

*Examining emotional intelligence within the context of
positive psychology interventions*

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence has not been widely studied in second language acquisition and studies published to date have been questionnaire-based. In this study we take a qualitative approach to focus on how emotional intelligence is used by two participants, one a learner and the other a pre-service teacher. The two focal participants were selected because they showed the most positive movement toward attaining their possible future L2 selves among a larger sample. Analysis shows the ways in which four branches of emotional intelligence inter-

acted as respondents worked with three activities adapted from the literature on positive psychology: savouring, three good things, and learned optimism. This paper shows how both the learner and teacher employed emotional intelligence to understand and integrate their experiences inside and outside the classroom as part of the language learning and teaching process.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, positive psychology, L2 self, learned optimism

1. Introduction

Positive emotion is one of the three foundational interest areas of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), but the ways in which emotion influences second language acquisition (SLA) have been vastly underestimated (MacIntyre, 2002; Dewaele, 2013). In the SLA literature, a handful of recent studies have introduced the concept of emotional intelligence, which is defined by the ability to think about and think with emotions (Dewaele, Petrides, & Furnham, 2008; Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Yoo, 2002). Understanding how emotions work is relevant to both teachers and learners alike (Arnold, 1999; Dewaele, 2013). In the literature on emotion, Tomkins (1970) argued that emotion is *the* principal driver of human behaviour. Tomkins reasoned that the perpetual presence of emotions, its pervasiveness across situations, and the different action tendencies associated with specific emotions make them the prime source of motivation. Motivation has been well studied in the SLA literature, but emotions have not been as widely studied. In recent years motivation has been studied extensively from the perspective of the L2 self system, with the ideal future self as a consistent, powerful element of motivation (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). There is a need to explore, in more detail, the role of *emotion* in the development of the L2 self system. This qualitative study will examine the facilitating role of emotional intelligence (EI) for persons who experience positive L2 self development.

In this study, we adapted three empirically supported positive psychology exercises—identifying three good things, savouring positive experience, and learned optimism—for the language learning context. Using EI as a theoretical lens (Salovey et al., 2002), we sought to examine how individuals respond in emotional terms to these tools designed to harness the positive-broadening power of positive emotion (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2013). The three activities were implemented in two separate groups, students and pre-service teachers, and we focus in-depth on the respondent from each group who reported the greatest gains in moving toward their individual L2 possible selves. The written

responses to the positive psychology exercises form the basis of our examination of EI in action, with the goal of better understanding the ways in which participants were responding to the interventions. It is important to note, from the outset, that this study is not designed to produce causal statements of the effects of these three exercises on development of the L2 self. Rather, we are using the interventions as exercises to explore in detail what respondents tell us they do when they undertake the positive psychology activities, and how emotions come into play when they react to the activities.

2. Emotion and the L2 self

In recent emotion theory, perhaps the most important development has been differentiating the functions and effects of positive and negative emotions (Fredrickson, 2001, 2006, 2013). Rather than conceptualizing positive as just the absence of negative emotion or treating them as two opposing ends of the same continuum, positive and negative emotions are best understood along two interacting dimensions of experience. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2013, p. 193), drawing on Fredrickson's (2006) theory, describe the properties of positive emotions in language learning: "Positive emotion facilitates the building of resources because positive emotion tends to broaden a person's perspective, opening the individual to absorb the language." It opens up learners' thinking in an active way, counteracts the effect of debilitating emotion, builds personal resources and generates contentment. It is important to note that it is necessary to find a balance between positive and negative emotion; both are required to function effectively (Fredrickson, 2001, 2013). If positive emotion is like the wind in a ship's sails, negative emotion is like the rudder keeping a ship on course. It is not the presence of positive emotion but the ratio of positive to negative emotion that is especially important for wellbeing (Dewaele & MacIntyre, this volume; Fredrickson, 2013).

For both teachers and students, emotions can be a powerful tool to facilitate language learning; enquiring about emotions provides a window into the unfolding process of language development. Recent research highlighting ways in which future states can be envisioned is one specific way in which teachers and students can work with emotion (see Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). Classroom and task conditions can tap into the power of learners' imaginations to both provoke positive emotion and enhance the cognition that goes along with it. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2013) draw on Dörnyei's L2 self system (2005) to propose that when teachers activate learners' future states by having them elaborate about future self-guides, they arouse two types of emotion support: anticipatory and anticipated emotion (Baumgartner, Pieters, & Bagozzi, 2008). Anticipatory

emotions are created in the present by actively working with possible selves and might be phrased as follows: “I am happy (now) when I think that someday I will talk comfortably with a native speaker!” Anticipated emotions draw attention to emotions that will be experienced in future states, as in the phrase “I will be so excited (in the future) when I speak only the target language in class!”

Anticipated states are also at the centre of Dörnyei’s (2005, p. 99) L2 self system, which includes “. . . specific representations of one’s self in future states, involving thoughts, images and senses, and are in many ways the manifestations, or personalized carriers, of one’s goals and aspirations.” The more clearly one envisions his or her possible future selves, the more detailed the guide to the future can be (Erikson, 2007). When future self-guides are expressed and converted into action, detailed possible selves offer a sort of roadmap—a clear forward-propelling vision that motivates specific performance (MacIntyre, Mackinnon, & Clément, 2009). An important caveat is that for possible selves to be effective, they must be invoked frequently, be accurate depictions of the present, and be perceived as potentially attainable in the future. A future self-guide that lacks clarity, specificity and emotional engagement will have little to do with motivation (MacIntyre et al., 2009). Taking advantage of the facilitating motivational effects of anticipatory and anticipated emotion and integrating those emotions with specific, vivid and rich future L2 self-guides, would likely be easier for learners who have higher levels of EI, a topic just beginning to be explored in the SLA literature.

