

B. ŞAHİN

BAÜ 2025

T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES EDUCATION
MASTER PROGRAM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

INTEGRATING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY INTO EFL CLASSROOMS:
EFFECTS ON YOUNG LEARNERS' WELL-BEING, MOTIVATION, AND
SELF EFFICACY

MASTER'S THESIS

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ISTANBUL 2025



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BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
MASTER THESIS APPROVAL FORM

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Thesis Defense Date:	13.05.2025

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ABSTRACT

INTEGRATING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY INTO EFL CLASSROOMS: EFFECTS ON YOUNG LEARNERS' WELL-BEING, MOTIVATION, AND SELF- EFFICACY

Şahin, Beliz

Master's Program in English Language Education

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Enisa MEDE

May 2025, 69 pages

This study investigates the effects of integrating Positive Psychology into English as a Foreign Language instruction on young learners' well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy. Employed an embedded mixed method with a QUAL-QUAN orientation, the study conducted over a five-week intervention with 47 second-grade students at a private primary school in Istanbul, Turkey. The intervention was grounded in Seligman's PERMA model (2011), focusing on the development of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment through classroom activities designed for the EFL context. The quantitative data were collected using the PERMA Profiler, The Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument, and Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy and analyzed through descriptive statistics and parametric and non-parametric tests. The qualitative data were obtained through focus group interviews and teacher's journal notes and analyzed through content analysis. The quantitative results revealed statistically non-significant changes in the wellbeing, motivation, and self-efficacy scores of the experimental group. However, the qualitative findings highlighted notable improvements in students' emotional experiences. These outcomes suggest that Positive Psychology interventions can foster a more emotionally supportive and motivating classroom environment for young EFL learners.

Keywords: Young EFL Learners, Wellbeing, Positive Psychology, Motivation, Self-Efficacy, PERMA Model

ÖZET

İNGİLİZCEYİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRETEN SINIFLARDA POZİTİF PSİKOLOJİNİN ENTEGRASYONU: KÜÇÜK YAŞ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN İYİ OLUŞU, MOTİVASYONU VE ÖZ-YETERLİĞİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİLERİ

Şahin, Beliz

İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans Programı

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Enisa MEDE

Mayıs 2025, 69 sayfa

Bu çalışma, Pozitif Psikoloji'nin İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen küçük yaş grubu öğrencilerinin iyi oluş, motivasyon ve öz-yeterlik üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektedir. Araştırma, İstanbul'daki özel bir ilkokulda ikinci sınıf öğrencileriyle yürütülmüş ve beş haftalık bir uygulama sürecini kapsamıştır. Nitel verilerin ön planda olduğu ve nicel verilerin destekleyici rol üstlendiği bir gömülü karma yöntem deseninin benimsendiği çalışmada, Seligman'ın PERMA modeli (2011) temel alınarak olumlu duygular, katılım, ilişkiler, anlam ve başarı boyutlarına odaklanarak sınıf içi etkinlikler EFL (İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenme) bağlamına uyarlanmıştır. Nicel veriler PERMA Profili, Motive Edilmiş Davranış ve Çaba Enstrümanı ve İngilizce Öz Yeterlilik anketi kullanılarak toplanılıp betimsel istatistikler ve parametrik ve parametrik olmayan testlerle analiz edilmiştir. Nitel veriler öğrenci odak grup görüşmeleri ve öğretmen gözlem günlüğü aracılığıyla elde edilip tematik analiz yoluyla incelenmiştir. Nicel bulgular, deney grubunun iyi oluş, motivasyon ve öz-yeterlik puanında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı olmayan değişiklikler göstermiştir. Ancak nitel veriler, öğrencilerin duygusal deneyimlerinde belirgin gelişmeler olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bu sonuçlar Pozitif Psikoloji temelli uygulamaların EFL sınıflarında duygusal açıdan destekleyici ve motive edici bir öğrenme ortamı oluşturabileceğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce Öğrenen Küçük Yaş Grubu Öğrenciler, İyi Oluş, Pozitif Psikoloji, Motivasyon, Öz-Yeterlik, PERMA Modeli



*To my 19-year-old self, who imagined this future before I could see it
clearly...*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Enisa Mede, for her invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the entire process. Her genuine care helped me stay grounded, even in the most challenging moments of this thesis.

I am profoundly thankful to Dr. Cemil Gökhan Karacan, once my instructor, now a mentor and dear friend. His belief in me for 7 years, even when I doubted myself, and the wisdom he shared have left a lasting mark on who I am becoming as an educator.

To my dearest friend Sude Gündüz, my academic companion and emotional anchor, thank you for being the voice that silenced my doubts and the kind of friend that everyone deserves but few are lucky enough to have. Your presence throughout this journey has been a gift I will always carry with gratitude.

To my beloved family, my mother Serpil Şahin, my father Ergun Turgay Şahin, and my sister and my colleague Beril Nur Eyüboğlu, thank you for your endless patience, and belief in me. Your unconditional love and hope made me feel strong enough to carry the weight of every goal I set. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

And to my wonderful students, thank you for being the heart of this thesis. Your smiles, curiosity, and honesty made this journey much more than just research. You reminded me every day why I chose this path, and unknowingly, you practiced Positive Psychology with me in the most genuine ways. You made the classroom brighter, and my perspective, too.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ETHICAL CONDUCT.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZET.....	v
DEDICATION	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xii
Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
1.1 Theoretical Overview	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	2
1.3 Purpose of the Study	3
1.4 Significance of the Study	4
1.5 Definitions.....	5
Chapter 2	7
Literature Review.....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Positive Psychology	7
2.3 Positive Education.....	9
2.4 Positive Psychology in SLA	12
2.5 Who are Young Learners?	14
2.6 Well-Being	17
2.6.1 Subjective well-being.....	19
2.6.2 The PERMA Model	19
2.7 Motivation.....	21
2.7.1 Motivation of young learners.....	22
2.8 Self-Efficacy	24
2.8.1 Self-Efficacy in Educational Settings.....	26
2.9 Growth Mindset	28
Chapter 3	30
Methodology	30
3.1 Research Design.....	30
3.2 Setting and Participants	32
3.2.1 Setting.....	32
3.2.2 Participants	32

3.3 Procedures	33
3.3.1 Data Collection Procedures.	33
3.3.1.1 The motivated behavior and effort instrument..	34
3.3.1.2 Questionnaire of english self-efficacy.....	33
3.3.1.3 The PERMA profiler..	34
3.3.1.4 Focus group interviews.	35
3.3.1.5 Teacher’s diary notes.....	36
3.3.2 Implementation.....	36
3.3.2.1 Week one – positive emotions.....	36
3.3.2.2 Week two - engagement.	37
3.3.2.3 Week three - relationships.	37
3.3.2.4 Week four – meaning	38
3.3.2.5 Week five - achievement.	38
3.3.3 Data analysis procedures.	39
3.3.4 Reliability and Validity.....	40
Chapter 4	41
Findings.....	41
4.1 Overview	41
4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis	41
4.2.1 Findings on wellbeing.....	41
4.2.2 Findings on motivation..	43
4.2.3. Findings on self-efficacy.	46
4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis	48
4.3.1 Findings from the Focus Group Interview.....	49
4.3.1.1 Emotional Wellbeing.....	49
4.3.1.1.1. Positive emotions.	49
4.3.1.1.2 Relaxation and comfort	49
4.3.1.2 Motivation.....	50
4.3.1.2.1 Increased intrinsic motivation	50
4.3.1.2.2 Practical relevance of English	51
4.3.1.3 Self-Efficacy	52
4.3.1.3.1 Belief in personal abilities.....	52
4.3.1.3.2 Growth and improvement recognition	52
4.3.1.4 Social and Collaborative Learning.....	53
4.3.1.4.1 Preference for group work.....	53

4.3.1.4.2 Peer learning and mutual support.....	54
4.3.1.4.3 Trust and cooperation	54
4.3.1.5 Appreciation of English Learning and Desired for Continuation	55
4.3.1.5.1 Practical importance	55
4.3.1.5.2 Enjoyment and continued engagement	55
4.3.2 Findings from Teacher’s Diary Notes	57
4.3.2.1 Enhanced Student Motivation and Enthusiasm	57
4.3.2.1.1 Increased participation.	57
4.3.2.1.2 Improved self-confidence.....	57
4.3.2.2 Development of Peer Support and Cooperation	57
4.3.2.2.1 Increased peer assistance.....	57
4.3.2.2.2 Expansion of collaborative practices across context.....	58
4.3.2.3 Cultivation of Positive Classroom Climate.....	58
4.3.2.3.1 Mutual encouragement and praise.....	58
4.3.2.3.3 Positive emotional disposition	58
Chapter 5	59
Discussion and Conclusion	59
5.1 Discussion of Research Questions	59
5.1.1 Discussion of the findings of RQ1: Do young EFL learners who receive positive psychology interventions demonstrate significantly higher levels of well-being compared to those who do not?	59
5.1.2 Discussion of the findings of RQ2: Do young EFL learners who receive positive psychology interventions demonstrate significantly higher levels of motivation compared to those who do not?	61
5.1.3 Discussion of the findings of RQ3: Do young EFL learners who receive positive psychology interventions demonstrate significantly higher levels of self-efficacy in language learning compared to those who do not?	63
5.1.4 What do teachers’ journal notes reveal about the changes in students' well-being, motivation, self-efficacy, and classroom behavior throughout the intervention?	66
5.2 Practical Implications	68
5.3 Conclusion	69
5.4 Recommendations for Further Research	70
REFERENCES.....	71
APPENDICES	91

LIST OF TABLES

TABLES

Table 1 Demographics of Participants: Gender.....	46
Table 2 Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality for The PERMA Profiler.....	41
Table 3 Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of The PERMA Profiler.....	42
Table 4 Mann-Whitney U Test Results of The PERMA Profiler.....	43
Table 5 Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality for The Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument.....	44
Table 6 Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of The Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument.....	44
Table 7 Mann-Whitney U Test Results of The Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument.....	45
Table 8 Shapiro-Wilk Test Results of Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy.....	46
Table 9 Paired Samples T-Test Results of Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy....	47
Table 10 Independent Samples T-Test Results of Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy.....	48
Table 11 Emerging Themes from Focus Group Interviews.....	49
Table 12 Emerging Themes from Teacher's Diary Notes.....	57

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
PE	Positive Education
PP	Positive Psychology
PPI	Positive Psychology Interventions
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SWB	Subjective Well Being
VIA	Values in Action

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis aims to investigate the effect of Positive Psychology techniques on young learners' well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy. This chapter outlines the introduction part of the context, the theoretical overview, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, its research questions, the significance of the study, and the definitions of key terms applied in the research.

1.1 Theoretical Overview

The psychology of learners and teachers undeniably lies at the heart of Second Language Acquisition. In recent years, the Positive Psychology movement gained increased attention in educational settings and research emphasizing the prominence of fostering well-being, resilience, and positive emotions of learners. As Peterson (2006) defined, Positive Psychology is considered as “the scientific study of what goes right in life, from birth to death and at all stops in between” (p.4) Unlike traditional psychology which puts more emphasis on ‘what goes wrong in life’ (Lopez & Snyder, 2009), Positive Psychology acknowledges that the positive mind leads good health without ignoring negative emotions as well. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) argue that positive psychology was founded on three main pillars which are positive experiences, positive character traits and positive institutions. The first two pillars have been the focus of much research whereas positive institutions have received less attention in the field.

The PERMA Model, one of the core frameworks of positive psychology, was developed by Martin Seligman (2011). It mainly focuses on five pillars of well-being: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. By providing a holistic approach, this model not only brings a perspective on personal happiness and flourishing, but also on academic success and motivation in educational contexts. Seligman (2011) contended that these elements of well-being must meet three criteria; it must contribute to overall well-being, it should be something that individuals pursue for their own sake, and it should be measurable.

Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) are intentional practices “aimed at cultivating positive feelings, positive behaviors or positive cognitions” (Sin &

Lyubomirsky, 2009, p. 468). It was reported by Bolier, et al. (2013) that positive psychology interventions have the potential to contribute to improving one's overall happiness and mental health, as well as in reducing signs of depression. Furthermore, positive psychology interventions can be handfuf in improving learners' well-being which is considered as one of the core life skills (Mercer et al., 2018). In his study, Espayos (2023), worked with 30 students by implementing PERMA model- based psychological wellness program where students were assessed on their psychological well-being before and after the intervention. The study found significant improvements in students' well-being, especially in areas such as autonomy, positive relationships, self-acceptance and purpose in life.

Studies have shown that learners with higher self-efficacy and motivation tend to engage more actively, persevere in difficult tasks, and perform better overall (Bandura, 1997; Dörnyei, 2001). While much has been written on the role of positive psychology in the education of adults and general well-being, there is an undeniable paucity in empirical research on how positive psychology techniques affect young EFL learners. Consequently, this present study aims to evaluate the positive psychology techniques based on Seligman's PERMA model on young EFL learners' well-being, self-efficacy and motivation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Roberts et al. (2002) discussed that there is a shift in pediatric psychology from solely focusing on children's weaknesses to a more positive and strength-enhancing approach which reflects a positive psychology perspective. There's a growing body of literature that supports the positive effects of positive psychology intervention, especially educational settings. Though it is exciting to witness the growing attention to the field, research specifically targeting young learners remains scarce.

The context of primary EFL education presents a unique set of opportunities and challenges that have not been addressed in the existing body of research. Children are considered different from adolescents and adults in several key aspects, including cognitive, emotional and social development (Cameron, 2001). As they are still in the process of building core skills, learning about emotions and how to regulate them and forming their social relationships, they seem highly responsive to positive psychology interventions, yet how this intervention should be adapted and applied in young EFL learners' classrooms is still underexplored.

The process of language learning for young learners requires developmentally appropriate and engaging methods that can also foster motivation and confidence (Cameron, 2001). Though positive psychology interventions have been applied in various educational contexts, there is a lack of research exploring how these interventions and positive psychology techniques impact well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy in young EFL learners. Motivation and self-efficacy are widely recognized as pivotal predictors of long-term success in SLA (Dörnyei, 2001; Pajares & Valiante, 2006).

Research demonstrates that attention span tends to enhance as children grow older (Pinter, 2011); however, it is an indisputable reality that their ability to concentrate is limited. Their other developmental characteristics such as greater reliance on immediate rewards (Chance, 1993) and the need for more engaging learning environments demand specially designed interventions. The outcome of the implementation of the positive psychology techniques that are appropriate and influential with older students may not be the same as young learners and may need to be adapted to suit the learning styles and developmental needs of children.

