

## Revisiting Research on Positive Psychology in Second and Foreign Language Education: Trends and Directions

Ali Derakhshan \* 

### Abstract

With the rise of positive psychology (PP) and its emphasis on the affordances of positive emotions to second/foreign language teaching and learning, numerous studies have been conducted on different PP constructs all over the world. Nonetheless, the status of researching this school of psychology in L2 education is still imprecise. To fill this gap, the present state-of-the-art paper intends to flesh out the conceptualizations, premises, versatilities, emerging theories and methods, and research trends in PP and second language acquisition (SLA). Moreover, it elaborates on the seven PP factors, including optimism, immediacy, connectedness, commitment, academic buoyancy, immunity, and mindfulness. Such sample variables have also been supported by scientific evidence from different contexts. Additionally, some potential implications are drawn for stakeholders to enlighten the process and quality of L2 education. Finally, the study suggests some avenues for future studies to expand the scope of PP and SLA research and practice.

**Keywords:** positive psychology (PP), trends, directions, emotions, second language acquisition, second/foreign language education

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author: Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran,  
Email: [a.derakhshan@gu.ac.ir](mailto:a.derakhshan@gu.ac.ir), ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6639-9339>



## **1. Introduction**

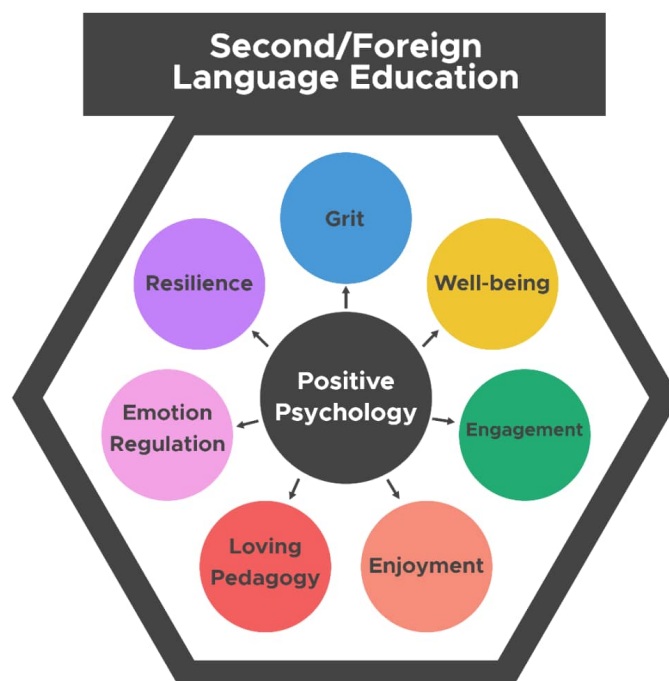
Second/foreign language education has long been acknowledged as one of the most challenging and emotional jobs all around the world (Derakhshan, 2022b; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; Mercer, 2020). Success in this field depends not only on one's efforts and practices but also on his/her inner state and psycho-emotional factors (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; Prior, 2019). This close bond with emotions and psychological drives led to the emergence of a new trend in educational psychology called positive psychology (PP), which aims to “understand, discover, and promote the factors allowing individuals and communities to thrive and lead happier lives” (Wang, Derakhshan, & Rahimpour, 2022, p. 3). As pinpointed by Dewaele et al. (2019), PP generally deals with what leads to balance and what results in imbalances in the social, personal, and professional dimensions of human life. PP is a reaction and movement against previous schools that lingered on negativities and miseries (Fresacher, 2016; MacIntyre et al., 2019). It should be noted that PP does not ignore the presence of negative factors, but it complements them with positive emotions and variables like joy, happiness, love, human flourishing, creativity, resilience, grit, engagement, and well-being (Budzińska & Majchrzak, 2021; Derakhshan, 2022a; Dewaele, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 2016, 2019; Wang, Derakhshan, & Pan, 2022; Wang et al., 2021; Seligman, 2011). The proponents of PP argued that psychology has never been a neutral field, and given its emphasis on negative aspects of human behavior, it has long been negative (Gabryś-Barker, 2016; MacIntyre, 2016). To amend the imbalance, PP endorsed the significance of negative factors but mostly aimed to understand what makes life better (Derakhshan et al., 2021a, 2021b; Pawlak et al., 2021; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). It also pinpointed that instead of highlighting and exaggerating problems and negativities, educational psychology should focus on human strengths, virtues, and positive qualities (Gao et al., 2020; Greenier, 2021; Li, 2021; MacIntyre, 2021; Seligman, 2018; Wang, Derakhshan, & Pan, 2022).

