

Powerfully Positive: Searching for a Model of Language Learner Well-Being

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Abstract Positive psychology examines and promotes human well-being. This chapter describes the author's quest to create a useful, understandable model of language learner well-being known as EMPATHICS. The chapter offers some basic information about positive psychology, explains why the author at first used a less elaborate model, PERMA (Seligman, 2011), and gives a rationale for devising the EMPATHICS model. The bulk of the chapter outlines key elements of EMPATHICS and presents interdisciplinary research that serves as a foundation for the model. The model, after further refinement and validation, can significantly enhance language learner well-being and seems to be adaptable to language teacher well-being and to the well-being of learners and teachers outside of the language field.

Keywords Well-being • Language learners • Positive psychology

1 Introduction

Positive psychology is all about human well-being.¹ The goal of this chapter is to describe my quest to create a useful model of well-being, a model that, after further development and validation, could become widely used in the field of language learning. As this chapter will show, I first considered a simple, well-known, published model of well-being (PERMA) developed by a premier positive psychologist (Seligman, 2011), but I soon had to alter it to make it more meaningful, and even

¹On principle, I believe that human well-being cannot long exist without attention to the well-being of other species and the Earth as a whole (see Oxford & Lin, 2011). Positive psychology will eventually need to address this topic.

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then I found that it was still theoretically incomplete. After that, I decided to create my own model, EMPATHICS, which is more extensive, more grounded in the theory of complex systems, and richer in related research (Oxford, 2016). My ultimate goal is to enhance the lives of language learners, although the model can also relate to individuals in countless contexts. At the same time, the EMPATHICS model seems broad enough to encompass the well-being of people who are formally no longer learners, although all of us are arguably learners throughout the lifespan.

1.1 Organization of the Chapter

This section provides some basics of positive psychology and describes my initial involvement positive psychology (with PERMA) before I devised my own model. Section 2 portrays the PERMA model and how I revised it. Section 3 presents an abbreviated version of the EMPATHICS model (see Oxford, 2016 for complete details), which I developed on the basis of published research, as well as my experience as a language teacher educator, former language teacher, and educational psychologist. Section 4 concludes the chapter with recommendations for the future.

1.2 Foundations of Positive Psychology

Positive psychology examines positive elements and strengths in the human psyche and human experience, not just the problematic, distressing aspects that have often been psychology's stock in trade. Focusing on human well-being, positive psychology faces human difficulties from the standpoint of strength instead of weakness. Because ancient religious and philosophical leaders discussed virtues, happiness, and the good life, we might say that positive psychology has been present for thousands of years. It has certainly been reflected in humanistic theory and research in the twentieth century (Linley, Joseph, Maltby, Harrington, & Wood, 2011). However, only during the last decade and a half has positive psychology become a coordinated, scientific field with intensive scientific sharing, institutional and personal networking, and major handbooks and textbooks (see, e.g., Lopez & Snyder, 2011; Peterson, 2006; Seligman, 2011).

1.3 My Initial Involvement with Positive Psychology

I started studying positive psychology intensively a few years ago while working with Professor Lourdes Cuéllar in analyzing the rich, written narratives of her Mexican university students. These students were studying Chinese in their home country, and several of them also learned Chinese on trips to China. They showed

an amazing love of the Chinese language and culture and of their teacher, as well as motivation, inspiration, resilience, autonomy. To analyze the data, we used Seligman's (2011) PERMA model (see Sect. 2). We published a joint article that captured the feelings and experiences of these intrepid, talented, spirited learners (Oxford & Cuéllar, 2014). However, for our research with Mexican learners, as well as for a different positive-psychological study comparing two learners, a successful, satisfied language learner and a traumatized one (Oxford, 2014), it was necessary to adapt the PERMA model significantly to correct some logical weaknesses in the model.

2 Understanding the PERMA Model

Seligman (2011) stated that the purpose of his well-being theory, centered in PERMA, is to “increase flourishing by increasing **p**ositive emotion, **e**ngagement, **m**eaning, positive **r**elationships, and **a**ccomplishment” (p. 12, emphasis added). Those factors are important, but I felt they sometimes needed to be rethought and reorganized (Oxford, 2016), as shown below.

