Sticky Objects and positive emotions: researching teacher wellbeing and resilience
British Council ELTRA webinar

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Sharing our stories…

Please think of a positive emotional experience in your teaching/ learning of a second language

Write in the 'chat box'

- what your emotion was
- a few words about where it came from

Enjoy ment

achievement

hope

friendship

Surprise

Fun

Excitement

Passion

laughter

Emotions and Objects
(Ahmed, 2004).

'a cultural politics approach to emotions, informed by feminism and cultural studies, Ahmed (2004) is interested **in what emotions do,** that is: to which ideas and objects they adhere, giving those ideas and objects intensity and charge. […] There is a reciprocal relationship between emotions and objects:

"Emotions [...] shape, and are also shaped by, contact with objects" (Ahmed, 2004: 7).

Sticky Objects

Benesch (2012 and 2017)

'Sticky objects in ELT'

The Positive Psychology movement and Exploratory Practice

- Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihaly, 2000) is about helping 'people lead better lives' (MacIntyre & Mercer 2014: 154)

- Whatever we do, we need to focus on 'making life more enjoyable' (Allwright & Hanks, 2009: 241).

- How do we flourish?

- What is the role of positive emotions?

- Not just for individuals, but also for groups and institutions

Exploratory Practice: Quality of Life and Wellbeing

"Quality of life (QoL) does not mean that all things are good and/or easy; rather, it may include working very hard, but on something that is interesting, rewarding, and relevant to those working on it." (Hanks, 2017: 101)
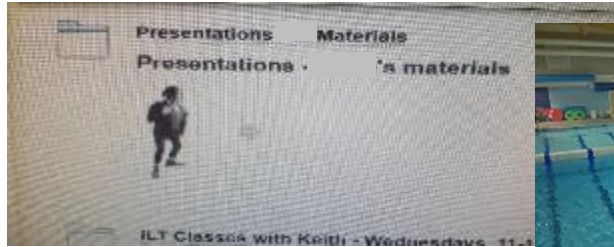
The Research Project

- ***'Sticky Objects' and pathways to resilience and wellbeing: teacher understandings of and practices in positive psychology in their classrooms***

- Teachers working in EAP in universities in UK and Saudi Arabia

- Teachers researching their own contexts and developing their own practice and wellbeing

- Diaro App and interview data

- https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/%E2%80%98sticky-objects%E2%80%99-pathways-well-being-resilience-teacher-understandings-practices-positive
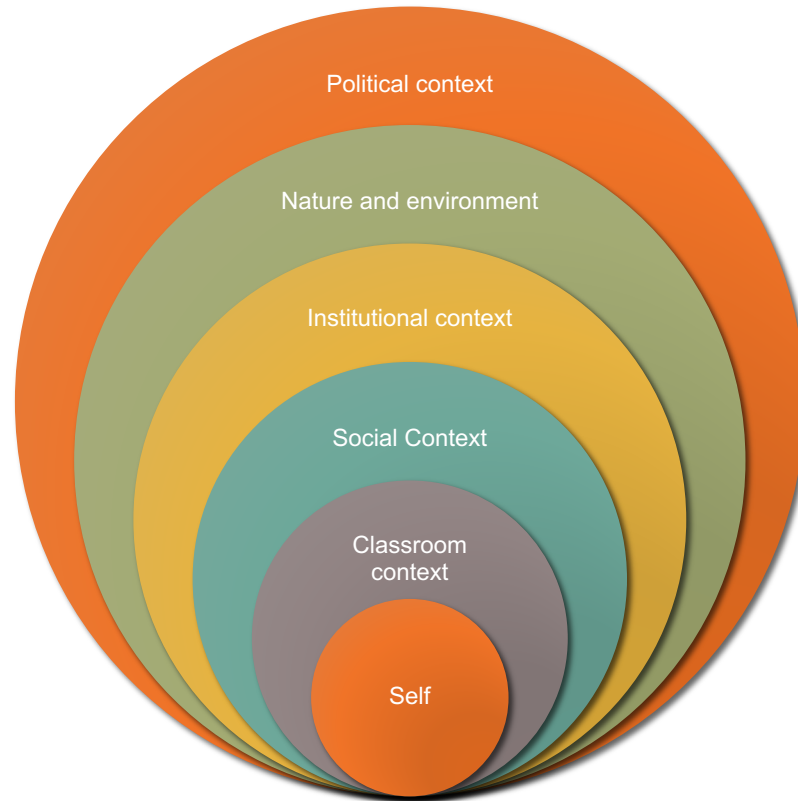
Some sticky objects from Saudi Arabia

