



PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AT MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

The global landscape has seen a significant shift in the last couple of decades, with English emerging as a main subject at schools in Uzbekistan. For countries like Uzbekistan, where English is increasingly becoming a key component of education, understanding the psychological aspects of teaching this language, especially at the middle school level, is crucial. This article explores the psychological considerations that educators need to navigate in order to facilitate effective English language acquisition among middle school students in Uzbekistan.

Key words: Middle school, psychological, mindset, motivation

Introduction

In Uzbekistan, usually children go to school at 7 age, and they study for eleven years at school. School stages are divided as following:

1-4th grade: Elementary school

5-9th grade: Middle school

10-11th grade: High school

Students start learning English at 1st grade, so coming to middle school they will have a base of understanding foreign language, but still being a child, they may have some psychological aspects that teachers should consider. The psychological aspects of teaching English to students in grades 5-9 are crucial for fostering effective learning environments. Understanding these aspects allows educators to tailor their approaches to meet the diverse needs of their students, enhancing motivation, reducing anxiety, and promoting engagement. The following sections outline key psychological factors that influence English language teaching at this educational level.

Literature Review and Discussion

1. Understanding the Learner's Mindset

At the middle school stage, students are transitioning from childhood to adolescence, facing numerous emotional and cognitive changes. This transition can affect their receptiveness to learning, including a foreign language like English. Teachers must be cognizant of this developmental stage, recognizing that students may experience anxiety, peer pressure, and a fluctuating sense of self-esteem, which can impact their language learning journey.

Encouraging a Growth Mindset



Fostering a growth mindset—where students view challenges as opportunities for development—can significantly influence their attitude towards learning English. By providing constructive feedback, celebrating small achievements, and emphasizing the value of effort over perfection, teachers can help students build resilience and motivation. People with growth mindsets believe that key to success is perseverance, not intrinsic ability¹. Researcher Wilang also supported the idea that in learning languages mindset can predict cognitive and affective outcomes².

2. Cultural Context and Parental Involvement

The cultural backdrop of Uzbekistan highly influences students' learning experiences. English is often associated with modernity and global citizenship, but it can also evoke feelings of resistance stemming from cultural identity preservation. Teachers must navigate this delicate balance, leveraging students' existing knowledge of their native language and culture to promote an inclusive learning environment.

Engaging Parents

The relationship between various facets of parental participation and a range of child outcomes has been the primary focus of pertinent research. From preschool through secondary education, the majority of research shows a positive correlation between parental involvement measures and children's behavioral and academic outcomes³.

Parental involvement is critical in Uzbekistan's educational landscape. Encouraging parents to participate in their children's English learning—whether through supporting homework, attending school events, or fostering a positive attitude towards the language—can reinforce students' motivation. Understanding parents' attitudes towards English is important for teachers, as it can directly influence students' perceptions and willingness to learn.

3. Motivation and Engagement Strategies

Motivation is a key factor in successful language acquisition. Students in middle school often require diverse and engaging methods to inspire a genuine interest in English. Traditional teaching methods may not suffice; thus, educators should incorporate various strategies that resonate with their psychological and developmental needs.

Teachers can stimulate students' interest in English through role-switching and feedback, which helps in recognizing individual intentions and emotional states⁴.

¹ Spatz & Goldhorn, When It's More Difficult, I Just Cram More! An Exploratory Interview Study on Students' Mindsets in Physics, *European Journal of Science and Mathematics Education* <https://www.scimath.net> Vol. 9, No. 3, 2021, 92-109

² Wilang "Mindset of high school students in English language learning", *TESOL international journal*, Vol.16, No. 2, 2021

³ Efthymia Penderi, Konstantinos Petrogiannis, & Zoe Gavriilidou, "Parental involvement and English Language Learning: Parents and students' reports", Democritus University of Thrace, Hellenic Open University, *Language Learning Strategies: theoretical issues and applied perspectives*, 2017

⁴ Wang, Jing. (2017). *Joining English Teaching Theory with Teaching Practice*. *DEStech Transactions on Social Science, Education and Human Science*, doi: 10.12783/DTSSEHS/EEMT2017/14527



Addressing emotional factors, such as anxiety and self-confidence, is essential for creating a supportive learning atmosphere⁵.

Incorporating Interactive Techniques

Utilizing games, role-playing, and project-based learning can stimulate engagement and make learning more enjoyable. These methods not only appeal to students' desire for social interaction but also create a supportive community where learners can practice without fear of judgment.

Setting Realistic Goals

Setting achievable, incremental goals can help maintain motivation. Teachers can work with students to establish personal milestones in their English learning journey, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability. Celebrating these achievements, no matter how small, can boost students' self-efficacy and encourage continued effort.

4. Addressing Language Anxiety

Language anxiety is a common phenomenon among learners, particularly in a high-stakes environment like a middle school classroom. Students may fear making mistakes or being judged by their peers when practicing English, leading to a reluctance to speak or participate. Teachers should be aware of these barriers and implement strategies to help students manage their psychological conditions, thereby improving their speaking skills⁶.

Creating a Safe Learning Environment

To mitigate anxiety, teachers should cultivate a classroom atmosphere that emphasizes safety, respect, and acceptance. Encouraging peer support and collaborative learning can help students feel more comfortable. Additionally, integrating mindfulness practices and relaxation techniques can assist students in managing anxiety, allowing them to focus better on their language learning.

5. Embracing Technology

The rise of digital tools in education can offer innovative ways to address the psychological aspects of learning English. Educational apps and online platforms can make learning more engaging and less intimidating. Technology also allows for personalized learning experiences, enabling students to progress at their own pace and according to their individual learning styles.

Fostering Autonomy through Technology

⁵ Wang, Jing. (2017). *Joining English Teaching Theory with Teaching Practice*. DEStech Transactions on Social Science, Education and Human Science, doi: 10.12783/DTSSEHS/EEMT2017/14527

⁶ Rigel Sampelolo "A study of speaking common university learner barriers in Indonesian context" *Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science* , Volume 3 Issue 3 Desember 2021



By encouraging students to utilize online resources, language games, and virtual exchanges with native speakers, educators can promote autonomy in learning. This autonomy can significantly enhance motivation and self-efficacy, providing students with a greater sense of control over their language learning process. However, in local context, it can be difficult to reach in all areas of Uzbekistan, due to some factors, including digital lack of digital literacy, low-income families or distant areas. In this case, teachers' creativity with minimal resources or recorded items will work effectively.

Conclusion

The psychological aspects of teaching English at middle schools in Uzbekistan are multifaceted and interconnected. By understanding the developmental stages of their students, fostering a positive learning environment, engaging parents, addressing language anxiety, and embracing technology, educators can enhance the effectiveness of their teaching methodologies. A holistic approach that considers the emotional and cognitive dimensions of learning will undoubtedly contribute to the successful acquisition of English, equipping Uzbek students with valuable skills for their futures in an increasingly interconnected world.

While the focus on psychological aspects is vital, it is also important to consider the potential for overemphasis on these factors, which may lead to neglecting the pedagogical and didactic elements essential for effective teaching. Balancing psychological insights with instructional strategies is key to successful English language education.

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