

УДК 374.81:159.92

**BASIC STRATEGIES OF TEACHING ADULTS FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
IN TERMS OF ANDRAGOGY****Honcharova-Ilina T.**

*The article proposes basic strategies of teaching adults foreign languages in terms of andragogy. Fundamental assumptions and principles of andragogy are revealed. The article describes main psychological peculiarities of adult learners and emphasizes the problem of motivation support in the process of learning foreign languages by adults, underlining of the importance of continuing education.*

*Key words: adragogy, adult learners, motivation, continuing education.*

*У статті пропонуються базові стратегії навчання дорослих іноземним мовам у світлі андрагогіки. Розглянуто фундаментальні передумови та принципи андрагогіки. У статті описуються головні психологічні особливості дорослих учнів та робиться акцент на проблемі підтримки мотивації в процесі вивчення іноземних мов дорослими, підкреслюється важливість безперервної освіти.*

*Ключові слова: андрагогіка, дорослі учні, мотивація, безперервна освіта.*

*В статье предлагаются базовые стратегии обучения взрослых иностранным языкам в свете андрагогики. Рассмотрены фундаментальные предпосылки и принципы андрагогики. В статье описываются основные психологические особенности взрослых обучающихся и делается акцент на проблеме поддержания мотивации в процессе изучения иностранных языков взрослыми обучающимися, подчеркивается важность непрерывного образования.*

*Ключевые слова: андрагогика, взрослые ученики, мотивация, непрерывное образование.*

**Problem statement.** The 1997 Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, the highly commended outcome document of the 5th International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), defined adult education as the "entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society". Adult education takes different forms. It is provided in different places and set-ups (community learning centers, folk high schools, on-the-job, evening classes, etc.), for different purposes and at different levels from primary to post-doctoral (adult basic education, continuing education, higher education, etc). The term "adult education" has in recent years often been accompanied by "adult learning", placing more emphasis on demand than on the process of provision [10].

The problem of adult learning is crucial for our country as in Ukraine nowadays there is a great demand for highly qualified specialists of different areas and levels, the development of the society requires professionals of new type – flexible, capable of continuous self-development, mobile, and of course, speaking foreign languages. Unfortunately, the amount of adults speaking English in Ukraine is dramatically low. According to EF EPI, the world's largest ranking of countries by English skills, Ukraine occupies the 24<sup>th</sup> place out of 26 European countries by English proficiency [4]. This greatly decreases the competitiveness of our specialists in the world labor market. Thus there exist a strong need in creating new forms of teaching adults foreign languages and developing modern methods to make adult learning efficient and optimized.

**The aim of the article** is the analysis of the basic principles of andragogy and their application to teaching adults foreign languages emphasizing the problem of motivation support.

**Analysis of researches and publications.** The concept of adult learning has always been closely connected with the term "andragogy". The notion of andragogy has been around for nearly two centuries. It became particularly popular in North America and Britain as a way of describing adult learning through the work of Malcolm Knowles. In

contrast with traditional pedagogy in which the teacher transmits knowledge to receptive but passive children, andragogy, or the "art and science of helping adults learn" [6, p. 22], offers an appropriate and viable alternative. Malcolm Knowles, andragogy's most famous proponent, argued that adults were self-directed, problem-solving learners whose life experience constituted a significant learning resource. Thus, instead of the traditional hierarchical relationship between the teacher and pupil, the adult learner participates fully in his or her education, influencing the curriculum and determining learning objectives.

Andragogy is perhaps most clearly understood, as Knowles has suggested, in contrast with pedagogy, a distinction that highlights the stark difference between a teacher-dominated form of education, long regarded as appropriate for children's learning, and a learner-centered one, now viewed as particularly relevant for non-traditional adult learners.

During the first half of the 20th century, European wars and other disruptions prevented large numbers of students in Eastern Europe from completing even a primary education. In peacetime, recovering industries were met with a large but uneducated labor supply. Demand grew for adult education – a new concept – and new teaching methods. Andragogy became an important field of both research and practice [5, p. 32].

