



**UNIVERSIDAD ESTATAL PENÍNSULA
DE SANTA ELENA
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN E IDIOMAS
INSTITUTO DE POSTGRADO**

TÍTULO DEL TRABAJO

**TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO ADULTS WITH
UNFINISHED EDUCATION THROUGH EFFECTIVE
METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES**

AUTORA

Lic. Jenny Alexandra Maldonado Torres

**TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN EN MODALIDAD EXAMEN DE CARÁCTER
COMPLEXIVO**

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TUTORA

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DEDICATORIA

To my parents, whose example motivated me to live by the values of responsibility, perseverance, and resilience.

To the members of the Ángel Polibio Córdova Educational Institution, who, with their joy and dedication, have shown that there is no age limit to achieving dreams if we have the life to pursue them.

Jenny Alexandra Maldonado Torres

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Resumen

En este ensayo se enfoca la enseñanza del inglés para personas adultas con escolaridad inconclusa (EPJA) en Quito, donde se nota que la metodología tradicional produce desmotivación y deserción. El propósito es demostrar que las estrategias andragógicas, como el aprendizaje autodirigido, ABP y storytelling, superan barreras al permitir la conexión del idioma con sus realidades cotidianas.

Se llevó a cabo un estudio de caso cualitativo con 20 estudiantes de entre 30 y 60 años en la Institución Educativa Ángel Polibio Córdova Santander, utilizando entrevistas, observaciones en clase y análisis temático, y respaldado por autores como Knowles y Steber & Rossi.

Los resultados indican que la relevancia práctica, la autonomía y los entornos colaborativos son fundamentales para lograr el compromiso en el aprendizaje del inglés como segunda lengua.

Se propone un marco integrador que convierte las aulas en comunidades inclusivas, recomendando la capacitación docente y la flexibilidad curricular para lograr un aprendizaje equitativo y sostenible.

Palabras claves: 3 palabras

La andragogía: Es el alma del texto, constituye el puente que respeta la vida ya vivida de estos aprendices, brindándoles voz y autonomía para evitar tratarlos como niños que requieren dirección permanente.

Aprendizaje Basado en Proyectos (PBL): Permite transformar las clases en proyectos dinámicos como folletos turístico o videos comunitarios que hacen del inglés una herramienta real.

Relevancia práctica: La conexión del espacio laboral, familiar, o sueños cotidianos, activan el aprendizaje duradero que los estudiantes requieren

Abstract

This essay examines English language instruction for adults with incomplete schooling (EPJA) in Quito, highlighting how traditional approaches can result in demotivation and dropout. It demonstrates that andragogical strategies—like self-directed learning, problem-based learning (PBL), and storytelling—effectively address these issues by connecting language learning to students' everyday experiences.

A qualitative case study involving 20 students aged 30 to 60 was conducted at the Ángel Polibio Córdova Santander Educational Institution. The research utilized interviews, classroom observations, and thematic analysis, drawing on the works of authors like Knowles and Steber & Rossi.

The results show that practical relevance, autonomy, and collaborative environments are essential for engaging in learning English as a second language.

An integrative framework is proposed that transforms classrooms into inclusive communities by suggesting teacher training and curricular flexibility to promote equitable and sustainable learning.

Keywords: 3 palabras

Andragogy: This is the essence of the message, establishing a connection that respects these learners' lived experiences, giving them a voice and fostering independence to avoid treating them as children requiring constant supervision.

Project-Based Learning (PBL): Transforms classes into engaging projects such as tourist brochures or community videos, making English a practical, real-world skill.

Practical Relevance: Linking to the workplace, family life, or everyday dreams promotes lasting learning that students need.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most challenging and, at the same time, revealing experiences in my professional career occurred in the Adult Education Program (EPJA) at the Ángel Polibio Córdova Santander Educational Institution, similar to the one described by Delgado (2022) in his study on educational reintegration in Limón Indanza. The group consists of 20 adults, aged 30 to 60. Housewives, single mothers, security guards, and construction workers, among others, were unable to complete their formal education due to various life circumstances. Now, with a mixture of hope and determination, they seek not only to obtain their high school diploma but also to learn English, a curricular requirement they perceive as insurmountable.

