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Effects of Positive Education on EFL Students' Performance

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Resumen

La presente síntesis de investigación analiza los efectos que tiene la educación positiva en el rendimiento académico y bienestar emocional de estudiantes de lenguas, según lo reportado en estudios previos. Para ello, se exploró este modelo educativo desde la percepción de maestros y estudiantes a través de una revisión de 19 estudios indexados de los últimos 10 años (2015-2025). El estudio se ha enfocado en áreas como motivación, salud mental y ambiente positivo y su influencia en el aprendizaje de idiomas. Los resultados evidencian que, gracias a la implementación de la educación positiva, los estudiantes de lenguas extranjeras han mejorado su rendimiento académico y su bienestar emocional, lo cual ha generado mayor motivación en ellos. Además, los profesores reportan beneficios de la educación positiva, pero también ciertos retos en su aplicación. Es importante mencionar que no se evidenciaron efectos adversos entre los participantes de estos estudios. Considerando estos resultados, se puede afirmar que la educación positiva resulta eficiente para contrarrestar el estrés, ansiedad y otras patologías asociadas a las complicaciones que pueden surgir durante el aprendizaje de un nuevo idioma en las instituciones educativas, sin dejar de lado aspectos esenciales como el contexto sociocultural donde se requiera aplicar el modelo mencionado.

Palabras clave del autor: percepción docente, percepción estudiantil, factores emocionales, innovación educativa, aprendizaje de idiomas, educación positiva

Abstract

The present research synthesis examines the effects of positive education on the academic performance and emotional well-being of language students, as reported in previous studies. Therefore, this educational model was explored from the perspectives of teachers and students through a review of 19 indexed studies from the last 10 years (2015–2025). The study focused on areas such as motivation, mental health, and positive classroom environments and their influence on language learning. The findings indicate that, through the implementation of positive education, students of foreign languages have improved their academic performance and emotional well-being, which has increased motivation. Furthermore, teachers report benefits from positive education, though they also highlight certain challenges in its application no adverse effects were observed among the participants in these studies. Based on these results, it can be asserted that positive education is effective in mitigating stress, anxiety, and other pathologies associated with the challenges that may arise during the learning of a new language in educational institutions, while also considering essential aspects such as the sociocultural context in which this model is applied.

Author Keywords: teacher perception, student perception, emotional factors, educational innovation, language learning, positive education

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Emilia and Sofía

Dedications

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Sofía

Introduction

In recent years, research has focused on students' emotional well-being and its impact on their academic performance. Thus, there is one approach that has been implemented and studied: positive education (PE), which combines academic learning with the principles of positive psychology (Caruana Vañó, 2010). In the area of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL), the application of PE strategies aims to make students feel happier, more motivated, and emotionally supported while improving skills like reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Therefore, it focuses on creating a more meaningful and positive learning experience.

This research synthesis explores how PE can influence academic performance and emotional well-being in students, as reported in previous studies. The classroom environment plays a big role in how students learn a new language. When students feel supported and emotionally safe, they are more likely to participate and enjoy the learning process (Seligman et al., 2009). PE aims to create a kind of environment where students not only improve their language proficiency level, but also feel good about their progress and develop their self-confidence. While this approach seems promising, there is still limited information on how students and teachers experience it in real classroom situations.

This study hopes to contribute to the understanding of how PE can be used in EFL classes by analyzing what research has demonstrated so far. We also took into consideration the perspectives of both teachers and students about this pedagogical model. The goal is to offer useful insights that can help teachers and institutions support both the academic and emotional needs of EFL students.

This work is divided into six chapters. The first one includes a description of the research. The second presents the theoretical framework. The third chapter analyzes the literature review. The fourth introduces the methodology used for the collection and analysis of 19 empirical studies. The fifth one includes the data analysis and results. Finally, in the last chapter, conclusions and recommendations are found.

Chapter I

1. Description of the Research

1.1 Background

According to Seligman et al. (2009), PE is a pedagogical approach, which comes from positive psychology, that focuses on developing students' academic performance and general well-being. In the case of language students, PE seeks to develop their communicative competence as well as their sense of welfare and happiness. Noble and McGrath (2015) state that "positivity also encourages educators to explicitly teach students the values and skills for expressing gratitude and thinking optimistically" (p. 4). These authors claim that there is a strong link between learning and emotions, suggesting that schools should teach happiness skills. PE is a comprehensive teaching approach that prioritizes students' well-being, motivation, and general development (Seligman et al., 2009). Furthermore, when discussing the concept of PE, Babic et al. (2022) maintain that:

> As an educational approach, positive education places student wellbeing at the core of education alongside academic subjects, without either being compromised by the other. It promotes the teaching of global skills needed to flourish in life, and fostering these skills in school also leads to a vast range of psychological, social, and academic benefits in the present. (p. 3)

The previous quote emphasizes that PE integrates well-being and academic learning, enhancing students' psychological resilience and academic success. Seligman et al. (2009) highlight that teaching well-being in schools is essential as it serves as a tool for improving learning outcomes.

