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Construction and Application of a Model for Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation for Employment Among Gen Z Foreign Language Majors Engaged "Slow Employment" in the AI Era

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Abstract

With the number of university graduates continuing to rise and the explosive development of generative artificial intelligence (AI), traditional language-related industries are undergoing a disruptive transformation. The convergence of fears regarding technological unemployment and the cognitive bias of 'the irrelevance of one's major' has led to an increasingly prominent phenomenon of 'slow employment' among English language graduates. Enhancing the intrinsic motivation for employment within this group is a key task for universities in supporting graduate employment. Grounded in positive psychology theory, this study systematically analyses the current status and influencing factors of the intrinsic motivation for employment among Generation Z English majors experiencing "slow employment". Drawing upon the Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA) theory, it constructs a systematic model for enhancing this motivation and clarifies its practical application across three dimensions: psychological assessment for employment, personalised career guidance, and collaborative education involving families, schools and the community. This research provides theoretical support and practical pathways for universities to address the "slow employment" dilemma faced by foreign language graduates and to optimise employment education in the era of intelligent technology.

Keywords

Positive psychology, Generation Z English majors, Slow employment, Intrinsic motivation for employment, PERMA model

1.Introduction

Employment is the cornerstone of people's livelihoods and affects countless households. In his address on 'Promoting High-Quality and Full Employment', General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasised that the employment of young people, including university graduates, must be treated as a top priority, with strengthened support for those facing employment difficulties. The 2026 Government Work Report also explicitly called for

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policies to support youth employment. The cohort of university graduates in 2026 is projected to reach 12.7 million, presenting a severe macro-level employment situation. However, amidst this wave of employment, the explosive development of generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies—such as ChatGPT and large language models (LLMs)—has brought about disruptive changes in traditional language-related industries. Core positions for English majors, including cross-border e-commerce copywriting, entry-level translation, and traditional language teaching, have been significantly reduced. As a result of this impact, many Gen Z English majors born in the 2000s are facing an unprecedented 'fear of technological unemployment', leading them to choose, either voluntarily or involuntarily, to delay entering the workforce. This has given rise to the phenomenon of 'slow employment', which stands in stark contrast to societal expectations.

University graduate employment is a vital social project concerning the national economy and people's livelihoods, as well as the rational allocation of human resources. It not only concerns the practical implementation of the quality of talent cultivation in higher education institutions but also impacts social stability and the nation's innovative development. Cultivating university students who possess a proactive employment mindset and strong intrinsic motivation to seek employment is a shared requirement of both higher education and societal development. Against the backdrop of the intelligent era, the 'slow employment' of English majors is often accompanied by profound confusion regarding career values and the depletion of psychological capital. How to activate this group's internal motivation for job-seeking and help them overcome technological anxiety has become a pressing bottleneck in universities' employment education efforts. A review of existing research reveals that discussions on university students' intrinsic motivation for employment have largely focused on external environmental interventions, with insufficient exploration of internal psychological mechanisms. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of specialised research targeting specific 'slow employment' groups, such as English majors, amidst the impact of intelligent technologies. In particular, there is a lack of systematic research grounded in positive psychology and focused on constructing industry transformation models for the AI era. Existing findings struggle to provide actionable, targeted, practical guidance and have failed to effectively bridge the gap between positive psychology theory and the practical needs of fostering intrinsic motivation for employment.

The selection of foreign language students as the research subjects is highly necessary and representative. This choice of specific research subjects stems not only from the large scale of this group but also from the limitations in talent development structures and the impact of industry transformation they face amidst digital and intelligent transformation. Statistics indicate that amongst China's more than 3,000 higher education institutions, over 1,000 offer foreign language and literature disciplines and programmes, making foreign language students a substantial and highly representative group within the country's higher education system. However, for a long time, the focus of talent development in China's foreign language disciplines has been overly centred on training in short-term communicative skills, such as language proficiency, to some extent neglecting the long-term objectives of cultivating critical thinking and cross-disciplinary capabilities. The limitations of this traditional training mechanism have resulted in this cohort demonstrating relatively weak core competitiveness and employment resilience when faced with sudden technological iterations and career transitions. Currently, the 'Outline of the Plan for Building a Powerhouse in Education (2024–2035)' explicitly proposes that the digitalisation of education should serve as a key breakthrough, opening up new avenues for educational development. The disruptive application of digital and intelligent technologies, such as Ar-

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tificial Intelligence Generated Content (AIGC), in the fields of education and language services has, whilst injecting innovative pathways into the high-quality development of higher education, also placed foreign language students squarely in the line of fire, exposing them to the cognitive bias of the 'uselessness of their specialisation' and the practical dilemma of shrinking job opportunities in traditional industries. Therefore, an in-depth examination of this vast and distinct cohort experiencing delayed employment is not only integral to comprehensively supporting the construction of an education powerhouse, but also serves as a crucial barometer for resolving the technical challenges faced by humanities graduates in higher education during the era of intelligent transformation.

