RaPAL

2018 Conference Edition

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The Research and Practice in Adult Literacies Network

Welcome

Research and Practice in Adult Literacies (RaPAL) is the only UK-wide organisation that focusses on the role of literacies in adult life. We promote effective and innovative practices in adult literacies teaching, learning and research; and support adult literacies practitioners and researchers. We enjoy engaging in debates that touch on English language and literacy, numeracy and digital skills across homes, communities and workplaces. Through our members, digital journals, conferences and fora, policy and advocacy work, we are active in Europe and have international links.

What we do

- Encourage collaborative and reflective research
- Publish a journal three times a year
- Create networks by organising events (including an annual conference) to contribute to national debate
- Believe in democratic practices in adult literacies
- Emphasise the importance of social context in literacies
- Critique current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill
- Campaign for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives

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The editorial group for 2019-2020 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner-researchers: Gwyneth Allatt, Angela Cahill, Claire Collins, Vicky Duckworth, Sarah Freeman, Tara Furlong, Toni Lambe, Sue Lownsbrough, Jonathan Mann, Juliet McCaffery, Mary-Rose Puttick, Anne Reardon-James, Yvonne Spare and Rachel Stubley.

RaPAL members are involved in the compilation of the journal as editors, reviewers and referees.

We are a friendly group – open to new members and new ideas. Please contact us with any contributions (views, comments, reports and articles) and do not be put off if you are new to the field or if you have not written for a publication before. The journal is written by and for all learners, tutors/teachers and researchers who want to ask questions about this field of work. It does not matter if the questions have been asked before. We want to reflect the many voices within adult literacies work and to encourage debate.

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Editorial

Toni Lambe and Julie Collins

Welcome to Journal 97, which focuses on the joint RaPAL, Learning and Work Institute, UCL Institute of Education, UCU, and NATECLA conference held on 14th November 2018 at Westminster Kingsway College, London. The annual conference on English, maths and ESOL was entitled *Rethinking Participation* and contributions on the day provided wide ranging perspectives on how to increase and widen both participation and provision in the area of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Concrete examples of the positive impact of language, literacy and numeracy learning on individuals, communities and the wider economy were also provided.

This edition includes contributions from practitioners and researchers who gave presentations and led workshops at the conference and a student, Andrew Humphries, who inspired us during his plenary interview with Stephen Evans. There are also articles and book reviews related to the theme of the conference as well as contributions highlighting interesting and innovative ways of working with students.

Sue Pember OBE, a former senior government official, currently HOLEX Director of Policy and External Relations and a former lead Director for Adult and Further Education in the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), provided the key note at the joint conference and her article opens this conference edition.

Calling for a new Adult Basic Skills Strategy Sue reflects on the success of the original Skills for Life Strategy and the important legacy left behind. She provides a nine-point plan for this new strategy arguing for a renewed commitment to adult literacy and numeracy at Government level.

This is followed by Jo Dixon's reflection on adults writing in the digital age, which leads her to some interesting observations regarding student autonomy and students understanding of the role of the tutor.

Valeria Panyko, a maths teacher, also provides a reflective piece. In this instance relating to her experience of working towards Advanced Teacher Status (ATS)*. There were some unexpected outcomes for Valeria which caused her to rethink certain aspects of her teaching and as with Jo's earlier piece, student autonomy and tutor role were not far from the surface.

ATS was launched in 2017 by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). It offers a significant step up from Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and in November 2018 it was announced that those who achieve Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) will be conferred with The Chartered College of Teaching's Chartered Teacher designation. Further information can be found by following this link.

https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/membership/ats-advanced-teacher-status/

The next four articles all provide either ideas for good practice or discussion and links to some excellent resources for tutors. Smith, Peacock and Bartrip's article discusses the authors' experience of trialling erasure writing with their students of English; concluding that this approach to creative writing is accessible to students across a range of abilities. This article brings to mind Frost and Hoy's adage 'a beginner writer is not a beginner thinker' (1985) and our efforts in the late 1990s to convince trainee adult literacy tutors that creative writing with students was both possible, and a 'good idea'.

A further article concerned with student writing is provide by Judith Kirsh who tells us about the production and publication of student writing in the form of reading books for active citizenship.

For anybody interested in the whole area of student writing, Tom Woodin's 2008 "'A beginner reader is not a beginner thinker': student publishing in Britain since the 1970s" is an excellent read and is available at https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230701865629.

Richard Rossner, a member of the Council of Europe's coordination group for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM), takes us through the Council's online toolkit. Here we find extensive, free, resources that can be used in the preparation and provision of language support for refugees.

The next article by Casey, Gardner and Greller, is thought provoking and should certainly cause much discussion amongst practitioners. Their initial argument is that to participate in the digital world students need to be able to read and write. They then put forward some suggestions about ways in which digital technology, by way of a smartphone 'app' they are developing, could be used by students outside class to support and practise their learning; a development that would seem to answer some of the questions raised by Jo Dixon as to the possible uses of technology in writing development.

Where their ideas may be more challenging, particularly for literacy tutors, especially those who adhere to the social practice model, is their suggestion that what they call the 'nuts and bolts' of literacy should be taught as a standalone skill as opposed to 'in context' as currently practised.

Kathy Jones challenges us in a different way when she talks about literacy provision for homeless adults and suggests that even without Government help there are possibilities for improvement within the current context.

Storytelling and reading aloud are the topics of our final two articles. Sarah Telfer and Amanda Turner provide an analysis of trainee teachers' experiences of incidental learning, using storytelling, in the English as a Second Language (ESOL) classroom in the Further Education and Skills sector, advocating for the effectiveness of storytelling as a pedagogic tool in teaching and learning.

Sam Duncan discusses the Reading Aloud in Britain Today project and encourages us to think about what we mean by reading, reminding us of the importance of keeping students at the centre of the process. Further ideas can be located through the UCL Read Aloud website, or the reading agency blog. https://readingagency.org.uk/news/blog/

If you wish to contribute information to the project then you can complete their questionnaire here. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/sites/ioe/files/everyday-reading-questionnaire.pdf

Finally, Andrew Humphries and Lorraine Powney, in conversation, discuss the benefits and barriers involved in returning to learning.

The two books reviewed for this edition provide much to think about for those concerned with equity and social inclusion. Graham Hall reviews *Numeracy as Social Practice*. This is an edited book which will be of interest to those who are interested in numeracy in an international context, as well as those who seek to understand how numeracy is being used to maintain and reproduce dominance/inequality. Juliette McCaffery reviews *Identity and Resistance in Further Education*, another edited book and one that challenges and critiques prevailing norms of policy and practice and the 'marketisation' of further education.

This edition closes with Tara Furlong's round up of news from the sector.

Note from the Journal Coordinator

Yvonne Spare

Yvonne can be contacted on journal@rapal.org.uk

Hello fellow RaPAL members

We hope you enjoy this, our conference edition of the Journal. Our next edition will be on the theme of **Creative Responses to Literacies Policies**, a subject dear to the hearts of many adult literacies and numeracy tutors! If you have any thoughts on articles that you would like to see in this edition, now is the time to let us know – a call for papers went out to the Rapallist in March and we would like to see drafts or even just outline ideas by the end of April.

Any comments about this or other editions, or ideas for future content can be sent to journal@rapal.org.uk and don't forget that most Journal editions contain articles by new writers. There are guidelines on our website on the Write for Us page and we offer as much support as you feel you need. We are also interested in hearing what you think about your Journal. There is a feedback section on the website so that you can comment on anything you have read in this or previous editions. Follow the link to our comments space at the bottom of the page, which needs the password that has been circulated with this edition.

Finally, we would like to reiterate that the articles we publish are not necessarily representative of the views or position of the membership body, and we do not advocate any given course of action in any given context. We do, of course, support freedom of speech and of academic liberty, and the pragmatic achievement of objectives as a negotiated consensus.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Yvonne

Boosting Participation in Adult Literacy and Numeracy

Dr. Susan Pember OBE

Sue started her career in teaching. She was the Principal of Canterbury College for 10 years and, between 2010-2013, the lead senior civil servant working with Ministers on post-19 education and skills policies including leading the Skills for Life strategy. In this role, Sue commissioned research and led the analytical team. She was the architect and sponsor of the National Research and Development Centre for Literacy and Numeracy and is an advocate of research-led policy for practitioners improving their practice through research. Sue is now the Policy Director for HOLEX, which is the professional body for adult education providers, including building up an evidence base of why Lifelong Learning is vital to this country's prosperity. Sue's own research for her doctorate was in entrepreneurialism and the impact of bureaucracy - concentrating on the Further Education sector. Sue is the Vice Chair of Bedfordshire University and has significant experience in all aspects of policy development and education excellence.

Even after 20 years of effort by teachers and practitioners, the UK still has underlying productivity and societal issues created by too many of the UK population having poor basic skills. An estimated 9 million adults of working age in England have low basic skills, with more than a quarter of adults aged 16-65 having low literacy or numeracy skills or both. This is well below the average for literacy and numeracy compared to other OECD countries.

Having poor basic skills creates problems for individuals. For example, these 9 million people may struggle with basic quantitative reasoning or have difficulty with simple written information. They may not be able to estimate how much petrol is left in the petrol tank from a sight of the gauge, or to fully understand instructions on a bottle of aspirin - and they will not be able to help their children to read. As well as having a devastating impact on the individual, it also creates difficulties for the country. The impact of poor skills reduces productivity and leads to low skills levels in the work place. Poor language skills damage citizenship and create isolation and a fragmented society, leading to a loss of equality and social exclusion. It fosters an environment in which many people feel they have been "left behind", that this country doesn't value them and is not willing to invest in them.

Successive Governments since 1996 have tried to tackle the issue. In 2001, as a result of Lord Moser's review and resulting 1999 report, the Skills for Life Strategy was developed and published. This strategy was an inter-department/agency strategy and one of the first programmes to have a Performance Service Agreement with a target attached to it and was one of only a few programmes that successfully met its targets early.

The Skills for Life Strategy was far reaching. The strategy was successful, met its targets early and went on to ensure that between 2001 and 2011, some 14 million participated in adult literacy and numeracy activities with over 8 million qualifications being achieved, which produced a 13% improvement in literacy in the adult population with over 5 million more adults with skills at level 2 (BIS Skills for Life Survey 2011).

The strategy's processes and systems were embedded into mainstream practice in 2007 and still continue. The strategy left a lasting legacy and infrastructure including:

- A legal entitlement to have free education for those without a level 2 in English and/or maths
- Teaching materials and resources (although these require updating)
- Qualification framework from entry level to level 2
- Recognition that literacy and numeracy teachers need to be trained and qualified
- Funding mainstreamed into ESFA funding methodology
- Solid research foundation on the economic impact of investing in adult English and maths.

Annual participation in English and maths courses reached its peak in 2009 and then settled down at around 800,000 across all groups. However, in 2016/17, participation decreased to 755,300 - a decrease from 803,800 (6.0 per cent) in 2015/16 and then again in 2017/18 a further decrease to 664,200 (12.1 per cent) in 2016/17.

This reduction in participation is causing alarm as the need is still there. Adults need to be supported by a government infrastructure, which can help to improve their prospects and that of the economy. This decrease in participation is a worrying trend, which must be addressed through a renewed government focus on adult literacy and numeracy.

Underlying Issue

Too many young people are leaving school with low levels of literacy and a disturbing feature in England is that young adults perform no better than the older generation. Although adults approaching retirement age (55-65-year-olds) in England compare reasonably well with their counterparts in other countries, younger people are lagging badly behind. Other things being equal (including migration), this means that over time the basic skills of the English labour force could fall further behind that of other countries.

In many countries, rising educational attainment has driven up basic skills. But in England, whilst many young people are more likely than their parents' generation to continue into further and higher education, too many still have weak basic skills. There is an imbalance in funding and investment such that those who do well at school are invested in, while those that didn't do well don't really get a second chance. Of the £20 billion available for post-19 education and skills training in this country, only 7 % goes on those without a Level 3 qualification. This breeds resentment and a feeling of being left behind.

Although funding is an issue, the situation is more complex. Austerity measures reduced the Adult Education Budget and removed the entitlement to a free Level 2 in 2013. These cuts did not touch English and maths for adults, and the basic skills entitlements remain.   ESF funding exists (at the moment) but is managed differently and there is some more funding for ESOL from other funds. So, the reduction in participation over the last three years is not due entirely to lack of funds.

Why then has participation dropped and what can be done about it? A recent discussion with providers about the reasons for this rapid reduction in participation revealed that it was complicated and often caused by the unintended consequences of policy changes.   The main causes highlighted were:

- **Funding**: The funding levels for courses are now not covering the cost of provision and so colleges and providers cannot afford to offer them as they used to
- **Embedded in Level 2**: Removal of the Level 2 entitlement to free vocational courses has had a knock effect on literacy and maths participation because many Level 2 learners were encouraged to undertake English and maths as part of a joint programme
- **Promotion:** Learners are not coming forward because there is no national or regional promotion
- **Initial Advice and Progression:** Intermediary infrastructure is no longer there - Jobcentre plus is now focused on work and is not referring learners. Children's centres and Schools no longer see it as part of their community role
- **Changes of Client Group Status:** The client group is no longer seen as the unemployed, but those in low-waged employment - often these are part-time workers and are therefore not able to attend classes in the daytime. They are still in need of improving their skills, but require a different offer.

These issues are not insurmountable, but they do need to be coordinated and led by Government. If further investment and changes to the offer are not made, then participation will continue to decrease, productivity will continue to be lower than our competitors and the societal consequences and dependencies on the state will continue to rise.

So, what can be done to turn the tide and increase participation?

Building on the success of Skills for Life and existing best practice, the Government should renew its approach and consider the following:

1. **Leadership**

Renewed leadership and championing by Government through active endorsement and the publishing of a new Adult Basic Skills Strategy, either as part of a Lifelong Learning Strategy, or, as a standalone document. The new strategy should:

- Explain the importance to prospective learners
- Explain to employers why they should be involved.

The rationale underpinning this new strategy should be to highlight the importance of basic skills in the face of the changing nature of the workplace and the increased complexity of traditional jobs. And secondly, make Britain a more equal society and 'close the gap' by addressing issues including area and social exclusion, deprivation and educational attainment.

2. **Endorsement from the Top**

To get buy-in from stakeholders, this new strategy should be endorsed in the same way the Industrial Strategy has been endorsed and seen as part of the solution to improving productivity and helping create a dynamic economy.

3. **Whole Government Approach to Delivery**

This new strategy and underpinning implementation plan should be made up of several different strands of work requiring a whole government approach to delivery and involve the main government departments (DWP, MHLGC, HO, MOD, DH,) and should be led by DfE.

4. **Rebalancing the Post-18 Funding Envelope**

Government should use the post-18 funding review to acknowledge its importance and recommend rebalancing the post-18 spend so that those who were failed by the Schools system have a second chance to learn the basic skills they need for life. DfE should also be looking for more resources as part of their spending review bid.

Immediate action should be taken to rebase the funding levels for English and maths - the present rates do not take into account inflation or recognise the complex needs of learners, or the expectation of what is needed to meet Ofsted criteria and standards and current benchmarks.

5. **Regional and National Infrastructure**

As spending is to be devolved, so is the responsibility for ensuring adults are aware of their entitlements. The Government and Mayoral Combined Authorities should work together to:

- Manage national and local campaigns, including national advertising, that build and feed off each other with consistent messaging
- Determine active progression and first step routes, including training intermediaries who can support the learner into learning such as Jobcentre plus, Careers Service, TUC (learner reps), employer HR departments, Doctors' surgeries and Public Libraries, with specialists trained to signpost and support first step learning.

6. **Enhanced Workplace Offer**

As more of those needing to improve their skills are already in the workplace, the workplace should become a learning environment with more providers working in employers' premises. The new National Retraining Scheme should prioritise the teaching of basic skills in the workplace.

7. **Quality Offer**

Providers are capable of doing the right thing. Adult Community providers are judged by Ofsted, as 88% 'outstanding' or 'good'. They know what works and should continue to deliver best practice, which includes:

- Pre-course assessment
- Diagnostic assessment
- Individual learning plans
- Delivery though different/appropriate sets of learning options, including the use of digital
- Good relevant learning resources

- Practice embedded
- Regular feedback and assessment leading to recognised qualifications
- Clear progression routes
- Underpinning by trained qualified teachers.

8. Supporting the Frontline

Although providers are delivering good or outstanding provision, many are saying that current learning materials are dated and need to be revised. The Skills for Life and other resources are still available on the ETF website and are well used.

The new strategy should make provision for the development of new materials for teachers and learners. The teacher base is solid (but ageing) and more resource needs to go in attracting and training basic skills teachers.

