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A NARRATIVE STUDY: UTILIZING PERSONAL STRENGTHS TO
MANAGE FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
University Honors

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Entitled: A Narrative Study: Utilizing Personal Strengths to Manage Foreign Language Anxiety

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation University
Honors

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Dr. Jessica Moon, Director, University Honors Program

A Narrative Study: Utilizing Personal Strengths to Manage Foreign Language Anxiety

Purpose

Foreign language anxiety develops when a student feels under pressure or uncomfortable in a foreign language-learning situation often because they are cognizant of their inability to project themselves in their target language as they do in their first. As a result, students may become nervous or overwhelmed and fear speaking in the target language. Many researchers and educators have recommended strategies to help students manage their foreign language anxiety. To continue expanding on these ideas, the purpose of this research is to investigate whether focusing on and using personal strengths will mitigate students' foreign language anxiety and help improve their classroom performance. Students rarely dedicate enough time to the self-reflection needed to discover their strongest attributes, so this study provided them with scaffolded self-reflection through narrative frame stories composed of sentence starters and connectives. Students were asked to fill in the blanks with their own thoughts and reflections. In this study, participants creatively used their strengths to improve their language learning.

Literature Review

Foreign language anxiety can be defined as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language-learning process (Aida, 1994; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Research has shown that debilitating foreign language anxiety can hinder learning due to students' feelings of fear, insecurity, and doubt. This can cause students to demonstrate poor performance in the language classroom as well as withdraw from the learning process (Guy & Radnovsky, 2001; Marcos-Llinas & Garau, 2009; Saito & Samimy, 1996).

Foreign language anxiety can be caused by several factors such as fear of making mistakes, having insufficient language skills, a lack of confidence, and a fear of receiving negative feedback (Huang, 2012).

Witnessing the effects of debilitating foreign language anxiety has caused educators to question classroom processes and research solutions to help students manage these feelings. Many students focus on their weaknesses and the limitations of their foreign language rather than on their strengths. A study done by Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) demonstrated that focusing on and utilizing one's strengths increased happiness in participants and decreased symptoms of depression. Therefore, this thesis proposes that utilizing a strength intervention in foreign language classrooms along with self-reflective writing on the experience could help students mitigate these anxious feelings.

Self-reflective writing can be difficult for many people as Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) explain. Narrative frames have been shown to encourage those who struggle to self-reflect because the narrative structure is scaffolded. They also ensure that the researcher will obtain the desired information because the frames determine the nature of the responses. Therefore, this thesis proposes that, through the design and implementation of narrative frames, students will discover their top personal strengths and discover ways of creatively using them to mitigate their foreign language anxiety.

Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language classroom anxiety continues to be a struggle and hinders many students attempting to master a target language. Two studies by Huang (2012) demonstrate the causes of this foreign language anxiety in students and the means students can employ to manage anxiety

and improve their target language performances. Both of the studies revealed the same four primary sources of foreign language anxiety: insufficient foreign language skills, personal issues, lack of effective learning strategies, and teacher factors. Participants reported that they were afraid of making mistakes due to poor listening and speaking skills, had no confidence, were unsure of how to ask questions in class, and were scared of receiving negative feedback.

Huang (2012) then asked the same participants to describe their own perspectives of the actions they can take to manage their foreign language anxiety. Again, the results showed that both sets of participants had identical top three answers to the open-ended question. The categories for these strategies included: outside-the classroom responsibilities, changing attitude toward the language/course, and inside-the-classroom responsibilities. Specifically, these responsibilities included: ensuring lots of language practice outside of the classroom, becoming more self-confident in learning the foreign language, and being active in answering questions in class. To mitigate such limitations, the following sections propose a consideration of positive psychology.

Positive Psychology: Character Strengths

How can we help individuals realize their full potential? This was the question that led to the creation of the Values in Action (VIA) Institute by the Mayerson Foundation in 2000. The purpose of this institute is to focus on the meaning of “good character” and how it can be measured. Peterson (2006) defines character strengths as individual differences amongst positive traits, such as curiosity, kindness, and gratitude. Along with this definition, Peterson identifies several criteria that each must possess in order to be considered a character strength:

- is ubiquitous: widely recognized across cultures

- is fulfilling: contributes to individual fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness
- is morally valued: is valued in its own right and not for tangible outcomes it may produce
- does not diminish others
- has obvious antonyms that are “negative”
- is trait-like
- is measurable
- is distinct: is not redundant with other character strengths
- has paragons: strikingly embodied in some individuals
- has prodigies: is precociously shown by some children or youth
- can be selectively absent
- has enabling institutions (p. 141-142)

After reviewing pertinent literature and cultural products that addressed good character, Peterson and other researchers formulated 24 character strengths that are separated into six categories: strengths of wisdom and knowledge, strengths of courage, strengths of humanity, strengths of justice, strengths of temperance, and strengths of transcendence.