In the world of EFL teaching, the classroom setting is the core of students' learning experiences. Just like the atmosphere of a room can affect people's moods, the vibe in an EFL classroom may significantly influence how students learn and what they take away from the experience (Zheng, 2008). For this reason, PE aims to create a favorable classroom environment in which learning occurs more naturally and easily.

It is important to note that many studies have investigated the application of PE principles in EFL classrooms. For instance, Parra (2010) found that one effect of PE is that students "…approach EFL learning with a greater measure of self-assurance and tend to be more open to allowing the new language experience to penetrate their heads and hearts" (p. 162), demonstrating significant improvements in both language proficiency and emotional resilience among students. Parra

(2010) also showed that PE strategies foster a supportive and encouraging classroom environment, which can lead to increased motivation, better academic performance, and a more positive overall learning experience for EFL students. While these studies highlight the potential of PE, there remains a lack of evidence addressing its specific application in EFL contexts, particularly in Ecuador.

1.2 Problem Statement

PE offers several benefits for students' performance, but these require further investigation to be fully understood (Schweder, 2018). As discussed before, the benefits of PE include improved students' academic performance and general well-being, but not all language teaching programs apply PE. Naz and Murad (2017) state that educational institutions should promote PE so that students benefit from its principles, which may lower students' anxiety and improve their participation in school activities.

Rickard et al. (2023) go on to say that "efforts have been made to embed positive psychology knowledge and skills more strategically and extensively in schools" (p. 312). However, more research should be carried out on the effects of PE on EFL students' performance. Rickard et al. (2023) assert that research can provide a deeper understanding of how this approach can give students a notable academic performance rise, among other emotional and personal benefits, such as the ones mentioned above. The authors add that knowing more about this topic may also help educators implement it in the classroom.

As can be seen, implementing PE within educational settings is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. In the words of Oladrostam et al. (2024), "researchers have concluded that there is a need to gain a better understanding of how positivity and well-being could be promoted…[in the classroom]" (p.4). This clearly shows that investigators are aware of how positivity in classrooms impacts students. Moreover, Oladrostam et al. (2024) observed that "teachers' positivity and friendliness exert a strong influence on learners' sense of enjoyment" (p. 4). Furthermore, Bahous et al. (2011) affirm that, "positive language learning experiences increase learners' self-confidence in using the second language and further motivation to learn it" (p. 3).

In recent years, according to Seligman et al. (2009), we have experienced a rise in mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression among younger generations. The authors claim that PE

may be an excellent tool available for students due to its accumulated attention for its potential benefits in enhancing students' academic performance and emotional well-being.

Other authors who have found benefits of the implementation of PE in EFL classrooms include Schweder (2018), Naz and Murad (2017), and Rickard et al. (2023). However, these results are scattered throughout several studies and in different contexts. There is a lack of studies analyzing trends in terms of location, methodology, and participants published in previous research and arranged into one paper. We were not able to find articles that have synthesized this information, so it is easily available to be implemented by EFL teachers and students in the context of countries like Ecuador. Therefore, the present research synthesis aims to address this gap by summarizing key information from prior research in the area of the implementation of PE in EFL classrooms and its impact on learners. Moreover, the perspective of both teachers and students have been included in this analysis.

1.3 Rationale

As referenced earlier, implementing PE is beneficial for successful teaching and learning. The decision to explore such an approach comes from recognizing that, as we have shown in previous paragraphs, the way of teaching significantly influences students' academic performance and overall learning outcomes.

Regarding students' perspectives, in the study of Qiu (2022), a learner confessed that "Positive education increases one's willingness to participate in classroom interactions, helps to develop a positive approach to learning, and can, thus, improve language learning outcomes" (p. 3). When properly applied, this approach can have a significant impact on the perspectives of EFL students. Many studies show how important PE is in shaping students' learning experiences and outcomes in EFL education.

By investigating how PE and performance are connected, this work aims to improve our understanding of the effects of PE on EFL learners' performance. Indeed, authors such as Zhao et al. (2019) have reported the benefits of incorporating PE in the language classroom, emphasizing that "positive education aims to improve students' academic performance as well as their well-being and character strengths" (p. 1).

1.4 Objectives

General objective:

To analyze the effects of positive education on students' academic performance and emotional well-being, based on findings from previous research.

Specific objective:

To synthesize results from previous research on the implementation of positive education in the language classroom

To examine the teachers' and students' perspectives on the implementation of positive education in the classroom.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How does the implementation of positive education impact EFL students' academic performance and emotional well-being?
2. What are the teachers' and students' perspectives on the implementation of positive education in the language classroom?

