

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

**Development of IT skills within the ESOL  
classroom**

**Darlington College – June 2022**

Darlington College (2022) *Final Report on the OTLA Action Research Project – Development of IT skills within the ESOL classroom*. London: ETF.

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This resource was produced as part of the Education and Training Foundation’s OTLA programme, which was funded by the Department for Education. To learn more about the OTLA programme please visit: <https://et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/professional-development/practitioner-led-development-and-research/otla/>.

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

The programme was delivered on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation by:



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# Development of IT skills within the ESOL classroom

## Darlington College

### SUMMARY

This project centred on developing IT skills among low-level ESOL students enabling them to access aspects of IT to enhance their learning.

Full time ESOL students were taught IT skills which they cascaded to other ESOL students. We intended to build a 'community of practice' where students could actively participate, learning from and supporting each other's development (Vygotsky, 1978; Lave and Wenger, 1991).

### RATIONALE

Embedding IT skills in the ESOL classroom is very beneficial (One Stop English, date unknown; ETF, 2021). Lack of IT knowledge and skills presents barriers for many of our ESOL students. Lockdown further exposed the lack of IT skills with ESOL students unable to access online learning, resulting in several students being unable to complete their courses, hindering their progression in English. Additionally, some students struggled to understand and follow tutor instructions. To support our students, we developed a project where full-time ESOL students passed on their IT skills to those in the adult pre-entry and entry one classes.

#### Other Contextual Information

Our action research was part of the Education and Training Foundation's OTLA 8 Programme and took place at Darlington College, a medium sized general further education college in the North East of England. The college provides a wide range of courses and has a thriving ESOL Department with four permanent and three temporary staff. The classes range from part-time pre-entry to Level 2 (English and maths) classes, as well as a full-time programme for the 16-18-year-olds.

We worked with two groups of students: full-time 16-18 and pre-entry and Level 1 ESOL.

### APPROACH

We adopted an action planning process, involving the following stages:

#### Planning Stage:

- After initial team meetings at the beginning of the project, we recognised full-time ESOL students lacked confidence in their IT and communication skills and so we needed to build up their skills and confidence.
- Students were invited to be part of the project and informed what it would involve. Although

initially apprehensive, they were reassured they would be supported, guided and given time to prepare by the IT tutor.

- We discussed and agreed topics they would prepare and how they could present them to their peers. The following topics were chosen: turning the computer on and off, accessing Google Chat and using Google Meet. Students would present using PowerPoint.

#### **How the planning was put into practice:**

- A chronological order of lessons was decided by the students.
- The project lead liaised with the IT tutor ensuring time was secured for the delivery of the lessons.
- Once they were prepared and confident, full-time students delivered to the pre-entry class with the support of the IT tutor.

#### **Evaluation:**

- Both full-time and pre-entry students were given reflection activities (Exit Tickets) to complete. These were adapted to the level of the students to gain insights into the effectiveness of the presentations.
- The tutors met to ascertain what went well and what could be improved going forward. The feedback was mainly positive; however, it was felt the full-time students should be better prepared for the next round. They needed to be confident about the topic, prepare more informative slides and avoid simply reading from them to enable them to connect more effectively with the group being taught.

## **OUTCOMES AND IMPACT**

### **Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

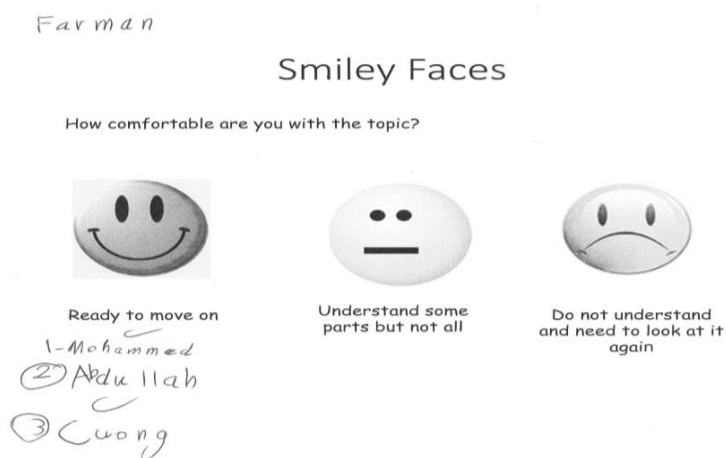
By the end of the sessions, the pre-entry students could turn a Chromebook off and on. They could also access Google chat which greatly increased their confidence.

The full-time students gained confidence in their ability to communicate as well as improving their IT skills. The experience has ensured their learning experiences have been broadened, made more interesting and engaging and relevant to the 'real' world. CN for example, told me he felt "delighted" (his favourite adjective!) after his teaching experience. He told me it had helped his pronunciation (an area he needed to develop).

