

Building students' self-esteem in a language class

Anna Gębka-Suska et al.

Important quotations and statements:

"Self-esteem decides about the future performance." Brian Tracy

"Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're always right." Henry Ford

"They can because they think they can." Virgil

"Self-esteem is developed in infants under 2 years of age, mainly by parents"*

"Boredom diminishes self-esteem"*

"The higher one's self-esteem the greater his or her creativity and vice versa" *(conclusions after the conference organised by The University of Economics in Poznań entitled "Innowacyjne zarządzanie w oświacie" and devoted totally to self-esteem <http://iz.edu.pl/program/>)

"The teacher is responsible for his students' self-esteem just like the doctor is responsible for his patients' health." Ania GS ☺

Think what a teacher can do to build his students' self-esteem in the following moments:

When describing the course to the prospective student:

-
-
-
- Present the course as something easy and attainable.

When administering a placement test:

-
-
-
- If possible, avoid very formal written tests.
- Use picture tests instead.
- If a written test cannot be avoided, have different tests for different levels and give the student a chance of scoring more than sixty percent.

During the placement interview:

-
-
- Do not correct! Show that you understand.
- Respond to **what** is being said and not to **how** it is said.
- Nod your head as often as possible. Maintain eye contact.
- Smile!
- Praise the student!
- Express astonishment at how good the student is after only a limited period of study.

In the first lesson:

-
-
-
- Learn the students' names.
- Congratulate them on having decided to study the language and/or on having achieved a certain level.
- Try to remember as much personal information about your students as possible. Write it down after the lesson.
- "All about Me" MindMaps are very useful.

When giving feedback:

-
-
-
- Make the feedback positive at ALL times!
- Make it very specific and individual! E.g. "Jola, your 'TH' sound is simply perfect."
- Encourage the students to think about their strong points.

During the lesson:

-
-
-
-
- Always show that you care about the students and their progress.
- Plan well! Plan activities that are neither too easy nor too difficult.
- Prepare lots of student-centred activities.
- Stop testing and start teaching!
- Don't correct too much! Let the students correct each other.
- Empower the students! Stress it to them that their success depends entirely on them.
- Tell them you don't have the perfect recipe for learning the language but it's their responsibility to search for the method that will suit them.
- Use every opportunity to prove to the students what they already CAN rather than what they can't.
- Listen carefully to EVERY student, even to the quietest one!
- Develop a wide range of signs with which you can indicate to the students that you hear them even when somebody else is talking!
- Listen to WHAT they say and let the contents matter!
- If they say something personal, try and remember it and refer to it later.
- Admit that you also make mistakes sometimes!

When setting homework:

-
-
-
- Let the students be creative.
- Let them decide what they will do.
- Encourage the students to write about themselves.
- Use students' work as the basis for further practise.

When correcting homework or tests:

-
-
-
- Throw all red pens out through the window! Use a pencil instead!
- Don't count points!
- Make use of Luke Prodromou's idea - Lessons from the learner - turn students' work into an exercise - correction is not painful then.

Believe in your students because they often don't believe in themselves.

