

**DIELE 2024**

# **Workplace Orientations of Language Teachers with ADHD**

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# Overview

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Recommendations

# **ADHD is...**

**“ ... a problem with the ability to organize behavior over time to prepare for the future.**

**(Barkley & Benton, 2022, p.56)**

**Verbal/ Non-verbal  
working memory**

**Emotion regulation**

**Self-motivation**

**Planning/  
Problem solving**

1. poor inhibition
2. poor self-regulation
3. problems with executive function

**(Barkley & Benton,  
2022)**



# Research questions

1. How do language teachers with ADHD describe their relationship to their work?
2. What kind of supports and obstacles do language teachers with ADHD experience in the workplace?
3. How can teachers with ADHD be better supported in the workplace?

# Interviewees

| <b>Pseudonym</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Nationality</b> | <b>Diagnosis</b> |
|------------------|---------------|------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Christie         | F             | 50s        | North America      | Self             |
| Wendy            | F             | 30s        | North America      | Medical          |
| Barbara          | F             | 50s        | Australasia        | Self             |
| Olivia           | F             | 40s        | North America      | Self             |
| Peter            | M             | 30s        | Australasia        | Medical          |
| Kimberly         | F             | 30s        | Southeast Asia     | Self             |
| Kenneth          | M             | 40s        | North America      | Self             |
| Winona           | F             | 40s        | North America      | Medical          |
| Tara             | F             | 20s        | North America      | Self             |

# Findings

# RQ1: Orientation to work +

- Derive satisfaction in helping students succeed
- Focus on student needs
- See themselves in students
- Have a strong desire to improve, be thorough
- Last minute planning is common
- Have a creative "ADHD spark"