By explaining the significance of positive emotions and behaviors, in expediting the development of teachers and students, the PP movement has inspired several L2 researchers and practitioners worldwide to focus on the bright side of language education (e.g., Derakhshan, Dewaele, & Azari Noughabi, 2022; Derakhshan &

Nazari, 2022; Dewaele et al., 2019; Dewaele & Li, 2021; Li et al., 2018; Mercer, 2020; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2021; Pawlak et al., 2016; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). The PP movement has also prompted many L2 researchers to examine language teachers' and learners' positive emotions and personality characteristics like empathy, enjoyment, flow, resilience, happiness, optimism, love, trust, joy, contentment, tolerance, interpersonal communication skills, engagement, and many more that determine one's academic success (Derakhshan, 2022b; Derakhshan, 2021; Fan & Wang, 2022; Fathi et al., 2021, Li & Wei, 2022; Liu & Chu, 2022; Seligman, 2011; Shakki, 2022; Teo et al., 2022; Wang, Derakhshan, & Azari Noughabi, 2022; Xie & Derkhshan, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022, among others). However, the scope of PP research in L2 education is by no means limited to these factors, and as foregrounded by MacIntyre (2016), PP involves at least 36 potential factors of second language acquisition (SLA). Such a list has been the focus of research for decades, yet the overall research trends and directions of PP in the context of SLA have rarely been studied. As an exception and a landmark study, Wang et al. (2021) elucidated the research and practice of PP in SLA, explained the background of PP, and sampled seven key constructs of enjoyment, grit, loving pedagogy, academic engagement, emotion regulation, resilience, and well-being (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Potential Positive Psychology Factors Contributing to the Second/Foreign Language Learning Experience* (Wang et al., 2021, p. 6)



Despite these insights, other potentials of PP to SLA research and practice have remained uncharted. To fill this lacuna and depict the status of the interplay of PP and SLA, the present study aimed to conceptualize PP within SLA and explicate the developmental trends and directions in researching PP constructs. Moreover, seven PP factors, namely optimism, immediacy, connectedness, commitment, academic buoyancy, immunity, and mindfulness are examined and supported by empirical evidence from studies in SLA.

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1 Positive Psychology: Conceptualizations and Foundations*

It is argued that L2 education has long been governed and dominated by cognitive perspectives that led to the negligence of emotions in L2 learning and teaching (Dewaele et al., 2019). However, in the last decades, the misconception that inspecting emotions is an unscientific act has been resolved and replaced with a shift toward ‘emotionology’ and ‘emotioncy’ (Mackenzie & Alba Juez, 2019; Pishghadam et al., 2013; Pishghadam & Abbasnejad, 2017). As this feeling and the emotion-based movement gained popularity, the emotional aspects of L2 education flourished remarkably among researchers (Prior, 2019). Accordingly, students’ and teachers’ effect and emotions witnessed a surge of attention and interest with the arrival of PP. This school of educational psychology underscores different ways through which people can thrive and flourish in their personal and professional life (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Although it confirms the role of negative factors and abnormalities, it defends the positive side of life (Seligman, 2006). The ultimate goal of PP is to help people to live a better life, shape positive emotions, enhance engagement, and add meaning to life (Seligman, 2006).

More specifically, in its practical domains, PP steps beyond negativities and stressors like anxiety, stress, tension, amotivation, demotivation, fear, boredom, and so forth (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; Mercer, 2020; Pawlak et al., 2021; Pawlak, 2020; Wang & Guan, 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Instead, it places emphasis on variables like trust, love, joy, flow, optimism, hope, courage, well-being, resilience, perseverance, creativity, happiness, and the like (Derakhshan, Greenier, & Fathi, 2022; Dewaele et al., 2019; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Wang, Derakhshan, & Azari Noughabi, 2022; Wang, Derakhshan, Rahimpour, 2022). According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), PP builds on three major pillars including “positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions” (p. 6). The first pillar relates to internal experiences and emotions, while the second pillar has to do with features related to well-being in life. As the third pillar, positive institutions refer to the institutional settings that let people grow (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014).

Theoretically, PP draws on different foundations including 1) the broaden-and-build theory, 2) the rhetorical/relational goal theory, 3) the social cognitive theory, and 4) the attachment theory (MacIntyre et al., 2019; Seligman, 2018; Zheng, 2021). The first theory accentuates the role of positive emotions in human flourishing and

persistent action (Fredrickson, 2001). It distinguishes positive emotions from negative emotions. Based on the broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions usually have five main functions; 1) broadening one's thought-action repertoires, 2) reducing the effect of negative emotions, 3) enhancing psychological resiliency/hardiness, 4) creating and providing personal resources, and 5) generating psychological and physical wellbeing (Wang et al., 2021; Zheng, 2021). On the contrary, negative emotions have harmful impacts on people as they reduce their thought-action repertoires and limit their performance (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Since positive emotions can lead to optimal short-term and long-term functioning, this theory posits that they should be cultivated in individuals both as an end and as a means to wellbeing (Fredrickson, 2004).

The second theoretical foundation of PP was provided by the rhetorical/relational goal theory (RRGT), which was first proposed and used in instructional communication by Mottet et al. (2006). RRG T suggests that teachers and students have different rhetorical and relational goals in the class that they aspire to achieve (Mottet et al., 2006). Consequently, the class revolves around their relational and rhetorical needs/goals. In this process, teachers have to manage both relational and rhetorical needs simultaneously through their behavioral choices. When these objectives are achieved, optimal learning can occur (Frymier, 2007). Rhetorical and relational behaviors can serve different purposes. For instance, teachers may use 'clarity' to improve their own teaching as well as students' beliefs and attitudes (Beebe & Mottet, 2009). Sometimes, teachers may use relational behaviors like 'non-verbal immediacy' to form a joint relationship and rapport in the class (Myers, 2008). In sum, RRG T posits that teachers and students have academic and relational needs which need to be fulfilled in a friendly context that paves the way for optimum performance (Myers et al., 2018).