As has been demonstrated, positive psychology has proven beneficial in educational context (Brunwasser et al., 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Seligman et al., 2009; Waters 2011), there remains a significant gap in comprehending how these interventions impact young learners in EFL classrooms, especially their motivation, self-efficacy, and well-being. This gap highlights the necessity for dedicated research aimed at exploring the impact of positive psychology techniques in this specific context. Such research is essential for promoting both emotional well-being and academic success of young learners learning English as a foreign language.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the possible effects of positive psychology techniques on well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy of young learners in EFL context. While significant research showed how effective positive psychology techniques are in fostering well-being and academic success in older students (Froh et al., 2008; Espayos, 2023 Marques et al., 2011), there remains an important gap in understanding the effectiveness of these techniques in young learners, especially in language learning settings. Therefore, it was aimed to bridge the gap by applying

positive psychology techniques based on Seligman's PERMA model (2011) and investigate their effects on young learners' well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy.

Seligman et al. (2009) stated that well-being programs must be 'evidence-based' therefore this study utilizes a mixed method approach by using several well-established data collection tools. The Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument (Al-Shehri, 2009; Demir, 2016) was used to evaluate changes in young learners' motivation. The Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (Wang, 2004; Açikel, 2011) was employed to evaluate learners' self-efficacy language skills aiming to provide insights how the positive psychology techniques influence young learners' confidence in their language abilities. Finally, as the third quantitative data collection instrument, the PERMA Profiler (Seligman, 2011; Butler & Kern, 2016; Demirci et al., 2017) was utilized to evaluate the five pillars of well-being under the PERMA model.

Furthermore, the qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews reflections on the intervention. The researcher aims to capture both short and long-term effects of positive psychology interventions on learners' well-being.

To address the gaps, the following research questions guided this study;

1. Do young EFL learners who receive positive psychology interventions demonstrate significantly higher levels of well-being compared to those who do not?
2. Do young EFL learners who receive positive psychology interventions demonstrate significantly higher levels of motivation compared to those who do not?
3. Do young EFL learners who receive positive psychology interventions demonstrate significantly higher levels of self-efficacy in language learning compared to those who do not?
4. What do teacher's journal notes reveal about the changes in students' well-being, motivation, self-efficacy, and classroom behavior throughout the intervention?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present study holds significance in the field of language education, especially within the context of young EFL learners. Murphy (2016) claimed that positive psychology offers 'a host of ways to live more healthy, happy and intellectually stimulating lives that people actually wish to share with their social networks to make them healthier, happier, stimulated and stimulating'. Despite the evidence that positive psychology can contribute to better emotional states and

academic performance, its influence on language learning of young learners is still largely unexamined. In the light of this, this study aims to address the critical gap on the application of positive psychology interventions in EFL settings. During the intervention phase, it is intended to enhance students' well-being, motivation and self-efficacy by providing young learners opportunities to experience positive emotions in language learning settings as positive emotions enhance well-being by developing assets for future growth (Frederickson, 2001, as cited in Gregersen, MacIntyre & Mercer, 2016).

Furthermore, this research seeks to offer implications for teachers, institutions, and curriculum developers on how the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) can be integrated to create more engaging and emotionally supportive classrooms. Research has shown that positive emotions, strong relationships, and engagement in EFL classrooms notably boost learners' willingness to participate and motivate (Cameron, 2001; Mercer et al., 2012). This study seeks to equip teachers with strategies that can boost both the emotional and academic outcomes of young learners by applying these techniques in classrooms.

Finally, the findings from the study will be beneficial and valuable for teachers and policy makers, providing empirical evidence on the importance of emotional well-being. The present study can also have an effect upon the development of educational programs in which emotional and academic goals are coordinated to make learners more motivated and resilient (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

1.5 Definitions

Positive Psychology: Acknowledge to have emerged as a new branch of psychology, positive psychology is the scientific study of virtues, strengths and factors that help individuals to thrive and flourish (Seligman & Csikzentmihayli, 2000).

The PERMA Model: A framework which was developed by Martin Seligman in 2011 describes the five essential pillars to contribute to well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.

Motivation: An internal drive that directs students' behavior toward a specific goal in language learning which can be categorized into two main types; intrinsic motivation in which learners are driven by internal satisfaction, and extrinsic

motivation, which includes engagement in activities to gain external rewards or avoid punishment (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Self-efficacy: Individual's belief in their ability to achieve in specific situations or tasks. Bandura (1997) stated that self-efficacy influences the way people approach challenges, the effort they put in, and how they persevere through difficulties.

Well-being: The comprehensive condition of a person's physical, mental, and emotional wellness. It involves elements such as positive emotions, satisfaction with life and mental performance.



Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review intends to rigorously analyze the existing body of theoretical constructs and research associated with positive psychology in educational settings, specifically focusing on its role and effect in enhancing well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy among young learners. This review aims to contextualize the key role of positive psychology in fostering young learners' development.

2.2 Positive Psychology

Psychology, the science of mental life (James, 1890), addresses the elements that promote a fulfilling life and enhance subjective well-being include emotional states like joy and contentment, personal characteristics like integrity, altruism, intimacy, and wisdom, as well as supportive social frameworks (VandenBos, 2007). It seeks to understand the underlying mechanisms of emotion, perception, cognition, and social interaction. Psychology explores human nature and provides insights into mental health by integrating multiple approaches such as behavioral, cognitive, and psychodynamic perspectives (Schacter et al., 2011).

In its traditional approach, psychology has primarily concentrated on aspects such as depression, sorrow, and emotional weakness, thereby emphasizing the negative facets of experience (Mercer, 2017). However, positive psychology shifts the focus from treating mental illness to enhancing and promoting flourishing and well-being. It predominantly focuses on 'positive experiences and positive character or virtues' (Jørgensen & Nafstad, 2004). It also should be noted that the intention behind positive psychology is to enhance traditional research areas rather than supplant them, ensuring a more holistic and balanced perspective on human psychology. Norrish and Vella-Brodrick (2009) expressed that 'positive psychology aims to contribute to a comprehensive approach to mental health by adding an investigation of positive emotions and human strengths to existing knowledge on mental illness and dysfunction.' Peterson (2006) also identifies positive psychology as the scientific study of what makes life worth living by focusing on resilience, well-being and positive emotions. The term 'Positive Psychology' was coined by Abraham Maslow (1954). He asserted that the idea of psychology being too preoccupied with dysfunctions and

disorders which lead to a lack in an understanding of human potential was emphasized. Seligman and Csikzentmihayli (2000) criticized mainstream psychology as it views humans as passive individuals instead of considering them creative, proactive, and self-determined human beings.

Admitting that the individual credited with establishing the positive psychology movement is Martin Seligman (1998), a professor affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania, the historical roots of positive psychology date back to earlier. When William James (1890) put forward the term ‘healthy mindedness’, the foundation of positive psychology was laid. Furthermore, it should be stated that the philosophical root of positive psychology is irrefutably aligned with the Aristotelian tradition which is about virtue, morals and what makes life good (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011; Jørgensen & Nafstad, 2004). Seligman (2002) explained by saying:

The message of the Positive Psychology movement is to remind our field that it has been deformed. Psychology is not just the study of disease, weakness, and damage; it also is the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is wrong; it also is building what is right. Psychology is not just about illness or health; it is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. And in this quest for what is best, Positive Psychology does not rely on wishful thinking, self-deception or hand-waving; instead, it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that human behavior presents in all its complexity. (p.4)

Positive psychology shares similar disciplines with humanistic psychology which focuses on understanding the individual as a complete and integrated being. Developed by Maslow (1954) and Rogers (1961), humanistic psychology focuses on personal growth, self-actualization, and the inner goodness of individuals. Positive psychology, on the other hand, was built on humanistic ideals, however, it is considered more empirical and scientific. While both the goal of both fields is to elevate human potential, positive psychology was criticized by humanistic psychologist for being too “scientific and stuck to quantitative inquiry” (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011, p. 10).

2.3 Positive Education

Positive Education (PE) integrates the principles of positive psychology with traditional educational practices to support both the academic and emotional development of students. The main goal of Positive Education is to merge academic goals with the advancement of learners' well-being (MacIntyre et al., 2019). This approach prioritizes the enhancement of well-being, resilience, and personal strengths, asserting that mental health and emotional wellness play a fundamental role in optimizing learning outcomes.

According to UNICEF's "The State of World's Children" report (2021), mental health conditions affect about 13% of adolescents globally, with the prevalence of depression and anxiety. It also underscores the social factor which may contribute to mental health challenges and the impact of the issues on young people's well-being. The literature provides a sparkling number of reports that demonstrate the increase of mental health challenges among children and adolescents. These reports not only offer crucial data but also emphasize the need for mental health interventions, especially in educational settings. Chaves (2021) suggested that engaging in open conversations about mental health during childhood can act as a "buffering factor", facilitating the early identification and prevention of the mental illness symptoms and the cultivation of wellbeing strengthens emotional intelligence and wellbeing literacy in children which plays 'enhancing factor' that encourages their flourishing (p.275). In a similar vein, Waters (2014) stressed the importance of the role that schools play in students' well-being and mental health. Additively, Seligman et al., (2009) pointed out the need for incorporation of positive psychology into the classes done by teachers and instructors.

Several attempts have been made to provide education under the positive psychology principles. One of the most prominent projects, Geelong Grammar School Community project, is a pioneering initiative in integrating positive psychology within an educational framework. It was begun in 2008, and with the leading from Dr. Martin Seligman who spent six months for training stuff, it culminated in evidence-based positive psychology principles with traditional education to foster well-being, life satisfaction and resilience among students (Norrish, 2015).

Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) are defined as purposeful actions to 'cultivate positive feelings, behaviors, or cognitions' (Sin & Lyumbomirsky, 2009,

p.468). Grounded in positive psychology principles which are focused on strengths, PPIs are structured activities designed to enhance well-being, Michael Fordyce (1981), one of the pioneers in PPIs, pointed out 14 principles that people should follow in order to be happy which are:

- be more active and keep busy;
- spend more time socializing;
- be productive at meaningful work;
- get better organized and plan things out;
- stop worrying;
- lower your expectations and aspirations;
- develop positive, optimistic thinking;
- get present oriented;
- work on a healthy personality;
- develop an outgoing, social personality;
- be yourself;
- eliminate negative feelings and problems;
- close relationships are the number one source of happiness;
- value happiness.

PPIs offer several tools and strategies that also can be tailored to educational settings to build resilience, improve mood, and enhance flourishing. Seligman et. al. (2005) listed over 100 ways to increase happiness within 40 practical interventions including signature strengths and expressing gratitude and it was concluded that, though being short-term, gratitude expression was the most beneficial. Building on these findings, Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) further proposed that a significant level of effort is essential to fully maximize the benefits of PPIs. Regarding academic success, Poffenberger and Carpenter (1924) demonstrated that character traits contributed to academic achievement.

The Maytiv program (Shoshani et al., 2016), a comprehensive school-based positive psychology intervention, was designed to enhance the well-being, social-emotional skills, and academic performance of children. Aiming to create a supportive educational environment contributory to both personal and academic growth, the Maytiv program focuses on fostering positive emotions, character strengths, and resilience among children. This program also aligns well with Seligman's PERMA

model (2011) as it includes lessons enhancing positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and achievement. Conducted with 2517 students and 70 teachers, the study succeeded to show the improvements in emotional SWB, peer relations, GPA scores and emotional and cognitive engagement of students who participated in the intervention program, while the control group displayed no changes in these components (Shoshani et al., 2016). The outcomes of the intervention were attributed to the program's emphasis on goal setting, gratitude, and fostering a growth mindset. Over and above, the study highlighted how incorporating positive psychology interventions can result in increased intrinsic motivation and better coping strategies.

The study by Kağıtçıbaşı et al. (2020), evaluated a 14-session program aimed at fostering self-efficacy, growth mindset, and social agency among sixth grade students in Turkey and it was found that the intervention successfully mitigated declines in key developmental areas.

Character strengths, defined as morally valued traits, are essential for guiding individuals to act ethically and effectively (Park & Peterson, 2009, p.11). They are also defined as “the psychological ingredients, processes or mechanism that define the virtues” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.13). These strengths are essential in positive psychology as they provide the foundation for personal growth and contribute to well-being. Values in Action (VIA), developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004), is a framework to identify human strengths categorization. It highlights 24-character strengths based on six virtues: courage, wisdom, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Interventions that focus on individual strengths have proven to significantly enhance overall life satisfaction and self-awareness (Proctor et al., 2011; Stebleton et al., 2012). Based on the study by Ruch et al. (2014) character strengths in children, as measured by VIA-Youth, have been shown to positively influence both life satisfaction and self-efficacy. In their study, Shoshani and Shwartz (2018) argued how children's intellectual, interpersonal, temperance, and transcendence strengths are associated with enhanced school functioning, mental health, and well-being. Good character influence good behavior which eventually led to academic success (Weber & Ruch, 2012). Findings of the research underscore the essentiality of positive psychology training for students.

2.4 Positive Psychology in SLA

The emergence of the switch towards researching about positive emotions and affectivity has influenced the researchers and the practitioners in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Wang et al., 2021). Until the 1970s and 1980s, cognitive elements were highly underscored in mainstream language teaching. After the humanistic movement, researchers have turned their focus to understanding emotions in the language learning and teaching process and made a conclusion that effectively analyzing learning in cognitive frameworks requires consideration of the influence of emotions (Mercer, 2017). In his prominent Affective Filter Hypothesis, Krashen (1985) highlighted the positive influence of learners' affectivity in language learning. Swain (2013) also described the relationship between emotions and cognition as "inseparable/integrated". Arnold and Brown (1999) also stated that the affective elements of learning coexist with the cognitive elements, rather than opposing each other. Attention should be given to emotions in the language learning classroom to provide the optimal learning setting for learners. Regarding emotions, Frederickson's 'Broaden-and-Build' Hypothesis (2011) shed another light on understanding the impact of emotions. It was implied that as people experience positive emotions, their awareness broadens which helps individuals to investigate further possibilities, which also nurtures the readiness of learners in language learning settings (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Fresacher (2016) also noted that positive emotions are vital as "the language itself opens new worlds, and positivity allows them (L2 learners) to focus on this new world more fully" (p. 345).

In terms of child development, Denham (1998) demonstrated the key role of emotions. They aid children to establish secure attachment, develop self-awareness, and possess sense of empathy. Emotions provide the ability to form and navigate social relationships. Children with strong emotional foundations tend to outperform both academically and socially (Denham et al., 2003). Fredrickson and Cohn (2008) also pointed out that when learners are happy, they have the tendency to acquire new information. Interest, which is one of the primary motivators in language learning, is also promoted by positive emotions (Izard, 1991).

In Dörnyei's (2005) *L2 self-system theory* he argued that the motivation of L2 learners is influenced by three components; ideal L2 self, which is the anticipated future emotions, ought-to L2 self, the qualities required to meet the expectations, and

L2 learning experiences such as curriculum or teacher-student relationship. MacIntyre et al. (2019) defined this theory as ‘future-oriented’ and commented that future goal orientations are useful to secure the learning process as it helps learner to approach the language from a more optimistic perspective.

