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Chapter X: Jobs, Careers and Callings: Adapting Positive Psychology Tasks for Use in ESL/EFL and Other Language Classes and Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT: This chapter offers an innovation in teacher development for many teacher educators: the inclusion of language learning-related activities connected with positive psychology into micro-teaching as a way of helping teachers to craft their own jobs. The chapter begins with the distinction between jobs, careers and callings and introduces Wrezeniewski and Dutton’s (2001) concept of “job crafting.” It then gives a brief overview of positive psychology including types of happiness, using Seligman’s (2002) differentiation of “The Pleasurable life”, “The Good Life” and “The Meaningful Life” and expanding to his PERMA model of Well-being (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaningfulness and Accomplishment) (Seligman 2011). After this introduction to positive psychology, the chapter reports on Lyubomirsky’s identification of behavioral and cognitive actions related to positive emotion and suggests specific classroom tasks that can be used for micro-teaching by teachers in training. These tasks, based on some the author uses in an M.A. TESOL course on Positive Psychology in ELT (English Language Teaching), give the learners practical experience using the ideas and provide tools for them to craft their own jobs.

As an ESL/EFL/other language teacher and/or a teacher educator which of these definitions comes closest to defining your own teaching position?

a job (Done primarily for the pay.)

■ *a career* (In addition to the pay, there is a deeper personal investment, opportunities for promotion and increased social standing, self-esteem, and power within the position.)

■ *a calling* (The primary reward is the sense of fulfillment it brings to the person doing it.)

These distinctions, based on the work of Wrzesniewski, et al. (1997), offer a glimpse into our motivations as workers. Most teachers, it seems safe to assume, are probably somewhere on the *career/calling* end of the continuum. Wrzesniewski acknowledges as much, using teachers and Peace Corp workers as examples of people who believe their efforts make the world a better place. But she says “calling” is not limited to “the helping professions”. Noting that the term “calling” originated in a religious context but the modern use of the word no longer necessarily has that connotation; it can apply to anyone whose work is socially valuable and can include “salespersons, medical technicians, factory workers and secretaries” (Wrzesniewski, et al. 1997:22).

Schwartz (2015:13) points out that “(i)t is people who see their work as a ‘calling’ who find it most satisfying. For them, work is one of the most important parts of life, they are pleased to be doing it, it is a vital part of their identity, they believe their work makes the world a better place.”

The way to transform a job into a calling is what Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) call “job crafting.” Job crafting is “what employees do to redesign their own jobs in ways that can foster job satisfaction, as well as engagement, resilience, and thriving at work.” (Berg, et al. 2008:1). Citing a study of educators, the same authors state that job crafters are (1.) “giving more attention, time, energy to one’s passion... (2.) taking on additional tasks that are related to one’s passion... and (3.) reframing the social purpose of one’s work to align with one’s passion.” (Berg, et al. 2008:4).

Humanistic psychology founder Abraham Maslow is quoted as having said that “the most beautiful fate, the most wonderful good fortune that can happen to any human being, is to be paid for doing that which he passionately loves to do” (quoted in ben-Shahar 2007:99). Surely that is most people’s motivation, or at least hope, when entering teaching as a profession. It seems logical that, as teacher educators, we should give learners tools to do that.

Teacher education programs introduce many topics, theories and methodologies. However, things like crafting a job or making the job into a calling are rare. If we can do so, that would be a powerful innovation.

Introducing positive psychology into the language classroom and into language teacher development programs is one such way. This chapter will share some basics of positive psychology and then explore ways that teacher educators can use in their teacher development courses and their students can, in turn, use with their own learners. If students actually experience and even teach these activities in micro-teaching, it will probably make it easier for them to try the ideas in their own classes. And, for some teachers, it will help them craft their jobs to make more of their time in the classroom into a calling. At the same time, as teacher educators, we are crafting our own jobs in ways that increase our own satisfaction and competence.

1. What is Positive Psychology?

What is positive psychology and why is it important for us as English teachers and teacher educators? Every teacher necessarily deals with educational psychology. We either deal with it with awareness or by default. It seems better to be conscious about what we are doing. There are also concrete educational benefits of thinking about learners’ mental states. Peterson (2006: 285) points out that “positive attitudes and motives about school translate themselves into good academic performance.” Seligman, [Ernst, Gillham, Reivich and](#)

[Linkins](#) (2009) link positive mood to broader attention and enhanced creative, holistic, analytic and critical thinking skills, -- precisely the kinds of skills we want people in teacher training courses to apply. Oishi, et al. (2007) report on an online survey of nearly 120,000 people which correlated higher levels of life satisfaction with increased likelihood of continuing with their education and higher levels of happiness being connected to higher grade point averages and lower absence rates. Achor (2010:44) suggests that positive emotion “primes” us as learners, “flood(ing) our brains with dopamine and serotonin, chemicals that not only make us feel good, but dial up the learning centers of our brains to higher levels. They help us organize new information, keep that information in the brain longer, and retrieve it faster later on.” Clearly, the research shows very practical reasons for us to pay attention to our students’ mental well-being.

