Pentón Herrera, L. J., & Becker, A. (2027). 'It has turned my world upside down': The effect of positive psychology interventions on students' emotional intelligence. In T. Gregersen, M. Driver, S. Mercer, & P. D. MacIntyre (Eds.), Advancing research on positive psychology in SLA: Deconstructing misconceptions (pp. 202-227). Multilingual Matters.

10 'It has turned my world upside down'

The Effect of Positive Psychology Interventions on Students' Emotional Intelligence

Luis Javier Pentón Herrera and Anna Becker

In this chapter, we report on a qualitative case study conducted at a large public university in Poland, exploring the effects of positive psychology interventions (PPIs) on the emotional intelligence of first-year students in a second language (L2) learning context. Our guiding research question was: What are the effects of positive psychology interventions on L2 English students' emotional intelligence? Utilizing Mayer et al.'s (2016) four-branch model of emotional intelligence as a theoretical framework, our findings reveal that students became more actively engaged in perceiving, using, understanding and managing their emotions. This growing awareness contributed positively to their psychological well-being and fostered deep cognitive and social involvement within the language learning environment. Our results align with Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, which suggests that positive emotions can expand cognitive capacities and foster personal resources for resilience. The study underscores the transformative potential of integrating PPIs into language education, advocating for a teaching paradigm that incorporates emotional and social learning to enhance both academic and personal growth in the language classroom.

Introduction

For many years, the field of second/foreign language (L2) teaching and learning has had a historical, unbalanced tendency to emphasize and prioritize cognition and cognitive factors. In contrast, emotions have been at times regarded as less central or even peripheral to the learning process (Wang & Li, 2022). However, the affective turn (Pavlenko, 2013) has created new spaces for topics that had remained on the periphery or ignored, such as emotions (Gkonou et al., 2020; Martínez Agudo, 2018),

9781836685333_bookpdf.indb 202 11/2/2026 8:34:30 PM

well-being (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020; Pentón Herrera et al., 2023) and social-emotional learning (SEL; Pentón Herrera, 2020; Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2021). Among the perspectives driving this shift is positive psychology (PP). As PP gained traction, scholars in applied linguistics began to explore its relevance, gradually introducing it as a promising addition to theoretical frameworks on L2 teaching and learning, in an effort to approach theory, practice and research from a more strength-based approach (Dewaele et al., 2019; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; MacIntyre et al., 2019).

With roots in humanistic psychology and drawing on seminal works of various scholars, such as Csikszentmihalyi (1990),[1] among others, PP is a branch of psychology that focuses on the study of the positive aspects of human life, such as well-being, happiness and flourishing (Compton & Hoffman, 2020). PP aims to understand and foster the factors that enable individuals and communities to thrive, emphasizing the strengths and virtues that allow people to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives (Fredrickson, 2001). In the literature and in practice, PP has been distinguished by its proactive pursuit of cultivating what is best within individuals and societies, rather than merely remedying the worst, operating on the premise that cultivating positive experiences, traits and institutions can lead to a richer, more fulfilling and constructive life (Linley & Joseph, 2004). Applying PP in language education aims to enhance students' intrinsic motivation, resilience, overall psychological health and well-being (Driver, 2024; Peng et al., 2024), and it has also drawn attention to the well-being of language teachers too (Sadeghi & Pourbahram, 2024).

One innovative application of PP in second language acquisition (SLA) is the use of positive psychology interventions (PPIs), which are systematically designed practices aimed at increasing individuals' well-being, enhancing desirable emotions and building resilience (Falout, 2016). These interventions, such as gratitude exercises, mindfulness sessions and strengths-focused activities, translate the core principles of PP into practical strategies that can be integrated into any curricula, including language teaching curricula. By directly applying PPIs in the language classroom, educators can foster an environment that supports both emotional well-being and enhanced language learning, creating a dynamic and engaging educational experience (Helgesen, 2016). Such approaches intertwine psychological well-being with effective language acquisition (Dewaele et al., 2019; Gabryś-Barker & Gałajda, 2016).

Inspired by MacIntyre et al.'s (2019) call for 'building a base of empirical support for the relevance of PP concepts and efficacy of interventions' (p. 269), in this chapter, we report on a qualitative case inquiry in a course entitled *Positive Psychology and English* at a Polish higher-education institution. This course aimed to develop students' English language skills while introducing them to PP interventions and practices

they could apply in their daily lives. The inquiry was guided by the research question:

- *What are the effects of positive psychology interventions on L2 English students' emotional intelligence?*

Conceptual Framework

Building on this foundation, we employ the four-branch model of emotional intelligence as our theoretical framework, as it aligns closely with the objectives and core components of PPIs. The four-branch model of emotional intelligence (EI), shown in Figure 10.1, enables us to explore how the multifaceted and multilayered concept of EI can be specifically and systematically targeted through pedagogically embedded PPIs in the L2 classroom. Moreover, it provides a comprehensive structure for understanding the different levels at which EI operates, offering insight into how it can be developed and integrated into language learning contexts (Mayer et al., 2016; Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

EI – sometimes called emotional quotient (EQ; Mayer et al., 2004) – refers to the capacity to recognize, understand and manage emotions to enhance thinking and relating. As defined by Mayer and Salovey (1997), EI involves the ability 'to perceive accurately, appraise, and express

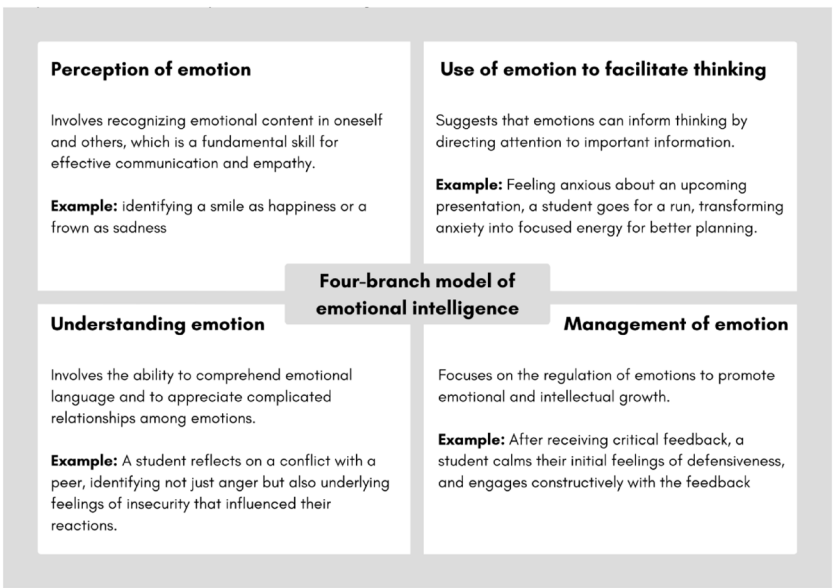


Figure 10.1 The four-branch model of emotional intelligence (Note: This figure was created by us, the authors of this manuscript, and was inspired by the work of Mayer et al. (2016) and Mayer and Salovey (1997))

emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth' (p. 10). This conceptualization posits EI as a subset of social intelligence, involving the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The relevance of EI in educational settings is underscored by its demonstrated impact on students' social interactions, academic performance and psychological well-being (Brackett et al., 2006). Furthermore, the development and application of EI, which is achieved through SEL initiatives, is increasingly recognized as essential skills for children and adults in both educational and professional settings (Bruce, 2010; Pentón Herrera, 2024a; WEF, 2025). In educational contexts, it is typically regarded as a relational and pedagogical approach that fosters inclusive, emotionally safe learning environments where students can thrive both personally and academically (Bruce, 2010).

