Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Trauma-Informed English Language Teaching to Adults

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Abstract
This qualitative paper examines trauma-informed teaching of English as a second language (ESL) to adults. Trauma is highly prevalent worldwide, and post-traumatic stress negatively affects language learning. A review of the literature identified five major principles for trauma-informed learning: safety, agency, a foregrounding of student identities, recognition of strengths, belonging, and meaning. However, very few empirical studies exist in this field, with a dearth of student voice and a lack of trauma-screening of students. Additionally, most published research about anxiety in second and foreign language learning does not critically examine the learning environment. The present study, informed by socio-environmental theories of trauma and critical pedagogies, privileges the voices of ESL students from three universities in Australia. Thirty-nine participants completed a validated tool to measure post-traumatic stress responses, and 20 of these students then took part in semi-structured interviews about the learning environment in their university-based English language centres. Interview questions were based on principles identified in the literature review. Data were analysed through a critical thematic analysis and a trauma-informed lens. For the purposes of this paper, findings are summarised into three major themes: Liberty, equality, and fraternity. The theme of *liberty* encompasses authoritarianism in the classroom, choices, and autonomy. *Equality* refers to teachers treating students equally, and egalitarianism amongst peers. The third theme, *fraternity,* examines supportive teachers and peers, as well as collaborative, interactive learning. Given the current climate of mass forced migration and COVID-19, the findings are timely and relevant for all second language learners.

Keywords: Trauma-Informed, ESL, TESOL, PTSD, Student Voice

Introduction

Educational institutions are increasingly recognising the link between trauma and learning. Trauma-informed schooling is gaining recognition (NSW Department of Education, 2020), and universities are beginning to implement mental health strategies into their courses and syllabi (Baik et al., 2017). Such initiatives signal an acknowledgement that mental distress impacts learning, and that educational institutions have a role to play in the mental wellbeing of students (Carter, Pagliano, Francis, & Thorne, 2017).

The precise definitions of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are a matter of debate. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), psychological trauma is defined as "exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271). However, broader definitions have characterised trauma as any experience "that impairs the proper functioning of the person's stress-response system, making it more reactive or sensitive" (Supin, 2016, p. 5).

Despite differences in definitions of psychological trauma, and culturally-specific manifestations of post-traumatic stress, the trauma research community generally accepts that PTSD involves a broad pool of biological responses. These include hypervigilance and hyperreactivity, sleep disorders, and physical symptoms (Hinton & Good, 2016). Similar post-traumatic stress responses have been identified across cultures (Silove, Steel, & Bauman, 2007) and "there is growing consensus that PTSD possesses cross cultural validity" (McNally, 2016, p. 122). This is reflected in the DSM-5 being modified from earlier versions to reflect cross-cultural manifestations of trauma (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

While psychological trauma used to be considered an unusual occurrence (Herman, 1997), this is no longer the case. With approximately 70 percent of the global population having experienced a traumatic event (Kessler et al., 2017), psychological trauma has been called an "epidemic – not only in the world's low and middle income countries" (Fidyk, 2019, p. 54). Only a small percentage of people who have experienced trauma go onto develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); however, it is estimated that for every 100 people worldwide, there will be 12.9 lifetime episodes of PTSD (Kessler et al., 2017). Populations at greater risk of developing PTSD include women (Australian Institue of Health and Welfare, 2020, July 23), refugees (Knipscheer, Sleijpen, Mooren, Ter Heide, & van der Aa, 2015), and military veterans (Wallace, 2020). It is therefore likely that every second language classroom will contain some traumatised learners.

The effects of trauma on learning and concentration are well established in the scientific literature. Stimuli that recall the original trauma cause a spike in brain activity specific to the trauma (Bryant & Harvey, 1995; Thrasher, Dalgleish, & Yule, 1994; van der Kolk, 2014), causing a flashback. Flashbacks trigger the amagdyla - the part of the brain responsible for detecting fear - thus impeding concentration and speech centres in the brain (Perry, 2006; van der Kolk, 2014). The ability to organize information logically and sequentially is also affected, negatively impacting the capacity to identify cause and effect and to make long term goals (van der Kolk, 2014).

