Connecting Minds: Language Learner and Teacher Psychologies

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The future of ELT?

Engkey English language teacher robot in South Korea

Image from: http://www.voanews.com
Video 1
It’s about people
What is psychology?

“the scientific study of how the human mind works and how it influences behaviour”

(http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/psychology)
What is it NOT...

• It is not...
  1. It is not just about motivation
  2. It is not just about cognition
  3. It is not just about an abstracted, internal mind
“...psychologically wise teachers can make a huge difference to the lives of their learners”

(Duckworth, 2016, p. 218)

EVERY SINGLE DAY!
Psychologically wise language teachers do 3 key things

1. They develop positive relationships

2. They focus on positivity and growth

3. They nurture their own professional well-being
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The key social relationship for a learner...

- ...is typically with the teacher
- Hattie’s (2009) meta-analysis list of 138 most influential factors on learning...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-report grades</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piagetian programs</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing formative evaluation</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro teaching</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceleration</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom behavioral</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive interventions for learning disabled</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher clarity</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocal teaching</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-student relationships</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaced vs. mass practice</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-cognitive strategies</td>
<td>0.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior achievement</td>
<td>0.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary programs</td>
<td>0.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repeated reading programs</td>
<td>0.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity programs</td>
<td>0.65</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Video 2
Relationships especially in language education

• Language teaching is inherently social
• It involves communication and collaboration
• It requires socio-cultural competence
What qualities do people look for in their relationships?

• Roffey (2011, p. 100) lists the following:
  – Mutual respect
  – Trust & honesty
  – Reciprocity – Give & take
  – Acceptance of you as a whole person
  – Open communication
  – Equality
  – Warmth
  – Reliability – Being there in good & bad
  – Feeling comfortable and enjoying being together
The emotional bank account

(Covey, 2004)
How to make deposits...

• Develop positive relationships (Gkonou & Mercer, 2017)
  1. Work on mutual trust & respect
  2. Be empathetic
  3. Be responsive to learner individuality
Communication is key
“An extensive body of research suggests the importance of close, caring teacher-student relationships and high quality peer relationships for students’ academic self-perceptions, school engagement, motivation, learning, and performance”  (Furrer, Skinner & Pitzer, 2014, p.102)
Also peer-peer relationships
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Whether you think you can or you think you can’t...

You’re right.

Henry Ford
Mindsets
(Dweck, 2006; Dweck et al., 1995)

• Implicit theories
  – **Fixed mindset**
    • Attributes regarded as static or fixed
  – **Growth mindset**
    • Attributes regarded as being more malleable
Two mindsets

This is the way my intelligence is . . .!

No, intelligence WILL grow and develop

Graphic from: http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk
**Growth mindset**

- I can improve my abilities
- Even if I face problems, I can overcome them with effort and perseverance
- When I fail, it is a chance to learn something

**Fixed mindset**

- My abilities are given – I can either do it or I can’t
- When I have difficulties, there is nothing I can do to overcome them
- When I fail, it proves that I am no good at something
How to...

• Promote a growth mindset in our learners
  – Teacher as role model
  – Teacher talk
  – Strategies & pathways
Strength spotting  (Linley, 2008)
Describe what you see in the box
(Rogers, 2012, p. 196)
Positive emotions for learning


Figure adapted from: Fredrickson & Cohn (2008)
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What is the most important letter in...?
T is for Teachers!
There is no system in the world or any school in the country that is better than its teachers.

Teachers are the lifeblood of the success of schools.
Why teacher professional wellbeing?

You can't pour from an empty cup. Take care of yourself first.

Random acts of kindness FB page
Reasons for reciprocity

... It’s catching!
‘Burnout cascade’ or ‘virtuous cycle’
(Holmes, 2012; Rogers, 2012)
Happiness at work
"If a doctor, lawyer, or dentist had 40 people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn't want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer, or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher's job."

- Donald D. Quinn
Stress management for teachers
(Mills, 1990)

- Your physical condition
- Your mental condition
- Your emotional condition
Stress management for teachers
(Mills, 1990)

Which are the ones you need to pay more attention to?

Adapted from: Kyriacou, 2000
“We need to become a little more teacher-centred in our priorities”
If you want to be the best teacher you possibly can be...

...then you **must** ensure you look after your professional well-being!

**FACT:** Happy teachers make for happy learners! 😊
Teacher professional wellbeing is **not** an indulgence, it is a **necessity** for good teaching

(Roffey, 2011, p. 133)
Psychologically wise teachers know that for successful language teaching...

- **Psychology** matters
- **Relationships** matter
- **Positivity** matters
- **YOU** matter! 😊

See also Angela Maiers – You matter campaign
THANK YOU