Chapter II

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section, we aim to deepen our understanding of key concepts such as positive psychology, positive education, and academic performance. The discussion focuses on how these concepts interrelate to foster educational environments that enhance students' well-being and academic success. Thus, we try to provide a foundation for the present research synthesis.

2.1 Positive Psychology

In 1998, psychologist Martin Seligman introduced the idea that therapists should focus on a person's strengths, resilience, and well-being instead of only paying attention to their negative aspects or problems (Positive Psychology Center, n.d.). The PERMA model, which stands for positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, is the basis of this kind of psychology, a well-being theory (Seligman, 2011). This model allows therapists and patients to work on cultivating positive emotions, doing meaningful activities, building strong connections with others, finding purpose in life, and achieving goals (Seligman, 2011). In the early 2000s, Seligman thought that the concepts of positive psychology could be implemented in educational settings (Seligman et al., 2009).

2.2 Positive Education

Even though the term positive education was coined after the emergence of positive psychology, the notion of analyzing students' well-being had appeared before. Closely related to the ideas of positive psychology and education, Goleman's (1995) model of emotional intelligence outlines five essential competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and relationship management that can be applied in classrooms to enhance students' skills and personal development. This author goes on to mention five key aspects of emotional intelligence: "the knowledge of one's own emotions, the ability to control them, the ability to motivate oneself, the recognition of other people's emotions and the control of relationships" (p. 307).

Seligman et al. (2009) define positive education as the application of positive psychology principles in an academic environment in order to contribute to the development of students' well-being and academic success. After the emergence of PE as an educational model, the link between students' emotional well-being and academic learning has been well-established (Rickard et al., 2023). According to Babic et al. (2022), positive education integrates these

principles by creating classroom environments that support psychological health while developing essential life and academic skills.

As shown by Garcés Aznárez (2016) and Zhao et al. 2019), applying the mentioned principles in the EFL context could improve students' language competence, self-efficacy, and emotional regulation. By reducing stress and fostering positive emotions, PE creates an EFL classroom atmosphere conducive to language acquisition. Furthermore, Zhao et al. (2019), argue that positive environments increase motivation, confidence, and enjoyment in language learning, which are crucial for EFL learners. Garcés Aznárez (2016) argues that understanding students' emotions in an EFL classroom setting is a big step toward contributing to their stability and happiness. This author also claims that this idea of a happy life is reflected in some educational curricula, in what is called Emotional Education.

2.3 Academic Performance

Academic performance, traditionally measured through standardized assessments and grades, is a central goal of educational systems (White & Kern, 2018). However, modern educational theories suggest that academic achievement is influenced by students' psychological well-being. The integration of positive psychology within education, known as PE, offers a framework that directly addresses both academic mastery and students' mental health (White & Kern, 2018).

Moccozet (2012) refers to academic performance as "the achievement of a learning activity in a given situation" (p. 1). He also states that this concept measures two parameters: the result and the process, by answering the questions: What was learned? And How was it learned? The evaluation of academic performance is centered on the result, since this indicates how a certain skill was acquired.

2.4 EFL and ESL students

Studying English as a second language is not the same as studying it as a foreign language (Mirza, 2015). Mirza (2015) argues that ESL students have the opportunity to practice the target language outside the classroom because it is widely spoken by the majority of the people in that community; an example of this could be a Spanish-speaking person learning English in the USA. EFL learners, on the other hand, cannot use the target language outside the classroom to the same extent because most people do not speak the target language in that community; an example of this type of learning is a Spanish-speaking person learning English in Ecuador. Mirza (2015) adds that the term ESL can also be used to refer to an additional language other than the

first, regardless of the context in which it is learned. Thus, in the present research synthesis, sometimes we use the generic term ESL, even though the analysis is focused on studies in EFL contexts.

Dinitroff et al. (2018) argue that learners in ESL contexts may be more aware of the instant benefits of learning English, such as communicating with others, understanding media, or functioning in society, and thus be more motivated to learn it than EFL students. Jie et al. (2022) claim that PE can enhance intrinsic motivation in EFL students, by applying the PERMA model. Positive emotions are a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation, reinforcing the role of PE in promoting a more motivated and engaged learning environment (Jie et al., 2022).

Chapter III

3. Literature Review

In this section, we present relevant findings of past research on PE in language learning classrooms. We examined studies focusing on the effects of PE on students' performance. In addition, the information summarized in this chapter revolves around the benefits and challenges of implementing PE in educational settings. We also examine the teachers' and students' perspectives on this implementation.