Post-traumatic stress can also affect verbal learning, memory, and concentration (Brandes et al., 2002; Bustamante, Mellman, David, & Fins, 2001; Jelinek et al., 2006; Johnsen & Asbjornsen, 2009; Lindauer, Olff, van Meijel, Carlier, & Gersons, 2006; Vasterling et al.,

2002), all of which play a major role in learning an additional language. Further research has found that the symptom load of PTSD is inversely correlated with the speed of second or other language acquisition (Theorell & Sondergaard, 2004). As post-traumatic responses can fluctuate depending on the environment (Silove, 2013), there is a clear need for educators to provide a learning context that minimises fear and stress for students. Therefore, this research project aimed to answer the following research question:

According to adult students who have experienced trauma and post-traumatic stress responses, what constitutes a positive English as a second or additional language (ESL) learning environment?

Overview of the Literature

Despite the prevalence of trauma, the trauma-informed classroom is an under-researched area. This brief overview outlines second or foreign language anxiety, trauma-informed second language teaching, and presents themes from the wider literature on trauma-informed principles and teaching marginalised groups.

Learner affect and second language anxiety

Research in teaching English as a second or other language (TESOL) and second language acquisition has been critiqued for its lack of relevance to classroom practice (Kramsch, 2015; Maley, 2016; McKinley, 2019; Medgyes, 2017; Reagan, 2005; Rose, 2019; VanPatten, Williams, Keating, & Wulff, 2020). In the cognitivist studies that often predominate, learners are characterised as language-processing computers with little attention paid to the learning environment (Atkinson, 2011; Pennycook, 2001).

Similarly, learner affect has generally been treated as an individual variable in language learning, along with other factors such as personality, intelligence, and motivation, (Khasinah, 2014; Thurman, 2018). These are presented as immutable rather than fluid states that are subject to change depending on the environment and the nature of interactions with others. Anxiety, for example, has been characterised as a "psychological variable" (Dewaele, 2017, p. 70), or "learner trait" (Dikmen, 2021).

Many other explanations for second language anxiety highlight individual or cultural pathologies rather than seeing it as an outcome of the learning environment. Second language anxiety is attributed to cultural traits (Woodrow, 2006), perfectionism (Dewaele, 2017), neuroticism (Dewaele, 2013; Şimşek & Dörnyei, 2017), or other deficits located in the individual (King & Smith, 2017; Oxford, 2017; Şimşek & Dörnyei, 2017; Sparks, Ganschow, & Javorsky, 2000).

As a result, studies about second language anxiety tend not to focus on the role of teaching. Instead, they concentrate attention on its prevalence, physiological effects, impact on learning, correlation with personality traits and learner beliefs, and the individual coping mechanisms employed by students (Dewaele, 2013; Dewey, Belnap, & Steffen, 2018; King & Smith, 2017; Şimşek & Dörnyei, 2017; Woodrow, 2006) (see also Dikmen, 2021 for a systematic review; McIntyre, 2017 for an overview). Where strategies for teachers are provided, they sometimes involve brief general advice to create a supportive classroom environment (Dewaele, 2013; King & Smith, 2017; Thurman, 2018).

More often, however, strategies are divorced from TESOL pedagogy. Recommendations for teachers involve encouraging students to be responsible for their emotions via relaxation techniques (Oxford, 2017; Woodrow, 2006), cognitive behavioural tools (King & Smith, 2017; Oxford, 2017), exposure therapy (Oxford, 2017), social skills training (Oxford, 2017); and various positive psychology techniques (Oxford, 2016, 2017; Thurman, 2018). These strategies place anxiety and affect within the personal responsibility of language learners rather than seeing them as a product of the teaching and learning environment. Moreover, they do not specifically address psychological trauma, an extreme form of stress.

Trauma-informed second language teaching

The body of literature that specifically addresses ways that teachers can mitigate trauma in the second language classroom is mostly theoretical, or synthesises existing knowledge. Only a small number of published papers on trauma-informed second language teaching include empirical, primary research in their methodologies (Gordon, 2015; Holmkvist, Sullivan, & Westum, 2018; Ilyas, 2019; Louzao, 2018; McPherson, 1997; Montero, 2018; Tweedie, Belanger, Rezezadeh, & Vogel, 2017; Wilbur, 2016).

