

# Educational Values in the Movie "The Pursuit of Happyness" A Reflection for English Language Learning

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT		
<b>Keywords:</b> <i>Educational Values, The Pursuit of Happyness, English Language Learning, Film-Based Learning, Character Education</i>	<i>This study explores the integration of character education into English language learning through film analysis. The research aims to identify the educational values in the movie "The Pursuit of Happyness" (2006) and propose ways to utilize them as a medium for literary reflection in the EFL classroom. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with content analysis as its main methodology. The primary instruments were the film and its dialogue transcript, which were systematically analyzed through the theoretical lens of Eyre and Eyre's (1993) "Values of Being" framework. The findings reveal five core educational values prominently portrayed by the main character: honesty, courage, peaceability, independence and self-potential, and self-discipline and moderation. The analysis concludes that the film's authentic dialogues, narrative dilemmas, and character journey provide a rich source of pedagogical material to foster not only students' language skills but also their moral reasoning and critical thinking.</i>		
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## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of education, particularly within the context of English language learning, there is an increasing demand for instructional media that are not only engaging but also contextually relevant and capable of enriching students' overall learning experiences. Traditional approaches that prioritize theoretical knowledge are no longer sufficient to meet the needs of 21st-century learners, who must develop not only cognitive competencies but also essential intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. This requires a holistic framework where English language education nurtures students intellectually, emotionally, and socially.

Among various pedagogical tools, visual narrative media such as films have proven to be exceptionally powerful. Films provide authentic linguistic input, offering exposure to natural dialogues, diverse accents, and vocabulary used in real-world contexts, which is effective in increasing student motivation and fostering a deeper understanding of language (Ismail, 2013). More importantly, they serve as a medium for transmitting social, cultural, and educational values, allowing learners to engage with complex themes and develop moral and emotional intelligence.

Recent scholarship has increasingly focused on analyzing educational values in film as a resource for character education. Studies such as those by Putri and Arfiani (2022) on *The Peanut Butter Falcon* and a directly relevant study by Sonia Isabella et al. (2024) on *The Pursuit of Happyness* have successfully identified core moral values like honesty, courage, and responsibility portrayed in these films. Sonia Isabella et al. (2024), for instance, applied Eyre and Eyre's (1993) framework to identify five key values in the film. However, these valuable studies primarily concentrate on the *identification* and *analysis* of these values. A gap remains in demonstrating how these identified values can be systematically and pedagogically integrated into the English language classroom as a tool for reflective learning.

Addressing this gap, this article aims to achieve two primary objectives. First, it will analyze the core educational values portrayed in the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* using Eyre and Eyre's theoretical framework. Second, it will propose concrete and practical ways in which these values can be utilized as a medium for enhancing English language learning, specifically by fostering students' moral understanding, critical thinking, and language skills through literary reflection.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Film as a Pedagogical Tool and Values Medium**

The use of film in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom has been widely validated. Films serve as multimodal audio-visual tools that enhance communication skills by providing authentic linguistic and cultural exposure, thereby increasing student engagement and motivation (Kabouha, 2016; Asian Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education, 2022). Beyond language acquisition, film functions as a modern form of literature capable of conveying complex themes and moral dilemmas (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Research confirms that narratives in film can effectively instill educational values by creating emotional and contextual learning experiences, making them powerful resources for character education (Putri & Arfiani, 2022).

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework: Eyre and Eyre's "Values of Being"**

The primary theoretical foundation for this research is Linda and Richard Eyre's theory from their book *Teaching Your Children Values* (1993). They categorize values into two groups; this study focuses on the "Values of Being," which are foundational to moral character. These values include: Honesty (truthfulness and integrity), Courage (acting righteously despite fear), Peaceability (seeking harmony and avoiding conflict), Self-reliance and Potential (believing in one's ability to grow and achieve), Self-discipline and

Moderation (controlling desires and living a balanced life), and Fidelity and Chastity (loyalty and moral purity). This framework provides a structured lens to analyze how character is portrayed and developed in narratives, making it highly suitable for analyzing a character-driven film like *The Pursuit of Happyness*. This approach is supported by Lickona's (1991) advocacy for integrating character education across all learning domains.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with content analysis as its core methodology. According to Creswell (2014), this approach is ideal for exploring and understanding the meaning embedded within social phenomena or texts. It was chosen to systematically identify, describe, and analyze the educational values portrayed in *The Pursuit of Happyness* and to explore their potential pedagogical applications in the EFL context.

#### **3.2 Participants**

This study did not involve human participants. The object of the research was the 2006 biographical drama film, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, directed by Gabriele Muccino. The film itself, including its narrative, characters, dialogues, and visual elements, served as the primary source of data for the content analysis.

#### **3.3 Instruments**

The instruments used for data collection were the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* and its corresponding dialogue transcript. The film served as the primary audiovisual material, allowing for the observation of visual cues such as facial expressions, body language, and settings that reinforce the narrative's values. The dialogue transcript provided a detailed textual record for in-depth analysis of conversations and monologues that convey specific educational themes.

