

Letting the Learners take the Strain

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News

The good...

- ALL remains at the heart of policy making and support for languages teachers in all sectors.
- LSIS still in charge of support for the FE sector.
- NIACE is still running Adult Learners Week – still time to nominate learners for a prize.
- The BBC is launching a new Italian beginners course for adults on BBC 2 at the end of February; an interactive version will be available in early summer.

The not so good.....

- Funding for teacher support has diminished affecting national and regional events.
- The FE budget overall is reduced; there are changes to learner support and new restrictions on concessionary claims .
- Programmes of learning delivered by HEIs have been adversely affected by changes in funding for part time learners.

A chance to make your voice heard

- LLUK is conducting a consultation into qualifications in the FE sector – details at www.wired-gov.net



What are we doing today?

Using our experience of teaching adults to:

- Debate what learners can and can't do for themselves.
 - Analyse current classroom practice. Are teachers working too hard and learners not working enough?
 - Gauge the impact on current practice of letting learners take the strain.
 - Share activities and ideas for teaching.
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Some facts and figures

- 1 in 3 people have experience of learning language as an adult (almost 30% of the population);
- Only 18% learn by attending a course;
- The majority of adults learn through self study (texts; online; DVDs; CDs).

NIACE: Figures of speech 2007



What do facts and figures tell us?

- That adults are capable of learning other languages on their own;
 - That they need skills and resources but not necessarily teaching to be able to do so;
 - That people who join a class are likely to have specific reasons for doing so and, therefore, specific expectations of teaching.
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How do people learn on their own?

- Skills for learning
- Organisational skills

Where do they get these skills from?

From life and learning experiences that they have already had.



Skills for learning

Research

e.g. choosing a school

Memorising

Lateral thinking

Risk taking

Checking

Action planning

Evaluating

We transfer this learning process from one context to another including language learning.



Organisational skills

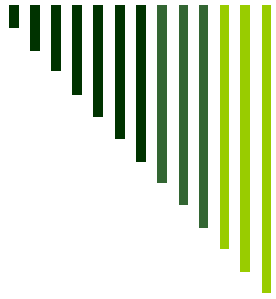
Analysis (identify need; audit current position; weigh options; make informed choices)

e.g. making holiday plans

Problem solving (recognising problems; coping strategies; overcoming obstacles)

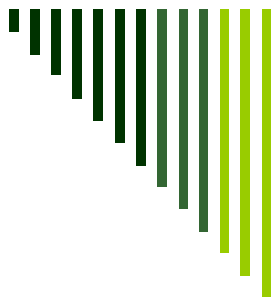
Managing time (judging time needed; dealing with timescales and deadlines; fitting essential actions in; making time; choosing the right time)

Maintaining motivation (setting goals; identifying rewards; checking progress)



The theory

What is andragogy?



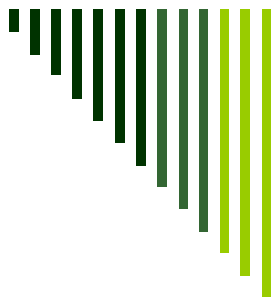
Theory

Learners bring experience and skills to a group that will enable them to learn language.

Teachers bring experience and skills to a group that enable them to support learners with their learning.

Democracy is a feature of successful adult learning groups. Experience and skills are shared between participants.

What skills and experience do you share to support language learners? How do you share them?



The knowledge

Grammar

Vocabulary and.....

Pronunciation

Intonation

Script

Meaning

Culture

How to pass language exams



Where does the knowledge come from?

1. Resources

Task:

List all the resources that you use, or that you might use, to prepare and deliver language teaching.

Once you have a list of resources, identify those to which only you have access (that cannot be accessed by learners).

Rank your list of resources from those that learners can use all on their own to those that can only be accessed with your support.



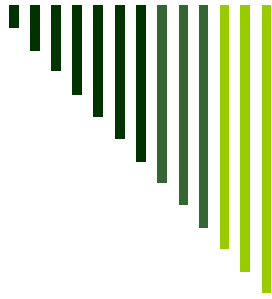
Where does the knowledge come from?

1. Activities

Task: what activities do you put your learners through in order to help them learn?

As a group share all the things that you do even those that you think might not be politically correct!

