

Hello – thank you for inviting me to speak at the conference.

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## Agenda

- ▶ Adult learning theory
- ▶ Pitfalls
- ▶ Our clients
- ▶ Assessment
- ▶ Programming



## Who is the adult learner

- ▶ 1. Adult Learners Have A Well-Established Sense Of Self



In childhood, we model ourselves off our parents and siblings. As teenagers, we pull away from family to mimic our friends and peer groups. It isn't until adulthood that we pick-and-choose from these two stages. We form a complete entity we call our 'self' and can be very attached to it. Even if we're not emphatic about identity politics, we do have a clear sense of self. We know we're distinct and separate from those around us. This affects our decisions and actions. In a training context, this means we want a say in our eLearning courses. We require a healthy sense of autonomy in learning. Otherwise, we soon lose interest.

## Who is the adult learner

- ▶ 2. Past Experiences Play A Pivotal Role In Adult Learning



Kids go to school with a good deal of knowledge, but it's not necessarily academic. By pre-school, they vaguely know how to share and communicate. But there's lots of space for fresh data. Adults, on the other hand, have a world of experience behind them both academic and social. To teach them effectively, you have to feed into what they already know. Piggy-back off that and launch new concepts. This is crucial, because if your new data clashes with their existing knowledge base, they're not likely to accept it. You have to skillfully integrate into their lived experience, becoming an active part of their thought process.

## Who is the adult learner

- ▶ 3. Adult Learning Is Purpose Driven



Kids go to school because they're supposed to. Adults learn because they see the relevance. If they don't train, it could cost them a job or a promotion. They consciously decide to pick up a new skill or polish a valued hobby. It's a choice, not a duty. So their learning needs to be goal oriented. They have to see measurable learning objectives and have a clear system of gauging their progress. Otherwise, they'll just walk out of class. Any course for adult learners must be tied to real-world applications. For example, incorporate simulations or real-world examples that allow them to see how the skill relates to their job duties or will help them overcome a challenge that is hindering their work performance.

## Who is the adult learner

- ▶ 4. Adult Learning Relies On A Readiness To Learn



Closely tied into their practicality is their willingness to attend the course. If they understand the relationship between the course and their success, they will attend. They're still aware they're in the session by choice, so they're open to learning. They see the value in it and can comprehend the big picture. This makes them more receptive to study and master material. It also makes them more discerning. They can recognize quality and are more emphatic in demanding it. They should relate to instructors and course designers as age peers, since they're fellow adults. They rarely hold them in awe or derision like kids do with their teachers. Keep training material relevant and task based to tap into their openness and interest. If they are not in class for academic growth, question their reasons for being there. This is a privilege not a right.

## Who is the adult learner

- ▶ 5. Adult Learners Are Driven By Internal Motivation



Kids can be trained with ‘carrots and sticks’. They want their teacher to like them, and they’re eager for those gold stars. They’re scared of disapproval. These polar emotions can keep them working hard, at least for a while. Adults develop their own methods of motivation. Focus their training on problem-solving. Rote learning doesn’t do them much good. There’s no stage in their workday when they’ll need to recite their lessons. Instead, offer simulations and contextual role play, showing how to translate their training into real life. This will keep them coming back to class.

## Who is the adult learner

- ▶ 6. Mistakes Are Often The Most Valuable Teacher



The adult learning theory hinges on experiential learning. Which means that adults are encouraged to explore the subject matter firsthand and learn from their mistakes. For example, participate in branching scenarios that show them how their actions or behaviors lead to real consequences. As a result, they are less likely to make those mistakes in the workplace and continually develop their experiential knowledge.



## Who is the adult learner

- ▶ 7. Adult Learners Must Play An Active Role In Course Design Process



A core principle of the adult learning theory is that adult learners must be actively involved in the process so that they're empowered and motivated. They should as much as is practical play a part in developing content, evaluating performance, and creating training criteria. Conduct surveys to get their feedback, then invite them to identify gaps that they see. They should also be able to personalize their learning paths and choose activities that are relevant to them and their job duties. Namely, resources that allow them to immediately apply what they've learned and address individual pain points.

