



The Interplay Between Test Takers' Emotions and Test Results

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ABSTRACT

This study presents how emotions influence learners' success in the second language acquisition context. The objective of the research is to focus on the accompanying feelings before and after the vocabulary test in a sample of two students. The learners were chosen deliberately to contrast the low achieving one with the high achieving learner. The feedback was gathered by a teacher who provided the interviews with the participants who answered the questions before and after the vocabulary test. Data analysis indicates that both Student 1 and Student 2 feel tension before and after the test but their attitude towards learning is different. The study proves that because the high-achiever puts a lot of effort into studying, the one cares about the results, but the low-achiever hopes that the holistic knowledge would allow him to pass what is tested or examined. The findings also reveal that positive emotions foster being successful but negative emotions contribute to failures due to high results achieved from the test motivate the high-scorer for further learning, making him more curious and willing to succeed, whereas the low-scorer becomes easily frustrated and feels tension throughout the whole process of studying and tests or exams taking. Considering the study results, it can be stated that there is a link between emotions and success in language learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

POSITIVE psychology posits peoples' strengths and development worth investigating. Therefore, the strengths and development take place under certain circumstances simultaneously, to which emotions usually appear. As emotionality accompanies almost all everyday situations, particular types of feelings occur among learners as well as teachers. MacIntyre and Gregersen [1] imply that emotions are experienced as pleasant versus unpleasant, that is why they determine the extent of L2 learners' success. Hence, in accordance with the broaden-and-build theory by Fredrickson [2], positive emotions are stated as extremely vital affective factors for SLA, which objective is to motivate L2 students for future learning [3]. Thus, the study was created to investigate the influence of emotions and attitude towards learning on being successful by the two students with diverse features. Thanks to the answers of the respondents, we concluded that there is a link between positive emotions and achieving success. Moreover, we have also found that the application of positive psychology principles has a significant role in second language acquisition. Thus, the paper aims to

introduce formerly mentioned dimensions due to their significant roles which they play in a classroom setting of L2 [3].

2. POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

By the time the idea of positive psychology was formulated, researchers tried to develop knowledge about how to teach, how things are learned by students, how to make learners reach well-being, etc. [4]. However, after the three pillars of positive psychology were established by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi [5] namely: positive experiences, positive character traits, and positive institutions, Snyder and Lopez (2002) published the Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology, as well as plenty of researchers, decided to write articles with a great number of ideas from the field of positive psychology thereby encouraging others for further research by MacIntyre [6]. A range of contexts from the book became an inspiration to develop the idea of well-being as a salient principle of future education in terms of individuals as well as communities [6]. That is why the links between SLA and positive psychology were explored. MacIntyre [6] explores

that within the years, a variety of contributions have been made in the area, suggesting several dimensions of further development of positivity, to which belong: "From Negative to Positive Emotion" (a theory based on a difference between positive and negative emotions by Fredrikson [7], "From Deficiencies to Strengths" (a model of character strengths, VIA inventory of character strengths, but also Seligman's "signature strengths"), and "From PERMA to EMPATHICS" (discussed below). What is more, MacIntyre and Mercer [8] claim that throughout the years a range of research on positive psychology was transformed into practice.

Reviewing the notion of positive psychology, it has to be mentioned that all the various studies brought new insights, extended the theory as well as focused on multidimensional and additional aspects of what was initially discussed. One of the examples is Oxford's concept of EMPATHICS [9] thanks to which the author develops the idea of well-being in a language learning context, suggesting factors that contribute to being a high-achiever student and explaining why low-achievers experience indifference, anxiety, frustration. The letters of the acronym mean: "E" - empathy and emotion, "M" - motivation and meaning, "P" - perseverance together with optimism, resilience and hope, "A" - autonomy and agency, "T" - time, "H" - habits of mind and hardiness, "I" - intelligences, "C" - character of strengths, "S" - self-factors, including self-esteem, self-concept, self-verification, self-efficacy [9]. The author claims that all the components are related to a complex dynamic system, which means that they are interconnected, and they evolve, simultaneously affecting the development of a student's well-being. However, being a high achiever is influenced not only by the EMPATHICS elements but also by culture, learning contexts and a language learning process created by teachers. At this point, Oxford (2016, p. 72) [9] suggests providing "teacher development sessions" that would contribute to establishing "well-targeted language learner development on interrelated positive psychology topics" which stick to the individual differences of second language learners.