Of these studies, findings varied somewhat depending on the data source. Teachers and cultural support workers recommended the use of fun and humour (Holmkvist et al., 2018; Ilyas, 2019; Wilbur, 2016); empathy and approachability rather than authoritarian teaching (Holmkvist et al., 2018; Ilyas, 2019; Louzao, 2018); holistic support for students (Ilyas, 2019; Tweedie et al., 2017); embedding health topics in the syllabus (Wilbur, 2016); using relaxation or mindfulness activities (Wilbur, 2016); and teaching vocabulary related to emotion (Tweedie et al., 2017) or political struggle (Montero, 2018). Mental health workers recommended art, music, and physical movement in the syllabus, and avoiding discussions of family (Gordon, 2015). Students emphasised the importance of caring, supportive teachers who listened to students (Louzao, 2018); and asked for low pressure classes (McPherson, 1997).

The studies above are subject to methodological limitations. None used a validated screening instrument to measure the post-traumatic stress of participants; Louzao (2018) used the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Survey, while the remaining studies classified students as traumatised on the basis of refugee background, experiences of war or trauma (Holmkvist et al., 2018; Ilyas, 2019; Montero, 2018; Tweedie et al., 2017; Wilbur, 2016), or if they displayed behavioural indicators of PTSD (McPherson, 1997). Only three studies (Louzao, 2018; McPherson, 1997; Montero, 2018) included significant student voice, and of these, only McPherson (1997) and Montero (2018) studied adult learners. Findings that answered the research question above are therefore limited.

Due to the small number of empirical studies, the literature review was broadened to include theoretical and review articles on trauma-informed second language teaching (Durish, 2012; Finn, 2010; Horsman, 2004; McDonald, 2000; Nelson & Appleby, 2015), research on environmental factors affecting post-traumatic stress (Herman, 1997; Silove, 2013), and literature on critical pedagogies (Freire, 1996; Smyth, 2011), which aim to empower traditionally marginalised students. From this combined body of literature, a number of themes emerged. These were: a safe and secure environment; agency and choice; a foregrounding of student identities; recognition of strengths; social belonging; and meaning.

Methods

To overcome the limitations of existing studies in trauma-informed second language teaching, the present study was designed to privilege the perspectives of students. It also used a validated tool to measure post-traumatic stress. The theoretical framework combined socio-environmental theories of psychological trauma (Herman, 1997; Maercker & Hecker, 2016; Maercker & Horn, 2013; Perry, 2006; Silove, 2000, 2005, 2013) with critical approaches to education (Cooke, 2006; Emdin, 2016; Freire, 1996; Giroux, 1997; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2014; Pennycook, 1990, 2001; Smyth, 2011; Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). These theoretical stances are applied most often in the examination of traditionally marginalised populations who have been subjected to 'othering' narratives. These perspectives share a lens that shifts the pathology and burden for change from the individual to the social environment. They also stress empowerment and a voice for those who traditionally have the least power in both mental health and education: the person experiencing mental distress and the student, respectively.

After gatekeeper permission was obtained, participants were recruited from three universities in Queensland, Australia. Eligible participants were 18 years or older, had at least an intermediate level of English, were studying or had recently studied an English language course at a participating university, and had signed informed consent. Ethical clearance was granted by the University of Queensland's Human Ethics Committee. All participants were provided contacts for support services in case of psychological distress. None reported distress as a result of participation.

Data collection was conducted between June 2019 and January 2021, and was divided into two stages. In the first stage, 39 participants completed the PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5), a validated tool for measuring post-traumatic stress (Weathers et al., 2013)(See Appendix 1). The PCL-5 was chosen for its accessible level of English, ease of administering, and cross-cultural validity (Ibrahim, Ertl, Catani, Ismail, & Neuner, 2018; Kruger-Gottschalk et al., 2017; Lima et al., 2016; Sadeghi, Taghva, Goudarzi, & Rah Nejat, 2016). A glossary was provided for a small number of words. Test-takers were not asked to disclose the source of their trauma, thus avoiding possible triggering of post-traumatic stress responses. Pre-COVID, participants completed the PCL-5 in person, but from April 2021, it was administered online. Possible scores in the PCL-5 range from 0 to 80, and a score of 31 and above are considered to indicate the likelihood of PTSD (National Center for PTSD, n.d.).

In Stage 2, 20 of the 39 participants undertook semi-structured interviews about the learning environment at their English language centre. This was partially a convenience sample, though efforts were made to ensure a gender balance and range of backgrounds. Two of the universities involved in the study accepted only full-fee paying international students into their ESL programs, while the third also accepted domestic students from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. Demographic information and PCL-5 scores are provided in Table 1. Interview questions were based on the principles identified in the borader literature review (see Appendix 2).

