

### Editorial

Most positive psychology advocates would agree that social bonding and interpersonal engagement are essential to one's well-being. Not only was this issue of *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching (SSLT)* a pleasure to put together, it was also an opportunity for like-minded colleagues with a passion for positivity to become friends. When we thought about gathering together research on positive psychology in SLA we did not know whether the idea would be well received. We started with a few inquiries to ask whether there was interest in collaborating on a conference symposium. As it happens, there was no need for concern—not only were people interested but they were genuinely excited about the idea. The response was a resounding yes to the symposium and so we considered whether we might try to publish a collection of papers based on the symposium. *SSLT* was our first and only choice because the journal has developed a strong reputation for excellent articles that are oriented toward both research and teaching, and it is published with open access. Needless to say we were thrilled when the journal accepted the proposal for a special issue within a day or two; in no time, we were on our way.

The debut for many of these papers was the 2014 International Conference for Language and Social Psychology in beautiful Honolulu, Hawaii. The fact that so many people in the audience skipped the sun and sand to engage with the presenters was most gratifying to all of us; the room was literally singing! The positive reception that the papers received gave us the momentum we needed to complete the special issue without delay. Within two weeks of the conference, all of the authors had completed their manuscripts. Just a few weeks after that, *SSLT* was ready to send us the proofs. If good news travels fast, then this special issue must contain some very good news indeed.

The present collection of papers as a whole reflects the positioning of positive psychology within the modern SLA field. There is a creative, eclectic mix of qualitative and quantitative methods used in the research, coupled

with innovative teaching practices. The three founding pillars of positive psychology as laid down by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) (specifically, positive character traits, positive emotions and positive institutions) are three of the pillars for this special issue. The opening paper by MacIntyre and Mercer points to additional pillars within the literature, including principles of humanistic education, the good language learner studies, and extensive work on motivation that will support the application of positive psychology to SLA in both theory and practice. MacIntyre and Mercer help to set the context for studies of language learning that will be inspired by positive psychology. In addition to situating positive psychology in SLA, the authors point to some of the trends that bode well for the future of the field-within-the-field. The authors emphasize that positive psychology must not be confused with frivolous pop psychology. The paper provides a starting point for anyone interested in learning more about positive psychology and language learning.

The second paper by Oxford and Cuellar examines in-depth the narratives of Mexican learners of Chinese using Martin Seligman's PERMA model as a theoretical guide. The result is an outstanding paper that paints a nuanced picture of the psychology of the learners. There is rich food for thought in this article that should inspire future research that both applies and extends the PERMA model.

The paper by Tim Murphey shows his brilliance as an educator. The paper uses the future-oriented term *well-becoming* to highlight the development of well-being as a process rather than an end-state. This observation alone makes the paper worth reading but Murphey goes much further. Using his experience with singing he manages to turn his student language learners into engaged, applied researchers. This paper is an excellent example of the best of Carl Rogers' writing about education—a teacher sharing who he is with his students to tremendous effect.

The fourth paper, by Dewaele and MacIntyre, is based on reporting the results of a large-sample survey that introduces a new measure of foreign language enjoyment. The authors note that emotion has not been widely studied in SLA, and positive emotion has been especially neglected (outside theories of motivation). Dewaele and MacIntyre draw upon the foundational research of Barbara Fredrickson, whose broaden-and-build theory has changed the way emotions are conceptualized. The mixed methods paper presents numerical data alongside learner voices that capture the richness of emotional experience during language learning.

Joseph Falout's paper is classroom-oriented in a literal sense; it examines the important effects of seating arrangements on student learning. Falout's well-structured argument reflects a modern concern for a long-standing issue in education, that is, the effect of the structure of the space on the people within

it. Falout uses the concept of the action zone in the classroom to show why something as basic as seating arrangements is not a trivial matter for students. This paper should be read by everyone who decides on the physical layout of the classrooms, especially teachers and school administration. Readers are encouraged to share it with decision makers as a way to open a much needed dialogue on the spaces where learning happens in modern pedagogy.

The paper by Danuta Gabryś-Barker takes its inspiration from Winston Churchill's notion that success reflects the ability to go from one failure to another without losing enthusiasm. The paper opens with the fascinating mixed history of the term *enthusiasm*. The core of the paper presents an analysis of pre-service teacher narratives that reveal both strengths and limitations in their own training. Gabryś-Barker expertly draws upon the literature, as applied to the narratives, to recommend training teachers to use a more expressive style. This is an important observation to offer pre-service teachers, and long serving ones too. Gabryś-Barker is talking about a critically important element of teaching, and working with pre-service teachers to develop realistic conceptions of enthusiasm is an excellent idea.

The seventh paper, by Gregersen et al., takes a somewhat unusual approach; its logic is best seen by working backwards. The authors identify learners who reported making progress toward self-development, as uniquely defined by each individual, over a 3-week period. Contributing to self-development was a series of three scaffold exercises drawn from the literature on positive psychology (specifically: three good things, savouring, and learned optimism). The paper focuses on ways in which the respondents' emotional intelligence facilitated working through the exercises and contributed to self-development. This appears to be the first paper in the literature to use qualitative methods to show in detail *how* emotional intelligence operates in the SLA context.

The final paper is a two-part study by Chaffee, Noels and Sugita-McEown that examines ways in which learners can adapt to a controlling teacher. Kim Noels and her colleagues' work on self-determination theory is well respected in the SLA literature and this paper takes their work in a new direction. By examining ways in which learners exercise secondary control, the authors are able to identify effective and ineffective ways of dealing with difficult classroom situations. The authors use detailed statistical analysis of their data to support recommendations for creating more resilient learners. Although the statistics might be challenging for some readers, the paper is well worth reading for its sage conclusions on building resilient learners.

Finally, the special issue includes Stephen Ryan's review of the book *The Language of Peace: Communicating to Create Harmony* written by Rebecca Oxford. As editors, we are honoured to feature Oxford's highly original work in

two places in this special issue. The book review captures Ryan's personal reactions to the book and its treatise on the links between language and peace. Ryan describes his approach to the issue as "cynical," at least at the outset. However, as his review shows, the merits of the text won him over.

In some sense, this special issue has been an overnight success that was years in the making. Getting a diverse collection of highly experienced and well-respected researchers, scholars and teachers to produce both a symposium and a special issue in a rather short timeframe can be achieved only if the authors are at the top of their game. We are fortunate to count the contributors to this volume among our mentors, colleagues and friends. As guest editors, we sincerely appreciate both the encouragement and assistance from the journal editor Mirosław Pawlak, Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak, who worked closely with us on the proofs, and the team at *SSLT*. We close this editorial with a heart-felt *thank you* to all those who made this collection possible. We now offer it to a worldwide audience of teachers and researchers who will hopefully take away their own inspirations.

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## References

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