

# ANALYZING THE ANDRAGOGY PRINCIPLES TO BOOST LITERACY SKILLS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

*Literacy is a fundamental skill that university students should master to reach greater academic achievement. Dealing with university students requires a certain approach and learning theory. The influence of the andragogy theory by Knowles in teaching university students cannot be ruled out. This research aims to analyze the andragogy principles in teaching and learning activities of sixth-semester students in the research methodology course of English Language Education, The Faculty of Teacher Training and Pedagogy, Dwijendra University. This research is qualitative research where the data were collected from in-depth observation and interviews with an English lecturer. The data were analyzed qualitatively by referring to Knowles' (1984) principles of andragogy which include (1) adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction, (2) experience provides the basis for the learning activities, (3) adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life, and (4) adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented. The finding shows that the principles have been inserted in various learning activities to boost the literacy skills of sixth-semester students. The data shows that principles are potentially beneficial to dealing with university students due to their learning styles and students' characteristics.*

*Keywords: literacy skill, andragogy's principle, university student, Knowles*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy is a fundamental skill that must be acquired by students at all levels to reach greater academic achievement. It is considered a foundational skill that is necessary to acquire knowledge and skill in the educational institution. Literacy simply refers to a combination of the ability to read and write as well as understand information and express ideas both concretely and abstractly (Haeussler, 2012). Literacy is also defined as the ability to create and communicate meaning from and by using various social contextual symbols, achieving desired goals through language skills (Akhter, 2014).

Literacy has an important role in various aspects of life. Mastery of literacy has an important role in cognition, social, and intellectual life, as well as influencing historical and cultural change (Huettig & Pickering, 2019). Literacy skills contribute to national development by reflecting the qualities of each person, being functionally beneficial to the surrounding environment, and optimizing citizen involvement in the development of their nation (Mulia, 2016). The definition of literacy emerges necessity and importance of literacy in the academic aspects.

Literacy skill in Indonesia is still considered a fundamental issue and it needs progressive improvement. Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2023 shows that Indonesia reached a score of 371 points which places Indonesia in 68<sup>th</sup> rank out of 81 countries being studied (Ahdiat, 2024). It can be a strong basis of

reflection for all academic institutions. All stakeholders should pay attention and find a solution to this issue.

University as a higher education institution encounters the literacy issue. The issue of literacy is even more risky at the university level since most of the learning materials in university are distributed in written text such as modules, books, articles, etc. The academic achievement of university students relies on literacy skills. Furthermore, people with a lack of literacy competency are more likely to experience poorer employment opportunities and outcomes and lower income (Miranda, 2021). As a result, they often face welfare dependency, low self-esteem, and higher levels of crime.

The problem of literacy was also experienced by the students of sixth-semester students of English Language Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Pedagogy, Dwijendra University. The fundamental problem with literacy is students' motivation. The students did not have any motivation to read the written resources given in the Research Methodology course by the lecturer. The students skimmed the text and did overgeneralization of the contents with resulting of misinterpretation of the content of the reading material.

The approach of university students is special and different compared to lower education levels. The theory of pedagogy is not merely effective for university students; thus, it is implemented of the andragogy theory which refers to the adult learning theory. Andragogy is a theory that connects self-direction, prior experience, readiness to learn, and immediacy of application to improve learning (Hagen & Park, 2016). Furthermore, it is defined as the study of adult learning, and its principles and processes can influence the learning satisfaction of graduate students (Ekoto & Gaikwad, 2015). It usually refers to the field of educating or guiding adults, playing an innovative role in enabling moments of community in organizations, educational systems, neighborhoods, and society in general (Note, Backer, & Donder, 2020).

The implementation of andragogy in teaching university students is based on certain principles. Knowles (1984) proposes four principles of andragogy that can be implemented to teach university students. The principles are (1) adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction, (2) experience provides the basis for the learning activities, (3) adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life, and (4) adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.

The research aims to analyze and elaborate on the implementation of andragogy principles by Knowles (1984) in the teaching and learning process of six-semester students of English Language Education at Dwijendra University in the academic year 2023/2024. The implementation of the principles is to boost the literacy skills of the students. It will be beneficial to find the practice of andragogy theory in teaching university students specific to the aspect of literacy.

## **2. RESEARCH METODOLOGY**

This research is qualitative in the form of a case study that describes the implementation of andragogy principles by Knowles (1984) in teaching and learning activities of six-semester students of the English Language Education at Dwijendra University in the academic year 2023/2024. The subject of the research was the lecturer of English Language Education who taught Research Methodology. The data were collected through observation and interviews. The instruments of data collection were an observation sheet and an interview guide. The data were analyzed qualitatively using Miles and Huberman (1994) theory of data analysis which consists of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/ verification.