3.1 Effects of Positive Education on EFL Students' Performance

Several studies have confirmed that PE improves students' intrinsic motivation, well-being, and engagement. For instance, Shen et al. (2024) conducted a quantitative study using a survey to measure EFL Chinese college students' well-being and motivation in classrooms where PE activities were used. The authors found that the emotional support given by their teachers was crucial to students' motivation and their perception of well-being. Shen et al. (2024) concluded that "motivation is also recognized as a pivotal individual characteristic that can contribute significantly to learners' academic success" (p.2).

Further exploring this theme, Gałązka and Trinder (2018) promoted the importance of creating a positive emotional environment in EFL classrooms after conducting a study. The participants were Polish English students from different institutions, such as primary schools, universities, and private language schools, for a total of 212 people. They were involved in drama activities to enhance students' confidence and a sense of belonging. The authors observed that the activities resulted in the enhancement not only of students' motivation but also of their overall progress. Extending this line of thought, Shen et al. (2024) found that emotional support from teachers plays an important role in developing EFL students' well-being and motivation.

Oladrostam et al. (2024) conducted a mixed-methods study where they used the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) as part of the treatment. One of the instruments used was reflective diaries of the participants. The participants were 25 Iranian teachers who had between 10 and 15 years of experience in EFL teaching. The findings showed that "positive emotions developed as a result of the intervention include feeling kind and patient, adopting an optimistic perspective, understanding students' feelings, and establishing positive relationships" (p.13).

Turning to a related aspect, Li and Xu (2019) conducted a study in which almost 2000 students from three different high schools in China participated. The authors used questionnaires, scales,

and open-ended questions to correlate emotional intelligence and language students' performance. This study demonstrated that students felt anxious and, in general, were not very motivated to learn the target language. The authors added that teachers "should be psychologically aware of and should be prepared to embrace learners' affective ambivalence" (p. 9). For teachers, it is important to motivate students by strengthening their emotional stability. Learners should develop a strong emotional capacity to cope with emotions, especially negative ones, in different situations and contexts (Li & Xu, 2019).

Arenas et al. (2024) carried out an experimental research study to establish a relation between the anxiety level and the academic achievement of 120 EFL students of the seventh grade in the Philippines. The participants were divided into 2 groups, experimental and control. The authors incorporated PE principles in the teachers' lessons. The findings confirmed that the "level of anxiety has a significant negative correlation with academic achievement […] This implies that as the students' level of anxiety increases, their academic achievement […] decreases" (Arenas et al., 2024, p. 436). These findings suggest that students would need to control their emotions and avoid too much anxiety in order to achieve academic success.

In a similar study, Shoshani and Slone (2017) had 315 EFL participants in an age-appropriate classroom program for primary school children. PE activities were implemented in this program. This study took place in 12 different schools in Israel. The authors used tasks and questionnaires with the children. The educators were also part of the program; they received a teacher training session, led by a mental health professional specializing in positive psychology. This study presents an analysis of the success of PE for young learners, recognizing the impact of PE on children aged 5 to 13. Shoshani and Slone (2017) claimed that the findings "... showed a significant increase in the intervention [group], but not in the control group, in children's positive emotions…" (p. 7). Additionally, the results indicated that there was a significant increase in the children's levels of satisfaction in school.

Interviews, questionnaires, and tests were the instruments used by Wu's (2023) study, in which 201 EFL students participated. These students were divided into an experimental and a control group. Positive psychology strategies were implemented with the experimental group with the purpose of increasing their speaking skills in the target language. Wu (2023) concluded that "a positive classroom environment enhances EFL students' interest in verbal expression [in the target language]..." (p. 52). The author pointed out that in a positive psychology classroom, the teacher must respect students' willingness to speak.

3.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Implementing PE in classrooms

While a PE program may lead to successful outcomes, implementing these ideas may come with some challenges. As we have discussed, one goal of PE is to support both personal and academic growth. By providing students with the tools and knowledge they need to succeed academically and personally, PE empowers them to thrive. However, PE cannot be considered a solution to all the problems students may face.

White and Kern (2018) conducted a study in Australia involving 3 to 18-year-old students. The researchers asked the students various subjective questions about how they perceived their well-being and that of their partners. The authors also gathered data from the teachers of the institution with the use of qualitative observations, surveys, and conversations. The majority of junior students seemed to understand the importance of well-being and resilience, not just for themselves, but also for their friends. Many stated that learning about these topics helped them become better students and improve their relationships at home and with their peers.

On the other hand, senior students perceived these ideas as less relevant, and they could not feel a connection between PE and their daily lives. Still, some believed it helped them improve how they handled school, friendships, and family. At the end of the study, it was revealed that PE was particularly beneficial for those students at risk of failing; it contributed to their well-being and academic achievement. Overall, the findings suggested that this approach may also help with autonomous learning, since many students experienced the benefits of PE and thought it could be integrated into their studies.