After the strengths were researched and formulated, the next question concerned how these character strengths could be measured or assessed. Through the VIA Institute, the VIA Inventory of Strengths was born. The inventory is a self-reported survey, in which participants must rank their responses with items on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = not at all like me, 5 = very much like me). There are a total of 198 items (5-9 statements per strength) for the participants to answer. After reporting their degree of support for each statement, respondents receive a report which lists all 24 characters strengths in order from the individual’s strongest to weakest virtue.

After taking the VIA Inventory of Strengths, Peterson (2006) suggests that participants select one of their personal strengths and consider how they could use it in a new and different way. Embracing these strengths can help students both inside and outside the classroom by better equipping individuals to face life challenges. A study done by Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) provides evidence that this exercise can be beneficial for participants in that those who utilized their personal strengths demonstrated an increase in happiness and a decrease in symptoms of depression. These changes occurred immediately following the initial week of strength assessment and continued six months later.

Narrative Frames

Narrative frames as a research method provide the researcher(s) with a storied snapshot of the participants' experiences. Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) constructed and utilized narrative frames to understand the experiences of language teachers in specific contexts. Narrative frames are defined in this research as “starters, connectives and sentence modifiers which give children a structure within which they can concentrate on communicating what they want to say whilst scaffolding them in the use of a particular generic form” (p. 375). They provide scaffolding for the participants and determine the direction of the story, which makes data analyzation easily comparable among all of the participants.

As does any research methodology, narrative frames possess their own strengths and limitations. A strength discovered from the research of Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) was that the scaffolding of the narrative structure was useful in encouraging those who struggle to self-reflect. A second strength of narrative frames is that they ensure that the researcher will obtain the desired information because the frames determine the nature of the responses. Unlike free-

flowing narratives, the frames provide structured results to the researcher which makes for easier analysis and concrete ways of categorizing data. Lastly, there is a limited quantity of data, which means that the number of participants can be larger (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008).

A limited quantity of data might be seen as a limitation to expansive generalization, but in the case of this study, it was important to use an individual approach due to the large variation that individuals experience. At times, group data fails to capture individuality. Furthermore, narrative frames may provoke frustration among respondents who desire more space when they are reflecting. Also, researchers may like more content than what is obtained in the allowed spaces or want to explore an idea that a participant presents. Another caution when employing narrative frames is that, if poorly designed, the potential exists for the participants to create a narrative that does not have connected ideas. Lastly, a narrative frame could de-personalize the narrative of the participant's experience, creating the potential for the narratives to turn into "factual statements rather than discursive constructions" (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008, p. 383).

Research Question

In this study, researchers sought answers to the following question: Will language learners who focus their attention on their personal strengths have more control over their foreign language anxiety? In an attempt to address these issues, this thesis proposes that if students focus on their top personal strengths and discover creative ways of using them in language learning, foreign language anxiety could be mitigated and students' performance in the classroom will improve. In order to recognize these strengths, participants were asked to complete several tasks of self-discovery and self-reflection.

Methodology

This narrative study is comprised of three narrative frames documenting how a participant felt about their language learning before applying their strengths, how they felt during the exercise, and their resulting feelings. The narrative frames have been chosen to provide guidance and support in terms of both the structure and connection to the written narrative (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). This study was conducted with participants from four advanced writing courses within the Culture and Intensive English Program (CIEP) as well as two Elementary Spanish I courses at the University of Northern Iowa. The CIEP population was chosen because students may be experiencing heightened anxiety because they are studying in a country where English is the dominant language. Also, being in an advanced writing course presupposes that they will have the proper background knowledge to carry out the tasks given to them (i.e., writing the narrative frames). The students from the Elementary Spanish I courses were chosen because they may be experiencing higher amounts of anxiety due to this class being the start of their target language learning as research suggests that language anxiety lessens as proficiency increases.

Timeline

January 2018. Before filling out the narrative frames, the participants discovered their top three personal strengths by completing the online VIA Character Strengths Survey on their personal computers. The survey averaged around thirty minutes to complete. Once they completed the survey, respondents received a list of all twenty-four strengths in order from one to twenty-four. However, in this study, participants were asked to focus solely on their top three

personal strengths. The following describes what took place during the strengths week for the participants.

Day 1. After completing the online VIA survey, participants were asked to fill out a narrative frame that took around fifteen minutes to complete (see Appendix A for full narrative). This pre-assessment narrative frame prompted participants to think of a difficult situation in their English or Spanish class and ways in which they might use their strengths to discover alternative ways of addressing difficulties that arise. They returned the narrative frame at the beginning of the following class.

Day 2. Once the participants completed and turned in the pre-assessment narrative frame, they were given a worksheet to document the ways they used their strengths during the following week (see Appendix B for full worksheet).