Research also advocated the positive influence of PPIs on second language learning. Gregersen and MacIntyre (2012) stressed that PPIs in language education support learners in building emotional resilience and reduce language-related stress. Another study by Gregersen (2016) indicated the increase in EFL learners’ well-being after the gratitude and altruism exercises. In their meta-analysis, Aydın and Tekin (2023) inferred that using PPIs decreases foreign language anxiety. The positive association between positive appraisals and engagement, self-determined motivation was emphasized by the researchers. Writing diaries, examples of positive psychology practices, were found to be beneficial in supporting psychological needs, motivating for sustainable learning, and promoting emotions, resilience, and boldness (Oxford et al., 2015; Shelton-Strong & Mynard, 2020). Regarding language skills, while PPIs succeeds to increase the scores of listening comprehensions, it also developed EFL learners’ literacy skills and creativity in reading skills (Abdolrezaipoor & Ghanbari, 2021; Hui et al., 2020) Guz and Tetiurka (2016) discussed the importance of teachers’ mindset, decisions, and choices in children’s positive emotions as young learners’ classrooms are ‘inherently emotion-laden’. Following this finding, Kostulas and Mercer (2018) postulated that not only learners benefitted from PPIs, but also teachers are affected.

The EMPHATICS model, developed by Oxford, is a framework in SLA that embodies positive psychology principles with the aim of supporting social, emotional, and motivational aspects of learning (2016). The framework delineates “...important psychological forces that help learners achieve high well-being and progress rapidly, develop proficiency, and relish the language learning experience” (Oxford, 2016, p. 10). Each letter stands for a component:

- Emotion and empathy
- Meaning and motivation
- Perseverance
- Agency and autonomy
- Time

- Hardiness and habits of mind
- Intelligence
- Character strengths
- Self-factors

The factors included in the EMPATHICS system are “part of a complex dynamic system” (Oxford, 2016, p. 10) which basically means that no single factor functions independently within this model. The uniqueness of each individual component arises not primarily from the influence of any single factor, but rather from the collaborative dynamics of all relevant components (Dörnyei, 2009).

2.5 Who are Young Learners?

In educational contexts, young learners generally refer to children between the ages of 5 to 12, yet there is not a certain distinction between young learners and adolescents. Different scholars define the term “young learners” from their own perspective. Young learners are separated into two groups: five to seven years old and eight to ten years old (Peck et al., 1993). It was separated as the crucial changes eventuated during these two periods. Children are unique according to their developmental features and they are distinct from adolescents and adults in several ways, particularly in their reliance on concrete thinking and developing language comprehension skills (Cameron, 2001). Young learners have an ongoing language acquisition in their native language, which also influences their second language learning process. Since their capacity to comprehend abstract concepts is limited, they benefit more from interactive, hands-on activities which also stimulate their curiosity and energy.

The globalization of English has transformed it into a lingua franca which serves as the pre-eminent medium of communication across different regions worldwide. Having its roots in historical processes such as British colonial expansion or the establishment of the United States of America, English is now considered as the dominant language in diplomacy, international trade, and popular culture (Crystal, 2003). This issue has increased the demand for an early start in English language education worldwide and many countries prioritize English in primary education to provide learners with a competitive advantage in the globalized world. Graddol (2006) also proffered that as English proficiency is linked to economic opportunity, early start

allows young learners to build solid foundation. Shin and Crandall (2013) argued that the two major reasons to start learning English early are:

- 1) The significance of acquiring English for academic advancement and career opportunities.

- 2) The positive impacts of language education at an early stage.

Lenneberg (1967) put forward the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), which suggests that before the onset of adolescence, children learn languages more naturally and intuitively than adults. It was proposed in the hypothesis that after the age of 9, as the brain stiffens and loses flexibility due to the gradual specialization of brain hemispheres and the myelination of Broca's area, it forfeits its potential for natural acquisition (Pinter, 2011). To provide empirical evidence to support CPH, Johnson and Newport's (1989) study on age and language acquisition implies that young learners have tendency to achieve higher proficiency level in a foreign language than those who started learning L2 later. Considering grammatical development, Dimroth (2008) evaluated the difference between adolescent learners and young learners. The study suggested the way adolescent learners processed language is more similar to adults, on the other hand, young learners acquired grammatical features in a different sequence and learned faster. It can be inferred that young learners tend to acquire language patterns in a more natural way, whereas older learners tend to process the language input more analytically.

Children progress in their emotional, moral, physical, and cognitive development at distinct and individual paces (Linse & Nunan, 2005). Therefore, it is highly important to adjust instruction to a child's individual stages. Brazelton and Greenspan (2000) also highlighted the necessity of children deserving educators who touch upon their needs in accordance with their socio/emotional, physical, cognitive, and moral development. The cognitive development of young learners directly influences how they acquire language. In Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1959), it was posited that children move through different stages in which children often struggle with abstract concepts. This indicates that teachers should design and utilize tangible, visual, and experiential methods to support EFL learning. Since they lack abstract thinking, language acquisition in young learners is implicit in a great measure (Cameron, 2001).

Social and emotional factors are significant for young learners beyond a doubt since they are still developing and their relationships, emotions, and social context

shape their approach to learning. Eisenberg et al. (2006) clearly stated that a child's socio-emotional development encompasses the ability to control emotional responses, establish interpersonal connections, and understanding the feelings of others. These competencies play a significant role in enhancing a child's motivation, engagement and resilience within educational settings. A positive social environment fosters a sense of belonging in language classrooms, which is crucial as young learners are highly responsive to emotional ties with their teachers and peers. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes the role of social relationships in cognitive development, suggests that within a supportive area, a child is capable of accomplishing tasks that s/he could not do alone. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that children's language learning can be promoted through social relationships.

Positive emotions play an eminent role in young learners' development and academic success, contributing to both emotional well-being and cognitive advancement. Positive emotions such as curiosity, gratitude, and joy, reduce stress, enhance resilience, and improve social skills in children (Oros, 2014). It is now well established from a variety of studies that they have a positive effect in mitigating aggressive and assertive behaviors and promoting the ability to cope with challenges (de la Vega & Oros, 2013; Lillo, 2006). As learners feel more engaged and open to new experiences, fostering positive emotions has been claimed to boost cognitive flexibility (Frederickson, 2005). Isen (2001) conclusively shown that the experience of positive emotions stimulates creative and flexible thinking, which aids individuals recognize a broader spectrum of behavioral choices in particular contexts.

Positive psychology interventions (PPIs) designed for children gained considerable attention for their promising role in promoting well-being, resilience, and positive self-perception within classroom settings. Schools are considered as an ideal environment for implementing such interventions, given their reach and influence on children's daily lives. Several lines of evidence show that PPIs have the ability to foster essential psychological strengths such as resilience, optimism, hope, and life satisfaction which also contributes to children's mental health and academic engagement.

For instance, in a study conducted by Kwok et al. (2016), a school-based intervention focusing on enhancing hope and gratitude among primary school students in Hong Kong was implemented. The intervention was designed around group-based

activities in which students can reflect on and express their gratitude and optimism about future outcomes. The findings of the study demonstrated increased levels of hope and gratitude and significant decrease in depressive symptoms, illustrating how PPIs can support positive factors in children's mental health. The findings underscored the value of integrating the PPIs early can serve as a buffer against stressors in childhood and adolescence.

Similarly, Owens and Patterson (2013) attempted to explore the effects of two positive psychology intervention strategies, gratitude and best possible selves intervention, on children. During the intervention phase, children engaged in activities which are designed to build positive self-perception and appreciation for others and the findings revealed improvements in self-esteem, social interactions and emotional regulating, suggesting that gratitude exercise and future-oriented reflection not only elevate positive emotions among children, but also enhance their emotional and social competencies.

2.6 Well-Being

In recent years, well-being has become a central focus in educational settings, especially with the growing influence of positive psychology. Instead of merely emphasizing the absence of negative emotions, well-being focuses on fostering positive emotions and a sense of purpose. Discussion on well-being dates to Hellenic philosophy and for several years, many scholars have attempted to define well-being and measure it. Day and Qing (2009) considered wellbeing as both a social and psychological construct and defined as a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community. Seligman (2011) likened well-being to weather as "no single measure defines it exhaustively" (p.15).

In literature, wellbeing was generally divided into two subcategories: hedonic wellbeing and eudemonic wellbeing. Hedonic wellbeing is mostly characterized by pleasure, happiness and the avoidance of pain. Hedonic psychologists agreed that wellbeing is all about subjective happiness and focuses on pleasure (Ryan & Deci, 2002). On the other hand, eudemonic wellbeing consists of self-actualization, purpose and meaning of life (Kashdan et al., 2008). The Eudaimonic perspective asserts that not all satisfying outcomes bring wellbeing to people unless they are deeply engaged in the activities that are meaningful to them and resonate with their core values. In this

state, people experience a sense of personal expressiveness, a term coined by Waterman (1993), in which they feel intensely alive and true to themselves.



2.6.1 Subjective well-being. Having become popular in the last decades, Subjective Well-Being (SWB), is generally related to individual's own personal assessment of their happiness rather than objective indicators. Diener (1994) defined his concept as "levels of pleasant affect, lack of unpleasant affect, and life satisfaction" (p.543). Campbell (1976) states that happiness exists within the individual's personal experience, which means that it is dictated by individuals who perceive and evaluate their own lives, rather than by external factors. In understanding well-being, this subjectivity is central as what one individual find satisfying may differ from another. Subjective Well-Being has positive measures which include a global "assessment of all aspects of a person's life" (Diener, 1984, p. 544). This evaluation involves individual's overall satisfaction and fulfillment with their life, and it can be expressed in both verbal and non-verbal behavior (Diener & Ryan, 2009). On this basis, subjective well-being goes beyond momentary emotions and embraces a broader evaluation of life satisfaction. Several scales have been developed to evaluate both the cognitive and emotional satisfaction aspects of well-being such as Self-Report with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), (Pavot & Diener, 2008), Self-Anchoring Striving Scale (Cantril, 1965), Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS), (Watson et al., 1988) and so forth. These scales are all self-report measures designed to evaluate aspects of subjective well-being. They rely on participants' personal experiences and perceptions to assess their emotional states and satisfaction with life by providing direct insight into their well-being.

2.6.2 The PERMA model . A foundational framework that outlines five key elements (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment) that contribute to well-being, the PERMA model was developed by Martin Seligman. Underlining a more 'eudaimonic notion' (Mercer et. al., 2018), these elements of the model enhance a holistic view of well-being by extending beyond happiness to broader aspects of life satisfaction. As it is understood, it contrasts with Subjective Well-Being (SWB). Positive emotions, which is the first element of the PERMA model, puts emphasis on the experience of joy, gratitude and hope. Frederickson (2002) reported that positive emotions manifest that individuals are functioning at their best. In educational context, it was stated that students who experience higher levels of happiness tend to achieve better grade points, attend classes more and display greater levels of conscientiousness (Oishi et. al., 2007).

Engagement is considered as the state of being fully absorbed in tasks that make time feel like flying. It's related to the other psychological constructs such as motivation, attention and interest, yet also a separate one (Reinders & Nakamura, 2022). When students are engaged, they become absorbed in the learning process, fostering their intrinsic motivation. Seligman promoted the idea of fostering flow to boost engagement, which includes being fully immersed in the current moment. Massimini and Delle Fave (2000) emphasized that experiencing flow is inherently fulfilling and drives individuals to seek out similar experiences, which in turn encourages personal growth. Engagement can be behavioral, cognitive and affective (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Positive relationships are essential for well-being as they lead to emotional support, boost confidence and bring a sense of belonging. Seligman (2011) argued that positive relationships foster well-being and life satisfaction. Layard (2005) also emphasized the importance of human relationships as two of the crucial elements that affect happiness. In classroom, peer support and interactions predicted emotional EFL engagement (Matrić et.al., 2019). Levitt and Guacci-Franco (1993) concluded that academic achievement and social adaptation are enhanced in students who receive peer support. Likewise, establishing a sense of comfort with the teacher and the school setting enables students to cultivate positive relationships, improve their social behavior and enhance their social competencies (Larson, 2011). To conclude, positive relationships, both with peers and teachers, play a fundamental role in advancing well-being and academic success.

Meaning, the fourth pillar of the PERMA model involves possessing a sense of purpose or feeling connected to something greater than oneself. To put it in a different way, Seligman (2011) explains this concept as “belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self” (p. 12). Kun et. al. (2017) indicated that we do best when we devote time to something greater than ourselves. Research also suggests that when learners find meaning in their studies, they can experience higher levels of engagement and motivation (Govorova et. al., 2020).

Lastly, accomplishment refers to the pursuit and achievement of goals that provides learners with a sense of competence. Perseverance and resilience are essential for achieving success in academics, sports, and career (Seligman, 2011). The accomplishment pillar of the model can be strongly related to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) which posits that individuals are motivated by

three fundamental needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Competence, which refers to the desire to feel effective and to experience mastery over tasks, closely aligns with this pillar of the PERMA model as it emphasizes the satisfaction and motivation derived from achieving goals. Autonomy, which is the need to feel in control of one's actions and decisions, was highlighted in SDT. This is closely related to the process of setting and accomplishing goals in the PERMA model. It can be stated that when students set their own learning goals and work towards achieving them, they foster a sense of accomplishment.

2.7 Motivation

Derived from the Latin verb *movere* which means to move, motivation can be defined as the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it and the effort expended on it (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Owing to its complexity, motivational theories do not offer a comprehensive perception on the definition of the types of motivation. Muir (2021) claimed the importance of understanding motivation as it “influences the goals that we choose to work towards and the choices that we make” (p.124).

Motivation can be broadly classified into two types; intrinsic motivation, which is brought by internal drives such as enjoyment and personal interest, and extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external rewards and pressures (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The concept of intrinsic motivation begins with the idea that humans naturally tend to be active and seek out engagement. Individuals have internal tendencies towards development and growth, requiring external factors to thrive. Therefore, intrinsic motivation specifically includes participating in enjoyable and interesting activities. Strong et al., (1995) reported that arousing curiosity, promoting success, encouraging relationships and authenticity are crucial in meeting young learners' motivational needs. Additionally, it should be noted that when children are placed by children in an active learning role by presenting lessons that include unclear information, it can spark curiosity as students are motivated to resolve the uncertainty. Socio-contextual factors (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) also came into prominence in the last decades. Karagöl (2008) reported that the nature desire of children for interpersonal connection is strengthened by encouraging relationships with others.

