

Keeping a confidence- building diary

*Analysing learners' responses from a
self-determination theory perspective*

Jo Mynard and Scott Shelton-Strong, Japan





Overview



01 **Context**
Private university in
Japan

02 **The course**
Self-directed language
learning



03 **Theories**
Self-determination theory
and positive psychology

04 **The study**
Qualitative analysis of
diaries and reflections

05 **Findings**
Summary of activities,
feelings and motivations

06 **Conclusions**
Supports basic psychological
needs and positive emotions

Promoting positive feelings and motivation for language learning: the role of a confidence-building diary

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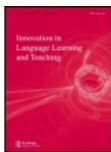
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ABSTRACT

In this study, Japanese university students learning English in Japan were asked to keep a confidence-building diary (CBD) for one week in order to understand the benefits of maintaining a positive outlook for learning. The researchers investigated what activities the participants engaged in and what emotions they felt as a result, how the activity influenced their motivation for learning English and also whether participants later continued to engage in confidence-building activities. Drawing on basic psychological needs theory, self-determination theory, research on effect in language learning, and positive psychology, the researchers conducted a qualitative analysis of the diaries of 39 participants. The researchers also conducted follow-up interviews approximately five months later with seven participants. Participation in the CBD activities resulted mainly in positive emotions, occasionally in combination with

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—Shelton-Strong
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01 The context

The context



KUIS

Location: Chiba, Japan
Founded: 1987
Students: 4000
Majors: Languages / international cultures

The SALC

- Self-access Learning Center
- Learning community
- Language learner autonomy
- 12 learning advisors.

1987

University opened

2003

First SALC

2007

Second SALC

2017

Current SALC



02 The course

Effective Language Learning Module



Self-directed

Module introduces effective ways of learning: Supported by learning advisors



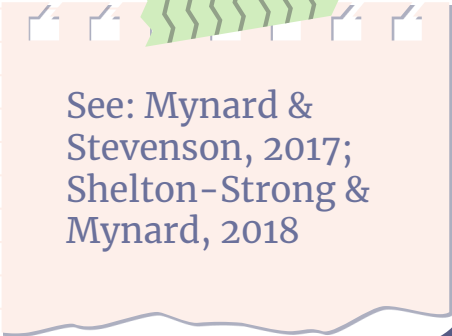
Optional

Offered each semester; 1 semester; 16 weeks



For credit

Around 300 students per year take the module



See: Mynard & Stevenson, 2017;
Shelton-Strong & Mynard, 2018

Confidence-Building Diary

Tell yourself everyday about something **GOOD** and **POSITIVE** related to studying or using English. This will increase your confidence and motivate you to continue through even the most difficult times.

In this diary, write something good and positive about using your English. Think about how that makes you **feel** about your ability to use English:

Day 1: *"I went to the English Lounge and enjoyed talking with a teacher and other students. I was able to use some of the new words I learned in our conversation in class the next day!"*
"I felt happy and it helped me realize my progress."

	"GOOD" & "POSITIVE" things about English study
Day 1	Activity: Feelings:
Day 2	Activity: Feelings:
Day 3	Activity: Feelings:

	“GOOD” & “POSITIVE” things about English study
Day 1	Activity: I read a English book, “Dracula”. I was able to find unknown words. Feelings: I improved my English skills, enjoying story.
Day 2	Activity: I went to Karaoke, and I sang a English song. Feelings: I was able to refresh myself, and I was able to hear my pronunciation.
Day 3	Activity: I talked with SALC adviser. I was able to talk with her actively. Feelings: I felt happy as I could talk with native speaker.

Example



Shelton-Strong &
Mynard, 2018



Reflection

1. Did the confidence-building diary motivate you? Why or why not?

2. Other than the confidence-building diary, what can you do to help yourself to maintain a positive attitude when you are learning a new language?