9. Use of the Media

To increase participation, the new Strategy should include a media campaign using television adverts. Although the Skills for Life adverts were controversial at the time, they did the trick and nudged many reluctant adults into participating in learning. There is a desperate need for something similar that lets prospective learners know they are entitled to free provision.

Conclusion

Teachers and managers are working hard to do their best for learners, but the infrastructure that supports them is disintegrating. If further investment is not made, participation will continue to decline and productivity will continue to be lower than that of our competitors, and the social consequences and dependencies on the state will continue to rise.

It is time for Government and the Combined Authorities to take the reins and invest in those adults who need education the most.

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Adults learning to write in the digital age

Jo Dixon

Jo has twenty years' experience as a part-time teacher of adult literacy and ESOL and a track record of integrating and innovating with new technologies. She is currently studying for a PhD in web science (web science is the interdisciplinary study of 'how the Web is changing the World and the World is changing the Web' – see https://www.southampton.ac.uk/wsi/index.page).

Jo welcomes comments on the ideas expressed here and dialogue on any issues surrounding adult literacies and digital inclusion and can be contacted at jmd3g10@soton.ac.uk

Introduction

I am not currently teaching, but once a week I support an 'IT drop-in' for a charity organisation called CLEAR (www.clearproject.org.uk). CLEAR provides ESOL classes and specialised advice and support services for refugees and asylum seekers who require assistance with issues such as immigration, housing and unemployment. The IT drop-in aims to complement CLEAR's core services by providing supported access to the internet via five desktop computers and free Wi-Fi that learners and clients can use to get online using their own devices. Alongside my regular work at the IT drop-in, I am working closely with staff and learners at CLEAR to develop my PhD project around an aspect of literacy and digital inclusion.

A member of staff at CLEAR has referred potential participants to me who have sufficient speaking and listening skills to allow me to interview them and engage them in discussion, but who struggle with literacy. They include people who are at various stages of learning to speak English: some have passed speaking and listening exams at Entry 2 or Entry 3 but have not passed exams at the same level in reading or writing, while others are fluent in spoken English, having come from countries where English is widely spoken, but have much lower literacy levels.

In initial interviews, six of my participants surprised me by asserting that they are not interested in using the Web. Their learning priority is to improve their writing and they do not appear to feel there is any role for the Web in this. All six have passed ESOL speaking and listening exams at Entry 2 or Entry 3, and some have also passed reading, but none have achieved writing at the same level as their other skills. Two did not study beyond primary school before coming to the UK so their own language literacy skills may be relatively low, which may impact on literacy learning in a new language (See www.leslla.org for research into the specific difficulties of low-educated adults learning a second language). However, the others claim to have no difficulty with reading and writing in their own language. Why, then, are these learners finding it so difficult to develop their writing skills in English? This seemed worthy of some further thought, and the result is this paper – a collection of ponderings, rather than any formal research findings, on what a subset of my interviews suggests to me about ESOL learners, learning to write, and technology.

Writing in real life

The individuals I am working with do not write much in their everyday lives and this could be one reason why this skill is proving more difficult to develop. Complicated lives have often meant periods of months, or even years, when the individual was not participating in ESOL classes. Their spoken English seems to progress with or without lessons as they have to understand and make themselves understood in everyday situations. However, they have very little motivation to practise writing.

Aside from ESOL classes or homework, the only writing any of them initially report doing is form filling, but forms typically require short answers of a repetitive nature (the same personal details every time), and do not require them to write in full sentences or think about grammar and punctuation. On further prompting, they all say that they engage in writing short text messages and instant messaging using apps such as WhatsApp, IMO or Snapchat but they are dismissive of this as 'writing': it does not involve handwriting; messages are 'only short' or even 'short, short'; predictive text helps you with spelling, and you don't really think about punctuation or grammar. Furthermore, when using messaging apps, switching and mixing modalities (moving from written to spoken language and vice versa, and combining words with static and moving images) is common. This practice enables learners to avoid writing more than they can comfortably or confidently do, so they are never stretched or challenged. If they are unsure how to write something, they will simply use voice or visual media instead.

So, if these individuals do not write much in their everyday lives, what do they aspire to do with writing? Why are they so eager to improve their writing and pass writing exams?

In developed societies, writing is a status symbol; being able to write well equates to knowledgeability or intelligence in many people's minds. One individual talked with passion about the importance of being able to write because if you cannot write you 'feel like something is missing'. Another wants to be able to write by hand as beautifully as their children do. Perhaps society has elevated writing to such a level that further justification is not always required.

Others see writing as a prerequisite for accessing vocational courses and ultimately studying their way out of a low-skilled job. Two participants clearly have their sights set on jobs that require a vocational qualification and they know that to be accepted on the vocational course they need to work towards and pass writing exams at level 1.

Is there a role for the World Wide Web, or other internet-based technologies, in developing writing?

This question is important for the IT drop-in at CLEAR. We try to encourage learners to use websites and apps for additional, independent learning to supplement their limited class time, but they will not do so if they feel that these do not help them meet their learning needs.

There seems to be, in the minds of these six interviewees, a disconnect between the 'not really writing' that they do in their lives and the writing that they do for teachers and exams. They also

seem to value uses of technology that 'teach' (YouTube videos that explain things) and websites or apps for learning that provide feedback (interactive exercises that end with a show of ticks or a score and therefore a sense of achievement). But they seem to feel that they need a teacher to help them improve their writing and that independent writing practice is not helpful if they have no-one to correct it. They use internet technologies in their daily lives, but not in a way that they feel supports their writing development. I wonder if we can help them find ways of using the technology that they already have, or other technology that is freely and easily available to them, to support their writing development.

Tools based on speech synthesis would seem to have potential, given that these learners have relatively stronger speaking and listening skills. Learners are aware of voice assistants such as Siri, but most seem unaware that text-to-speech (read aloud) and speech-to-text (dictation) may also be built into their phone or available in free apps. I am interested in using these technologies to explore ways of exploiting learners' stronger skills - speaking and listening – to develop their weaker skills.

Some learners tell me their handwriting is too slow but that using a phone or computer does not help them improve this skill that they need for writing in class and in exams. Automaticity in handwriting would allow them to devote more cognitive resources to other aspects of writing, but building automaticity requires practice, and some learners clearly lack motivation to write by hand. Perhaps there is a role for handwriting recognition tools that convert handwriting to digital text.

Other learners explain that tools such as predictive text, autocorrect, spelling checkers and grammar checkers enable them to write more correctly when using technology, but that use of these tools does not result in better writing when not using them. If that is the case, perhaps they need to consider how and when to use these tools and explore different ways of using them.

Conclusion

As I think through the many possibilities that new technologies hold for writing development, I begin to think that, to benefit most, learners need to be willing and able to take more responsibility for their own learning. Their participation needs to go beyond attending lessons and doing the homework: they need to accept the teacher's role as a guide rather than as the giver of all knowledge, and, given the limited class time most of them have, to recognise and exploit the learning opportunities present in their everyday uses of language outside of class. They need to participate in real-life writing practices and develop autonomous learning strategies in order to make these count.

I hope that I may be able to write another article as my project evolves – perhaps one that contains some answers to the many questions that my ponderings raise. Meanwhile, if anyone reading this has explored new technologies or learner autonomy in the context of developing writing skills with Entry level literacy or ESOL literacy learners, or wishes to comment on any of the ideas expressed here, I would be delighted to hear from you.

The impact of my (Advanced Teacher Status) ATS journey on my professional practice

Valeria Panyko

Valeria has been working as a maths teacher and she achieved Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) as a participant of the first cohort in the country. She is a dedicated maths teacher who believes that creativity and has a major role in supporting learners in gaining better understanding of the key principles of maths. Valeria has been nominated for 'Maths Teacher of the Year' at the Skills Awards 2019, and she is one of the finalists. She can be contacted through her LinkedIn account.

Being a maths teacher...

... preparing my 16-18 years old students and adult learners for their GCSE or Functional Skills Maths exams in a multi-cultural FE college in London often gives me the opportunity to reflect on my practice, even after many years of teaching. Daily challenges and the changing curriculum make me think about how to enhance my practice, engage my students and make them feel positive and motivated about a subject I consider to be a foundation for our everyday lives. When I heard about the ATS course, I did not hesitate and applied straight away as I felt that I was ready for the next step of my professional development. Also, I needed some clarification, some fresh ideas and I was ready to reflect on my practice in a structured way.

At the beginning…

… of my ATS journey I was very uncertain about the expectations and how to complete my portfolio, but soon a very knowledgeable mentor was assigned to me. Sandi Bates is a senior lecturer at University of Wolverhampton and she gave me clear guidance, set next steps and SMART (Specific, Measured, Agreed-upon, Realistic and Time-based) targets for me to ensure that I would complete my portfolio on time. She was very approachable, and when I felt the need of further guidance or reassurance that my work was reaching the required standard, I was able to contact her and the reply arrived promptly.

The starting activity…

…of the ATS course was to identify areas of improvement based on self-assessment and on feedback about my practice from my students, colleagues and managers. The questionnaire was based on the 20 Professional Standards, therefore it allowed me to gain thorough '360 degree' feedback about my professional practice. It was very uplifting that my colleagues highlighted many points that I also considered as effective practices, but I could not see how they would like me to move forward because they mainly focussed on my strengths. However, my students' feedback was very clear. They wished to see more use of technology and they admitted to not being

motivated in the subject, so I decided to focus on increasing the motivation level of my students and find out how technology could help me to make the lessons more interesting and engaging.

An unexpected outcome…

… of my students' feedback was that louder and livelier students were much happier in the lessons than their shy, quiet peers who felt that I did not know them well enough. It really shocked me, as I thought that I did pay a lot of attention to those learners who seem to be avoidant to participate in class discussions, worrying about not getting the answer right. I felt that I spent more time on encouraging them and I used a range of strategies to make them feel more confident in the lessons (1:1 support, peer work, positive verbal praise and written, very careful differentiation avoiding 'labelling' …) but it seems that they felt they needed more attention. Based on this recognition, I decided to convince my quiet students to sit at the front of the classroom, so their work could be closely monitored and they could have more opportunities to clarify their thoughts. While some students were too scared to sit close to the board (they need more time to see the benefit of this), those ones who decided to move, have made significant progress within a short time. Their attendance and motivation level dramatically increased and many stated that they have started enjoying the lessons. While seating arrangement are always in place, now I am more aware of the needs of my shy, quiet students.

As the course progressed...

... the number of my developmental activities significantly increased. On one hand I found it fascinating to measure the impact of this training (and of course what I have learned there) on my students' progress, but on the other hand I felt that I was overloaded with information and I found it a real challenge to sort them out, put them in order and include them in my portfolio. After the mentor meetings (which happened through Skype due to the distance), I always had a very clear picture of where I was and how to move forward. My mentor highlighted the most significant steps, reminded me to keep my focus on addressing the Professional Standards. Beside my mentor, Christina Gasson, the Head of Quality Assurance of our college, was there to help me. She observed three of my lessons and provided valuable, constructive feedback. Also, I observed her lessons which were really inspirational and gave me new ideas.

Reading...

...was a key feature of the ATS year. Two of my favourite books, Boaler's *The elephant in the classroom* and Barton's *How I wish I'd taught Maths* were extensive sources for ideas and they gave food for thought. Both books are based on evidence, and I felt connected because these studies offered explanations and solutions to a number of my questions and concerns. The more I read, the more exciting it was because I began to understand more about what was driving my

students' behaviour. For example, when two very similar quizzes were given to my students (one at the beginning of the lesson, one at the end after discussing the first), learners in the 'lowest set' scored fewer marks in the second test. I found this perplexing, but the Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) provided an answer: students in the lowest set were being overloaded with information which was making them very tired. As a result, they could not even solve those questions what they were able to answer before.

Experimenting with ideas, resources …

... and finding the effectiveness of them was very exciting part of the ATS process. I consider myself a creative person, but this time my attention was to design resources with the maximum impact.   I created many resources from flash cards to exam-revision cards; a Learning Journey for students to record key points of learning; I designed a 'Maths in my Vocational Area' booklet to show how maths appears in various vocational subjects, and held a conference for Childcare students to show the link between practitioners' knowledge and confidence in maths on young children's development; I made more use of technology (BKSB, Kahoot, Mathswatch, Onmaths, Mathsgenie, Powtoon, just to mention a few); I encouraged my learners to research for specific topics or take a photo of their completed work (e.g. matching cards activity) and e-mail it to me so we could discuss their work with the class. I also attended internal and external training and completed many online courses. Throughout the year I had a diary open on my computer, and I noted down what happened during and in between my lessons. It became a very interesting reading and a massive resource bank for my reflective account, my case studies and for the other pieces of work in my ATS portfolio.
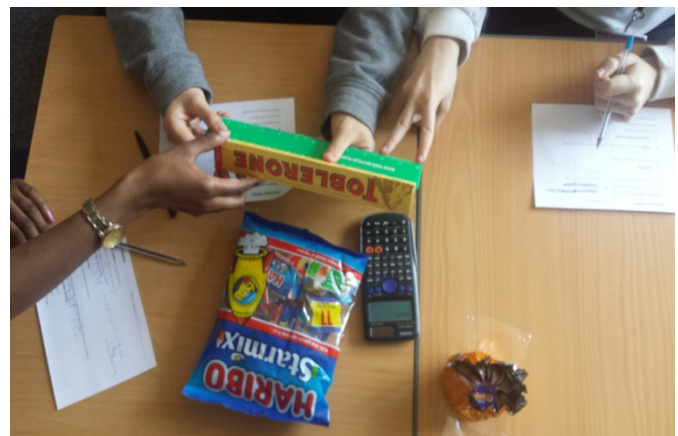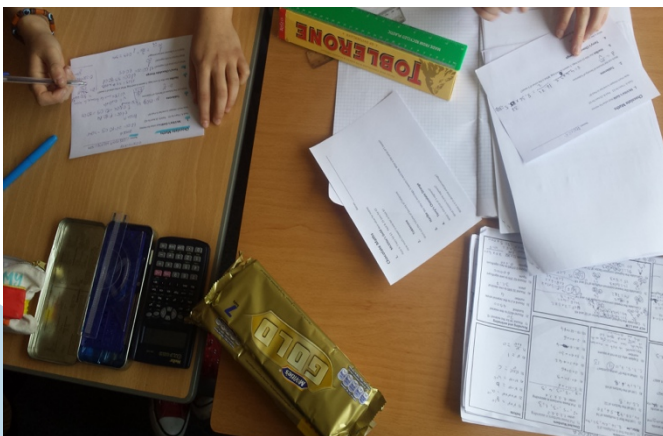
Conclusion...

I must say that the ATS course has changed my mindset in a number of ways. While, before I saw myself as a maths teacher who knows what to teach and how to identify students' needs, now I listen to my learners more carefully and let them tell me how they would like to be supported. I give them more authority to decide what they want to learn, and I offer them choices during the lessons. I feel that many of my students see me as a professional guide now, who is there to help them, therefore they are more open towards me, sharing their thoughts and fears. Also, based on students' feedback we decided not to have ability sets any more, and this year we feel that our students are much happier, and they seem to show greater progress.

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Erasure writing in the classroom: creating new narratives from old

Michael Smith, John Peacock and Alison Bartrip

Michael Smith has worked in the Further Education sector for nine years, teaching English and Teacher Education. He currently works at Barking and Dagenham College as Learning Innovation Manager.

John Peacock entered education via the slightly unconventional route of teaching Diamond Sorting to local people in newly independent Namibia. He currently works as a Learning Champion at Barking and Dagenham College where he teaches English and mathematics, and supports other teachers in enhancing their practice.

Alison Bartrip has worked in education for more than ten years, and in the Further Education sector for the last five, teaching both English and mathematics. She currently works at Barking & Dagenham College as a Head of English and mathematics.

Introduction

This article explores the use of erasure writing as a form of original composition with learners of English. It details the findings and experiences of three GCSE English teachers based in a general Further Education College setting who have been trialing this approach over the past four months. The article will feature examples of erasure writing that learners have created, alongside commentary from learners and their teachers on how they found the process. It concludes by arguing that erasure writing is a valuable and inclusive mode of narrative composition that enables learners across a range of abilities to engage in a form of creative writing and construct meaningful texts.

Erasure writing

Erasure writing can be considered a form of redaction, in which an original text is edited by a second author to give it new meaning. Much work already exists in the domain of erasure writing (Glass, 1981; Ruefle, 2006; Holmes, 2009; Abel, 2013), and as a mode of composition examples of erasure writing are recognised and valued for the new perspectives they offer on old texts (King, 2012). Erasure texts often adopt unconventional forms of presentation and structure, and eschew long sentences in favour of concise ones that place greater emphasis on individual phrases or individual words. The end result often resembles a form of poetry, in which rules of syntax and grammar are relaxed but maintained to a degree so that meaning can still be conveyed effectively.

Whilst well-established as a literary practice (King, 2012), the practice of encouraging learners to explore erasure writing as a mode of composition remains an under-researched area.

