

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

**Flipgrid for ESOL language development**

**Hopwood Hall College – June 2022**

Hopwood Hall College (2022) *Final Report on the OTLA Action Research Project – Flipgrid for ESOL language development.*  
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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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# Flipgrid for ESOL language development

## Hopwood Hall College

### SUMMARY

This project utilised the video discussion platform Flipgrid to empower and develop ESOL learners' language development in speaking and listening. The aim was to enhance learners' confidence in communication and digital skills. Flipgrid was found to be an effective way to do this.

### RATIONALE

In the ESOL teaching context, it is often difficult to find speaking and listening resources which meet learners' needs. Published resources are often developed for global markets or have a focus on grammar. The practical nature of ESOL learning, requires practitioners to make adaptations to ensure relevance for ESOL learners. The development of digital educational tools has allowed teachers to explore and utilise a variety of digital technology to meet the needs of their learners. Flipgrid, which is a collaborative online video discussion platform, was chosen as it focusses on empowering learners through their own voice. In addition, it allows teachers to set tasks which relate to their daily lives. The interface is similar to most social media tools and be easily operated by anyone who has a smartphone.

#### Other Contextual Information

Our action research was part of the Education and Training Foundation's OTLA 8 Programme. The project was carried out in the ESOL department at Hopwood Hall College (FE) to support and develop the speaking skills of Level 1 ESOL learners. The learners attended classes for six hours per week. They were mostly from asylum seeker and refugee backgrounds. Their speaking and listening skills varied at Level 1; some were very confident while others required more support to gain confidence. Likewise, there were differences in their digital skills levels and access.

### APPROACH

It was important that the learners were very clear about the aim of the project and what their expected level of involvement would be. The scope of the project was explained and example Flipgrids were used to demonstrate what learners would be required to do (Appendix 4).

It was important to explain that, as the Flipgrids were private, there would be no unauthorised viewing. Each group had a unique code which was only disseminated to that specific group. In addition, the email of each learner was added into the group; therefore, no unauthorised learners or Flipgrid users could access the group. This engendered a sense of security and increased comfort levels to upload audio or videos.

The process to download the app was straightforward and was completed by most learners in the class. Due to Wi-Fi accessibility some chose to do this at home. An introductory PowerPoint was created which learners could access via the college Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) at any time if they had any issues in the initial set up.

Learners then had to input their unique group code which would allow them to join their group. It was at this juncture that some issues were identified which required a review of how the learners' emails were inputted. It was found that adding the domains as well the individual college email addresses solved this issue.

The initial task was to upload introductory videos, which would allow them to use the app from their phone (Appendix 5). Learners were able to explore the range of filters, emojis and backgrounds to personalise their Flipgrids. This proved to be a fun experience and the simplicity of the task allowed learners to focus on using Flipgrid rather than their English, which immediately built their confidence and overcame any initial resistance to using the app. Learners commented that:

“I liked using it on my phone, it was so easy!”

“It's private, just for me and my group.”

“I really liked using it and it's fun. I can make my Flipgrid at home or at college because I can use my phone!”

“I liked using the filters and backgrounds, it was something different. I could make the Flipgrids in my way.”

Learners were also able to choose whether they wanted to upload a video or an audio. This autonomy to do what they were comfortable with and allowed the learners to engage in the project. The feedback from the learners was positive as they felt in control of the narrative and the pace. They also enjoyed viewing their classmates' videos and learning new details about them.

Learners who had not engaged in this activity were encouraged to join in and were bolstered by their colleagues. I think this collaborative encouragement was motivating for reluctant learners. Learners have since uploaded a range of Flipgrids to utilise the app to demonstrate their language acquisition. They review their Flipgrids and have visual evidence of their progress.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

This section of the report shares outcomes and impact, in relation to teaching, learning and assessment, professional development and organisational development.

### Teaching, Learning and Assessment

In the next academic year Flipgrid will be utilised department wide for ESOL and workshops will be set up for other departments and support provided to embed its use. Flipgrid has shown that it is indeed a collaborative video discussion tool which supports asynchronous learning. It fosters an enjoyable social learning environment which benefits learners of all abilities.

