



EVALUATION OF MAIN PRINCIPLES AND METHODS IN TEACHING ENGLISH ONLINE FOR ADULTS AT UNIVERSITY OF CUU LONG, VIETNAM

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Abstract:

Teaching English to adult learners requires approaches that address their unique characteristics, including autonomy, motivation, and practical learning goals. While adult language education is increasingly important, there remains a lack of research grounded in the classroom experiences of English teachers working with adult learners, particularly within the Vietnamese context. This study aims to identify effective teaching principles and learning strategies for adult learners, focusing on methods and technologies that enhance engagement and promote self-directed learning. Drawing on the practical experience of English language teachers at Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL), University of Cuu Long (UCL), Vietnam, a mini-research project was conducted with 15 English teachers who have taught adult students. Data were collected using an open-ended questionnaire exploring teaching principles, the importance of a supportive learning environment, and the most motivating and effective instructional methods. The findings reveal that interactive methods are considered the most impactful, as they actively involve learners, support collaborative and learner-centered instruction, and align with the self-directed nature of adult learning. These insights highlight the need for language programs and teacher training to prioritize interactive, motivating, and context-responsive approaches for adult English education.

Keywords: adult learners, teaching principles, interactive methods, motivation, self-directed learning, University of Cuu Long

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1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale

Foreign language education has traditionally focused on young learners—ranging from children to adolescents, and occasionally very young adults (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). As a result, when the role of language learner is assumed by adults, the teaching process is often perceived as more complex and challenging (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). This perception is reinforced by parents, educators, and policymakers who widely advocate for the principle of “the earlier, the better” in foreign language acquisition (Singleton & Ryan, 2004). However, this raises a critical question: Are older learners truly less effective in acquiring new languages?

While this view is not universally accepted, there is a broad consensus that a learner’s age is linked to distinct cognitive skills, learning styles, and educational needs (Harmer, 2015). These age-related factors necessitate differentiated teaching strategies and learning models. Adult learners, in particular, bring unique expectations, life experiences, and self-directed learning tendencies that are not effectively addressed through methods designed for younger students (Merriam & Bierema, 2013).

The shift toward online education, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has further highlighted the importance of adapting teaching approaches to fit evolving contexts. The pandemic made it evident that online learning is not merely a temporary alternative but a lasting and flexible mode of education (Dhawan, 2020). Online platforms have allowed learners across all age groups to acquire new skills and continue their education with fewer barriers. With ongoing technological advancement, online learning is likely to become more adaptive, accessible, and learner-centered.

In light of these developments, this study investigates the unique characteristics of adult learners, examines the challenges involved in teaching them, and discusses essential principles and methodological implications for effectively teaching English to mature students—specifically in online environments.

1.2. Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this study was to identify suitable teaching principles and methods for effectively teaching English to adults in an online environment. The research specifically focused on how teaching practices can be adapted to meet the unique needs and preferences of adult learners engaged in remote or digital learning contexts.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on adult language education and emphasize the increasing importance of online learning for adult students. In the context of English language acquisition, this research provides valuable insights into how digital platforms can be leveraged to support adult learners more effectively. Adult students will gain a deeper understanding of the potential of online English learning, while teachers can use the results as a reference to enhance and personalize their

instructional strategies. Ultimately, the study highlights how online education can be tailored to foster more engaging, motivating, and successful language learning experiences for adult learners.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Perception

Although the term adult learners may vary slightly in definition depending on the context or emphasis, this study defines adult learners as individuals over the traditional schooling age (typically 18–60 years old) who voluntarily choose to engage in educational activities to fulfil professional, social, or personal needs.

Interest in adult learners within the field of teaching methodology has grown from the recognition that mature students learn differently from younger individuals. Building on this understanding, American educator Malcolm Knowles introduced the concept of andragogy, which he described as the art and science of adult learning. According to Knowles (1984), adult learning is characterized by several assumptions: adults are self-directed and capable of managing their own learning; they bring a rich reservoir of experience that supports learning; they are ready to learn when they assume new social or life roles; their learning is task- or problem-centered, with immediate application; and they are typically motivated by internal rather than external factors.

While Knowles' model has faced criticism over the years, it has had a substantial influence on adult learning theories and has significantly shaped instructional practices in adult education. Building upon Knowles' principles and the work of other researchers such as Harmer (2007), Lightbown and Spada (2006), and Cozma (2015), the following sections explore the cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral characteristics of adult students.