The next theory beneath PP is social cognitive theory (SCT), which was introduced and developed by Bandura (1986). It posits that learning occurs in social environments with a reciprocal interaction among the people, context, and behavior. This learning theory accentuates social effect and external/internal social support. SCT endorses both the cognitive aspects of learning and the role of social context in one's learning and behavior. As put by Bandura (2008), SCT accentuates the

importance of behavioral observation, modeling, imitation, and the influence of attitudes and emotional responses in shaping learning. Hence, it can be claimed that SCT focuses on the way environmental and cognitive factors cooperate to determine learning and behavior. Despite many contributions, SCT has been condemned for an overestimation of the impact of the environment on behavior (Schunk, 2012).

The last foundation stone of PP was laid by the attachment theory (AT), which was developed by Bowlby (1969). AT was intended to explain relational patterns among individuals. It is one of the main tenets of developmental psychology, which asserts that a child's attachment to a caregiver shapes a behavior, which can then become autonomous. Other than psychology and child maturation, AT has been implemented in language education (Fleming, 2008; Geddes, 2006). Simply, the concept of attachment refers to an emotional bond among people, which can influence their relationships, experiences, and task engagement. Based on AT, students, who establish an attachment with their teachers and peers can make more explorations and become socialized (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). This attachment also makes students engaged, motivated, and risk-takers without fearing failure in the classroom (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). When the attachment level is high in a class, teacher-student rapport and immediacy also increase.

## ***2.2 Positive Psychology and Second/Foreign Language Education***

Although the role of positive emotions and affect in L2 education was highlighted decades ago, it boomed with the rise and flowering of PP which caused a renaissance in language education (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). This movement inspired researchers and practitioners to shift their attention from examining negative emotions to both negative and positive variables involved in L2 education (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele, 2015; Wang et al., 2021). PP does not believe in the polarity of emotions and argues that they cannot be easily divided into negative or positive ones since in many situations they may complement each other (MacIntyre, 2021; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). According to Gregersen (2013), positive emotions can add joy and meaningfulness to L2 teaching and learning and form a sense of resiliency when encountering challenges during the process. The foundations



of PP were made clear by MacIntyre and Mercer (2014) and this led to the appearance of different positive factors in this line of inquiry including love, trust, enjoyment, happiness, emotional intelligence, hope, and pride (Derakhshan, Dewaele, & Azari Noughabi, 2022; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Gregersen et al., 2014; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; Mercer et al., 2016; Wang, Derakhshan, & Pan, 2022).

The application of PP to L2 education went through four main stages as pointed out by MacIntyre (2016). The first contribution was the switch from negative emotions to positive emotions considering both sides as promising for the theory and practice of L2 education. The second injection of PP into L2 education was carried out by the character strengths model, which explains the way L2 teachers and students can flourish by improving their character virtues (MacIntyre, 2021). The next application of PP was made by the extension of PERMA model to EMPATICS model. The PERMA model was proposed by Seligman (2011), including positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning in life, and accomplishment. In light of PERMA, one can reach well-being and meaning in life only if there is an interplay among all these elements (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020). Five years later, Oxford (2016) developed another model called EMPATHICS, which involves nine elements of *emotion and empathy, meaning and motivation, perseverance, agency and autonomy, time, hardiness and habits of mind, intelligences, character strengths, and self-factors*. Many of the factors pinpointed in this model are not sufficiently explored in L2 education and this can motivate more L2 studies under the influence of PP. The last contribution of PP to L2 education relates to the concept of flow, which is a positive state of well-being in which the person functions perfectly and is engaged in the task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

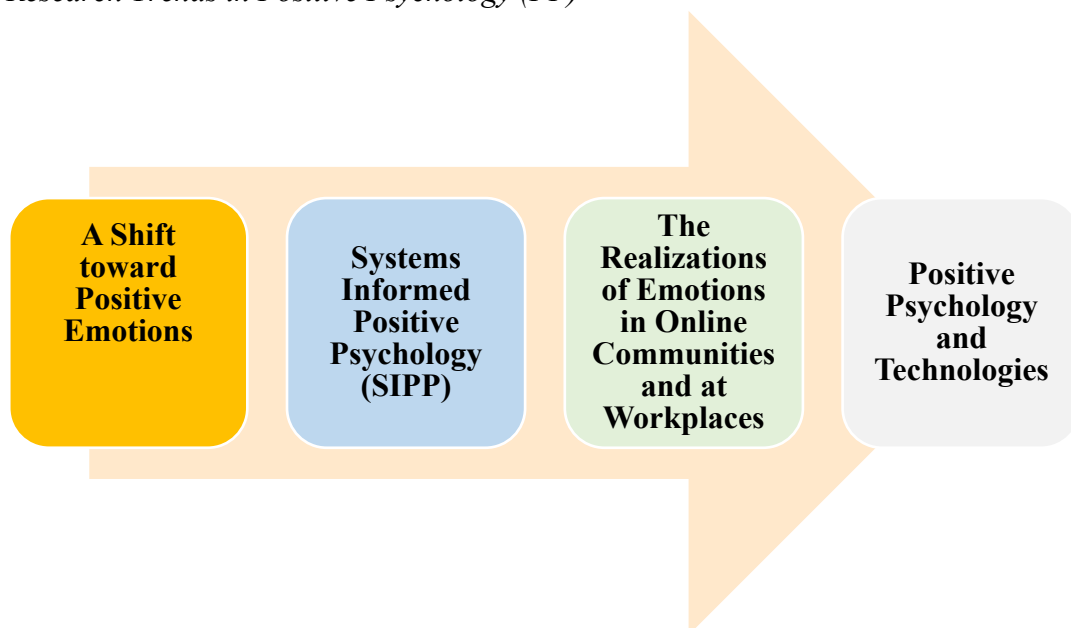
### ***2.3 Research Trends in Positive Psychology***

