The role of teacher's health culture in the formation of students' hardiness

E.A. Yugova^{1*}, and *M.A. Yugova*²

¹ Ural State Pedagogical University, Ekaterinburg, Russia

² Ural State Law University, Ekaterinburg, Russia

Abstract. The relevance of the researched problem is determined by the necessity to improve the teacher's culture of health and wellbeing affected by the growing functional loads leading to the stressful situations that influence the human health status and life expectancy. The article is aimed at proving the necessity to form hardiness of the students, particularly, through the teaching/learning process. The situation is conditioned by low stress resistance of university students and consequently by their decreased self-preservation and low life expectancy. The research method is students' self-report based on the S. Cohen and G. Williamson Perceived Stress Scale questionnaire (stress resistance self-evaluation) that allows to prove the necessity to form hardiness exactly in the age group under consideration [1]. The didactic methods are the classroom discussion and the role-play. The article discloses and corroborates the pedagogical approaches to the human hardiness formation that are used during the vocational education at the university level and are necessary to overcome life difficulties evolved during the personal ontogenesis. The article can be of practical value to educators, psychologists, psycho-physiologists, and other professionals dealing with support and assistance to those students who experience problems in difficult situations.

1 A problem statement

The lifestyle of modern students is characterized by a high level of community commitment. They have to be disciplined and organized, to memorize much information for a short period of time, to organize the balanced day schedule, to communicate with a great number of people, to make right decisions in various situations. All these require great endurance, emotional tension and inner tenacity. Most students are directly involved in working life not in collective farms or youth construction projects as it was in the Soviet times but in the services sector and in order to survive at the time of economic crisis they work more often in evening and night shifts, though some of them work within their speciality [2]. Such situation negatively influences both the vocational training of students and their health status. There are research data that during the examination period the

*Corresponding author: ipcs-propfed@yandex.ru

students' heart rate persistently increases to 80-92 beats per minute against 76-80 beats per minute at the period of ordinary academic studies [3].

At the same time, the preadult age is the period of the rapid development and very fast changes in personality. It is the stage when young people are becoming professionals. During their studies at a higher educational institution students inevitably experience the difficulties connected with a multitude of different reasons concerning their training process and their personal factors.

This statement is especially relevant to young people who study at higher educational institutions as the health standard of young men and women is determined not only by high intellectual load during the university studies but in the first instance by neglectful attitude to the healthy life style. As their main function, students distinguish acquiring knowledge for the future professional activities. Obtaining a degree is an important stage in their personality development as students enrich their worldview and scientific outlook and upgrade their intelligence. We focus the attention on the fact that students lead a very active way of life. Students spend most time on their studying at a higher school, preparing their homework assignments; the rest of their time is spent on their communication with their friends and family, and other personal matters. In this regard, another reason of students' stress can be irregular alimentation and insufficient sleep [4].

For many students, the studentship is not only the period of professional self-determination but at the same time the period of determining their own position in their private life as the student age is the age of high mating activity. Many of those who get married after obtaining a university degree get acquainted with their potential spouses while studying at a higher school. Therefore, students often have conflicts between their studies and their private life. Life experience testifies that only few young men and women are able to avoid the situation when personal problems are sidelined by the studies, which is also a cause for young men and women's stress [5]. The contradiction between personal and professional spheres is one of the main contradictions in the students' way of life. Both personal and professional spheres are necessary for proper personality development. One cannot sacrifice the former to the latter and vice versa. The absence of time and energy tells negatively on the health status of young people. The stress caused by the above-mentioned reasons can lead to serious negative consequences and influence negatively the mental health of students, and reduce the hardiness of the human body. Hans Selye gave the name to this type of stress - distress [6].

In order to self-actualize future specialists have to be ready for constant self-modification, to have inner personal responsibility for their own health, to be able to live in harmony with themselves, to know the self-healing techniques, to be able to overcome undesirable states of health, to be able to restore their own performance in the working place, to remove consequences of occupational fatigue, to prevent possible personality malformations in their professional activities, to eliminate self-destructive behavior strategies from their lives. To solve all the above-mentioned problems it is necessary to form the hardiness of the younger generation.