The four-branch model of EI is an ability model[2] that includes four main components of EI, arranged in hierarchical order, beginning with basic and advancing to integrative psychological processes. The branches are (1) perception of emotion, (2) use of emotion to facilitate thinking, (3) understanding emotion and (4) management of emotion. The first branch, perceiving emotions, involves recognizing emotional content in oneself and others (e.g. identifying a smile as happiness or a frown as sadness), a fundamental skill for effective communication and for labeling and identifying emotions. The second branch, using emotions to facilitate thinking, suggests that emotions can inform thinking by directing attention to important information. The third branch, understanding emotions, involves the ability to comprehend emotional language and appreciate the complex relationships among emotions. Finally, the fourth branch, managing emotions, focuses on regulating emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer et al., 2016; Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

In this study, the four-branch model serves as a foundational framework to analyze how PPIs influence each aspect of emotional intelligence among 14 first-year students pursuing a bachelor's degree in English Studies at a university in Poland. The first branch, examining perceptions of emotions, is assessed through participants' ability to identify and react to emotional cues throughout our course. The second branch, which utilizes emotions to facilitate thinking, is assessed by observing how participants leverage their emotional states to enhance the comprehension and retention of new material. Understanding emotions, the third branch, is explored through participants' interpretations of emotional expressions and language nuances. In contrast, the fourth branch, managing emotions, is investigated in the context of how participants regulate their

emotional responses to challenges inside and outside the learning space. This comprehensive analysis has the potential to not only underscore the detailed mechanisms through which emotional intelligence develops in educational settings but also provide empirical support for enhancing pedagogical strategies that effectively integrate emotional intelligence into the L2 curricula and thus institutionalize it within schools and higher education institutions in Poland and beyond. It is important to note that this suggested PPI is in itself part of language learning and does not interfere with curricular L2 learning objectives if appropriately implemented. For this, teachers require adequate training and an understanding of PPIs, as well as the connection between PP and language learning in general.

As a note of importance, throughout the teaching of the course and in this manuscript, PP and, by extension, PPIs are understood as SEL practices. We acknowledge that this conceptualization represents a departure from more traditional definitions of PPIs, which often frame them as discrete, empirically tested techniques aimed at boosting individual well-being (Biswas-Diener, 2011; Parks & Biswas-Diener, 2013). We conceptualize PPIs as integrated, context-sensitive practices meant to nurture students' EI (Pentón Herrera, 2024a, 2024b; Rogers et al., 2024). We view this perspective as aligned with recent conceptual developments in positive language education (PLE), which emphasize the integration of well-being and language learning as mutually reinforcing aims situated within classroom realities (Mercer et al., 2018). In this view, well-being is not treated as a separate intervention but as a pedagogical thread woven into the communicative and relational practices of language teaching.

Methodology

This qualitative case study was conducted at a large public university in Poland over a 15-week semester in a course entitled *Positive Psychology and English*. The *Positive Psychology and English* course was one of the new courses created at the university under the initiative of 'English Across Academic Domains (EAAD) courses', which is the name the institution gave to first-year English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. The EAAD courses consisted of 5-week courses taught in succession during a 15-week semester, which took place in the winter of 2022. During these 15 weeks, nine groups of students were taught three 5-week EAAD courses, each consisting of a specific topic determined by the instructor, which included content relevant to first-year English, as designated and assigned by the leadership. The university administration gave instructors the freedom to choose and teach any academic topic as part of the EAAD course. Each of the three instructors chose a topic and area with which they were familiar and designed their five-week course around it.

For example, Instructor 1 had a background in law, having worked as a paralegal for a while before pursuing a degree in English, which

was a similar experience to Instructor 2's background in architecture. Luis Javier, Instructor 3, chose PP as one of his main areas of research, and he also has an academic background in psychology and PP, having majored in psychology and business administration during his undergraduate studies. Figure 10.2 shows the sequence of the EAAD semester, where each instructor (a group of three instructors per semester) would teach independent courses (i.e. law and English, architecture and English, and PP and English) to three groups of students for five weeks, and then rotate to three other groups after five weeks. At the end of the 15-week semester, all nine groups of students received three 5-week courses (i.e. were taught by all three instructors).

Also, Figure 10.3 shows more detailed information about the course from which data were collected, the *Positive Psychology and English* course, including the overview, weekly topics and content for first-year English. Through the PPIs conducted over a five-week span, students were provided with tools and opportunities to autonomously and jointly test these interventions. That is, in class, we learned together about various PPI strategies (see Appendix A for a more detailed list) and the importance of language in this process, and then we discussed and practiced them in class. An example of this is the 'Three Good Things' intervention, where students reflected on and shared three positive experiences each day, using descriptive and emotionally resonant language to articulate these moments, which not only enhanced their awareness of

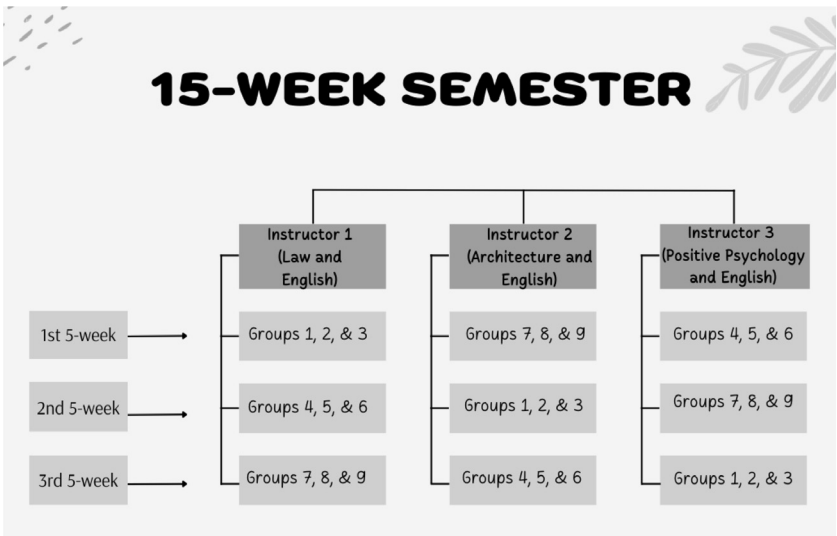


Figure 10.2 Sequence of the EAAD semester (Note: Luis Javier Pentón Herrera was Instructor 3 in this group organization)

Positive Psychology and English

Course objective: The aim of this Positive Psychology module is to simultaneously develop students' language skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) and sequencing and processing skills (inferring, hypothesizing, predicting, cause and effect, and proposing). Throughout this module, students will be introduced to the main tenets and principles of Positive Psychology, which will be used as a lens in our class discussions and reflections.