Peterson (2006, vii) famously defined “positive psychology” as “theory and research...(into) what makes life most worth living.” While traditional psychology focuses on mental illness and difficulties such as depression and schizophrenia, positive psychology emerged as a movement within the discipline of psychology about two decades ago.

Designed as a supplement to, not a replacement for traditional psychology, positive psychology focuses on mental health: What is going on, cognitively and behaviorally, with happy, mentally healthy people?

Seligman, one of the pioneers of positive psychology, makes it clear that it is not “the Power of Positive Thinking”, which he terms an “armchair exercise” (2011: 186) based on a philosophy, rather it is scientific observation and empirical, replicable research. It is also not what he sarcastically refers to as “happy-ology” (Seligman 2004), focusing only on pleasure and ignoring negative experiences. Positive emotion, he points out, “habituates.” He explains with the example of eating French vanilla ice cream. The first bite gives great pleasure. By the sixth bite, we are used to it and the pleasure is diminished.

2. Types of Happiness

Seligman finds it useful to differentiate types of happiness. At the lowest level is “The Pleasant or Pleasurable life”. That is the concern of “hedonics” – the study of our feelings from moment to moment” (2002). In addition to the problem of habituation, there is the “hedonic treadmill.” Happiness is a moving target. Supposed you really, really want that beautiful Gucci™ bag, so you buy it. Initially, it gives you pleasure. But now you already have it. Soon, it isn’t so special, so desired any more. But, oh, that beautiful Prada™ bag you don’t have sure looks attractive, doesn’t it? The same is true with new cars and houses and job promotions.

Another challenge is the “set point”. About half of any individual’s happiness is genetically fixed. Naturally, it goes up and down based on life experiences but it returns to about the same point (Lyubomirsky 2007). She goes on to say that one’s circumstances, usually difficult to change in a meaningful way, account for only about ten percent of one’s positive emotion. As Seligman summed up the pleasurable life, (*Playboy* publisher) “Hugh Hefner was wrong. The pursuit of pleasure makes almost no contribution at all to a satisfying life” (quoted by Stockley 2006).

But if the “set point” and “circumstances” determine about sixty percent of one’s happiness, it is the other forty percent where a person’s decisions and actions can make a difference. Those percentage points lead to Seligman’s other types of happiness.

“The Good life” is about engagement and flow. “Flow” is used here in the sense proposed by Csikszentmihályi (1997), as the psychological state that is a balance of challenge and skill. Athletes call it “being in the zone.” As teachers most of us have almost certainly experienced flow in the classroom during a class where everyone is working and communicating and upon glancing at the clock we think, “Wow. What happened? Class time is over!” It is like the time evaporated. During flow, our sense of time is distorted. We

are very focused and appropriately challenged. If something is too difficult, it is easy to give up. If it is too easy, we get bored. During flow, we are usually unaware of our happiness. We are focused on the task, not the emotion. Only later do we notice our sense of satisfaction.

The final type of happiness is “The Meaningful Life.” This Seligman defines as “belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self, and humanity creates all the positive institutions to allow this: religion, political party, being green, the Boy Scouts, or the family” (2011: 12). Very often, the activities, cognitive and behavioral, related to The Meaningful Life match those of a calling.

Seligman has revised his earlier model to make it both more inclusive and complete. The ideas about happiness still hold true, but rather than looking just at happiness, the new model is about more complete “well-being” that seeks to help people flourish.

The new model is called PERMA for Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning (and Meaningfulness) and Accomplishment.

Positive Emotion. This includes the above aspects of what we usually think of as “happiness.” It is perhaps the easiest aspect of PERMA to work on in the classroom as it is fairly easy to develop and use tasks that connect positive emotions to traditional language class targets such as grammar, language function, vocabulary and fluency work.

Engagement (which includes Csíkszentmihályi’s Flow). This means “learner buy-in” – getting them to feel connected to the class and the tasks.

Relationships. This includes both teacher-student and student-student relationships, with student referring both to “teachers in training” and the end-user language students.

Meaning (and meaningfulness). This is not related to the traditional ESL/EFL “form vs. meaning” distinction. Rather, it is what Seligman refers to as “belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self.” (2011:8)

Accomplishment or achievement. This is also referred to as “agency” (Murphey 2012, this volume). It means setting and achieving goals. Seligman (2011) notes that this is not about winning for its own sake. It is not about accumulating money for example, but rather it concerns the philanthropy that people like Rockefeller and Carnegie and current charitable donors like Bill Gates and Warren Buffett engage in and who use their wealth to accomplish wonderful things. Although few of us will ever be in a position like that, we can all accomplish things that make us better people by “paying it forward”.