Ángel Polibio Córdova Santander Night School offers educational opportunities for those with incomplete schooling. At the start of the academic year, students returning to their studies experienced a noticeable gap between their expectations and the actual teaching. When the teacher launched English classes conforming to the national curriculum (MINEDUC, 2021), students were taken aback by the abstract grammar, disconnected vocabulary lists, and rote exercises, which immediately created barriers and prompted complaints to school authorities. Their initial enthusiasm diminished as the pedagogical approach failed to relate to their lives, needs, or background. Students indicated that these methods reminded them of their childhood schooling, revealing a resistance rooted in the misalignment between standardized educational policies and their real-world experiences.

The decision to investigate this issue stems from the increasing need to provide educational opportunities that address the realities of this population, as promoted by organizations like DVV International (International Cooperation Institute of the German Association for Adult Education) and UNESCO reports on lifelong learning (DVV, 2024; UNESCO, 2015).

This essay argues that implementing methodological strategies that combine principles of andragogy, self-directed learning, and active methods such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Storytelling is significantly more effective in promoting meaningful learning and motivation among adult English learners with incomplete schooling than solely transmissive strategies.

This essay advances the claim that implementing methodological strategies that combine principles of andragogy, self-directed learning, and active methods such as project-based learning and storytelling offer a pedagogically meaningful and context-responsive alternative to traditional EFL instruction in EPJA settings

To support this claim, the essay relays on a qualitative case study conducted in an EPJA EFL classroom with the purpose of identifying the most effective methods for teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners with incomplete schooling. The specific goals were: (1) to understand the characteristics, motivations, and barriers faced by adult learners in this context; (2) to evaluate the applicability of andragogical principles and active teaching methods in the English classroom; and (3) to develop a framework of best practices based on the evidence collected. Rather than positioning the research as an end in itself, the study functions as an empirical argument that illustrates how andragogic principles materialize in practice and how learners respond to them. Consequently, the findings are interpreted as situated evidence that supports the pedagogical claim advanced in this essay.

The importance of this study is multifaceted. On a social level, it promotes inclusion and the right to lifelong learning, providing vulnerable groups with tools to improve their employment and personal prospects (FARO, 2022; Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2021). On an academic level, it aims to fill a gap in the existing literature, particularly in the Ecuadorian context, concerning the intersection of andragogy, language teaching, and adult education for individuals with interrupted educational paths.

The methodology used in this study was qualitative, employing a case study design to thoroughly understand the phenomenon in its real context, this providing arguments to reinforce the central thesis of this essay.

This work has three main sections. The Introduction contextualizes the problem and defines the research's main pillars. The Development is divided into three parts: a review of the literature on andragogy, adult learning, and relevant methodologies; the Methodological Aspects, which detail the research design; and an Analysis and Discussion section that compares the case study findings with the theoretical framework. Finally, the Conclusions section summarizes the findings, discusses limitations, and suggests future research directions, reaffirming the thesis's validity. The document concludes with a comprehensive list of references.

DEVELOPMENT

2.1 State of the Art: Theorizing Research

Teaching a foreign language to adults with incomplete education is a complex field that draws on andragogy, the psychology of learning, and neuroscience. Unlike pedagogy, which focuses on children, andragogy is defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1980, p.1). This approach, popularized by Malcolm Knowles, is based on key assumptions about adult learners: the need to understand why they are learning something, their self-concept as self-directed individuals, the importance of their prior experiences as a resource for learning, their readiness to learn in real-life contexts, and an primarily intrinsic motivation (Domenech, 2015; Flavio de Jesús Castillo Silva, 2018).