Strengths week. On this worksheet, participants were asked to choose a strength each day, think of a creative way to utilize it in their English or Spanish class, and then report on what they did and how they felt. This helped students keep track of what they were doing and how it was affecting their performance and feelings. Furthermore, the researchers had anticipated that it would be easier for participants to reflect on their experiences in the post-assessment narrative frame having access to the documentation of their thoughts throughout the project.

Following “Strengths Week”. The following class after Strengths Week, the participants were given their post-assessment narrative frame. They were asked to reflect on the similarities and differences in their feelings before and after the intervention by describing how they felt communicating in their target language (see Appendix C for full narrative). They reported on

levels of confidence, continuing struggles, and ways they might conquer these struggles by using their signature strengths in the future.

Both the narrative frames and participants' Strengths Week reports were then analyzed for changes in discourse from the beginning of the project to the end. The information provided by participants demonstrated the level with which focusing on personal strengths offered mitigation of language anxiety.

Significance

Several researchers and educators have suggested ways in which students can alleviate foreign language anxiety in the classroom because they want to set students up for success. This research provides evidence as to whether focusing on and utilizing one's strengths is beneficial in reducing foreign language anxiety and subsequently improving performance in the classroom. If deemed beneficial, future educators may be inspired to use positive psychology interventions in their own classroom to create an environment where students feel more relaxed and confident when communicating in their target language, rather than anxious and afraid of making mistakes.

Results

Participants included 36 students who signed the initial consent forms; however as the procedure progressed only 18 filled out at least one of the worksheets, and seven of those 18 completely filled out all three forms. The majority of analysis focuses on the seven that completed all of the forms; however there will be discussion on those students who did not fill out all three forms but who did provide important information in the initial stages of the research procedures (see Pedagogical Implications). First, this section will cover the analysis of the seven

participants, four students from the CIEP classes and three students from the Spanish classes (see Appendix E for full transcriptions of narratives).

Combined, these seven students had fourteen different strengths that they used throughout the strengths week: zest, teamwork, gratitude, forgiveness, love, humility, perseverance, honesty, prudence, fairness, hope, spirituality, love of learning, and curiosity. From their narratives, the students discussed a variety of language struggles they currently had, how they applied their character strengths in class throughout the week, the impact that it had on them, and the resulting effects of the procedures on their language difficulties. The ways in which the participants experienced the stages of strength application and resulting effects will be explained in the following sections as well as patterns that arose amongst the seven students.

Current Language Difficulties

Participants found the most difficulties in completing tasks that would allow them to use the target language proficiently and their insufficient language skills generated language anxiety. These tasks included remembering new words, writing an essay or paper, and expressing their ideas in the target language. After documenting their difficulties, participants explained the reasons behind them. Reasons included not having enough time, having bad habits, or an overwhelming amount of new vocabulary. Overall, students seemed to relate their language difficulties to a lack of time and practice using the language. Following their recognition of a lack of time to practice, the participants discussed their own strengths and proposed solutions to their solve their language problems. Overall, these solutions focused on not giving up, loving the language, and getting to know other classmates. The next section illuminates the ways in which

participants used their strengths throughout the week and their resulting feelings as well as patterns that arose with students using similar strengths.

VIA Character Strengths Application

The VIA Character Strengths Survey divides 24 strengths into six categories: courage, justice, transcendence, temperance, humanity, and wisdom and knowledge. Among these six categories, courage was identified most often with five out of the seven participants using this strength. On the other hand, wisdom and knowledge, was the least popular with only one student using two strengths from this category.

Researchers have reported striking similarities in the strengths that people generate around the world. The most commonly generated strengths in 54 countries are kindness, fairness, honesty, and gratitude, while the least prominent strengths are prudence, humility and self-regulation (Park et al., 2006). However, the participants in this study did not align with these results. Overall, the top two strengths were perseverance and love. Kindness, the top strength according to the study done by Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2006), was not endorsed by any of the participants in this study. In fact, many of the strengths endorsed by the participants fell into the lower parts of the ranking (see Appendix D). For example, perseverance is ranked 19, but in this study, this character strength tied for first ranking with love. Not only was perseverance endorsed the most by participants, but it was also used the most frequently with three students collectively using it eleven times throughout the strengths week. This number is significant as the next most frequently used character strengths were love and humility and they were used only four times throughout the strengths week. This indicates that participants found perseverance to be the easiest and most effective character strength to apply to their language

learning in order to manage their foreign language anxiety. The following sections discuss how the participants used their strengths in each category and the impacts it had on them.