03 Theories

Underpinning theories



01

Self-determination theory

“Basic psychological needs theory identifies psychological need satisfaction as the essential nutriment for wellness and flourishing” (Reeve, 2022, p. 16).

02

Positive psychology

Positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Self-determination theory and basic psychological needs


SDT maintains that people are inherently inclined towards positive learning experiences, but points to 3 basic psychological needs all people share which need support for this to lead to healthy development, flourishing and well-being.



(Ryan & Deci, 2020)

Positive Psychology and Emotions

Positive psychology focuses on what goes right in life, and how feelings such as happiness, well-being, empathy, confidence, and so on, are central to successful learning and long-term motivation.



(MacIntyre,
Gregersen, and
Mercer 2019).



04 The study

Research questions



01

What positive learning activities do students choose to focus on in their confidence-building diaries?

02

What feelings emerge from doing the activities?

03

How did the CBD activities affect the students' motivation for learning English?

Methodology



Participants

39 students taking the module; Japanese nationals majoring in languages, 18-20



Data collection

Coursework (diaries / reflections) collected with students' permission



Data analysis

Qualitative analysis by the two researchers drawing on SDT and positive psychology literature





05 Findings

Research questions

01

What positive learning activities do students choose to focus on in their confidence-building diaries?

The majority of the learning activities the students chose to focus on took place outside of the classroom environment. The activities often resulted in actions supportive of the learners' BPNs.

Table 1. Positive activities noted in participants' CBD over a one-week period.

Category	Code	Number of instances	
In-class events	Class activity	15	15 (8%)
Language-related activities (outside class)	Language study	34	113 (61%)
	Listening	10	
	Reading	15	
	Writing	3	
	Speaking	34	
	Singing	1	
	Test-related	11	
	Work-related	5	
Using media	Music and other media	23	23 (13%)
Metacognitive activities	Reflecting	19	33 (18%)
	Planning ahead	14	
Total			184 (100%)

Research questions

02

What feelings emerge from doing the activities?

Table 2. Positive feelings reported in participants' CBDs over one week.

Category	Code	Number of instances	
Feeling good	Happiness	32	71 (73%)
	Enjoyment	16	
	Fun	9	
	Feel good	9	
	Excitement	4	
	Energetic	1	
Interest	Interest	17	26 (27%)
	Motivation	5	
	Satisfaction	2	
	Comfort	2	
Total		97 (100%)	

Participant reflections

Excerpt 1 (Autonomy / Competence / relatedness)

"I went to {The Self-Access Center} and studied with my friend and helped each other. I was able to finish my homework. I was happy to find my friend studying with me."

Excerpt 2 (Competence / Positive emotions)

"I could read difficult book better than before. I could understand the meaning of the book. I feel happy because I can understand the story. I reading my favorite book and I feel excited!"

Table 3. Negative feelings reported in participants CBD over one week.

Code	Number of instances
Nervousness	8
Difficulty	7
Feel bad	3
Tiring	3
Boredom	1
Total	22

Research questions

03

How did the CBD activities affect the students' motivation for learning English?

All 39 participants felt that the CBD activity was beneficial. Overall, the reasons given included satisfaction of all three basic psychological needs.

Competence

Excerpt 3

"I strongly think that building confidence for daily studying motivate me for two reasons. First, in the process of confidence building diary I could come up with the new actions related to boost my confidence and I had an image of being successful in the long way to a good English speaker."