Andragogy, therefore, is not just a theory but a model that promotes knowledge in higher and adult education, fostering a horizontal relationship between the facilitator and the participant (Alonso Chacón, 2012; Caraballo-Colmenares, 2007). Authors such as Barros (2018) have revisited the work of Knowles and Paulo Freire, emphasizing dialogue as the core of socio-pedagogical mediation, a fundamental principle for working with adults who, like those in this study, may have experienced exclusion from the formal education system (Groves, 2016).

2.1.1. Adult Learning: Cognitive and Psychological Factors

Learning a new language as an adult presents unique challenges and advantages. Neuroscience research, such as that by Steber and Rossi (2021, p. 17), demonstrates the "fascinating plasticity of the adult brain," which can memorize and recognize new words in a foreign language even after brief training. This study employed a multimethod approach (EEG and fNIRS) to show that familiarity and cognitive control mechanisms are crucial in the early stages of vocabulary learning. This indicates that strategies that leverage association (e.g., word-image) are neurocognitively sound (Steber & Rossi, 2021).

However, barriers exist. Klimova and Maltseva (2024) identify negative psychological factors such as fear of failure, anxiety, and limiting beliefs about one's own ability to learn ("you cannot teach an old dog new tricks"). Additionally, they highlight positive factors like high intrinsic motivation and the ability to control the learning process independently (Abetova et al., 2024). Motivation plays a crucial role, and studies such as that by Mardani et al. (2024) examine how personal and professional goals motivate adults to overcome challenges. Moreover, language learning in adulthood has been shown to provide cognitive benefits, acting as a form of "cognitive therapy" that can delay age-related decline (Antoniou et al., 2013; Owatnupat, 2021).

2.1.2. Adult-Centered Methodologies

Given the profile of the adult learner, the methodologies must be active, participatory, and relevant. Self-directed learning (SDL) is a core concept where individuals take the initiative to identify their learning needs, set goals, find resources, and assess their progress (Knowles, 1975; Robles Arboleda et al., 2024). The teacher's role shifts from instructor to facilitator or "coach" (Mitchell, 2023). Recent research investigates how students utilize technological tools like Google Translate and online videos for self-directed learning (Van & Cardoso, 2022; Willoughby & Sell, 2024).

Among active methodologies, Project-Based Learning (PBL) stands out for its effectiveness. This approach, rooted in the work of Dewey and Kilpatrick, structures learning around complex, authentic projects that lead to a final product or presentation (Estalayo et al., 2021; Zúñiga et al., 2021). For adults with incomplete schooling, PBL helps them connect English language learning to their realities, such as entrepreneurship, improve practical skills, and foster collaboration (Sangacha, 2023; Zambrano et al., 2022).

Another effective method is storytelling. Vecino (2016) demonstrated in his research with adult English learners that this method not only improves listening and speaking skills but also expands vocabulary, enhances memory, and increases learners' confidence. Stories provide a relevant and emotionally engaging context, making language learning feel more natural and less intimidating (Morgan & Rinvoluceri, 1983).

2.1.3. Adult-Centered Methodologies in Latin America

Youth and Adult Education (EPJA) in Latin America operates within a context marked by poverty and inequality, where illiteracy and low levels of education remain widespread (Redalyc, 2006). In this environment, teaching a second language is not only about acquiring linguistic skills but also functions as a tool for social inclusion, promoting critical thinking, and expanding personal and professional opportunities (Jaya, 2024; Santos de Lima et al., 2021).

2.1.4. Review of Key Studies

These 12 studies are most relevant to neural mechanisms of adult English acquisition—plasticity, foundational principles, learner autonomy, practical methods, barriers, and regional applications for educators.