Similar to other movements in psychology and education, PP did not happen in an abrupt way. There are some developmental trends in this school of psychology, as well (Figure 2). These trends can be presented in three classifications of past, current, and future trends. As for its past trends, for a long time, PP was subsumed under humanistic psychology and its associated research on the full functionality and

psychological health of the individual (Farooqi, 2021). At this time, PP was limited to subjective, positive experiences of hope, optimism, well-being, flow, satisfaction, joy, happiness, and the like. This movement toward positive emotions was a direct reaction against the previous concentration of negativities in educational psychology. In this regard, Seligman (2011) maintained that relentless attention to the negative side of human behavior made educational psychology overlook many positive aspects. In sum, the first movement was a switch from negative emotions to positive, subjective experiences and emotions. At this stage, numerous studies were conducted on different positive emotions related to teachers and students across different educational contexts (e.g., Dewaele, 2015; Gregersen, 2013; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; MacIntyre, 2016).

## Figure 2

*Research Trends in Positive Psychology (PP)*



This focus on various positive emotions has continued up to now and under-explored constructs of PP are still of interest to L2 researchers. However, researching PP has extended to chaos complexity theory and complexity dynamic system theory

(CDST). The proponents of this trend argue that many of the factors and constructs involved in PP and language learning are complicated and non-linear; hence, they call for new theories to interpret emotions and affect (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Mousavian Rad, 2021). One of the most recent studies in this domain was conducted by Gu and Sun (2021), who contended the role of nested systems in developing EFL students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and engagement in classroom activities. Likewise, Kern et al. (2020) supported the use of Systems Informed Positive Psychology (SIPP) by defending the injection of various principles, concepts, methodologies, and practices from the systems sciences into PP discourse to enhance human functionality. This movement from individual perspectives to systems perspectives has initiated novel studies using methods driven by CDST including Latent Growth Curve Modeling (LGCM) (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2021; Kruk et al., 2022) and Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling (RQM) (Elahi Shirvan & Talebzadeh, 2020) as methods in analyzing affective variables in SLA. The current trends in researching PP have also focused on the realizations and appearance of emotions in online communities, especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Brouzos et al., 2021; Derakhshan et al., 2021a; Yamaguchi et al., 2020; Zhao, 2021). Another line of research at the moment relates to the application of the Job Demands and Resources Model (JDRM) to PP, especially regarding the provision of energy and engagement at work (Bakker, 2011; Derakhshan, Greenier, & Fathi, 2022).

Despite the promising insights of previous trends in researching PP, future trends are emerging in this domain, too. The benefits of technologies and technological advancements in shaping and reshaping L2 teachers' and students' emotions can be a momentous direction for research. The next venue for research can be 'making art from broken pieces', which underscores the way people can grow and gain strength from their imperfections and failures in light of PP. The interplay of PP constructs and professional behaviors and performances of EFL teachers, especially their job crafting is also a new line of inquiry. Finally, the contagious nature of PP constructs and the ecological perspectives on their development is a fresh direction of research. Now that the underpinnings, current status, and future trends for doing research on PP and SLA are explicated, the researcher presents seven constructs from PP that need further exploration in the next section.

#### **2.4. Emerging Theories and Methods for Studying the Positive Psychology Factors**

Given the complexity and dynamicity of PP factors (Dewaele et al., 2019; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020; Lomas et al., 2021), the old, traditional methods and theories sometimes fail to measure these factors and justify their potential relationships. Considering this, some researchers have employed some novel methods and frameworks to study the PP factors (e.g., Boudreau et al., 2018; Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2022; Li et al., 2020; Rajablou & Elahi Shirvan, 2017; Rusk et al., 2018, among others). Some of these emerging methods and theories are explained below.

##### *2.4.1 Time Series Analysis*

Time series analysis (TSA) is “a standardized approach that helps to address the mathematical and statistical questions put forth by the time correlations” (Shumway & Stoffer, 2017, p. 3). Inspired by the “*Complexity and Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST)*”, TSA aims to generate a thorough understanding of the dynamic and evolving essence of cognitive, emotional, or behavioral variables (Jin, 2022; Montgomery et al., 2008). TSA, according to Kelty-Stephen et al. (2022), enables the retrodiction or prediction of dynamic and complex events in the past or future and, thus, can considerably contribute to the unraveling of the nuanced changes in teachers' and students' positive characteristics, behaviors, and emotions.