One of the most salient ideas while discussing positive psychology studies is the theory of Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs). PPIs can be defined as a combination of strategies and tools of which target is to boost L2 learner's personal growth, as well as to increase well-being, happiness, positive emotions, and behaviours. According to the authors Sin & Lyubomirsky [10], Positive Psychology Interventions are composed of two crucial elements to which belong maintaining long-term effects of PPIs together with enhancing positive well-being through positive feelings, experience, and thoughts. To investigate reasons and ways of PPI in stimulating L2 student well-being, Seligman et al. [11] undertook research aiming at checking which interventions work most effectively on members of a study group. The researchers proposed forty various examples of interventions, grouping them into three types of exercises to do: Placebo Control Exercise (participants were asked to write daily journals), Gratitude Visits (respondents were obliged to write letters containing gratefulness for those who have done something positive), and the 3 Good Things Task (research group members should have to record 3 things that raise their well-being and justify the reasons for choosing them). The gathered data presented that the most beneficial results appeared among respondents of Gratitude Visits and the positive emotions lasted after the research was ended. On the

other hand, long-term effects were also noticeable among participants of the 3 Good Things and Placebo Control Exercise thanks to which positive feeling was maintained for up to six months. The research concluded that PPIs have an impact on positive responses and well-being levels. Sin and Lyubomirsky [12] add that even if PPIs effectively boost L2 learner's well-being, they are more beneficial in overcoming plenty of symptoms of depression. Furthermore, MacIntyre et al. [13] mention that all the interventions tend to have a greater influence, only if learners are motivated, older and treated individually by a teacher. What is more, such interventions should be adjusted concerning Individual Differences of students, their achievements and efficacy [12].

An exemplary study in terms of positive psychology was provided by Gregersen, MacIntyre and Meza [14] concerning the notion of building "social capital" for second language students thanks to exercises of positive psychology. The authors indicate three pillars of positive psychology in the context of language learning, to which belong positive emotions, positive character traits, and positive institutions [14]. To make SLA effective, a strong emphasis is put on providing activities that are beneficial for learners. Thus, the authors suggest six various types of PPEs – positive psychology exercises – that boost the experience of positive results as well as contribute to the gaining of happiness and the reduction of sadness. PPEs include laughter, physical activity, engaging altruism, interaction with pets, expressing gratitude, and listening to music. Due to the gathered data, it was stated that each of the activities creates an opportunity for learners to have resources and benefits from being a part of a community they belong to. Such a situation helps build social capital, through relations within a community, which plays a significant role in acquiring a target language [14].

The concept of positive psychology is evident in conclusions suggested by Lake [15] after providing research to the evident need for the article: "Accentuate the Positive: Conceptual and Empirical Development of the Positive L2 Self and Its Relationship to L2 Proficiency". The author decided to measure whether the idea of "a hierarchical model [of self-concept] could be used to organize various constructs that relate to positive self-constructs and motivation for L2 field". Lake [15] mentions that the hierarchy consists of the following stages: Positive L2 Self (passion, interest, being goal-oriented), The Global Positive Self (curiosity, flourishing, hope), and L2 Self-efficacy (reading, listening and writing in L2). According to the results, experiencing positive language situations from the earliest stages of acquiring a target language contribute to developing a positive self as a learner and user of L2, consequently boosting motivation, increasing language proficiency having a feeling of "greater good in a flourishing self" [15].

Ibrahim [16] emphasizes the role of positive emotionality on motivational engagement while learning a target language which is called Directed Motivational Current (DMC). The notion was originated by Dörnyei and Muir [17,18] who explain that DMC "is created when a structured pathway is set up towards a vision, in a way in which this pathway both reinforces momentum towards the vision and at each step intensifies it". In other words, DMC is a state when L2 learners' vision of being successful in the future together with the effort they put into studying L2 act as determination towards achieving goals [17,18]. What is more, its idea is to combine positive psychology notions, such as engagement,

flow or happiness into "a goal-oriented process" that may last for a long time [16]. The concept consists of three constituents: positive emotional loading, goal-orientedness, and a salient facilitative structure. Thus, according to Ibrahim [16], DMC may be exemplified by being engaged in improving language skills that would contribute to reaching goals while learning L2 or working in a group that thanks to collective power members can gain momentum to fulfill certain tasks. Furthermore, due to the DMC cases are goal-oriented, they take place only with a great energy investment of an individual. Then, an eventual goal should be perceived as desirable and meaningful for a learner [17-19]. Subsequently, Ibrahim [16] elaborates that having a valuable aim is insufficient to become a highly motivated student but maintaining a state of intensive motivation is a key to achieve a goal providing that it matches a concept of DMC. What is more, with the object of generating the DMC structure, several contextual conditions should exist. However, once DMC has begun, it maintains particular progress automatically through experiencing positive feedback by a student, reaching sub-goals, and the habitual routine a learner follows [17-19].

