prominent or specialized as it is in the present day; however, emotions were already acknowledged to have consequences on language learning. At this early stage, emotions were portrayed in the literature as disturbances, problems or obstacles that had to be overcome in order for students to be able to engage in rational thinking and effective learning (Dunkel, 1948; Pimsleur *et al*., 1968). An example of this is presented by Dunkel (1948), who suggests that ages 6 to 12 are the best period for language learning as children have not yet begun the *Sturm und Drang* of adolescence. According to Dunkel (1948), during ages 6 to 12, 'the child turns from the family circle to the world around him and works with maximum freedom from emotional disturbance. As a result, during this period, the child makes the greatest strides in learning' (p. 71). Thus, the prevailing view during this period seemed to suggest that a lack of emotions was conducive to effective language learning, reinforcing the notion that emotions were primarily negative and, thus, obstacles to be managed or overcome for educational success.

Another salient point from the literature about emotion during this period of time is the ongoing debates within and beyond the field, which

seemed to suggest that learning a new language was harmful because it created emotional difficulties for children (Hobbs, 1954). Once again, we witness how emotions in applied linguistics were approached as something that caused disturbances and that had to be avoided. We believe this early view of emotions as something that was disrupted and negative was the result of the lack of understanding about emotions and emotional intelligence at the time. As a matter of fact, during this period of time, scholars argued that emotions were too complex for systematic study (Patterson, 1937), which might have been because psychological methodologies for studying emotion were less advanced than they are today. Such attitudes likely constrained the scope of research and pedagogical innovation related to the emotional dimensions of language learning. It is against this backdrop that later developments in the field should be considered, as they represent a shift away from viewing emotions as merely disruptive to recognizing their multifaceted roles in the learning process.

As we end this section, we want to point out that, albeit scarce, there were scholars who were not satisfied with the prevailing conversations about emotions. Toward the 1960s, humanistic approaches to language education gave rise to academics who questioned the role of emotions and emotional development in education. An example of this is offered by Hobbs (1954), who posits, 'Let us turn now from intellectual to emotional factors in language learning. What of the child's emotional development…? What are his interests and motivations?… It seems likely that the major portion of the factors unaccounted for by intelligence is motivation' (p. 201). Some scholars agreed that emotions were closely connected to motivation, making a case for how emotional development and performance are connected to increased intelligence and motivation in language teaching and learning (Hobbs, 1954; Previtali, 1960). Such conversations would lead the field toward a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between emotion and cognition, setting the stage for contemporary explorations into emotional dimensions in language learning.

'Emotions-as-something-to-lower' phase (from around 1960s to 1990s)

During the 1960s to 1990s, emotions became more prominent in applied linguistics, where the expression of emotion and the effect of learners' emotional responses were perceived as important parts of language teaching and learning (Chastain, 1976; Lentzner, 1978). Further, scholars began to argue that both affective and cognitive engagement were essential for deep processing and, therefore, language acquisition (Craik & Lockhart, 1972). Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis is perhaps one of the most well-known theories in applied linguistics, described as a 'mental block that prevents acquirers from fully utilizing the comprehensible input they receive for language acquisition' (p. 3).

In his book, Krashen (1985) proposed the lowering of the affective filter, which entails creating conditions where the learner is 'not concerned with the possibility of failure in language acquisition and when he considers himself to be a potential member of the group speaking the target language' (pp. 3–4). Importantly, he pointed out that the teacher has a key responsibility in achieving a lowered affective filter through a low-anxiety classroom setting to foster successful language learning. The emphasis on emotions therefore began to shift from primarily being considered disturbances to being recognized as critical elements that could either facilitate or hinder the language learning process.

Some of the most common emotions associated with impeding language acquisition were anxiety, frustration and demotivation, with ambiguous empirical results showing how those variables distinctively affected individual learner output (Scovel, 1978). It was assumed that, by decreasing 'negative' emotions experienced by learners, that is, by making learners less anxious or frustrated, they would automatically become better language learners. Phillips (1992), for instance, attests to a debilitating impact, especially in evaluative situations, of anxiety or apprehension on learners' oral performances. According to her, anxiety was one of the most crucial variables affecting language learning. She even went further to argue that anxiety played a major role in 'students' affective reactions,… their attitudes toward language learning in general' (Phillips, 1992: 14). She thereby indicates how (forced) language performances, in which students feel unease, can have detrimental consequences not only for their specific L2, but students' perceptions of their performances as well as language learning as a process and field as a whole.