Flipgrid has allowed us as practitioners to:

- review learners' comprehension of instructions to complete tasks
- assess the development of speaking skills
- celebrate learners' strengths
- identify areas of concern and provide actionable feedback
- assess and reflect on my teaching practice.

Flipgrid has also allowed learners to:

- enhance their communication and digital skills
- reflect on their learning
- gain confidence in their speaking and listening
- connect with their fellow learners.

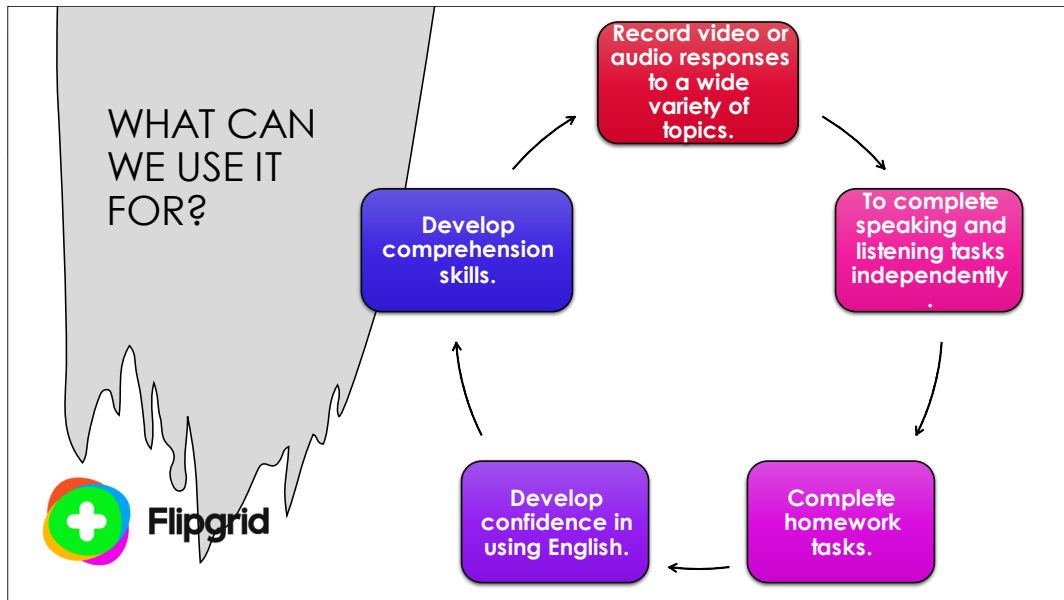


Figure 1. Slide showing how Flipgrid can be used when working with ESOL learners.

Flipgrid is a versatile teaching tool which is restricted only by the teacher or learners' imaginations. It could be used with low level learners all the way up to the higher levels and further to practise and embed a range of skills from pronunciation, listening to short stories, uploading book or film reviews, expressing their opinions on given topics, presenting information or debating points of view.

Teachers can use it to assess learners' knowledge, contextual understanding and language acquisition. Flipgrids can range from simple feedback (reflective especially) to detailed narratives expressing opinions on a wide range of topics. As teachers we could use this tool to demonstrate learners starting points and progression as well as a formative and summative assessment tool.

### Organisational Development

The use of Flipgrid can easily be embedded into every teacher's teaching, learning and assessment activities and can be used with learners at all levels. The added bonus of a single sign-in using the learners/staff own college email and password allows ease of access. The functionality of Flipgrid is similar to other apps, such as social media, which makes it accessible to learners who are familiar with smartphones (Appendix 6). During a Digital CPD event, a demonstration was given on how to use Flipgrid and staff could see examples that had been created. One member of staff said, "It looks so fun, I miss that!" Another commented that:

"It could be used to collect reflections from vocational learners on placement for work experience, rather than the learners coming back into college to sit with us and get their feedback."

Flipgrid can be used by anyone with access to a smartphone or a device with internet access. It is

simple to use if learners have basic digital skills. For learners who couldn't access Flipgrid at home (e.g. due to Wi-Fi access or digital poverty), they could use it at college. This makes it inclusive in respect of individual financial background. In addition, learners can demonstrate meaningful information related to their own opinions and observations.

