

Introduction

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Background

Dr. Dan Dewey had a vision for a textbook that implemented positive psychology and language learning outcomes. It was brought to life by a research team led by him, which started working on this book while researching whether positive psychology interventions lowered student stress in the classroom significantly (Rogers, 2022). The results showed that there were no negative effects on students' test scores and qualitative data showed a positive reaction to the lesson plans, so we decided to continue the process and make enough lesson plans to fill an entire year of listening and speaking curriculum. It was decided that *Positive Psychology in the Classroom: Lesson Plans for English Language Teachers* would be open source here in Ed Tech Books to allow its influence to reach as many people as possible. We hope to make a positive impact on students, teachers, and institutions by sharing our resources.

How to Use This Book

As you will see in each chapter, there is an intro to the chapter's topic with an explanation on the introduction page. You will also see that each chapter has 10-13 lessons with adapted levels: novice high and intermediate high. These adaptations are based on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012), which is the proficiency scale we use at our institution. Here is an example of an introduction page:

Character Strengths

There are 24 CS that a person can possess, each within a category of six different virtues, which are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These CS are reminders of the best qualities of one's personality. Accepting these CS possessed by oneself and others can be beneficial and challenging based on perception previously acquired, which is why practicing mindfulness and PERMA may be helpful in maintaining well-being. PERMA, mindfulness, and CS are all three subcategories of PP that can be applied in the education system and taught to learners. The practice of teaching PP has become known as positive education (PE).

Knowing the best qualities of a person can help improve many aspects of life. One woman, having taken a survey provided by the Values in Action (VIA) Institute on Character about her signature CS, discovered that self-regulation was her 24th or last strength, meaning it was the one she was worst at. Distraught at this discovery, she worked on self-regulation and took the survey again years later. It moved from 24th to second place (Niemiec, 2017). CS that are weaknesses don't have to remain weaknesses. They can be improved. CS are also relevant and promote flourishing—experiencing positive emotions, social experiences and growth that are associated with “happiness, flow, meaning, love, gratitude, accomplishment” and so forth (Seligman, 2012)—in many different domains of life (Wagner, Pindeus, & Ruch, 2021). Because CS are relevant in multiple aspects of life, knowing personal CS can cultivate improvement in those aspects.

Overview

Overview on Character Strengths - Novice High

Overview on Character Strengths - Intermediate Mid

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence - Novice High

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence - Intermediate Mid

Teamwork

Teamwork - Novice High

Teamwork - Intermediate Mid

Love of Learning

Love of Learning - Novice High

Love of Learning - Intermediate Mid
Kindness
Kindness - Novice High
Kindness - Intermediate Mid
Honesty
Honesty - Novice High
Honesty - Intermediate Mid
Self-Regulation
Self-Regulation - Novice High
Self-Regulation - Intermediate Mid
Curiosity

Curiosity - Novice High
Curiosity - Intermediate Mid
Spirituality
Spirituality - Novice High
Spirituality - Intermediate Mid
Creativity
Creativity - Novice High
Creativity - Intermediate Mid

You may be teaching students that fit one of the proficiency levels well or they may be just below or above one or the other. The lessons were designed to be adapted. Feel free to use the activities as guidelines, change them according to your students' needs, or use activities from both proficiency levels.

The title page of each lesson plan will have a quote that describes the topic being presented in the lesson plans. Here is an example of a lesson title page:

Teamwork

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."

-Helen Keller

Teamwork - Novice High

Teamwork - Intermediate Mid

Each lesson plan has six major sections: Lesson Information, Overview, Activate Background Knowledge, Activities, Follow Up, and Homework. Lesson Information is where you will find the language learning and positive psychology outcomes. This will explain the outcomes for both positive psychology and language learning, and the activities will combine the two. In most activities, you will see positive psychology being used as the content for language learning. This section will also list the materials you will need for the lesson.

Lesson Information

Positive Psychology Learning Outcomes

Students will...

1. recognize positive feelings through answering questions about gratitude.
2. experience and express positive feelings through talking about gratitude.

Language Learning Outcomes

Students will...

1. connect content to background knowledge.
2. actively participate in conversations through proper responses.
3. ask and answer a limited variety of questions.
4. use specific phrases/chunks to express positive feelings through talking about gratitude.

Materials

- [Gratitude PowerPoint](#)

The Overview will simply state what the lesson is about in one to two sentences. The teacher should be able to look at this section to get a quick understanding of the lesson. Activate Background Knowledge is a short three-to-five-minute activity or explanation that will hopefully do just what it is titled: activate students' background knowledge on the lesson topic.

Overview

Explain to students that you will talk about being grateful and about ways to express gratitude.