Furthermore, the skill of 'risk-taking' was evident and students could see that mistakes are to learn from. Self-management was also developed, students were empowered and encouraged to use their initiative and autonomy. AH felt very uneasy during the presentation because he had not prepared well. He recognised that but kept going. He completed the lesson but felt he could do better and asked if he could take another in the future so he could improve.

In addition, communication skills were developed resulting in increased confidence when speaking to others, particularly to those they did not know. This is a life skill that will help students in their future job search or progression to higher levels of study. For example, MG stated he was very nervous and found it difficult but has since presented in other classes and said he felt much better.

The pre-entry students benefited from being taught by students who could empathise with their difficulty in understanding the English language. In addition, they learned skills which will enable them to access learning online. See exit ticket example below:



They also were exposed to technology which will be built on to support them in learning English through different channels. This will lead to improvements in confidence which will empower students to integrate more into society.

The ESOL team also benefitted, and learned from, a student-led approach. For some this was a new approach and 'letting go' was a concept not always easy to adopt. Having seen the benefits, it is hoped this will become a consistent approach within the ESOL classroom. For example, two members of the team stated they thought the project was a new and exciting idea, whilst one teacher, whose class was taught by the 16-19 years old, stated her students really enjoyed the sessions and learned some basic IT skills following the experience and she is keen to repeat the activity. In addition, it is hoped the collaboration across the team will also be embedded into the wider curriculum.

On my part, I learned to cascade knowledge gained from teaching an International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum in a creative manner. This involved sharing good practice around skills development as opposed to just supporting language development.

There was a great deal of emphasis on collaboration within this project. This came to fruition via students from a variety of backgrounds, experiences and languages, working together. Tutors also collaborated much more than previously.

### Professional Development

Professional Standard	How our project outcomes demonstrate this standard
1. Reflect on what works best in your teaching and learning to meet the diverse needs of students.	The approaches used were new to many of the team who initially struggled with students having control of the learning. Through meeting regularly, gathering feedback from students, and discussing progress with them, we were able to constructively and honestly reflect on what worked best in our teaching and support each other to make improvements. Regular reflection enabled us to

	<p>appreciate the benefits of the approach used, enhancing our teaching practice whilst additionally encouraging effective relationships with each other and our students.</p>
<p><b>6. Build positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues and students</b></p>	<p>The project's success hinged on effective collaboration on many different levels. Initially, full-time students and teachers worked together to decide on topic delivery, needing to build up trust and confidence in each other. In classroom teaching sessions students increasingly relied on each other to help with communication and the execution of practical activities. Collaboration was further needed to provide honest feedback on activities so their usefulness could be effectively assessed and any improvements made.</p>
<p><b>15. Promote the benefits of technology and support students in its use.</b></p>	<p>This project developed IT skills for ESOL students who struggled with the concept. Being taught by other ESOL students helped to lessen language barriers enabling them to express their difficulties more readily. Those teaching the sessions were able to recognise difficulties other students had in using IT and, with the teacher's help, support them appropriately to understand and use IT more effectively.</p> <p>As a result of the project, most students have grown in confidence in using IT. In addition, the project helped teachers better appreciate students' difficulties and find more effective means of working to enable them to meet challenges and overcome barriers to learning.</p>

## Organisational Development

The project created an opportunity for staff from different curriculum areas to meet, share ideas and teaching and learning and assessment approaches. In the busy world of FE, these opportunities do not occur as frequently as we would like. It was, therefore, fortuitous to have the privilege to work so closely with colleagues. Working on the project additionally helped to raise the profile of the ESOL department. For example, more regular and productive meetings with managers, more colleagues involved and more recently, the introduction of peer teaching into maths sessions.

Attending the Tees Valley English and Maths conference gave us the opportunity to share our work with other centres in the area. The chair of this meeting said she would share all I had imparted in a document which would be cascaded to all participants. This raised the profile of the project and our team whilst enabling us to get useful feedback from other ESOL practitioners. In addition, the project was shared at the Bell Foundation meeting where it was met with enthusiasm and interest.

## LEARNING FROM THIS PROJECT

### What went well:

All those involved found the project to be both a rewarding and positive experience. After some initial trepidation, people readily joined in and did their very best to ensure the project was a success. Feedback was extremely positive and the majority of those involved would like the activities to continue. One of the most pleasing aspects is seeing students grow in confidence and begin to take responsibility for their own learning. This student-led approach to teaching and learning has informed the ESOL team and demonstrated an approach that can be deployed elsewhere in the college. For example, this practice is currently being used within maths sessions. CN and MA (the higher-level maths students) are teaching the Entry 2/3 group for the last two sessions of the academic year. Because of their previous experience, they “jumped” at the opportunity and according to their IT teacher, are developing some wonderful resources.

