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ФАКУЛЬТЕТ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ

СЕКЦІЯ

«МОВОЗНАВЧІ, ЛІТЕРАТУРОЗНАВЧІ ТА ЛІНГВОДИДАКТИЧНІ КРОС-КУЛЬТУРНІ СТУДІЇ»

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PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPETENCE AS A CORE SKILL FOR MODERN LANGUAGE EDUCATORS

In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, the role of language teachers extends far beyond linguistic instruction. Modern educators are increasingly required to address the psychological dimensions of teaching and learning, which are crucial for fostering successful outcomes. Psychological competence, encompassing an understanding of how individuals think, feel, and interact, has emerged as a core skill for contemporary language educators. By integrating psychological principles into their teaching practices, educators can create environments that support both academic achievement and the emotional well-being of students.

The internal and interpersonal dynamics of the classroom environment are pivotal in shaping the effectiveness of language learning. Earl Stevick emphasized that the quality of teaching materials is less significant if students do not experience psychological safety and comfort within their interactions with teachers and peers [2]. Cultivating student confidence, fostering strong teacher-student rapport, and nurturing positive group dynamics require a comprehensive understanding of how individuals think, feel, and behave in diverse contexts [*ibidem*].

A nuanced understanding of psychology allows teachers to address both student and teacher well-being effectively. Sarah Mercer and Herbert Puchta argue that psychology extends beyond cognition, encompassing emotional states, confidence, beliefs, attitudes, relationships, social perceptions, motivation, and aspirations [1]. Recognizing these elements enables educators to create supportive climates conducive to active learning and meaningful engagement. This understanding

also underlines the reciprocal relationship between teacher and student psychology, highlighting the importance of addressing teacher well-being as a foundation for effective teaching [*ibidem*].

Enhancing Teacher Well-Being through Systemic and Individual Strategies

Teachers' cognitive and emotional processes profoundly influence their professional behaviors and, by extension, student outcomes. However, individual strategies for well-being, such as self-care or time management, are most effective when aligned with systemic measures provided by institutions. For example, while teachers may establish boundaries between professional and personal life, institutional policies that respect these boundaries – such as limiting after-hours communication or providing adequate preparation time – are essential to making these efforts sustainable.

Specific policy recommendations to enhance teacher well-being include the following:

1. Flexible work hours or remote work options should be provided where feasible.
2. Teachers should have regular access to workshops focused on time management, stress reduction, and integrating psychological principles into teaching.
3. Open communication and regular feedback should be encouraged to acknowledge teachers' contributions and address their concerns.
4. Teachers should have access to counselling services, peer support networks, and wellness programs to support their mental health.
5. Teacher workloads should be adjusted to prevent burnout and allow time for personal well-being activities.

Mercer and Puchta emphasize that institutional support, such as access to professional development resources, structured mentorship programs, and supportive leadership, amplifies teachers' capacity to implement personal well-being strategies [1]. These systemic factors not only reduce stressors but also foster an environment where teachers feel valued and empowered. In turn, this creates a positive feedback loop, where teachers' improved well-being enhances their ability to support students effectively.

Linking Systemic Support to Classroom Practices

The integration of systemic support and individual strategies is critical for nurturing psychological competence in the classroom. For instance, professional development programs can provide teachers with the tools to manage diverse classroom dynamics while also addressing their psychological needs. Access to counselling services or peer support groups within institutions can further bolster teachers' mental health, enabling them to maintain the energy and creativity needed for effective pedagogy.

Additionally, systemic interventions, such as collaborative planning time and workload adjustments, directly enhance the implementation of time management strategies. By reducing

administrative burdens, institutions allow teachers to focus on preparing lessons that incorporate psychological principles, such as fostering growth mindsets or implementing inclusive practices. These efforts translate into more cohesive and supportive learning environments for students.

Fostering Constructive Self-Perceptions and Growth

A pivotal aspect of fostering learning lies in students' beliefs about their capacity for growth, encapsulated in the concept of the growth mindset. Teachers can play a crucial role in guiding students toward adopting growth-oriented perspectives through structured discussions and activities that encourage reflection. For example, we have developed step-by-step instructions for science-based tool and classroom activity "*Mindset Scavenger Hunts*":

1. Introduction to Mindsets: begin with a lesson that defines growth and fixed mindsets, using relatable examples to illustrate the concepts.
2. Preparation of Materials: provide students with worksheets or digital tools outlining the traits of fixed and growth mindsets.
3. Identifying Examples: assign students to find examples of fixed and growth mindsets in various media (e.g., advertisements, movies, books, or social media posts).
4. Classroom Discussion: have students share their findings in small groups or as a class. Discuss how these examples relate to real-life learning scenarios.
5. Reflection: encourage students to reflect on their own mindsets and identify areas where they might adopt a growth-oriented perspective.
6. Actionable Steps: conclude the activity by having students set specific goals for applying growth mindset principles in their studies.

Students' sense of agency in language learning can be bolstered by equipping them with strategies such as organizing vocabulary, managing distractions, setting goals, and self-assessing progress. Providing constructive feedback that emphasizes strengths while addressing areas for improvement is essential. However, generic praise can inadvertently reinforce fixed mindsets. Effective feedback should be specific, detailed, and actionable, enabling students to understand how their strengths can be leveraged across diverse contexts.

For instance, a brief comparison of *Feedback Methods*:

- Ineffective Feedback: "*Good job.*" (Generic and lacks actionable information.)
- Effective Feedback: "*Your argument was well-structured, and I appreciated how you supported your points with evidence. To make it even stronger, consider expanding on your conclusion to tie all ideas together.*"

Building Positive Group Dynamics in Virtual Environments

Positive group dynamics are essential for fostering collaborative learning environments. This becomes particularly challenging in virtual settings, where the absence of physical cues can

hinder interaction and trust. Specific strategies to foster psychological safety in virtual environments include:

- Establish norms for respectful communication and participation in online platforms to set clear expectations.
- Use virtual meetings or discussion boards to gauge students' well-being and address concerns promptly through regular check-ins.
- Assign roles in-group projects to ensure equitable participation and accountability, thereby encouraging structured interaction.
- Ensure all students have access to the necessary technology and support to engage in virtual collaboration by providing accessible resources.
- Incorporate icebreaker activities and informal conversations to create a sense of community and build rapport.

By ensuring active participation from all group members and prioritizing inclusivity, teachers can create virtual environments that encourage trust, respect, and effective teamwork.

Incorporating psychological insights into language teaching empowers educators to address their own well-being while supporting students in engaging with tasks independently and collaboratively. By applying psychological principles and aligning individual strategies with systemic support, teachers can discover diverse methods to motivate learners, enhance engagement, strengthen group dynamics, reduce anxiety, and foster psychological safety. Moving forward, educators are encouraged to advocate for institutional policies that prioritize teacher and student well-being and to continuously integrate innovative practices that address the evolving needs of their classrooms. By doing so, they contribute to creating educational environments that are not only inclusive and effective but also transformative for all stakeholders.

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