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Communication Strategies in Adult Literacy: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

This paper examines the critical role of literate communication in adult literacy programme, emphasising its importance in equipping adults with essential reading, writing, and numeracy skills for active participation in social, economic, and political spheres. It reviews key challenges such as learner heterogeneity and motivation, and explores how communication practices grounded in the Transactional Model of Communication and Knowles's Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy) can enhance learning outcomes. The analysis highlights the necessity of interactive, learner-centered approaches that address adults' diverse backgrounds and foster motivation, self-efficacy, and practical application. The conclusion underscores the importance of adaptive communication strategies and anticipates that future advancements, including technological integration and educator capacity building, will improve accessibility and effectiveness in adult literacy, ultimately promoting lifelong learning and societal empowerment. The method adopted for this paper is conceptual.

Keywords: Adult Literacy, Communication Strategies, Andragogy, Transactional Model of Communication

Introduction

Literate communication in the adult literacy programme is very significant in equipping the adult population with the fundamental reading, writing, and numeracy skills to help empower the adults to participate in social, economic, and political life. However, the field of adult literacy education confronts various problems, such as heterogeneity and motivation challenges, as well as other issues that make the process of communication more difficult. This paper reviews the communication practices in adult literacy, its issues, and the future ahead. Following the argument in the Transactional Model of Communication and the Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy) by Knowles, this paper sheds light on how



the communicative methods could be most effective to support the peculiarities of adult learning and generate better results in literacy.

However, adult literacy is not merely a transfer of knowledge, but it entails communicative processes that inclusively involve adult learners and create relevance to what they have experienced and lived (Smith & Doe, 2022). In comparison with pedagogy that targets child learners, adult literacy programmes have to address the varying backgrounds, motivations, and limitations of learners, which means that they will have to incorporate different communicative strategies that take their complexity into account (Brown et al., 2021). Moreover, literacy instructors working with adults have the dual task of providing not only literacy material but also building motivation, self-efficacy, and application of practical skills. The foregoing requirements help to highlight the significance of communicative explicitness, feedback mechanisms, and context relevance as applied to adult literacy contexts.

Adult Literacy

This is referred to the ability of adults to read, write, and use numbers effectively in daily life, enabling them to function competently in society. It goes beyond basic reading and writing skills, encompassing the capacity to understand, interpret, and critically evaluate information from various sources. According to Brown et al., (2021), adult literacy empowers individuals to engage fully in community life, access better job opportunities, and participate in lifelong learning. Adult literacy programmes often focus on equipping learners with practical skills that are immediately applicable in personal, social, and work-related contexts, addressing the educational gaps that may have resulted from limited access to formal schooling during childhood.

Adult literacy is the ability of adults (typically aged 15 and older) to read, write, and use basic math and digital skills effectively in daily life, work, and participation in society. It is a critical issue worldwide, affecting everything from employment opportunities and economic development to health outcomes and civic engagement.

Basic aspects of Adult Literacy

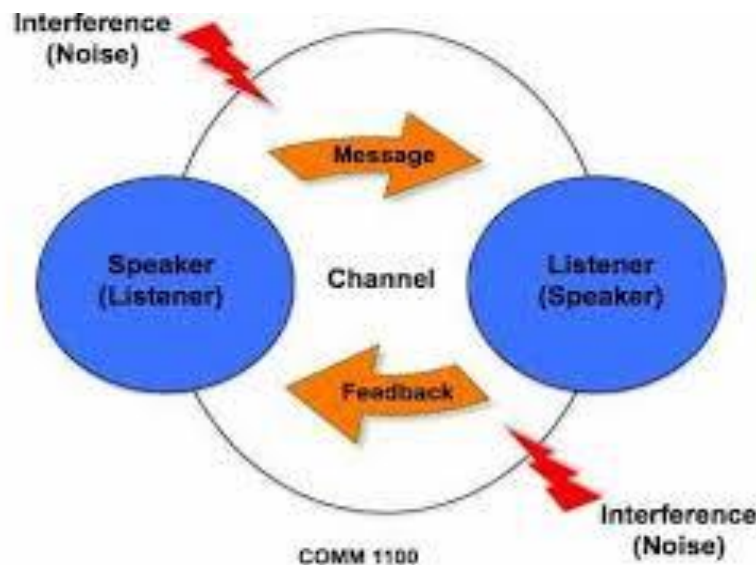
1. **Basic Literacy:**
 - i. Reading and understanding simple texts.
 - ii. Writing clearly and coherently.
 - iii. Understanding instructions and signs.
2. **Numeracy:**
 - i. Basic mathematics like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.
 - ii. Understanding time, money, measurements, and data.
3. **Digital Literacy:**
 - i. Using devices like smartphones, computers, and the internet.
 - ii. Filling out online forms, emailing, or accessing services.
4. **Functional Literacy:**
 - i. Applying reading, writing, and mathematics in practical tasks like:
 - Reading medicine labels.
 - Writing a job application.
 - Managing a budget.