Some sticky objects from the UK

Initial analysis: contexts

Themes arising

Personal

Interpersonal

Political context

Nature and environment

Institutional context

Social Context

Classroom context
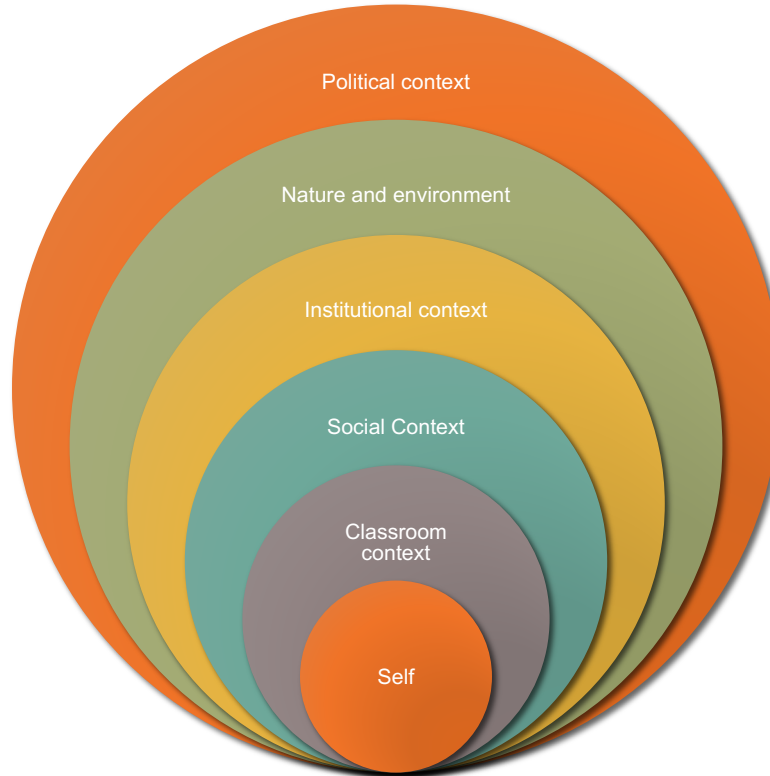
Self

Pedagogic

Beyond self

Caveats

Personal : *Teacher self-care*


- Amal (Diary): I feel that **this is luxury for me** to pass [a particular shop] and get a cup of coffee I mean that I feel this is a luxury so it makes me really **happy**.

Interpersonal relations: relationships with students

Wafa (diary): *After finishing the Mid Module Exam I brought pizza and surprised my students. They were so excited and grateful for me. I told them that you study and worked hard, so you need now to take a break and reward yourself. Of course, I joined them and we talked about our life and some of their interests. I felt so great because I was able to know more about my students and what they are interested in.*

Pedagogic aspects
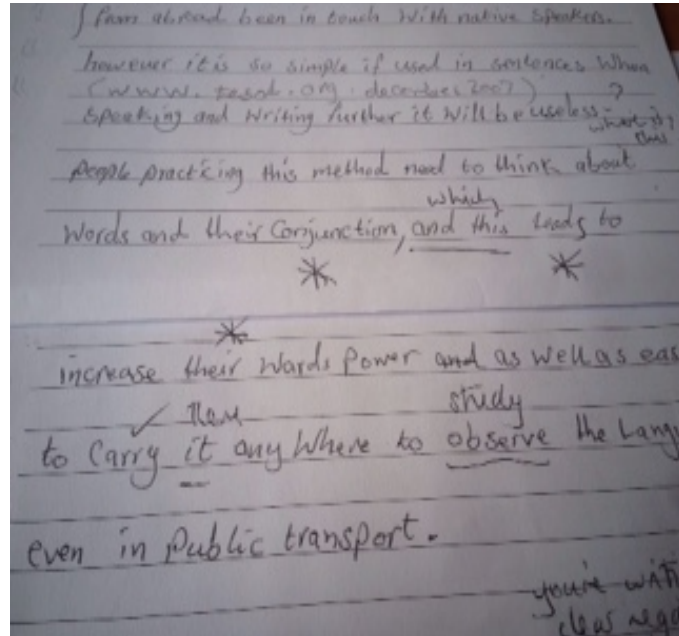
- Karen (Diary): This was the only student who combined info. together in her homework task. I felt positive as I realised she had not only understood the source she'd read but that she had taken responsibility for, and had advanced her own learning.