While all of the elements of PERMA have a role in the ESL/EFL and teacher education classroom, positive emotion is the one that usually most clearly connects to elements teachers expect to deal with in their classes such as grammar, language function, vocabulary sets, and fluency tasks/strategies.

To build upon this short overview of some of the principles of positive psychology, let us move on to an exploration of ways to make use of them in ESL/EFL and teacher education classes. This section identifies eight suggestions from positive psychology and ways those concepts are easily practiced in ESL/EFL classes. After reading an earlier version of this chapter, a friend and colleague who shares my interest in using positive psychology in language teaching said, “Marc, you are actually doing this in your own M.A. TESOL classes. That’s the real innovation. Ask your students to reflect on what they have taken away and done in their classes.” To that end, I invited former students, all of whom are English teachers in Japan, as well as other colleagues who have been part of teacher development workshops I have conducted throughout Asia, to reflect on what they do in their own classes and how students react. One reflection is presented for each of the activities.

3. Positive Psychology as Classroom Content.

Sonja Lyubomirsky (2005:32-33) identified “Eight steps toward a more satisfying life”, which are paraphrased below to make them more accessible to learners. They are as follows:

- Remember good things in your life. (Count your blessings)
- Do kind things.
- Say “thank you” to people who help you.
- Take time for your friends and family.
- Forgive people who hurt you.
- Take care of your body and health.
- Notice good things as they happen.
- Learn to work with your problems and stress.

Most of these are items **that** come up regularly in ESL/EFL classes. “Family₂” “friends₂” and “health” are standard topics in many beginning level textbooks. Two of the items are tied to grammar: “Remember good things” requires using past tense and “Notice good things as they happen” requires some form of present tense usage. “Thanking” and “forgiving” are language functions, often taught with fixed expressions or routines.

In my own classes, I give this information to the learners via a “sentence strip peer dictation.” I copy the sentences and cut them into strips. Each student receives one. They stand and circulate, reading their sentence to a series of partners and writing their partners’ sentences. They continue until they have collected all eight. Then they work in small groups, discussing the meaning of each idea and how they do – or could – practice the ideas in their own lives.

4. Positive Psychology Task Examples for Learner Micro-Teaching Sessions.

In most language teacher education courses, the students (teachers in preparation or in-service) see or hear about classroom activities and participate in teaching simulations or “micro-teaching” experiences where one person acts as the teacher and the other students pretend to be language learners.¹ footnote: If it is easier, free photocopyable tasksheets for most of these activities are

available at <http://www.eltandhappiness.com/innovationspospsych-downloads.html>)

Although complete courses in Positive Psychology in ELT (English Language Teaching) do exist, in most teacher training programs, time does not allow for this kind of in-depth study. However, if it could be done in a small way, that could set the stage for teachers acrafting their own job, a true innovation. It may be possible to devote two or three class meetings to the topic by giving pre-service teachers some background and inviting them to do the “sentence strip peer dictation” described above. Afterwards, individuals prepare and teach one of the following activities to the other peers in the class.

As mentioned above, each of these activities is followed by a “Teacher reflection” from a practicing teacher who learned about positive psychology either as part of their own M.A. TESOL program or at a conference workshop on the topic. They were asked to reflect on either their own experiences introducing the activities in their own actual language classrooms and/or their learners’ reactions.

Positive Psychology concept: **Remembering good things in your life.**

Microteaching task: *Three good things last weekend.*

Language points: past tenses and encouraging follow-up questions, fluency practice.

Preparation: prepare small counters such as poker chips, dried beans, etc.

Students start by working alone. Each person lists three good things that happened last weekend. Then they work in groups of three or four. One person reads aloud his/her first item. Partners ask as many follow-up questions as possible. Each person gets one point (counter) for each question. Note that for lower level classes, it may be necessary to either teach WH- and Did/Was questions or brainstorm sample questions with the class.

Teacher reflection: (Japanese high school teacher, Aichi Prefecture, Japan): As a teacher, I felt quite satisfied, because I could see my students actively participated in this activity with happy smiles on their faces. I’m happy when students are happy. Students enjoyed

communicating with others and talking about good things. They were well-motivated to share their good memories with others. It was usually hard for my students to come up with questions, but during this activity, students asked questions by themselves. (N. Okuda, personal communication, Dec. 7, 2015)

Teacher reflection: Filipino university teacher and TESOL certificate educator, Manila, The Philippines

“It was such a wonderful experience for my students to focus their attention on recalling and sharing their recent positive experience. Some of these experiences include events such as graduation ceremony, family reunion, outing, birthdays and surpassing a difficult challenge that they have encountered in life. Through various language functions and forms, they were able to share the happiness they felt upon facing these positive experiences.” (A. Sicat, personal communication, Jan.4, 2016)

Positive psychology concept: **Expressing Gratitude.**

Microteaching task: *Thank you letters.* (Also called “gratitude letters”).

