



Pedagogical Strategies of Positive Psychology Conforming to Neoliberal Ideologies in EFL Context

Seyyed Mohammad Ali Soozandehfar

Assistant Professor of TEFL, Department of TEFL, University of Hormozgan,
Bandar Abbas, Iran, soozandehfar@hormozgan.ac.ir

Abstract

Neoliberal changes in pedagogy focus on marketization of teaching and learning processes through different innovative interdisciplinary strategies to evoke the collective appeal (Ross, 2007). The concurrent emergence of positive psychology as both exploration of interdisciplinary positive emotional experience and as diagnostically neoliberalistic query (Freeman, 2020) and the complicated entanglement of neoliberalism and emotions (Pilkington, 2016) can imply that the integration of positive psychology into the educational context might be correspondent with a sort of neoliberalistic framing of pedagogy. This issue entails an exclusive scrutiny on pedagogical contexts, where such boundaries often coalesced into totally optimistic streams. Accordingly, this qualitative study aimed at exploring EFL teachers' different strategies in line with the tenets of positive psychology while, simultaneously, complying with the premises of neoliberalistic streams. To this end, postulating its design on Reflexive Grounded Theory, this research collected the data via the qualitative procedures such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, field notes, and content analyses. Totally 116 participants, i.e., 52 males and 64 females, purposively screened for homogeneity concerns via Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQ), were interviewed afterwards. Besides, diverse online/offline materials and sources pertinent to the objective were gathered for the analysis through the respective procedures of codification, memoing, categorization, thematization, and theoretical sampling. The qualitative analyses of categorization and thematization yielded five major themes as the final results: legitimation, collective empowerment, logical positivism, wisdom of negotiation, and identification approach, delineating those eudaimonic strategies which can trigger a sort of positive psycho-pedagogy susceptible to neoliberalistic intents. Finally, this study implied raising the consciousness of teachers in the EFL context with regard to the subtle interrelationships between positive psychology and neoliberalistic tenets in accordance to pedagogy.

Keywords: Eudaimonic, EFL, Neoliberalism, Pedagogy, Positive Psychology, Strategies

Received 05 July 2020

Accepted 26 September 2020

Available online 11 September 2021

DOI: 10.30479/JMRELS.2020.13668.1678

©2021 by the authors. Published by Imam Khomeini International University.



1. Introduction

Historically, perspicacities on the notion of positive psychology in the realm of pedagogy can be regarded as paradigmatic and as a result metamorphic. In general, there are two major types of paradigms in this respect. The first, inspired by *essentialist paradigm*, explicates a core, authentic, true positive educational psychology within pedagogical contexts (Fleischer, 2005; Rogers, 1961). The second, rooted in *postmodern paradigm*, takes into account multiple, fractured tenets of positive educational psychology that individuals slip in and out without any of them being objectively representative of the whole respective pedagogical context (Britzman, 1994; Featherstone, 1995; Hall, 1996; Hall et al., 1992; Sen, 2006). The postmodern version is the one that is most relevant for transformational aspects of teaching because rather than seeing the educational self as fixed, it allows for the reinvention of the self in response to the changing and challenging conditions of the pedagogy. Investigations pertaining to the field of positive psychology indicate that in order to remove pedagogical problems, interdisciplinary positivity should be integrated into teaching methodologies, learning styles, and individuals' attitudes (Lopez & Gallagher, 2009; Lopez & Snyder, 2009). For instance, Chaffee et al. (2014) revealed Canadian students' techniques, such as perseverance and reinforcement, to keep a positive attitude towards their unsatisfying learning context. Moreover, Seligman et al. (2009) indicated that several strategies in line with positive psychology, such as asking learners to discuss several pleasant subjects and assisting them to self-explore their positive behaviors could enhance their learning efficiency. Gregersen et al. (2014) investigated the way emotional intelligence contributes to achieving a second-language identity, indicating the potency of positive emotions in coping with the anxiety through applying learners' experiences in the educational setting.

Furthermore, Seligman (2018) called positive behaviors as PERMA including several strategies such as involving students in communicative tasks, creating positive interactional atmospheres, provoking meaning-making beyond the classroom tasks, and realizing points of strength and attainment are the integral underpinnings of positive psychology. In this respect, some scholars explored several techniques in line with positive psychology such as integrating affective factors into pedagogy, meaning-making through interaction, dealing with cross-cultural treatments, and figuring out the successful characters (Oxford & Cuéllar, 2014). In the same vein, Brunzell et al. (2016) investigated the contribution of a positive pedagogy to trauma-experienced learners' advancement. They proposed a "trauma-informed positive education (TIPE)" (p. 63), including a triplex

interconnected strategies of learning, i.e., boosting managerial strategies, resolving break-offs in relationships, and promoting emotional reservoirs.

Following postmodern conceptions, universities and institutions are already transforming EFL teachers' identities by guiding them into particular disciplinary frameworks through implicit and explicit rules for how EFL teachers must present themselves in the classroom life. In order for EFL teachers to contribute to a more sustainable society it would be necessary for them to be critically aware of the frameworks that universities or institutions are guiding them into and simultaneously exercise eudaimonic creativity and criticality to reconstruct their identities in the context of the shifting educational setting around them. However, such creativities and criticalities might have some overlaps with neoliberal ideologies. As Stibbe (2011, p. 92) mentions, positive creativities can be regarded as a form of 'political subjectivity,' a means of empowering EFL teachers to take a more active and critical role in shaping identities probably liable to the unquestioned neoliberal and institutional powers or forces dominating over their work environment. According to Hall (2004), "The possibility that one can gain control over that which has controlled one's consciousness by becoming conscious of that dynamic of control is the premise of most twentieth-century theories of politicized subjectivity" (p. 55).