2.1 *Lack of Mapping the Character Strengths onto the PERMA Elements*

Seligman suggested that the five PERMA elements are underpinned by 24 character strengths: creativity, curiosity, judgment or critical thinking, love of learning, perspective or wisdom, bravery or valor, perseverance, honesty or authenticity, zest or vitality, love, kindness, social intelligence (emotional and personal intelligence), teamwork, fairness, leadership, forgiveness, humility, prudence, self-regulation, appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality (Peterson, 2006; VIA Institute of Character, 2014). Unfortunately, specific associations between the PERMA elements and the character strengths were not made by Seligman or his colleagues.²

²In the apparent absence of any published mapping of the character strengths onto the PERMA elements or vice versa, I created such a mapping by using logic and a knowledge of psychology. For example, love, hope, and gratitude seem to be *positive emotions*. Curiosity, perseverance, and zest are associated with *engagement*. Honesty, kindness, social intelligence, teamwork, fairness, leadership, and (interpersonal) forgiveness are linked with *relationships*. Perspective, appreciation of beauty and excellence, and spirituality are yoked to *meaning*. Creativity, judgment, bravery, love of learning, self-regulation, prudence, humor, humility, and once again perseverance and zest are tied to *accomplishment*. I might even say that *all* of the virtues contribute to accomplishment to varying degrees. Any theoretical mapping, including mine, needs examination by panels of experts and could benefit from empirical testing.

2.2 *Questions About the Independence of the PERMA Elements*

Seligman (2011) claimed that each element in the PERMA model “is defined and measured *independently* of the other elements (*exclusivity*)” (p. 16, emphasis added). However, this aspect of PERMA—the independence of the elements in terms of definition and measurement—is not empirically supported by my studies. For example, I repeatedly discovered that engagement and meaning are inextricable and that other dimensions are mutually interactive. The theory of complex systems, which positive psychology seems to ignore, suggests that any language learning system is deeply contextualized and has many intricately interacting, evolving components. All of this seems to be missed in PERMA.

2.3 *Difficulties with Five Elements of PERMA*

Before creating EMPATHICS, I modified Seligman’s (2011) PERMA framework and used the modified framework in two successful studies (Oxford, 2014; Oxford & Cuéllar, 2014). However, I continued to wonder whether the PERMA model, in either the original version or my modified version, was fully adequate for language learning. My critique of the PERMA model is shown below.

2.3.1 *Wrong for Positive Psychology to Focus Only on Positive Emotions*

Although positive and negative emotions are both present in learning, Seligman’s (2011) well-being theory focuses on positive emotions, the P in PERMA, without considering negative emotions. Seligman (2011) endorsed Fredrickson’s (2004) “broaden-and-build” hypothesis, which states that positive emotions, such as happiness, curiosity, interest, pleasure, and joy, broaden the individual’s options, build greater skills and competence, and trigger spirals of well-being, while negative emotions narrow the person’s possibilities and often focus on fundamental, survival-related issues.

However, language learning offers a complex picture of emotions. Less successful learners clearly experience anxiety and other negative emotions (Horwitz, 2001), but even the most effective language learners occasionally experience such emotions while working toward proficiency. In fact, sometimes negative emotions have some conceivably positive effects, such as keeping the learner alert. More on this topic will be discussed on emotions in Sect. 3.3.1.

2.3.2 The Incorrect Separation of Engagement and Meaning

Instead of separating *engagement* and *meaning*, as in Seligman's (2011) theory of well-being, I put the two together as *meaningful engagement*. My rationale is that learners become engaged in that which they consider meaningful and try to avoid that which they feel is not meaningful. Meaningful engagement embraces intrinsic motivation, flow, self-determination, and investment. The first three are part of standard positive psychology (Lopez & Snyder, 2011), and the fourth, investment, alludes to the fact that the learner invests or does not invest in learning the language for sociocultural reasons (Norton, 2010). These reasons might include the degree of cultural capital (Ushioda, 2008) and social capital such an investment will provide.