Weeks	Topics	Language Content	PPIs
1	Positive psychology: Main tenets and principles	Inferring, predicting, and hypothesizing	- Three Good Things - Gratitude Letter - Savoring
2	Positive psychology: The self and others	Cause and effect	- Strengths Spotting - Random Acts of Kindness - Best Possible Self
3	Positive psychology: Language and strategies	Making connections	- Emotional Vocabulary Building - Reframing - Mindful Journaling
4	Positive psychology: Scenarios and responses	Predicting and proposing	- Perspective-Taking Scenarios - Conflict Resolution Mapping - Empathy Mapping
5	Positive psychology in action: Presentation of final projects	Unreal tenses and subjunctive	- Affirmation Writing - Meaning-Making Projects (Final video projects) - Reflective Closure

Figure 10.3 Course objectives and weekly classes (taken from the syllabus)

positivity but also deepened their emotional expression and vocabulary around well-being.

Participants

All participants were first-year students from Poland (n=10), Ukraine (n=3) and Kazakhstan (n=1), pursuing a bachelor's degree in English Studies at a university in Poland. They were all C1-level English speakers, and their age ranged from 18 to 21. Data were collected through purposive sampling, a strategy that involves deliberately selecting participants who are most likely to provide relevant, in-depth data for the study objectives (Patton, 2014). This method is particularly effective in educational research where specific educational outcomes are anticipated (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). While data were collected from all nine student groups who participated in the course, the scope of this study prompted us to focus on a single group to allow for the depth of analysis characteristic of qualitative case study methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2024). Group #1

was selected from the dataset collected from the nine groups because it was the most diverse and had the largest number of participants per class. Additionally, due to the volume and complexity of the dataset collected, it was not feasible within the timeline and parameters of this manuscript to conduct a comprehensive analysis of all nine groups. Our focus on Group #1 thus reflects both a strategic research decision and practical considerations of scope and analytic manageability.

Ethical considerations were rigorously adhered to throughout the study. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the study's goals, the voluntary nature of their involvement and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, ensuring compliance with institutional and international guidelines on ethical research (American Psychological Association, 2017). Given that Luis Javier was also the instructor of the course, special care was taken to mitigate potential power imbalances and coercion. Students were assured that their participation or nonparticipation in the study would have no effect on their course performance or grades, and all data were analyzed only after the course had ended and grades had been submitted. This dual-role dynamic was discussed transparently with students to build trust and reduce any perception of obligation. All of these processes were approved by and recommended by the institution and leadership. Confidentiality was strictly maintained by anonymizing participant identifiers in all research documents and publications. All students spoke English as an additional language (at the C1 level) and identified as multilingual learners. Table 10.1 shares more details about the participants. All names are pseudonyms.

Data collection and analysis

Data collection, all conducted in and produced by participants in English,[3] encompassed multiple methods to gather comprehensive insights into the participants' experiences and outcomes. Weekly journaling was employed, requiring participants to submit five entries over five weeks, reflecting on the effect of PPIs on their academic and personal lives. The weekly journals were a mandatory component of the course and accounted for 60% of the students' final grade. Students submitted one entry per week over the five-week course via Moodle. Each journal was guided by a specific prompt aligned with the weekly themes of the course (e.g. gratitude letter, savoring and conflict resolution mapping). While the length of entries was open, students were encouraged to write one to two paragraphs that meaningfully reflected on their learning and personal application of linguistic and EI-related content, and they could include poetry, visuals and any other forms of expression. These journals served both formative and summative purposes: they provided insight into each student's evolving understanding of PP and allowed the

Table 10.1 Participants' demographic information

Pseudonyms	*Country of origin*	*Self-identified gender*
Dela	Kazakhstan	Female (F)
Dian	Ukraine	F
Alka	Poland	F
Mela	Poland	F
Mar	Poland	F
Luc	Poland	Male (M)
Pal	Poland	F
Dran	Ukraine	F
Lia	Poland	F
Sail	Ukraine	F
Ylda	Poland	F
Jojo	Poland	F
Mimi	Poland	F
Fiaz	Poland	F

instructor to assess engagement and growth in EI and English language use.

Classroom discussions were systematically recorded through detailed note-taking in the researcher's reflective journal. Notes were taken during and immediately after each class session, covering all five weeks of the course. These records focused on capturing key discussion moments, participant reactions and group dynamics as they unfolded from the teacher's perspective. Discussions were generally guided by the instructor, were structured around each week's PP theme and included both small-group tasks and whole-class conversations. Although no formal observation protocol was used, discussion guidelines and prompts were embedded in the weekly lesson plans to encourage students' reflection and dialogue. These notes provided valuable insights into students' emotional engagement with course material and their collaborative learning processes.

At the end of the five-week course, students were invited to complete an anonymous end-of-course questionnaire designed to gather their reflections on the perceived impact of PPIs on their personal and professional lives. The questionnaire employed a mixed-format approach, combining Likert-scale items, short-answer responses and a few open-ended questions. While the instrument was not adapted from a standardized tool, it was carefully developed by the instructor to align with linguistic and EI-related objectives, focusing on student satisfaction, emotional engagement, perceived academic and personal benefits, and any challenges encountered. Sample questions included: 'To what extent did the course

help you apply positive psychology to your daily life?' (Likert-scale question), 'Which weekly topic or strategy was most relevant to your personal growth?' (multiple-choice question) and 'What suggestions do you have for improving this course?' (open-ended question). Administered in the final week of the semester, the questionnaire served as both a reflective tool for students and an evaluative instrument for the researcher to assess the relevance and reception of the pedagogical approach.

As the culminating assignment of the course, students were invited to create a final video project individually or in pairs (the project was 40% of their final grade), with the aim of synthesizing and applying the concepts explored throughout the five weeks. This assignment functioned both as a pedagogical tool to foster creative expression and as a qualitative research artifact, offering insight into how students internalized and personalized their learning. The prompt was intentionally open-ended to allow for individual interpretation, but each video was required to include a clear introduction to a PP concept, a major message or takeaway and practical strategies that viewers could implement. For example, students explored topics such as self-compassion, gratitude, growth mindset and the impact of kindness, linking them to real-life scenarios and personal reflections. Videos were uploaded to a shared online folder accessible to the class, facilitating peer learning and community engagement. From a research perspective, the video projects were analyzed for themes related to emotional intelligence development, including students' capacity to articulate emotional awareness, demonstrate empathy and model emotion regulation strategies. By integrating the final video project as both a teaching and a research tool, the course emphasized multimodal learning and allowed for the demonstration of academic and affective growth in a dynamic, student-centered format.

The data reported in this manuscript are part of a larger study. The entire dataset collected for this project on PP and English includes 1386 minutes of video recordings (for all nine groups) and approximately 151,000 words collected from weekly journal entries, with some entries including visuals. However, for this specific chapter, we analyzed and reported solely on 144 minutes of video recordings and a corpus of 2940 words for the 14 participants in Group #1. This decision was guided by both practical and methodological considerations. From a feasibility standpoint, analyzing the full dataset within the scope of a single manuscript was not possible due to its size and multimodality. Methodologically, Group #1 was selected through purposive sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2014) from the dataset collected from the nine groups because it was the most diverse and had the largest number of participants per class. The data were subjected to an interpretative analysis (Stringer, 2013), focused on identifying and understanding salient features of students' experiences. This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of how emotional intelligence competencies were developed

in response to the course activities, offering nuanced insight into the emotional and pedagogical dimensions of the intervention.

