



SHAPING SUCCESS ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS

**FINAL REPORT ON THE SHAPING SUCCESS AR PROJECT –
EXPLORING STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING VOCABULARY
RETENTION IN ESOL LEARNERS**

New College Durham

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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-7/>.

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Final report - Exploring Strategies for Improving Vocabulary Retention in ESOL Learners

New College Durham

Trauma can seriously affect memory, making the ability to learn a new language even more difficult. What can we do to help those affected? Our project looked at ways to reduce anxiety and strategies to help our ESOL learners remember how to use vocabulary confidently and accurately.

Summary

New College Durham is an FE college serving Durham city and the surrounding area. We offer a range of diverse courses including ESOL classes for adults and 16 to 18-year-olds.

We have noticed that many of the ESOL learners have problems retaining knowledge, often manifesting in poor retrieval of vocabulary or little progress being made in spelling work. Learners can become frustrated as they perceive their progress to be slow, and they are keen to move on to further study or employment but feel hindered by their poor language skills. This in turn can impact on confidence and self-esteem so it becomes more than just a language issue. Our project looked at strategies to aid retention and recall in conjunction with a selection of mindfulness strategies to improve language outcomes and learner confidence.

Rationale

Over the first national lock down, many ESOL staff attended CPD sessions run by the British Council looking at the effect of trauma on learning. (British Council 2020). We know that trauma can have a negative impact on brain function (Van Der Kolk 2014) and it follows that this can lead to poor learning outcomes for particular groups of learners.

A significant number of the learners we work with have experienced trauma of some kind. We work with both adult refugees and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, many of whom have fled war.

We have seen groups of learners not making the progress we would expect, often regardless of their own educational background. This can lead to feelings of frustration for them, and a lowering of their self-esteem and confidence.

We felt inspired to explore this area and see if we could introduce strategies into our teaching to strengthen the learners' memory function, and thereby support them better in their learning journeys. Initially, we looked at general memory, but as the project progressed, we realised that this was too broad. We therefore narrowed it down to vocabulary retention with a particular emphasis on spelling as we identified this as an area which most of the learners had weaknesses in.

Approach

Ready to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identified strategies to help learners feel safe and secure before starting the project. (Delaney 2016)• Worked with a mindfulness coach, conscious of the need to avoid adverse reactions amongst those who have experienced trauma.• COVID-19 restrictions led to adapted approaches and staff selecting those they felt comfortable with. (Appendix 8)
How we learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keen to encourage learners to learn more about how they learn/what works for them.• We constructed a simple questionnaire which reflected on past learning experiences both successful and less so.• Learners identified the ingredients of a successful learning experience for themselves. Staff reviewed this information to inform their approach.• A similar questionnaire used at the end to explore their perceptions of vocabulary retention from both online and face-to-face classes.(Appendix 12)
Approach 1&2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entry Level 1 class focused on spelling and breaking words up in their constituent syllables. (Case Study 1 & Appendix 14)• Pre-Entry Level class focused on spelling target vocabulary using the 'look, say, cover, write, check' method. (Case Study 2)
Other approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The following strategies were also used to practise and reinforce new lexis.• Using pictures to help remember difficult spellings e.g. apple• Visualisation to help personalise the meaning of an word/concept.• Recognition of words within words e.g. for got ten.• Word patterns e.g. dropped , slipped.• Choosing their own vocab lists.
Evaluation of progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific assessments were planned at key points in addition to weekly revision. Term 2 - summative assessment of vocabulary retention across both terms.• Specific assessment criteria around vocabulary and spelling included.e.g. spelling accuracy, choice of vocab in context, range of vocab.• A range of assessment activities - cloze, multiple choice, correct the spelling, free writing and speaking tasks..
Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embed mindfulness strategies from the start of the new year• Establish a departmental garden as a safe space• Build in questionnaire and initial activities exploring personal vocabulary strategies into induction.• Build vocabulary development and assessment in more systematically and link to building confidence and independence.

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices

In response to guidance from experts in the field, the team has extended the already extensive pastoral offer to include mindfulness exercises for all learners. The welfare offer has been particularly important this year with the stress caused by the pandemic. Staff have become more confident at conducting mindfulness exercises and have forged a relationship with a mindfulness coach in order to practise this safely. Mindfulness exercises at the start of classes set the right tone for learning new vocabulary and focussing on spelling.

The project has provided the opportunity for the team to focus on trying out different strategies to teach spelling and vocabulary. We have had training as a team, and individuals have also worked on their own strategies, researching areas of interest as part of their CPD. Staff have used new approaches and have been open to new experiences and methods and this is something that we see continuing in the future. Staff got creative, using flashcards with home drawn pictures which they encouraged students to post around their homes to great effect. There is no conclusive evidence as to which approach was most successful, and learners seemed to prefer a variety. The key was to try out different approaches to find what worked for the teacher and the learners.

Over the lockdown period when classes were taught online, in contrast to the first lockdown classes from March 2020, the team maintained a focus on spelling and vocabulary in an attempt to continue with the progress made in this area. Rather than adopt one practice activity we found that looking for opportunities to recycle in as many different ways as possible proved most effective. They were used both as assessment and practice activities, designed to focus on:

Spelling: spot the mistake, word jumbles

Meaning in context: choose the best word, cloze activities

Grammatical use: freer writing tasks

There has also been a more reflective approach taken to assessment, considering how we assess vocabulary across different levels. Should we use the same approach and criteria for Entry Level 1 and Level 1 or are different elements more important at different levels?

We found that a more mechanical approach worked better at lower levels, using scaffolded approaches like gap fill texts to help the students reproduce the required words.

At higher levels, a free writing approach worked well as it allowed us to assess the students' ability to select vocabulary to suit the context.