Moreover, White and Kern (2018) highlighted significant challenges when implementing PE. The authors found that PE is not a solution for problems like poor reading skills and a lack of interest. Instead, the authors emphasized that the success of well-being programs depends on the interplay among teachers, students, and parents. It was also mentioned that without taking these ideas into account, PE programs could vanish or be found meaningless.

Another challenge mentioned by White and Kern (2018) is that:

> Professional leadership is responsible for making relevant decisions about how to operationalize wellbeing programs within a school and how to select training opportunities that uphold scientific rigor. Care needs to be taken in how the change process is introduced and managed within the school. Leaders also need to take care of their well-being to adequately enable well-being in those they lead (p. 11).

PE has been demonstrated to offer a variety of advantages for EFL classrooms by integrating well-being into traditional academic frameworks. For instance, Babic et al. (2022) found that PE fosters individual and collective well-being, equipping students with the skills to succeed both academically and personally. The researchers conducted their study in Austria, involving 60 middle school students aged 12 to 14. According to these authors, one important advantage is the potential for PE to create a holistic learning environment that supports emotional regulation, resilience, and critical thinking, all of which enhance motivation and engagement in language learning. Additionally, PE's focus on fostering positive relationships and emotional well-being can lead to improved classroom dynamics, a feeling of community, and better academic results (Babic et al., 2022).

Despite these encouraging results, Babic et al. (2022) also found challenges in the implementation of PE. The researchers highlighted that teachers would need systemic support and training to include PE in their classes effectively. The authors stressed that without the necessary professional development, the program might lose some of its effectiveness.

Parra (2010) conducted an action research study in which 17 beginner EFL Colombian students participated. The participants responded to different questions by ranking their affective factors while taking a basic English course. It was demonstrated that "socio-affective strategies can promote and facilitate the process of English learning by stimulating students to have deeper thoughts about their learning state" (p. 163).

Ramzan et al. (2023) sought to find a relationship between EFL students' classroom enjoyment and learning attitudes. The research took place in Pakistan, and 221 secondary school students participated. Questionnaires, which included closed-ended questions and scales to measure their classroom enjoyment, were administered. The authors affirmed that "the positive trend in the level of enjoyment reported by EFL students suggests that their learning environments are generally successful in fostering a sense of enjoyment" (Ramzan et al., 2023, p. 2242). Having a positive attitude while studying motivates students to continue striving on the path to language learning.

Brunzell et al. (2016) also found some challenges in the implementation of PE in the English classroom. The authors carried out a longitudinal qualitative study with nine Australian teachers, aged between 23 and 38 years, as participants. The researchers aimed to investigate the process and challenges of implementing PE in the classroom from the educators' perspective. The teachers were interviewed over 13 weeks. According to the authors of this investigation, one of

the most important findings was that implementing positive practices with students can be challenging because students "may not be able to communicate what they need or how best to support them" (p. 234). The authors point out that teachers must do their best for learners to feel valued. They added that when teachers ask students about their needs and preferences, this may result in a closer relationship between educators and learners, which in turn may help raise students' self-esteem and well-being (Brunzell et al., 2016).

3.3 Teachers' and Students' Perspectives on Implementing PE

Research has shown different perspectives between teachers and students about the implementation of PE in their classrooms. A study by Stroud (2013) used two different surveys, which were administered to 104 EFL students from private schools in Japan. Humor was used by Stroud as a PE classroom strategy, which seemed to have positive effects on the students. Some of these effects were "relaxation, higher retention, higher participation, more enjoyment, and a more comfortable atmosphere" (p. 76). However, the author also stated that some of the interviewed students did not believe in the possible benefits of the mentioned PE strategy.

In addition, Stroud (2013) stated that "the creation of a more relaxed state and comfortable class atmosphere was also reported to be very true in over 60 percent of the student answers" (p. 76). This suggests that humor as a PE strategy can enhance enjoyment and reduce stress, potentially improving students' overall learning experience.

A study by Barranca-Enríquez et al. (2021) demonstrated that PE positively affects college students from Mexico. A total of 18 EFL students participated in that study, including 12 women and 6 men, all aged 22 years old. Several questionnaires were administered over three weeks, all of them including "different methodologies, which offer the participants an opportunity to engage in their introspection and knowledge" (p. 392). The skills that showed significant improvement were "the emotional coefficient, impulse inhibition, empathy, and the social skills of the emotional intelligence profile" (p. 392).

Sandholm et al. (2023) performed an investigation during 11 months in Finland, in which 72 English teachers with around 30 years of experience participated. These educators were in charge of students aged 5 to 18 years old. The strategy used in this study was the PERMA model, applied in each classroom. Teachers freely wrote about their experiences. Moreover, a questionnaire was administered to each one of them. The authors mentioned that teachers "reported finding positive education useful for supporting students' emotional development" (p.

243). The teachers who participated in the investigation reported that using PE is a strong tool for students, especially when they are learning something new or challenging. It was also stated that PE encourages classroom participation.