Hardiness describes the measure of the individual's ability to endure a stressful situation, while maintaining the internal balance and without compromising the success of the activities [7]. Salvatore Maddi and his colleagues noticed that hardy commitments must be consistent with the real situation, as in the case of optimistic beliefs [8, 9, 10].

The hardiness of an individual gives an opportunity to recognize stress, rather than to deny it. With the help of hardiness a young person is able to face up a stressful situation, and even benefit from it. Given the fact that we are not always able to influence the course of events, in a number of critical cases the hardiness gives a positive effect on personal self-development. The aforesaid makes it possible to consider hardiness as a resource of resistance to stress.

The hardiness components are formed in childhood, partly in the adolescence, but the process of their formation has to be continued at the youth age, too. This formation depends on the competently built process of training at the educational institutions, including higher schools. In particular, to develop the stress resistance it is extremely important to support students' initiatives and to approve of their decision-making in case of complex tasks. To develop risk - taking skills it is important to have wealth of impressions, the variability and heterogeneity of the environment.

1.1 The objective of the work

Research methods.

In the course of the research, the following methods were used: theoretical (theoretical analysis and specification); diagnostic (students' self-report (stress resistance self-evaluation) based on the S. Cohen Perceived Stress Scale questionnaire [1]; methods of graphic representation of the results.

Experimental research base.

Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University and Ural State Law University were an experimental research base. 128 respondents (average age of 17 ± 1.5 years) participated in stress resistance self-evaluation procedure based on S. Cohen Perceived Stress Scale questionnaire.

Stages of research.

The study of the problem was conducted in three stages.

The first stage involved analysis of the Russian and foreign literature on the investigated problem.

The second stage was devoted to determining the basis for the experiment; conducting the students' self-reports based on the S. Cohen Perceived Stress Scale questionnaire, and processing the results. It was also devoted to elaborating the methodological support and study aids on students' hardiness formation in the context of foreign language teaching at a non-linguistic higher school, namely, the curriculum content, the most effective means and methods of teaching were determined.

At the third stage, drawing conclusions was performed.

2 Materials and the results of the research

Among the factors that determine the high hardiness of the human body, there is the readiness to stress. That is why the self-evaluation of students' stress can be considered as an indicator that reflects the *state of hardiness* and enables them to predict its manifestation in difficult situations.

In addition to the stress factors, psychological predictors of human hardiness formation are the levels of reactive (situational) anxiety and personal anxiety, the adaptive capacity of the cardiovascular system. But the state of stress is the most marked indicator that students have in this age group [11].

The test results were processed by calculating the amount of points respondents have on all the questions of the test. Stress resistance was determined by the table below based on the number of points that respondents have and their age (Table 1).

Hence, taking into account the age of the respondents, the following results of stress resistance self-evaluation were obtained (Table 2).

Table 1. Stress resistance evaluation.

Stress resistance evaluation	Age			
	18-29	30-44	45-54	55-64
Excellent	0,5	2,0	1,8	1,3
Good	6,8	6,0	5,7	5,2
Satisfactory	14,2	13,0	12,6	11,9
Bad	24,2	2,3	22,6	21,9
Very bad	34,2	33,0	23,3	31,8

Table 2. Stress resistance self-evaluation.

Stress resistance evaluation	Number of students (persons)	Number of students, %
Excellent	22	17
Good	23	18
Satisfactory	37	30
Bad	26	20
Very bad	20	15

Thus, the results show that more than half of the students consider their level of stress resistance as less than satisfactory. In particular, 30% of respondents have satisfactory stress resistance, 20% of respondents — bad and 15% — very bad. And only 35% of students participating in the survey marked their good and excellent resistance to stress (Figure 1).

Fig. 1. Indicators of students ‘stress resistance self-evaluation.

Hardiness is less the physical endurance of a human being than a moral category determining the way of human interaction with the world. Educational environment is a multi-level system of relations and its members are expected to make a lot of efforts to process and experience a large amount of diverse information [12]. This activity leads to the development of distress, which is confirmed by the results of our study (Figure 1). Accordingly, we can affirm with great probability that the young people’s hardiness formation in the represented age group is a necessary element for the health preservation and longevity. And, in its turn, it is a psychological and pedagogical condition that ensure the effectiveness of the educational environment.