Language point: Thanking, letter writing.

Preparation: none.

If necessary, teach English letter writing conventions such as the date at the top, greetings like, “Dear (name),” Closings “Sincerely,” “Yours,” and “Love,” as well as when they are appropriate – e.g., “Love,” is great for a letter to one’s parents or other family members but probably not appropriate in a letter to a teacher or boss. Then each student thinks of someone who helped them in a big way. They write a letter (a) explaining exactly what the recipient did to help them, (b) explaining the result, i.e., how it changed the writer’s life and (c) saying thank you. Have them write the letter in the recipient’s main language and also in English. (This may be done as homework). The teacher collects the English version.

Encourage the students to, ideally, read the letter to the person they wrote to. If that is not practical, they should mail or email it to the recipient. The teacher might even consider providing envelopes and stamps to make it easier. Note that this is a standard positive psychology activity that almost always produces [satisfying](#) results.

I teach in Japan where direct emotion is rarely expressed [overtly](#). Still, one study of second-year Japanese students in a compulsory writing class found that 95% of them reported experiencing positive emotions while doing the activity. [A similarly high](#) 85% of the letter recipients reacted positive as well (Harada 2015). Note that very often students choose to write the letter to one of their parents so this actually works on both expressing gratitude and taking time for family.

Teacher reflection: (Japanese university teacher, Tokyo). As a teacher giving an out-of-class assignment, I assured my students their privacy and decision-making process of two points. One was they could keep the letter undisclosed. The other was they could decide on how the message was conveyed. Students who read the letter out loud reported that having a mission to accomplish made it easier for them to express their gratitude directly. A few reported they had stopped short of doing so due to the sense of embarrassment. I told them showing their appreciation was most important and that it was natural to be hesitant about reading out loud. (N. Harada, personal communication, Dec. 27, 2015)

Positive psychology concept: **Doing kind things.**

Microteaching task: *Random acts of kindness.*

Language point: imperatives (follow-up activity: oral or written narrative). Preparation: [Have on hand](#) two pieces of chocolate or other candy for each student.

In class, ask, “What time is it?” When someone answers, say, “Oh. It’s snack time!” and give everyone two pieces of candy. Tell them to eat – and enjoy – one of the pieces.

After they do, explain that that was a “random act of kindness” – an unexpected nice thing to do. Tell them that the other piece is for someone else. It must be someone who is not in this class. Depending on where the class is held and what is culturally appropriate, they might give it to a stranger or to someone such as a school cleaning staff member, office staff person, bus driver, etc. Teaching them something to say, such as “This is for you. Enjoy it!” Then brainstorm other “random acts of kindness” they could do. Write them on the board, using the imperative form. Examples: *Smile at someone who is not smiling. Give up your bus/train seat to an older person or someone with a baby. Compliment someone who doesn’t expect it. (“Cool jacket!”). Write thank you notes to the school’s cleaning people on the whiteboard/chalkboard at the end of the day.* Ask them to both give the extra piece of candy and do one more random act of kindness before the next class. During the following class, have them talk about what they did, describe the recipient’s reaction as well as their own feelings and/or have them write about it. You may want to have them email to you what they did. Print the student’s short “random acts of kindness” stories and distribute them for reading and discussion in the next class. Note: when they are eating the candy, you may want to guide them through it so they eat “mindfully”. See “Eating a blueberry mindfully” below.

Teacher reflection: (Japanese university teacher, Sendai, Japan). Initially students are somewhat skeptical about saying things like “I love your smile!” or “Oh, thank you!” For some, it takes a while to come up with compliments for their partner. Reactions expressed in students’ logs show they enjoy this unusual experience: “Complimenting each other was a new experience!” “It was kind of embarrassing to compliment each other but I really enjoyed it”. Students took joy in finding good things to say to others: “I felt really great to praise other people.”, “It was such an eye-opening experience to find that there

ARE so many things to praise others for.” Students felt “Happy”: “I’m happy because I can compliment everyone.” (T.Schmidt, personal communication, Dec. 18, 2015).

