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TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO ADULTS

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Theories about adult learning are predicated on the assumption that adults learn differently from children and adolescents. The belief is that these differences should be taken into consideration when structuring learning environments for adults. Age of the learners, existing knowledge level, motivation, social conditions, determination and student situation are factors that are different from younger learners and that must, therefore, be considered when developing a language program for adults.

Keywords: teaching foreign languages, andragogy, methods of teaching, adult learning, learning environment.

Teaching foreign languages has a long history. Throughout centuries methods of teaching and instruction have been changed excluding and complementing one another. But the ideas of such prominent scholars as Ya.A. Komenskiy, I.G. Pestalozzi, A. Disterveg about the complex nature of the educational process have been studied and valued. Thus, according to these principals, the educational process presupposes a few necessary and equally important components: 1) someone who is studying; 2) subject or field which is being studied; 3) teacher who is in charge of the process; 4) learning environment including the place, time, etc. These components are essential, the efficiency of teaching itself depends on them. Researchers in the field of teaching foreign languages emphasize the equal importance of a high-level competence in a language of teachers and taking into account peculiarities of a teaching subject along with any individual peculiarities of students.

Age characteristics and peculiarities of a student are studied in developmental psychology. Pedagogical psychology and developmental psychology go hand in hand. Problems of pedagogical psychology are studied and considered according to age peculiarities of a person. Contributions to the development of pedagogical psychology have been numerous. Among them, there are works of K.D. Ushinsky, P.F. Kapterev, L.S. Vygotsky, P.L. Blonsky and other prominent scholars and psychologists. Individual peculiarities of students define methods and ways of teaching. One of such peculiarities is presented by age characteristics of learners. So, in order to create the productive education environment that encourages professional self-development in foreign language education many factors should be taken into consideration [1].

Teaching adults certainly differs from teaching children. There are particular things that need to be taken into consideration when dealing with such category of learners. First, it is necessary to understand how adults learn in general and

how they act within the educational process. In general, they tend to bring more life experience, and they ultimately have more to give to one another and to their teacher. The role of a teacher is very important and continuous pedagogical education is necessary [2].

Teaching adults is performed on the basis of particular principals and methods. Andragogy studies methods and principals of adult education. From the Greek, "*andr-*", meaning "*man*", and "*agogus*", meaning "*leader of*", it literally means "*leader of man*", whereas "pedagogy" literally means "leading children". But in general, pedagogy means the study of teaching methods.

The term "Andragogy" was introduced by a German scientist Alexander Kapp in 1833. Andragogy became a theory of adult education. There are several definitions of andragogy:

1. Scientific approach to the process of teaching adults throughout life.

2. Theoretical and practical approach based on the humanistic theory of learning.

3. Particular methods of teaching. Andragogy ("man-leading") is distinguished from pedagogy ("child-leading") [3].

Adult education is a difficult task for teachers. Processes of perception, memory, and thinking are different in comparison with a young learner. In addition, an adult has a well-established mental model, life experience, occupation, etc., which causes difficulties in teaching adults when a teacher needs not only to "instill" the new, but also to "delete" the old [4].

How can we define 'adult' when we talk about adult education? An adult is a fully developed and mature human being.

In 1970 Malcolm S. Knowles created a fundamental work "The modern practice of adult education. From Pedagogy to Andragogy". According to Knowles, there are two definitions of an adult:

1) Who behaves as an adult – who performs adult roles? (a social definition). Applying the first criterion, a person is adult to the extent that individual is performing social roles typically assigned by our culture: responsible citizen, spouse, parent, etc.

2) Whose self-concept is that of an adult? (a psychological definition). Applying the second criterion, a person is adult to the extent that individual perceives herself or himself to be essentially responsible for her or his own life [5].

The process of adult learning or adult education brings together into a discreet social system all the individuals, institutions, and associations concerned with the education of adults and perceives them as working toward the common goals of improving the methods and materials of adult learning [5].

The quality of education process depends on many factors. One of the factors is teacher's competence formed and improved during the professional life of a specialist [6]. The competence and professionalism of a teacher are very important. Pedagogical competence of a teacher is presented by a set of profes-

sional skills and features that a teacher should have. These types of competence are mainly personal competence (responsibility, creativity, ability to solve problems) and professional competence (knowledge, communication, management, etc.) [7].

According to Knowles, an adult educator performs several functions:
− Diagnostic function;
− Planning function;
− Motivational function;
− Methodological function;
− Resource function;
− Evaluative function.

Characteristics of adult learners according to **andragogy** which are different from the assumptions about child learners (pedagogy):

1. Self-concept

As a person matures his/her self concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being. Adult programs need to be designed to accept viewpoints from people in different life stages and with different value sets.

2. Adult learner experience

As a person matures he/she accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning. Adults seek out learning experiences in order to deal with some life-changing events. Adults need to be able to integrate new ideas with what they already know if they are going to use the new information. Information that conflicts with what is already believed to be true, and thus forces a reevaluation of the old material, is integrated and accepted more slowly. New knowledge needs to be integrated with previous knowledge. Adults need more time to integrate new knowledge.

3. Readiness to learn

As a person matures his/her readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his/her social roles. Adults prefer self-directed and self-designed learning programs.

4. Orientation to learning

As a person matures his/her time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his/her orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness [8].

5. Motivation to learn

As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal [9]. The learning environment must be physically and psychologically comfortable. Adults can learn well and much from a dialogue with respected peers. The key role of a teacher is control. The teacher must balance the presentation of new material, debate, and discussion. Adult learners expect to be assessed, but adult learners need assess-

ment not just for evaluation but also for motivation and feedback. Assessment for adult learners can also be empowering and can lead to a richer, deeper learning experience [10]. The learner is involved in identifying what he wants to learn, in making plans for the program, and in evaluating the program. In order for these conditions to occur, the role of the "teacher" must be more that of process facilitator rather than content expert [11].

On the basis of these characteristics, we can study how adult learners are different from young ones. The most common peculiarities of teaching a foreign language to adults are communicativeness, flexibility, and individualization in teaching process [12].

There are differences and similarities between adult and young learners. For adults, learning a new language can be painfully slow and often a frustrating experience. There is a whole new set of rules to learn, let alone thousands of new words and expressions. As it has been mentioned before, adults do not learn the same way that children do [13]. Adult learners are comfortable with abstract thought patterns. They like to call on their life experience. Adults have developed methods of learning that work best for them. They have better discipline than children. Their brains are fully developed and they have better motivation. On the other hand, adult learners have a number of characteristics which can make learning and teaching problematic: adult learners can be critical of teaching methods, anxious and worried because of the previous failure. More often that young learners, adults face certain linguistic problems as persistent deviations from the second language learner norm and language transfer, which is negative influence of their mother tongue on their ability to progress in a foreign language without involving their first language. Adults tend to understand the rules of a language rather than just 'doing it' as young children would [14].

According to Russian scholars, in the process of mastering a second language a secondary linguistic persona is being formed. Under the term "secondary linguistic persona" N.D. Galskova understands the total amount of human capabilities in the production of speech in the context of authentic communication with people of other cultures. This totality is the purpose and result of mastering a foreign language. The process of the formation of "secondary linguistic persona" is complicated especially when teaching adults [15].

Conclusion. Thus, individual peculiarities of students define methods and ways of teaching. One of such peculiarities is presented by age characteristics of learners. The main psychological and linguistic features of adult learning a foreign language are presented by difficulties during studying and teaching a foreign language. The process of teaching a foreign language to adults needs to meet not only communicative, cognitive expectations of learners, but also personal ones. Adults want their learning of a foreign language to be problem-oriented and personalized.

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