In terms of DMC, Ibrahim [16] gives an example of a learner who became easily frustrated of not understanding what her relatives were saying in English and that is why she began to study L2 on her own. The experience of a two-year learning process made her satisfied and aware of greater language skills. As a result, it inspired Ibrahim [16] to deepen the knowledge of DMC through providing a study. The research was designed to find affective factors of DMC, as well as to understand how positive emotions influence learning behaviour while experiencing DMC. Therefore, Ibrahim's salient idea [16] was to find a link between positive emotionality and motivation among learners. Seven participants were interviewed about their experiences of engagement. Six themes were identified that the respondents associated with engagement to which belong: a unique experience, L2 learning as a lifestyle, enjoyment/happiness, effort as not effort, sense of change, and sense of being lucky [16]. All the themes together with positive feedback, joy, excitement, and also flow are factors that prove the existence of DMC among the respondents.

On the grounds of gathered data, the author [16] states that positive emotions take place while experiencing DMC situations. However, having initial aims does not contribute to positive emotionality as to a high extent as having specific and self-concordant goals. What is more, it was observed that the respondents tended to combine various emotional resources to maintain the motivational levels they achieved. An example of the resources was the utilization of both anticipated and anticipatory emotions about an image of a future self. Then, an image of a future self is based not only on visualizing sensory moments but on conceiving pride, progress, and success an individual experiences while acquiring L2 goals. Though the DMC cases occur rarely, they lead to creating a conclusion of a positive affect role on motivational intensity while experiencing DMCs. For instance, despite having a vision of success as well as visualizing future L2 goals, the participants noticed that they were not motivated in a lasting way, although a state of excitement took place while learning the target language. The respondents were engaged more on a feeling of enjoyment it covered a longer period and the holistic process of learning L2 instead of being deliberately focused on aims. Besides, according to the results, enjoyment

contributed to satisfaction appearance which made the research group have a sense of progress, further equated by the participants to a sense of change [16]. Such understanding is interpreted by them as a sign of improvement but also a sign of personal growth. The existence of personal growth is noticeable when one: is what he or she wanted to be, has a positive self-image and reaches unknown personal meaning and value in terms of own potential discovery. Then, an individual who experiences personal growth simultaneously fosters significant abilities, as well as becomes developed, improved, unique and a greater person.

While the research was carried out, negative emotions such as boredom and frustration were reported but they occurred when the progress perception was disrupted. Hence, it was claimed by [16] that the DMC situations combine both positive and pejorative emotions to regulate the emotional entity which is responsible for maintaining engagement. What is more, the author [16] indicates that neither engagement itself nor other feelings related to the pleasure of L2 learning contribute to having a sense of happiness to a great extent but having a sense of development is crucial while studying a language. Thus, due to the DMC cases take place, a process of learning L2 becomes a vital part of an individual's routine through automatized habits and favoured involvement which make a learner engaged in acquiring new skills. Finally, Ibrahim [16] highlights the significance of a link between happiness and personal growth as encouraging for further research in terms of positive emotionality.

As presented, positive psychology plays a vital role not only in the process of learning second languages but also in teaching them. What is more, positive psychology together with the notion of DMC became starting points for empirical consideration. The article includes the study provided to check whether emotions influence being successful by the two students of various characteristics as well as proving the existence of positive psychology in educational situations.

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Research objectives

The research was created to find out how emotions influence students' success in the second language acquisition context due to their significance in numerous aspects. The study presents a concept of positive emotions in the light of emotional experience in a sample of two students. The study was provided via teacher interviews with the two foreign language learners. The respondents were asked to describe accompanying feelings before and after the vocabulary test in the most detailed way possible due to a variety of tests and exams are emotion-laden events for students. The strengths and limitations of the provided research are elaborated on below. The following research questions have been addressed:

- 1) How do students with the highest and the lowest scores feel before and after the test?
- 2) What is the relation between emotions and success in test-taking?

