Integrating Positive Psychology into Chinese Language Education: A Micro-Analysis of *Crossing the Silk Road*, the UAE's Country-Specific Textbook

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Abstract

In line with the Belt and Road Initiative's emphasis on cultural-educational exchange, this study examines how positive psychological constructs are represented in the UAE Chinese textbook *Crossing the Silk Road*. Through lexical frequency analysis and theoretical mapping, it analyses the distribution of positive lexicons, their alignment with the six virtues and the PERMA framework, and their role in cross-cultural communication. The textbook contains 21 positive lexical items, totaling 191 occurrences, but their distribution across proficiency levels (L1–L4) is uneven. High-frequency terms dominate lower levels, while key terms like *nǔ lì* 努力 (effort) and *píng hé* 平和 (calm) appear too infrequently for effective retention. The analysis reveals a strong emphasis on Humanity-related virtues, partial representation of Transcendence and Temperance, and limited development of Justice. These findings highlight gaps in integrating positive psychology into Chinese language education and suggest revisions to enhance linguistic proficiency, intercultural empathy, and alignment with Belt and Road educational goals.

Keywords: Positive Psychology, Six Virtues, PERMA Model, Cross-cultural Communication, Belt and Road

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The author sincerely thanks the anonymous reviewers of both the initial and the second rounds for their valuable comments and suggestions in Chinese and English, which have played an important role in improving this paper.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dellios (2017) highlights that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) seeks to rekindle historical ties through principles such as "win-win cooperation," "mutual respect," and fostering a "community of common destiny." Despite extensive focus on the economic and infrastructural facets of the BRI, its cultural and educational philosophies have garnered less attention. The article underscores the necessity for China to establish educational and cultural institutions that can function as hubs for learning and research across diverse languages and educational traditions.

The historical relationship between China and the Arab world dates back over 2,000 years, significantly fostered by the ancient Silk Road, which served as a vital conduit for both trade and cultural exchange. Both Chinese and Arab cultures emphasize moderation and syncretism, values that can serve as a strong foundation for mutual understanding and integration (Wu, 2022; Pradhan, 2023, pp. 233–249). Chinese-Arab communication has long oscillated between material exchange and philosophical dialogue. From Tang-Song caravans laden with silk and spices to Ming-Qing scholars translating astronomy and ethics, the relationship shifted "from tangible goods to spiritual resonance" (Chen, 2022). This trajectory, rooted in Silk Road reciprocity and now reflected in Belt and Road diplomacy, frames contemporary studies that span historical retrospection (Jazza, 2022; Mingze & Yun, 2024) and present-day economic cooperation (Berro, 2022).

Authenticity, communicativeness, and cultural adaptability have long been emphasized in Chinese textbook compilation (Zhao, 1988; Lü, 1996; Shu & Zhuang, 1996; Liu, 2000; Li, 2006). However, textbooks for school-aged learners must also consider their cognitive psychology and emotional expression. Current research lacks a systematic analysis of embedding positive psychological elements in these textbooks.

In today's interconnected world, language learning is more than mastering grammar or memorizing vocabulary; it is a pathway to personal growth and social connection. Positive Psychology emphasizes that relationships and contributing

to communities are central to a meaningful life (Seligman, 2011; Stavrova & Luhmann, 2016; Gold et al., 2024). Integrating these principles into language education can transform learning into an experience that fosters well-being and engagement.

The Belt and Road Initiative creates opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration and shared purpose. Integrating Positive Psychology into language education not only enhances linguistic skills but also builds resilience and optimism. For example, intercultural activities that promote cooperation and language exchange can strengthen learners' sense of belonging. Yet research shows a big gap: language textbooks rarely weave in PP principles, especially missing the opportunity to use the Belt and Road as a framework to boost learners' cross-cultural identity and positive traits.

This paper suggests fresh ways to integrate these ideas into lessons and materials, aiming to fill that gap. Doing it this way would make learning a language feel more balanced and actually useful in real life.

The subject of analysis in this paper is the country-specific secondary school Chinese textbook *Crossing the Silk Road* (عبر طريق الحرير), co-compiled by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Education and the Center for Language Education and Cooperation (CLEC). In July 2019, the UAEMOE formalized the integration of Chinese language education into its primary and secondary schools through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), incorporating Chinese language instruction into the national curriculum (Zhu et al., 2021; Liang et al., 2022). During the 2020–2021 academic year, 119 public schools launched Chinese courses, employing 210 teachers and enrolling 31,538 students (Wang, 2020).[1] By June 2024, the number of schools offering Chinese courses had increased to 171, with 71,000 students enrolled (Wu, 2024, p. 1). The first UAE-specific Chinese textbook, *Crossing the Silk Road*, was co-developed by Chinese and Emirati scholars to support this educational initiative.

1 Retrieve from https://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202012/22/WS5fe1977ba3101e7ce9736b45.html

This micro-level study explores how positive-psychology constructs are instantiated in the UAE's Chinese language textbooks, using lexical frequency analysis and theory-driven mapping. Three key questions guide it:

(1) Do positive lexicons, both globally and across proficiency bands, span the full spectrum of psychological well-being, and do they recur with the density and cadence required for durable retention?

(2) How do the textbooks' lexical choices map onto the six universal virtues and the Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA) framework (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Dahlsgaard et al., 2005; Seligman, 2011)?

(3) If these virtues and their lexical markers constitute a cross-cultural psychological common denominator, how do the textbooks mobilize them to meet the challenges of intercultural communication?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Positive Psychology and Its Application in Foreign Language Teaching

As early as the Warring States Period (戰 國), Mencius (孟 子 , 372 BC – 289 BC) had already proposed that the "theory of innate goodness" is the core of his educational philosophy, emphasizing the foundation of internal moral cultivation and the perfection of one's moral character through education. In 1998, PP, introduced by Martin Seligman, represented a significant shift from a traditional focus on pathology to an emphasis on cultivating human strengths (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This approach explores individual well-being through three main threads: Positive Experiences (e.g., happiness, optimism), Positive Personality (e.g., strengths, virtues), and Positive Communities and Institutions (e.g., social support, environmental influence). Our research primarily focuses on the first and second threads, examining how positive psychological elements are

manifested through linguistic cues in teaching materials.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) identified six core virtues, a framework further validated by Dahlsgaard et al. (2005). These virtues, namely Courage, Justice, Humanity, Temperance, Wisdom, and Transcendence, provide a structured approach to understanding and cultivating human strengths. These virtues serve as a foundation for fostering resilience and a sense of shared humanity. Moderation, a cornerstone of Temperance, embodies the art of self-regulation to avoid excess, encompassing character strengths such as forgiveness, humility, and prudence. This self-regulation promotes a balanced approach to behavior, desires, and the expression of viewpoints, steering clear of extremes. Syncretism, by contrast, highlights the virtues of Humanity and Transcendence, emphasizing justice in terms of fairness and teamwork, and wisdom in the context of integrating diverse cultures, perspectives, and elements. This integration fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of the rich tapestry of human experience, encouraging us to find common ground while celebrating our differences.

Seligman's (2011) PERMA model frames well-being as a configuration of five mutually reinforcing domains: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Positive emotion subsumes joy, gratitude, love, and satisfaction—

states that integrate retrospective appreciation, present contentment, and prospective hope, thereby widening cognitive scope and energizing subsequent processes. Engagement denotes the flow state achieved when skill and challenge are calibrated; self-awareness and temporal tracking recede, and intrinsic mastery surfaces. Relationships encompass authentic, reciprocal ties that confer a sense of belonging and buffer stress, thereby amplifying the affective returns from other domains. Meaning is generated when behavior is embedded in a value system that transcends the individual, anchoring motivation in times of adversity. Achievement is what happens when you successfully chase goals that matter to you. Here, the effort you put in and the results you get carry equal weight—they feed off each

other, lifting your mood and keeping you engaged.

Positive Psychology has increasingly been applied to second language acquisition to enhance learners' engagement and well-being (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Scholars argue that incorporating PP principles into language education fosters resilience, optimism, and motivation (Wang, Derakhshan, & Zhang, 2021). Empirical studies using the PERMA model demonstrate improvements in speaking proficiency and overall happiness among learners (Esmaeilee et al., 2025). Systematic reviews further confirm strong links between PP and language performance, highlighting its role in promoting learner involvement and emotional regulation (Miao et al., 2025). Practical applications and pedagogical strategies for integrating PP into language classrooms have also been widely discussed (Padilla & Chen, 2025).

Previous studies indicate that linguistic expression is central to the communication of positive psychological attributes. Lexical items serve as a tractable proxy for Positive Psychology because their frequency, recurrence, and contextual breadth allow researchers to trace how psychological constructs are embedded and reinforced through language. Cole et al. (2010) found a strong link between how kids express themselves through language and how they handle their emotions. They highlighted three big pluses: getting better at sharing feelings through talking, understanding emotions more deeply, and learning ways to manage themselves. This aligns with what Curtain and Dahlberg (2010) noticed, that ages 7 to 11 are a critical time for using language to build social skills and become less self-centered. They said focusing on learning words and speaking clearly should be the building blocks of good communication.

Plutchik (1980) proposed "Wheel of Emotions" with eight basic emotions—joy, sadness, anger, fear, trust, disgust, surprise, anticipation, which forms a wheel, spreading out from the center. Emotions like "joy" and "trust" feel good, and they can range from exciting to calming. Jajarmi and Pishghadam (2019) looked more into this topic, checking how teaching language through emotions affects how

well Iranian EFL students remember words long-term. They suggested that letting students create their own emotion-based word lists helps them understand better and care more, by connecting feelings to specific ways of speaking. Brkić (2024) used Plutchik's wheel in EFL/ESL classes to help students learn more words by linking them to emotions. This way, learners get better at words by understanding and talking about feelings in context, which boosts their overall communication skills.