MacIntyre *et al*. (1998), in their conceptualization of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in an L2, not only impressively showcase how the different linguistic, communicative and social psychological variables influence learners' WTC, but also that all of these approaches are interrelated and contribute to a better understanding of language learning and the emotions involved. Importantly, the authors suggest that self-confidence, conceptualized by Clément (1980) as the combination of perceived competence and lack of anxiety, positively contributes to WTC in an L2. In addition to self-confidence, the desire to communicate with someone is crucial for learners' WTC. As is further suggested, WTC is essential to *authentic language use* between individuals and is embedded in complex interdependencies of individual and social factors.

'Emotions-as-a-binary' phase (from around 1990s to the Present)

While the field of applied linguistics had historically been dominated by cognitive approaches to (researching) language learning (Swain, 2013), emotions and positive psychology have increasingly been recognized in the field of applied linguistics as contributing to a more holistic understanding

of learners and teachers and the SLA process (Richards, 2022). Based on groundbreaking work conducted by MacIntyre and Mercer (2014) and MacIntyre *et al*. (2016), for instance, the focus of language learning has been expanded to include social relationships and cohesion, appreciation and engagement and, ultimately, enjoyment of life. Importantly, as has been pointed out by Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018), the focus has shifted away from negative emotions, e.g. anxiety, to positive emotions, such as enjoyment, which can foster language learning and teaching. This is parallel to a shift in psychology as well (Donaldson, 2020), which, as pointed out by White (2018: 23), had its '[focus]...on fixing what is broken rather than focusing on subjective experiences that are valued by individuals (such as satisfaction, hope, contentment, and flow)'.

Several researchers have adopted positive psychology as a key component to successful language learning. Fredrickson's (2004) and Fredrickson and Losada's (2005) 'broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions', for instance, suggests that having a positive mindset and specifically channeling positive emotions expands learners' thinking, fosters resilience and generates personal and intellectual resources. This binary approach of positive versus negative emotions has been conceptualized as 'the positive-broadening and negative-narrowing power of emotion' by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012). Scholars like Arnold and Brown (1999) further enriched the conversation by examining how emotional intelligence could play a pivotal role in language acquisition, marking a significant departure from earlier views that saw emotions as mere obstacles or something that had to be lowered (i.e. in the case of 'negative emotions'). They also find that too much emphasis was put on negative emotions, whereas stimulating positive emotional factors such as motivation, empathy or self-esteem could be beneficial not only for language learning per se but also for learners' 'affective natures and needs'(Arnold & Brown, 1999: 3). As they further argue, 'Attention to affect can improve language teaching and learning, but the language classroom can, in turn, contribute in a very significant way to educating learners affectively' (Arnold & Brown, 1999: 3).

In line with this development, more attention has also been paid to language teacher emotions. Seminal work on this topic has been conducted by Benesch (2012), who, influenced by Ahmed's (2004, 2010) conceptualization of 'feeling our way', combines emotions with critical applied linguistics and a focus on innovative research and teaching agendas. Benesch (2012: 133–134) concluded that

(1) Emotions stick to certain objects…When teachers and students have differing reactions to these objects, pulling them toward themselves or pushing them away, those differences can be important areas of exploration, leading to greater understanding of teaching and learning…

(2) Teaching and learning are not only intellectual activities but also embodied ones.
(3) Teachers carry out complex emotional work, entailing: managing their emotions to get to the 'appropriate' ones; trying to read students' emotions on their bodies; explicitly teaching emotions.
(4) Attention to emotions and affect theorizes critical teaching not for implausibly grand liberation, empowerment or transformation, but rather, as small and subtle shifts in perception or understanding that cumulatively might lead to social reform.

While these developments and findings are indispensable for our understanding of emotions and affective factors in language learning and teaching, they have generally been conceptualized as dichotomous entities. In the following section, we would like to propose our perspective on how to move away from this limiting view and how to truly read, incorporate and live emotions as we constantly express and position ourselves through language and emotions.

Projecting Ahead: The Future of Emotions in Applied Linguistics

So what, then, is the future of emotions in applied linguistics? We are certain that different scholars may have different perspectives and arguments on how we should proceed. However, in this section, we would like to offer our perspective on a new phase of emotions in applied linguistics, one that we call the *emotional literacy phase*. Here, we propose that the field embraces emotions as a natural, ever-present and long-lasting critical element in our lives as daily users of language. Language and emotions cannot be separated (Lindquist *et al*., 2015), and we advocate for situating emotions as the (meta)center in applied linguistics. Thus, we propose the field of language education, applied linguistics and sister fields take into consideration the criticality of emotional literacy in language teaching, learning and research. For clarity, emotional literacy is described as the ability to understand our own emotions, the capacity to listen to others and empathize with them and their emotions 'and the ability to express emotions productively. To be an emotionally literate person is to be able to handle emotions in a way that improves your personal power…and the quality of life around you' (Steiner & Perry, 1997: 11).