Pedagogically speaking, erasure writing offers learners a pre-built platform on which they can construct new narratives. This differs from traditional creative writing where learners are initially faced with a blank page that they can find daunting. Moreover, exposure to new words and concepts that feature in the original texts invites learners to carefully read and judiciously select appropriate forms to convey meaning in their writing. The pictorial aspect in some erasure texts is also significant, in that the use of images within the text brings about a multimodality that bridges textual meaning, both literal and figurative, with visual meaning.

The project

The decision to explore erasure writing in the classroom came about as a result of our college's participation in a national project entitled Make Art, Not War, commissioned by 14-18 NOW, an arts programme established to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. Learners were posed the question 'what does peace mean to you?' and invited to create a response. The project encouraged creative expression and learners were given freedom to consider their response to the question and arrive at their own interpretations.

The method

The project ran with two GCSE English classes over a duration of three weeks. To introduce the concept, a selection of quotes on peace were given out and learners were told to highlight anything that meant something to them even if it was an odd word or phrase. Discussion of the selections then took place, with interesting themes and concepts associated with peace explored in further detail. A lot of room was given to this; comments and questions incidental to the concept of peace were encouraged in an attempt to build a collective understanding of how peace can be interpreted in a range of contexts.

Learners were then shown finished examples of erasure writing, some of which were just redacted and others that included an image. A selection of different photocopies from a range of fiction novel pages were then offered to learners to explore. At this stage rather than 'erase' what they didn't want, they highlighted words or phrases that connoted peace in some way. Learners then blacked out the rest and added a pictorial element if they wished. During composition, collaboration between learners was encouraged to facilitate the cross-fertilisation of ideas. As teachers we were mindful when supporting learners not to impose our own ideas into their texts, instead encouraging them to find their own voices.

Project findings

The use of erasure writing as a vehicle for creative expression led to a range of outputs. In the beginning stages, wide-ranging discussion ensued about many of the peace quotes, often with different interpretations and sometimes moving away from the topic but in a positive way. At first the learners were unclear how to go about creating their own work but by using the examples they

all became engaged. The output was of a high standard with learners pulling together vocabulary from the texts that they would never normally put together. Many pieces were about internal suffering rather than external factors. Many were quite short but meaningful. Learners were confident and capable in articulating what peace meant to them verbally, but expressing this through erasure writing was difficult, owing to the reduced word choices they could make. Despite this, learners approached the task with great enthusiasm and demonstrated a firm conceptual understanding of peace through their interpretations.

Examples

Example 1 - CH's erasure writing
CH's erasure writing has been created using some pages from Stonehenge by Bernard Cornwall.

> *The priests…understand…a great relief…like pale gold. Priests…dared to hope…that…must be part of his great scheme. God approved of the bargain. The tribe…walked…then gathered…alone.*

Example 2 - CC's erasure writing
CC took two pages from Michael Alexander's *Confessions of a Male Nurse* (a chosen text from the college's library) and thinking about peace, created a response to the question of what it means to her.
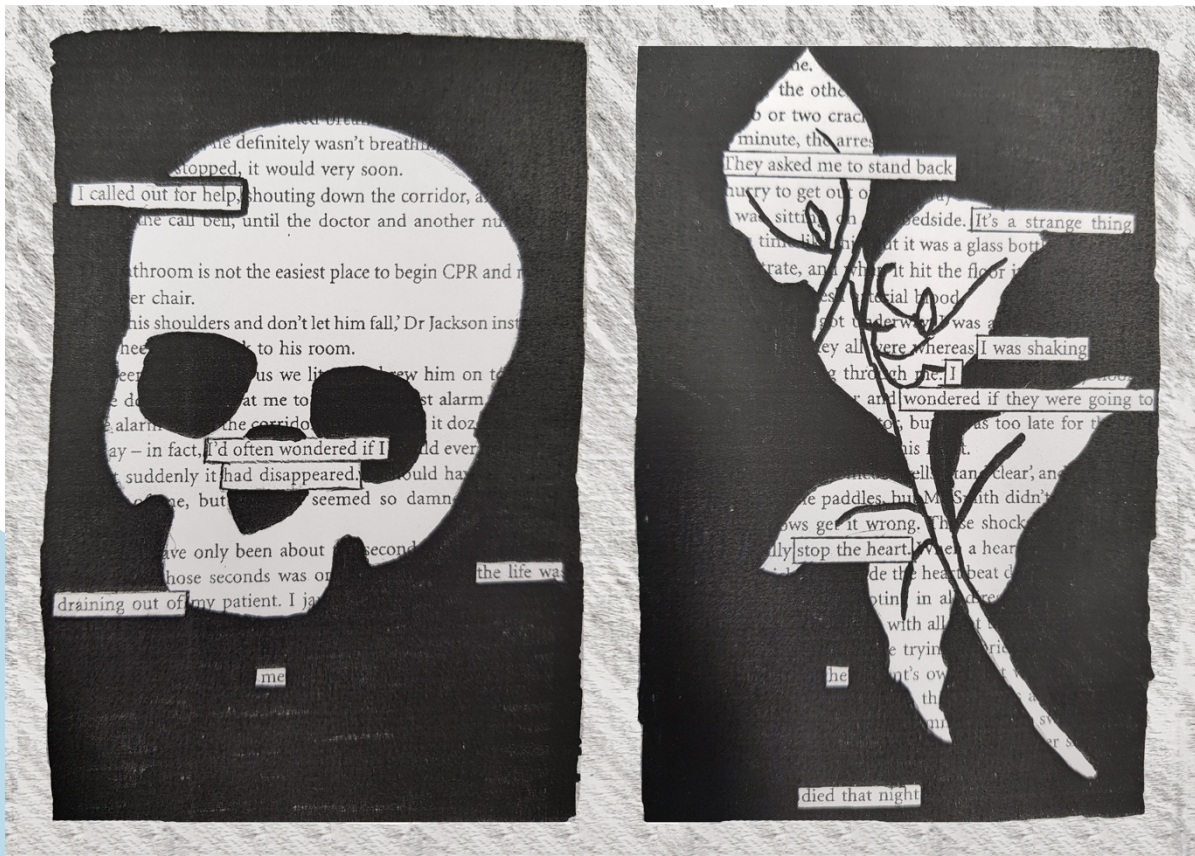
Reflections and conclusions

Quotes from learners:
- I didn't think I'd be able to do it, but once I started, I amazed myself.
- It was really difficult at the start until you spot a couple of words you can use and it goes on from there.
- All those peace quotes were really good. I liked talking about them with the others.
- I want to read the book that I had the pages from. *('The Traitor's Wife' by Allison Pataki)*

For many of the learners we work with English is a subject that they have not previously excelled in, and one that they are often not enthusiastic about studying. With that said, this small-scale project has indicated that erasure writing is a valuable way to engage learners in creative writing through novel means. The project has also demonstrated to us the value and importance of exploring key concepts, such as peace, in Further Education English classrooms. Much of English teaching in Further Education settings is oriented towards functionality and vocational relevance in the real world, and the importance of English in these contexts is important. But similarly, we must not neglect the rich opportunities that exist within English classrooms to explore challenging and thought-provoking ideas that ultimately invite us into the conversation of mankind (Oakeshott, 1960). In this tradition, erasure writing offers learners a bridge between what has come before and what is yet to come as they seek to find their own voice.

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Literacy for Active Citizenship readers

Judy Kirsh

Judy has more than 25 years' experience in the field of English Language Teaching, as a teacher, teacher-trainer, external examiner, consultant and materials-writer. She was project co-ordinator in 2102/13 for the 'Welcome to the UK' project, having previously worked at LLU+ on a range of projects and courses including the development of the Citizenship materials for ESOL learners, ESOL subject specialist modules, combined and blended learning ESOL/Literacy DTELLS and the Teaching Basic Literacy to ESOL learners course, to name but a few. Judy has also worked on the British Council ESOL Nexus project and is currently co-chair of NATECLA, the professional association for ESOL teachers in the UK.

Introduction

The *Active Citizenship and English* project (2013 – 2015), led by Learning Unlimited (LU), used a range of innovative approaches to support the integration of non-EU women and included a '*Literacy for Active Citizenshi*p' strand.

Using a range of participatory approaches, ESOL learners and volunteer befrienders were encouraged and supported to write unique stories about funny, personal and less typical aspects of everyday life in the UK, which were then edited by the LU team to create two graded versions of each story – one at Entry 1 level and the other at Entry 2+ level. In recognition of the uniqueness of the series and their contribution to ESOL literacy, the *Literacy for Active Citizenship* readers won the prestigious international British Council ELTons award in the 'Innovation in Learner Resources' category in 2016, a hugely exciting and rewarding event for all who had been involved in the project.

Development process

The '*Literacy for Active Citizenship'* readers development process was extremely successful in supporting integration and making literacy opportunities accessible to a wide range of people. We used participatory strengths-based approaches to give migrant women attending ESOL programmes and their volunteer befrienders a voice, providing them with a unique opportunity to be pro-actively involved in a creative publishing project. This resulted in the participants seeing their stories being illustrated, published with ISBN numbers and launched at a national event. The books were catalogued in the British Library and national university libraries, and the participants had the pride and satisfaction of knowing their stories would be read and enjoyed nationally.
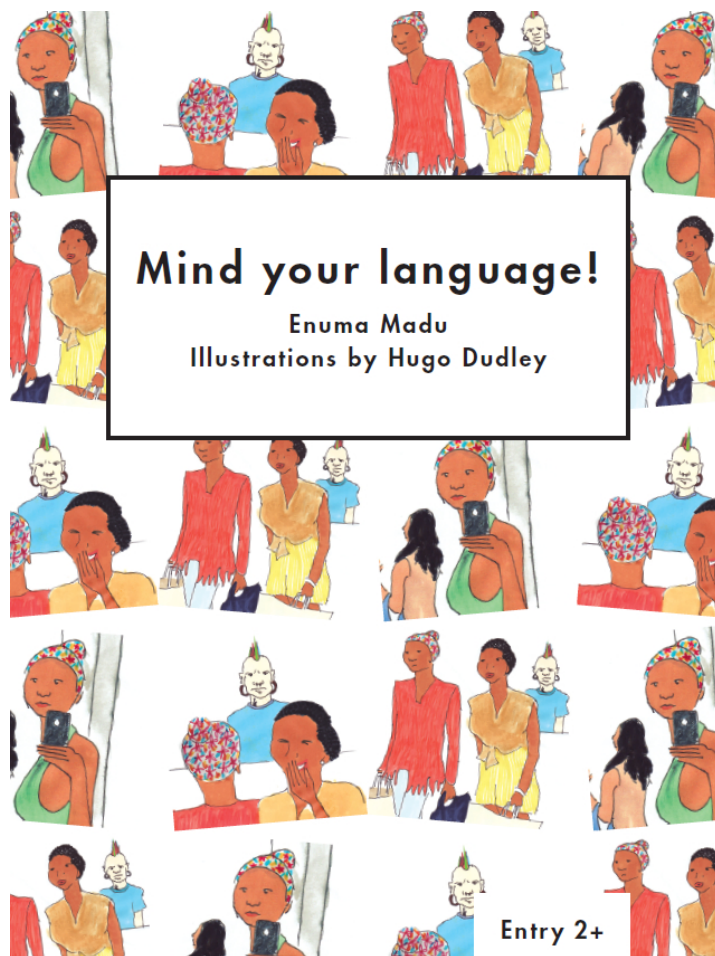
Key Features

At the time, there was a limited range of books on the market produced specifically for adult ESOL/literacy learners at Entry 1 and Entry 2+ and they were mostly written by ESOL professionals. The *'Literacy for Active Citizenship'* readers provided a series of authentic reading materials which had particular relevance and resonance for adult learners with a shared life experience of migrating to, and settling in, the UK, those who are new to the English language and/or Roman script, those with learning difficulties and those who, for a range of reasons, did not have the opportunity to develop literacy skills in their first or main language or at school.

Another key feature of the series is that participants gave each story an element of humour, surprise, gentle self-deprecation, fun, or wry observation of everyday life in the UK, which makes them stand out from more typical publications which cover themes such as going to the doctor, shopping or learning English in a much more traditional way.

Uniquely, there are two versions of each story (Entry 1 and another at Entry 2+) and this allows each theme and its story to be explored with a whole class and still provide differentiated reading and activities, as well as providing opportunities for reading progression. Each of the 20 published

titles in the series includes carefully graded key words, comprehension and discussion questions as well as supporting activities. The books were illustrated by volunteers, and their different visual interpretations and approaches provide another rich aspect to this product. The additional free downloadable resources are available on the Learning Unlimited website and include, for example, games, puzzles, images, matching activities, gap fill exercises, and worksheets. Where necessary, guidance is provided for tutors on how to prepare the activities (such as printing, laminating and cutting up class sets of matching cards which can be re-used), or ideas for how to use the same activity with ESOL learners working at different levels (see http://www.learningunliare mited.co/resources/acereaders)

Conclusion

An underpinning aim for '*Literacy for Active Citizenship'* series is to encourage the readers, whether at home or working together in an ESOL/literacy classroom, to reflect and draw on their own life experiences and recognise the value of these. The books and activities in the series are now being used and enjoyed nationally in ESOL classes and independently by adult speakers of other languages (ESOL), as well as literacy learners who are developing their reading skills in English.

The Council of Europe's toolkit for volunteers and others providing language support for refugees
An introductory guide

Richard Rossner

Richard is a co-founder and former chair of Eaquals, an international association dedicated to the enhancement of quality and effectiveness in language education, which has its own inspection and accreditation scheme. He continues to work for the association as an inspector and consultant.

As a member of the Council of Europe's coordination group for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM) project, Richard was closely involved in the development of the Council of Europe's toolkit for volunteers providing language support for refugee. He is also author of two recent books published by Oxford University Press: Language Teaching Competences, and Language Course Management.

Introduction

The Council of Europe's online toolkit, freely available in seven languages at https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants, was devised as part of the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM) project (see www.coe.int/lang-migrants for further information) within the Council of Europe's Language Policy Programme 2015-2017. It takes the form of a website containing 57 'tools' and other resources that can be used by volunteers to prepare for and provide language support for refugees. The individual tools were prepared by contributors from five different organisations and individuals, in Austria, France, Italy, Romania and the UK respectively. Further details about the development process and about the contributors can be found on the website, which can be viewed on any kind of computer or mobile device connected to the internet. However, the layout will vary depending on the device being used.

This introductory guide provides a step-by-step 'tour' of the structure and content of the toolkit website using links to the various pages and to examples of individual tools.

1.   The homepage
Click on the above link. You will find the following:

    a.   A general introduction to the toolkit
    b.   The list of languages in which the website is available (in the lower half of the page) which is also to be found (in abbreviated form) in boxes on the right. These contain direct links to the website in the various different languages: click one or more of these languages to see different versions of the homepage
    c.   Links to a downloadable leaflet in English and French (bottom right)
    d.   Links to the six other areas of the website via tabs across the top of the page under the heading of the page, or in a bar menu. These sections are explained below.

2.   'Introduction'
Click on the tab marked 'introduction'. The page contains four headings with images, and brief descriptions of the kinds of tools available under each heading. The headings are as follows:

    a.   'The Council of Europe and language policy for migrants/refugees'

b.   'Refugees: some essential background'
c.   'Cultural and language awareness'
d.   'Language learning'.

For ease of navigation, this list of headings is also available on the right-hand side of the page in this section, as is the case in the other sections.

Click on the 'language learning' subsection (for example) : under a brief introduction there is a list of five tools. Like all the tools in the toolkit, each has a transparent title, and each can be viewed on screen and/or downloaded in PDF or in Word format. Word format allows users to adapt the tools to their specific context or purpose if they need to.

Click on tool 10 '***What is involved in providing language support for refugees?***' (for example): like all the tools, tool 10 includes a summary of the aim just below the title. In this case, the aim is to encourage volunteers to think about the language support needed by refugees and how it can best be provided. This is important because volunteers may or may not have experience of providing language support, or they may think they need to adopt the role of 'language teacher', which is not the case. This point is discussed under the heading 'Teaching versus providing language support'.

The second page contains some important 'points to note', which it would be useful for volunteers to reflect on, especially those who are working with refugees in this way for the first time.

The 'Dos and Don'ts' table on the third page is designed to encourage volunteers to reflect on the way they should approach their task. Where possible, it would be valuable if volunteers could discuss their thoughts about these points with other volunteers and/or with a coordinator. The reflection task is followed by a brief discussion of each of the possible behaviours listed in the table.

Note that in the text there are links to other tools in the toolkit which are relevant. This is a feature of many other tools.

Now return to the 'introduction' section.

IMPORTANT NOTE: to return from looking at any tool to the website and the list of tools, use the back button ← .