3.2. Participants

The data was taken from interviews. The data was gathered by a teacher who provided the interviews with the students who answered the questions that were asked before and after the test. The learners were chosen purposefully to contrast the low achieving learner with the high achieving one.

The first student is an English major, his sex is male, and he is 21 years old. His English language proficiency is defined as B2 and he has experienced 11 years of learning the target language. The student might be described as motivated to learn but he usually achieves the lowest grades among members of the whole group that he belongs to at the university. What is more, worth mentioning is the fact that besides studying, the student has a full-time job. Subjects require studying a lot of theory and due to this fact, passing tests and exams cause a huge problem for this learner. Because of the student's full-time job, the time he has left to spend on studying is ultimately insufficient.

The second student is a 21-year-old male student of English Philology, as well. His English language proficiency is estimated as C1 and he has had the experience of learning the English language for 13 years. The learner can be characterized as motivated to study and he achieves the highest grades among all members of his group. It is essential to notice that the English language is a passion for this student and his studying equal's pleasure. He memorizes things quickly and the obtained knowledge from the earlier stages of education is so large that it enables him to achieve great scores without putting too much effort into studying.

3.3. The instrument

The interviews with each of the students were provided separately and in two sections – before and after the vocabulary test. The interviews aimed to gain information about students' feelings before and after the test, their preparation for the test, and their attitude towards learning. The learners were ordered to answer the following questions (appendix 1.1., 1.2.) elaborately, explaining their answers with as many details as possible.

3.4. Data analysis

In the research design, qualitative data were collected. Thanks to this, an efficient study design was made to analyze the case study, containing identified and compared all the main themes. The purpose of the qualitative data in the given approach was to compare two students of diverse achievements. The data were recorded and transcribed as well as combined in the discussing section below.

3.5. Results

3.5.1. Before the test – Student 1

The student is motivated to learn but achieves the lowest grades among members of the whole group that he belongs to at the university. He admits that he is not prepared for the test that will be provided in a while. He only guesses what material will be tested. Moreover, he adds: "[i]n general, the way I am prepared for tests depends on how much time I had before the test to learn, how tired I was, I work besides studying at the university, and I usually study at the last moment because this is my character trait". Furthermore, the student confesses that neither does he study hard nor is his overall knowledge of English rich enough, and that is why he often fails tests and must retake them as a result. It sometimes happens that he is not allowed to write exams during exam sessions because he tends to reach the limit of possible test retakes during the semester, which are often not passed.

In terms of studying particular subjects more or less, he claims that he spends the most time studying literature because, apart from the fact that reading itself is time-

consuming, he must read various interpretations to understand a particular text better. What is more, he says: "I try to study lists of words for conversation classes tests but when I am obliged to find the meanings of the words, it often happens that I do not have time to study them. But when I notice that I will not have time to learn, I read the articles twice only to guess the meanings. Maybe during the test, I will come up with an idea of what the meaning of a tested word was". Due to the lack of time, the learner predicts or rather hopes, that he will manage to pass his tests with at least the lowest passing grade only because the items that were in the test were practised at classes.

The student observed that he is more successful when the tested material is practised several times during classes thus, "it may happen that the received grade will be 60-80% then", he adds. Therefore, the learner indicates: "it is much worse with grammar classes and lectures when I need to sit and memorize the theory. It is very tiring for me". But he does not feel the pressure of getting the best grades. The student learns for himself and he does not care to a great extent what grade he will obtain. He explains: if it's my first attempt, I am quite stressed but when I fail and I have to write the test for the second time, I am stressed a lot and angry as well because I should study it one more time and waste my time. Right now, before this concrete test, I feel the tension as well as stress because, as I said, I work, and I could not prepare myself efficiently for the test because I did not have enough amount of time to study". As it can be observed, the learner does not consider studying beneficial for broadening his knowledge and developing his language skills. He treats a retake as a waste of time and a situation that triggers feelings of anger and stress. As a justification for his point of view, he mentions that tests and exams may be surprising, due to the possibility that they may contain a particular material that was not studied in classes and require additional knowledge apart from a provided curriculum. Consequently, the student claims: "there is a great probability that even if we learn hard, we may not get good grades – ones which will satisfy us". That is why, the learner subordinates received grades not only to his knowledge as well as the way of being prepared but to the validity of the test – whether a test or an exam measures what should be accurately measured. He is prepared not to pass the test and he is aware that his current knowledge may not contribute to receiving a grade of 60% and passing the test.

