Applying PERMA-based lessons for EMP speaking instruction to enhance students' learning experience

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Abstract

To integrate the Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning in life, and Accomplishment (PERMA) model into teaching English speaking to create a harmonious English learning class, this study investigated lecturers' feedback on the designed lessons and students' perceptions of learning these lessons in their English for Medical Purposes (EMP) speaking class. To serve the first purpose, a workshop was held to introduce and demonstrate the PERMA-based lessons to EMP lecturers, who then delivered their feedback via an open-ended questionnaire. To serve the second purpose, student participants attending PERMA-based lessons in EMP course 1 and standard lessons in EMP course 2 gave feedback in interviews. The findings reveal that the PERMA-based lessons embodied the PERMA model values, demonstrating their effectiveness in improving students' learning enjoyment by engaging them more in study, fostering their positive feelings, and reducing their negative counterparts. It is then recommended that the validation process in this study can be used in other research aiming to validate intervention programs. Second, EMP teachers incorporate these lessons into their teaching, and lecturers from other educational fields consider adapting these lessons to foster their teaching and benefit their students.

1. Introduction

The concept of positive education has long been gaining more attention in English learning and teaching. Under the light of the PERMA model, it is believed that more efforts should be made to create a happy learning environment in language classrooms. This is because learning a foreign language is naturally challenging, presenting numerous barriers that can hinder success. Amidst this difficulty of foreign language learning, speaking learning proves challenging for students (Riasati and Rahimi, 2018; Le et al., 2024; Ly and Nguyen, 2024). Therefore, applying PERMA strategies to foster a positive and supportive learning atmosphere is a promising solution to cope with language learning adversity (Helgesen, 2016; Cheng and Chen, 2021; Dong, 2021). However, until now, there has been little application of the PERMA model in EFL or EMP contexts, leaving a gap to be filled in the existing literature.

Building on the theories of the PERMA model and recognizing the importance of student well-being in their learning process, this study has developed PERMA-based lessons designed to enhance the quality of learning English speaking skills for EMP students. However, the concern about the quality of these lessons and whether they effectively align with the PERMA model's principles to ensure that EMP students learn to speak English in a supportive and balanced environment remains a big question to be addressed. Therefore, validating these PERMA-based lessons first and then examining how students perceived these lessons in their learning is essential for the study. Consequently, this study aims to address two research questions, including

1. What are the lecturers' evaluations of the PERMA-based lessons?

2. What do students perceive of the PERMA-based lessons?

2. Method

2.1 The PERMA Model

This model was devised and refined over several years by Seligman and his colleagues in 2000, 2002, 2009, and 2011. It encompasses five key aspects that define the concept of well-being.

The P-Positive emotion. The feeling of happiness and satisfaction in life drives people to pursue throughout their lifetime. This can be achieved when people know how to nurture positive emotions as often as possible. Positive emotions can come when people are with the ones they care about, do what they enjoy, listen to inspiring music, and acknowledge what is going well in their lives.

The E-Engagement. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) uses the term 'flow' to decode engagement. According to him, this is the state of spirit when people enjoy doing something so immersedly that they lose track of time or other current affairs. Within that state, people will engross themselves in the things that engage them, using their highest strengths (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The R-Relationship. To explain this aspect, Seligman (2011) uses 'Other people'. Specifically, when people live their lives, they have connections with other people around, making up the notion of society. Once their relationship is positive, it urges other dimensions, i.e., Positive emotion, Engagement, Meaning in life, and Accomplishment, to thrive

The M-Meaning in life. A meaningful life drives people to attempt to pursue their living purposes. Meaning does not involve one's own sake only. It also refers to what one can do for other people around them (Seligman, 2002). Once people know what they live for, they can specify a scheme to use the best of their ability to achieve their goals.

The A-Accomplishment. Cheng and Chen (2021) believe that Accomplishment is a bridge to the mastery of competence and stimulates students to invest in their learning. Accomplishment is always associated with a sense of pride, which is an important part of well-being (Seligman, 2011)

The integration of these five aspects constructs the concept of well-being, a basic human right according to the World Health Organization (Mercer, 2021). Seligman (2002) further clarifies that these aspects are not independent entities; rather, they are intertwined and mutually influential. Therefore, an intervention aimed at enhancing people's well-being should consider each aspect of the model as a unified whole, rather than viewing them as separate components of a large picture.