Throughout the project, learning and observations were shared with other teachers within the department. Some teachers thought it was a good idea so also started using it. One member of staff said:

“I'm definitely using this with my group. It's a great way for me to give them a homework task and see who does and how well!”

It is a flexible learning tool as tutors can use this at different language levels. For example, pre-entry ESOL learners could upload pronunciation of key topic words or make simple sentences. These activities can be adapted or new tasks created throughout the level. Level 2 learners could present structured arguments to support their point of view.

## Professional Development

Professional Standard	How our project outcomes demonstrate this standard
<p><b>4. Be creative and innovative in selecting and adapting strategies to help learners to learn.</b></p>	<p>Our project used educational technology to support and develop teaching, learning and assessment. It made use of existing technology (smartphones) which learners had access to and were confident and familiar using. Flipgrid is a free app and website which can be downloaded. Learners can create their own accounts and sign in. It works well with common software such as MS Office which is widely used in academic institutions.</p>
<p><b>13. Motivate and inspire learners to promote achievement and develop their skills to enable progression.</b></p>	<p>This project developed learners' speaking skills through the use of Flipgrid on a regular basis. Learners used the app frequently so became familiar and confident with it. They reflected on the Flipgrid recordings which had been uploaded and shared their ideas on how to improve. They also compared their first Flipgrid recording with their final recording and reflected on their progression. This allowed them to explore their progression and achievements, which in turn motivated them to do more.</p>
<p><b>15. Promote the benefits of technology and support learners in its use.</b></p>	<p>Learners need digital skills to complete everyday tasks, access employment, communicate and study. Flipgrid is a simple way to promote these. It is free, easy to use, secure and private. Learners can practise recording audio and video in a supportive and or comfortable environment. It gave them the confidence to use similar apps and record audio and video. It also promoted language acquisition and appropriate and effective language use.</p>

## LEARNING FROM THIS PROJECT

Mango stated that ‘Flipgrid provided learners with a safe, low-stress platform for language practice while allowing them to track their progress, which in turn helped learners gain more confidence in their listening and speaking skills.’ (Mango, 2021: 277). Flipgrid was implemented with Level 1 ESOL learners who had varying levels of speaking skills. Their level was assessed through completion of an Entry Level 3 qualification or based on their initial assessment before commencing the course.

These learners could understand the application of Flipgrid and its benefits. It did not mean they were self-assured using it, which was shown clearly in the initial Flipgrids (Appendix 7). However, learners’ ease and level of active engagement with Flipgrid increased over time (Appendix 8).

Moreover, Holbeck and Hartman (2018) found Flipgrid to be an effective and relevant educational tool. They reported that it helped increase student engagement and communication in a secondary art classroom:

‘One of the earliest published studies that examines the efficacy of using Flipgrid in a language teaching context is McLain (2018) who found Flipgrid to be an effective learning tool for Business English Writing learners in Korea. Student-participants in McLain’s study reported that Flipgrid was beneficial for them to engage in language practice from home. Many participants also reported that they had perceived an increase in their English-speaking ability.’ (Hammett, 2018: 36)

During the speaking exams, the following feedback was noted from the assessors and interlocuters.

“These learners were really prepared; they just completed that whole exam without the usual delays such as asking for more time or demonstrating signs of nervousness and anxiety.”

“The questions and answers were well executed. They really demonstrated active listening and mirrored language.”

Although these learners practised independently, they also utilised Flipgrid for their speaking exam preparation in groups. The learners were able to view, not only their own Flipgrids but also their partners as many times as they needed to.

Flipgrid could be utilised at lower levels to identify how practical and beneficial this could be. Flipgrid made a noticeable difference to learners’ confidence, oracy and digital skills during this project. With patience and practice this could be incredibly useful for lower level ESOL learners as it would give them an opportunity to consolidate their language acquisition over the academic year. Utilising Flipgrid in sessions will enable teachers to encourage learners to engage asynchronously and improve their language and digital skills. Learners have ownership and control over what they produce and present while teachers gain clarity of each learner’s understanding and progression. One member of staff has started using it with young learners and said that, as Flipgrid is a single sign-in with the college email, it adds another layer of efficiency to using the app:

“It’s great, I want to use it and the learners want to use it. They downloaded the app and have logged in so fast!”