3. Emotional intelligence

According to Salovey, Mayer, and Caruso (2002, p. 160), EI refers to “the ability to process emotion-laden information competently and to use it to guide cognitive activities like problem solving and to focus energy on required behaviors.” Emotional intelligence reflects the ability to reason non-cognitively, essentially thinking with and about emotion, using an array of skills (Bar-On, 1997; Conte, 2005). A comprehensive review of the various competing schools of thought surrounding the conceptualization and measurement of EI are beyond the scope of the present paper (see Petrides, Furnham, & Mavroveli, 2007). Rather, we chose to use the Salovey et al. (2002) EI model as the theoretical lens through which we analyse the learner and teacher narratives. This model identifies four interconnected branches of EI, each of which may be relevant to L2 learning and self-development, both inside and outside the classroom. The branches of EI are described as follows:

- *Branch 1: Emotional perception and expression.* This branch includes using facial expression, intonation and cultural artefacts to notice and

interpret emotional messages. For example, a language learner who hears hesitation in the voice of her interlocutor in response to an invitation to coffee understands much more about that person's emotions and thoughts than an individual who misses that vocal cue.

- *Branch 2: Emotional facilitation of thought (using emotional intelligence).* This branch involves using emotions to influence cognition in order to solve problems, reason, and make decisions more effectively and creatively. For example, emotions can modify the way a person understands events, making thoughts positive if the person is happy, or negative if the person is sad. A teacher who can generate empathy to facilitate her judgments about why her newcomer to class is shy and reserved is able to entertain multiple viewpoints and therefore use emotion to facilitate reasoning that is deeper and more creative.
- *Branch 3: Emotional understanding.* This branch consists of understanding emotions, what they mean, how they interact, and how they evolve over time. Most fundamentally, this means labelling emotions with words and recognizing their relationships. For example, an emotionally intelligent first-grade English language teacher would deduce that the annoyance and irritation of her Spanish-speaking student over his inability to open his lunch box will escalate to anger if she does not help him with the latch.
- *Branch 4: Emotional management.* This branch addresses the delicate balancing act of emotion regulation. In terms of self-regulation, too much control, minimization or complete elimination of emotion stifles EI, and in regulating emotion in others, harnessing emotions is much healthier than attempts at suppression. For example, a persuasive language learner speaking about the genocide in his native country does not want to deaden the emotions of his audience but rather move the listeners to a deeper understanding of his culture. Tayer, Newman, and McClain (1994) discuss several techniques (used alone or in combination) that individuals use to regulate their moods, some more effective and others less so. We have summarized their findings in Table 1. Within the narratives provided by the participants presented in the results section below, we will identify instances of the four branches of EI in action.

Table 1 Summary of more effective and less effective mood regulating strategies

More effective	Less effective
Physical exercise	Passive mood management (i.e., TV, sleep, food)
Listening to music	Direct tension reduction (i.e., drugs, alcohol)
Social interaction	Spending time alone
Cognitive self-management (i.e., "pep talk")	Avoiding person or thing that caused the bad mood
Pleasant distractions (i.e., hobbies, shopping)	

In SLA, there have been only a few studies of EI (Sucaromana, 2012). Aki (2006) outlines what might be a controversial argument in which he suggests that EI is more influential in SLA success than the traditional idea of mental intelligence. He argues, "success in foreign language teaching depends on the instructor's knowledge of the field, experience, ability to establish communication and intimacy on the basis of EI as well as on the learner's emotional mood, his/her ability to comprehend the language and the level and purpose for which he [or she] learns the language" (p. 69). There is some research showing a strong relationship between EI and language learning processes, such as listening comprehension (Valizadeh & Alavinia, 2012). Other data show a small but significant correlation between EI and both language learning strategy use and English proficiency among Iranian students (Zarafshan & Ardeshiri, 2012). There are also data available that show a strong correlation between EI and affective experiences such as teacher self-efficacy (Moafian & Ghanizadeh, 2009) and language anxiety (Shao, Yu, & Ji, 2013). Finally, in a large scale study, Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham (2008) used an internet survey of over 450 multilingual learners to show that those higher in EI consistently reported less language anxiety than those with lower EI scores. The pattern of results obtained showed "significant and consistent trait EI effects across the various conditions" (Dewaele, et al., 2008, p. 947). These studies support the need for further investigations of EI in SLA.

4. EI and positive psychology exercises

Like researchers and practitioners in applied linguistics, positive psychologists are concerned with creating evidence-based practices that incorporate interventions to increase individual happiness, well-being and satisfaction. Peterson (2006, p. 30) suggests that happiness is not reserved "only for the lucky and the strong" but results from a conscious effort and thoughtful action that can be awkward, embarrassing or even uncool at times. A myriad of different activities to increase individuals' sense of fulfilment are found in the positive psychology literature (Peterson, 2006; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009), many of which have been put to the test empirically (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Three specific activities whose effectiveness has received support were adapted for use in the present study. The exercises include identifying "three good things" (Seligman, et al. 2005), "savoring" positive experiences (Peterson, 2006), and developing "learned optimism" (Seligman, 2006). Although these are separate, stand-alone positive psychology interventions, we implemented a scaffolding approach that began with identifying positive things, savouring them, and then anticipating the future with optimism. In this way, we

are attempting to understand specific instances of positive emotion (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2013), using EI as a theoretical lens (see Figure 1). The three activities were implemented in two separate groups, language students and pre-service teachers in an English language teacher education program. We focus in-depth on one respondent from each group who reported changes in the hoped-for L2 self (see Dörnyei, 2005). Rather than producing causal statements of the effects of the exercises on development of the L2 self, we use the interventions to examine what respondents tell us they do when they undertake the activities, and how they react emotionally to them, as Figure 1 illustrates.



Figure 1 Positive psychology activities tap into the connection between emotions and L2 self

The three good things exercise is based on research that suggests that positive outcomes arise when individuals contemplate those things for which they feel the most gratitude. According to Peterson (2006, p. 38), “counting your blessings on a regular basis makes you happier and more content with life.” In this intervention, participants are asked to jot down three things that went well during the day and then briefly describe the reason each event was good. The description step is important because it requires participants to reflect more deeply than they would by simply listing positive noteworthy events. Seligman et al. (2005) discovered that being grateful for three good things each day increases happiness and decreases depression for up to 6 months.