3.5.2. Before the test – Student 2

The second student is motivated to study and achieves the highest grades among all members of the group. In terms of being prepared for tests and exams in general, he claims that: "I have a feeling that I am always not prepared well for the test but it turns out in the end that I am usually the best prepared from the rest of my group so I can say that it is a kind of irony". The learner adds that before this particular test which will be provided, he feels prepared efficiently since he was focused when the tested material was explained and practised during classes but also, he was studying all the items at home. It must be mentioned that learning English equals pleasure for this particular student, that is why being prepared does not mean that he has had to force himself to study. Moreover, the student says: "I feel that I will succeed, and I will be successful during my studies because the knowledge I obtained previously allows me to achieve the best grades and perform well not only during classes but also in real-life

situations when I am obliged to use English to communicate". Hence, the quote shows the reason for being successful according to the second learner. He is an example of a student who reaches satisfying grades and goals not only by studying hard but because of knowing the previous school stages that allows him to be successful without putting too much effort into it. However, in this case, the learner is highly motivated, willing to learn, and he is curious about the target language as well.

The learner confesses that he tends to be almost calm before tests and exams because he is prepared well. He memorizes things very quickly, in classes as well as while studying at home and that is why the learning process of this particular student begins at classes and continues to take place at home. It can be described as consistent, regular, and permanent – which is what leads to collecting and preserving items in long-term memory. The material is always studied in advance by the learner and the student himself is curious about the tested topic. This in turn leads to the student looking for and finding additional information not only because the student intends to surprise a lecturer but because of the student's curiosity and a willingness to broaden his horizons and the current knowledge he possesses. Therefore, no subject would study to a smaller or a greater extent; he devotes the same quality and equal amount of time studying all the required material. The learner is engaged steadily in learning but there are certain university subjects he enjoys to a lower or a higher degree.

The student can predict the grades he will gain in a precise way. The reason why he can do it is the fact that he is almost perfectly prepared for all the tests and exams. The only exception would be a situation when the test validity would be inaccurate. The learner adds: "I aim to get the best grades – I mean 100% and my main goal is not to be required to write exams during the winter and summer exam sessions – which is possible at our university when our average test grade is 4.5. The greatest pleasure for me is when I can relax and I have leisure time during the winter and summer exam sessions when the rest of the whole group has to write exams, but I do not. It is the greatest satisfaction for me". Furthermore, the learner mentions that: "[i]n the morning on my way to the university I feel quite stressed before tests, I feel only my heart beating a little bit faster than usual, but when I notice that the rest of the group is less prepared than me – it makes me calm. It is the same right now. I was talking to my groupmates and it seems that I am one of the best-prepared persons among my whole university group. I feel greatly confident right now". While providing the interview with the learner, a slight smile was noticeable on his face. His self-esteem is visible which makes others perceive him to be a successful student.

3.5.3. After the test – Student 1

The first student states that he is convinced that the extent of being prepared as well as the knowledge he possessed would allow him to pass the test. He explains as follows: "I hope I will pass the test because I was active during the classes and I remembered the vocabulary. Maybe I did not remember the meanings of all of them, but I could associate them and guess the meaning, so I can say that I am satisfied with how I performed during the test". The results were announced by the teacher a moment after the test. The learner confessed that he is satisfied with the result he gained, which was 63% – which means he almost passed, and he was not counting on a higher

grade, to begin with. Among the whole group, the result this particular student obtained, was one of the lowest.

Asking the student about the overall results he gains, he answered that he is always satisfied when the test is passed. The learner is aware that he is not the student with the widest knowledge, his private life does not allow him to dedicate his whole life to learning the language, he spends the majority of his time at work and not on studying. He adds that he will probably not become the student achieving almost always 100% from all the tests and exams but being successful for him means reconciling studying at the university simultaneously with working and earning money to make a living.

The student explains that whether tests make him stressed or not, depends on what knowledge the tests examine – if it is practical or theoretical knowledge. He describes it in the following way: "I perform well at group-work and presentations. I am angry after grammar and morphology tests which examine our theoretical knowledge. I think we should be tested on practical knowledge". The student adds that the knowledge he possesses is very frequently insufficient to pass tests and exams, but he is stressed and nervous to the highest extent when he has to learn theory by heart and when no practical skills or knowledge will be tested. He is angry that the holistic knowledge he obtained during the previous learning stages only helps him to a small degree to perform during tests and exams but does not allow him to pass the material that he is being tested on.