Iranian EFL teachers can take identity reflection into their career, reflecting deeply on the discourses that their employers are guiding them into, and reforging themselves to better respond to the changing conditions of the world in the classroom life. Keeping a positive identity can work in almost all the situations of their work environment, especially in the classroom and their teaching process, avoiding having a career crisis, burnout, or so, but it might not ensure that what they do in their job aligns with their positive values since the world changes or imposes some certain predetermined rules and principles. In case instructors cannot implement positive-psychology-instigated ideologies, the institutional practice would be restricted to leading teachers to accept pre-planned responsibilities in the form of neoliberal program. Consequently, teachers are required to be equipped with some positive strategies to make their critical side survive in such a commanding context. Accordingly, in particular, the current investigation attempts to represent an investigated response to the following questions.

- What kind of strategies do Iranian EFL teachers apply to pedagogically move in line with the tenets of positive psychology which are simultaneously acquiescent to neoliberalistic ideologies?

2. Literature Review

In order for EFL teachers to contribute to a more sustainable society, it would be necessary for them to be critically aware of the frameworks that universities or institutions are guiding them into and simultaneously exercise eudaimonic creativity and criticality to reconstruct their identities in the context of the shifting educational setting around them. Positive educational traits can be interpreted as the utilization of positive emotions to empower the psychological capabilities of the teaching and learning stakeholders (Luthans, 2002). Such capabilities, encompassing optimism, humor, self-efficacy, kindness, resiliency, and generosity, can be amenable to promotion in order to ameliorate pedagogical performance (Nelson & Cooper, 2007; Ramlall, 2008; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). The crucial mission of positive psychology in education entails positive impacts and behaviors in the realm of teaching and learning. The teacher's positive character and resilience can inspire gratitude and compassion in learners, leading them to boosting their self-esteem, life satisfaction, hope, and in general, to elevating their educational identity (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The teacher's role becomes more significant when the class environment can bring about constructive stimulators for depressive selves running naturally within the collaborative task-based activities facilitated by the teacher.

However, such creativities as well as criticalities might have some overlaps with neoliberal ideologies. As Stibbe (2011, p. 92) mentions, positive creativities can be regarded as a form of 'political subjectivity,' a means of empowering EFL teachers to take a more active and critical role in shaping identities probably liable to the unquestioned neoliberal and institutional powers or forces dominating over their work environment. According to Hall (2004), "the possibility that one can gain control over that which has controlled one's consciousness by becoming conscious of that dynamic of control is the premise of most twentieth-century theories of politicized subjectivity" (p. 55). In other words, as Pilkington (2016, p. 270) states, positive psychology might be biased via neoliberalistic approaches since there exists a complicated relationship between neoliberalism and emotions; such a relationship can imply that the application of positive psychology in pedagogy might be correspondent with a sort of neoliberalistic framing. Accordingly, teachers' conglomerate and contingent positive psychology can be typically concocted out of the mediation of neoliberalistic-acquiescent eudaimonic strategies and tactical perseverance to be positively impressive within the pedagogical context while pursuing the neoliberal ideologies at the same time. McCaslin and Good (1996) institute a congruous conception gleaned from educational psychology, i.e. the "informal curriculum," which is "the continuous, albeit uncoordinated, stream of momentary experiences that teachers aggregate and internalize with varying degrees of awareness, protest, and satisfaction" (p. 622).

Neoliberal changes in pedagogy focus on marketization of teaching and learning processes through different innovative interdisciplinary strategies to evoke the collective appeal (Ross, 2007). Pedagogical institutions seem to apply creativity, technology, problem-solving tasks, and in general more positive atmosphere than the traditional systems in order to be able to compete with the global economy in the respective area (Robertson, 2007). According to Mathison (2004), such global expectations are in line with a dominant approach to pedagogical responsibility which might be more product-oriented and bureaucratic. Such globalization and commercialization of pedagogy might bring about vital disparities among teachers even in unconscious ways.

MacIntyre et al. (2019) purport that positive and negative affective behaviors are connected with pedagogically-instigated cognitive behaviors. In other words, teachers' pedagogical reflectivity is entangled with complicated and interrelated affective and sociocultural apprehension. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) link positive psychology to EFL teaching, asserting that positive psychological traits can provoke and enhance learners' noticing and thinking abilities via hindering affective filters; they prompt fruitful response to demanding educational moments, leading to the development of internal individually-unique strategies as well as creative self-protecting traits to counter the affective filters. Nevertheless, the concurrent advent of positive strategies as both exploration of interdisciplinary positive emotional experience and as diagnostically neoliberalistic query entails an exclusive scrutiny on the contexts like education, where it is practiced with its two boundaries often coalesced into totally optimistic streams of pedagogy (Freeman, 2020). As Binkley (2011) states, positive strategies can entail a neoliberal subjectivity, revealing the elusive and tacit policies via teachers' exerting potential to appeal students' thoughts and emotions in diverse interdisciplinary areas. As Fabian and Stecher (2017) delicately elaborate, such a neoliberal subjectivity pertains to production-consumption as well as effort-satisfaction divergences, prompting teachers to bring about secure circumstances where the impact of affective filters is decremented so as to transform students' thinking styles in a way that neoliberally-stricken teachers manipulate.