We have also found that, in addition to weekly spelling assessments, many of the practice activities we have been using provide learners with far more formative feedback helping them to explore their understanding and use of new items more

fully. Reviewing and questioning the effectiveness of our existing practice has proved stimulating and has given us the impetus to try out new things as we adapt our teaching to a more blended approach.

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

The biggest change to organisational practice has come about through the increased focus on welfare that we have. We have formed a relationship with a social enterprise in Durham, which has the aim of supporting Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. As a result of the benefits we have seen from increased welfare focus, we have worked with the SLT to identify some space to start a gardening club. The college is building raised beds and a paved area for the ESOL learners, and the social enterprise has provided us with seeds, tools and mini greenhouse so that we can offer learners a chance to work outside and grow their own fruit and vegetables. This has proven benefits for positive mental health and by getting support from the college; the welfare element of what we do has been recognised and is being actively promoted.



My little tomato is growing healthy. 🌱☀️ It has enough water and sun. However, give me some more good advice, please. ❤️

The ESOL team has always had an ethos of sharing best practice, but this project has led to deeper reflections on teaching practice and more professional discussions within the team and a willingness among staff to try something new. During the project, we used a recording sheet to track our activities. This was open to the whole team and could then be discussed at weekly team meetings. This proved to be very useful and generated more professional discussions and provided support even when we were not able to share physical space. (Appendix 13)

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression

The overall results from assessments in term 1 show an increase in achievement in spelling, writing and speaking outcomes. We used range and appropriacy of vocabulary as assessment criteria in written and spoken tests and spelling as an assessment criterion in written tests.

We saw a dip in achievement in term 2, following the period of lockdown. What is interesting is that learners were quite clear on why they were more likely to remember the meaning and spelling of words from term 1, and the meaning only of words from term 2 as can be seen in the results from the second questionnaire.

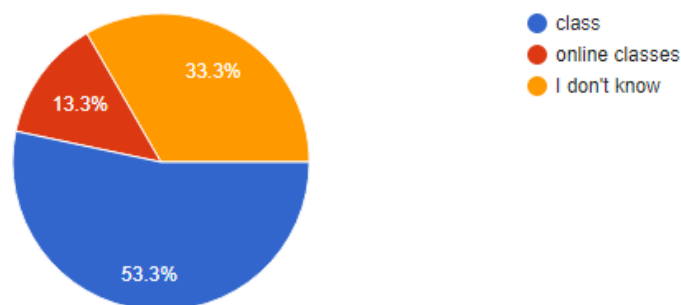
I think from class better than online

Teacher explaining very good

I can remember words more and learn new words when I learn face to face

هل من الأسهل تذكر الكلمات من الفصل أو الدروس عبر الإنترنت؟
هل من الأسهل تذكر الكلمات من الفصل أو الدروس عبر الإنترنت؟

15 responses



It is also worth noting that we did not have the opportunity to carry on with mindfulness activities during lock down, and this might also have been a contributing factor to a dip in achievement.

However, we were able to see that those learners who carried on using the spelling strategies we used together in class during lock down still continued to make progress. Learner S for example has found 'breaking words down' a very useful strategy and has been enthused by the impact it has had on her progress.

Spellings of words

Saturday, January 2, 2021 2:54 PM

Ques tion
De scrip tions
Con grat u la tions
Dis in te rest ed
Pro nun ci a tion
Care less with mon ey
Fi nan cial
Un derline

Those learners who did not use the strategies made less progress and the progress was not secure, so they were unable to reproduce the words independently in a freer piece of writing as we can see in Learner Y's case study.

Attendance was 91% for term 1 (face to face) and 86% for term 2 (online) and this is also a possible contributing factor to the dip in achievement.

Learning from this project

Although the project took place in extremely challenging circumstances, and it may not be possible to say definitively what the impact of the lockdown was on the work we were doing, we are still comfortable with the following conclusions.

We can say that using a consistent and focused approach to learning vocabulary with built-in practice activities allows the learner the best chance to transfer the item from their short term to their long-term memory. Most approaches seemed to be successful, but learner buy in by way of them choosing the vocabulary items was really important. When that happens, the item can be retrieved even several months after learning. On the other hand, without focus and consistency, this does not seem to happen as easily, and learners are not as secure in their learning. It is interesting to note that 'look say cover write check' was found to be effective in the mechanics of writing the words, but not so much in the retrieval of the vocabulary item, so using it plus an approach focussed on meaning and context is more successful in helping the students to really know a word.

We also found that we had the best results when we were face to face with learners. We cannot say for certain, but it seems that the work we were doing on mindfulness allowed the learners to approach their learning in a more positive and relaxed frame of mind, which seemed to be better for learning to take place. This is corroborated by feedback from learners who told us that being in class focused their attention more and that they found learning vocabulary more difficult "when I think of a lot of thing" and "when we don't use it much in class". They also felt that the chance to "...practise in my class with my friends" was a key advantage of face-to-face sessions. With this in mind, we will be looking at how we can replicate the opportunity to explore the meaning and use of new words more collaboratively if we continue with a more blended offer.

Asking learners to reflect on their own learning experiences before asking them to choose a strategy to help them remember vocabulary more successfully proved effective in many cases with some learners like Learner S getting a great deal out of the experiment. Raising the learners' own awareness of how they learn, introducing them to strategies that might help them to move items into their long-term memory and then asking them to reflect on what worked well for them, reinforced the importance of learners taking more responsibility for their learning, in line with other college initiatives.

Finally, we learnt that no one is ever too old or has been teaching too long to try new things. Some of us felt a little ridiculous when we started introducing mindfulness

activities into class, but the positive response we had quickly overcame any feelings of embarrassment, and we fully embraced the approach.

