Examining Interfaces between Advances in Positive Psychology and L2 Learning and Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Second/foreign language (L2) education has long been regarded as one of the most emotional and challenging endeavors around the globe (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2023; Derakhshan et al., 2022; Kruk & Pawlak, 2022; Li et al., 2023; Liu & Song, 2021; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Mercer, 2018; Pawlak et al., 2020; Plonsky et al, 2021; Wang, 2023). Such an intricate nature is due to the interactions among several factors in this process which are linguistic, cognitive, sociocultural, and emotional in nature (Derakhshan, Wang, et al., 2023; Pawlak & Kruk, 2022). Therefore, success in L2 learning and teaching depends on various psycho-emotional factors and contextual drivers that exert an impact on different dimensions of one's behaviors and L2 performance (Derakhshan, 2022b, 2022c; Pan et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2022). However, for decades the investigation of emotions in L2 education was limited to negative emotions and miseries such as stress, anxiety, boredom, burnout, depression, and the like (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2023; Jin et al., 2021; Pawlak et al., 2023; Solhi et al., 2023; Zawodniak et al., 2023). The detrimental consequences of negative emotions were exaggerated during this period, and it was not until the turn of the century that positive emotions and personal strengths began to gain momentum (MacIntyre, 2021; Seligman, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). This drastic shift toward strengths and positive affect was revolutionized by a new school of psychology called positive psychology (PP). PP, as the name signifies, underscores positive emotions such as love, joy, resilience, optimism, engagement, well-being, happiness, hope, flow, motivation, and so forth. The proponents of PP point out that, instead of dwelling excessively on the dire consequences of negative emotions and other deleterious factors in education, including L2 education, teachers need to look on the bright side and the way one's strengths can enrich, flourish, and expedite his/her performance and sense of happiness. What is crucial, PP psychology does not deny the existence and impact of negative emotions but, rather, takes the stance that positive and negative emotions play different roles in the process of learning. According to Fredrickson's (2001, 2003) broaden-and-build theory, while negative emotions tend to narrow learners' field of attention to cope with unpleasant consequences, positive emotions lead to a broadened field of attention, encouraging exploration and play. As Mercer and MacIntyre (2014) argue in their landmark publication introducing PP to SLA, "Differentiating positive and negative emotions leads to a more nuanced understanding of how they affect L2 learning and communication" (p. 162).

As its basis, PP rests on three major pillars, including positive experiences, positive individual traits, and positive institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). These core features and the emotional essence of L2 education bring into the spotlight the power of positive emotions, which are at the heart of effective L2 education (Dewaele et al., 2019). As foregrounded by MacIntyre (2016), PP involves at least 36 potential factors that impact L2 education, including attachment security, benefit-finding, mindfulness, life-longings, optimistic explanatory style, personal control, positive growth, self-verification, happiness, resilience, humility, positive ethics, social support, wisdom, relationship connections, meaning in life, self-efficacy, toughness, subjective

well-being, gratitude, sustainable happiness, self-determination, character strengths, curiosity and interest, hope, emotional intelligence, optimism, forgiveness, courage, compassion, love, positive emotions, self-esteem, emotional creativity, reality negotiation, and attachment security. These constructs have gained L2 researchers' interest and have led to a proliferation of studies that have provided a 'fresh air to breathe' after decades of overestimating negative emotions and the problems they generate (Derakhshan, Greenier, et al., 2023; Derakhshan, Solhi, et al., 2023; Kruk et al., 2023; Qin, 2024; Zare et al., 2023). This paradigm shift has spawned many cutting-edge ideas and insights regarding the role of emotions and psycho-emotional drives in L2 education. Nevertheless, the interplay of PP factors and L2 teaching and learning is still in its initial stages and requires even more empirical endeavors. In tune with this demand, the articles compiled in this special issue of Porta Linguarum seek to unveil the role of PP in L2 learning and teaching in light of various implications and applications that this flourishing school of psychology can have for both learners striving to master a given additional language and educators trying to facilitate this process.

INTRODUCING THE SPECIAL ISSUE

The current special issue comprises 10 empirical studies that can be broadly divided into two different groups: a) *implications and applications of PP for L2 learners*; and b) *implications and applications of PP for L2 teachers*. The first group of studies focuses on the function of PP in L2 learning, and the second group concentrates on the role that PP may serve in L2 teaching.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF PP FOR L2 LEARNERS

