

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN D.NUNAN'S "TBLT" MODEL AND  
M.S.KNOWLES'S "SIX PRINCIPLES OF ANDRAGOGY" IN ELT**

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**Abstract:** This article explores the relationship between David Nunan's Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) model and Malcolm S. Knowles' six principles of andragogy in modern English Language Teaching (ELT). Focusing on adult learning contexts, the study uses a conceptual analysis of key theoretical sources to identify shared assumptions between the two frameworks. The analysis shows that TBLT naturally reflects andragogical principles such as learner autonomy, experiential learning, real-life relevance, and problem-centered instruction, making it especially suitable for adult and non-philology ELT contexts.

**Key terms:** andragogy; adult learning; Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT); learner autonomy; needs analysis; experiential learning; English Language Teaching (ELT); motivation

### **Introduction**

In recent decades, English Language Teaching (ELT) has increasingly focused on adult learners in different contexts, such as higher education, workplace training, migration, and lifelong learning. These learners are usually different from children and teenagers in the way they approach learning. Adults often bring clear goals, strong personal experiences, and practical needs into the classroom. Because of this, teaching methods that work well for young learners do not always work in the same way for adults (Knowles, 1980).

One important theory that explains how adults learn is andragogy, developed mainly by Malcolm S. Knowles. Knowles (1984) proposed six principles that describe adult learners, such as their need to understand why they learn something, their preference for self-direction, and their focus on real-life problems. These principles have been widely discussed in adult education, training, and professional development. However, they are less often clearly connected to specific ELT teaching methods, even though many ELT practices seem to reflect these ideas in practice.

At the same time, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has become an influential approach in modern ELT. Scholars such as Nunan (1989, 2004) argue that language is best learned when learners are engaged in meaningful tasks that reflect real-world language use. TBLT emphasizes needs analysis, learner-centeredness, and communication, which are especially important in adult classrooms. Research in applied linguistics has shown that task-based learning can support meaningful interaction and practical language development (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015).

Despite these similarities, the relationship between Knowles' andragogy and Nunan's TBLT model has not been discussed in detail. Many studies focus on TBLT from a linguistic or methodological perspective, while adult learning theory is often treated separately. This article aims to address this gap by examining how Nunan's TBLT model relates to the six principles of andragogy proposed by Knowles. By doing so, the paper seeks to show that TBLT can be understood as an approach that naturally supports adult learning principles in modern ELT contexts.

### **Research Methods**

This study uses a qualitative, conceptual research approach based on document analysis. Key primary and secondary sources on andragogy and Task-Based Language

Teaching were carefully selected and reviewed. The main sources include Malcolm S. Knowles' works on adult learning theory and David Nunan's publications on TBLT, along with well-established studies in applied linguistics and adult education. The analysis focuses on identifying shared concepts and themes between Knowles' six principles of andragogy and the main features of Nunan's TBLT model. No empirical data were collected, as the study aims to develop a theoretical understanding rather than test classroom outcomes.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

This section examines the relationship between Malcolm S. Knowles' six principles of andragogy and David Nunan's Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) model. Although these two frameworks come from different academic traditions, they share several important ideas about how adults learn and how teaching should be organized. By looking at each principle in relation to key features of TBLT, it becomes clear that Nunan's model supports adult learning in ways that closely match Knowles' assumptions (Knowles, 1984; Nunan, 2004).

The first principle of andragogy is that adults need to know why they are learning something. Adult learners usually want to see a clear purpose behind classroom activities, especially how learning connects to real-life use (Knowles, 1980). In TBLT, tasks are designed around meaningful goals, such as solving a problem, completing a plan, or sharing information. Nunan (2004) explains that tasks should reflect real-world language use, not artificial classroom drills. This helps adult learners understand the value of what they are doing, which can increase their engagement and effort.

The second principle concerns adults' self-concept as independent learners. According to Knowles (1984), adults prefer to take responsibility for their own learning

rather than depend fully on the teacher. TBLT supports this idea by giving learners an active role during tasks. Learners often make choices about how to complete a task, what language to use, and how to cooperate with others. Nunan (1989) also highlights learner-centered curriculum design, where learners' needs and preferences are taken into account. This approach respects adult learners' desire for autonomy and control.

The third principle emphasizes the role of learners' experiences. Adults bring rich personal, social, and professional experiences into the classroom, and these experiences can become valuable learning resources (Knowles, 1980). In task-based classrooms, learners are often encouraged to share opinions, explain past experiences, and relate tasks to their own lives. Tasks such as discussions, role plays, and problem-solving activities naturally invite learners to use their background knowledge. Research in ELT shows that such experiential learning supports deeper engagement and meaning-making (Ellis, 2003).