Teacher reflection: (American university teacher, Osaka, Japan). “I gave each student one hundred yen (about US85cents) to use to do something nice for someone else. I told them that doing something nice for a friend was okay, for an acquaintance better, but for a total stranger the best. Then, they were supposed to email me what they had done, which I sent back out to everyone in occasional digests. The stories that came in were lovely: leaving a box of chocolates by an old man’s apartment door, buying some water for an overheated marathon runner, and even putting a hundred yen on a brother’s desk, though he did not notice.” (C. Kelly, personal communication, Dec. 13, 2015)

Positive psychology concept: **Take time for friends and family.**

Microteaching task: *An award for you.*

Language point: Expressing gratitude and appreciation.

Preparation: (optional). Draw or find online pictures of blank trophies or award medals.

Make copies. Each student needs three or four.

Ask **learners** to think about the other students in the class. If they were going to give other people an “award”, **for** what would it be? Encourage answers and write the ideas on the board. Examples: *Good listener! You always help our group! Cool fashion award! Hard worker! Kindness award! Good friend!* Either give them the **blank awards** or have them draw awards/trophies. **Invite learners to** personalize them and **then** give them to the people they want to thank. This activity is based on Hadfield (1992).

Teacher reflection: New Zealand university teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand.

“I designed this activity to cheer up an intermediate class who were having a ‘mid-term slump’: loss of energy and a touch of homesickness. I cut out the medal outlines so that each student had one for everyone else in the class and brought in lots of coloured felt tips. I explained what to do and they flung themselves into it. There were lots of laughs while they were thinking of things to write and colouring in. Then we had the medal giving ceremony with as much pomp and dignity as possible – in contrast to the awards they had given each other which were hilarious. They thanked each other for things like, ‘Always wearing colourful clothes to brighten up the rainy days!’ and ‘Always asking the questions we all wanted to ask but were too shy!’ I found the activity improved morale and led to a stronger class culture, with lots of running jokes and gags based on what they had written about each other.” (J. Hadfield, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2016)

Positive psychology concept: **Forgiving.**

Microteaching task: *Ranking forgiveness quotes.*

Language point: forgiveness language, understanding quotes and metaphor, comparing and discussion, giving reasons.

Preparation: (Optional) Make copies of these six quotations:

- *“Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is letting go of pain.”* – Kathy (on the internet).

- *Not to forgive “is like drinking poison, then waiting for it to kill your enemy.”* –

Nelson Mandela

- *“‘Goodbye’ is easier than saying, ‘I was wrong.’ ”* - unknown

- *“When you forgive, you don’t change the past. You change the future”* –

Bernard Meltzer

- *“If we really want to love, we must learn how to forgive.”* – Mother Teresa

“When you forgive someone who hurt you, you take away their power to hurt you.” – unknown

In class, give the students the copies or write the quotes on the board. Students work in pairs or small groups. Ask them to discuss the meaning of each quote and number them from 1-6, from the most (#1) to the least (#6) meaningful. Encourage them to give reasons.

Note: use care when working with a topic like forgiveness. Don't push students to talk about things they don't want to share. Keep in mind that some students, such as refugees, may have had experiences that you, as a language teacher and not a mental health professional, are not prepared to deal with. If such things come up, try to put them in touch with someone who is qualified to help them.

Teacher reflection: British university teacher, Tokyo, Japan).

Asked if I had forgiven the man who knocked down my daughter with his car I said I had. I realised I had forgiven him because he would never have done that on purpose. As I held the small weight in my hand and it got heavier and heavier I thought of other people who I had not forgiven, usually because the hurt that they inflicted was tiny (but inflicted on purpose) in the day to day of a busy life. They were not big hurts but could add to a heavy weight if carried for long enough. Spiteful comments, slight dismissals, mild scoldings, I forgave many small hurts that day that no-one but I remember. I feel lighter.” J.Sato, personal communication, Jan.4, 2016

Teacher reflection: Filipino university teacher and TESOL certificate trainereducator, Manila, The Philippines

“Though they find (forgiveness activities) a bit bothering, the participants in my TESOL workshop admitted that it somehow changed their perspective in life about forgiveness...Overall, the participants expressed their humility and joy upon pardoning their oppressors.” (A. Sicat, personal communication, Jan.4, 2016)

Positive psychology concept: **Noticing good things as they happen, mindfulness.**

Microteaching task: *Eating a blueberry with mindfulness*

Language point: Imperatives, present tenses, listening.

Preparation: **Bring** a dried blueberry or similar fruit **for each student in the class**. Actually, any fruit is OK but dried fruit is less messy to deal with in the classroom than others.

In class, point out that they have eaten thousands of pieces of fruit – wonderful, delicious, healthy fruit -- but most of the time, we don't really notice. We are usually eating and talking to someone, or eating and watching TV, or eating and reading the newspaper – eating and doing something else. Rarely are we just eating and focusing on that. Today they will eat one blueberry with mindfulness. Give one blueberry to each person. In a slow, smooth voice, read the following script. Pause at the dots (•) so they have time to think about and do what you are saying.