Author(s) and Year	Study Objective	Methodology	Key Findings
Fundamentals of Andragogy and Adult Learning			
Knowles (1980)	Establish the principles of adult education.	Theoretical/Conceptual	Define andragogy and its six key assumptions about the adult learner (self-concept, experience, disposition, etc.).
Neuroscience and Cognition in Adult Learning			

Steber & Rossi (2021)	To investigate the neural mechanisms of early language learning in adults.	Experimental (EEG/ fNIRS)	The adult brain shows plasticity; associative learning activates mechanisms of familiarity and cognitive control.
Antoniou, G. & Wong (2013)	Hypothesizing about language learning as cognitive therapy.	Review and hypothesis	Training in a foreign language can be an effective intervention to mitigate age-related cognitive decline.
Self-Directed Learning (SDL)			
Robles Arboleda, Rodríguez & Vega Iza (2024)	Exploring SDL in second language acquisition in adults.	Systematic review	SDL is crucial to success in L2 learning among adults and correlates with motivation and autonomy.
Garrison (1997)	To propose a comprehensive model of SDL.	Theoretical	The SDL integrates self-management (context control), self-monitoring (cognitive responsibility), and motivation.
Active Methodologies: PBL and Storytelling			
Sangacha (2023)	Analyze PBL as a methodology for entrepreneurship with students with incomplete schooling.	Action research	PBL is highly effective in developing practical skills and contextualizing learning in this group of students.

Neighbor (2016)	Observe the benefits of Storytelling with adult EFL students.	Pedagogical innovation/Observation	Storytelling improves the four language skills, memory, and confidence of adult learners.
Context and Challenges of Adult Learning			
Klimova & Maltseva (2024).	Identifying difficulties in language learning among adults.	Literature analysis	The barriers are both psychological (fear, lack of confidence) and cognitive (memory), but they can be overcome with appropriate strategies.
Muñoz, Solórzano, et al. (2024)	Analyzing the development of oral expression in adult Ecuadorian entrepreneurs learning English.	Case study	Learning is most effective when it focuses on immediate and relevant communication needs for your activity (e.g., serving customers).
Effective Methodological Strategies in Foreign Language Teaching for Adults in Latin America			
Morales, L., Alvarado-Martínez, E., & Carretero	To explore the interactions between a student aged 40 or over,	A qualitative approach was used with a digital ethnography strategy. Data collection	The authors conclude that applying andragogy and adaptive education can optimize teaching practices

Hernández, A. (2022)	her classmates, and the teacher in a virtual English class, in order to propose a didactic model based on Andragogical Theory and Adaptive Theory to promote inclusion.	techniques included peripheral observation in a virtual environment (Microsoft Teams), field notes, and narratives.	and promote the inclusion of adult students, who are often vulnerable to exclusion due to prejudices about their learning abilities.
Acosta Padrón, R. (2018)	To defend the need to contextualize the teaching of foreign languages in the Latin American sphere, so that it responds to the needs and conditions of the region, and to propose a didactic conception with a strong sense of identity.	An article of reflection and critical analysis based on the review of pedagogical and sociolinguistic literature, including the ideas of thinkers such as Freire and Bello.	Sociocultural competence must therefore be the means, content, and objective of teaching, counteracting the cultural penetration that can accompany language.
Sánchez Díaz, XFC (2025)	To analyze the learning of English as a second language in older adults in Mar del Plata, Argentina,	This was an interactive qualitative case study. Instruments such as focus groups and participant observation	This study shows that the demand for learning English in this age group is not a mere pastime but a need linked to

	identifying their needs, motivations, and the barriers they face.	records were used to collect data.	improving the quality of life and social connections.
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2.1.5. Gaps and Contribution of Research

The literature review highlights significant progress in understanding andragogy and adult learning. However, several research gaps remain: (1) there are few studies focusing specifically on populations with incomplete schooling in the Ecuadorian context, as noted by Delgado (2022); (2) there is a lack of long-term impact studies that assess how methodological strategies influence language retention and students' life paths; and (3) there are limited direct comparisons between different active methodologies (e.g., PBL versus Storytelling) within the same control group. This research aims to address these gaps. Conducting a case study at an Ecuadorian institution provides valuable, contextualized data. It examines the combined use of andragogical principles and active methodologies, offering a comprehensive view of the phenomenon and a framework of practices that educators facing similar challenges can adapt.

