



The Impact Mechanism of Intensive English Programs on the Well-Being of Chinese EFL Learners in Malaysia Using the PERMA Model

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of intensive English programs on the well-being of Chinese EFL learners in Malaysia, using the PERMA model as a framework. The research employs a qualitative case study approach, focusing on learners from Hebei Province to examine how Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment contribute to their overall well-being. Through thematic analysis of participant experiences, the study highlights how interactive activities, peer support, and milestone achievements foster emotional resilience, motivation, and academic success. Emerging themes, such as cultural adaptation strategies and perseverance, extend the PERMA model to a cross-cultural context, emphasizing the interplay between language learning and psychological growth. The findings have practical implications for designing culturally responsive and emotionally supportive intensive English programs. They underscore the importance of integrating positive psychology principles into curriculum design and providing tailored support systems for learners in cross-border educational settings. Theoretically, the study contributes to positive psychology by demonstrating how resilience and cultural adaptation intersect with the PERMA model to enhance well-being. It also offers insights into the role of language learning as a transformative process that supports personal and professional aspirations. This research affirms the potential of intensive

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INTRODUCTION

Well-being is a key factor in the education process, as it affects students' performance and their overall life satisfaction. For EFL learners, more so, the promotion of well-being should always be encouraged since learning another language can be characterized by emotional, cognitive, and social costs. Promoting well-being elements such as positive emotions, engagement and interpersonal relationships are some of the conditions that should be fostered in student instructional learning environments, particularly in settings where the learners need to build new linguistic and cultural identities.

This paper will discuss factors that affect the learning of Chinese EFL learners in cross-cultural contexts, like learning in Malaysia. Many of them suffer from language stress, cultural adaptation, and educational performance and all these influences their well-being (Lu, Liu, & Zhang, 2021). Such concerns suggest that efforts should be made to identify ways through which this population can be protected, and positive psychological profiles enhanced. Intensive English programs that expose students to language learning curriculum give a good chance to study how educational settings affect the social and emotional belonging of Chinese EFL students cross-culturally.

PERMA model by Seligman (2011) is indeed a useful model that links psychology concepts to well-being. It consists of five elements which are Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. These components are not only quantifiable, but also each involves an interaction with the other to simultaneously pursue what could be considered a state of well-being (King, Pitliya, & Datu, 2020). Butler and Kern (2016) note that PERMA has been used in educational settings to evaluate the learner's well-being and performance, by building a PERMA-promoting environment. PERMA model is used in this study to examine the well-being of Chinese EFL learners learning in Intensive English Programs in Malaysia (Waters & Loton, 2019).

Problem Statement

Even though there is considerable discussion in the context of education about positive psychology, there is a lack of concern about the PERMA model to examine the learner's well-being in EFL intensive programs, especially in the cultural setting. Research has largely focused on the challenges of EFL learners including, language anxiety and cultural adaptation without adequate consideration of the benefits of the learning process (Canlı & Höl, 2024). In addition, little attention is paid to the psychological impact that intensive English programs have on learners' psychological well-being, especially in a particular culture such as the Chinese learners from Hebei Province. Identifying and filling these areas of weakness is critical in developing effective learning programs that improve language skills as well as promote overall student well-being.

Research Questions

- How does participation in an intensive English program influence the well-being of Chinese EFL learners?
- What are the specific contributions of each PERMA component to the well-being of these learners?

LITERATURE REVIEW

PERMA Model and Well-Being in Education

The PERMA model stands for Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. The model, created by Seligman (2011), provides a multidimensional framework for understanding and promoting well-being. It defines five well-being factors, including Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievements. Each of these elements is connected, and all these work together to affect mental health, motivation, and performance in different fields, including education (Al-Hendawi et al., 2024). Butler and Kern (2016) took further this approach proposing an instrument to measure components of the PERMA model called PERMA Profiler that is relevant for different settings. For instance, Yin, Ong and Qiao (2024) conducted a systematic review that identifies the various psychological factors affecting the well-being of Chinese international students in the United States while focusing on the positive effects and involvement. Their findings support Seligman's (2011) PERMA model to strengthen the notion of students' resilience and motivation.