The second activity, savoring, refers to being aware of pleasant experiences and making a deliberate attempt to make them last as long as possible, to remember them, and to re-live them in as much detail as possible (Peterson, 2006). A more familiar process comparable in some ways to savouring is coping—that is, where an unpleasant event engenders undesirable emotions that individuals deal with by attempting to change the event itself, its consequences, or themselves in order to decrease the negative impact as quickly as possible.

Coping strategies in language learning, such as dealing with error correction or seeking extra help from the teacher, are often taught explicitly in the classroom. Compared to coping, however, savoring strategies such as anticipating positive events in the future, relishing them in the moment and reminiscing about those in the past seem to be taught less frequently. According to Peterson (2006, p. 70), "those who habitually savor are indeed happier and more satisfied in general with life, more optimistic, and less depressed than those who do not savor." To develop savouring skills, students are asked to stop and notice something enjoyable and to share it with others. They are encouraged to take something away from the event that will later allow reminiscing (such as a photo or a memento) and indulge in self-congratulatory thinking. Savouring might mean focusing intently on a specific experience, event, or achievement while blocking out everything else to become totally immersed in the pleasure of the moment.

The third activity in the present study is learned optimism, an adaptation of one created by Gregersen and MacIntyre (2014, p. 222). Drawing on the work of Seligman (2006), they encouraged teachers to "shift the focus away from permanent, pervasive and personal explanations for difficulties toward more temporary, specific and hopeful explanations." Too often, it seems, people give advice to each other with the intent of creating optimism that ironically has the opposite effect. The 1989-Grammy award winning song of the year, "Don't worry, be happy" by Bobby McFerrin is a fine piece of pop music but is terrible advice, impractical at best and frustratingly discouraging at worst (Ehrenreich, 2009). Simply urging people to be more hopeful, to "get over it" or "look on the bright side" is often an exercise in futility. A more productive approach would be interrupting instantaneous negative reactions to a setback and replacing them with a positive sequence of realistic thoughts. For example, a learner who habitually ruminates in pessimism might react to error correction with automatic thoughts such as these: "The teacher doesn't like me . . . I am stupid . . . I am going to flunk this class . . . Everybody else knows what they are doing except me . . . I will never learn this language." But if this learner has shown the ability to communicate in the target language in the past, then a more optimistic set of cognitions are available, and can be accessed more easily with practice. The idea is to head-off negative cycles of thought before they spiral out of control, and do so as quickly as possible. Peterson (2006) refers to "learning optimism on the hot seat." For example, the negative thoughts that occur following harsh error correction might be countered by deliberate thoughts such as the following: "Teacher is having a bad day . . . She was in a hurry to give feedback and move the class along . . . I made a mistake but that's part of learning . . . With just a little more practice, I will get this . . . It was a silly mistake, I know the proper verb tense" and so on. The key to the exercise is to rapidly counter the pessimistic thought with an optimistic one that better suits the

situation, until it becomes a habit of mind. Naturally, learners who are prone to pessimistic thought will benefit more from these activities than those who already have a tendency toward optimism. What needs to be kept in mind is that the purpose of these activities is to focus on positive emotions such as enjoyment (see Dewaele & MacIntyre, this volume). Learners predisposed toward optimism might not need as much instruction or practice in shifting automatic thinking toward encouraging self-talk as more pessimistic learners.

Gregersen and MacIntyre's (2014) variation on the learned optimism activity is meant to give language learners practice in rapidly disputing pessimistic thoughts, avoiding the over-generalization of beliefs and thinking of alternative explanations. It is based on Seligman's process of learning optimism ABC-style. That is to say, when an individual is faced with an Adverse event, they maintain a *Belief* about how that adversity is construed, and *Consequences* ensue that are formed by the feelings and actions that stem from the beliefs. It is important to emphasize that those globally pessimistic thoughts that occur quickly and spontaneously for pessimistic learners are often exaggerated and can be reinterpreted through the provision of counter-evidence that is both more reasonable and encouraging within the situation. With practice, thinking optimistically becomes a learned, routine pattern.

Although each of the three interventions named above (three good things, savoring, and learned optimism) have been shown to be effective, an important question that has not yet been addressed is whether there is an optimal sequence to the exercises and interventions (Seligman, et al., 2005) and what impact they might have in the language learning domain. The three activities used in this study have not yet been examined as a structured progression. As shown in the text of the intervention instructions (in the results section below), we used a scaffolding approach to create a strategy whereby we asked participants to move from acknowledging and sharing good things, to savouring and reflecting more deeply upon them, and then use experiences gained to explain setbacks in a more optimistic way. Our thinking is that if learners and teachers experience greater satisfaction, contentment and optimism, then positive growth would be reflected in their self-reported visualization of possible future selves.

Relatively little is known about classroom activities or techniques that increase positive emotion in language learners and language teachers, and how positive emotion might facilitate development of possible future selves. Our qualitative method complements the quantitative approaches more typically taken in the few SLA studies of EI that are available in the literature. We are seeking to address what Shao, Yu, and Ji (2013, p. 924) suggested is needed in the study of EI in SLA, that is to "reveal the real situations and experiences of learners." We seek to accomplish this goal using two case studies. We explore three questions:

1. How do language learners and teachers, who have shown an increase in the attainability of their possible selves, reflect on three good things, savour positive experiences, and attempt to learn optimism?
2. What do the case studies reveal about the strategic sequencing of activities and language learners' EI?
3. What do the narratives of participants tell us about ways in which they use EI in positive psychology activities?

5. Method

5.1. Participants

Our two case study participants were drawn from two larger groups—a learner group and a teacher group—who participated in an initial phase of this study. Once selected for in-depth analysis here, the choice of specific participant became secondary to the task of describing her experiences. Using qualitative analysis implies that the specific data generated and the interpretation of the data are not generalizable or replicable, but stand on their own as a glimpse into the detailed and situated affective reactions of the specific participants.