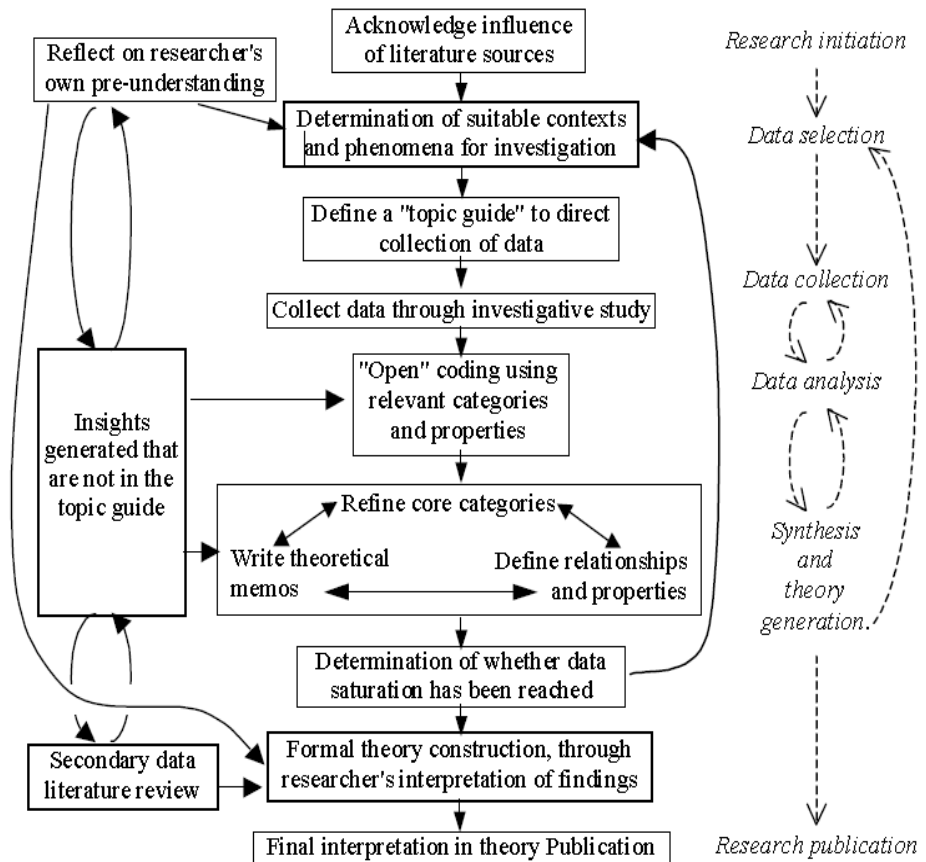
3. Method

The design of the present study was centered on a reflexive grounded theory (Figure 1), characterized by theoretical sampling, requiring some data to be collected and analyzed. Thus, sampling began purposively, as in any qualitative study. It entailed some essential procedures such as openness and induction, immediate analysis, concurrent data collection and analysis, data

142 Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies 8(4), 137-158,(2021)
 codification, stimulating recording of developing thoughts, constant comparative analysis, abduction logic, theoretical sensitivity and sampling, saturation, and data integration (Gasson & Waters, 2013).

Figure 1

Reflexive Grounded Theory (Gasson & Waters, 2013)



3.1. Participants

Totally 116 EFL instructors, i.e. 52 males and 64 females, were given Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQ) to select the emotionally intelligent ones enjoying high intensity and frequency of emotional well-being. They ranged in age from 26 to 43. It is worth mentioning that the preliminary participants consisted of 65 EFL teachers (39 females and 26 males) screened via the questionnaire and then interviewed afterwards. The

number of participants increased gradually during the analysis and reached 116 subsequently.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

For measuring participants' EQ, the 33-item questionnaire on emotional intelligence was utilized (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). This Likert-scale questionnaire was composed of 15 positive facets of adaptability or flexibility, assertiveness or seriousness, evaluation of feelings, explication of feelings, handling feelings, organizing feelings, impulsiveness or immediate response, the ability to make links, self-confidence, the extent to which one can stimulate oneself, communication ability, the extent of handling stressful contexts, the ability to empathize, the ability to maintain happiness, and the ability to keep oneself optimistic. The reliability of the questionnaire, regarding the samples of the present study, yielded an index of .784, revealing a reasonable consistency in the responses to the items of the questionnaire. Moreover, some documents pertaining to positive psychology as well as eudaimonic strategies in pedagogy which appeared to be helpful in achieving data saturation in the study were collected through emails, Instagram, or WhatsApp for further analysis. Furthermore, some interviews were also employed to elicit further information about the eudaimonic strategies the participants applied in their teaching profession as a mediation between positive psychology and pedagogy.

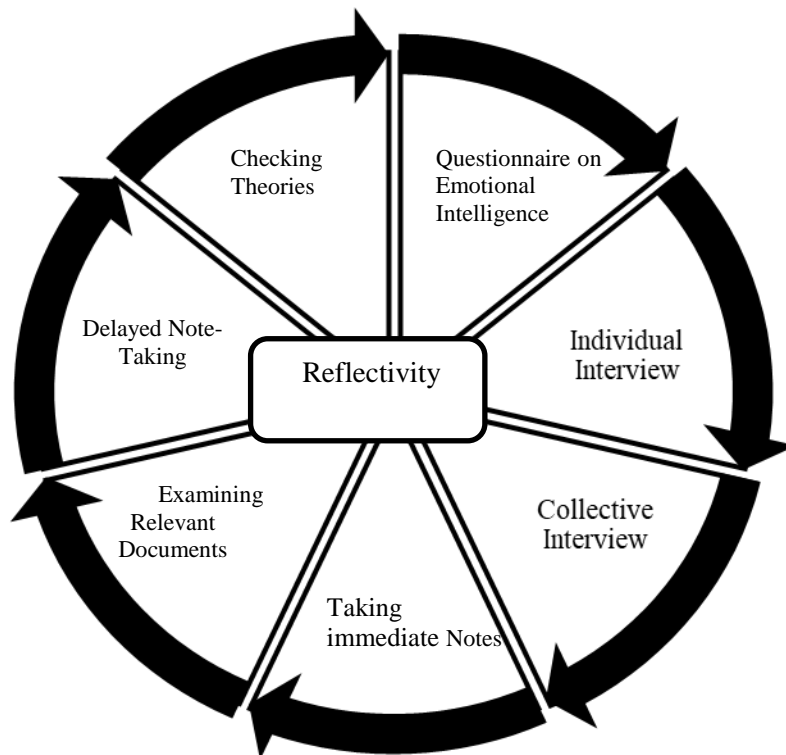
3.3. Procedures

The collection of data in this investigation included a triangulated multi-phased concatenation. In other words, the phases of data collection formed a cyclical process in a sense that if data analysis did not reach theoretical saturation, and additional empirical data was necessitated to test the explanatory adequacy of the theoretical constructs, the researcher had to subsequently repeat the whole process of data collection with other different groups of EFL teachers, and collect more data to reach the process of making theoretical statements to the point where no new information would appear. First, 65 EFL teachers (39 females and 26 males) were emotionally screened through the questionnaire on emotional intelligence for the discussion-oriented semi-structured interviews, mostly conducted in a focus-group fashion and in Persian for the sake of accuracy and better understanding. Since, during the analysis, data saturation was not reached, 51 further participants were selected via the questionnaire, and interviewed subsequently. Besides, converting the jot notes into detailed field notes took place as soon as possible after the events. In the field notes, it was attempted to use words as close as possible to the words used by the participants in addition to the thoughts, impressions, and explanations on the part of the