The PERMA model has been applied in education more often to evaluate learners' psychological well-being and performance. Positive emotions are important in diminishing stress, whilst positivity promotes the right climate for learning (Fredrickson, 2001; King et al., 2020). Engagement entails dedication to tasks and this state referred to as flow, has been shown to positively influence motivation and productivity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Social relationships suggest

that people are supported by their fellow students and teachers in developing a mutual network of cooperation during the learning process (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Meaning means associating learning activities with a higher purpose or a meaningful objective that makes students too committed as well as satisfied. Last, accomplishment or the importance of goal attainment to increase confidence and a sense of accomplishment was discussed by Minh (2024).

Research has shown that the use of the PERMA framework enhances learner results in their learning processes. That is, positive emotions and engagement in educational activities positively affect the learning of a foreign language by increasing its ease of understanding and desire (Yang, 2021). Recent research also supports these claims. Zhang et al. (2023) found that positive emotions and perceived social support significantly impact international students' mental health and academic adaptation, particularly during stressful situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings align with the PERMA framework, highlighting that students with strong social relationships and emotional resilience tend to thrive academically and psychologically. Yin, Ong, and Qiao's (2024) systematic review provides additional evidence for this, stating that Chinese students' psychological well-being is defined by the context in which they experience the academic environment, their peers, and ways of dealing with stress. According to their research, language stress, cultural differences, and the process of social adaptation affect the well-being of international students. Likewise, developing effective working interactions in the context of classroom environments was found to enhance students' adaptability to resources and their general satisfaction with their learning experiences.

Challenges and Opportunities for Chinese EFL Learners

Chinese EFL learners have some specific issues while studying in a foreign country, which in this case is Malaysia. These challenges are usually attributed to differences in culture, language, and academic stress (Zhang, Grimshaw, & Shi, 2021). For instance, learners receive high foreign language anxiety, thus reducing students' performance and well-being (Lu et al., 2021). Moreover, psychological stress is raised as a result of the challenges given by the change in cultural norms as well as communication norms which also leads to a poor probability of success in social relations as well as academic success (Yang, 2021).

Nevertheless, there are the opportunities to develop and enhance the organizations and institutions functioning. Some researchers have established how perseverance and persistence factors contribute to Chinese EFL learners' well-being as well as their performance (Tang & Zhu, 2024; Waters & Loton, 2019). Grit which includes passion and determination towards achieving long-term goals has also explained the learners' resilience and motivation (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Likewise, resilience teaches learners how to better accommodate new circumstances and states of being, as well as to bounce back from failure, which contributes to learners' self-confidence and emotional stability. These psychological traits relate well with the PERMA model. Majorly, the engagement and accomplishment factors within the model are key for goal achievement, both personally and academically (Shao, Pekrun, &

Nicholson, 2019; Yan, Gao, & He, 2020). Several cross-cultural research has highlighted the importance of favorable educational contexts pointing to the specifics of Chinese EFL learners. For example, Minh (2024) also points to the potential of promoting positive psychology in learning programs for learners to cope with such aspects as cultural adjustment and academic difficulties and benefit their psychological well-being.

Intensive English Programs

Programs opt for Intensive English Language programs that aim to direct the students to a fast-paced learning program that provides both academic and interpersonal language usage. These programs are normally characterized by a series of skill and learning activities dealing with the aspects of communication that include reading, writing, listening, and speaking as well as cultural and social learning (Curren et al., 2024). Implemented teaching and learning methodology including face-to-face discussions, group work, use of presenters, and other recovered-based techniques in a bid to enhance interaction among students. Studies regarding the effect of intensive English programs on the learner's profile including motivation, achievement, and emotional well-being have been well-researched. Such programs provide students with structured methods to achieve curriculum goals. Proficiency in this language, gained through incremental processes, boosts students' confidence and sense of accomplishment. Also, integrating students in these programs assists them in forging social networks meaningfully with different learners and teachers, thus encouraging supportive structures for learning. Emotional needs are reflected in actions that promote positive feelings, such as celebrating accomplishments and fostering creativity in an environment free from physical or verbal abuse. However, the efficacy of intensive programs depends on how each of them meets the specific cultural development needs of prospective learners. Therefore, various cultural integration activities and individual accommodation measures can be helpful for Chinese EFL learners in Malaysia according to the research results. It is important to note that students' programs that are based on the PERMA elements are likely to support the optimal conditions for academic performance as well as a positive psychological state.