Some of Knowles' concepts of andragogy are generally accepted. Others are disputed because they overlap with pedagogy. Further research has shown that childhood to adult learning is a spectrum. Some kids are precocious and some adults are immature where training is concerned. That said, Knowles' adult learning theory states adults have a developed sense of self, prior experience, practical reasons for learning. They're ready to learn and internally motivated. As a result, their training programs should be self-directed, relevant, contextual, and task-based. They should be less theoretical and more hands-on.

## Motivation In Adult Learning: How Important Is It Really?



Even though adults have completely developed brains, they may lack the internal motivation essential for mature learning. This has nothing to do with their educational background. A student may be completely uneducated in the formal sense but may have keen insights, observational skills, natural negotiation and communication skills, and the eagerness to learn standardized typical skills. Those students will progress at a faster rate than those students who are not internally motivated. For these students, they have to see the value and relevance of the programme. If necessary, excuse them from the programme until they work through their own values. The student must come ready to learn. If not, there is no learning.

## How Can We Adapt Training To What Adult Learners Need?

- ▶ 1. Make Training Specific



Among the various adult learners' characteristics and needs, one of the most consistent traits is that adults don't care about abstract theories, but practical results. Being able to see the immediate tangible benefits from their training is what draws them to learning.

In other words, their training has to enable them to perform tasks faster and better, or to do things that they couldn't do before.

When working with adult learners, you should cut any unnecessary theoretical background from your training content. Keep only the essential parts, and enrich your training with simulations and real-life case studies that facilitate knowledge transfer. Incorporate on-the-job training sessions that teach your learners specific skills that they'll be able to apply to their own everyday workflows.

## How Can We Adapt Training To What Adult Learners Need?

### 2. Make Training Self-Paced



Adult learners have busy work schedules and plenty of family-related needs and household chores to tend to. So, asking them to go through a rigid training schedule is a recipe for disaster.

Your training program should let them study at their own pace, and allow them to dive in their courses whenever they can find some free time. Make deadlines for larger projects well in advance so the student can plan their time. If they have problems with organization, this can be noted as a teachable skill.

This does not mean they can ‘dial it in’ when it comes to class preparedness and attendance. Your students are attending class as a part of their ‘work day’.

## How Can We Adapt Training To What Adult Learners Need?

### 3. Make Learning Outcomes Clear



Another typical adult learner characteristic is that, unlike kids, adult learners need to have an intrinsic motivation to learn.

To properly motivate adult learners, you need to make the learning outcomes clear. In other words, you need to show them how your training program will help them improve the actual skills they'll need in their everyday lives.

Letting them know that their training success will be a factor in the advancement of their career will also help tremendously. If they are not intrinsically motivated, you must provide more of a cause and effect scenario: if they do not perform to the behavior standards and work ethic as outlined in the attendance contract then they must withdraw from the programme. Work with your manager to ensure this document exists and is signed by every student, every semester.

## How Can We Adapt Training To What Adult Learners Need?

### 4. Teach Through Experience



Most adults learn through experience. That's how they learn their most important work and life skills. Even the things that we've been taught at school only actually sink in after we've used them in practice.

Adults also love to share their experience in a subject matter—which you can leverage to have your adult learners to teach one another.

Start by integrating discussions and chats into your learning program to help your learners swap stories and experiences with their peers. Keep them on topic!!!!

They will learn more through this impromptu collaboration, and they'll enjoy the learning process more as well.

## How Can We Adapt Training To What Adult Learners Need?

### 5. Create A Buzz



The older you get, the less open you are to change. Whether that's beliefs, attitudes, or even routines. Naturally, this will also apply to training. So, how can you help adult learners become more flexible toward change?

One way would be to have other, more eager peers motivate the group. We're social animals, after all, and a few positive examples within the team can make all the difference.

Alternatively, you can try stirring up a competitive spirit in them by gamifying learning. Game elements, like setting points for successful task completion, will make the training experience more challenging and definitely more compelling for your adult learners.