2.2 Positive education interventions

The Penn Resiliency Program aims to help students enhance their ability to deal with daily stressors and ubiquitous issues that adolescents face in their lives.

The Strath Haven Positive Psychology Curriculum focuses on encouraging students to use their signature strengths in a new way to cope with adverse situations. As a result of this, students can obtain learning engagement, enjoyment of school, achievement, and social skills.

The Geelong Grammar School Project implements interventions to help students discover their signature strengths and make use of them, thus relating to positive things that happen in students' daily lives that make them feel good. The special thing about this project is that it not only intervenes in students, but also involves many other types of stakeholders, e.g., administrators, teachers, and students.

Helgesen's (2016) PERMA intervention: Happiness in ESL/EFL offers EFL teachers a valuable opportunity to foster their teaching and support students in achieving success in language learning in a hedonic way. The researcher proposes strategies to integrate Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning in life, and Accomplishment into students' English learning experiences.

2.3 A PERMA-Based intervention program for EMP students

Based on the principles of the PERMA model, the positive education programs, the PERMA-based lessons were developed. This development is informed by the conceptual framework for second language teaching outlined by Ellis and Shintani (2014), which encompasses the concepts of approach, method, and technique.

Approach. Happy language learning involves a process of cultivating students' well-being as a means to attain learning purposes. This process is divided into five key aspects: Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning in life, and Accomplishment.

Method. The teaching methodology is PERMA-oriented, using techniques targeted at the five dimensions of the PERMA model.

Techniques. The teaching techniques can be diverse and may include PERMA-based speaking prompts, PERMA-based tasks that align with course requirements, and the use of related videos.

2.4 English for Medical Purposes (EMP)

Maher (1986) defines 'English for Medical Purposes' as the teaching of English to medical people, i.e., doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals. Moreover, according to him, the purposes of such an EMP course are to meet the specific needs of the English knowledge of medical students, to focus on specific themes or topics that are strongly related to the medical field, and to enhance skills that are appropriate for medical students.

Salager-Meyer (2014) argues that one of the most important skills to be cultivated in EMP courses is speaking skills, and there are three important values that such instruction should focus on. First of all, it should focus on helping medical students and health professionals communicate in their academic cultures. This is because there are circumstances where these professionals need to exchange information or cultivate medical knowledge with their institutions, instructors, peers, or colleagues. Second, EMP speaking courses have to familiarize EMP students with the language of medical conference presentations, where they strengthen their understanding of medical problems shared in the conference and deliver presentations themselves. Lastly, it is to teach students to convey doctor-nurse-patient communications in which the doctors are expected to diagnose a patient's health problem, enquire about their patient's social or psychological issues, or even check their patient's understanding (Salager-Meyer, 2014).

2.5 Method

The study employed a time-series design and a mixed-methods approach. First, to collect data from the lecturers, an open-ended questionnaire was administered to them after the workshop. Second, to collect information about students' perceptions of the PERMA-based lessons, interviews were conducted.

2.5.1 Research setting

The study was conducted at a university of medicine and pharmacy in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. The university curriculum included two compulsory courses in English for Medical Purposes, where students were taught the four English language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In each course, students studied nine topics related to healthcare science. In Course 1, the topics were Hospital Staff, Hospital Equipment, Respiratory System, Circulatory System, Digestive System, Blood, Bones, Nursing, and Surgery. Meanwhile, in EMP course 2, nine other units, i.e., Skin, Nervous System, Endocrine System, Reproductive System, Urinary System, Talking about Symptoms, Diagnostic Equipment, Administering Medication, and Describing Frequency, were covered. Importantly, all these topics were taken from the same book, with the same level of proficiency and lesson design.

2.5.2 Participants

There were two types of participants in this study, EMP lecturers and medical students. Regarding the lecturers, all six lecturers of the EMP courses in the university were invited to join the study. All of them had over 10 years of experience teaching EMP courses, including teaching speaking skills. Their expertise was regarded as valuable for evaluating and validating the PERMA-based lessons. Moreover, one of them agreed to teach both the PERMA-based lessons and the standard lessons to the student participants.