Gaps in Existing Research

Prior research highlights the concept of PERMA and intensive English programs; however, no qualitative research has considered the combination of these ideas, although they may have a symbiotic relationship in unique cross-cultural contexts for EFL. Unfortunately, most of the current studies are based on the counts of subjective well-being and foreign language achievement, indicating the lack of coverage of the learner's experiences (Butler & Kern, 2016). Moreover, the research is sometimes limited to comparing the results across different learners forgetting the cultural and context differences in the learners like Chinese students studying in Malaysia. For example, quantitative research on the use of grit and resilience in language learning has been

conducted merely, but little has been done to understand how these aspects of personality are culturally expressed (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Macintyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2019). A qualitative approach can uncover a deeper understanding of the impact of the PERMA components in intensive English programs and how these programs can be relevant to different learners. To address these gaps, the present research has investigated the target group of Chinese EFL learners from Hebei Province who participate in Intensive English Programs in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The current study uses a qualitative case study research design to examine the experiences of Chinese EFL learners from Hebei Province studying intensive English programs in Malaysia. A case study approach is suitable when studying a phenomenon concerning real-world scenarios, especially for participants' views and or external factors influencing them, it is more appropriate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This methodology enables the author to consider the influence of intensive English programs on learners' well-being in the context of the PERMA model. The rationale used for employing a qualitative research approach in this study is based on the need to get factual details of participants' emotions, perceived experiences, and social interactions that at times cannot be easily quantified. Such an approach allows for constructing the psychology of the learning process and social context out of participants' discourses in contexts of cross-cultural learning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Participants

The participants for this study were selected by purposive sampling, a method that is employed to choose people most appropriate to the study questions (Patton, 2015). The target sample is Chinese EFL learners from Hebei Province who are currently enrolled in intensive English programs in Malaysia. These learners are in a particularly advantageous position to shed light on the interaction between cross-cultural adjustment, language acquisition, and psychological well-being. Targeted participants comprise individuals of different ages, educational levels, and previous ENGLISH abilities. This diversity enables the study to capture variations in how various learners perceive and or handle the opportunities and challenges of the program. In an attempt to avoid gender bias in the study, efforts will be made to recruit participants of both genders and a mix of academic levels.

Table 1 presents respondents' demographic data, including age, gender, educational background, English proficiency, prior English experience, program duration, career aspirations, and cultural adaptation experiences.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

Demographic Category	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Age	21	22	20	23	22	21	24	23
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Educational Background	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate
English Proficiency	Intermediate	Advanced	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Intermediate	Beginner	Advanced
Previous English Experience	2 years in English course	3 years of formal study	1 year language program	2 years of study abroad	3 years of English medium schooling	2 years of study abroad	1.5 years intensive course	2 years language immersion
Current Program Duration	6 months	8 months	6 months	1 year	6 months	7 months	6 months	8 months
Career Aspiration	International Relations	Business Management	Media/Journalism	Engineering	Marketing	Computer Science	Medicine	Education
Cultural Adaptation Experience	Struggled with food preferences	Struggled with communication styles	Adapting well to local lifestyle	Struggled with group work	Enjoying cultural exchange	Adapting to language barrier	Struggling with accent differences	Adapting to social norms

Data Collection

To ensure that the study gets an overall picture of the participants' experiences, the study utilized a range of qualitative data collection techniques. In collecting data, the use of semi-structured interviews is the primary source of data collection (Ruslin et al., 2022). This format makes it possible to look deeper into participants' elaborations on certain issues and at the same time ensures that the research remains on course focusing on areas relevant to the PERMA model (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Interviews focus on what participants felt, and how involved, connected, purposeful, and accomplished they are in the specified program.