The learner group was composed of the 10 English language learners enrolled in an advanced speaking and listening class in an intensive English for Academic Purposes program in a small Midwestern university in the United States. This multicultural group, ranging in age from 18 to 40, consisted of 4 females and 6 males, and came from a variety of countries, including Saudi Arabia, China and Japan. All of them had successfully completed six of seven levels, and were one class away from enrolling in credit-bearing university programs.

The teacher group was composed of 9 pre-service and in-service teachers enrolled in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program at the same university as the first group and who accepted our invitation to participate. Four were final-year undergraduate pre-service teachers from the United States, 3 female and 1 male, ranging in ages from 21 to 24. The other 5 participants, all female and ranging in age from 25 to 32, were TESOL graduate students with teaching experience that ranged from 1 to 5 years. Three were from the US while the other 2 were from Chile and Armenia.

5.2. Procedures and instruments

The language learner group participated in this study as part of their English language class; some of the activities were conducted in class while others were assigned as homework and collected by the classroom teacher (the third

author). Given that there was a relationship between participants and the researchers, care was taken to ensure that respondents were treated ethically. To facilitate free and informed consent among the learners, responses from all individuals were sealed until after their course was over and the grades submitted. The teacher participants responded to prompts exclusively via e-mail sent as private correspondence to the fourth author, who was a colleague in their pre-service teacher training course.

After consenting to take part in this study, participants in both groups filled out an instrument called the Perceived Attainability of Possible Selves (PAPS) that we created in order to determine the visions each language learner or teacher had for him/herself and the strength with which they believed they could be achieved. Participants were asked to close their eyes and imagine themselves as language learners/teachers in 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, a year, and beyond, and to write down 10 “possible selves” that represent who they would like to become. Once participants finished their lists, they rated how likely each goal was to be achieved on a scale of 1 (*impossible*) to 5 (*certain*). This created an individualized list of relevant possible selves.

During the next 3 weeks, individuals in both groups participated in three positive psychology activities (three good things, savoring, and learned optimism), focusing on one intervention per week. Each activity generated a written account that was collected for later analysis.

Upon completion of the 3-week activity period, the research team returned a clean copy of each participant’s original PAPS (where they had created a list of their visions for their possible selves) but with the ranking of their perceived attainability left blank. As the final step of their participation, learner and teacher respondents again closed their eyes, imagined who they would like to become, and re-ranked how possible these selves were on a scale of 1 (*impossible*) to 5 (*certain*).

The detailed instructions for the three activities were as follows (in Figure 2 there is a table accompanying the instruction for Activity 3):

- *Activity 1: Three good things.* Three times this week write three positive experiences that have happened during the day. These things should be related to language teaching or learning. Also write down the rationale for why these three experiences were positive and/or why they occurred.
- *Activity 2: Savoring.* Stop and notice the next time something good occurs. Keep a log of one positive experience each day of the activity. The positive experience could have to do with TESOL, language teaching, language learning, or education, but could also be a more general experience. Write about how you felt, what made the experience positive, and how you may be able to have another similar positive experience in the future. Afterwards take the time to share these experienc-

es with another individual. For each day you document a savory experience, you also need to document the reaction from another individual and note how you felt about sharing the experience.

- *Activity 3: Learned optimism.* Use the following chart. Write down three adverse experiences that you had during your day. What are your beliefs about the event? How do you interpret it? What are the consequences, or results, of your beliefs? How do these beliefs affect you and others? Finally, brainstorm a list of counter-evidence to the negative beliefs, the causes of the event, or the consequences. For example, if you failed a test, your counter-evidence could be: "I was watching TV the night before instead of studying. I know the information on the test, but I didn't take the time to study." Write an example of counter-evidence for each item from the table above in the lines below.

Write down adverse experiences.	What are your beliefs about the event? How do you interpret it?	What are the consequences, or results, of your beliefs? How do these beliefs affect you and others?
<i>Response</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Response</i>

Figure 2 Table accompanying the instruction for Activity 3

After data collection was complete, the net gains and losses from the PAPS were tabulated for all participants. The learner and teacher with the greatest gains were selected to be the case study participants. We chose this approach because we thought that individuals with the largest gains in attainability of L2 self might have responses that would be especially helpful in understanding how EI can be seen in narratives generated in the context of the positive psychology interventions. Limiting the analysis to two complete sets of responses (1 teacher and 1 learner), followed from the beginning to the end of the study, provides the depth and richness of data that the purpose of this study requires. Both sets of narratives were analysed independently by three raters who were familiar with the literature on EI and positive psychology. The raters were asked to code only those commentaries associated with the four EI branches outlined above. Each of the branches was assigned a different colour for coding. Only those sections that appeared on two or more raters' scripts are included in the analysis. To preserve the authenticity of the participants' voices, we inserted the excerpts exactly as they had been written, with no grammatical or spelling changes.

6. Results and interpretations

Our first research question asks about perceived gains in the attainability of the possible selves of the learners and teachers following the task intervention. Ta-

ble 2 shows both the language learners and teachers in separate lists. The pseudonym for each participant is accompanied by his/her net gain or loss from the PAPS. This was calculated by comparing pre-activity ratings with the post-ratings and calculating the total difference across all of the individual's items.

Table 2 Net gains on the PAPS measure of L2 self

Learner group participants	possible self net gain/loss	Pre-service teacher group participants	Possible self net gain/loss
Awatif	+7	Amy	+14
Gharam	+5	Zachary	+7
Sameh	+2	Catherine	+7
Katsumi	+2	Emma	+4
Abbus	+2	Olga	+3
Jamal	+2	Sally	+2
Kenzo	+1	Sofia	0
Marid	-3	Morgan	-1
Akilah	-5	Misty	-4
Rose	-7		

Overall, the participants increased in the perception of attainability of possible selves although there was a range of values for gains and losses (from +7 to -7 for learners; and from +14 to -4 for teachers). A majority of persons in both groups showed increased attainability of their possible selves, but there also were some who suffered losses (3 learners and 2 teachers). Awatif and Amy (a learner and teacher, respectively) each reported the greatest gains in their group for the perceptions of the attainability of their possible selves. Table 3 lists their data in detail. An *O* denotes their rankings in the pre-activity rendering of the measure while an *X* indicates how they ranked the attainability of their envisioned possible selves after completing the three positive psychology activities.