References

British Council (2020) *An Introduction to Trauma and its effects in the Classroom*
Accessed 01.06.2020

Delaney M. (2016) *Special Educational Needs* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Van Der Kolk B. (2014) *The Body Keeps The Score. Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma.* Penguin

Appendix 1 – The project team

Project Role	Name	Job Role
Project Lead	Bridget da Silva	Curriculum Manager
Deputy Lead	Tom Hudson	ESOL lecturer
Project team	Natasha Emmer	ESOL lecturer
	Alison Phillips	ESOL lecturer
	Marina Giannaka	ESOL lecturer
	Sara Barbin	ESOL lecturer
	Rebecca Jones	ESOL lecturer
	Wendy Castleton	ESOL lecturer
	Helen McCree	ESOL lecturer
	Sue Dickson	ESOL lecturer
	Niall Oddy	ESOL lecturer
Project Mentor	Sheran Johnson (ccConsultancy)	
Research Group Lead	Tricia Millar (That Reading Thing)	

Appendix 2 – Case Study

Learner S

Learner S is a refugee from Lebanon. She joined the college this academic year, shortly after the fatal blast in Beirut, and was clearly very distressed about that situation. She had been in the UK for 7 years prior to starting college, and had survival English.

Before starting college, Learner S had never been in education. She can read and write in Arabic, but by her own admission, not very well. She was very anxious at the start of the course, and said she felt ashamed of her lack of education.

The class used chunking and repetition in different contexts as the main way to help with spelling both in face and face classes and in lock down. The class also had weekly spelling tests where they were given a list of words to learn. The class used breathing exercises during face to face sessions but not during online sessions. However, the tutor was able to carry out regular welfare checks with learners.

Learner S started from a very low level (see examples of work). However, she did writing at home every day. She repeated the spellings until she felt secure with them and then she wrote them in sentences. She used the spelling strategies that we had used in class when she was at home. She began to score well in weekly spelling tests, and as her confidence grew, she did more independent writing extra to what was required in class. Summative tests in December and March show a massive improvement in her overall writing ability, and in particular in her spelling. In both sets of tests, words were tested in a piece of free writing, and Learner S scored highly on spelling both times. The March test was designed to test words from both terms. This shows that she has been able to transfer the spellings into her long term memory.

These are some examples of her work over the course of the year, showing the progress she has made.

September 2020

This is the front page of the learner's ILP. We ask all learners to write a short pen portrait to tell us a little bit about themselves. We can see from this writing that Learner S has limited knowledge of spelling and a very limited range of vocabulary.

Learner Pen Portrait

my name is afa. I'm from Lubanon
i live UK in habx in UK

October 2020 formative test

This was done after a period of teaching which focused on personal information. We can see here that Learner S has made a slight improvement in her writing but still has significant problems with her spelling. This was before we introduced spelling strategies in class, but we had just started to do mindfulness activities at the start of the sessions.

Postcard

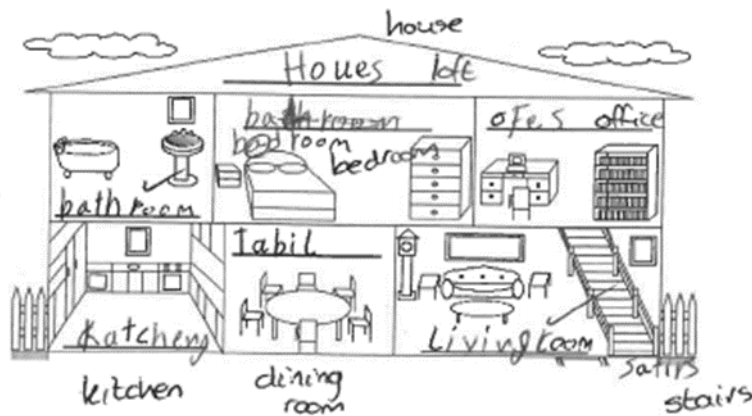
Dear Edyta,

I Live in fishburn ~~IA~~
IA

~~IA~~ TSZILU D Q
sat kton - on regr kars
~~I do cooking everyday~~

~~TSZILU D Q~~

I am ~~cooking~~
I am cooking everyday ✓



December 2020 summative test

This was a free writing test at the end of the term. Learners were asked to write about their house, having studied vocabulary related to that topic throughout the term. Spelling strategies had been introduced, as well as mindfulness activities. We can see a significant improvement in her ability to spell, and the range of accurate vocabulary she is using, even in test conditions.

Please write about 50-75 words.

when I was six years old my house was in Lebanon. Then my house was small. We were with my mom and dad and my brothers. It has (it consists) of a living room and two bedrooms. There has a medium sized kitchen and a corridor. There has a bathroom and a veranda. The special it was about 150 m².

March 2021 summative test

This was the summative test at the end of term 2, which followed a term of online teaching. As part of the test, the learners were asked to write something similar to the task they completed in the December test. We can see that a lot of the vocabulary is secure in the learner's memory now, and although she has made some spelling mistakes, the words themselves are able to be retrieved. All of these words were taught in face-to-face classes where we were using spelling strategies and mindfulness activities.

bed

house A room in my home
In my house there are two bedrooms
and the kitchen, living room, bathroom are
small. So my bedroom is very small.
(There are in bedroom, small bed and mirror
and sofa. There are clothes every where,
because my room is small.

