

XV International Conference "Linguistic and Cultural Studies: Traditions and Innovations", LKTI
2015, 9-11 November 2015, Tomsk, Russia

English Language Courses for Adult Learners in Russia

Gavriil Nizkodubov*, Maxim Denisov

National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, 30 Lenin Avenue, 634050, Tomsk, Russia

Abstract

The paper deals with a compositional analysis of levels in adult education. Local level subsystems which structure includes curricula, syllabus, teaching staff, human resources, facilities, students and their interaction with andragogical personnel (adult educators) have been considered. The analysis introduced in the paper is aimed at revealing key features, which determine models of adult education, peculiarities of English language courses for adult learners. In addition, the authors suggest a classification for English language courses as an effective means for acquiring the highest level in English language learning.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the Scientific Committee of LKTI 2015.

Keywords: Adult learner; adult educator; lifelong education; adult education; system of education; course structure.

1. Introduction

Nowadays adult education is getting more and more popular around the world. Demand for adult education has reached new top level in Russia since adults are becoming aware of a discrepancy problem between their professional, social and cultural levels compared to new economic, politic and cultural realities in Russia. In order to eliminate that existing gap adult students have resorted to opportunities offered by lifelong education.

Lifelong education is a consciously planned process of personal growth throughout human life, which is most often planned in a specially organized forms and institutions of further education.

Lifelong education includes a variety of educational institutions (courses, lectures, language centers, institutes and universities) which are parts of postgraduate, further education and refresher courses.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: gavriil-nizkodubov@yandex.ru (G. Nizkodubov).

These educational institutions implement two main areas: promote improvement (or obtaining) of professional training (or qualification) and develop general cultural level of adults.

In the current paper, we have made an attempt to find out answers to the following issues:

- A) To study the local level subsystem of adult education;
- B) To identify the most typical models of educational systems;
- C) To consider the typical characteristics of the foreign language courses for adult learners;
- D) To introduce a classification for foreign language courses.

2. Discussion and Research Hypothesis

First, we would like to consider local level subsystems which structure includes curricula, syllabus, teaching staff, human resources, facilities, students and their interaction with andragogical personnel (adult educators). Activities of adult educators are due to, on the one hand, a number of internal factors (trained personnel, their professional motivation, value orientation), on the other - curriculum and syllabus subsystems.

The curriculum subsystem includes curricula, adult education outcomes, traditions and standards established in the educational institution. The main function of this subsystem - strategic orientation of andragogical personnel, matching their value orientations and gaining a mutual understanding. In addition, the subsystem provides a managerial aspect of the educational process, practical coordination between adult educators, administration and support staff. The curriculum subsystem block is also important to ensure that the outcomes of the educational system are consistent with the criteria put forward by adult education (Zimnyaya, 2002).

The syllabus subsystem comprises a complex of teaching methods, educational technologies and teaching aids. Effectiveness of the educational process depends on the quality of training and methodological support and its compliance to the curriculum block and methodological resources for andragogical personnel.

An integral element of the educational system is its facilities (classroom conditions, state of the art equipment, devices, tools, comfort level for adult educators and adult learners). Functioning of all the above-mentioned subsystems totally depend on that element. Educational system for adults should be considered in conjunction with the surrounding socio-cultural environment, which is a source of external influences of both positive and negative type (Zmeev, 2007).

With all the variety of educational institutions and practice diversity for working adults, there are three most common models of educational systems in Russia: corporate, specialized and virtual. In real life, these three models of adult education systems are functioning in parallel, to some extent, complementing each other.

Corporate education systems are designed by large enterprises, companies, corporations to train their employees and various categories of staff. Efficient organization of the educational process directly in the enterprise has important socio-economic, cultural and psychological consequences not only for the company itself, but also for the society as a whole. Modern large enterprises are a place of huge concentration of intellectual, spiritual, cultural resources, they are successfully competing with the regular system of education.

Specialized educational systems operate on the basis of educational institutions which are specifically designed for training professionals in a specific economy sector and certain professional groups. Classic examples of such systems are institutions of further education, as well as specialized courses adapted at various schools.

Virtual educational systems are designed by adult learners to meet personal learning needs. Virtual educational systems are often designed by computer and information technologies. They allow an adult person to create an "educational institution" for their own needs in accordance with their abilities, life and professional intentions (Kovalenko, 2003).

Foreign language courses for adults are an integral component of specialized and virtual educational systems. Virtual educational system acts as a form of self-study for those who study foreign languages.

In the last decade, there has been a steady increase in the number of adult students willing to attend courses of a foreign language, as well as noticeable growth rates of the courses themselves. This upward trend, in our view, will not only be maintained but also will increase in the near future. The reason for this is the lack of knowledge in foreign languages of high school and college graduates. The system of general and vocational education involves teaching foreign languages in all secondary and higher educational institutions. However, individuals are trained at a low level, they are not able to read, write, and especially incapable of conversation and translation practice. The current situation in Russia requires various categories of citizens to have a good command of a foreign language. In most cases, this language is the English language. The necessity of learning English can be explained by different

reasons where business and traveling needs are the best examples.

Thus, foreign language courses in the general education system are the main link between school, university and post-graduate education for adults in the field of teaching foreign languages.

Like any educational system, foreign language courses for adults have typical characteristics. The main are:

- Well-organized structure that guarantees that the learning process is fully completed and the learners outcomes are achieved;
- Specific curricula, syllabus, and textbooks;
- Learning combines different forms and methods of teaching;
- Regular adult learners;
- Adult educators ensure completion of a curriculum (Nizkodubov & Evseeva, 2015).