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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: The Project Team

<b>Project Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Role</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Project Lead	Saima Hanif	ESOL and Community Interpreting Lecturer	<a href="mailto:Saima.hanif@hopwood.ac.uk">Saima.hanif@hopwood.ac.uk</a>
Project Deputy	Laura Wiggan	Program manager	<a href="mailto:Laura.wiggan@hopwood.ac.uk">Laura.wiggan@hopwood.ac.uk</a>
Mentor	Emily Bryson	ELT Specialist	<a href="mailto:emilybryson@outlook.com">emilybryson@outlook.com</a>
Research Group Lead	Rachel Öner	English Specialist	<a href="mailto:rachel.oner@btinternet.com">rachel.oner@btinternet.com</a>

## **Appendix 2: Learner Case Studies**

### **Student 1 – Fareeda**

Fareeda has lived in the UK for over twenty years and came to college to develop her language skills in order to learn British Sign Language. In our first sessions she expressed severe anxiety in speaking in English despite being assessed at ESOL Level 1. She would second guess herself and would speak quietly when engaging in class activities. Using Flipgrid has demonstrated how well Fareeda is able to utilise her language skills. She recorded audio only as this was more comfortable for her, and it allowed her to focus only on what she was saying. In class this has translated to her asking more questions and engaging in discussions more openly and with more ease than she did so initially.

“I didn’t feel confident when I started the ESOL course because I don’t think my speaking is good. Flipgrid was a new way of learning for me. I didn’t want to be on the camera, but I really wanted to show Saima and myself that I was trying. I made the Flipgrids just with audio because I didn’t feel very comfortable on the camera. I liked this because I was able to just talk and use the language we needed to use. Now I feel like I have improved because I will ask my teachers questions and I feel much more comfortable using the grammar for level 1.”

### **Student 2 – Seyedashadi**

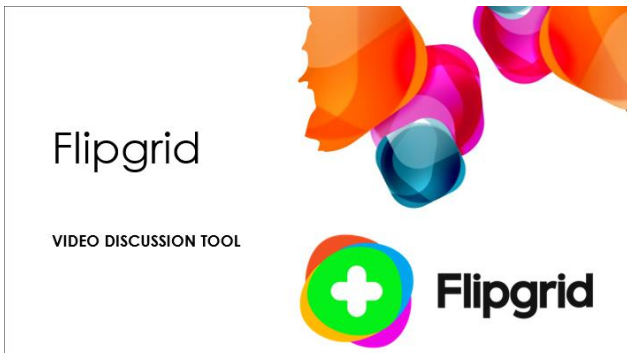
Seyedashadi had completed Entry Level 3 ESOL previously in addition to a Level 1/2 Hair and Beauty course. She also works at a beauty salon and regularly uses her English skills with clients. Having experienced ill health, she came to college to develop her knowledge and use of higher-level English. Her aspiration is to be self-employed with her own business. Flipgrid allowed Seyedashadi to develop and use her formal language skills through structured presentations. This has translated to her developing confidence to use her newly acquired language in formal settings.

“I love learning and I like the way you teach me so I wanted to use this app and see how it could help me. It was very easy to use and I can use it on my mobile so it’s much better for me. I liked making videos with the music and filters. It was a good way to practise my presentations for my speaking exam. My groups could watch mine and I could watch theirs and then make questions. I think it was fun and good for me, I could keep watching my Flipgrids and checking my work.”

## Appendix 3: Resources

### Appendix 3a: Flipgrid PowerPoint

These PowerPoint slides were created to support learners to use Flipgrid. It introduced the project, ethical permissions and joining instructions. The full PowerPoint can be accessed via this Padlet board: [https://padlet.com/c\\_collins2/OTLA\\_Hopwood](https://padlet.com/c_collins2/OTLA_Hopwood)



Flipgrid

VIDEO DISCUSSION TOOL

Flipgrid



Flipgrid

What is it?