Student achievement: pride and trust

We played kahoot spelling game and I told them the rule i before e except c. They all looked amazed. One student told me he had always struggle spelling was quite happy to find out about the rule.
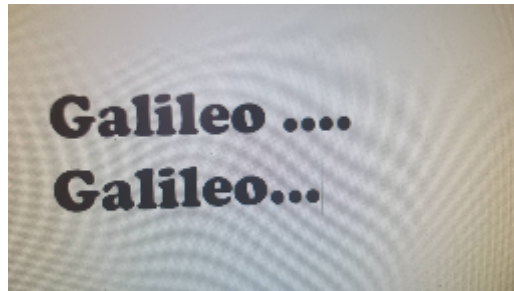
His eyes were showing.

I couldn't believe how such small detail could make a change in the learning process. When students start to learn, they start to trust the teacher. Trust makes learning easier!

Institutional aspects:

- Choice and autonomy
- Creating materials
- Student-centred teaching

It was like I'd discovered gold...

Environment: Social context

- Amal (Diary): As I was getting out of my car this morning, I noticed some teachers and students parking their cars and walking towards the University gates. It was such a **happy** moment because there was a point where I thought this would never happen and women would not be able to drive.

Notes of caution?

- 'The tyranny of positive attitude' (Held 2002)
- Neo-liberal discourse of self-reliance
- Accountability of emotions
- Manipulation of emotions to institutional ends

'Things are not going well'

Enhancing the positive in your teaching

Celebrate your success!

Write in the chat box

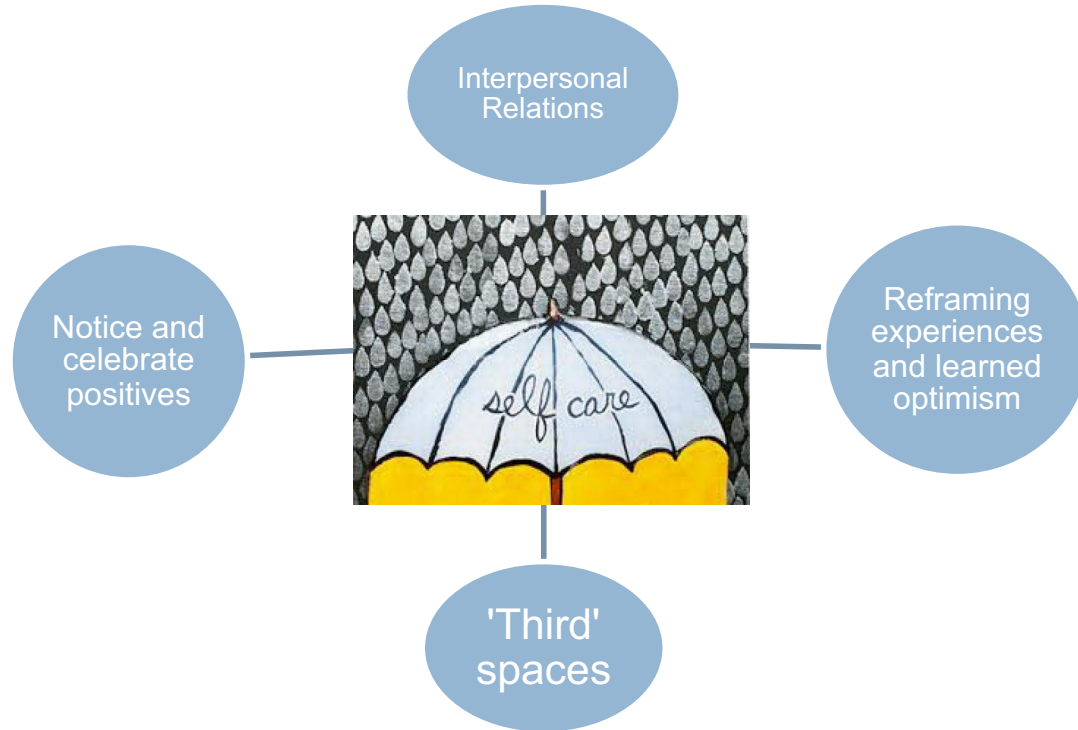How can you record and remember the positives?