All in all, the six virtues and the PERMA model provides a theoretical foundation to consider word choices, while language education research proves that words possess positive psychological ideas. Together, they are the foundation for looking at how words like these are used and spread in the textbook Crossing the Silk Road.

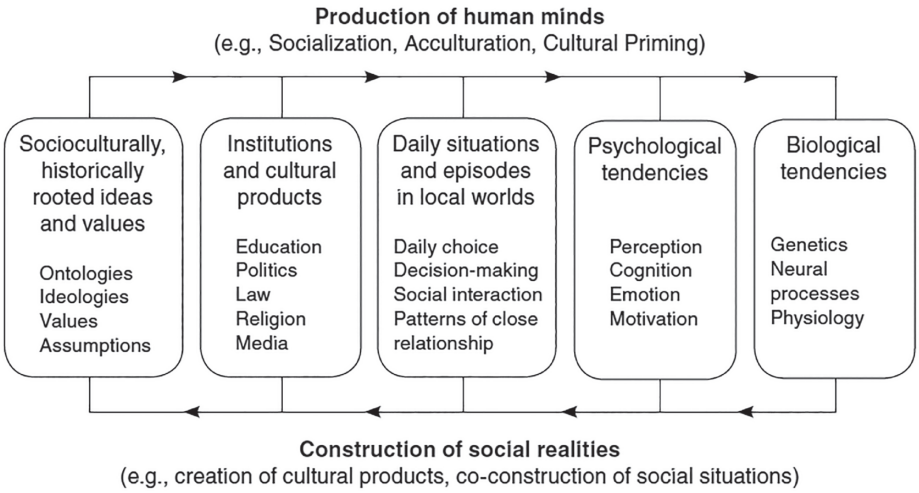
2.2 Positive psychology as the core solution for cross-cultural communication

Cross-cultural communication faces multifaceted challenges. Contemporary scholars have identified at least four key phenomena: cultural content with a high degree of dependence on local knowledge, such as history and traditional customs, often creates a "cultural discount" when encountered by overseas audiences lacking relevant background knowledge. This leads to difficulties in understanding and acceptance. Additionally, linguistic and expressive barriers arise when information is transmitted without multilingual or cultural annotations, resulting in distorted messages and inadequate language adaptation. Communication strategies and contextual adaptation also pose problems; for instance, an excessive focus on cultural differences can stifle commonality and dampen the willingness to collaborate. Structural and systemic barriers further complicate matters, as dominant cultures may interpret weaker ones in ways that reinforce cultural hegemony (Nguyen, 2020; Aririguzoh, 2022; Yao et al., 2024; Zhang, 2025). In response, we propose that the "virtues" and PERMA models of PP can effectively

address these challenges, forming a dynamic chain of prevention, resolution, and deepening.

Shweder (1991, pp. 73–110) revolutionizes our understanding of the mind by rejecting its portrayal as a "detached central processor." Instead, he argues the mind is deeply entangled with cultural contexts—such as how "meaning" is constructed through shared values. For example, the Eastern emphasis on "honor" shapes social interactions and identity formation, yet this concept carries far less weight in individualistic Western societies. Building on this, Eom and Kim (2014) extend the framework by proposing the mutual constitution of psychology and culture. In this dynamic cycle, the psyche is both "shaped by culture" and "shapes culture in return." As visualized in Figure 1, individuals absorb cultural models (e.g., values, rituals) through daily participation in their cultural world, which then molds their psychological tendencies. These tendencies, in turn, guide behaviors that reinforce or reshape cultural realities (e.g., creating new social norms).

Figure 1. Mutual constitution of psychology and culture[2]



2 Reprinted from "Cultural psychological theory," by Eom, K., & Kim, H. S. 2014, In B. Gawronski & G. V. Bodenhausen (Eds.), *Theory and explanation in social psychology* (pp. 328-344). New York, NY: Guilford Press. https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soss_research/2562/

As visualized in Figure 1, this cycle operates through two key processes. Figure 1 further unpacks the reciprocal relationship between mind development and social reality, structured around two core processes: “Mind Production” (e. g., socialization, cultural learning) and “Reality Construction”. In “Mind Production,” four layers of influence—sociocultural values, institutions (e.g., education systems), daily interactions, and biological factors (e.g., neuroplasticity) collectively mold. The psychological tendencies that emerge as the “end product” of the first three cultural layers manifest as stable patterns of how individuals perceive, feel, and act (e.g., prioritizing group harmony in collectivist cultures). In “Reality Construction,” these shaped minds actively create daily situations and world concepts, as well as structure social situations (e.g., workplace hierarchies). Guided by their psychological tendencies, individuals behave in culturally patterned ways (e.g., a “harmony-focused” person avoids confrontations at work), and these behaviors then seep into institutions and reinforce cultural products. In turn, these reinforced cultures loop back to reshape psychology, completing the cycle. Arrows in the figure visualize this continuous feedback: Values shape experiences, experiences mold psychology, and psychology reshapes reality.

Essentially, this perspective fosters a holistic understanding that respects cultural specificity while identifying universal threads in human experience, revealing a dynamic, recursive cycle where psychology and culture continuously shape one another.

By integrating Shweder’s (1991) cultural entanglement theory with Eom and Kim’s (2014) mutual constitution framework, we uncover a critical insight: Virtues and psychological constructs are simultaneously culturally specific and universally resonant. This two-sided approach lets us respect different ways of expressing things. For example, it honors how “honor” is understood in Eastern cultures while still recognizing the shared hopes we all have as humans. Shweder’s focus on how culture and psychology are tied together fits perfectly with PP’s big-picture framework. That framework is key to communicating across cultures.

PP's PERMA model, from Seligman in 2011, works as a handy bridge here. It gets that "mind and meaning" are shaped together within cultural settings. It also points out strengths that matter across cultures. Things like bouncing back from tough times or understanding others' feelings can guide how we interact.

Rooted in six universal virtues—Wisdom, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, Transcendence—the PERMA model gives us tools that work across cultures for cross-cultural connections. How these virtues show up might vary. In East Asia, "Wisdom" often links to Confucian respect for elders. In Western contexts, it's more about critical thinking. But their core goal, helping people thrive mentally, stays the same.

This matters a lot, especially in spaces where Western views often take center stage. PP's focus on treating all cultures as equal makes sure everyone's voice gets heard, as Li et al. (2002) noted. While Positive Psychology promotes cultural inclusivity, its application must be localized to respect contextual nuances and avoid oversimplification. For instance, the UAE textbook *Crossing the Silk Road* incorporates culturally resonant themes such as collectivism and respect for elders, aligning with regional values while embedding universal virtues like Humanity and Wisdom. We'll look at how the textbook *Crossing the Silk Road* uses words to put these universal ideas to work for learning across cultures. We therefore expect Positive Psychology lexicons to act as low-barrier relational lubricants across cultures, a hypothesis tested in Section 4.3.

3. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF TEXTBOOKS AND RESEARCH CONTENT

In this section, we introduce the textbook *Crossing the Silk Road* (ربع طريق الحرير) to elucidate its fundamental characteristics and intended audience. We also delineate its educational objectives and overall structure. Additionally, we present statistics regarding the distribution and frequency of positive psychological terms within the textbook.

3.1 Textbook Implementation, Design Structure, and Learning Objectives

The textbook series *Crossing the Silk Road* (عبر طريق الحرير) is a joint project by UAEMOE and CLEC. It's designed to match the cultural and educational goals of the Belt and Road Initiative. Published by Beijing Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press between December 2022 and May 2024, the six-level series is made to fit the educational needs of the UAE and other Arab countries. Each level includes Volumes A, B, and C, with Volume A containing nine lessons and Volumes B and C each having six lessons. Each volume is designed to cover one semester across the full range of grades in the UAE secondary education system. The textbooks provide bilingual explanations for instructional language, cultural notes, vocabulary, and grammatical structures in both Chinese and Arabic. The series' difficulty increases progressively, starting with basic descriptions of school and daily life, then moving to suggestions and viewpoints, comparing similarities and differences, and culminating in complex discourse functions such as progression, speculation, hypothesis, purpose, and reasoning. To date, twelve volumes across four levels have been published, forming the primary focus of this study. These volumes reflect regional characteristics and highlight the lifestyle and cultural customs of Arab countries.

The learning objectives of the textbook series are to enable students to use Chinese for everyday expression and communication on common topics such as shopping, using public transportation, expressing hypothetical relationships, and conveying speculative tones. Culturally, the series features Chinese and Arab musical masterpieces, traditional dwellings from both cultures, and distinctions between the Chinese and Arabic languages.

The textbook series also features a diverse cast of characters, including those of Chinese and Arab descent, reflecting its commitment to inclusivity and cultural representation. Names such as Ālī (علي), Hāsāng (حسن), Fǎdīmā (فاطمة), Āyīshā (عائشة), and Hālīfā (خليفة) are included, each with historical or cultural

significance. For example, “Ali” is the cousin and son-in-law of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, “Fatima” is Muhammad’s daughter, and “Aisha” is one of his wives (Al-Ja’fari, 1997, pp. 10–25; Ahmed, 1999). Emirati male characters are depicted wearing traditional long-sleeved robes known as قرودنك (Kandora), with a headscarf غترة (Ghutra) secured by a black cord عقال (Aqal). Female characters wear حجاب أميرة (Hijab Amira) and عباءة (Abaya). Arabic cultural elements are didactically incorporated through tasks that combine Emirati landmarks—such as the Burj Khalifa or Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque—with positive affect words, encouraging students to express admiration, gratitude, and pride in culturally meaningful contexts. These elements underscore the textbook’s emphasis on cultural authenticity and diversity.