Today we will do something unusual. You are going to really experience eating a blueberry. • You are going to eat this blueberry and as you do, really notice it. You'll get to know this piece of fruit better than any fruit you've eaten before. • Hold it in your hand. Look at it. • Notice the color. Notice the wrinkles. I wonder if they are like fingerprints. I wonder if each one is different than other ones. • And smell it. You can notice that slight, sweet flavor. • And put it in your mouth but don't eat it just yet. • Notice how your tongue knows just where to put it. • And notice how your mouth is wet with saliva. Your body automatically knows you are going to eat something good. • And now, very slowly start to chew it. • As you chew, you taste and smell the flavor. • Take your time. It is good and you want it to last as long as possible. • Think about how wonderful it tasted, because you took the time to notice.

Note: This is based on a “raisin meditation” by Jon Kabat-Zinn, popularized by

Moyers (1993). Meditation may seem like an unusual thing to introduce into a language classroom. However, as Lyubomrski (2007:241) points out, “(a)n avalanche of studies has shown that meditation has multiple positive effects on a person’s happiness and positive emotions, on physiology, stress, cognitive abilities, and physical health.” For many people, however, it might seem like it belongs in a temple in Thailand or an ashram in India – or at least a retreat center in California more than their own classroom. One purpose of using this eating meditation is to use a simple, everyday thing like food is to make “mindfulness” see less “exotic” than “meditation” seems to some people. “Mindfulness” really is as simple as slowing down and noticing what is really happening in one’s life.

Teacher reflection: Japanese university teacher, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. “What an amazing experience to use a blueberry to do meditation! I have never eaten it like this and pay attention to it using my senses before. This was the first experience for me to savor the taste of the blueberry much more than usual and look at the blueberry carefully. The meditation made my body feel something unusual and get warm. After the meditation, I noticed that I could feel relaxed and refresh my mind through experiencing the blueberry meditation. It would be a great idea to take time to do meditation by using a blueberry.”

(M.Sugiyama, personal communication, Dec. 17, 2015)

Positive psychology concept: **Take care of your body and health.**

Microteaching task: *Line up nonverbally.*

Language point: gesture, spoken language for confirmation.

Preparation: none.

Divide the class into groups of six to eight and have them line up as quickly as possible using only non-verbal cues, like gestures. When they finish, they sit down or squat and then speak to confirm that they are in the correct order.

Have them line up in some of these ways:

- Tallest to shortest
- Birthday, January to December
- The time they got up today.
- The time they get up on weekends.
- How long it takes them to get to school.
- The number of letters in their name (first and last).
- How much time they spend on-line each day.
- The size of the palm of their hand.

Do a few of the “line up nonverbally” tasks. Upon completion students can be conveniently paired up with someone who is usually not their partner as they can work with the person they are standing next to. Although it may seem surprising to ask students to do physical movement tasks in English class, there is ample evidence that students who do physical tasks do better academically (Ratey and Hagerman 2010).

Humans evolved to walk about 20 kilometers (about 12 miles) a day (Medina 2014:31). We certainly were not meant to sit for eight hours a day, or even for a 60 or 90 minute class. After 20 minutes sitting, blood builds up in the feet, lower legs and buttocks. Standing and moving for just one minute gives a 15% increase of blood, and therefore oxygen, to the brain (Sousa 2011:34). In this activity, students spend a few minutes being physically active, reenergizing themselves. (See Kelly chapter XX, this volume).

Teacher reflection: (Australian university teacher, Shiga Prefecture, Japan). “Humans are social beings and providing physical activities typically engages students more actively in their learning. Students may sometimes appear to initially be a little reluctant but soon discover through experience and instruction that the resultant positive effect on the body

and brain can support their learning both in and out of the classroom. I also find it interesting how a significant energetic shift takes place, which carries over into future lessons. Classroom physical activities are often novel experiences which seems to provide an atmosphere that is more relaxed and conducive to communication.” (S.Jugovic, personal communication, Dec. 18, 2015)

Positive psychology concept: **Learn to deal with your problems and stress.**

Microteaching task: *Yogic breathing.*

Language point: listening, TPR (Total Physical Response)

Preparation: none.

Point out that yogic breathing has been shown to help people deal with stress (Campbell 2013). It has the advantage that people can do it privately while in a public space. That is, they can do it in a room full of people but it is unlikely anyone will notice. That makes it useful before stressful events like tests, job interviews, etc. These are applications that can give a competitive advantage to our students.

Demonstrate yogic breathing. Breathe out through the mouth slowly counting to six, hold for a count of five. Inhale through the nose for a count of four. Again hold for a count of five. Invite the students to do the breathing. Lead them through it at least five or six times.