The data were subjected to a deductive thematic analysis informed by the four-branch model of emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2016), which served as the primary analytical framework. Specifically, we categorized all data sources according to the four branches – (1) perception of emotion, (2) use of emotion to facilitate thinking, (3) understanding emotion and (4) management of emotion – which allowed us to explore how each facet of EI manifested in the students' learning experiences, fitting them within these four frames. Each author independently coded the data according to this model, and themes were then compared and synthesized collaboratively to ensure consistency, transparency and analytical rigor. Ultimately, a total of 22 codes surfaced, and the codes presented below represent a harmony of coder agreement after discussing the similarities and differences detected during the independent coding phase. This process enabled us to link students' evolving emotional awareness and strategies to concrete classroom practices and PPI activities, thereby reinforcing the framework's utility in applied language education contexts.

Findings

Our data analysis revealed that students reported gains in social and emotional awareness and well-being. Participants also identified and employed strategies to mitigate undesired emotions both inside and outside the university space, which contributed to their motivation and engagement in the English language classroom. Importantly, all four levels of EI (Mayer et al., 2016) represent a progression from basic perception (initial stage) to implementation (final stage). Within the five weeks of the course, the data revealed that students transitioned from perceiving their emotions, to using them to think/reflect, to understanding them as concepts, parts of themselves, others and society, to finally managing/processing/coping with/externalizing their emotions to improve their well-being.

Notably, although many of the examples students shared drew on experiences beyond the classroom, these experiences are not separate from language learning, as students inevitably bring their emotional lives, relationships and everyday challenges into the L2 classroom. From an emotional intelligence perspective, the ability to recognize, interpret and regulate emotions in everyday life may also help students navigate similar emotional experiences in language-learning situations. Because the course was situated in an English language learning context, we thus interpret these reflections as relevant to learners' participation, interaction and self-expression in that setting. Unless participants explicitly connected these experiences to language learning; however, such links should

be understood as pedagogical implications rather than direct outcomes reported by students.

Perceiving emotion: Heightened emotional and social awareness

The first branch of the four-branch EI model involves the perception of emotion. According to our data, a majority of participants (n=11) reported developing a heightened awareness of their own emotions and those of others throughout the course. This development is particularly relevant in language learning, where understanding emotional nuances and nonverbal cues is essential for effective communication (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Pentón Herrera & Darragh, 2024). Mar, for instance, shares an experience in her journal about riding the bus, which illustrates her perception of different emotions vividly: She is frustrated about being stuck on a very full bus, and then, by engaging in a gratitude technique learned during the PPIs, she realized:

> at least I have a seat … the bus has heating so I'm warm unlike the people in the awful freezing cold outside; and I have a nice book and finally some time to read it. And I wasn't even mad at the guy reading my book from behind.

This example not only shows how Mar weighed the positives and negatives of her current situation but also highlights her newfound tolerance for another person on the bus reading her book from behind, which would have typically made her 'feel terrible' and 'stuck in a bus in a gigantic traffic jam'. In a language-learning context, providing opportunities for students to achieve this heightened awareness of emotional states may enhance learners' ability to navigate social and cultural interactions in English, where interpreting subtle emotional cues is critical for success.

Echoing Mar's experience about recognizing one's emotions and acting in response to them, Dela further suggested that she 'focus[es] on what you can control, and use[s] language to regulate my anxiety'. Dela's ability to connect emotional regulation to language highlights how PPIs can help students reframe their affective states to better engage with the language-learning process, such as reducing anxiety during oral presentations or group discussions. Our participants further used imagery in their descriptions, such as 'journal as trash can' (Lia) or 'charge my batteries' (Ylda) through PPIs, which can be used in the classroom to explore the meaning behind these metaphors in more detail and further deconstruct our and others' perceptions of emotions.

Although these PPIs do not replace any counseling or therapeutic interventions, a clarification made by the professor at the beginning of

every class, they seem to have allowed for the recognition of emotions. An example of this can be observed in Luc's journal, where he shared:

> Time before winter break is very difficult for me. Especially based on the fact that I am not yet settled down in Warsaw since moving here in September. Place that I come from is very quiet and close to nature. In [small rural village] I lived right next to the mountains and now I live in [large urban] district – the contrast is monstrous.
>
> I'm rather a pessimistic person, the anxiety and exhaustion make it hard for me to try and for example, start a gratitude journal. I don't know why but I just don't feel it. I think that sometimes people just end up in a place that is hard to get out from. They need some time and will from within themselves to actually start seeing 'bright colours' again.
>
> Right now, I definitely don't have 'contentment with the past, happiness in the present and hope for the future' but I will try to follow the ideas that Positive Psychology will give to me during the course. Who knows what will happen.

Also, given the focus on language learning, important concepts can be problematized, analyzed etymologically and deconstructed so students can express their opinions more accurately and help them understand the language used to 'label' them. By developing EI to express complex ideas and concepts in English, students not only enhance their linguistic repertoire but also learn to communicate more empathetically and authentically in their second language (Pentón Herrera & Darragh, 2024). Other concepts, such as 'prejudice', as problematized in one of the implemented PPIs (see Week#4 '*Perspective-Taking Scenarios*' in Appendix A) in our study, can be a helpful addition to students' vocabulary and make them realize that the connotations existing around those concepts also potentially influence their EI. As Mimi explained:

> I learnt from our last meeting, was that prejudice doesn't have to be bad. I mean, it is bad when we discriminate someone about something, that for us is unacceptable. I realised that sometimes we are so focused on protecting our arguments that we just can't take into consideration, that our friend or new person has different thinking, was raised differently and we can't change it even if we want to. We often exclude that person from our 'friend circle', but it's not necessary.

Other examples of concepts elaborated through PPIs were 'forgiveness', 'argument' and 'empathy'. These emotionally laden terms were discussed and unpacked, helping students sharpen both their emotional vocabulary and their ability to identify and interpret emotions – key components of the perception of the emotion branch of EI. These activities were intentionally designed to prompt reflection on how language carries,

evokes and shapes emotional meaning. As a result, these tools enhanced students' emotional awareness and sensitivity. This, in turn, supported their engagement with language-learning tasks such as debates, group discussions and collaborative projects by fostering essential emotional competencies, including self-regulation, empathy and active listening.

Using emotion to facilitate thinking: Emotional insights as learning tools

The second branch of the four-branch EI model centers on using emotions to facilitate thinking. In addition to the positive effect on participants' EI and their improved perceptions of emotions in themselves and their surroundings, the PPIs conducted in this study's context also seem to have contributed to participants becoming resilient and conscious about the underlying processes of thinking about emotions. Participants' journal entries and in-class reflections longitudinally suggest a growing awareness of how emotional states influenced their thought processes through various life situations, as we will share in this section. This is particularly relevant in language learning, where emotional states can influence cognitive engagement, memory retention and creative problem-solving in tasks such as writing, speaking and interpreting language nuances (Tyng et al., 2017; Wu & Kabilan, 2025).