3.2 Research Content and Data Overall Distributions

The primary focus of this study is to analyze the prevalence of vocabulary within the textbooks that reflects positive psychological traits associated with virtues and the PERMA model. This analysis reveals the distribution and emphasis of these terms within the educational material. By categorizing the vocabulary based on the six virtues and the themes of the PERMA model, we can evaluate the quantity and spread of terms across various thematic categories. This approach allows us to investigate the thematic focus of the textbooks in the realm of positive psychological education. Positive lexical items were defined as terms explicitly expressing positive emotions, virtues, or well-being, based on the six virtues and PERMA model outlined in Section 2.

Directly sampling from the textbooks, this study identifies positive psychological expressions.[3] Examples include 1AL3 “我很高興見到你” (أنا نم يعس يدي / Nice to meet you), 1BL6 “生日快樂” (عيد ميلاد سعيد لك / Happy birthday to you), 2AL4 “你最喜歡什麼顏色” (ام هو لون المفضل

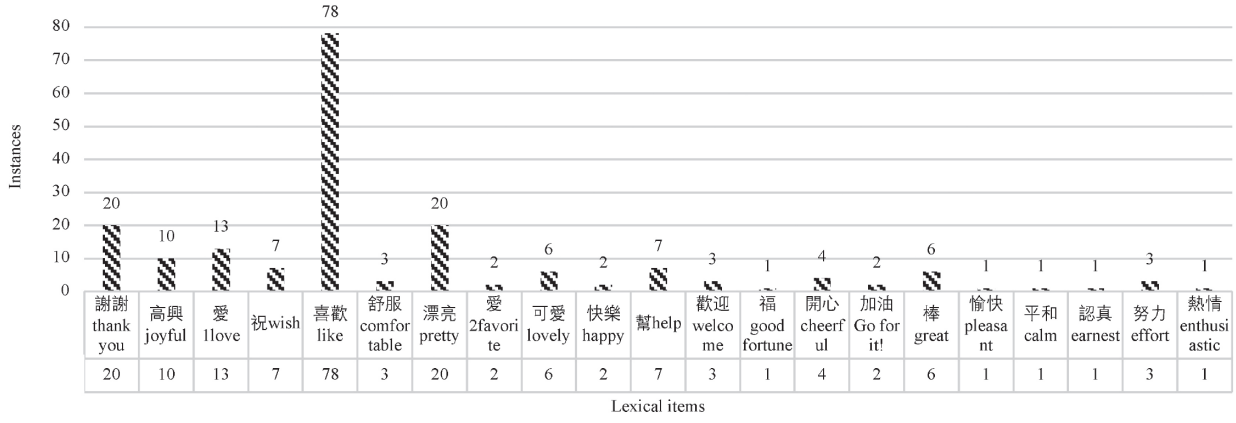
3 In the subsequent notations, we will use the format of “level + volume + lesson number” for indication. For example, “2AL5” refers to Level 2, Volume A, Lesson 5.

لديك؟ / What's your favorite color?), 3CL1 " 這隻熊貓好可愛 !" (فـيطل ادنابـلا اذه ادًج / This panda is so cute!), and 4AL5 " 歡 迎 ! 請 進 " (لضفـت !كب الهس و الهأ كلوخدب / Welcome! Come on in).

Our methodology examines not only the lexical semantic functions of these terms, which pertain to their positive psychological connotations, but also delves into the interaction between psychology and culture. This interdisciplinary approach, which merges linguistics with Pos Psy, establishes a two-tiered analytical framework. It assesses the interplay of psychological and cultural elements, lexical semantics, and the dynamics of transmission.

According to calculations, the textbook *Crossing the Silk Road* contains 21 lexical items, which occur 191 times. The overall situation of the positive expression vocabulary in textbooks is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The frequency of positive lexical items within the textbook *Crossing the Silk Road***.**



The x-axis categorizes lexical items into 21 distinct categories, presented in both Chinese and English. The y-axis quantifies their frequency of occurrence, which spans from 0 to 90 instances, summing to a total of 191 instances. Each item is graphically represented by a bar, the height of which corresponds to its frequency in the textbook, with exact counts provided for precision.

The term " 喜 歡 " (ىوهي /بحي /انالف بجعي translated as "like") appears

most frequently, with 78 instances, indicating a significant emphasis on expressions of preference and approval. So the textbook uses a lot of positive phrases. You'll likely find them when it talks about personal preferences, things people approve of, or friendly chats. Then there's " 謝謝 " (ٱرٗكش/"thank you") and " 漂亮 " (ولح /"pretty") – each pops up 20 times. These show common social moments, like saying thanks or giving a compliment. Words that show up 6 to 13 times include terms for affection, appreciation, and helping. Examples are " 愛 1" (بح/"love") " 可 愛 " (فيطل /"lovely") " 棒 " (زاتمم/"great") and " 幫 " (ةدعاسم/"help"). These words tell us that the textbook uses all kinds of expressions that support emotional well-being and getting along with others. " 高興 " (ديعس/"joyful") and " 祝 " (يّتمتي/"wish") are also in this group. They show the book uses words for happiness and good wishes.

Low-frequency terms (appearing 1–5 times) include " 福 " (ةمعِن ، سةداعس/"good fortune"), " 熱情 " (سّمحتم/"enthusiastic"), " 平和 " (ىئداه/"calm"), " 認真 "(ەدجتم/ "earnest"), " 愉快 "(حرف/"pleasant"), " 加油 "(تسطتيعي ذلك/"go for it"), " 開心 "(ديعس/"cheerful"), " 歡迎 "(مرحاب/"welcome"), " 快樂 "(فرح/حرف/ ديعس/"happy"), " 愛 2"(لّضَفُم/"favorite"), " 舒服 "(مريح/"comfortable"), and " 努力 " (ەدتجم/"effort").

These words don't show up very often, but they still let learners get a better sense of positive ideas. (Maybe rewrite in a more academic style.) That helps them understand positivity more. But these less common words have a downside. To remember things, you need to see them again and again. So words that don't show up much are easier to forget. Not seeing them often makes forgetting more likely. It also means fewer chances to practice using them in real talks. That can slow down how well you communicate. When chatting about feelings or social stuff, having fewer words to pick from makes it harder to share those subtle thoughts. Since learning these less-frequently used words is tricky, we need practical ways to help remember them and use them more.

To mitigate these challenges, textbook developers and educators are

encouraged to increase vocabulary exposure through diverse activities, such as role-plays and contextual writing. By anchoring terms to relatable scenarios, this method not only bolsters language learning but also advances cross-cultural understanding and positive psychological well-being among students, thereby achieving a holistic understanding of the material and enhancing linguistic and cross-cultural awareness synergistically.

4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This section addresses the three research questions in turn, grounding each discussion in the theoretical backdrop and the evidence yielded by the textbook data.

4.1 Distribution and Retention of Positive Lexicons across Proficiency Levels

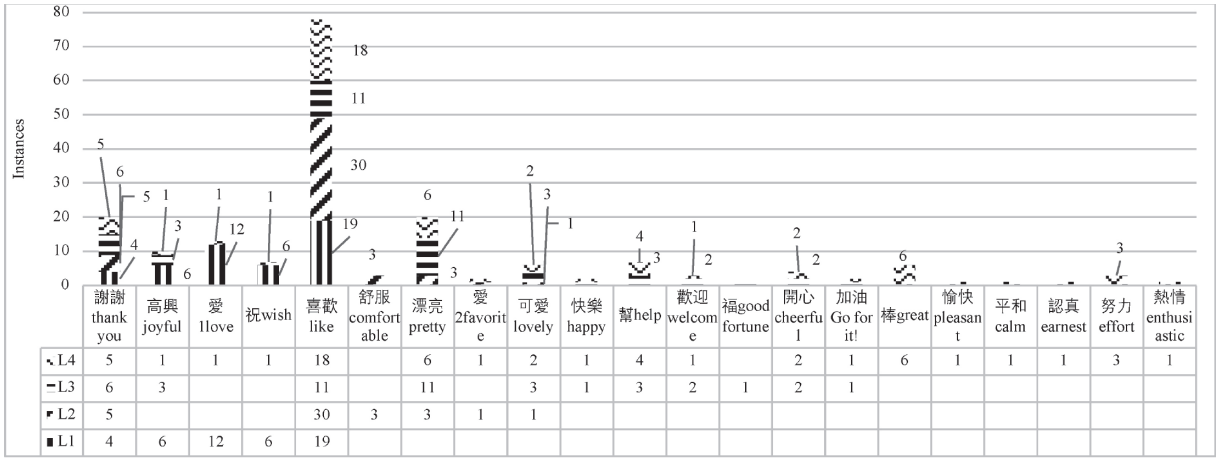
Figure 2 presents the overall distribution of positive-psychology lexis in textbooks. Although diversity is evident, many items occur so rarely that they are unlikely to be solidified in long-term memory. As previously noted, the series is designed for Emirati secondary education, spanning from Level 1 (Grade 7) to Level 6 (Grade 12). Subsequent analyses will trace how these lexical resources are unevenly distributed across the four tiers.[4]

Figure 3 compresses the positive-psychology lexicon into a single bar display. Frequency climbs the y-axis; individual words stretch across the x-axis. Bar height alone tells the story, a sliver for " 福 (good fortune)", " 加 油 (go for it!)", " 平 和 (calm)", etc., a tower for " 喜 歡 (like)", " 謝 謝 (thank you)", " 愛 1(love)", and " 漂 亮 (pretty)". Columns are tagged L1–L4; the integers perched above each bar fix the raw counts at different levels. As shown in Figure 3, lower-level texts (L1–L2) rely primarily on high-frequency vocabulary with transparent

4 As previously mentioned, although the textbooks are designed for six grades, only four levels have been published to date.

meanings, such as “ 愛 (love),” “ 喜 歡 (like),” and “ 謝 謝 (thank you).” These terms, characterized by their straightforward semantics and everyday utility, align with beginners’ limited linguistic capacity while reducing cognitive load. In contrast, mid-level materials (L3–L4) retain this core vocabulary but expand the lexicon to include more abstract, encouragement-laden words: “努力 (effort),” “熱情 (enthusiastic),” “ 加 油 (go for it),” “ 棒 (great),” and “ 認 真 (earnest).” This shift demands deeper semantic comprehension and greater control over language production from learners, reflecting a gradual upward progression in curricular expectations.