Appendix 3 – Case Study

Learner Y

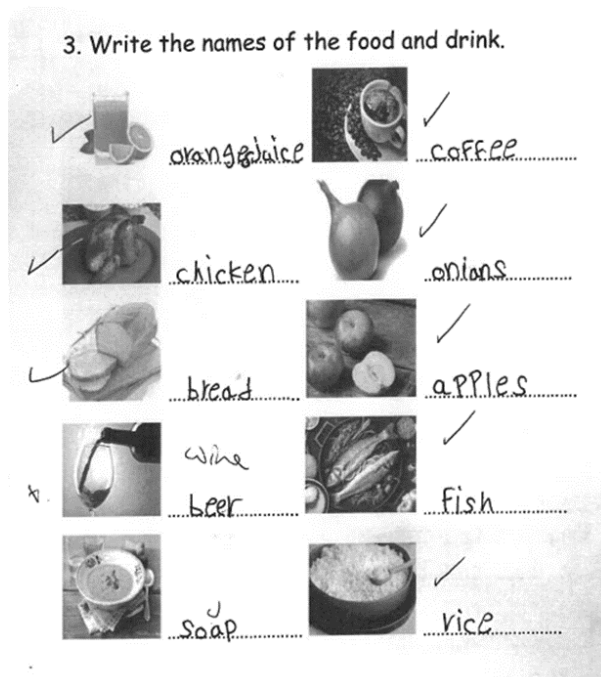
Learner Y is a refugee from Syria. She is in her mid-50s. She is working at Pre-entry Level, and has been at college for 2 years, although both years have been disrupted by COVID.

Her teacher reports that her initial diagnostic test for writing saw her achieve 49%, with spelling being a real problem. Over the year, this class predominately used look say cover write check and repetition to help remember their spelling work and breathing exercises at the start of class. The spelling work carried on throughout lock down, but not the breathing exercises. The class had weekly spelling tests, using 10 words that were given to them to learn the week before.

Learner Y showed consistently high scores in her weekly spelling tests throughout the year. However, while she was able to correctly produce the words the class was working on in free writing in December summative tests, she was not able to do the same with the tests in March. This suggests that something about the way she was learning in term 1 enabled the words to transfer into her long-term memory, whereas what she learned during the lock down period stayed only in her short-term memory.

Spelling test term 1

This was testing a list of 10 words which the learners had studied in class. They were given the words to learn and look say cover write check forms to use at home.



December 2020 summative test

This was a free writing task testing words that had been studied throughout the term, and tested in weekly spelling tests. We can see that Learner Y has been able to retrieve the vocabulary very well and use good spelling for most of the words.

2. Write 5 sentences with There is/There are in the fridge.



- ^{In} 1. The fridge there is jam. ✓
- ^{In} 2. The fridge there ^sare fruit. x
- ^{In} 3. The fridge there is orange juice. ✓
- ^{In} 4. The fridge there ^eare carrots. ✓
- ^{In} 5. The fridge there ^eare vegetables. ✓

4/5

March 2021 summative test

We can see from this test that the learner is not able to retrieve the correct vocabulary or use good spelling. This followed a period of online learning. During this time, this learner found it hard to study at home. She did not use the spelling strategies the class had been using, and she said it was hard to study because (her)'head is busy'. We take this to mean that she was feeling stressed.



.....jaket.....



✓.....boots.....



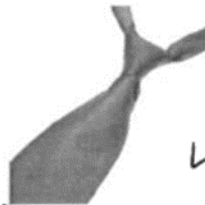
~~seaks~~
~~seacs~~
~~glases~~
 socks



.....shoss.....



blouse
 T shirt.....



✓.....tie.....



gloves
 glows.....



.....^up
jamber.....



shirt
 short.....



.....jeans.....

2/10

Appendix 4 – Initial questionnaire

This was the questionnaire we used with learners to ascertain what their perceptions of learning were. We agreed on some questions as a team and then sent out a paper-based version to the students. We translated the questions into Arabic to make it accessible to the majority of learners in the lower-level classes, but also did some class discussion around the questions to make it accessible to other language speakers. Learners were asked to complete the questionnaire individually and anonymously, so they were free to write whatever they wanted.

Dear Student,

Please can you answer these questions for us.

What's your name?	
How old are you?	
Where are you from?	
Tell us about something you learnt that was easy for you.	
Why was it easy?	

Tell us about something you tried to learn that was difficult for you.	
Why was it difficult?	

Arabic

ما هو اسمك

كم عمرك

من اين انت

أخبرنا عن شيء تعلمته وكان سهلاً عليك.