3. 'Preparation and planning'
Use the tabs or the menu bar to find this section. The general aim of the tools in the section is to provide help for volunteers in preparing their language support session. This time, there are three sub-headings with brief introductions to each:

a.   'Some points to think about'
b.   'Needs analysis'
c.   'Planning content'

Choose 'some points to think about': you will see a list of ten tools. As an example, select tool 21, '***Selecting and using texts for listening and reading at elementary level***'. Again, the tool begins with a clear aim, namely to help volunteers with challenges they are likely to encounter in finding and using suitable texts in the target language (the language refugees want to learn) for refugees to listen to or for them to read. The tool is divided into two sections, one about listening activities and the other about reading activities. Each section invites the volunteer to think about the kinds

of text that may be suitable and interesting for refugees with a very elementary level of proficiency in the target language, and then to consider some key questions about organising listening or reading activities, before suggesting a step-by-step approach illustrated by an example.

Now choose the last sub-section, 'planning content': you will see only three tools, all of which are lists designed to help volunteers choose language they want to highlight in their language support. Select tool 33 '***Expressions for everyday communication***'. As the aim states, this tool is to help volunteers to choose expressions that are related to scenarios that they plan to focus on in their language support activities with refugees. The list is ten pages long and covers a wide range of expressions useful for beginners in the target language. These are organised in tables under thematic headings. The first column describes the function or purpose for which the expressions are used, the second lists the expressions themselves, and the last column provides examples of how the expressions can be used. This list, like those in tools 31 and 32, is a very useful resource for volunteers who need to find suitable expressions and examples quickly.

Now you need to click on the back button to return to the website.

4. **'Activities'**
As you will see when you click on the 'Activities' tab at the top of the page, this section contains five different types of tool that can directly help volunteers plan and run language support sessions for refugees with an elementary level of competence in the target language. Each sub-section has a slightly different orientation covering:

   a. 'Getting started' - one tool to help volunteers to work comfortably with a group
   b. 'Learning vocabulary' – three tools
   c. 'Thinking about language learning' – two tools to get refugees thinking about their languages and their learning
   d. 'Scenarios for language support' – 15 tools that provide ideas for running language support sessions
   e. 'Mapping journeys and interacting with the host community' – three tools that can help volunteers organise language support in the local area.

Click on tool 35 in 'learning vocabulary': '***Ideas for learning basic vocabulary: everyday life'***. You will see that this tool offers advice on selecting and using pictures to introduce and work on basic vocabulary. The various examples of pictures provided in the tool may be useful, but it is suggested that volunteers try to find alternative or additional pictures that are meaningful to the refugees in the context in which they are working. As mentioned in the first paragraph, tool 22 provides further advice on finding and selecting pictures and real objects for use with refugees.

'Scenarios for language support' is by far the largest sub-section, and each scenario follows a similar format. What changes is the real-world situation being focused on in the language activities and resources. Click on the 'scenarios' sub-section on the 'activities' page and read carefully through the notes about scenarios. These explain the layout of the scenarios and provides suggestions for preparing to use any of them. These guidance notes contain links to various other tools that can also help orientate volunteers to using the scenarios well.

To see an example of a scenario for language support, click on tool 44 '***using health services'***. This shows the simple and clear layout of scenarios, and how activities follow each other in a logical sequence. As in most scenarios in the toolkit, ideas are provided for refugees with low literacy in

the target language, and some pictures are also included as examples. It is <u>not</u> suggested that this or the other scenarios should be given to the refugees on paper. Generally, volunteers will use a scenario, perhaps with adjustments and additions, as a plan or as ideas for one or more language support sessions. Very often volunteers will want or need to adapt the language and activities to better match the needs of the group, which may include some refugees with a higher level of proficiency in the target language. They should also invite refugees to give their own examples and use their own ideas in role play dialogues and other activities. In other words, scenarios are starting points for language support: they are not designed to be followed strictly but rather to be adapted and extended to meet the needs of each volunteer and each group of refugees.

Now go back to the website and select another scenario, for example, tool 45 *'shopping: buying clothes'* or tool 47 *'food: inviting someone to a meal'* so that you can compare the ways different scenarios are organised.

5. 'Resources'
This is another useful section of the website. It contains the following:

   a.   A list of all the tools, where you can download any tool, or all of them if you wish
   b.   A glossary containing explanations of some of the terms used in the various tools
   c.   Links to directories of relevant websites in English, French, German and Italian
   d.   A short list of links to the websites of the Council of Europe and other key international organisations.

6. 'About the toolkit'
This section contains:

   a.   Information about the piloting of the toolkit in Italy in early 2017
   b.   An account of how the toolkit was developed
   c.   A list of the people who contributed in different ways to the development of the toolkit
   d.   Information about the event held in November 2017 to launch the toolkit.

It is suggested that you continue to explore the different section and sub-sections of the toolkit and examine the different tools. The toolkit is a free resource. Please inform anyone you know who may be interested in using the toolkit in their work with refugees about its contents and where they can find it.

Richard Rossner
Member of the Coordination Group
Council of Europe's 'Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants' (LIAM) project

Citizen Literacy: Rethinking approaches to adult literacy to promote digital inclusion and citizenship.

John Casey, Diane Gardner and Wolfgang Greller

John Casey is a Senior Learning Technologist at City of Glasgow College. He started his academic career studying for a joint degree in Maths and Physics but changed direction and ended university with a degree in Irish and Russian literature. John is a published author in the field of technology and education, and had led and managed a number of R&D projects in this area. While working at Central St. Martins Art College in London, his analysis of economics trends in open education was referenced in a UK government report. John's skills have also led him to occasional work in the music industry with diverse groups from Joe Strummer to the Shetland Music Archive. John maintains an occasional blog at https://geronimoscadillac.com.

Diane Gardner is the Curriculum Head of Widening Access and Community at City of Glasgow College. She also represents the college on Glasgow's Adult Learning Group and co-chairs Scotland College's Community Based Learning Group and is one of the authors of the DfE Post 16 Phonics Tool in England which is due to be published soon. Her main interest is developing City Phonics which she created due to lack of any resources or advice for Adult Literacy tutors on how to teach adults how to read and write. The voice recognition and handwriting aspects of the app being created will help develop students' phonological awareness.

Wolfgang Greller is Professor for Learning Innovation and Multilingualism at the Vienna University of Education. He has been working in the field of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) for nearly 30 years in a variety of roles, including senior management and research. After a period as Vice-Principal for Research and Quality Assurance, Wolfgang is now active as a lecturer in teacher education. Therefore, his applied research efforts are practically oriented to improve education at all levels, but he also looks at promoting life-long learning in ubiquitous and informal contexts using self-regulated learning strategies. His website can be found at www.greller.eu.

Introduction

The key theme that this article explores is understanding adult literacy as the foundation for digital inclusion and citizenship. It is easy to overlook this in both the popular and academic discourse around the subject of digital inclusion and citizenship. To be specific, adult textual literacy (to be able to read and write) is required to use web and smartphone technologies effectively. Without that foundation skill, options for participating in the digital world are extremely limited. This position forms the basis for the design of a new adult literacy project (Citizen Literacy) that combines a synthetic phonics method to developing reading and writing skills in adults, with face-to-face classes being supported by online digital learning resources.

The Citizen Literacy project is based on existing work at the City of Glasgow College that has been delivering synthetic phonics-based adult literacy training to learners and tutors in the West of Scotland Region through an accredited City and Guilds programme developed at the College (please see https://www.cityofglasgowcollege.ac.uk/city-phonics).

From this perspective and our Scottish national policy context, we propose that literacy skills, especially the textual skills of reading and writing, are so important to personal development, inclusion and digital citizen participation that they should be taught as a subject in their own right, as well as in context. In this article we describe the development work we are engaged in and discuss the potential for international and European collaborations to inform the development of digital approaches amongst literacy practitioners.

The Current Situation

A challenge to the approach we propose is that the dominant existing adult literacy methods in the rest of the UK have few concrete approaches that involve teaching the mechanics of reading and writing to adults (as opposed to children). The dominant policy paradigms of Social Practice and Employability have instead focussed on building general confidence and social and communication skills. In this dominant model, lessons about spelling, handwriting practice, punctuation and a limited amount of grammar are spread across general activities. So, what should be the foundation of any adult literacy development programme is currently dispersed across widely different contexts, leading to incoherence in delivery and unsatisfactory outcomes for learners.

Developing Digital Tools

In our current programme development work, we are exploring how learners may access and use digital resources to support their own learning on the course and independently. We feel our students would be disadvantaged further if we did not explore digital options for their learning opportunities.

This innovative way of supporting the delivery adult literacy is in response to student needs and also to the EU's High-Level Group of Experts on Literacy call to action from 2012 when the then Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism, Youth and Sport, Androulla Vassiliou, stated:

> I asked the group to look at common success factors in literacy programmes and policy
> initiatives and to take into account the realities that people – young and old – face today
> and the needs that come with modern technologies, such as 'Web 2.0' and smartphones.
>
> (Vassiliou, 2012)

Also, more recently, at ELINET's 2018 International Symposium in Germany one of the Keynote speakers, Janet Richardson focussed on the need to ask new questions about the connections between Literacy, Digital Literacy and Citizenship. This encouraged us to begin exploring digital approaches as a matter of some urgency (Richardson, 2018).

Our technical approach is based on adult literacy learners' existing use of internet enabled smartphones. At first this may seem counterintuitive to some educators. But our approach is based on student input and feedback at The City of Glasgow College which evidences that adults with poor literacy skills already use smartphones and access the digital world in a range of ingenious ways. This digital dimension provides another useful means of delivering learning opportunities for these adults and opens up many new CPD and teaching opportunities for staff.

The synthetic phonics-based approach we have been developing lends itself well to building digital learner support tools that can be used on smartphones. As a first step in this area, we have begun developing a prototype smartphone 'app' that uses voice and handwriting recognition to support our students to practice exercises outside of class. Our project software developers have been sitting in on adult literacy classes to learn more about the target learners. From this we have developed a small proof of concept demonstrator with this YouTube demo video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bMP14MrJ-o&feature=youtu.be

In creating this tool and exploiting its many benefits, we are beginning to develop a framework for improving textual literacy for our students as the foundation for access to information in a digital world and the basis for inclusion and participation in digital citizenship.

International Perspectives

In a later phase of development, the Citizen Literacy project aims to explore how adult literacy practitioners in different EU countries approach their work, especially in relation to using digital resources and techniques. In this connection, we would like to explore the development of a shared pedagogical model based on existing EU competency frameworks for teachers and citizens. The international dimension emerges from the insight that low literacy among adults is on the one hand preventing them to enter the labour market or from developing their full potential. On the other hand, digital citizenship is increasingly becoming an issue of 'educational justice', as more and more public and private services are moving online, requiring digital literacy on top of reading and writing skills (Hardt and Negri, 2009).

The EU, therefore, recently developed a generic framework for digital competences 'Dig Comp' (Ferrari, 2013; Vuorikari et al, 2016; Carretero et al, 2017) as well as a framework specifically for educators DigCompEdu (Redecker, 2017). Unfortunately, these approaches are based on an assumption of existing reading and writing skills of the learners. Due to the lack of these foundation key literacy skills, adult literacy then becomes a matter of social and digital inclusion for 21c citizens. Removing barriers to accessing digital services through a cross-competence approach that includes adult literacy, is therefore vital for the future of our societies.

Furthermore, a better understanding is needed with regards to how digital devices (e.g. smartphones) and services are accessed by people with low literacy or special literacy needs. We need better evidence about how textual representations of online information and online interactions are taken up by this target group (e.g. sign-up and log-in procedures). How multimedia and haptic approaches of online information may perhaps mediate lack of reading and writing competences, and how this differs from access to printed information. With this

knowledge base, innovative and forward-looking pedagogic models, learner support services and courses can be created.

We propose to identify and build on good practice already in place elsewhere and examine how national policies shape the support of these skills. As part of this process we want to explore how digital tools and infrastructures are being (and can be) leveraged to support the developmental journey of adults via textual literacy into digital literacy and active digital citizenship (Manzini and Francesca, 2011; Mumford, 1995).

Working in collaboration with practitioners in other countries would greatly assist us in informing the design of our work and explore what may be usefully transferable between languages and cultures. This would enable us to investigate the possibility of a creating a shared developmental framework for learners and tutors to support adult textual and digital literacy and citizenship that could be mapped against EU competency frameworks.

Tutor Training

Our tutor training programme is unusual in the UK in that it concentrates on training adult literacy tutors on the 'nuts and bolts' of how to teach reading and writing to adults. Due to current policy constraints, such tutor skills are not clearly developed and articulated in current practice but instead are usually subsumed in a range of applied and social skills contexts. This approach represents a move away from current dominant UK policy directions that presumes these skills are best taught in context.

We propose using methods and tools directly focused on teaching reading and writing to adults instead of dispersing literacy efforts across general skills development, and believe this would ensure more literacy students' needs being met.

Linking these approaches to digital tools would also open up many, many more opportunities for students and staff. We have identified a teacher skills deficit in this area and are proposing to remedy it by offering a number of complementary CPD approaches including F2F methods supported by digital tools and modern digital learning platforms. We are also keen to explore how these methods and technologies are being used in other countries to inform both our own practice and share our experience with others.

Conclusion

We know that the use of smartphones for adult literacy is not exploited at the moment and it is not unusual, or surprising, to discover that adult literacy learners have poor digital literacy skills. But bridging this gap by embedding digital techniques into existing literacy education practice would help us reach a greater number of disadvantaged and disenfranchised adults, helping them begin to take progressive steps in their lives and in turn within their different communities (Freire, 1970).

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Literacy and numeracy for homeless adults: what role for the adult education sector?

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Introduction

Homeless people are often identified as a group in need of improving their literacy and numeracy skills (Barton et al. 2007; DCLG/BIS, 2014). Whilst the evidence base on this is weak, a recent attempt to assess homeless people's basic skills levels found that in a sample of 139 single homeless adults, 51 per cent had poor literacy skills and 55 per cent had poor numeracy skills (i.e. below level 1) (Dumoulin and Jones, 2014). This is likely to disadvantage many homeless people in multiple areas of life.

However, people experiencing homelessness are often excluded from opportunities in the adult education system (Barton et al., 2006; Luby and Welch, 2006; Reisenberger et al., 2010; Olisa et al., 2010; Dumoulin and Jones, 2014). As a result, third sector homelessness organisations have often been identified as important sites for learning. Yet, not much is known about what this community-based provision looks like in practice, nor the various factors shaping it. In my doctoral research I set out to explore this issue, through semi-structured interviews with 27 staff working across the homelessness sector. Whilst the focus of my research was community homelessness organisations, it also highlighted a role for the adult education sector in supporting homeless (potential) learners.

Literacy and numeracy learning in the homelessness sector

Interviewees from across the homelessness sector described offering literacy and numeracy support in a way that temporarily *compensated* for, rather than *addressed* in any sustained way, literacy/numeracy weaknesses experienced by their service users: most commonly helping people struggling to meet the literacy and numeracy demands of everyday life. This involved doing things 'for' people (for example, helping people to read and understand official forms) rather than helping them to be able to cope with everyday tasks independently.

> 'We aren't doing a huge amount about that, having basic skills courses… a lot of the support work that will be done will be by people who will work with people to actually do forms.'

Although less common, interviewees also described offering some support to help homeless people to *develop* and *improve* their literacy and numeracy skills. These activities included reading groups, creative writing activities, one-to-one support, literacy and numeracy courses and embedded learning (for example 'learning on the job' in social enterprises).

In-house provision: a tailored, flexible approach

Interviewees described a number of successful approaches for engaging homeless adults in literacy and numeracy education. Flexible and tailored learning options, a mix of one-to-one support and small class sizes allowed for support to be tailored to individual learners. Service users were able to dip in and out of provision, and learning opportunities were linked to service users' own goals and interests. Furthermore, provision appeared to be rooted in the ways in which service users were using (or wanted to use) literacy and numeracy in their day-to-day life, rather than based on pre-determined, standardised frameworks.

Some interviewees described needing to plan course provision around the conditions service users were expected to meet in order to access benefits and other support services. For example, provision was planned in recognition of service users' need to prioritise attending appointments at the Job Centre. Therefore, lateness and missed sessions had to be accommodated. This, it was felt, was not as well catered for in more formal adult education settings such as local adult colleges.

> 'We definitely operate on the understanding that that's gonna happen and we have all sorts of things in place to make sure that doesn't derail things.'

Addressing exclusion from mainstream adult education

As organisations predominantly concerned with tackling homelessness, rather than being dedicated learning institutions, it may seem strange that homelessness organisations are offering learning opportunities. When asked about the reasons they were offering such support, interviewees commonly spoke of the exclusion of their service users from the mainstream adult education system, and their desire to compensate for this in some way through their organisations.