On the part of student participants, a class of 41 medical students was chosen randomly to experience the PERMA-based lessons and the standard lessons. Consequently, 11 students attended the focus group interview after the PERMA-based lessons, while the other 07 students had the face-to-face interview after the standard lessons. The changes in students who attended the two interviews and the number of them were seen to have no effects on the results of this study because the study merely examined students' perceptions in general, and the collected data were found to be saturated in the end.

2.5.3 Instruments

The open-ended questionnaire

The open-ended questionnaire was administered to the lecturers to gain their insights into the lessons designed. Originally, the questionnaire consisted of three sections to collect information about 1/ the levels of achievement for each dimension of the PERMA model; 2/ the potential effectiveness of the PERMA-based lessons, and 3/ the possibility of applying these lessons. Each section contained questions for the participants to rate their responses using a seven-point Likert scale, and to explain their answers.

The interviews

 In the first interview, 11 students attended a focus group interview where they all answered how they evaluated

their experience with the PERMA-based lessons. In the face-to-face interview after the standard lessons, another 07 students provided feedback on how they perceived the differences between the PERMA-based lessons and the standard lessons that they had, selecting the one that they preferred and explaining the reasons after their choice. The information on how students perceived when they had and did not have the PERMA-based lessons was expected to provide a multi-dimensional image of their experience.

2.5.4 Procedure

The study contained two stages. In the first stage, after the PERMA-based lessons were developed, a workshop with the lessons' demo teaching was held for EMP lecturers to gain their evaluation via an open-ended questionnaire. Their feedback was used to make any necessary modifications to the lessons. Then, in stage two, the lessons were taught to the student participants, and their perceptions of the lessons were collected. Finally, students continued to attend the second EMP course with the standard lessons and gave their feedback on the two types of lessons.

2.5.6 Data analysis

The descriptive test with the mean, standard deviation, min, and max was used to analyze the quantitative data. These helped to figure out the tendency and dispersion of the data.

To interpret the qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed. According to Ary and Sorensen (2010), Braun and Clarke (2006), and Cohen and Morrison(2001), there are six steps in treating qualitative data following a thematic analysis. These steps include familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing reports.

Regarding this study, the two big themes to be addressed in lecturers' responses consisted of the similarities and differences in their viewpoints. In respect of students' answers, the finalised themes were students' description of their experience with the PERMA-based learning activities, the improvement of students' engagement, the improvement of students' positive emotions, the improvement of students' relationships, the meaning of the PERMA-based learning activities on students' learning, the improvements in students' accomplishments, the decrease in students' anxiety about speaking English, students' resistance to the PERMA-based learning activities.

2.6 Ethical approval

Several steps were taken to ensure the participants' confidentiality. First of all, all the participants were invited voluntarily, and their consent to take part in the study was obtained before the study. In the data analysis, participants' names were replaced by codes. For example, the lecturer participants were nominated by Lecturer 1, Lecturer 2… Meanwhile, student participants were named ST1, ST2, ST3, etc. To eliminate gender bias, the personal pronouns 's/he' and possessive adjectives 'her/his' were used whenever necessary. Most importantly, the study obtained ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of Can Tho University of Medicine and Pharmacy under Decision No. 319/ĐHYDCT, February 6th, 2024..

3. Results: Development in choices of the best ELT methodologies over the time

3.1 Results of stage 1

3.1.1 Achievement levels of the lessons for each PERMA model dimension

To seek information about this, participants were asked to rate their assessment on a scale and comment on their choice.

Table 1. Achievement levels of the lessons for each perma model dimension

Aspects	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Positive emotion	6	6.0	7.0	6.12	0.41
Engagement	6	5.0	7.0	5.67	0.82
Relationship	6	6.0	7.0	6.17	0.41
Meaning in life	6	6.0	7.0	6.33	0.52
Accomplishment	6	5.0	6.0	5.83	0.41
Valid N (listwise)	6				

Table 1 shows that the PERMA-based lessons exemplified the PERMA model to a quite high level when all the means ranged between 5.7 and 6.3. Among the aspects, the lessons reflected Meaning in life, Relationship, and Positive emotion the most. Meanwhile, the manifestation of Accomplishment and Engagement through the lessons was at a lower level.

