NEW TO ESOL AND NEW TO LITERACY LEARNING

Research to support the development of resources for practitioners

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises research conducted by Learning and Work Institute (L&W) for a project commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation to provide support to English for Other

for example on differentiation and the appropriate use of phonics

A shortage of high quality, attractive and flexible teaching and learning materials suitable for use with adult learners at this level, to support the development of functional language skills in day to day settings, and the development of basic literacy skills

The resources developed on the basis of this research aim to help tackle some of the key issues identified by practitioners   - classes was time consuming, due to the need for a high level of differentiation. The materials developed in this project include time-saving templates, and differentiation suggestions in every unit.

More widely, this report makes a number of recommendations for policymakers, the Education and Training Foundation, and ESOL providers.

Recommendations for policy

Policymakers should consider boosting the availability of appropriate and flexible funding for   -   ESOL provision which support progression.

Policymakers should ensure that resourcing for ESOL also addresses practical barriers to learning, and includes provision for appropriate learning support.

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relevant national standards for ESOL, and in relation to ESOL teacher training.

Recommendations for ETF

ETF should develop further, accessible opportunities for professional learning and

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including in the appropriate use of phonics with ESOL learners.

ETF should consider supporting ESOL practitioners with further teaching and learning
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Recommendations for providers

Providers should ensure the availability of appropriate professional learning and development oppor   -
and for non-specialist staff in support roles.

Providers should develop their partnership working local to support professional learning and development, as well as to facilitate a   -

INTRODUCTION

Project overview

This report summarises the research stage of a project commissioned and funded by the Education and Training Foundation on behalf of the Department for Education and the Home Office. The project was delivered by Learning and Work Institute (L&W), in partnership with Learning Unlimited (LU).

L&W is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. LU is a community social enterprise with expertise in both the delivery of and training in pre-Entry and Entry Level 1 ESOL.

The aim of the project was to provide support for ESOL practitioners working with pre-Entry and Entry Level 1 learners. The project had two strands and five main objectives:

Strand 1 – Research

Conduct survey and focus groups with practitioners and volunteers across the sector to understand what support they need in the delivery of   -   ESOL provision
 Create 10 profiles of Entry Level

Stevenson, 2014).

ESOL, especially for women as they tend to be the primary carer in a family unit

identified (but also co-ordinated) to support the delivery and development of ESOL provision in areas of high demand (Stevenson et al, 2017a).

Funding a flexible and tailored 'pre-Entry' ESOL offer

Within available AEB ESOL funding,   -   ESOL is not part of some   ESOL offer. This maybe because the demand for it is not recognised or prioritised in relation to the need to provide other ESOL levels, or due to misunderstanding that AEB funding cannot or should not be used for non-accredited learning   -   . Where this is the case, it is important that providers engage in a dialogue with local stakeholders, such as refugee resettlement organisations, to consider the local needs and how these can be met. This dialogue needs to be at an appropriate level; senior management level support may be needed if ESOL curriculum managers are unaware of options for funding   -   ESOL, or if the provider has made a strategic decision only to offer accredited learning (L&W, 2018b).

Different eligibility criteria for different Government programmes can make it challenging to offer a consistent and holistic provision to learners. For example, the MHCLG Integrated Communities English Language Programme targets people who may have lived in this country for a number of years without taking successful steps to improve their English speaking and listening skills. The provision looks to support people not in employment and not actively seeking employment at this stage (i.e. those not generally eligible for other types of fully funded support to learn English), potentially making it more challenging for providers to create progression routes between different kinds of provision.

AEB ESOL providers can claim extra funding support for learners who progress slowly and need

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learning, this extra funding can be used to provide additional hours for ESOL learners who have low literacy skills to enable them to achieve a qualification. Providers can also access AEB funding to provide learner support to individuals who are furthest from learning and/or work and who may need additional support to overcome certain barriers to engaging or continuing in learning. For example, it can be used to meet the cost of travel or childcare.

Learning support is also available to meet the cost of making reasonable adjustments, as part of the Equality Act 2010, for learners who have an identified learning difficulty or disability, to achieve their

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ESOL level, but this can be limited as there are competing demands on these funds and certain needs, such as learning difficulties and disabilities, are prioritised (L&W, 2018b).

'Pre-Entry' and Entry Level expertise

There are measures that can   courses at   -   and Entry Level 1. These include opportunities for practitioners to undertake professional development, such as teaching basic literacy skills to adults as this specialist area is not always covered in ESOL teacher training (Stevenson et al, 2017a). Some resources to assist in developing expertise and capacity are identified in the accompanying review of ESOL teaching and learning materials.