I transcribed the interviews verbatim and, to preserve the authentic voices of participants, did not alter grammatical errors. I removed hesitation devices and fillers that impeded flow or comprehensibility. Data were coded manually, following thematic analysis protocols established by Braun and Clarke (2006), who advocated an inductive process Themes were

ascribed based on their "repetition, recurrence, and forcefulness" (Lawless & Chen, 2018, p. 2) and analysed for "power relations, status-based hierarchies, and larger ideologies" (Lawless & Chen, 2018, p. 13). They were also analysed through a trauma-informed lens.

Findings

For the purposes of this paper, and in the spirit of the Paris Conference on Education, the findings are divided into three major themes: Liberty, equality, and fraternity. 'Liberté, égalité, fraternité', is not only the national motto of France, but a summation of core democratic values (Day, 2021). Fortuitously, these universal principles align closely with the findings of this study. In the context of this paper, *liberty* refers to the freedom "to do anything that does not harm others" (Elysee, n.d.); providing choices; and building agency and autonomy. *Equality* refers to egalitarian relationships in the classroom, and *fraternity* refers to collaboration, support, and interdependence.

Liberty

Under the umbrella of *liberty,* participants of the study reported their attitudes to controlling teachers, choices, and the development of English language autonomy.

Although most - if not all - participants came from teacher-centred educational traditions, they discussed feeling "motivated", "more relaxed", "free", and "comfortable" in a less authoritarian classroom. While they agreed with classroom rules that helped them develop their English or involved respecting others, in general they did not want to be controlled.

> For my personality, I don't want someone to control me. [S7]
>
> I don't like to have some restrictions to students. [S8]
>
> [The teacher] was very, very controlling, I think. But didn't work. No. It didn't work at all. [S39]

They stated that when teachers treated students in an authoritarian manner, this was infantilising and risked disengaging them.

> They used to deal with students more like high school students than university level students. And it's so bad because sometimes you have students who are PhD students. Like imagine! They are not kids to deal with them like that. "Stop talking" or "I'm talking!" "Don't use that, don't do this!". So these rules are so funny because you're not at school. [S36]
>
> When he get angry then that's the problem, because you feel like you are just a kid, or you just feel you're weird. […] If he is angry then you're not happy in the class. If you're not happy, you won't understand anything or you won't listen. [S38]

In addition, participants reported that teachers often punished students without considering the wider circumstances of the situation.

> It could be for I'm asking him something related to the class, not outside things, not like joking or something. Not like I'm being like a naughty student. [S38]

A better response, according to participants, was for teachers to approach infractions by seeking to understand the reasons.

> When someone wanted to talk, [she] would stop and listen to us, what we were saying. This is far better than what [another teacher] was doing. So [she] wanted to understand what we are talking about. [S38]

While providing choices is often considered a keystone of trauma-informed principles (Elliott, Bjelajac, Fallot, Markoff, & Reed, 2005)), participants in this study offered a more nuanced view. Many reported not wanting to have to decide certain matters, such as seating arrangements or co-creating the syllabus. Having too many choices in supplementary learning materials was also seen as overwhelming by some participants.

> Our teachers just provide us with many websites and many resources. I just don't know how to pick them. […] I know they just want to provide as much as they can and they hope we can make good use of them, but actually it's hard for me to make a choice. [S8]

However, participants emphasises that they wanted to have decision-making capacity for large decisions, such as choosing group members for an assignment, or being able to negotiate a change in class or level.

> You can change your class and if you feel not comfortable with the level you are in you can meet the manager and decide with him. […] they give us choices and that is comfortable for me. If I didn't like the teacher or something I can change it. [S1]

Choices in assessment topics were also considered very important for empowering students, as it served to reduce their stress levels and increase their confidence.

> Choices are really important because it gives students an opportunity to do what they feel comfortable with and work and put their effort to do what they need to do. [S40]

> I remember clearly that [teacher] told us any topic we can choose related to this speaking, so I found it very helpful, because I am very nervous person so I can choose a topic that is related to me. [S28]

Another aspect of liberty is autonomy. Participants described how effective teachers helped to build the English language autonomy of students. The first way they achieved this was by scaffolding learning and teaching in a clear and structured way. According to participants, failure to do this led to students having to either be dependent on the teacher or seek information elsewhere.