Data Analysis

The semi-structured interviews conducted in this study were analyzed using a process known as thematic analysis (see Table 2), which enables the identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns from the data (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The analysis focused on understanding how participants' experiences aligned with the five dimensions of the PERMA model: These are Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement. This approach enabled a focused examination of the participants' narratives on how they defined, experienced, and perceived well-being as influenced by the context of the intensive English program, allowing for both inter-participant and intra-participant comparisons.

The data analysis process in the current study required the researcher to read the transcripts continuously for immersion in the data and then aim to code and identify themes that encapsulated participants' experiences. Emphasis was placed on the verbal and imagery depictions of the difficulties and accomplishments of the participants. To gain an understanding of how this program impacted their psychological state, the findings were analyzed in relation to the PERMA framework. This method has the advantage of a general framework that remains quite adaptable when investigating the use of language learning, as well as the wellness of individuals in a multicultural setting.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were central to this study, particularly as it involved semi-structured interviews exploring participants' personal experiences and well-being. Informed consent was obtained before participation, with clear explanations about the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and any potential risks. Participants were assured they could withdraw at any point without penalty (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Confidentiality was maintained by removing names from transcripts and securely storing data in password-protected files. Identities were protected by ensuring no identifying details appeared in reports or publications. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, interviews were conducted respectfully, allowing participants to speak at their own pace and decline any questions. If signs of distress emerged, participants were informed of available support resources.

Table 2: Themes Based on Questionnaire

Question	Theme	Sub-themes	PERMA Component
What specific activities or aspects of the intensive English program evoke feelings of joy and optimism?	Positive Emotions	- Interactive class activities (role-playing, group projects, games) - Feedback and progress recognition - Engaging cultural exchange activities	Positive Emotions
How do learners describe their experiences of being fully immersed or engaged in the program's learning tasks?	Engagement	- Group discussions and debates - Writing and project-based learning - Listening exercises and real-life simulations	Engagement
How do interactions with peers and instructors contribute to the social support and well-being of learners?	Relationships	- Peer support in group work and study sessions - Teacher encouragement and positive feedback - Classroom collaboration and discussions	Relationships
How do participants perceive the role of language learning in achieving their personal and professional aspirations?	Meaning	- Career aspirations (global job market, specific professions) - Personal growth and cultural exchange (broadening horizons, learning new perspectives) - Language as a tool for academic and professional opportunities	Meaning
What milestones or achievements within the program are most significant to learners, and how do these accomplishments affect their confidence and motivation?	Accomplishment	- Passing exams and tests - Successfully completing presentations and projects - Improvement in language skills (writing, speaking, listening)	Accomplishment
How do learners adapt to cultural differences while participating in the program, and what strategies do they use to build resilience?	Adaptation & Resilience	- Socializing and engaging in local cultural activities - Improving language skills through immersion (language practice outside of class, media) - Adapting communication style and managing cultural expectations	Relationships, Meaning
How do learners maintain motivation and perseverance in overcoming challenges related to language learning in a cross-cultural context?	Motivation & Perseverance	- Setting small, achievable goals and celebrating progress - Seeking social support (peer and teacher encouragement) - Focusing on long-term goals and career aspirations	Engagement, Accomplishment

DATA ANALYSIS

The theme synthesizes responses to the seven core research questions, aligning them with the five foundational PERMA model factors: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Promotive stimuli, reflecting positive emotions, emerged through activities, feedback, and cultural exchanges that fostered joy and optimism. Activities such as debates, writing tasks, and real-world simulations promoted active engagement, while collaborative group work and classroom discussions with instructors provided essential social support. Learners derived meaning by connecting language learning to personal passions, career aspirations, and cultural understanding. Accomplishments included passing exams, mastering new skills, and completing tasks, which enhanced their confidence and motivation. Additionally, managing challenges related to accommodation and survival illustrated their coping strategies, cultural adaptation, and pursuit of long-term goals. Table 2 summarizes how program components collectively enrich learners' cross-cultural experiences.

Positive Emotions

Respondent 1

I feel happy when we do role-play exercises in class. It's fun to act out real-life situations, and it helps me practice speaking English naturally without feeling too nervous.