A video discussion tool for all designed to empower you!

Permission and data protection

I will need you to consent when I	I will not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose your video to the project team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share your personal details</li> </ul>

Why?

I am doing a digital skills project.

I want to see how useful Flipgrid is for students.

- How easy is it for you to use ?
- How much does it help you develop your speaking?
- How confident do you feel after using it?

How do we use it?

Use your **mobile!**

- Download the app from your Play/App store.
- Use your group code - the teacher will give this to you.
- Sign up using your **COLLEGE** email only please.

Post an introductory video introducing yourself and telling us a little bit about you!

WHAT CAN WE USE IT FOR?


- Record video or audio responses to a wide variety of topics.
- To complete speaking and listening tasks independently.
- Complete homework tasks.
- Develop confidence in using English.
- Develop comprehension skills.

Group codes

PLEASE ADD **YOUR** GROUP CODE ONLY




L1 B - f9652d91



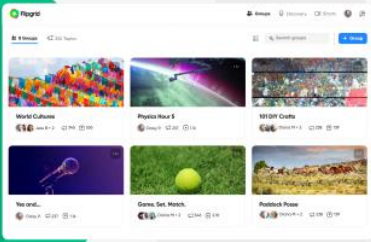
### Appendix 3b: Getting Started Guide

[This guide was created by Flipgrid](#) to help teachers use the software effectively.