Unlike intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation arises when learners are motivated by external rewards such as grades, praise or tangible incentives (Ryan &

Deci, 2000). Such motivation is often connected to outcomes that are unrelated to the activity, such as reaching a particular objective or evading punishment. In Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), which is the sub-theory of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Deci and Ryan (1985) classified extrinsic motivation into four types; *external regulation*, which is the least autonomous form and involves engaging in a behavior solely to satisfy external demand such as a student studying to avoid failing without any interest in the subject, *introjected regulation* is the stage of partially internalization, a student who studies just to avoid feeling embarrassed can be exemplify, *identified regulation* which includes the stage where an individual starts to acknowledge the value of a task and considers it as important, the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, *integrated regulation* is the stage where an individual fully integrated the behavior as it aligns with the personal goals and identity.

2.7.1 Motivation of young learners. Motivation in young learners is a complex and ever-changing process affected by various factors both internal and external. Especially in the EFL context, young learners' motivation is greatly driven by the classroom setting and their learning environment which includes their interaction with their peers and teachers. While there is a paucity of research on young learners' motivation in the EFL context, a handful of studies have been conducted and attempted to offer valuable insights into this area. For instance, The ELLiE Project (Enever, 2011), a longitudinal study which examined early language learning in European countries, assesses what can realistically be achieved through early language learning. Including over 1,400 young learners, the key focus was on bringing a perspective on young learners' attitudes and motivation and how these factors developed in various socio-educational contexts. Various research methods such as smiley questionnaires, classroom observations, parent questionnaires, and learner interviews. The study revealed that while playing games, learning new words and singing was among the factors that increase young learners' intrinsic motivation, peers' behaviors, writing and drawing activities were classified as the factors that decrease their motivation (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2012). The project highlighted the fluctuating nature of young learners' motivation throughout the years and the importance of structured, engaging, and enjoyable learning environments.

Another longitudinal study involving three generations, The Pécs Project aimed to develop and English syllabus for children. However, the project also succeeded in

investigating young learners' motivation and attitudes. The study exposed that motivation changed and evolved across three developmental phrases and, classroom enjoyment and rewards drive younger learners, whereas older learners are more focused on the practicality of using English in the future (Nikolov, 2002).

The motivation of young learners in the EFL context is shaped by several factors. One study by Wallace and Leong (2020) focused on the role of teacher relationships and learning environment play in sustaining motivation among primary EFL learners and explored that the importance of interactive classroom activities, such as storytelling, songs and games help sustain motivation over the course of time. The study also succeeded in showing that when learning environment is dynamic and supportive, young learners respond positively. In a thesis conducted with 500 state school students from grade four to eight, Bahar (2018) revealed that motivation varied significantly across grades and genders, with female students showing higher motivation levels. It was accentuated that teacher attitudes, lesson difficulty, the coursebook, and the peer influence are among the influential factors. Another thesis by Biricik (2010) which was carried out with 5- and 6-years old children uncovered the importance of creating dynamic and supportive classroom environment tailored to the needs of very young learners and it was suggested that motivational practices such as using Total Physical Response (TPR) or using age-appropriate materials enhance learners' involvement.

The key role of parental involvement in young learners' motivation was also addressed in the literature. Choi et al. (2019) highlighted the role of mothers in promoting young learners' interest and motivation towards learning English and it was found that mothers' interest towards the target language culture positively influences children's motivation to learn. Therefore, it can be clearly stated that parental encouragement and involvement play a fundamental part in shaping learners' attitudes towards language learning.

Furthermore, Karimi and Parsamajd (2024) brought another perspective on sustained motivation of young learners through Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs). The research sought to evaluate how goal-directed activities aid sustain long-term motivation. It was conclusively shown that obtaining clear goals and the necessary classroom support led to continuous flow of motivation which also helps them in maintaining engagement and overcoming challenges.

2.8 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, which is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to perform a specific task successfully, is based on Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1986, p. 391). From a social cognitive perspective, human functioning is seen as a model of the principle of reciprocal relationships involving three parties: behavior, cognitive and personal factors. Irie (2021) stated that "people are self-regulating agents who take action in response to the complex interactions among personal, behavioral and environmental determinants" (pp.100-101). This interplay is also called "reciprocal determinism" (Pajares, 2002, p.17). Therefore, it can be concluded that self-efficacy is a major element of personal determinants which let people take a decision about themselves. Self-efficacy is crucial in Social Cognitive Theory as it impacts how people approach challenges. As Bandura stated, individuals who possess high self-efficacy tend to take on difficult tasks, recover from setbacks and persevere through obstacles when compared to those with low self-efficacy (1997). Thus, the level of effort individuals dedicate to learning or performing new behaviors is directly impacted by self-efficacy, making it a critical factor in determining motivation and learning results.

Self-efficacy is influenced by four key sources which are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and emotional states (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experiences, considered as the most influential source, is related to students' own assessment of their ability based on their previous experiences of success or failure. While successful experiences increase self-efficacy, failure decreases it (Açikel, 2011). By fostering mastery experiences with scaffolding tasks, teachers can allow students to build their language skills progressively.

Observing peers completing tasks, called vicarious experiences, has also a critical role in promoting self-efficacy. When students are in doubt about his/her abilities, the effectiveness of vicarious experiences becomes more prominent. Through model similarity, students' self-efficacy can rise to perform a task (Schunk, 1987). Bandura (1994) claimed that perceived self-efficacy is significantly affected by the level of similarity individuals perceive with the models they are observing. In their study, Zhang and Ardasheva (2019) highlighted the importance of peer interaction in the EFL classroom as it serves as a model of successful behaviors.

Verbal persuasion also significantly boosts learners' self-efficacy. Positive feedback from teachers, peers and parents has a positive effect on individuals' self-efficacy which finally leads to the ability to face the challenge during a task. Similarly, negative feedback can result in a decrease in self-efficacy. It was claimed by Alderman (1999) that negative feedback has more impact on self-efficacy when compared to positive feedback. Teachers' constructive feedback highlighting students' strength promotes a positive classroom environment where students are motivated and supported (Schunk, 2003).

Physiological and emotional states also influence self-efficacy. Individuals often assess their stress levels, physical sensations, or emotional reactions when evaluating their capabilities. Positive emotional states, such as calm or excitement, generally enhance self-efficacy, while negative states tend to diminish it (Bandura, 1986). Emotionally supportive learning environments reduce stress and promote well-being which also fosters higher self-efficacy.

2.8.1 Self-efficacy in educational settings. Self-efficacy is a crucial determinant of students' persistence, engagement, and achievement in academic settings, and it influences how they approach learning tasks, set goals, and respond to challenges (Pamuk, 2014). Klassen and Usher (2010) stated that teachers and students are required to believe in the power of their actions to reach the desired outcome, otherwise, they would have possessed minimal motivation to act or to persist when confronted with challenges. Regarding the eminence of self-efficacy in education, Graham and Weiner (1996) conceived self-efficacy to be a stronger predictor of academic achievement. Researchers in the field of self-efficacy have identified a distinction between self-efficacy for learning and self-efficacy for performance, as efficacy beliefs influence both skill acquisition and the performance of learned abilities (Schunk et al., 1987; Zimmerman et al., 1992; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). Self-efficacy for learning is the individual's belief in self-regulation processes to learn (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). Schunk (1996) stated that learners' self-efficacy for self-regulation is a stronger predictor of performance on learning tasks, as individuals may be unaware of the specific skills needed. It is the belief in one's capability to carry out a specific task by using the skills they possess. This belief often serves as a more accurate predictor of actual task performance. Considerable evidence has accumulated to show the beneficial impact of self-efficacy for learning strengthens later self-efficacy for performance, which contributes to higher levels of actual achievement (Schunk & Hanson, 1985; Schun et al., 1987; Zimmerman et al., 1992). Klassen et al., (2008) also found that it is less likely for students with high self-efficacy to postpone important tasks as they are more capable of organizing and monitoring their learning.

Self-efficacy is shown to contribute significantly to students' use of self-regulated learning strategies. Self-efficacious students tend to set ambitious goals, utilize effective learning techniques, and monitor their own progress which eventually lead them to enhanced academic achievement (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Additionally, Pajares (2006) highlighted that students with higher self-efficacy for self-regulation displayed better academic adjustment and are better equipped to face challenging academic demands. This suggests that nurturing self-efficacy in educational settings not only promotes academic outcomes but also promotes broader skills essential to lifelong learning.

Similarly, in second language learning classrooms, self-efficacy is a crucial factor that can affect both the learning process and the outcomes. A large and growing body of literature has investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and academic outcomes in language learning, and they revealed that students' self-efficacy belief is a vital predictor of their success in academic outcomes (Chemers et al., 2001; Cheng and Chiou, 2010; Schunk, 1981; Jeng and Shin, 2008). Tilfarlıoğlu and Çiftçi (2011) pointed out that students' self-efficacy and academic performance are highly correlated. It was found by Hsieh and Kang (2010) that EFL students with stronger self-efficacy beliefs showed greater willingness to communicate in their L2. Having investigated the self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes of Turkish EFL learners, Genç et al., (2016) found that students' self-efficacy beliefs about their capabilities in learning English affected their motivation and academic perseverance. Pertaining to language skills, while Wang and Li (2010) reported the positive relationship between high self-efficacy beliefs about reading and social and cognitive strategies, the positive correlation between self-efficacy about listening and metacognitive awareness of listening strategies was highlighted by Rahimi and Abedini (2009). Similarly, Kaşık (2014) targeted at investigating how self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes influence performance in English writing among university students and the findings of her thesis disclosed a positive relationship between self-efficacy and writing performance, with higher self-efficacy and positive attitudes correlating with better writing outcomes. In their study, Liao and Wang (2018) underscored the increasing role of strategy instruction in learners reading self-efficacy. In the same vein, the research conducted by Schunk and Rice (1993) establish that students who took part in training focused on boosting self-efficacy experienced enhancement in both their self-efficacy and their reading comprehension capabilities.

While extensive research has established the role of self-efficacy in older students and general education settings, studies focusing on young EFL learners' self-efficacy are notably scarce which is pertinent considering the unique challenges faced by young EFL learners. Alizadeh Oghyanous (2017) explores the impact of brain-based teaching methods, specific techniques such as orchestrated immersion, active processing, and relaxed alertness on the self-efficacy of young learners in an EFL context and it was revealed that brain-based teaching methods have a positive effect in students' self-efficacy and it also created supportive, engaging and stimulating learning environments. Another study conducted with Indonesian primary school students',

Anam and Stracke (2016) concluded that students with higher self-efficacy in learning English reported more frequent use of metacognitive and socio-affective strategies which underscore the role of self-efficacy as a motivating factor in young learners' approach to language learning.

2.9 Growth Mindset

Introduced by Carol Dweck (2006), the concept of a growth mindset (incremental theory) underscores the belief that abilities can be developed through effort, learning, and perseverance. Dweck (2006) identified that individuals who adopt a belief that their abilities and skills can be enhanced through dedication, effective strategies, and constructive feedback from others exhibit a growth mindset. On the other hand, people who possess a fixed mindset (entity theory) are decisive that their talents and abilities can't be easily changed. Students exhibiting a fixed mindset generally dismiss constructive feedback and feel uneasy about the successes of those around them (Saunders, 2013). It has significant implications in educational contexts, particularly in fostering resilience and motivation. Boaler (2013) defined the influence of the mindset theory as a 'revolution that is reshaping education'. Learners with a growth mindset tend to approach challenges with optimism and a willingness to learn, understanding that setbacks and mistakes are integral parts of the learning process. They are more inclined to accept challenging assignments, persevere through obstacles, and actively seek answers (Dweck & Yeager, 2019). In their meta-analysis which focused on the relationship between mindsets and mental health among people aged 4-19, Schleider et al., (2015) offered evidence that a fixed mindset correlates with both internalized and externalized mental health issues, indicating that youths with a more pronounced fixed mindset experience greater severity in mental health issues. Aligned with these findings, Lam et al., (2022) advocated that establishing a school culture centered around a growth mindset school culture has the potential to be advantageous for students making the transition from preschool to primary school.

The mindset surrounding language learning arises from individuals' convictions about the attributes that are essential for achieving proficiency, coupled with their beliefs about the potential for these attributes to evolve (Williams et al., 2015). In EFL classrooms, promoting a growth mindset among students can significantly enhance learners' language development, transforming how they perceive and engage with learning tasks. In a comprehensive literature review of the influence on a growth

mindset in second language learning, several studies accomplished to shed light that attaining a growth mindset fosters L2 motivation, self-efficacy, willingness to communicate and student engagement (Derakhshan et al., 2022; Lou and Noels, 2017; Zarrinabadi & Mantou Lou, 2022; Zhang et al., 2021; Zarrinabadi & Mantou Lou, 2022). It was reported by Lou and Noels (2016) that L2 learners who cultivate a growth mindset reveal elevated levels of academic engagement, a more optimistic mood, and a determination to continue their effort in the event of failure. Similarly, a study by Bai and Guo (2019) indicated that primary school students who possess a growth mindset tend to utilize self-regulated learning strategies more effectively in their English writing. Derakhshan and Fathi (2024) stressed the role played by cultivating a culture that promotes a growth mindset within the second language classroom in terms of enabling learners to conquer their anxiety and engage more fully in speaking activities. Several studies have explored the relationship between a growth mindset and second language achievement; however, there remains a notable paucity of research examining the impact of a growth mindset on young learners' L2 learning.

In reviewing the existing body of literature, it is evident that positive psychology offers valuable insights into enhancing well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation within educational settings. However, there remains a significant paucity of research addressing its application to young EFL learners, particularly in the Turkish context. While frameworks such as Seligman's PERMA model (2011) and Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) demonstrated their effectiveness in various populations, their adaptation and impact on young learners in language learning context are underexplored which highlights the necessity for studies that not only investigate the implementation of the interventions but also evaluate their outcomes in supporting holistic growth. Addressing this gap will contribute both theoretically and practically.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted for the current study. It begins with a description of the setting and participants, followed by a comprehensive explanation of the instruments and procedures implemented throughout the research. Additionally, the chapter details the impact of positive psychology interventions on young learners' well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation. The chapter concludes by presenting the data analysis methods used to interpret the results.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method research design (Creswell, 2003) to examine the effects of positive psychology interventions on young learners' well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation. Integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, it was aimed to provide a holistic understanding on the impact of these interventions, capturing measurable changes alongside in-depth insights into students' experiences and perceptions.

The mixed-methods research design is widely recognized as an effective approach for addressing complex research questions, especially in educational settings. As it can be used to build on the findings of a qualitative study by pursuing a quantitative phase of the research (Mills & Gay, 2018), a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation can be achieved by integrating mixed-methods research design. Whereas qualitative data offers rich, contextual insights that explain the underlying reasons behind the observed patterns, quantitative data provides measurable evidence and generalizable results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). As such, this approach is valuable for studies examining multifaceted constructs such as well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation.

There are three models in mixed-methods research design which are the QUAL-Quan Model, The QUAN-Qual Model, and The QUAN-QUAL Model (Mills & Gay, 2018). The QUAL-QUAN Model, also known as the triangulation mixed method research, gives equal priority to both qualitative and quantitative methods and they are integrated to address the research question comprehensively. It explores a phenomenon deeply and measures it, allowing both methods to contribute equally to the findings.