Respondent 2

Group projects always make me feel optimistic because we work together to solve problems. It's exciting to see how different ideas come together, and I enjoy collaborating with my classmates.

Respondent 4

The weekly feedback sessions with my teacher are encouraging. When I see my progress, even if it's small, I feel motivated and positive about my learning journey.

The responses emphasize that positive emotions among Chinese EFL learners from Hebei Province in the Intensive English program highly depend on interactive and engaging activities. Concerning the aspect of joy, fun mechanisms, including role-plays, peer group assignments, and games, make learning enjoyable rather than intimidating. These activities not only contribute to making the learning process enjoyable but also facilitate interaction between learners, decrease the level of language stress, and increase the level of optimism. Furthermore, non-linguistic activities, such as storytelling and cultural exchange, contribute to a positive attitude because learners' language practice is grounded in their personal and cultural identity. Although the learners are passionate about their learning, feedback sessions and supportive class environments enable them to

remain optimistic about the progress they are making to build up their confidence. The use of real-life context in teaching and learning English, as illustrated by the enjoyment and benefit gained from watching English movies and interacting with other genuine materials, justifies the need to complement the teaching methodology with real-life content. Collectively, the responses point to the need to incorporate intensity and culture to enrich learners' emotional states, thus directly in line with the Positive Emotions of the PERMA model.

Engagement

Respondent 3

When we do debates in class, I feel completely focused. I have to think quickly, respond in English, and pay attention to what my classmates are saying. It keeps my mind active and fully involved.

Respondent 5

Writing essays is when I feel the most immersed because I need to organize my ideas and express them clearly in English. It's challenging but very satisfying when I finish.

Respondent 6

I feel fully engaged during the interactive grammar workshops. The teacher gives us immediate feedback, and I stay focused on improving my skills through practice.

The responses show that the learners are deeply engaged in the tasks that demand active involvement, interaction with another learner, and authentic use of their knowledge and skills. The strategies of using debate, play-acting as well as group decision-making require learners to remain highly engaged by demanding their thinking ability while also offering them something to do purposefully, thus supporting learners to experience flow. Specific assignments such as essaying and intensive reading enable the learners to work hard and effectively and have a positive relation in their thinking patterns and work. To add to this, aspects like listening to real audio or developing presentations keep learners engaged by applying what they have learned in real-life situations. These activities belong to the Engagement component of the PERMA model showing the idea of purposefully designed, stimulating, and meaningful tasks to keep learners' attention and commitment during the learning process. Finally, the responses confirm the necessity to include highly varied and realistic activities that would ensure the learners' complete engagement in the tasks related to language acquisition.

Relationships

Respondent 1

My classmates are always supportive during group projects. We share ideas and help each other with tasks, which makes me feel less stressed and more confident.

Respondent 3

The encouragement I get from my teacher motivates me to keep trying, even when I make mistakes. They always make me feel that my efforts matter.

Respondent 7

I enjoy working with my peers because they understand the same challenges I face. We often study together, and this teamwork makes learning feel less lonely.

The responses emphasize the importance of peer support and adequate instructor support in enhancing learners' psychological well-being and creating an environment that is fundamental to learning. The exchange of ideas and information with other students creates interaction and support for both social and academic lives. Several students qualified their learning experiences by explaining how group work during projects, group or individual study, and group discussion enriched their learning by providing company during difficult times or resolving issues more easily. Instructors played a significant role by providing encouragement and constructive feedback. This type of relationship builds confidence, enables participants to engage, and boosts their resilience, which aligns well with the Relationships component of the PERMA model.

Meaning

Respondent 5

Learning English is essential for my career goals. I want to work in an international company, and being fluent in English will help me communicate better with colleagues from different countries.

Respondent 6

I see learning English as a bridge to better opportunities abroad. I dream of studying in the UK, and knowing English is key to achieving that dream.

Respondent 8

For me, learning English is about broadening my horizons. It allows me to connect with people from different cultures and gives me a deeper understanding of the world.