Table 3 Learner and teacher pre- and post-activity ratings in their PAPS

Awatif (learner)	1	2	3	4	5	Amy (teacher)	1	2	3	4	5
<i>I wanna be a good speaker in one month.</i>			O	X		<i>Improve my own language ability in Spanish (language)</i>					X
<i>I wanna be able to writ with out any grammar mestiks in 3 months.</i>			O	X		<i>Improve native-like intonation (in Spanish)</i>			O	X	
<i>In six months I wanna be able to understand and give expression about what I hear.</i>			O	X		<i>Be able to better code-switch between "Guatemalan dialect" and a more formal, general Spanish (language goal)</i>			O		X
<i>In one year I wanna be perfect speaker in front of people.</i>				O	X	<i>Improved ability to simplify grammatical explanations (teaching)</i>				O	X
<i>I wanna have high grades in all my class in 2 years.</i>			O	X		<i>Improved "comprehensible input" in TL (teaching)</i>					O
											X

<i>In 5 years I wanna have good relationships with native speaker.</i>	O X	<i>Not rely on L1 when teaching</i>	O X
<i>In 6 years I wanna have good job about the English skills I had learn.</i>	O X	<i>Plan better: Be able to foresee good class activities & flow</i>	O X
<i>In 7 years I wanna be a good write as native speaker.</i>	O X	<i>Better able to connect with students while maintaining professional/appropriate distance</i>	O X
<i>In 10 years I wanna be perfect in speaking presentation.</i>	O X	<i>Involve students in TL community culture</i>	O X
<i>In 20 years I wanna be perfect English speaker.</i>	O X	<i>Enthusiastic, well-prepared, organized, calm, expert—favorite words to describe “ideal” self</i>	O X

In the following subsections we present the instructions for each activity and then highlight excerpts from participants’ narratives that provide insight into their EI whilst completing these activities.

6.1. Positive Psychology Activity 1: Three good things

Instructions: “Three times this week write three positive experiences that have happened during the day. These things should be related to language teaching or learning. Also write down the rationale for why these three experiences were positive and/or why they occurred.”

Although it is expected that the roles of learners and teachers would influence the content of their narratives (“*I think I did really good in my listening test*” vs. “*My students were 100% engaged in the activities today . . .*”), it is interesting that both participants made several comments about how their good things made them *feel*, even though the instructions to this activity did not include directions to report specific emotions or feelings. Awatif’s narrative on the second day of the activity contained more emotion-laden language than on other occasions (roman font emphasizes emotion words):

Good thing #1: *My writing teacher offered help to me, she asked me if she can pic me to the hospital to see my son because he was sick. I was so happy that she asked me and help me*

Reason: *Because I sent an email to my teacher about my son and then she asked me about my son in the class*

Good thing #2: *I felt confedent in my reading class, all my answers were right.*

Reason: *I studied yesterday and fineshed my homework*

Amy’s most emotional narrative also occurred on the second day of the activity, but unlike Awatif, Amy’s feelings came through in her attributions of cause:

Good thing #1: *Students did a role play & they were fantastic! They were so creative and used the language they had to create really interesting stories*

Reason: *I finally realized that my students would LOVE this kind of activity, and they did! I planned the whole chapter (2 weeks) as a unit and the whole week went better (for the most part).*

Good thing #2: *I brought props to class—I never remember/plan ahead enough to do this.*

Reason: *It's embarrassing, but so many aspects of teaching takes so much effort and planning and can often overwhelm me into inaction, but this week I gave myself a figurative kick in the rear and did real teacher stuff.*

According to Salovey et al. (2002), gains cannot be made in other branches of EI without first being competent in perceiving the presence of emotion and expressing it (EI Branch 1 above). Awatif and Amy both identify their emotions: Awatif was "happy" and "confident" while Amy was "embarrassed" and "overwhelmed." Amy, however, brought her perception to another level by also being able to identify emotions in other people, in this case, her students—they LOVED (caps were used by Amy for added emphasis) the role play activity that she had planned for them.

The narratives of Awatif and Amy also demonstrate that their EI encompasses more than perception and expression. Awatif moved beyond simple identification of emotion to understanding it (EI Branch 2) when she was able to attribute the cause of her happiness to her teacher's kindness and the reasons for her confidence in reading class to the fact that she had studied. Furthermore, an examination of Awatif's various three-good-things narratives establishes that she consistently engaged in effective mood regulating strategies like distracting herself by taking a shopping trip to a big city and interacting with classmates and teachers both in and out of class (EI Branch 4).

Amy's narratives demonstrated both emotional management (EI Branch 4) and the emotional facilitation of thought (EI Branch 2). Her embarrassment and feelings of being overwhelmed led to a "figurative kick in the rear!" that functioned as a self-management technique, indicating a move beyond the simple identification of feelings toward effectively managing those feelings. Like Awatif, Amy mentions engaging in a lot of interaction—mostly with her students. Furthermore, the "figurative kick in the rear" led her to bring props to class, positively reinforcing her identity by doing "real teacher stuff." This narrative illustrates the difference between the function of positive and negative emotion, and also the effect of coordinating different types of emotions. The negative emotional kick narrowed Amy's focus toward a specific action (a thoughtful process that led to bringing props to class) that later produced positive emotional results for the teacher and students alike.

6.2. Positive Psychology Activity 2: Savoring

Instructions: "Stop and notice the next time something good occurs. Keep a log of one positive experience each day of the activity. The positive experience could have to do with TESOL, language teaching, language learning, or education, but could also be a more general experience. Write about how you felt, what made the experience positive, and how you may be able to have another similar positive experience in the future. Afterwards take the time to share these experiences with another individual. For each day you document a savouring experience, you also need to document the reaction from another individual and note how you felt about sharing the experience."