Courage

As defined by the VIA Institute, courage consists of “emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal.” The participants used perseverance the most, followed by honesty, and then zest. Utilizing these strengths, the participants asked questions, finished exams, made it through a hard day, focused, and completed tasks at hand. In the following excerpts from the narratives, the sentences starters are in italics and the other text is the participants’ responses. For example, student F wrote, “*On Tuesday, the strength I used was perseverance. I used this strength in my English class by focusing on new things that I can learn every day.*” After doing these activities, the students felt good, relieved, happy, and satisfied. Overall, tapping into their natural strengths of courage and perseverance, allowed students to make it through the day and finish their homework, which allowed them to feel a sense of relief and more confident on language tasks.

Justice

As defined by the VIA Institute, justice consists of the “civic strengths that underlie healthy community life.” Three of the seven students indicated that one of their top strengths was either teamwork or fairness. For example, student E wrote, “*On Friday, the strength I used was fairness. I used this strength in my English class by giving assistance to my classmates. After doing this, I felt supportive and glad.*” Students used these strengths to help others in the class and be fair to each others’ needs. Participants felt supportive helping others in the class as well as happy to share their knowledge with others.

Transcendence

As defined by the VIA Institute, transcendence consists of “strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning.” The strengths students’ utilized from this category included gratitude, hope, and spirituality. The participants used these strengths to learn new vocabulary and share their culture. For example, student B wrote, “*On Thursday, the strength I used was hope. I used this strength in my Spanish class by studying/practice. After doing this, I felt relieved with more Spanish knowledge.*” Student D utilized gratitude and wrote “*On Thursday, the strength I used was gratitude. I used this strength in my English class by giving a speech about a song to my classmates and teachers. After doing this, I felt thankful for having the chance to share my culture through my favorite song.*” Overall, using transcendence strengths, students felt more connected to class and were hopeful in learning more about the target language.

Temperance

As defined by the VIA Institute, temperance consists of “strengths that protect against excess.” The strengths students’ utilized from this category included prudence, forgiveness, and humility. Student F wrote, “*On Monday, the strength I used was humility. I used this strength in my English class by helping my classmates do things that I already knew how to do. After doing this, I felt happy and comfortable.*” This student did not try to prove that they were better than others, but rather were excited by combined knowledge that could help them both grow. Student G used prudence to make judgments on their progress in the class and wrote, “*On Wednesday, the strength I used was judgment. I used this strength in my English class by changing the topic of my paper, which I had taught for a week. After doing this, I felt like my work on my paper was*

going well.” After using these strengths, students felt more confident in their abilities and decisions in the language classroom.

Humanity

As defined by the VIA Institute, humanity consists of “interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others.” Love was the only strength used from this category and proved beneficial as students felt good showing love to others by helping them out. Student F wrote, “*From this experience, I felt that by giving love, you could receive love back. This is because another person will save what you share with them.*” In particular, student E thrived on working with classmates and therefore this support allowed them to feel comfortable in class and with surrounding peers.

Wisdom and Knowledge

As defined by the VIA Institute, wisdom and knowledge consist of “cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge.” Student C was the only participant to generate strengths from the wisdom and knowledge category. This participant’s love of learning encouraged the exploration of words and grammar beyond classroom instruction and therefore felt challenged and increased their understanding of class material. Curiosity made this participant feel satisfied after having a discussion with preschoolers on why learning a second language is important. This participant applied their strengths not only inside the classroom, but also to outside activities and therefore felt more satisfied and challenged in the language learning process.

Resulting Effects on Language Struggles

The overall impact on participants was a sense of relief, happiness, and satisfaction after applying their strengths to language learning. Some also felt challenged, supportive, and thankful. All of these impacts led to students feeling less anxious in class and a heightened feeling of comfort during language learning exercises. Students also felt that they had an increased awareness of strength application. Student G mentioned that they didn't know that they had any strengths before doing this exercise and that they would not have known unless someone had told them. Everyone possesses strengths, but most are not always aware of them. This research shows that becoming aware of strategies to utilize one's strengths can help one overcome weaknesses. Figure one is a model representing the process discussed throughout this manuscript. Results showed that this exercise was beneficial in mitigating students' foreign language anxiety and producing a sense of comfort and confidence in the students.