##### *2.4.2 Latent Profile Analysis (LPA)*

Latent profile analysis (LPA) is “a categorical latent variable approach that focuses on identifying latent subpopulations within a population based on a certain set of variables” (Spurk et al., 2020, p. 1). LPA, therefore, assumes that individuals can be classified with varying levels of probability into groups that have various configuration profiles of personal and/or contextual factors (Berlin et al., 2014; Howard & Hoffman, 2018). LPA, which mainly aims to categorize a sample or population into various sub-groups, can be effectively utilized in educational research (Dahling et al., 2017) to classify students based on the different favorable and unfavorable feelings they experience while learning course content.

##### *2.4.3 Ecological Dynamic Systems Theory*

Ecological dynamic systems theory is a theoretical framework through which one can

explore the potential relationships between an organism and other organisms involved in an immediate environment, which is characterized by novel values, intrinsic dynamicity, diversity, and variability (Cao, 2011; Peng, 2012). In classroom contexts, the ecological approach addresses the relationships between the learners and all the psychological and emotional elements embedded in the ecology of the classroom (Kasbi & Elahi Shirvan, 2017). Hence, the ecological examination of students' psycho-emotional variables reflects the connections between students and whatever is present around them (Rajablou & Elahi Shirvan, 2017).

#### *2.4.4 Relational Theory*

Relational theory is “a broad framework for various psychodynamic models of practice that, in part, consider how the self develops in relationship to other selves and is based on patterns from this interactive process” (Cait, 2008, p. 179). Put simply, in relational theory, the human mind is regarded as being developed within a relational context, taking into account both the self and the other (Gkonou & Mercer, 2018). The relational theory is based on psychoanalysis and was developed in response to the drive theory, which holds that an individual’s behavior is determined by his or her internal drives (Moskowitz et al., 2022).

#### *2.4.5 Idiodynamic Method*

The idiodynamic method is “a relatively new mixed-method approach to studying in real time the complex dynamics of integrated affective and cognitive states that interact continuously with human communication” (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2022, p. 67). This method evaluates communication processes within individuals with the aim of better comprehending the dynamics of the various interacting processes involved (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2019). The data produced by idiodynamics are beneficial for studying ‘complex dynamic systems’ (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2017) as they are unique, dense, and can be viewed longitudinally. The idiodynamic method enables educational researchers to collect authentic, real-time data about students' intra-personal variability throughout the learning process (Chinn & Sherin, 2014; MacIntyre, 2012).

### *2.5. Factors from Positive Psychology*

### *2.5.1 Academic Buoyancy*

L2 education is a challenging field with several adversities, pressures, inconsistencies, conflicts, and linguistic-cultural variations that requires one to stay strong (Huang, 2022; Martin & Marsh, 2019; Wang, Derakhshan, & Rahimpour, 2022). This sense of resiliency in academia came to be known as academic buoyancy, which pertains to a person's capability to monitor and tackle academic setbacks and adversities in L2 education and firmly move toward success (Yun et al., 2018). It is the ability to specify and deal with L2 problems and difficulties (Martin & Marsh, 2008). Academic buoyancy is a factor-driven from PP that can be regarded as a positive response to common academic setbacks (Putwain et al., 2015). This construct is dynamic and affected by internal and external factors (Comerford et al., 2015; Huang, 2022). In nature, academic buoyancy highlights human strengths and functions as positive representations of resilience (Zheng, 2021).

Different concepts have been used synonymously with academic buoyancy including resilience, hardiness, coping, and immunity. Resilience is related to one's ability to cope with general difficulties rather than academic ones (Martin & Marsh, 2019). Likewise, hardiness is a person's skill to tackle and minimize the influence of negativities on his/her performance (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). Academic buoyancy has also been mixed up with coping, which is one's different strategies to resolve problems and challenges (Sommerfeld & McCrae, 2000). Therefore, they are explicit techniques that people utilize to deal with an aversive situation. The final cognate term is immunity, which refers to the defensive mechanisms that one employs to moderate and halt adversities, confusions, and harms to his/her behaviors (Hiver, 2017). Given the prominence of being buoyant in L2 education, several studies have been carried out on this construct using PP. The results indicated that academic buoyancy has positive relationships with students' motivation, participation, achievement, self-efficacy, self-esteem, WTC, engagement, sustainability, persistence, competence, perceived enjoyment, self-regulation strategies, and commitment, (e.g., Han & Wang, 2021; Jahedizadeh et al., 2019; Malmberg et al., 2013; Wang, Derakhshan, & Azari Noughabi, 2022; Yun et al., 2018). It also curbs and reduces negative emotions like stress, anxiety, and hopelessness (Zheng, 2021). Most of these studies have focused on EFL students and other stakeholders'

perspectives, especially teachers' has been ignored to date. Hence, this construct can be the focus of future studies.