researcher. Moreover, some documents relevant to the objective of the study were examined. Finally, a tabulation of elicited concepts and strategies paralleled and categorized to diverse pre-existing theoretical concepts and strategies was provided. The tabulation of data in this phase paved the ground for the first phase of data analysis. Figure 2 shows the data collection procedures.

Figure 2

Gathering the Data (Soozandehfar & Sahragard, 2017)

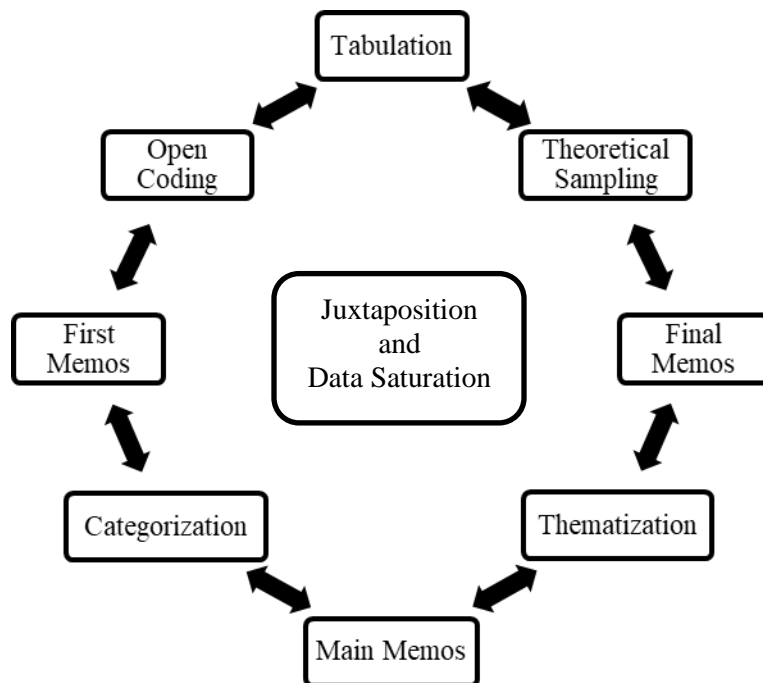


Listing the crucial notions and some certain research interests and general concepts referred to as sensitizing concepts was a place to start the analysis. Also, the next step was listing the special terms used by participants which were called in vivo codes. Such tabulation of concepts and codes was the result of data collection cycles. The concepts and codes which were found from literature and listed in this phase were in line with the research question in this study. In the next phase, the significant chunks were identified pertaining to the scope of the research, and then were coded subsequently. Some of the labelings were conducted through in vivo codes due to lack of preconceived categories so that the researcher in this phase was open to all theoretical directions. In fact, the researcher defined the ideas best fit in the initial memos, and interpreted the data as tentative analytical categories. These early memos were so helpful for the researcher to direct and focus on

further data collection. In the trend of simultaneous gathering and codification of data, the continual juxtaposition created major concepts via synthesizing the minor notions. In fact, open coding fractured the data, whereas axial coding reconnected the data. It was tried to develop core categories through the process of axial coding to increase the level of conceptual analysis. The selected core categories encapsulated and explained the preliminary eudaimonic strategies as a whole. Afterwards, some holistic justifications for the extracted contents of the memos were represented to further revise the major concepts, and to thematize the eudaimonic strategies. Figure 3 shows the data analysis trend in the present study.

Figure 3

Steps in Analysis (Soozandehfar & Sahragard, 2017)



The credibility of the present investigation was supported by structural corroboration through method/data triangulation, by consensus through some peer debriefings, and by referential adequacy through some member checks. Moreover, regarding dependability issues, i.e. trustworthiness and consistency, this study utilized the intra-rater method of code-recode agreement. Furthermore, with regard to transferability issues, this research used descriptive adequacy technique via similarity technique through cross-case comparisons, i.e. using similar data from different participants from diverse institutes with different methods and contexts. Finally, the

confirmability of this study was enhanced by corroboration through triangulation and peer review techniques. Besides, the researcher observed ethical issues such as the type of information to be obtained, i.e. issues of illegal activities and guilty knowledge, relationships with participants, i.e. issues of anonymity and confidentiality, reciprocity, i.e. indebtedness in return for the participants' time, effort, cooperation, etc., and getting permission to conduct the research (Ary, *et al.*, 2010).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

As it was elucidated in prior sections, the data analysis in this study was performed in a cyclical style in interaction with data collection. The analysis of the data started with listing crucial notions. In other words, according to Gasson and Waters' (2013) reflexive approach towards thematization, the analysis began with certain research interests and general concepts referred to as sensitizing concepts that provided a platform to start. Also, the next step was listing the special terms and concepts reflected in various documents as well as those mentioned by the participants during the interviews. Such tabulation of concepts and codes was the result of data collection cycles. Some significant exemplars of the *vivo* codes are as follows.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| •Happiness | •Extra effort |
| •Positive Emotions | •Kindness |
| •Emotional Intelligence | •Autonomy |
| •Positive Relationships | •Unity |
| •Innovation | •Gratitude |
| •Hope and Optimism | •Curiosity |
| •Cooperation | •Entrepreneurship |
| •Creativity | •Meaningful Life |
| •Self-Acceptance | •Well-being |
| •Flourishing | •Emotional Support |
| •Transformation | •Denying Problems |

Afterwards, more crucial words, phrases, or chunks from both documentary and interview data relating to different dimensions regarding the practice of positive psychology in pedagogy were identified and coded accordingly. Then, via the initial memoing, the identified chunks were more interpreted and classified as tentative analytical categories so as to better direct and focus on further data collection. Some significant instances of the openly coded data are presented as follows.