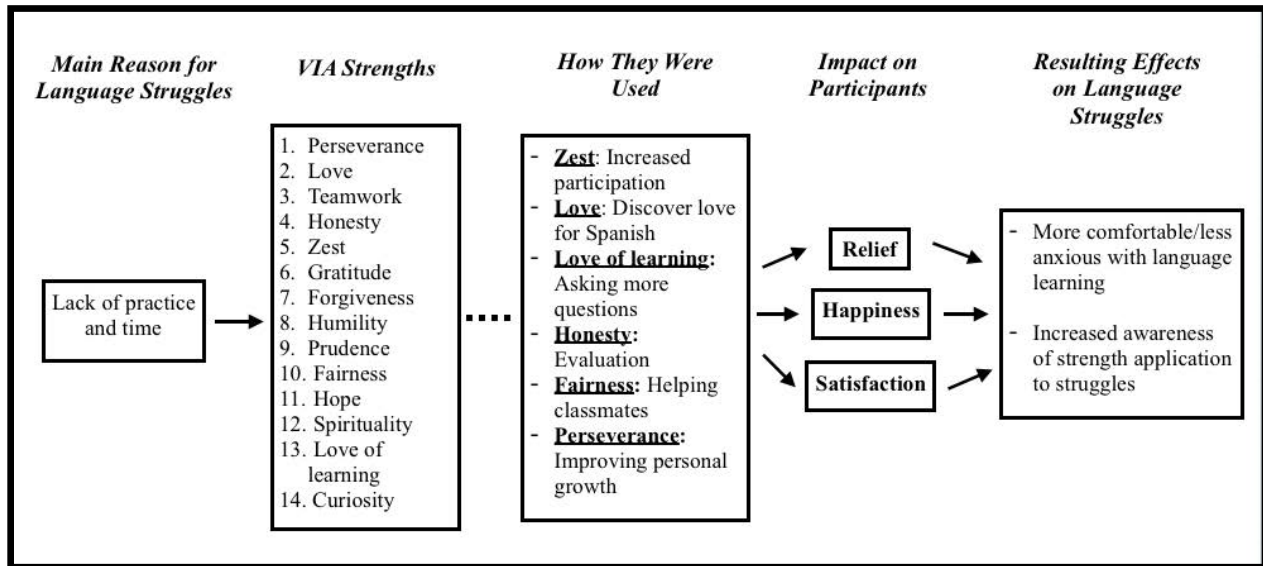


Figure 1. A Model of VIA Strengths Applied to Language Learning

Pedagogical Implications

The majority of this analysis focused on the students who completed all three narratives and experienced the resultant increase in anxiety management and greater comfort in the classroom. However, many students took the VIA Character Strengths Survey, but commented that they did not know how to apply their strengths in their language classes. Even with the seven who did complete all three of the forms, some did not use each strength throughout the week. This was especially true with the strengths of appreciation of beauty and excellence and spirituality. Many students came to me confused concerning how they could apply these strengths to their language learning. One student wrote, “I took the VIA survey, but I have no idea what to do with it.” As demonstrated in the results, many students benefitted from using their strengths in their language learning because they felt more comfortable and confident in completing difficult language tasks. Therefore, the students who were unaware of how to apply their strengths might benefit more from a discussion or explicit instruction on how to do so in language classrooms. Having discussions concerning students’ application of spirituality and appreciation of beauty and excellence in the classroom might help them discover ways to use their natural strengths and apply them to elements over which they have limitations in order to relieve feelings of anxiety and promote feelings of comfort and confidence.

Limitations

Demographic information was not gathered from the participants in an attempt to solely focus on their strengths and their utilization in language learning. If this study were to be reproduced, it would be interesting to gather demographic information to analyze cultural differences that may exist in terms of participants’ diverse strengths as well as their application.

As mentioned in the literature review section (see narrative frames), narrative frames possess some limitations in the way they are created. To review, narrative frames may not be compatible with how a writer would like to structure their work, researchers may feel they would want more content, and some prompts may be misinterpreted. For example, in the first narrative, the line “one of my personal strengths is” was intended to be followed by one of the VIA character strengths. However, some students interpreted that as an opportunity to write a strength that they have always identified with such as “patience” and “keeping efforts”. These answers still allowed for good analysis, however, it was not the original intention.

Lastly, another limitation is that in total about 18 students filled out at least one of the worksheets and seven of those 18 filled out all three. Although this study implemented an individual approach, a larger population would have garnered more data. Also, only 10 minutes were allowed for the explanation and instruction of the research so as not to take too much of the cooperating teachers’ class time. With more instructional time, deeper explanation of the VIA Characters Strengths survey as well as examples of ways to use some of the strengths could have been included.

Further Research and Conclusion

Demographic information was not gathered from the participants, therefore if this study were continued, it may be interesting to discover cultural differences in the way that students use their strengths. For example, through the CIEP program there were many students from different countries and a common strength among some students was a feeling of comfort by helping others in the class, which indicates a collectivistic culture. Therefore, research on how cultural

values can influence the strengths students possess and how they apply them in language learning would be an interesting pursuit.

Second, this study was only conducted with native English speakers studying Spanish and students from around the world studying English as a second language. Every language possesses their own unique properties and instructional practices. Therefore, research could benefit from analyzing ways that students may use their strengths in different language contexts. For example, they may use their strengths differently while studying French versus studying Spanish. With a greater population, a list of ways students have used particular strengths in their classrooms could be generated and shared with language teachers around the world. Therefore, if an educator wishes to do this method of strength intervention, they could share examples of ways actual students have used their strengths in their language learning classrooms.