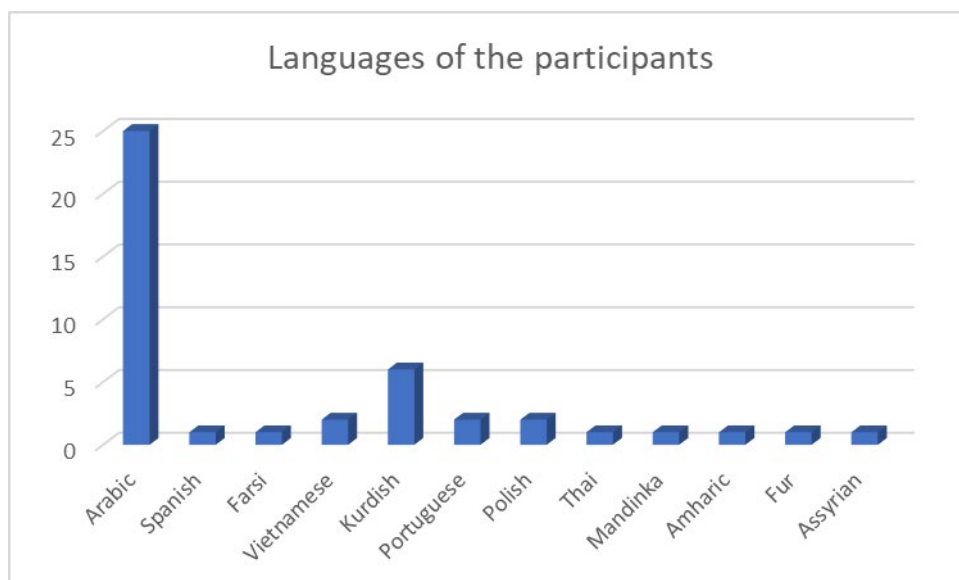
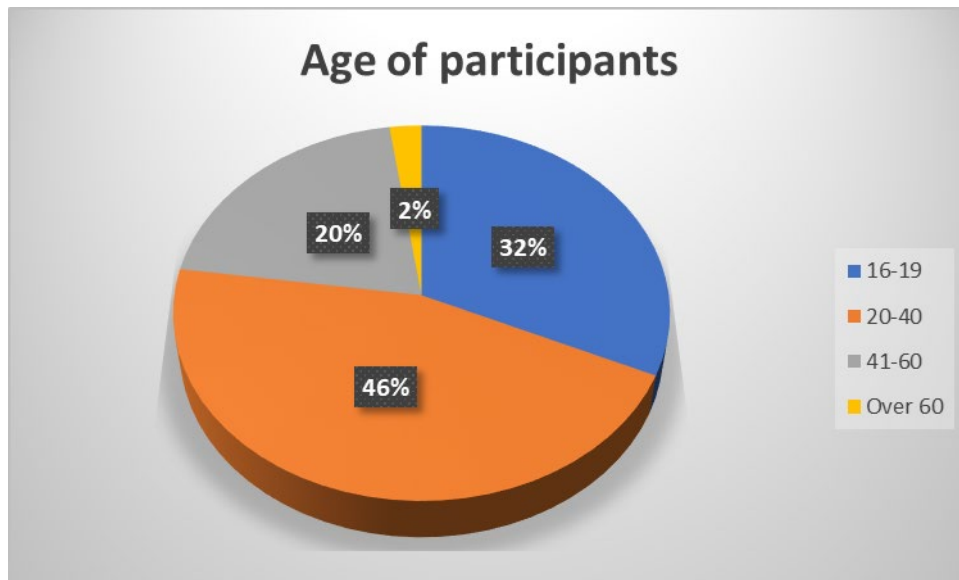
لماذا كانت سهلة

أخبرنا عن شيء حاولت معرفته وكان صعباً
عليك

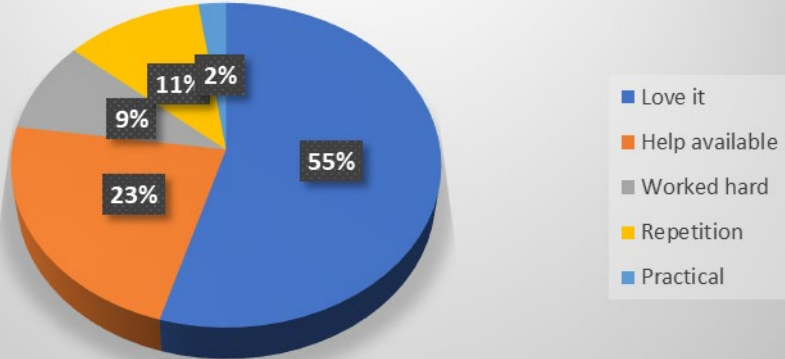
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Appendix 5 – Results of the initial questionnaire

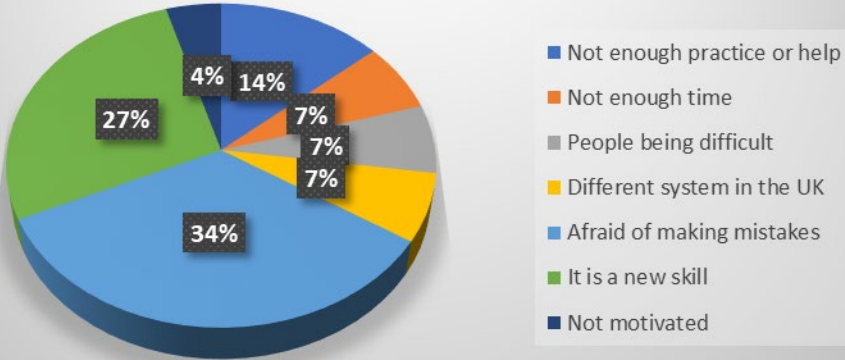
Looking at the results of the questionnaire, we can see that the majority of learners are Arabic speaking adults. They strongly identify 2 factors which help them to learn things: firstly it is something that they enjoy, and secondly that help is available for them. They also strongly identify 2 factors that make learning more difficult: firstly that they are afraid of making mistakes, and secondly that they are learning something completely new.



Why was it easy for you to learn a new skill?



Why was it difficult for you to learn a new skill?



Appendix 6 – Examples of class breathing exercises

We used the exercises on the next page with low level classes as they do not need too much language input. They were used at the start of class before any learning began. Learners responded very positively to them.

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

Breathing

When we are anxious or upset our breathing becomes more rapid. We can feel better by deliberately slowing and relaxing our breathing. Anxious breathing is up in the chest, whereas relaxed breathing happens deeper in the stomach.

Relaxed breathing instructions

- Breathe in slowly and steadily through your nose for a count of 4 - don't rush this!
- Pause for a count of 1
- Exhale slowly and steadily for a count of 4 - breathe out gradually - try not to breathe out with a sigh
- Repeat for a few minutes until you notice a change in how your body feels
- If you get distracted, or if your mind wanders, just bring your attention back to how it feels to breathe in and out



Practice Belly Breathing

Sit comfortably in a chair and place your hands on your belly, with your middle fingertips just slightly touching. Now breathe in deeply and notice how your fingertips move apart a little. That shows you are breathing effectively with your diaphragm. You might need to practice this!

