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A Dynamic Model of EFL Learners' Personal Best Goals, Resilience, and Language Achievement

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A Dynamic Model of EFL Learners' Personal Best Goals, Resilience and Language Achievement

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Abstract

One of the objectives of any educational endeavor is helping students to adopt a set of personal goals for their achievement. This is known as personal best (PB) referring to personalized goals or standards of excellence that match or exceed one's prior best in the academic context. It is also believed that PB goals can fluctuate in line with other academic-associated factors. The aim of the present study is to scrutinize these goals in association with students' resilience and language achievement. In other words, this study elucidated how English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' PB and resilience influence language achievement. To do so, 173 students studying in two private language institutes and a university completed two questionnaires. The former was PB scale designed by Martin (2006) measuring specific, challenging, competitively self-referenced, and self-improvement goals. It was then translated to Persian and validated by the present researchers. The latter was the resilience scale containing five dimensions of perceived happiness, empathy, sociability, persistence, and self-regulation. The questionnaire was designed and validated by Kim and Kim (2016) and then translated to Persian and validated in this study. The results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) demonstrated the validity of the Persian versions of the scales. The results of structural equation modeling (SEM) indicated that PB is a positive and significant predictor of resilience. Moreover, it was found that language achievement is predicted by both PB and resilience.

Keywords: competitively self-referenced goals, challenging goals, EFL learners, language achievement, personal best goals, resilience goals, self-improvement goals

Un Modelo Dinámico de los Mejores Objetivos Personales, Resiliencia y Aprendizaje de Lenguaje de los Estudiantes de EFL

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Resumen

Uno de los objetivos de cualquier iniciativa educativa es ayudar a los estudiantes a adoptar un conjunto de objetivos personales para su consecución. A esto se le llama mejor meta personal (MMP) referido a los objetivos personalizados o estándares de excelencia que encajan o exceden la anterior MMP en el contexto académico. También se cree que los objetivos de la mejor meta personal pueden fluctuar en línea con otros factores académicos. El propósito del presente estudio es investigar estos objetivos asociados a la resiliencia y los logros de idioma. En otras palabras, este estudio dilucida como las mejores marcas personales de los estudiantes de EFL y la resiliencia influyen en los logros de idioma. Para conseguirlo 173 estudiantes de dos escuelas de idiomas privadas y de una universidad completaron dos cuestionarios. El primero fue una escala de mejores metas personales diseñado por Martin (2006) para medir objetivos específicos, retadores y competitivamente auto-referenciados y de auto-mejora. Luego fue traducido al persa y validado por los actuales investigadores. El segundo fue una escala de resiliencia con cinco dimensiones de felicidad, empatía, sociabilidad, persistencia y auto-regulación percibidas. El cuestionario fue designado y validado por Kim y Kim (2016) y luego traducido al persa y validado en este estudio. Los resultados de un análisis factorial confirmatorio (AFC) demostraron la validez de las versiones persas de las escalas. Los resultados de los modelos de ecuaciones estructurales (MEE) indicaron que la mejor meta personal es un predictor positivo y significativo de resiliencia. Más aún, se halló que los logros de lenguaje se predicen tanto con la mejor meta personal como con la resiliencia.

Palabras clave: objetivos competitivamente auto-referenciados, objetivos retadores, alumnado de EFL, logro lingüístico, mejor meta personal, objetivos de resiliencia, objetivos de auto-mejora



There has been increasing interest and reputation on goals and goal setting over the past three decades having widely been explored in different domains (Arabi, Ghanizadeh, & Jahedizadeh, 2018). In the educational field, four types of goal representations are determined by Elliot and Sheldon (1997) that traverse achievement motivation. The first one comprises task-specific goals which are specific guidelines for proximal implementation. The second one refers to situation-specific goals that reflect the intention of and reasons for performing and achieving. The third representation is related to personal goals that reflect more wide-ranging and general goals than those which relate to a specific condition. The fourth one is also related to the self-images one has for the future, reflecting more distal. Recently, a more comprehensive version of goal theory known as academic personal best (PB) goals was proposed by Martin (2006) which refers to personalized goals or standards of excellence that match or exceed one's prior best in the academic context. PBs have the potential to facilitate or enhance key educational factors for a number of reasons. First, they generate success more accessible to students. Theoretically, all students can perform as well as or better than before. In this regard, when students believe that success is accessible to them, there would be less need to maneuver in failure-avoidant ways and more reasons to be optimistic and hopeful when facing future challenges and tasks (Covington, 1992; Martin & Marsh, 2003; Martin, Marsh & Debus, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; Martin, Marsh, Williamson & Debus, 2003). PBs also have the capacity to enhance self-efficacy and self-esteem. Martin (2001, 2002) has described how the experience of success is one of the most powerful sources of self-efficacy and self-esteem. Therefore, if PBs provide greater opportunities for success they also enhance opportunities for students to gain a sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem in what they do. Moreover, not only does success enhance self-esteem, it also energizes students to persist at challenging tasks (Bandura, 1997).