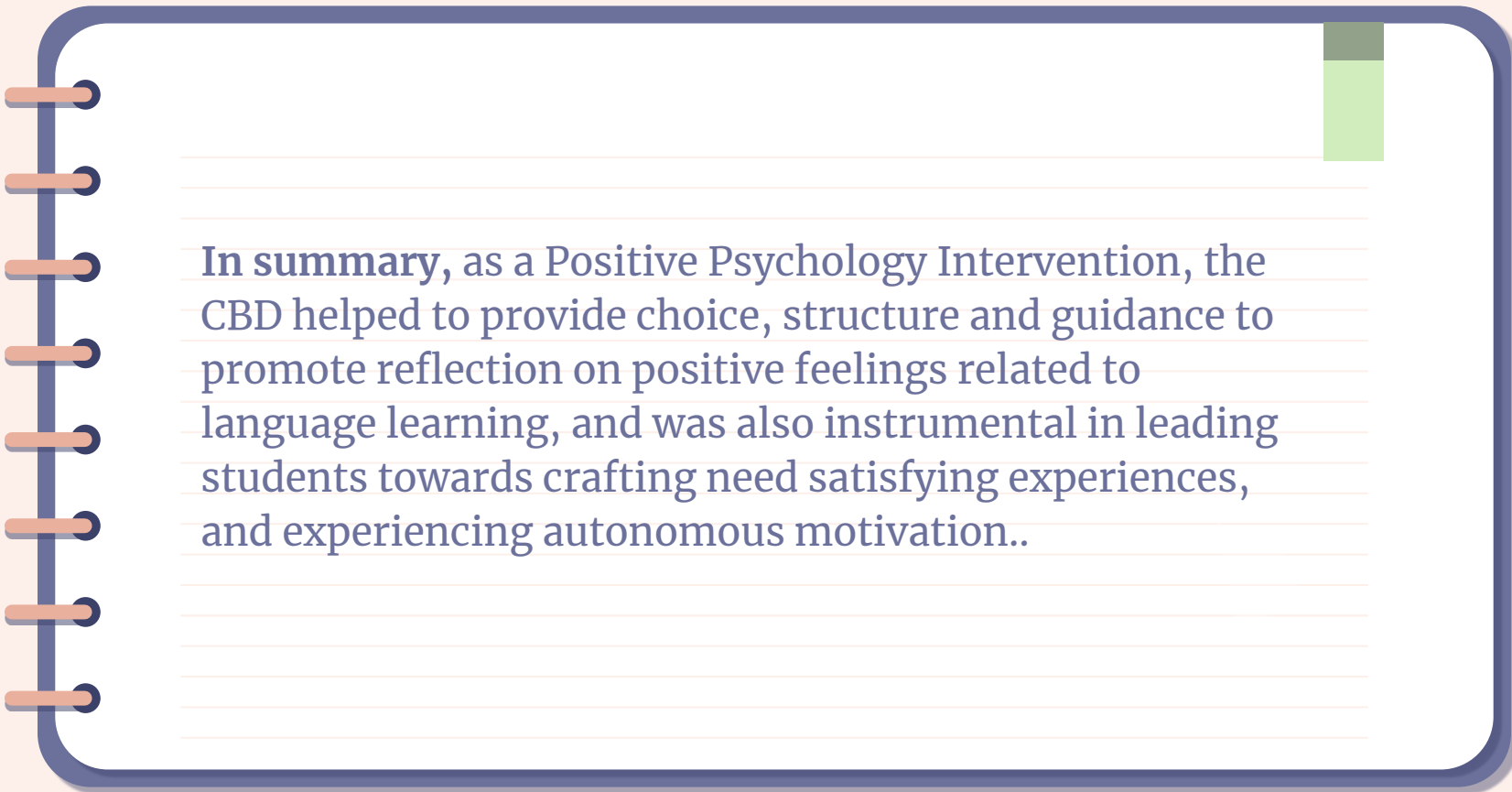
Relatedness

Excerpt 4

"I went to Yellow sofa [conversation lounge] and enjoyed talking with a teacher and friends. I talked about love with my friends and a teacher. It was very interesting. But I was very nervous when I talked with a teacher."



06 Conclusions



In summary, as a Positive Psychology Intervention, the CBD helped to provide choice, structure and guidance to promote reflection on positive feelings related to language learning, and was also instrumental in leading students towards crafting need satisfying experiences, and experiencing autonomous motivation..

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