Accurate assessment of learner needs

Accurate screening and initial assessments (IA) tools are a critical part of understanding of English language learning needs at all levels. An initial screening is used to identify an ESOL need while an initial assessment then identifies the level of proficiency. A screening can be carried out by a non specialist while an IA needs to be conducted by a trained practitioner. They can then advise an

also cater for those who are unable to attend classes due to learning needs, health conditions or disabilities.

Adequate and appropriate childcare

ESOL providers and refugee support organisations consistently identify childcare-related issues as a barrier to learners accessing provision. This includes the provision of crèche and other childcare services, and also the need for providers to have sufficient capacity to offer classes at times which

so any additional investment in ESOL should include further support for childcare. There is also the potential for more co-ordinated approaches to ESOL planning to support this, for example in matching learners to provision with the appropriate facilities and through partnership working where ESOL providers offer classes at venues where childcare is available (Stevenson et al, 2017a).

Digital language learning

Advances in digital technology are already transforming the manner in which migrants across the UK are interacting with language learning materials, but ESOL programmes often fail to reflect this. There is potential for massive open online courses (MOOCs) and mobile learning apps to support migrants with some English to develop their language skills. Facebook and other forms of social media have potential to provide more opportunities for interactive learning, as does adapting ESOL programme curriculums to both make use of these platforms as common reference points. Digitalisation could allow for more migrants to benefit from the personalisation of language learning materials and enable the growth of the social support networks which have been shown to improve learning outcomes. For this potential to be realised, programme providers, technology firms and academics will need to collaborate on the development of new approaches. Manchester Adult Education, who offer learners participating in their Talk English initiatives access to a   -digital course and app, are an example of good practice in this area (APPG, 2017).

However, the potential for harnessing the power of digital language learning should not be

technology, particularly for those with low literacy skills. With little experience of using technology, they may be resistant or unable to use it for learning. There may also be the challenge of learners lacking access to technology, either their own or through their provider. Hence, while the integration of mobile and handheld learning is important for ESOL, and providers should encourage learners to use their own technology, this should not be an expectation or requirement of learners. In addition, the wider benefits of ESOL classes, such as community integration and peer support may be overlooked when focusing on technology (L&W, 2016). A more appropriate method may be to blend digital elements with other   -   and Entry Level interventions ESOL.

This rapid review of research, policy and practice documents highlights the challenges and barriers experienced by ESOL providers and practitioners. It is notable that many of the themes discussed in this review also emerge from the practitioner research discussed below. However, missing from this review is detailed discussion of the kind of   -   and Entry Level 1 teaching and learning materials and support

Introduction and overview

This section of the report details the findings from the first two stages of the qualitative research; an online survey followed by focus groups with ESOL practitioners and volunteers. A thematic analysis was conducted with the emerging themes organised into the key areas of defining µngn53>43(n55f 1ched [/

ESOL tutor

This included a lack of understanding about both the kind of learner that needed to be placed in
-         and about the kind of progress that   -   learners could be expected to make.

Training for 'pre-Entry' ESOL teachers
There was widespread agreement from both survey respondents and focus group participants that there was lack of training on how to teach   -   ESOL learners both within initial teacher training schemes and as part of professional development.

be teaching pre-ESOL absolute beginners... there is a very significant need for something which will complement the CELTA or, indeed, the TEFL Academy or some of the other Level 5 qualifications that are around." ESOL tutor

A small number of participants had attended training; Learning Unlimited, Assentis were mentioned as providers as well as a MOOC run by Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition (LLESLA). However, the vast majority had received no training and were not aware of any training. This was raised as an issue in all the focus groups and by several survey participants. There were issues about the availability of training but also about participants having the time to attend training and the funding to pay for it.

Central to the need for the training was the widely held perception that teaching   -   learners was very challenging and that ESOL teachers had a corresponding urgent need for support.

"I have seen this with my team, it is very physically draining and I think sometimes, from a resilience point of view I feel that anything around how to make this easier on yourself, and how to deliver this in a way which is not so physically investing for you as a teacher." ESOL tutor

This perception of   -   ESOL as very demanding in terms of time, energy and practitioner skillset was one of the most resonant findings across the focus groups.

Barriers for ESOL learners
Participants identified a number of barriers, both structural and personal, experienced by   -   learners, some of which were directly related to the characteristics of being a   -   learner.