For instance, Pal shared an experience she had on the train: Her train arrived with a 100-minute delay, which 'made me mad … So, *as I was stuck there, I thought*: okay, I might get later than anticipated however, now I have the time to read a chapter from the book I've brought' (our emphasis). This experience indicates that Pal perceived her emotions and then went on to think about what they meant to her and her current situation, ultimately utilizing her frustration as a cue to engage in a more productive and calming activity. Pal's example underscores how emotional regulation can help learners manage frustrations during language-learning challenges, such as struggling with unfamiliar vocabulary or adjusting to the pace of group discussions. In addition, Pal's adaptive strategy exemplifies how recognizing and channeling one's emotional energy can directly enhance cognitive engagement and problem-solving capabilities.

Further, Dian reported appreciating the input provided on 'how the brain works in terms of focusing on negative thoughts and emotions as a part of unconscious self-defense. It could be assumed that negative thinking, in a way, is a part of our nature'. PPIs, therefore, can provide meaningful knowledge to improve individuals' understanding of psychological/mental well-being and offer insights into how cognitive and emotional processes shape our thinking. In the context of language learning, this understanding can empower students to overcome undesired emotions such as anxiety or fear of making mistakes during language

practice, enabling them to focus more effectively on task completion and skill development.

Several journal entries suggest that participants became more 'comfortable' speaking about their problems given the 'supportive environment' (Dran). This is perhaps due to the fact that they were given a safe space to express, deal with and share their problems through assignments, the time/space dedicated in the classroom and the feedback they received. Ideally, language learning should always take place in such a conducive environment and be every teacher's goal, independent of PPIs, encouraging this practice. Providing a supportive environment is particularly important in language learning, as it fosters the confidence to experiment with new linguistic forms, take risks in communication and engage in collaborative activities with peers. Ongoing communication and discussions not only promoted emotional awareness but also facilitated the use of emotional insights to aid in analytical thinking and personal growth. By consciously applying what they learned about emotional dynamics, participants were able to approach challenges with a more nuanced perspective and adaptively integrate their emotional experiences into their cognitive processes. The ability to harness emotional insights for cognitive growth further supports language learners in tasks requiring critical thinking, such as debating, analyzing texts or writing persuasive essays.

Understanding emotion: Deepening social and emotional comprehension

The third branch of the four-branch EI model involves the ability to comprehend emotional language and to appreciate the complicated relationships among emotions, which enables individuals to interpret and respond to emotional signals more effectively. In a language learning context, this branch is particularly significant as it involves the ability to understand and articulate nuanced emotional expressions, an essential skill for effective communication in a second language. By thinking about and better understanding the wide spectrum of emotions and the way these are described on an individual or societal level, the PPIs conducted in this study can help manage emotions, how they are stored and processed, and, ultimately, be directed at others and ourselves. Mar, for instance, reported:

> The steps to resolving a conflict, which we talked about in class, made me realize that arguing doesn't have to be a product of anger. I have always thought of arguments as something horrible that should be avoided, but looking at the process of how such a disagreement can [be] resolved, by being respectful, using empathy and showing [my] own vulnerability, it showed me that maybe I shouldn't be as afraid of disagreements as I am.

Thus, understanding emotions and the implications of those emotions on one's own mental and physical state is crucial and can be developed through PPIs. Mar's ability to reconceptualize conflict highlights the importance of emotional understanding for managing challenging social interactions in the language classroom, such as group discussions or debates, where cultural and linguistic misunderstandings can arise.

Similarly, Alka explained, '[PPIs] made me wonder how happier our world would be if we were taught these skills [emotional intelligence] in school. Many people are still not aware of how our psychological well-being is important.' Lia went even further and suggested we adopt this mindset also for psychological therapy sessions: 'I believe we should destigmatise attending therapy, as if [it] was something out of the ordinary and something that makes you a "weird" person or an outsider.' Being exposed to PPIs on a more compulsory and regular basis throughout education could be a simple way of understanding certain people's mindsets and potentially even foster collaboration between teachers and therapists caring for the well-being of the same individuals.

The profound impact of PPIs on individuals' personal views about emotions is vividly depicted in Lia's illustration (Figure 10.4), which not only represents the concept of emotional unity and acceptance but also encapsulates her transformative journey through emotional education. Lia's illustration poignantly captures the essence of shared human experience through the depiction of two sets of hands coming together. This visual metaphor underscores the universal nature of emotions and the communal journey of acknowledgment and acceptance. The written message accompanying the visual emphasizes that emotions are a universal experience, highlighting a fundamental aspect of EI: the recognition that no one is isolated in their emotional experiences.

> What I have learned from today's class is that EVERYONE has emotions. It is, in fact, a universal experience, and you should NEVER blame yourself for having emotions and never underestimate them! I have a tendency to do that, because I believe (or used to do that) that my own emotions are unreasonable and I'm basically overexaggerating. Now I understand that I am not alone and YOU AREN'T AS WELL!

Through this message, Lia communicates a powerful shift from self-criticism to self-acceptance, a crucial step in EI that fosters empathy toward oneself and others. Additionally, Lia's personal note about wanting to tattoo one of her hands as a permanent reminder of her journey toward embracing her emotions illustrates the deeply personal impact of understanding (and accepting) one's emotions.

In Lia's journal entry, she also lists several English language songs that resonate with her emotional journey. These songs served as emotional and linguistic touchpoints, allowing her to explore and articulate