This model appears to align most closely with the current study as the quantitative data from the pre- and post-test scores provides measurable evidence of the changes in the participants' well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation. On the other hand, the qualitative data obtained from focus group interviews and teacher's diary notes enriches the findings and offers deeper insights into the students' experiences during the intervention phase. Additionally, the aim of the study is not just to measure outcomes or explore experiences, but to combine both of them to create a holistic and well-rounded analysis of the effectiveness of the intervention. Henceforth, both data types were used to triangulate findings and provide a thorough understanding of how positive psychology interventions impact young learners' well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation.

Involving two second-grade classes, the quantitative aspect of the study adopted a quasi-experimental approach. One class, which is the experimental group, received a series of positive psychology interventions over a five-week period, while other class served as the control group, following the standard curriculum without any additional interventions. The intervention, as discussed later, consisted of age-appropriate activities based on Seligman's (2011) PERMA model. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to both groups using validated instruments to measure changes in participants' well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation.

The qualitative component complements the quantitative data by exploring students' perceptions and teacher observations on the interventions. Data was collected through semi-structured focus group interviews with the experimental group. Semi-structured focus group interviews provide rich, descriptive data on how students respond to the activities and how they perceive their impact on their emotional and motivational states (Hyman et al., 1954). Spradley (1980) also described data collection through observations as a prevalent strategy, with researchers having the flexibility to assume multiple roles in the process.

3.2 Setting and Participants

3.2.1 Setting. The study was conducted at a private primary school located in Istanbul, Turkey. The school provides bilingual education to its primary school students by utilizing CLIL approach with certain subjects such as Math, Science, and Life Sciences taught in English. Students in this school receive a total of 17 hours of English instruction per week which is distributed across three distinct English courses; Core, CLIL, and Extension. In Core lessons, students focus on learning general English including developing their grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. The CLIL lessons (Content and Language Integrated Learning) are designed to teach both subject and content and language skills simultaneously with the same teacher, as in the Core lessons, teaching Math and Life Sciences in English. Finally, the Extension lessons are conducted by a foreign teacher, where the primary focus is on phonics and pronunciation.

Additionally, EFL teachers are readily available to support students outside the classroom. Students are encouraged to approach their teachers for assistance which fosters a collaborative and supportive learning environment. However, teachers are required to communicate in English with their students, even in informal settings. This policy of the school aims to ensure that students remain immersed in the target language and exposed to English both in academic and non-academic interactions.

3.2.2 Participants. The participants in this study consisted of 42 second-grade students, including 18 males and 24 females, aged between 7 and 8 years old. The participants were selected using convenience sampling, as they were part of the researcher's current classroom. This sampling method was chosen due to the accessibility and practicality of working with existing students (see Table 1.).

Table 1

Demographics of Participants: Gender

	F	%
Female	24	57.1
Male	18	42.8
Total	42	100.0

The majority of the participants have attended the same school since kindergarten which provides them with a consistent educational environment and from the early years of their education, they have been immersed in a bilingual curriculum and exposed to English as a second language and their overall proficiency level aligns with the A1 (beginner) level of the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) which means that they are able to:

- Understand and use familiar expressions and basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.
- Introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where s/he lives, people s/he knows and things s/he has.
- Interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help (Council of Europe, 2001).

3.3 Procedures

The present section outlines the data collection instruments, data analysis procedures, and the phases of the intervention thoroughly.

3.3.1 Data collection procedures. This section outlines the procedures employed for collecting data to evaluate the effects of positive psychology interventions on young learners' well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation.

3.3.1.1 The motivated behavior and effort instrument. Consisted of 18 items and with the $\alpha=.89$ score of Cronbach's Alpha, the Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument (Demir, 2016) was utilized with the aim of assessing learners' motivation and effort in second language acquisition. It is a 5-point Likert type instrument and ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing participants to express varying levels of agreement with each statement. The items in the scale focus on key aspects such as motivation, interest, confidence, and perceived difficulties in learning English, addressing emotional responses and cognitive beliefs as well. The original version of the scale is a 41-item questionnaire developed by Al-Shehri (2009) in collaboration with Zoltán Dörnyei. In this study, only the subscale related to motivation was used, which was translated to Turkish and adapted by Demir (2016) (see Appendix A).

3.3.1.2 Questionnaire of english self-efficacy. This instrument was administered to evaluate students' judgements about their own capabilities in learning English language. The questionnaire includes 32 items across four subscales: self-efficacy for listening, self-efficacy for speaking, self-efficacy for reading, and self-efficacy for writing. It is a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Definitely I cannot) to 7 (Definitely I can), allowing students to indicate their confidence in performing language-related tasks. The internal consistency coefficient for the total scale was reported as .96. Originally developed by Wang (2004), the instrument was translated into Turkish by Açikel (2011), during which five items were reworded to prevent potential misunderstandings. Similar changes were made to some items, although the total number of the items remained the same (see Appendix B).

3.3.1.3 The PERMA profiler. The profiler is a self-report instrument consisting of 23 items designed to assess individuals' well-being across each domain of Seligman's (2011) PERMA model (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning and Accomplishment along with the additional measures for Negative Emotion, Physical Health and Overall Happiness. Participants rate each item on an 11-point Likert scale with the aim of obtaining a holistic understanding of the impact of the intervention on their well-being. Originally developed by Butler and Kern (2016), the PERMA Profiler was translated to Turkish by Demirci et al., (2017). Although some changes were made for linguistic purposes, the Turkish version maintained the original structure and the number of the items (see Appendix C).

3.3.1.4 Focus group interviews. As a part of the qualitative data collection process, focus group interview was conducted using a semi-structured format. Focus group interviews are used to ‘collect shared understanding from several individuals as well as to get views from specific people’ (Creswell, 2015, p.217). This approach allows for the exploration of participants’ perspectives in a flexible and guided manner. Fraenkel and Wallen (2019) asserted that the aim of the focus group interviews is to uncover genuine opinions regarding specific issues within a social environment that allow students to listen to differing perspectives and reassess their own stances accordingly. Dörnyei (2007) remarks that focus group interviews can vary significantly, influenced by how much the researcher depends on a structured interview guide instead of permitting participants to freely engage with broader subjects. The semi-structured questions were designed to elicit detailed responses regarding the students’ experiences with the intervention and their perceptions of its impact on their well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation. The questions addressed general impressions, emotional and social experiences (aligned with the PERMA dimensions), and changes in their confidence and engagement in learning English. Additionally, they provided opportunities for students to reflect on specific activities and share their favorite moments. Considering the participants’ A1 proficiency level in English, the focus group interview was conducted in Turkish to ensure clarity and encourage more detailed responses. The interview was facilitated with the assistance of their homeroom teacher with the aim of minimizing language barriers and allowing participants to express their thoughts and experiences more freely and accurately (see Appendix D).

3.3.1.5 Teacher's diary notes. The observations from teacher's diary notes served as a crucial qualitative data source by offering rich and contextual reflections on the implementation of the PERMA-based activities throughout the five-week intervention. As Burgess (1981) highlights, diaries provide intimate narratives of classroom life, enabling access to affective and behavioral dimensions that may not be readily visible to external observers (p. 81). After each week, the researcher systematically documented student responses to the activities, with specific attention to indicators of well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy. By capturing the real-time developments and subtle transformations, the teacher's diary contributed to a more detailed understanding of how Positive Psychology interventions affected young learners. Moreover, the use of diary data supported methodological triangulation alongside student focus group interviews and quantitative scales.

3.3.2 Implementation. The implementation phase of the study was designed to last for five weeks, with each week dedicated to one element of the PERMA model which are Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement. The intervention took place in English lessons and are tailored to suit their proficiency level and developmental needs.

3.3.2.1 Week one – positive emotions. The first week of the implementation phase was dedicated to fostering positive emotions among students by cultivating gratitude, self-awareness, and positivity. A key activity of the week was the 'Gratitude Jar' exercise (see Appendix E), in which students wrote down things they were grateful for. This activity was designed to encourage students to reflect on positive experiences, moments of appreciation, and acts of kindness and to reinforce their ability to focus on the good aspects of their daily lives. Frederickson (2002) pointed out that as we increase positivity, our lives will be re-shaped around how we view ourselves. Throughout the week, the students were encouraged to talk positively about themselves and their classmates. One of the key activities involved providing students with a mirror and encouraging them to engage in positive self-talk (see Appendix F). They were modeled and prompted to express affirmations about themselves and highlight their abilities and strengths. As Hoffmann and Rus (2012) indicated, a positive emotional state in children fosters greater creativity and facilitates easier resolution of problems.

3.3.2.2 Week two - engagement. Aiming to immerse students in activities that captivate their interest and encourage active participation, the second week of the implementation phase was dedicated to fostering engagement among participants. During this week, students were taken out to the garden to take a mindful walk which was called the ‘English Walk’ (see Appendix G). Each student was asked to walk for 5 minutes and observe themselves and the things around them by using 5 senses. When every student finished walking, a reflection circle was established to share experiences. Through this activity, it was aimed to strengthen participants’ concentration and awareness as Rosenstreich et al., (2021) stressed, mindful movement enhances sensory information which led to new perspectives on learning tasks. Additionally, students were involved in a project-based task where they categorized the states of the matter, aligning with the theme of the week. Through this project, they actively explored and classified solids, liquids, and gases. The process included researching, organizing, and presenting their findings to their classmates (see Appendix H).

3.3.2.3 Week three - relationships. The third week of the implementation phase focused on fostering relationships, and this week’s activities aimed at helping students develop meaningful connections with their peers through structured interactions and an emphasis on mutual support and kindness. The concept of kindness was introduced to students through discussions and role-playing scenarios with the goal of emphasizing the importance of demonstrating kindness both in words and in actions. To further advance peer connections, a buddy system is established during this week where each student was paired with a classmate, forming a partnership designed to promote both academic and social support. In this system, buddies collaborated on classroom activities and assisted one another with academic tasks alongside providing strengthening social interactions. Students were also assisted to use phrases that appreciate their buddies’ effort (see Appendix I). It is nurturing for students to practice a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006; Einck, 2017) and Navarro (2020) also asserted that utilizing language that promotes a growth mindset when communicating with children influences their underlying beliefs about their self-efficacy. During the week, students also filled a ‘Kindness Calendar’ in which they wrote the kind acts they did (see Appendix J).

3.3.2.4 Week four – meaning . The fourth week of the implementation phase was centered on the concept of meaning which is a vital element of the PERMA model. During this week, classroom activities were designed to bridge the gap between the lessons and their practical applications in everyday life. Lessons were contextualized to highlight their relevance to the real world. Discussions were also integrated into lessons to encourage students to think critically about how the things they are learning can impact their lives and the world around them. By connecting lessons to real-world context, students were expected to develop a stronger sense of relevance and engagement with their English lessons.

Throughout the week, class discussions focused on understanding the truth behind natural disasters and reflecting on the importance of building a better future for humanity, considering ways to create safer and more resilient communities through environmental awareness. The ‘Helping Plan for Disasters’ (see Appendix K) activity encouraged students to brainstorm and organize ways to help communities before, during, and after a disaster and this activity was designed to foster a sense of responsibility and awareness. The week’s CLIL lessons incorporated multiplication which allowed students to apply mathematical concepts in a real-world disaster response scenario, reinforcing both numeracy skills and social awareness. In the ‘Disaster Relief Mission’ activity (see Appendix L), students took on the role of emergency responders, using multiplication-based problem solving to strategize aid distribution. These activities and discussions, aligned with the Meaning pillar of the PERMA model, aimed to help students develop problem-solving skills, empathy, and a sense of collective responsibility.

3.3.2.5 Week five - achievement. During the fifth and the final week of the intervention, which focused on the Achievement pillar of the PERMA model, students engaged in activities that were designed to help them bring an awareness of their progress and celebrate their accomplishments. The week started with a class discussion on the concept of achievement where the teacher introduced the term and encouraged students to reflect on their personal accomplishments. Students also specifically elaborated on their achievements in English lessons (both Core and CLIL lessons) and identified areas in which they had improved throughout the intervention.

Students involved in preparing a World Water Day poster to be presented to first graders (see Appendix M). It was aimed at bringing awareness to water usage and

environmental issues. Then, students took part in the activity called ‘I Am The Teacher’ where they were divided into groups of four and were asked to select a topic previously covered in the class. Over the course of two days, they prepared to instruct and presented their chosen topic to their classmates. The key idea of this activity was to enhance their confidence, their leadership skills, and ability to deliver information to others (see Appendix N).

In closing, regarding the occurrences of the intervention phase, each student received a certificate of participation which recognizes their effort, perseverance, and engagement throughout the five weeks (see Appendix O).

3.3.3 Data analysis procedures. Quantitative data were derived from pre-tests and post-tests scores obtained through the PERMA Profiler (2016), the Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (QESE) (2004), and the Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument (2009). Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the participants’ performance before and after the intervention. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Due to their statistical power and ability to provide more precise and generalizable results (Mills & Gay, 2018), parametric tests were selected for the data analysis in this study. For parametric tests to be valid, it is essential that the data adhere to normal distribution, consistent variance, and are assessed using an interval or ratio scale (Pallant, 2020). Given the substantial size of the sample in this research fulfills the criteria for normality, using parametric tests ensures that the results are statistically robust and have greater interpretability (Field, 2018). While paired samples t-tests were also conducted to identify statistically significant changes between pre-tests and post-tests, independent samples t-test was utilized to examine differences among two classrooms to provide deeper understanding of how the intervention influenced different dimensions of well-being, self-efficacy, and motivation.

Qualitative data, which were collected through semi-structured focus group interview and teacher’s diary notes were analyzed manually by using content analysis. The researcher reviewed the qualitative data multiple times to familiarize herself with the content to identify recurring themes. Key patterns were coded and categorized into broader themes. Qualitative results were also compared with quantitative results through a process of triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings.

3.3.4 Reliability and validity. To ensure the rigor of this mixed-methods research, the study employed established criteria to uphold both qualitative trustworthiness and quantitative robustness. In line with Guba and Lincoln's (1981) framework, four dimensions were considered for the qualitative aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These dimensions parallel the conventional concepts of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity often associated with quantitative research (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility was strengthened through the use of data triangulation, combining various sources such as focus group interviews, teacher's diary notes, and pre and post intervention tests. This allowed for a multi-perspective understanding of how PERMA-based activities influenced students' well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy. This consistency of results across different tools helped reduce researcher subjectivity and bolstered the trustworthiness of interpretations (Denzin, 1978). Additionally, the study's alignment with existing theoretical and empirical literature provided a strong basis for methodological and analytical coherence (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transferability was addressed by offering detailed descriptions of the study's setting and participants. Contextual information, such as the school environment, the age group, and the structure of the five-week intervention was shared to help readers assess whether the findings might be applicable to similar educational contexts.