The triangulated data reveal that the lessons can reflect the values of each dimension of the PERMA model. Among the five dimensions, Positive emotion, Relationship, and Meaning in life were most clearly represented. The results of the questionnaire were reinforced by participants' explanations. For example, warm-up questions designed to trigger students' positive emotions and connect with their daily experiences helped students feel good and eager to join their class (Lecturers 1 and 2). This demonstrates that the lessons were attentive to students' emotions throughout their learning process (Lecturer 3). Moreover, Positive emotion was seen as being fostered during the pre-, while-, and post-stages of the lessons through interactions with their lecturers, games, and videos (Lecturer 5). Furthermore, awarding extra points for interactive activities like discussions and games contributed to facilitating students' hedonism (Lecturer 2).

Apart from being appreciated, it was suggested that the lessons could tackle ten other sub-dimensions of Positive emotion, such as hope, joy, amusement, gratitude, etc., simultaneously to make them more Positive emotion-oriented (Lecturer 6).

Relationship was well expressed in the PERMA-based lessons through interactive activities between students and students, and students and lecturers. The regular interaction between them helped strengthen their relationships (Lecturer 5). In addition, Meaning in life was achieved through the designed activities. For instance, the close-up questions were found to be meaningful when they asked students to reflect on what they studied and accomplished after each lesson (Lecturer 1). Furthermore, Meaning in life was obtained via authentic tasks about students' lives and studies (Lecturer 5).

In contrast, Accomplishment received different opinions from the lecturers. For example, Lecturer 4 argued that significant development could not be achieved in just one lesson. In his/her opinion, meaningful progress required prolonged exposure to these activities. However, Lecturer 5 challenged this view by highlighting the usefulness of interactive, meaningful, and engaging tasks. S/he confirmed that these activities helped students develop specific competencies after each lesson and that accumulating these achievements over time would improve students' overall knowledge and skills.

Similar to Accomplishment, Engagement elicited differing views from the participants. Three lecturers agreed that the lessons could activate students' engagement through active learning techniques such as games, videos, and extra point awards. However, Lecturer 4 claimed that student engagement depended more on students' self-perceptions and competence rather than the lessons alone. This viewpoint was opposite to many other researchers in the field. For example, while agreeing that students' self-perception is important to their learning engagement, Astin (1999), Csikszentmihalyi (1990), and Hiver et al. (2021) argue that lecturers should take measures to encourage student initiatives, as this is crucial for learning new knowledge. Regarding students' competence, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) mentions in his theory of flow that, to make engagement happen, tasks could be of students' current competence at the first stage, then be elevated to be of higher requirements. Conclusively, the viewpoint of Lecturer 4 was acknowledged, and attention to student engagement should be paid closely to during the intervention process.

Briefly, it can be said that the PERMA-based lessons reflect all five dimensions of the PERMA model. The feedback from validators has reinforced their strengths and highlighted areas for improvement, ensuring their effectiveness in teaching.

3.1.2 Potential effectiveness of PERMA-based lessons in EMP speaking classes

Table 2. The levels of potential effectiveness of the PERMA-based lessons

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Potential effectiveness of the PERMA-based lessons	6	5.0	6.0	5.61	0.49
Valid N (listwise)	6				

Table 2 shows that the PERMA-based lessons were capable of attaining success if they were applied in teaching EMP speaking (*M*=5.61).

In combination with the triangulated data, it was seen that the designed PERMA-based lessons were likely to attain success if used to teach English speaking in an EMP class. This is because the lessons offered several opportunities for students to practice the language. For example, according to Lecturer 1,

"The lessons are designed to help students develop their speaking skills. Through the designed activities, students have opportunities to discuss and present their ideas to their friends. Moreover, by listening to their friends' presentations, students can sharpen their knowledge and enhance their speaking skills." (Lines 36-39, Appendix 1).

As a result of this, the lessons could engage students to study and hence foster their learning passion. Lecturers 3 further explained, *"I feel that the lessons are well-designed and better tailored, which may increase student attention to their study…"* (lines 43-44, Appendix 1). Moreover, Lecture 5 added, *"Students are more likely to enjoy studying when the lessons are engaging and interesting"* (lines 49-50, Appendix 1), and therefore, students' English speaking skills could be enhanced.

However, lecturers were concerned about the class size and the time constraint. They were afraid that such teaching strategies could be effective in small class sizes, but when there were more students in the class, it would be hard to cover all the content or to reach all students, resulting in a time constraint.

To remedy this concern, the lessons subsequently included different task types where students worked individually or with others. In addition, student rotation was applied to make sure that all of the students were reached. To address the time consumption, some tasks were assigned as take-home work whenever time was not allowed in class.

