


Chapter 12

The Landscape of Positive Psychology in Foreign Language Teaching: A Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This bibliometric study uses Scopus and Web of Science data to explore the growth and impact of Positive Psychology in Foreign Language Teaching research from 1981 to March 2025. Findings reveal exponential growth in publications from 19 pre-2013 to 845 in 2024, reflecting increased interest in integrating PP into language education. Leading journals include Frontiers in Psychology and System, while authors such as Wang, Dewaele, and Derakhshan focus on various aspects of PP in FLT. China, Iran, and Europe lead institutional contributions. Thematic analysis reveals a shift from foundational topics, such as autonomy, to contemporary issues, including grit and emotion regulation. Despite PP's interdisciplinary promise, the field exhibits regional compartmentalization and needs longitudinal, cross-cultural studies to validate interventions. The findings emphasize PP's transformative potential in encouraging holistic, learner-centered FLT practices, advocating for future research to bridge theoretical and practical gaps through the integration of technology and equity-focused strategies.

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THE CONCEPT OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

The discipline of psychology has undergone a notable transformation in recent decades, marked by the emergence of Positive Psychology (PP). Positive psychology was pioneered by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000). It emerged as a scientific study of well-being and flourishing, shifting psychology's focus from pathology to strengths and positive emotions. It is a branch of psychology focusing on the scientific study of well-being, resilience, and human flourishing. In recent years, PP has shifted from traditional pathology-centered approaches to understanding strengths, virtues, positive emotions, and flourishing within individuals and communities. Nowadays, instead of merely addressing the negative aspects of human experience, PP aims to identify and cultivate the elements that enable individuals to thrive (Gabryś-Barker & Gałajda, 2016; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Today, PP encompasses exploring positive emotions such as joy and happiness, beneficial personal traits like grit and resilience, and supportive institutions that facilitate human flourishing. The primary objective of PP is to understand, test, discover, and promote the factors that enable individuals and communities to thrive. It focuses on the positive aspects of life and the methods that can be demonstrated to enhance well-being, investigating topics such as happiness, hope, gratitude, well-being, and individual strengths (Gabryś-Barker & Gałajda, 2016). This foundational work established key frameworks, such as the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011), which have since been adapted for educational contexts, including foreign language teaching (FLT), to enhance learner and teacher experiences. Recognizing this lineage provides a theoretical anchor for the chapter's exploration of PP's evolution within FLT, grounding its bibliometric analysis.

THE CORE TENETS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive Psychology identifies and nurtures the strengths and virtues that empower individuals and communities to prosper. This field encompasses the exploration of positive emotions (such as joy, interest, and contentment), beneficial individual traits (including character strengths, resilience, and optimism), and supportive institutions (like educational settings) that facilitate human flourishing (Dewaele et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

A fundamental framework in Positive Psychology is Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, which delineates five essential components of well-being: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment.

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