

Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) Action Research Project

'Teaching nuggets': go-to resources for supporting ESOL and low-level literacy learners with digital skills

ACL Essex – June 2022

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For further information regarding the Shaping Success Action Research programme and this project go to https://ccpathways.co.uk/practitioner-research/otla-8/.

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'Teaching nuggets': go-to resources for supporting ESOL and low-level literacy learners with digital skills.

ACL Essex

SUMMARY

This was a project to exemplify cross-curricular collaboration between IT, English and ESOL colleagues in the creation of fun, easy to use resources that promote good digital skills and literacy teaching practice. These resources were intended to be complete and ready to deliver in any classroom.

ESOL, English and Digital learners participated in the project and had the opportunity to reflect on and review the 'nugget' resources and the impact on their learning. We unearthed a real hunger for collaboration between our areas. Furthermore, the project has promoted a practical approach to resource creation and sharing that is having a reach throughout our organisation and beyond.

RATIONALE

Ensuring no one is left behind on the journey to digital literacy and being confident in participating in life in the digital age, had become a priority for us post lockdown.

In some cases, asking tutors to explicitly teach digital skills to ESOL/literacy learners was not an option as tutors themselves lacked confidence. We also noticed that offering ESOL/literacy learners a place on a digital skills course was prohibitive as IT tutors felt less equipped to differentiate.

We had observed that in the abrupt move to online teaching our already time-poor tutors had become overwhelmed with the volume of new material, links, ideas, and resources available to them. The rationale was to give the resources an immediately practical application, rather than anything steeped in theory.

Therefore, we set out to create quick, easy and fun resources that any tutor, regardless of subject specialism, could use to encourage learner confidence using tech. Moreover, the collaboration would embolden IT tutors with their understanding of how to approach differentiation for ESOL/literacy learners whilst teaching digital courses.

Other Contextual Information

ACL Essex is the leading adult education provider in Essex and has adult community learning centres in most of the major towns in the county. The eight sites across Essex deliver a combination of centre-based, online live and online self-study courses.

Functional Skills English, ESOL and Digital Skills tutors, based at different centres across Essex, were invited to participate in the project by Curriculum Leads. Tutors attended an online workshop to collaborate on ideas for the teaching 'nuggets'.

As the resources were developed and made more accessible, more tutors from across the service were invited to use them and subsequently participated in the project.

The learners who participated were attending accredited ESOL, Supported Learning English, Functional Skills English and Digital classes from pre-entry to Entry Level 2. They were given the opportunity to give feedback on the teaching nuggets and reflect on their digital progress.

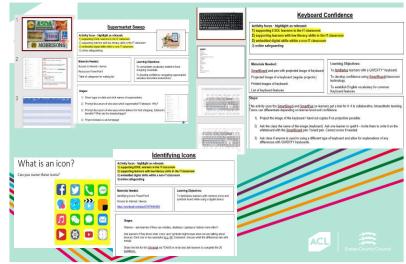
APPROACH

We initially started by focussing on 'pitching' the idea to teaching staff (Appendix 3). We presented the phases of the project as the following:

- Phase 1: ideas sharing
- Phase 2: contribution of content
- Phase 3: development of content into physical / digital resources
- Phase 4: trial and results.

We consulted staff about using their time to:

- participate in an interactive webinar
- create and maintain a collaborative space
- submit ideas for the content of the resources
- assist in producing the resources
- trial the resources with learners and collate feedback
- any additional ad hoc sharing of ideas and thoughts.

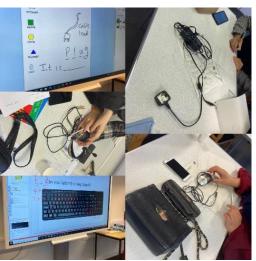


Once we had gathered tutors and managers who wanted to be involved, we delivered an interactive webinar (Appendix 3) to generate the first ideas for resources. The resource ideas needed to be moulded into a specific 'template' to ensure they were usable and could be easily accessed by time-poor tutors.

