



I Ain't No Academic: An Exploration Of How To Better Engage Plumbing Learners In The Study Of Language



PURPOSE

This research study aims to explore plumbing learners' genuine experiences of studying GCSE English at an FE college to better assess why disengagement with formal modes of study is so common and to analyse whether engagement can be increased by introducing more socially situated literacies into language activities.

KEY FINDINGS

Often students enter FE with negative preconceptions of learning English after having been made to feel 'not academic' at school

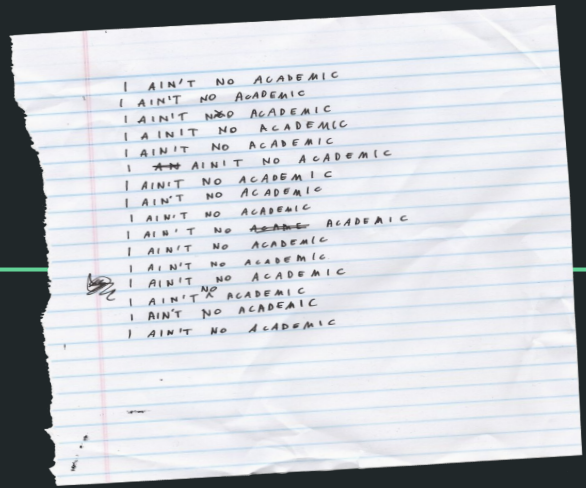
Learners can feel disengaged when the learning content is not relative to their lives

Disengaged learners can enjoy studying language when they feel the content is more relatable

The learners' voice is of paramount importance in finding ways to improve disengagement with the study of language

ANALYSIS

For disenfranchised learners to meaningfully study language, they must re-discover something about language that interests them and reconnect with language on their terms, through a literacy that is familiar to them. Often, these students come to FE from a school experience that labelled them, or implied that they were 'not academic'. This re-connection with language is a re-connection with what they had previously estranged themselves from in order to 'survive' in a school system that did not cater for their intellect or skill set, and is imperative to establish before they can once again study language in a way that will nurture their development.

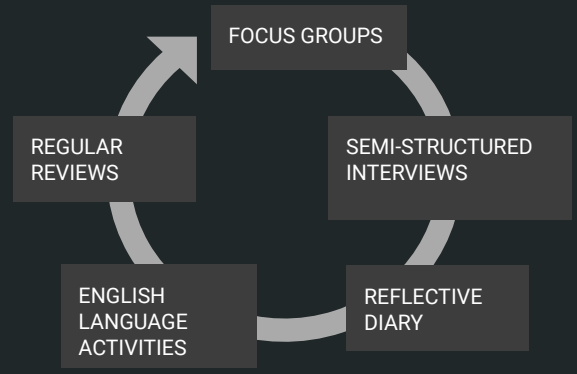


"I see language totally different now. It's not only about doing paragraphs about Macbeth and stuff like that, there's a lot more to language..."

Dinero- Level 1 plumbing student

"It takes your mind off the stress of learning so it's just easier to do..."

Thiago- Level 1 plumbing student



KEY LITERATURE

"Fusion of Horizons: This describes the nature of understanding as integrating what is unfamiliar to use into our own familiar context, so when we understand something we fuse someone else's viewpoint with our own and in this encounter we are transformed because it broadens our mind."

Zimmermann, J., 2015. *Hermeneutics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

"One always and only learns to interpret texts of a certain type in certain ways through having access to, and ample experience in, social settings where texts of that type are read in those ways"

Gee, J., 2008. *Social linguistics and literacies*. London: Routledge.