The learner states that his emotions change throughout each test that he has to write, and the same situation was a moment before when he was required to write this particular test. He elaborates: "When I get the paper and see that my knowledge is poor, I am frustrated, and I wait for the results. If I fail a test or an exam, then I am frightened during the retake because I may fail it one more time, which causes a huge problem for me". The student mentioned that the intensity of the emotions he felt while he was writing the test lowered when he read the tasks that he had to do. The reason why the tension decreased was the fact that the difficulty of the test was average, which means that thanks to practising the material during the classes and the knowledge he has from the earlier learning stages, the student has gotten the opportunity to fulfill the tasks and gain 60% without perfect preparation. That is why it can be claimed that the level of difficulty influences the emotions that accompany this particular student while writing the test.

After the test, a general feeling of the learner is happiness because the test was not failed. However, the student says that even if he experiences failures, he tries not to give up and overcome such troubles through simply sitting and learning. He claims: "I learned how to handle failures. In the first year, I was incredibly angry at myself but now, even if I fail a test or an exam or even some of them, I try not to give up and retake everything that was not passed by me". Such situations motivate the student to study, and they tend to be current priorities. He adds: "[i]t always happens that when I fail the test, it is the only thing I keep thinking about and I have to start doing something not to think about my failure. That is why, I notice myself shaking; I start to smoke, and I look for somebody to talk to as well". The student explained that looking for a person to talk to makes him forget about the stress and the retaken test; the conversation occupies his thoughts and allows him to be a little bit relaxed.

3.5.4. After the test – Student 2

The second student, whose target while studying English studies is gaining only the best grades and performing impeccably, is fully satisfied with the score he received. He got 100% and it is the only reason why he is delighted about how he performed. He reveals: "When I receive 95% from the test, it is insufficient for me. 100% is the ideal. If I get a grade below 100%, I feel unrealized, I have remorse that I should have studied more, I should have devoted more time to learning. I love English, I love studying everything that is connected to it and I feel angry at myself when I should know something but in actuality I do not know. Even if it is an additional material". The learner says in the summary that it is his greatest character trait to aim at the best results in every field of life. Sure enough, he is usually satisfied with the grades he gets since they are almost always around 100%.

The student admits that tests and exams themselves do not stress him out and after each of the tests or the exams he tries to feel free from contemplating whether he passed them or not. He says: "I am chilled out because I know how I performed, and I can predict what grade I will get. I usually have a feeling that the grade will satisfy me because I know the answers to all of the questions." The student claims that he is always sure that the knowledge he possesses is sufficient and it may allow him to achieve 100%. It has never happened that he had a feeling of being not completely prepared. That is why his self-esteem is exceedingly high and it is the reason for him being calm while writing tests or exams. During this particular test, the learner was calm but felt a little bit of tension. Nevertheless, the extent of the tension was minimal. His emotions were stable but, after the test, the learner was feeling incredibly positive. He mentions: "I am positive after the tests and it was the same in this case. What is interesting, I am euphoric, energetic then but after 10 minutes it disappears. Maybe because it is normal for me that I performed well on the test and I will pass it surely with one of the best grades that can be gained. When I know that I performed ideally, accurately and precisely, I feel that I can move mountains. I am satisfied and proud of myself. I do not need to wait until the results will be announced. I may sleep well without thinking of what I wrote. It happens that I even forget that I wrote some tests or exams. I focus on other things to study and to pass".

The learner remembers that when he got the paper with the test, he felt stressed to a small extent but when he read the questions, he got relaxed. The student explains in the following manner: "the material we had to study was not very difficult for me as some other material used to be from more requiring subjects, such as syntax and morphology. We practised the items for the test during classes so I think that even if we have not studied at home, we would have been able to write the test in a way that we pass it and achieve 60% without putting too much effort into previous preparation. I do not mean that the test was simple itself but, the teacher guided us to remember as much as it is possible from the lesson and the job we had to do at home, which was just to memorize all the items from classes. In my opinion, there was nothing fiendish in the test, and therefore I reckon that it was quite easy to pass it". He was greatly confident before and after the test but after the results were announced, the student is convinced that the required material was not demanding

enough that it would not be easily achievable to get at least 60% from the test.

In terms of emotions, the student feels the happiness that the test was passed perfectly. He is satisfied, calm and has a smile on his face. He elaborates: "I notice my hands are a little bit shaking after the test – when I hand in the test – even if I performed well or not. It always happens and I got used to it that it is my characteristic feature". Among the whole group, this learner was the calmest before the test, a moment after writing it and when the results were announced.