Karakasidou et al. (2025) examined the relationship between EFL teachers' implementation of PE and their own well-being. The participants were 175 Greek teachers from secondary level. This study included only teachers as participants. They were asked to respond to a questionnaire to assess their "positive education practices, well-being and self-efficacy" (p. 9). This research showed that "implementing positive education practices significantly predicts teacher well-being, life satisfaction, and self-efficacy, even after accounting for demographic and professional variables" (Karakasidou et al., 2025, p. 16).

Regarding students' perspective, Laakso et al. (2021) used questionnaires, interviews, and assessments with 140 Finnish fifth- and sixth-grade students in order to examine their experiences and opinions about classroom activities aimed at developing and fostering students' well-being. Using this mixed-methods approach, the authors were able to demonstrate that "the majority of the students liked, and in many ways benefited from, the well-being lessons…" (Laakso et al., 2021, p- 270). According to the authors, the students were able to enhance their positive emotions and develop emotional intelligence skills not only in their classrooms but also in their everyday lives.

Another perspective on this topic comes from a study conducted by Hammad Al-Rashidi and Çakmak (2024), in which 250 Turkish EFL learners aged 14 to 18 participated. The authors used pre- and post-tests to examine students' opinions about PE in the classroom. The most important findings indicated that "when students perceive that their teachers genuinely care about their learning progress […] and create a supportive learning situation, they are more prone to cultivate a positive self-concept" (p. 167).

The reviewed studies demonstrate that PE significantly influences EFL students' motivation, well-being, engagement, and academic success. However, its implementation comes with some challenges, such as the need for thoughtful adaptation to each school's unique characteristics. Insights from teachers and students underscore the importance of strategies like humor and emotional support in creating a positive classroom environment. Collectively, these findings suggest that while PE holds great promise, its success depends on careful and context-specific application.

Chapter IV

4. Methodology

We conducted a research synthesis, which is defined by Wyborn et al. (2018) as “a process of reviewing, assessing and synthesizing existing literature or data to produce a series of outputs” (p. 73). These authors claim that this research approach allows a comprehensive analysis of the results of previous studies. In the case of the present research study, this approach enabled us to analyze findings from previous studies on students’ performance and well-being after the implementation of positive education. To ensure methodological rigor and relevance, we defined clear inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting studies in this research synthesis.

Inclusion criteria were as follows: studies had to be published between 2015 and 2025 to reflect contemporary teaching practices; written in English or Spanish to maximize accessibility; conducted in classrooms; explicitly focused on PE, PP, or positive learning environments applied to language education; designed with empirical methodologies including quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods; and preferably published in peer-reviewed journals or reputable academic sources to ensure scholarly credibility.

Exclusion criteria included non-empirical works such as opinion articles, editorials, or theoretical essays without empirical data; studies unrelated to language learning or not applying PE principles; as well as articles with insufficient methodological detail or unclear research design.

By applying these criteria, we aimed to make sure the studies we included were both methodologically correct and clearly connected to our research questions. This allowed us to carry out a reliable synthesis that could offer meaningful insights into how Positive Education impacts students’ academic performance and emotional well-being in language learning classrooms.

Initially, a systematic search of academic papers was conducted to identify relevant works relating to the impact of PE on language learning students' performance. The databases in which we searched for information were SSRN, Science Direct, Redalyc, and ResearchGate. Keywords such as “positive environments for teaching,” “positive psychology,” “positive classroom atmosphere,” “EFL education,” and “positive education” guided the search process. Studies published within the last 10 years and focusing on language learning contexts were considered for the analysis. However, throughout the work, we include earlier research because of their importance.

For this research, we considered the following journals: *Sage Journals, Papeles del Psicólogo, European Journal of Contemporary Education, Íkala, revista de lenguaje y cultura, International Journal of Educational Research, Educational Action Research, Psychology of Well-being Frontiers in Psychology, Oxford Review of Education,* among others.

After collecting the data, we analyzed the articles to classify them according to their relevance and importance for our investigation.

Chapter V

5. Data Analysis and Results

In this chapter, we present an analysis of the 19 articles that were used to conduct this research synthesis, which aimed to address the following research questions: How does the implementation of positive education impact EFL students' academic performance and emotional well-being? And what are the teachers' and students' perspectives on the implementation of positive education in the language classroom? This chapter is divided into the following sections: research location, research approach, research instruments, effects of PE on students' performance and emotional well-being, and teachers' and students' perspectives on the implementation of PE in the classroom.