As shown through this study, students benefit from utilizing their strengths and applying them to language learning. After creatively using their strengths, students felt a sense of relief, satisfaction, and overall more comfort and confidence in the classroom. However, many students did not know how to use their strengths in the class and therefore did not complete all of the narratives. This evidence suggests that students could benefit from educators who work with their learners to develop strategies to discover their strengths and apply them to language learning.

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Appendix A

Pre-Assessment Narrative Frame

Last Four Digits of
Student ID Number: _____**My Strength Story: Part 1**

In my language class, I have a very difficult time trying to _____
_____. The main reason for that is _____
_____.

However, I feel I excel in _____
_____.

One of my personal strengths is _____. I know this is my personal
strength because _____. This
week, I have used my personal strength to _____
_____. One way I could use my strength to
help me in my language class is _____
_____. Every day next week, I will use my personal strength in a new way
by _____.



Appendix B

Strengths Report Worksheet

My Strengths Worksheet

Last Four Digits of Student ID: _____

My Top Three Personal Strengths:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Weekly Strength Report:

• **Monday**

- The strength I used was _____.
- I used this strength in my English class by _____
_____.
- After doing this, I felt _____
_____.

• **Tuesday**

- The strength I used was _____.
- I used this strength in my English class by _____
_____.
- After doing this, I felt _____
_____.

- **Wednesday**

- The strength I used was _____.
- I used this strength in my English class by _____
_____.
- After doing this, I felt _____
_____.

- **Thursday**

- The strength I used was _____.
- I used this strength in my English class by _____
_____.
- After doing this, I felt _____
_____.

- **Friday**

- The strength I used was _____.
- I used this strength in my English class by _____
_____.
- After doing this, I felt _____
_____.

Appendix C

Post-Assessment Narrative Frame

Last Four Digits of
Student ID Number: _____

My Strength Story: Part 2

This week, I used my personal strength in a new way by _____
_____ . From

this experience, I felt _____
_____ . This is because _____
_____ .

In my English class I felt more _____
_____ . However, I still struggled with _____
_____ .

_____ . Yet, from this
experience, I have learned _____
_____ .

_____ . Therefore, a new way I can use my personal strength is to _____
_____ .



Appendix D
Chart of Strengths Endorsement and Frequency of Participant Use

VIA character strengths	Rank in population	Number of participants endorsing	Frequency of Participant Use
Kindness	1	0	0
Fairness	2	1	2
Honesty	3	2	1
Gratitude	4	1	1
Judgement	5	0	0
Love	6	3	4
Humor	7	0	0
Curiosity	8	1	1
Appreciation of beauty	9	0	0
Creativity	10	0	0
Perspective	11	0	0
Social intelligence	12	0	0
Leadership	13	0	0
Teamwork	14	2	1
Bravery	15	0	0
Love of learning	16	1	3
Forgiveness	17	1	0
Hope	18	1	2
Perseverance	19	3	11
Spirituality	20	1	0
Zest	21	1	3
Prudence	22	1	1
Humility	23	1	4
Self-regulation	24	0	0

Appendix E

Full Transcriptions of Narratives

Student A (Spanish)

In my language class, I have a very difficult time trying to remember all the new words. The main reason for that is, I have little time to devote to extra study. However, I feel I excel in participating in class and finishing homework. One of my personal strengths is perseverance. I know this is my personal strength because I always finish tasks that are set before me to the best of my abilities. This week, I have used my personal strength to complete all necessary projects when tired and stressed. One way I could use my strength to help me in my language class is not giving up even if the class becomes difficult. Every day next week, I will use my personal strength in a new way by hopefully devoting more time to increasing my understanding of Spanish.

My top three character strengths are: perseverance, spirituality, and honesty. On Monday, the strength I used was perseverance. I used this strength in my Spanish class by my goal was to devote more time to learning Spanish throughout the week; however, sadly, I did not reach this goal very well. After doing this, I felt the need to work harder. On Tuesday, the strength I used was perseverance. I used this strength in my Spanish class by making sure to complete all assigned homework for Wednesday's class. After doing this, I felt satisfaction. On Wednesday, the strength I used was perseverance. I used this strength in my Spanish class by participating in class all throughout the week; however, as before stated, I wanted to devote more time to personal study than I did. After doing this, I felt the need to improve my Spanish skills. On Thursday, the strength I used was perseverance. I used this strength in my Spanish class by completing homework for Friday's class. After doing this, I felt satisfaction. On Friday, the strength I used was perseverance. I used this strength in my Spanish class by making it to class, despite the fact that I was running behind and was very tired. After doing this, I felt satisfaction.

This week, I used my personal strength in a new way by exercising it. From this experience, I felt that though I am meeting class requirements, I need to work harder. This is because I wish to master Spanish rather than just get by. In my Spanish class, I felt more aware of my need to devote more time to personal study. However, I still struggled with making that time available in my busy schedule. Yet, from this experience, I have learned the importance of giving the learning of a new language a high level of priority. Therefore, a new way I can use my personal strength is to devote the time necessary to learning Spanish completely.