Awatif's savouring experiences as a language learner were more effective in producing well-being than those of other participants. Unlike the other respondents, Awatif started with an adverse event that she was able to turn around. Savouring is usually intended as an opportunity for reflection on a positive event, as opposed to coping with a problem and then moving on to something else. In Awatif's case, she capitalized on the savouring opportunities to detach herself from negative events from the language class through distractive regulation strategies:

My Angle

This morning, I woke up and brushed my teeth. My mind start thinking about my home work and what I have to do in all of my classes; I was despert. Then I went to my room and I saw my son sleeping; I looked at hem and smile, he is like an angel. Everytime I look at his face, I forget every thing make me nurves. My son woke up and smiled, he wanted to play so we went to the bathroom and my son had the best shower in the world. These moments are joyful to me.

Wall Mart

Today after I fineshed classes, I went to wallmart with my family. I was despoinded because I tok D+ in my grammar test, I don't want to fail in this class. As soon we arrived to wallmart, I saw people their starting to get ready to the halween; they were so excited and happy. I started to look at the stuff of the haloween, tey were amaizing. The funiest part that my husband weared 3 different masks, and everyone was funny. He made me laugh today, I forgot about the test; some time people need to have something exiting to change their mood and do better for the next time.

Enga

Today I was upset because my reading test was hard and I didn't like it. Then in my lestining class, we met Elga she isa survivor from the war that Hetler caused. She talked about her chiled hood and how she still remember every detallse in this war. She want to teach the world that everyone is equal and there is no need to hate. We had a great discussion about how people love each other no mater what, it doesn't matter what your religioius. I forgot about my test and I start thinking about her ,

how she survived from the war and what happen to her family, and how people died from hunger auddespas in this war. It is realy amazing that she is talking about her childhood and that people should love each other.

In all three instances, Awatif first identified experiencing a negative emotion: In the first example, she was “*desperate*” thinking about all the homework she had to do; in the second she was “*disappointed*” because of her grade on a grammar test; and in the third, she was “*upset*” at the difficulty of her reading test. However, these adverse emotions were momentary as she immersed herself in things she evaluated as more important to her well-being: her son’s smile, her husband’s comical Walmart antics, and meeting a concentration camp survivor who advocated loving others. This approach is consistent with Salovey et al.’s (2002) EI Branch 4, and also provides a compelling example of Fredrickson’s (2006, 2013) recommendation to find a balance between positive and negative emotion. Awatif uses effective positive-broadening emotional management strategies that focus on human interaction and pleasant, loving feelings. At the end of her second narrative, she comments, “*I forgot about the test; some time people need to have something exiting to change their mood . . .*” At this point, there was no remediation for the D+ on the grammar test—only, to quote her directly—“*. . . to do better the next time.*” Savouring something good on the heels of identifying adverse emotion seemed to work optimally for Awatif, and shows the interaction among all four EI branches.

Amy’s savouring experiences demonstrate how important EI is for language teachers. In her narratives, she focuses on the emotional well-being of her learners, and draws positive emotion from their success (emotion words are in roman font in the following excerpt). By being aware of her students’ progress, affective states, and engagement, she is able to match her work with her learners’ needs, reasoning with/about emotion to adjust the exercises used in class (EI Branch 2).

The Cooking Show: Mood rating = 5

My students presented a “cooking show.” I was so proud of them. I am so happy to see them use Spanish in real ways. They are so creative and don’t see language as limiting. They made jokes, and left their comfort zones if only for a few minutes. I saw that they needed more revision and practice time to really do their best, so I implemented those in current exercises. My friend [Amanda] also teaches the same level, and did the same activity. We talked about it, and we were both glad we did it and were happy to see our students at work. I’m always glad to talk with her about our class and it really helps me plan more effectively.

Delighted: Mood = 10

My class polished their family compositions today in lab time. They’re looking great! What I liked best about today was giving my students a lab-work day. They could

choose what assignments or resources they need to do most, and then they were free to work. I had lots of opportunities to interact, and students seemed visibly relieved to have finished some of the work load. I spoke a lot of English, but I see these days as relationship-building, check-in, support days more than "language days." I had high attendance—which was a miracle for Fridays @ 8 am.

In the first excerpt, we have put the words indicative of emotion that demonstrate that Amy perceived and identified her positive affect in roman script. These emotions sprang from her realization that her learners were using the target language in real ways, such as exercising creativity, making jokes and taking risks. It appears that EI facilitated her judgment and the students benefited from the teacher's efforts (EI Branch 2). She modified her instructional strategies to include more time for practice and revision. In finding opportunities for sharing her experience with a fellow teacher, their mutual reflection on their emotions can be seen as a form of EI management (EI Branch 4).

The second excerpt from Amy's savoring narrative reveals how she once again paid attention to her learners' nonverbal communication of affect. In this case, their visible relief at getting work done justified her decision to not have a "language day." She reasoned that her decision to interact with students and to concentrate on relationship-building was a positive change to her normal teaching routine. Not only did her decision result in students' feeling relief, but in greater learner engagement in a difficult time slot (Friday at 8:00 am), evidence of managing emotions effectively (EI Branch 4).

6.3. Positive Psychology Activity 3: Learned optimism

Instructions: "Use the following chart. Write down three adverse experiences that you had during your day. What are your beliefs about the event? How do you interpret it? What are the consequences, or results, of your beliefs? How do these beliefs affect you and others? Finally, brainstorm a list of counter-evidence to the negative beliefs, the causes of the event, or the consequences. For example, if you failed a test, your counter-evidence could be 'I was watching TV the night before instead of studying. I know the information on the test, but I didn't take the time to study.' Write an example of counter-evidence for each item from the table above in the lines below."

The purpose of this intervention was to provide experience in transferring participants' justifications for difficulties away from enduring, generalized reasons toward more transitory, particular and hopeful ones. In this activity, "adverse" is somewhat relative. For learners who have a natural predisposition toward optimism, finding an "adverse experience" may be difficult. Figure 3 and Figure 4 provide narratives from this activity.