### *2.5.2 Commitment*

The construct of commitment, as one of the most important factors in L2 education, refers to the strong mental linkage that an individual forms between his/her personal beliefs and a profession (Lu, 2021). Simply, commitment concerns how happy a person is with a job/practice that drives him/her to improve job performance and quality (Altun, 2017; Crosswell & Elliott, 2004). A sense of commitment in L2 education is critical for successful language teaching and learning (Altun, 2017). It is observed when an EFL teacher or student is obliged to take on extra responsibilities and tasks in order to obtain positive academic outcomes (Sarıkaya & Erdogan, 2016). Hence, it is asserted that commitment includes an obligation to the school, peers, job maintenance, performance, sustainable development, and a proficient knowledge base (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004). Having been considered as a wellspring of instructional quality, the concept of commitment has been studied in L2 education, especially in relation to different PP constructs. Previous research demonstrated that commitment can predict students' academic success and optimism (Lu, 2021), emotional intelligence (Ashraf et al., 2017), self-efficacy beliefs (Chesnut, 2017), self-esteem (Salehnia & Ashraf, 2015), and work engagement (Dong & Xu, 2022). However, the role of experience, culture, and identity status in EFL teachers' and learners' degree of commitment to language education has not captured ample scientific attention. Moreover, the trace of factors like love and trust at workplaces in shaping commitment is an interesting topic for research.

### *2.5.3 Connectedness*

In the context of education, the concept of connectedness concerns teachers' and students' sense of belongingness and psychological attachment that reflects their acceptance, value, engagement, and support offered by others (Goodenow, 1993). The construct of connectedness has long been perceived as an element of 'relatedness' (Hagerty et al., 1993). It gained popularity and identity when it was

juxtaposed to learners' learning processes (Blum & Libbey, 2004). Moreover, different concepts like belonging, bonding, and engagement were proposed as cognates of connectedness (Liu, 2022). At this stage, unsolid definitions and conceptualizations were provided for the term connectedness in education (Wang & Degol, 2016). Now, it has been found that connectedness is subsumed under one of the four dimensions of classroom climate proposed by Wang and Degol (2016). They argued that classroom climate includes four dimensions, namely academic environment, institutional environment, relationships, and safety. Sense of connectedness is claimed to be a segment of the third dimension- community relationship. In research domains, despite advances, scholars still use cognates of connectedness in place of the term itself (García-Moya, 2020).

Prior research on connectedness in EFL contexts reveal that the existence of a strong sense of connectedness in the class can promote teachers' motivation, classroom management skills, well-being, pedagogical performance, and interpersonal communication skills (García-Moya, 2020; Quin, 2017; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). In a similar manner, the construct can enhance students' achievement, well-being, resilience, hope, academic engagement, interpersonal communication skills, attachment, and success (Derakhshan, 2022b; Greenier et al., 2021; Violanti et al., 2018). Other than these, connectedness can bring about psychological hardiness and effectiveness (Liu, 2022). Nevertheless, the interplay of PP, loving pedagogy, interpersonal factors, and connectedness is yet under-researched. The use of various research instruments to unravel the way connectors influences EFL teachers and students is also recommended.

#### *2.5.4 Immediacy*

The concept of immediacy, coined by a social psychologist Albert Mehrabian (1969), is conceptualized as “a set of communication behaviors which enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another” (p. 202). It refers to different verbal and nonverbal behaviors and strategies that teachers and students use to form a sense of closeness in the classroom (Dickinson, 2017). It represents closeness and rapport between interactants (Finn & Schrod, 2012). The concept of immediacy can be classified into verbal and nonverbal categories. Verbal immediacy pertains to one's



use of verbal messages to project praise, willingness, empathy, reward, openness, humor, kindness, and inclusiveness in the class (Ballester, 2013). On the contrary, nonverbal immediacy is the use of strategies that intend to form physical and emotional proximity in the class and increase attention, involvement, and liking (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000). EFL teachers use a mixture of verbal and nonverbal cues to form immediacy and rapport in their classes (Cui, 2022).

Concerning its theoretical foundations, immediacy has been driven from two popular theories; AT (Bowlby, 1969) and hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1962). AT as explained earlier, capitalizes on the role of emotional ties among teachers and studies in establishing and determining classroom rapport, practices, and engagement (Zheng, 2021). This sense of liking and proximity fosters students' academic growth and development (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Furthermore, in his theory, Maslow (1962) posits that before reaching optimal performance one's basic human needs must be met. One of the most basic psychological needs of EFL students is undoubtedly a sense of proximity and immediacy with others. It has been empirically investigated by different scholars, who maintained that a strong sense of immediacy in L2 education can contribute to empowerment (Cakir, 2015), social intelligence (Cui, 2022), academic engagement (Derakhshan, 2021), sustained attention (Bolkan et al., 2017), achievement (Teo et al., 2022), and clarity and credibility (Zheng, 2021). Yet, the effect and interaction of many other PP constructs with immediacy from the perspective of EFL teachers have been ignored by L2 scholars.

#### 2.5.5 Immunity

The concept of immunity is derived from a Latin word '*immunis*' and concerns the state of resistance against an aversive entity (Hiver, 2016). It is a defensive system that safeguards one against harms, negativities, and undesirable effects on the environment (Saydam, 2019). It is a metaphor taken from biology and medicine, which underscores teachers' defense mechanisms against stressors and helps them keep their professional equilibrium and effectiveness (Hiver, 2017). Immunity has two manifestations in education, namely productive (positive) and maladaptive (negative) depending on the consequences that the stressors (Hiver, 2016). The functionality of this protection system hinges upon the level of *specificity* of a

challenge or disturbance, *memory* or past experiences of overcoming a threat, *adaptability* to changes, and *durability* of attempts to cope with tensions to form an identity (Rahmati et al., 2019). The construct of immunity has mostly been explored from teachers' perspectives. Research approves its impact on teachers' reflectivity (Rahmati et al., 2019), cognition and identity (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017), and practicum motivation (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017).