In the last two decades, some researchers have investigated the important role of PB goals in student academic success or achievement (e.g., Martin, 2006, 2015; Martin & Elliot, 2015; Arabi, Ghanizadeh, & Jahedizadeh, 2018) as well as academic engagement and motivation (Martin, 2007; Martin & Elliot, 2016; Martin & Liem, 2010). In effect, PB goals are

expected to influence various dimensions in learning. In this study, it was presumed that these goals can influence learners' coping strategies in learning difficulties, i.e., their learning resilience. Resilience, as a relatively new concept is "the capacity to bounce back, to withstand hardship, and to repair yourself" (Wolin & Wolin, 1993, p. 5).

To narrow down the definition in an academic context, resilience as "a measure of successful stress-coping ability" (Connor & Davidson, 2003, p.77) is "the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences" (Wang, Haertal & Walberg, 1994, p. 46). Academic resilience is the students' ability to deal effectively with setbacks, challenges, and pressure in the school setting over time (Fallon, 2010). It has the potential to heighten the likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought by early traits, conditions, and experiences. Khalaf (2014) has also defined academic resilience as one of the indicators of adjustment with the setbacks of university life and one of the strongest predictors of class participation, enjoyment of study, and general self-esteem. Hence, resilient students are those who adapt high levels of achievement performance and motivation in spite of many stressful conditions putting them at risk of poor performance at school or even dropping out of school (Alva, 1991). Thus, resilience can serve as an individual difference factor helping L2 learners overcome critical difficulties in the long-term L2 learning process. In order to have a better picture of academic resilience, we can consider the Student Motivation and Engagement Wheel, an expansive model of behavioral and psychological engagement reflecting emotions, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, relevant to academic engagement at school (Martin, 2001, 2002, 2003a, 2003b).

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate resilience among teachers (e.g., Clandinin, 2010; Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Hollnagel, 2011; Mansfielda, Beltmanb & Price, 2014; Schelvisa, Zwetslootab, Bosa & Wiezer, 2014; Van Breda, 2011). Researchers have investigated the factors constituting resilient behavior and the ways of measuring adaption to hardship (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). In the last decades, psychologists have moved away from deficit models of resilience. In other words, a paradigm shift has occurred focusing on strengths as

opposed to deficits and on health as opposed to illness. Resilience, therefore, is viewed as part of ordinary healthy development rather than an extraordinary phenomenon.

With regard to student resilience, a study attempted to examine psychological and educational correlates of academic resilience via between-network and within network approaches. Martin and Marsh (2006) developed a 5-C model of academic resilience including: commitment (persistence), confidence (self-efficacy), composure (low anxiety), coordination (planning), and control. The researchers used the data, collected from 402 Australian high school students, to develop a uni-dimensional academic resilience construct and concluded that a construct validation approach to the empirical evaluation regarding academic resilience is much more logical and theoretically consistent relational pattern between or among the constructs.

Other studies investigated the association between students' resilience and motivated behavior and proficiency level (Kim & Kim, 2016; Martin, 2008), psychological, social, and educational experiences (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997), and involvement in school activities, academic performance, and family conflicts (Alva, 1991). Besides, a number of studies attempted to explore the relationship between resilience and academic achievement (Abolmaali & Mahmudi, 2013; Fallon, 2010; Kwek et al., 2013; Putwain et al., 2013; Reis, Colbert & Hebert, 2005; Scales et al., 2006; Speight, 2009; Waxman & Huang, 1997), success in homework and tests (Gordon, 1996; Somchit & Sriyaporn, 2004), and student engagement, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Borman & Overman, 2004). Storytelling in L2 (Nguyen et al., 2015), life satisfaction (Seligman, 2002), communication competence (Duran, 1983; Wiemann, 1977), risk factors including, low expectations of teachers, stress, lack of English language ability, inattentiveness, and inability to form new relationships (Abrams-Terry, 2014) were also analyzed with regard to resilience. Other constructs in relation to resilience also included; family communication patterns (Jowkar, Kohoulat & Zakeri, 2011), critical thinking (Jones, 2003; Kamali & Fahim, 2011; Krovetz, 2008; Kumpfer, 1999; Werner & Smith, 1982), divorce, poor parenting, and disadvantaged background (Lindstroem, 2001; Masten, 2001), and gender (Khalaf, 2014; Morales, 2008).