Positive psychology, which focuses on the stimulation of individual potential and positive experiences, offers a new perspective for a thorough analysis of the mechanisms that activate intrinsic motivation for employment amidst technological transformation. Accordingly, this study draws upon positive psychology theory and, against the backdrop of the generative AI era, systematically analyses the current state and core influencing factors of the intrinsic motivation for employment among Generation Z English majors experiencing 'slow employment'. It clarifies the mechanisms through which positive psychological qualities contribute to the reshaping of value in human-machine collaboration and cross-cultural communication, and constructs a scientific and operational model for enhancing intrinsic motivation for employment from the perspective of 'AI + language services'. The research provides practical guidance for universities to optimise career guidance models for foreign language graduates and refine talent development systems in the intelligent era, thereby supporting university graduates in achieving high-quality and full employment.

2.Related Research

2.1. Current State of Domestic Research

The introduction of positive psychology in China began in the early 21st century. In recent years, as the phenomenon of 'slow employment' among Generation Z university students has become increasingly prominent, interdisciplinary research combining these two fields has gradually emerged. Particularly against the backdrop of industry reshaping driven by artificial intelligence technology, research into "slow employment" among specific professional groups—such as foreign language majors—caused by technophobia has begun to attract attention. The overall research direction exhibits a progressive trajectory of "phenomenon description—influencing factors—pathway exploration", with studies focusing on three aspects: theoretical connections, influence mechanisms, and enhancement strategies.

2.1.1. Interdisciplinary Research on Positive Psychology and Intrinsic Motivation for Employment

Existing domestic research has centred on constructing a theoretical framework for the employment intrinsic motivation of Generation Z university students based on core theories of positive psychology. Wu Jieqing et al. (2016), adopting a positive psychology perspective, explored how proactive personality influences university students' career adaptability through the mediating role of achievement motivation, proposing that achievement motivation serves as the key link in activating employment intrinsic motivation. Li Lei et al.

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(2022), integrating Self-Determination Theory, proposed that the core dimensions of employment intrinsic motivation among Generation Z university students are autonomy, competence and relational needs, and constructed a 'positive psychological traits—intrinsic motivation—employment behaviour' model. Zhang Min et al. (2023) defined the components of employment intrinsic motivation from the perspective of positive psychological capital, emphasising the positive driving role of positive psychological qualities such as self-efficacy. The aforementioned studies provide a theoretical reference for analysing how English majors maintain psychological resilience in the face of the impact of AI.

2.1.2. Research on the Mechanisms Linking University Students' "Slow Employment" and Employment Motivation

Scholars have researched the mechanisms influencing employment motivation among the 'slow employment' cohort, focusing on positive psychological traits, the external environment, and their interaction. Wang Hao et al. (2024) found through empirical research that career anxiety is negatively correlated with psychological resilience among the slow employment cohort, and that family support can mitigate the erosion of motivation by reinforcing positive psychological qualities. Ma Li et al. (2022) proposed that self-perception, psychological capital and social support are core influencing factors, emphasising the role of positive psychological interventions. Liu Fang et al. (2023) utilised structural equation modelling to verify that positive psychological qualities indirectly enhance intrinsic motivation by alleviating career confusion, with career cognitive biases acting as a moderating factor. These research findings hold significant practical value in explaining the cognitive biases and anxiety experienced by English language students arising from the 'theory of the uselessness of their major'.