By evaluating the responses received, it can be concluded that participants regard the acquisition of the English language as a critical pathway to self-fulfillment and career success. Therefore, most respondents acknowledge knowledge of English as advantageous in enhancing their careers in international business, marketing, as a translator, or working in IT Companies. Acquiring English is seen to open themselves up to opportunities around the world, educationally through studying abroad or professionally through corresponding with colleagues' employers, or otherwise and keeping up to date with current trends. These responses relate to the Meaning component of the

PERMA model because respondents associate language learning with purpose, as well as having ambitions and a prosperous future. Such findings support language learning as a practice not only as an academic subject but to achieve one's individual goals.

Accomplishment

Respondent 2

The most significant milestone for me was passing the mid-term exam with a high score. It showed me that all my hard work was paying off and gave me the confidence to tackle more difficult tasks.

Respondent 3

Completing my first presentation in English felt like a huge achievement. I was nervous at first, but when I received positive feedback from my teacher, it boosted my self-esteem and motivated me to improve further.

Respondent 8

I felt proud when I was able to write an essay without using a dictionary. It made me realize how much my vocabulary and writing skills had improved, and it motivated me to keep pushing myself.

The responses show that learners get significant motivation and confidence virtues from the achievement of key milestones in their language learning process. Such activities include passing exams, delivering presentations, and doing some essays independently, and they are happy when they receive positive feedback; this was regarded as having concrete milestones towards accomplishment, which boosts their confidence. They are accomplishing things that endorse their increasing competence and skills which in effect increases their self-confidence level, and makes them strive more. For instance, coming out of a test or a speaking activity usually involves a transition in learners' self-conceptions from initial diffuse anxiety to feelings of accomplishment. Moreover, individual transformations, like watching an English movie without subtitles or writing an essay without carrying a dictionary are more effective since they are specific achievements of the particular skills mastery.

Adaptation & Resilience

Respondent 4

At first, I struggled with how direct people are in Malaysia, especially in class discussions. I adapted by trying to be more open and express my opinions confidently. I also made an effort to learn about the local customs, which helped me feel more comfortable.

Respondent 5

The language barrier was challenging, but I adapted by practicing English outside of class with my roommates and local friends. I also joined cultural events to understand Malaysian traditions and make new friends.

Respondent 6

I initially found it difficult to understand the Malaysian accent, but I built resilience by watching local TV shows and listening to podcasts. Over time, I became more familiar with the accent and felt more confident in my listening skills.

The results indicate that learners employ a range of coping mechanisms to establish cultural readiness and adapt to a multicultural learning environment. There is one notable way: direct immersion into the local culture, as they can attend social events in the foreign country, start acquainting themselves with the specifics of local customs, or even try the local food, which should all contribute to making them feel less isolated from the local population. Other needs include expanding the scope of language practice beyond the classroom and managing diverse accents and sounds to resolve communication issues. Another area that learners deploy to build resilience is learning how to address fit and misfit in different interactional contexts, which includes addressing different social expectations by, for example, becoming comfortable with a more assertive communication style or with being more laid back about time. In this regard, learners develop a level of openness and organization that enables them to become accepting of their environment and confident in their capacity to learn from it. These responses suggest that personal assertiveness and social participation tend to enhance resilience in the face of developmental adversity in a cross-cultural educational program, further underlining the importance of cultural acclimation in the process of emotional and social development.

Motivation & Perseverance

Respondent 4

Whenever I struggle with speaking or grammar, I remind myself why I started learning English in the first place so I can pursue my dream of studying abroad. This long-term goal keeps me motivated, even when it gets tough.

Respondent 6

I keep track of my progress by setting small, achievable goals. For example, I challenge myself to learn a certain number of new words every week. This helps me stay motivated and see my improvements.

Respondent 8

When I feel discouraged, I think about the opportunities that speaking English will open up for me in my future career. I also try to remind myself that everyone faces difficulties, and perseverance is key to success.