When you are feeling tense and hoping to relax, try breathing out a little bit more slowly and more deeply, noticing a short pause before the in-breath takes over (there is no need to exaggerate the in-breath, just let it happen). You might find it useful to count slowly or prolong a word such as **ONE** or **CALM** to help elongate the out-breath a little (to yourself or out loud).

Simple Breathing Exercise

This breathing exercise takes only a few seconds, no matter where you are. It is particularly helpful at stressful times, and also practice it at regular intervals throughout the day.

- Take a deep, slow breath in and hold it for 5 seconds. Feel your belly expand as you do this.
- Breathe out slowly, to a count of 5.
- Breathe in again, make every breath slow and steady and exactly the same as the one before it and the one after it.
- As you breathe out, concentrate on expelling ALL the air in your lungs.
- If you are alone, you could make a noise like **WHOO** as you do this to help you feel the air being let out.
- Keep the outbreath going for as long as you can. Keep it relaxed for a few seconds before you inhale again.

Colour Breathing

For a fast and effective calming technique in a stressful situation, visualise the colour blue. Visualise breathing in that blue calm and breathing out red tension.

Appendix 7 – Student reactions to mindfulness

Posted on our VLE by one of the teachers in September, just to get the learners familiar with the concept of mindfulness

Hi students. Before you begin your learning, repeat the listening activity we did on Tuesday morning.

Set your timer for 2 minutes.

Listen in silence. It sometimes helps to close your eyes. What can you hear?

After two minutes, tell us what you heard...Your breathing? Machines in the house? Your neighbours outside? Your children playing? What could you hear?

Posted Tue 22 Sep 2020 at 6:11 pm

Selection of learner responses

Hi , I did a listening activity this morning, and I heard the Fridge sound.the clock ticking, the birds chirping, and the sound of the tap my daughter didn't turn off well before going to school

I did a listening activity today morning, so I heard the sound of birds chirping, the sound of the wall clock ticking, the sound of neighbors passing by my house and the dryer, my wife left it work before she went out.

Hi, i did a listening activity yesterday morning ,Iheard the cars outside , the fridge sound and my little boy was crying in the bed room.

Hi, I did a listening activity today morning, so I heard the sound of wind, the sound of people outside and the sound of washer machine

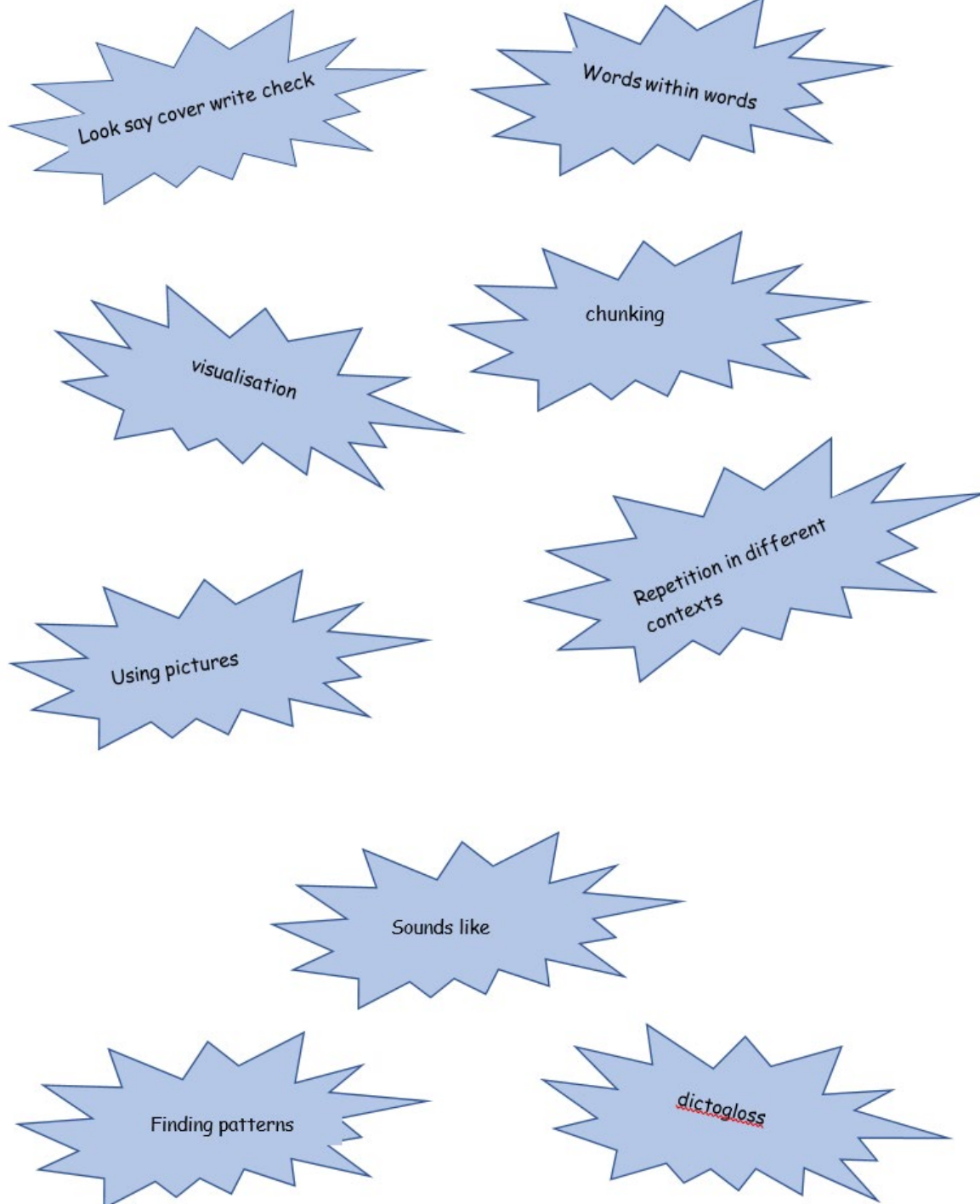
Hi.I did listening activity this afternoon,I heard my parents voice.The wall watch noise.and the ice cream car music,and fridge voice and also my dog voice

I have done it, This morning the listening activities and I heard the sound of birds from outside in the garden,I also heard the Aquarium fish tank in the Tv room, larray always leave on for the fish, and it's very noisy. The clock on the walls it's click, click.... I think our neighbours was cleaning their house and I heard the vacuum cleaner.