3.1.3 The possible application of the PERMA-based lessons

All the lecturers approved the application of the PERMA-based lessons in teaching English speaking to EMP students. They further explained that the designed lessons offered many benefits, such as developing students' speaking skills, learning autonomy, and creativity. Moreover, the lessons contributed to varying the lecturers' teaching strategies, making their classes more vivid and interesting. For example, Lecturer 1 said, *"PERMA-based lessons offer many advantages to students in their study and help them develop their speaking skills."* (lines 52-53, Appendix 1). Meanwhile, Lecturer 2 added, *"Through activities like games, students can improve their autonomy, creativity, and apply their skills in speaking activities."* (lines 54-55, Appendix 1)

Apart from that, one lecturer suggested that the warm-up questions could be more diverse because repeating the same questions might lead to boredom and diminish students' enthusiasm.

To this end, the PERMA-based lessons gained approval from the lecturers, and their suggestions to improve the quality of the lessons were noted to make necessary changes.

3.2 Results of stage 2, interview 1

 After experiencing the PERMA-based learning activities, 11 student participants voluntarily attended a focus group interview to share their perceptions of the lesson intervention.

3.2.1 Students' description of their experience with the PERMA-based learning activities

The PERMA-based learning activities served many benefits to the students and contributed to improving student learning in many aspects. For example, the activities were effective in assisting students' understanding of the topics and content of the lessons (ST2, ST3, ST5, ST6, ST7, ST8, ST9) as students confessed that "*Her teaching helped me absorb the knowledge better*…" (lines 16-17, Appendix 2) and "…*helped me access the topics more easily*…" (lines 46-47, Appendix 2) and strikingly "…*had a lot of positive effects on me*..." (lines 64-65, Appendix 2).

Students had a lot of opportunities to practice English, which was another prominent point drawn from the students' sharing, as ST8 described

"…*the teacher intentionally asked students to speak English and tried to maintain the flow of her interaction with the students. Therefore, even if the students were shy and refrained from speaking English, they would also have to open their mouths and speak some English. I mean all the students had opportunities to speak English…"* (lines 79-84, Appendix 2).

Moreover, the warm-up questions at the beginning of each speaking lesson were found to be meaningful in helping students practice saying things about their lives and making them feel more confident when speaking English. For example, ST11 shared that "…*the two questions in the warm-up section helped us be more confident when speaking in front of many people*…" (lines 119-121, Appendix 2). At first, the section aimed to help students get ready for the lessons by saying something familiar and close to their lives, and hence getting a good feeling before diving into the main content of the lessons. In the end, it turned out that such activity could also improve students' confidence in speaking English.

Regarding students' favorite activities during the PERMA-based learning activities, the two most mentioned factors were students' interaction with their friends and with their teacher, and games. For instance, students said that the interactive activities helped to "…*improve my communication skills*…" (lines 24-25, Appendix 2); made them feel happy because they "…*could understand and speak English in class*…" (line 36, Appendix 2) and helped them "…*feel more confident when speaking English*…" (lines 99-100, Appendix 2). Moreover, students

appreciated the employment of games in their speaking class. They believed that games created a fun learning atmosphere (ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4, ST6, ST9) and were meaningful as well as effective for them to learn vocabulary as ST2 confessed that games "…*were fun and meaningful to learn vocabulary because we didn't only play, once we had the answers to the games, the teacher would ask us more questions so that we could speak more…*" (lines 14-16, Appendix 2).

3.2.2 Improvement of students' engagement

Thanks to the lessons, students were engaged in many different interactive activities in class. For example, they worked in pairs or groups to discuss the topics of the lessons and answered different questions from the teacher. As a result of this, students were more active and initiative in their learning as ST3 shared that s/he was "…*active when studying…*" (line 29, Appendix 2) and "…*no longer passive in learning…*" (lines 30-31, Appendix 2). Students even *"… had the motivation to do self-study…*" at home (line 18, Appendix 2), "…*followed the teacher's guidance to do more self-practice…*" (line 91, Appendix 2). Moreover, students wanted a good speaking performance in class as ST6 shared that "…*whenever it was time for the English class, I prepared for it carefully so that I could speak more efficiently when invited*…" (lines 61-63, Appendix 2).