2.1.1. Benefits of Online Learning

One significant advantage of online learning is its flexibility and the ability it gives students to learn at their own pace. This flexibility is particularly helpful for adult learners who may need to juggle work, family, or other responsibilities. The ability to pause, replay, or review course materials enables learners to revisit challenging content and learn on their own terms. Online education also allows for a customizable learning environment. Learners can study from any location as long as they have access to the internet, removing the constraints of time and space that are often associated with traditional classroom settings.

Additionally, online learning offers a broader range of perspectives. Students and instructors may come from diverse geographical and professional backgrounds, enriching the educational experience and enabling learners to gain insights from global viewpoints.

2.1.2. Limitations of Online Learning

Despite its advantages, online learning has several limitations. The lack of face-to-face interaction with instructors can restrict feedback and reduce the sense of personal connection, which may lead to social isolation and lower motivation and retention rates among learners. Another significant concern is the potential for social isolation. Prolonged engagement in online courses without peer interaction can lead to stress, nervousness, and anxiety, affecting students' mental well-being and academic performance.

Technological setbacks also pose challenges. Students may experience issues such as unstable internet connections, hardware malfunctions, or even power outages, especially in regions with limited technological infrastructure. These disruptions can hinder the learning process and cause frustration.

2.1.3. Challenges of Online Learning for Adult Learners

Although adult learners' age is not viewed as a disadvantage in itself, certain physical and cognitive characteristics present challenges. Adult students often arrive in the classroom with lower energy levels due to multiple responsibilities and existing fatigue. Teachers must be mindful not to misinterpret signs of apathy or lack of participation as disengagement from the course content. As one teacher noted, *"Being used to the age-specific enthusiasm displayed by the children I had been teaching for many years, it took me some time to understand that I was not necessarily the one to blame for my adult students' lack of focus or even signs of boredom."*

While mature learners tend to possess more developed cognitive abilities and conceptual understanding, they may experience slower memory recall and reaction times. However, consistent with the findings of Polson (1993), educators in this study observed that while adult learners may take longer to complete tasks, they often perform with greater accuracy and thoroughness than younger students.

From an attitudinal perspective, adult learners often bring high expectations to the learning environment. While their strong motivation is an asset, they frequently demand immediate and practical results from their instruction. As one respondent shared, *"Adults may not be so patient with the results they expect from the English course. In general, they want to gain knowledge as soon as possible, and they need to have the relevance of that knowledge proved in real-life situations."*

Adult learners may also hold preconceived preferences for traditional teaching methods shaped by their previous educational experiences. These preferences can pose challenges to teachers aiming to implement more modern, communicative instructional approaches. Another attitudinal barrier is the learners' potential lack of confidence in their intellectual abilities. This may lead to language anxiety, especially when students feel they are not progressing quickly, hesitate to speak in class, or fear making mistakes. This fear is often tied to the desire to avoid losing face, a concern that becomes more acute with age.

Teachers, too, may feel challenged when teaching adult learners. Several respondents noted increased nervousness in adult education settings. Unlike younger learners, adults are often more aware of their learning needs and more critical of whether those needs are being effectively addressed. This can create added pressure on instructors to deliver content in a more targeted and responsive manner.

2.2. Principles of Online Instruction

Andragogy is a learning theory developed to assist adults in the learning process. Although many attribute the term to Malcolm Knowles, it was originally coined by German educator Alexander Kapp in 1833 (Note *et al.*, 2021). Knowles later popularized the concept in the 1960s and is often referred to as “*The Father of Andragogy*” (Mews, 2020). The term derives from the Greek words andro, meaning “man,” and agogus, meaning “leader of.”

Knowles (1980, p. 42) defined andragogy as “*the art and science of helping adults learn.*” In his 2005 work, he outlined six key principles of adult learning: (1) Adults need to understand why they are learning something; (2) They value self-direction and autonomy; (3) Their learning is influenced by prior experiences; (4) They are primarily driven by internal motivations; (5) They are ready to learn when they encounter relevant life situations; and (6) Their learning is problem-centered rather than content-centered.

Implementing these principles allows educators to design instruction that supports adult learners’ autonomy and meets their individual needs. Practical applications of these principles will be detailed in the results section. In Indonesia, andragogical principles have been explored in both formal and non-formal education contexts. For example, Sumule (2018) discussed andragogy in a theological school setting, highlighting its usefulness in religious education programs such as Sunday School. However, this study did not offer a systematic exploration of how andragogy is applied in practice.