An initial set of these 'nuggets' were then trialled by tutors at opportunities that we felt would integrate well with existing lesson and course planning. We made the 'nuggets' accessible to staff via TEAMS, internal team meetings, word of mouth and a <u>Padlet</u> (See Appendix 3).

Feedback started to come in via MS forms, photos of learners in the classroom engaging with the activities ('nuggets in action') and another <u>Padlet</u> for written reflections of using the resources.





In January we identified, via the support of our mentor, that the project needed upscaling in terms of the amount of teaching nuggets being produced as well as the generating of feedback. She encouraged us to re-assess who was involved and how we were assigning tasks to participants. We brought new people on board (tutors low on hours or those with developmental feedback from Observations of Teaching and Learning) and this, as predicted by Chloë our Mentor, resulted in more output and more feedback. This increase in production was an uplift we all needed and from there we saw the enthusiasm to share the project through the organisation and beyond grow. We increased the broadcast reach for the ideas as finished nuggets via an internal Ideas Room, Curriculum managers' meeting and a blog on PDNorth FE Tapestry and NATECLA East of England website.

Additionally, we discovered that to make these resources 'accessible' to staff they needed to be in places where staff go to plan. Our approach of sharing internally and via Padlet was, we realised, not hitting the brief of these resources becoming part of a tutor's natural planning arsenal. In a team meeting, ESOL staff identified Skills Workshop as one of their top places to source new resources:



So, we contacted Skills Workshop and they have published some of the ideas.

Device of the Day
Supermarket Sweep
Wordle
Keyboard Confidence
Identifying devices and icons



We scheduled a final session with participants to conclude findings and gather feedback on just how usable they now find these.

When we have come to the end of the project, we thought more about the ethical considerations around who the work belonged to and how it should be credited when sharing. In the final meeting with contributing participants, we posed this question to them and asked if they felt their input had been sufficiently credited. Some people felt they had not. As a result, we have ensured practitioner names are attached to all resources shared on internal and external sites.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Tutor feedback from ESOL Intermediate doing the 'Join the Library' nugget:

"Used with 8 Intermediate students... They were all familiar with borrowing books: one had already used library computers, but the rest were surprised to find out the many facilities on offer. They were particularly surprised by the crafts available and that there were so many things for children. None had heard about the Library of Things and were interested in this.

They enjoyed searching the website together. They supported each other and it prompted good discussion. By supporting each other, they found all the info they wanted. It took about 30 minutes (also inc some extra discussion/vocab about genres of books)."

Digital Skills Tutor Feedback on Identifying Icons nugget:

"I used this as an opener in all six of my Digital Skills classes. They all really enjoyed it and gave positive feedback on Teams. It was a little easy for some of them (L1s). I liked the fact that they could see their answers and then have another attempt to try and get a better score; so learning directly from it."

Learner feedback on Supermarket Sweep nugget:

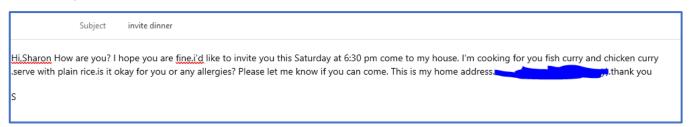
"This was good for me as my keyboard skills are not very good. My spelling is not very good but the computer was able to guess what I meant which helped me with my list. I need to do more keyboard skills."

"It was good to put a list together and easier to get into the website than I thought. I copied my list in and this helped me recognise the words."

"I am a beginner keyboard user, so I am very slow. It was interesting but I need more practise."

The nuggets encouraged easy steps to digitise existing activities. As such, learners have increased access to activities which naturally embed digital skills. For example, a generic writing task, such as writing an invitation to a friend for dinner, can be transformed by encouraging real time use of digital resources. This could be done by typing a real email on a mobile phone and sending to the tutor rather than a paper version of an email template.