In the literature, *emotional literacy* and *emotional intelligence* are often used in parallel or interchangeably, but they are distinct concepts. *Emotional literacy* has a longer history in academic publications and refers to the ability to recognize, understand and appropriately express one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Emotional literacy is often considered a foundational skill or subset of emotional intelligence as it focuses on effective communication through effective

emotional vocabulary. *Emotional intelligence* is defined as individuals' ability to know and manage their emotions, motivate themselves, recognize others' emotions and handle relationships (Goleman, 2005). 'While emotional intelligence expresses an innate personality dynamic to be nurtured, emotional literacy is the unity of understanding, strategy, and skills that a person can develop throughout life' (Alemdar & Anılan, 2020: 260). That is, *emotional intelligence* is the innate capacity to recognize, understand and manage emotions, whereas *emotional literacy* is a set of skills that can be taught, learned and enhanced for effective emotional communication.

In our opinion, advancing the field of applied linguistics to the *emotional literacy phase* involves three key considerations. These are: (1) broadening existing perspectives on emotions, (2) incorporating social-emotional learning and (3) extending emotional concerns and considerations to non-human beings.

Broadening existing perspectives on emotions

One of the fundamental shifts that must occur in the emotional literacy phase of applied linguistics is the reframing of how we view emotions themselves. Traditionally, emotions have often been classified into binary categories of 'positive' or 'negative', with the former being encouraged and the latter suppressed or avoided (Frijda, 1986; Scherer, 2005). The prevailing binary of positive and negative emotions not only restricts our emotional vocabulary but also contributes to a problematic standardization across academic discussions, everyday conversations and social norms. We suggest transitioning to the terms *desired* and *undesired*, *helpful* and *unhelpful* or *pleasant* and *unpleasant* emotions to extend the possibilities of how we address our emotions and do away with the oversimplified categorization of 'good' and 'bad'. These also more accurately reflect an individual's personal relationship with their emotions. Unlike positive or negative, which impose societal judgments, desired and undesired allow for a more nuanced, personal exploration of our emotional states, giving individuals the agency to define their own emotional experiences.

Furthermore, we consider it harmful to label emotions strictly as positive or negative, since all emotions have a purpose in our lives: to guide, teach and inform us. Labeling emotions as negative or positive is reminiscent of the 'Emotions-as-disturbances' phase (described above), and it inadvertently perpetuates a mindset where certain feelings are deemed unacceptable or problematic and should therefore be censored. The practice of stigmatizing or even censoring certain emotions can lead to internalized shame, repression or denial of these feelings, rather than a healthy acknowledgment and processing of them. Such labeling also oversimplifies the complex nature of human emotions and can

deter natural emotional responses, making individuals less likely to openly discuss or address them, thus potentially hindering personal growth and emotional resilience. Emotions are individual and complex psychological states that offer valuable data about our relationships with ourselves, others and the world around us (Barrett, 2017). Emotions are neither good nor bad; they are natural and inherent to our existence. Thus, aligning with the vision and works included in this edited volume, we propose that instead of labeling emotions as good or bad, they should be treated as experiences that offer learning opportunities, thus aligning with a more developmental perspective (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007).

Building upon this nuanced understanding of emotions, we argue that applied linguistics could benefit substantially from adopting what Susan David calls *emotional agility* (David, 2016). Emotional agility is the practice of navigating life's twists and turns with self-acceptance, clear-sightedness and an open mind, thereby unhooking ourselves from the rigidity of pre-set emotional responses. It is an approach that acknowledges the information that each emotion conveys, encouraging us to learn from them rather than stifling or avoiding them. By integrating emotional agility into language education and research, we can develop more comprehensive, human-centered pedagogies that prepare learners not just linguistically but also socially and emotionally (Keltner & Lerner, 2010). Further, this shift towards a more nuanced understanding of emotions and how to use them as a source of data to increase our emotional intelligence, dovetails with advances in emotion psychology, where scholars have emphasized the adaptiveness and functional nature of emotions (Izard, 2011; Keltner & Gross, 1999).