The history of this coined term as it moved from Eastern Europe to the United States is instructive. If pedagogy is the art and science of teaching children (from the Greek *paid*, meaning "child," and *agogos* meaning "leader of"), andragogy was intended as a parallel term with its root of the Greek *aner* (from the stem *andra*) meaning "man, not boy." In his writing about the workers' movement, the German educator Alexander Kapp coined the term "*Andragogik*" in 1833 to clarify Plato's educational approach. It reappeared in 1921 when German social scientist Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy made use of the term to call attention to the need for special methods and teachers to be used with the blue collar workers. Then, Eduard Lindeman, a colleague of James Dewey who shared his commitment to progressive education, first introduced the term into English (1927), emphasizing the informal, experiential, and lifelong nature of the andragogical orientation. Lindeman had been studying the German Folk High School, a form of which continues today in Norway: it is a residential educational environment for adult learners whose instruction is a general civic education with no standard curriculum but a wide, free range of courses appropriate for adults [11, p. 57].

Thus, Knowles, whose name dominates the field of andragogy in American education, is indebted to an Eastern European ancestry in its attention in the mid-twentieth century to the learning of the adult worker which, in turn, calls for an action-oriented, non-traditional education. His pragmatic, goal-oriented approach, so attractive to practitioners, may have in part accounted for his widespread success in promoting this field throughout the world, but may also have finally put him at odds with the academy, which still today questions whether his theory of andragogy is empirically valid. Nonetheless, Knowles' influence remains profound, both in practice and in the academy [11].

When andragogy was effectively introduced by Malcolm Knowles to the American educational scene in 1968, it was welcomed as an appropriate counterpoint and necessary relief to the presumptions of pedagogy; moreover, it proved immediately successful. Previously, the focus on the child's learning was so dominant that few psychologists had considered that adults might be able to learn [9, p. 32]. The possibility that they might learn well but differently from children rested upon the then surprising notion that adults too continued to develop psychologically, intellectually, and emotionally in keeping with their age. This differentiation between adult learners and younger learners is crucial to andragogy, with its attention on the adult as a whole person with specific developmental needs.

Thus, in contrast to the passive child who is receptive to the teacher's transmission of knowledge, the adult learner was presumed to be self-directed and eager to initiate inquiry into knowledge that was particularly meaningful to him or her. In place of a one-directional communication from teacher to pupil, the andragogical model involved participatory learning with the adult assuming increasing responsibility [12].

**Presentation of basic material.** A distinctive set of assumptions about mature learners that can be regarded as basic andragogic principles can be formulated:

- Their self-concept moves from dependency to independency or self-directedness. Although pedagogy may have made learners dependent, the adult educator (or andragogue) can help to move adults to self-directed learning in which they assume primary responsibility for their learning and its direction.

- They accumulate "a growing reservoir of experiences" that can be used as a basis on which to build learning. The adult's life experience becomes an invaluable learning resource, as valid a mine of riches as an academic library.

- Their readiness to learn becomes increasingly associated with the "developmental tasks of social roles." In other words, adults are not as motivated as children to learn due to external academic pressure; rather, they learn best in response to their own sense of what they need to know in order to grow.

- Their time and curricular perspectives change from postponed to immediate application of knowledge and from subject-centeredness to problem-centeredness.

- Their motivation to learn becomes internal [7].

The first two assumptions, which recognize that an adult is an independent individual with a fully formed, unique personality, are drawn from humanistic psychology, while the second two assumptions, which attend to an adult's readiness to learn, rely on a psychosocial development perspective [2, p. 4]. The final assumption regarding internal motivation was added later.

Understanding Knowles' assumptions in conjunction with his "technology" gives a clear sense of the core of his theory of andragogy.

As it is clear from the above mentioned principles, mature learners have internal motivation. This form of motivation is the most difficult to maintain. Very frequently it happens so that adults lose their motivation because of various reasons. Among them we can emphasize the following: lack of free time, lack of self-confidence, misunderstanding by close relatives and friends, and the absence of obvious progress at the early stages of learning. In our experience we apply some basic strategies to maintain strong motivation of adult learners.

1. **Creating useful and relevant learning experiences based on the age group and interests of the learners.** This strategy emphasizes on the practical knowledge. It is important to design a course that provides immediate relevancy. Learning materials must be easily put into practice. Adult learners appreciate more practical knowledge, rather than extraneous facts and theories.

2. **Facilitating exploration.** Even though children are famous for their exploratory nature and curiosity, adult learners, too, sometimes like to take the opportunity to construct knowledge in a way that is meaningful to them. For this reason, it is necessary to have all sorts of materials, references, infographics, short videos, lectures, podcasts and free resources available.

3. **Building community and integrating social media.** Keep in mind that social media websites are a powerful tool for collaboration, commenting and sharing. You can facilitate group discussions and communities.