Figure 3. The positive lexical items and distribution at four levels in *Crossing the Silk Road*



	謝謝 thank you	高興 joyful	愛 1love	祝wish	喜歡 like	舒服 comfortable	漂亮 pretty	愛 2favorite	可愛 lovely	快樂 happy	幫help	歡迎 welcome	福good fortune	開心 cheerful	加油 Go for it!	棒great	愉快 pleasant	平和 calm	認真 earnest	努力 effort	熱情 enthusiastic
L4	5	1	1	1	18		6	1	2	1	4	1		2	1	6	1	1	1	3	1
L3	6	3			11		11		3	1	3	2	1	2	1						
L2	5				30	3	3	1	1												
L1	4	6	12	6	19																

The distribution of positive lexical items across the four levels is uneven. At Level 1 (L1), for example, only five positive terms appear: “謝謝 (thank you)”, “高興 (joyful)”, “ 愛 1 (love)”, “ 祝 (wish)”, and “ 喜歡 (like).” Notably, “ 愛 1” (love) clusters heavily in L1 (12 occurrences) and barely appears in Levels 2–4 (L2–L4); “ 祝 (wish)” follows this pattern. L2, by contrast, shows greater lexical diversity, adding terms like “ 舒服 (comfortable)”, “ 漂亮 (pretty)”, “ 愛 2 (favorite)”, and “ 可 愛 (lovely).” Yet unevenness persists: “ 舒 服 (comfortable)”, for instance, is confined to L2 with no occurrences in other levels. L3 introduces additional

positive items, including “ 快樂 (happy)”, “ 幫 (help)”, “ 歡迎 (welcome)”, “ 福 (good fortune)”, “ 開心 (cheerful)”, and “ 加油 (go for it)”. These terms recur in L4 but with low frequencies. Building on previously introduced positive lexica, L4 adds “ 棒 (great)”, “ 愉快 (pleasant)”, “ 平和 (calm)”, “ 認真 (earnest)”, “ 努力 (effort)”, and “ 熱情 (enthusiastic)”, again, with insufficient recurrence.

This imbalance likely stems from the textbooks’ level-specific objectives and content design, reflecting a hierarchical organization of positive lexis. But there’s a big issue: these individual words don’t show up very often. That means the way they’re spread out now might make them hard to remember. The positive words that don’t appear much don’t get enough attention. Learners can’t hold onto them for long or get good at using them. Knowing words well matters a lot for understanding and using a second language effectively. Studies, like Bergström et al. (2022), say you need to see words over and over to learn them and keep them in your memory. What’s more, if positive words only stay on one level of the textbook, learners don’t get steady exposure. That slows down their overall language understanding and ability to express themselves. Nation (2001), suggested “spaced repetition” works better. Spacing out repeats over time works better than cramming them all together—it helps words stick in your memory. What’s more, big jumps between levels can throw off the learning flow.

Criado (2009) says repetition acts like a bridge. It moves words from short-term to long-term memory. It lets you use them smoothly, almost without thinking. Criado also says that really learning words depends on four connected things. First, repetitive practice. Doing drills over and over cements word info in long-term memory. That makes using them automatic, as Rundus (1971) and DeKeyser (1997) have noted. Second, how useful the words are for learners’ communication needs. This shows in how often they’re actually used in daily language, according to Nation & Waring (1997). Third, how easy it is to learn the words. This ties directly to how many new words each textbook unit introduces (Nation, 2001, 2006). Fourth, the way words are taught. That means whether the focus is on clear,

direct learning or picking it up naturally through language activities, as Nagy (1997) discussed.

Consequently, the textbook's current design—marked by minimal recycling and stark gaps across levels—undermines both the automation of positive vocabulary and the broader development of learners' linguistic cognition and expressive capacity. These findings highlight a key takeaway: learners typically require between 6 and 20 exposures to effectively master new vocabulary (Rott, 2007; Teng, 2016). Future revisions should therefore systematically align positive lexis with the "frequency–distribution–repetition–activity design" framework derived from psycholinguistic evidence, ensuring learners receive the repeated, meaningful encounters necessary for long-term mastery.

To achieve a balanced distribution of positive vocabulary across different levels of teaching materials, several approaches can be considered. The simplest and most trustworthy way is to follow existing teaching plans. Take the Youth Chinese Test (YCT) as a good example. It has separate writing and speaking parts. The writing test has four levels. YCT Level I covers 80 words. Level II has 150 words, matching the CEFR A1 level. Level III includes 300 words, corresponding to CEFR A2. Level IV has 600 words, which lines up with CEFR B1. The speaking test has two levels: Primary and Intermediate. The YCT's syllabus and guide include topics, tasks, language points, and vocabulary lists. These can help make sure positive words are spread out in textbooks following logical and practical communication rules.

In the realm of teaching materials, it is imperative to judiciously modulate the frequency of significant and semantically rich positive vocabulary to ensure its recurrence across various levels. Take the term " 努力 (effort)", for instance, which makes its debut in 4AL9, yet appears but once. Regrettably, the text fails to incorporate this word into meaningful expressions or exercises; it merely stands as a lone lexical item. This lesson is titled " 你的漢語愈來愈好 (تصبح لغتك الصينية أحسن فأحسن./Your Chinese is getting better and better.)" This could

seamlessly integrate a question probing into the methods of enhancing one's proficiency in Chinese, inviting responses such as " 我每天努力學習漢語 (أنا أدرس اللغة الصينية كل يوم./I diligently study Chinese every day)" or " 謝謝！我覺得只要努力，就一定能取得進步 (شكرًا لك! أنا مؤمن بأن chǎc مدقتلا نأب رمأ لا رفم منم هع لجه./Thank you! I firmly believe that with effort, progress is inevitable.)" These responses, brimming with motivational and uplifting language, should be strategically interspersed across levels L2 to L4. Their presence, in measured doses, can fortify students' retention and comprehension of such vocabulary. Similarly, foundational positive words like " 愛 1(love)", which surfaces in 1BL3 with " 我 愛 我 家 (I love my home)" and reappears in 4CL2 as " 我 愛 您 (أحبك /أحبّكَ /I love you)", and " 祝 (wish)", which follows a parallel trajectory, warrant a spiral pattern of recurrence. This deliberate design, maintaining a consistent frequency across multiple levels, not only strengthens memory but also establishes a robust cycle of learning, consolidation, and application.

Recent studies, including those by Raeissi (2017) and Yang (2022), have emphasized that optimizing vocabulary acquisition requires a dual-pronged approach, focusing on the "3R" principles—recycling, repetition, and retrieval—and integrating vocabulary across diverse contexts. The concept of "multiple exposures across different contexts" underscores the need for vocabulary to reappear in various situations, such as textbook texts, news headlines, and chart captions. This repetition familiarizes learners with the logical use of words in different scenarios. Together, these studies highlight that effective vocabulary acquisition hinges on combining "high-frequency repetition" with "diverse contexts." Relying solely on rote memorization of vocabulary lists is insufficient for deep understanding. Conversely, exposure to contexts without sufficient repetition frequency fails to create lasting memories.

Recent research, like work by Raeissi (2017) and Yang(2022), stresses that learning words well needs two key steps. Focus on the "3R" ideas: recycling,

repetition, and retrieval. And mix words into different situations. The idea of "seeing words in many different contexts" matters. Words need to pop up in various places. Think of textbook passages, news headlines, and chart labels. This kind of repetition helps learners get used to how words fit logically in different scenarios.

Drawing on the preceding discussion, in the family-themed unit of 1BL3, vocabulary such as " 愛 1(love)", " 開心 (happy)", " 快樂 (cheerful)", and " 加油 (go for it!)" can be employed. These words are typically associated with themes of familial warmth, harmony, care, and support, thereby conveying positive emotions and values. In the invitation activity at level 3BL4, " 我們一起去哈利法塔吧 (تعال نذهب إلى برج خليفة معًا/Let's go to the Burj Khalifa together.)" can incorporate not only basic vocabulary but also terms that embody the concept of active participation, such as " 歡迎 (welcome)", " 棒 (great)", and " 熱情 (enthusiastic)".