Emotions serve as cues that inform our cognitive processes and behavioral responses; they are not mere reactions but information-laden experiences that guide adaptive action (Gross & Barrett, 2011) – hence, the focus of this edited volume, which proposes that emotions be approached as E-Motion = Experiences create Motion. This underscores the need for applied linguistics to engage deeply with interdisciplinary emotion theories and frameworks that can provide a richer understanding of the emotional dimensions in language learning and teaching (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 2014). By adopting this multifaceted perspective on emotions, applied linguistics can broaden its theoretical and practical scope, enriching both our understanding and our teaching methodologies. Moving beyond reductive labels allows for a fuller comprehension of the complexity of emotional experiences, enabling us to tap into the educational power embedded within this complexity. Moreover, expanding this exploration to include a broader range of emotions beyond commonly studied ones like anxiety and enjoyment can further enhance our understanding, allowing for a more comprehensive examination of how varied

emotional experiences shape and are shaped by the processes of using, learning and teaching language.

Incorporating social-emotional learning

The next pivotal move in advancing applied linguistics into its emotional literacy phase involves embracing social-emotional learning (SEL) as a cornerstone of academic and pedagogical inquiry. SEL serves as an integrative framework that brings together various conversations and initiatives focusing on emotional and social aspects, such as positive psychology, identity formation and well-being, under one comprehensive umbrella (Pentón Herrera, 2020; Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2021). In doing so, SEL could provide the field with a unified conceptual lens through which to examine a diverse range of social and affective factors that interact in complex ways in language learning and teaching. Such a holistic approach allows for a deeper understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of emotional experiences, thereby encouraging more effective language education strategies beyond mere linguistic competencies. Further, adopting SEL as a guiding framework in applied linguistics also opens up space for fostering a more inclusive learning environment (Pentón Herrera, 2023).

When SEL is incorporated into language teaching and learning, it helps educators and researchers recognize that academic outcomes are closely tied to learners' social and emotional well-being. Such recognition is critical for developing pedagogies that are attuned to the emotional lives of students, enabling a more meaningful engagement with language learning. This is particularly important in contemporary settings where diverse learner populations often come with unique emotional and social challenges (Brackett *et al*., 2011). The integration of SEL into applied linguistics also serves as a springboard for actionable, transformative education. By examining language learning through the lens of social-emotional factors, we not only address *what* is being learned but also *how* it is being learned and *why* it matters (to the individual, community and society). This creates a pedagogical paradigm where emotional literacy and intelligence (i.e. emotional development) become as fundamental as linguistic literacy, thereby aligning with the broader educational goals of preparing learners for the complexities of real-world social and emotional landscapes (Greenberg *et al*., 2003).

Lastly, consolidating various sub-disciplines and threads of research under the SEL umbrella supports interdisciplinary research collaborations. It helps to build bridges with disciplines like psychology, neuroscience and even artificial intelligence, inviting a multi-faceted approach to understanding the emotional dimensions of language learning and teaching. By adopting SEL as an overarching framework, applied linguistics positions itself to contribute valuable insights to these

broader interdisciplinary conversations, thereby extending its academic and practical reach.

Extending emotional concerns and considerations to non-human beings

Research in applied linguistics has historically centered on human emotions and interactions within formal learning environments. However, as societal shifts driven by globalization, migration, technological advances and environmental concerns are redefining education, the field acknowledges the growing significance of non-traditional learning settings (Becker, 2023; OECD, 2018; Tumuheki *et al*., 2023). These shifts are not just about where learning takes place; they challenge the very nature of who participates in these educational processes. These innovative, unconventional learning spaces '[break] down the outside/inside barriers… into a middle space that is neither here nor there. We [as learners] become de-territorialized, assembled around a common learning goal' (Magno & Becker, 2023: 167). Hence, the conversation needs to evolve beyond human-centric frameworks to also accommodate a wider range of beings and settings. It is an opportune time for applied linguistics to explore emotional interactions that transcend human actors and include non-human entities and even the environment itself. To make significant progress, a multidisciplinary approach becomes imperative, allowing scholars worldwide to contribute diverse perspectives on the emotional dimensions of language learning.