### Even better if:

The full-time students had been better prepared for their lessons. Several of them were a little shocked at the reality of teaching and one even asked if he could do it again because he felt he did not deliver well which shows his commitment to the project.

The tutors were also taken by surprise, and we all agreed that we had overestimated the ability and confidence of the students. Based on this, more support was given to ensure the students were better prepared.

The full-time students need to practise more, ensuring they know the topic well prior to delivering topics. They also need to understand the importance of communicating clearly and ensuring their presentations are ‘lessons’ and not simple modes of displaying a collection of information.

All colleagues need to be on board. One was reluctant from the outset. This colleague teaches the higher groups so did not participate in the project although she was party to all the meetings and many of the discussions surrounding it. Without doubt she was very interested in knowing how the project progressed and expressed her pleasure at its success.

## REFERENCES

Education Training Foundation (2021) *Effective digital skills teaching in the context of digital exclusion: ESOL and non- formal learning*, available on: [Essential Digital Skills CPD programme - The Education and Training Foundation \(et-foundation.co.uk\)](https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/essential-digital-skills-cpd-programme)

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University

One Stop English (date unknown) *ESOL Support: IT in ESOL*, available on: <https://www.onestopenglish.com/support-for-teaching-adults/esl-support-it-in-esol/144679.article>, Date accessed: 11.02.2022

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: The Project Team

Project Role	Name	Job Role	Contact
Project Lead	Caroline Gaydon	ESOL Lecturer	carolinegaydon@darlington.ac.uk
Project Deputy	Jessica Smith	ESOL Lecturer	jsmith@darlington.ac.uk
Project Team	Ellie Kattou-Smith	ESOL Lecturer	EKattou@darlington.ac.uk
Project Team	Lois Calvert	Manager	LCalvert@darlington.ac.uk
Mentor	Catherine McPartland	Mentor	cpmcpartland@gmail.ac.uk
Research Group Lead	Gail Lydon	RGL	gaillydon@me.com

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

### **Case study 1: C**

C, 16, is from Vietnam and is generally a very motivated student. He has good IT skills and often supports others in the classroom. He struggles with his pronunciation and it can be difficult to understand him, at times. Having C deliver to the pre-entry class was seen as a way to help him with his confidence in speaking and for him to recognise the importance of pronouncing words correctly.

C was a victim of trafficking. He was in foster care in Darlington but seemed unhappy with this family. This impacted his learning because he couldn't sleep and was very tired.

It was during this time that C delivered his lesson to the pre-entry group. He was enthusiastic and had prepared a clear PowerPoint but he was difficult to understand. He tried really hard and used other students to help with communication.

His reflection indicated he had enjoyed the session and I feel it really did help him. Since this experience, C has moved to another foster carer where he feels he is much happier because they are British and can help with his pronunciation.

### **Case study 2: MG**

MG, 16, wants to be a teacher so this was a great opportunity to expose him to that world. He is a very serious student who does not like to get things wrong. He would rather not take a risk!

The experience was more difficult than MG thought it would be. MG had the role of teaching the pre-entry group how to turn the laptops on and off. He learned that this is easier said than done.

After the lesson, he laughingly said he no longer wanted to be a teacher but we have since worked further on his confidence and he has returned to the idea.

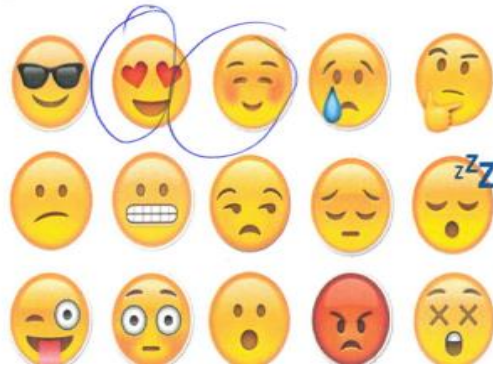
### Appendix 3: Feedback forms

Circle the emoji that best describes how you feel about today's topic: *Abdullah . H.*



*Mohamad Ghorer.*

Circle the emoji that best describes how you feel about today's topic:



## Appendix 4: Student Prepared Teaching Materials

The screenshot shows a Google Slides presentation in a web browser. The browser tabs include 'Sharepoint Online: Home', 'ProSolutionWeb 21.5.0', 'Staff Myday » Darlington College', 'Lois Calvert - Chat', 'Search results - Google Drive', and 'Welcome to Google Meet.pptx'. The address bar shows the URL: docs.google.com/presentation/d/19DhVRLSEcpDJSABc1MUZThKHkp1sO9N/edit#slide=id.p1. The presentation title is 'Welcome to Google Meet .PPTX' and it is saved to Drive. The last edit was on 11 November 2021. The slide content is as follows:

### Welcome to Google Meet

My name is Cuong . I m 16 year old I from VIETNAM . Now I live in Richmond and I am studying in Darlington college .