Despite the bulk of research exploring students' personal best goals, the notion seems to be remained an uncharted territory among EFL learners. Moreover, only a few studies investigated L2 learning resilience (Abrams-Terry, 2014; Kamali & Fahim, 2011; Khalaf, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2015; Oxford et al., 2007) which implies the need for exploring the notion of resilience in depth in second/ foreign language learning. In consideration of what was noted about the contributing role of student personal best goals and their resilience in the learning process and due to the relevance of the two constructs, the present study aims at exploring EFL students' resilience by examining its association with learners' personal best goals and academic achievement.

Purpose of the Study

In particular, this study inquires the interrelationships of resilience, personal best, and language achievement. This study is the first attempt to incorporate the relational pattern of the above mentioned variables among EFL learners. Specifically, the present study presented a model depicting connections and causal relations among these factors. Figure 1 represents the hypothesized model in which personal best and resilience interrelationship affects language achievement. Personal best and resilience and their sub factors were hypothesized to be causally related to each other. Considering the sub factors of personal best known as, specific goals, challenging goals, competitively self-referenced goals, and self-improvement goals, the purpose would be more narrowed down. A more detailed purpose of this study is to examine the interrelationship of these sub factors and resilience and their probable impact on language achievement. Figure 1 displays the hypothetical model by inserting the subscales of each variable.

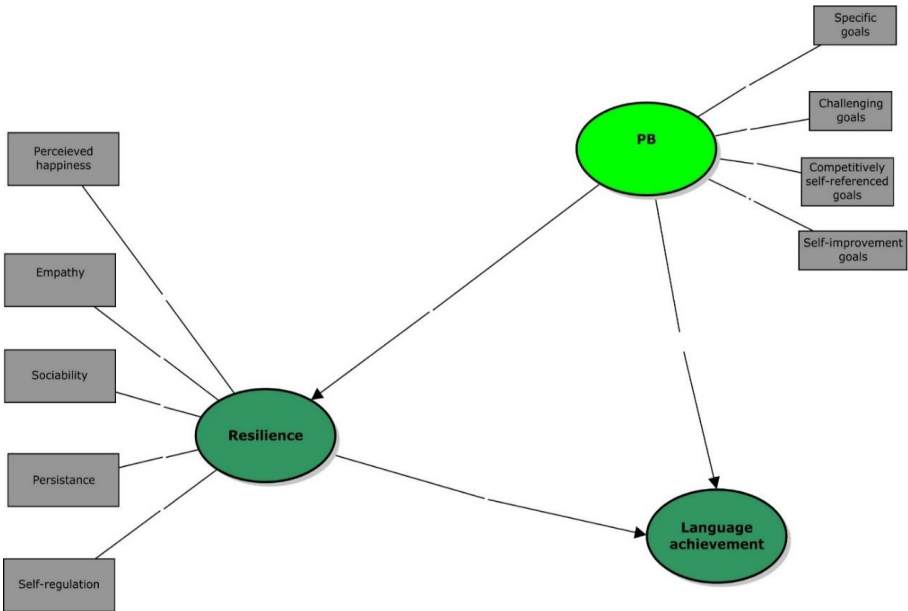


Figure 1. The hypothetical relationships among the variables under study with their subscales

Method

Participants

In order to collect the required data, 173 Iranian EFL learners with different ages, genders, and various levels of proficiencies were selected randomly as the sample members. It must be noted that participants were all non-native speakers of English whose first language was Persian. They were learning English in language institutes and a university of Mashhad, a city in Iran. The community sample of 173 students included university (N=90) and institutes students (N=83) who were female (N=122) and male (N=51) students. Moreover, they ranged between 19 and 41 years old (M=24.12, SD=3.56). The university junior students were studying ELT, and translation

studies. The institute students were studying at upper intermediate levels. After a brief explanation of the purpose of the study, all the participants received the two questionnaires. They were also assured that their personal information would be kept confidential. They were also required to provide demographic information such as their age, gender and educational level as well as their grade point average (GPA).

Instrumentation

Personal Best Goals Scale

To determine student PB goals, the study employed the Persian version of 'Personal Best Goals Scale' designed and validated by Martin (2006) and translated to Persian by the present researchers and its reliability and validity were then computed. The personal best scale consists of 16 statements gauging four aspects of PBs: specific goals (4 items), challenging goals (4 items), competitively self-referenced goals (4 items), and self-improvement Goals (4 items). The scale measures the four types of goals via a 5-point Likert-type response format from never to always.

