
ADULT LEARNERS – DESCRIPTION.

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with a complicated matter of teaching English language to adults. Teaching is highly challenging, intellectually demanding and emotionally rewarding. A teacher has in his hands welfare of his students and it is his responsibility to instill knowledge into them. Adult learners have characteristics that distinguish them from “traditional” school or college learners. They are considered to be very demanding students because they already have experiences on the educational and working field so the organized learning plan seems to be essential for them. Teachers choose suitable methods of teaching with deliberation taking into account adults’ styles of learning because the right choice makes the teaching and learning process more effective.

Keywords: teaching English language; students; learning process more effective

It is known that there are major differences between children and adults. They think, speak and behave differently. That is why the teachers’ attitude towards adults is different and they themselves, are also treated differently. Usually, adults are defined as learners who are characterized by a complete intellectual and social maturity. These are the students who are aged 19 or over.

According to Harmer (1998), the biggest difference between adults and younger learners is that they come to the class with **great learning experience**. Usually, they have gone through many years of education and then may have studied at a higher level. Because of long history of good and bad learning experience adults have formed strong opinions about how process of learning and teaching should be carried out. Their previous schooling experience (their achievements) may also cause assumptions that they are going to fail or achieve success. “Adults are frequently more nervous of learning than younger pupils are. The potential for using face becomes greater the older you get .” (Harmer, 1998: 11). Harmer states that older students who are coming back to the classroom after long absence often have high level of anxiety about the learning process.

“Adults can be disruptive and exhausting too. They may do it not in same way as younger learners, but teachers of this age group will have experiences of students who spend the lesson talking to their neighbors when the teacher is trying to focus their attention or who *World Scientific News 8 (2015) 118-131* disagree vocally with much of what the teacher is saying. They arrive in class late and fail to do any homework.” (Harmer, 1998: 11). As Komorowska (2000) writes, current communication plays an important role while teaching adults. This usually results from their situation at work and future plans. For example, if adults need language knowledge for tourism, they may wish lessons were focused only on the efficiencies of the everyday language. If they need knowledge to pursue the professional correspondence they may want to focus on the efficiencies of reading and writing. Their wishes are taken into account while planning a language course.

Teaching adults usually does not cause as many problems as teaching in the lower age groups. This is because adults generally are not forced to learn the language so they have a **strong motivation to learn**. This greatly facilitates the work of the teacher. Although the motivation of adults to learning is high, they rarely spend the right amount of effort on learning. This is because they **lack time to learn** on their own. Adults are people who work professionally and a part of that they have family and social responsibilities. Therefore, it is hard to expect from them individual learning at home and doing homework.

An **irregular attendance** on classes is also a clear difficulty. It is caused by work career, family and organizational problems that are inevitable in the life of adults. We also keep in mind that adults who often work in the important positions in the companies and have to fulfil responsibilities can hardly bear the transition to the role of student who is corrected and reprimanded by the teacher. Those people are **afraid of ridicule and criticism from the other adults** as well.

“We are all products of our environment, our genes and our experiences; so are your students. Their ages, tastes, politics, attitudes, knowledge, experience, aptitude, ability and intelligence (and the list could go on) are all different. They may well be at very different stages in their lives. They will all have different needs and make different demands on you.” (Corder, 2002: 10).

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