2.2. Methodological Aspects

To achieve the objectives of this research, a qualitative case study design was employed.

The case study involved an English teaching group in the Extraordinary Higher Basic Education program, held during the evening session at the Ángel Polibio Córdova Santander

Educational Institution. Like many institutions in Ecuador, this one serves young people and adults seeking to finish their formal education, often while working or caring for family.

The participants: The study involved 20 adult students aged 30 to 60. All of them had interrupted their formal education for more than five years and were currently enrolled in upper basic education. The course instructor also collaborated on the study. The researcher acted as an observer, which required permanent open-mindedness and flexibility to minimize interpretive bias.

The data collection was conducted using three primary techniques to ensure triangulation and the validity of the findings.

1. Semi-structured interviews: Individual interviews were conducted with the 20 students. An open-ended questionnaire was used to explore their previous experiences with education and English, their motivations for learning the language, the challenges they encounter (personal, professional, and academic), and their perceptions of the most and least effective teaching methods. The interviews helped capture the richness of their personal stories.

2. Non-participant observation: Five 90-minute English class sessions were observed. Five sessions were considered enough to identify recurring interactional patterns. The researcher took a passive role to avoid disturbing the classroom's natural flow. An observation checklist was used to record the teaching strategies used by the teacher, the level of student participation and engagement, the types of interactions (teacher-student, student-student), and the overall classroom atmosphere.

The data analysis process was thematic. Interview transcripts and field notes were coded using an inductive method. Initially, open codes were identified directly from the data. These codes were then grouped into broader categories and ultimately combined into core themes that addressed the research questions. This process allowed for the identification of recurring patterns, relationships among concepts, and key participants' perspectives on effective teaching methods.

Informed consent was obtained from participants, pseudonyms were used, and participation did not affect course evaluation.

2.3. Analysis and Discussion of Results

The analysis of the data collected in the case study, considering the theoretical framework, uncovers a strong alignment between the needs of adult learners with incomplete schooling and the principles of andragogy and active learning strategies. The discussion centers around three main themes: the importance of relevance and practical application, the influence of autonomy and self-direction, and the significance of the learning environment.

2.3.1. The Primacy of Relevance: "I want to learn what is useful to me."

A recurring theme in the interviews was the students' strong pragmatic focus. One 45-year-old student, a security guard, stated: "Time is one of my biggest enemies. I need to memorize things I am going to use. I want to learn English to help my children and grandchildren with their homework and, at the same time, get a better-paying job." This view directly supports the andragogical principle of the willingness to learn being rooted in real-life relevance (Knowles, 1980). Students are driven not by abstract academic demands but by concrete, applicable goals. This finding aligns with the studies by Muñoz et al. (2024), who discovered that Ecuadorian entrepreneurs learn English more effectively when the content addresses their immediate communicative needs.

Classroom observations reinforced this idea. In a session using a traditional methodology based on the repetition of decontextualized grammar rules, participation was low, and attention was scattered. In contrast, in a session that implemented an activity where students were tasked with creating a simple English-language tourist brochure about their community, engagement was noticeably higher. This activity connected with their experience (another principle of Knowles) and had a clear and tangible purpose, aligning with Sangacha's (2023) recommendations for this population. Neuroscience supports this approach: associative learning, which links new vocabulary (English words) with familiar and relevant concepts (their community), is a powerful mechanism for the adult brain (Steber & Rossi, 2021).