> If it was easy to understand, we didn't have to go to her and ask questions and "What do you mean, or what was that about? What is this about?" So we just had to constantly [ask her for help] […] and then she could say the final word and then she could [say], "Yes, it's because of me, it's because I told you to do this, you did it, and you succeed." It's not because you were smart enough, you're capable to do it on your own. [S39]

> I was not asking a lot of questions, because I was feeling like, he won't understand me […] I feel like I just better stop and maybe do it with the students or my phone. [S38]

Another aspect of building agency was providing encouraging feedback, which gave students more confidence to express themselves in English.

> They just give us so much courage if we made a progress. Especially when you're writing., and they [say] "Oh, you made a mistake last time but you didn't do it this time. That's good!" Yeah so, when people feel encouraged, they just do better and they just work harder to improve themselves. [S8]

> It make us feel like you are doing it right, we are moving in the right way. That's all. And that's what you need, isn't it? You gotta keep moving forward. So you gotta feel like "Yes, you're doing right. That's it, let's keep on going." [S39]

> When I hear something, "Yeah, you have done well on that", the motivation goes up, I want to do more. It makes me feel "Yeah, I can do that. If I did that, I can do more, I can do better, I can do more than that!" [S40]

Finally, participants reported that familiar thematic content in courses increased their sense of agency. This content gave students the knowledge and confidence to communicate in English.

> In Japan I had some opportunity talk about my [research] in English so yeah, it's very common for me to speak the scientific topic. So it's easy, more than daily conversation. [S6]

> They talk a lot daily topic we can learn or use to our daily life. They much more useful especially for the beginning English learning student. […] I think because in that way I think I'm related to topic and I can give better answers [S7]

> When there are no words to speak, I get stuck without speaking and I struggle to speak a lot. So when it's familiar to me I can speak a lot about my job and job environment in my country. [S23]

Equality

Within the theme of equality are findings around teachers treating students equally, and egalitarianism between peers. Participants noted that singling out students for shame in front of their peers – especially for errors – was particularly stressful.

> I feel bad because everybody look at me and my friend. [S4]

> If your name be written on the board there are two reasons. One is you are really excellent, the other one is you are bad student. […] You don't behave well. So your name is written on the board. Mostly the second situation happens a lot. So when the teacher wrote my name on the board I felt really frustrated. Frustrated, yes. So I tell her I don't feel good, I feel really bad. [S10]

They also stated that it was important for teachers not to single out particular cultures.

> The teacher keep telling us that Indian people are smart, Indian people… like that. And then we – other people who were not Indian - were not feeling OK, we were a bit upset about it. Like other people are not smart. [S40]

Significantly, participants reported that egalitarianism between students enhanced their learning experiences. This had two aspects: being treated equally from a social perspective, and having the same level of English as their classmates. Despite many participants having professional careers and high levels of education, they instead emphasised their common identity as language learners.

> I think, when I'm going to a classroom, we all the same, even if I am sitting with the Prime Minister. At that specific time, we are the same because we are all lacking for the same kind of knowledge. [S21]

Having a similar level of English also made students feel safer and more confident in class.

> I think at first I hesitated a little bit like, "My English is not good, what can I do? How can I interact with teachers? Oh, I think I'm not going to make it." I was very nervous at that time, but everyone is same as me. So, I feel that relaxed and safe. [S28]

> In Saudi Arabia they put high level students with the low. All of them in one class, like stairs. And that doesn't make me feel comfortably. I was very stressful when that happened. […] But in this level, all of the students are the same. The same range. [S1]

A sense of equality, therefore, was represented in terms of cultures being equally valued, not standing out from classmates, having a shared identity as English language learner, and having a similar level of English.

Fraternity

A recurring theme in the findings was the positive impact of supportive teachers and peers. This involved others demonstrating care, and the benefits of collaborative approaches to learning.

Overwhelmingly, participants characterised teacher care as showing patience, attentiveness, and understanding.

> They interact with you in a good way. They feel you have something to say. [S1]

> It started with being kind, respect, and the teaching style. I was really feeling comfortable to continue with my studies. [S40]

This led to student confidence and motivation, both of which enhanced learning.

> It was so easy for me to ask questions, even if it's not right […] I will feel confident because the relationship just gives you confidence to ask whatever you want, even if it's wrong. [S38]

> I tell myself I need to do better because they care me so much, and then I shouldn't let them down. [S8]

Teachers who cared about students' lives outside the classroom also contributed to a positive learning environment, according to participants.