Student B (Spanish)

In my language class, I have a very difficult time trying to persevere. The main reason for that is, lack of bravery. However, I feel I excel in perseverance to learn. One of my personal strengths is hope. I know this is my personal strength because I expect the best in the future. This week, I have used my personal strength to persevere in my classes. One way I could use my

strength to help me in my language class is persevere to learn. Every day next week, I will use my personal strength in a new way by including it in more day to day activities.

My top three personal strengths are: hope, perseverance, and love. On Monday, the strength I used was perseverance. I used this strength in my Spanish class by pushing through the class even though it's Monday. After doing this, I felt tired. On Tuesday, the strength I used was hope. I used this strength in my Spanish class by learning new vocabulary. After doing this, I felt better with better understanding. On Wednesday, the strength I used was love. I used this strength in my Spanish class by learning new vocabulary and starting to love Spanish. After doing this, I felt happy. On Thursday, the strength I used was hope. I used this strength in my Spanish class by studying/practice. After doing this, I felt relieved with more Spanish knowledge. On Friday, the strength I used was perseverance. I used this strength in my Spanish class by making it through the last day of the week. After doing this, I felt excited! It's Friday!

This week, I used my personal strength in a new way by starting to love my classes. From this experience, I felt excited to learn more. This is because I have a better understanding and interest. In my Spanish class, I felt more comfortable. However, I still struggled with vocabulary/memorization. Yet, from this experience, I have learned not to give up and to practice more. Therefore, a new way I can use my personal strength is to love more with more motivation.

Student C (Spanish)

In my language class, I have a very difficult time trying to remember names for objects in Spanish. The main reason for that is, there are so many. However, I feel I excel in the basics. One of my personal strengths is love of learning. I know this is my personal strength because I'm always learning something from any situation. This week, I have used my personal strength to try speaking Spanish without fear of failing. One way I could use my strength to help me in my language class is to spend more time studying/practicing. Every day next week, I will use my personal strength in a new way by trying the language in different contexts.

My top three personal strengths are: love of learning, empathy, and open-mindedness (curiosity). On Monday, the strength I used was love of learning. I used this strength in my Spanish class by exploring the words and grammar beyond what we learned. After doing this, I felt challenged. On Tuesday, the strength I used was love of learning. I used this strength in my Spanish class by asking questions. After doing this, I felt like I had more understanding. On Wednesday, the strength I used was empathy. I used this strength in my Spanish class by connecting with a classmate about struggles. After doing this, I felt not alone. On Thursday, the strength I used was love of learning. I used this strength in my Spanish class by practicing Spanish with fluent spouse. After doing this, I felt like I have more to learn. On Friday, the strength I used was curiosity. I used this strength in my Spanish class by practicing speaking skills with my preschool class. After doing this, I felt satisfied after a discussion about why "speaking another language isn't stupid" and we all realized that learning another language is hard.

This week, I used my personal strength in a new way by listening to a Spanish podcast. From this experience, I felt like I understood more than I thought. This is because I've been trying new ways to practice the language. In my Spanish class, I felt more confident with

understanding. *However, I still struggled with confidence with speaking. Yet, from this experience, I have learned to keep practicing and trying. Therefore, a new way I can use my personal strength is to talk as much as I can in Spanish.*

Student D (CIEP)

In my language class, I have a very difficult time trying to concentrate when reading. The main reason for that is my reading habit. However, I feel I excel in speaking and listening. One of my personal strengths is patience. I know this is my personal strength because I take things seriously and reflect about them. This week, I have used my personal strength to read, concentrate, and do lots of homework. One way I could use my strength to help me in my language class is to think positively, be patient, and do things. Every day next week, I will use my personal strength in a new way by reading carefully and never giving up.

My top three personal strengths are: zest, teamwork, and gratitude. On Monday, the strength I used was zest. I used this strength in my English class by finishing three exams despite the fact that I was feeling sick. After doing this, I felt relieved. On Tuesday, the strength I used was teamwork. I used this strength in my English class by participating with classmates in a conversation about experiments on animals. After doing this, I felt good because everybody in the group gave their opinion, and the best thing was we didn't argue. On Wednesday, the strength I used was zest. I used this strength in my English class by participating a lot in class and helping my classmate. After doing this, I felt like I accomplished something because I helped another classmate. On Thursday, the strength I used was gratitude. I used this strength in my English class by giving a speech about a song to my classmates and teachers. After doing this, I felt thankful for having the chance to share my culture through my favorite song. On Friday, the strength I used was zest. I used this strength in my English class by finishing more exams after a hard day. I was feeling sick again. After doing this, I felt thankful for finishing my class of the day. I also felt relief.