2.3.3 The Problem of Incomplete or Weak Thinking About Contexts

For positive psychologists the term *relationships* refers to healthy interpersonal relationships, which are part of well-being (Seligman, 2011). However, aside from "institutions," the contexts of those relationships are hardly discussed in Seligman (2011). PERMA does not look deeply enough at the whole context, such as culture, socioeconomic status, politics, religious beliefs, and so on.

2.3.4 The Vagueness of "Accomplishment"

Accomplishment can refer to achievement of many kinds (Seligman, 2011), but that conception seems somewhat vague. When applying the term *accomplishment* to language learning, I have tried to make the meaning clearer. To me it encompasses (a) the development of various degrees of language proficiency over time; (b) achievement in a particular curriculum or course; and/or (c) self-regulated behavior, beliefs, affect, and strategies related to developing skills in the language and culture-related understanding.

2.4 Moving Ahead

PERMA's elements, in their original form and even in the revised shape I gave them, were helpful for understanding learner well-being but were definitely not sufficient. Believing that the language learning field needed a richer model of learner well-being (which could eventually be expanded to teacher well-being), I developed the EMPATHICS model, described below.

3 The EMPATHICS Model

The EMPATHICS model (Oxford, 2016) emerged gradually during 2014 and 2015 and is still evolving. It is being tested largely through narrative data from learners.

3.1 A Short History of EMPATHICS

At the 2014 International Conference on Language and Social Psychology in Honolulu, Hawai'i, I presented a paper (Oxford, Pacheco Acuña, Solís Hernández, & Smith, 2014) discussing the findings of a study by my Costa Rica-U.S. narrative-research group. At the end of the paper I briefly mentioned the shortcomings of PERMA for positive psychology conceptualization and data analysis, and I gave a very brief description of the EMPATHICS model. I received very encouraging feedback. As a result, I developed the model further and presented it at the 27th International Conference on Foreign/Second Language Acquisition in Szczyrk, Poland (Oxford, 2015c) and in an in-depth chapter (Oxford, 2016).

3.2 What EMPATHICS Means

The term EMPATHICS is an acronym outlining important psychological dimensions that are part of human well-being and that positively influence language learners' achievement and proficiency. The word EMPATHICS is tied to the concept of empathy, which is truly important in language teaching and learning and which is found in the model. The complex, interrelated, interacting, and evolving dimensions include the following³: *E*: emotion and empathy; *M*: meaning and motivation; *P*: perseverance, including resilience and resilience; *A*: agency and autonomy; *T*: time; *H*: habits of mind; *I*: intelligences; *C*: character strengths; and *S*: self factors, especially self-efficacy. In the rest of this chapter, I will signify some key interactions among the dimensions or factors by comments like this: (see **self-efficacy**).

3.3 E for Emotions and Empathy

The first dimension consists of emotions and empathy, which are interwoven.

³The broad dimensions of EMPATHICS are listed here, but some of the factors within them are omitted due to space constraints. For full information on all factors, see Oxford (2016).

3.3.1 Emotion

For MacIntyre (2002), emotion is “the primary human motive” and “functions as an amplifier, providing the intensity, urgency, and energy to propel our behavior” in “everything we do” (p. 61). The human brain is an emotional brain, creating relationships among thought, emotion, and motivation (Le Doux, 1998). Because cognition and emotion are inseparable, emotion is an inherent part of learning (Le Doux, 1998; Oxford, 2015b).

Emotional intelligence is “the ability to understand feelings in the self and others and to use these feelings as informational guides for thinking and action” (Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Yoo, 2011, p. 238). Language teachers can help students to develop emotional intelligence and to use it when in contact with other people. Emotional intelligence is especially necessary in intercultural situations. Dewaele (2013) explored emotional intelligence as related to language learning.

Positive emotions such as “pride and satisfaction with one’s efforts” contribute to language learners’ self-regulation (Schunk & Ertmer, 2000, p. 631) and **autonomy** (Benson, 2011). They also have a motivational role to play in cognition (see **motivation**). Positive psychologists often view happiness as the foremost positive emotion, but happiness could instead be a skill that one can develop by accepting both pleasant and painful emotions (Ricard, 2003). Acceptance of all of one’s emotions, including joys and sorrows, means acceptance of oneself. To paraphrase Florida Scott-Maxwell (1983), “When you truly possess all you have been and done *and felt* (...) you are fierce with reality” (p. 42, emphasis added). Positive emotions can be present in a person at the same time as negative emotions. For example, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) noted that in their study female students showed both greater anxiety and greater enjoyment than male students.