Being the system of beliefs about themselves and the world that promotes persons’ successful coping with stress and different situations, it is hardiness that is one of the basic

psychological characteristics. Modern higher school is designed not only to broaden students' horizons by forming a systematic view of the world, but also to help learn how to solve specific life problems, applying the acquired knowledge and skills. The success of this process depends on the teachers, as well as the educational environment where the learning process takes place. Since the learning process involves not only the acquisition of new knowledge, but also the formation of students' own worldview and the assimilation of moral norms, it seems important to address the problem of the students' hardiness formation exactly in the educational environment of higher school.

Considering the problem in the aspect of students' hardiness, it should be noted that there is a lack of clear integral model of young people's own way of life, as well as the absence of formed meaningful auto regulation and practical skills at the stage of their entry into life. Consequently, the majority of young people are socially unadjusted in this vital period of their lives. The author believes that one of the mechanisms to improve adaptation in the social environment is the individual hardiness, and points out that in order to prepare young people for the upcoming stressful situations it is necessary to develop hardiness in process of training at a higher school. The same author examined the interrelation between hardiness and readiness for professional self-determination. This brings us to the conclusion that if a person has such a personality characteristic as hardiness, he/she is more ready for professional self-determination [13].

Taking into account that hardiness is a systemic psychological attribute formed in the process of personal and professional genesis, hardiness formation in professional activity is also considered in the aspect of the phenomenology of hardiness in relation to the focus of the personality. There are personality research studies of health care providers showing that the most important components of their hardiness are their developed ability of confident professional and personal behavior, and belief in controlled life. In the personal genesis the highest level of hardiness is reached in the period of life and professional maturity (when the professional work experience is between 11 and 15 years) [14]. So it means that considerable time period has passed before hardiness in the professional activity is formed after university graduation.

While analyzing the adaptive capacity and hardiness of young people, the researchers mention their connection with the selected life script. It is interesting to note that two groups of respondents were chosen according to their preferred life script. The first group consisted of young people having the winning life scripts, the second group - having losing ones. Respondents with a winning life script showed a higher level of hardiness than respondents with a losing life script. They have higher levels of engagement, control, risk taking, so it means they are more resistant to stress, are motivated to self-actualization, manage the situation more effectively, manifest their leadership qualities. Students with winning life scripts have higher levels of control and risk acceptance and they more actively look for ways to achieve the objectives and ways out of difficult situations; they are more open to new experience and perceive difficulties as a test for themselves. These differences are probably connected with the fact that since childhood students with winning life scripts have accustomed to set goals and achieve them, they are more confident in themselves and their success. The role of adults (parents and teachers) is important, because they initially support the initiative and encourage the child and his/her interests that underpins his/her success. Thus, we can assume that tuning in to the positive result of the actions manifests hardiness and allows to take responsibility for the actions and to accept the situation as a kind of test, which can lead to new experience and knowledge. On the other hand, losers (those who have losing life scripts) learned in their childhood that their destiny is to fail in everything, so they manifest their hardiness to less extent, hold more passive positions, and prefer not to take responsibility for the outcome of events [15].

It should be noted that the available studies of the problem under consideration do not emphasize the possibility and necessity of hardiness formation in the learning process at the university where the process of becoming a professional takes place and the basics of professional activity are taught.

In order to carry out this idea the request for teachers possessing high culture of health and wellbeing is of particular relevance. The competences of the teachers in this case include educating students about the appropriation of the values of a healthy lifestyle as personally significant values. They exist in the form of knowledge, behavioral norms, and everyday life activities. The health culture of a teacher is getting great importance especially in the context of the professional training of a future specialist. One of its important aspects is the formation of hardiness as a resource of resistance to stress and the preservation of personal value through pedagogical communication leading to the transformation of stressful life events into new opportunities. Hence, teachers participating in this communication should possess health-creating need-motivation sphere that allows them to help students form lasting skills, positive character traits, habits that ensure their hardiness.

However, in terms of hardiness formation the primary task is to teach the basics of healthy lifestyles and ideas of hardiness formation to those who teach disciplines of humanities, social and economic sciences, because it is impossible to develop something that you have no idea about.

3 Conclusions

Hardiness requires deep understanding of life processes; this is not possible without solid knowledge base. Taking into account that the essence of hardiness beliefs is the system of views on the world, human beings, and relations of human beings and the world, it is the educational environment (where the educational process takes place, in particular methodological support of specific disciplines) which is one of the key components needed for successful hardiness formation.

