Helping first-year students flourish through languages: Integrating positive psychology, transition pedagogy and CLIL principles

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Lead Institution: Flinders University

Partner institution: The University of Sydney

Project joint leaders: Dr Antonella Strambi and Dr Ann Luzeckyj

Project partner: Associate Professor Antonia Rubino

Project manager: Ms Joy Tennant

Report authors: Dr Antonella Strambi, Dr Ann Luzeckyj and Associate Professor Antonia Rubino

Project website: www.L2flourish.org
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Requests and inquiries concerning these rights should be addressed to:
Learning and Teaching Support
Student Information and Learning Branch
Higher Education Group
Department of Education and Training

GPO Box 9880
Location code C50MA7
CANBERRA ACT 2601

<learningandteaching@education.gov.au>

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# List of acronyms used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACIS</td>
<td>Australasian Centre for Italian Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDIE</td>
<td>Analysis, Design, Development, trial Implementation and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALAA</td>
<td>Applied Linguistics Association of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTC</td>
<td>Australian Learning and Teaching Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEFR</td>
<td>Council of Europe Framework of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIL</td>
<td>Content and Language Integrated Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoP</td>
<td>Community of Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL2</td>
<td>Flourishing in a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYE</td>
<td>First-Year Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCNAU</td>
<td>Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOTE</td>
<td>Languages Other than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC-SF</td>
<td>Mental Health Continuum-Short Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERMA</td>
<td>Positive Engagement Relationships Meaning Accomplishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERMA+</td>
<td>Positive Engagement Relationships Meaning Accomplishment plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
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<tr>
<td>TP</td>
<td>Transition Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive summary

Project context

In the specific context of second language learning, increasing student attrition and lack of motivation to progress beyond introductory courses has been repeatedly noted. Another important challenge for tertiary educators is supporting students’ wellbeing, especially as they transition from school to university, and through their university studies.

By integrating positive psychology, transition pedagogy (TP), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) principles into language curricula, this project responds to an identified need within the area of Second Language Learning and Teaching, as well as to broader issues around student wellbeing. More specifically, the project capitalises on the unique features of the Second Language (L2) learning environment to address the critical issue of attrition in second language courses at tertiary level, as well as to support students’ flourishing (Keyes, 2009).

Aim of the project

The project aims to:

- contribute to first-year students’ psychological, emotional and social wellbeing, referred to as flourishing, by capitalising on the unique features of the L2 learning experience
- increase the perceived value of language studies, as well as the level of enjoyment experienced by learners, by providing relevant and useful learning materials and activities; in turn, learners’ positive perceptions may sustain their motivation to continue in the study of an L2, hence contributing to graduate qualities in the areas of internationalisation and intercultural understanding.

Project approach

The project involved developing an innovative approach to L2 teaching and learning, underpinned by positive psychology, TP and CLIL principles. The Flourishing in an L2 (FL2) approach and resources were developed through a process of Analysis, Design, Development, trial Implementation and Evaluation (ADDIE) via the steps listed below.

1. Analysis: Literature review and needs analysis completed prior to project funding.
2. Design: FL2 approach and resources designed for first-year students in language courses at introductory (beginner) levels. Inclusion of positive psychology principles, and scaffolding through TP and CLIL, on the existing basis of the Council of Europe Framework of Reference (CEFR) for competence in languages.
3. Development: 26 learning activities developed in English and Italian for trial implementation, together with implementation guidelines.
4. Trial Implementation: Some FL2 activities trialled by two groups of first-year, beginning-level students of Italian language in two universities during the 2016 academic year.
5. Evaluation: FL2 approach and activities evaluated through:
   a. language educators’ workshops and creation of an FL2 community of practice
   b. a reference group composed of experts in language education and general education, as well as positive psychology
   c. student feedback through end-of-semester evaluation surveys and end-of-year interviews (ethical clearance obtained prior to trial implementation). Forty-four students participated in
the trial across two institutions, although only 12 provided responses in end-of-semester evaluations. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with students to gain greater insight into the value they gained from participating in the trials. Students were invited to volunteer for the interviews, which involved open-ended questions.

Project outputs and resources

Project outputs and resources include:

- a teaching and learning approach for the development of a first-year curriculum for beginning-level university students, which integrates positive psychology, TP and CLIL principles
- a database of evidence-based curriculum resources for first-year university L2 classes, available in English and Italian from the project website (www.l2flourish.org)
- guidelines for curriculum design, development, implementation and evaluation of the FL2 approach and learning activities are also available from the project website
- six nationwide language educators’ workshops and a webinar, which was recorded and is accessible from the project website
- establishment of a national, online Community of Practice (CoP) which focuses explicitly on innovative L2 curricula that integrate positive psychology, TP and CLIL principles
- two professional development workshops for language educators at RMIT University and Monash University. These workshops were not included in the original project plan, but were offered on request by discipline leaders at these institutions
- academic publications and conference presentations: one journal article in press, one in preparation, four conference presentations delivered, and a presentation at the Flinders Teaching and Learning week (5 December 2016). Two further conference presentations are planned for 2017
- the project report
- a project website (www.l2flourish.org) that holds the activity database, webinar recording, curriculum design, implementation and evaluation guidelines, a link to the FL2 CoP, as well as links to external resources and a project blog.

Impact of the project

The project impact exceeded expectations in some areas. Observed impact includes:

- positive feedback received following conference presentations
- positive feedback received by language educators participating in workshops, as well as from the reference group and international advisory group; language educators expressing enthusiasm for the approach and declaring intention to apply it in their teaching
- healthy membership of FL2 community of practice (over 100 members across Australian tertiary institutions)
- project team members invited to deliver extra professional development workshops for staff at Monash University and RMIT University, following discipline leaders’ attendance to FL2 workshops
- trial implementation and implementation of FL2 activities in Spanish by colleague at The University of Western Australia planned for semester 2, 2017
• project team members’ guest editing of a special issue of the *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* focusing on positive psychology approaches to the learning and teaching of second languages

• positive feedback received from participating students indicating that the FL2 approach and resources contributed to a positive learning environment and individual wellbeing

• high rates of viewing of FL2 website (www.l2flourish.org) and learning resources; project website linked to from LCNAU (Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities) projects page: www.lcnau.org/projects/ (principal association for tertiary language educators).

**Key findings**

The FL2 approach clearly demonstrated a readiness from the sector to embrace the principles that form its core. The very positive response generated among language educators participating in the project workshops and from the reference and international advisory groups is evidence of sector readiness to embrace the FL2 approach.

What emerged most clearly from the students’ evaluation surveys is that implementation of the FL2 approach must be wholly embraced by both teachers and students to be successful. In other words, the FL2 activities should be fully integrated in the existing curriculum, and the overall teaching approach should be consistent with the principles underlying the FL2 project. Despite limited feedback available from students, the results obtained thus far suggest that the FL2 approach and activities can be implemented in a variety of contexts with positive outcomes. Further trial implementations and student data collection is planned for 2017.
Table of Contents
Acknowledgments ..................................................................................................................... i
List of acronyms used .................................................................................................................. ii
Executive summary ..................................................................................................................... iii
  Project context ............................................................................................................................ iii
  Aim of the project ....................................................................................................................... iii
  Project approach ........................................................................................................................ iii
  Project outputs and resources ................................................................................................. iv
  Impact of the project ................................................................................................................ iv
  Key findings ............................................................................................................................... v
Tables and figures ........................................................................................................................ vii
Chapter 1: Project aims and context .......................................................................................... 1
  Project context and theoretical background .............................................................................. 1
Chapter 2: Project approach and method .................................................................................. 5
  Analysis .................................................................................................................................. 6
  Design and development .......................................................................................................... 6
  Implementation .......................................................................................................................... 9
  Evaluation procedures ............................................................................................................. 10
    Student evaluation of the FL2 approach and learning activities ............................................. 10
    Practitioner feedback .......................................................................................................... 11
Chapter 3: Project outputs, impact and findings ...................................................................... 13
  Project outputs ......................................................................................................................... 13
  Project impact and dissemination ............................................................................................. 14
  Project evaluation ..................................................................................................................... 15
    Student data ........................................................................................................................... 15
    Reference group feedback ..................................................................................................... 19
    Language educators’ evaluation ............................................................................................. 20
  Project insights and linkages ..................................................................................................... 24
Appendix 1: Certification .......................................................................................................... 26
Appendix 2: References ............................................................................................................. 27
Appendix 3: FL2 website analytics at 1 June 2017 ................................................................. 29
Appendix 4: Reference group and international advisory group ............................................... 30
  International advisory group .................................................................................................. 30
Appendix 5: Academic publications and conference presentations (as at June 2017) ............ 32
## Tables and figures

### Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>L2 learning activities modified by positive psychology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Project activities and Kift’s TP principles</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Impact plan</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>FL2 project concept and design</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The FL2 website</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Student enjoyment of FL2 activities correlations</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students’ FL2 activities ‘feel good’ correlations</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students’ enjoyment of learning Italian correlations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Students’ statements regarding positive relationships</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Students’ statements evaluating FL2 activities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Students’ statements regarding language difficulty</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Meeting of workshop attendees’ expectations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Educators’ responses regarding aspects of FL2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Work cloud of responses to ‘What aspects of the workshop will you apply in your own teaching?’</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Educators’ familiarity with CLIL</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Educators’ familiarity with positive psychology</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Educators’ familiarity with TP</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Project aims and context

This seed project involved designing, developing, trialling and evaluating an innovative approach to curriculum design in second language courses at tertiary level, which integrates positive psychology,\(^1\) transition pedagogy (TP) (Kift, 2009) and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning—see Coyle, 2006) principles. The project, whose short title was Flourishing in a Second Language\(^2\) (FL2), had two main aims:

1. Contribute to first-year students’ psychological, emotional and social wellbeing, referred to as *flourishing* (Keyes, 2009), by capitalising on the unique features of the Second Language (L2) learning experience.

2. Increase the perceived value of language studies, as well as the level of enjoyment experienced by learners, by providing relevant and useful learning materials and activities and an overall supportive environment. Learners’ positive perceptions may sustain their motivation to continue in the study of an L2, hence contributing to graduate qualities in the areas of internationalisation and intercultural understanding.

Project context and theoretical background

Tertiary students’ psychological, social and emotional wellbeing, and issues related to transition to university studies, have generated considerable attention in recent years. Young people, particularly in the 18–25-year-old age group, tend to experience greater levels of stress, and lower levels of wellbeing, compared to older adults (Casey, 2013), and university students are especially likely to experience mental health problems (Stallman, 2010). As a result, a growing interest has developed in *positive education* (McGrath, 2009), or ‘applied positive psychology in education’ (Green, Oades & Robinson, 2011). Stemming from general psychology, positive psychology was established with the explicit intention of catalysing ‘a change in psychology from a preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building the best qualities in life’ (Seligman, 2002:3). Positive education interventions at Geelong Grammar School in Australia (Norris, 2015) and Wellington College in the United Kingdom (Morris, 2013) are considered as exemplars for their potential to support not only student lifelong learning, but also mental health and wellbeing throughout the schooling years and beyond (Green et al., 2011). Many positive education interventions\(^3\) are underpinned by the PERMA model of wellbeing (Seligman, 2012), which comprises the following components:

- **Positive emotion** includes happiness, joy, hope, love, compassion, gratitude, pride, awe and optimism.

- **Engagement** is associated with the experience of ‘flow’, described as a loss of self-consciousness and sense of time when fully involved in an activity. The state of flow is facilitated by activities that provide a match between our perceived abilities and the challenge posed by the task at hand.

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\(^1\) ‘Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive.’


\(^2\) A ‘second’ language is any additional language, or a language other than the student’s first, or native language. This may include Languages Other than English (LOtE) or English as an additional language. In the literature on language acquisition second is sometimes distinguished from ‘foreign’, depending on whether the language is learned in the country in which it is the official language or in the student’s home country. In this report we employ second rather than additional, as that is the term most often employed in published works in the relevant field of research.

\(^3\) For a list, see the SAHMRI Education web page: [www.wellbeingandresilience.com/education/](http://www.wellbeingandresilience.com/education/).
• Relationships refers to humans’ need to be loved, appreciated, and supported, and to have positive interactions with the people around us.

• Meaning is achieved when we feel that we are serving a purpose that is greater than ourselves, when we do something that we perceive as valuable and worthwhile, and that is consistent with our personal values.

• Accomplishment is related to being able to achieve one’s goals, and to develop competence is something that is important to us. This involves perseverance and resilience, and not giving up when faced with challenges.

• + (‘plus’) refers to physical wellbeing, which contributes greatly to emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. This is an addition to the original PERMA model as a result of Martin Seligman’s collaboration with the Centre for Wellbeing and Resilience within the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI, n.d.). With this addition, it becomes the PERMA+ model.

A number of weaknesses in the PERMA model when used for L2 learning were identified by Oxford (2016) who proposed a broader and more inclusive model of wellbeing known as EMPATICS. The FL2 project, while it acknowledges Oxford’s work, employs the PERMA+ model because this is the most widely known and applied framework across a range of disciplines and educational contexts. Using PERMA+ therefore facilitates immediate recognition by colleagues and administrators, and supports more effective dissemination.

As previously mentioned, in combination with PERMA+ and positive psychology principles, our project draws on TP (Kift, 2015). As demonstrated in Kift’s (2009) ALTC-funded project, TP recognises the vulnerability to stress and anxiety experienced by students in their first year at university because of the unfamiliar cognitive, social and emotional demands posed by the tertiary learning environment. TP recommends a whole-of-university approach to student support including specifically designing all areas of the curriculum to facilitate first-year students’ wellbeing. TP was developed to help academic staff develop a curriculum that supports students new to learning in university contexts. TP involves six interconnected principles: transition, diversity, design, engagement, assessment, and evaluation and monitoring, and was specifically developed by Kift (2009). Including TP principles in the project is appropriate as it is concerned with student wellbeing and with teaching first-year students. The TP principles advocate:

• a well-designed first-year curriculum that supports transition into university, regardless of students’ previous experience, by helping them understand how to study both at university and within their discipline

• supporting student diversity, which covers a great range of differences including socioeconomic background, culture, age, nationality, and experience of learning, among others. Such diversity, if not positively addressed, may intensify issues experienced by students as they begin their university studies. TP promotes teaching which recognises that students differ in their knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes and may therefore require diverse approaches (such as a range of resources including text, audio and video as well as assessment choices)

• student-focused first-year curriculum design which is ‘scaffolded’, providing an initial foundation for students and allowing further learning to then build on it as new skills, abilities and knowledge are developed through further carefully scaffolded support

• student engagement, facilitated through innovative and collaborative activities which address students’ needs and encourage their participation
• effective assessment which introduces students to a range of practices, providing timely, well-articulated and constructive feedback to make students aware of their progress and areas that may require improvement

• the inclusion of mechanisms that support the evaluation and monitoring of student engagement and performance and allow timely intervention to occur. These mechanisms would ideally provide students with opportunities to monitor their own learning and evaluate where further support or additional work might be required (Kift, 2009).

An important advantage of TP is that these principles are evidence-based and have been effectively embedded within the curriculum across a range of academic areas (including sciences, business, education, information technology, arts and social sciences). However, TP is not widely used or known specifically in relation to learning and teaching of an L2. The FL2 project therefore provides a valuable contribution to understanding the relevance and potential application of TP in language learning contexts.

Another recent OLT-funded project (Cranney et al., 2012) also encourages a whole-of-university approach to wellbeing, and advocates embedding resilience-building activities across all areas of the tertiary curriculum to optimise students’ wellbeing and academic achievement. While a whole-of-university approach may be highly desirable, many disciplines must fulfil accreditation requirements, which limit opportunities to introduce wellbeing-enhancing activities. Rather than introducing additional activities into the curriculum, the TP approach recommends reshaping and reconsidering the curriculum to incorporate transition support.

In language courses, the content of reading or listening activities can be varied to suit the learners’ needs and interests, as long as a focus on linguistic and communicative development in the target language is also maintained. This approach easily facilitates the inclusion of activities that contribute to flourishing through an L2. Furthermore, since the late 1970s, and the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching, learners’ active involvement in interaction has been viewed as a fundamental requirement for the development of proficiency in a second language (e.g. Canale & Swain, 1980).