The responses indicate that learners sustain motivation and endurance through a combination of short-term tactics and long-term objectives. Some of the participants use either personal dreams or goals such as pursuing a scholarship for studying overseas or getting a better job promotion as motivation by keeping the focus on the goal whenever they are faced with challenges. When learners were establishing their goals, they were asked to set small identifiable, and measurable courses of interventions to be taken at a given time. They should always be achievable to provide them with a feeling of accomplishment, even if their progress is slow. Another interesting factor is social support, a student's interaction with peers or a positive response from instructors reaffirms his/her belief in the intention and persistence. Furthermore, learners use English in contexts that interest them, thus making learning more enjoyable and less of a chore.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Themes Aligned with PERMA Components

Positive Emotions

Participants provided reports of sections of happiness and positivity during interactions related to the intensive English program. Such emotions emerge from the classroom activities that involve collaboration and engagement either in a discussion, drama, or an organized competition in group work, or a stand-up presentation (Roy, 2024). They help in decreasing language anxiety and assist in creating a positive perception by the learners towards such activities which goes a long way to enhance the mood and motivation among the learners (Gregersen, Macintyre, & Meza, 2014). For instance, one of the participants said, 'Speaking in the classroom and doing group assignments left a positive impact on my feeling of well-being, and I liked to see myself improving' (Yang, 2021).

Engagement

Engagement or the level of participation in learning activities also featured prominently as another of the study's overall themes. All of the participants revealed some 'task absorption', especially during state tasks that are fun but demanding for instance debates and problem-solving exercises. This is consistent with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow where learners get to focus, feel happy with what they are doing, and consistently achieve their intended goals. For instance, the possibility to apply multimedia tools and real-life simulations was highlighted to create high involvement and learning persistence.

Relationships

The theme highlighted the role of social relations in promoting the welfare of learners. Peer and instructor support was also mentioned by the participants to be one of the most important for the facilitation of an effective learning environment. Other tasks which are in groups also assist the learning of new languages besides enhancing the fellowship play roles in eradicating loneliness within a different

cultural environment that an individual is not used to (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). As one participant commented, “Our teacher was very friendly and that gave me the courage to ask questions and explain my difficulties.” Effective student-instructor interaction has been demonstrated to influence academic motivation as well as emotion (Gumelar et al., 2024; Tang & Zhu, 2024).

Meaning

Learning a foreign language was widely associated with the participants’ view of themselves and their individual goals. Most participants stated that fluency in English was not only a learning achievement but also a platform for numerous life goals, including education, employment, and social interaction. These meanings came with the specific learning goals and their alignment with their long-term goals which make up part of the PERMA model. For instance, one of the participants said, “Learning English has empowered me to dream of studying in another country.” These findings support the idea of creating a meaningful context that will keep learners engaged and committed to their learning activities (Curren et al., 2024).

Accomplishment

The language skills achieved were recognized as gains, which helped participants feel more confident and improve their self-esteem. Accomplishments consisted of passing language tests or specific activities like presenting a business plan, or receiving a good comment from the teacher, which were perceived as turning points. These achievements not only activate the learners’ perceived ability and their desire to achieve more to decrease gaps between them and their perceived self, thus embracing a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2006). For instance, one of the participants was proud and more motivated when they saw that their test scores were improving. These moments coincide with other research that has focused on accomplishment as a way of improving one’s quality of life (Shao et al., 2019).

Emerging Themes Beyond PERMA

Adaptation Strategies for Cultural Differences

Cultural transition as another theme pointed out overwhelmed participants’ ability to cope with a different culture (Zhang et al., 2021). Some learners highlighted that they faced challenges in dealing with people from different cultural backgrounds, which made them feel uncomfortable and nervous. But they also discussed what they did to find a more effective solution such as participating in cultural activities and seeking support from fellows who had the same experience. The above strategies not only increase their cultural competence but also enhance their quality of life, as they feel a sense of belonging to that culture.

Perseverance and Motivation

Another very strongly evident theme was that of persistence and motivation. The participants underlined the significance of maintaining

motivation in such conditions as language difficulties, and academic demands (Yan et al., 2020). For instance, one found it easy to set short-term goals and achievement of these goals was done with jubilation. These results correspond with that of the theory of grit which refers to passion and persistence towards achieving long-term objectives as related to estimated student success and well-being (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). This voiced information can be seen in the following quote from one of the participants: “To this, I said ‘I stop and tell myself it’s not about the destination anymore, it’s about the journey’.”