Adult literacy communication

The above, on the other hand, involves the strategies and processes used to effectively convey and facilitate learning among adult learners within literacy programs. It emphasizes culturally relevant, respectful, and learner-centered communication approaches that address the unique experiences and needs of adults. As Adeyemi and Smith (2024) highlight, effective communication in adult literacy requires sensitivity to cultural backgrounds, literacy levels, and preferred learning styles. This form of communication often incorporates dialogue, feedback mechanisms, and interactive teaching methods, fostering a supportive environment where adult learners feel empowered and motivated to participate. It plays a critical role in ensuring that literacy content is accessible, engaging, and meaningful to adult learners.

Theoretical Framework

Transactional Model of Communication



The Transactional Model of Communication was propounded by Dean C. Barnlund in 1970 and often referred to as Barnlund's Transactional Model presents a holistic insight into the art of communication in adult literacy. According to this model, communication between communicators is interactive and dynamic with the characteristics of simultaneous transmission and reception of messages (Wilmot & Hocker, 2018). Communication is never one-way in adult literacy; learners and educators do not encode or decode or negotiate meanings in different directions but simultaneously, and thus, the strategic processes of message development, channel choice, and feedback integration are important to reduce misunderstanding and maximize involvement of learners.

The Transactional Model is highly relevant to adult literacy because it shifts the focus from a "teacher-telling-student" (linear) model to a "collaborative learning" model. It validates the adult learner's active role in constructing meaning, transforming the educational process into a collaborative, context-aware experience



Adult Learning Theory or Andragogy

This paper is also complemented by the Adult Learning Theory, or andragogy as it was proposed by Malcolm Knowles, in the United States, in 1968 to distinguish how adults learn compared to children. It centers on six assumptions: self-concept, experience, readiness, orientation, motivation, and the need to know. While Knowles brought it to prominence in the late 60s and 70s, the term was originally coined by German educator Alexander Kapp in 1833.

According to this theory an adult learner is self-directed, is equipped with prior experience, and has a readiness to learn that is socially constructed, and learns something that is problem-focused and immediately useful (Knowles et al., 2015). Effective communication approaches in adult literacy should then be in line with these features by involving learners in the decisions of content, making new information connected to their experiences, and emphasizing practical results (Livingston, 2023).

This combination of the two theories offers an excellent opportunity for formulating interactive and learner-centered communication strategies.

Method: The method used for this paper is conceptual.

Problems in Communication strategies in Adult Literacy

The underlisted are the problems of communication strategies in Adult literacy:

The inability to define and properly evaluate the characteristics and the needs of learners is one of the biggest issues of adult literacy communication (Ogunleye, 2023). Sometimes the adult learners have to combine learning with their work and family duties, and that is why they are not always available and may be interested in different ways. Any communication approaches that disregard such aspects will discourage students or activate participation that is no longer lasting. Additionally, the heterogeneous nature of adult learners in respect of their background education, proficiency in language, and cultural differences continues to complicate the process of designing and delivering messages (Adeyemi & Smith, 2024).