For example:



Aside from the impact on learners, the project has facilitated improved collaboration between curriculum areas. The group sessions for generating ideas provided a platform for sharing that didn't exist before between IT, English and ESOL teams. Finding the opportunities has been hard (due to the nature of our organisation spread over 9 venues and our current workload) but the opportunities have opened up visibility of ESOL/literacy issues to the IT curriculum and communication on enrolments has increased.

Additionally, the teaching nuggets, encouraged time-poor tutors to understand that improving learner access to digital opportunities is neither difficult or time consuming or a high brow idea. One tutor, whose most recent Observation of Teaching and Learning saw an action plan to digitalise some of her writing activities and created the 'live emails' resource, reflected:

"I love how easy it is to not only to use this format, but also to share samples anonymously for correcting as a class. I will definitely use live emails again".

Tutor feedback has been that they have been empowered by their ideas being shared widely, and this has had an impact on morale and a sense that their CPD and new approach to lesson planning is now having an impact. "Feedback on Device of the Day has brightened a gloomy week" reported one of our participants.

The enthusiasm for this 'off the shelf' lesson planning concept gained traction with extended and senior leadership. Our vice principle reported that he had "ideas for nuggets on sticky notes all over my desk" after the project was shared in an ACL 'ideas room' event.

Literacy learners and tutors are a resource poor section of our provision. This project has plugged a gap to an extent. For example, one of our participants who works across English and Supported Learning has expressed how inspiring the project has been for creating and accessing fresh resources.

Professional Development

| Professional Standard | How our project outcomes demonstrate this standard |
|--|---|
| 2. Evaluate and challenge your practice, values and beliefs. | Our project allowed space for IT, English and ESOL teams to share their expertise and understand the pedagogy and value of different approaches – in a way that does not happen regularly. For example, using verbal recollections to relay steps in a process underpins processing of language (e.g., use of imperative) but also allows to breakdown and simplify processes required to be successful in digital tasks. |
| 4. Select and use digital technologies safely and effectively to promote learning. | This project offered an opportunity to promote functional digital skills across multiple curriculum areas. By embedding the ideas from Digital Skills Framework within other areas, we were actively facilitating the teaching of themes around staying safe online. |
| 6. Develop collaborative and respectful relationships with learners, colleagues and external stakeholders. | From the offset the project focussed on bringing staff together. We focussed our attention on promoting the project to multiple curriculum areas and setting up a collaborative space for ideas to be shared in. We facilitated an interactive webinar as part of the idea forming stage and this was received as being uplifting for practitioners who have often felt they work in isolation. Lack of time and space to work across curriculum areas is cited by tutors as a barrier to sharing of practice in our organisation which is spread across multiple sites throughout the county. This project opened up avenues for how this can be overcome. |

Organisational Development

ACL Essex is an educational service which is divided and managed by curriculum area - not by geographical area. Although Microsoft Teams has allowed better team building within each curriculum area, with team meetings now better attended than ever, there is little collaboration across the curriculum areas. We believe that this project has offered an opportunity for tutors to come together, consider other disciplines and to think more creatively to develop digital teaching nuggets.

Although the current focus is on supporting and encouraging digital opportunities for learners with low literacy skills, the project has the potential to embrace more curriculum areas as we encourage all learners at all levels to actively engage with the digital world, improve their skills and grow in confidence.

Moving forward, we want the project to have a legacy. We intend to develop further nuggets to be

made available on topics such as online safety, sustainability, accessibility, British Values and numeracy.

Our technology manager has been enthusiastic in promoting the collaboration between the curriculum areas and the digital platforms we use. The nuggets will be embedded as part of a planned Digi Fest event in the summer. This has been a great improvement for the question we came up against in terms of how we would give the nuggets' reach.

LEARNING FROM THIS PROJECT

What went well: when we communicated the idea for this the response was great within the platforms we shared. Having IT, ESOL and English practitioners was so inspiring and really highlighted how real and relevant this project was.

Even better if: this has been about scale and timing. We were slow off the mark with producing the content and spent too long in recruiting staff, pitching the idea and generating ideas. This left us little time to give the finished resources a platform and therefore generate the volume of feedback in the timescale.