2.1.3. Research on the Model of Interdisciplinary Literacy and Competence among Foreign Language Students

Since the formal launch of China's New Liberal Arts initiative in 2019, higher foreign language education has been entrusted with the mission of actively serving national strategic development and strengthening foreign language capabilities. As interdisciplinary concepts provide methodological support for the development of the New Liberal Arts (Tian Xianpeng & Jiang Shujie, 2022), and given the accelerating trend of cross-disciplinary integration within foreign language disciplines (Wang Lifei & Song Hailing, 2021), the interdisciplinary literacy and comprehensive qualities of foreign language students should naturally be accorded high priority to meet the demands of the nation and society for a new generation of talent. However, a review of existing research on competency models and literacy in China reveals that discussions have primarily focused on basic education in primary and secondary schools (Xia Xuemei, 2018; Yan Baiyang, 2019), the construction of interdisciplinary competency models for engineering students (Du Tingting, 2020; Yang Xiaoli, Lei Qing, 2022) and the assessment of interdisciplinary literacy (Wang Guangming et al., 2017; Chen Siyu, 2023). Although numerous scholars have repeatedly emphasised the urgent need to cultivate interdisciplinary literacy and comprehensive application skills among foreign language students (He Ning, Wang Shouren, 2022; Ning Qi, 2023; Luo Xuanmin et al., 2023), foundational research focusing on the components of this group's interdisciplinary literacy and intrinsic motivation remains scarce. This relative lag in research has resulted in existing employment guidance strategies lacking sufficient disciplinary targeting and precision when

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addressing the 'technical slow employment' dilemma faced by foreign language graduates under the dual pressures of the impact of AI technology and the transition to the 'New Liberal Arts'.

2.1.4. Research on Implementation Strategies for Employment Intrinsic Motivation from a Positive Psychology Perspective

Existing research focuses on positive psychological interventions, cognitive guidance and multi-faceted support, integrating these with practical applications to formulate targeted strategies. Chu Zhaohui (2021) advocates establishing a three-dimensional intervention model of "cognitive restructuring—capacity building—psychological support" based on positive psychological counselling. Zhong Axiu (2022) proposes constructing an interactive positive psychological support mechanism to strengthen self-efficacy through group counselling and other means. In terms of practice, Nanjing Agricultural University has introduced integrated courses (Zhou Jianpeng, 2024), Tsinghua University has implemented the "45° Anti-Anxiety" intervention model (Xiao Xue, 2025), and Zhejiang Normal University has established a dual-track model (Zhu Xiangyang et al., 2023), all of which demonstrate localised innovation. However, specialised positive psychology intervention strategies for talent transformation in the language services industry in the digital and intelligent era are currently still in the exploratory phase.

2.2. Current Status of International Research

Based on core theories of positive psychology, developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan have taken the lead in researching the relationship between youth 'slow employment' and intrinsic motivation for employment. This has resulted in a mature research framework comprising 'theoretical exploration—empirical testing—practical application', with research primarily focusing on dimensions such as the cultivation of positive psychological traits, psychological intervention models and social support mechanisms. For example, Ryan & Deci (2020), adopting a positive psychology perspective, argued that the intrinsic motivation for employment among young people delaying entry into the workforce lies primarily in the fulfilment of three core psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. They proposed that reducing external control and reinforcing autonomous choice can effectively activate intrinsic motivation for employment. Bakker et al. (2022), drawing on work-reframing theory, suggest that by guiding young people who have delayed entering the workforce to leverage their own strengths and reconstruct their career perceptions, their intrinsic motivation for employment and career adaptability can be significantly enhanced. Smith et al. (2022), from the perspective of community support, suggest that building positive social support networks to provide psychological counselling and resource support for young people delaying employment can alleviate their career-related anxiety and strengthen their intrinsic motivation for employment. Lee (2023) found that the influence of positive psychological traits on the intrinsic motivation for employment among those delaying employment varies across different cultural contexts; in Eastern cultural contexts, family support and collective identity play a more significant role in activating intrinsic motivation.

2.3. Research Trends

Existing research offers important insights for this study, but has notable limitations: firstly, it has not paid sufficient attention to the specific characteristics of Generation Z, particularly overlooking the unique

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psychological state of graduates from specific disciplines—such as foreign language studies—who have been severely impacted by generative AI; furthermore, research on interdisciplinary competency models is largely concentrated in engineering or basic education fields, resulting in intervention strategies lacking discipline-specific targeting; secondly, the application of positive psychology remains rather limited, lacking a systematic intervention framework and theoretical integration; existing findings largely remain at the level of individual case summaries or the presentation of experiences, lacking in-depth theoretical refinement; thirdly, there is a lack of long-term follow-up, making it difficult to reveal the dynamic mechanisms of intrinsic motivation; fourthly, the collaborative support mechanism between home, school and community is imperfect, and research into the differences among various regions and disciplinary groups under the intelligent transformation still needs to be strengthened.

Since the state introduced several policies and regulations to promote graduate employment, the phenomenon of 'slow employment' among Generation Z university students has attracted widespread attention, and the importance of positive psychological intervention has become increasingly apparent. However, faced with the dual pressures of industry reshaping driven by artificial intelligence and the transformation towards the development of the 'new liberal arts', targeted and systematic pathways for enhancing employment motivation still require optimisation. Although domestic research has been active in terms of practical strategies, it still lags behind the mature international research framework of "theoretical exploration—empirical testing—practical application", and models for interdisciplinary integration and the construction of multi-track collaborative education networks remain in their exploratory stages.