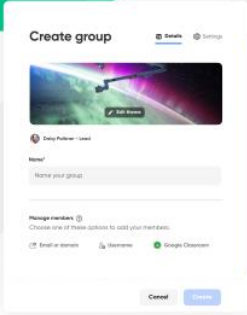
**Getting Started**  
Educator Edition




**Step 1**  
**Create a Group**  
Think of this as a learning community.




**Step 2**  
**Add Members**  
Add people to your group.




**Getting Started**  
Educator Edition




**Step 3**  
**Create a Topic**  
Topics are prompts that spark discussions.



**Step 4**  
**Share**  
This invites members to see the content.

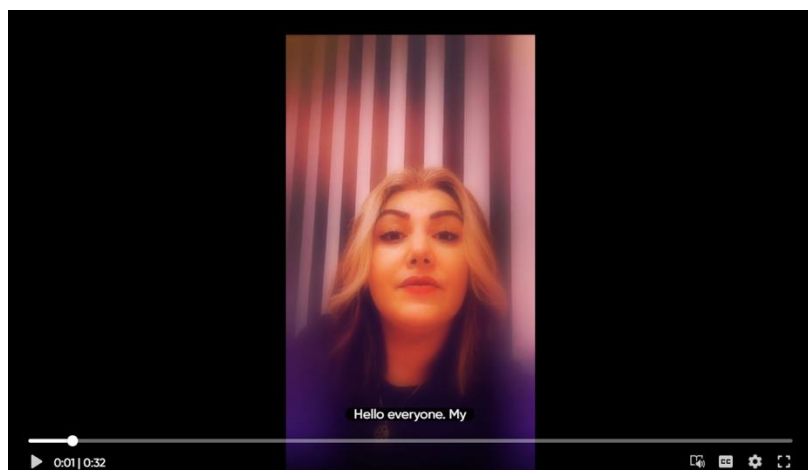


**Step 5**  
**Watch the Magic**  
Watch your students' creativity and self expression come to life!



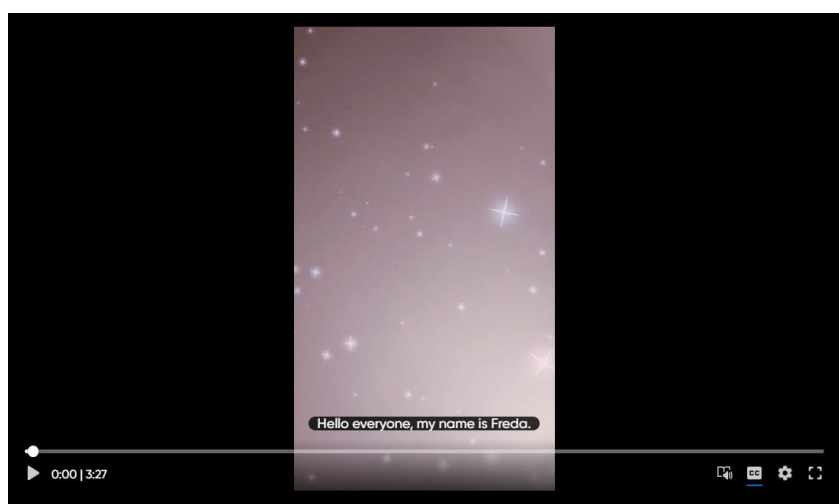
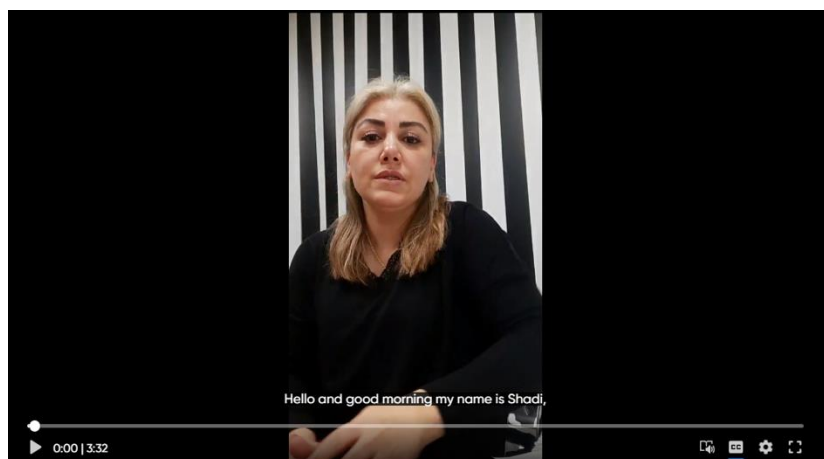
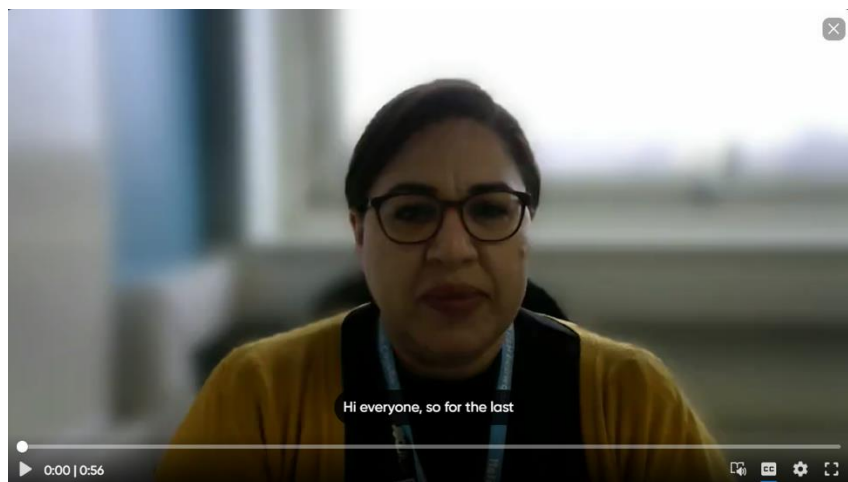
## Appendix 4: Flipgrid Intro Videos

You can watch the videos below on this Appendix Padlet: [https://padlet.com/c\\_collins2/OTLA\\_Hopwood](https://padlet.com/c_collins2/OTLA_Hopwood)




## Appendix 5: Flipgrid Final Videos

You can watch the videos below on this Appendix Padlet: [https://padlet.com/c\\_collins2/OTLA\\_Hopwood](https://padlet.com/c_collins2/OTLA_Hopwood)





## Appendix 6: Training Resource for Teachers

The slides below are from our digital event at Hopwood Hall College. The full PowerPoint can be accessed via this Padlet board: [https://padlet.com/c\\_collins2/OTLA\\_Hopwood](https://padlet.com/c_collins2/OTLA_Hopwood)



Flipgrid

VIDEO DISCUSSION TOOL

Flipgrid

What is it?