### **3. RELATED RESEARCH/LITERATUR REVIEW**

#### **a. Literacy**

Literacy is a fundamental skill in the academic life of the students. Literacy can be defined in various definitions; most of them relate to reading and writing skills. Literacy is often defined as the ability to read, write, understand information, and express ideas both concretely and abstractly (Daley, 2003). Literacy is seen as an "autonomous" property or ability of the individual, and literacy teaching focuses on remedying deficiency and developing competence in literacy skills (Hodgson, 2019).

Literacy is defined as a combination of the ability to read and write as well as understand information and express ideas both concretely and abstractly (Haeussler, 2012). Literacy refers to the ability to create and communicate meaning from and by using various social contextual symbols, achieving desired goals through language skills (Akhter, 2014). Langer et al. (1985) consider literacy as a complex issue involving cognitive psychology, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, education, history, and philosophy, with implications for historical and cultural change. Literacy enhances people's ability to predict spoken language, aiding comprehension and providing a stable environment for training the predictive system (Huettig & Pickering, 2019).

#### **b. Andragogy**

Andragogy is the methods and principles in adult education. Andragogy concerns adult education and learning, but its meaning is ambiguous and has different historical and professional perspectives (Loeng, 2018). It is a theory that acknowledges learners as self-directed and autonomous, with the teacher acting as a facilitator of learning rather than a presenter of content (Henschke, 2011). It is a process for helping students become self-directed learners, involving them in planning, conducting, and evaluating an educational program (Kerwin, 1981). Andragogy is a learning theory focusing on the specific needs of adults, emphasizing self-direction and responsibility for decisions (M. Knowles, III, Swanson, & Robinson, 2020).

#### **c. Andragogy Principles**

The theory of andragogy is implemented in certain principles to characterize the teaching and learning process reflected in the theory. Knowles (1984) proposes four basic principles of andragogy in adult learning classrooms. The principles include:

- 1) Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction
- 2) Experience provides the basis for the learning activities
- 3) Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life
- 4) Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The research was conducted in the sixth semester of English Language Education at Dwijendra University in the academic year 2023/ 2024. The data were collected from observation in the classroom and interviews with the lecturer who implemented the concept of andragogy in boosting students' literacy skills.

Based on the interview with the lecturer, literacy skills in Research Methodology play an important role in achieving academic achievement in this course. Most of the learning sources provided by the lecturer are written; either printed or digital version. The students were expected to learn the theories related

to research by reading the learning sources and then implementing them in writing a research proposal.

The evidence reflects that the need for literacy skills is undeniable. In implementing the activity to boost students' literacy skills, the lecturer was aware that the theory of andragogy cannot be skipped to get an expected result. The lecturer implemented andragogy principles by Knowles in achieving the goal of literacy skills. The implementation of andragogy principles in the classroom can be seen in the following section.

**a. Principle1: Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction**

Teaching adult learners has great disparity with the teaching of young learners. The teacher of young learners does the planning and evaluation initially before the class through the discussion with the peers. Based on the observation and interview with the lecturer of English Language Education, this principle is implemented in the first meeting within 17 meetings. In the first meeting, the lecturer always does classroom discussion to determine the whole learning activity, task, project, and evaluation. It dealt with the planning of the lecturer which can be a strong indication of the principle of andragogy principles in teaching university students.

Based on the observation, the first class began with the presentation of the lesson contract containing the list of materials and set of rules in the lecture's process. The interview shows that he intended to be democratic with the students since the students are adults and should have the ability to discuss and give opinions.

Planning in the educational context can be defined as the process of setting objectives and determining the means to achieving the objectives, it deals with deciding in advance what to be taught, how to teach, who is to be taught, and the evaluation of the recipient (Innocent, 2021). The involvement of students of students in the planning process has the potential to motivate students to be physically and emotionally engaged in the teaching and learning activities (Susila, 2021).

Considering the content of the material in Research Methodology, the role of students in determining the reading material is important. Based on an interview with a student in the sixth semester, she mentioned that the lecturer gave the freedom to the students to choose recommended books related to Research Methodology in advance. The students were expected to commit to their choice since the result must be achieving the learning competencies in the course. There are some selection of books that students can choose as follows:

Table 1. Recommended Book for Research Methodology

No.	Author	Year	Title
1.	Sugiyono	2017	Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D
2.	Suharsimi Arikunto	2011	Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktik
3.	John W. Creswell	2008	Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research
4.	Craig A. Mertler	2008	Introduction to Educational Research

Source: Interview with the lecturer (2024)

Table 1 shows the recommended books with rich and comprehensive explanations the lecturer offered to the students. However, if the students have any relevant books which meet the standard, they are acceptable. Letting the students involved in planning especially in determining the reading material is potentially effective in boosting students' literacy skills.

**b. Principle 2: Experience provides the basis for the learning activities**

Teaching adult learners is challenging since it deals with a democratic atmosphere. The experience is a must when it comes to teaching adult learners or university students. They need to experience the material and the concept rather than being explained and forced to believe it. Knowles (1984) states the importance of providing learning experience in the learning activities of adult learners.