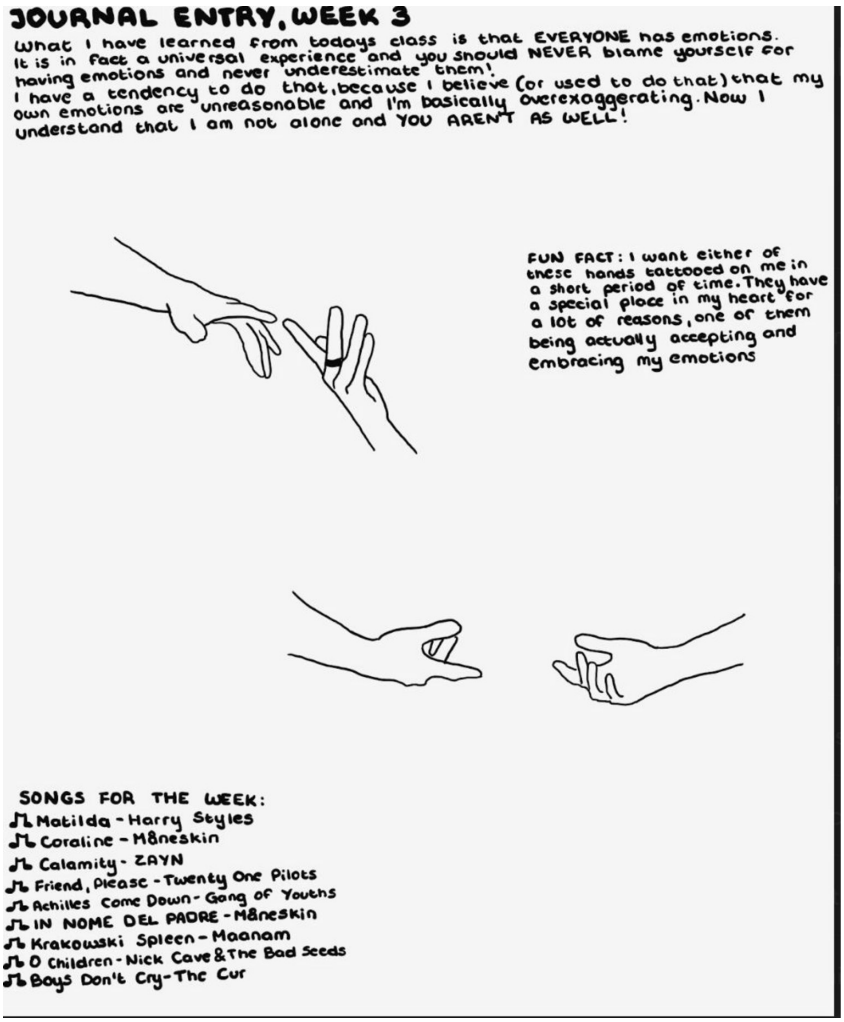


Figure 10.4 Lia's illustration of understanding and embracing emotions

complex feelings in English. By connecting to the emotional narratives in the music, expressed through themes such as vulnerability (e.g. Calamity by Zayn), resilience (e.g. Matilda by Harry Styles) and hope (e.g. O Children by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds), Lia practiced interpreting and expressing emotional meaning in her second language. This deepened her EI and may have also strengthened her language skills in contextually meaningful ways. Her engagement illustrates how PPIs can intersect with language learning, utilizing culturally relevant materials, such as music, to help students better understand and express emotions in English. In this way, Lia's experience demonstrates how emotional intelligence

can be cultivated through the use of authentic language and emotional resonance.

Managing emotion: Regulation strategies for well-being and growth

The fourth and last branch of the four-branch EI model centers on regulating emotions to foster emotional and intellectual growth, allowing individuals to handle their feelings effectively and enhance their overall development. In language learning, emotional regulation is critical for creating a balanced emotional state that supports communication, comprehension and retention, particularly in high-pressure academic environments. In the context of this study, our analysis has revealed that participants perceive these PPIs to equip them with peace, control and security – emotions much needed to navigate times of uncertainty, emotional struggle and fear, such as starting university. The PPIs conducted in this study seem to be, thus, extremely useful and handy tools for our participants for managing their emotions and generally achieving more satisfaction and happiness in everyday situations. For instance, as Mar summarized it convincingly,

> For me, the most important thing I have learned during this course is how to deal with anxiety, how to understand it better and prevent it from having a negative influence on the way that I feel and behave. I feel that now, when I know the methods and exercises that help with battling anxiety, I enjoy my studies and simply being a student more than I did before.

Similarly, as other participants' answers (n=12) suggest, an important stressor for most of them was school/university (i.e. long hours at the university, many assignments and being separated from their families, for those who moved to the capital for their studies), thus negatively impacting those already suffering from anxiety and exacerbating their mental well-being. For L2 learners, this stress is often heightened by linguistic challenges, cultural adaptation and the pressure to perform in a new language. These PPIs provided participants with strategies to regulate these emotions and create a more positive association with learning English. The PPIs in the English language classroom were, therefore, perceived as a welcome tool to detach (i.e. to manage emotions emanating) from the harsh reality of pressure, exams and high expectations. Sail, for instance, reported that, 'due to your classes, I've learnt to identify my worries and negative emotions and reduce them by making connections'. Jojo, as her takeaway message from the PPIs, suggested that 'to protect ourselves from burnout, depression, anxiety, and many more disorders/illnesses, we must put in the work and reach out, do some research, take

up hobbies, find time and the energy to do things that bring us joy, or simply give ourselves the time and permission to process and find a solution'. Jojo's response emphasizes how managing emotions is directly linked to students' ability to maintain engagement and confidence in language learning tasks, fostering resilience and perseverance in challenging situations.

The practical application of PPIs is further demonstrated in participants' final video projects, which address a range of important topics such as overcoming stress and enhancing well-being through environmental wellness and targeted interventions for specific groups, such as teenagers. All video projects (n=14) included specific language-learning contexts, such as strategies to reduce anxiety during oral presentations in English or tips to stay motivated while preparing for language proficiency exams. The examples provided in the videos showcase the intersection of emotional management and language learning, as participants applied PPI techniques to address challenges unique to their linguistic journeys. Each video discusses these issues and also shares practical strategies (i.e. PPIs) that have proven helpful for participants, as required for this final project.

Individual variation and voices

While most students reported positive outcomes, individual preferences and responses varied. Some students, like Alka, found systematic journaling difficult to sustain, while others, like Dela and Sail, considered it their favorite technique. This diversity highlights the need for offering a broad range of PPI strategies (see Appendix A) to accommodate varying learning styles, emotional needs and personal preferences. Research has consistently shown that the success of PPIs depends on aligning the intervention with the individual characteristics that shape personal engagement, including the self (i.e. personal traits and dispositions), motive (i.e. goals and intentions) and task (i.e. context and demands), as this personalized approach significantly enhances their impact on well-being and emotional development (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). In our view, this variation does not diminish the effectiveness of PPIs; rather, it underscores the importance of personalizing emotional intelligence development. For instance, participants explored and applied techniques such as mindfulness, reframing negative thoughts and affirmations to manage stress in and beyond the classroom. These strategies were featured prominently in students' final video projects, where learners demonstrated their ability to transfer theoretical knowledge into daily habits that enhanced emotional well-being and language learning. Such multimodal applications underscore the potential for PPIs to build lasting, meaningful tools for personal development.

Although some techniques, like systematic journal writing or the 'three positives for one negative' strategy, resonated more with some students than others, all participants reported gaining insights about themselves, their emotional patterns and their relational well-being. As Alka shared, 'after two days, I couldn't remember to do it. So I came to the conclusion that the techniques that involve systematic writing aren't for me.' In contrast, Sail found journaling 'helpful … to appreciate tiny things that I used to take for granted', and Dela described it as her favorite technique. The language used by participants to describe PPIs reflects the depth of their impact, both emotionally and holistically. While Dela expressed gratitude for the basics – 'air, water, sun, my body, sleep and food' – Alka noted feeling 'more grateful and less gloomy', a particularly meaningful shift given the common emotional challenges students face during the dark, cold Polish winter. For many, PPIs not only influenced their academic experiences but also positively shaped their perceptions of everyday life. As Sail summarized: 'Without exaggeration, I would say that it has turned my world upside down and started a brand-new chapter in my life, in which I am VERY different.' This spectrum of responses affirms that PPIs, when implemented with flexibility and attention to individual differences, can support a wide range of learners in developing emotional intelligence in ways that are meaningful and sustainable.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore how PPIs, when embedded in a language learning context, impact students' EI and language learning. Our findings suggest that participants demonstrated progression and development through all four branches of Mayer et al.'s (2016) EI model. Crucially, students recognized and managed their emotions more effectively and used these emotions to enrich their cognitive processes and interpersonal interactions. Importantly, these developments were self-reported and occurred over a relatively short five-week period. That said, these findings are particularly relevant in the context of language learning, where emotional states can profoundly influence motivation, anxiety levels and overall language acquisition (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Our findings align with Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, which posits that positive emotions broaden individuals' thought-action repertoire, thereby building enduring personal resources. Notably, the data suggest that PPIs cultivated an environment where students like Mar and Pal felt empowered to constructively reinterpret and manage stressful situations. Mar's shift from frustration to gratitude while 'being stuck on a very full bus' and Pal's strategic use of an unexpected delay to engage in a reflective activity exemplify the importance of learning how to apply, in practical terms, our EI skills to successfully navigate daily challenges.