Syamsuddin and Jimmi (2018) found that using andragogical principles improved students’ English language skills. Nevertheless, they did not clearly explain how each of the six principles was implemented in the classroom, leaving a gap in the application framework. Abdullah *et al.* (2021) advocated for adopting andragogy in Indonesian higher education, emphasizing its alignment with adult learners’ needs. Similarly, Purwanti (2017) reported that andragogic principles significantly influenced university lecturers’ professional development and instructional practices. These studies collectively suggest that andragogy is applicable not only in formal academic settings but also in various non-formal learning environments. Its flexible, learner-centered nature makes it suitable for a wide range of adult education contexts.

While andragogy focuses on adult learners, pedagogy refers to traditional child-focused education. Knowles *et al.* (2005) noted that pedagogy emphasizes dependency, as children generally lack the experience and self-direction needed for independent learning. Nagara (2020) adds that pedagogy positions the teacher as the central authority,

while andragogy promotes learner autonomy. The differences between these approaches will be further illustrated in the results section as well.

2.3.1. Self-Concept

The first assumption of andragogy emphasizes that adults possess a more developed self-concept compared to children. Knowles *et al.* (2005, p. 65) explain that “*adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives.*” This is attributed to the maturity of adults, who are generally more self-directed and independent (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). To enhance self-concept in adult learners, Knowles, as cited in Merriam and Bierema (2014), proposes two critical factors: establishing a conducive learning environment and involving adults in designing the course content. Including learners in the course design aligns with the concept of self-directed learning, whereby learners take initiative in planning their own educational experiences. Loeng (2020) supports this, emphasizing that self-directed learners are more likely to develop autonomy and take responsibility for their learning decisions.

At the tertiary level, this principle is often applied through institutional structures that acknowledge and support adult learners' autonomy. Taylor and Kroth (2009) recommend incorporating learners' life experiences into classroom activities, considering these experiences fundamental to adult learning. For example, instructors might allow adult students to rearrange classroom furniture to facilitate interaction or solicit their expectations for upcoming lessons. Furthermore, need analysis—collecting learner input on goals and expectations—is essential for tailoring instruction. As Hariyadi and Yanti (2019) note, this process ensures that course content aligns with learners' goals and autonomy.

In virtual learning environments, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, implementing self-concept can begin with pre-course surveys to identify learner expectations. Lecturers can use simple questionnaires to determine what learners hope to gain and how they prefer to engage with content. Technological tools like Kahoot can further support engagement and enhance learning. According to Licorish *et al.* (2018), Kahoot not only makes learning more enjoyable but also fosters focus and participation. Overall, activities such as conducting need analyses, involving learners in setting classroom norms, and integrating engaging digital tools help strengthen adult learners' self-concept.

2.3.2. Experiences

The second assumption of andragogy is that adult learners bring a wealth of personal and professional experiences that significantly impact their learning. Knowles *et al.* (2014) argue that these experiences serve as a foundation for new learning. Pitts (2013) supports this, noting that prior experience can facilitate learning progression. Similarly, Boud and Miller (1996) claim that experience forms the core of learning and maximizes opportunities for adults to connect with new information.

Merriam and Bierema (2014) emphasize that adults evaluate new knowledge by comparing it with past experiences, which may lead them to question unfamiliar content. Traumatic or negative past experiences can impede learning, while relevant and positive experiences can enhance it. Therefore, understanding learners' diverse backgrounds is crucial. Purwanti (2017) suggests that instructors should explore and acknowledge these experiences to better meet learners' needs and select suitable teaching materials. In practical terms, universities can implement this principle through experiential and project-based activities. Tandon (2016) proposes two innovative strategies: Outdoor Event Preparation and Real-Time Business Commencement. These activities allow learners to apply skills such as negotiation, entrepreneurship, and teamwork in real-world contexts. Lecturers can also ask students to reflect on past experiences related to these events, fostering deeper learning.

Online learning also offers opportunities to incorporate adult learners' experiences. For instance, lecturers can post topic-related videos and have students share personal reflections in small discussion groups. Project-based learning activities, such as creating instructional videos (e.g., how to cook healthy food), encourage learners to draw on real-life experience. These projects can be shared on digital platforms like Zoom, YouTube, or social media, enriching both the learning process and peer interaction.

2.3.3 Readiness to Learn

Readiness to learn in adults is often influenced by changes in their social or professional roles. Merriam and Bierema (2014) describe these situations as "teachable moments" that create the motivation and urgency for learning new skills. Such moments are closely linked to real-life challenges that drive the need for education and development.