3.6. Discussion

The research aimed to explore how emotions both positive and negative influence students' success in the second language acquisition context due to them playing a vital role in the process of learning the target language. The two research questions stated above indicate the reflection of whether the two learners of diverse attitudes, motivations, emotions and grades perform similarly or differently while being tested.

The first research question: "[h]ow do students with the highest and the lowest scores feel before and after the test?" leads to a conclusion that both Student 1 and Student 2 feel tension before and after the test but their attitude towards learning is different. It can be stated that Student 1 is a low-achiever, and that is why he becomes stressed when he does not pass tests. Moreover, he permanently feels the tension due to his knowledge being insufficient to allow him to perform well during tests or taking exams. The only situation that makes him calm and relaxed is when the results of tests or exams are announced, and the student gets to know that he achieved the result that made him pass the test. Thus, it can be claimed that the tension of Student 1 takes place before taking the test and until receiving a grade. The learner mentioned that to lower the extent of nervousness and anxiety as well as not to shake himself, he has to start smoking and look for a person or people to talk to. After the test, when it is passed, he is satisfied when he would not need to retake it and study one more time, supposing that the material had been studied before. On the other hand, when the test is failed, he has a feeling that he will "waste his time studying one more time the same items". He gets even angrier when theoretical knowledge is tested, and not practical. The reason for the frustration is that because of not being ideally prepared, the learner loses a chance to pass a test or an exam in as minimal way as possible. Then, the holistic knowledge that he obtained during the previous learning stages, would not allow him to perform at least to get 60% and pass what was tested or examined. On the other hand, Student 2 is a high-achiever, and he is aware of his knowledge, which allows him to be satisfied with the grade he received. The learner gets calmer when he compares the knowledge he possesses and the extent of being prepared with the knowledge and preparation of his groupmates. In this way, he finds out that the time he spent on learning, as well as the background he has, would allow him to perform the way he expects, which means aiming at getting a 100% score. After the collection of tests or exams by lecturers, the learner is peaceful, and he does not feel any tension. Moreover, he can predict what kind of grade he will gain. However, performing below 100% makes the learner disappointed and angry at himself that he made a mistake, has not studied enough or did not know a particular item well. The student notices his hands shaking each time when the tests or exams are collected but, as he admitted, it is his characteristic

feature. This particular situation may be evidence that because he puts a lot of effort into studying, the student cares about the results.

Answering the second research questions: "[w]hat is the relation between emotions and success in test-taking?", it can be claimed that Student 1 is less successful than Student 2. The reason for that is a discrepancy between their language proficiency but also their attitude towards learning. Student 1 has high expectations but the effort he puts in is insufficient. This student has little time for studying. The strategies he uses for compensation turn out to be ineffective, yet he still does not look for more effective solutions. He seems to be disheartened and pessimistic. The learner does not have a feeling of being successful, and that is why the emotions he has are pejorative. He becomes easily frustrated and feels tension throughout the whole process of studying and tests or exams taking. The student is motivated to learn but does not do too much to move in this direction. On the one hand, he would like to be the most successful among the whole group, whereas, on the other hand, he does not put a lot of effort into the learning process. The learner would like his overall knowledge and logical thinking to help him pass all tests and exams. If it is insufficient to be successful, the extent of negative emotions arises. Conversely, Student 2 is optimistic and highly motivated. He is also self-confident, curious, and derives pleasure from learning. He shows a streak for competitiveness and enjoys outperforming other students. Even if his hands are shaking while handing in the test, he is calm and aware of his knowledge. He does not feel much tension due to him being able to predict what kind of grade he will obtain. However, if the score does not satisfy him, he feels disappointed and has a feeling that he should have studied more and could have answered the questions more precisely by giving more details. All the results motivate the learner for further learning, making him more curious and willing to succeed. Having achieved one of the highest scorers among the whole group, he is proud of himself and he tries to maintain this particular situation, which is ultimately what gives him power for the future. According to the pillars of positive psychology, successful learning of L2 takes place only when the students' characteristics together with emotional experiences are integrated with the learning situations. Hence, the goals of learning language are individuals' positive self-development, enjoyment, but also positive interactions with others which are positive psychology topics. Taking the instances of Student 1 and Student 2, it may be stated that positive emotions foster being successful whereas negative emotions contribute to failures. The learners are affected by factors included in Oxford's concept of EMPATHICS [9] what brings an explanation to the fact that their well-beings vary from each other. Moreover, being English majors verifies to what extent the respondents are engaged in the process of learning the language what consequently influences their success. Because of being obliged to do various exercises while being university students, they are unaware that certain exercises are PPEs chosen deliberately by teachers to build "social capital" [14,21]. Furthermore, it was observed while researching those positive relations with others as well as Positive L2 Self contribute to lowering stress. Relating to Lake's article [15], experiencing positive language situations causes Positive L2 Self-development, simultaneously enhancing motivation and L2 proficiency. What is more, it has to be mentioned that a