The current body of knowledge on immunity is limited to teacher immunity and its sources and strategies being personal, professional, contextual, and socio-cultural (Wang, Derakhshan, & Azari Noughabi, 2022; Songhori et al., 2020). However, the role of demographic factors, educational qualifications, emotional-regulation strategies, school climate/culture, cultural factors, professional identity status, and pedagogical content knowledge of teachers in determining their immunity is unclear. Additionally, the perceptions and views of other stakeholders are ignored in this line of research. Immunity is not exclusive to EFL teachers, instead students may also need this armoring system in facing numerous challenges of L2 education. In comparison to other factors of PP explained in this article, immunity seems to require more research in L2 contexts.

#### 2.5.6 Mindfulness

The concept of mindfulness has been given different definitions and conceptualizations in the past decades. In simple words, mindfulness is an ongoing and internal process that reflects one's cognizance of events and experiences that emerge (Brown & Ryan, 2003). It allows the brain to analyze and reproduce experiences and thoughts (Hölzel et al., 2011). Mindfulness is mutable in that it can develop by means of mediation and training (Roeser, 2016). Trying to explicate the term better, Roeser (2013) argued that mindfulness is a person's non-judgmental awareness of the present-moment events that relate to his/her calmness and compassion. In clinical mediation, mindfulness has been regarded as a tool to improve patient's awareness and capacity to respond to deficient behaviors (Bishop et al., 2004). However, in academic contexts, the term highlights the process of concentrating one's attention only on the present moment occurrences and regulating emotions without being worried about the past or future (Ramasubramanian, 2017).

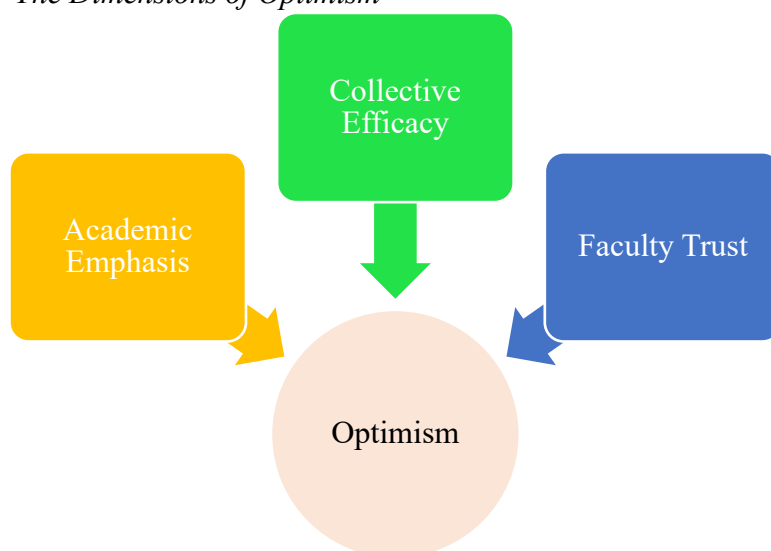
According to Shapiro et al. (2006), the construct of mindfulness has three dimensions in the form of three axioms of *intention*, *attention*, and *attitude*. Intention is the inherent logic behind practicing or craving for mindfulness, while attention pertains to an individual's moment-to-moment operations and experiences. The third dimension of mindfulness, which directly influences the second one, is the attitude that concerns how people recognize and approach the mindfulness practice (Shapiro et al., 2006). Different theories support mindfulness including constructivist perspectives, attention theories, self-regulation theory, flow theory, Gestalt psychology, self-efficacy theory, and self-determination theory whose explanation is beyond the scope of this review article. In light of its strong theoretical foundations, mindfulness has extensively been examined in L2 education. For example, in a case study in China, Wang and Liu (2014) argued that cultivating mindfulness could help EFL students control and direct their own learning. Likewise, research shows that mindfulness practices enhance teachers' psychological abilities, self-regulation strategies, self-efficacy, and social relationships (Chiesa et al., 2011; Condon et al., 2013; Waldman & Carmel, 2019). Furthermore, different investigations approved the correlation of mindfulness with other academic variables including teachers' psychological well-being (Jennings, 2015), emotional regulation (Kerr et al., 2017), effectiveness (Flook et al., 2013), academic performance (Rosenstreich & Margalit, 2015), and engagement (Kee & Liu, 2011). Mindfulness has also been identified to reduce stress and anxiety (Harnett et al., 2016). However, the correlation of this construct with other negative factors like boredom, hopelessness, and disengagement has been overlooked by L2 scholars. The influence of treatment on mindfulness practices on L2 teachers can also be an insightful topic for further research.