In a classroom setting, Watkins (2005) suggests that instructors initiate discussions about learners' experiences and expectations related to the course content. This encourages engagement and promotes reflection. Learners can then organize their thoughts and present their reflections in small groups or to the entire class. These strategies are also effective in virtual learning environments. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, educators could ask students to select a relevant case study, create posters, and present them via Zoom or similar platforms. The activity could include peer feedback to foster interaction and deepen understanding.

Moreover, educators must equip themselves with tools for assessing learners' readiness. Gencel and Saracaloglu (2018) stress the importance of self-directed readiness tools that help instructors tailor their teaching to the learners' preparedness. In an age of technological advancement, the ability to use digital tools is also vital in enhancing and assessing readiness in online and blended learning environments.

2.3.4 Motivation

Motivation, a key factor in adult learning, can be both internal and external. Dörnyei (2020) defines motivation as the mental and emotional state that influences people's behaviors and decisions. While Knowles *et al.* (2005) argue that adults are primarily

driven by intrinsic motivations—such as personal growth, quality of life, and job satisfaction—Merriam and Bierema (2014) acknowledge that external factors also play a role. These may include work obligations or the need to meet professional standards.

Misch (2012) illustrates this dual motivation in medical education, where students are driven not only by personal ambition but also by external requirements such as passing exams or obtaining licensure. This suggests that adult learners often balance internal and external drivers in their educational pursuits.

To enhance motivation, Aragon (2003) recommends creating a supportive environment that encourages active participation. Lecturers can foster this environment by promoting mutual respect and open dialogue (Blondy, 2007). In online settings, instructors might invite students to attend webinars, take notes, and discuss their learnings through platforms like Zoom. These discussions can lead to content creation, such as videos or newspaper articles, helping learners connect their efforts with real-world impact. Merriam and Bierema (2013) also advise aligning course content with learners' interests to boost internal motivation. Overall, motivating adult learners requires well-designed activities that promote autonomy and meaningful participation.

2.3.5 Need to Know

Another central principle of andragogy is that adults need to understand the rationale behind their learning. Knowles *et al.* (2014) explain that before engaging with new material, adults consider both its benefits and its consequences. Thus, instructors must clearly explain the relevance and importance of course content to foster learner commitment and awareness.

Effective learning strategies can support this principle by integrating real-life tasks such as case studies, interviews, and problem-solving activities. Conrad and Donalson (2004) argue that such tasks help learners connect theory to practice, reinforcing their understanding of course relevance. These strategies are also well-suited for online education. For example, instructors might present a critical question—such as “How can parents help children learn online effectively?”—and ask learners to conduct interviews or gather data to answer it.

Domysheva and Kopylova (2021) emphasize the need for practical, job-relevant tasks in adult education. Real-world problem-solving activities, especially when introduced at the beginning of a course, can be instrumental in uncovering learners' goals and learning orientation. Educators should use these insights to adapt course content to meet learners' expectations and professional needs.

2.3.6 Problem-Centered Learning

According to Merriam and Bierema (2014), adult learners are problem-centered, meaning they engage with learning more effectively when it addresses real-life issues. There are two primary reasons for this. First, when adults face a specific problem, it triggers intrinsic motivation. For example, a person diagnosed with COVID-19 may become

highly motivated to learn about the virus, treatments, and preventive measures. This motivation stems directly from a pressing personal need.

Second, problem-centered learning is inherently practical and applicable to everyday life. Despite their maturity and experience, adults still need guidance in this process. Unlike traditional classrooms, where teachers act as knowledge providers, educators in problem-centered environments serve as facilitators. Rico and Ertmer (2015) explain that facilitators support learners' inquiry without dominating the discussion. Schwartz, cited in the same study, reinforces the importance of guiding learners rather than acting as the sole source of information.

In online learning, problem-centered activities can include discussions featuring multiple perspectives. Lecturers can use tools like Zoom polling to engage students and collect feedback during these discussions. This approach enhances learner interaction and decision-making skills. Abraham *et al.* (2016) advocate for problem-based learning (PBL) as a strategy for promoting self-regulation and self-directed learning. Supporting this, Hadi and Izzah (2018) found that PBL helped English learners become more open and strategic in addressing their learning challenges. Ultimately, problem-centered learning encourages autonomy and critical thinking, key components of adult education.