#### **3.4 Data Analysis Procedures**





Data analysis followed a systematic process adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994), focusing on two main steps. First, data display, where relevant scenes and dialogues identified from the film and transcript were organized into tables. Each table corresponded to a specific educational value and included columns for the timestamp, the data (dialogue/scene description), and an analysis of the value being portrayed. Second, conclusion drawing and verification, where the organized data was interpreted to identify patterns and formulate propositions on how these values could be integrated into English language learning. Conclusions were continuously verified by cross-referencing with the data and the theoretical framework.

### **4. Findings**

#### **4.1. Honesty**


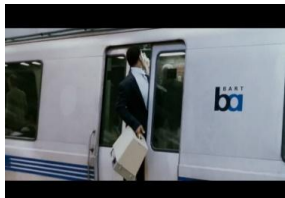
Honesty is consistently portrayed as a foundational principle for Chris Gardner, who maintains integrity even when it is difficult.




Table 1: Portrayal of Honesty

Timestamp	Scene Pictures	Dialogues	Analysis
00:43:44 – 00:43:56		CHRIS: "I couldn't think of anything. I was arrested for failure to pay parking tickets. I ran here from the Polk station. From the police station."	Chris demonstrates the educational value of honesty by voluntarily disclosing his arrest during a crucial job interview. This scene illustrates Eyre & Eyre's (1993) concept of honesty as 'telling the truth even under pressure,' showing how moral integrity can be maintained despite potential negative consequences.
00:46:12 – 00:46:19		CHRIS: "There's no salary. My circumstances changed some. I need to figure out if I can make it."	Chris acknowledges his financial struggles instead of hiding them, displaying moral courage to be truthful even when it could affect his opportunity. This supports Eyre & Eyre's (1993) idea of honesty as a character value that builds trust.
01:39:11– 01:39:20		INTERN: "Did you finish the whole thing...?" CHRIS: "I have to go somewhere. But I finished the whole thing, too."	Chris truthfully confirms task completion even when pressed for time. This reflects his habitual honesty, aligning with Eyre & Eyre's (1993) emphasis on truthfulness in daily behavior.
01:24:28 – 01:24:38		CHRISTOPHER: "Where are we going?" CHRIS: "I don't know."	Chris chooses to be truthful with his son, admitting uncertainty rather than offering false reassurance. This aligns with Eyre & Eyre's (1993) interpretation of honesty as an expression of love and integrity in relationships.

## 4.2. Courage




Table 2: Portrayal of Courage

Timestamp	Scene Pictures	Dialogues	Analysis
00:43:44 – 00:43:50		CHRIS: "I couldn't think of anything. I was arrested for failure to pay parking tickets."	Chris shows moral courage by attending a high-stakes job interview immediately after being released from custody. According to Eyre & Eyre (1993), courage involves facing challenges despite fear.
00:30:05 – 00:30:25		CHRIS (V.O.): "This part of my life's called... running."	Chris's determination to chase the stolen scanner illustrates his physical courage and initiative. Eyre & Eyre (1993) highlight courage as taking action in the face of obstacles.

00 :29 :05- 00 :29 :18		CHRIS (V.O.): "I could get my scanner, get past him somehow, and if I timed it right, jump right on and roll off."	In this scene, Chris takes personal risks to retrieve vital property. His actions reflect calculated bravery, reinforcing Eyre & Eyre's (1993) view that courage includes physical and ethical risk-taking.
01 :12 :45 – 01 :12 :55		CHRIS: "I'm on a five minute break... I can't. I'm in a competitive internship at Dean Witter."	Despite being physically injured, Chris returns to work with determination. This exemplifies perseverance, a key form of courage per Eyre & Eyre (1993).
00 :49 :39 – 00 :50 :03		CHRIS: "I want Christopher. Here."	Chris firmly demands custody of his son despite his unstable circumstances. This moral courage aligns with Eyre & Eyre's (1993) view of standing up for what is right.

#### 4.3. Peace

Table 3: Portrayal of Peace

Timestamp	Scene Pictures	Dialogues	Analysis
01 :35 :28 – 01 :36 :00		CHRIS: "Space. For privacy. Peace."	Chris defines peace for his son using simple, heartfelt language. According to Eyre & Eyre (1993), peaceability involves maintaining emotional balance and seeking calm.
01 :22 :14 – 01 :22 :31		CHRIS: "That's fine. I just don't want him to see me taking money. He thinks I know what I'm doing."	Chris avoids conflict and preserves his son's sense of security. This aligns with Eyre & Eyre's (1993) idea that peace requires emotional control.
00 :18 :42 – 00 :18 :51		CHRIS: "I'll get some good work after the navy. It's going to be fine. It's going to be."	Despite financial stress, Chris speaks calmly and optimistically to his wife. His peaceful tone supports Eyre & Eyre's (1993) concept of peaceability through calm leadership.

01 :41 :17 –  
01 :41 :22



CHRIS:  
"What's your favorite color? I was wondering about that."

Chris defuses emotional tension by asking a light, caring question. This reflects peaceability as attentiveness and connection, as suggested by Eyre & Eyre (1993).