Research Methodology class aimed at giving students the experience to fail and succeed at the same time. Based on the observation, the students were not driven to a certain topic of the research when they determined the topic of the proposal. The students chose the topic by their experience of the lectures they had joined and then read the book related to the topic to get a specific research problem.

The lecturer empowered students' experiences in reading the theory as a consideration of selecting a research topic. It relies on the assumption that the students tend to remember the theory they like to read. Based on the observation, most of the students remembered about Speech Act theory by Austin and Searle. It was a great connection to make a research proposal from the Speech Act topic. The learning process in teaching adult learners will become more effective and interactive if it is connected to their experiences (Susila, 2023). However, the process of giving students experience depends on the individuals to proceed and connect to the material being explained. Some individuals may perceive great results meanwhile others may feel differently.

The lecturer makes use of the students' experience to build students' interest in reading the relevant references as well as the process of writing the proposal. The reading and writing or literacy skills cannot be perceived theoretically; it is perceived by the process of experiencing the reading and writing of certain topics. It is expected that by having the experience of making and writing the research proposal, the students will boost their literacy skills. Norman (2022) stated that giving meaningful learning experiences in teaching adult learners can significantly improve their specific skills and knowledge. Furthermore, the highlight of the learning experience in university classes can be motivated activity with full engagement and contribution of students.

**c. Principle 3: Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact on their job or personal life**

Adult learners can be characterized as intentional learners; they learn something they want to know or need. University students have the freedom to choose the major and study they like to learn and master. Knowles (1984) highlighted the use of relevancy and direct impact of the material and topic in adult classes to the students personal lives or job requirements.

Based on the interview to selected students, the students of English Language Education chose this major due to their willingness to be an English teacher. They learn the lectures offered in the major lists as a professional English teacher. One of the requirements to graduate is Research Methodology. This lecture gives the students ability to write a research proposal related to English education or linguistics.

However, this lecture is also needed by the students to run a requirement as a teacher. The teacher is required to conduct a classroom action research to improve their quality of the students. Based on the interview to the lecturer, the students as prospective teacher should be able to conduct a research in classroom setting. In addition, the research report is also necessary to upgrade the teacher level.

To confirm, the observation of the teaching and learning process in sixth semester class shows that the lecturer always provides the strong reason of learning especially in reading material source they select. The lecturer shows the situation where and when the students need to learn about it. When the students are aware the importance of learning the lecture, they will have willingness to read the materials. The students said that their literacy activities were carried out attentively since they know they would need this competency in the future.

Their intentions to join English Language Education were not only as a teacher but also as a willingness to master English for personal purposes such as wanting to live abroad. The lecturing process which enables students to realize the importance of study literacy will lead to their literacy skills including reading and writing which are necessary in living abroad.

By recognizing their need for literacy skills as a relevant skill for their job, the students of English Language Education at Dwijendra University showed great motivation and engagement in the Research Methodology course. A student stated that he has a clear understanding of the importance of literacy skills to their job in the future. Furthermore, he added that knowing his needs let him practice and improve his literacy skills.

#### **d. Principle 4: Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented**

There are some characteristics of an adult learner by the experts that give a certain identity of adult learners. Besides highlighting the needs, adult learning must accommodate problem-centered learning. Adult learners in this case university students can think critically to solve the problem. It can be categorized as a problem-centered learning approach.

Knowles (1984) has highlighted that adult learning has preferred to learn something problem-centered rather than content-oriented. Based on the observation, the lecturer facilitated students to solve the problem given. At that time, the lecturer asked the students what a possible research title based on the topic of blended learning. The students read some references and articles to be able to answer the questions. By giving the problem to the students, it enabled students to read as many articles as possible to find the title of the topics. It boosted students' literacy skills when they read and wrote some information.

The practical implementation of problem-center in adult learners is by the implementation of problem-solving activities. Hsu and Hsu (2020) suggested the implementation of problem-solving activities that encourage students to learn something intensively. Being encouraged in learning by problem-centered, students are willing to empower their reading and writing skills to solve the problem. The expected result of this activity is the boosting of students' literacy skills.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This research is intended to analyze the principles of andragogy by Knowles (1984) in boosting the literacy skills of university students in Research Methodology courses. The finding shows that all principles were implemented by the lecturer in boosting literacy skills in the sixth semester of English Language Education. Principle 1: adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction was implemented in the planning process in the first meeting. Principle 2: Experience provides the basis for the learning activities is implemented by providing various experiences, especially in literacy skills. Principle 3: adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact on their job or personal life is implemented when the lecturer allowed students to relate the major to students' personal lives. Principle 4: adult learning is problem-centered

rather than content-oriented was implemented by giving students problems to be served where the students must empower the literacy skills to solve the problem.

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