Similarly, the word " 平和 (هادئ/calm)" appears in 4AL1 to describe the style of a famous Sino-Arabic musical piece. However, its usage extends beyond this context. It can also be applied to describe natural environments, for example, " 這片樹林給人平和的感覺 (هذه الغابة تُعطي إحساسًا بالسكون./This forest gives a sense of calm.) ", and religious and spiritual settings, such as " 清真寺裏面非常平和，讓人感到舒服和真主的愛 (داخل المسجد، هناك سكون شديد يجعل المرء يشعر بالراحة ويشعر أن الله يحبّه./Inside the mosque, it is very calm, making one feel comfortable and loved by Allah.") These contexts also lend themselves to expressing personal inner peace and tranquility. The versatility of this word enables it to convey positive and uplifting emotions in a wide range of situations.

This part is about how people learn positive words from second-language textbooks. It focuses on two things: the words being distributed unevenly and ways to fix that. Positive words in textbooks—like " 愛 1 (love)", " 努力 (effort)", and " 平和 (calm)"—show a mix of plenty and scarcity across levels L1 to L4. Some words bunch up on one level. For example, " 愛 1 (love)" pops up a lot in L1 and then disappears. Others stay alone. " 舒服 (comfortable)" only stays in L2. Not seeing these words enough acts like a big roadblock to remembering them. It stops

them from sticking in long-term memory. Studies have long shown repetition is what moves words from short-term to long-term memory. Learners need to see a word 6 to 20 times to really know it. And spacing out these repeats works better than cramming them all at once. So the way to improve is clear. On one hand, stick to syllabi like YCT. This makes sure words are spread out following how people actually learn languages. On the other hand, create a "spiral repeat" system. Let core words show up again across different topics and situations. For example, "努力 (effort)" can be worked into conversations about learning. "平和 (calm)" can describe different places like forests or mosques.

It's like a prism bending light. Words repeat naturally in various scenes. This strengthens memory while teaching how to use them. In the end, mixing frequent repeats with different contexts helps positive words go from being recognized to being actively used. They truly become tools that learners can use when expressing themselves in the language.

4.2 Mapping Textbook Lexis to the Six Virtues and PERMA Framework

4.2.1 Virtues and Emotions Across Cultures: Insights from Positive Psychology and Religious Scriptures

Peterson and Seligman (2004), together with Dahlsgaard et al. (2005), pointed out that PP needs a classification system everyone can agree on. This system would support serious research. To create it, they studied philosophical and religious traditions from across the globe. These included China's Confucianism and Taoism, South Asia's Buddhism and Hinduism, and Western ones like Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Their work across different cultures found six key virtues that keep showing up: Courage, Justice, Humanity, Temperance, Wisdom, and Transcendence. These virtues include 24 distinct character strengths. This gives a strong, well-founded way to categorize human strengths and virtues—no random choices here.

While these six virtues focus on "internal" character strengths, Seligman's (2011) PERMA model centers on the "external" pursuit of a flourishing life. The former describes the inherent qualities humans possess, while the latter explores how to leverage these qualities to achieve well-being. The two frameworks are complementary: internal virtues (for example, humanity) form the moral core for PERMA elements (for example, positive emotion and relationships), and PERMA practices (for example, engagement) reinforce the expression of these virtues.

Figure 2 illustrates the frequency of positive lexicons in the textbooks: "喜歡 (like)" appears most often (78 times), followed by "謝謝 (thank you)" and "漂亮 (pretty)" (20 times each), and "愛 1 (love)" (13 times). Other terms include "高興 (joyful)" (10 times), along with "祝 (wish)", "可愛 (lovely)", and "棒 (great)". These lexicons reflect key elements of positive emotion in the PERMA model, as well as virtues tied to humanity such as gratitude, love, and kindness. Table 1 further maps 21 positive lexicons from the *Crossing the Silk Road textbook* to the six core virtues and PERMA elements:

Table 1. The 21 positive lexicons corresponding to virtue types and PERMA elements

Lexical items	Virtues Types	PERMA Elements
謝謝（thank you）	Humanity	Positive Emotion, Relationships
高興（joyful）	Humanity, Transcendence	Positive Emotion
愛 1（love）	Humanity	Positive Emotion, Relationships
祝（wish）	Humanity	Positive Emotion, Relationships
喜歡（like）	Humanity	Positive Emotion
舒服（comfortable）	Humanity, Temperance	Positive Emotion
漂亮（pretty）	Humanity, Transcendence	Positive Emotion
愛 2（favorite）	Humanity	Positive Emotion, Relationships
可愛（lovely）	Humanity	Positive Emotion
快樂（happy）	Humanity, Transcendence	Positive Emotion
幫（help）	Humanity	Positive Emotion, Relationships

(cont)

歡迎（welcome）	Humanity	Positive Emotion, Relationships
福（good fortune）	Humanity, Transcendence	Positive Emotion, Meaning
開心（cheerful）	Humanity, Transcendence	Positive Emotion
加油（Go for it!）	Humanity, Courage	Positive Emotion, Engagement
棒（great）	Humanity, Transcendence	Positive Emotion
愉快（pleasant）	Humanity, Transcendence	Positive Emotion
平和（calm）	Temperance, Wisdom, Transcendence	Positive Emotion, Engagement, Meaning
認真（earnest）	Wisdom, Courage	Engagement, Accomplishment
努力（effort）	Wisdom, Courage	Engagement, Accomplishment
熱情（enthusiastic）	Humanity	Engagement, Positive Emotion

As illustrated in Table 1, the virtue of "Humanity" nearly sweeps the board of positive lexicons, with the exception of "認真"(earnestness) and "努力"(effort). Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 38) and Dahlsgaard et al. (2005) define humanity as interpersonal strengths in social interactions. These traits go beyond fairness to embody generosity, kindness, and understanding, often categorized as altruistic or prosocial. Among these strengths, Peterson and Seligman (2004, pp. 293–295) highlight "love" as humanity's most developed form. It weaves connections across relationships (romantic, familial, mentorship, or collegial) through mutual aid, comfort, acceptance, intense positive emotion, commitment, and even sacrifice. In contrast, the absence of love is often marked by hatred, loathing, or spite. Research (Insel, 1997) suggests that despite evolving manifestations from infancy to adulthood, the neurobiological mechanisms underlying reciprocal attachment remain consistent.

The term " 愛 1 (love)" appears 13 times in the textbooks, primarily at Level 1, to teach early concepts of family and interpersonal bonds. For example, 1BL3 includes " 我愛我家 (I love my family)" and " 我愛我的爸爸，也愛我的媽媽。爸爸媽媽都愛我 (I love my father, and I love my mother. My father and

mother both love me)". In Islamic philosophy, love transcends mere sentiment. It is a divine force central to creation and existence (Chittick, 2014, 2024, pp. 94–125). Rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith, and influenced by pre-Islamic and Hellenistic thought, love reflects God's love for humanity (Chittick, 2014). It extends to social interactions and emphasizes ethical balance between spirituality and duty (Karimullah, 2023).

Qur'anic verses underscore love's reciprocity: "Allah will replace them with others who love Him and are loved by Him" (Qur'an 5:54).[5] Another verse includes a supplication: "Our Lord! Bless us with pious spouses and offspring who will be the joy of our hearts, and make us models for the righteous" (Qur'an 25:74).[6] This expresses desire for solace from family.

The term " 喜歡 (like)" appears 78 times in the textbooks to convey enjoyment or approval. Examples include 3AL6: " 我很喜歡熊貓 (I really like pandas)" and 3BL4: " 我很高興你喜歡這裏 (I am glad you like it here)". In the Qur'an, however, "like" often denotes metaphorical "likeness" or "association" rather than psychological preference. For example, "Or should We treat those who believe and do righteous deeds like corrupters in the land? Or should we treat those who fear Allāh like the wicked? (Qur'an 38:28)" [7]and "[Angels], gather together those who did wrong, and others like them, as well as whatever they worshipped (Qur'an 37:22)".[8] Rarely, it describes psychological preference: "As for those who believe and do good deeds, He (Allah) will give them their rewards in full. Allah does not like transgressors (Qur'an 3:57)".[9]

In Arabic, emotional expressions of "liking" or "loving" often use "بح (hub)", which belongs to masculine nouns "رکذم" meaning "love" or "like". This term encompasses familial love, friendship, romantic love, or fondness for things.

5 Retrieve from https://quran.com/al-maidah/54

6 Retrieve from https://quran.com/25?startingVerse=74

7 Retrieve from https://quran.com/38?startingVerse=28

8 Retrieve from https://quran.com/37?startingVerse=22

9 Retrieve from https://quran.com/3?startingVerse=57

It is frequently used in the Qur'an to describe love for Allah, people, or good deeds. For example, "نَّإِ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلتَّوَّٰبِينَ وَيُحِبُّ ٱلْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ"(Surely Allah loves those who always turn to Him in repentance and those who purify themselves (Qur'an 2:222))[10], uses "يُحِبُّ (yuḥibbu)", the third-person singular form of "بح". This highlights semantic differences. Chinese distinguishes " 喜歡 (like)" (milder) from " 愛 (love)" (deeper), while Arabic "بح" converges these meanings.

This observation also highlights the semantic differences between Chinese and Arabic vocabulary regarding the concepts of "love" and "like." While Chinese tends to differentiate between the two, with "love" implying a more profound affection than "like," Arabic often converges these meanings, with "love" encompassing the sense of "like." This distinction is crucial for understanding the nuances of emotional expression across languages and cultures.

