



Methodological guide to facilitate the learning of English in middle-aged adults

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Methodological guide to facilitate the learning of English in middle-aged adults.

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Abstract

This research was held at the Language Centre of the Technical University of Ambato, it is aimed at middle-aged adult students of English Program. A lot of discussion and investigations have been done about methodologies and strategies exclusively for young students. However, adults have not been taken into account.

This particular group of learners are in repetition phase or last enrollment, and some of them have dropped out to the English program. Besides, teachers must comply a strict planning in time and contents, which becomes discriminatory for learners with difficulties of learning. Some teachers think that working with adults delays the regular progress of teaching.

In spite of legal basis, which assure equality in access to education for everybody. It happens for people with special educational needs associated or not to disabilities. In this university, adults are not part of this consideration.

The goal of this investigation is to promote a different alternative of learning English for adults of middle age. At the same time: to raise the awareness about the importance of inclusive education. Also, to associate Andragogy to the methodologies that respect rhythms of adults, through the curricular adaptations. And, to provide teachers methodological strategies to work with adult learners.

The author's teaching experience was a starting point for gathering information from a year ago. Given that there were no specific data on adults of middle aged studying at the Language Centre of the University. First, forms for students were created to record data, and a questionnaire was applied to determine students' level of satisfaction with their English learning. In addition, a survey was applied to English teachers to analyze about the methodological processes used to guide students' learning middle-aged adults. At the same time, explorations of texts and digital pages about the subject were made.

The reliable results, allowed to design a guide of methodological strategies to offer a different alternative of learning for adults in the English program. It will give teachers the opportunity to improve their teaching process through curricular adaptations. Also, they can use mental gymnastics to stimulate learning of adults of middle-aged.

Keywords: methodological strategies, Andragogy, different learning



Guía metodológica para facilitar el aprendizaje del inglés en adultos de mediana edad

Resumen

Esta investigación se realizó en el Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Técnica de Ambato, mismo que está dirigido a estudiantes de mediana edad del programa de Inglés. Muchas discusiones e investigaciones se han realizado sobre metodologías y estrategias exclusivamente para jóvenes estudiantes. Sin embargo, los adultos no han sido tomados en cuenta.

Este grupo particular de estudiantes está en fase de repetición o última inscripción, y algunos de ellos han abandonado el programa de Inglés. Además, los maestros deben cumplir una estricta planificación en tiempo y contenido, lo cual se vuelve discriminatorio para los alumnos con dificultades de aprendizaje. Algunos profesores piensan que trabajar con adultos retrasa el progreso regular de la enseñanza.

A pesar del fundamento jurídico, que garantiza la igualdad en el acceso a la educación para todos. Esto se da para personas con necesidades educativas especiales asociadas o no a discapacidades. En esta universidad, los adultos no forman parte de esta consideración.

El objetivo de esta investigación es promover una alternativa diferente de aprender inglés para adultos de mediana edad. Al mismo tiempo: sensibilizar sobre la importancia de la educación inclusiva. También, asociar la Andragogía a las metodologías que respeten los ritmos de los adultos, a través de las adaptaciones curriculares. Y, para proporcionar a los profesores estrategias metodológicas para trabajar con adultos.

La experiencia docente del autor fue un punto de partida para recolectar información desde hace un año. Dado que no había datos específicos sobre adultos de edad media estudiando en el Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad. En primer lugar, se crearon formularios para registrar los datos de los estudiantes, y se aplicó un cuestionario para determinar el nivel de satisfacción de los estudiantes con su aprendizaje del inglés. Además, se aplicó una encuesta a los profesores de inglés para analizar los procesos metodológicos utilizados para guiar a los estudiantes en el aprendizaje de adultos de mediana edad. Al mismo tiempo, se realizaron exploraciones de textos y páginas digitales sobre el tema.

Los resultados confiables, permitieron diseñar una guía de estrategias metodológicas para ofrecer una alternativa diferente de aprendizaje para adultos en el programa de inglés. Está proporcionará a los profesores la oportunidad de mejorar su proceso de enseñanza mediante adaptaciones curriculares. Además, pueden utilizar la gimnasia mental para estimular el aprendizaje de los adultos de mediana edad.