To achieve such a level of interactivity, small-group teaching is necessary: language classes are places where students and instructors are constantly involved in collaborative exchanges of information and meaning co-construction. These approaches contribute to creating a climate of mutual support, which is consistent with TP and provides an ideal background for positive psychology coaching. As an added benefit, recent research (e.g. Dewaele, 2008) has shown that language learners tend to experience a greater level of detachment from negative emotions when discussing feelings in a second language.

These considerations are important, as research into affective factors in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) also shows that L2 learning involves negotiating and reshaping one’s self-image, and that it can be an ego-threatening and anxiety-generating activity (e.g. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Second language pedagogy therefore promotes and requires the establishment of a learning environment where students are supported, not threatened, and feel secure enough to make mistakes. These environments actively encourage students to engage in peer support and personal sharing, as discussed by Brown (2007).

Motivation to study languages has also been a major area of interest in SLA over the past four decades, as discussed in a detailed review of the area conducted by Dörnyei (2009a). The construct of L2 motivation has developed from Gardner and Lambert’s (1972) seminal work and proposed two-dimensional model, to multidimensional, post-structuralist, psychologically grounded models of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2009b) which identify a range of motivating factors, including seeking self-realisation and personal growth, as well as affiliation.
Unfortunately, several studies into L2 students’ motivation in Australian universities have found high levels of student attrition and lack of motivation to progress beyond introductory courses. These results may be due to several factors, including a widespread view that learning to speak an L2 has low economic value, and the significant effort required to master an L2 (Stables & Wikeley, 1999). A recent ARC-funded project (Nettelbeck et al., 2009), however, also identified a mismatch between learners’ interests and language curricula as a key contributor to students’ loss of motivation.

To sustain second language learners’ motivation, recent approaches, especially CLIL, advocate a greater integration between linguistic goals, learners’ interests and the cognitive demands posed by the texts with which learners interact. Professor Do Coyle, one of the most valued and respected proponents of CLIL explains: ‘CLIL is flexible and dynamic, where topics and subjects—foreign languages and non-language subjects—are integrated in some kind of mutually beneficial way so as to provide value-added educational outcomes for the widest possible range of learners’ (Coyle, 2006:3).

Traditionally, L2 learners at initial levels of competence in the target language have been exposed to a limited range of rather predictable texts with a view to facilitating comprehension and a focus on the linguistic means used to convey meaning. The difference with CLIL is it advocates access to content-rich texts at any level of competence (Coyle, 2006). Therefore, rather than lowering the cognitive challenge posed by texts to the students’ current level of linguistic competence, CLIL employs scaffolding techniques such as vocabulary building activities and visual support to aid students as they engage with content that is new and of interest to them. Personally relevant learning activities that provide appropriately targeted cognitive and linguistic challenges to learners facilitate the experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In turn, experiencing flow can promote learners’ emotional and psychological wellbeing (ibid.), and sustain their intrinsic motivation, ensuring that they are willing to expend the time and effort required to learn an L2.

While the SLA discipline has a strong tradition of research and practice grounded in psychology and education, as demonstrated by the above considerations, only recently have scholars recognised the potential of positive psychology as an area of inquiry, especially in its applications to L2 teaching. MacIntyre and Mercer, two well-known researchers specialising in the affective aspects of L2 learning, have suggested that the SLA field is ‘in a particularly strong position to engage with [positive psychology] to generate innovative thinking and research’ (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014:167), and have recommended wellbeing, flourishing and ‘hardiness in respect to language learning’ (ibid.) as fruitful areas for future studies.

In summary, by integrating positive psychology, TP, and CLIL principles, the FL2 project responds to an identified need within the area of Second Language Learning and Teaching. The project capitalises on the unique features of the L2 learning environment to address the critical issue of attrition in second language courses at tertiary level. Importantly, the proposed curriculum approach is also designed to contribute to first-year students’ overall wellbeing.
Chapter 2: Project approach and method

The main contribution of this project was the development of an innovative approach to L2 teaching and learning, underpinned by the theoretical framework discussed in the previous section. Figure 1 graphically represents the project concept and design.

The project followed an approach that is commonly referred to as the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation; Forest, 2014). While each of these five phases may occur consequentially and in a linear fashion, there is considerable overlapping between them, and a cyclic movement whereby data collected through evaluation activities feeds back into the process as analysis for a subsequent phase. In the following sections, each phase is discussed as it relates to the FL2 resources.
Analysis

The process of needs analysis was initiated before the project received funding, through observation of the teaching and learning contexts in which the investigators operate. Such observation was supported and complemented by an extensive review of relevant academic literature, some of which is discussed in the previous section of this report.

As a result of the analysis process, it was decided that the FL2 resources would be designed for beginning-level university students. Beginners’ courses were selected because students enrolled in them are likely to be in their first year at university, and are therefore the most ‘at risk’ from any adverse effects of university study on their wellbeing. Many of these students have no prior experience of L2 learning and may only wish to gain some introductory knowledge over one academic semester. It has been anecdotally observed, however, that some students discover a passion for languages and thus feel encouraged to continue in their studies. Positive experiences in the initial stages of learning are crucial in facilitating a shift in attitudes, leading to a long-term commitment to L2 learning. Introductory-level classes tend to attract mostly students in their first year at university; hence these classes represent an ideal environment for the application of positive psychology and TP principles, as previously discussed.

Design and development

The design of activities at introductory levels of competence in a target language does, however, pose significant challenges as students’ initial ability to engage in meaningful conversation is limited. These challenges were addressed through the use of TP and CLIL principles, scaffolding student learning and ensuring a process of gradual progression. For example, from earlier to later activities, there was a gradual shift from English to the target language as the medium for task instruction. Furthermore, initial activities provided greater focus on discrete elements of the target language (grammar, vocabulary) required for meaningful communication, while still providing access to relevant content.

Beginning-level courses across Australian universities are commonly organised around the A1 level of the Council of Europe Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR—Council of Europe, 2001). Some of the learning activities typically used to achieve the aims and outcomes of the CEFR are very similar to those used in positive psychology coaching (e.g. Grant & Leigh, 2011). For example, one of the competence descriptors included in the A1 level of the CEFR is: ‘[Learners] can write simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do’ (Council of Europe, 2001: 62). To achieve this goal, L2 learning curricula will often include an activity requiring students to write a description of their daily or weekly routine or of their appearance or personality. Positive Psychology practices involve a slight but significant change to these activities, such as identifying one’s positive qualities and character strengths or writing three things that one is grateful for at the end of the day.

With very minor changes, L2 learning activities can therefore provide opportunities for students to extend their linguistic and communicative competence in the target language as they develop resilience and wellbeing. Including these changes has an additional bonus of providing students with personally relevant and useful learning activities. Some of the possible changes are shown in Table 1, below.

Table 1: L2 learning activities modified by positive psychology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical activities included in an L2 curriculum at the A1 level of the CEFR</th>
<th>Positive psychology activities (e.g. Grant &amp; Leigh, 2011)</th>
<th>Modified L2 learning activities in line with positive psychology exercises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe yourself; describe a friend; describe a family member</td>
<td>Find your strengths and solutions</td>
<td>What are your character strengths? How would one of your best friends or closest family member describe your best qualities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe your typical daily/weekly routine</td>
<td>Be mindful; find your strengths and solutions</td>
<td>Make a list of all the things you do to relax after a stressful day/week. Which are more effective? How often do you do them?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write a postcard to an imaginary friend from an imaginary holiday location</td>
<td>Practise random acts of kindness; practise gratitude</td>
<td>Write [an imaginary] thank you card to someone who did something nice for you recently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Focus on Linguistic elements] Engage in practice activities involving more or less meaningful use of linguistic elements, to aid memorisation and to develop automaticity. For example, match a vocabulary list with the corresponding pictures, list all adjectives you can use to describe an object</td>
<td>Be mindful; practise gratitude</td>
<td>Keep a diary for a week. At the end of each day, write at least three things that you are grateful for. Use nouns and adjectives (for example ‘the blue sky’) and verbal nouns (e.g. infinitive forms in Italian or French, such as ‘seeing my best friend’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, the FL2 curriculum design and development approach was supported by Kift’s Low risk, ‘do-able’ actions that would make a difference (Kift 2009a). For example, to support the TP principle of evaluation and monitoring suggested actions that would make a difference might include ‘Promote a climate of support and encouragement …’ (Kift 2009a:2). This principle is consistent with the Accomplishment and Relationships components of the PERMA+ model, and with the importance of establishing a non-threatening, supportive learning environment where students engage in peer support and feel safe to make mistakes, as advocated by SLA research. Therefore, activities were developed with the specific aim of encouraging students to develop positive relationships in the classroom and outside.