Hi I did this activity today, and I heard someone walking in front of the door I have heard some sounds I didn't recognise what is this, It's actually look like someone writing something on the wall.

Appendix 8 – Spelling strategies we used

These are some of the strategies we used in class. Each teacher chose to use a particular strategy and used this with the class in a consistent way. One of the most popular approaches was to find words within words, for example: within the word education we can see the word **cat** which can help students to remember the words as a whole. There is more explanation of the different strategies in the example spelling lesson in appendix 14.



Appendix 9 – Student record sheet

These are record sheets that we encouraged the learners to use to choose vocabulary that is relevant to them. They were asked to record words when they felt they needed to, rather than in every lesson, so the selection was completely down to what they felt they needed.

Name [REDACTED] Date 1, 12, 2020

What new words have you learned today?

unpredictable
take into account
discovering
random
undesirable
unfa Penalty - punishment
hope - want -

Name



Date 2/12/20

Spelling	Synonym	Example sentence
unpredictable		My boss is unpredictable.
penalty		I got ^a penalty point by police camera record.
<u>convienced</u> Check your spelling. <i>Handwritten</i>		

Appendix 10 – A1 writing mark scheme

This is included to show how we focused on vocabulary as part of the assessment criteria for marking writing. This is an E1 (A1) level scheme.



NCD LEVEL writing assessment ESOL 3 A1

Date:

Name: _____

Tutor: _____

Learning objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe your childhood home using was/were (had) and a range of vocabulary Write about someone famous you admire using was/were (to describe early life) and a range of vocabulary 		
AO1. AO2. AO3. TEXT Did you do everything? Did you use the right text type? Word count	AO4. GRAMMAR Did you use...? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sentences good word order verbs correctly full stops / question marks capital letter at the beginning 	AO5. VOCABULARY Did you use...? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a range of vocabulary capitals and lower case (small letters) correctly good handwriting good spelling
/10	/10	/10

 Things you did well
 What do you need to work on?

Appendix 11 – A2 writing mark scheme

This is included to show how we focused on vocabulary as part of the assessment criteria for marking writing. This is an E2 (A2) level scheme.


NCD LEVEL writing assessment ESOL 4 A2

Date:

Name: _____

Tutor: Natasha Emmer

Learning objectives:			
Task 1 – Fill in a form			
Task 2 – Write an article for your teacher about a party you went to last month (80 words)			
Task 3 - Write an email to a friend describing your new manager at work (80 words)			
Marks	AO1. TASK	AO4. GRAMMAR	AO5. VOCABULARY
10 Excellent	Did you answer the question? Word count	Range of punctuation - capital letters, full stops, commas, question marks,	Range of vocabulary - task appropriate and common words
7 Pass	AO2. AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE	Sentence grammar is controlled so meaning is clear (e.g. verb form, tense etc.)	Spelling
	Format Register	Word order	Handwriting
1 Poor	AO3. ORGANISATION	Simple and compound sentences	Uses upper and lower case letters appropriately
	Paragraphs/openings/closings	Use of adjectives	
	/10	/10	/10

✓	Things you did well
	What do you need to work on?

Appendix 12 – Follow up questionnaire

This questionnaire was sent out via Google Forms as we had been working online and wanted to keep the learners engaged in using IT. The questions were designed by the team to explore the learner experience in face-to-face classes versus online classes. We sought to find out how learners remember the vocabulary we had studied in both types of classes, whether it was the meaning and the spelling, or the meaning only, and whether there was a difference between the memory function in both types of classes.

We found that learners had better recall of vocabulary from the face-to-face classes, in the volume, meaning and spelling as opposed to the online classes, even though the vocabulary had been learnt some time earlier. Learners identified the fact that they had more opportunities for practice in the face-to-face classes, and this was a factor in them having better recall.

This is a link to the questionnaire which is still active.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfhUMvYeluGT2OSk9uEHZ_76be6CEPVCZCaYQwHw39tZCE3BQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

When asked about what they can remember about the words they learnt in face to face teaching (term 1), this was the response:



When asked about what they can remember about the words they learnt in online teaching (term 2), this was the response:



This was borne out by the written evidence. When asked to write down words they remember from term 1, which is longer ago, this is an extract of what was produced:

mean ,generous,bought,
Housework. Invest. Engineer. Amazing. Went. Became. Daughter. Credit card. Saturday. go for a walk.
Fantastic. Because. Doctor. Nurse. Borrow. Sell. Save. Stack shelves. Rich. generous. Careless with money
Do the exercise.
Hello!
Yes
Easter sometimes Monday Tuesday Thursday delicious married surname sunshine showers fantastic
favourer January February March April may June July August September October November December
Mother. bedroom. North. football
Reading writing exercises sports shopping swimming

improve -look after-lovely-findly-classmates-understand-unfortunates-godless-relationship-regards-blong-

Compared to this from term 2:

Daughter. Sun. Husband. Spring. Autumn. Winter. Summer. Short. Long. Around. Square. Tall. Fat. Slime.
Black. Red. Leather. Wool. Checked. Skirt. Dress.
Walk.
No
Wearing weather clothes dress
father. long. Cold
Huge friendly older