3.3.2 Empathy

Empathy is not just cognitive or emotional; it is both. It is an “other-oriented emotional [and cognitive] response elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone else (...)”. (Batson, Ahmad, & Lishner, 2011, p. 418). Empathy includes such elements as compassion, sympathy, and caring, and it focuses not on oneself but on someone else. Rather than being a disposition or trait, empathy is situated in given contexts and events. For example, a learner might become empathetic toward another learner who is anxious, upset, or confused while doing a particular language activity.

3.4 *M for Meaning and Motivation*

The second dimension encompasses meaning and motivation.

3.4.1 Meaning

According to positive psychology, all humans are goal-seeking and active, and this shows they are always constructing meaning for themselves (Linley et al., 2011). Meaning refers to (a) the extent to which people view themselves as having a purpose, mission, or aim in life; (b) the belief that life is significant and is greater than the present moment; and (c) the means of making sense of our experience, discovering the worth of ourselves and everything else in life, and directing our energies appropriately (Steger, 2011). Meaning can be attained by being responsible in the current moment (Frankl, 1984). In addition, humanistic language learning instruction can foster learners' meaning-based self-actualization (Moskowitz, 1978; Stevick, 1990), as well as inspired consciousness and peak experiences (Oxford & Cuéllar, 2014).

3.4.2 Motivation

For Dörnyei (2009b), “motivation refers to a cumulative arousal, or want, that we are aware of” (p. 209). Intrinsic motivation, i.e., the desire to do something for its own sake due to interest, enjoyment, and challenge (Ryan & Deci, 2001), is particularly important for language learning. Ushioda (2008) compared intrinsically motivated language learners to their extrinsically motivated fellow students and found that the former showed greater retention of information, greater involvement, more creative and efficient thinking, and a wider array of problem-solving strategies. A learner's experience of flow combines complete immersion in a task accompanied by intrinsic motivation, confidence, and perceived timelessness (Csíkszentmihályi, 2008).

Another perspective says that motivation depends on imagination, which helps us define imagined identities known as possible selves (Ryan & Irie, 2014). Possible selves, to be motivational, must be potentially reachable or plausible. Dörnyei's (2009a, b) L2 [second language] Motivational Self System contains two possible selves, known as future self guides: the ideal L2 self (the L2-specific aspect of the person's ideal self) and the ought-to L2 self (reflecting the extrinsic, instrumental motives to learn the L2). Another component of the system is the situated L2 learning experience. Optimally, these three components will be in harmony.

3.5 *P for Perseverance*

Perseverance refers to an ongoing effort to accomplish something valuable despite problems, opposition, difficulties, or failure. Two of the three elements of perseverance discussed in Oxford (2016) are resilience and hope.

3.5.1 Resilience

Resilience has been defined as a “self-righting and transcending capacity to spring back and adapt” despite trauma, adversity, or stress (Truebridge, 2014) and as patterns of positive adaptation in the face of significant risk or adversity (Masten, Cutuli, Herbers, & Reed, 2011). Contributors to resilience include (a) personal traits, or personal protective factors, such as self-efficacy, positivity, attractiveness, goal-orientation, ethics, and a sense of meaning; and (b) social/environmental protective factors, such as compassionate relationships, opportunities for participation, and positive institutions, contribute to resilience.

3.5.2 Hope

Hope is “desire accompanied by (reasonable) expectation” (Clarke, 2003, p. 164). Hopelessness is (a) a lack of positive expectation; (b) a despairing lack of self-regulation and (see **emotions**, **agency**, and **autonomy**); (c) part of demoralization, which also includes helplessness and a subjective sense of incompetence (Clarke, 2003). To help create hope and avoid hopelessness, the person (a) must have certain characteristics, such as motivation, a sense of life purpose, inner strength, and a modicum of energy, and (b) must pursue important, potentially achievable, but moderately difficult goals (Averill, Catlin, & Chon, 1990; Schrank, Hayward, Stanghellini, & Davidson, 2011). For some scholars (Lazarus, 1999; Vaillant, 2008) hope is emotional and not tied to cognition or reason, though the preceding sentence reflects cognition.