Importantly, students paid attention to their friends' conversation presentations and the teacher's corrections to learn more about the topics and improve their work. This is because "…*when the teacher corrected…friends' work…",* students *"could also learn something for …own conversations and improve them better*…" (lines 72-73, Appendix 2). Students thus appreciated the opportunity to comment on each other's work. Specifically, "…*when one group finished presenting their ideas about the topics, the teacher invited other groups to pose questions or comment on the group's presentation...*", such interaction was found to be meaningful because students "…*could learn from each other…*" (lines 124-127).

Flow was explicitly seen in student engagement when students got absorbed in what they were doing in the speaking class as they were more focused on the task in class because they "… *saw … learning was more effective…*" and they "…*could even stay more focused on the lessons...*" (lines 101-102, Appendix 2). Interestingly, students felt interested and happy in completing the activities as ST6 accepted that "…*now in the English-speaking lessons when the teacher invited me to speak, I felt happy and could finish answering her questions in complete sentences…*" (lines 59-61, Appendix 2).

3.2.3 Improvement of students' positive emotions

As noted from students' sharing, it is needless to say that students' positive emotions governed most of their learning time in class. A counting of keywords showing positive emotions such as fun (4x), happy (6x), excited (1x), active (1x), confident (6x), and proud (2x) indicated that these feelings appeared rather regularly in students' learning.

Specifically, the games created a fun learning atmosphere. Therefore, students considered the games "*meaningful and effective to learn vocabulary*…" (lines 14, 51, Appendix 2, because they helped students "…*remember the vocabulary better*…" (line 8, Appendix 2). Meanwhile, other students felt excited and active as ST3 said that s/he "…*really liked … class because we were happy, excited, and active when studying...*" (lines 28-29, Appendix 2). Most importantly, students felt happy in the speaking class because they "…*could understand and speak English in class…*" (lines 35-36, Appendix 2) and attained satisfactory scores in the final exam (ST5, ST6, ST7).

3.2.4 Improvement of students' relationships

Students' relationships with their teachers and friends developed considerably via the PERMA-based learning activities. First of all, students had a supportive and rewarding relationship with their teacher and friends. For example, students were encouraged to make an effort to learn, to interact in English and were corrected if they made mistakes by their teacher. This can be seen when the teacher asked students "…*different small questions…*", helped students "…*practice the new words…*" or ... *asked more questions to elicit more ideas*…" from the students (lines 5-11, Appendix 2. Apart from that, the teacher "…*often asked and interacted with*…" the students*,* and "…*tried to maintain the flow of her interaction with the students*…" (lines 80-81, Appendix 2)*,* helping them "…*be more fluent in speaking and responding to her*…" (lines 45-49, Appendix 2). Thanks to the teacher being *caring* and *patient with the students*, the students felt cared for and loved in their class.

Apart from the inspiring relationship with the teacher, students enjoyed a reliable and harmonious relationship with their friends via the intervention of the PERMA-based learning activities. For example, when students practiced with their friends, listened to their friends' conversations, and gave feedback on each other's performance, they learned from each other and improved themselves. As ST8 ever said, "…*I worked with my partner and my group really well to complete the tasks. I really appreciate our cooperation*…" (lines 86-87, Appendix 2). ST9 complemented this point and added, "…*when other students spoke in the class, I listened to*

them, learned more words, and edited my conversations …" (lines 108-109, Appendix 2). Students' mutual relationships in the speaking class were strengthened deeply through the PERMA-based learning activities.

3.2.5 Meaning of the PERMA-based learning activities on students' learning

As many students agreed, the PERMA-based learning activities brought a lot of benefits and meaning to their learning. Many of the students' sharing reinforces this point. For example, students learned more knowledge related to their field of study as they confessed that they "…*learned a lot of useful knowledge about general medicine…*" (lines 3-4, Appendix 2), they "…*read more about the disease, its symptoms, and treatment…*" (lines 21-22, Appendix 2) and hence, they "…*learned more medical knowledge in this way…*" (lines 22-23, Appendix 2). In addition, students see that they could improve themselves. For example, they became more confident thanks to practicing speaking with their partner and teacher (ST3, ST7, ST8, ST9, ST11) and had better self-study skills thanks to take-home tasks and ongoing tasks in class (ST2, ST6, ST8, ST10).