2.4 Implementation of Principles of Online Instruction in Adult Learning

Based on Knowles' (1980) principles, the adult learning process should be organized into three core stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Lytovchenko (2016b) argues that each stage must utilize interactive teaching methods and foster group collaboration to motivate learners to engage actively. In this approach, teaching transforms into a collaborative art, as Knowles (1950, p. 29) describes, with student-teacher cooperation forming the backbone of the learning process. This cooperation emphasizes the importance of involving learners in shaping the educational experience and using innovative tools and techniques.

English language teaching offers numerous methods aligned with these principles. Group discussions promote collaboration, authentic interaction, and learner engagement (Harmer, 2016; Prichard, Bizo & Stratford, 2006; Alfares, 2017). Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Project-Based Learning (PBL) further support learner-centered instruction, focusing on practical communication and individual learner needs (Willis & Willis, 2007; Herrin, 2009; Bilsborough, 2018). Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) also play a key role in enabling autonomy and self-directed learning (Monteiro, 2018; Butler-Pascoe, 2009; McClanahan, 2014). The diversity and effectiveness of these methods continue to grow, helping adult learners achieve better academic outcomes and develop lifelong learning habits.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, in which an open-ended questionnaire was used to gather teachers' perspectives on the principles and methods of online instruction. The aim was not to collect statistical data but to share experiences related to the use of instructional methods and technologies that addressed the specific characteristics of adult learners in university-level English language education.

3.2 Participants

This study involved 15 English language lecturers from the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Cuu Long, Vietnam. All participants held a Master's degree in TESOL or Teaching Foreign Languages (TFL) and had experience teaching English to adult learners in English-major courses at the university. Their teaching experience ranged from 10 to 22 years, reflecting a high level of professional expertise in the field.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

The primary data collection instrument was an open-ended questionnaire, a common method in qualitative research. The questionnaire included the following three questions:

- 1) Did you think university students should be taught using adult learning principles and methods? Why or why not?
- 2) What type of learning environment did you find most effective for adult students, and what strategies did you use to create it?
- 3) Which learning methods and technologies did you find most effective and motivating for adult students?

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The 15 English lecturers were invited to respond to the open-ended questionnaire based on their professional experiences and insights gained from teaching adult learners at the University of Cuu Long. They were encouraged to answer honestly and reflectively to ensure the reliability and depth of the data collected.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Main Results from the Study

The analysis of the collected responses indicates that all participating teachers (100%) acknowledge the importance of incorporating adult learning methodologies in English language teaching. They emphasize that adult learners differ significantly from children in various ways. Adults tend to be more independent and autonomous, demonstrate greater responsibility and motivation to achieve meaningful learning outcomes, and are capable of engaging with more complex learning tasks. Moreover, their prior knowledge

and life experiences support the acquisition of English skills and foster critical thinking. Adult learners are also more discerning about content, resources, and teaching methods, often expecting higher standards and preferring structured and well-organized material. Unlike children, they can sustain attention for longer periods and value being treated with respect and as equal partners in the learning process. Importantly, they are primarily motivated to learn when the content is professionally relevant to their goals. These findings underline the necessity of adapting instructional approaches to suit the specific characteristics and expectations of adult learners in English language education.

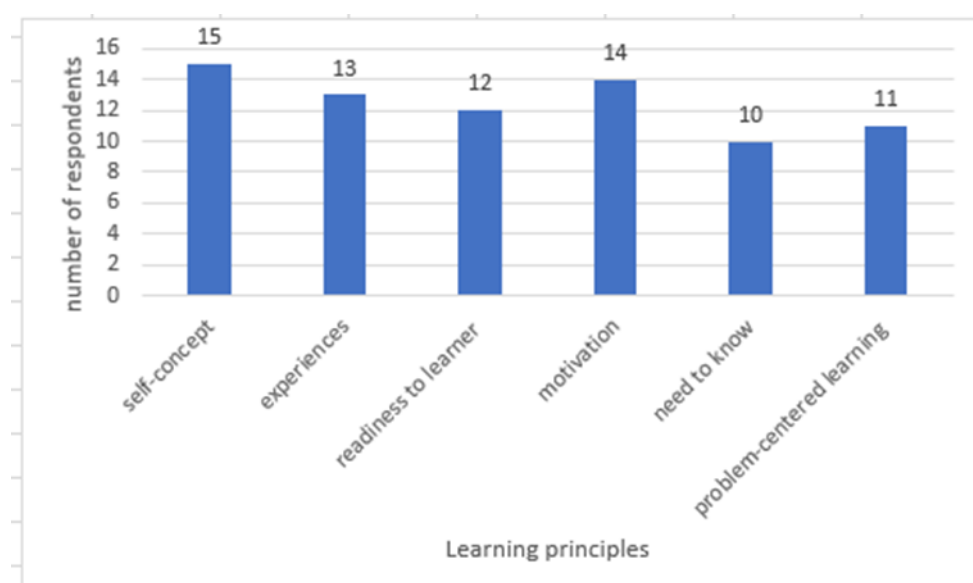


Figure 1: Adult Learning Principles Applied in English Online Classes at University