Dependability was ensured through transparent and systematic documentation of all stages of the research. Each procedural stage was carefully recorded to allow for review.

Confirmability was achieved by focusing on data that reflected participants' genuine perspectives. Researcher bias was minimized through cross-checking between qualitative data sources. This process ensured that findings emerged from the data itself rather than assumptions (Patton, 2002).

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Overview

In this chapter, the results of the present study are outlined, focusing on the efficaciousness of positive psychology techniques on the wellbeing, motivation, and self-efficacy of second grade EFL learners in a private primary school located in Istanbul, Turkey. The subsequent sections present the results obtained from the quantitative and qualitative data.

4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

The current study investigated the effect of PERMA-based positive psychology techniques on second grade EFL learners' well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy. This section consists of three sub-parts aiming to present the quantitative findings of students' well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy.

4.2.1 Findings on wellbeing. This section presents the overall wellbeing statistics of both control group and experimental group. First, Shapiro-Wilk test results revealed the normal distribution of the data. Table 2 indicates the Shapiro-Wilk test results for The PERMA Profiler.

Table 2

Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality for The PERMA Profiler

			Statistics	df	p
Control Group	Pre		.924	20	.120
	Post		.897	20	.037
Experimental Group	Pre		.935	22	.159
	Post		.933	22	.143

To assess the normality of the data, both Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted. Prior to conducting paired-sampled t-tests, the assumption of normality was assessed through the Shapiro-Wilk Test for each group's pre- and post- test scores on The

PERMA Profiler. The analysis showed that the pre- ($p = .120$) and post- test ($p = .037$) scores of the control group, the pre- ($p = .159$) and post- test ($p = .143$) scores of the experimental group satisfied the assumption of normality. However, the post-test scores of the control group showed a significance value slightly below the .05 threshold which indicates a marginal deviation from normality.

Table 3

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of The PERMA Profiler

		W	z	df	p
-	Experimental Group	89.000	-1.217	22	0.235
	Control Group	46.000	-2.203	20	0.027

* $p < .05$.

As could be seen from Table 3, the results from the Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed that in the experimental group, there was no statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, $W = 89.00$, $z = -1.217$, $p = .235$ which suggested that the PERMA-based activities did not produce a perceptible change in students' well-being over the intervention period. However, a statistically significant difference was observed in the control group with the pre-test and post-test scores ($W = 46.00$, $z = -2.203$, $p = .027$) despite the absence of any PERMA-related intervention. To find out if there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups before and after the intervention, Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted.

Table 4

Mann-Whitney U Test Results of The PERMA Profiler

		U	df	p
Pre-Test	Experimental Control	186.500	42	.285
Post-Test	Experimental Control	256.000	42	.371

* $p < .05$.

To examine whether the experimental group and the control group differed in their well-being scores before and after the intervention, Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted. The results obtained indicated that there was no significant difference in the pre-test scores between the groups, $U = 186.50$, $p = .285$, showing that both groups were statistically equivalent. Similarly, no statistically significant difference was observed between the groups, $U = 256.00$, $p = .371$. This suggests that the PERMA-based intervention did not lead to a significant difference in well-being levels between the experimental group and the control group at the end of the intervention (See Table 4).

4.2.2 Findings on motivation. This section outlines the motivation statistics for both the control and the experimental groups. To begin with, the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test are presented to assess the normality of the data distribution. Table 5 displays the Shapiro-Wilk test results for The Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument.

Table 5

Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality for The Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument

		Statistics	df	p
Control Group	Pre	.890	20	.027
	Post	.871	20	.012
Experimental Group	Pre	.950	22	.321
	Post	.957	22	.423

The assumption of normality for motivation scores was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. It was indicated from the results that the control group's pre-test ($W = .890, p = .027$) and post-test ($W = .871, p = .012$) scores deviated from normality. In contrast, the experimental group's pre-test ($W = .950, p = .321$) and post-test ($W = .957, p = .423$) scores did not deviate from normality. Given that not all data met the assumption of normality, non-parametric statistical tests, such as Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test and Mann-Whitney U Test were used to analyze the motivation scores.

Table 6

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results of The Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument

	W	z	df	p
Experimental Group	12.500	-3.701	22	< .001
Control Group	79.000	-0.644	20	.533

* $p < .05$.

The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed a statistically significant increase in the motivation level of the experimental group following the intervention, $W = 12.50, z = -3.701, p < .001$. This evidence demonstrates that the PERMA-based

intervention effectively influenced the motivated behaviors and effort levels of the participants (see Table 6).

As opposed to the experimental group, the control group showed no statistically significant change in motivation scores between the pre-test and the post-test, $W = 79.00$, $z = -0.644$, $p = .533$, which sets forward that their levels of motivation remained unchanged in the absence of the intervention. The Mann-Whitney U Test reported the motivation level differences between the two groups.

Table 7

Mann-Whitney U Test Results of The Motivated Behavior and Effort Instrument

		U	df	p
Pre-Test	Experimental Control	321.500	42	.011
Post-Test	Experimental Control	248.000	42	.479

* $p < .05$.

According to Table 7, the analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in the pre-test scores, $U = 321.50$, $p = .011$, which can be an indicator that two groups were not equivalent at baseline in terms of motivated behavior and effort. Especially, the control group showed higher motivation scores before the intervention. However, the comparison of the pos-tests demonstrated no significant difference between the groups, $U = 248.00$, $p = .479$, suggesting that by the end of the study, the gap in motivation levels between the groups had diminished. This finding may reflect a favorable effect of the intervention on the experimental group, as it seems to have boosted their motivation to a degree that is on par with the control group.

4.2.3. Findings on self-efficacy. In this section, The Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy scores of both control and experimental group are displayed before and after the course of the implementation. First, the results of Shapiro-Wilk test were presented to ensure the normality of the data pertaining to items about English self-efficacy. In the sequel, a paired sample t-test and an independent sample t test results are presented. Table 8 demonstrates the Shapiro-Wilk normality test results for the Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy.

Table 8

Shapiro-Wilk Test Results of Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy

		Statistics	df	p
Control Group	Pre	.927	20	.133
	Post	.909	20	.062
Experimental Group	Pre	.966	22	.610
	Post	.917	22	.067

* $p < .05$.

The assumption of normality for the English self-efficacy scores was assessed through the Shapiro-Wilk test for both the experimental and control groups. For the control group, the pre-test scores were found to be normally distributed ($W = .927, p = .133$). Although the post-test results approached significance ($W = .909, p = .062$), they still fell above the threshold which suggests no statistically significant deviation from normality. For the experimental group, both the pre-test ($W = .966, p = .610$) and the post-test ($W = .917, p = .067$) scores did not deviate significantly from a normal distribution, confirming that the assumption of normality is met. The findings indicated that the data for English self-efficacy scores in both groups are considered approximately normally distributed and allow for the use of parametrical statistical tests such as paired sample t-test and independent sample t test in subsequent analyses.

Table 9

Paired Samples T-Test Results of Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy

		M	SD	t	df	Sig.
Control Group	Pre-Test	50.8	1.29	-0.80	20	.430
	Post-Test	81.0	0.96			
Experimental Group	Pre-Test	50.1	0.93	0.12	22	.990
	Post-Test	50.4	0.87			

* $p < .05$.

A paired samples t-test was conducted to assess whether there was a significant difference in English self-efficacy levels between the pre-test and post-test within each group. As demonstrated in Table 9, for the control group, the results revealed no statistically significant difference between the pre-test ($M = 50.8$, $SD = 1.29$) and post-test ($M = 51.0$, $SD = 0.96$) scores, $t(20) = -0.80$, $p = .430$. This implies that participants in the control group did not experience a meaningful change in their self-efficacy over the implementation period.

Similarly, the experimental group did not show statistically significant between the pre-test ($M = 50.1$, $SD = 0.93$) and post-test ($M = 50.4$, $SD = 0.87$) scores, $t(22) = 0.12$, $p = .990$. In other words, the intervention did not have a statistically measurable effect on the English self-efficacy levels of participants in the experimental group.

In brief, the gathered results revealed that the PERMA-based intervention did not lead to a significant change in self-efficacy within the experimental group, and no natural increase was observed in the control group as well. To determine the differences between groups, an independent samples t-test was performed which was presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Independent Samples T-Test Results of Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy

		M	SD	t	df	Sig.
Pre-Test	Control	78.5	0.90	-0.88	42	.381
	Experimental	81.0	0.96			
Post-Test	Control	53.8	1.23	1.23	42	.267
	Experimental	50.1	0.87			

* $p < .05$.

According to Table 10, an independent samples t-test was performed to compare the English self-efficacy scores of the experimental and control groups at both and after the intervention. Before the intervention, the pre-test results of the control group ($M = 78.5$, $SD = 0.90$) and the experimental group ($M = 81.0$, $SD = 0.96$) did not differ significantly in their English self-efficacy scores, $t(42) = -0.88$, $p = .381$, which suggests that the groups were statistically equivalent at baseline with respect to their self-perceived English efficacy.

After the intervention, the post-test scores revealed that the control group ($M = 53.8$, $SD = 1.23$) again did not differ significantly from the experimental group ($M = 50.1$, $SD = 0.87$), $t(42) = 1.23$, $p = .267$. This denotes that the PERMA-based intervention did not result in statistically significant difference in English self-efficacy when compared to the control group by the end of the study.

4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

This section presents the qualitative findings derived from focus group interviews conducted with young EFL learners who took part in a five-week intervention grounded in positive psychology techniques and teacher's diary notes. The purpose of these interviews was to gain deeper insights into students' subjective experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses related to the intervention. Additionally, to complement the findings obtained from the focus group interviews, field notes were systematically kept by the researcher throughout the implementation period. The data collected were transcribed and subjected to a rigorous thematic

analysis in order to identify recurring patterns and noteworthy individual expressions. Through this analytical process, several themes and associated sub-themes emerged. These themes are systematically presented in the subsequent sections, supported by quotations from the students.

4.3.1 Findings from the focus group interview.

Table 11

Emerging Themes from Focus Group Interviews

Main Themes	Subthemes
1. Emotional Wellbeing	1a. Positive Emotions 1b. Relaxation and Comfort
2. Motivation	2a. Increased Intrinsic Motivation 2b. Practical Relevance of English
3. Self-Efficacy	3a. Belief in personal abilities 3b. Growth and improvement recognition
4. Social and Collaborative Learning	4a. Preference for group work 4b. Peer learning and mutual support 4c. Trust and cooperation
5. Appreciation of English Learning and Desired Continuation	5a. Practical Importance 5b. Enjoyment and Continued Engagement

4.3.1.1 Emotional well-being.

4.3.1.1.1. Positive emotions. During the interviews, the participating students consistently expressed an array of positive emotions including happiness, excitement, enthusiasm, and joy both during and after English classes. These emotional experiences were closely associated with specific classroom activities pertaining to the first week of the intervention which focused on positive emotions. The interviewees displayed appreciation for talking positively about themselves.

[...] When I said good things about myself, I felt proud and happy. (S3, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] The mirror activity made me smile. I never thought I could say such kind things about me (S5, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

4.3.1.1.2 Relaxation and comfort. The students frequently highlighted the experiences of relaxation and comfort that emerged during the English lessons. Such

emotional states were perceived as significantly beneficial and quite enhanced in engaging deeply with content and comprehending instructions, thus positively affecting their performance. A few respondents reported that having a positive atmosphere in the classroom made them less nervous about making mistakes in English lessons. They felt like the classroom has become a safe zone where their mistakes and errors are also welcomed. Below, some of the excerpts show the positive mental state they experienced:

[...] I felt relaxed and happy, and I noticed that I understand and perform English tasks better when relaxed. (S1, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] Writing the things we are thankful for on the gratitude jar activity helped me to look on the bright side and it was a happy moment for me. (S2, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

On the other hand, two students occasionally uttered mixed emotional responses, particularly feelings of happiness coupled with sadness when lessons concluded, or experiencing too many emotions in one lesson which resulted in lacking awareness of the emotional state. The following excerpts below underline students' strong emotional attachments and investment in English classes:

[...] In English lessons, I feel so happy because I enjoy every minute of it, but it really makes me sad when the class ends. (S3, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] I love English lessons; I definitely do but in one lesson I feel so many things. When I achieve something or read digital books, I am happy but when I lose in a game, I feel quite angry, so, I cannot decide how I exactly feel in English lessons. (S4, Interview Data, 28.03.2025).

In summary, the majority of the interviewees reported a heightened presence of positive emotions such as joy, excitement, and relaxation, especially during activities designed to promote emotional expression. The findings in general underscore the potential of positive psychology-based practices to enhance young learners' emotional experiences.

4.3.1.2 Motivation.

4.3.1.2.1 Increased intrinsic motivation. During the interviews, the intrinsic motivation among students was obvious, largely driven by their growing sense of competence and personal enjoyment derived from engaging in activities. The students

particularly emphasized the improvement they experience in their English proficiency and as they become more aware of their improvement, they are more intrinsically motivated. The following excerpts display boost in their intrinsic motivation in learning English:

[...] I was afraid of English lessons and speaking in English at one time but, now I feel more motivated because I feel more comfortable. (S1, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] I am definitely more motivated because I've noticed my improvement. (S5, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] I love English lessons so much. It is very important for me to learn English, I was always motivated in English lessons, but lately I feel more motivated and self-confident. (S3, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

Perseverance was also echoed by the students as pivotal in encouraging them to persist despite encountering challenges. They articulated clear understanding and belief in the importance of perseverance for achieving success. The following excerpts explicate students' never-ending effort and perseverance:

[...] Giving up means never succeeding but why would I give up if I love English so much? (S2, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] I never give up because I know I'll succeed if I keep trying (S6, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

4.3.1.2.2 Practical relevance of English. The participating students displayed a strong motivational response linked to understanding the practical implications and benefits of English language learning in real-world scenarios. The awareness of practical relevance significantly reinforced their enthusiasm and commitment to continued learning. The following excerpts below revealed students' increased motivation through having a better understanding about the benefits of learning English:

[...] Lately I realized that English isn't just a lesson; it can be used everywhere in life. (S1, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] While creating a helping plan for natural disasters, I thought about what if something like this happened to me abroad and I realized that if I know and

... speak English well, I can help myself and my family in an emergency. (S2, Interview Data, 28.03.2023)

[...] It is always beneficial to learn new things and sometimes we need English to gain new information. (S7, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] Natural disasters can happen in anywhere in this world. I recognize the importance of speaking English to understand what is going on or help other people in situations like these. (S5, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

To wrap up, the data strongly suggest that the intervention positively influenced students' motivational orientations toward English language learning. A noticeable shift toward increased intrinsic motivation was observed and the participants also remarked on a noteworthy sense of perseverance, indicating that they were more willing to persist in the face of challenges. Furthermore, the students' recognition of the real-world use of English reinforced their motivation by providing a meaningful and relevant context for language learning.

