

Language Use for Adult Learning

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Countries in the world have, over the past two decades, become more and more interdependent, and new technologies have erased many existing borders. Consequently, this has led to a situation where language use has become more necessary than ever for linking with the rest of the world and for producing an enlightened citizenship able to function in today's ever-shrinking world.

Without doubt, one of the most complicated jobs in today's world is teaching. Adult classes are very often made up of individuals with differing interests, abilities, skills and knowledge. For this reason, one size does not fit all. Teachers face the challenge of meeting the variety of needs they are confronted with. This may get even more complicated when classrooms are characterised by diverse populations and which in turn present multilingual and multicultural challenges. This diversity in the classroom makes teachers' work difficult since cultural diversity poses a pedagogical and social challenge to educators.

Teachers as well as students bring into the classroom their own personal cultures, institutional cultures, and even cultures from specific social realities, and it is no easy challenge for the teacher to somehow integrate all this into a "class culture" to produce an environment that is conducive to learning. Teachers need to be knowledgeable about how students coming from different countries, backgrounds and life experiences perceive the world and how they process the language/s and intercultural aspects being taught in class. This makes it necessary that future teachers are prepared not only with knowledge in their discipline but also with the ability to assume multiple roles in a multi-cultural society. In the 21st century, foreign language competence and proficiency and intercultural understanding are no longer considered as optional extras or a luxury but have become an essential part of being a citizen.

Both in the society in which we live as well as in the global economy, an increasingly important characteristic is the ability to understand and communicate in other languages. Such a characteristic not only contributes to the cultural and linguistic richness of our society but increases personal fulfilment and promotes global citizenship.