Figure 1 illustrates the adult learning principles most commonly applied in online English classes at the university level. In response to the second question of the survey, all participants emphasized the importance of a supportive learning atmosphere. Teachers described the ideal environment for effective learning using attributes such as friendly, non-authoritarian, supportive, informal, non-threatening, collaborative, involving, non-stressful, accepting, and trust-based. To foster this kind of atmosphere, respondents indicated they treat students as equals, respect their opinions, avoid harsh criticism, and actively encourage student participation—especially among shy learners. One respondent shared that they invite quieter students to contribute their “expert” opinions in areas where they have professional experience, using that confidence as a gateway for broader participation. Another teacher mentioned soliciting feedback at the end of class by asking students which activities they enjoyed or disliked and why—an approach aimed at building trust and adapting teaching to learner preferences.

Group work was also highlighted as a critical factor in establishing a positive classroom climate. Teachers noted that collaborative activities reduce students’ inhibitions, enhance engagement, and promote a sense of responsibility and unity. The positive energy within small groups often carries over to the broader class dynamic,

reinforcing a cooperative learning environment. The approach to error correction emerged as another key factor. Respondents agreed that mistakes should be accepted as a natural part of the learning process and emphasized that correction must be supportive, not demotivating. Seven teachers (58%) warned against excessive correction, which they felt could erode students' self-confidence. In contrast, eight respondents (67%) praised peer correction as an effective strategy, with one stating that when students are empowered to help each other, it boosts mutual respect and engagement.

In response to the third question—regarding the most effective and motivating learning methods for adult students—teachers identified several interactive techniques that promote communication and collaboration. From the data, seven methods were selected based on frequency of mention ($N \geq 5$): group discussion (6 mentions), task-based learning (7), project-based learning (12), use of technologies (15), and blended learning (15). Group discussions were particularly valued due to their relevance to real-life adult experiences, mirroring conversations held at home, with friends, or in professional settings.

Project-based learning was considered especially suitable for adult learners due to its learner-centered nature and emphasis on collaboration. Unlike task-based approaches that focus on shorter, specific outcomes, projects may span weeks or months and require students to exercise autonomy in organizing their research, choosing resources, collaborating with peers, and presenting their findings. Teachers highlighted the value of this approach in linking classroom activities to real-world contexts, fostering engagement, motivation, and deeper learning.

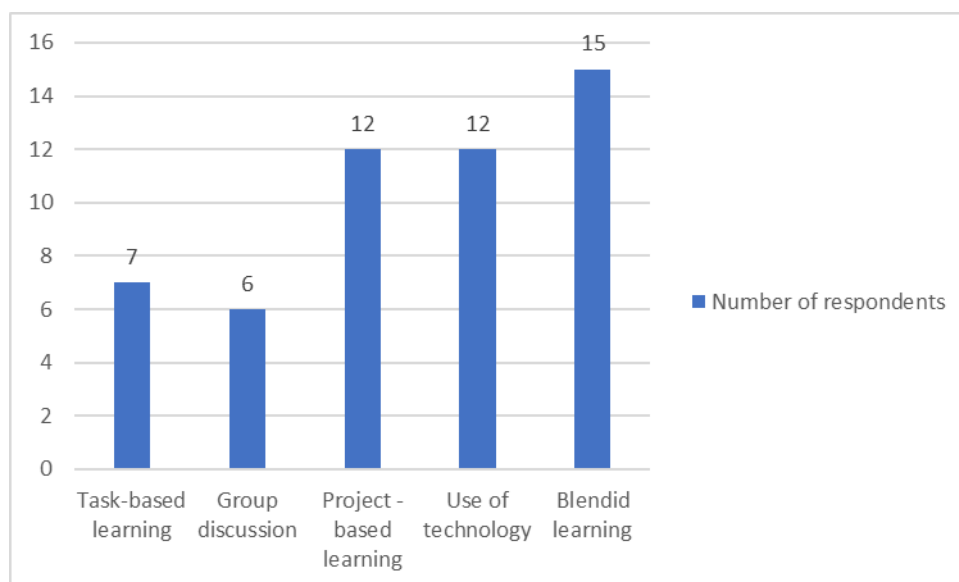


Figure 2: Learning methods identified by respondents as particularly effective for teaching adult learners in university-level English classes