> Every 2 weeks my teacher, after the class leave, she sit with me and ask me about my experience, how I feel, what I usually do on the weekends and she try to give me advice to do things, like activities in [city]. And actually, I shocked and I was happy with it. [S1]

> They always notice the difficulties of the students and they are always there to help us. Once [during COVID] there were no rice at the supermarket, our teacher promised me to bring me some rice […] I have no words to say thanks to her. [S23]

Participants reported that peer collaboration was also a significant part of a positive learning environment, and teachers facilitated this by making tasks interactive and cooperative. Setting tasks which involved students sharing their culture with their classmates motivated them to communicate and share knowledge.

> As an African student I really feel enthusiastic sharing experiences about African tradition. [S21]

> It gave me a chance to reflect my culture, to tell about my country. [S38]

> We know very well that people from different backgrounds are really proud of their culture and they always want to share something from their culture. [S36]

In turn, this led to mutual understanding and respect, which enhanced students' sense of acceptance and belonging, freeing them up to learn.

> They are always friendly to me. And they try to ask me as many questions about my culture, about me. And that's make me comfortable with them, to talk to them. They will not judge me because something or they judge me because my religion or anything else. [S1]

> When they respect our culture, we don't feel any stress. We can do our learning in a free environment where we are free to speak and free to do things, free to learn well. [S23]

> Last time when I expressed about my country cultures, everybody was wondering, so that makes me really interested and happy. "Oh, they know about our culture, they felt that it is good", so that really helped me. And yeah, that really helped me to build connection between each other. [S28]

> I feel like being acknowledged, being respected and it's make me feel like I am being valued too. [S40]

Collaborative learning with peers subsequently led to synergistic knowledge.

> If we become a group it will be a very good, like coming together, it's fit together. […] You can understand the group, you can learn something from it. [S1]
>
> Maybe if you work alone, you can only have your own ideas but if you work in groups, there are many different ideas which maybe you never work out before. So they can show about how they study, how they learn, and you can also get some help from it. […] And you know when friends get together, they will do a thing better. [S8]
>
> When we were learn together, I think we can improve our knowledge by talking to each other, learning with each other. I think it's better to be like a group and learn. [S23]

Despite participants being more used to educational models that de-emphasised peer collaboration, they overwhelmingly stated that interactive learning with their classmates helped both their wellbeing and their learning of English.

Conclusions

This paper has presented findings of a qualitative study on trauma-informed English as a second language teaching that privileges student voice. As such, it provides new insights into what helps and what hinders learning from the perspective of students. As part of the methodology, participants reported significant variations in post-traumatic stress. However, there were no significant differences in how they perceived a positive learning environment. Therefore, this confirms the benefits of trauma-informed instruction to all learners (Holmkvist et al., 2018). Just as liberty, equality, and fraternity are human values, trauma-informed teaching is for all humans (Wilson, 2022), and should be best practice in every second language classroom.

As a result of the findings presented here, a number of implications emerge.

- The wellbeing of students should not be compartmentalised and is not just the purview of 'Health & Wellness sections' of university-based English centres. Participants reported that emotional nourishment and wellbeing came from teachers and classmates rather than from formal counselling services, though these were readily available.

- Students do not want transactional teaching. Teaching a second language is not about transmitting the mechanics of grammar and vocabulary in a decontextualised, technical, and dehumanising way. Students are not language learning devices, and they highly value personal engagement from teachers.

- Classroom relationships and teaching style make the most difference to learning environment, according to students.

- Students should not be subjected to hierarchical systems that infantilise them and disrespect their status and autonomy as adults.

In accordance with the student-centred focus of this paper, I will end with a quote from one of the study participants that encapsulates the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and sums up – albeit in an earthy style – the impact of equitable and inclusive teaching.

[The teachers] value all of our interactions. Even if you said, let's say, just shit, they try to take the positive part of that. And by allocating us to work groups randomly, with no strict rules, it also makes us feel that we are equal. So there is no impoverished people in the classroom. There is no wealthy people in the classroom. There is no high and lower society, so we can just mix together and learn. [S21]