- *We get together*^{A1} sometimes with students and review the successes, and problems^{A2} ...

- *I think they're so sure about their rules and we **try to manipulate** ^{A3} them...*
- *We usually try to **speak in favor of students' interests** ^{A4} ...*
- *There are some **gatherings or meetings** ^{A5} at the beginning of each term.*
- *Usually most of the teachers try to **be optimistic** ^{A6} and **not to resist** ^{A7} due to some emotional reasons...*
- *Of course, I **try to negotiate a lot of positive points** ^{A8} here with my students ...*
- *Most of our success here is due to our **enjoyable and intimate atmosphere** ^{A9} and teaching team. We have so many **meetings and conferences** ^{A10} together...*
- *We are so **comfortable** ^{A11} with the **head of the institute** ^{A12} and **other colleagues** ^{A13} ...*

The sub-categories extracted from the open coding undertook further analyses, i.e. axial coding, while using intermediate memos in order to determine the core category covering the above-mentioned sub-categories. To this end, the researcher took advantage of theoretical sampling, and analyzed different documents related to the existing literature. What was found in this regard in the literature of positive psychology, through the use of some intermediate memos, dealt with Cabanas' (2018) notion of "*Legitimation*," i.e. the positive ways which make teachers explain and justify their various commitments to the regularities of the job they are framed to do. In other words, it delineates social as well as individualistic justifications indicating the positive premises of neoliberal ideology; i.e. teachers' crucial power to perceive and legitimate the teaching environment as a happiness-instigating context. Therefore, *legitimation* was considered as the core category for the sub-categories mentioned above. Table 1 clarifies this axially coded categorization in terms of the above open-coded exemplars.

Table 1

The Axially Coded Core Category A

Core Category	Sub-Categories	Coded Samples
Legitimation ^A	Meetings, Gatherings, Conferences	A1, A5, A10, A13
	Reviewing Rules, Ensuring Success	A2, A8
	Justification, Reasoning, Convincing	A3, A4, A8
	Appropriated Environment	A3 , A4, A6, A7, A8, A9, A11

Indicating a new form of eudaimonic mediational strategy, the following exemplars are taken as the most representative.

- *We **give our opinions or suggestions for change** ^{B1}, but they accept them and then they usually try to put it into practice ...*

- Of course, **they accept the positive changes** ^{B2}, but they never reject or react negatively ...
- Sometimes, we suggest the principal to improve some essential rules or courses in the curriculum, and he **usually respect all of the suggestions** ^{B3} ...
- Some of us try to practice some of our ideas in the middle of our classes or lessons **in line with what they expect** ^{B4} ...
- It is great to **feel independent and autonomous** ^{B5} to talk and negotiate on the curriculum; I feel being **a member of decision-makers** ^{B6}, and have **a sense of enthusiasm** ^{B7} because **I think my new ideas are put into practice some day in the near future** ^{B8};
- I see that **I can question or even criticize** ^{B9} here ... on different issues like the working environment, the textbooks, the facilities, the students, etc.
- They have **some criteria for all teachers to meet** ^{B10}, and no more... **they don't accept criticisms or changes unless they are in line with their criteria** ^{B11} ...
- Sometimes, at the beginning of the term, they **introduce the best teacher** ^{B12} in the institute. They choose it **based on the extent of constructive suggestions to improve the institute** ^{B13} ...
- I was once chosen as the best teacher **because my class was observed several times and I put into practice the new ideas** ^{B14} ...
- They think of me as **a successful teacher because of my high observation scores** ^{B15} and how I **bring about new positive changes** ^{B16} in the institute...

Through axial coding as well as intermediate memos, Cooperrider and Godwin's (2015) concept of "*Collective Empowerment*" was determined as the core category covering the above-mentioned sub-categories is in line with the present theoretical concepts dealing with both positive psychology and neoliberalism. Table 2 illuminates this second extracted core category.

Table 2

The Axially Coded Core Category B

Core Category	Sub-Categories	Coded Samples
Collective Empowerment ^B	Autonomy and Trust	B1, B5, B8, B9
	Positive Contribution	B1, B6, B13, B14, B16
	Conforming to Rules	B4, B10, B11
	Observation and Reward	B12, B14, B15
	Positive Relationships	B2, B3, B5, B7

Moreover, the following typically sampled utterances illuminate a new eudaimonic mediational strategy.

- I guess the best way to show your positive behavior is to **follow the positive rules** ^{C1} ...
- I first **observed my colleagues' positive ways of handling the principles and methods** ^{C2} and then I began **using them in a way that helped me to fit in a positive education faster** ^{C3} and **following students' interests and needs** ^{C4} ...

- *I think following class observers' comments^{C5} can be very helpful because usually what they want or say is exactly based on the positive rules^{C6} ...*
- *I try to follow the institutional teaching framework step by step^{C7} in my classes; even sometimes, I take the written framework with me to remember the steps...*
- *He [Supervisor] is there as a positive model^{C8} for me; he allows me to experiment and even make mistakes^{C9} ...*
- *Although stressful, he observes our classes and after the lesson we'd talk and he would offer positive suggestions and approaches to solve students' problems^{C10} ...*
- *Written observation reports can be a helpful way to see if we're in line with positive education^{C11} ... they can recognize positive teachers based on the observation reports^{C12} ...*

Through axial coding as well as intermediate memos, the core concept which was extracted from the respective literature pertained to Harvey's (2020) notion of "Logical Positivism," which is organized on the part of the authorities of the institutes consisting of several forms (Ellis, 2009). This concept can be in line with positive psychology behaviors since it can be a reasonable response to the question, "what is right about their teachings?" which explores a way to reveal teachers' strengths and boost their positive practices. Also, it can be in line with neoliberalistic viewpoints since it accentuates the application of corporate supervision in public environments (Berggren *et al.*, 2010). Table 3 illuminates this third extracted core category.