Activate Background Knowledge

Give the students a minute or so to discuss the following questions:

- What makes you happy? Why?
- What does gratitude mean? (Teacher models answer first)
- When do you experience gratitude? (Teacher models answer first)

The activities are explanations to the teacher about what their students should do. Each lesson has about five to seven activities and are designed to fill a 65-minute time period. Here is a sample activity from Gratitude-Novice High:

Activity 1: Vocabulary/Speaking

Present lexical family: gratitude (n.)/thankfulness, grateful (adj.)/thankful, to be grateful (v.)/thankful, gratefully (adv.)/thankfully

- Definitions and examples:
 - *Gratitude/thankfulness* = the feeling of being happy because of something
 - Ex: I feel gratitude because of/for my family.
 - *(To be) Grateful/Thankful* = happy because of something
 - Ex: I am grateful/thankful for my family.
 - *Gratefully/Thankfully* = in a grateful manner
 - Ex: Thankfully, my family is healthy.
- Discuss: What are we grateful for? Make a list on the board together as a class:
 - family, friends, jobs, home, food, clothes, etc.
- Discuss: What are you grateful for? Why?
 - I am grateful for my mom because she is kind and loving.
 - I am grateful for my mom because she cooks for me.

The next section is Homework where there is a homework assignment for the students to do with the positive psychology topic they just learned in class. Feel free to use the assignment suggested or change it based on what you think your students would benefit most from.

Homework

Record yourself explaining how you feel about calling or writing a thank you message for someone.

- What was difficult about doing that?
- What was easy?
- How do you think the other person felt?

The last section, Follow Up, is another set of three-to-five-minute activities to follow up on each day after the lesson was taught. The lessons design is based on a model where positive psychology lessons are taught on Monday and then each day of class after (Tuesday-Thursday) there is a follow up activity to remind the students what they learned on Monday. This is another aspect of the lesson plan that we hope you will adapt according to your teaching context and schedule.

Follow-Up

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday:

With a partner share 3 things you are grateful for today. Make sure you use one or more of the expressions we learned: I am grateful for..., I feel gratitude for..., I appreciate..., _____ (a person or thing) means so much to me.

Introduction Video

The following video provides examples of the experience teachers had teaching and creating the lessons at Brigham Young University's (BYU) English Language Center (ELC) where these lessons were created and implemented into the curriculum. This video will also provide teachers with a background on how to create and implement the lessons into their specific contexts.

What is Positive Psychology?

"Positive psychology takes you through the countryside of pleasure and gratification, up into the high country of strength and virtue, and finally to the peaks of lasting fulfillment, meaning and purpose" (Seligman, 2002).

The theory behind this book is positive psychology, which has been defined as "the scientific study of what goes right in life," Peterson (2006). Martin Seligman, who has become known as the "father of positive psychology", realized that there was a problem in the traditional approach to psychology as it focused on negative human emotions, whereas positive psychology concentrates on well-being and facing problems with a human strengths perspective rather than focusing on difficulties (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). There are many positive psychology interventions that will be addressed in the lesson plans contained in this book. Some of which include gratitude, hope, self-regulation, and self-compassion. These interventions are synonymous with the human strengths mentioned previously.

Seligman (2009) took positive psychology a step further by implementing it in the education system. In this form, positive psychology has become known as positive education. Positive education has been more specifically defined as "an education for both traditional skills and for happiness." (Seligman, Ernst Gillham, Reivach & Linkins, 2009). Its "fundamental goal" is to "promote flourishing or positive mental health within the school community." (Norris, Williams, O'Connor & Robinson, 2013). Flourishing has been defined in several ways but can largely be described as "both feeling

good and functioning well.” (Norrish, Williams, O’Connor & Robinson, 2013). Seligman also describes flourishing as finding fulfillment in life, accomplishing tasks that are meaningful and worthwhile, and having a connection with others on a deeper level (Seligman, 2012).

Rationale

Positive psychology interventions have rarely been addressed in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). To bridge the gap between SLA and positive psychology, we have written these lesson plans to help students deal with the stress language learners experience while studying English as a second or foreign language. The education experience is naturally stressful (Akkermans, Paradniké, Van der Heijden, & De Vos, 2018) as students are supposed to be pushed and challenged to grow. Language learning adds a layer of stress to being educated as stress and anxiety are common factors in SLA (Dewaele, Chen, Padilla, & Lake, 2019; Mercer, MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Talbot, 2018). Research suggests that to change this we need to consciously practice positivity (Achor, 2010), meaning there are huge benefits to making positivity a consistent practice in SLA students’ daily life. Due to the foreseen benefits of positive psychology in language learning, our belief is that applying these lessons will help reduce the negative side effects of language learning and support flourishing and well-being in English language learners (Rogers, 2022).

Each chapter (see details in chapter introductions) was chosen as units because of Seligman’s (2012) beliefs about positive psychology interventions and how they will help humans flourish. PERMA and Character Strengths came directly from Seligman’s (2002, 2012) research about well-being and human strengths. The Mindfulness chapter was based on research by Shauna Shapiro (2020), specifically about how to show ourselves self-compassion. The other topics in this chapter were decided on based on research by Dr. Dewey and brainstorming what we believed would be the best mindfulness topics for the English language learners we taught.

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