Today I will introduce you to google meet.

- FIRST I WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO ENTER GOOGLE MEET

- LOG IN TO GMAIL ON YOUR COMPUTER, CLICK THE DOT ICON IN THE RIGHT CORNER> SELECT GOOGLE MEET.

The slide also features a Google Meet logo, a pink sticky note, and a screenshot of a Windows Start menu with the 'Meet' icon highlighted. A small text box on the slide says 'This is profile picture'. At the bottom of the slide, it says 'This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-NC'. The presentation interface includes a slide navigation pane on the left, a toolbar at the top, and a 'Click to add speaker notes' area at the bottom.

Sharepoint Online: Home | ProSolutionWeb 21.5.0 | Staff Myday » Darlington College | Lois Calvert - Chat | Search results - Google Drive | Welcome to Google Meet.pptx

docs.google.com/presentation/d/19DhVRLSEcpDJSABc1MUZThKHkp1s09N/edit#slide=id.p2

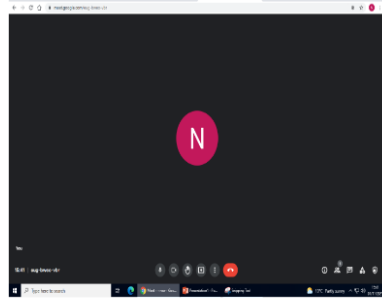
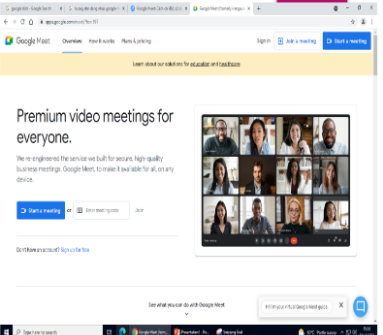
### Welcome to Google Meet .PPTX

File Edit View Insert Format Slide Arrange Tools Help *Last edit was on 11 November 2021*

Background | Layout | Theme | Transition

- 1
- 2
- 3

- Step 2: Google Meet will appear, then select new meeting
- Paste the URL or enter the class or online meeting code that you shared by other members in the box Enter a code or link > Click Join
- Check your microphone and camera before joining the class, online meeting > Click Join Now (Or tap Request to join).



Click to add speaker notes

Type here to search | Inboxes - CarolineGa... | Welcome to Googl... | 7b. Darlington Coll... | 11:09 11/05/2022

Sharepoint Online: Home | ProSolutionWeb 21.5.0 | Staff Myday » Darlington College | Lois Calvert - Chat | Search results - Google Drive | Welcome to Google Meet.pptx

docs.google.com/presentation/d/19DhVRLSEcpDJSABc1MUZThKHkp1sO9N/edit#slide=id.p3

### Welcome to Google Meet .PPTX

File Edit View Insert Format Slide Arrange Tools Help Last edit was on 11 November 2021

Background Layout Theme Transition

- 1
- 2
- 3

- this is a microphone
- this is a camera
- this is the shortcut button when we have ended the meeting or conversation.

Click to add speaker notes

Type here to search | 11:09 11/05/2022

## Appendix 5: Students working in classrooms



## Appendix 6: Examples of Students' Work

Accessible via this Padlet: [https://padlet.com/c\\_collins2/OTLA8\\_Darlington](https://padlet.com/c_collins2/OTLA8_Darlington)

The original documents are archived here:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/19DHVRLSEcpDJSABc1MUZThKHkpl1s09N/edit#slide=id.p1>

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1u3-WTWgM2TiL\\_TORUmDPT8nWkDS4At5A/edit#slide=id.p1](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1u3-WTWgM2TiL_TORUmDPT8nWkDS4At5A/edit#slide=id.p1)

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1DkfQUc8ghQ\\_YdvMwKGdBCZoNMg41esV1o9gTA\\_Hxspo/edit#slide=id.p1](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1DkfQUc8ghQ_YdvMwKGdBCZoNMg41esV1o9gTA_Hxspo/edit#slide=id.p1)

## Appendix 7: Participants and Stakeholders

No of learners?	<b>12</b>	No of staff?	<b>4</b>
No of organisations?	<b>1</b>	No of employers/ stakeholders?	<b>0</b>

## Appendix 8: Research/ Evaluation Approach

<b>Participant/observer</b> (e.g. practitioner reflective accounts, logs)		<b>Interview/survey</b> (e.g. polls, questionnaires, learner interviews)	<b>X</b>
<b>Observation of practice</b> (in person, video, observation notes)		<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>X</b>
<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>X</b>
<b>Other</b> (specify):	Action Research		



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