5.1 Research Location

Table 1

Research location

Location	Author/Year	N	%
America	Barranca et al. (2021); Parra (2010)	2	10.5%
Asia	Arenas et al. (2024); Hammad Al-Rashidi & Çakmak (2024); Li & Xu (2019); Oladrostam et al. (2022); Oladrostam et al. (2024); Ramzan et al. (2016); Shashoni & Slone (2017); Shen et al. (2024); Stroud (2013); Wu (2023)	10	52.6%
Europe	Babic et al. (2018); Gałązka and Trinder (2018); Karakasidou et al. (2025); Laakso et al. (2020); Sandholm et al. (2022)	5	26.3%
Oceania	Brunzell et al. (2016); White and Kern (2018)	2	10.5%
Total		19	100%

Table 1 highlights the geographical distribution of the 19 studies analyzed in this research synthesis. It seems as though the area of PE has gathered more attention in Asia, since 52.6% of the studies were carried out in that region. In addition, Europe accounts for 26.3% of the studies, while only 10.5% of the research was carried out in America and Oceania respectively. It is noteworthy to mention that no studies from Africa and South America were found, which may

suggest a research gap in these continents. This uneven distribution points to the need for more geographically diverse studies in future research.

5.2 Research Approach

Table 2

Research approach

Approach	Author/Year	N	%
Quantitative	Hammad Al-Rashidi & Çakmak (2024); Karakasidou et al. (2025); Ramzan et al. (2023); Shen et al. (2024)	4	21.1%
Qualitative	Babic et al. (2022); Barranca et al. (2021); Brunzell et al. (2016); Gałązka and Trinder (2018); Parra (2010); Stroud (2013); White & Kern (2018)	7	36.8%
Mixed methods	Arenas et al. (2024); Laakso et al. (2020); Li & Xu (2019); Oladrostam et al. (2022); Oladrostam et al. (2024); Sandholm et al. (2022); Shoshani & Slone (2017); Wu (2023)	8	42.1%
Total		19	100%

Table 2 shows that the most commonly used research approach was mixed methods, representing 42.1% of the examined studies. The qualitative approach appears second, in 36.8% of the studies. Next, we have the quantitative approach, employed in 21.1% of the research. The use of a mixed-methods approach may show a growing interest in combining both numerical data and detailed personal experiences to get a better understanding of the impact of PE on students' performance and well-being.

5.3 Research Instruments

Table 3

Research instruments

Instruments	Author/Year	N	%
Diaries	Oladrostam et al. (2024)	1	5.3%
Interviews	Brunzell et al. (2016)	1	5.3%
Surveys	Shen et al. (2024)	1	5.3%

Questionnaires	Barranca et al. (2021); Hammad Al-Rashidi & Çakmak (2024); Karakasidou et al. (2025); Ramzan et al. (2023)	4	21.1%
Educational Interventions	Arenas et al. (2024); Babic et al. (2022); Gałązka & Trinder (2018)	3	15.8%
Mixed Instruments	Laakso et al. (2020); Li & Xu (2019); Oladrostam et al. (2022); Parra (2010); Sandholm et al. (2022); Shoshani & Slone (2017); Stroud (2013); White & Kern (2018); Wu (2023)	9	47.4%
Total		19	100%

As shown in Table 3, mixed instruments is the category that accounts for 47.4% of the analyzed studies. This suggests that many researchers preferred a combination of tools to collect and understand the data more thoroughly. After that, we can see that questionnaires were used in 21.1% of the research, and educational interventions were employed in 15.8% of the research. In contrast, individual tools like diaries, interviews, and surveys were each used in only one study, representing each 5.3%. Overall, the data indicate a trend toward using varied and integrated instruments to explore the topic more thoroughly. These instruments could serve as a guide for teachers who would like to explore the implementation of PE in their students.

5.4 Effects of Positive Education on EFL Students' Performance and Well-being

Table 4

Effects of PE on EFL students' performance and well-being

Effects	Author/Year	N	%
Positive Effects (reduced anxiety, increased motivation, self-confidence, participation, etc.)	Arenas et al. (2024); Babic et al. (2022); Barranca et al. (2021); Gałązka & Trinder (2018); Hammad Al-Rashidi & Çakmak (2024); Laakso et al. (2020); Oladrostam et al. (2022); Oladrostam et al. (2024); Parra (2010); Ramzan et al. (2023); Shen et al. (2024); Shoshani & Slone (2017); White & Kern (2018); Wu (2023)	14	73.7%
Negative Effects		0	0%

Neutral	Brunzell et al. (2016); Karakasidou et al. (2025); Li & Xu (2019); Sandholm et al. (2022); Stroud (2013)	5	26.3%
Total		19	100%

Table 4 reveals that most studies reported positive effects of PE on students' performance, with 73.7% of the sample showing favorable outcomes. This strong trend suggests a general agreement among researchers that PE has a beneficial impact in language learning contexts. Interestingly, no studies reported negative effects, which might indicate that PE is perceived as a low-risk or supportive approach. A smaller portion of the studies (26.3%) showed neutral results, meaning that while PE did not necessarily lead to negative outcomes, it also did not make a clear difference in those cases. These findings highlight the potential value of PE in education and suggest that context and implementation might influence its effectiveness.

