



## **‘Mature’ students: hidden talents**

**Ever noticed that some of your more mature learners seem to take a long time to get anything done?**

Being a full-time student again is offering me some new perspectives on my work with ESOL learners and dyslexic adults. I understand better the insecurities and challenges facing my adult learners, particularly with the online teaching situation. Apart from meeting a lot of new material, I’m also discovering that I can’t work as fast, or remember as much as I used to, without conscious effort. Unfortunately, it’s a natural part of the aging process.

On the other hand, I know how I work best, and I can draw on life experience to figure out what to prioritise. I think I’m less anxious than my younger classmates, because I can see how what we are learning works in the context of what I already do.

That’s not the case for all adult learners, though. For some, being in the classroom might evoke long-buried painful memories of not succeeding in education. It’s certainly worth reminding them how successful they have been in other areas of life since school, and helping them to identify what the factors for success were. Was it working at their own pace? Asking for help when necessary? Planning ahead? Sometimes low self-confidence makes it harder for them to perceive their own skills. I once had a learner who could easily remember long strings of numbers (turned out he used to be a parking attendant!). The trick was to uncover his technique and apply it to English spelling.

What unexpected talents do your mature learners bring to the language classroom?