Table 3

The Axially Coded Core Category C

Core Category	Sub-Categories	Coded Samples
Logical Positivism ^C	Following Positive Rules	C1, C5, C7
	Using Colleagues' Experiences	C2, C3
	Supervisor as a Model	C5, C7, C8, C9, C10
	Student-Centeredness	C4, C10
	Observation Reports	C11, C12

Furthermore, the openly-coded typical utterances below imply a new eudaimonic mediational strategy.

- *I think, information-gap activity is one of the essential parts of my classes^{D1} ...*
- *Sometimes, in TTC classes, they review^{D2} some important techniques, one of which is information-gap activity^{D3} ...*
- *They told us to perform information-gap activities through group or pair works^{D4} ...*

• *I always give my students some tasks related to **recognition of some information in all the skills, for example, by asking questions** ^{D5} ...*

• *I use some **practicing-tasks** ^{D6} like an activity where **one student is given a picture, and must describe it to another student, who makes a drawing from the description** ^{D7} ...*

• *Some activities like where **students must share information** ^{D8} about their families, relatives, etc., and **then others explain the same issue again in their own words** ^{D9} ...*

• *For example, to test their speaking in the class, I ask easy questions to answer or discuss ^{D10} ...*

Through axial coding as well as intermediate memos, the core concept which was extracted from the respective literature pertained to Najam's (2020) notion of "Wisdom of Negotiation," which is very likely to occur in the classroom if students, in addition to practice of forms, are made to utilize their knowledge of language and communicative resources to gain the desired information. This concept can be in line with positive psychology since the teacher, using such a strategy, can stimulate and boost students' self-esteem. Table 4 reveals this fourth extracted core category and its axially-coded sub-categories.

Table 4

The Axially Coded Core Category D

Core Category	Sub-Categories	Coded Samples
Wisdom of Negotiation ^D	Information-Gap Activities	D1, D2, D3, D4
	Simulation Activities	D8, D9
	Project-Based Activities	D6, D7
	Oral Communication	D10
	Recognition Questions	D5

In addition, below are some other exemplars of openly-coded utterances, indicating the fifth extracted form of eudaimonic strategy.

• *I think **he's very skillful** ^{E1}; **I always want to be like him** ^{E2}; **he is so self-confident** ^{E3}, and **he knows how to adapt himself to all types of students or classes** ^{E4} ...*

• ***I love my friend's humorous teaching** ^{E5}; **he is really a comedian teacher** ^{E6} ...*

• *Actually, one of my reasons of working here is **his presence and respect** ^{E7} in this institute...*

• *He is really **a man of action** ^{E8} and he always **helps and guides us as a model** ^{E9} ...*

• ***One of my colleagues always help me** ^{E10} to see what to do and how to solve my problems...*

Through axial coding as well as intermediate memos, Seth's (2020) notion of "*Identification Approach*" was extracted as the core category covering the above-mentioned sub-categories in line with the present theoretical concepts dealing with both positive psychology and neoliberalism. Table 5 illuminates this fifth extracted core category.

Table 5

The Axially Coded Core Category E

Core Category	Sub-Categories	Coded Samples
Identification Approach ^E	Desire to Be Like a Figure	E2, E10
	Popularity of the Figure	E7, E9, E10
	Self-Advantage	E1, E4, E10
	Significant Features	E3, E4, E5, E6, E8
	Institutional Respect for the Figure	E7

4.2. Discussion

According to the findings, positive psychology and its *eudaimonic legitimation* of the working environment towards human well-being and positive relationships may develop a sort of emotional retreat, committing the individualistic psychic self-acceptance and personal flourishing in the light of neoliberal insights. This strategic eudaimonia, when applied in pedagogical contexts, from positive psychology perspective, can entail an intrinsic maxim in EFL teachers inspiring a reflective move towards their true self as "an exercise of psychic survival" (Lasch, 1984, p. 259), and from neoliberal perspective, can suggest a strategic solution to the unsteady, insecure, and dynamic world of EFL teaching profession (Beckert, 2020). However, such eudaimonic legitimation might be congruent with the marketizing neoliberal ideologies, which emphasize the laissez-faire and personal accountability to collaboratively amalgamate their qualifications so as to gain the maximum profits (Habbu, 2011). Accordingly, EFL teachers' teaching ideologies might be framed gradually to unconsciously pursue a profit-oriented positivity in their teaching profession.

The second extracted core category, i.e., *collective empowerment*, implies that EFL teachers' practice of positive emotions and individualistic promotion manifested via autonomy, hope, trust, inspiration, positive contribution and relationships can be actualized when integrated with the experiences of collective empowerment under the control of institutional rules and regularities. Nevertheless, neoliberally speaking, collective empowerment is an integral constituent in facilitating "conjoint shifts," prompting the EFL teacher and the EFL teaching organization to imagine

new paradigms of educational behavior and new meanings in the teaching profession, and liberating EFL teachers to take into account innovative risks to take in order to create novel moments and moods in their pedagogical affairs with high motivation and energy to make real difference in themselves as well as in those who work with them (Lewis, 2016, p. 214). However, the dark side of this issue is that such attempts concur with the transmission of a neoliberal viewpoint purporting that such positive efforts should entail a competitive frame of profiting (Hastings, 2019).