2.3.2. The Power of Autonomy: "Let me learn my way."

The adult students in this study, despite their incomplete schooling, possess a strong self-concept as capable and self-directed individuals. Many expressed frustration with overly rigid and paternalistic learning environments. One 30-year-old participant commented, "I feel uncomfortable when we are told exactly what to do and how. I know how I learn best; I need to be able to find things for myself." This highlights the need to foster self-directed learning (SDL), as proposed by Robles Arboleda et al. (2024) and Garrison (1997).

Strategies that promoted autonomy were highly valued. For example, the Storytelling technique, where students could choose a simple personal story to tell in English, gave them a sense of ownership and control over the content. This practice not only improved their fluency and confidence, as Vecino (2016) observed, but also validated their life experiences as a valuable learning resource. The teacher's role as a facilitator, offering guidance and resources rather than imparting knowledge in a one-way fashion, was crucial. This aligns with Mitchell's (2023) view of the teacher as a coach who supports the transition to SDL.

2.3.3. The Learning Environment: Overcoming the Fear of Making Mistakes

The interviews revealed that the most common psychological obstacle was the fear of making mistakes and "making a fool of myself." This aligns with the challenges noted by Klimova and Maltseva (2024). One student shared, "I am terrified of speaking English in front of everyone. I feel like my pronunciation is bad and they are going to laugh." Such anxiety significantly hinders learning, particularly in developing speaking skills.

The observations showed that active and collaborative methods are essential for creating a safe and supportive learning environment. During PBL and storytelling activities, the focus shifted from grammar correction to effective communication. Working in small groups decreased individual pressure and encouraged cooperation. The teacher played a vital role in modeling a positive attitude toward mistakes, viewing them as a natural and necessary part of learning. This transforms the classroom into a community of practice where vulnerability is accepted, which is a key aspect of adult learning according to theorists like Brookfield (1987), who supports challenging adults to explore and act in different ways without fear.

In summary, the discussion of the results enhances the thesis of this research. Combining an andragogical approach that values the experience and autonomy of adults with active methodologies like Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and storytelling, which make learning relevant and meaningful, is the most promising strategy for teaching English to this specific group. Ignoring these aspects and relying on traditional pedagogical methods is not only ineffective but may also reinforce negative experiences that caused these students to drop out of school initially.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

To address the problematic situation described, a comprehensive methodological strategy is proposed, based on the integration of three key approaches: Andragogy as a philosophical framework, Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a core method, and Meaningful Learning as the ultimate objective. This proposal aims to transform the English classroom from a space primarily for knowledge transmission into a community of practice where the language becomes a functional and relevant tool.

3.1. Andragogical Foundations of the Proposal

The proposal is based on the andragogical principles of Knowles (Domenech, 2015; Flavio de Jesús Castillo Silva, 2018).

- **The need to know:** The process should start with a participatory assessment. Instead of imposing the curriculum, the teacher guides a discussion about why and for what purpose learning English is important in their context. Could it help them sell their crafts online? Understand manuals for new agricultural tools? Communicate with tourists visiting the area? This step is essential for fostering intrinsic motivation.
- **The learner's self-concept:** Students should be treated as peers in the learning process. They should be given autonomy to choose project topics, distribute tasks, and select assessment methods (Robles Arboleda et al., 2024). The teacher's role shifts from "instructor" to "facilitator" or "guide" (Acosta et al., 2023).
- **The importance of experience:** Their real-life experiences are the main source of

learning. Projects should be based on their actual lives. For example, instead of just learning vocabulary related to “the city,” they could create a project about “promoting local products,” using English to make brochures, short videos, or a simple website.

- **Learning orientation:** The approach should focus on problem-solving. The language is not learned in isolated steps (such as just using the verb "to be" and then the simple present tense), but in an integrated and practical way as the project requires.