An additional challenge was things we couldn't control, such as lots of staff absences and cover, which means some work didn't get done in as timely a fashion. We reflected and scaled back and focused on just a few nuggets creating a template for future development.

Lastly, we, like any content creators, worry about the 'updateability' of the resources. Against such a fast-changing educational backdrop and with sustainability in mind, we chose not to produce hard copies of the bank of resources we created – rather to only make the resources available via the digital channels mentioned above. However, that still leaves us with the challenge of how and how often we should update the nuggets. Even within the timescale of the project, one nugget on the topic of 'online form filling' around an activity to order lateral flow tests in real time, started to feel like old news. We hope that by really promoting the simplicity of turning an idea into a nugget by using the simple Nugget template, will mean that we can just keep on collecting the ideas as they come in rather than update existing ones and as such can build an interesting back catalogue of teaching ideas.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Project Team

| Project Role | Name | Job Role | Contact |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Project Lead | Alex Bates | Curriculum Lead, | Alexandra.bates3@essex.gov.uk |
| | | ESOL | |
| Project Deputy | Vicky James | Curriculum Lead, | Vicky.James@essex.gov.uk |
| | · | English | |
| Project Team | Paula Fulton | Tutor | Paula.Fulton@essex.gov.uk |
| Project Team | Carol Samlal | Tutor | Carol.samlal@essex.gov.uk |
| Project Team | Caroline Dunn | Tutor | Caroline.Dunn@essex.gov.uk |
| Project Team | Sharon Roberts | Tutor | Sharon.Roberts@essex.gov.uk |
| Project Team | Catherine Kelly | Tutor | Catherin.Kelly@essex.gov.uk |
| Project Team | Andrew Bassey | Tutor | Andrew.Bassey@essex.gov.uk |
| Mentor | Chloë Hynes | Mentor | chloe.hynes@ccconsultancy.co.uk |
| Research Group | Rachel Öner | Reginal Group Lead | rachel.oner@btinternet.com |
| Lead | | | |

Appendix 2: Learner Case Studies

Learner 1

| Name of learner: | Filiz |
|---|---|
| Course enrolled to: | ESOL Intermediate |
| Level: | Entry 2 |
| Learner profile: e.g. languages spoken / SL needs. | While Filiz's reading and writing skills are E2/3, her spoken skills are lower. She came to the UK just a few months ago. She is a professional engineer and is clearly quite academic and, as such, has learnt a lot of English through reading books and studying online. But her spoken language lags behind, as unable to work here, she doesn't have much opportunity to communicate with others. Her IT skills are probably the best in the class. |
| Tutor observations of learner ways of working: e.g. preferred type of activity / learning preference. | As above – academic. |
| Digital confidence at start: | High |
| Tutor reflections on engagement with the nuggets used in class: | Filiz is interested in anything that connects her with the "real" world and so she appreciated the authenticity of the activity. She had already become a member of ECC Libraries, but hadn't explored the website before so she was interested in this. What struck me most, however, is how she took it upon herself to help others who were having problems navigating the site. She drew upon her own IT confidence to give her the courage to support others, explaining the task while sharing her own screen. She was motivated to speak and help others, in what was a genuine situation. The photograph clearly shows how she is enjoying demonstrating to others, who were far stronger speakers but lacked her IT confidence. |
| Learner reflections on engagement with the nuggets used in class: | Filiz enjoyed this task and was happy to help others. |
| Impact: digital confidence now? | N/A |