discrepancy between motivation levels does not impact future L2 aims of the participants because they both are willing to associate their lives with the English language. That is why, in reference to the idea of PPIs, the learners try to combine the most effective strategies and tools while learning L2 to become as successful as it is possible. Finally, the gathered data present that achieving goals is subordinated to the dimension of effort what as a consequence provokes various emotions to appear. Referring to the concept of DMC [16-18], effort plays a vital role in language learning together with a vision of success because they motivate students for future development in the process of learning L2. While discussing the role of DMC, it must be highlighted that when the L2 learning process is crucial for a learner, it becomes a part of an individual's routine through habits as well as involvement which make a student engaged in acquiring new skills. The extent of learning process significance verifies how Student 1 and Student 2 are successful while test-taking and learning L2.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The results imply that there is a link between emotions and success in language learning. Positive emotions foster language learning; however, they are interrelated to negative emotions. Every student at every learning stage experiences these types of emotions to a higher and lower extent. However, it must be remembered that they both have their roles. Fredrickson and Losada [20], in the article "*Positive Affect and the Complex Dynamics of Human Flourishing*" present the research results which prove that the excessive existence of positive emotions over negative emotions is not convenient for the positive development of well-being, but on the other hand, too many negative emotions is not beneficial, as well. The researchers made calculations that to experience flourishing, for only one negative emotion everybody should experience between 2,9 and 11.6 positive emotions [20].

In terms of the pedagogical implications that might be suggested after providing the research that not only a university life, but life as a whole verifies the students' overall attitude toward learning and the goals, they are going to reach. A very crucial role at this point may be played by a lecturer. This person should be a tutor who shows which path the students should follow to learn most efficiently but also, to memorize as much as it is possible from the classes during which the material, which will be tested afterwards, was practised and explained clearly and understandably. What is more, a teacher should become an observer who should be able to adjust a provided material taking into consideration learners' autonomy and individual differences. Furthermore, while arranging tests and exams, a lecturer should compose all the tasks per criteria, characteristics of a good test or an exam, which are: a reason for the assessment, what skills are going to be checked, a written or an oral form of a test or an exam, subject of testing, content, and structure but also, test validity and reliability.

There are certain limitations to a research design. The research is an example of a case study that was created to compare two male students of diverse character traits, motivation, attitude towards learning, and success they experience while being English majors. It can be suggested to provide this kind of study between two female students or at a greater sample or to choose the participants depending on their attitude towards learning, motivation, autonomy, individual differences, strategies they use, etc., since the results may

bring new insights into the studied topic which did not take place while considering this particular case study.

Summing up what was presented in this article, it can be said that the example of the two students participating in the study proves the existence of the saying "nothing succeeds like success" but also the saying, "nothing succeeds like positive emotions".

APPENDIX

1. 1. Questions asked before the test:

- 1) How would you describe the extent of your preparation for this test in particular and exams in general?
- 2) Are you prepared for the test and exams because you study hard or because your overall knowledge of English is rich?
- 3) Do you study in advance or at the last moment?
- 4) Are there any subjects that you study more for and some that you study less for?
- 5) Can you predict what grade you will get for the tests or exams?
- 6) Do you subordinate your test or exam grade to what knowledge you have acquired during classes or lectures?
- 7) Could you describe what emotions accompany you right now before the test?

1. 2. Questions asked after the test:

- 1) Do you have a feeling that you could have been better prepared or are you satisfied with the result you achieved?
- 2) Are you satisfied with all the results that you have achieved?
- 3) Do tests themselves in general stress you or are you stressed because of your insufficient knowledge?
- 4) Were the extent of emotions that you felt stable or fluctuating? What was their intensity?
- 5) What emotions accompanied you when you received the test on a paper?
- 6) Could you describe what emotions accompany you right now after the test?

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BIOGRAPHIES

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