

## ***RECENZJE, OMÓWIENIA, SPRAWOZDANIA, KOMUNIKATY***

Magda Janczuro

Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski w Olsztynie

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3724-4938>

e-mail: magda.janczuro@uwm.edu.pl

### **Emotions in the classroom. Several remarks on *Relationship Matters* by Czesław Kiński. V&R Unipress. Göttingen 2024, pp. 197**

**Emocje w klasie.**

**Kilka uwag o książce *Relationship Matters* Czesława Kińskiego.  
V&R Unipress. Göttingen 2024, ss. 197**

The matter of general life well-being seems to have been gaining attention in recent years. People have become interested in what makes life worth living, how to improve the quality of their relationships and simply how to enjoy the present moment to the fullest. This interest is reflected in a number of books, workshops and seminars available on the market. One of the plausible explanations for the rising popularity of the notion of well-being may be attributed to the findings of a relatively new branch of general psychology – positive psychology. Concentrating on optimal psychological states, positive psychology does not deny the existence of negative emotions or their effect on one's functioning, but it redirects people's attention to what contributes to their flourishing, finding meaning in life and experiencing positive emotions. It builds primarily on humanistic psychology, whose founders are considered to be Maslow (1943, 1954) and Rogers (1979).

In the light of the development of positive psychology, it does not surprise that the concept of well-being has attracted attention among educational researchers in general and scholars from the English Language Teaching (ELT) world in particular. For example, an amount of research was devoted to language teacher psychology (Mercer & Kostolus 2018) or how perceived teacher emotions affect students' engagement in the classroom (Dewaele & Li 2021). It is in keeping with these trends that Kiński endeavours to investigate

the level to which certain aspects of the teacher's professional activity exert an influence on learner emotions, both positive and negative.

In the first chapter, Kiński explains his motivation for writing the book, which stems primarily from his everyday interactions with students and fellow teachers, his own experiences as a learner, and his deep interest in the latest findings of positive psychology and their application in the ELT classroom. Next, the author presents a few taxonomies of the concept of human relationship (Sprecher & Reis 2009; Clark & Mills 1993; Foa & Foa 1974), rightly emphasising the complexity of the phenomenon. Having defined the notion of human relationship and its importance in the educational context, Kiński briefly discusses the concept of general life well-being, the essence of which was captured in the PERMA model (Seligman 2011) and later adapted and developed by other scholars (Kern et al. 2014; Oxford 2016). The author elaborates on the theory of well-being in order to help the reader comprehend the multifacetedness of the state and justify his choices of replacing the concepts of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) with Foreign Language Ill-Being (FLIB) and Foreign Language Well-Being (FLWB) respectively, since the latter, as Kiński cleverly notices, convey broader meanings and encompass a wide range of emotions accompanying the process of second language acquisition.

The first part of the second chapter is devoted to describing the teacher-student relationship in terms of the prominent theories in psychology and psychology of education: behaviourism and neo-behaviourism, cognitivism, social constructivism, and humanism. Not only does the author provide a theoretical framework for his study, but he also enumerates a significant number of practical implications that could be of utmost importance to both beginning and more experienced teachers. It is also worth observing that Kiński recognizes the evolving character of the teacher-student relationship, advocating for a well-balanced approach when adopting roles, techniques and materials in the ELT classroom. The author encourages practising teachers not to exclude or abandon any theories, which might have been the case in the past, as their certain elements may benefit students and facilitate their development in various ways. Such a reasonable approach to the topic is reflected in Kiński's words: 'one feasible solution might be to treat these taxonomies as complementary rather than mutually exclusive.' Finally, the author presents the contributions of Polish researchers, highlighting the diversity of factors influencing the teacher-student relationships (Grucza 1978; Woźniewicz 1987; Pfeiffer 2003; Gębal 2013).

In Chapter 3, Kiński demonstrates that emotion and cognition are inextricably linked and shows how emotions can either hinder or enhance

learning processes depending on their nature and one's interpretation. The author notices that for many years, psychological research was conducted primarily in order to investigate what situations, behaviours and actions should be avoided because of their generating negative emotions. In other words, the emphasis was put on the importance of negative emotions, almost entirely ignoring positive emotions and their potential for boosting one's performance. The situation has slightly changed since positive psychology came into existence. Seligman, perceived as the founder of positive psychology, believes that there exist intrinsically motivating elements of human life that contribute to well-being if pursued for their own sake (Seligman 2012). At this point, Kiński successfully acknowledges certain similarities between the particular elements of Seligman's PERMA model and the earlier research. For example, the author notices that the engagement element from Seligman's model builds upon Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory (Csikszentmihályi 1975, 1990, 1997). Certain correspondences can also be distinguished between the concept of meaning and the premises of logotherapy developed by Frankl (1959). It needs to be accentuated that Kiński manages to employ the abovementioned theories in the educational context, which may lead to heightening teachers' awareness of the role of emotions and effective communication in the classroom. On the other hand, the author also discusses certain critical remarks that positive psychology has faced over the years, which creates a broad perspective on the subject in question. The last section of the following chapter includes selected studies into student well-being.

