

Transcript for DRGC Training Video #7

Jennifer: Welcome to our eighth video in the teacher training series on developing responsible global citizens. Today, we'll focus on "learning to learn." We'll start by defining it, explore its relevance for our learners, both now and in the future, and discuss practical classroom applications. My name is Jennifer Holton, and this is my colleague, Chiara.

Chiara: I'm a language teacher, trainer, and educator based in Sicily. Today, we're here to talk about "learning to learn." So, how would you define it? As we know, society constantly evolves, and new skills are always needed. Learning to learn supports this, as learning is a lifelong process. Wherever we operate, we need skills to select information, read in-depth, find reliable sources, and apply critical thinking to distinguish what's important, true, or relevant.

Jennifer: How can we incorporate learning-to-learn strategies into our curricula? Is it something we focus on at the beginning of a course, or do we revisit it periodically?

Chiara: We encourage our learners to set personal goals at various points in the course, not only language-focused goals but also other skills. For example, if they're preparing for university or job interviews, achieving language milestones can bring them closer to those broader objectives.

Jennifer: Could you share some practical ways to help students set SMART goals?

Chiara: There are several techniques that can depend on the students' characteristics. One exercise I like involves students visualizing their future. I ask, "How do you see yourself a year from now? What will you have achieved?" After reflecting, they open their eyes and start sharing. Another activity in the handbook has students draw their current situation, potential obstacles, and future goals. This helps them think through the process, and sharing it with others further reinforces their goals.

Jennifer: Reflecting on goals is crucial. How do you help students build self-reflection skills?

Chiara: Throughout a course, students reflect on their progress. They might set study plans or identify areas they're strong in and others they need to improve. This reflection is forward-looking. Self-assessment is essential, and it's not just about correcting errors but also recognizing strengths, which builds on successes and gives students a realistic view of themselves.

Jennifer: And how does this tie in with developing a growth mindset, something we'll discuss further in unit seven?

Chiara: Definitely. Growth mindset is about understanding that learning is a journey. Encouraging self-reflection and using feedback is part of helping students see their growth. They start to understand that feedback isn't only about errors; it also highlights achievements.

Jennifer: How do we help students with note-taking and summarizing?

Chiara: It depends on the student's needs, but we use tools like visual organizers, mind maps, or flowcharts to help them record and organize information. They also decide which vocabulary and topics are relevant to focus on.

Jennifer: Can you explain visual organizers in more detail?

Chiara: Based on what information you want to retain, you can use mind maps, Venn diagrams, or KWL charts. For example, students list what they know, what they want to know, and what they've learned, giving them a clear visual of their progress. It's helpful for teachers, too, as it shows prior knowledge and highlights what students are building upon.

Jennifer: Time management also seems to be part of learning to learn. Why is it important?

Chiara: Time management helps learners focus on priorities and balance tasks. A technique like color-coding urgent and important tasks can be helpful. Another technique in the handbook, the Pomodoro Technique, helps students manage time effectively while also taking breaks.

Jennifer: How can we encourage learning beyond the classroom?

Chiara: Developing student autonomy is crucial. By guiding them toward resources outside of the classroom, such as authentic materials or online content on topics they're interested in, we help them learn independently.

Jennifer: And how does modeling effective learning fit into this?

Chiara: At the end of each learning segment, we should encourage students to reflect on what they've learned and what was helpful. Peer feedback is also beneficial as it teaches students to give constructive and kind feedback.

Jennifer: Could you share a successful example of implementing learning-to-learn strategies?

Chiara: Absolutely. In my classes, we regularly identify and discuss 21st-century skills, like organizing phrasal verbs or setting future goals. Students enjoy taking responsibility for their learning, which boosts their confidence and engagement.

Jennifer: These skills are vital, but how do they integrate with English language teaching?

Chiara: Learning-to-learn skills are embedded in language activities. As students reflect, they use functional language that's relevant for setting goals and planning, so both skill sets reinforce each other.

Jennifer: Are these strategies limited to higher-level learners?

Chiara: Not at all! At any level, recording new language learned helps retain it and builds organizational skills. For example, lower-level students benefit from noting down vocabulary or using images to reinforce concepts.

Jennifer: What if a student resists these strategies, saying, "That's not how I learn"?

Chiara: Students have different learning preferences, but sometimes it's about encouraging them to try new techniques. For example, using post-it notes or images can help students integrate new ideas and make learning more memorable.

Jennifer: What advice would you give to novice teachers working on developing responsible global citizens?

Chiara: Start small and build gradually. Teaching shouldn't happen in isolation; sharing ideas and strategies with colleagues in the staffroom enriches everyone's approach. Teachers should be learning to learn, too.

Jennifer: Thank you for joining us in this video on Learning to Learn. We hope you now have a clearer understanding of these concepts and can bring some of these strategies into your classrooms. Chiara has shared practical insights into learning-to-learn and why it's essential for our learners' futures.