> 'People tell us that they don't feel judged here… they feel valued and respected and all the rest of it and that's what we want to do. Because some people don't feel that anywhere else'

Interviewees highlighted a number of barriers to their service users participating in mainstream education provision. These related both to the perceived nature of mainstream provision, which was felt to be at odds with the complex needs and interests of their service users. They highlighted low levels of confidence amongst their service users, with some recognising a need to perform a brokerage role to encourage participation at local colleges. A number had also hosted external

adult education providers within their settings, in an attempt to break down barriers to learning for their service users.

> 'I think if I took some of the [service users], and sent them to college once a week, they wouldn't go. But by coming here, it's the same environment – it's safe, secure.'

Patchy provision: a missed opportunity?

Whilst my research has identified many positive aspects of learning provision in homelessness settings, it also highlights a missed opportunity to support homeless people to engage in learning. Whilst in a small number of instances, learning opportunities formed a regular part of the service offered, in most instances these were often short term and ad hoc.

In addition, on the whole, staff felt that they did not possess the technical capacity to deliver or facilitate literacy and/or numeracy education.

> 'I don't have the knowledge base to teach, so people aren't getting what they need.'

Instead, a dependence on volunteers to support the ongoing provision of learning opportunities could make service provision inconsistent.

> 'Providing that one-to-one support requires a real kind of commitment from people which is difficult to guarantee… the last thing we want is those people having yet another bad experience of education.'

Homelessness organisations also felt a knock-on impact of austerity in the adult education sector – the outreach activities described above, for example, were not underway at the time of interview in any of the organisations included within the sample, and in recent years, interviewees described a notable reduction in engagement and outreach work undertaken by local colleges and other external learning providers.

> 'We used to have the [adult education provider] in. They used to regularly do stuff at [the organisation]. I'm going back several years…particularly literacy classes… but all that funding is gone'.

Conclusion and recommendations for the adult education sector

The patchwork of provision described above represents a real missed opportunity for homeless people. Whilst homeless people are often identified by politicians and other stakeholders as a group in need of improving their literacy and numeracy skills, the government appears to eschew any responsibility to fund it. Without recognition by policymakers and significant financial investment, the extent to which such organisations are able to offer high-quality literacy and numeracy support is likely to remain limited.

That said, a number of actions can be taken within the existing context to enhance educational provision for homeless adults. Some solutions relate to provision in community organisations supporting homeless people. But others relate to the ways in which the adult education sector could better support homeless (potential) learners.

What can the adult education sector do?

- identify and (where possible) remove barriers to learning participation in their own organisations for those with multiple and complex needs
- ensure that relevant outreach opportunities are communicated clearly to the homelessness sector.
- explore ways in which providers could support literacy and numeracy provision in homelessness and other community settings, e.g. volunteer brokerage opportunities
- where possible, offer free (or subsidised) training in adult literacy and numeracy education for staff working in homelessness agencies
- develop courses specifically for those working with homeless or other 'marginalised groups' to support basic skills training.

Incidental Learning in Storytelling

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Abstract

This article analyses trainee teachers' experiences of incidental learning using storytelling in the English as a Second Language (ESOL) classroom in the Further Education and Skills sector. It comments on the reflections of trainee ESOL teachers using story activities in their practice and it explores their experiences of incidental learning within language teaching.

The research focuses on the responses, evaluations and perceptions of trainee teachers on the effectiveness of storytelling as a pedagogic tool to enhance language and literacy skills development and explores the impact of incidental learning on trainee teachers' professional development.

The findings indicate that trainees experienced incidental learning whilst implementing storytelling in a wide range of contexts with various groups of learners from Entry Level 1 (beginners) to Level 2 (upper intermediate). Storytelling as a pedagogical tool was used in various forms, such as unplanned impromptu uses when demonstrating a grammatical or lexical point. The trainee teachers' reflective accounts of incidental learning demonstrated a positive impact on their professional progress, which is mainly reflected in the components of attitudinal and intellectual change with some evidence of behavioural change too.

The key findings of the study indicate that storytelling provides creative opportunities for teachers to develop their practice through incidental learning. It highlights the importance of unplanned and spontaneous anecdotal stories in engaging ESOL learners in language practice and suggests that stories can be used as an effective pedagogic tool in teaching and learning.

Keywords
Incidental learning; Storytelling; Communities of Practice; Teacher Education; Further Education and Skills Sector; Trainee Teacher ESOL teachers.

Introduction

Throughout life, individual learning is shaped by the experiences that the person engages in. However, when something unexpected occurs within the context of these learning experiences which challenges existing knowledge, then incidental learning takes place. It has been argued that

incidental learning happens when an individual is occupied within a learning experience and when something unexpected or unplanned happens. This is also defined as disjuncture (Marsick and Watkins, 1992). It is therefore a by-product of another activity, whether that is a formal or informal learning experience (Hunter, 2010; Kerka, 2000).

This paper explores if the use of storytelling can result in incidental learning for trainee teachers and how storytelling can be used to engage learners. The personal nature of sharing anecdotal stories can result in incidental learning which unexpectedly shapes trainee teachers' professional development (Brasher, et al, 2012; Polly, 2007). Trainee teachers can be highly receptive to learning experiences as they have a desire to learn and which draws attention to the importance of incidental learning occurring within their practice.

One of the most important elements for a trainee teacher, which shapes the sort of teacher they will become, is the journey that they experience throughout the programme (Jephcote, Salisbury, 2009). The placement experience provides valuable opportunities for incidental learning to take place and this can lead to the growth of their knowledge and skills in their pedagogical practice. According to Rytivarra and Kershner (2012) professional learning is a deep learning experience which results in transformations to practice, rather than superficial acquisition of knowledge and skills. It is through the adoption of practice that results in changes within the individual.

A definition of incidental learning

McGeouch, 1942 (as cited in Marsick and Watkins, 1992), first defined incidental learning as learning which is unplanned and occurs within a formal learning environment, but without formal instruction or specific materials. This describes the characteristics of incidental learning, but is limited to formal learning. It has since been extended to include all types of learning experience, focussing on the unexpected element of the learning that occurs (Marsick and Watkins, 1990).

Incidental learning is often discussed alongside informal learning and has even been described as a subcategory or component of informal learning (Gilley et al, 2001; Polly, 2007; Hunter, 2014). However, due its spontaneous nature, it can take place within any type of learning experience, unexpectedly as part of another activity. It is by nature unplanned and therefore an individual and personal learning experience.

Marsick and Watkins (1992) suggest that incidental learning is more prevalent within an unpredictable and dynamic environment such as the workplace, where disjuncture is more likely to happen. However, teaching and learning environments within which teachers operate offer rich opportunities for incidental learning. Not only is the learning environment unpredictable, but the dynamics within the group can fluctuate and this creates the sort of conditions where incidental learning takes place. This makes it an important type of learning that should be valued as part of a trainee teachers' development of pedagogical skills.

The theoretical framework for incidental learning to happen in a meaningful way

The framework for incidental learning (Figure 1) includes a central learning sphere where incidental learning occurs. The trigger for incidental learning is some form of *disjuncture.* This is when an individual is forced to find an alternative approach to a situation because of something unexpected happening (Jarvis, 2010; Marsick and Watkins, 2001; Polly, 2007). This unplanned trigger is often a by-product of another experience or activity and is subject to interpretation by the individual. This is in relation to prior knowledge.

Alongside this, *critical reflection* on the experience enables meaning to be formed. Context also plays a pivotal role, determining how an individual interprets the experience and consequently, the actions which follow. The existing knowledge and prior experience that an individual has will impact on how every factor is engaged with.

Figure 1: Theoretical framework for incidental learning

Non- learning

Disjuncture

Incidental Learning Space

Reflective practice

Identity

Tacit Knowledge

Context – Prior Experience

Context – Community of Practice

Context – Political
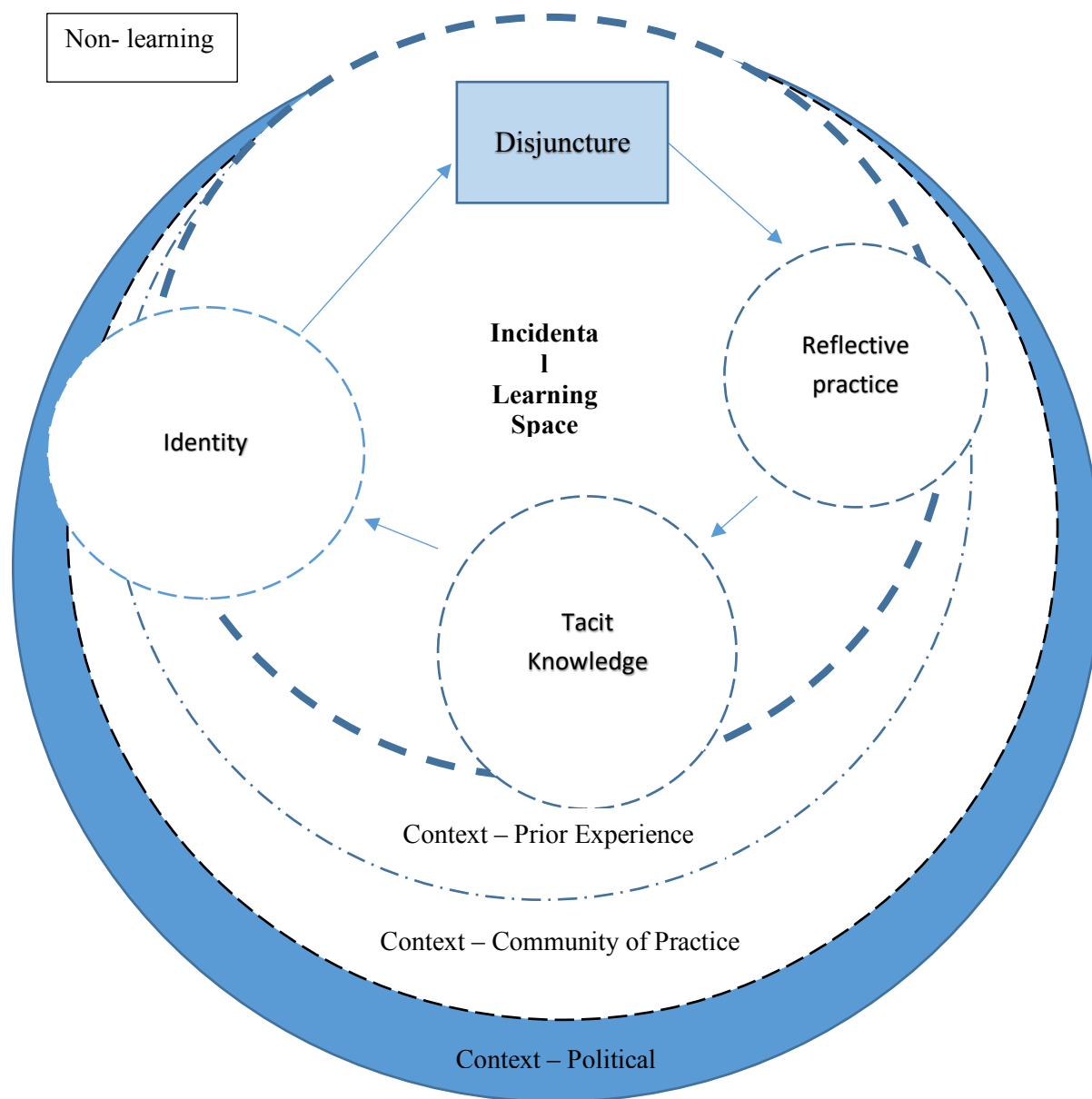
Methodology

The study focused on the post-lesson evaluations of a small group of trainee ESOL teachers teaching in a variety of contrasting settings in the Further Education (FE) sector. Contexts of teaching included FE colleges, Community teaching, Adult Education Services and English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

The participating group of teachers were asked to deliver a storytelling activity of their choice as part of their teaching practice; after the lesson they were asked to reflect on the success of this activity and to post their thoughts onto a Moodle forum. Nineteen trainee teachers took part; out of these 12 were pre-service and new to teaching (novice teachers) and 7 were in-service teachers (in post). There were 24 'discussions' or posts on Moodle (see diagram 1 below).

Diagram 1 Screen Shot of Moodle

The trainees' post-lesson reflections were posted on Moodle and were analysed as part of qualitative data. The importance of reflection is emphasised strongly by teacher trainers as an essential part of teacher development (Farrell, 2011), as it encourages them to examine and evaluate their classroom practice and pedagogic development. Coding was used to identify recurring and prevalent themes in the teachers' responses on the Moodle forums. Coding can be defined as the naming of units of data (Newby 2010) which emerge, tagged with codes or themes. With reference to language teaching methodology, the ESOL teachers were encouraged to use a range of approaches to implement their storytelling activities to gain a richer collection of data to analyse; it was expected they would adopt an 'Engage, Study and Activate' (ESA) approach to learning (Harmer 2007) by encouraging learners to draw on their own prior knowledge and experiences or 'stories'. It was anticipated that teachers might then use the stories elicited from learners to teach aspects of grammar or vocabulary, following on with learners then using this new knowledge to formulate a piece of work. Storytelling activities could be provided, or trainees could choose to make one of their own.

The key question in this research study aimed to explore how storytelling activities can shape teachers' professional development through incidental learning. The research study was based on a humanistic philosophy, which argues that individuals and their stories should be at the heart of education, that learners' views, beliefs and experiences will help us as teachers to better understand, change and manage their language learning. The study endeavoured to take an inductive approach to analysis, examining what emerges from the data collected.

Ethical framework

An ethical framework is usually provided by 'a knowledgeable professional body' (Megginson et al, 2007: 34). In this research study this was endorsed by the university where the researchers work. The trainees were given an information sheet detailing the aims and objectives of the research study and they were asked to sign a participant information sheet to seek permission to carry out research and ensuring confidentiality. It was made very clear to all trainee trainers contributing to the research study that participation was entirely voluntary and that it was not an officially assessed part of their course; all trainees who took part in the study did so out of choice.

Valid and rigorous qualitative research data should reflect diversity of race, age, gender and culture. As the data analysis for this investigation is based upon qualitative judgments, the research was conducted with a mixture of 'pre-service' (new to teaching) and 'in service' (in a teaching post) trainees to offer richer data and to allow comparisons. Trainee teachers were chosen based on their willingness to participate, the rationale being that willing volunteers will engage with the process more fully.

Berman (cited by Mishra Tarc 2013: 392) points out that students' personal disclosure of experiences during language classes can be a problematic, opening up a host of ethical and personal conflicts for the student and the teacher. With reference to this study the ESOL teachers were asked to consider this in terms of ethical practice during storytelling activities, being aware of sensitive subject areas for the learners such as: war and political conflict, different ethnic and religious beliefs or loss of family and friends during ethnic cleansing. However, Berman suggests that rather than avoiding 'emotional' issues, that these be used to inspire students to write with meaning, for example, by encouraging learners to use their personal experiences in 'language experience' story writing.

This research study followed a qualitative approach to collecting data, taking a humanistic philosophical position. Storytelling can offer insights into people's worlds as they are grounded in narrative, reflecting how people see themselves and feel about themselves. It was therefore the aim of the study to use qualitative data to seek knowledge on interaction and feelings. Qualitative data is defined by William and Brown (2009) as a process which seeks to measure the value of something; this study examined the effectiveness of using storytelling in incidental learning, exploring the values of trainee teachers' experiences and their interpretation of classroom 'events'.

Analysis of teachers' responses

Significantly all the trainee teachers decided to devise their own storytelling activity either selecting and adapting a readymade resource or making one of their own. This suggests that offering a choice encouraged trainees to develop their creativity and imagination, enabling them

to demonstrate the ability to make their own resources, showing autonomy and metacognitive skills.

> …my mentor said **I could be as creative as I liked**...I could choose what to teach...I thought this was a good opportunity to use storytelling...as sometimes I am constrained by a set scheme of work…

Trainees' responses indicated story activities were a valuable and enjoyable vehicle to use in the classroom, demonstrating pleasure in the use of storytelling.

> It was **great** working with stories...

> All the students seemed to **really enjoy** hearing each other's stories...

> The learners **really enjoyed and engaged** with this activity.

Stories were used as a creative source or 'incidental springboard for inspiration' and diagram 2 below indicates trainees' inspiration for storytelling tasks.

Diagram 2 Trainees' Inspirations for Storytelling

Analysis of trainees' reflections indicated clear evidence of both planned and impromptu creative experimentation with storytelling activities in lessons, using a variety of inspiration for tasks and resources such as: ice breakers, fictional stories, fairy stories, folk tales, literature, story games and use of video stories.

> This activity is not my own invention, it is adapted from a game I've been playing since I was a child, but I have found it works very well as a quick starter, or to target word class, or certain vocabulary.

Interestingly, trainees discovered that true stories and 'human interest' stories were popular with students.

