

The Mediating Role of Differentiated Instruction in Intercultural Adaptation and Subjective Well-being

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Abstract:

Previous research has shown that the development of Subjective Well-being (SWB)—a critical factor for the psychological health of second language learners, as well as a major source of sustained motivation for their learning—requires the involvement of Intercultural Adaptation (IA). However, past studies have primarily focused on theoretical discussions and position papers, with only a few empirical studies concentrating on second language acquisition, particularly in the context of English. This study aims to empirically investigate how IA influences the path to SWB, introducing Differentiated Instruction (DI) as a mediating variable for the first time. Data from 193 CFL (Chinese as a Foreign Language) university students were collected through a survey questionnaire, and the SEM-PLS model was used for analysis. The findings indicate that key factors within IA, including cultural empathy, emotional stability, and Chinese proficiency, significantly impact SWB. Moreover, DI plays a clear positive role in driving the IA-SWB path. Based on these findings, this study recommends that teachers focus on thematic care in future IA development, ensuring that learners remain closely connected to Chinese culture during their cross-cultural adaptation process. Additionally, the study suggests that teachers utilize diverse teaching methods and assessment tools to maintain learners' sensitivity and openness to cultural exploration throughout their adaptation journey. This research provides important insights for CFL educators in enhancing the SWB of international students studying in China. It also offers valuable inspiration for teachers on how to promote the mental health of international students through cultural practices.

Keywords:

Differentiated Instruction; Intercultural Adaptation; Subject Well-being; Chinese as a Foreign language Learning.