Building upon existing research, this study applies positive psychology to distil and elevate practical issues—such as 'ambiguous self-perception', 'weakened psychological capital' and 'insufficient motivation activation'—among Generation Z English majors experiencing 'slow employment' into the core proposition of 'positive psychological empowerment—motivation activation—transformation of employment behaviour'. By incorporating PERMA theory, this study explores the construction of targeted and systematic pathways to enhance employment motivation, thereby providing guidance and reference for universities in conducting career guidance for foreign language students in the 'slow employment' cohort during the intelligent era, and in activating the intrinsic motivation for employment through human-machine collaboration and cross-cultural communication.

3.Construction of a Model for Enhancing the Intrinsic Motivation of University Students in "Slow Employment"

3.1. Overall Structure of the Model

This model takes Generation Z English majors experiencing delayed employment as its core research subjects. Based on the PERMA theory of positive psychology (Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment), it constructs an integrated research and intervention framework comprising "theoretical anchoring – variable design – methodological support – pathway implementation". With the five PERMA elements as independent variables and employment intrinsic motivation as the dependent variable, the model focuses on the core challenge faced by foreign language graduates of Generation Z under the im-

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pact of generative AI technology: "a loss of intrinsic motivation due to technological anxiety, leading to a 'slow employment' predicament". The model not only clarifies the practical value of "theoretical support for employment in the intelligent era" but also elucidates its theoretical contributions across dimensions such as conceptual guidance, action activation, support construction, direction clarification and anxiety alleviation, providing a systematic theoretical anchor from a positive psychology perspective to address the challenge of delayed employment.

At the research implementation level, the model integrates diverse research methods—including questionnaires, psychometric assessments and qualitative interviews—to achieve complementarity between quantitative data and qualitative insights, thereby ensuring the scientific rigour and depth of the study. Simultaneously, it clearly defines the causal logic between variables and establishes an analytical framework of 'digital positive psychological traits–intelligent job-seeking motivation', providing a clear logical framework for empirical research.

The model ultimately culminates in a practical, end-to-end intervention programme, establishing a five-dimensional development pathway that covers all dimensions of the PERMA framework: the Positive Emotions dimension focuses on addressing tech anxiety and fostering an optimistic mindset; the Engagement dimension reinforces 'AI + Language' career exploration and empowers students through immersive human-machine practical experiences; the interpersonal dimension establishes a collaborative support system spanning disciplines and involving industry, academia, research, families, schools and the community; the meaning dimension promotes self-awareness of 'linguistic and humanistic values' and the shaping of professional values; and the achievement dimension establishes tiered objectives for 'human-machine collaboration skills' alongside a micro-achievement incentive mechanism. This has formed a closed-loop intervention system ranging from psychological adjustment to action empowerment, and from individual growth to environmental support. The entire framework is underpinned by a closed-loop logic of "research–practice–enhancement", providing both a systematic theoretical model for academic research into the career transition challenges faced by Generation Z foreign language professionals, and an actionable practical guide for universities, families and society to collaboratively foster employment-oriented education, thereby achieving a deep integration of theoretical and practical value.

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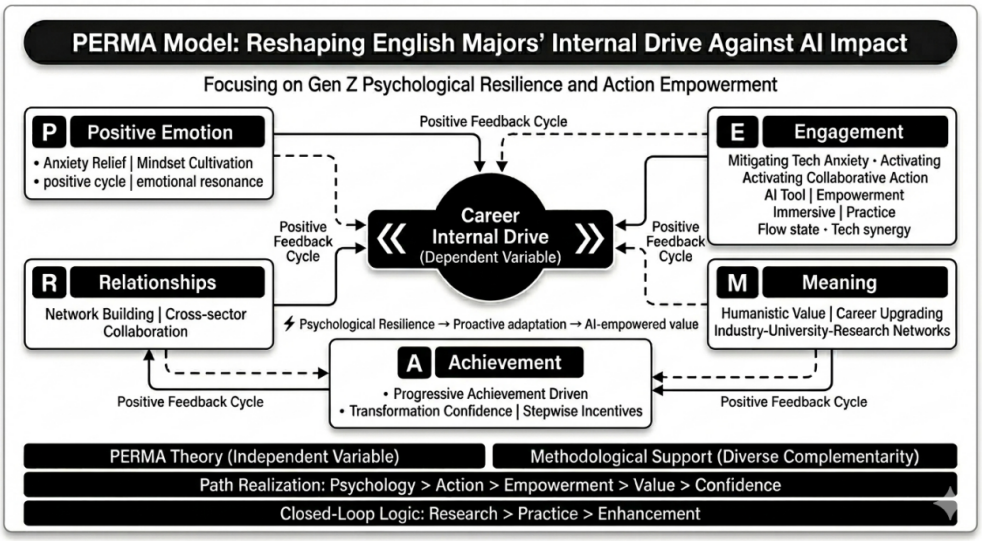


Figure 1. PERMA-based Model for Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation in University Students Facing "Slow Employment".

