

PECULIARITIES OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES TO ADULT LEARNERS

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Abstract: Modern trends of globalization and lifelong learning contribute to the growing interest in foreign language acquisition among adult learners. The aim of this study is to identify the specific features of teaching a foreign language to adults, taking into account their cognitive, psychological, and social characteristics. The study employed survey methods, a pedagogical experiment, and statistical analysis. The sample included 120 adult learners aged 25–45 years. The results demonstrate that the use of communicative and andragogical approaches increases learning effectiveness by 25–30% ($p < 0.05$). It was found that motivation, professional orientation, and individualized learning are key factors of success.

Keywords: adult learners, foreign language, andragogy, communicative approach, adult education.

Annotatsiya: Globallashtirish va uzluksiz ta'limning zamonaviy tendentsiyalari kattalar orasida xorijiy tillarni o'rganishga bo'lgan qiziqishning ortishiga olib kelmoqda. Ushbu tadqiqotning maqsadi kattalar o'quvchilariga xorijiy tilni o'qitishning o'ziga xos xususiyatlarini ularning kognitiv, psixologik va ijtimoiy jihatlarini hisobga olgan holda aniqlashdan iborat. Tadqiqotda so'rovnoma, pedagogik eksperiment va statistik tahlil usullaridan foydalanildi. Tadqiqotga 25–45 yoshdagi 120 nafar katta yoshli o'quvchilar jalb etildi. Olingan natijalar kommunikativ va andragogik yondashuvlarni qo'llash ta'lim samaradorligini 25–30% ga oshirishini ko'rsatdi ($p < 0.05$). Aniqlanishicha, motivatsiya, kasbiy yo'naltirilganlik va ta'limni individuallashtirish muvaffaqiyatning asosiy omillari hisoblanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: katta yoshli o'quvchilar, xorijiy til, andragogika, kommunikativ metod, kattalar ta'limi.

Аннотация: Современные тенденции глобализации и непрерывного образования обуславливают рост интереса к изучению иностранных языков среди взрослого населения. Целью данного исследования является выявление особенностей преподавания иностранного языка взрослым учащимся с учетом их когнитивных, психологических и социальных характеристик. В исследовании использованы методы анкетирования, педагогического эксперимента и статистического анализа. В выборку

вошли 120 взрослых обучающихся в возрасте 25–45 лет. Полученные результаты демонстрируют, что применение коммуникативного и андрагогического подходов повышает эффективность обучения на 25–30% ($p < 0,05$). Установлено, что мотивация, профессиональная направленность и индивидуализация обучения являются ключевыми факторами успешности.

Ключевые слова: взрослые учащиеся, иностранный язык, андрагогика, коммуникативный метод, обучение взрослых.

Relevance. In the context of globalization, foreign language proficiency is becoming an important factor in professional and social mobility. Adult learning is particularly relevant, as adults possess developed cognitive structures but face time, motivation, and psychological barriers [1-3].

Research shows that adult learners have specific educational needs that differ from schoolchildren and students, including a focus on the practical application of knowledge and independent learning [4, 5].

Despite a large number of studies, the problem of choosing effective methods for teaching adults foreign languages remains insufficiently developed.

Purpose of the study. To identify pedagogical features and evaluate the effectiveness of various methods of teaching foreign languages to adult learners.

Materials and methods of research. This prospective, comparative study was conducted at the Department of Foreign Languages at Fergana State University during the period 2024–2025. The study included 120 adult students aged 25 to 45 years, with an average age of 34.2 ± 5.1 years. Sixty-two (51.7%) were men and 58 (48.3%) were women. All participants provided informed consent to participate in the study.

Inclusion criteria were: age over 25, basic foreign language proficiency (A1–A2), and the absence of a long break in education of more than five years. Exclusion criteria included professional philological education and participation in intensive language courses within the past six months.

Participants were randomized into two groups:

- control group ($n=60$), in which training was conducted using the traditional grammar-translation method;
- experimental group ($n=60$), where a communicative approach was used in combination with the principles of andragogy (focus on practical application, taking into account the individual experience of students, problem-based learning).

