

---

## Adult learning

Teaching adults is somewhat different from teaching children. The science of adult learning is called andragogy. There is one name you will always come across when reading about andragogy: Malcolm Knowles. He developed principles that can be applied to most adult learning situations. Knowles' assumptions describe characteristics of an adult learner, like the readiness and motivation to learn and the experience of an adult, which influence the way an adult learns in contrast to child learners. These assumptions are supplemented by multiple theories about adult education and learning, such as action learning, project-based learning, experiential learning, and self-directed learning. Elements of these different theories are used in effective modern classes and workshops. You can find out more on these concepts on the following webpages.

<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-knowl.htm>

This page summarises Knowles' assumptions and principles. Knowles describes five key assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners that are different from child learners and thereby claims a difference between pedagogy and andragogy. He describes an adult learner as a self-directed human being with a reservoir of experience and internal motivation to learn. Learning itself is more problem centred and oriented to the tasks of an individuals' social role.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skQJo3Vpqvc>

This video runs through the different stages of an action learning process in a real-life example. Action learning means learning by working in a group on a real project or problem. It involves experience, reflection, and interaction. A coach guides the group through the process.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMCZvGesRz8>

This video gives a short explanation of what is meant by project-based learning. It is not restricted to adult learning and has become increasingly popular in pedagogy. Students are required to work on a complex question or challenge in groups. A teacher applying project-based learning needs to

carefully plan, manage, and assess projects. This method is most suitable for promoting skills like collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/gradschool/training/resources/teaching/theories/kolb>

This website explains experimental learning. Experiential learning theory was developed by D. Kolb and published in 1984. It is best described as 'learning by doing'. In contrast to a pure didactic method, which is in its narrow sense a learning method using lectures, experiential learning is characterised by reflection. The theory divides experiential learning into four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. Many teaching activities (e.g. simple text reading or homework) can be allocated to the different stages of the experimental learning concept.

<http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/pl3p/Self-Directed%20Learning.pdf>

This link directs you to a pdf summarising self-directed learning, its history, challenges, and controversy. Self-directed learning requires the individual's initiative and responsibility to select and assess learning activities. The term self-study or autodidacticism, which both mean 'learning on your own', is often referred to when speaking about self-directed learning.

<http://adulthood.about.com/od/teachers/a/coursedesign.htm>

This link gives you a short overview on how to build a lesson for adults. After having gone through the information provided by the previous links, you might recognise elements of the different learning theories within.

If you have any further questions or you have any other comments or suggestions, please email me at: [karin.eichele@novartis.com](mailto:karin.eichele@novartis.com).

Karin Eichele  
Novartis Pharma GmbH, Nürnberg, Germany  
[karin.eichele@novartis.com](mailto:karin.eichele@novartis.com)

## Scandinavian Languages: Danish, Faroese, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish, and ... er ... English?

Scandinavia has given the world many fine things (dynamite, *The Scream*, Spotify, Tetra Pak, Lego, A-Ha), but did you know that it invented English?

That's the conclusion of Jan Terje Faarlund, a professor of linguistics at the University of Oslo, as reported in *Appolon* (a research magazine published by his own university),<sup>1</sup> which not unreasonably describes his assertion as a 'sensational claim'.

Faarlund's argument is based on the fact that: (1) the indigenous population in England adopted from its Scandinavian colonisers words for things that already had names (rather than just for new things); and (2) the English syntax is similar to that of (other) Scandinavian languages. As an example, he cites word order:

I have *read* the book (English)

Jag har *läst* boken (Swedish)

Ich habe das Buch *gelesen* (German)

The verb precedes the object in English and Swedish, but not in German or Old English (Anglo-Saxon), from which English is widely believed to have descended.

Faarlund notes that 'wherever English differs syntactically from the other Western Germanic

languages - German, Dutch, Frisian - it has the same structure as the Scandinavian languages.' Okay, but couldn't one equally argue that wherever it differs syntactically from Scandinavian languages it has the same structure as other Western Germanic languages?

While taking words from other languages is commonplace (ironically, the import of English words is an ongoing concern for many in the Scandinavian countries), borrowing syntax and structure is, according to Faarlund, 'highly irregular'. So why did it happen in the case of English? That is a question Faarlund is yet to answer.

### Reference

1. Nickelsen T. UiO linguist makes sensational claim: English is a Scandinavian language. *Apollon*. Available from: [www.apollon.uio.no/english/articles/2012/4-english-scandinavian.html](http://www.apollon.uio.no/english/articles/2012/4-english-scandinavian.html) [Accessed 2012 December 11].

Stephen Gilliver

Science Editor, Center for Primary Health Care

Research, Malmö, Sweden

[stephen.gilliver@med.lu.se](mailto:stephen.gilliver@med.lu.se)