


# Chapter 1

## Could Positive Psychology Be the Missing Link in Language Education? Key Factors of Positive Psychology in Language Teaching

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter examines the incorporation of critical positive psychology (PP) constructs, including resiliency, motivation, classroom engagement, and positive emotions, into the fields of second language acquisition research and pedagogy. The chapter illustrates how emotionally supportive learning environments promote cognitive flexibility, learner autonomy, and enhanced linguistic outcomes, as it is founded on theoretical models such as the Broaden-and-Build Theory and the PERMA framework. It emphasizes the function of PP in improving academic performance, emotional resilience, and motivation, drawing on empirical studies from a variety of sociocultural contexts. The chapter posits that PP can enhance language education by fostering emotionally meaningful, learner-centered experiences and by underscoring the necessity of pedagogical approaches that are cognizant of cultural differences in affective expression and learners' expectations.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Psychological theories have significantly influenced instructional methods, particularly in language education, which has traditionally been based on cognitive and behavioral paradigms (Dörnyei, 2019; Mitchell et al. 2019). For decades, research on second language acquisition (SLA) has focused on quantifiable academic results and the mitigation of adverse psychological conditions, including anxiety, stress, and burnout (Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009; Vaezi & Fallah, 2011). This research provides insights into the acquisition of linguistic proficiency by analyzing factors including motivation, aptitude, identity, interaction, and learning conditions (Dörnyei, 2005; Ortega, 2014). The contributions have notably influenced SLA theory and pedagogy, impacting curriculum design, teaching practices, and assessment methods. According to Ellis (2015), SLA examines the processes through which individuals learn a language subsequent to their first, incorporating cognitive, social, and instructional aspects. This chapter examines instructional SLA, which takes place in formal educational environments. It emphasizes the intentional design of teaching strategies and classroom interactions to facilitate language acquisition across various sociocultural contexts.

Emotions, while present in classroom settings, were often marginalized or treated as obstacles to learning rather than essential elements of the learning process (Budzińska & Majchrzak, 2021), particularly during the prevalence of cognitive paradigms in SLA, which were shaped by structuralist and Chomskyan linguistics. In this period, language acquisition was primarily viewed as a cognitive process focused on the manipulation of abstract structures, while affective variables were considered secondary or disruptive to rational learning. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis recognizes the role of emotion but positions it as a limiting factor, proposing that high anxiety or low motivation may obstruct input and hinder acquisition. Studies on Foreign Language Anxiety (Horwitz, 1986) similarly examined the adverse effects of negative emotions, thereby reinforcing a deficit-oriented perspective. This deficit framing led to a scholarly inclination to pathologize emotion instead of examining its generative or facilitative roles in learning.

Positive psychology (PP) emerged in the late 1990s, marking a paradigmatic shift in the larger field of psychology and prompting a more balanced exploration of human functioning. Introduced by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), PP advocates for the scientific study of strengths, virtues, and conditions that enable individuals and communities to flourish. Along with the reduction of distress, emphasis is also placed on the development of positive emotions, character traits, and situations that support well-being (Donaldson et al., 2011; Peterson, 2006). Although its intellectual origins extend to ancient concepts of virtue and flourishing (Snyder

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