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DESIGNING AUTONOMOUS AND NEED-BASED EFL CURRICULA FOR ADULT LEARNERS

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Abstract. This thesis explores the integration of negotiated curricula and technology-mediated autonomous learning for adult EFL classrooms. It highlights how aligning course content with mature learners' professional goals and fostering self-regulated digital practice enhances continuous engagement despite situational constraints. **Keywords:** andragogy, learner autonomy, negotiated syllabus, mobile-assisted language learning, adult education.

Main Text

Introduction. Adult English instruction in continuing education settings operates under distinct situational parameters. Mature learners balance coursework with professional responsibilities, family obligations, and irregular schedules. Traditional, fixed pedagogical syllabi designed for primary or secondary education fail to address these situational realities, resulting in high attrition rates.

Theoretical Framework. According to Knowles' andragogical framework, adult learners are self-directed, goal-oriented, and require an immediate practical rationale for what they study. They evaluate learning activities based on their perceived utility in real-world professional contexts. Therefore, rigid grammar-based syllabi lead to disengagement because they treat language as an abstract subject rather than a tool for problem-solving.

Methodological Application. To accommodate adult situational and cognitive characteristics, language programs should integrate two complementary practices:

1. *The Negotiated Syllabus:* At the onset of instruction, a diagnostic needs analysis should establish target scenarios (e.g., negotiating contracts, presenting research, writing emails). Revisiting this syllabus periodically transforms learning into a joint

contract between teacher and student, giving adults ownership over their educational trajectory.

2. *Structured Digital Autonomy*: To mitigate the impact of missed classes due to work commitments, instruction must extend beyond the physical classroom through mobile-assisted learning tools. Providing asynchronous catch-up materials, spaced-retrieval vocabulary apps, and domain-specific listening resources allows adults to maintain study continuity on flexible schedules. However, technology must be paired with explicit strategy training (e.g., self-monitoring, goal-setting) to prevent passive or surface-level consumption.

Conclusion. Adult language education requires a shift from traditional pedagogy to an adult-centered framework. Combining negotiated curricula with structured digital autonomy addresses the situational challenges of adult life, ensuring that instruction remains professionally relevant and sustainable over time.