Other relevant links between project activities and Kift’s TP principles are illustrated in Table 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-year curriculum principle (Kift, 2009a)</th>
<th>Actions that would make a difference ... (Kift, 2009a)</th>
<th>Elements implemented in this project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Transition</strong>&lt;br&gt;‘... the first-year curriculum will enable successful student transition into first year, through first year, into later years and ultimately out into the world of work, professional practice and career attainment.’</td>
<td>2. ‘Be consistent in all student communications (e.g. in presentation of program material ...).’&lt;br&gt;2. ‘... discuss planning and self-management skills (including time and stress management).’</td>
<td>The project allowed mapping of relevant activities to existing language course objectives so that consistency could be achieved in the design elements within the wellbeing component, and that seamless integration with existing activities was facilitated. Language classes typically comprise students from a wide variety of skill levels, cultural and social backgrounds and prior experiences. Project activities encouraged learners to recognise their strengths and deal with difficulties in effective ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Diversity</strong>&lt;br&gt;‘The first-year curriculum should be attuned to student diversity and must be accessible by, and inclusive of, all students.’</td>
<td>2. ‘... discuss planning and self-management skills (including time and stress management).’</td>
<td>The project activities emphasised the contribution of language studies to the development of general skills and knowledge that are relevant to the students’ experiences outside the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Design</strong>&lt;br&gt;‘First year curriculum design and delivery should be student focused, explicit and relevant.’</td>
<td>3. ‘Make linkages/connections explicit between first-year subjects of study.’</td>
<td>The project activities were designed to enhance students’ engagement by providing content that is personally relevant. Furthermore, the project aimed to develop group solidarity within the classroom through frequent interaction, sharing of personal information, and group experiences in a mutually supportive environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Engagement</strong>&lt;br&gt;‘Learning, teaching, and assessment approaches in the first-year curriculum should enact engaging and involving curriculum pedagogy and should enable active and collaborative learning.’</td>
<td>2. ‘... encourage students to work collaboratively (e.g. in pairs, informal groups, on other activities) in order for them to get to know each other and develop a sense of academic and social belonging. 3. Encourage and facilitate teacher–student interactions.’</td>
<td>The project activities contributed to students’ awareness of their own strengths; they also contributed to students’ ability to manage stress and anxiety, as well as negative feelings, such as disappointment and sadness. As such, it was expected that students would become better equipped at dealing with academic demands, including assessment requirements and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Assessment</strong>&lt;br&gt;‘The first-year curriculum should assist students to make a successful transition to assessment in higher education ....’</td>
<td>1. ‘Schedule an early piece of formative assessment to be submitted and returned before Week 4 to ... relieve early student anxiety ....’</td>
<td>The project activities contributed to students’ awareness of their own strengths; they also contributed to students’ ability to manage stress and anxiety, as well as negative feelings, such as disappointment and sadness. As such, it was expected that students would become better equipped at dealing with academic demands, including assessment requirements and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Evaluation and monitoring</strong>&lt;br&gt;‘Good first year curriculum design is evidence-based and enhanced by regular evaluation that leads to curriculum development and renewal designed to improve student learning.’</td>
<td>1. ‘Be aware of first-year program and subject evaluation results and the key areas identified for improvement and staff development. ...’&lt;br&gt;3. ‘Promote a climate of support and encouragement ...’</td>
<td>The project responds to an identified need to support students in developing resilience, and skills that can enhance their psychological, emotional and social wellbeing. Project activities were also formally evaluated to assess their effectiveness. Establishing a climate of support and encouragement was essential to the success of this project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 2 shows, links between Kift’s TP and Positive Psychology principles can be easily identified. For example, points 7 and 8 on Grant and Leigh’s (2010) ‘Eight steps to happiness’ list involve creating social networks and taking time to ‘Reflect, review, renew’. These two strategies are also consistent with points 4, 5, and 6, on Kift’s (2009a) list. Establishing a positive social climate within the classroom, as well as encouraging learners to set goals and engage in self-monitoring and evaluation, are also repeatedly recognised as fundamental principles of a solid L2 pedagogy (e.g. Brown, 2007:66–73). Consistent with the notion of embedding support within curriculum and pedagogy the various principles were interwoven and, alongside an overall CLIL approach, guided the design and development of project activities. As previously mentioned, within CLIL, students access interesting and relevant content through the target language and by doing this they learn to use that language for communicative purposes. These CLIL principles underpin the project, in the sense that the FL2 activities are meant to provide access to content that is relevant to individual students’ goals and interests, thus contributing to adding value and relevance to the study of languages.

Based on this approach, 18 L2 learning activities were developed during semester 1, 2016, and a further eight activities in semester 2, which are referred to as the FL2 activities. Linguistic and communicative goals included in the existing course syllabi for the trial implementation were examined to identify their potential alignment with positive psychology principles, and especially with the PERMA+ model. The majority of FL2 activities are adapted (with permission) from the evidence-based practices available from the Greater good in action website (ggia.berkeley.edu), developed at the University of Berkeley. Other activities were designed specifically for this project, based on existing research-validated resources, such as brochures and videos developed by the counselling services at the University of Sydney.

The FL2 activities were collected in a searchable database, available from the project website (www.l2flourish.org), and tagged using information relative to general positive psychology themes and the components of the PERMA+ model, TP principles, and L2 learning outcomes in the areas of grammar, vocabulary and communicative functions, as well as an indication of the appropriate CEFR level.

The FL2 activities are designed to complement, rather than replace, existing activities; in most cases they are best used for further practice and application rather than in the initial stages of learning. Given that there is significant variation in the selection and sequencing of learning goals in L2 courses across Australian universities, however, it is desirable to maintain a flexible approach that empowers educators in making informed decisions regarding selection and integration of the FL2 activities in their existing syllabus and teaching contexts. Detailed descriptors facilitate this process. Furthermore, to encourage learners’ awareness of the strategies employed in the FL2 curriculum, all FL2 activity sheets distributed to students included information regarding the positive psychology principles on which the activities are based, evidence of their effectiveness and further references. The linguistic and communicative elements supported by each activity are also clearly listed to facilitate learners’ self-monitoring and evaluation, and to highlight the relevance of the FL2 activities to L2 learning outcomes.

Implementation

While the FL2 curriculum was designed in English to facilitate uptake across different target languages, Italian was selected as the language for the trial implementation. Italian was selected for a number of reasons, but predominantly because it is among the most widely taught languages in Australian universities; it therefore presents an ideal entry point for dissemination of our approach within language departments. Two specific contexts were identified for the trial implementation: the ITAL1201 and the ITAL1202 courses at Flinders University and the ITLN 1611 and ITLN 1612
courses at the University of Sydney, as both provided convenient access due to the researchers’ involvement in the teaching and/or coordination of these courses.

The FL2 activities were introduced gradually to students in the selected courses during semester 1, 2016, partly because students had very limited competence in the target language, which would make it very difficult for them to engage in conversation. We were also concerned, however, that this new approach might encounter some resistance. We particularly sought to ensure that the shift from an exclusive focus on the linguistic aspects of language learning to a dual focus on language and personal, potentially sensitive content was gradual and gentle, to give students time to adjust. Therefore, out of the 18 FL2 activities developed for the first semester, seven were implemented; two of these were assigned as homework, and five were used in class. Similarly, of the further eight FL2 activities developed in semester 2, six were implemented at both institutions. At Flinders University, two activities were assigned in preparation for conversation tutorials, two were suggested as out-of-class practice activities and two were used in class. At the University of Sydney, two FL2 activities were assigned as alternatives to similar writing tasks that were formally assessed, while the others were used as classroom activities.