## Pitfalls in Adult Education

You're the experts!

What's working?

Even more important, what's NOT working



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## A New Plan

- ▶ Identify your learners
- ▶ Identify their strengths
- ▶ Quantify their needs. Be specific. Get data
- ▶ Revisit



## Assessment

- ▶ Who
- ▶ What
- ▶ When
- ▶ How
- ▶ WHY???
- ▶ (where is pretty obvious)



## Assessment

- ▶ What assessments are you using
- ▶ When do you assess?
- ▶ What do you do with the data?
- ▶ How do you report, and who do you report to???



## GRMMR

### What it is NOT:

- A curriculum to teach language, reading or vocabulary
- Worksheets and 'plug and play'
- Traditional transformational grammar

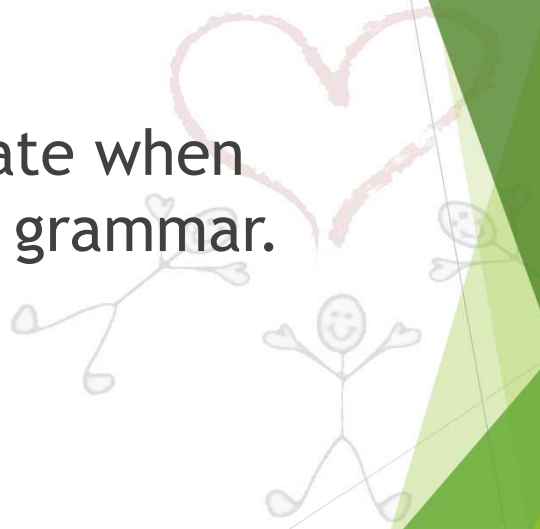
### What it is:

- Visual, manipulative, tactile, in real space
- A tool for teaching
- Intuitive, 3D
- A powerful support for literacy and editing
- Integrative into every subject



## First take-away message

- ▶ People are literate when they understand grammar.



## History

- ▶ Montessori link
- ▶ Jimmy Gore and Robert Gillies
- ▶ Evolution
- ▶ Data

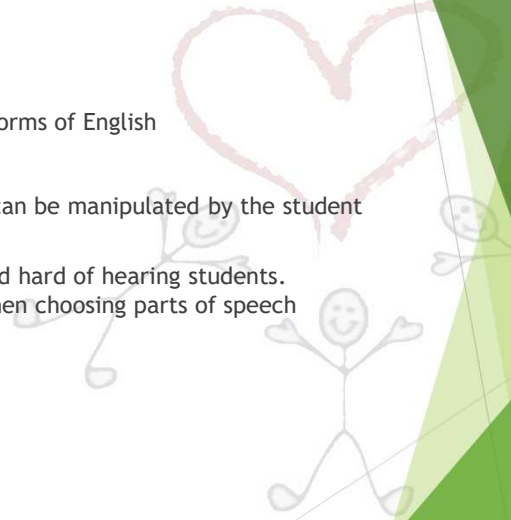


## Philosophy

- ▶ The Montessori and Green Bridge approach to teaching grammar has been designed for individuals with specific language challenges. The approach uses shapes, colours, specific teaching, and interaction with actual student writing to develop understanding, making the grammatical rules of English explicit. Evidence has been presented which supports the use of this approach with students in the areas of past tense morphology, comprehension of dative structures and comparative questions. There is sufficient evidence that this kind of intervention can be effective with older learners as well as younger children. This challenges the current move to reduce direct English grammar intervention for school-aged children who use ASL or oral English.

## Why GRMMR shapes?

- ▶ Shapes help you model the structures and forms of English
- ▶ They do not disappear
- ▶ They can be easily shared with peers, and can be manipulated by the student to find and edit errors
- ▶ Limited set! Words are unending to Deaf and hard of hearing students. Knowing what's what 'narrows the field' when choosing parts of speech





## English Learning



The link to the online whiteboard and videos is deleted and will only be available on completion of the full 2-days training.