Resilience Scale

The Persian version of Resilience Scale designed and validated by Kim and Kim (2016) was used to determine EFL student resilience which has been considered as an important criterion for testing potential functions of particular factors, especially motivational factors in L2 learning (e.g. Kim & Kim 2014; Kormos & Csizer, 2008; Mezei, 2014; Papi, 2010; Taguchi, Magid & Papi, 2009). The scale comprises 26 items evaluating five dimensions of student resilience: perceived happiness (9 items), empathy (7 items), sociability (3 items), persistence (4 items), and self-regulation (2 items). The scale was translated by the present researchers and its reliability and validity were then computed.

Results

To check the normality of data distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed. This test is used to check whether the distribution deviates from a comparable normal distribution. If the p-value is non-significant ($p > .05$), we can say that the distribution of a sample is not significantly different from a normal distribution, therefore it is normal. If the p-value is significant ($p < .05$) it implies that the distribution is not normal. Table 1 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. As can be seen, the obtained sig value for all variables is higher than .05. Therefore, it can safely be concluded that the data is normally distributed across all four variables.

Table 1
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Resilience	.07	173	.05
Personal Best	.08	173	.06
Language Achievement	.06	173	.05

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics of EFL learners' resilience and its five subscales. As the Table shows, the mean of perceived happiness is ($M=31.98, SD=8.81$), for empathy it is ($M=24.83, SD=7.48$), for sociability it equals ($M=9.58, SD=3.02$), for persistence the mean is ($M=13.93, SD=3.21$), the mean of self-regulation is ($M=10.61, SD=2.47$), and the total mean for resilience is ($M=90.95, SD=23.24$).

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics of EFL learners' PB goals and its four subscales. As the Table shows, the mean of specific goals is ($M=14.36, SD=3.96$), and for challenging goals it is ($M=13.01, SD=4.27$), for competitively self-referenced goals it equals ($M=13.55, SD=4.29$), the mean of self-improvement goals is ($M=14.69, SD=5.28$), and the total mean for PB goals is ($M=56.43, SD=16.20$).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of EFL Learners' Resilience and Its Components

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived Happiness	173	14.00	44.00	31.98	8.81
Empathy	173	8.00	34.00	24.83	7.48
Sociability	173	3.00	14.00	9.58	3.02
Persistence	173	6.00	19.00	13.93	3.21
Self-Regulation	173	5.00	15.00	10.61	2.47
Total Resilience	173	46.00	125.00	90.95	23.24
Valid N (list wise)	173				

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of EFL Learners' PB Goals and its Components

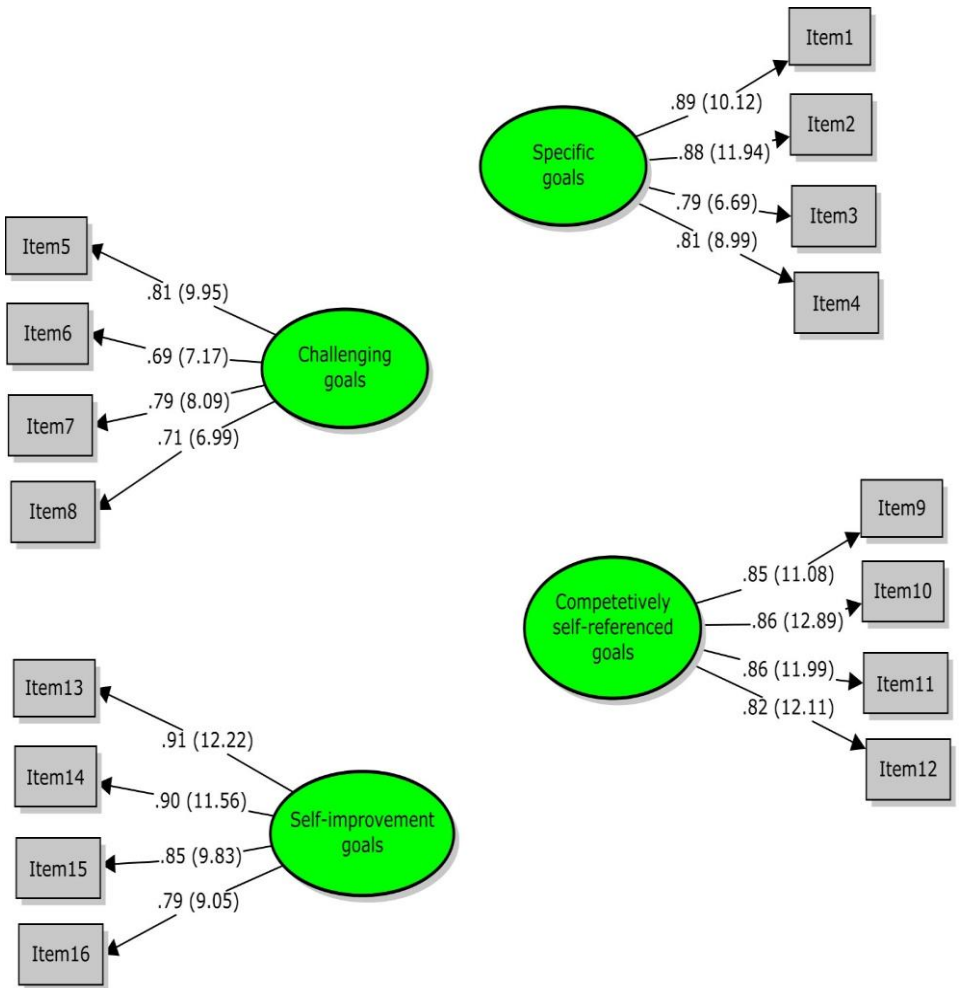
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Specific Goals	173	8.00	20.00	14.36	3.96
Challenging Goals	173	4.00	20.00	13.01	4.27
Competitively Self-Referenced	173	4.00	20.00	13.55	4.29
Self-Improvement Goals	173	4.00	20.00	14.69	5.28
Total PB Goals	173	31.00	80.00	56.43	16.20
Valid N (List wise)	173				