In addition to the FL2 activities, the overall teaching approach of the participating staff was consistent with the principles that guided this project, albeit with some individual variation. All three teachers strove to create a positive environment where students’ engagement was stimulated, their achievements celebrated, and learners were consistently encouraged to work collaboratively and support each other. Furthermore, in introducing the FL2 activities, teachers drew students’ attention to and discussed the wellbeing-enhancing strategies that were relevant to each activity.

Evaluation procedures

Student evaluation of the FL2 approach and learning activities

Students’ feedback on the FL2 activities was collected through the following tools:4

- **an evaluation survey** which comprised (a) eight statements designed to gather the students’ views on the usefulness and relevance of the FL2 activities, and (b) 14 statements measuring their overall intrinsic motivation. These latter statements were based on the Language Enjoyment scale developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), which includes students’ perceptions of whether the learning environment is supportive and promotes positive relationships. All surveys used 5-point Likert scales and the final evaluation had an open question at the end for further comments. The survey was administered online through the respective institutions’ learning management systems at the end of semester 1.

- **focused interviews** to gather more in-depth feedback. The interviews were conducted at the end of semester 2, given that very few students had completed the survey instruments in semester 1. In line with Flinders University’s ethics requirements, two research assistants who were not involved in the teaching of these courses conducted the interviews. Interview questions focused around the students’ experience with and perception of the FL2 activities, especially in relation to their relevance and usefulness.

Additional student data was collected through:

- **the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form** (MHC-SF) survey, which was administered at the beginning and end of semester 1, 2016. The MHC-SF is a validated instrument that provides

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4 Ethical clearance to collect student data for evaluation purposes was sought and obtained from the relevant university committees (Flinders SBREC Project 7173).
reliable measures of emotional, psychological and social wellbeing; however, it only comprises 14 statements, which minimises the time demand imposed on the respondents. The MHC-SF was administered online, to facilitate data collection and management.

- **Learning analytics**, which are automatically generated by the learning management systems in use at the participating institutions, and were expected to provide some information on access to the project resources, thus complementing self-report data.

As they do not provide useful information on the project impact these data are not discussed further in this report. The MHC-SF was completed by very few students during the first semester, and because of its limited uptake it was abandoned in semester 2. Similarly, the learning analytics did not provide relevant data as many of the FL2 activities selected for the trial implementation were completed in class and not online.

A total of 44 beginner students participated in the project, with an even number of 22 students in each university. The 22 students who participated at Flinders University represented one of two whole classes for the ITAL1201 course, at the beginning of semester 1, 2016. Most students were aged between 18 and 24 years, with only three mature-age students in their thirties or over. In terms of gender, as is often the case with language classes, most of participants were female (n = 18, or 82 per cent) whereas only four were male. Over 80 per cent of students enrolled in ITAL1201 were commencing students, and 94 per cent were Australian citizens.

At the University of Sydney, the FL2 activities were trialled in two of the four tutorial groups within the ITLN 1611 course. Out of the 34 students enrolled in the two groups (49 per cent of the total enrolment of 70), 22 (65 per cent) signed and returned consent forms, and were thus included as participants in this study. The mean age for the whole cohort of ITLN 1611 students was 22.8 years, and 66 per cent of students were female. Furthermore, 60 per cent were commencing students and, interestingly, slightly over 22 per cent of the students were born overseas.

**Practitioner feedback**

**Reference group**

The project included both a reference group and an international advisory group who were invited to provide feedback on the FL2 approach and activities. These comprised academic staff with expertise in language learning and student wellbeing. A full list of these two groups’ membership is included in Appendix 4.

Participants from both groups were provided with general information about the project and the context for use of the activities. They were asked for general comments and to specifically respond to the following questions:

- To what extent do you feel that the FL2 activities developed thus far support the project aims and objectives, namely:
  a. to contribute to first-year students’ psychological, emotional and social wellbeing, referred to as flourishing, by capitalising on the unique features of the L2 learning experience?
  b. to increase the perceived value of language studies, as well as the level of enjoyment experienced by learners, by providing relevant and useful learning materials and activities?

The FL2 activities used in semester 1 were made available to these groups prior to their use in the classrooms to allow any required changes to be incorporated before their use with students.

**Language educators**

Feedback on the FL2 approach and activities was also collected through six face-to-face workshops run in Australian capital cities and one online seminar (webinar). A call for participation was issued
to Australian tertiary language educators through the Australasian Centre for Italian Studies (ACIS) blog and mailing list, the Languages and Cultures Network of Australian Universities (LCNAU) mailing list, as well as through professional contacts. A total of 129 registrations were received, and 90 attendees were recorded, representing over 10 languages taught across a range of tertiary programs and modalities. Registration forms requested information regarding the participants’ level of familiarity with the three areas that the project draws from: Positive Psychology, TP and CLIL.

The workshops opened with a brief description of the pedagogical rationale and theoretical underpinnings of the FL2 project; this was followed by opportunities for attendees to explore and engage with some of the FL2 activities. Considerable time was allocated to informal group discussion and so participants had time to engage with and provide feedback on the FL2 approach and activities. A workshop evaluation survey was administered at the end of each workshop, which invited feedback on the length and organisation of the workshop, as well as on the participants’ intentions to implement the FL2 approach and activities in their respective contexts.

Figure 2: The FL2 website
Chapter 3: Project outputs, impact and findings

Project outputs

The project developed a range of FL2 resources and produced a number of outputs. These include:

- a teaching and learning approach for the development of a first-year curriculum for beginning-level university students that integrates positive psychology, TP and CLIL principles. The approach is evidence-based as it has been trialled in two Italian language courses, one at Flinders University, and one at the University of Sydney (as part of this seed project). Feedback on the approach has been received from students, experts in positive psychology, general education and language education, as well as from over 100 tertiary educators who participated in the project workshops (discussed below) and two additional invited sessions held at Monash and RMIT universities.

- a database of evidence-based curriculum resources for first-year university L2 classes, available in English and Italian from the project website (www.l2flourish.org). Each resource is tagged using information relative to general positive psychology themes and the components of the PERMA+ model, TP principles, and L2 learning outcomes in the areas of grammar, vocabulary and communicative functions, as well as an indication of the appropriate CEFR level.

- guidelines for curriculum design, development, implementation and evaluation of the FL2 approach and learning activities, also available from the project website.

- six nationwide language educators’ workshops and a webinar, which was recorded and is accessible from the project website. A total of 129 registrations were received for the workshops, and 90 attendees were recorded. The workshops allowed the project team to:
  - disseminate information on the theoretical and practical aspects of the proposed approach to curriculum design, including presentation of the FL2 approach and learning activities.
  - collect practitioners’ expressions of interest in trialling the project resources in their contexts.
  - promote active discussion of the issues (pedagogical, practical, institutional) relating to the integration of positive psychology, TP and CLIL principles in L2 courses.
  - identify a network of contacts and gather input regarding needs and preferences to establish and maintain a national community of practice.

- the establishment of a national, online community of practice (CoP) which focuses explicitly on innovative L2 curricula that integrate positive psychology, TP and CLIL principles. The CoP, founded through the project workshops, currently has 106 members (including members of both the project team and reference group), and enabled the project team to leverage well-established professional networks. These networks include the LCNAU, ACIS, Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA), First-Year Experience (FYE) community and the University of New South Wales resilience-success-network. Establishment of the CoP is designed to facilitate resource sharing, promotion of active discussion of the issues surrounding the proposed approach, and identification of best practices, hence supporting the development of the FL2 approach and learning activities.

- two professional development workshops for language educators at RMIT and Monash universities. These workshops were not included in the original project plan, but were offered on request by discipline leaders at these institutions who had attended the FL2 workshop in Canberra, and who believed that their colleagues would benefit from hearing about the approach.
• academic papers: one journal article has been accepted for publication, with one in preparation; four conference presentations delivered; and a presentation at the Flinders Teaching and Learning week. Two further conference presentations are planned for 2017. Details are provided in Appendix 5

• the project report

• a project website (available at www.l2flourish.org – see Figure 2) which holds the activity database, webinar recording, curriculum design, implementation and evaluation guidelines and a link to the FL2 CoP, as well as:
  – links to external resources
  – a project blog, which provides updates on the project activities as well as news and resources that are relevant to the project’s approach.