> Students seemed to like the story because it's was gory, unsolved and real. Learners also liked it because it happened in this country.

> **…**problems and miniature adventures I have the students can relate to…I also find it somewhat easy to talk about life experiences as these are real happenings.

It is important to note that trainees used personal anecdotal stories to model and exemplify language, acting as a story role model. Trainees also suggested they unexpectedly discovered anecdotal stories allowed them to present a more human side for learners to identify and bond with.

> …the teacher should introduce herself and tell them something interesting about herself too. This makes the teacher more human and likeable.

Trainees perceived anecdotal conversation and exchanging of oral narratives of personal experiences as a highly social act, thus encouraging not only *explicit* but *implicit* collaborative learning strategies. Significantly, personal anecdotes from both teacher and learners which were used naturally in class, were found to be a very successful pedagogic tool.

> I incorporated my own anecdote using a personal experience…

> The use of personal anecdotes made the class lively as they all wanted to contribute…

Most trainees expressed confidence and belief in the effectiveness of their story activities in their teaching practice, trainees' accounts revealing that what began as incidental storytelling in the form of personal anecdotes, became a routine classroom practice in various forms due to the observed positive impact on the atmosphere in class and learners' language proficiency.

> I would begin each session with an anecdotal story telling activity...

Responses from ESOL trainee teachers indicated that personal stories are valid and useful platforms to use in language teaching for a variety of purposes such as: encouraging class bonding thus promoting a positive learning atmosphere conducive to a multi-lingual classroom; stimulating learner engagement and motivation; promoting interaction and collaboration; and building situational language context to make a pedagogic teaching point.

Findings

Accounts of trainees' incidental learning was particularly significant in the following areas:

1) Trainees discovered that telling personal anecdotal stories can act as a 'follow me' model to encourage students to tell their own anecdotes.

> I had imparted information and this encouraged the learners to speak about their own lives with me and each other…

2) Trainees unexpectedly discovered the value of utilising their own life stories as short anecdotes, to spontaneously illustrate a language point and/or to function as prompts for learners' own stories. Trainees' responses revealed an impromptu usage of storytelling particularly as a pedagogic tool to aid learners struggling unexpectedly with a specific grammar point, or to give an example of the language in context for clarification.

> When learners are struggling with a particular grammar point it is often necessary for it to be put into context for clarification. To do so I often draw upon my own life experiences, not just to help clarify the grammar point with which they are struggling but also to help them engage with their teacher…

Trainees' accounts exemplify an **i**mpromptu usage of stories on occasions when they had been using storytelling strategies in their practice without realising it, especially when they needed to clarify a language point without having it purposefully planned it for that particular lesson, or spontaneously when introducing a topic area.

> I recently used storytelling in an ESOL class without realising I was doing it!

An analysis of the trainees' reflective accounts enabled the mapping of trainee teachers' responses to anecdotal storytelling as a continuum of incidental learning practices, demonstrating that storytelling can be effective in impromptu; 'one off' and anecdotal uses of storytelling; routine classroom practice stories; storytelling for ice breakers, warmers and engager activities and collaborative storytelling activities. However, it is significant to note that certain uses were seen to overlap and run into each other, such as personal anecdotal stories as warmers and ice breakers

The study also supports the theory that when teachers and learners are engaged in and focused on anecdotal communicative story tasks, it results in impromptu language practice with language learning taking care of itself (Harmer, 2007).

> It engages the imagination of the learners and they particularly enjoyed making their own stories up and hearing the variations in the stories from other learners.

The accounts demonstrate the trainee teachers' individual approaches to the introduction and usage of storytelling activities in their teaching practice which, in most cases, led to some levels of change in their professional development due to incidental learning, mostly demonstrating an attitudinal change in the form of positive acceptance of anecdotal stories in their future practice.

> It went really well much better than I anticipated and is something that I will definitely use again.

> I must say I was a little unsure about how the group would take to writing about themselves in a far more personal way than is required for a C.V. However, the results revealed that they found writing about themselves and their lives in a mini autobiography an enjoyable task.

This study suggests that uses of storytelling led to developmental changes in the professional practice of the trainee teachers who, having experienced a positive response from their learners, changed their attitudes to storytelling, perceiving them as inspirational and a tool they would use again within their teaching methods. It was clear to see how bringing storytelling into trainee teachers' training enhanced their pedagogic perspective on their teaching; enriching their teaching practice and changing their beliefs on effective teaching.

> I will introduce more forms of storytelling tasks in future activities…

> This exercise gave me ideas for future lessons…

Significantly, trainees' reflections revealed examples of incidental learning within their teaching, indicating that the storytelling activities had enlarged their professional understanding of their practice, leading to more conscious planning of using storytelling.

> With hindsight, I would fully plan the lesson around a fictional story…

Reflections from trainees

Reflective practice is an important tool in practice-based professional learning contexts such as teacher education, where incidental learning plays a big role in how trainees learn from their own professional experiences. This is in contrast to more formal forms of learning or knowledge transfer. Analysis of the data indicated that trainees experienced clear examples of 'disjuncture 'in the form of unexpected classroom situations. These incidental learning experiences occurred when trainees learnt from their own professional experiences, rather than from a formal learning or knowledge transfer. Analysis indicates that trainees were reflecting 'on action' and identifying how to improve their practice (Schon, 1983).

> If it had been a longer session I would have used more stops for variations in activities…

> The activity would have been delivered more smoothly if I had done more to raise schema and tune the learners into the necessary vocabulary at the beginning of the session. I would do this in future as well as suggesting an optional opening sentence for the beginning of both stories…

A clear example of 'disjuncture' can be seen in the post below from a trainee teacher whose storytelling activity received an unanticipated negative reaction from his ESOL learners, as they were not engaged in the story subject matter.

> In a previous lesson a student lost interest due to a subject in a story that was not apparent in his native country...Even though I struggled to inspire him into the topic, it was a learning aspect for me to think about the contexts of my stories in future lessons…

The choice of subject matter and story context topic featured as an important factor in analysis of the data. Loehr (2012) describes how having a negative connotation within a story can lead the learners being negative consciously or subconsciously.

It was evident from posts from the pre-service 'novice' teachers that they were still exploring their practice. Trainees' comments would suggest that they were still learning incidentally from the use of storytelling activities in some instances, as some were using personal anecdotal storytelling spontaneously without planning but, subsequently recognised the value of such activities.

> ...I feel that starting the lesson with a short story about my own home promoted a feeling of inclusion and relaxation. The story I told was impromptu and anecdotal…

Jefferson (1978) points out that modelling of language by teachers often takes place through impromptu 'incidental anecdotal story chat'. it is evident from some trainees' comments that sometimes they had not planned to use personal stories, or indeed are not always aware that they are using personal anecdotes as pedagogic tools but do use them regularly.

> …It is something that I have used in each lesson that I have prepared and taught. I cannot say that to do so has been a conscious decision on every occasion, but it has been present throughout.

The use of personal anecdotes by teachers was a prominent theme reflected in trainees' posts on Moodle, they demonstrated how personal stories from the teacher not only engage learners but help the ESOL teacher become more human and bond with their group. Trainees' posts indicate that the use of anecdotal stories invited open dialogue amongst the learners and the teacher, with the teacher acting as a conduit for the ESOL learner, to tell her/his story or narrative.

The role of incidental learning was evident in the development of pedagogic practice. Analysis of reflections showed clear evidence of trainees' experiencing unexpected situations or 'disjuncture' in their teaching, both positive and negative. Analysis revealed examples of incidental learning within their specialist subject of language teaching and articulated awareness of how storytelling has improved their practice. Analysis of trainees' reflections indicates that the storytelling activities have enlarged their professional understanding of their practice, leading to more conscious planning of using storytelling, identifying how it will be used in the future.

Conclusion

This aim of this study was to analyse the reflections of trainee teachers' experiences of using storytelling as part of their teaching practice in ESOL classroom and to examine any examples of incidental learning. Findings were based on observations of ESOL teachers experimenting with story activities in their language classes and the impact on the teachers' professional development.

The findings indicate that trainees used storytelling successfully as a pedagogical tool in unplanned impromptu uses, when engaging learners in a topic area or when demonstrating a grammatical or lexical point. The trainee teachers' reflective accounts demonstrated a mostly positive impact on the implementation of impromptu storytelling resulting in incidental learning in trainees' professional development, which is mainly reflected in the components of attitudinal and intellectual change with some evidence of behavioural change too.

The key findings of the study indicate that storytelling provides opportunities for teachers to engage in incidental learning and highlights the importance of using anecdotal storytelling in engaging learners. It suggests that with careful planning and sensitive consideration, stories can be used as an effective pedagogic tool in teaching and learning.

This paper argues that incidental learning can occur through the exchange of anecdotal storytelling within a classroom setting and that trainee teachers can use storytelling techniques as an opportunity to reflect critically on their practice. Ultimately this can provide an embodied approach as it is born from personal experience.

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Reading Aloud in Britain Today: an overview and implications

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Introduction

Do you ever read out loud?
When, where, with whom and why?
Do you ever listen to others reading aloud?

Though I have asked this question now a great many times, I am never bored by the answers I get. I am in the second year of a two-year Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project recording and analysing contemporary adult reading aloud practices. I have been trying to ask as many adults across Scotland, Wales and England the questions in italics above. Why have I been doing this? There are many ways to answer this. One answer is simply that very little is known, or written down, about this. If scholars from 2500 were to try to find out what adult reading was like in 2018, they would find all sorts of records of the types of texts created, sold, borrowed from libraries or downloaded onto devices. They might also find bestseller lists, book reviews and reading curricular. They would find quite a lot, in other words, about the texts that were read and about ideas to do with the teaching of reading. They would find few clues, though, about how texts were read, and in particular about what was read in silence and what aloud, using the voice and ear. Similarly, if you were to do an internet search under 'reading aloud' right now, you would probably find material about the use of reading aloud as a teaching tool to teach literacy or language, and you would almost certainly find material about the importance of parents reading to their children. You would find it much harder to find anything about the reading aloud practices that we as adults may do regularly across the different domains of our lives (Duncan, 2015, 2018).

But why does this matter? I think it matters because we talk about teaching or developing 'reading' as if we all share an understanding of what reading means, but do we? What exactly do we mean by 'reading'? 'Reading,' particularly in teaching or research contexts, is usually taken to mean an individual, silent process of looking at some marks on a page and deciphering a meaning. Reading certainly is this, but isn't it also so much more?

The research project

Reading Aloud in Britain Today is a multi-method research project, using three different forms of data collection to gather information about contemporary reading aloud practices. It started in the summer of 2017 with a Mass Observation Project directive sent around 'correspondents', asking questions about reading aloud and their lives (see Directive 109, Summer 2017 under http://www.massobs.org.uk/mass-observation-project-directives). The summer of 2017 also saw the completion of a 29-item questionnaire that was distributed, mainly electronically, through project partners and community organisations (see pdf on the project website: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/research/projects/reading-aloud-britain-today) (with the option of a hard-copy by post). By the beginning of 2018, 160 Mass Observation correspondents had sent in written responses to the 'Reading Aloud' directive, in hard copy and by email, and 529 people had completed the questionnaire. Finally, between October 2017 and July 2018, I travelled around Scotland, Wales and England interviewing adults and, where possible, making audio-recordings of both these interviews and of adults undertaking different forms of reading aloud.

The decision to use these three methods of data collection was, on one level, simply about trying to find multiple ways to gain the participation of a range of people across Britain, each offering different ways for experiences to be fed into the project. More than this, though, these forms of data collection all allow for the gathering of data in keeping with the work of New Literacy Studies, or the ethnography of literacy more broadly, championed by the work of Brice-Heath (1983, 2012), Street (1984), Barton & Hamilton (1998) and Gregory and Williams (2002). In this view, literacy is recognised as a socially-situated, varied, ideological and ever-evolving social practice. Within this perspective, what 'reading' and 'writing' mean is not self-evident but rather we need continual examinations of the real-life usage of different communities to inform our understandings. As Mace (1998) and Baynham (2000) have stressed, if we remember that literacy practices involve personal and social meanings within or beneath the observable literacy events, we cannot hope to research literacy practice without finding ways to gather individual, first-person accounts to access these meanings or values. The thinking behind both the original (1937-1950s) and revived (1981-) Mass Observation Project are remarkably in keeping with this view and can be understood in terms of multiple layers of duality, being both collaborative writing and data collection, both an art and a social science, and involving correspondents writing both as autobiographers, telling the stories of their own lives, and sociologists observing others (see Kramer, 2014) for an analysis on this 'dual vision' (Duncan, 2018). The desire to gather both participants' observations of practices and their personal accounts of their own experiences of reading aloud is the 'Mass Observation ethos' underpinning the Reading Aloud in Britain Today research design.

An overview of findings

I will report back briefly now on what each of these forms of data collection tell us about adult reading aloud today.

The questionnaire

The first thing that the questionnaire says, at least about its participants, is that reading aloud is widespread. Around 90% report reading something aloud either daily, weekly or monthly, and less than 3% never read anything aloud. This provides an answer of sorts to the question – do adults read aloud today? These ones, at least, certainly do. But more than this, it also says that the reading aloud that they do is diverse. Social media posts, newspapers, signs and posters, children's books, recipes and instructions, poetry and religious texts are some of the texts more often read aloud, with graffiti on toilet doors and placards at museums read aloud less often and by fewer people. The reasons for reading aloud are equally diverse, with reading aloud to share a text being the common reason indicated, with to memorize, to learn, to help others, to worship, to write and to enjoy as also commonly given reasons. Many also noted the range of purpose at play 'to fix instructions in my head or for comprehension of tricky language or for something unbelievable in the news', 'for the impact e.g. sibilance in a poem. To help with understanding wording. For problem solving.' 'To communicate information to someone else so they can comment on it straightaway. To instruct someone while working together (e.g. reading a recipe while cooking). To share the load of reading (e.g. a long Bible passage), hear different voices for variety and hear it come to life, to help parents/grandparents - if they are not wearing reading glasses.'

The questionnaire data also suggests something interesting about multilingualism. About half of those who filled out the survey indicated that they at least sometimes read aloud in more than one language. Some of these seemed more 'traditional' forms of multilingualism, reading aloud in the two or more languages they use to communicate in most days: 'I am bilingual – Polish and English- and occasionally read aloud in both languages' or 'I read aloud in English in class.' 'Also, love reading aloud in French as I am a French speaker.' Some are reading for religious purposes, where that language is used almost exclusively for that religious purpose 'Religious reasons – Arabic' or 'In Hebrew at the synagogue.' A great many are for language learning purposes: 'I'm learning Danish and it help me,' 'When I was learning German in the 80s it was really useful to get my tongue around the demanding consonant clusters.' Some are people who seem to value the sounds, rhythms and texts of a language (Old Norse for example) that they do not use to communicate with others. Rather, their engagement with this language takes the form of reading and reading aloud: 'I read good poetry aloud in English, Persian and Azeri Turkish' or 'I also read Latin and Ancient Greek aloud, slowly and repeatedly, in order to wrestle the meaning from the texts.' This may be well a useful reminder that our engagement with other languages, our voicing of other languages even, is not necessarily mainly or always about person-to-person communication.

We do, though, need to consider who the survey participants are. These 529 adults are not a mini-version of the current population of Britain. They are a fair representation geographically, and over-represent linguistic and ethnic/cultural diversity, but are 75% female and 75% university educated. Men and those without a university education are therefore significantly under-represented. It is also clear that those who filled in the survey were predisposed to talking or thinking about reading (choosing to fill in a survey called 'everyday reading'), and most were confident doing surveys online. We need to remember, therefore, that the sample are not necessarily speaking for 'most people' in Britain. However, it is equally important to note that these are not reading aloud fanatics. Nearly everyone noted that they prefer reading silently to reading aloud, do more reading silently and find reading silently easier. These 529 adults may well be (overall) a university-educated group particularly keen on reading, and particularly confident doing online surveys, but they do not seem to be particularly preoccupied with reading aloud specifically (a number noted that they had not thought much about reading aloud before doing the survey), and this makes their responses of great interest.

Mass Observation

The 160 Mass Observation responses range from less than half a page to over eight pages, 96 by email and the remainder posted. These can all be read, along with other Mass Observation responses, at the Mass Observation Archive at the Keep in Sussex. The overwhelming message is one of *surprise* at the topic ('adults and reading aloud don't go together') and *realisation* that they read aloud more than they had realised (with the word *realise* or *realised* appearing frequency). This cannot be overemphasised, so strongly does it feature:

> 'my first reaction – I don't do it. But the more I thought about it, the more I realised I do actually read out loud, more than I thought I did'

> 'I suddenly realise that I am saying these words aloud as I tap them out on the word processor. Something I must be doing continuously without realising it.'