The narratives shared by participants throughout the study highlight the role of PPIs in fostering resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms, crucial for academic and personal growth. Moreover, the profound personal transformations and communal engagements observed echo broader findings in the field regarding the impact of PPIs on enhancing connectivity and personal growth (Al-Jarf, 2022; Oladrostam et al., 2024). Participants like Dela and Lia demonstrated a nuanced understanding and management of emotions, which is crucial for their psychological well-being. In the language learning context, these transformations are particularly impactful because language classrooms inherently involve communication, social interaction and the expression of identity – all areas where EI plays a critical role (Pentón Herrera & Darragh, 2024). We suggest that participants' transformations may not be isolated experiences but may point to the potential of PPIs to contribute to a more supportive learning environment, including in ways that may extend beyond the classroom. At the same time, because the student accounts presented here primarily reflect personal and emotional experiences, the implications for language learning should be interpreted cautiously.

The transformative experiences experienced by the participants lead us to conclude that language classrooms are particularly apt to accommodate students and their psychological/mental needs. The language learning context presents unique opportunities for implementing PPIs (Rogers et al., 2024), as it focuses on communication and self-expression. Engaging with a new language requires learners to navigate unfamiliar cultural norms and express complex ideas and emotions in ways they may not have before, making EI an essential component of effective language learning (Zarezadeh, 2013). Language teachers can effectively address these important aspects of student life by integrating tools, techniques and materials, such as PPIs, which focus on students' and their own well-being, mental wellness and health. As the participants' responses have shown, using music, arts and several games were common coping strategies and reduced students' anxiety and stress, and improved their mood, well-being and academic performance, especially in demanding exam phases.

The language classroom and its multimodality can create a safe space for learners, almost detached from reality, as it can enable cognitive/mental travel, project ideas and futures yet to be realized, and process traumatic experiences from the past (Becker & Magno, 2022), thus expanding and strengthening students' EI. Arguably, with language learning and increased proficiency in communication as major objectives in the English language classroom, different kinds of media such as music, arts and games serve as ideal authentic materials and content for learners – both from a linguistic and a PP perspective. These media not only facilitate language skills but also provide platforms for emotional expression and reflection, allowing PPIs to be seamlessly integrated into

language activities. More specifically, language learning and teaching can foster (internal) dialogue (McGovern & Yeganeh, 2023) – a much-appreciated technique by our participants that is expressed through speaking or writing exercises in multiple languages and semiotic resources (Becker, 2021). Further, exploring metaphors to express one's state of mental health, concerns, worries and needs might be another way of assisting students.

Although this study was limited to five weeks, future research could examine the long-term impacts of PPIs on EI and their role in L2 teaching and learning. Investigating how PPIs can specifically enhance language proficiency, perhaps by reducing language anxiety or increasing motivation, would contribute valuable insights to the psychology of language learning. Studies could also explore the effectiveness of different types of PPIs, such as mindfulness versus gratitude interventions, and assess their differential impacts across diverse educational contexts and across different time frames – short- and long-term. Additionally, incorporating experimental designs with control groups could provide more robust evidence of the causative effects of PPIs on both EI and language proficiency. By continuing to advance this line of research, we can contribute to shaping educational practices that enhance language skills and promote mental health and well-being, which, in our view, are essential for building a better world together.

Final Thoughts

In this study and throughout the course, students explored language and also began to explore themselves. Through the use of PPIs, the classroom became a space for reflection, emotional expression and connection. The students' voices, at times joyful, at times vulnerable, reveal a deep need for holistic pedagogies that do not isolate language from life. We conclude that embedding PPIs into language education holds considerable promise, not as a supplement to traditional instruction but – importantly – as an integral thread of it. For educators, this means reimagining the classroom as both a place for linguistic progress and a space for emotional growth and human development. We understand, however, that PPI's success is closely linked to the educator's comfort, willingness and preparedness to engage in emotionally focused pedagogy. When educators feel equipped and supported, PPIs can move beyond surface-level exercises to genuinely address the deeper emotional dimensions of language learning, creating more meaningful and impactful learning experiences. Similarly, when students learn to identify and express their feelings, regulate their emotions and empathize with others, through and in an L2, they are not just becoming better speakers; we are all becoming more connected and supportive in our increasingly interconnected world.

Notes

(1) We recognize the significant contributions of seminal scholars to the field of PP. However, for ethical reasons related to the nature of some of their work, we have chosen not to include certain references.
(2) The ability model refers to a theoretical framework that conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a set of measurable cognitive abilities – such as perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions – rather than as stable personality traits or general dispositions (Mayer et al., 2004).
(3) The data presented has a mix of American and British English, as participants spoke different variations of English, and all varieties of English were welcomed in the classroom. We would like to honor the participants' words and use their English variety in this section.

References

Al-Jarf, R. (2022). Positive psychology in the foreign language and translation classroom. *Journal of Psychology and Behavior Studies*, *2*(1), 50–62. https://doi.org/10.32996/jpbs.2022.1.6

American Psychological Association. (2017). *Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct*. http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/

Becker, A. (2021). 'I'm always in this conflict'– Students' struggle of plurilingual identity expression, linguistic insecurity, and assimilation in Switzerland's higher education. *European Education, 53*(1), 15–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/10564934.2021.1971542

Becker, A., & Magno, C. (2022). Cognitive migration through language: Capturing linguistic movement and barriers in language portraits. In C. Magno, J. Lew, & S. Rodriguez (Eds.), *(Re)Mapping migration and education: Centering methods and methodologies* (pp. 134–157). Brill.

Biswas-Diener, R. (2011). Applied positive psychology: Progress and challenges. *The European Health Psychologist*, *13*(2), 24–26.

Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., Shiffman, S., Lerner, N., & Salovey, P. (2006). Relating emotional abilities to social functioning: A comparison of self-report and performance measures of emotional intelligence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *91*(4), 780–795. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.91.4.780

Bruce, C. (2010). *Emotional literacy in the early years*. SAGE.

Compton, W. C., & Hoffman, E. (2020). *Positive psychology: The science of happiness and flourishing* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2024). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. Harper & Row.

Dewaele, J-M., Chen, X., Padilla, A. M., & Lake, J. (2019). The flowering of positive psychology in foreign language teaching and acquisition research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02128

Driver, M. (2024). Realities of comfort and discomfort in the heritage language classroom: Looking to transformative positive psychology for juggling a double-edged sword. *The Modern Language Journal*, *108*(S1), 147–167. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12899

Falout, J. (2016). The dynamics of past selves in language learning and well-being. In P. D. MacIntyre, T. Gregersen, & S. Mercer (Eds.), *Positive psychology in SLA* (pp. 112–129). Multilingual Matters.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology. The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *The American Psychologist*, *56*(3), 218–226. https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.56.3.218

Gabryś-Barker, D., & Gałajda, D. (Eds.). (2016). *Positive psychology perspectives on foreign language learning and teaching*. Springer.