Project impact and dissemination

In some areas, the results obtained exceeded expectations, while with others the evaluation data available was too limited to allow any strong claims either way regarding the project’s impact. Table 3 presents the first two columns of the original impact plan, with comments relative to achievement of the expected goals.

Table 3: Impact plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated changes at:</th>
<th>Project completion</th>
<th>Six months post-completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Projected</td>
<td>Evidence of achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Team members</td>
<td>Recognised as leaders and innovators in L2 and first-year pedagogy – e.g. through performance reviews, research collaborations, invitations to deliver workshops</td>
<td>Invited to deliver an extra workshop in Canberra, which was not originally planned. Invited to deliver professional development workshops for staff in languages at RMIT University and Monash University. All team members are currently involved in new projects that include applications of FL2 principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Immediate students</td>
<td>Personal wellbeing (‘flourishing’). Perceptions of L2 courses as enjoyable and personally relevant</td>
<td>Students’ comments in end-of-year interviews support expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Anticipated changes at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project completion</th>
<th>Six months post-completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projected</td>
<td>Evidence of achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 3. Spreading the word | Growing membership and engagement in CoP. Conference presentations receiving positive feedback. Project endorsed by professional associations (e.g. LCNAU) | Several academic outputs, including conference presentations (list in Appendix 5) Invitation to deliver two additional workshops at Monash University and RMIT University, allowing membership to grow further. CoP includes 106 registered members | Continuous engagement from practitioners through CoP—expressions of interest in trialling approach in other contexts. High rates of downloads, views and linking. | Project website and resources recorded high rates of viewing. Italian FL2 activities specifically 62 total accesses, English activities 47 accesses. Website visits from Australia: 979; UK: 270; US: 133. For more data, see Appendix 3. CoPs take time to develop and flourish so minimal activity to date is positive |
| 4. Narrow opportunistic adoption | Colleagues of project team members expressing interest in trialling approach in other languages | Many comments from workshop participants across a range of languages expressing interest and intention to trial the FL2 activities in their contexts | Resources being developed for other languages in collaboration with colleagues | Translation of FL2 activities into Spanish has begun, for trial implementation at The University of Western Australia in semester 2, 2017 |
| 5. Narrow systemic adoption | Full implementation in Italian programs at participating institutions planned | Approach fully implemented in beginners’ courses at Flinders University; implementation at the University of Sydney planned | Full implementation in Italian programs at participating institutions | Approach fully implemented in beginners’ courses at Flinders University, implementation at the University of Sydney planned |
| 6. Broad opportunistic adoption | Language educators trialling approach in their contexts. Italian curriculum trialled at other institutions | Informal trials have begun. Collection of data on these experiences planned for 2017 | Trials continuing | Formal evaluation of trial at The University of Western Australia planned for 2017 |
| 7. Broad systemic adoption | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

### Project evaluation

In the following sections, data on the impact that the FL2 approach and activities had on the students participating in the Italian trials are discussed. Student evaluations are followed by the results of dissemination activities, including project workshops and evaluation by the reference and international advisory groups.

### Student data

As previously mentioned, students participating in the trial implementation of the FL2 activities were invited to complete evaluation surveys at the end of the semester 1, 2016. Unfortunately, only six students at Flinders University and six at the University of Sydney responded. This relatively
low uptake, while in accordance with similar exercises, may be motivated by a lack of time and the high demands posed on students by competing assessment deadlines at this time of the academic year. Responses indicate, however, that these 12 participants’ perceptions of the FL2 activities were strongly related to their overall experience in the language courses. As illustrated in Figure 3, items related to the FL2 activities included in the end-of-semester evaluation survey co-vary. For example, if students answered positively to the statement ‘I enjoy doing the FL2 activities’, they also tended to select positive answers in relation to ‘The FL2 activities are useful’ (r = 0.91), ‘The FL2 activities are relevant to my needs and interests’ (r = 0.80), and ‘The FL2 activities help me find resources and tools to support my wellbeing’ (r = 0.75).

![Figure 3: Student enjoyment of FL2 activities correlations](image)

Interestingly, the correlation between ‘I enjoy doing the FL2 activities’ and ‘The FL2 activities make me feel good’, though positive, was not statistically significant. Conversely, this latter statement was strongly correlated with items evaluating the students’ overall learning experience, which also tended to co-vary, as shown in Figure 4.

![Figure 4: Students’ FL2 activities ‘feel good’ correlations](image)

Statistically significant correlations were identified between ‘The FL2 activities make me feel good’ and statements such as ‘I enjoy learning Italian’ (r = 0.84), ‘I have made friends in my Italian class’ (r = 0.89), ‘I’m a worthy member of my Italian class’ (r = 0.82), ‘The teacher is encouraging’ (r = 0.84), and ‘The teacher is friendly’ (r = 0.80). These results suggest that the FL2 approach and activities contributed to establishing positive interpersonal relationships in the class and that, in turn, the establishment of positive interpersonal relationships and an overall positive perception of the learning environment may have led students to attribute their positive feelings to the FL2.
activities. These results also suggest that the establishment of a supportive learning environment, in accordance with the FL2 principles, contributed to students’ self-efficacy and positive emotions, as well as positive interpersonal relationships. As shown in Figure 5, strong correlations were also observed between, ‘I enjoy learning Italian’, and ‘The teacher is encouraging’ ($r = 0.75$), ‘I can laugh off embarrassing mistakes’ ($r = 0.84$), ‘Making errors is part of the learning process’ ($r = 0.85$), ‘It’s a positive environment’ ($r = 0.77$), and ‘I’m a worthy member of my Italian class’ ($r = 0.74$).

Figure 5: Students’ enjoyment of learning Italian correlations

A few differences were noted between the two groups of participants at Flinders University and the University of Sydney. Given the small number of participants, it would be inappropriate to calculate any inferential statistics and therefore the data were treated as qualitative observations. As the chart in Figure 6 shows, all six Flinders students agreed that they had made friends in their Italian class, and all except for one (undecided) also agreed or strongly agreed to statements involving positive relationships, including: ‘My class mates are nice’; ‘It’s a positive environment’ and ‘There is a good atmosphere’. All respondents also either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement ‘I enjoy learning Italian’. Conversely, at the University of Sydney the average scale points on these statements were all below four, with ‘I have made friends’ approaching a score of three, which corresponded to ‘unsure’.
Figure 6: Students’ statements regarding positive relationships

Similar differences between the Flinders and Sydney groups were noted on statements evaluating the FL2 activities more specifically, such as ‘I enjoy doing the FL2 activities’, ‘The FL2 activities are useful’, and ‘The FL2 activities make me feel good’, as shown in Figure 7. While the average scale point for Flinders students was around four, corresponding to ‘agree’, for the Sydney group the average was closer to two, which corresponded to ‘disagree’.

Figure 7: Students’ statements evaluating FL2 activities

What is encouraging, however, is that the respondents in both cohorts agreed that the language used in the FL2 activities was not excessively difficult, as shown in Figure 8. This is important, given that the worksheets are indeed more linguistically challenging when compared to some of the practice activities found in commercial textbooks. Also, when asked whether the FL2 activities were too ‘touchy-feely’ for them, most students selected disagree or strongly disagree, which alleviates some initial concerns that students might be resistant to the FL2 approach; there were two male respondents who were undecided. Although it is impossible to generalise due to the very limited number of participants, different genders might respond differently to the FL2 activities. This remains to be established through further research.

What is also encouraging is that students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement ‘I’ve learnt interesting things about Italian and Italy’. This suggests that their achievement in terms of language learning was not compromised by the introduction of the FL2 activities and an added focus on non-language aspects.
To gain a deeper insight into the participants’ perceptions of the FL2 approach and activities, students were invited to participate in an interview at the end of semester 2. A total of seven students volunteered to be interviewed (three at the University of Sydney, four at Flinders University). Their feedback was overall very positive. The interviewees showed a thorough understanding of the underlying principles of the project. Moreover, the participants found the implementation of FL2 activities felicitously integrated into the program, and highly consistent with the learning objectives of the course. Overall, the participants declared that they would be happy to continue with the FL2 approach in the future. During the interviews, the FL2 activities were deemed highly recommendable to new students of Italian L2, and to students of other subjects. Student comments include the following:  

I felt like the ‘Giving it up’ and ‘Know your strengths’ were the hardest ones for me just because I’m kind of not normally a positive person about myself ever, so it was tricky to try and suss out top 10 strengths and then positively describing yourself so in a way that called to attention things that needed to be worked on. And the ‘Giving it Up’ one I kind of realised I give up a lot already, so that I don’t take out time for me so I think I did the reversal of the GGIA one, so I think I added something, like a cup of tea every night instead of not having one.