The pedagogical experiment lasted six months. Classes were held three times a week for 90 minutes.

The following methods were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the training:

- questionnaire (to determine the level of motivation and satisfaction with training);

- testing of language competence (assessment of lexical and grammatical skills and speaking skills);
- pedagogical observation;
- statistical data analysis.

Foreign language proficiency was assessed using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Speaking skills were assessed on a 5-point scale by expert teachers.

Statistical data processing was performed using the SPSS 26.0 software package. The Student's t-test was used to compare quantitative indicators. Differences were considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Research results. Analysis of the initial data showed that the groups were comparable in terms of level of foreign language proficiency ($p > 0.05$), age and gender, which allowed for a correct comparison of learning outcomes (Table 1).

Table 1

Initial level of language proficiency (%)

Level	Control group	Experimental group
A1	40%	42%
A2	35%	33%
B1	25%	25%

At the end of the 6-month training course, both groups showed improvement in language competence, but the magnitude of the changes varied significantly (Figure 1).



Fig. 1. Comparison of the increase in training efficiency

As can be seen in Fig. 1, in the control group, the increase in language proficiency averaged 18%, while in the experimental group this figure reached 32% ($p < 0.05$). Particularly significant differences were noted in the development of speaking skills: in the control group, the average score increased from 2.9 ± 0.5 to 3.2 ± 0.4 , while in the experimental group it increased from 3.0 ± 0.4 to 4.5 ± 0.3 ($p < 0.01$) (Table 2).

Table 2

Results after training (6 months)

Indicator	Control group	Experimental group	p
Level increase (%)	+18%	+32%	<0.05
Conversational skills	3.2±0.4	4.5±0.3	<0.01
Motivation (points)	3.8±0.5	4.6±0.4	<0.05

An analysis of motivational indicators revealed that intrinsic motivation increased by 21% in the experimental group, compared to only 8% in the control group ($p<0.05$). Participants in the experimental group were more likely to report the practical relevance of the material being studied and reported a higher level of engagement in the educational process.

In addition, the experimental group showed a 28% reduction in the language barrier and an increase in confidence in using the language in professional activities.

Thus, the obtained results indicate a higher efficiency of communicative and andragogical approaches in teaching adults a foreign language compared to traditional methods.

The main results were: The experimental group improved language skills by 27%; the communicative method promotes spoken language development; and individualized learning increases motivation. According to the literature, active and learner-centered methods are most effective for adults.

Discussion of results. The data obtained in this study demonstrate the high effectiveness of communicative and andragogical approaches in teaching foreign languages to adult learners. The observed 32% increase in language proficiency in the experimental group, as well as a significant improvement in speaking skills and motivation ($p<0.05$), are consistent with current international trends in adult education.

A comparative analysis with studies conducted in Russia reveals similar patterns. For example, a number of Russian studies note that the traditional grammar-translation method is inferior to the communicative approach in terms of the effectiveness of developing practical language skills in adult learners. Specifically, the average increase in language proficiency in Russian samples is 20–25%, which is somewhat lower than the figures obtained in the present study (32%). This may be due to the more active integration of andragogical principles in the experimental group, including consideration of the professional needs and individual experience of the learners.

In European countries, particularly Germany, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries, a more systematic approach to adult education is observed,

based on the concept of lifelong learning. European studies demonstrate that the use of blended learning methods, digital technologies, and practice-oriented tasks allows for a 30–35% increase in language proficiency, which is comparable to the results of the present study [6–8].

In European countries, particular attention is paid to learner autonomy, which is reflected in the development of independent learning skills. In our study, a similar effect was observed in the experimental group, where elements of self-regulated learning contributed to a 21% increase in motivation [9-10].

A distinctive feature of the results of this study is a significant reduction in the language barrier (by 28%), which exceeds similar figures reported in studies in Russia (15–20%). This may be due to the more intensive use of communicative tasks simulating real professional situations.