Palabras clave: estrategias metodológicas, Andragogía, aprendizaje diferente.



Introducción

In the last years the educational changes have occurred in a vertiginous way (JC Richards, 2014), we are living in the age of knowledge. It is not enough to be a professional. Now, the continuous improvement and updating (CJ Casteel, 2010) of what has been learned is required.

Experts, educators, pedagogists and psychologists have presented ideas to improve methodological teaching processes (Fewell, 2010) in order to achieve excellence in educational quality. However, generalized methodologies (C Griffiths, 2014) are proposed for a group of young learners. This research looks for including (A Doiz, 2012) to middle-aged adult (Papalia, 2015) students into the English learning process as well. Middle-aged students are a dispersed, vulnerable and disadvantaged group (Chan, 2010). They continue to be part of a system of education that is neither pedagogical nor andrological (Ozuah, 2016). A system called pedagogic that ignores the educational needs of adults (B Taylor, 2012) and therefore excludes them from the process of inclusive teaching and learning.

Undoubtedly, this investigation is educationally interesting. It proposes changes toward an inclusive (Mittler, 2012), participatory, supportive and non-discriminatory learning (C Forlin, 2011). To foster a spirit of cooperation and inter-learning which respect learners' differences (Thomas, 2013). On the other hand, teachers will be better prepared to face the challenge of guiding the learning process of adult students alongside younger.

Education is the basis of society and society will go where education goes. This work has a social interest (DK Lipsky, 2013). One of its aims is to form individuals who respect differences, solidary and able to adapt to the changes of a demanding world (Messiou, 2012). Therefore, it is important to identify methodological strategies (MA Mastropieri, 2017) that allow students discover their abilities and guide them to be actors of this society.

The education for adults has changed and it cannot be ignored. In hindsight, education for adults has been recognized only through: literacy, night education and / or distance learning programs. It was considered a minority and unfortunate group because they were not able to accede to the educative system (I Hardy, 2015).

There is interest to research new methodological alternatives (Zare, 2012) to improve the quality of teaching for university students. This is an example: "System of Methodological Strategies to improve oral expression (Nazara, 2011) in the process of



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teaching and learning of English at the Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial, Santo Domingo 2006". The main objective was to improve the educational teaching task through a system of methodological strategies (Hinton, 2011) for the development of the oral communication.

Moreover, there are some proposals done in the Career of English in the Technical University of Ambato, that propose methodological strategies to improve the communicative production (Barraja-Rohan, 2011) in the English language in some institutions of the city of Ambato. However, none mentions adult learning as the target population; Nor they are mentioned as beneficiaries of the results of those investigations. The aim is to promote differentiated learning (Cole, books.google.com) to middle-aged adults in the English program of the Language Center of the Technical University of Ambato. In addition, the specific objectives are: To sensitize the educational community about the importance of inclusive education (Unianu, 2012). To associate characteristics of the adults to the methodologies that fit to their learning rhythms, through the curricular adaptations (Byrne, 2013). And to provide teachers with appropriate Methodological Strategies to work with adult learners. (U Sharma, 2012).

This research presents four stages: First, theoretical framework focused on Andragogy (Chinnasamy, 2013) and its differences than Pedagogy. The Cognitive, Communicative and Sociocultural Approach (Nassaji, 2010), Humanistic Approach, Communicative Method (MF Hock, 2011). That includes researching background and current situation of adult learners in the language center. Second, this stage shows variables, analysis of SWOT of the Language Center, population. Analysis and interpretation of results of the surveys. In addition, conclusions and recommendations.

Third stage refers to the proposal itself: "Guide of Methodological Strategies for Differentiated Learning of Adults in the English program". It provides information about characteristics of adult learners and their learning difficulties (Hulme, 2014). This guide includes, practical exercises to reactivate the mind and memory (G Kasper, 2014). As well as activities for each language skill in order to satisfy needs of adults through curricular adaptations (McLeskey, 2001). Finally, the impact of this proposal on education, social, economic, and spreading areas.