In yoga, people breathe out through the mouth and in through the nose because the mouth is bigger than the nostrils. We want to get rid of the old air in the lungs. People can adjust the 6-5-4 ratio to whatever they are comfortable with but the idea is to exhale longer than inhale, again to get rid of old air. Many people feel a little lightheaded the first few times they do this. That feeling will pass with time.

Teacher reflection: American teacher, various levels, Nagoya, Japan. “Yogic breathing has immediate positive effects in the ESL classroom. In a first year, low-level university class,

students who were shy seemed more confident and ready to participate, while those who were more rambunctious became more calm and collected. Junior high school girls actively used the breathing technique before a reading test, showing noticeable excitement at being able to control their nervous feelings to improve their performance. Explaining the purpose of this exercise, to relax and focus, adding that it will help you feel more confident, is essential to the perceived merit of the activity; students can imagine the result they should get, and they feel that their teacher is giving them something helpful, making *them feel supported*. (A. Rose. personal communication. Dec 20, 2015)

The final two classroom activities, *Gratitude journals* and *Three good things today*, are larger tasks involving several of the positive psychology concepts mentioned above. They all involve noticing and remembering good things, but often include thanking, friends and family and other things suggested by the concepts.

Microteaching task: *Gratitude journals*

Language point: fluency writing, past and present tenses

Preparation: (Optional) prepare a handout for students to write their journal entries, or have them keep their entries in a notebook.

It is not uncommon for ESL/EFL teachers to encourage students to keep journals in English.

Many positive psychology researchers (Lubomirsky 2007; ben-Shahar 2010; Morris 2009) encourage people to keep gratitude journals. At a set time, often once a week but sometimes daily, ask learners to write good things in their lives for which they are grateful. This allows them to revisit and re-experience positive emotions. Fredrickson (2009) points out that it is not the number of positive experiences but rather than number of experiences of positive emotion that is important. Mentally revisiting experiences is a way to increase that number.

Teacher reflection: American university teacher, Sendai, Japan. This is my own reflection,

from the author of this chapter. Gratitude journals were the first positive psychology activity I tried. What struck me early on is how some students reacted. One student, a sophomore named Maya, wrote this: “I played with my pretty dog. • It was a sunny day with a beautiful blue sky. • I got a “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” book that I had long wanted. • I got up early, so I walked my dog. It was so pleasant and enjoyable for me. • I dreamed a happy story when I slept. I saw a rainbow today. • When I cooked dinner, my family was pleased.” When I read it, as a language teacher, what I notice were the positive adjectives: *pretty, sunny, beautiful, pleasant*, etc. But what struck me more was Maya’s attitude. Before we started journaling, she was an average student. Once she started noticing and recording her positive experience, she blossomed. She became very positive, and very actively engaged. And she became an “A” student. Maya is just one example of how positive psychology is an innovation that can help learners grow and succeed.

Microteaching task: *Three good things today*

Language point: fluency writing, past and present tenses

Preparation: (Optional) prepare a handout for students to write their journal entries, or have them keep their entries in a notebook.

Seligman, et al. (2005) take the gratitude journal idea a step farther. For one week, participants in a study were asked to write down three good things that happened each day. For each, they were also asked to answer the question, “Why?” It can either be “why it happened” or “why it was good.” The idea is to get people into the habit of noticing and savoring positive experience. In a comparison with other positive psychology interventions, it was found that people who participated in the “three good things” experiment continued noticing positive things and had an increase in positive emotions for six months after the experiment finished.

In my own classes, 43% of students reported continuing to notice experiences of positive emotion two months after the task had finished. In class, gratitude journals and three good things diaries can be a useful source of content for speaking activities. Partners can be encouraged to ask WH-questions about what their friends have written and talked about.

Those questions serve two functions. They provide practice in a useful discourse and conversation strategy by asking questions as a way of keeping a conversation going.

Additionally, the questions, because they are about a positive experience, serve as what Seligman (2011) called “active, constructive” questions: They remind the speaker of the positive situation and allow him/her to mentally go deeper into the feeling of positive emotion.

Teacher reflection: Indonesian teacher, Yoyakarta, Indonesia. See figures 1-4. “The students like the activity very much because it makes them appreciate little things they experienced for a week. They can develop a short paragraph well in spite of some grammatical problems.” (A. Hapsari, personal communication, Dec.14, 2015).

Figures 1-4 around here.

Figure 1: Students working on the “Three good things today” project.

Figure 2: Making the project plan.

Figure 3: Early work

Figure 4: Final student product.

Photo credits: Astri Hapsari, Universitas Islam Indonesia

Microteaching task: *10 minutes for happiness*

Language points and preparation vary with specific tasks.