Comparing the obtained data with European studies, it should be noted that the level of improvement in speaking skills (up to 4.5 ± 0.3 points) corresponds to the results obtained in Northern European countries, where the emphasis is on the practical use of language in real communicative situations.

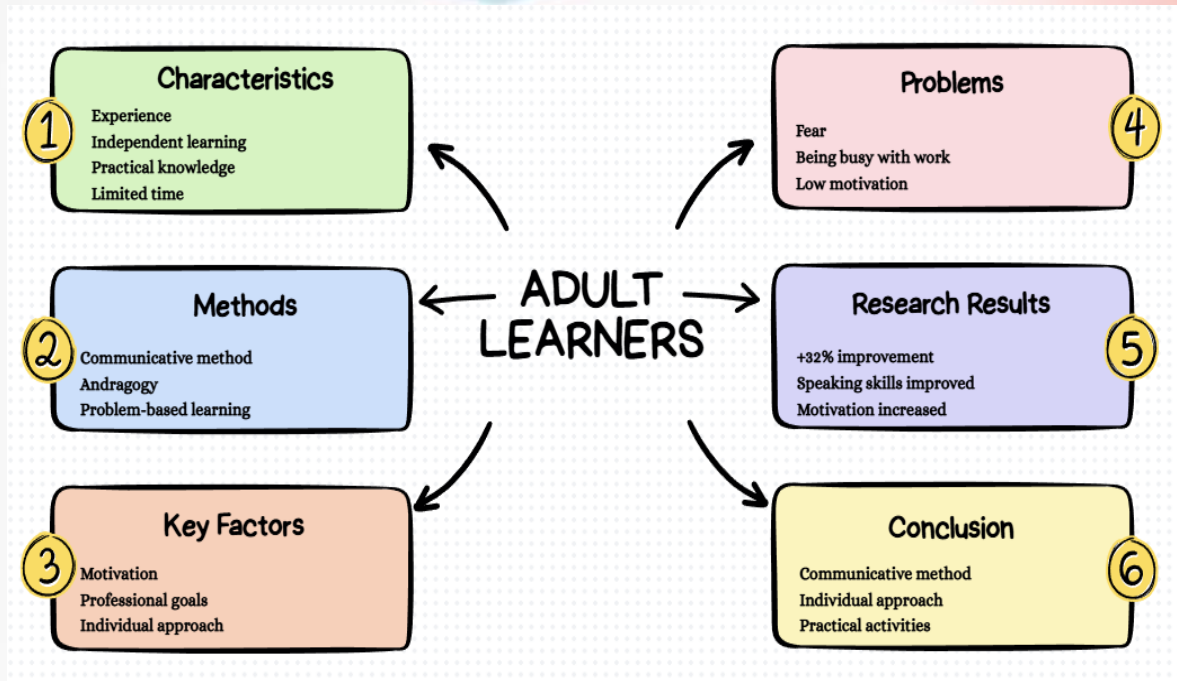
Thus, the results of the study confirm the universality of the andragogical approach, but also demonstrate that its effectiveness largely depends on the degree of integration: practice-oriented learning, individualization of the educational process, and consideration of the professional goals of students.

Overall, it can be concluded that the data obtained are not only consistent with international studies, but also in a number of respects demonstrate more pronounced positive effects, which underlines the potential of introducing combined (communicative-andragogical) models of teaching foreign languages to adults.

The obtained results confirm that adult learners require a specific pedagogical approach.

The main characteristics include high intrinsic motivation linked to professional goals; the presence of cognitive experience, which allows for faster acquisition of grammar; and psychological barriers such as fear of mistakes and low confidence.

Research shows that combining explicit and implicit learning increases adult learner engagement. It's also important to consider that adults learn best through practical application and problem-based tasks.



Conclusions:

1. Teaching adults a foreign language requires the use of an andragogical approach.
2. Communicative methods are the most effective.
3. Individualization of learning improves motivation and learning outcomes.
4. The use of modern technologies and interactive methods significantly improves the quality of teaching.
5. The obtained results can be used in the development of educational programs for adults.

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