3.2. Explanation of Components

3.2.1. Positive Emotions (P)

Positive Emotions (P) represent the primary entry point for addressing the lack of intrinsic motivation among the 'slow employment' cohort within English language programmes. Against the backdrop of the explosive growth of generative AI technology among Generation Z, this group is generally trapped in a vicious cycle of negative emotions, including technological career anxiety, the perception that their specialisation is obsolete, and doubts about their core competitiveness. These negative emotions, arising from technological displacement, continuously deplete their cognitive resources and inhibit job-seeking activities, creating a vicious cycle where 'the more anxious they become, the more they avoid; the more they avoid, the more lost they feel', ultimately exhausting their intrinsic motivation for employment. Based on Frederickson's theory of positive emotion expansion, positive emotions can effectively broaden cognitive scope, enhance problem-solving abilities and psychological resilience. In this model, their core function is to 'alleviate technological anxiety', using positive emotions to break the negative cognitive loop of 'foreign languages being replaced by technology', thereby providing a crucial psychological buffer to help English majors experiencing delayed employment rebuild their motivation to seek work.

In the research design, positive emotions serve as the core independent variable. They are quantitatively assessed using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) psychological scale, adjusted to account for AI-related anxiety. This is combined with qualitative interviews to capture the group's genuine emotional state under the impact of AI, providing data support for precise intervention and linking the entire chain of logic from problem diagnosis to motivation activation. At the practical level, the model corresponds to an enhancement pathway of "alleviating tech anxiety + fostering an optimistic mindset": universities conduct "human-machine collaboration" group counselling sessions, mindfulness training for technology adaptation, and employment pressure relief workshops to help students master emotional regulation methods; guide them to recognise that AI cannot replace the warmth and empathy required in cross-cultural negotiations; and cultivate an optimistic mindset amidst technological change; Families should foster an employment atmosphere

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that embraces transformation and encourages trial and error, reducing the transmission of anxiety and utilitarian expectations, whilst providing the 'slow employment' cohort with ample emotional support and room for experimentation; society should optimise the public discourse surrounding employment, dispelling the polarised stereotype that 'foreign language majors are obsolete in the era of artificial intelligence'. The cultivation of positive emotions is not merely psychological consolation, but rather helps foreign language graduates who are taking their time with employment to accumulate psychological capital and enhance their resilience in the job market. This enables them to maintain an open and optimistic mindset during their career exploration, actively activate their intrinsic motivation for employment, and simultaneously reinforce other PERMA elements such as commitment and interpersonal relationships, forming a virtuous cycle that drives the model to achieve a closed-loop effect of "psychological adaptation – motivation activation – action implementation".

3.2.2. Engagement (E)

Engagement (E) is the core driving force for activating employment action among the five PERMA elements, and serves as the key lever for resolving the predicament of "skill rigidity and avoidance of career transition" faced by the group of English majors experiencing delayed employment. Traditional English majors generally suffer from a lack of engagement with digital technologies; they lack interest in or harbour resistance towards new human-machine collaborative job-seeking approaches such as "prompt engineering" and "post-editing of machine translation post-Editing(MTPE)", making it difficult for them to enter a state of flow. Consequently, they become trapped in a negative cycle of "clinging to the past with no job prospects – avoiding transition with no action – and persistent avoidance", which depletes their intrinsic motivation for employment. Based on Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory, engagement refers to a state of self-forgetfulness in which an individual is fully immersed in an activity. In this model, the core function of engagement is to 'activate human-machine collaborative action'. Building students to participate deeply in intelligent language-based job-seeking practices breaks the traditional avoidance of job-seeking and provides practical support for the activation of intrinsic motivation for employment.