Other positive terms—including " 高興 (joyful)", " 漂亮 (pretty)", " 快樂 (happy)", " 福 (good fortune)", " 開心 (cheerful)", " 棒 (great)", and " 愉快 (pleasant)"—extend beyond Humanity to encompass Transcendence. That is, connecting to a larger universe. Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 519) and Dahlsgaard et al. (2005) define Transcendence as strengths that connect individuals to a larger universe, imbuing life with meaning. These include spirituality, which involves a commitment to non-material ideals such as the universal, sacred, or divine.

For example, " 福 (good fortune)" relates to spirituality through belief in sacred forces and the pursuit of spiritual well-being beyond material life. In 3BL6, the Spring Festival is described with " 我買了春聯、窗花，還有福字 (I bought Spring Festival couplets, paper cuts, and the character for 福)". The character " 福 (fú)" symbolizes prosperity, happiness, and luck in Chinese culture. Its influence permeates traditions and modern life (Zhang & Zhang, 2015).

In Arabic, " 福 " aligns with two concepts. The first is "ةكرب (baraka, divine grace)", as in "إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ فِى لَيْلَةٍ مُّبَٰرَكَةٍ ۚ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ" (Indeed,

10 Retrieve from https://quran.com/2?startingVerse=222

We sent it down on a blessed night, for We always warn against evil (Qur'an 44:3).[11] The second is "ظح (ḥaẓ, luck/chance)", seen in "َنيِذَّلاَّ اَّلِإ آَهٰىَّقَلُي اَمَو ۚ ٍّظَح وُذ اَّلِإ آَهٰىَّقَلُي اَمَو اوُرَبَص ۚ ٍمِيظَع"(But this cannot be attained except by those who are patient and who are truly fortunate (Qur'an 41:35).[12] Clarifying such distinctions in teaching enhances understanding of how cultural and religious contexts shape semantic nuances.

Consequently, in vocabulary instruction, teachers can further elucidate these semantic distinctions to provide a more nuanced understanding of these terms. By doing so, educators can enhance students' comprehension of how similar concepts may be expressed differently across languages, reflecting the cultural and religious contexts in which they are rooted. This approach not only enriches language learning but also fosters a deeper appreciation for the diverse expressions related to fortune and blessings in various traditions.

Appreciation of beauty is another transcendent strength. It links to excellence and evokes awe, observed in art, nature, or moral virtue. The term " 漂亮 (pretty)" describes aesthetic appeal. For example, 2AL5 includes " 奇蹟花園很漂亮 (The Miracle Garden is very beautiful)" (referring to Dubai's Miracle Garden). Other examples are 3BL4: "迪拜真漂亮 (Dubai is so pretty)", 3BL5: "哈利法塔晚上最漂亮 (The Burj Khalifa is most beautiful at night)", 2CL1: " 這雙白色的鞋子很適合，很漂亮 (These white shoes are very suitable and pretty)", and 3CL1: " 他的頭髮長長的，她很漂亮 (Her long hair makes her look very pretty)". This reflects the Qur'anic view that beauty is divine creation: "Who has perfected everything He created. And He originated the creation of humankind from clay (Qur'an 32:7)".[13]

" 愉快 (pleasant)" also relates to appreciating beauty, describing enjoyable experiences. For instance, 4AL1 uses it to characterize a song's style. The Qur'an

11 Retrieve from https://quran.com/44?startingVerse=3

12 Retrieve from https://quran.com/41?startingVerse=35

13 Retrieve from https://quran.com/32?startingVerse=7

links such delight to divine blessing: “Reclining within them, they will call therein for abundant fruit and drink (Qur’an 38:51)”.[14] This depicts Paradise’s bliss and reflects belief in spiritual fulfillment in the hereafter.

The vocabulary of emotional expression includes terms like “ 高興 ” (joyful)”, “ 開心 (cheerful)”, and “ 快樂 (happy)”, which convey a deep sense of gratitude for life’s positive aspects. These terms are closely tied to gratitude, reflecting an appreciation and acknowledgment of favorable experiences. Gratitude serves as a bridge, helping individuals recognize and value the good in their lives. For example, when forming new acquaintances, as in 1AL9, saying “ 認識他我們很高興 (We are very happy to meet him)”, demonstrates gratitude for the pleasant initial encounter. Similarly, in 3CL2, the phrase“ 今天真是非常開心的一天 (Today has been a truly cheerful day)” expresses delight after visiting the Miracle Garden. In 3AL1, the suggestion“ 周末快樂！你們週末常常做什麼？ (Have a happy weekend! What do you usually do on weekends?)” highlights the positive anticipation and enjoyment of leisure time. These examples demonstrate how language can convey gratitude for life’s positive moments, reinforcing the connection between emotional vocabulary and gratitude.

Hope, too, grounds people in their future, as seen in “ 棒 (great)”—used to express positive expectations. For example, 4A61 includes “ 有人會彈鋼琴，有人會拉二胡，有的人會跳舞。大家都很棒！ (Some can play the piano, some can play the erhu, and some can dance. Everyone is great!)”. Humor, while not directly tied to these terms, can evoke “ 高興，開心，快樂 (joyful, cheerful, happy)” by fostering amusement, a form of positive emotion.

Together, these strengths act as pathways to a larger sense of purpose, adding depth and meaning to life. How do you think these strengths manifest in your own life? Can you share an example of how one of these strengths has impacted you? Gratitude, hope, and spirituality are key examples of this transcendent experience. However, this categorization is not rigid, as these terms can take on different

14 Retrieve from https://quran.com/38?startingVerse=51

meanings and roles depending on the context. For example, " 高興 (joyful)" and " 開心 (cheerful)" might relate to the appreciation of beauty when describing pleasant things. However, they can also tie into gratitude when expressing thanks for life's blessings. Similarly, " 快樂 (happy)" can stem from gratitude, hope, or the appreciation of beauty. So, this classification largely depends on the specific context.

The terms " 加油 (Go for it!)", " 認真 (earnest)" and " 努力 (effort)" align with courage. " 加油 " exhorts perseverance in challenges. For example, 3CL4 includes " 加油，你一定行的 (Come on, you can do it!)" (encouraging peers before a cultural festival performance). This echoes Qur'anic verses emphasizing mutual encouragement "except those who have faith, do good, and urge each other to the truth, and urge each other to perseverance (Qur'an 103:3)"[15], which highlights the significance of mutual exhortation and encouragement, thereby reflecting the virtue of benevolence. Similarly, the verse "except those who have faith, do good, and urge each other to the truth, and urge each other to perseverance (Qur'an 2:45)"[16] underscores the importance of perseverance and courage in the face of adversity, exemplifying the virtue of courage.

" 認真 (earnest)" and " 努力 (effort)" reflect focused goal pursuit, tied to wisdom. Examples include 4AL8: " 老師介紹得特別認真 (The teacher introduced it very earnestly)" and 4BL5: " 只要你努力，就一定能學好 (As long as you work hard, you will surely learn well)". These terms encourage steadfastness, wise choices, and effective goal pursuit. They align with "Surely Allah loves those who fight in His cause in ⌜solid⌝ ranks as if they were one concrete structure (Qur'an 61:4)"[17], which praises steadfast striving for faith and wise action.

Finally, temperance encompasses " 舒服 (comfortable)" and " 平和 (calm)". " 舒服 " reflects concern for others' feelings, involving moderate regulation of

15 Retrieve from https://quran.com/103?startingVerse=3

16 Retrieve from https://quran.com/103?startingVerse=3

17 Retrieve from https://quran.com/as-saf/4

emotions to avoid excess discomfort. This echoes Qur'anic emphasis on kindness: "The reward of an evil deed is its equivalent. But whoever pardons and seeks reconciliation, then their reward is with Allah. He certainly does not like the wrongdoers (Qur'an 42:40)".[18]

" 平和 (calm)" reflects the pursuit of inner peace and emotional stability. It is tied to temperance (moderating emotions to avoid impulsivity), wisdom (insight into life), and transcendence (rising above material distractions). The Qur'an mentions such tranquility: "Then Allah sent down His reassurance upon His Messenger and the believers, and sent down forces you could not see, and punished those who disbelieved. Such was the reward of the disbelievers (Qur'an 9:26)".[19] This describes divine calm enabling righteous speech, attesting to Allah's wisdom.

4.2.2 The nested relationship between the PERMA model and the Six Virtues

The PERMA model, proposed by Seligman (2011) as a five-factor framework for measuring well-being, emphasizes Positive emotion (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), Meaning (M), and Accomplishment (A) as operable terminal variables. It excels at quantifying well-being but offers limited guidance on how to cultivate it. To address this gap, Peterson and Seligman (2004) identified six core virtues, including Humanity, Courage, Wisdom, Temperance, and Transcendence, that function as ethical "generators" of well-being. These virtues operate through "character strengths" to explain how individuals pursue happiness through daily practices. Crucially, the two frameworks are not separate: virtues power the engine, while PERMA measures the output. This study argues that positive lexicons in Chinese act as bridges between these realms, simultaneously embodying "virtue semantic roles" and PERMA indicator roles" to form a language-psychology-ethics triangulation.