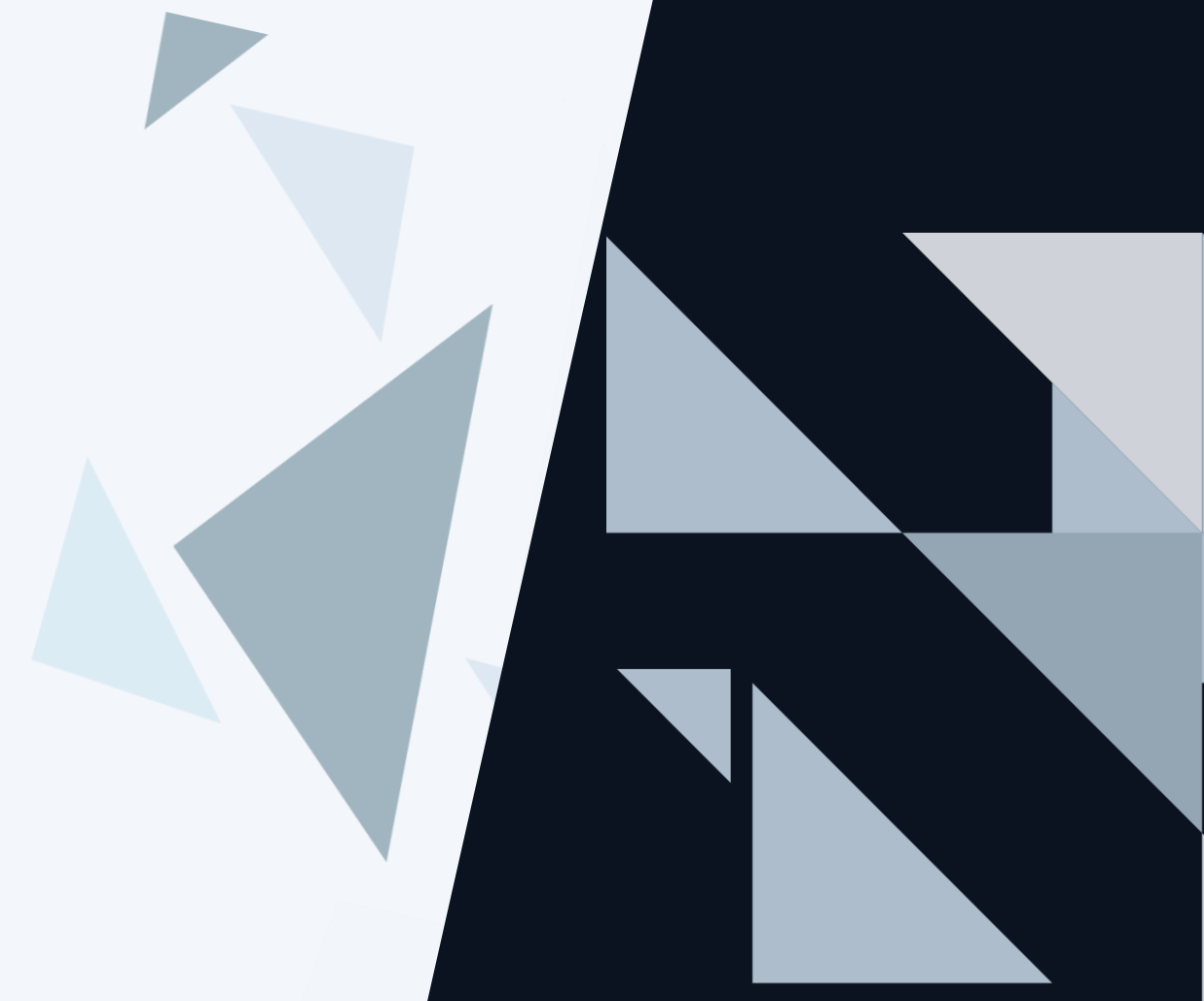


# ” Always improving

I knew that if I could do that job I could not only kind of help **mitigate, fix those own factors** within myself but then I could also **learn** how those problems, uh, arose and how to **deal with them.** (Kenneth)

# RQ1: Orientation to work —

- Feel a disconnect from other faculty
- May have trouble with interpersonal relationships
- External stimuli is disruptive
- Have trouble completing 'boring' tasks
- Have difficulties managing workload




# ” It never ends

Definitely. 1000%. Everything, down to the fonts to the color of the PowerPoint to the content, I change every semester. I relook at all my stuff, even though I'm teaching the same courses... I'm still just trying to make everything better, like even with old courses. New classes, **oh my gosh the planning doesn't ever end.** (Kimberly)

# RQ2: Existing supports

- 'Hands off' supervisors: Freedom + autonomy
- Clear overall long-term structure + purpose
- Schedule 'buffers' during work period

- Close-knit teacher community
  - Two-way clear communication with supervisors
  - Working tech in classrooms
  - Clean spaces
- 

# ” My own way

..we have guidelines...these are our goals but achieve them how you like. So that's nice. I can do what I want .. I couldn't imagine being at a school where you're told what to do and how to do it. Oh my God, that would be a nightmare for me. I like to do things my way. (Olivia)

# ” Free to be me

I have **so much freedom** in how I [teach], that I'm not constrained, **I don't feel like I'm fighting my own brain** when I'm in the class. (Wendy)



# RQ2: Complications

- Lack of clarity regarding institutional norms
- Busy staff rooms
- No freedom
- No collegial atmosphere, ableism
- Subpar equipment, multi-step requirements for use
- Illogical organization



# ” Unaware of norms

It's sometimes challenging to know what expectations are and I personally have found that **not having other people around doing similar duties to kind of keep on pace with makes it hard to know like when I'm hyperfixating on something that I need to break away from.** (Tara)

# ” Ableism

I have a feeling [ADHD] would be used against me, and then there's the whole attitude where it's your responsibility to be healthy and normal, where people get crap for taking sick days... so I don't tell anybody that I have ADHD unless I 100% trust them and I know they're not gonna use it against me in some way. (Winona)

# ” Disrupting the wa

I probably have made things unpleasant for Japanese people on committees. I think there's **some people who don't want to work with me because I'm more outspoken than I should be.**

**(Christie)**

**But the harshest  
critic is themselves**

# ” A bad day

...when I drop the ball in a major way. I mean I just forget to check the paper that I said I would check, or I forget to do something for a student that I said I would do. Um, **I still have a really hard time forgiving myself for that, even when it's not a big thing. (Olivia)**

# ” Stigma

The cultural attitudes are very forgiving towards students but they're not forgiving towards adults and everybody just sort of expects that ...it disappears when you're an adult ...You learn how to cope with it and you do the best you can to get around it but like like you're trying to "hammer the nail... but I'm not a nail, I'm a screw! You can hit me all you want with the hammer. It ain't going to go down". (Tara)

# RQ3: What supervisors can do

1.

Clarify institutional structure & expectations

2.

Promote open communication

3.

Give performance feedback

4.

Use flexible guidelines

5.

Normalize being different



# Reference

Barkley, R. A. & Benton, C. (2022). Taking charge of adult ADHD: Proven strategies to succeed at work, at home, and in relationships. The Guilford Press.



**Thanks for coming!**

# Workplace Orientations of Language Teachers with ADHD

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