Teaching English to Adults

Веренич Ирина Михайловна
преподаватель ГГУ им. Ф. Скорины,
Беларусь, Гомель
E-mail: irenevr@mail.ru

Teaching adult learners can be very rewarding, but very challenging as well. When we teach English to adults, we are dealing with individuals who have a set of study skills, acquired in their previous schooling. They know perfectly well what it is like to attend classes, and the greater their commitment to their learning, the more organized they are, and the more skills they are willing to deploy. Adult learners are well equipped for dialogue and exchange [1].

The reasons adults enroll in English courses can be different. Some need to improve their English communication skills to do business or have better chances of advancement in their careers. Others want to travel to English-speaking countries and want to get around on their own. Others still, simply enjoy it, or studied it when they were kids and want to take their English to the next level.

There are some advantages and disadvantages of teaching English to adult learners. As for advantages, adult learners decide to study English because of their own willing and motivation, that is why they concentrate on the process of learning the language. They may well have a view of the importance of learning which makes them stick to a course of study in a specifically adult way. They bring life experience into the classroom. Teachers of adults can expect more immediate cooperation from the majority of their students, good discipline and positive atmosphere during the lessons [2].

However, teaching English to adult learners has disadvantages too beside the advantages. Many adult learners have difficulties in remembering English grammar. Adults are frequently more nervous of learning than younger pupils are. The potential for losing face becomes greater the older you get. Older students, who are coming back to the classroom after a long absence, usually have a high degree of anxiety about the process of learning itself. Moreover, most adult learners have full time jobs and careers, some study, and it's hard for them to find the time to take an English course. That is the reason why adult learners often arrive in class late and fail to do any homework. Although students may have the initial motivation to enroll in classes, it may vanish into thin air if they suddenly face activities and tasks that don't inspire them to learn. It is possible for adults to suffer from boredom in class, especially when they are studying on a full-time course.

Good teachers are able to balance the serious study of English with the more entertaining activities to facilitate language learning. Rather than excusing adult learners from doing homework, a teacher should give them several, but shorter tasks to do, each of which will take about five or ten minutes. A teacher may also ask students to watch a five-minute video while they have breakfast and then summarize it. Tasks must be short and focused.

Teachers should plan activities that specifically cater to learners' goals, like job interviews, business correspondence etc. They can also provide a variety of activities that will keep adult learners engaged, like videos, games, puzzles or even field trips. By watching their classes and asking their students what they think and feel, teachers can select a judicious blend of activity and style [3, p. 10-12].

Bibliography

1. https://busyteacher.org/3643-teaching-adults.html
2. https://welovewriting.wordpress.com/2012/05/15/advantages-and-disadvantage-of-teaching-english-

for-adult-learners/
3. Harmer, J. How to Teach English / Jeremy Harmer. — Addison Wesley Longman Limited, England, 1998. — 212 p.