Embracing a multidisciplinary approach allows us to examine the emotional dynamics of language learning beyond human interaction, by considering exchanges with non-human entities and environments. For instance, Luis Javier's experiences offer valuable insights into this expanded scope. In two different settings, the United States and Poland, Luis Javier spoke to his canine companions, Virgo and Maui, in three languages – Spanish, English and Polish. He noted that these emotionally charged interactions were free from judgment, encouraging him to speak without the usual emotion labor that accompanies language learning (when speaking with human beings). These exchanges with Virgo and Maui, especially now in Poland, have not only been meaningful for Luis Javier at a personal level but have also significantly improved his fluency in Polish, thereby increasing his motivation to continue practicing Polish with both human and non-human beings. Luis Javier's experience illustrates the unexplored emotional dynamics in interactions with non-human beings, which could be educationally enriching and beneficial in improving linguistic skills.

Another example of how we could extend emotional concerns and considerations to non-human beings is by examining the burgeoning role of artificial intelligence (AI) in language teaching and learning.

As AI-powered chatbots, language models and virtual assistants become increasingly sophisticated, they are poised to play a significant role in the educational landscape. These AI entities can simulate emotional intelligence to a certain degree, offering personalized learning experiences that adapt to a learner's emotional state, thereby affecting learning outcomes. However, the introduction of AI as an 'emotional actor' in the language learning process raises critical ethical and pedagogical questions, as we have already seen (e.g. Dodigovic, 2005; Hockly, 2023). How do we navigate the emotional complexities of human-AI interactions? What are the implications of/for emotion labor, learner motivation and educational equity when a non-human entity becomes part of the emotional landscape? As applied linguistics moves into this uncharted territory, interdisciplinary collaborations with AI ethics, computer science and cognitive psychology will be essential for understanding and harnessing the emotional dimensions of human-AI interactions in language education.

Final Thoughts

As we have journeyed through the intricate tapestry of emotions in applied linguistics, it becomes clear that emotions are not merely peripheral factors but are at the heart of the language learning and teaching experience. From being perceived as disturbances in the early 20th century to the present-day acknowledgment of their multifaceted nature, emotions have been redefined, reshaped and reconsidered, mirroring the larger academic and societal shifts (Arnold & Brown, 1999; MacIntyre *et al*., 2019). The 'emotional literacy phase' we propose in this chapter seeks to acknowledge and embrace the totality of the emotional experience in language learning. While the previous phases had their merits and contributed immensely to our understanding of the role of emotions in language acquisition and the wider field of applied linguistics, the need for a more holistic, inclusive and nuanced approach is evident. By emphasizing emotional literacy, we encourage educators, researchers and learners to recognize, articulate and value the emotional dimensions of/within language education (Steiner & Perry, 1997).

Moreover, as Barrett (2017) notes, emotions serve as crucial data points, offering insights into the non-trivial interplay among cognition, motivation and learning outcomes. By broadening our perspectives on emotions – moving away from positive/negative binaries and acknowledging a greater spectrum of emotional experiences – we can cultivate environments where all emotions are recognized as valuable assets rather than obstacles or something to be avoided. This shift aligns with the vision of holistic education, where the emotional well-being of the learner is as significant as linguistic competencies (Greenberg *et al*., 2003), or perhaps even more so. Building on this perspective of

holistic education, the incorporation of SEL further underscores the interconnectedness of emotions with broader social contexts. SEL not only equips learners with skills that are essential for real-world interactions but also promotes resilience, empathy and understanding (Pentón Herrera, 2020; Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2021). In an increasingly globalized world, these competencies are indispensable, and embedding SEL into applied linguistics ensures that we are preparing learners for the complexities of global communication.

Our proposition to extend emotional concerns to non-human entities, including AI, reflects the evolving landscape of education in the 21st century. As technology continues to reshape how we interact, learn and communicate, understanding the emotional dynamics of these new interfaces is paramount (Dodigovic, 2005; Hockly, 2023). Just as human–human interactions are laden with emotional nuances, so too will be/are human–AI exchanges, requiring applied linguists to consider the emotional implications of these novel educational tools. As we finalize this chapter, we recognize that the study of emotions in applied linguistics stands at an exciting crossroads. The shifts we have traced and the new directions we propose are indicative of a field that is responsive, dynamic and deeply attuned to the human experience. As Wierzbicka (2010) aptly observes, understanding emotions in applied linguistics is not merely an academic exercise but a journey that resonates with our shared humanity. By moving away from a dichotomous understanding and conceptualization of positive and negative emotions, fostering emotional literacy, integrating SEL and embracing new non-human and technological frontiers, applied linguistics can continue to enrich its contributions, ensuring that the emotional heart of language learning beats strong in the years to come.

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