3.2. Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a Central Strategy

Problem-based learning (PBL) is an active approach that involves students in researching and developing a product or response to a complex, real-world question (Aritio et al., 2021; Zambrano et al., 2022). In the case presented, it could be implemented as follows:

Phase 1: Launch and Planning. The teacher presents a challenging guiding question, co-created with the students, such as: "How can we promote our community's products to English-speaking visitors?" (How can we promote our community's products to English-speaking visitors?). In groups, students plan their project: they decide on the final product they will create (a catalog, a tourist video, or a script for a guided tour) and identify what they need to learn to accomplish it.

Phase 2: Research and Development. This is the "learning by doing" phase. Students research vocabulary related to their products (fruits, texts, etc.), and learn phrases to describe processes, prices, and qualities. The teacher provides "mini-lessons" just-in-time. Teaching on necessary grammatical structures, such as descriptive and comparative adjectives or the use of imperatives. Simple technological tools, like Google Translate, can support self-directed learning (Van & Cardoso, 2022), and online videos can be used to practice listening (Wiloughby & Sell, 2024).

Phase 3: Product Creation and Presentation. The groups work on their final product. This process encourages cooperative learning and communication (Muñoz Busto et al., 2021). The final step is presenting the project to an authentic audience, such as other classmates, family members, or even a simulated tourism fair. This presentation not only assesses the product but also the communication skills students have developed. Storytelling can be a powerful technique in this phase, allowing students to share the story of their products in a personal and engaging way (Vecino, 2015).

This methodology, as Sangacha (2023) shows in a similar context, is perfect for entrepreneurship and management, directly linking learning with practical skills and boosting students' self-efficacy.

Authentic and Formative Assessment

The assessment should align with the methodology. Instead of multiple-choice exams, authentic and ongoing assessment is suggested (Bustos Morlesín et al., 2021). This includes:

- **Co-constructed rubrics:** To assess both the final product, teamwork process, and oral communication.
- **Portfolios:** Where each student compiles evidence of their learning (drafts, voice recordings, reflections).
- **Self-assessment and peer assessment:** Promoting metacognition and responsibility for one's own learning.

By adopting this approach, learning English ceases to be an abstract requirement and becomes a tangible tool for personal and community development, thus achieving significant and lasting learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusions

Teaching a foreign language to adults with incomplete schooling is a challenge that cannot be solved with traditional teaching methods. Experience shows that using standardized curricula, which are disconnected from students' real-life situations, demotivates learners and reinforces the idea that language is an overwhelming obstacle. Theoretical studies confirm that andragogy should guide instruction, emphasizing the adult learner's experience, independence, and problem-solving skills. A clear contradiction exists between this principle and typical teaching practices in adult education programs, creating a gap that calls for innovative strategies.

This research essay presents an integrated strategy that combines andragogy with Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a practical and effective solution. This approach makes English language learning a useful and relevant skill rooted in learners' real lives and needs. By engaging in authentic and meaningful projects, adults not only learn language skills but also build critical thinking, collaboration, and self-confidence, fostering meaningful and lasting learning.

4.2. Recommendations

1. **Teacher Training:** Conduct ongoing training programs focused on andragogy and active methodologies such as PBL. Teachers working with adults need specific tools to facilitate learning for this population (Villegas et al., 2024).
2. **Curriculum Flexibility:** It is recommended to allow more flexibility when implementing the national English curriculum for adult education programs. Teachers should have the freedom to modify the content and objectives to meet their students' needs and interests, using the curriculum as a general guide rather than a strict framework.
3. **Creating Contextualized Materials:** Develop and share educational resources that are culturally or socially relevant to adults with incomplete schooling. This includes materials that reflect their work, community, and personal contexts.
4. **Promoting Action Research:** Encouraging adult education teachers to conduct action research projects in their own classrooms to organize their experiences, assess the effectiveness of new strategies, and add to the body of knowledge on adult education in their specific settings.
5. **Gradual Technological Integration:** Introducing technological tools should be done gradually and focused on practical goals, while being mindful of the potential digital divide. Simple tools like translation apps, video platforms, or social networks can be effective allies when thoughtfully incorporated into learning projects.

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