In the research design, engagement serves as the core independent variable, quantified using tools such as the digitally adapted Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. Combined with qualitative interviews to identify barriers to students' transition into digital roles, this approach provides a basis for targeted interventions, linking the logical chain from motivational arousal to concrete action. At the practical level, the model corresponds to an enhancement pathway of "AI-language career exploration + immersive practical empowerment": universities establish platforms such as intelligent overseas marketing experience camps, large-model English data annotation training, and localisation project-based internships to guide students in immersing themselves in "human-machine collaboration" career scenarios, thereby achieving a state of flow through novel practical experiences; simultaneously, digital career exploration workshops are conducted to help students identify interdisciplinary career paths that combine English as a foundational asset with fields such as cross-border business and digital media, whilst aligning these with their personal interests to enhance their willingness to engage proactively. Cultivating engagement is not merely a matter of arranging practical activities; rather, it involves using immersive experiences to activate students' initiative in job-seeking, enabling them to accumulate professional experience and confidence. This, in turn, feeds back into other PERMA elements such as positive emotions and interpersonal relationships, forming a virtuous cycle that drives the model towards a

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closed-loop effect of "action activation – enhanced intrinsic motivation – stable employment".

3.2.3. Relationships (R)

Relationships (R) are the core safeguard for building an employment support system within the five PERMA elements, and serve as a vital pillar for resolving the predicament of 'language isolation and a lack of cross-disciplinary resources' faced by foreign language graduates experiencing delayed employment. Faced with the impact of AI, foreign language graduates often encounter multiple interpersonal pressures, including the spread of anxiety within the purely humanities-oriented ecosystem, the disparity when compared to peers in technical roles, and societal prejudice against traditional foreign language skills. The lack of a positive, interdisciplinary social support network blocks access to employment information and resources for transitioning into new digital industries. Based on social support theory, positive interpersonal relationships can provide individuals with emotional comfort, informational support and practical assistance. The core role of interpersonal relationships in this model is to 'build cross-sectoral industry-academia-research support'. By establishing diverse support networks, an inclusive employment environment is created for university students experiencing delayed employment, thereby strengthening the external support for their intrinsic motivation to find work.

In the research design, interpersonal relationships serve as the core independent variable, quantified and assessed using tools such as the Social Support Scale. This is combined with qualitative interviews to map the current state of students' support networks, providing data to underpin collaborative interventions and refining the model's external environmental logic. At the practical level, the model outlines a pathway for enhancing the "interdisciplinary and industry-academia-research collaborative support system": universities break down barriers between the arts and sciences to form interdisciplinary technical job-seeking mutual-aid groups comprising "English majors + computer science/business students", thereby fostering peer support on campus; collaborating with overseas-expanding enterprises, technology-focused alumni-run businesses and the Translators Association of China (TAC) to establish a "Smart Transformation Mentor Pool", providing students with specialised opportunities in machine translation post-editing (MTPE) and internal referrals within cross-border e-commerce; at the family and societal levels, emotional acceptance is provided to mitigate utilitarian expectations, jointly constructing a diverse, empowering ecosystem for English majors facing delayed employment. The cultivation of interpersonal relationships is not merely a matter of resource matching, but rather involves providing comprehensive support to students with delayed employment through multi-stakeholder collaboration. This alleviates employment pressures, broadens employment channels, and reinforces other PERMA elements such as investment and meaning, thereby creating a virtuous cycle that drives the model towards a closed-loop effect of "environmental empowerment – activation of intrinsic motivation – successful employment".

3.2.4. Meaning (M)

Meaning (M) is the core guiding principle within the five PERMA elements that clarifies career direction; it is the fundamental lever for resolving the predicament of "lost core values and lack of direction" faced by the group of English majors experiencing delayed employment. In an era where large language models can generate translations in a matter of seconds, English majors commonly experience a sense of absurdity, be-

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lieving that "a purely instrumental foreign language holds no value". They face a severe loss of professional meaning, plunging into deep confusion over "the value of language learning and their own niche in the era of artificial intelligence", which in turn leads to a loss of intrinsic motivation for employment. Based on self-determination theory, meaning refers to an individual's perception of the value of their own actions and life goals. The core function of meaning within this model is to 'clarify the humanistic value of language'. By helping students clarify their professional values and life aspirations, and reshape their career positioning, it provides the fundamental impetus for activating their intrinsic motivation for employment.

In the research design, meaning serves as the core independent variable, quantified and assessed using tools such as the Life Meaning Scale and the Career Values Scale, whilst qualitative interviews are employed to explore students' career identity crises. At the practical level, the model corresponds to a development pathway of 're-shaping linguistic and humanistic values + shaping career values': universities offer career planning courses and career values clarification workshops to guide students in upgrading their professional roles from the traditional 'mechanical translator and instrumental foreign language reproducer' to 'digital international communicators who tell China's stories well, infusers of warmth in cross-cultural negotiations, and expert polishers of AI-generated English tweets'; The cultivation of meaning is not merely about setting goals, but rather about aligning individual foreign language strengths with macro-strategic national needs—such as digital global expansion and international communication—through value-led guidance. This helps students regain professional dignity and a sense of irreplaceable significance, thereby stimulating the intrinsic motivation for proactive job-seeking. This, in turn, feeds back into other PERMA elements such as positive emotions and engagement, forming a virtuous cycle that drives the model towards a closed-loop effect of "clear direction – enhanced intrinsic motivation – proactive employment".