Another mainly cognitive model is that of Snyder (2000, 2002). Snyder’s hope theory involves two main kinds of thinking: (a) “pathways thinking” (the belief that one has the ability to find and use routes or strategies to attain a goal) and (b) **agency** thinking (the belief that one has the ability and intention to move via pathways toward a goal). Emotions have a much lower profile in this model. Specifically, the perception of progress toward a goal stimulates positive emotions, while the perception of a goal’s being blocked creates negative emotions. Researchers applying Snyder’s model discovered that people with high hope, compared with those with low hope, were less depressed and more engaged, energized, inspired, goal-oriented, satisfied, and confident (Feldman & Snyder, 2000; Wroblewski & Snyder, 2005). Other studies revealed that long-term hope (trait hope) related to greater academic success, even when a other relevant factors, such as intelligence, previous academic performance, college entrance-exam scores, and self-esteem, were controlled (Oxford, 2016). Creative interventions to stimulate hope in individuals have been successful (Brown Kirschman, Johnson, Bender, & Roberts, 2011; McDermott & Snyder, 2000; Rand & Cheavens, 2011).

3.6 *A for Agency and Autonomy*

Agency and autonomy are the important factors in the fourth dimension.

3.6.1 Agency

Agency is the “capacity to act volitionally to affect outcomes” (Ryan & Irie, 2014, p. 113), the departure-point for developing **autonomy** (Benson, 2007, in Gao & Zhang, 2011, p. 27), and the starting point for learners’ efforts in using learning strategies (Gao & Zhang, 2011). For Agency also means actively engaging in defining the terms and conditions of one’s own learning, deciding on the relevance and significance of what one is learning, and voluntarily controlling behavior (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Agency is linked to **self-efficacy** and **habits of mind**. The agentic person is the origin of his or her actions, has high aspirations and good problem-solving skills, enjoys well-being, and learns from failures (Oxford, 2016).

3.6.2 Autonomy

Autonomy is the capacity to control, take responsibility for, or take charge of one’s learning (Benson, 2011; Little, 2007). Not surprisingly, autonomy is related to learning strategies and self-regulation (Griffiths, 2013; Oxford, 2003, 2015a, 2016). Holec (1981) commented that the autonomous learner has the ability to take charge of every aspect of his or her learning, including decisions about objectives, content, progression, methods, techniques, monitoring procedures, and evaluating outcomes, but he stated that most learners are not autonomous but are involved in the process of gaining autonomy.

Several visual metaphors have emerged to depict the nature of autonomy. For instance, Nunan (1997) and others used the metaphors of increasing autonomy through stages or by degrees. Little (2007) described autonomy as part of a spiral including both interdependence and independence. Menezes (2008) depicted autonomy as a key element in a larger, complex system.

A significant theoretical clash in the language learning field has been whether autonomy is more than just a Western, individualist cultural construct or whether it can also embrace collectivist cultures. This conflict seems to have been reconciled in favor of the concept of “multiple autonomies” that fit different cultures (Oxford, 2016).

3.7 *T for Time*

The fifth dimension concerns time, a very complex area (Boniwell, 2011; Oxford, 2016). I will assume here that time is nonlinear and recursive. In other words, time does not follow a simple pattern of past-present-future, and our interpretations of

past and present events continue to change (Ryan & Irie, 2014). Nonlinearity means that the future and the past can influence present behavior and are part of a person's everyday cognition. I will focus here on some elements of time related to language learners' well-being: temporal appraisal and time perspectives.

In temporal appraisal, some people perceive their past selves less favorably than their present selves and believe their future selves will be still better than their present selves (Ross & Wilson, 2002). To me, that reflects a linear view of time with ever-increasing positivity occurring as an individual's life goes on, different from the nonlinearity mentioned above. However, some theorists assert that happy and unhappy people see time differently, with happy individuals tending to savor past positive life experiences and unhappy people ruminating about past negative life experiences (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2011). I speculate that optimism and pessimism are differentially related to these tendencies.