None of the classroom suggestions in this chapter take a huge amount of time, but because teachers are very busy and are often constrained by fixed curricula, required textbooks and the like, they may not be able to do as much with positive psychology as they would like. However, most of us can find ten minutes here and there for a warm-up, an energy builder or a fluency expansion. To that end, I have written a set of 14 activities called, “10 minutes for happiness” (Helgesen 2012). Each is a short communication task with a clear, identified language goal and is linked to one of Lyubomirsky’s 8 ideas, above.

Teacher reflection: Japanese junior high school teacher, Toyohashi, Aichi Prefecture, Japan. “Most students want to have a happy life, so this is the core matter when I plan classes. Now I realize that the activities based on the science of happiness (Positive Psychology) would be able to make students feel happy and motivate them to study more. Moreover I believe that the activities enable students to improve their positive way of thinking. Through making and using the activities, I feel happier than before. This feeling is really a by-product of "ELT and Happiness." (H.Osuka, Dec. 12, 2015).

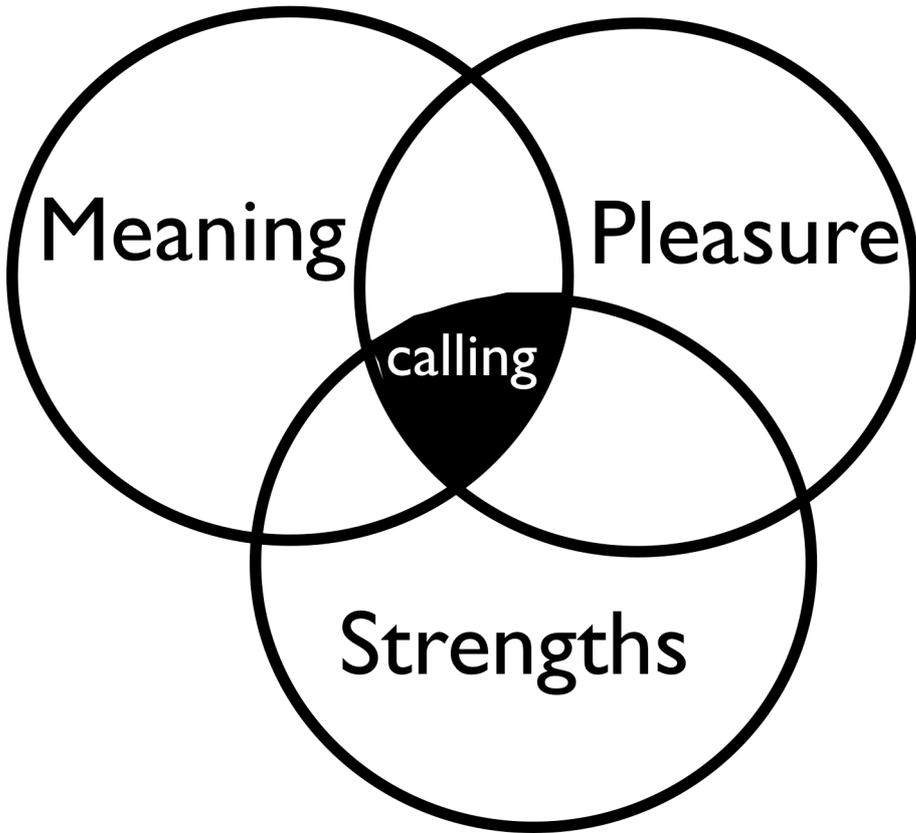
5. Crafting Our Own Jobs.

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest **innovative** ways to include positive psychology exercises in teacher development classes. But the real innovation is giving teachers and teacher educators tools to use to craft our own jobs, beyond those learner education classes. Regular use of these and other positive psychology tasks is a way we can craft our own classes and jobs to include positive emotion. Perhaps we cannot experience our jobs as a calling every minute of every day. But we can focus our attention. To that end, ben-Shahar (2009) proposes an MPS process (see figure X.5). “M” is for “meaning” – What about your job do you find meaningful? For many of us as language teachers, it is helping learners acquire the skills so they can use English to successfully communicate. Then, ben-Shahar

continues, notice what gives you pleasure (the “P”). For us as teachers, it is often when our students are able to use the language on their own, without our guidance. Finally, notice your strength (“S”) as a teacher. Presumably, it is in passing on those skills. If one imagines a Venn diagram with those three circles: Meaning, Pleasure and Strength, it is in the intersection that we can craft our calling. If we can help the students in our teacher education courses find and create their callings that is a profound innovation.

Figure X.5 around here.

Figure X.5 (5.1) ben-Shahar's MPS (Meaning, Pleasure, Strengths) Process



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