00 :52 :36 –  
00 :52 :40







CHRIS:  
"Just hang on. We'll come out of it. It's going to be fine."

Chris reassures his son during a crisis, modeling peaceful communication despite inner turmoil. This aligns with Eyre & Eyre's (1993) view of peace as a stabilizing force.

#### 4.4. Independence and Self-Potential

Table 4: Portrayal of Independence and Self-Potential

Timestamp	Scene Pictures	Dialogues	Analysis
00 :44 :52 – 00 :45 :00		CHRIS: "I'd be real pleased to be in the program."	Chris expresses enthusiasm about joining an unpaid internship, demonstrating belief in his future growth. This reflects Eyre & Eyre's (1993) concept of self-potential trusting one's ability to succeed.
01 :22 :14 – 01 :22 :26		CHRIS: "I just don't want him to see me taking money. He thinks I know what I'm doing."	Chris chooses to appear self-reliant in front of his son to protect his image as a dependable parent. This aligns with Eyre & Eyre's (1993) view of independence as developing inner strength.
01 :48 :33 – 01 :49 :01		CHRIS (V.O.): "I was gambling, during all this, that I could get back on my way to being one, which I guessed would feel like happiness."	Chris reflects on his decision to take risks for long-term success. His perseverance illustrates Eyre & Eyre's (1993) notion of personal growth through effort.
01 :39 :25 – 01 :39 :50		CHRIS: "I liked to read about interesting lives. Cool lives... Thomas Jefferson. Christopher Columbus."	Chris draws inspiration from historical role models, reinforcing proactive learning. Eyre & Eyre (1993) view this as essential to self-potential development.



01 :42 :18 –  
01 : 42 :23



CHRIS:

"It's about people trying to be free, so they can try to be happy."

Chris connects freedom with happiness, underscoring the importance of autonomy. This embodies Eyre & Eyre's (1993) belief in independence as the path to fulfillment.

#### 4.5. Self-Discipline and Moderation

Table 5: Portrayal of Self-Dicipline and Moderation

Timestamp	Scene Pictures	Dialogues	Analysis
01 :32 :45 – 01 :32 :51		CHRIS: "It's two dollars for electricity. We need breakfast tomorrow."	Chris practices moderation by prioritizing basic needs over temporary comfort. Eyre & Eyre (1993) describe moderation as self-control and thoughtful decision-making. This dialogue helps learners explore how to express budgeting and priorities in practical English.
00 :48 :17 – 00 :48 :30		CHRIS (V.O.): "This part of my life is called... intern. Show up early. Run with coffee. Stay late."	Chris outlines his disciplined daily routine, reflecting Eyre & Eyre's (1993) idea that self-discipline is built through consistent habits. The narration offers learners exposure to present tense routines and motivational language in professional contexts.
01 :15 :22 – 01 : 15 :27		CHRIS: "Paying bills. A parking ticket."	Even with limited resources, Chris fulfills his responsibilities. This models responsible behavior under pressure, which Eyre & Eyre (1993) link to maturity and self-control. Students can practice using vocabulary related to obligations and financial discipline.
00 :35 :28 – 00 :36 :00		<b>CHRIS (calmly):</b> "I'm not. I'm going to sell those things I leased. And I'm going to stand out. In my program."	Despite being provoked, Chris responds calmly and with focus. His restraint and long-term thinking align with Eyre & Eyre's (1993) definition of emotional control. Language learners can study tone, determination, and future-oriented expressions in English.

## 5. Discussion

The significance of these findings lies in their direct pedagogical application. This study confirms and extends the findings of Sonia Isabella et al. (2024) by moving from value identification to pedagogical integration. While their work established *what* values are in the film, this research demonstrates *how* these values can be taught in an EFL classroom. The character of Chris Gardner serves as a powerful model of Eyre and Eyre's (1993) "Values of Being," providing a narrative that is both inspirational and analyzable.

The integration of these values into English language learning can be highly effective. The authentic dialogues provide rich linguistic models for teaching value-laden expressions (e.g., expressing determination, prioritizing, showing honesty). The moral dilemmas faced by Chris (e.g., being honest in an interview, parenting while homeless) are perfect catalysts for communicative activities like classroom debates and discussions, prompting students to use English for critical thinking and moral reasoning. Furthermore, Chris's entire character journey offers a coherent framework for reflective writing tasks, where students can analyze his development in terms of specific values like self-discipline or courage. This process simultaneously hones students' language skills and their emotional and ethical intelligence, achieving the holistic educational goals described by the National Research Council (2012).

## 6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* is a rich and effective pedagogical tool for integrating character education into the English language learning classroom. The analysis successfully identified five core educational values honesty, courage, peaceability, independence and self-potential, and self-discipline and moderation that are deeply embedded in the film's narrative and character development. The research further demonstrates that these values can be systematically taught through the film's authentic dialogues, moral dilemmas, and inspirational character journey. By using this film as a medium for literary reflection, educators can create a learning environment that not only enhances students' linguistic competence but also fosters the critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and moral grounding essential for their holistic development.

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