Liked that they were positive, about health and well-being, relevant, make you stop and think as at uni you can get caught up with deadlines, practical in terms of learning Italian.

It was nice, it helped me calm down a bit when I was doing homework in general because I was doing business topics which was new to me and there was the maths in there so it was nice to have a part of my course to have these things to do ... so helped me, nice to do something different/relevant to me and working on myself.

The Foto Sig., it made me look up a holiday picture and made me reflect on why I did that activity at a deeper level so I was able to spill out my feelings more on paper than I usually do if I go and see a place, make you explore the reasons and probably treasure the moment more ...

Reference group feedback

Feedback obtained from the reference group was also very positive. In particular, experts in positive psychology, general education and L2 learning praised the novelty of the approach and its potential for enhancing motivation among language learners. Given that we did not distribute the

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5 For a more extensive discussion of student evaluation data, please see Strambi, Luzeckyj, and Rubino (2017).
implementation guidelines with the first set of FL2 activities, some of the reviewers requested advice and guidance on how the resources might be implemented within the curriculum.

Some experts also commented on individual activities in terms of different degrees of appeal, although the comments suggested these remarks were influenced by personal preferences or the specific teaching contexts of the respondent. The wide range of activities and resources provided adequately addresses this concern as educators can decide which resources they prefer. Finally, the reference group offered other specific recommendations, for example avoiding colloquial language (especially Americanisms), that were addressed through minor changes to the resources and inclusion of implementation guidelines. The following comment typified responses:

- *I really like what you have created in these Italian lessons.*
- *I think that the exercises should work well to raise awareness of the ingredients of wellbeing and to provide practice and application opportunities.*
- *I have just been looking at these materials—they are excellent and I especially like the very different, but integrated, take on learning and student wellbeing.*
- *Well done to you and the team.*

Other feedback from the reference group comprised questions on how the activities might be implemented in class and how they would be contextualised for teachers and students. This feedback has been incorporated into the implementation guidelines that have been developed and are available from the project website.

Language educators’ evaluation

As previously mentioned, project dissemination activities involved delivering language educators’ workshops, which allowed the project team to gather further feedback on the FL2 approach and activities before, during, and after the workshops. Discussions during workshops reflected a great deal of enthusiasm and engagement from participants. Language educators clearly found the approach valuable and could see its usefulness to their own contexts. Some of the workshop attendees were already familiar with the principles underlying the project, although for many some aspects were a new discovery. Certainly, the integration of the three areas of positive psychology, TP and CLIL was a novelty for all participants, although most attendees were already implementing strategies consistent with the FL2 approach. In several cases, the attendees welcomed the FL2 resources as tools that validated their current practices, and provided them with appropriate terminology and supporting evidence to strengthen their teaching philosophy and pedagogical approach. These views are expressed in the following comments, collected through the end-of-workshop evaluation survey:

- *The workshop made me more aware of the things that I actually already do—which is a big positive—can focus on it more because of the awareness and its advantages.*
- *I will definitely pay more attention to transition and positive psychology.*
- *I will look at activities we currently use from a different perspective and will try to include a ‘flourishing’ twist i.e. give a different focus.*
- *[I will apply to my teaching] the awareness of the mental issues a student goes through the first year of studies at uni of which I was aware but even more now.*
- *I’ll try to use some of the activities, as I think they could be very motivating for my students. I leave the workshop with a different point of view on some aspects and methods of teaching: for example, the integration of meditation.*

Overall, the workshop participants found the workshops met their expectations, as shown in Figure 9.
Some concern was expressed during the workshops in relation to the competencies required to address students’ psychological wellbeing. In response to these concerns, it was pointed out that positive psychology is not designed to replace appropriate therapy administered by medically trained professionals, and that language educators should be discouraged from engaging in counselling. Instead, we recommend that a good working relationship be established with the university’s counselling team, and that information be included in the course resources regarding support agencies so that student referrals to appropriate services can be made as required.

Another challenge identified by some participants was the potential cultural sensitivity of some FL2 activities. For example, it was observed that in some East Asian cultures the sharing of deeply personal information is uncommon, and that students may be reticent to engage in such sharing in the classroom. Given that the FL2 approach can be adapted and implemented in ways that respond to context-specific needs, however, language educators should be able to identify the FL2 activities that are most suitable to their teaching context.

Finally, a small number of participants indicated that there may be workload implications for both students and staff related to using the FL2 resources in the classroom. Given the potential benefits associated with the introduction of activities, however, most agreed that the benefits would outweigh their time investment.

In summary, the language educators’ feedback was overwhelmingly positive, not only because the FL2 approach provided reinforcement of their beliefs and practices, but also because they gained insight into new ways of thinking about their own teaching. Importantly, the participants expressed a desire to implement at least some of the FL2 activities in their respective contexts, and indicated interest in gaining more knowledge about the project developments. Comments received by 56 workshop participants through the end-of-workshop evaluation survey are summarised in Figures 10 and 11.

The chart in Figure 10 represents a count of comments mentioning the different components of the FL2 approach that the participants would apply in their teaching, whereas Figure 11 is a word cloud including all responses to the same survey question. As the figures show, many participants mentioned the FL2 activities specifically, but also the more general principles from TP and Positive Psychology, as well as the FL2 approach as a whole.

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6 For example, some participating colleagues requested that workshops be run specifically with staff from their institutions.
Possibly the most surprising finding was the perceived novelty of the FL2 project’s integrated approach and its underlying principles. The 127 tertiary language educators who registered to attend one of the workshops completed a short needs assessment survey prior to their participation. The survey asked them to indicate their level of familiar with positive psychology, TP and CLIL on a four-point scale ranging from ‘Very familiar’ to ‘Completely new to me’. As shown in Figures 12, 13 and 14, CLIL is, not surprisingly, the area that recorded the highest level of pre-existing knowledge, with just over one-third declaring themselves to be familiar or very familiar with this approach. Also of interest, positive psychology/education followed, with only two per cent claiming a high level of familiarity and a further 24 per cent having some knowledge, whereas three-quarters (74 per cent) of participants were somewhat or completely unfamiliar with it. Most surprisingly, only 17 per cent declared familiarity with TP, which suggests that this approach has not yet been fully embraced by the language educator sector.

A further survey is planned to gather data on impact at six to nine months post-workshop.
Figure 12: Educators’ familiarity with CLIL

Figure 13: Educators’ familiarity with positive psychology

Figure 14: Educators’ familiarity with TP
Project insights and linkages

The FL2 project used and advanced existing knowledge arising from previous OLT-funded work, as well as from other relevant academic studies. As discussed earlier, the project is informed by research on recent approaches to SLA, such as CLIL. It also draws on Instructional Design, TP and Positive Psychology, including the following ALTC/OLT-funded projects:


Specifically, the FL2 approach to language learning is evidence-based and all learning activities are designed to support students’ psychological, emotional and social wellbeing. These activities are also consistent with one or more of Kift’s TP principles—transition, diversity, design, engagement, assessment, evaluation—and monitoring. This approach helps students to develop social connections and affiliation; kindness and compassion; forgiveness and reconciliation; mindfulness and focus; gratitude and appreciation; optimism, self-compassion, and ability to identify one’s strengths. These goals are consistent with the Resilience success project by Cranney and Andrews, as well as with the Enhancing student wellbeing project led by Dr Chi Baik at the University of Melbourne.

Several disciplinary and interdisciplinary linkages have emerged from the project. The L2 community is well supported through the LCNAU, a network of individuals working in language programs across Australia. The LCNAU ‘aims to strengthen the tertiary languages sector in Australia through advocacy, collaboration, research and support’ (LCNAU website, 2016). By initially drawing on this network and gaining its endorsement the FL2 project could gain effective support in the delivery of the developed resources. Linkages via the LCNAU aided in the advertising and delivery of the six national workshops and webinar.