The fourth principle states that adults are ready to learn when they face real-life situations that require new knowledge or skills. Readiness to learn is closely linked to social roles and immediate needs (Knowles, 1984). This idea strongly connects to needs analysis, which is a key element in Nunan's TBLT model. Nunan (1989) argues that tasks should be based on learners' actual communicative needs, especially in contexts such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). When tasks reflect learners' work, study, or daily communication needs, adult learners are more willing to invest effort in learning.

The fifth principle describes adults' orientation to learning as problem-centered rather than content-centered. Adults usually prefer learning that helps them deal with real problems instead of memorizing information for its own sake (Knowles, 1984).

TBLT is built around this idea. Tasks are structured as problems to be solved or goals to be achieved through language use. Long (2015) notes that task-based instruction encourages learners to focus on meaning first, which fits well with adults' practical approach to learning.

The final principle relates to motivation. Knowles (1980) suggests that adults are mainly motivated by internal factors, such as self-confidence, personal growth, and satisfaction. In TBLT, tasks are often meaningful and relevant, which can increase learners' sense of achievement. When learners successfully complete a task, they can clearly see what they are able to do in the language. Research on motivation in ELT also supports the idea that meaningful communication and personal relevance strengthen learners' internal motivation (Dörnyei, 2001).

Overall, this analysis shows that Nunan's TBLT model aligns closely with Knowles' six principles of andragogy. While TBLT was not originally developed as an adult learning theory, it offers practical classroom procedures that reflect how adults prefer to learn. This suggests that TBLT can be understood as an approach that naturally supports andragogical principles in modern ELT, especially in adult learning contexts.

### **Implications in ELT to Non-Philology University Students**

This section explores how relationship between frameworks can be used in teaching English Language to university students of non-philological majors. As we know, in many universities, English is taught to students whose main field of study is not languages, such as engineering, medicine, business, or social sciences. These students usually learn English as a tool rather than as an academic subject. For this reason, ELT for non-philology majors needs approaches that respect adult learners' goals, experiences, and limited time. The connection between Task-Based Language

Teaching (TBLT) and andragogy offers useful guidance in this context (Knowles, 1984; Nunan, 2004).

First, tasks can be designed around students' academic and professional needs. For example, students may work on tasks such as presenting a project, discussing a case study, or writing short reports related to their field. This helps learners understand why English is important for their future roles, which supports adult learners' need for purpose (Knowles, 1980). Needs analysis, a key element of TBLT, is especially important when teaching students from different disciplines (Nunan, 1989).

Second, TBLT allows students to take an active role in learning. Non-philology students often prefer practical activities rather than traditional grammar-focused lessons. Tasks encourage collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving, which support learner autonomy and responsibility. This matches adults' preference for self-directed learning and meaningful engagement (Ellis, 2003).

Finally, task-based lessons make it easier to use students' prior knowledge and experiences. University students already have subject knowledge in their own fields, and tasks can invite them to share this knowledge in English. This not only increases confidence but also supports internal motivation, which is essential for adult learners in academic settings (Dörnyei, 2001). Overall, combining TBLT with andragogical principles can make ELT more relevant and effective for non-philology university students.

### **Conclusion**

This article examined the relationship between David Nunan's Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) model and Malcolm S. Knowles' six principles of

andragogy in the context of modern English Language Teaching. Although these two frameworks come from different academic fields, the analysis shows that they share many common ideas about how adults learn and how teaching should be organized. Both emphasize meaningful learning, learner involvement, and the importance of real-life relevance.

The discussion demonstrated that key features of TBLT, such as needs analysis, learner-centered task design, and problem-based activities, closely reflect Knowles' assumptions about adult learners. Tasks help adult learners understand why they are learning English, allow them to use their prior experiences, and support autonomy and responsibility in learning (Knowles, 1980; Nunan, 2004). In this sense, TBLT can be seen not only as a language teaching approach but also as a practical way to apply andragogical principles in ELT classrooms.

These findings are especially important for adult learning contexts, including university courses for non-philology students and professional English programs. In such settings, learners often have clear goals and limited time, and they expect learning to be useful and connected to their real needs. Task-based instruction responds well to these expectations by focusing on communication and problem-solving rather than isolated language forms (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015). At the same time, teachers take on the role of facilitators who guide learning rather than control it completely.

However, this study is limited by its theoretical nature. It does not include classroom data or learner perspectives. Future research could explore how the connection between andragogy and TBLT works in practice through empirical studies in different ELT contexts. Despite this limitation, the article suggests that bringing adult

learning theory and ELT methodology together can strengthen both fields and support more effective teaching for adult learners.

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