Write down adverse experiences.	What are your beliefs about the event? How do you interpret it?	What are the consequences, or results, of your beliefs? How do these beliefs affect you and others?
<i>I met my conversation partner, she asked me about things that we cant do if in Islam.</i>	<i>I explain to her every thing we dont do in Islam and I gave her reasons.</i>	<i>She said that some of what we do in Islam make science. Islam is interesting</i>
<i>a friend asked me to go with her in a picnic today</i>	<i>She was inest [upset] but I bologys [apologize] because I was busy.</i>	<i>She understand why I can't go w/ her then she went to the picnic.</i>
<p><i>Counter-evidence:</i></p> <p><i>1. I was glad to explain to my conversation partner about Islam some people don't know about Islam and they might have a wrong image about it.</i></p> <p><i>2. My classmate asked me to go with her to a party in the campus, I apologize to her that I can't go, I was busy. I fet that she was despoinded. The next day I asked her about the party, she said that the party was not good. I felt relief because the party is not worth to go.</i></p>		

Figure 3 Awatif's learned optimism narrative

The first adverse event for Awatif, experienced on her second day of the learned optimism activity, was a discussion with her conversation partner about Islam and the things that believers are not permitted to do. Because Awatif chose to categorize this incident as something adverse (as per the instructions), we believe that she might have been feeling defensive, consistent with the idea that other people have the wrong image about her religion. In her interpretation of the event, Awatif believes that she gave a reasonable explanation and as a consequence her partner found sense in it. By dealing with the question with a positive tone, a potentially aversive situation seems to have been transformed into something hopeful. This narrative is most consistent with EI Branch 1, simply labelling emotions occurring in the situation.

The second event Awatif mentioned was refusing an invitation to a picnic. Her narrative recognizes that she disappointed her friend, but she perceives that her friend understood her reasons not to attend. Although Awatif believes that the friend understood that she had other things to do, there seems to have been a lingering sense of disappointment. It was not until the friend told her that the party was not good that Awatif felt relief. This excerpt demonstrates the perception and expression of emotion both within herself (feeling "relief") and another (her friend felt "disappointed" and "upset"), again corresponding to EI Branch 1.

Amy's learned optimism narratives are taken from the third day of the activity. Figure 2 contains her three adverse experiences, what she believed about them, the consequences that arose, and the counter-evidence she created.

Write down adverse experiences.	What are your beliefs about the event? How do you interpret it?	What are the consequences, or results, of your beliefs? How do these beliefs affect you and others?
<i>Student missed apt for quiz, I addressed this with him and he got upset.</i>	<i>I thought I needed to be firm because I felt he was taking advantage of my flexible approach. I was kind, but firm. Then he almost cried and I felt terrible.</i>	<i>I later reflected on this event and felt I had done the right thing. The student stopped attending class. I decided that in the future I should be firm from the beginning to avoid this problem.</i>
<i>Student was looking at a peer's paper in class.</i>	<i>I was at first personally offended. She had been a very good student, then I wondered if I had missed previous cheating because of bias or favoritism.</i>	<i>I dealt with the student, and made a mental note to be very aware of pre-conceived notions.</i>
<i>I was so stressed about everything (class, trip . . .) felt very unprepared for a test and also a paper.</i>	<i>I felt I was doing poor work. I know it was situation-based, but still I thought my work was poor.</i>	<i>I felt physically sick, had trouble focusing and generally became very upset and nervous.</i>
<p><i>Counter-evidence:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. I made a student cry, but I felt justified because of the situation, and my words were carefully chosen and kind.</i> <i>2. The student cheated. Even though it was a surprise and disappointing, it is not my fault.</i> <i>3. The week was probably the most stressful I've had. The work I had done the rest of the semester had given me enough support to carry me to the end (through the rough spots).</i> 		

Figure 4 Amy's learned optimism narrative

The first two adverse events that Amy discussed both involved a student's violations of rules or ethics. In both cases, Amy decided to be firm and hold them accountable, but this approach takes an emotional toll on her. She identified the first individual as being "upset" and when he almost started to cry, she felt "terrible." Her response to the second individual was to feel personally offended. Amy's EI moved beyond simple identification of these emotions to higher levels when she described how her future approach to the class would differ in order to prevent similar problems. These are hard lessons for a pre-service teacher to learn but part of an ongoing process of working out the

interaction among classroom policies, student actions, and teacher's emotions. Developing the conditions that create a synergy among policies, students and the teacher is a specific example of EI Branch 4—being an emotionally intelligent teacher who manages the balancing act in a classroom.

Amy's third adverse circumstance was self-focused and referred to high levels of stress that made her believe that she was doing poorly in her schoolwork, thus resulting in feeling physically sick, nervous and upset. In the counter-evidence section, she recognized that although the week was stressful, she had performed well throughout the semester. She seems to imply that this idea mitigated her stress, a line of thinking that is consistent with the "build" side of Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotion. The more optimistic frame of mind allows that previous investment in classroom social capital can pay off during stressful times later in the semester. In this one example, we see elements of all four EI branches, (a) perceiving emotions, (b) effectively using EI knowledge, (c) understanding how emotions work, and (d) managing the balance among competing emotional trajectories.

7. General discussion

We asked three research questions in this study. The first concerned how the respondents who reported the highest increase in attainability of their possible selves reacted to the sequence of positive psychology interventions. An examination of the 19 original participants' pre- and post- PAPS measure demonstrated that 13 of them (68%) increased perceived attainability. Although this result suggests progress toward self-related goals among the majority of students, their narratives themselves tell a more cautionary tale. We found that a multitude of variables affecting the participants are related to other aspects of the respondents' lives, and that thinking about future possible selves can generate a number of unanticipated influences. In terms of the complexity of the person, it is helpful to look through a dynamic systems lens (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, in press). We have argued elsewhere (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014, p. 243) that "the trajectory of the individual learner is an emergent pattern, a convergence of several moving parts, including the systems of the physical body (e.g., skeletal-muscular, neurological systems), the social system (native language groups, target language groups), and learning context (relationships with teachers and peers). All of these components interact to give learning its meaning, order and pattern. There is not a master plan or pre-set script for where the learning is going, but neither are these examples of completely random, disconnected acts." In the present study, we found the learner and teacher exercise EI to understand ways in which a wide range

of emotional experiences, inside and outside the classroom, affect the language learning and teaching process.