> 'I imagine like other people I had thought little about reading aloud […] It was something I immediately associated with childhood. However, the more I've thought about it, I've realised that I read aloud or am read aloud to in a variety of ways.'

Participants also wrote about a great many different reading aloud practices and sixty-six kept a reading aloud diary detailing these. I grouped the practices into 20 categories: memorises from childhood and youth; generic work practices; specific work activities; study purposes; individual and group writing processes; sharing correspondence; following instructions, recipes or reading ingredients; preparing and giving speeches; board games, quizzes, crosswords and quizzes; play-reading, drama and amateur dramatics; engagement with poetry; religious worship; to help others; reading books or stories to other adults; listening to audiobooks; engagement with social

media and the news, and miscellaneous solitary practices (including throat exercises). Six headline points may be a better way in to all this:

1	More people reported reading aloud social media posts and newspapers than reading to children (despite reading aloud with children being such a visible, talked about practice).
2	Not all reading of books and stories is to children, a large amount is to other adults.
3	Not all reading aloud is to others at all, a lot done completely alone and to pets.
4	A great deal of reading aloud at happens in the workplace, both more specialist (e.g. scripts used for forms of therapy or reading aloud to perform wedding ceremonies as a registrar) and generic (such as the reading of minutes at meetings or the reading aloud of health and safety regulations).
5	Many different forms of reading aloud happen as part of individual and group religious worship, including reading aloud and listening, one person reading aloud to many listeners, many people reading aloud or reciting together in unison and solitary reading aloud.
6	Finally, it is notable just how much poetry, drama and literary reading activity goes on among this group, across a range of ages and educational backgrounds. This says as much, or more, about the often hidden natures of these more 'artistic' aspects of adult life as it does about reading aloud itself.

Remembering, though, that the Mass Observation correspondents are writing as autobiographers as well as sociologists, here are two examples of the many, many stories told:

'My dying friend, bed-ridden and no longer able to go outside, particularly enjoyed listening to poems about nature and the seaside. It made her feel nostalgic and she imagined herself walking along a beach with sand between her toes.'

'I chanced one evening to accidentally receive Radio Cairo which was broadcasting, in Arabic I suppose, an extremely long reading […] by a man whose voice and style were so intense and passionate, that I was mesmerized by it all, and was compelled to listen. I didn't understand any of it, but recognised that some sentences were from time to time repeated as in an heroic poem. The passion and intensity of the reading increased to an extreme degree as the reading continued until, abruptly it ended- very precipitately as if the reader had been shot dead. I sat stunned: its emotional effect was enormous although I

understood not a word. I remember it even now, more than half a century later, and can still hear that reader's passionate voice – it still has an effect upon me.'

I would invite any readers to think about what these two stories are telling us about reading aloud, and also, why, when asked about their literacy practices, correspondents respond with stories like these (see Duncan, 2018 for a longer analysis of the Mass Observation data)

The recordings: interviews and practices

Between October 2017 and July 2018, I travelled around, interviewing and making recordings of people reading aloud in Rotherham, Hull, Frome, Glasgow, Shetland, Skye, Pontypool, Huddersfield, Nottingham, Gloucestershire, Leicester, Sunderland and all over Greater London. 91 audio-recordings are now in the British Library Sound Archive available to listen to in the reading rooms ([British Library Sound & Moving Image Catalogue shelf mark C1765](#)). The range of practices and purposes are broadly similar to those noted in the questionnaire and Mass Observation responses, but the nature of these in-depth interviews and audio-recordings allowed the capture of more detailed explorations, explanations and conversations. In the presentation I gave at the conference, instead of presenting an analysis, I played a 5-minute edit of some of the interviews. The extracts that these were taken from are available to listen to [here on the project website](#), and all of these interviews are available to listen to in full at the British Library. However, I would like to try to capture something of this approach here with this edited transcript of these seven voices, arranged here into three themes, each of which highlights the profound in the 'everyday'.

1) 'Everyday stuff': 'reinforcing' the 'right things'

> Voice 1: I got married quite late […] I do a lot of shopping, so shopping involves her reading me lists and me talking about them, so negotiating shopping, everyday stuff. We talk a lot and we listen to the radio, you know online stuff that we share, newspaper items we get, you know […] we'll read and talk about bits that interest us […] just everyday stuff. […] we arrange a lot of meetings, so we read from emails, talk about, you know 'can you do Wednesday week? 'No, my sister's coming.' 'Oh blast, blah blah blah' and we'll look at something else and then we'll read again so, everyday stuff is one thing.

> Voice 3: If my partner's driving and he has messages, I'll read them back to him […] , I'll get them mixed up, mind […] in supermarkets I tend to read aloud […] reading ingredients and stuff- […] cause I've gone gluten free and I just pick something up and read – I probably look like a crazy person standing there reading to myself, but you see a lot of people doing it […]

Voice 4: You do see people in the supermarket doing it a lot […] I do it for clarification that there's no wheat in it, it sounds silly, but in my head it makes sense and if I read it aloud, and I've read every word, and I've spoke every word, then it means that's not in it, if I haven't seen wheat in it or gluten then that's not in it.

Voice 3: I think it's back to, same as revision, reading aloud enforces it for me –

Voice 4: Enforces that thing. And recipes - I find if I do a recipe on my phone or on my tablet, I find myself talking to the tablet, relaying the information, right, now I'll do that now, I'll do that now – and I'm relaying the information as a reinforcement that I'm doing it right, and putting the right things in the right time and the right amount.

2) 'Expressing life': the 'mysterious' 'resonance' of the 'wider ownership' of words read aloud

Voice 2: In the last couple of years, in Addis Ababa there have been poetry, developing poetry programmes and many youngsters are writing poetry to express themselves so I listen a lot through […] social media, so it's interesting, they read out loud because there are lots of emotions in it, it's mainly political, social, a reflection of their life […] The beauty of the language, but also the message […] I mean you listen to politicians and it's dry, poetry is much more complex and it has beauty. It expresses life in a very amazing way, in a way that I like to listen because I can relate to that.

Voice 5: I would read out loud in our chapel because we have our own worship so there will be readings out loud in chapel […] so out loud is quite an important thing for the rest of the community and the public to hear. […] In my own prayer life too, I will frequently read aloud, poetry for example, because I like to hear the resonance of sound, and expression and it becomes much more alive for me.

Voice 6: The fact that the words on the page are being verbalised it gives them a different, a different resonance, it gives them a different meaning […] you know when I'm in class and I'm reading the, you know, the phrase that I really wanted to, it's like 'oh yeah ok I really understand that differently now' […] there's a different resonance, there's a different feeling to it, there's a different, it's almost like a play, like, it's like 'ok I can accent this word I this way,' or I can put this emotion on this word, or I can feel text in a different way […]

Voice 5: There's a double dimension, isn't there? I would agree with you what you are saying. It's something to do with your body, something to do with your voice, the

ownership of the word widens completely and I think there's something quite mysterious actually.

3) *'Emotional' 'engagement': 'a time to be together'*

> Voice 7: I had a recent experience where my partner was not well and it sort of, it ended up being, not quite for medicinal purposes, but 'lie down and I'll read you a story' and it brought back, not quite memories […] I was reading a novel, so, but that quiet, calm, someone not well, it was soothing, it was lovely, it was just a time to be together […] it was quite a bit emotional moment actually where the engagement of one reader and one listener was – a dead interesting thing.

Here we see reading aloud fusing the ordinary and the extraordinary, or as a portal between the mundane and the metaphysical.

Conclusion 1: What does this tell us about adult reading aloud today?

Looking across these three data sources, we can say that reading aloud *is* a ubiquitous part of adult life. It may not be talked about a great deal, but it is done, and it is done in lots of different ways, in different places and for different purposes. Reading aloud (like reading itself) is not one activity, one process, but many. Some of the reading aloud practices examined seem to be forms of service to others, whether to entertain, help, teach or facilitate worship. Other forms of reading aloud are employed to serve particular cognitive or creative purposes: for example, to memorize or learn something or to compose or refine text, alone or with others. Still other forms seem to be ends (or beginnings) in themselves, where the saying or hearing the words has particular importance, conjuring or proclaiming truths or enjoying sounds.

The project findings also encourage us to reassess the ways we can understand boundaries or divisions between literacy and oracy. We could consider, for example, whether a memorized and recited text that has never had a written form could be seen as a form of reading aloud. We could also think about how often we may do 'something' that is a mixture of reading aloud and improvised oral language, when doing a presentation from PowerPoint perhaps, ordering from a menu with friends, or discussing the opening times of a shop, standing outside staring at the sign in the pouring rain.

The data also suggest something about how we understand a literacy practice to be common or 'everyday'. Is a practice common when a person, or a certain number of people, do it frequently? (Every week? Every day?) Or is a practice common when it happens regularly across a society, a sort of prevalence, for example readings at weddings or funerals? These happen often but not within any one individual life. Or is it more about the cultural visibility of a practice? We hear a lot about reading to children but much less about the reading that adults may do to each other or that we may do completely alone to write emails. Are differences in visibility to do with context,

forms of power, or something else? What does this mean for whether these practices are included when we think about reading in educational contexts?

Conclusion 2: What does this mean for us as adult literacy teachers?

The aim of the Reading Aloud in Britain Today project is to find out what people do and why. It is a 'finding out' exercise. It is not about advocating any particular uses of reading aloud or arguing that reading aloud should be used as a teaching tool. We can, though, think through potential implications as adult literacy teachers. Perhaps the most important, and simplest, implication is the importance of interrogating our definitions or conceptualisations of reading that underpin our teaching. When we teach reading, what are we teaching? The old Adult Literacy Core Curriculum and the Functional Skills English subject content documents do a decent job of breaking reading down into component skills, but this seems to have been done assuming that reading is always and only a silent process. There are no mentions of uses of the voice and ear or of reading to communicate something to someone else.

If we take seriously the reminders from Street (1984), Brice-Heath (1983) and others that our teaching needs to be based on careful examinations of what learners do and want to do, and that we must challenge dominant assumptions of what literacy is or means, then this should include remembering that reading is not one, single, uniform process, just repeated in different locations. Rather, 'reading' is an umbrella term for a hugely diverse range of practices and processes. This certainly does not mean that we all need to start doing lots of reading aloud in our classes, but I think it does mean that we need to be a bit more open in our explorations of the forms of reading engaged in by our learners and think a bit more carefully about how best to support our learners in developing the reading and writing skills that matter the most to them. This project has taught me that we cannot guess at the practices that mean the most in each other's lives (or assume they are like our own); we need to ask and keep asking.

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Magnificent. Excited. Fulfillment. Equal.
Four words to describe Andrew's journey

Julie Collins, is currently mentoring her third student on the ATS programme. She has 40 years of experience in adult, community and further education and has been coordinator of four Grundtvig Lifelong Learning partnerships working with 15 different European institutions (trade union, university, adult education, research, refugee, theatre, web radio, vocational, homeless, adults with learning disabilities). Her M. Ed in Literacy used multi-modal approaches to build self-esteem and literacy with the socially excluded. Her interest is in supporting student narratives.
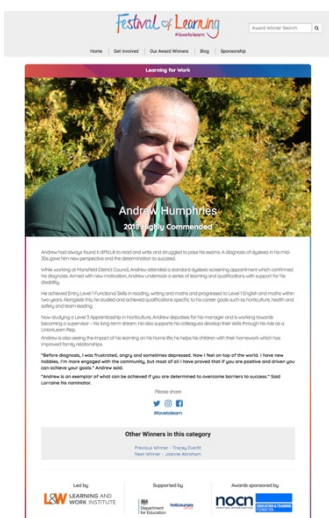
Stephen Evans, CEO, Learning & Work Institute interviewed Andrew Humphries, Highly Commended, Festival of Learning, during the plenary session of the conference.

After meeting Andrew Humphries and Lorraine Powney, I asked them to make a contribution to the Journal. Andrew's voice was powerful and his story inspiring. My hope was that it would encourage other learners, for students to continue contributing to the discussion, about what is important in the Journal.

Andrew, reflecting on the event said, 'It was the first time I had got up and spoke to anyone. I didn't have butterflies, I had sharks inside, but once I had spoken the first word, I felt like I was like everyone else – normal. I loved it.'

The idea for a recorded conversation grew and I sent a few questions to see if they were happy with the focus. The audio file, it was agreed, would to be deleted after transcription.

- *Can you tell me a bit about your time at secondary school?*
- *When you left school - what were your hopes and aspirations?*
- *What event in your life brought you to return to learning as an adult?*
- *What is/are the name of the course/s that you have completed?*
- *Which skill has been the most valuable to you at work?*
- *What skills have you developed that have surprised you?*
- *What has been the best part of the course that you have attended?*
- *Have you struggled with any specific bits?*
- *What has enabled you to overcome any barriers?*
- *What three words sum up your learning journey?*
- *Where do you see yourself in one year and maybe even in 5 years time?*
- *Are there character traits that you believe we, as tutors, need to support and develop to be able to help others to do what you, together, have achieved?*
- *Which skills do you feel are the most important to students – in their personal life or at work?*

Andrew and Lorraine (standing on the right)

Andrew prepared some written responses as prompts to the conversation.

A conversation

(A) I joined a Youth Training Scheme because I thought I needed an education and I got a placement at Mansfield District Council. I met Lorraine (now Principal Learning & Development Advisor, Mansfield District Council) and Steve Ulyett (GMB Coordinator) and they recognized that I had potential and they put the right people in place to start my training. I wanted to start with this bit of my story - learning. I thought I was a nobody. I didn't have a good start with family, or school. They never really supported me. I was told I was going to be on the dole. I wanted to prove them wrong. I thought gardening will be easy. I'll do gardening. Actually, it not as easy as you might think.

(L) We were looking at the Skills for Life agenda back in 2005 and we had a Lifelong Learning Agreement to look at employees who were not reaching their potential in literacy, numeracy and IT, although IT was not a front runner at the time. It was organized with the trade unions. We held an Open Day where we gave information to all employees and also invited the Dyslexia Association to come along and bring their promotional material. Our (then) Managing Director told people about her own struggle with dyslexia and what her journey had been like and her hope about raising people's aspirations. Andrew stepped forward and indicated that he thought he had dyslexia, so we arranged a test.

(L) He was working in horticulture and had a great understanding but was working at an optimal level. He didn't feel like he was achieving. He needed to find out what learning would help him from Entry Level 1 along his journey. He now has Level 2 English and is on a Horticultural apprenticeship. At the time he felt there were barriers – he was not feeling intellectual enough to have those conversations. He felt vulnerable in different arenas. Straight away we saw a change in his emotional shift - the frustrations were starting to diminish as he was starting to feel he could make a contribution.

(A) I always thought people were better than me. I couldn't read. It was an embarrassment. Just a piece of paper - a different colour, changed my life. The things the Council have given me, screening, money invested in me, have let me became a shop steward and a team leader. I read the papers from work now and my memory is brilliant. On my journey, everyone who has been put there to teach me has made it fun. I want to pass that on. I saw this lad, one of the apprentices, and I thought I want you on my team. I've taught him lots and I thought I knew everything but he taught me how to extract a 50p piece out of a circle whilst marking out a pitch, so I let him take over and get on with it. I am proud of him. Proud, that I've taught him. I've tried to point him in the right direction. Give him what they have given me.

From an educational perspective the important things Andrew and Lorraine said were:

(A) Having time to reflect.
(A) Changes of subject so that I didn't get bored and so that I could leave the ghosts in my head.
(A) Learning which was fun – e.g. subtraction through playing darts and dominoes. When you are playing in a competition you're learning at the same time, though I've never been brilliant at maths.
(A) Tutors who care about what the student will achieve.
(A) Signing a pledge.

(A) Knowing that if I ask, they will try hard to support me.

L) Having the right people at the right time – the relationship between all tutors and Andrew was important.

(L) Optimising time when it was best for his learning.

(L) Understanding the emotions of the learner – tutors having emotional intelligence to navigate the journey – you don't want to break them.

(L) Motivating students – finding the passion to go again after some downtime (resilience).

(L) Each step has been celebrating his success, embedding what he has learnt.

(A) If you met me when I was 16, you probably wouldn't have liked me. Now my anger has all gone. I don't know where. It's all from learning. I don't worry about what I can't achieve any more, because I can now. I was scared of asking before. I've got a better understanding of life.

Four words that would sum it all up – magnificent, excited, fulfilled and equal.
- In my achievement I feel magnificent
- I feel excited about my learning
- Lorraine interjected - a sense of fulfillment
- It's nice to feel that I am an equal if that makes sense. I can talk to anyone.

(L) It has raised his self-esteem and confidence. He's a Learning Rep and Andrew represents the Council too. It's not just a one-way process.

(A) When I got back from London I was summoned to the MD's office and was given an award for being an Ambassador of Learning, which no one else has ever been awarded. It meant so much for me. I could cry now just thinking about it. The government needs to start investing in people. I got given a computer with a screen (monitor overlay) and 'Dragon' (text to speech). I am not scared any more of digital.