3.2.6 Improvements in students' accomplishments

Students' accomplishments were obtained very clearly through students' sharing. For example, students admitted that they absorbed more knowledge about their field of study, knowledge of vocabulary, and pronunciation. (ST1, ST2, ST6 ST8, ST9, ST11). As a result of this absorption, students remembered vocabulary better (ST1) and improved their pronunciation (ST6).

Interestingly, students could engage in longer conversations and interactions with their friends and their teacher. For example, ST5 no longer "…*had difficulty expressing what I meant because I didn't know how to say it...*" (lines 49-50, Appendix 2) like before. Instead, now s/he could respond and speak fluently with the teacher. In the case of ST6, s/he shared that before the intervention program, s/he "…*had never spoken...*" in front of many people "…*in English…*", and especially "…*in complete sentences...*" (lines 58-61, Appendix 2), like what s/he could do after the intervention program.

Needless to say, it is thanks to these PERMA-based learning activities that students could speak confidently (ST3, ST6, ST7, ST8, ST9) and fluently (ST3, ST5, ST7, ST8). What is more, students developed their self-study skills and became more initiated in learning (ST2, ST6, ST8, ST10).

3.2.7 The decrease in students' anxiety about speaking English

It was thanks to the PERMA-based learning activities that many students reduced their language anxiety, feeling less stressed and scared when speaking English. For instance, ST5 said, "…*the teacher's teaching strategies helped me feel less stressed when studying English…*" (lines 44-45, Appendix 2). This was approved by ST10, who admitted that in the latter stage of the course, s/he felt less scared when speaking English. ST6 and ST7 even emphasized that s/he was not scared of English anymore. Rather than that, they would like to prepare well in advance before class time so that they could have an efficient performance when invited to speak.

From this point, it can be said that the PERMA-based learning activities contributed to fostering students' well-being and reducing their anxiety about speaking English.

3.2.8 Students' resistance to the PERMA-based learning activities

Despite the fact that all students acknowledged the importance of the PERMA-based learning activities to their English speaking, not all of them favored this way of language teaching. Specifically, one student admitted that the activities of the PERMA model did not suit her/his personality. Since s/he was a silent person and preferred to speak less, adapting to so many activities at a time was a bit too much for her/him.

This is to say that the PERMA-based learning activities cannot go without any flaws. Therefore, any resistance to this teaching has to be taken into account to work on appropriate remedies for later applications.

3.3 Results of stage 2, interview 2

In this section, 07 students agreed to give their feedback on the two types of lessons via a face-to-face interview. According to their sharing, there were important points made. First, the results of Interview 2 strengthened the findings in Interview 1, as both of them were quite similar. Second, the standard lessons did not contribute a lot to either developing students' speaking skills or creating a comfortable learning environment.

First of all, students admitted that the PERMA-based lessons gave them more joy and fun when studying. In other words, their positive emotions were much better when they had the lessons. For example, ST1 said that s/he "…*felt more cared…*" (Appendix 3, line 33) in class while ST6 preferred the lessons because "…*learning English was more fun…*" and "…*enjoyable and did not put any pressure…*" (Appendix 3, lines 63-64). In addition, students' engagement was fostered when they were engaged in a lot of interactive activities (ST3) with the teacher, in pairs,

or in groups (ST1). As a result of this, students were "…*more engaged and concentrated on learning*…" (ST3, Appendix 3, lines 44-45) and thus got better preparation for the final speaking exam (ST6). Furthermore, students' relationships with their teacher and their peers were deepened when students felt that they were more cared for because the teacher asked them more questions about their lives and encouraged them to speak English (ST1). The teaching strategies also helped student learning become more authentic when the teacher *"... taught and explained vocabulary through videos or related situations. So the knowledge was practical and easy to understand*…" (Appendix 3, lines 90-92). The combination of these factors contributed to improving students' speaking skills when they could speak more fluently (ST3) and express their ideas better without having to learn by heart (ST6).

However, there was still a case when students did not like the PERMA-based lessons because they felt anxious and stressed when having to speak English in class (ST9), meaning that the lessons could reach all types of students, which triggered further investigation.

About their experience with the standard lessons, many students admitted that they did less practice. Specifically, ST1 "…*just studied the content in the coursebook*…" (Appendix 3, line 5) while ST2 confessed that they had fewer interactive activities (ST7), "…*the interaction mainly happened between the teacher and some invited students...*" (Appendix 3, line 18) and they "…*rarely practiced in pairs or groups*…" (Appendix 3, line 19). Learning was not authentic when the vocabulary extended was too complicated and abstract to apply in reality (ST2, ST3, ST7).