Learner 2

| Name of learner: | Jihad |
|--|---|
| Course enrolled to: | Completed Let's Get Digital for ESOL 2020/21 Working towards EDSQ E3 21/22 |
| | Failed first attempt by 1 point – tutor refection was that it was due to misunderstanding of instruction and vocab in a task. |
| Level: | E2/E3 ESOL E3 EDSQ |
| Learner profile: e.g. languages spoken / SL needs. | Syrian refugee who has progressed from pre-entry ESOL over the past 4 years. Really keen learner and takes up many opportunities to study extra quals. |
| Tutor observations of learner ways of working: | Catherine was worried about teaching Jihad in her mainstream IT class due to his English. Catherine observed an ESOL class* to get ideas and reflected that a lot of the work was vocab based and involved a lot of discussion – which she was less familiar with incorporating. (*see Peer |
| e.g. preferred type of activity / learning preference. | observation Feedback CK). On reflecting about Jihad's fail on his first attempt at EDSQ, the ESOL tutor suggested that more vocab building would help him. |
| | To facilitate this – the project came up with the Teaching Nugget: Encouraging vocabulary building in the IT classroom. |

Teaching 'nugget' plan

Title of activity: Encouraging vocabulary learning in IT

Activity focus - highlight as relevant:

- 1) supporting ESOL learners in the IT classroom
- 2) supporting learners with low literacy skills in the IT classroom
- 3) embedded digital skills within a non-IT classroom

Materials Needed:

Whiteboard / projector / smart board

PPT (provided)

Wordwall link -

https://wordwall.net/resource/30180322

Learning Objectives:

To develop strategies for IT tutors to support vocab building.

Structure / Activity:

- Tutor displays the PPT with vocabulary items. Teacher asks for volunteers to select an item and explain it. Teacher crosses off each item as it is successfully described.
 - Extend: ask learners extension questions about each item. <u>E.g.</u> for 'Password' the teacher could ask: 'can you tell me what makes a strong password'?
- Tutor shares <u>Wordwall</u> link. Use once as whole class and set as additional homework for learners who have shown difficulty with understanding the vocabulary in assessments.
- 3) Follow up to follow up, repeat the process at the start of the following lesson. This time have the weaker learners go first at explaining the vocab items and give examples. Only ask the stronger learners to correct if they think there are errors.

Link to Wordwall activity

Digital confidence at start:

Not too low but frustrated by English level.

Tutor reflections on engagement with the nuggets used in class:

My teaching style does not really focus on vocabulary building. The whole process of examining how certain activities play out during sessions will bring this out.

Learner reflections on engagement with the nuggets used in class:

'My problem was with words and reading questions. After I did not pass, I had one more lesson and we looked again at all the words'. Jihad was pleased that after he failed Catherine and Carol collaborated on a nugget that used ESOL ideas to cover some of the common EDSQ vocabulary.

Impact: digital confidence now?

'I passed EDSQ exam'. Jihad has progressed from basic digital skills course in 2020 to passing EDSQ.

Peer Observation – ESOL and Digital – learner case study 2

| Name or observer: | Catherine Kelly |
|---|--|
| Name of tutor: | Carol Samlal |
| Course observed: | Let's Get Digital ESOL |
| Purpose of observation: | A learner is attending my EDSQ class with English as a second language and wanted to see how I could better support him in my class |
| Main comments: | It was only the 2 nd class and the time that I spent was quite short – I really wanted to see how Carole explained and managed learners that had limited English language skills and how she explained digital processes |
| Will you use any of the teaching methods / activities you observed in your own teaching? | Her explanations were slower and thorough and calmer I really enjoy observing other tutors because you get so much out of it in terms of how to do things differently and reflect on your own teaching. I can be speedy – so it really demonstrated to me to slow it right down and be really mindful of language that I use – I can use quite a lot of colloquialisms, so I really need to remove that from my explanations. I would like to observe again – and will arrange that with Carol |
| Any suggestions for activities / approaches that could be used to support learners in the class you observed? | I have a tendency to rush and realised that I really need to slow it down and change how I check for understanding instead of asking can they do something – I will request that they do it so I can check that they are grasping new concepts and processes |

Appendix 3: Planning and collaboration resources

Appendix 3a: Resource list

Hynes, C., (2021). A bridge to digital literacy for ESOL + learners. *Claire Collins Consultancy*. Available at: EDS Cluster 2 – Claire Collins Consultancy (ccpathways.co.uk) [accessed 8.6.22].