Moreover, *logical positivism* is a new version of positive psychology associated with humanistic behaviors (Mruk, 2008), which is concerned with both perceiving positive human psychology and simultaneously exploiting this mental knowledge within neoliberal ideologies to assist others while practicing the tasks in different ways to persuade some dominant long-term psychodynamic and behavioral policies as putative mainstream practices; a strategic form of positive conformity to the institutional premises or obviously specified institutional teaching procedures and techniques, expecting EFL teachers to apply. Some of the teachers may be skeptical about how they are assessed and by whose criteria; they feel they become the clone of their supervisors and authorities by following and imitating the teaching strategies they recommended from planning to management of the class (Harvey, 2020). However, they are more concerned with gaining a positive response from the supervisors, students, and as a result, the head of the institute who would see them as *good* teachers. Therefore, these reasons prompt them to adopt a logical positivity or a positive conformative approach. This core category may also be in line with the concept of “bureaucratic ventriloquism” (Rennert-Ariev, 2008, p. 111), gestating the ways teachers successfully mediate the hidden curriculum, and give only the appearance of compliance or conformity with formal profit-based expectations. In other words, teachers sometimes convey an inauthentic response so markedly detached from their own beliefs that the utterances themselves appear to be projected from elsewhere. However, such insincere beliefs in teachers are derived from a positive individual decision from within to follow the social, political, and institutionalized context in which they can profit (Rennert-Ariev, 2008). Therefore, through bureaucratic ventriloquism or the compliance form of conformity, teachers may be led to the construction of a logical or principled form of positivity in pursuit of profits.

Furthermore, *wisdom of negotiation* implies that oral-practice activities can give the students the chance of negotiation through utilizing their linguistic and communicative skills to activate their positive psychology to share their knowledge to complete a required task, that is, a true communicative task. The crucial point is that, without the teacher's wisdom, the students might be unable to complete the negotiation task with the information they have at the beginning of the activity. While doing the

activity, the students can collaborate to share information purposefully as in real life. A negotiation activity is often utilized as a follow-up or practice activity, activating a positive side of the learners' mind, i.e. communicative competence. Accordingly, teachers try to build some kind of oral practice into every review and reinforcement they do in the classroom as a form of positive mediational tool to facilitate the process of negotiation. Actually, the promotion in oral negotiation entailed a positive link to satisfaction with speaking. On the other hand, from the perspective of neoliberalism, negotiation activities as an opportunity for neoliberal subjectivity can prompt teachers to elicit and scrutinize various types of information on the personal lives, experiences, preferences, and secrets of students (Fuchs, 2011); accordingly, having gained enough insights into students' ideologies, neoliberally-stricken teachers can easily appeal and manipulate students' thoughts and emotions in diverse interdisciplinary areas where they themselves are trapped (Binkley, 2011).

Finally, through *Identification Approach*, teachers act in a specific manner to appear as similar as a popular or positive figure in the institute. The teacher conforms to the owner of positive meanings prevailing within the colleagues' minds and actions. In fact, a range of positive meanings are nurtured by this model colleague, each of which stands for the introduction of particular situations, procedures, or objects in the mind of these participants. These meanings have different varying degrees of supremacy. The participants may have diverse degrees of control over their extracted meanings from the model colleague; that is, the relations of ownership of positive meanings can entail the possibility of positive meaning negotiation, helping the teachers during the construction of various forms of eudaimonic strategies on the basis of the model's disciplined positive meaning. Thus, such constant negotiation of model-related ownership of positive meanings may lead to the participant's formation of positive-psychology strategies.

However, from the viewpoint of neoliberalism, such a model figure in the institute may bring about a sort of competition between teachers both within and across the institutes; teachers often receive more funding based on their popularity in the institute, with no increased funding for teachers with lower popularity, teachers from low-income backgrounds, or teachers who are still student teachers (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000). Consequently, institutes compete for such popular figures with high teacher and student attraction since the model character might make a crucial contribution to creating profit as well "promissory legitimacy" of neoliberal behaviors prevalent in the institute (Beckert, 2020, p. 321). Promissory legitimacy pertains to the neoliberal legitimacy that the model receives from the plausibility of promises or successes s/he is attributed to through the postmodern neoliberal

ideologies; accordingly, EFL teachers perceive the model's successes as their own future attainments that authorities in the institutes value as the underpinning criteria justifying success of others in the institute. Such a model usually has some presentations or allegements about the choice of approaches and strategies that teachers can make for their future advancement both educationally and financially (Madariaga, 2020).

5. Conclusion and Implications

Pedagogical centers often require teachers to perform particular tasks and adopt specific types of identities congruent with positive psychology. However, when teachers are supposed to be positively accountable for their own activities and reflexively handle their classes, they should question themselves whether their activities are neoliberally-laden, since the current EFL institutes, postulated on neoliberal ideology, are increasingly pursuing a business trend entailing particular positive capabilities and communicative skills to comply with the dynamic requirements of such a marketization of teaching and learning (Sancar, 2012). Teachers are educated to take the pedagogy into account as a competitively lucrative business. Accordingly, this entails a critical evaluation of relationships, learning tasks, teaching methodologies, learning styles not to be trapped into the marketization rationale of neoliberalism. Neoliberally-stricken profit-oriented tasks or strategies should be dissociated from authentic positive-psychology-instigated strategies. This is not to deny the positive values of creativity, critical thinking, multiple intelligences, interdisciplinary knowledge, etc. involved in such a trend; however, the world-wide proliferation of neoliberalistic marketization premise should not make it natural for teachers to configure such positive values as marketable competitive entities (Sugarman, 2015). Teachers should not conflate deliberation of positive-psychology strategies and neoliberal profitability tenets (Brown, 2003), and should take this into account that neoliberal ideologies might dissemble behind their positive strategies.