4. **Personal approach.** A personality of a teacher is very important for adult learners. It is necessary to involve your personal experience, real-life stories, make yourself open and available for communication. For a teacher it is necessary to be emotional, inspiring, making each piece of material exciting and fascinating.

5. **Using games and challenges.** Not only children like to play. Our experience shows that different problem solving exercises, case studies, games, quizzes, brain teasers, creative tasks are extremely useful to maintain motivation and stimulate mental processes.

6. **Using humor.** Humor would work great even with the most demotivated learners. Humor helps to create inviting atmosphere and neutralize internal inhibitions.

7. **Dividing information into small comprehensible pieces. This strategy** is essential, as it helps people remember and assimilate information. Small bits of information are easier to process. It must be taken into account as adult learners are characterized by slower processes of memorizing, analysis and synthesis in comparison with younger learners.

8. **Accommodating individual interests and career goals.** It is essential to empower learners to work on these goals and individualize the training to suit their needs.

9. **Getting examples of their workplace.** Your learners may not always remember to associate what is learned with its application at the workplace. Sometimes they might need reminders and a clue to help them make that connection.

10. **Being respectful to learners.**

11. **Asking for feedback.** It is motivating to know that your opinion contributes to the course.

## 12. Presenting the benefits of undertaking the course.

In this connection the role of a facilitator or teacher is especially important. Basically teachers should be aware that their role has been changed. Learner-centered classes will stimulate dialogue and knowledge construction. Learners will benefit from a scaffolding approach to learning where the teacher provides more support in the early stages of the course; this support is gradually faded until learners become self-reliant. In a constructive approach teachers should see themselves as facilitators and co-learners. Teachers must bear in mind, however, that learners are individuals with different life experiences and learning preferences. Some adult learners will still prefer the traditional pedagogical approach to teaching and learning. Teachers should respect that, and at the same time gradually try to push learners away from their comfort zone in the direction of a deeper approach to learning.

**Conclusions.** The methodological base of andragogy is the fundamental framework for developing new strategies in teaching adults foreign languages. Taking into considerations psychological and social peculiarities of mature learners, accepting that adults do differ in their way of learning, andragogy gives the understanding of how adults learn and identifies additional ways in which adult learners differ from their younger counterparts:

- They want to understand why certain lessons are being taught.
- They particularly appreciate task-oriented learning.
- They often have less free time outside of class.
- They are more self-directing.
- They are learning the language due to need and have more of a life- or task-focus.

With this in mind, and being aware of basic andragogic principles it is possible to create a specific and task-oriented model of teaching with its own strategies and make the process of learning effective avoiding possible barriers and hidden pitfalls. Teaching adults is difficult but fascinating process providing strong feedback in case of compliance with basic methodic principles and psychological peculiarities. The prospects for future researches in this area can be connected with the development of the methods increasing the effectiveness of teaching adults foreign languages and optimizing the process of learning making it less time-consuming

## References

1. Brookfield S. D. Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning. A comprehensive analysis of principles and effective practice/ S.D. Brookfield. – Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986. – 375 p.
2. Cooper M. K. & Henschke J. A. An Update on Andragogy: The International Foundation for Its Research, Theory and Practice / M. K. Cooper & J. A. Henschke. – the CPAE Conference, Detroit, Michigan, November, 2003. – 8 p.
3. Cross K. P. Adults as Learners. Increasing participation and facilitating learning / K. P. Cross. – San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981. – 300 p.
4. EF EPI. The world's largest ranking of countries by English skills [Electronic resource] / Official site of the EF EPI. – Access mode:  
<http://www.ef.com/epi/regions/europe/ukraine/>
5. Henschke J. Andragogy: Towards a discipline of adult education?. P. Jarvis (ed): Twentieth Century Thinkers in Adult Education / J. Henschke. – London: Routledge, 2003. – P. 301-313.
6. Knowles M. The adult learner: A neglected species (3rd Ed.). / M. Knowles. – Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing, 1984. – 293 p.
7. Knowles M. Andragogy in Action / M. Knowles. – San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984. – 234 p.
8. Knowles M. Andragogy in Action. Applying modern principles of adult education / M. Knowles. – San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1984. – 287 p.
9. Merriam S. H. and Caffarella R. S. Learning in Adulthood / S.H. Merriam and R. S. Cafferella – San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999 – 134 p.
10. The 1997 Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning [Electronic resource] / Official site of the UNESCO. – Access mode:  
<http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning>
11. Zmeyov S. Andragogy: Origins, Developments, Trends / S. Zmeyov. – International Review of Education, 44 (1), 1998. – P. 103-108.