

Research Question:

How will the introduction of Functional Skills exams affect the teaching of ESOL and learners' success?

Rationale and Aims:

Following the introduction of Functional Skills assessments for ESOL learners, research was needed to find how teachers coped without prior training and to see if students were successful without specialist training.

Preliminary Findings:

- Teaching methods changed very little from previous years.
- Initial exam results are positive but some students struggled with the writing due to the time limit.

Challenges:

- Teachers were apprehensive about teaching for the Functional Skills exams.
- Teachers were worried the tasks would be appropriate and suitable for ESOL learners.
- Online writing exam for L1 FS: IT ability of students.
- Time for the paper-based writing exam for E3.
- Students' feelings of dropping down a level – L1 ESOL did E3 FS.

Recommendations:

- Initial Functional Skills training for new teachers
- Regular standardisation of marking.
- Development of teaching materials to be shared and available to all teachers.
- Lots of timed writing practice needed for E3.
- Lots of online writing practice needed for L1.

Moving Forward:

Dissemination of findings and recommendations to all current and new L1 and L2 ESOL teachers at Kirklees College through staff development; Continue with development of FS English teaching resources for ESOL classes next year.

Reading:

Teaching Adult ESOL – Principles and Practice, Edited by Paton. A and Wilkins.M (2009)

Context and Culture in Language Teaching, Kramsch. C (2001)

Edexcel Functional Skills English, Constant. C and Washington. K (2010)

<http://esol.britishcouncil.org/methodology/teaching-higher-level-esol-learners>

ESOL TO Functional Skills – breaking down the fear for teachers

Participants and Methods:

80 L1 and L2 ESOL (19+) learners and 10 teachers from both Huddersfield and Dewsbury centres; Questionnaires from teachers Interviews and discussions with teachers. Classroom activities completed by students, such as worksheets, reading, writing and speaking Functional Skills activities.



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