The present study might naturally suffer from some limitations. The most significant one might pertain to the fact that all the purposive sampling features may not be observed in the participants of the study in their real sense. That is, the researcher might not have been able to fully explain the extent to which the participants were representative. Also, the number of participants in this study may not be adequate for a pure qualitative study like this. Due to the participants' lack of time, the interviews could not be extended so much for further elaborations. Moreover, the number of male and female participants could not be balanced due to accessibility issues. Furthermore, the type of grounded theory which was utilized in this study was a locally peer-evaluated combination of the former schemes, so that its credibility and transferability might have been better to be re-evaluated

through other experts' consensus. Finally, the participants' desirability effect in both taking part in the interviews and answering the questionnaire items should not be ignored, though the effect is of an inevitable nature.

Some studies can be conducted to practically investigate how teacher educators may incorporate such neoliberal strategies into their teacher training programs. Also, researchers can investigate the ways in which different ideologies infiltrate EFL teachers' lives as the institutional policies may be appropriated. Additionally, researchers can examine the ways in which institutional authorities can succeed in legitimizing the ideologies for teachers. Moreover, other studies can investigate different ways which may link the in-class to out-of-class neoliberal mediation. Furthermore, with regard to the crucial role of teachers' mediational identity in the process of EFL-teaching-self transformation, some similar studies in the realm of teacher identity can be carried out with its participants majoring particularly in TEFL. Ultimately, more studies can be conducted to further explore the features of such neoliberally-stricken eudaimonic strategies in connection with different fields of pedagogy in other different contexts.

References

- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Sorensen, C. (2010). *Introduction to research in education*. Wardsworth Cengage Learning.
- Beckert, J. (2020). The exhausted futures of neoliberalism: from promissory legitimacy to social anomy. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 13 (3), 318-330.
- Belnap R. C., Bown J., Dewey D. P., Belnap L. P., & Steffen P. R. (2016). "Project perseverance: helping students become self-regulating learners in P. D. MacIntyre, T. Gregersen, & S. Mercer (Eds.), *Positive psychology in SLA* (pp. 282–304). Multilingual Matters.
- Berggren, U. J., Blomberg, S., & Petersson, J. (2010). Traits of a representative welfare state: The Swedish example. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 19, 402-11.
- Binkley, S. (2011). Psychological life as enterprise: social practice and the government of neo-liberal interiority. *History of the Human Sciences*, 24 (3), 83-102.
- Brown, W. (2003). Neo-liberalism and the end of liberal democracy. *Theory & Event*, 7. Retrieved from <http://muse.jhu.edu/>
- Cabanas, E. (2018). Positive psychology and the legitimation of individualism. *Theory and Psychology*, 28(1), 3-19.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage.
- Cooperrider, D. L., & Godwin, L. (2015). Positive organization development: innovation-inspired change in an economy and ecology of strengths. In *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*, edited by K. S. Cameron and G. M. Spreitzer, 737–750. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fabian, R. & Stecher, A. (2017). Positive psychology's promise of happiness: A new form of human capital in contemporary neoliberal governmentality. *Theory and Psychology*, 27(5), 600-621.
- Freeman, C. (2020). Feeling neoliberal. *Feminist Anthropology*, 1 (1), 71-88.
- Fuchs, C. (2011). *Foundations of critical media and information studies*. Routledge.
- Gasson, S. & Waters, J. (2013). Using a grounded theory approach to study online collaboration behaviors. *Advance Online Publication*, 22, 95-118.
- Gillborn, D. & Youdell, D. (2000). *Rationing education: Policy, practice, reform and equity*. Open University Press.
- Habbu, A. (2011). *The neoliberal legitimation crisis of 2008*. Carceral Notebooks.
- Harvey, L. (2020). *Social Research Glossary*. Quality Research International.
- Hastings, M. (2019). *Neoliberalism and Education*. Oxford University Press.
- Lasch, C. (1984). *The minimal self: Psychic survival in troubled times*. W. W. Norton & Company.

- Lewis, S. (2016). *Positive psychology and change*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Madariaga, A. (2020). The three pillars of neoliberalism: Chile's economic policy trajectory in comparative perspective. *Contemporary Politics*, 26(3), 308-329.
- Mruk, C (2006). *Self-esteem research. Theory, and practice: toward a positive psychology of self-esteem*. Springer.
- Najam, A. (2020). *Avoid these traps when negotiating in a crisis*. Harvard Business Publishing.
- Petrides & Furnham (2003). Trait emotional intelligence: behavioral validation in two studies of emotion recognition and reactivity to mood induction. *European Journal of Personality*, 17(1), 39-57.
- Pilkington, M. (2016). Well-being, happiness and the structural crisis of neoliberalism - an interdisciplinary analysis through the lenses of emotions. *Mind and Society*, 15(2), 265-280.
- Rennert-Ariev, P. (2008). The hidden curriculum of performance-based teacher education. *The Teachers College Record*, 110(1), 105-138.
- Robertson, S. L. (2007). Remaking the World: Neo-liberalism and the Transformation of Education and Teachers' Labour. In L. Weis and M. Compton (Eds), *The global assault on teachers, teaching and their unions* (pp. 11-30). Palgrave
- Ross, E. W. (2007). *Neoliberalism and education reform*. Hampton Press.
- Sancar, M. (2012). Neoliberal mechanization of education. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology* 11(3), 246-254.
- Seligman, M. (2018). PERMA and the building blocks of well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(4), 333-335.
- Seth, K. P. (2020). *The impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention: an empirical study of entrepreneurship education's four key characteristics*. Brunel University.
- Soozandehfar, S. M. A., & Sahragard, R. (2017). A putative model of transformative teaching self. *Applied Research on English Language*, 6(3), 363-386.
- Sugarman, J. (2015). Neoliberalism and psychological ethics. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 35(2), 103-116.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Bibliographic information of this paper for citing:

Soozandehfar, S., M., A. (2021). Neoliberally-acquiescent eudaimonic strategies of positive psychology practiced in EFL pedagogy. *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies*, 8(4), 137-158.