In Figure 2, it is evident that technology-enhanced learning is especially favored by respondents due to its ability to support self-directed learning, foster interaction, and extend language practice beyond the classroom. Respondents reported frequent use of

distance learning platforms (including university-developed online courses), Zoom, Kahoot, and mobile learning tools that allow students to access resources, listen to podcasts, and review materials anytime and anywhere. These tools, they note, are particularly motivating for adult learners because of their flexibility and relevance to learners' professional and personal contexts.

Blended learning, which combines face-to-face instruction with independent, technology-based study, was also highly valued. Respondents noted that this approach provides a balance of autonomy and personal interaction, allowing adult learners to control the pace and timing of their studies while still benefiting from in-person communication, discussion, and collaboration. Flipped learning was mentioned as a subset of blended learning, where students engage with lecture content at home and use classroom time for discussion and task-based application, which respondents believe enhances learner engagement and comprehension.

Notably, all 15 respondents emphasized the importance of group work, identifying it as foundational to the effective implementation of adult learning strategies. One teacher explained, *"It gives adult learners the possibility to be fully engaged in learning, practice the language, and feel more confident and independent from the teacher."* Group work was especially appreciated for its ability to create a supportive learning environment: more confident learners can share their expertise and assist peers, while less confident students are able to practice in a non-threatening setting, reducing anxiety and fear of making mistakes in front of the whole class.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this research contribute to a deeper understanding of how the characteristics of adult learners can inform effective English language teaching at the university level. They also offer insights into teaching methods that best support adult learners in acquiring English. Our results align with previous studies (e.g., Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018; Klimova, 2018; Lytovchenko, 2016a; Vikulina *et al.*, 2017) that emphasize the importance of flexible, interactive, and learner-centered approaches in adult education. These studies consistently highlight the need to align language instruction with adult learners' personal and professional needs, foster peer- and self-evaluation, encourage active engagement and collaboration, ensure cultural authenticity, and create opportunities for learners to apply their skills in real-world contexts.

The methods and technologies identified by our respondents as effective for teaching English to adult students also find robust support in the literature on adult education and second language acquisition. Specifically, group work—especially group discussions—emerges as an essential component of adult language learning. Previous research supports the idea that group discussions allow adult learners to engage with real-world issues in a collaborative, less intimidating environment (Harmer, 2016). In such settings, students can experience increased autonomy as they teach and learn from each other (Alfares, 2017), benefiting both the "teacher" and the "learner" through reciprocal language development (Lier, 2014). Moreover, the collaborative nature of

group work motivates students, as they work together toward common goals, fostering a sense of responsibility for each other's success (Prichard, Bizo & Stratford, 2006). Alfares (2017) further emphasizes the motivational benefits of group work, noting that it helps create a supportive, natural, and interactive learning environment, which boosts learners' confidence and prepares them for communication in broader social contexts.

The advantages of Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Project-Based Learning (PBL), which were frequently cited by our respondents as highly effective for teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to adults, are consistent with the findings of earlier studies (Willis & Willis, 2007; Herrin, 2009; Bilsborough, 2018; Lytovchenko, Ogienko, & Terenko, 2017; Lytovchenko, 2009). Both TBL and PBL are learner-centered methodologies that allow students to focus on authentic communication rather than formal language analysis. These approaches are particularly effective because they put students in real-world situations, enabling them to apply all their language resources to solve complex tasks. Additionally, both TBL and PBL encourage learner autonomy, as students take responsibility for their learning. A unique benefit of PBL is its capacity to connect classroom learning to real-life scenarios, making the learning process more relevant and motivating for students (Bilsborough, 2018).

The study's findings regarding the use of technology and blended learning also align with a substantial body of research on their effectiveness in adult ESP education. As Monteiro (2018) notes, self-directed online learning is increasingly popular and serves as a valuable tool for students who cannot attend traditional classroom settings. Butler-Pascoe (2009) highlights several benefits of technology in language learning, including the ability to offer authentic communication activities that reflect specific professional environments, expose students to socio-cultural aspects of language, and facilitate collaborative learning. Furthermore, technology supports student-centered learning by addressing individual needs and enhancing motivation, self-esteem, and autonomy (Butler-Pascoe, 2009). McClanahan (2014) also emphasizes the importance of technology in making language learning more relevant to adult learners, noting that multimedia tools bring real-world experiences into the classroom, thereby strengthening the connection between language learning and students' everyday lives.