3.2.5. Accomplishment (A)

Achievement (A) is the core driving force for reshaping confidence in the transition among the five PERMA elements, and serves as the key support for resolving the predicament faced by English majors experiencing delayed employment—namely, being "too high for some roles yet too low for others" and suffering from a low sense of efficacy. Caught between the contraction of traditional sector-specific roles and the technical barriers of emerging positions, English majors often set overly traditional job targets (such as refusing to consider anything other than well-known multinational corporations or key state-run schools) or face frequent setbacks in technical assessments. This makes them highly susceptible to self-doubt and learned helplessness, ultimately leading them to abandon their job search and fall into a vicious cycle of delayed employment. Based on goal-setting theory and self-efficacy theory, achievement refers to the sense of accomplishment and self-identity an individual gains after attaining a goal through effort. In this model, the core role of achievement is 'staged achievement drive', which helps students build confidence in their career transition by establishing staged goals and positive feedback for 'human-machine collaborative micro-competencies'.

In the research design, achievement serves as the core independent variable, quantified through tools such as the Achievement Motivation Scale and the General Self-Efficacy Scale, whilst qualitative interviews are used to analyse students' current goal-setting and feedback practices. At the practical level, the model corresponds to an enhancement pathway comprising "step-by-step 'human-machine collaboration' goals + micro-achievement incentive mechanisms": universities guide students to break down broad job-seeking goals

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into actionable, phased mini-goals, such as "learning to use AI tools to optimise a bilingual Chinese-English CV", "independently drafting an overseas AI-powered marketing tweet", or "completing a simulated interview for a new MTPE role"; Progress made by students in interdisciplinary micro-courses and intelligent vocational skills certification (such as language service-related certificates) is acknowledged, thereby reinforcing students' self-efficacy and driving stable employment through enhanced confidence. The cultivation of achievement is not merely a matter of assessing targets, but rather involves using positive incentives to help students who are taking their time with employment build confidence in their job search, strengthen their motivation to seek employment proactively, and in turn nourish other PERMA elements such as positive emotions and meaning, thereby forming a virtuous cycle that drives the model to achieve a closed-loop effect of "confidence enhancement – activation of intrinsic motivation – successful employment".

4.Application of the Model for Enhancing the Intrinsic Motivation of University Students with 'Slow Employment'

4.1 Psychological Assessment of 'Slow-Employment' University Students

This model can serve as a scientific framework for universities to conduct specialised psychological assessments of job-seeking students in English language programmes who are experiencing delayed employment. Universities can build a comprehensive assessment indicator system based on the five dimensions of PERMA, combining quantitative scales with qualitative interviews to comprehensively evaluate students' actual status in terms of positive emotions, career engagement, social support, career meaning and achievement motivation. By introducing sub-indicators such as the degree of technophobia, willingness to embrace digital transformation, and identification with linguistic and humanistic values, systematic assessment can accurately identify the core issues underlying the weak intrinsic motivation for employment among English majors amidst the wave of intelligent technology. This assessment model not only enables the precise categorisation of students experiencing delayed employment into distinct groups—such as those suffering from technology-induced anxiety due to learned helplessness regarding generative AI, those clinging to traditional skills and rejecting human-machine collaboration, those lacking cross-disciplinary social capital and interdisciplinary support, and those facing a loss of professional dignity and values—but also assists universities in establishing dynamic digital psychological profiles for foreign language graduates' employment. This enables routine monitoring of foreign language graduates experiencing delayed employment and subject-specific screening, providing reliable data support and a basis for judgment for subsequent categorised assistance, thereby effectively driving the transformation of university employment psychological services from an empirical approach towards standardisation and digitalisation.