The mean of language achievement as measured by grade point average (GPA) is ($M=16.99$, $SD=1.591$) as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of EFL Learners' GPA

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
GPA	173	13.50	19.45	16.99	1.59
Valid N (list wise)	173				



$\chi^2 = 1120.31$, $df = 499$, $RMSEA = 0.063$, $CFI = 0.90$, $GFI = 0.90$, $NFI = 0.90$

Figure 2. The schematic representation of the four PB goals

The translated version of the PB scale was administered to EFL students. To determine the validity of the scale, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) utilizing the LISREL 8.50 statistical package was performed. The model consisted of four facets, namely, specific goals, challenging goals, competitively self-referenced goals, and self-improvement goals, each consisting of four items. A number of fit indices were examined to evaluate the model fit: the chi square/*df* ratio which should be lower than 2 or 3, the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Good Fit Index (GFI) with the cut value greater than .90, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of about .06 or .08 (Schreiber, Amaury, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006). The structural model is presented in Figure 2. As indicated by Figure 3, the chi-square/*df* ratio (2.24), the RMSEA (0.063) and the NFI=.90, CFI=.90, and GFI= .90 all reached the acceptable fit thresholds. Overall, it can be concluded that the proposed model had a perfect fit with the empirical data.

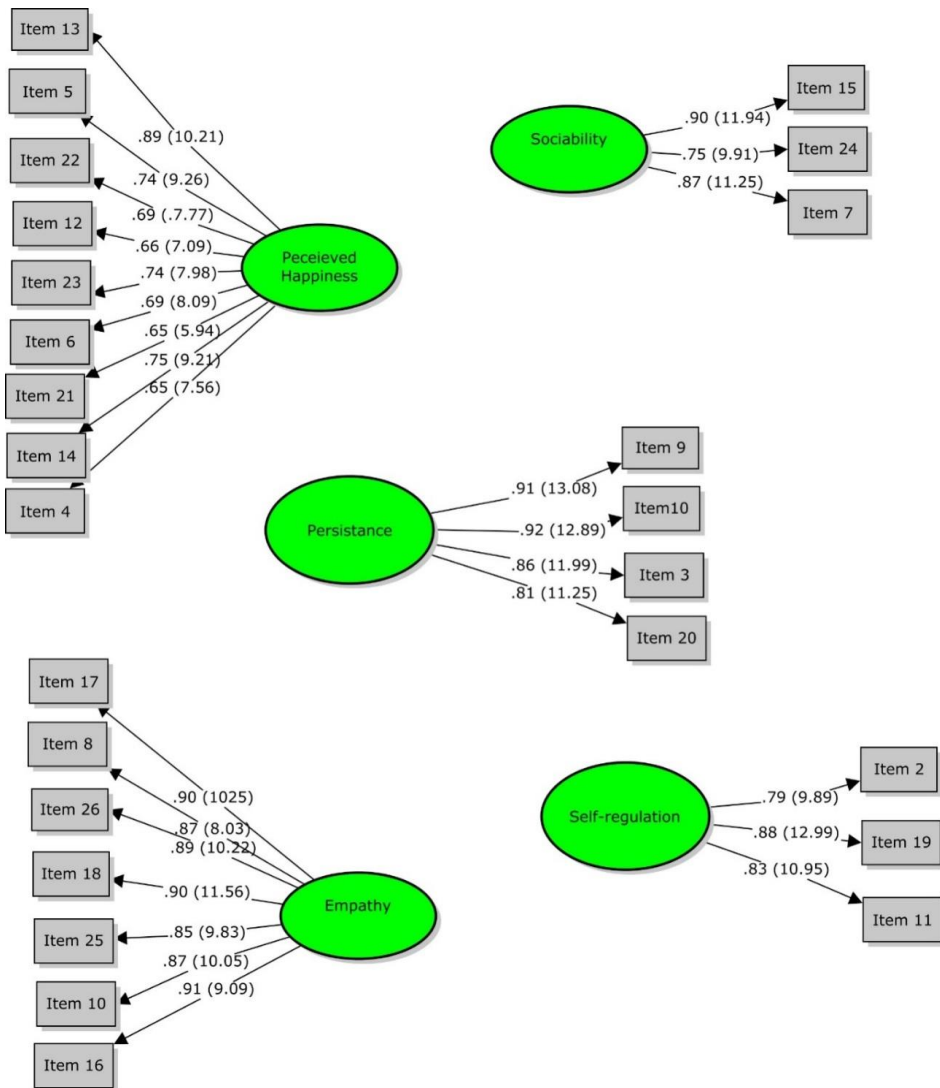
The Cronbach's alpha estimate for the PB scale was found to be .88, and for each goal was as follows: specific (.80), challenging (.77), competitive (.79), and self-improvement (.86).