There are a number of specific observations that can be made, both about the interventions and possible selves. A close comparison between the lists of participants' possible selves and their corresponding narratives demonstrates an integration of thinking about gratitude, savouring and optimism. For example, when comparing Amy's list of possible selves in Table 3 with the entirety of her narratives from the three-good-things intervention (not just the excerpts found in this article) many connections are evident. In two of her visions of possible selves, she mentions her goal to be a better planner and be more organized. Similarly in her three-good-things narratives she says "*I'm trying to create more continuity from day-to-day*" and "*I've been remembering to [place students in semi-circle] more often. I write notes in my lesson plan . . .*" In the excerpt presented above, she pats herself on the back for being organized well enough to remember to bring props to class. She also envisions a possible self who is "*better able to connect with students while maintaining professional/appropriate distance.*" Likewise, in her narratives she talks about "*being kind but firm*" with a student, and about being delighted to interact with students, and to have days for relationship-building. The connections between Amy's PAPS possible selves measure and her responses to the activities occurred frequently among respondents. A majority of the participants had tight connections between their specific possible selves and themes that were written in their narratives. It may be that the possible self visions help to guide what participants are grateful for, what they savour and what they write about in terms of negative experiences. Understanding that emotional reactions, classroom activities, and language development are part of an integrated whole-person provides evidence for how the branches of EI theory work together and how EI might facilitate the link between specific (positive psychology) activities and L2 self-development.

Our second research question involved the sequencing of the positive psychology interventions. By examining two cases, we see that strategic ordering of activities encouraged participants to reflect upon those daily events for which they were grateful, savour them and then use them as springboards for learning optimism. We discovered that when participants hypothesized why their good things happened in the first activity, both Awatif and Amy used the opportunity to also create counter-evidence—a task that they were supposed to carry out only later, as part of the learned optimism intervention. Awatif and Amy used both activities to be grateful and generate optimism, reactions that seem to facilitate the perception that their possible selves were more attainable after the interventions. This also suggests a synergy among the activities and highlights the importance of integrating activities that optimize the positive emotional outcomes.

Our third research question concerned what the positive psychology narratives of language learners and teachers tell us about their EI, and how it is reflected in interventions such as the ones we used. Both Awatif and Amy showed that they were continually moving within and among the four branches of EI. Throughout the majority of their narratives they exhibited the ability to perceive, identify and express their emotions (Branch 1)—a necessary first step to the other three branches. We also saw numerous instances where they were able to use their emotional awareness to facilitate their thinking and to understand their own emotions and those of people in their spheres of influence (Branch 2). Both Awatif and Amy used effective strategies to manage their emotions. We saw various examples of the more effective EI strategies such as using social interaction, cognitive self-regulation, and healthy distractions (see Table 1) and little evidence of less effective strategies such as passive mood management, direct tension reduction, spending time alone, or avoiding the people or things that caused the adversity. We chose the two participants described in this study because they reported moving closer to their ideal self during their courses; our major conclusion is that the process of self-development is facilitated by using EI in effective ways.

8. Limitations

Before concluding, we must note two of the limitations in this study. First, this study was a 3-week snapshot of learners' and teachers' experiences. There is as yet no way to know the optimal length of implementing interventions such as these, nor the optimal window to assess their effects. Future research would benefit from data collection at intervals designed to determine whether ripple effects of the interventions induce a positive virtuous cycle or whether the gains from the interventions are short-lived and too easily buried under the weight of established habits. The element of time is important in any intervention study and can only be assessed as future studies of these (or similar) activities are reported.

Second, the spontaneous displays of EI shown by the learners suggest that we cannot ascribe the gains in possible selves simply to the effects of the three interventions. The participants have been engaged with language learning for a long time and have experience and habits that were not assessed in the present study. As would be the case with any real-world classroom intervention, it is possible, even likely, that the interventions complemented, supplemented, or coordinated the emotion regulation strategies the learners had already been using. Future studies might also want to consider how the specific EI skills (or lack thereof) that participants bring to the activities affect how those activities unfold over time so that the interventions can be planned for even greater outcomes.

9. Conclusions

This is the first qualitative study to examine how EI is manifest in a progression of positive psychology interventions for participants who perceived growth in the attainment of L2 possible selves. There has not been much prior work on EI in the SLA area and those studies that do exist have used survey research. This study followed one learner (Awatif) and one pre-service teacher (Amy), selected based on their gains in the attainability of their possible future selves, through a progression of positive psychology interventions. We were able to show specific examples of EI in action. With the present data, we contribute to an explanation of the process. When Awatif was disappointed by her grades in school, she was consoled and encouraged by her angelic son and comedic husband; her story was about trying harder the next time, with her family in mind. When Amy encountered stressful situations at the end of the course, she did not focus on her frustrations and anxieties, but rather the support from her students that she had cultivated throughout the course; she understood that her students could be counted on to ease her worried mind. The examples presented above show evidence of specific ways in which positive psychology interventions can prompt reflection and a positive focus with accompanying positive emotions that ultimately facilitate movement toward attaining desired possible future selves. In conclusion, we return to the purpose of positive psychology as articulated by Seligman et. al. (2005):

The intent is to have a more complete and balanced scientific understanding of the human experience—the peaks, the valleys, and everything in between. We believe that a complete science and a complete practice of psychology should include an understanding of suffering and happiness, as well as their interaction, and validated interventions that both relieve suffering and increase happiness—two separate endeavors. (p. 410)

As we move to increase the optimism and well-being of the persons in the language learning classroom, while at the same time combating the negative effects of debilitating affect, a two-pronged approach seems most reasonable. As gratitude, savouring and optimism put wind in the sails, inevitable negative emotions can be reduced to manageable levels where they function as rudders keeping the ship on course. Within the larger systems of their cultures, schools, and classrooms, emotionally intelligent teachers and learners work together to move toward who they dream themselves to be.

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