ID	Nationality/ethnicity	Gender	Age	Student status	PCL-5 score
1	Saudi Arabian	M	22	International	29
4	Thai	F	33	International	23
5	Taiwanese	F	28	International	8
6	Japanese	M	25	International	31
7	Hong Kong	F	28	International	34
8	Chinese	M	19	International	25
10	Taiwanese	F	20	International	16
11	Japanese	F	32	International	14
13	Chinese	F	27	International	15
19	Sri Lankan	M	47	International	30
21	Mozambiquan	M	30	International	21
22	Thai	F	27	International	23
23	Sri Lankan	M	52	International	10
28	Nepalese	F	19	International	47
35	Japanese	M	25	International	26
36	Kurdish	F	28	Domestic	25
37	Congolese	M	25	Domestic	11
38	Eritrean	M	24	Domestic	10
39	Brazilian	M	39	Domestic	9
40	South Sudanese	F	32	Domestic	16

Table 1. Demographic Information and Post-Traumatic Stress Scores of Study Participants

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Appendix 1

Instructions: Below is a list of problems that people sometimes have in response to a very stressful experience. Please read each problem carefully and then circle one of the numbers to the right to indicate how much you have been bothered by that problem in the past month.

In the past month, how much were you bothered by:	Not at all	A little bit	Mode - rately	Quite a bit	Extre -mely
1. Repeated, disturbing, and unwanted memories of the stressful experience?	0	1	2	3	4
2. Repeated, disturbing dreams of the stressful experience?	0	1	2	3	4
3. Suddenly feeling or acting as if the stressful experience were actually happening again (as if you were actually back there reliving it)?	0	1	2	3	4
4. Feeling very upset when something reminded you of the stressful experience?	0	1	2	3	4
5. Having strong physical reactions when something reminded you of the stressful experience (for example, heart pounding, trouble breathing, sweating)?	0	1	2	3	4
6. Avoiding memories, thoughts, or feelings related to the stressful experience?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Avoiding external reminders of the stressful experience (for example, people, places, conversations, activities, objects, or situations)?	0	1	2	3	4
8. Trouble remembering important parts of the stressful experience?	0	1	2	3	4
9. Having strong negative beliefs about yourself, other people, or the world (for example, having thoughts such as: I am bad, there is something seriously wrong with me, no one can be trusted, the world is completely dangerous)?	0	1	2	3	4
10. Blaming yourself or someone else for the stressful experience or what happened after it?	0	1	2	3	4
11. Having strong negative feelings such as fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame?	0	1	2	3	4
12. Loss of interest in activities that you used to enjoy?	0	1	2	3	4
13. Feeling distant or cut off from other people?	0	1	2	3	4
14. Trouble experiencing positive feelings (for example, being unable to feel happiness or have loving feelings for people close to you)?	0	1	2	3	4
15. Irritable behaviour, angry outbursts, or acting	0	1	2	3	4

aggressively?					
16. Taking too many risks or doing things that could cause you harm?	0	1	2	3	4
17. Being “superalert” or watchful or on guard?	0	1	2	3	4
18. Feeling jumpy or easily startled?	0	1	2	3	4
19. Having difficulty concentrating?	0	1	2	3	4
20. Trouble falling or staying asleep?	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix 2

Interview Schedule

1. What do you think is a good environment for learning English?
2. Do you feel safe and relaxed learning English at [university name]? Who or what makes you feel safe? How does this affect your feelings about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
3. Does anyone or anything make you feel scared or stressed at [university name]? How does that make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
4. Does your English class have many rules? Who makes the rules? How does that make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
5. Do you have many choices about how and what you study? How does it affect your learning?
6. Do you feel that your teachers and other staff at [university name] respect your culture and the other language(s) you can speak? How does that make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
7. In your classes, you use learning materials such as textbooks and videos. Do these tell stories about people from your culture? Do you feel these texts respect your culture? How does this make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
8. Do you feel your teachers and other staff respect your life experience and your skills? How does that make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
9. Do you feel that your teachers notice the things you do well in English? Do they tell you when you are improving? How does that make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
10. Do you feel that your teachers and other staff at [university name] care about you? Do they try to make everybody feel welcome? How does that make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
11. Do you feel that your classmates care about you? How does that make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
12. Do you feel like your teachers and other staff really listen to you? How does that make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
13. Do you feel like the topics you talk about and read about in class are important to you and your life? How does that make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
14. Living in a different country like Australia can be good and bad. Do you think that your teachers and other people at [university name] understand how it feels to come to a new country with a different culture and different language? How does that make you feel about your classes? How does it affect your learning?
15. Has anything else at [university name] made it easier for you to learn English?
16. Has anything else at [university name] made it more difficult for you to learn English?

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