The correlations among the four goals were then computed. As indicated in Table 5, all goals highly correlated with each other.

Table 5
The Correlation Coefficients among PB Goals

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Specific goals	1.00				
2. Challenging goals	.79**	1.00			
3. Competitively self-referenced goals	.72**	.64**	1.00		
4. Self-improvement goals	.86**	.64**	.74**	1.00	
5. PB goals	.88**	.82**	.88**	.92**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level



$\chi^2 = 596.312, df = 228, RMSEA = 0.066, CFI = 0.88, GFI = 0.89, NFI = 0.90$

Figure 3. The schematic representation of the five resilience subscales

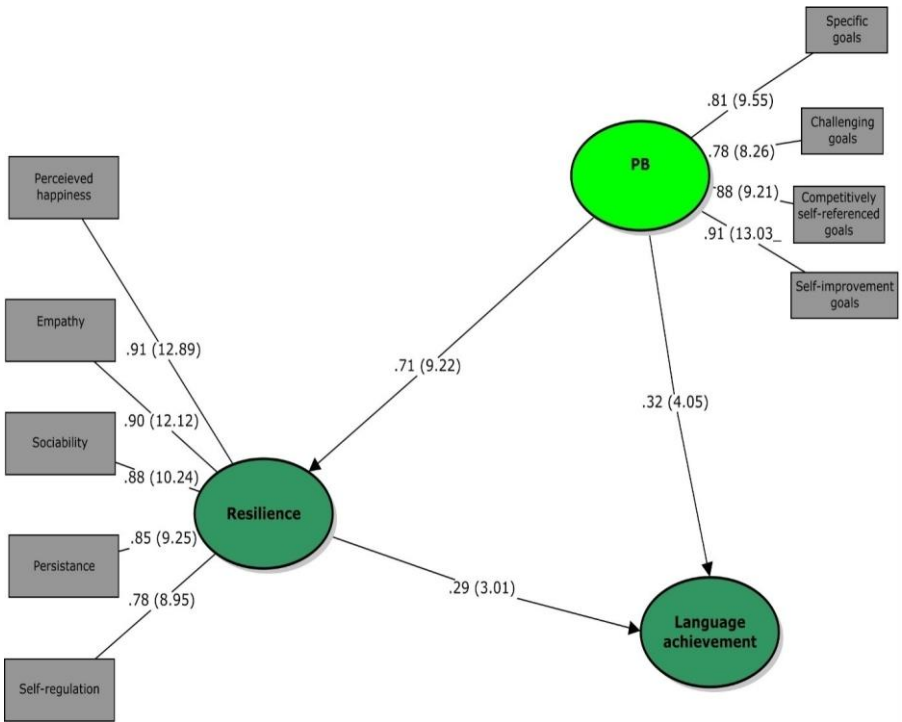
The translated version of the resilience scale was distributed to EFL students. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) utilizing the LISREL 8.50 statistical package was performed to define the validity of the scale. The resilient model includes five facets, namely, perceived happiness with nine items, empathy having seven items, sociability consisting three items, persistence with four items, and self-regulation including three items. Above fit indices were examined to evaluate the model fit: The structural model is presented in Figure 4. As indicated by Figure 3, the chi-square/*df* ratio (2.06), the *RMSEA* (0.066) and the *NFI*=0.90, *CFI*=0.88, and *GFI*=0.89 all reached the acceptable fit thresholds. Overall, it can be concluded that the proposed model had a perfect fit with the empirical data.