4.3.1.3 Self-efficacy.

4.3.1.3.1 Belief in personal abilities. During the interviews the students demonstrated marked improvement in their confidence and beliefs in personal capabilities in English lessons and reported that they after the first week of the intervention which focused on positive emotions, they started to implement positive emotions and self-encouragement techniques. Such practices notably enhanced their self-perception and strengthened them to tackle challenging tasks. The following excerpts reflect the issue:

[...] Even if the tasks are challenging, I learned to not to give up. I say, 'I can do this!' to myself and keep going. (S1, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] After you gave us a mirror and asked to talk positively about ourselves, I started to repeat these positive affirmations to myself at home during difficulties. (S3, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

4.3.1.3.2 Growth and improvement recognition. The recognition and acknowledgement of personal growth significantly impacted students' self-efficacy, as they reported. Students were more conscious of their advancements which gave rise to

increased confidence and motivation to further engage in language learning tasks. As shown below:

[...] Dictation exercises in English lessons were challenging at the beginning, but now I know how to encourage myself and feel I am doing better. (S8, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] As I realized my strengths, I started to feel more motivated because I sense that I am improving. (S7, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

An overwhelming majority of the students remarked heightened confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in English across various settings, including domestic environments. This confidence was explicitly attributed to the experiences within classroom activities that encouraged practical application and interaction. The following sentence was uttered by an interviewee regarding this particular situation:

[...] I was born in Ohio, the USA, but when I was very little, we came back to Turkey. Since childhood, my mom always wanted me to speak English fluently and tried so hard to speak in English with me at home. Until quite recently, I was reluctant, but now I feel more confident speaking English at home with my family. (S6, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

In sum, the focus group data revealed a noticeable enhancement in students' self-efficacy beliefs as a result of the interventions' emphasis on fostering positive emotions and self-reflective practices. While learners consistently reported a strengthened belief in their personal capabilities, the integration of reflective tools, such as mirror activities and the kindness calendar, appeared to facilitate greater self-awareness. Collectively, these findings underscore the positive impact of the positive psychology techniques in enhancing young EFL learners' belief in their own English learning potential.

4.3.1.4 Social and collaborative learning.

4.3.1.4.1 Preference for group work. Students expressed a strong preference for collaborative tasks, which they associated with increased enjoyment, ease of completing activities, and deeper learning experiences. The interviewees on whole consistently identified group or peer works as more satisfying when compared to individual tasks. The aforementioned findings are displayed in the following excerpts:

[...] Working together makes everything easier and more enjoyable. When we were working on the World Water Day poster, we had so much fun, and we couldn't realize how the time passed. (S2, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] Everybody has something they are good at. When we are working together, all of these things come out and we create something even more beautiful. (S3, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] Before the 'I am the Teacher' activity, we all talked about the distribution of tasks. At first, I was apprehensive, but it turned out to be a great experience for all of us. (S5, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

4.3.1.4.2 Peer learning and mutual support. The participants highlighted significant benefits of the support they obtained from their peers. They reported that the 'Buddy System' enhanced their learning experiences, consolidated mutual support, and strengthened interpersonal relationships. Seeking for or giving help when needed was in favor among students as it made them feel more comfortable. One student also commented that sometimes asking a question to a teacher can be overwhelming, but it is easier and more relieving to ask a classmate. The aforementioned issue was reflected in the following excerpt:

[...] I learned a lot from my friends, and group work became even more enjoyable for me. (S4, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] If I were to do an activity right now, I would rather do group work. But if I have to work alone, that's not a problem either because I know I can get help from my buddy whenever I want. Having this environment in the classroom makes me feel very comfortable. (S8, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] I feel a great sense of confidence and happiness whenever a classmate of mine asks me for help. (S3, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

4.3.1.4.3 Trust and cooperation. Group activities significantly contribute to students' understanding of the importance of trust and cooperation and they recognized these factors as crucial and irreplaceable for successful teamwork. These activities notably enhanced their comfort, confidence, and collaborative capabilities. As shown below:

[...] Working with groups taught us the importance of trust. (S1, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] When I do group work, I have to make sure that my group mates put in the same effort as I do. I have to trust him, but at the same time, I have to give him trust. (S6, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

The gathered results highlighted the critical role of social and collaborative learning in enhancing students' overall classroom experience. Students expressed a strong preference for group work and claimed that the 'Buddy System' not only promoted academic gains but also contributed to the positive interpersonal relationships. The findings revealed that fostering a socially supportive and collaborative classroom culture can significantly contribute to both the emotional and academic dimensions of language learning among young learners.

4.3.1.5 Appreciation of english learning and desired for continuation.

4.3.1.5.1 Practical importance. Students explicitly acknowledged the practical benefits and essential role of English in real-life, particularly for international communication and future opportunities. This practical appreciation fostered deeper engagement and sustained commitment to language learning. They conveyed a clear preference and enthusiasm for additional engaging activities that highlighted their recognition of the educational benefits and enjoyment derived from such learning experiences. The interviewees reflect this by saying:

[...] Learning English is very important for comfortable communication abroad. (S7, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] I want to learn English even more. I know that it will be very beneficial for me in the future. (S5, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] I realized English learning is more beneficial than I initially thought. (S4, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

4.3.1.5.2 Enjoyment and continued engagement. Enjoyment and perceived educational value were significant drivers of students' continued interest and active participation in English learning activities. They welcomed opportunities to focus on the desire for sustained engagement and growth. The following excerpts support the enjoyment and continued engagement:

[...] Learning English excites me, and I feel I'm improving at school. (S3, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)

[...] As I am more aware of what I am capable of, I thrive to learn English more. (S1, Interview Data, 28.03.2025)



4.3.2 Findings from teacher's diary notes.

Table 12

Emerging Themes from Teacher's Diary Notes

Main Themes	Subthemes
Enhanced Student Motivation and Enthusiasm	1a. Increased Participation 1b. Improved Self-Confidence
Development of Peer Support and Cooperation	2a. Increased Peer Assistance 2b. Expansion of Collaborative Practices across Context
Cultivation of Positive Classroom Climate	3a. Mutual Encouragement and Praise 3b. Reduced Competitiveness 3c. Positive Emotional Disposition

4.3.2.1 Enhanced student motivation and enthusiasm.

4.3.2.1.1 Increased participation. Students demonstrated increased excitement and anticipation regarding intervention activities. They frequently asked about future sessions, showing genuine interest and intrinsic motivation. Such active inquiry and eagerness suggest that the intervention significantly enhanced their overall engagement.

4.3.2.1.2 Improved self-confidence. Students initially displayed hesitancy during activities, especially in expressing positive affirmations. However, with support and examples provided, students gradually developed confidence and became more willing to participate actively and independently.

4.3.2.2 Development of peer support and cooperation.

4.3.2.2.1 Increased peer assistance. Throughout the intervention, there was a noticeable shift from teacher dependency towards increased peer collaboration. Students actively sought help and provided assistance to their classmates. They began to view each other as sources of knowledge and encouragement, and this contributed to a more student-centered and supportive learning atmosphere.

4.3.2.2.2 Expansion of collaborative practices across context. Reporting from other teachers revealed that collaborative practices introduced through the Buddy System in English lessons spontaneously extended into another curricular context. Even if the lesson was not English, students reportedly maintained cooperative behaviors and displayed behaviors that promote peer support across different learning environments.

4.3.2.3 Cultivation of positive classroom climate.

4.3.2.3.1 Mutual encouragement and praise. Students are consistently engaged in behaviors characterized by mutual praise and encouragement. They openly celebrated peers' accomplishments and provided support during setbacks or mistakes. This nurturing environment significantly contributed to fostering emotional safety which encouraged students to actively participate without fear or judgement. The regular use of positive language created a classroom culture that valued kindness and growth over perfection.

4.3.2.3.2 Reduced competitiveness. An observable shift occurred from a previously competitive atmosphere to one that emphasized collective learning and enjoyment over individual winning. Students proactively reminded each other about the importance of collaborative learning experiences, resulting in decreased competitive tensions and improved peer relations. This shift also helped build empathy and respect among students, as they began prioritizing group success and emotional well-being over outperforming one another.

4.3.2.3.3 Positive emotional disposition. Students showed greater emotional stability during challenges, quickly recovering from setbacks and maintaining a positive attitude. They used affirming language both for themselves and for others, reflecting a deeper internalization of positive emotional coping strategies. Their consistent emotional resilience and positive outlook contributed to a learning environment that fostered well-being, joy, and motivation.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion of Research Questions

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the findings obtained from the current study which aimed to scrutinize the effects of PERMA-based positive psychology techniques on the well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy of young EFL learners. The findings of the study revealed a complex interaction between the quantitative and qualitative outcomes. Quantitatively, a statistically significant increase was observed in the motivation scores of the experimental group, affirming the efficacy of the PERMA-based positive psychology techniques in enhancing motivational dispositions. In contrast, quantitative measures of well-being and self-efficacy did not indicate statistically significant differences between pre- and post-tests. However, the focus group responses highlighted the students' increased emotional well-being, stronger belief in personal growth and self-efficacy, enhanced intrinsic motivation, and a clear preference for collaborative practices in the EFL classroom. To complement interview data, field notes recorded throughout the implementation phase offered real-time insights into behavioral and emotional shifts among students. The results are interpreted through the existing theoretical frameworks and empirical studies presented in the literature review. While the first sections discuss the quantitative and the qualitative findings appertaining to each research question, the following section will touch upon the practical implications, conclusions drawn, and recommendations for further research.

5.1.1 Discussion of the findings of RQ1: Do young EFL learners who receive positive psychology interventions demonstrate significantly higher levels of well-being compared to those who do not?. The quantitative results from the PERMA Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016) revealed a non-significant change in the experimental group's well-being scores. Several explanations may account for this seemingly counterintuitive outcome. One potential explanation concerns the brevity of the intervention period, which may have been inadequate to elicit statistically measurable improvements in multidimensional constructs such as well-being. In addition, the constraints of self-report measures may have obscured the detection of

subtle changes, especially when used with young learners. As Dodge et al. (2012) contended that well-being is context-sensitive and fluid, therefore, standard Likert-scale items may not be developmentally appropriate to fully capture these nuances in early childhood settings.

In contrast to the quantitative data, findings obtained from the focus group interviews showed emotional transformation of students. The interviewees expressed elevated feelings of joy, comfort, and emotional security during English lessons which strongly aligns with Frederickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory. This theory states that positive emotion expands individuals' thought-action repertoire, build enduring personal resources, and facilitate adaptive behavior. Specific activities during the implementation such as the Gratitude Jar, kindness reflections, and mirror affirmations were frequently cited as emotionally uplifting. In line with the developmental extension of this theory, emotions like joy and interest enhance young children's self-regulation, social cognition, and prosocial behaviors (Stifter et al., 2019). The interviewees' insights in this study demonstrate the broadening function of positive emotions as many reported feeling empowered and more willing to participate in communicative tasks. This finding corroborates Gregersen's (2016) study, which indicated that EFL learners' wellbeing improved following gratitude exercises. The students conveyed that looking into mirror and repeating affirming statements made them feel strong and ready to speak more. These findings are further supported by Self-Affirmation Theory (Steele, 1988), which suggests that individuals are driven to maintain a coherent sense of self-integrity. In anxiety-including contexts such as foreign language classrooms, affirming alternative self-domains may lessen emotional distress. Through positive affirmation practices, students in this study internalized positive self-perceptions, thereby reducing the psychological threat posed caused by linguistic challenges. Likewise, Escobar-Soler et al. (2024) found that regular use of affirmations can aid children in internalizing strengths-based thinking and cultivating a more positive self-concept.

A notable finding from the qualitative strand of this study pertains to the sense of relaxation and emotional comfort experienced by the participating students during the intervention. The students repeatedly mentioned feeling 'relaxed', 'safe' and 'free to make mistakes' which sentiments reflect a reduction in anxiety and a shift toward a more supportive learning atmosphere. Additional classroom observations documented

in the field notes supported these findings, revealing that students consistently demonstrated emotional resilience, used affirming language for themselves and peers, and quickly recovered from setbacks. These sentiments accord with the findings of Bajiri and Elmahdi (2024) who revealed that emotionally secure climates and the incorporation relaxation techniques substantially contribute to mitigating language anxiety among EFL learners. Practice centered on mindfulness effectively helps students regulate their emotional reactions, thus facilitating a more effective engagement in language learning tasks (Owens & Patterson, 2013).

5.1.2 Discussion of the findings of RQ2: Do young EFL learners who receive positive psychology interventions demonstrate significantly higher levels of motivation compared to those who do not? The findings of the study revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group's motivation scores, as supported by both quantitative and qualitative data. This is particularly noteworthy when contextualized with the literature on language learning motivation, which underscores the sensitivity of young learners' motivation to classroom climate, instructional design, and emotional experience (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Enever, 2011). The enhanced motivation observed in the experimental group is attributable to the structured, emotionally supportive, and engaging learning environment created through PERMA-based activities.

According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), motivation is conceptualized along a continuum from external regulation to intrinsic motivation, and it is most likely to flourish when three fundamental psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The findings of this study illustrate that the PERMA-based intervention successfully addressed each of these needs in developmentally appropriate ways. A number of interviewees conveyed effort, persistence, and a deeper enjoyment of learning. They indicated that they were more motivated as they felt emotionally safe to try, even when the tasks were challenging, and such statements reflect a shift toward intrinsic motivation. When a person is motivated intrinsically, they engage in a behavior aimed at a goal due to the pleasure or excitement that the achievement of this goal brings (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

Another noteworthy motivational theme that emerged was students' recognition of the instrumental value of English for future use, particularly in the context of travelling abroad. Several students mentioned that learning English was

important as it would allow them to communicate internationally or navigate situations in foreign countries. In such cases, learners endorse the importance of a task because they recognize its personal relevance. On many occasions, this type of future-oriented motivation was linked with young learners' English learning motivation (Dam, 1999; Heinzmann, 2016).

Additionally, some students mentioned learning English for its practical value in emergencies or survival scenarios, such as natural disasters or international crises. While this reflects a form of extrinsic motivation, it is likely identified regulation, as students have internalized the value of English as a tool for real-world communication and safety. Such statements illustrate how language learning is not merely academic but perceived as vital for future autonomy and preparedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). These findings corroborate with the work of Steb et al. (2015) demonstrated by using physiological measures that young learners exhibit greater emotional arousal when their basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied. These needs were directly targeted through the intervention in the present study. For example, students reported greater motivation when they were given choices, experienced pride in completing tasks, and worked collaboratively with peers, which reflect each of SDT's core needs. This supports the notion that satisfying environments are essential for fostering sustained motivation in young EFL learners.