At the same time, foreign language courses are considered as “specific institutions”:

- Foreign language courses accept those who wish to improve their knowledge of English;
- Basically, foreign language courses are on a fee-paying basis;
- In most educational institutions students gain knowledge related to their major field, the courses are attended by the majority of students who are not pursuing the goal of a professional mastering a foreign language.

Thus, foreign language courses can be defined as a specific type of non-formal educational institution, which is aiming at providing students with systematic knowledge, developing skills and abilities in the field of foreign language learners.

The specifics of foreign language courses is revealed by defining the purpose of foreign language acquisition. On this basis, all the courses can be classified as follows:

Type 1. Courses where adult learners study a foreign language in order to achieve some educational goals in another institution;

Type 2. Courses where adult learners study a foreign language to improve their educational level;

Type 3. Courses where adult learners study a foreign language to improve their professional qualifications (Matukhin, et al, 2014).

Courses of the first type are usually taken by an adult from various institutions. The principal difference of that type is that the purpose of language learning is determined by the educational purpose set by adult learners. For instance, foreign language courses for preschoolers largely ineffective, since there is no continuity between the courses curriculum for preschool and schoolchildren; such institutions are not consistent with the objectives and education content.

On the second type courses, adult learners are trained to improve their educational level. By mastering a foreign language, they want to get into the culture of foreigners, especially, by reading written sources and through direct communication with its representatives (guided tours, cultural and other contacts). Secondary function of learning a foreign language is manifested in the increase of learners’ language culture (understanding the native language by comparing it with the foreign one, improving culture of written documents, etc.). Curriculum of such courses may coincide with the curriculum of other educational institutions only in the outcomes to the level of proficiency. Acceptance of several levels of language proficiency for graduates is advisable. In this case, students could safely and consistently move from one stage to another, engage in different types of schools. This does not imply the unification of educational processes, curriculum and training materials – learning outcomes and skills can and should be achieved in different ways.

On the third type courses (professional type), students receive special training. In this case, the courses do not aim at increasing skills in the major field; they provide special language training for those who urgently need improvements in a foreign language in addition to the main specialty.

Table 1 depicts the structure of short-term courses in foreign languages for adult learners at Tomsk Polytechnic University.

Table 1. Structure of short-term courses at Tomsk Polytechnic University.

Elementary	General			Special
Revision course	General English	Intermediate English	Advanced English	English for Specific Purposes (ESP)/English for Academic Purposes (EAP)/Business English Course (BEC)

Elementary course involves teaching adults who have never learned English before, or adults who have a minimal knowledge of English. Upon completion of the course, students can understand foreign speech and are able to communicate in familiar situations (Matukhin & Gorkaltseva, 2015).

Basic course consists of three stages and allow adult learners to make a choice depending on the purpose of their training. For those adults who have sufficient knowledge of a foreign language the course allows adults to take up the Advanced English course. Upon completion of the Intermediate English course, adult learners, despite some rare mistakes in speech and understanding the meaning of what they hear, feel at home with a foreign language and are able to use grammatical structures of medium complexity.

The course of Advanced English assumes a sufficient command of English, ability to express complex ideas in the English language. Adult learners understand English speech, nevertheless, misunderstandings may occasionally occur only in unfamiliar situations.

Obtaining some special knowledge of the English language (BEC, ESP, EAP) is possible and feasible only if a person possesses some basic knowledge of the English language. The table above, in our view, demonstrates how to achieve maximum performance in teaching adults the English language. It shows continuity between the levels of knowledge of a foreign language (English) and the usefulness of curricula providing training at these levels.

3. Conclusion

To sum up, we once again would like to note that:

- A) Among the local level subsystems of adult education, we emphasize the following: curricula, syllabus, teaching staff, human resources, facilities, students and their interaction with andragogical personnel (adult educators).
- B) The most typical models of adult educational systems are corporate, specialized and virtual;
- C) The most common features that characterize foreign language courses for adult learners are an organized structure, specific curricula and syllabus, learning process, regular adult learners, andragogical staff;
- D) We have introduced a classification of foreign language courses for adult learners: courses where adult learners study a foreign language in order to achieve some educational goals in another institution; courses where adult learners study a foreign language to improve their educational level; courses where adult learners study a foreign language to improve their professional qualifications.

References

- Zimnyaya, I. A. (2002). *Pedagogicheskaya Psihologiya* [Psychology In Pedagogics]. Moscow: Logos.
- Zmeev, S. I. (2007). *Andragogika: Osnovy` Teorii, Istorii I Tekhnologii Obucheniya Vzrosly`Kh* [Andragogy: Fundamentals of The Theory, History And Technology Of Adult Learning]. Moscow: PER SE.
- Kovalenko, M. P. (2003). *Informatsionnaya Osnova Deyatel`Nosti V Formirovani Leksicheskogo Navy`Ka Audirovaniya Teksta* [Formation Of Listening Skills. Thesis Abstract]. Yekaterinburg: SE PER.
- Matukhin, D. L., et al. (2014). Methodological Basics Of Blended Learning In Teaching English For Academic Purposes To Engineering Students. *Asian Social Science*, 10, 97-102. <http://Dx.Doi.Org/10.5539/Ass.V10n20p97>.
- Matukhin, D. L., & Gorkaltseva, E. N. (2015). Teaching Foreign Language For Specific Purposes In Terms Of Professional Competency Development. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences MCSER Publishing*, 6(1), 525-531.
- Nizkodubov, G. A., & Evseeva, A. M. (2015) Planning And Implementation Of The Process Aimed At Teaching English To Adult Learners. *Mediterranean Journal Of Social Sciences MCSER Publishing*, 6(2), 643-647.