The consequences of these factors were diverse. First, students lost interest in studying and were less engaged in learning as ST1 confessed that s/he "…*was too lazy to prepare for the lessons*…" (Appendix 3, line 13). Moreover, students encountered difficulties in preparing for the final speaking exam, pronunciation of difficult words, as ST1 shared that s/he "…*had a lot of difficulties getting familiar with speaking in English and pronouncing difficult words*…" (Appendix 3, lines 23-24). Contributing more explanations, ST6 said that to cope with the speaking exam, s/he had to learn by heart. As a result, students experienced more 'anxious' and 'stressed' feelings and had more pressure when studying EMP speaking.

However, in contrast to the other six students, ST9 still preferred the standard lessons. This was because the student accepted that s/he learned more with the vocabulary extension and was not required to speak much in class.

3.4 Discussion

In combination with the results in stage 1 and stage 2, it can be said that the PERMA-based lessons offer several advantages over traditional methods.

First, it has to be confirmed that PERMA-based lessons can increase EMP students' experience of learning English speaking skills considerably. This experiment simultaneously confirms what previous researchers, e.g., Achor (2010), Seligman (2000), Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), Waters (2011), Macintyre et al. (2019), Dong (2021), and Yang and Mohd (2021) concluded about the effects of positive psychology interventions on students' well-being. Specifically, students' positive emotions mostly govern students' experience during the intervention of the PERMA-based learning activities. This is in good agreement with Helgesen (2016), who emphasized that positive emotions should be the first aspect to be impacted in students' language learning. This finding is thus consistent with Seligman (2000) and Macintyre (2019), who claimed that cultivating positive feelings can help to decrease the counterpart in students' learning process.

Moreover, students enjoy supportive and harmonious relationships with their teacher and friends throughout the intervention program, contributing to the growth of students' learning of English speaking. This value is barely distinguishable from Mercer (2021), who admitted that people's relationships play an important part in the language learning process.

Apart from the blossoming of students' positive experience, the study finds that students' learning anxiety is significantly lowered thanks to the PERMA-based learning activities. This, once again, concurs well with Seligman (2000) and Macintyre (2019). Despite this attribute, it is noted that students still feel scared when speaking English, meaning that although the PERMA-based learning activities can nurture students' positive emotions, they cannot wash away students' negative feelings completely. This has to be acknowledged as a potential shortcoming of the intervention program that future applicants should take into consideration. Moreover, this value supports Kern et al.(2015), who concluded that the presence of positive feelings does not necessarily imply the absence of negative ones.

Key implications can be drawn from the findings of this study. For example, PERMA-based lessons offer benefits to both lecturers and students and should be implemented in EMP speaking instruction. Second, to optimize the application of these lessons, lecturers should be adaptable and modify them as needed to accommodate class size and time constraints. Third, while the lessons from this study mainly focus on

teaching English speaking skills in EMP courses, it is recommended that lecturers in other language skills or fields use these lessons as a source of reference for creating their PERMA-based lessons.

4. Conclusion and recommendation

Aiming to validate and evaluate the PERMA-based lessons for EMP speaking instruction, this study first sought experts' feedback on the lessons after the workshop with demo teaching, then interviewed students after they experienced both the PERMA-based lessons and the standard ones.

The triangulation of the collected data indicated that the PERMA-based lessons incorporated the aspects of the PERMA model and proved to be effective in teaching EMP speaking. Moreover, they can foster students' positive feelings while declining the counterpart to a lower level. Apart from that, the lessons can engage students in learning English speaking and is possible to develop their speaking skills simultaneously.

Consequently, it is suggested that EMP lecturers consider applying these lessons in their teaching of speaking skills to enhance their students' speaking performance. Furthermore, lecturers in other language skills and other fields are encouraged to develop their own PERMA-based lessons to enhance student engagement and better their teaching careers. Most importantly, the validation process in this study, combining the experts' feedback and students' perceptions, can serve as a valuable example for future studies. Moreover, further studies can also be conducted to measure the effects of the PERMA-based lessons on other aspects of student learning, such as their engagement and learning performance.

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