Zimbardo (2002) noted the value of an optimally *balanced* time perspective, in which "past, present and future components blend and flexibly engage, depending on a situation's demands and our needs and values" (p. 62), although very many researchers promote the future time perspective (FTP) and a few highlight the past-positive time perspective as being the most crucial to well-being (Boniwell, 2011). In Zimbardo and Boyd's (1999) five-factor model, there are two past time perspectives: past-positive (focusing on happy memories) and past-negative (focusing on unhappy memories (see happy and unhappy people above). There are two present time perspectives: the present-hedonistic (pleasure- and excitement-oriented, living for the moment, and courting danger) and the present-fatalistic (tending to be hopeless and attributing control to outside forces rather than the self). Surprisingly, both present time perspectives, hedonistic and fatalistic, seem negative. I ask: Are there no individuals, including language learners, with a present-*positive* perspective? FTP is sometimes described split into high FTP (usually just called FTP) and low FTP (frequently known as absence of FTP). According to several FTP measures, (high) FTP involves actively looking for future opportunities, setting goals, considering future consequences of current behavior using goals as behavior guides, and employing the present period to plan for the future (Betts, 2013) and correlates with outcomes such as motivation, responsibility, planning ability, positive academic performance, and delayed gratification (Boniwell, 2011).⁴

⁴It came to mind that FTP measures might be concentrating on values from individualist cultures, in which individual achievement for the sake of self is highly rewarded. Perhaps researchers could also study "collectivist cultural FTP," which might include goal-setting and planning for deepening the following collectivist values: highly responsible, in-group nurturing and loyalty; achievement for the sake of the family or group rather than the individual; and communication patterns that are indirect, formal, and polite.

3.8 *H for Habits of Mind*

Habits of mind, the focus of the sixth dimension, are “composite(s) of many skills, attitudes, cues, past experiences, and proclivities” and are also “patterns of intellectual behavior” that we value more than other such patterns and that we choose to enact at certain times and in particular contexts (Costa & Kallick, 2008, para. 7). Costa and Kallick studied the habits of mind of smart, successful people in many different fields. They charted and described 16 habits of mind, including the following eight: finding humor, striving for accuracy, persisting (see **perseverance**), thinking flexibly, thinking about thinking, communicating with accuracy and precision, listening with understanding and empathy, and learning through multiple senses. In my experience, language learners who experience well-being use these habits of mind, as shown in Oxford (2016).

3.9 *I for Intelligences*

Theories of (multiple) intelligences challenge the standard, test-based, restricted conception of intelligence quotients and are the focus of the seventh dimension. Among the theoreticians of multiple intelligences are Sternberg (1985, 1997) and Gardner (2004, 2011). Sternberg’s triarchic theory of intelligences suggests that successful intelligence is what helps the individual succeed within his or her own sociocultural context. The theory includes three types of intelligence: practical, creative, and analytical. An individual can possess more than one of these types. Practical intelligence means situational, context-based capability (street smarts and adaptability). Creative intelligence involves using intuition and creativity to deal with novel problems and tasks. Analytical intelligence refers to information-processing and critical thinking skills as found on traditional intelligence tests. Sternberg’s triarchic theory can be related to different types of language learners (Oxford, 2016).

Gardner produced “the best-known contemporary statement about the plurality of abilities” (Peterson, 2006, p. 211). In his theory, each person has a certain set of intelligences, defined as sets of biopsychological potentials to process information that can be activated in a cultural context to solve problems or create valuable products. He argued that the intelligences arose through evolution because they were important to the human species. He also contended that the intelligences in his theory were largely independent of each other, had distinct developmental progressions, and were marked by the existence of savants, prodigies, and other exceptional individuals. In various iterations of his theory, he identified the following intelligences: (a) musical, (b) logical-mathematical, (c) verbal-linguistic, (d) visual-spatial, (e) bodily-kinesthetic, (f) interpersonal (social), (g) intrapersonal (introspective), (h) existential (largely spiritual), and (i) naturalistic (ecological, environmental). His work was intended to empower individuals, not to restrict them to a specific domain of intelligence. Elsewhere I gave examples of how each intelligence relates to language learning (Oxford, 2016).