In the opening paper, Dewaele, Ferrer, Ahmed, and Albakistani examine whether multilingualism can affect FL learners' anxiety and foreign language enjoyment. For this purpose, they used three different existing databases that contained relevant data. Statistical analyses of the databases revealed that multilingualism has a positive impact on FL learners' foreign language enjoyment. The analyses also demonstrated that multilingualism can negatively influence FL learners' anxiety. In the second paper, Albert and Csizér explore the interactions between emotions, motivation, and language learning autonomy. To do so, they invited a large sample of secondary school students from different Hungarian schools to answer standardized questionnaires. Concerning learner autonomy, they found that the only association that seems to be significant across each school is students' motivation, while the role of the other scales is limited to some of the schools. They also revealed some meaningful differences among Hungarian students regarding the role of emotion and motivation in language learning autonomy. The next paper in this part of this SI by Al-Hoorie reports a study on Saudi English language learners who were given language-related tasks and asked to demonstrate their preferred incentive structures in independent and interdependent contexts. It was shown that learners demonstrated meta-motivational awareness in terms of promotion. The outcomes also indicated that female participants exhibited a marked overgeneralization bias, clearly favoring a promotion-inducing incentive structure even for vigilance tasks. In the subsequent article, Derakhshan and Fathi provide new insights into the predictors of student engagement. They report on a quantitative study examining the role of ideal L2 self and growth mindset in promoting EFL students' engagement.

In this research, three self-report questionnaires were used to look into Iranian EFL students' appraisal of their growth mindset, ideal L2 self, and engagement. Results revealed that ideal L2 self and growth mindset can bring about significant changes in EFL students' engagement. On their part, Pawlak, Li, Zawodniak, and Kruk report an empirical investigation in which they use a mixed-methods approach to address the role of general grit and L2 grit in predicting Polish university students' motivated behavior. They also consider the mediating effect of self-perceived proficiency on the interaction between general grit, L2 grit, and motivated behavior. To these ends, they employed a composite questionnaire comprising four closed-ended scales and semi-structured interviews to delve into the variables in question. They found that both general grit and L2 grit can positively predict university students' motivated behavior. They also revealed that self-perceived proficiency can significantly mediate the association between general grit, L2 grit, and motivated behavior. In the next paper, Deng, Zhang, and Mohamed probe into English-major students' perceptions of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in relation to NNESTs' psychological well-being. Three pre-designed scales were used to assess English students' motivation and their perceptions of NESTs' and NNESTs' effectiveness. The study findings demonstrated that students perceived NESTs and NNESTs as having different strengths and weaknesses. Results also exhibited that English students' motivation was closely tied to their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. In the last paper in this category, Wu, Wang, and Wang report on a mixed-methods research investigating the interaction between burnout, resilience, and engagement. In this research, a group of EFL learners recruited from various senior high schools were asked to fill out three validated scales. They were also invited to take part in an online interview session. Results evinced that there is a reciprocal relationship between EFL learners' burnout, resilience, and engagement.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF PP FOR L2 TEACHERS

In the first paper in this part of our special issue, Sadeghi and Pourbahram discuss how major changes in expatriate teachers' professional lives can affect their well-being. In order to investigate this matter, online interview sessions were conducted with a group of Iranian EFL teachers who have immigrated to Turkey and are teaching in Turkish private schools. The results of the study showed that expatriate teachers reported a higher level of well-being compared to their colleagues working at Iranian schools. Subsequently, Solhi, Ünsal, Azari Noughabi, and Atay report on an empirical study carried out in multiple universities in Turkey. The study sought to assess the interplay between L2 teachers' well-being, emotion regulation, and L2 grit. For this purpose, three reliable questionnaires were distributed among a group of university instructors. The analysis of the data demonstrated that well-being and emotion regulation can positively predict L2 teachers' grit. Finally, Kim and Kim conclude this part of the special issue by exploring the challenges that beginning EFL teachers face in maintaining their resilience during professional development programs. In this case study, two beginning teachers were purposefully selected from a junior high school in South Korea. The results obtained from semi-structured interviews displayed that beginning teachers commonly face a variety of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and environmental challenges in sustaining their resilience.

CONCLUSIONS

The sheer number of articles initially submitted to the current special issue and the 10 papers eventually published in it, underline the relevance and importance of PP in the L2 education environments, including second and foreign language classes. Overall, the present collection of research studies contributes to the existing body of literature on the implications and applications of PP in the L2 education domain. Furthermore, it adds to our understanding of the key role of emotions and psycho-emotional drives in L2 teaching and learning. Additionally, the special issue offers new insights into the innovative and emerging approaches for examining teachers' and students' emotions in L2 education contexts. Finally, it is worth mentioning that several reviewers, editors, and colleagues worked closely with us on the proofs and examinations of the articles. Therefore, hereby, we express our immense appreciation to them for their contribution, assistance, and encouragement. We close this editorial with sincere thanks to all those individuals, who made this issue possible for the universal uses and inspiration to take away.

Ali Derakhshan & Mirosław Pawlak
Guest Editors

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