

UNIT 6: RESEARCH TOPICS IN MY FIELD

FINAL UNIT TASK

Semester 2025-2

THIS FINAL UNIT TASK IS NOT GRADED

Lead-in

1. Which of these definitions is the best for the word “happiness?”

a) A feeling or state of intense excitement
b) Inertia or inability to work or make an effort
c) A sense of well-being, joy, or contentment

2. Work with a partner and decide if you agree with these statements about happiness?
Why/why not?

1) I feel happiest when I'm busy doing a lot of activities and achieving my goals.
2) Happiness for me is sitting on my sofa relaxing watching TV and not having any obligations.
3) I feel very happy when I make the people I love happy: bake a cake they love, help them with something, or teach them something.
4) When I make the decisions and am in control, I am very happy. I love being the boss.

Listening

1. Complete the notes with the information that you hear. You will hear the recording twice.

Notes on the lecture:

Name of course: _____
The main question: _____
The name of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (the researcher) theory: _____
The focus of this researcher's study: _____
We need to do this if we want to find happiness: _____
The researcher observed these people: _____

2. Listen a third time and answer these questions.

What is a happy life?

What's the relation between happiness and flow?

How did the researcher get his ideas about flow?

Reading

1. Read the text on the theory of flow. You should underline parts of the reading you find important or take some notes.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of *flow*, described as a state of complete immersion and optimal experience in an activity, has significantly influenced psychology, education, and performance studies. However, the theory has received various critiques in the conceptual, methodological, and practical aspects.

One important critique is the ambiguity and subjectivity of the flow experience. Flow is characterized by elements such as intense concentration, loss of self-consciousness, and a balance between challenge and skill (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Yet, these features are highly individualized and self-reported, making them difficult to measure objectively or replicate consistently (Moneta, 2012). The reliance on retrospective self-assessments, often via the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), produces concerns about recall bias (how well and what we remember) and the reliability of data (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Another critique centers on the cultural and contextual limitations of the theory. Flow has been primarily researched in Western, individualistic contexts, where personal achievement and self-actualization are emphasized. Scholars argue that flow may manifest differently in collectivist cultures or be interpreted in other ways, limiting its cross-cultural validity (Delle Fave & Massimini, 2005).

Additionally, some researchers question the universality of flow's benefits, especially in educational or workplace settings. While flow is often linked to better performance and motivation, critics argue that the desire to reach flow can lead to overwork, neglect of social relationships, or escapism (Bradley, 2007). Flow may also not occur equally across all tasks, especially repetitive or mundane ones, which challenges its applicability in routine labor contexts (Engeser & Rheinberg, 2008).

Overall, Csikszentmihalyi's theory has helped us understand optimal experience. However, its empirical limitations, cultural bias, and potentially idealized view of human motivation need careful scrutiny and contextual adaptation.

References:

- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. Harper & Row.
- Moneta, G. B. (2012). On the measurement and conceptualization of flow. In S. Engeser (Ed.), *Advances in Flow Research* (pp. 23–50). Springer.
- Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002). The concept of flow. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 89–105). Oxford University Press.
- Delle Fave, A., & Massimini, F. (2005). The relevance of subjective well-being to social policies: Optimal experience and tailored intervention. *Social Indicators Research*, 65(1), 1–27.
- Bradley, J. (2007). *The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids*. Hyperion.
- Engeser, S., & Rheinberg, F. (2008). Flow, performance and moderators of challenge-skill balance. *Motivation and Emotion*, 32(3), 158–172.

Writing:

Write a paragraph that summarizes the information from the reading and the listening.

- Include ideas from the reading and from the listening text
- Contrast the points of the reading with those of the listening text
- State which argument convinces you more and why
- Word count: 120-160

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Peer Feedback:

After you finish writing, exchange your writing with a partner. Give your partner feedback.
Consider these aspects of the writing.

- Include ideas from the reading and from the listening text
- Contrast the points of the reading with those of the listening text
- State which argument convinces you more and why
- Word count: 120-160
- Is the writing concise, clear, correct, and creative?

Listening Transcript:

Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the first lecture of our new course in Positive Psychology. While some people may associate psychology with looking at what's wrong with us, and at what problems we have, there is much more to psychology than that. Positive psychology, for example, looks at how to help people become happier.

This lecture begins with a question: what makes a happy life?

Now, I'm going to give you one possible answer. A happy life is a life in which you are completely absorbed in what you do. Now, how does this compare with what you and your partner said?

This answer comes from the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and the theory of flow. Csikszentmihalyi is a psychologist who has spent much of his professional life on the study of what makes people happy and how we can find happiness.

Csikszentmihalyi suggests the theory that happiness is not caused by external events or things that happen to us. Our perception of these things and how we see these events either makes us happy or sad. In other words, if we want happiness, we have to actively look for it. However, this does not mean that we should always look for happiness! Csikszentmihalyi believed that our happiest moments happen when we are in a state of flow.

The theory of flow can be summarized like this: when we are totally involved in, or focused on, what we are doing, we are in a state of flow.

Csikszentmihalyi got the inspiration for this theory when he noticed how artists worked in a studio. They completely lost track of time, they didn't notice they were hungry or tired, and they could work for hours, even days, without stopping. Anyone I have spoken to who has experienced this state of concentration has said it's difficult to explain. The best way to explain it is that it is like being in a river and the flow of the water carries you away.

For the rest of this lecture, I will explore this theory of flow in more detail. First, we will look at Csikszentmihalyi's life, and how it influenced his ideas. Then we will look at the conditions that go with a state of flow. What creates flow, exactly? Finally, we will look at activities that can help us achieve flow in our everyday lives. Will this course make you happy for life? Well, maybe. Maybe.

Right, let's get started. If you look at the next slide ...