

Open Lecture: St.Paul's Institute of English Language Education, Rikkyo University

Title: Exploring the Links Between Language Teacher Motivation, Wellbeing, and Professional Development in Times of Change



Dr. Sarah Mercer
Professor, University of Graz, Austria

Date/time: Friday, 24th October, 2025 5:00-6:40pm

Online (Zoom)

Link to be sent after registration

Session conducted in English

Abstract

In an era of instability and rapid change, language teachers are facing an ever-increasing number of challenges including technological, social, and political dilemmas. The question is how to stay abreast of these developments, maintain confidence in one's ability to do one's job effectively, and protect and nurture one's wellbeing. It seems an impossible challenge. In this talk, we will unpack three key, interrelated notions: Motivation, wellbeing, and professional development. We will take a critical view of each construct, explore what we know about each in respect to language teachers, and reflect on how we can and indeed must work on these in both research and practice. Taking an ecological perspective, we focus on examining how sustainable, meaningful professional development opportunities can strengthen and boost language teacher motivation through enhanced self-efficacy and wellbeing. I will illustrate, drawing on research conducted by the Graz University Team, how professional development can serve as a buffer against burnout, highlighting the interplay of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social structural elements. I will argue that the whole education system would benefit moving forward from becoming more teacher-centred in its design and conceptualization. The talk concludes with practical considerations for teachers, leadership, and policy makers on how to create a work environment that proactively nurtures staff wellbeing and how to design professional development that boosts not breaks teacher confidence and motivation.

Speaker Bio

Sarah Mercer is Professor of Foreign Language Teaching at the University of Graz, Austria, where she is Head of ELT methodology. Her research interests include all aspects of the psychology surrounding the foreign language learning experience. She is the author, co-author and co-editor of several books in this area. She has served as Principal Investigator on several funded research projects, has worked on the editorial board of various journals, was co-editor of *System* for several years, is co-editor of Multilingual Matters' *Psychology of Language Learning and Teaching* book series, is currently president of IAPLL, and is ambassador for IATEFL.

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Admission: Free

Registration deadline: Tuesday, 21st of October, 2025

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