In conclusion, the integration of interactive learning methods and technologies—particularly those that emphasize group work, task- and project-based learning, and blended learning—proves to be highly effective in meeting the needs of adult learners in university-level English language education. These methods not only support language acquisition but also foster autonomy, motivation, and real-world applicability, making them particularly suitable for adult learners with diverse professional and personal experiences.

5. Conclusion and Implications

5.1 Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the principles and methods that can be applied when teaching English to adult learners at the tertiary level. The research highlighted the importance of adult learners' distinctive characteristics and needs in shaping effective teaching approaches. It confirmed that methods such as group work, task-based learning, and project-based learning are particularly beneficial for adult learners, as they allow for collaboration, real-world application, and the development of self-directed learning skills. Additionally, the use of technologies, such as Zoom and Google Meet, was found to be a powerful tool for fostering interactive learning and promoting engagement among adult learners. The findings underscore the need for adaptable, flexible, and learner-centered teaching methods that align with the autonomy, motivation, and problem-solving abilities of adult learners. These results can guide educators in creating more effective, inclusive, and engaging English language learning environments at the university level.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

5.2.1 For EFL Teachers

The findings of this study offer several pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, particularly those working with adult learners in higher education contexts. First and foremost, teachers should recognize the unique characteristics of adult learners, such as their greater autonomy, motivation, and practical experience. These learners benefit significantly from methods that allow for collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Group work is a highly effective strategy, as it provides adult learners with opportunities to share ideas and collaborate with peers in a less intimidating and more supportive environment. By fostering a friendly and comfortable atmosphere, group work can encourage greater participation and engagement in the classroom.

Task-based and project-based learning activities are also recommended for adult learners, as these methods align with their real-life experiences and professional needs. Adult learners are typically self-directed and motivated by practical, real-world applications of their knowledge. As such, they are likely to engage deeply with tasks and projects that relate to their professional lives, making learning more meaningful and motivating. Furthermore, these methods allow learners to take ownership of their learning process, fostering a sense of responsibility and agency.

5.2.2 For EFL Adult Learners

For adult learners, the research suggests that they are not only comfortable but also adept at using technology in their learning. The familiarity of platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet makes it easier for them to engage in collaborative tasks and participate actively in online learning environments. Moreover, the integration of digital tools can support self-

directed learning, enabling learners to access resources and learning materials at their convenience, which is essential for their busy lifestyles.

What's more, adult learners are more likely to succeed when learning activities are linked to their personal and professional interests. By incorporating real-life experiences and knowledge into lessons, educators can enhance learners' motivation and make the learning process more relevant. Overall, the findings suggest that adult learners thrive in learning environments that respect their autonomy, encourage collaboration, and use technology to support both individual and group-based learning.

5.3 Limitations

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, there are several limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, the research primarily focused on teachers' perceptions of the implementation of principles and methods in teaching English to adult learners in online settings. It did not explore the learners' perspectives regarding the effectiveness of these methods, principles, and technologies. Understanding learners' views would provide a more holistic picture of the factors that influence successful language learning in this context.

Secondly, the methodology employed in this study was somewhat limited. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding, future research should consider employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the effectiveness of various teaching methods, principles, and technologies. As noted by Note *et al.* (2021), andragogy encourages flexibility in method selection, as long as these methods promote effective communication and open new ways of thinking. A mixed-methods approach would provide richer data and allow for a more nuanced evaluation of the impact of online teaching practices on adult learners.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

To support the professional growth of EFL teachers—especially in rural areas—future research should examine how the six principles of andragogy can be effectively integrated into adult English language instruction. While previous studies (e.g., Hubers *et al.*, 2020; Syamsuddin & Jimi, 2018) offer useful insights, gaps remain in understanding how to apply these principles comprehensively in diverse EFL settings.

Findings from studies like Hiew and Murray (2021) and Aljohani & Alajlan (2021) suggest that adult learners' responses to andragogical methods vary across cultural and educational contexts. Therefore, further research should explore practical ways to adapt each of the six principles to match adult learners' autonomy, goals, and lived experiences in EFL classrooms.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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