This week, I used my personal strength in a new way by practicing, finishing my exams, giving my speech, and helping my classmates. From this experience, I felt happy, relieved, and grateful. This is because I know I made it work despite my health problems. In my English class, I felt more comfortable and alive. However, I still struggled with concentration sometimes. Yet, from this experience, I have learned to keep on practicing. Therefore, a new way I can use my personal strength is to read more.

Student E (CIEP)

In my language class, I have a very difficult time trying to express my ideas in English. The main reason for that is I am trying to practice speaking. However, I feel I excel in writing and listening. One of my personal strengths is leadership. I know this is my personal strength because I used to work as a boss. This week, I have used my personal strength to collaborate and learn from others. One way I could use my strength to help me in my language class is contributing to class and helping others. Every day next week, I will use my personal strength in a new way by sharing knowledge and getting to know people.

My top three personal strengths are: fairness, forgiveness, and love. On Monday, the strength I used was ... I used this strength in my English class by studying and improving grammar skills. After doing this, I felt happy for developing new ways to write. I was sick on Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday, the strength I used was fairness. I used this strength in my English class by sharing with my classmates. After doing this, I felt helpful. On Friday, the strength I used was fairness. I used this strength in my English class by giving assistance to my classmates. After doing this, I felt supportive and glad.

This week, I used my personal strength in a new way by getting to know my classmates. From this experience, I felt comfortable. This is because I could meet and work with new classmates. In my English class, I felt more comfortable. However, I still struggled with grammar and writing. Yet, from this experience, I have learned to use my strength. Therefore, a new way I can use my personal strength is to improve teamwork skills.

Student F (CIEP)

In my language class, I have a very difficult time trying to complete all of my homework. The main reason for that is that I don't have enough time. However, I feel I excel in listening and speaking classes. One of my personal strengths is love. I know this is my personal strength because I know how to show love to everyone. This week, I have used my personal strength to make new friends and make myself feel better. One way I could use my strength to help me in my language class is loving what I'm doing and learning more every day. Every day next week, I will use my personal strength in a new way by making new friends.

My top three personal strengths are: love, humility, and perseverance. On Monday, the strength I used was humility. I used this strength in my English class by helping my classmates do things that I already knew how to do. After doing this, I felt happy and comfortable. On Tuesday, the strength I used was perseverance. I used this strength in my English class by focusing on new things that I can learn every day. After doing this, I felt like I had really strong faith in myself. On Wednesday, the strength I used was all three of them: love, humility, and perseverance. I used this strength in my English class by helping myself grow more every day. After doing this, I felt really happy. On Thursday, the strength I used was all three of them. I used this strength in my English class by going forward and focusing on the future. After doing this, I felt happy and good. On Friday, the strength I used was all three of them. I used this strength in my English class by focusing on the future. After doing this, I felt happy and good because every day is better than the last.

This week, I used my personal strength in a new way by helping others understand life better. From this experience, I felt that by giving love, you could receive love back. This is because another person will save what you share with them. In my English class, I felt more comfortable and that I'm doing better every day. However, I still struggled with some things that I have to improve on, but I do feel better. Yet, from this experience, I have learned how to use my strength to improve other things. Therefore, a new way I can use my personal strength is to make other people happy in order to make myself feel better.

Student G (CIEP)

In my language class, I have a very difficult time trying to write an essay or paper. The main reason for that is that I don't know a lot of vocabulary. However, I feel I excel in grammar. One of my personal strengths is keeping efforts. I know this is my personal strength because keeping efforts has enabled me to overcome many problems. This week, I have used my personal strength to finish assignments and pass exams. One way I could use my strength to help me in my language class is to keep studying. Every day next week, I will use my personal strength in a new way by continuing to do well.

My top three personal strengths are: honesty, prudence, and teamwork. On Monday, the strength I used was honesty. I used this strength in my English class by asking my teachers questions which I didn't understand well. After doing this, I felt I was pretty sure about what I had to do. On Tuesday, the strength I used was patience. I used this strength in my English class by trying not to leave test answers blank. After doing this, I felt accomplished completing the test. On Wednesday, the strength I used was judgment. I used this strength in my English class by changing the topic of my paper, which I had been writing for a week. After doing this, I felt like my work on my paper was going well. On Thursday, the strength I used was focusing. I used this strength in my English class by focusing on just my topic of research paper. After doing this, I felt I could gather much more information. On Friday, the strength I used was selecting. I used this strength in my English class by deciding which information is important to my paper. After doing this, I felt ready to write my paper.

This week, I used my personal strength in a new way by using honesty and prudence. From this experience, I felt like I had never expected to have strengths. This is because I didn't realize until someone told me. In my English class, I felt more ready to focus on one topic. However, I still struggled with how to determine which information is important to me. Yet, from this experience, I have learned to evaluate what I do. Therefore, a new way I can use my personal strength is to evaluate my works as I am completing them.