The Cronbach's alpha estimate for the resilience scale was found to be .77, and for each subscale was as follows: perceived happiness (.79), sociability (.77), persistence (.79), empathy (.79), and self-regulation (.70). The correlations among the five subscales were estimated. As shown in Table 6, all subscales highly correlated with each other.

Table 6
The Correlation Coefficients among Resilience Subscales

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived happiness	1.00					
2. Sociability	.92**	1.00				
3.Persistance	.73**	.67**	1.00			
4. Empathy	.88**	.84**	.77**	1.00		
5. Self-regulation	.78**	.75**	.61**	.81**	1.00	
6. Resilience	.98**	.95**	.80**	.93**	.95**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level



$\chi^2 = 67.35$, $df = 30$, $RMSEA = .066$, $GFI = .91$, $NFI = .90$, $CFI = .90$

Figure 4. The schematic representation of the variables under study

To see if the hypothesized model fits the data, the LISREL 8.50 statistical package was used to run SEM. The afore-mentioned fit indices were examined to evaluate the model fit as stated above.

As demonstrated by Figure 4, the chi-square value (45.91), the chi-square/ df ratio (2.29), the RMSEA (.070), the NFI (.92), GFI (.93), and CFI (.95) all reached the acceptable fit thresholds. It implies that the model had a perfect fit with the empirical data.

To check the strengths of the causal relationships among the variables, the *t*-values and standardized estimates were examined. The results demonstrated that PB is a positive and significant predictor of resilience ($\beta=0.71$, $t= 9.22$). It was also found that language achievement is predicted by both PB ($\beta=0.32$, $t=4.05$) and resilience ($\beta=0.29$, $t=3.01$).

The correlation coefficients among EFL learners' PB, resilience, and language achievement, are presented in Table 7. As can be seen, the highest correlation is observed between PB and resilience ($r =0.88$, $p< 0.05$). Language achievement correlated weakly with both PB ($r =0.36$, $p< 0.05$) and resilience ($r =0.31$, $p< 0.05$).

Table 7

The Correlation Coefficients among PB, Resilience, and Language Achievement

	1	2	3
1. PB	1.00		
2. Resilience	.88**	1.00	
3. Language achievement	.36**	.31**	.1.00

**Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05

Discussion

The present study aimed at investigating the association among student personal best goals, resilience, and academic achievement. In effect, this study sought to find the effects of personal best goals on student resilience, and the effects of the two constructs on academic achievement.

The results indicated that personal best goals significantly and positively influence language achievement. PB is defined as specific, challenging, competitively self-referenced targets towards which students strive (Martin, 2012). It has been proposed that striving for personal best goals is a potentially efficient and effective way of enhancing student long-term academic development (Martin, 2011). When learners do their best improve their performance in comparison with previous performance or exert more effort on a present activity in comparison with prior task completion, they can get attain more satisfactory results, so in this way their academic

achievement will improve significantly after a period of endeavor (Arabi, Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2018).

Regarding the first type of goals, i.e., specific, it can be indicated that specific goals lead to higher levels of performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). Specific goals improve learners' performance by diminishing the uncertainty of goals and objectives (Locke, Chah, Harrison & Lustgarten, 1989). Concerning the second set of goals, namely challenging goals, it can be discussed that whereas the score required for outperforming the others is quite murky, the score to fulfil a PB is entirely pinpointed. Virtually, the challenge or struggle determined by a PB must be superior than that of the previous ultimate functioning. In other words, the specificity and challenge of goals leads to higher desirable functioning. Indeed, Locke and Latham (1990) in a meta-analysis study reported an effect size ranging from .42 to .80 for the facilitative role of impact of specific and difficult goals in academic effectiveness. Concerning the third type of goals (competitively self-referenced goals) with a competitive orientation whereby individuals compete with their own previous performance than with others, it is evident that PB is beyond the accomplishment of a standard. It is also the completion of a personalized standard based on individual's prior achievement. This personalized element of PBs, in effect, differentiates them from existing conceptualization of goals by accelerating the motivational dispositions for success (Martin, 2011; Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2015). For the last set of goals which are known as self-improvement aspect, one can perceive that they are related to the motivation to develop or build on previous levels of performance or attainment (Arabi, Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2018).

The results of the present study also indicated that student resilience influences students' language achievement significantly and positively. The factors extracted from the questionnaire items on resilience were found to be perceived happiness, empathy, sociability, persistence, and self-regulation. As for perceived happiness, the majority of the items were those adopted from a study, which had developed and verified a scale to measure life satisfaction. Based on the life satisfaction scale, the items for perceived happiness in the present study asked about the participants' perceptions of their sense of satisfaction and happiness in their lives. As a result, the L2

learners' positive and grateful attitudes and feelings were expressed by the factor of perceived happiness. Given this, perceived happiness is a relatively dominant component of L2 learners' resilience, it suggests that more positive perceptions of life contribute to stronger resilience, this in turn leads to higher academic achievement (Pendse & Ruikar, 2013).