### 2.5.7 Optimism

As a significant construct in PP, optimism comprises hope, responsibility, and positive attitudes toward life and career (Seligman, 2006). It is a collective belief in one's strengths, efficacy, and positive aspects of learning in an academic environment (Safari & Soleimani, 2019). Optimism is regarded as an intrinsic factor that mirrors positive expectations about the future in spite of challenges at the moment (Carver & Scheier, 2002). It can also be perceived as a personal tendency to expect and experience good things and survive from mishaps (Dong & Xu, 2022). The construct

of optimism has been approved to be multi-dimensional encompassing three dimensions of *academic emphasis*, *faculty trust*, and *collective efficacy* (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**  
*The Dimensions of Optimism*



As the first dimension, academic emphasis has to do with one's behaviors, which draw on personal beliefs in achieve learning and success. The second dimension, faculty trust, concerns one's confidence in other stakeholders and their role in the learning process. Finally, collective efficacy is a personal belief in one's capability to learn/work competently (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Previous in L2 education demonstrated that the construct of optimism produces different optimal outcomes for both teachers and students including a rise in their classroom rapport, resilience, confidence, self-efficacy, well-being, engagement, and academic success (Hoy & Tarter, 2011; Hoy et al., 2008; Lu, 2021; Sezgin & Erdogan, 2015). In comparison to other PP constructs, optimism still needs more studies to be conducted from the perspectives of both EFL teachers and learners. The causes, sources, and strategies to generate optimism in L2 classes are also fresh ideas for future research. Moreover, the interplay of optimism and positive interpersonal communication factors is also overlooked by L2 researchers (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Overall, as Figure 4 indicates, PP constructs can be momentous for both teachers and students in EFL domains.

**Figure 4**

*The Potential Factors of PP Contributing to L2 Education*



### 3. Conclusion and Implications

In this state-of-the-art article, the conceptualizations, main tenets, underlying theories, significance and roles, and sample factors of PP in the context of L2 education were sketched. It was argued that PP and its construct bring about several positive consequences for EFL teachers and students. PP can exponentially contribute to L2 education by enlightening the functionality of various stakeholders. As a result, the present article can practically inform different individuals in L2 education and research. EFL teachers may find this study significant and useful by understanding the role of positive emotions and PP constructs in the process of teaching and learning a second/foreign language. They can draw on the constructs of PP, especially those covered in this study and develop proper techniques and strategies to develop a caring and friendly learning environment for students to grow. Teacher trainers can also benefit from this study and design and propose professional development programs for pre-service and in-service EFL teachers in which the tenets, principles, and

practices of PP are thoroughly explained to EFL teachers. They can deliver workshops and seminars on different aspects of PP and the way it can enlighten L2 education. For a sustainable development in teaching, EFL teachers need to be taught about the theoretical and practical domains of PP constructs like enjoyment, engagement, and interpersonal skills. Materials developers are another group that can benefit from this study by designing textbooks, resources, and tasks in which the assumptions of PP are reflected. Rather than linguistic aspects, materials should consider students' positive emotions so that they can flourish in academia. Moreover, teacher-recruiting committees can identify the prominence of PP and extend their standards for teacher selection. Aside from the pedagogical skills of EFL teachers, the committees can also pay attention to teachers' knowledge and skills in PP and other educational psychology theories. They should capitalize on the affective side of L2 education as much as the linguistic side.

Finally, L2 researchers can draw on the ideas put in this review and run future studies on PP. Although researching PP has recently grown enough, there are still many unexplored areas. Most of the current studies are simple correlational studies; hence, future researchers can run qualitative and longitudinal investigations of different PP constructs, especially the seven factors mentioned in this article. Similarly, the majority of studies conducted on PP factors have been restricted to specific educational contexts; therefore, future scholars are highly recommended to switch toward cross-cultural investigations (Derakhshan, Greenier, & Fathi, 2022; Wang, Derakhshan, & Azari Noughabi, 2022; Wang, Derakhshan, & Rahimpour, 2022). Moreover, despite the fact that old, traditional methods sometimes fail to measure teachers' and students' dynamic emotions and behaviors (Lomas et al., 2021), the majority of L2 researchers have studied the behaviors and emotions of L2 teachers and learners through traditional methods. That is, the novel methods of research are somehow neglected in the domain of L2 education and research (Boudreau et al., 2018; Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2022; Li et al., 2020). Thus, future experimental investigations need to examine L2 teachers' and learners' classroom emotions and behaviors using innovative research methods like idiodynamic method, time series analysis, and latent profile analysis. Additionally, due to the complex and dynamic nature of PP factors (Dewaele et al., 2019), old theories are unable to explain

and justify the connections between these factors. What is now needed are empirical and review studies examining PP factors and their associations in light of emerging theories, including ecological dynamic systems theory, ecological momentary assessment, ergodicity, potential affective affordances, complex dynamic systems theory, and relational theory.



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**About the Author**

**Ali Derakhshan** is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at the English Language and Literature Department, Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran. He gained his MA in TEFL from the University of Tehran and his PhD in Applied Linguistics from Allameh Tabataba'i University. He was selected as a distinguished researcher by the Teaching English Language and Literature Society of Iran in 2021. His name appeared in the list of the top 2% scientists in the world in 2022. He has been a member of the Iranian Elites Foundation since 2015. He has published in both accredited international journals (*Review of Educational Research, Computers and Education, Language Teaching Research, System, Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching, Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, ELT Journal, Current Psychology, Asia Pacific Education Researcher, Educational Studies, Frontiers in Psychology, etc.*) and various local journals. His research interests are positive psychology, teacher education, learner individual differences, cross-cultural interpersonal factors in educational psychology, interlanguage pragmatics, and intercultural communication.