The motivational findings of this study can also be interpreted through the lens of Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs), a construct defined as intense, goal-directed motivational surges sustained over time (Dörnyei et al., 2014; Jahedizadeh & Al-Hoorie, 2021). Several aspects of the intervention parallel the three conditions believed to underlie DMCs: vision, salient facilitative structure, and positive affect. Students expressed forward looking aspirations, embraced emotionally meaningful roles, and reported a growing sense of confidence and purpose. These experiences reflect the dynamic and transformative potential of well-designed interventions to induce DMC-like motivation in young EFL learners. The participating interviewees' reflections broadly support the work of Karimi and Parsamajd (2024) which displayed the importance of having clear goals and the classroom support in sustained engagement and navigating through adversities.

A recurring theme in the focus group interviews was the motivational value of the Buddy System and receiving feedback from peers during collaborative activities. Working alongside a supportive peer encouraged participation, reduced fear of failure,

and created a sense of shared responsibility for success. The interviewees described feeling 'braver' or 'more willing to try' when they worked with a body which suggests that interpersonal trust functioned as an emotional safety net. Classroom field notes further corroborated the rise in student motivation. Students showed increased enthusiasm and proactive participation in intervention activities, often expressing excitement about upcoming sessions and asking to repeat games or tasks they enjoyed. These findings mirror those of the previous studies which suggested the relationship between collaborative activities, peer support and young learners' motivation (Kos, 2023; Kopinska & Azkarai, 2020; Mihaljević Djigunović and Nikolov, 2019, p. 516).

In a similar vein, Relationships domain of the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) was evident in the emergence. The participating students consistently mentioned the value of working together with classmates, learning from their peers, and trusting their buddies. These findings reflect the principles of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learning is maximized through guided interaction with more capable peers (1978). In the context of this study, social and collaborative learning played a crucial role in shaping not only academic engagement, but also motivational dynamics. The implementation of a structured Buddy System enabled learners to engage in reciprocal learning relationships where they offered and received support. These interactions fostered a sense of accountability and emotional safety. Furthermore, regarding peer interactions, the results of the present study are also aligned with Furrer et al.'s research (2014) which found that effective helpful interactions between classmates (e.g., interpreting instructor directions and exchanging resources) improve emotions of competence and autonomy by comprehending each other's perspectives.

From a Positive Psychology standpoint, collaborative learning supports both relatedness and accomplishment, as students work toward shared goals while developing their own skill and confidence. These experiences align with Oxford's (2016) EMPATHICS model that highlights social connection, agency, and character strengths as essential for sustained motivation. The PERMA-based activities not only nurtured emotional well-being but also created a socially cohesive learning environment.

5.1.3 Discussion of the findings of RQ3: Do young EFL learners who receive positive psychology interventions demonstrate significantly higher levels of self-efficacy in language learning compared to those who do not? The

quantitative findings, obtained from the Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy showed no significant change in the scores of the experimental group. This result may stem from several factors such as the relatively short duration of the intervention, the inherent stability of self-efficacy beliefs over short periods, and the limitations of Liker-scale self-report tools with young learners (Mellor & Moore, 2014). Bandura (1997) argued that self-efficacy is not as malleable as motivation or mood; rather, it is built through accumulated mastery experiences and reinforced over time through social persuasion and emotional regulation. In this study, although students likely began to experience shifts in self-perception, these changes may not have been sufficiently consolidated to produce statistically measurable differences. Despite the absence of quantitative change, the qualitative data provides intriguing evidence that the intervention fostered self-efficacy.

The qualitative findings of this study appear to reflect several key aspects related to the development of self-efficacy. Across focus group interviews, students described experiences that directly align with Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy: mastery, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and emotional regulation. For instance, when students reported feeling 'proud of speaking English aloud or said, 'I wasn't scared when I speak English with my parents', they were drawing from mastery experiences which are 'most powerful in building self-efficacy when tasks at hand are challenging and valued' (Klassen & Usher, 2010, p.3). Luo et al. (2023) also reported that students with higher self-efficacy typically allocate more energy towards concentration, perseverance, and cognitive abilities when tackling challenging assignments. A particularly compelling theme that emerged from the focus group interviews was the direct relationship between students' perceived improvement and their sense of self-efficacy. Many participants reported that noticing their own progress boosted their confidence and self-efficacy in English. Field notes revealed that students exhibited a development of self-efficacy among students, with individuals who were once hesitant now actively participating in tasks and proudly acknowledging their independent accomplishments. The link between the increase in self-efficacy and perceived improvement in this study is corroborates earlier findings (Alizadeh Oghyanous, 2017; Pajares, 2002; Tilfarlıoğlu & Çiftçi, 2011).

Another noteworthy implication of this study related to the development of a growth mindset in young EFL learners. While not directly targeted through the

intervention, the design and structure of the activities appear to foster beliefs consistent with growth mindset principles. As outlined in the literature review, a growth mindset refers to the belief that one's abilities can be developed through effort, noticeable strategies, and learning from mistakes (Dweck, 2006). The activities included in the intervention created a classroom culture where effort was normalized and celebrated. This environment may have contributed to learners' self-perceptions of improvement, perseverance, and persistence to grow. As highlighted in the scoping review by Campbell and Løkken (2023), optimism and growth mindset are foundational to child well-being and may emerge early through regular interactions with meaningful learning experiences. This finding bolsters the idea that when thoughtfully implemented, Positive Psychology interventions can support not only affective outcomes but also mindset shifts that are conducive to long-term academic resilience.

The findings of this study are in line with existing research that emphasizes the role of affective and social support in developing self-efficacy. As highlighted in the literature review chapter, self-efficacy predicts motivation, resilience, and strategy use in academic settings (Usher & Pajares, 2008; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005), and this is especially relevant in L2 context where fear of failure can inhibit communication (Kleinmann, 1977; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Correspondingly, Hsieh and Kang (2010) reported that higher self-efficacy predicted greater willingness to communicate in the target language. The self-affirmational activities encouraged learners to recognize their growth and competence, initiating internal dialogues of capability, which according to Schunk (2003), are a precursor to long-term efficacy gains.

Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) posits that learners' academic choices and performance are influenced by two key constructs: their expectations of success and the value they attach to the task. In a similar manner, Wigfield's (1994) asserted that students' value beliefs, *videlicet*, what they perceive as the utility of importance of what they learn, play a decisive role. In this study, interviewees articulated the instrumental value of English for future goals, such as traveling abroad or communicating during emergencies, which made them more enthusiastic to participate in language tasks. Thus, value and efficacy beliefs may have operated reciprocally.

Social interactions emerged as one of the most influential domains in supporting learners' self-efficacy throughout the PERMA-based intervention. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), social environments are not passive backdrops but active context in which learning, emotional development, and self-efficacy evolve. In this study, the social dimension was activated through collaborative tasks, peer modeling, and the Buddy System. Bandura (1986) identified vicarious experiences as one of the four principal sources of self-efficacy. When students observe peers succeed at tasks similar to their own, they tend to believe that they can achieve success too. Within the focus group interviews, 'I Am the Teacher' activity was referred as encouraging them to try harder or believe in their improvement. Furthermore, the Buddy System played an important role in enhancing both emotional safety and efficacy beliefs. Bandura (1986) emphasizes that the social persuasion individuals receive from peers can significantly boost their confidence. Therefore, the social domain of this intervention was a critical way through which students experienced cognitive, motivational, and emotional growth.

Yet despite this evidence, the development of self-efficacy among young learners in EFL context remains understudied. Much of the literature focuses on adult or adolescent learners, overlooking the unique needs, perceptions, and emotional regulation capacities of younger children. In light of this, the current study contributes to filling this gap by exploring how Positive Psychology-based interventions can initiate the formation of self-efficacy beliefs in young EFL learners.

5.1.4 What do teachers' journal notes reveal about the changes in students' well-being, motivation, self-efficacy, and classroom behavior throughout the intervention? As an additional layer of understanding to complement both the quantitative data and the focus group interviews, the analysis of teacher's journal notes revealed some behavioral, emotional, and interpersonal development throughout the intervention.

Students were observed to eagerly anticipate the intervention sessions, often asking when the next activity would take place or requesting repetitions of games. This enthusiasm was especially prominent during group-based and PERMA-informed activities, such as mirror affirmations. These observations echo the claims made by Dörnyei (2009) and Deci and Ryan (2000) that meaningful, autonomy-supportive and

emotionally engaging tasks can foster intrinsic motivation in language learners. The classroom environment transformed into a more energetic, student-centered space where learners participated not due to external prompts but out of personal interest and joy.

Furthermore, teacher journal entries highlighted growth in self-efficacy, particularly among students who initially displayed hesitance. As the intervention progressed, several students began volunteering during whole-class tasks. These behaviors are in line with Bandura's (1997) theory that mastery experiences are central to building a sense of self-efficacy. These findings reinforce the qualitative interview data where students articulated a stronger belief in their abilities to succeed in English lessons.

The journal notes also revealed a noticeable shift in classroom climate with a rise in positive peer interactions and a reduction in competitive tensions. Prior to the intervention, students were observed to be overly competitive during games, however, during and after the intervention, students frequently reminded each other that enjoyment and learning are the primary goals. Such behavioral changes reflect the cultivation of a more emotionally supportive and inclusive learning environment, one that aligns with the principles of positive education (Norrish et al., 2015; Seligman et al., 2009) and the classroom level application of the PERMA model (Owens & Waters, 2020). Increased peer support and empathy was evident in students' willingness to assist one another. On multiple occasions, students spontaneously comforted peers who made mistakes or struggled with activities. These findings align with Pinter's (2007) observation that effective collaboration among children not only takes responsibility for one's own contributions but also appreciating a partner's needs.

Finally, these observational insights offered a means of triangulating the discrepancy between the non-significant quantitative results and the positive developments reported qualitatively. While the statistical results did not reveal statistically significant differences in the measured variables, the focus group interviews, and the journal notes together indicate meaningful psychological and behavioral shifts. As Jang et al. (2016) argue, observable classroom behaviors and affective cues can reveal change even when standardized instruments fail to detect it quantitatively.

5.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study yield important implications of the application of Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) in primary school EFL context, especially regarding the elevation of young learners' well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy. Drawing upon the empirical findings of this study, the following implications are offered for educators, curriculum developers, and school administrations.

This study reinforces the value of creating emotionally safe and supportive learning environments to promote well-being. Teachers can foster well-being by integrating short, developmentally appropriate practices such as gratitude circles, mirror affirmations, and positive peer recognition into daily classroom routines. However, the burden should not be laid on teachers. School administrators and curriculum developers in Ministry of Education should cautiously integrate the Positive Psychology practices into the curriculum of foreign languages. While this study demonstrates the benefits of integrating Positive Psychology techniques into individual classrooms, the long-term effectiveness of such interventions may be limited if they are implemented in isolation. As suggested by White and Kern (2018), interventions must be embedded within a whole-school approach for positive educational change to be sustained.

One of the most robust findings of this study was the significant improvement in students' motivation in the experimental group, suggesting that PPIs grounded in the PERMA model can increase learners' sense of purpose and engagement. Importantly, many students in the focus group interviews referenced the utility of English for real-world goals which highlights the significance of value beliefs in academic engagement and suggests that even young learners respond to tasks that tap into future-oriented applications of English. Teachers and educators can design lessons that underscores not only linguistic objectives but also instrumental and aspirational purposes.

The gathered results also showed that learners were more likely to believe in their capabilities when they experience incremental success and receive affirmation from teachers and peers. This suggests that scaffolded learning tasks should be prioritized in curriculum design. Additionally, collaborative structures provide essential opportunities for peer modeling and vicarious learning. Teachers should be

encouraged to implement consistent cooperative learning strategies for building self-efficacy beliefs in young language learners.

In sum, the integration of Positive Psychology techniques into primary school EFL context holds considerable promise for nurturing young learners' wellbeing, motivation, and self-efficacy. However, the success of such efforts depends not only on the quality of classroom level practices but also on the extent to which they are embedded within a supportive and aligned school-wide culture. By adopting a whole-school approach rooted in the principles of Positive Psychology and Positive Education, institutions can foster emotionally enriching and academically empowering environments where language learning becomes more meaningful and sustainable.

5.3 Conclusion

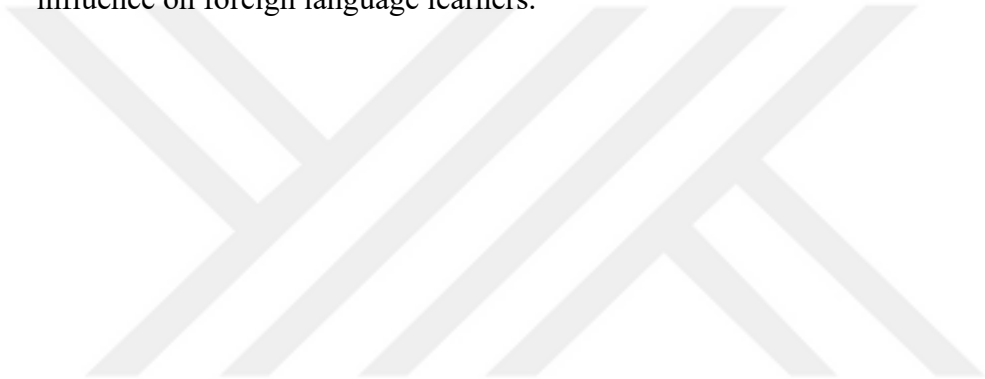
This study set out to explore the effects of Positive Psychology-based interventions on young EFL learners' well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy in a primary school context. Grounded in the PERMA model, the intervention was designed to provide students with emotionally supportive, socially engaging, and purpose-driven learning experiences across a five-week period. Incorporating both quantitative and qualitative tools, the study employed a mixed-methods approach to capture the multifaceted nature of students' psychological responses to the intervention.

While the quantitative data yielded mixed results, the qualitative findings provided compelling support to emotional, motivational, and social transformation. Students reported feeling more relaxed, valued, and confident, with many articulating a renewed willingness to engage in language tasks, take risks, and support one another in learning. These insights speak to the nuanced ways in which affective variables manifest in young learners.

Ultimately, this thesis underscores the vital role of emotional well-being, internal motivation, and self-belief in shaping language learning outcomes. Educators can create classrooms that do more than teach a language by prioritizing these elements, they foster resilience, joy, and a sense of personal growth that students can carry with them beyond the classroom walls.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

The integration of Positive Psychology in EFL classrooms, specifically with younger learners, remains an emerging area of inquiry. Future studies should explore the long-term impact of Positive Psychology interventions by implementing them over an extended period. Furthermore, to enhance the generalizability of findings, future research should include participants from a broader range of educational settings, including public schools or culturally diverse populations. While this study applied the PERMA model holistically, further studies could focus narrowly on one or two of its dimensions to explore their individual impact on language learning outcomes. Such research may offer more detailed insight into which dimension yields the strongest influence on foreign language learners.



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