CCERBAL 2023
BILINGUALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM: TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCIES, MOBILITY, AND WELL-BEING

PRE-CONFERENCE EVENTS: MAY 3; CONFERENCE: MAY 4-6, 2023

FEATURED SYMPOSIUM

Positive psychology in language learning: What, who, why and how theory FLOWS into practice.

Positive psychology (PP) has been blossoming in Second Language Acquisition; however, there are still notable gaps, especially in terms of multilingualism, social critical perspectives, and exploring populations in diverse contexts. This symposium introduces PP to those unfamiliar with this theoretical lens and it also challenges those who already work in the field, by critiquing existent approaches and opening up new perspectives for scholarship and practice. The symposium consists of four interconnected talks. Talk 1 will open the symposium by taking a transformative critical lens to PP. Three empirical talks follow examining different PP constructs in diverse settings: Talk 2 will explore the professional practice of Advising in Language Learning in the official languages and workplace context in Ireland. Talk 3 will discuss the constructs of engagement and flow in a higher education setting. The final talk will focus on a community service-learning project conducted with second language learners.

Talk 1: Positive psychology: Transformative perspectives (Sarah Mercer)

Positive Psychology (PP) was introduced in order to redress the balance in psychological work, which had placed an undue emphasis on repair and deficit perspectives. Instead, PP argued that there was a need to also look at strengths and understand processes of flourishing. One misunderstanding in PP has been the notion that the focus is only on positive aspects of human psychology and experience; however, the original intention was always to look at both positive and negative aspects and crucially understand how they interrelate (Peterson, 2006). Many of the critiques of PP have unjustly centred around this myth about PP and arguments have been made, for example, for an appreciation of the 'dark side' of emotions and the role of negative emotions in positive human functioning (Ivtzan et al., 2016). A second key area of critique of PP is its

emphasis on the individual and their psychology with little attention being paid to social contexts and the interaction between individuals and their social settings. For example, in respect to wellbeing, there have been criticisms about an undue emphasis on the individual's responsibility for self-care, which ignores objective conditions and social structures, which may nurture or damage a person's wellbeing (Mercer, 2021).

Taking these two key critiques to heart, this talk examines work done in SLA to date and considers how the field can move forward with a more socially critical perspective. In line with Ortega's (2005) call for scholars and practitioners to consider the social impact of their work, this talk proposes transformative positive psychology (Mercer & Gregersen, in press) as a possible response. I will outline the developments of PP in SLA, reflect on critiques and gaps, outline a transformative perspective, and suggest an agenda for future work in both research and practice.

Talk 2: Exploration of the professional practice of Advising in Language Learning in the official languages and workplace context in Ireland. (Deirdre Ní Loingsigh)

Considering the recent Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 in Ireland and the burgeoning interest in Positive Psychology (PP) in language learning, a language support infrastructure, designed in 2010-2011 to bolster staff confidence to use Irish as a second and official language in an organisational setting, is revisited. The professional practice of Advising in Language Learning (ALL) in this minoritised language context is presented through the fresh lens of PP. Data relating to a group-based ALL model where the phenomenon of linguistic insecurity was addressed, through reflective dialogue and interventions, over a 13-month period are presented. Participants were staff members of a Language Support Network (LSN) on a university campus. Mynard's Dialogue, Tools, and Environments model (2012; 2021) is woven with Mezirow's Theory of Transformation (1991) as the conceptual framework in the Participatory Action Research (PAR) study. 'Relational knowing' (Taylor, 2000) is drawn on as a theoretical 'tool'. The presentation focuses on how the professional practice of a Language Advisor contributed to the creation of a positive institution, one of the three pillars of PP (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The findings, which evidence a move by LSN members from a situation of isolated individual linguistic insecurity to one of group collaboration, linguistic confidence, and strong relational knowing are reconsidered. Literature on positive organisations (Cameron and McNaughton, 2014), and practices to foster linguistic resilience in the workplace (Varagnolo, 2021) inform the discussion. Having revisited previous practice to influence new directions, the researcher's current exploration of language practitioner roles (e.g., Language for Work - Tools for Professional Development, ECML), and the anticipated creation of context-based continuous professional development opportunities in ALL for the workplace in Ireland are shared. At present, positive participatory approaches to the professional practice of language support and flourishing communities of language learners in the organisational setting are key considerations.

Talk 3: Emotional engagement: The dynamo powering long-term motivation. (Jason Brown)

Directed motivational currents (DMCs) have been identified as powerful long-term motivational phenomenon capable of boosting one's progress along a goal-directed pathway (Dörnyei et al., 2015). DMCs explain how complex sets of social, affective, cognitive, and contextual factors can

play a role in motivating L2 learners in contexts where vision-informed, goal-oriented syllabi activate student agency. Drawing on this framework, the current study investigated prominent factors that triggered sustained periods of intensified L2 task engagement during a community service-learning course offered for international students at a Canadian university. The participants (N = 21) were students from a variety of countries, and the course prepared them for volunteer roles at community charity organizations where they completed their service for the course credit. The data was collected through repeated measures sampling over 13 weeks. Data sources included reflection journals, interviews, and idiodynamic wave graphs generated during retrospective participant recalls using the idiodynamic method (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2010). Data from focus learners (n = 9) was analyzed using retrodictive qualitative modeling (Dornyëi, 2014), which enabled the trajectory of the overall constellation of system variables under study to be captured. Results show that when students chose community placements that aligned with their IL2S visions, positive emotionality enveloped their participation in the class activities. In turn, this positive emotionality energized behaviour, resulting in overall improvement in engagement trajectories.

Talk 4: Community service learning: a bridge between positive psychology theory and pedagogical approaches in language learning for developing transversal competencies. (Laura Ambrosio)

This session will look at pedagogical approaches that include community service learning (CSL) as an integral part of language learning processes at a university level. The CSL model puts language learners in direct contact with reality and allows them to tackle new, concrete challenges involved in learning a discipline, while exploring their commitment to the community. To strengthen the learning process, the tasks accomplished in the community context must be meaningful and satisfy students' motivational needs and be accompanied by opportunities to reflect on their experiences. Autonomy, beliefs, emotions, goal setting, group dynamics, motivation, are part of some of the results linked to this experiential community learning tool, documented in a corpus of over 600 reflective journals representing a compulsory component of the experience. A representative sample (n=100) preliminary qualitative analysis of the journals is leading us to further develop the relationship between CSL, positive psychology and the development of transversal competences. Languages are a great vehicle to enable participatory attitude, allowing collaboration, cooperation and sharing for a more democratic and sustainable world. Such a CSL-inspired learning process deepens and enhances the skills students acquire throughout their university program and empowers them to meet the challenges posed by society, both today and tomorrow. While it is not possible to be an expert in all fields of knowledge, it is important to be able to link knowledge to capacities of using possible skills and be open to collaboration with others to achieve diverse goals and objectives. This is why an education valorising transversal competencies has become an important asset in the personal profile of learners.