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18 Retrieve from https://quran.com/ash-shuraa/40

19 Retrieve from https://quran.com/at-tawbah/26

Positive emotion, encompassing pleasure, joy, and gratitude, serves as the emotional heartbeat of well-being, and most Chinese positive lexicons find their roots here. At the core of these emotions lies the virtue of humanity, which shapes how we connect with others and experience positivity. For instance, " 謝謝 (thank you)" reflects gratitude toward others' kindness, not only sparking positive feelings (P) but also strengthening relational bonds (R). Similarly, " 愛 1 (love)," the quintessence of humanity, fosters intense joy (P), deepens connections (R), and can even evolve into a sense of meaning (M) when rooted in dedication. Terms like " 祝 (wish)," " 歡迎 (welcome)," and " 幫 (help)" further extend this focus: they warm relationships (R) through goodwill and support, all while nurturing joy (P). Even simpler terms like " 喜歡 (like)" and " 可愛 (lovely)" spring from humanity's instinct to appreciate positivity, evoking pure, uncomplicated pleasure (P).

While humanity forms the foundation of these emotional experiences, transcendence expands their horizons. " 高興 (joyful)" and " 開心 (cheerful)" draw pleasure not just from daily joys, which are grounded in humanity, but also from finding happiness beyond routine—moments that feel meaningful or even sacred (transcendence). " 漂亮 (pretty)" and " 愉快 (pleasant)" blend humanity's basic appreciation of beauty with a deeper, almost spiritual delight in aesthetics (transcendence). " 福 (good fortune)" ties this together: it merges humanity's longing for a good life with a transcendent recognition that blessings reflect something larger, purpose or meaning (M), and this amplifies both positive emotion (P) and a sense of purpose.

Temperance and wisdom act as balancing forces within these emotions, ensuring they remain grounded and life-giving. " 舒服 (comfortable)" merges humanity's care for well-being with temperance; think of a moderate lifestyle that avoids excess, which induces relaxation (P). " 平和 (calm)" goes further, integrating temperance (emotional regulation), wisdom (a rational perspective on life), and transcendence (spiritual peace) to foster inner stability (P), focused engagement (E), and even meaning (M). Meanwhile, " 熱情 (enthusiastic)," rooted

in humanity's passion, fuels positive emotion (P) while propelling action, and this bridges feelings and engagement (E) in a dynamic loop.

Emotions, however, do not exist in isolation; they drive action, which brings us to engagement: the state of full immersion in activities (or "flow") that feels deeply fulfilling. Engagement is fueled by a mix of wisdom, courage, and humanity, and three key lexicons illustrate this dynamic. First, " 加 油 (Go for it!)" combines humanity's support for others with the courage to face challenges, sparking positive emotions (P) and motivating active involvement (E). From there, " 認真 (earnest)" builds on this momentum: it merges wisdom (recognizing focus as valuable) with courage (dedicating effort wholeheartedly), enabling deep immersion (E) that often paves the way for accomplishment (A). Finally, " 努 力 (effort)" keeps this involvement going. It uses wisdom to stay on track and courage to push through obstacles. This keeps focus on goals (E) and leads to real results (A). Together, these words form a cycle of "motivation-focus-persistence" turning good qualities into action.

It's no surprise that much of this action centers on relationships—warm emotional connections that are a key part of well-being. Here humanity takes the lead. " 謝 謝 (thank you)" and " 愛 1 (love)" build stronger ties with thanks and care. " 祝 (wish)" and " 歡 迎 (welcome)" add warmth and acceptance to interactions. " 幫 (help)" grows trust by meeting others' needs. These words aren't just words—they're humanity in motion, making relationships a big source of lasting well-being.

Beyond connection, well-being needs meaning—the feeling that your life and actions match something bigger than just yourself. This feeling grows through transcendence and wisdom. " 福 (good fortune)" shows this clearly. It mixes humanity's hope for happiness with transcendence's sense that blessings mean something important (M). " 平和 (calm)" also fosters meaning. Its mix of wisdom (a sensible view) and temperance (emotional balance) makes space to think about life's purpose. Even " 愛 1 (love)" gets deeper here, evolving into devotion to

others or causes. This builds a strong “existential value” anchoring meaning in care.

Lastly, accomplishment—pride in hitting goals—comes when wisdom and courage turn effort into results. “努力 (effort)” uses wisdom to avoid wandering and courage to keep going through setbacks, making work into achievement (A). “認真 (earnest)” uses focused dedication—rooted in wisdom and courage—to get more done, making success likelier. Both words show how acting with good qualities brings real, satisfying outcomes.

In the end, Chinese positive words are more than just expressions. They’re living proof that good qualities and well-being go hand in hand. Humanity grounds our feelings and relationships. Wisdom and courage drive our involvement and achievements. Transcendence expands our sense of meaning and purpose. This trio reveals a powerful truth: language doesn’t just describe well-being—it shapes it, turning good ethics into the daily experience of a good life.

4.3 Mobilizing Universal Virtues and PERMA as a Common Denominator for Cross-cultural Communication

As previously mentioned, the six virtues stem not from conjecture but from systematic scholarship that integrates Eastern and Western classical sources. Scholars distilled these dispositions and aligned them with the PERMA model, thereby translating moral abstractions into measurable psychological processes. Empirical evidence indicates that the virtues covary with each PERMA component, yet their expression is culturally calibrated (Donaldson et al., 2023; Popa et al., 2021). Because both virtue theory and PERMA pursue the same objective, the promotion of optimal human functioning and social harmony, their structural convergence supports their joint application in intercultural research and practice (Barmeyer et al., 2020; Sułkowski & Chmielecki, 2017).

Table 1 illustrates that the concept of “Humanity” includes 18 lexical items, with “love” (愛 1) being the most quintessential expression. In the Chinese

language, numerous expressions reflect the core connotations of "love" (愛 1) and "Humanity" (benevolence, humaneness). For instance, the saying, " 愛人者，人恒愛之，敬人者，人恒敬之 (《孟子 · 離婁》)Those who love others will be loved in return; those who respect others will be respected (Mencius, Li Lou)", captures this sentiment. Similarly, the biblical command, "Love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12), underscores the universal nature of love. Regardless of whether a culture is collectivist or individualist, the essence of love represents a fundamental human need for emotional connection, care, and a sense of belonging—a commonality that transcends cultural boundaries.

Love is universally acknowledged, but its interpretation varies across cultures. In Western cultures, love often emphasizes individualism and personal fulfillment, whereas in collectivist cultures, it may be more closely associated with familial and social responsibilities (Karandashev, 2015). Metaphors play a big role in how we see and talk about love. A study with students from India, Iran, Japan, and Norway found people use metaphors like "love as a product," "love as play," "love as a contract," and "love as a responsibility." This shows how cultures understand love differently (Lindstrom & Samovar, 1989).

Cultural differences in how emotions are organized also change how love is felt and shared. In some cultures, people show love with open affection. In others, it comes through acts of service or doing family duties (Karandashev, 2019, pp. 31–55). " 愛 1 (love)" is a universal positive feeling. It builds good relationships and encourages affection toward ourselves, our families, and society. This basic human emotion crosses cultures, boosting emotional well-being and bringing people together.

In our analysis, the word " 喜 歡 (like)"—which means enjoying or approving of someone or something—shows up more than any other. It's not just about giving compliments. It helps grow positive feelings, too. Mostly, it's used to say nice things about what someone does, achieves, or is like. These good feelings help with well-being and make relationships stronger. When talking across

cultures, giving compliments brings people closer and shows respect. Saying “喜歡 (like)” is a strong way to build connections—pointing out the good in others makes social life more peaceful. But it’s key to remember that how people share and take in this kind of thing can differ a lot from one culture to another.

Culture affects how we show and make sense of positive feelings like “like,” especially when it comes to giving compliments. Afghari and Karimnia (2007) point out differences. In English-speaking cultures, people often just say “Thank you” when complimented. But in Persian culture, expressions are more subtle and modest. English speakers might openly praise family members—something Persian culture often sees as inappropriate. The Persian “Taarof” tradition shows this: a guest might first refuse food they like, only accepting after the host insists. It’s a customary way to show approval. This indirect approach is very different from English-speaking cultures, where people don’t pretend to refuse—they value honest personal expression. Persian culture links “Taarof” or approval to social etiquette and harmony.

Chinese culture also uses subtle ways to say “like.” Phrases like “我覺得某事 / 某物還不錯或很好 (I think something/someone is not bad or quite good)” or “這電影值得一看 (This movie is worth watching)” are common. “這書我翻了好幾遍了 (I have flipped through this book several times)” implies liking—the repeated action indirectly shows approval. These expressions care about social politeness and keeping things unspoken.

“認真 (earnestness)” and “努力 (effort)” are vital to wisdom and tie into courage. Being earnest is about staying serious and determined. It shows the courage to keep going even when challenges pop up. It means facing what’s unknown and pushing through tough times. These are all part of what courage is.

Effort comes from having the courage to act. It means putting in physical or mental work to hit your goals. It means stepping out of your comfort zone, fighting obstacles, and staying strong to succeed. Together, they show a brave way to live, helping you grow and feel a sense of achievement.

Takahashi and Bordia (2000) did a cross-cultural study on wisdom, finding that East and West see it differently. People from the US, Australia, India, and Japan rated seven traits: “aged,” “awakened,” “discreet,” “experienced,” “intuitive,” “knowledgeable,” and “wise.” Westerners—from places like the US and Australia—linked “wise” to being “experienced” and “knowledgeable,” focusing on thinking skills. Easterners—especially from India and Japan—tied “wise” to “discreet.” They see wisdom as mixing thinking and feeling with a focus on caution and good judgment.

These findings show big cultural differences in what wisdom means. Western cultures often equate it with thinking skills and smarts. Eastern cultures value wisdom as a mix of thinking and feeling, putting less weight on just knowing things. So while the West links wisdom to analyzing and learning, the East sees it as blending thought, emotion, and intuition.