(The apps I mentioned, which track invasive plants like Japanese Knotweed, or that identify plants, were ideas Andrew thought he'd like to try. In turn I wanted his advice, as he is apparently the go-to person for eliminating Japanese Knotweed in Mansfield and we have three clumps in a public park just a quarter of a mile away. At this point Lorraine must have been wondering about the direction this conversation was taking. We concluded that the future would be digital.)

(L) The digital platform is massive and what does it look like for people at the latter end of their careers or who have been out of work? It feels like we need something like a Skills for Life strategy for digital, as all transactions are going online, people can be afraid or don't know. People aren't always ready for work and they need support.

It was an honour to be able to listen to the conversation between Andrew and Lorraine. Their enthusiasm for learning was infectious and there are, it appears, special efforts put in place to support learners on their journey in Mansfield. It feels like a good place to be.

Numeracy as a Social Practice

Eds: Keiko Yasukawa, Alan Rogers, Kara Jackson and Brian V Street

2018, Routledge: Oxford and New York

255 pages

ISBN: 978-1-138-28444 - 9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-28445 - 6 (pbk)

Reviewed by Graham Hall

Graham Hall has taught numeracy components for a range of further education and higher education at Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Gwynedd. He has a master of education degree specialising in Mathematics, Education and Lifelong Learning.

This fascinating book documents an international project to investigate numeracy practices and numeracy education, covering both developed and developing countries. Contributors have come from diverse educational settings all over the world, yet the key principles which have emerged from the study will have as clear a resonance for teachers of numeracy in Britain as they will for teachers in many other places.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section presents a series of diverse case studies of numeracy. We are introduced, for example, to the work of waste collection vehicle drivers in New Zealand, builders of dry stone walls in the Philippines, and agricultural workers in Mexico. It is clear from these studies that numeracy involves far more than simple arithmetic. The central focus is on practical problem solving, which requires both mathematical ability and vocational knowledge in a real world context. Measurements must be made with an appropriate level of accuracy, and results may involve estimation. A high degree of spatial awareness may be essential. The numeracy demands of a task can become hidden, with workers unaware of the complexity of the numeracy skills they are using routinely and successfully from day to day.

The second section of the book addresses the important question of how well school mathematics courses prepare students for the numeracy demands of their future lives and careers. By drawing on studies of school mathematics in such diverse regions as Palestine and Nepal, contributors conclude that there has been a traditional focus on teaching mathematical techniques in the absence of any real world context. Those of us who were educated in Britain probably experienced a similar academic approach. However, several case studies identify efforts to increase the vocational relevance of mathematics for students. An example is the use of 'word problems' where tasks are presented in a realistic vocational context. A key concept emerging from this work is that numeracy is predominantly a social practice involving interactions between groups of people: to collect and process data, and then to act on the results obtained. Numeracy, unlike mathematics, is rarely a solitary activity.

The final section of the book makes a political statement about the role of mathematics education in maintaining the dominance of sections of society through the power of knowledge. Case studies are presented in such diverse contexts as: the education of black children in apartheid South Africa, primary education in India, a national literacy programme in Botswana, and the training of factory workers in Australia. Historically, mathematical education may have been disproportionally focussed on children who were expected to enter high status professions. The case studies suggest that most countries are now improving numeracy across the full social spectrum so that all members of society can achieve their maximum potential. Support programmes are increasingly being provided for adults who failed in mathematics at school, and are consequently restricted in their employment opportunities.

Overall, the book provides an important analysis of the current state of vocational numeracy internationally, and draws valuable conclusions on the future direction that numeracy education should take.

Brian Street, one of the co-editors of this volume, died on 21 June, 2017 during the final stages of the preparation of this book. The remaining co-editors dedicated the book to: 'Brian Street (1943 – 2017), Inspirational scholar, teacher and friend.'

Identity and Resistance in Further Education.

Eds: Pete Bennet and Rob Smith

2018, Routledge: Oxford and New York

197 pages

ISBN: 978-0-8153-7825-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-351-23295-1 (ebk)

Reviewed by Juliet McCaffery

Juliet McCaffery, PhD, has specialized in literacy, gender and equalities for over 30 years, working in the US, Brighton and London. She also worked as the gender and development officer at the British Council. She is now an education consultant and has worked in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian sub-continent and in Egypt, Yemen and most recently Cambodia. Her PhD research was on the educational experiences of English Gypsies and Irish Travellers. She was delighted to work on the 'Learning Together Across the Generations' pack for UIL (2017). She has a number of other publications.

The book provides illuminating information to anyone teaching post-school education as it critiques current policy as restrictive and managerial. I am not currently teaching in the post-16 further education context, but am deeply involved in adult education provision, and aware of the frustrating restrictions that are now placed on effective teaching and learning in all spheres of education, including schools and adult education. The authors of this book point out that funding for further education has been significantly reduced, more than in any other sector of education.

The book is essentially a critique of current policy and practice, mainly in colleges of further education and in PGCE courses in the university context and will be of particular interest to those working in those contexts. The book is divided into three sections – Section I - *Setting the Scene*, Section - II *Policy and Pain* and Section III - *Creativity and Resistance*. The eighteen chapters explain the theoretical underpinnings in different practices and cover a wide range of issues including teacher experience and identity, enquiry-based learning with adult learners, the importance of reflective practice, the impact of OFSTED and the effect of its focus on measurement and data, and consequently the undermining of the idea that inspection leads to improvement.

As Alan Tuckett points out in the preface, 'the denial of freedom for practitioners to exercise professional judgement has been dramatic in further education'. The instrumentalist purpose of education has led to a prescribed role for teachers and a prescribed curriculum leaving virtually no room for creativity. In this respect the editors, Bennett and Smith, make reference to King Lear, and how his daughters' desire for 'rationality' undermined him and his feeling of identity and self-respect (p.11). In chapter 3 the authors Groll, Bates, Saunders and Smith, are unreservedly critical of the required curriculum seeing it as the mechanism for supplying the labour market. They also

critique the inspection process for focussing on whether these skills are taught effectively. The authors maintain that the space in which teaching and learning takes place "has been conceptually reduced to the 'delivery' of a curriculum that produces students with the skills needed by industry and who are therefore 'employable'" (p. 29). The acquisition of skills required by the employment sector dominates the curriculum. It is to be noted that the Lingfield Report (BIS 2012) stated that a teaching qualification is no longer required, and it is now left to principals to decide if the teachers in their college require a qualification.

Jennifer Addo's refreshing account of how the positive aspects of further education experienced by her brother and sister and her own positive experience, as well as her life experiences, led her to become a teacher in further education. She had thought that further education provided 'a second chance' or an alternative for those from less affluent families. However, she has become disillusioned by the loss of creativity due to the current requirement for college managers to measure and monitor efficiency and the 'marketisation' of further education.

While Aldo's contribution starts on the positive aspects of further education, this is not reflected by other authors. They focus depressingly on how data has become increasingly important for accountability in the market setting. Chapter 12 discusses how a centralised market regulator can act as a mediator for government policy. Several articles critique OFSTED inspections and note that while lesson observation used to play an important role in the training, assessment and development of teachers throughout their careers, it no longer does. Recently OFSTED has come to be viewed narrowly by policy makers, inspectors and employers as an assessment tool for monitoring and measuring teacher performance. Both Smith and O'Leary argue that 'managerial positivism' has become an orthodoxy, and OFSTED, rather than promoting effective teacher and learning, has become the agent of enforcement.

Of course, further education and teacher training are not the only areas that have become very prescriptive. Both school education and adult literacy have lost much of their flexibility and consequently their creativity as most courses are now required to follow prescribed curricula.

Hopefully the authors' explicit critique of the current system will lead to change and the editors' references to the tragedy of King Lear will become irrelevant.

News from the sector
Tara Furlong

Tara is the Chair of RaPAL and can be contacted on webweaver@rapal.org.uk

I'd had three days solid hiking and camping in persistent rain with some biting cold, and was sitting dry, warm, well-fed and physically exhausted by a fire, which may have contributed to a curious wave of 'happy' on reading a report. It might not be everyone's choice text to pull out for a read in those circumstances, but I have to admit I was delighted to lever in time for a slightly soggy version of the Learning and Work Institute's recent *2030 vision: Skills for economic growth and social justice* that I'd picked up a few days before and made sure I'd shoved in my goody bag. Why? Because it directly addresses adult literacies in the context of the UK's future – something we haven't seen in a while.

The Augur review of Post-18 education is out soon – one can only assume the delays are attributable to valuable last-minute considerations; and the Learning and Work Institute have just launched an inquiry specifically into adult, further and community learning. A cautious spring budget works hard at being upbeat, so maybe we'll get somewhere. However, can I ask, what are these all-encompassing 'skills' seemingly amalgamated into a singular term?

2030 vision: Skills for economic growth and social justice

Learning and Work Institute's report [2030 vision: Skills for economic growth and social justice](#) recognises the UK is falling further behind international competitors in English, maths, and 'skills' generally, accompanied by falling living standards. It sensibly recognises that 'three quarters of the UK's 2030 workforce has already left compulsory education, so a higher ambition will require significant increases in adult participation in learning. Skills policy is devolved and the changes needed will vary by [area]' (p.6) to realise an affordable £20billion boost to the economy and extended benefits in health, wellbeing and civic engagement.

Improvements in learning and skills can contribute a fifth of economic growth – they are not insignificant – as evidenced in the heyday of the early millennium's investment in adult literacies. The report argues that this cannot be done without continuing to address not only skills to level 2 but also, explicitly, at level 3… in order to achieve higher national targets.

Consultations

Learning and Work Institute have opened a new inquiry specifically in to future-proofed local-to-national FE and skills. *The Future of the Skills System* call for evidence was released on 13th March, and is accessible on the [Skills Commission website](#). Closes 27th May.

The DfE has opened a [Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England](#), excluding T Levels, A Levels and GCSEs. Closes 10th June.

Review of Post-18 education

Publication of the Augur review of post-18 education is delayed but imminent. While much of the

press has focussed on higher education, Campaign for Learning with NCFE recently published commentary in *The Post-18 Review of Education and Funding a review of a lifetime* which is far more inclusive of adult education. They point out (5),

> ... the review of post-18 education – alongside the review of the UK apprenticeship levy - are forcing Westminster, Whitehall and the media to compare the funding of higher education with the funding of adult further education and adult apprenticeships, from adult basic skills to doctorates, and from Level 1 to Level 8... having to think differently could result in a post-18 education and skills system which can meet the challenges of the 21st century.

13th March's Spring Budget

Well, it can't be all bad news! After a very rough run, the economy has grown slowly but consistently for nine consecutive years and is forecast to continue growing slowly. Employment is increasing, mainly full-time, and with record levels of female participation. Government borrowing is being reduced and next year is predicted at the whopping level of 82.2% of GDP (we won't mention private sector levels). 'Skills' and productivity get lots of mention in the redacted speech, alongside the National Retraining Scheme, apprenticeships and T-levels.

I'm all for people working together - we'd never get anywhere without moving and sharing - but is over-relying on importing talent from abroad really solving the UK skills problem?

Online adult learning Rapid evidence assessment

This DfE report (p.10-11) emphasises the need for 'human interaction' as a critical element of online learning provision, as well as linking learning into recognised skills-in-demand, into practical learning experiences, and into live progression routes.

¿Skills?

'Skills' as basic or functional literacy and numeracy learning and 'skills' as higher level technical and academic learning - 'skills' appear to be conflated in the language of recent reports and publications. While I am sure there is significant overlap, are they really one and the same thing or a failsafe progression from one to the next? Or are there distinctions between the English, maths and digital learning of different areas and levels? Do these distinctions need to be explicitly recognised in order to be addressed and to drive excellence?

It was wonderful to see the explicit emphasis on Level 3 in *2030 vision*'s Executive Summary. I would argue that English, maths and digital capabilities at this level need more explicit support to scaffold learners through further learning. It isn't all mastered in all contexts at level 2, and learners continue to need strong English, maths and digital learning to support their wider learning. Vocational, and academic, teachers are specialists in their own subjects, not in teaching the (higher order) adult literacies that underpin modern study.

On reflection, 'happy' might not be the right term, but unless complex longstanding issues are clearly analysed and expressed, they are unlikely to find effective resolution. And the pendulum may be swinging back in (higher order) adult literacies' favour.

Why not write something for the RaPAL Journal?

We invite contributions from anyone involved in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL education to write and share ideas, practice and research with RaPAL readers. This can be writing from learners, ideas linking research and practice, comments about teaching, training or observations about policy. Our journal is now produced online and so we welcome articles, reviews, reports, commentaries, images or video that will stimulate interest and discussion.

The journal is published three times a year and represents an independent space, which allows critical reflection and comment linking research with practice in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL nationally and internationally.

The RaPAL network includes learners, managers, practitioners, researchers, tutors, teacher trainers, and librarians in adult, further and higher education in the UK. It also has an international membership that covers Ireland. Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia, South America, Europe and Africa.

Guidelines for contributors
All contributions should be written in an accessible way for a wide and international readership.

- Writing should be readable, avoiding jargon. Where acronyms are used these should be clearly explained.
- Ethical guidelines should be followed particularly when writing about individuals or groups. Permission must be gained from those being represented and they should be represented fairly.
- We are interested in linking research and practice; you may have something you wish to contribute but are not sure it will fit. If this is the case, please contact the editors to discuss this.
- Writing should encourage debate and reflection, challenging dominant and taken for granted assumption about literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

We want to encourage new writers as well as those with experience and to cover a range of topics. We aim to have three different kinds of articles in the journal plus a reviews section; these are slightly different in length and focus. We welcome illustration and graphics for any of the sections and now have the facility to embed audio and video files into the journal. The journal has a different theme for each edition but we welcome general contributions too.

Below you will see more details about the different themes and topics:

1. Ideas for teaching
This section is for descriptive and reflective pieces on teaching and learning. It is a good place to have a first go at writing for publication and can be based on experiences of learners and teachers in a range of settings. Pieces can be up to 1,000 words long.

2. Developing Research and Practice
This section covers a range of contributions from research and practice. In terms of research this could be experience of practitioner research, of taking part in research projects, commenting on research findings or of trying out ideas from research in practice. In terms of practice this could be about trying out new ideas and pushing back boundaries. Contributions should include reflection and critique. Pieces for this section should be between 1,000 - 2,000 words long including references.

3. Research and Practice: multi-disciplinary perspectives
This section is for more sustained analytical pieces about research, practice or policy. The pieces will be up to 4,000 words long including references and will have refereed journal status. Although articles in this section are more theoretically and analytically developed they should nevertheless be clearly written for a general readership. Both empirical work and theoretical perspectives should be accessible and clearly explained. Writing for this section should:

- Relate to the practices of learning and teaching adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL
- Link to research by describing and analysing new research findings relating this and any critical discussion to existing research studies
- Provide critical informed analysis of the topic including reference to theoretical underpinning
- Write coherently and accessibly avoiding impenetrable language and assumed meanings. The piece should have a clear structure and layout using the Harvard referencing system and notes where applicable. All terminology should be explained, particularly for an international readership.

Reviews
Reviews and reports of books, articles and materials (including online materials) should be between 50 to 800 words long. They should clearly state the name of the piece being reviewed, the author, year of publication, name and location of publisher and cost. You should also include your name, a short 2 to 3 line biography and your contact details. You can write the review based on your experience of using the book, article or materials in your role as practitioner, teacher trainer, and researcher or as a student.

Submitting your work
1. If you are responding to a call for articles via the RaPAL email list or directly by an editor you will have been given the email address of the editor(s) for submitting your work, together with a deadline date and the theme of the journal.
2. If you are submitting a piece of work that you would like RaPAL to consider for publication that has not been written as a result of a call for articles, please send it to journal@rapal.org.uk in the first instance. The journal coordinator will then let you know what the next steps will be.
3. All contributions should have the name of the author(s), a title and contact email address and telephone number. You should also include a short 2 to 3 line biography. Sections, sub-sections and any images should be clearly indicated or labelled (further guidance on image size is on the website www.rapal.org.uk.
4. All referencing should follow the Harvard system.
5. Articles should be word processed in a sans serif font, double-spaced with clearly numbered pages.
6. The article should be sent to journal@rapal.org.uk

What happens next?
1. Editors are appointed for each edition of the journal. They review all contributions and will offer feedback, constructive comment and suggestions for developing the piece as appropriate.
2. Articles submitted for the third category 'Research and Practice: multi-disciplinary perspectives' will be peer-reviewed by an experienced academic, research or practitioner in the field in addition to being edited.
3. The editor(s) will let you know whether your article has been accepted and will send you a final copy before publication.

If you have any questions, please contact the journal coordinator by emailing journal@rapal.org.uk