Enhancing the positive in workplaces

What 'secret door' could you ask your institution provide?

What is your institution doing in CV19 times?

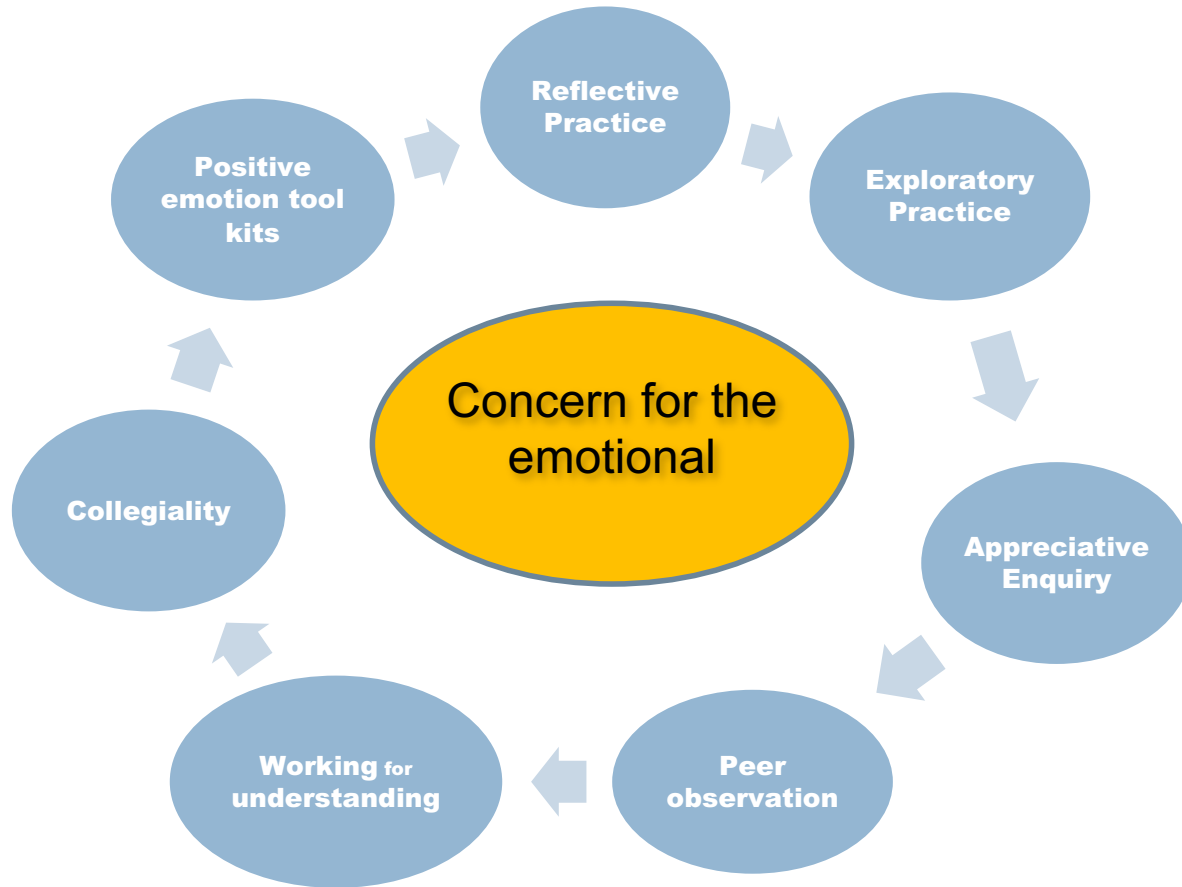# What can **teachers** *do*?

What can **institutions** *do*?

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- Care for staff
- Trust
- Autonomy
- Resources
- Showing value and appreciation

What can **teacher education** *do*?

A final positive note …

"Teaching is a radical act of hope. It is an assertion of faith in a better future in an increasingly uncertain and fraught present.

It is a commitment to that future even if we can't clearly discern its shape….

We teach because we believe it matters."

Kevin Gannon (2020:5)

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