4.2. Development of Personalised Employment Guidance and Intervention Plans

This model provides a clear implementation pathway for universities to formulate personalised employment guidance and intervention plans, effectively breaking through the limitations of traditional, one-size-fits-all employment guidance. Employment counsellors can, based on the assessment results of English majors experiencing delayed employment across the five dimensions, precisely identify their weaknesses in the face of technological disruption, and subsequently design tailored, intelligent intervention plans for the transition

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to language services. In practical application, for students experiencing technological anxiety, counsellors can conduct mindfulness training for technological adaptation and 'human-machine co-creation' critical thinking workshops to alleviate fears of unemployment; for students who are resistant to change or avoidant, immersive micro-training sessions—such as large-model prompt engineering and post-editing of machine translations—can be used to activate a state of flow during job-seeking; for students struggling to break into new fields, they can actively form interdisciplinary support groups and introduce a pool of industry-academia-research mentors specialising in intelligent transformation to facilitate vertical internal referrals; for students experiencing a loss of purpose, they can be guided through value-led approaches to transition into digital international communicators; and for students suffering from a loss of confidence, they can break down grand objectives to establish a step-by-step micro-achievement incentive mechanism. Through such targeted, precise interventions, universities can effectively address the practical challenges graduates face in their job searches, continuously stimulate their intrinsic motivation for employment, and significantly enhance the effectiveness and relevance of career guidance.

4.3. Practical Guidance on Home-School-Community Collaborative Employment Education

This model provides standardised practical guidance for a collaborative employment education mechanism involving families, schools and the community against the backdrop of intelligent technological transformation, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of families, schools and society in reshaping the job-seeking ecosystem for foreign language talent and enhancing students' intrinsic motivation for employment. Schools need to rely on this model to break free from the constraints of a purely liberal arts ecosystem, actively develop interdisciplinary micro-majors, and provide technical adaptation support alongside professional, intelligent career guidance. Families, for their part, should promptly shift away from utilitarian employment attitudes, dispel the outdated notion that foreign language graduates are limited to traditional education or foreign enterprises, embrace their children's digital transformation and cross-sector job-seeking, and provide the necessary emotional support to mitigate the infiltration of societal technological anxiety into the family unit. At the societal level, the focus should be on collaborating with language service industry associations and digital overseas expansion enterprises to optimise the public discourse surrounding employment. This will thoroughly dispel the polarised stereotype that foreign language talent is obsolete in the era of large language models, whilst actively expanding practical opportunities and job resources in intelligent language technology. By coordinating efforts across multiple stakeholders around the five key elements of PERMA, we can ultimately establish a collaborative education system characterised by emotional support, technical empowerment, value guidance and environmental safeguards. This will create a favourable environment for growth and job-seeking among foreign language graduates experiencing delayed employment, systematically addressing the technical challenges of this phenomenon and helping university students achieve high-quality and full employment.

5.Conclusion and Outlook

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Against the backdrop of a continuously rising number of university graduates and the profound reshaping of the language services industry by generative artificial intelligence, stimulating the intrinsic motivation for employment among foreign language students and effectively resolving the technical challenges of delayed employment are matters that directly concern the career transition and personal development of young people. They also impact the effectiveness of talent cultivation in university foreign language disciplines and the stability of social employment in the era of intelligent technology. Consequently, conducting relevant research holds distinct theoretical value and urgent practical significance. Drawing on the Positive Psychology PERMA theory and addressing the tidal wave of generative AI, this paper focuses on Generation Z English majors experiencing delayed employment. It systematically constructs a model for enhancing employment motivation comprising five dimensions: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement. The paper elaborates in detail on the core connotations, mechanisms of action and cultivation pathways of each element in addressing technological anxiety, reshaping humanistic values and practising a transition towards flow. It also clarifies the model's specific applications in scenarios such as intelligent employment assessment, personalised cross-disciplinary intervention, and collaboration among industry, academia, research institutions, families, schools and the community, thereby forming a relatively comprehensive discipline-targeted theoretical and practical framework. However, this study has certain limitations. Currently, the research focuses primarily on theoretical model construction and framework analysis; it has not yet delved into conducting large-scale empirical surveys and data validation among a specific group of English majors experiencing delayed employment. Consequently, the model's practical effectiveness in alleviating technological anxiety and enhancing human-machine collaboration has not been fully verified through quantitative data analysis, and the practical applicability of the relevant conclusions remains to be further validated by subsequent research. Overall, this paper introduces positive psychology theory into the study of delayed employment among foreign language graduates in the AI era, providing novel insights and actionable pathways for universities to deliver targeted disciplinary employment support. This not only enriches the interdisciplinary theoretical achievements in the field of graduate employment guidance in the era of intelligent technology but also lays a solid foundation for subsequent empirical research on 'slow employment' graduates across different regions and language specialisations. It is hoped that this will provide scientific decision-making references for enhancing graduates' intrinsic motivation for employment and optimising universities' intelligent employment education initiatives.

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