Oladrostam et al. (2022) reported that as a result of PE, "students also showed more self-efficacy in terms of voluntarily making an oral report, practiced speaking more frequently, and displayed greater propensity to show themselves and their true capabilities" (p. 12). This suggests that PE can boost students' confidence and willingness to participate, which are key elements in improving language performance, especially in speaking activities where anxiety often plays a role.

Wu (2023) concluded that "appropriate application of a positive classroom environment in English-speaking teaching can motivate both teachers and students in the speaking classroom" (p. 53). This reinforces the idea that PE not only benefits students emotionally and academically but also positively influences teacher motivation and classroom dynamics, creating a more engaging and productive learning environment.

Overall, the consistent positive outcomes across most studies, along with increased student motivation, confidence, and participation, support the idea that PE can play an important role in enhancing EFL students' performance. Motivation is essential for a student's emotional well-being, as it gives them a sense of purpose and satisfaction. Feeling motivated to achieve goals, such as participating in speaking activities, improves learners' mood and reduces the stress levels they may experience when performing these tasks, which involve interaction and public speaking.

5.5 Teachers' and Students' Perspectives on the Implementation of Positive Education in the Classroom

Table 5

Teachers' and students' perspectives on the implementation of PE in the classroom

Perspectives	Author/Year	N	%
Teachers' positive perspective	Karakasidou et al. (2025); Oladrostam et al. (2022); Oladrostam et al. (2024); Sandholm et al. (2022); Shoshani & Slone (2017)	5	26.3%
Teachers' negative perspective		0	0%
Students' positive perspective	Arenas et al. (2024); Barranca et al. (2021); Gałązka & Trinder (2018); Hammad Al-Rashidi & Çakmak (2024); Laakso et al. (2020); Parra (2010); Ramzan et al. (2023); Shen et al. (2024); Wu (2023)	9	47.4%
Students' negative perspective		0	0%
Neutral perspectives	Babic et al. (2022); Brunzell et al. (2016); Li & Xu (2019); Stroud (2013); White & Kern (2018)	5	26.3%
Total		19	100%

Table 5 shows that both teachers and students generally view the implementation of PE in the classroom positively. Students' positive perspectives made up the largest portion, which may reflect the perceived relevance or personal benefits of PE in their learning experience. Teachers' positive views also appeared in a significant number of studies, though slightly less frequently. Also, no studies reported negative perspectives from either group, which suggests that PE is widely accepted or at least not seen as harmful. However, a quarter of the studies presented neutral perspectives, possibly indicating uncertainty about the practical impact of PE or variation in how it is implemented. This mix of responses highlights the overall favorable perception of PE, while also pointing to areas where further investigation might be useful.

Chapter VI

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This research synthesis aimed to identify the effects of positive education on the academic performance and emotional well-being of students. It has been shown that this approach has been implemented and studied, especially in Asian countries. Moreover, the most commonly used research approach was mixed methods, and the researchers employed a combination of different instruments to collect data. The analyzed studies demonstrated that PE can be an excellent approach to be used in the EFL classroom, as it can enhance students' academic performance and well-being.

It is important to point out that 80% of reviewed studies report a beneficial impact of PE on student performance and emotional well-being. There are no negative reported effects, so it can be stated that implementing pedagogical approaches in EFL learners' classrooms poses no risk for either teachers or students. The only challenges that were reported were short implementation-time and lack of teacher training. Few studies demonstrate neutrality in the effects of PE, but these do not represent any difference in its potential value.

In summary, the implementation of PE in classrooms has led to improvements in both academic and personal areas. Academically, students show greater motivation, concentration, and participation, which contributes to better performance and engagement in the learning process. Personally, PE promotes well-being by fostering positive relationships, building self-confidence, and helping learners develop resilience. These combined effects make PE a valuable, low-risk educational approach that supports the holistic development of both students and teachers in language learning environments.

6.2 Recommendations

In this study, we analyzed the impact of PE on language learning students' academic performance and well-being. As shown in the results section, not many studies have been carried out in Latin America. Therefore, future research could examine the implementation of PE in EFL learners in this region

Since we have seen so many good results after the applications of PE, it would be interesting to survey EFL teachers in Ecuador about the use of PE. Some of them might already be utilizing its principles, and others might benefit from teacher training in that area. PE can even become part

of the official English curriculum in Ecuador. Thus, teachers would be more interested in that area and apply it in their practice.

Moreover, it would be interesting to find out about the results of studies on PE in other areas or school subjects, such as mathematics or social science, and analyze the results. We could compare the results across different school subjects to examine if there are differences.

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