“認真 (earnestness)” and “努力 (effort)” fit this idea of wisdom. Earnestness—being serious and determined—matches the Eastern view of mixing thinking and feeling. It shows the dedication needed to grow wisdom, which needs not just knowledge but also emotional smarts to use it well. Effort—working to reach goals—is also part of wisdom. It means actively seeking knowledge and using thinking and feeling skills to handle life’s challenges. In both East and West, wisdom isn’t something you get passively. It requires effort and dedication. This shows why being earnest and hardworking matters.

This connection between wisdom and these good qualities makes it clear. Building wisdom across cultures isn’t something that happens passively. It’s not just about what you learn. It’s about putting in the work and committing to using that knowledge well. Transcendence—defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004) and Dahlsgaard and others (2005)—is a strength that connects us to something bigger than ourselves, giving life deep meaning. It includes spirituality—a commitment to non-material ideals like the universal sacred or divine. The virtue of transcendence ties to words like “福 (good fortune)”, “高興 (joyful)”, “快樂 (happy)”, “愉快 (pleasant)”, and “開心 (cheerful).” These reflect a strong link to

the bigger parts of life. They show positive feelings tied to self-transcendence—breaking down the line between ourselves and others. These feelings can be felt alone or with others, often getting stronger through rituals that build connection and trust.

Self-transcendent emotions are frequently associated with spirituality and religion, where they function as both precursors and outcomes of spiritual experiences. This association underscores the importance of positive emotions in cultivating a sense of meaning and connection that extends beyond the individual self (Van Cappellen & Rimé, 2014). By recognizing the role of these emotions, we gain a deeper understanding of how Transcendence contributes to psychological well-being and the pursuit of a life filled with purpose.

If we weave Positive Emotion, Engagement, and Meaning into our understanding of "Temperance," we gain a deeper grasp of this virtue in Chinese culture. Put simply, "Temperance" (節制，jiézhì) includes ideas like " 舒服 (comfortable)" and " 平和 (calm)", and it aligns closely with the Chinese principle of " 有度 (moderation)", which means knowing when enough is enough.

Cultures differ greatly in how they approach emotions. Take Western cultures, especially the United States. They tend to encourage open displays of positive feelings, reflecting a broader cultural preference for "maximizing joy." For example, people in Western contexts hide positive emotions less often and talk about them more than negative ones. It is almost like they think "The happier, the better" (Hughes, 2013).

East Asian cultures, however, take the opposite approach. Here, "moderation" matters more, and even negative emotions are seen as having value, such as learning from failure. This means positive emotions are expressed more gently (Hughes, 2013; Miyamoto & Ma, 2011). This focus on restraint ties to a cultural emphasis on group harmony. Avoiding overly intense emotions helps keep the peace in communities, just as Western enthusiasm reflects their own values.

Miyamoto and Ma (2011) note another key difference. While people everywhere naturally want to savor joy instead of suppressing it, a basic way we

seek happiness, this urge is weaker among East Asians than Westerners. This shows how culture shapes even our most basic emotional habits. Western cultures lean toward amplifying joy, while East Asian cultures prioritize balance and restraint.

Chinese tradition has long emphasized this balance. The *Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸 , Zhōngyōng) states: " 喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中；發而皆中節，謂之和。中也者，天下之大本也；和也者，天下之達道也 " [When joy, anger, sorrow, and delight are not yet expressed, this is called "centrality" (中，zhōng); when expressed in moderation, this is called "harmony" (和，hé). Centrality is the foundation of all things; harmony is the path that guides all under heaven]. In simple terms, emotions should be neither bottled up nor let run wild. Striking this balance helps us live in harmony with the world around us.

So how do "Temperance" and the ideas of Positive Emotion, Engagement, and Meaning connect? Temperance is not about suppressing joy. It is about balanced emotional experiences, such as feeling happy without getting overly excited, which boosts well-being and personal growth. Here, "Engagement" means participating actively in life with steady emotions. It means not acting on impulse, not holding back, but finding fulfillment in balanced involvement. "Meaning," rooted in temperance, comes when our actions match our values and foster harmony, such as being considerate of others. This takes life's purpose beyond fleeting pleasure, creating a deeper connection to the world.

In short, linking "Temperance" with Positive Emotion, Engagement, and Meaning shows just how vital emotional balance is for personal happiness and social harmony. This idea fits perfectly with Confucian philosophy, which centers on harmony above all.

5. CONCLUSION

This study explores how positive psychological ideas are reflected in the UAE secondary school Chinese textbook *Crossing the Silk Road*, with three main research questions guiding the work.

What we found: the textbook uses a variety of positive words – 21 different terms, showing up 191 times total. But they're not spread evenly across levels L1 to L4. Some words like " 喜歡 (like)" and " 謝謝 (thank you)" pop up a lot, especially in lower levels. But really important ones, such as " 努力 (effort)" and " 平和 (calm)", don't appear much. Among the 21 positive lexical items, only a few reach the recommended exposure threshold of 6–20 times; for example, " 喜歡 (like)" appears 78 times, while " 努力 (effort)" and " 平和 (calm)" appear only once, far below the retention threshold. To further clarify this imbalance, future analysis could quantify the percentage of positive lexical items at each level that meet the 6–20 exposure standard, and examine their presence across textbook sections such as dialogues, reading passages, exercises, and assessments. It is clear we need a better way to repeat them – maybe a spiral approach that brings words back over time, following how people actually pick up language.

When we matched these words to the six universal virtues and the PERMA framework, one thing stood out: the textbook focuses heavily on the virtue of Humanity, as evidenced by phrases such as " 我愛我家 (I love my family)" and " 幫我一下 (Help me out)", which appear in interpersonal contexts that clearly reflect prosocial behavior. Words like " 愛 1 (love)" and " 幫 (help)" fit here, tying into PERMA's parts about positive feelings and relationships. Transcendence is reflected in words like " 福 (good fortune)" used in cultural celebrations such as the Spring Festival, and " 漂亮 (pretty)" in descriptions of landmarks like the Burj Khalifa, both evoking aesthetic and spiritual appreciation. But Justice gets very little focus. So the textbook does use PP to help with emotional well-being, but it could do more. Including virtues like Courage and Wisdom by using words such as " 努力 (effort)" and " 認真 (earnest)" more often would make it stronger.

When talking about cross-cultural communication, the study finds that virtues and their matching words work like a shared foundation. Terms such as " 愛 1 (love)" and " 喜歡 (like)" carry feelings that people from any culture can grasp, even if they're put into words differently. Phrases like " 謝謝 (thank you)" and " 歡

迎 (welcome)" help build connections across cultures. But there's a catch. Words that don't appear very often could actually go a long way in deepening cross-cultural understanding—if they were used more. So we need to put these words in different situations. For example, " 平和 (calm)" could be used when talking about both nature and religious settings – that might help bridge cultural differences.

Overall, *Crossing the Silk Road* lays a foundation for integrating PP into Chinese language education, but its effectiveness is constrained by uneven lexical distribution. Future revisions should prioritize frequency optimization, spiral recurrence, and alignment with frameworks like YCT to enhance retention. Additionally, cultural sensitivity should be considered, especially regarding terms like "love," "like," "happy," and "wish," which may carry different connotations or levels of social acceptability in Emirati contexts. For instance, while "love" (愛 1) is commonly used in Chinese to express familial affection, its use in public or classroom settings in Emirati culture may require contextual framing to align with local norms of modesty and emotional expression. Clarifying how these terms are understood and accepted in the UAE can help ensure that language instruction remains respectful, effective, and culturally appropriate. By refining these aspects, the textbook can better fulfill its role as a "virtue bridge," fostering not only linguistic proficiency but also cross-cultural empathy and psychological flourishing, thereby advancing the educational and cultural objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Funding

The authors declare that this research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data Availability

All data generated or analysed during this study are included in this published article.

Ethical statements

This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

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阿聯酋國別化漢語教材中的正向心理學研究
——《跨越絲路》的微觀解析

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摘要

在「一帶一路」倡議聚焦文化與教育交流的背景下，本研究分析阿聯酋教材《跨越絲路》中正向心理概念的呈現方式，補缺了當前教材研究的缺口。研究採用詞彙頻率分析與理論映照法，探討三個核心問題：正向心理詞彙的分佈特徵、與六大美德及 PERMA 框架的對應關係，以及其在跨文化溝通中的作用。

研究結果顯示，該教材包含 21 個正向詞彙（共計出現 191 次），但在不同等級（L1–L4）的分佈並不均衡，像是「喜歡（like）」，「謝謝（thank you）」等高頻詞彙在低水平等級中佔主導地位，而「努力（effort）」，「平和（calm）」等詞彙出現頻率極低，未能達到記憶留存所需的 6–20 次接觸量。研究分析表明，教材對「人道」美德（如「愛 1（love）」，「幫（help）」）有較高的覆蓋程度，這些詞彙與 PERMA 模型中的「正向情緒」和「關係」維度相契合；「超越」與「節制」美德也有一定體現，但「正義」美德的相關內容仍有待完善。此外，正向詞彙在跨文化語境中構成心理共通點，然而低頻詞彙複現不足，限制了跨文化理解的深度。

本研究的貢獻在於明確了正向心理學融入漢語教育教材研究的現存缺口。修訂時若優先採用螺旋式複現、優化頻率並對接 YCT 等框架，可強化教材的「美德橋樑」作用，助力提升語言熟練度、跨文化共情能力及「一帶一路」教育目標的實現。

*關鍵詞：*正向心理學　六大美德　PERMA 模型　跨文化溝通　一帶一路

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