Caring responsibilities, including childcare was another identified barrier particularly for women mentioned by several survey participants and in nearly all focus groups.

could be when the child starts school before they can start going to classes." ESOL tutor

This meant that women could be resident in the UK for many years before engaging in a sustained programme to learn English.

Financial problems and issues with irregular and insecure work, difficulty claiming benefits and difficulty paying for classes were other associated barriers.

A lack of confidence, embarrassment about a lack of literacy and a lack of motivation were identified as personal barriers, and these can be seen as arising from many of the issues discussed above. expectations about their progression and their perceptions of their failure to progress.

Equally poor attendance was also seen as a barrier to learning but again this was the outcome of many of the other challenges that learners face. Participants saw that the barriers experienced by learners were connected and interlinked. It was therefore often not only difficult for tutors to address barriers to learning but also to identify what the underlying cause of barriers were.

Challenges for ESOL teachers

The question of how to differentiate effectively due to the varied nature of   -   and Entry 1 learners was identified as the key challenge across the focus groups and surveys.

stand what your

So how do you have the time to meet all their needs as well?" ESOL tutor

Most teachers did not have any additional support, for example from a teaching assistant or learning support worker, in the classroom and found it difficult to meet the needs of such diverse learners.

Many of the other challenges related to the complex barriers experienced by learners. This was particularly the case with asylum seekers and refugees, some of whom experienced trauma. Teachers found it difficult to work with the challenges posed by traumaand there was a lack of adequate or appropriate services they could be referred to. Where services existed, learners did not have adequate English to access them.

A particular concern for practitioners was undiagnosed or undeclared learning difficulties; particularly problems with language processing and memory. Practitioners found it difficult to know whether learners had a specific learning difficulty or whether there were other factors that were a barrier to learning.

dyslexia." ESOL tutor

They also not did not feel they had received sufficient training to support learners who had problems with issues such as language processing.

Another reported challenge was that many   -   learners had not yet developed study skills as their previous experiences of education were limited. This meant that these had to be taught in addition to teaching the language and that learners found it hard to work independently. This was

seen as time and energy intensive.

Participants also felt there were challenges due to the nature of   -   ESOL provision. Some practitioners felt that the low number of hours and short courses meant that learners did not receive

stuff produced for schools and you can see the resources that are out there are childish   So, I think, you know, the sector is crying out for phonics at   -   level." ESOL tutor

Suggestions for resources

Focus group and survey respondents highlighted a lack of suitable teaching and learning materials for teachers of   -   ESOL and made detailed suggestions for these resources.

Many respondents said that they spent considerable time preparing their own materials to suit the needs of the learners in their classes.

ew materials available for illiterate refugees and this means I need to develop all

were described as poor quality and outdated. It was also seen as more difficult for teachers to produce these themselves.

Some participants also wanted resources that could be used with a minimum of photocopying to keep costs low but also for environmental reasons.

Digital resources were seen as important by some participants, particularly where they could be used with mobile phones.

appropriate for lower levels [but] this is something that needs to be integrated in new resources. Integration needs to be in the form of mobile technology as

ESOL tutor

This was connected to wanting resources that learners could use at home; it was felt that digital resources could be the best way to achieve this. However, there were some concerns expressed about the use of social media and digital technologies with ESOL learners

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the research findings feed directly into the approach taken to the development of the teaching materials

Practitioners identified an urgent need for training to support them in their delivery of ESOL to   - learners. Consideration needs to be given to the appropriate delivery mode of this training as part of professional development. Practitioners suggested that online training was easier to access but they clearly also valued the opportunity to meet face to face with colleagues to share their experiences.

The teaching and learning resources developed as part of this project could be supported by a   session on how to deliver them effectively. These could be delivered as a series of regional events to ensure that they are accessible, cost effective and generate maximum impact.

There were other development areas where practitioners identified they needed further support. These included training in adult literacy, in particular phonics tailored for adult ESOL learners. Consideration needs to be given as to the level of training required. The focus groups identified that while many ESOL teachers had a high level of expertise gained through experience rather than formal training, there were others newer to teaching or volunteers who needed introductory level training on how to meet the learning needs of   -   learners.

ETF should consider supporting ESOL practitioners with further teaching and learning resources for 'pre-Entry' ESOL, including digital resources.

The development of resources through this project were warmly welcomed, but it is clear there is an appetite for further resources for   -   learners. Online resources that could be accessed by learners with very low levels of English were the most clearly identified need. The importance of resources that could be used on smart phones was central to this. Listening materials were also requested and these would be a valuable addition to the resources developed as part of this project.

working in ESOL (L&W, 2019).

Providers should make full use of the available funding streams to support 'pre

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