Comparison with Literature

The conclusion made in this study accords with preceding research studies done on the PERMA framework and its effectiveness in educational contexts. For example, it is known that emotions contribute positively to learning, as well as engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Fredrickson, 2001). Consequently, the assertion is in line with the idea of relationship by Minh (2024) about relationships as a way of making the academic environment free of loneliness and increasing students’ desire to learn. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2023) noted that students, who experience discrimination or cultural barriers, benefit from social support system and emotion regulation techniques. It shows that peer relationships and institutional support are very important for decreasing cross-cultural stress and increasing students’ motivation. These results add more support to the argument of having social and emotional support strategies in intensive English programs.

Nevertheless, this research also provides some culturally specific findings concerning Chinese EFL learners learning in Malaysia. The focus on the strategies of adaptation and the part played by perseverance puts stress on the fact of how learners’ cultural and psychological backgrounds should be considered when developing programs for cross-border education. These findings, therefore, expand the current usage of the PERMA model for a new group’s understanding of how cultural adaptivity and resilience are related to the PERMA model.

Furthermore, in contrast to much of the prior research that follows ontological and epistemological positivism to measure the PERMA factors with numerical indices using self-report surveys (Butler & Kern, 2016), this study gives voice to learners’ real-life experiences, which enrich the understanding of how PERMA factors can be promoted and flourish by exploring their real-life events. For instance, the component focusing on meaning as a motivation emphasizes the need to connect learning experiences to people’s purposes and goals in life which is a relatively underexplored area that has been covered in quantitative research.

CONCLUSION

Building on this study, the PERMA model is applied in a cross-cultural context of language learning to demonstrate how cultural adaptations can either enhance or hinder the well-being process. The study also demonstrates that cultural adaptation strategies are important factors that enhance or inhibit learners’ well-being, in

addition to the five elements of PERMA. These strategies, as used in managing communication, respecting cultural practices, and dealing with culture shock, augment and enlarge the standard PERMA model by providing practical solutions to issues that affect learners in the intercultural educational environment. It also emphasizes the need to take cultural factors into account when implementing such positive psychological frameworks when working in diverse teaching and learning contexts. In addition, the study enriches the positive psychology body of knowledge as it describes how resilience and perseverance combine with PERMA features to promote learners' well-being. Some of the most critical plays in turning the participants' engagement and achievements included resilience, which enabled participants to manage unfamiliar cultural norms, and perseverance which demonstrates the participants' capacity to stay motivated despite various barriers. As we highlighted earlier, self-regulation and resilience have been noted to promote positive psychological processes. Thus, illustrating the relationships between these factors within the PERMA model, this study enriches the theoretical knowledge of learners' engagement and flourishing in challenging learning environments.

It is the role of policymakers and institutions offering education to come up with intervention measures for Chinese EFL students in cross-border education. These initiatives should also take into consideration cultural modifiers affecting learning, such as communication barriers affecting learners. Learners should be encouraged to attend pre-departure cultural orientation sessions or In-country cultural integration workshops as this will enhance learners' ability to cope better with new environments. The second critical policy recommendation is the promotion of relationship-building and cultural sensitivity training for educators. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the learner's experience, and instilling tools to develop positive relationships and resolve cultural differences is essential. Strategies for building rapport in the classroom, developing an inclusive classroom environment, and integrating cultural aspects into the curriculum are areas on which training programs can focus. Such efforts would further improve the effectiveness of the intensive English program in general and the well-being of both learners and teachers.

This study is limited by its qualitative approach, which focuses on a small sample of Chinese EFL learners from Hebei Province. While the case study method provides in-depth insights, its findings may not be generalizable to all international students. Additionally, self-reported data may be subject to response bias, as participants may present their experiences in a more positive or negative light depending on their personal perceptions. Future research should incorporate quantitative methods or mixed method approaches to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

The sustained impact of intensive English programs on learner well-being is also worth investigating in longitudinal studies. Observing language proficiency and well-being over time can be a way to figure out how the two may relate to each other. Additional studies into such programs can examine the longer-term benefits of incorporating positive psychology principles into educational programs, contributing to more effective and holistic approaches to language learning.

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