Methods

A survey was applied to 34 students of middle age of Language Center. There were 8 students of level A1, 11 of Level A2 and 15 students of level B1. Besides, 47 English teachers who have worked with adults were examined. Total population was 81



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respondents. Therefore, it was not necessary to determine the sample to obtain the required information.

Results

The most relevant responses by middle-aged adults were: First, learning English is between very difficult and difficult for them. Second, the methodology applied doesn't facilitate their learning. Third, they need a different methodology. They showed a percentage of 100%.

The most relevant responses by teachers were: First, teachers identify difficulties working with adults. Adults have a slower learning pace, they need more time to complete their tasks and they do not interact easily with the younger classmates. Also, teachers think the methodology they uses is partially inclusive 87%. And, teachers accept adults need to be included in the teaching process through some curricula adaptations 91%.

The proposal to design a guide of methodological strategies (Oxford, 2016) for adults in the English program was done taking into account the results of the surveys. Mainly, the guide is based on inclusive education. An inclusive education not only for young learners. Also, for adults without discrimination to make effective rights to education with equal opportunities (Giné, 2013).

This guide contains comments of experts in areas of: Psychology, psycholinguistics (Herriot, 2013), and Andragogy. The common concerns of adults. Characteristics of middle-aged adults and their difficulties of learning. Likewise, advice for learners and tutors. There is a "brain gym" which includes Neurolinguistic factors (Hoff, 2013) to prepare and motivate adults in their new learning.

Furthermore, the guide describes a process of curricular adaptations. It begins with a student profile. Next, a cognitive test to measure difficulties of adults in Attention, Comprehension and Memory (Cortiella, 2014). Then, a diagnostic test (Kim) based on English knowledge. Also, a reference of international standards focused on Bloom and revised taxonomy (Adams, 2015). Because, it is used in language center in the Ambato Technical University. Besides, a curricular adaptation plan. Finally, a report at the end of each term.

The particularity of this guide is the combination of objectives in each level of learning and the human, sociocultural and communicative approach (Richards, 2014). It permits to develop contents since the simplest to the most complex. Adult learners have the opportunity to work gradually in the production of language. Taking into account higher-



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order thinking (McNamara, 2015). Adults can adapt much easily to the levels of criticism. It has been done for listening, Reading and Speaking skills. To work in grammar, vocabulary and writing, is more effective follow patterns (Larsen-Freeman, 2013). This technique helps adults in their learning.

Teachers can enrich their own teaching strategies. They can innovate and combine them with those they estimate most useful. This investigation helps teachers to adapt new practices and strengthen human values, such as respect, tolerance and solidarity. This is an educational contribution for teachers and mainly adults. Adults can be the protagonists of their own learning by overcoming the barriers that their age implies.

According to the analysis of the results obtained from students and teachers. Middle-aged students are part of a generalized educational system at the Language Center of the Technical University of Ambato. The lack of statistical information about their academic progress. This shows the lack of interest in this particular group of students.

There is evidence of the absence of methodological strategies that cater differently to adult students in their English language learning. Adults are part of the same learning process as younger students.

A universal methodological process is not inclusive for adult students. It does not respect their differences in learning and it does not satisfy their learning rhythms in the English language.

Teachers are aware that it is very complex to heed the educational needs of a minority of students in the classroom. The curricular adaptations are the only way to do it. They also accept the need to understand this group of middle-aged students about their own characteristics to guide them in their learning.

Conclusions

Definitely, Andragogy theory must be present in the academy. Andragogy must be used in any process of teaching with adults. Adjusting methodological processes to teach English for adults is essential. This investigation is an example about something is happening in other universities.

This investigation is a contribution to reduce rates of failure, demotivation and desertion. It is a response to several concerns of adults. In this way, drop-out cases to the program would be reduced. Also, it would facilitate graduation processes for this group of students. Adult learners cannot graduate if they have not got the requirement of English Certificate.



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Besides, it is an educational alternative to facilitate the learning of adults. Characteristics of adults and own learning rhythms can be considered.

Superior education has the responsibility to warrant an inclusive education. They are educating professionals for the society. Educators are facilitators of learning. They must work with mixed methodological strategies and curricular adaptations in order to create a harmonious environment where the adults feel part of the learning processes.

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