Gkonou, C., Dewaele, J-M., & King, J. (Eds.). (2020). *The emotional rollercoaster of language teaching*. Multilingual Matters.

Helgesen, M. (2016). Happiness in ESL/EFL: Bringing positive psychology to the classroom. In P. D. MacIntyre, T. Gregersen, & S. Mercer (Eds.), *Positive psychology in SLA* (pp. 305–323). Multilingual Matters.

Linley, P. A., & Joseph, S. (Eds.). (2004). *Positive psychology in practice*. Wiley.

Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). How do simple positive activities increase well-being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *22*(1), 57–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721412469809

MacIntyre, P. D., & Gregersen, T. (2012). Emotions that facilitate language learning: The positive-broadening power of the imagination. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *2*(2), 193–213. https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2012.2.2.4

MacIntyre, P. D., & Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2019). Setting an agenda for positive psychology in SLA: Theory, practice, and research. *The Modern Language Journal*, *103*(1), 262–274. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12544

Martínez Agudo, J. de D. (Ed.). (2018). *Emotions in second language teaching: Theory, research, and teacher education*. Springer.

Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (2016). The ability model of emotional intelligence: Principles and updates. *Emotion Review*, *8*(4), 290–300. https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073916639667

Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. Sluyter (Eds.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications* (pp. 3–31). Basic Books.

Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2004). Emotional intelligence: Theory, findings, and implications. *Psychological Inquiry*, *15*(3), 197–215. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1503_02

McGovern, K. R., & Yeganeh, V. (2023). Drama for dialogue of civilizations: Performance as storytelling in the adult ESOL classroom. *TESOL Journal*, *14*(4), e745. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.745

Mercer, S., & Gregersen, T. (2020). *Teacher wellbeing*. Oxford University Press.

Mercer, S., MacIntyre, D., Gregersen, T., & Talbot, K. (2018). Positive language education: Combining positive education and language education. *Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition*, *4*(2), 11–31. https://journals.us.edu.pl/index.php/TAPSLA/article/view/7011

Oladrostam, E., Rahmati, T., & Nushi, M. (2024). Integrating positive psychology into an English as a foreign language teacher education program. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, *9*(4), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-023-00226-0

Parks, A. C., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2013). Positive interventions: Past, present, and future. In T. B. Kashdan & J. Ciarrochi (Eds.), *Mindfulness, acceptance, and positive psychology: The seven foundations of well-being* (pp. 140–165). New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

Pavlenko, A. (2013). The affective turn in SLA: From 'affective factors' to 'language desire' and 'commodification of affect'. In D. Gabryś-Barker & J. Bielska (Eds.), *The affective dimension in second language acquisition* (pp. 3–28). Multilingual Matters.

Peng, Y., Lou, K., & Xiong, T. (2024). Understanding teacher professional commitment from a positive psychology perspective: A case from Myanmar's Chinese language

teachers. *The Modern Language Journal*, *108*(1), 222–242. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12908

Pentón Herrera, L. J. (2020). Social-emotional learning in TESOL: What, why, and how. *Journal of English Learner Education*, *10*(1), 1–16.

Pentón Herrera, L. J. (2024a). Social-emotional learning in ESOL with ninth-grade newcomers. *ELT Journal*, *78*(2), 127–136. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccad051

Pentón Herrera, L. J. (2024b). An agenda for emotional intelligence in language teacher education. *Language Teacher Education Research*, *1*, 48–63. https://doi.org/10.32038/lter.2024.01.03

Pentón Herrera, L. J., & Darragh, J. (2024). *Social-emotional learning in English language teaching*. Michigan University Press.

Pentón Herrera, L. J., & Martínez-Alba, G. (2021). *Social-emotional learning in the English language classroom: Fostering growth, self-care, and independence*. TESOL Press.

Pentón Herrera, L. J., Martínez-Alba, G., & Trinh, E. T. (Eds.). (2023). *Teacher well-being in English language teaching: An ecological approach*. Routledge.

Rogers, C., McMurry, B. L., & Dewey, D. P. (2024). Teaching positive psychology lessons in an intensive English program. *ELT Journal*, *78*(2), 137–148. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccad052

Sadeghi, K., & Pourbahram, R. (2024). Exploring factors affecting English language teacher wellbeing: Insights from positive psychology. *System*, *122*, 103274. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103274

Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, *9*(3), 185–211. https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG

Sin, N. L., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2009). Enhancing well-being and alleviating depressive symptoms with positive psychology interventions: A practice-friendly meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *65*(5), 461–553. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20593

Stringer, E. T. (2013). *Action research* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Stringer, E. (2014). *Action research in education* (2nd ed.). Pearson.

Tyng, C. M., Amin, H. U., Saad, M. N. M., & Malik, A. S. (2017). The influences of emotion on learning and memory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *8*, 1454. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01454

Wang, X., & Li, Y. (2022). The predictive effects of foreign language enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom on general and domain-specific English achievement in online English classrooms. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 1050226. https://doi.org/10.3389%2Ffpsyg.2022.1050226

World Economic Forum. (WEF). (2025). *The future of jobs report 2025*. https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/

Wu, W., & Kabilan, M. K. (2025). Emotion-related theories in classroom language learning: The conceptualization and causation of emotions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *16*, 1551640. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1551640

Zarezadeh, T. (2013). The effect of emotional intelligence in English language learning. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *84*, 1286–1289. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.745

Appendix A: Weekly PPIs

Week	PPIs and Short Descriptions
Week 1: Positive psychology – Main tenets and principles	Three Good Things: Students write down three positive things that happen each day and reflect on why they happen. Gratitude Letter: Students compose a letter to someone they're grateful for and have the option to share or reflect privately. Savoring: Students take time to slow down and savor a positive moment, documenting their sensory and emotional experience.
Week 2: The self and others	Strengths Spotting: Students identify personal strengths and those of peers, discussing how these strengths can support well-being. Random Acts of Kindness: Students plan and complete small kind acts for others, followed by reflection. Best Possible Self: Students imagine and write about their best possible future selves in detail.
Week 3: Language and strategies	Emotional Vocabulary Building: Students learn new emotional terms in English and apply them in journal reflections. Reframing: Students practice shifting their perspectives on challenges, using new language structures. Mindful Journaling: Students journal guided entries focusing on emotional states and language used to express them.
Week 4: Scenarios and responses	Perspective-Taking Scenarios: Students analyze short scenarios with various topics (e.g., prejudice, etc.) and explore responses using empathy. Conflict Resolution Mapping: Students practice vocabulary and structures related to conflict management. Empathy Mapping: Learners map out others' feelings and thoughts based on hypothetical classroom or real-life conflicts.
Week 5: Positive psychology in action	Affirmation Writing: Students create personal affirmations and practice using them aloud or in writing. Meaning-Making Projects: Students make final video projects connecting PPIs to personal and social relevance. Reflective Closure: Students reflect on their five-week journey using metaphors, visuals, and/or future goals.