A video discussion tool for all designed to empower you!

Permission and data protection

I will need you to consent when I	I will not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose your video to the project team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share your personal details</li> </ul>


Why?

I am doing a digital skills project.

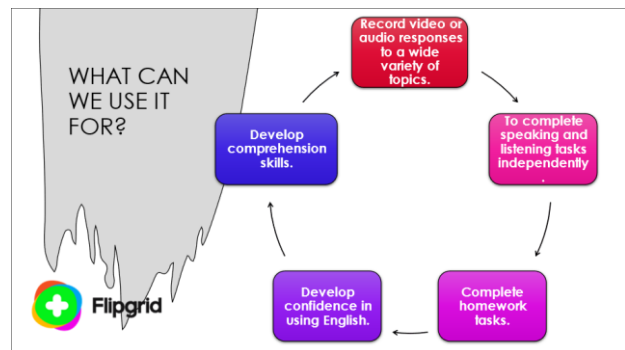
I want to see how useful Flipgrid is for students.

- How easy is it for you to use?
- How much does it help you develop your speaking?
- How confident do you feel after using it?

How do we use it?



- Use your **mobile!**
- Download the app from your Play/App store.
- You can also go to the Flipgrid.com website.
- Use your group code - the teacher will give this to you.
- Sign up using your **COLLEGE** email only please.
- Follow the instruction in the topic and post a video.



### Outcomes and Impact

As a practitioner, Flipgrid has allowed me to:

- review learners' comprehension of instructions to complete tasks
- assess the development of speaking skills
- celebrate learners' strengths
- identify areas of concern and provide actionable feedback
- assess and reflect on my teaching practice

Flipgrid has also allowed my students to:

- enhance their communication and digital skills
- reflect on their learning
- gain confidence in their speaking and listening
- connect with their fellow students



## Appendix 7: Flipgrid Activity Examples.

Nov 22, 2021

### Hello, I am...

7 responses • 355 views • 8 comments • 1.5 hours of discussion

I am excited to learn with you on Flipgrid! Explore the Flipgrid camera features - including drawing, stickers, screen recording, stitching, trimming, and more - and share your creation.

In your video, share:

- 🗣️ How do you pronounce your name?
- 🗣️ What is something we should know about you?

*Click the button with the book and speaker to access the Immersive Reader and transform this text!*



Dec 13, 2021

### Changes in the UK - Week 7

5 responses • 153 views • 5 comments • 2.7 hours of discussion

We prepared our first formal presentation during these sessions. You all did a fantastic job! I would now love to hear and see you present individually. Please take some time and record a video presenting your opinion on the changes in the UK.



Dec 13, 2021

### Compulsory Covid vaccines?

2 responses • 39 views • 1 comment • 0.4 hours of discussion

Hi all in week 12 for our reading session you needed to be on one side of this argument. The purpose of this was to use your English to make a strong statement. You all wrote a response in a formal letter. Could you please record a response to state whether you think the Covid vaccine should be compulsory. Your response should be at least 1 minute long.

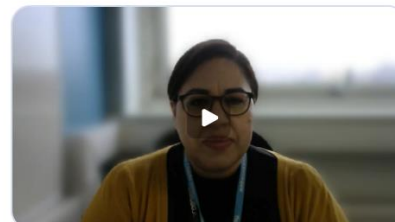


Mar 28, 2022

### March presentations

5 responses • 273 views • 24 comments • 8.9 hours of discussion

You have had 4 weeks to prepare and practice a presentation about a topic. You have been allocated a group who you have worked with. Please record your presentation here. members of the groups must then record a response to ask questions. The presenter must then record a responses to answer those questions.



2 views

## Appendix 8: Participants and Stakeholders

No of learners?	<b>20</b>	No of staff?	<b>2</b>
No of organisations?	<b>1</b>	No of employers/ stakeholders?	<b>1</b>

## Appendix 9: Research/ Evaluation Approach

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

# Thankyou

<https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/prep/>

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