The other problem is associated with the content relevance and the device of delivery. The conventional literacy teaching might be focused on didactic and generic content that does not speak to the adults and their real requirements (Brown et al., 2021). This may create detachment or learning on the surface. This absence of communicative, contextualized communication decreases the chances that learners have to negotiate meaning or use literacy skills in real-life situations (Greenberg, 2008). Moreover, some adult literacy initiatives may be restricted in resource availability and, therefore, cannot use a variety of communication tools, such as multimedia, technologies-facilitated environments, or blended learning designs that demonstrated their potential in making the learning process and interest more engaging and clear (Smith & Doe, 2022).

Mechanisms of feedback and assessment are issues too. Communication is also effective in adult literacy, as it comprises constant feedback, which is used to inform the learner's progress and adapt the instructors (Ogunleye, 2023). Nevertheless, the formative assessment and feedback given by learners are poorly integrated in many programs, and this is usually because of large classes, incompetent facilitators, or a limited time. This inadequacy prevents customized communication and teaching tactics in terms of changing learner requirements.



Lastly, socio-cultural blocks like the stigma attached to illiteracy among adults, gender roles, and disparity over education hinder open communication. Adults can be unwilling to become learners or full members of the learning community because of the fear of judgment or their previous negative experiences related to education (Adeyemi& Smith, 2024). These attitudes diminish communication and development of trust to achieve effective teaching of adult literacy.

Prospects for Enhancing Communication Strategies

Nevertheless, future research on the enhancement of communication-based strategies in adult literacy is bright due to a wealth of theoretical perspectives, as well as technology.

To start with, using the Transactional Model of Communication will promote less transmission-based and more dialogic and participatory communication since it is associated with highlighting such concepts as reciprocity in communication and co-construction of meaning (Wilmot &Hocker, 2018). The adult literacy educators have the opportunity to create the atmosphere of communication where the learners are valued as contributing members, and this will help to increase motivation and retention.

The incorporation of andragogical principles facilitates adapting the content and communicate to the self-disclosed needs, cultural issues, and problem-solution interests of adult learners (Knowles et al., 2015). This type of communication, which focuses on learners, adds the value of the content's relevance as well as stimulating learners to take up the quest of learning in their own hands.

The use of technology is also offering a critical chance of expanding the channels of communication and the format of communications. Such blended learning models that involve face-to-face activity and digital content allow for flexibility and self-paced learning, making them an effective option because adults have hectic schedules (Brown et al., 2021). Mobile learning apps, virtual classrooms, and online discussion forums also help to broaden communication beyond the classroom and allow continuous interaction and peer support (Smith & Doe, 2022).

In addition, the improved feedback systems that use digital technology enable the educators to track their learners in real time and permit them to communicate with them individually, enhancing their responsiveness and effectiveness of teaching (Ogunleye, 2023). Integration of multimedia materials, including videos, interactive quizzes, and interactive simulations, contributes to the enrichment of the communication feedback as the resources are attended to reach out to various types of learning styles and help keep the abstract nature of concepts related to literacy less abstract (Omoregie, 2024).

There is also the need to build capacities of teachers working in the area of adult literacy communication. Communication pedagogy training programs with cultural competence and technology integration qualify the facilitator and equip them to apply effective strategies when it comes to diverse adult learners (Adeyemi& Smith, 2024).

Prospects are also enhanced by policy endorsement and provision of resources to adult literacy and infrastructural communication. The institutionalization of adult literacy as a developmental priority across the board is the guarantee of systematic advances associated with designing the program and ensuring its sustainability (Ogunleye, 2023).



Conclusion

Adult literacy means of communication is vital in breaking impediments and making the learning effective. Effective communication is based upon the Transaction Model of Communication and Adult Theory of Learning that acknowledge the interactive, learner-centered and contextuality of adult literacy education. Issues like different need of the learners, resource constraints as well as issues in the socio-cultural context need to be solved using tactic, adaptive and participatory texting techniques.

The future of adult literacy communication will be facilitated by integration of technology, models of engagement and capacity building of educators. The resulting trends hold promise of more and easier, and effective learning that can enrich societies and enlighten adults: they can engage in lifelong learning and the positive development of them.

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