Hardiness helps to strengthen the will of man. The idea that hardiness is a resource of resistance to stress seems to be profound enough, therefore hardiness formation is a complicated pedagogical problem that can be solved at the university level only by an integrated approach. It should be noted that as health culture is an integral part of universal human culture, the disciplines of humanities, social and economic sciences may become a means of solving this problem [16, 17, 18, 19, 20].

The most effective way to improve the teacher's culture of health and wellbeing is to make use of advanced training courses containing specially selected information in the studied area. At the moment, the most demanded fields are: rational organization of labor (educational) activities; properly organized work and rest regime; compliance with the rules personal and public hygiene.

The culture of physical development, physical and functional fitness is of great importance; it is critical to apply recommendations for the restoration and relaxation of the body using traditional and non-traditional methods of healing.

In the region with a high status of environmental pollution, it is significant to take into account ecological relationships that directly affect human health, disease prevention, and culture of unlocking the genetic potential of the organism.

A good example of manifesting the teachers' culture of health and wellbeing we can find in the course of teaching English (or any other foreign language) at the University. At a Russian higher school the process of "entering the profession" begins at the first year of studies when future professionals learn the disciplines of humanities, social and economic sciences, which are professionally-oriented, and the following two academic subjects (in

accordance with the Federal State Educational Standards): "Foreign Language" and "Foreign Language in the sphere of professional activity" also belong to the above-mentioned group. Foreign Language as an academic subject has a strong educational potential that can contribute to creating the pedagogical conditions that promote hardiness formation as a resource of resistance to stress and preservation of personality values through transforming life events into the new opportunities. While determining the content of curriculum in terms of hardiness formation, we highlight those spheres of communication, which can "work" for the designated purpose, we select the appropriate language material, develop the system of exercises that form not only the foreign language communicative competence, but also lead to our goal: hardiness formation. The most effective methods to reach our goal, in our opinion, are class discussions and role-plays. They are aimed at stimulating students' interest and enhancing students' personal involvement in the learning process. These methods correlate with the real needs and at the same time solve specific methodic problems related to development of speech, cognitive and creative abilities of students in foreign language teaching. Class discussions and role-playing at foreign language lessons are conducted in accordance with the general rules of the discussion, but the specifics of the academic subject has to be taken into consideration.

Model Working Program on Teaching Foreign Languages for non-linguistic universities identifies several spheres of communication that can be considered as the most favorable for our needs to meet. They are referred to the sphere of every day communication, which covers a number of topics, e.g. "Family traditions and lifestyle patterns," "Biography," "Free time on weekdays and holidays"; the social and cultural sphere of communication which considers, in particular, such topics as "Lifestyle of modern people in Russia and abroad", "Health and healthy lifestyle"; professional communication sphere that includes the topic "Employment". The former two spheres of communication and their topics can be "fertile ground" for classroom discussions on the following points: biographies of well-known successful lawyers who have winning life scripts; principles of healthy lifestyles; principles of time-management; family values; the allocation of household responsibilities; positive perception of new social roles, e.g. when you create your family; sports and their importance. The topic "Employment" can be identified in the sphere of professional communication. As revision of the topic materials, we can offer role-playing, where the plot will be, for example, to play over stressful situations in the workplace and ways of handling these difficult situations.

The disciplines of humanities may become a means of solving the problem of hardiness formation. The great challenge for a university teacher is to activate the educational potential of the academic discipline not only for the transition of a certain amount of knowledge and development of skills and abilities, but for the personal development and education of the prospective specialists. In the context of foreign language teaching, we suggest: 1) by means of roleplaying: restoring stressful situations in quasi-professional activity and playing over possible ways of handling these situations; 2) by means of classroom discussion: learning about and discussing the issues connected with hardiness formation; summing up the discussion – reflecting and reviewing the problematic issues in order to formulate and reconsider the attitude to the discussed life situations.

All the above-mentioned leads to the active teachers' participation in implementing health-preserving pedagogical technologies, the development of cooperation relations with students, and the increasing possibility to form the hardiness of students.

This article contributes to the development of scientific knowledge about the nature of the adaptation resources of the individual and the hardiness formation of university students.

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