The fourth chapter begins with a short yet informative introduction to FLT studies and their methodology, along with a brief discussion on the ethical aspects concerning FLT research. The author draws the reader's attention to the complexity of FLT research stemming from its multidisciplinary character. As observed by Gębal, glottodidactics is still formally perceived as a branch of linguistics despite various attempts to separate it from linguistic studies and assign it its own autonomic status (Gębal 2013). The subsequent part of the chapter is devoted to introducing research aims, formulating research questions and hypotheses and presenting the process of collecting and categorising research data. Having examined the classifications of teacher roles and essential traits proposed by Zawadzka (2004) and Komorowska (1999, 2009), Kiński clearly and logically links the elements of positive psychology with everyday teacher activity in the classroom. The chapter closes with a short explanation of how the main questionnaire was formulated.

In Chapter 5, the author meticulously describes the demographic profile of the study participants. It is worth mentioning that the results of the

study, obtained through statistical analysis, are presented in three different ways: comments, figures and tables. The chapter also includes an extensive discussion of three groups of research questions, gathered and divided based on their relevance. Undoubtedly, from the perspective of a professionally active teacher, the most useful and valuable information is collected in the section containing pedagogical implications. Kiński offers a plethora of practical suggestions and solutions, combining the results of his study and his invaluable experience gained over the years of teaching the English language to all kinds of students. This enables the author to adopt a realistic perspective on the issues, presenting, on the one hand, problems with which teenage students struggle, and, on the other, the deficits and limitations that Polish schools have to face on a daily basis. For example, the results clearly show that students are less likely to experience anxiety if they are streamed into groups of students exhibiting a similar level of linguistic competence. However, as may be the case to some extent in some schools, such a solution is not always feasible due to financial aspects. At this point, the author also rightly observes that since both well-being and ill-being are established on the basis of self-reported feelings, they should be interpreted and approached with caution as they are highly subjective constructs. The pedagogical implications are followed by a section devoted to the limitations of the present study, research possibilities for the future areas and concluding remarks.

The book reads well thanks to its transparent structure and accessible language. The transparency and accessibility may attract more readers among practising teachers, creating a bridge between academic research and conscious educational interventions in the classroom. As Kiński notices, sometimes teachers embrace certain trends or employ materials retrieved from various questionable sources hoping that they may contribute to their classes being seen as more ‘attractive’ or ‘appealing.’ This book, on the contrary, has a potential to become a starting point for an informed discussion on the importance of emotions in ELT classrooms. The author refers to various Polish and international sources, all of which are collected in the bibliography section, providing a solid theoretical framework for his own research. Although the topic itself is not new, the author manages to identify the areas that have not been examined yet and he offers new perspectives and insights.

### Literature

Clark M.S., Mills J. (1993): *The difference between communal and exchange relationships: What it is and what it is not.* “Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin” 19, pp. 684–691.

- Csikszentmihályi M. (1975): *Beyond boredom and anxiety*. San Francisco.
- Csikszentmihályi M. (1990): *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York.
- Csikszentmihályi M. (1997): *Finding flow*. New York.
- Dewaele J.M., Li C.C. (2021): *Teacher Enthusiasm and Students' Social-Behavioral Learning Engagement: The Mediating Role of Student Enjoyment and Boredom in Chinese EFL Classes*. "Language Teaching Research" 25, pp. 922–945.
- Foa U.G., Foa E. (1974): *Societal structures of the mind*. Springfield, IL.
- Frankl V.E. (1959): *Man's search for meaning*. Boston.
- Gębal P.E. (2013): *Modele kształcenia nauczycieli języków obcych w Polsce i w Niemczech. W stronę glottodydaktyki porównawczej*. Kraków.
- Grucza F. (1978): *Glottodydaktyka, jej zakres i problemy*. „Przegląd Glottodydaktyczny” 1, pp. 3–35.
- Kern M.L., Benson L., Steinberg E., Steinberg L. (2014): *The EPOCH measure of adolescent well-being*. [Unpublished manuscript].
- Komorowska H. (1999/2009): *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych*. Warszawa.
- Maslow A.H. (1943): *A theory of human motivation*. "Psychological Review" 50(4), pp. 370–396.
- Maslow A.H. (1954): *Motivation and personality*. New York.
- Mercer S., Kostoulas A. (eds). (2018): *Language Teacher Psychology*. Bristol.
- Oxford R.L. (2016): *Toward a psychology of well-being for language learners: The "EMPATHICS" vision*. [In:] *Positive psychology in SLA*. P.D. MacIntyre, T. Gregersen, & S. Mercer (eds). Bristol, pp. 10–87.
- Pfeiffer W. (2001): *Nauka języków obcych. Od praktyki do praktyki*. Poznań.
- Rogers C.R. (1979): *The foundations of the person-centred approach*. "Education" 100(2), pp. 98–107.
- Seligman M. (2011): *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York.
- Seligman M. (2012, August 25): *Flourishing – a visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being at Happiness & Its Causes Conference*, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0LbwEVnfJA>>, accessed: 25.09.2025.
- Sprecher S., Reis H.T. (2009): *Encyclopedia of Human Relationships*. Thousand Oaks.
- Wóźniewicz W. (1987): *Kierowanie procesem glottodydaktycznym*. Warszawa.
- Zawadzka E. (2004): *Nauczyciele języków obcych w dobie przemian*. Kraków.