Empathy and sociability have been reported as components of resilience in several studies (e.g., Shin, Kim & Kim, 2009). Empathy refers to one's attitude of deeply understanding others' thoughts and feelings. Sociability is also a tendency to have a positive relationship with others. The two factors can be regarded as social competence (Benard, 1993). According to Luthar and Burack (2000), social competence is considered "a particularly useful indicator of children's overall positive adaptation or wellness" (p. 101). Resilience is seen to result from "the operation of basic human adaptational systems" (Masten, 2001, p. 227). Given this, social competence (including empathy and sociability) seems to enable learners to better adapt despite adversity by developing a supportive relationship with others. It is undisputed that these two factors are critical determinants of L2 learning (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2010). As for another factor found in the present study, persistence, it was revealed that the act of persistence in spite of adversity or discouragement is a component constituting resilience (Martin & Marsh, 2006). Connor and Davidson (2003) also found a similar factor. Even though the researchers did not name the factor, the items were associated with tenacity in making progress against challenging problems. Reflecting on the previous findings as well as the results in the present study, we suggest that persistence, or the willingness not to give up easily, can be a characteristic of stronger resilience and the corresponding academic success. The final factor, self-regulation, is similar to emotion regulation suggested by Reivich and Shatte (2002). They argued that the use of a well-developed set of skills that help control emotions, attention, and behavior is one of resilient individual's characteristics. The items for self-regulation in the present study determined that the capacity to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and impulses reflects stronger resilience and results in greater success (Ghonsooly & Ghanizadeh, 2013; Ghanizadeh & Mirzaee, 2012).

Regarding the association between EFL learners' resilience and PB goals, the results indicated that there is a significant relationship between the two

constructs. Resilience as an individual characteristic has been used to refer to good, stable, and constant adjustment under difficult conditions. Resilient students reserve high motivation achievement despite undesirable, stressful, and challenging situations and circumstances (Alva, 1991). Academic resilience can be under the influence of either external and internal supportive factors. The internal supportive factors include positive personal characteristics, perceptions, and values, such as, communication skills, self-efficacy, goal-orientations, and thinking skills. The external supportive factors encompass the contextual social supports and occasions accessible in the home, school, community, and peer groups (Alva, 1991).

As stated, achievement goal orientations are among the internal supportive factors. Broadly defined, achievement goals mirror the desire to advance, achieve, or exhibit competence in completing a task (Dweck, 1986). Moreover, different goal orientations with the mastery goal at the center underpin students' cognitive, metacognitive, and emotional attainments (Ames & Archer, 1988; Zafarmand, Ghanizadeh, & Akbari, 2014). Academic resilience is indeed the emotional affective consequence of goal orientations. It is indicated that students are more successful if they adopt a mastery orientation or intrinsic motivation (Fortune, Sinclair & Hawton, 2008; Rostami, Ghanizadeh, & Ghonsooly, 2015). The results of the present study are in harmony with a study conducted by Splan, Brooks, Porr & Broyles (2011) among university students. They indicated a positive and moderate association between resiliency and mastery-approach goal orientation.

Conclusions

On the whole, the yielded findings of the present study lead to the conclusion that personal best goals, resilience, and their sub-factors have facilitative role in EFL learners' language achievement. The results confirmed significant interrelationships among all the variables. In other words, when learners set specific and clear goals for their learning, they have a clear vision of their future goals. Consequently, such a vision pushes them towards better performance. For making progress in the process of learning, students are required to become independent learners who manage and control their effort to achieve their goals. Autonomous learners are

aware of their goals and how they should evaluate themselves to find out their weaknesses and strengths. They also have to be resistant against the problems and try to recover quickly from their adversities. Moreover, the present study investigated the association between personal best, resilience and language achievement. It was revealed that all the learners whether institutes or university students are the same regarding the variables under the study. It implies that both institute and university students are inclined to do their bests to achieve their learning goals.

Regarding the association between resilience, PBs, and language achievement, significant albeit weak correlations were found. It can be concluded that students who are highly goal oriented and successful in setting personal goals reveal greater academic persistence than those who do not possess the personal resource. As a result, it appears the goal-directedness one of the most prominent antecedents of academic resilience (Valencia, 1994). In addition, individuals with mastery goals embrace challenging events and persevere in the face of difficulties (Dweck, 1986).

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