3.10 *C for Character Strengths*

The eighth dimension focuses on character strengths. The VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues is asserted to be relevant to all cultures (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; VIA Institute, 2014), although I believe the profiles might look quite different across cultures. In this system there are six virtues and 24 character strengths related to those virtues. The virtue of wisdom and knowledge encompasses these character strengths: creativity, curiosity, love of learning, open-mindedness, and perspective. The virtue of courage contains these character strengths: authenticity, bravery, persistence, and zest. The virtue of humanity involves these character strengths: kindness, love, and social intelligence. In the virtue of justice are found these character strengths: fairness, leadership, and teamwork. The virtue of temperance includes forgiveness/mercy, modesty/humility, prudence, and self-regulation as character strengths. The virtue of transcendence embraces these character strengths: appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, and religiousness/spirituality. Oxford (2016) outlines applications to language learning. An individual's **habits of mind** (see earlier) and VIA character strengths, such as open-mindedness, creativity, and curiosity, are directly related to each other; both sets of qualities are positive, intensely embedded, and habitual.

3.11 *S for Self Factors, Especially Self-efficacy*

Positive psychologists (Maddux, 2011; Peterson, 2006) adopted the social cognitive concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997, 2006), on which this chapter concentrates for the last dimension. (See Oxford, 2016, for more self factors in this dimension.) Bandura (1997, 2006) defined self-efficacy as the person's level of confidence (belief) that he or she can successfully carry out an action to achieve a specific goal in a particular setting under certain conditions. Thus, self-efficacy is situated/contextualized. The theory of self-efficacy assumes that people are agentic (see **agency**) and are capable of symbolic thought. It also assumes that self-efficacy, not motivation, intention, innate ability, or personality, is the key factor determining people's choice of goals and behaviors, degree of effort and persistence, and the quality of problem-solving (Maddux, 2011). High self-efficacy involves focusing on finding solutions to problems, whereas low self-efficacy includes reflecting on personal inadequacies and lack of problem-solving efforts (Bandura, 1997). Research suggests that self-efficacy is correlated with the use of language learning strategies (Chamot, 2004; Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, & Robbins, 1996).

Bandura and Maddux describe five sources of information for individuals' efficacy beliefs: (a) their performance experiences, when attributing the outcome to their own efforts; (b) their vicarious experiences, or observing the consequences of others' behaviors; (c) their imagined experiences, or imaginatively seeing themselves or others behaving successfully or not; (d) their physiological and emotional

states that lead them to expect success or failure; and (e) others' verbal persuasion about what the individuals can or cannot do.

4 Synthesis and Suggestions for the Future

This chapter has presented many of the elements of the EMPATHICS model, although these elements, along with several others, are explained in greater depth in elsewhere (Oxford, 2016). The EMPATHICS model significantly expands PERMA, Seligman's (2011) positive psychology model. The EMPATHICS perspective emphasizes the importance of contextualization, given that language learning and language teaching are embedded in particular sociocultural contexts.

To enhance language learners' well-being, future development of EMPATHICS could include intercultural discussions and empirical research studies on relationships among the model's components. Questions might be: What are the multi-way relationships among self-efficacy, agency, and autonomy in various situations and cultures, based on quantitative and qualitative research? What factors emerge in an exploratory factor analysis of an omnibus measure of the EMPATHICS components with a very large, intercultural sample, and are those results supported by confirmatory factor analysis? Research can help refine and validate the EMPATHICS model in general and ensure that the assessment of its components is reliable and valid. An intercultural team of theorists and researchers could conduct the efforts named in this paragraph.

Though EMPATHICS has largely focused on language learner well-being, the model is also adaptable to the well-being of language teachers. Because much of the research on EMPATHICS components originally came from research outside of the language learning field, the model might also be feasible for use in explaining the well-being of learners and teachers in other fields.

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