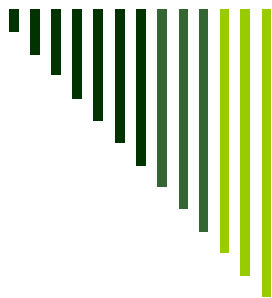
Analyse the list that you've come up with and draw out the activities that learners could do for themselves outside class time.



Conclusion

The resource and activity priorities for group learning are those that learners cannot access or use without support.

How does your teaching match up?



Why do learners join courses?

NOT because they can't learn language
but because they have identified that
they need face to face **support** to learn.



Learners need support to.....

- Use the target language;
 - Transfer existing learning skills to language learning. Refresh dormant skills, learn new ones;
 - Maintain motivation;
 - Check learning and rectify error.
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Use of target language

- A mantra of good language teaching;
 - The group may provide the only opportunity for learners to use and hear the target language;
 - Learners prefer native speaker teachers but.... not for the way that they speak English!
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Transfer of skills

Develop the skills that learners already have so that they can apply them to language learning:

e.g. Research: how to use a dictionary; what resources to use; how to find out about rules.

Refresh skills that may be dormant:

e.g. how to memorise words and rules.

Introduce skills that may be new:

e.g. writing in a different script.



Maintaining motivation

Motivation to do what? To continue to learn and use the language.

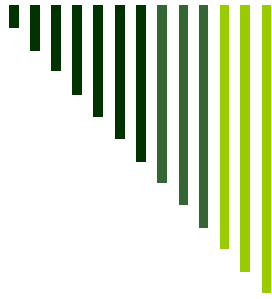
Some motivational techniques bind the learners to the teacher and to attendance at sessions but have nothing to do with language learning:

Force of personality

Threats

External impetus

The creation of a club mentality



Maintaining motivation

People are better motivated by:

Relevant content

Stimulating teaching

Successful learning



Relevant content

Relevant language and relevant topics.

Relevant language: a focus on language (grammar) that is of fundamental importance in transmitting meaning effectively and that may be difficult for learners to access without support (e.g. verbs).

Relevant topics: contexts that are up-to-date, of interest and use to learners and that provide a forum for extensive practice. Contexts that generate opportunities for all 4 language skills and for learners to diversify the language to suit their own purposes.



Stimulating teaching - planning sessions

Key features:

- Plenty of practice of learned language
- Plenty of checking and feedback
- Guidance about what and how to study
- Guidance about what to learn next and specific tasks for independent learning

In class avoid activities and learning that people can do for themselves, concentrate on where teacher support will make a difference.



How stimulating can you be?

<p>1. Numbers (the learners can count from 1 – 1000)</p>	<p>2. Instructions (the learners know the grammar of instruction giving)</p>
<p>3. Negatives (the learners know the most straightforward way of forming the negative)</p>	<p>4. Gender and number (the learners have met definite and indefinite articles)</p>
<p>5. Personal details (the learners know how to give basic information about themselves)</p>	<p>6. The weather (the learners know basic phrases for talking about the weather)</p>



Instructions

A receptive skill for most adult learners

- Web quest
 - Satnav
 - Odd road signs
 - Role plays: doctors; chemists; holiday home owners; making machines work
 - Treasure trail clues
 - Rules of etiquette
 - Card/board games – the rules
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Checking learning

What are you checking for?

That learners can operate as they wish to in the target language by:

- ☐ selecting the right vocabulary;
 - ☐ selecting and applying the right rules;
 - ☐ pronouncing language clearly enough to make sense;
 - ☐ having strategies to make sense of what said and written;
 - ☐ knowing how to make the language work for them.
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Checking learning

Task:

3 groups:

1. Vocabulary
2. Rules
3. Pronunciation

Share ideas for checking; select your group's star idea.



Letting learners take the strain

- Help learners be responsible for their own learning;
 - Give them the information and skills they need to do that;
 - Rebalance group sessions – less teacher input, more chance for learners to practise on their own, with others, as a group;
 - Assign roles and responsibilities to learners within the group and within the activities that are undertaken;
 - Facilitate the learning, don't control it;
 - Check and correct performance and make sure that this process results in improvement;
 - Create learners who don't need a teacher.
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