The success of the workshops offered opportunities for potential ongoing collaboration within the L2 discipline and with affiliated disciplines. Two workshop attendees agreed to trial the curriculum resources in their first-year language classes in 2017 to enrich the data collected in 2016 and contribute to the ongoing body of work developed through the implementation of the FL2 project. The project team were also invited to deliver further workshops at RMIT University and Monash University to support first-year language teachers in taking on the innovative approach to the curriculum.

Staff teaching in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts also attended workshops, providing positive feedback and endorsement of the value of the developed resources. Interest from staff in areas other than language teaching has also been forthcoming as the project developers have been

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approached to discuss using the innovative curriculum ideas in both chemistry and medicine at Flinders University (in the first instance). All three team members are now involved in interdisciplinary projects that involve a focus on student wellbeing.

One of the factors critical to the success of the project was the sector’s readiness to embrace the principles that form the core of the FL2 approach. This is evidenced by the very positive response generated among language educators participating in the project workshop, as well as from the reference and international advisory groups. It should also be mentioned that, to be successful, the implementation of the FL2 approach must be wholly embraced by teachers and students alike.

There were some important differences in the approaches to trial implementation. At Flinders University, the teacher of the trial group was also one of the researchers. This ensured a consistent—as well as a fully informed—approach in conducting the project. Students were given information about the project through a video that was played in class and distributed information verbally in the second week of semester. In addition, a university counsellor visited the class to introduce students to health, disability and counselling services.

At the University of Sydney, two different tutors (who had been given the rationale for the project, its main tenets and educational objectives before they began teaching) taught the two participating groups. Throughout the semester they were also involved in selecting the activities they deemed most suitable to their classes. Their knowledge of the project and their ‘investment’ in it differed from that of the researcher who also taught the class. Differences in teaching styles and class management also meant that the project was ‘handled’ differently, not just in the two institutions but also across the two groups at the University of Sydney. Furthermore, given that the curriculum design, implementation and evaluation guidelines had not yet been developed, these teachers had only a partial understanding of the project approach. Consequently, their ability to inform students and demonstrate the relevance of the FL2 activities may have been impaired, as suggested by some of the results obtained in the student evaluation surveys.

Another factor that limited the success of the project was students’ reluctance to engage with data collection exercises. A total of 12 students completed the end-of-semester evaluation survey, out of a cohort of 44 students who had consented to participate at the beginning of the first semester. At the end of the second semester, only seven students volunteered to be interviewed. This limited the amount of evaluation data available on the FL2 learning activities. The students’ reluctance appeared motivated mainly by ‘survey fatigue’ and the timing of the surveys, which were programmed in the final weeks of the semester when many assignments are due and students tend to be ‘time-poor’. Finally, the surveys were administered online with students invited to complete them out-of-class, in their own time. Roberts and Allen (2015) discuss both survey fatigue and reduced response rates in online surveys; it seems likely that completion rates would have been greater had surveys been completed in class. To redress some of these limitations, further trial implementations are programmed for 2017, with monetary incentives provided to students for timely survey completion.

Despite these limitations, the results obtained thus far suggest that the FL2 approach and activities can be implemented in a variety of contexts with positive outcomes. Educators at two institutions are planning to implement the FL2 resources in 2017 and to collect further evaluation data in their teaching contexts. Furthermore, during the project workshops most language educators expressed interest in the FL2 approach, and a desire to implement at least some of its resources in their own language classrooms. An impact survey at six to nine months post-workshop attendance is planned for 2017 to collect further data on any further applications of the FL2 approach.
Appendix 1: Certification

Certification by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professor Clare Pollock)

I certify that all parts of the final report for this OLT grant provide an accurate representation of the implementation, impact and findings of the project, and that the report is of publishable quality.

Name: ................................................................. Date: 23-6-17

[Signature]
Appendix 2: References


Kift, S. (2009). *Articulating a transition pedagogy to scaffold and to enhance the first year student learning experience in Australian higher education: Final report for ALTC senior fellowship program.* Strawberry Hills, NSW: ALTC.


Appendix 3: FL2 website analytics at 1 June 2017

Sessions: 1,832
Users: 1,247
Pageviews: 3,506

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>% Sessions</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. United Kingdom</td>
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<td>14.74%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Russia</td>
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<td>9. Saudi Arabia</td>
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Appendix 4: Reference group and international advisory group

Reference group

Professor John Hajek is Professor of Italian and a linguist in the School of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Melbourne. He has held research fellowships in the UK and Australia. He is currently director of RUMACCC (Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross-cultural Communication) and is founding president of LCNAU, which is the result of an OLT-funded project. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, and has lead numerous research projects commissioned, or funded by, public bodies, such as the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

Associate Professor Angela Scarino is the Director of the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures at the University of South Australia. She has been a Chief Investigator on a number of research grants, including assessing the intercultural and language learning (ARC Linkage 2006–09) and Student Achievement in Asian Languages Education (DEEWR, 2009–11). She is the author of the Shape Paper for Languages in the recently developed Australian Curriculum and the related curriculum Design Paper for Languages. She is currently the Chair of the Multicultural Education Committee, an advisory committee to the Minister for Education in South Australia.

Associate Professor Anthony Grant is the founder and director of the world’s first Coaching Psychology Unit at the School of Psychology at Sydney University. His coaching research and practice has frequently been reported in the national and international media. He has co-written and co-edited five books on evidence-based coaching and has many coaching-related publications in the peer-reviewed and professional press. His books on coaching have been translated into eight languages, and his is widely recognised as a key pioneer of coaching psychology. He hosted the “Making Australia Happy” TV program, aired on ABC in 2010.

Associate Professor Helen Askell-Williams is Associate Dean (Research) in the School of Education at Flinders University, Director of the Flinders Educational Futures Research Institute, and a member of the Flinders Centre for Student Wellbeing and Prevention of Violence. Associate Professor Askell-Williams has worked on collaborative research projects that have investigated teachers’ and learners’ knowledge and wellbeing, and has published extensively in this area.

Associate Professor Jacquelyn Cranney, from the School of Psychology at the University of New South Wales, has been involved in a number of Carrick and ALTC initiatives. She is Project Leader (with Dr Annie Andrews) of the recent OLT-funded project “Curriculum Renewal to Build Student Resilience and Success”. She has conducted extensive research on the psychological aspects of student learning and performance.

Dr Annie Andrews is Director, Counselling and Psychological Services / Deputy Director Student Development, at the University of New South Wales. With Associate Professor Cranney, she led the OLT-funded project “Curriculum Renewal to Build Student Resilience and Success”.

International advisory group

Professor Rebecca L. Oxford is currently an adjunct professor and external evaluator for federal grants for the Graduate Degree Program for Teaching ESL at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (USA). She is a Professor of Language Education and Research at Air University in Montgomery, Alabama, and was named Professor Emerita and Distinguished Scholar-Teacher at the University of Maryland. She directed language programs at the University of Maryland, the University of Alabama, Columbia University, and Pennsylvania State University. She has published more than 160 articles and book chapters on language learners, learning technologies, culture, and
teaching methods. She has presented keynotes and workshops at conferences in more than 40 countries. The Lifetime Achievement Award she received from Heinle/Thomson states, “Rebecca Oxford’s research has changed the way the world teaches languages.”

**Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele** is Professor in Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism at the University of Birmingham (UK). He is Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, and is on the editorial boards of prestigious academic journals (e.g. International Journal of Multilingualism; Canadian Modern Language Review) and book series (e.g. AILA, EuroSLA for John Benjamins; GRAMM-R, Studies of French Linguistics for Peter Lang). He has published extensively in the area of emotions and multilingualism, foreign language anxiety and foreign language enjoyment, and general motivation in foreign language learning.

**Dr Sarah Mercer** is Head of English Language Teaching at the University of Graz (Austria), and Deputy Head of the Centre for Teaching and Learning. She has published extensively in the area of language learning psychology, and is currently working on projects in the areas of language teacher psychology, CLIL and mindsets. Her recent publications include *Psychology for Language Learning: Insights from Research, Theory and Practice*, co-authored with Marion Williams and Stephen Ryan (published by Palgrave MacMillan), and *Towards an Understanding of Language Learner Self-Concept* (Springer).
Appendix 5: Academic publications and conference presentations (as at June 2017)