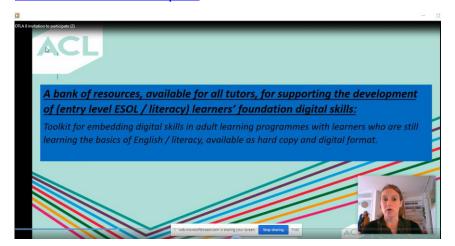
JISC (2020). Shaping the digital future of FE and skills. Available at: Shaping the digital future of FE and skills (jisc.ac.uk) [accessed 8.6.22].

The Education and Training Foundation (2021). Doing Action Research: A guide for post-16 practitioners. Available at: AR-Guide-v1.0-2.pdf (et-foundation.co.uk) [accessed 8.6.22].

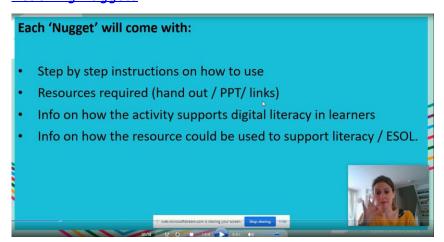
Appendix 3b: Planning and Collaboration resources

Videos

An Invitation to Participate



Teaching Nuggets

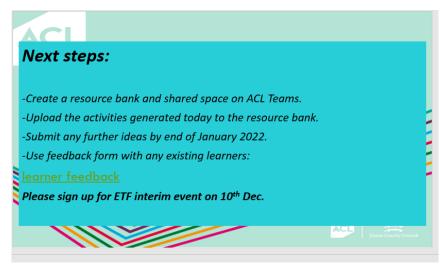


PowerPoint Presentations

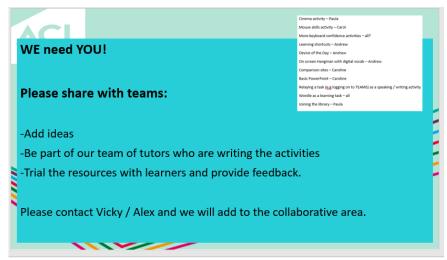
Accessible via this Padlet: https://padlet.com/c_collins2/OTLA8_Essex3



Invitation to participate



Interactive Webinar



Information for Course Leaders

Appendix 3c: Reflections

Nugget Padlet: https://padlet.com/c_collins2/OTLA8_Essex2

Feedback Padlet: https://padlet.com/c_collins2/OTLA8_Essex1

Appendix 3d: Blogs

Bates, A., (2022). 'Teaching Nuggets: Demystifying digital'. *FE Tapestry*. Available at: <u>Teaching Nuggets – PDNorth #FEtapestry</u> [accessed 8.6.22].

Bates, A., (2022). 'Teaching Nuggets: De-mystifying digital'. *NATECLA East of England*. Available at: <u>Teaching Nuggets: De-mystifying digital – NATECLA East of England (wordpress.com)</u> [accessed 8.6.22].

Appendix 4: Participants and Stakeholders

| No of learners? | 50 | No of staff? | 8 |
|----------------------|----|--------------------------------|---|
| No of organisations? | 5 | No of employers/ stakeholders? | 1 |

Appendix 5: Research/ Evaluation Approach

| Participant/observer (e.g. practitioner reflective accounts, logs) | X | Interview/survey (e.g. polls, questionnaires, learner interviews) | Х |
|---|------------|--|---|
| Observation of practice (in person, video, observation notes) | X | Document analysis (e.g. learner work, session plans, annotated resources, policies) | X |
| Custom test/assessment (of knowledge, skill, attitude, participation) for your 'intervention' | | High-stakes learner assessment (e.g. A Level results, End Point Assessment, BTECs | |
| Before/after assessment (e.g. measures of progress or change in attainment, participation) | | Comparative trial (e.g. comparing participants' outcomes against a 'control' group | |
| Other (specify): | Action Res | earch. | |

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