Wearing , clothes, past simple ,carful with money

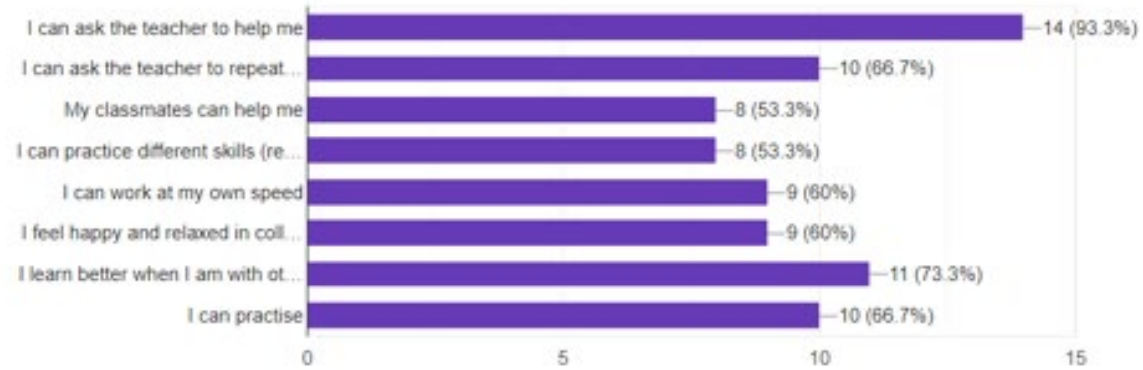
TV, table , school, and supermarket.

We asked the learners what they liked about learning face to face and online. What was really interesting was firstly their response to where they feel more relaxed and ready to learn, which was college rather than home. This can probably be explained by the fact that many of our learners are parents and were home schooling at the same time as studying, maybe with inadequate equipment.

The second interesting thing to note is that learners identify the fact that they can review the online lesson. Lessons were recorded and the recordings made available to learners, as well as the class materials, so this option was very popular with the learners.

What do you like about learning face to face in class? ما الذي يعجبك في التعلم وجها لوجه في الفصل؟

15 responses



What do you like about learning online?? ما الذي يعجبك في التعلم عبر الإنترنت؟

15 responses



Appendix 13 – Teacher record

This is the form that we used to communicate what we were doing as staff and share ideas.

OTLA Evidence – TERM 1

Date	Class	Activity description	Teacher reflection and Learner response
Week 11	ESOL 6	Adapted Dictoglass activity – completed over one week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stage 1 – Introduce key vocab with meaning. Students listen to Mystery story. Then test spelling - Stage 2 – Read text, Paired recall, Then test - Stage 3 – Read text <u>again</u>. <u>Students</u> write summary from memory with key vocab. Check spellings 	Teacher monitored any improvement in spelling over the week To repeat at intervals to see if there has been progress. Too early to say how effective it is
Week 8	ESOL 6	Mindfulness activities – Listening to sounds and Relaxation through breathing	
Week 10/11	ESOL 2A	Spelling tests-where students prepare by using look, cover, copy memory strategy. In the two tests we have had, students that completed the look, cover, copy sheet, had good results-including 10/10.	It is still early to say the strategy is working for all students, teacher will continue to monitor progress and use of strategy. Learners appear motivated by good spelling test results.
Term 1	ESOL 5	Every Tuesday we begin with a mindfulness activity which aims to settle the learners and help them focus. So <u>far</u> we've tried: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listening for 2 minutes to sounds • breathing and counting our breaths • focus on an object and our senses • spot the difference A few learners mentioned they wanted to incorporate more spelling into lessons, so we have (recently - <u>Weeks</u> 10 and 11) started to try out different spelling strategies. So <u>far</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding a word hidden in a tricky spelling, e.g. lie in believe, then writing 	All the learners have been happy to try out the focus techniques though they responded better to some than others (sounds and breathing worked well). In comments on Schoology, they said that they found it a useful way to get ready for study. They have responded enthusiastically to the spelling techniques, with one learner commenting that it was the first time he had ever got full marks in a spelling test.

Appendix 14 – Entry Level 1 class experience of the project

ESOL 3 are a class working towards Entry Level 1. They are from around the world, with speakers of Arabic, Kurdish, Portuguese, Thai, Vietnamese and Farsi. The majority of learners are female, aged between 25-45.

In term 1, we did face-to-face lessons using a blended learning approach, meaning that the class was split into 2 groups, and each group had a week in college followed by a week of independent study at home. The class meets 3 times a week, from 10-3.

Early on in the year, we introduced breathing exercises to the class. We started each day with a 5-minute breathing exercise. Learners quickly fell into the habit of doing this. Initial embarrassment and reluctance to close their eyes disappeared, and it became a way to come together, relax and prepare for the class to start.

As a class, I asked the learners to decide on an approach they wished to use to help them remember spellings. The majority wanted to try breaking the word into syllables (chunking), so that was the approach we used. I encouraged them to use different approaches at home if they didn't find chunking useful, but that was the method we used in the classroom.

This is how the chunking approach works. A word is divided into syllables and each syllable is learnt with the stressed syllable being identified then the word is re-joined: international – in ter **na** tion al

The class also had weekly spelling tests. They would be given a list of words to learn that were tested the following week. The marks of the weekly spelling test clearly show improvement but marked improvement for the learners who fully embraced the breathing exercises and were using the chunking method.

However, the weekly spelling tests only tested the memory for the short term. The biggest test came in the summative tests at the end of terms 1 and 2, when the learners were given free writing to do as well as gap filling tasks that sought to test the vocabulary in a more realistic way. It was interesting that across the board, the words were used more appropriately and with better spelling at the end of term 1 than term 2. Term 1 was face-to-face teaching, and term 2 was online. Learners struggled with remembering the words they had studied online in a cloze text as well as producing them in free writing. However, when they were asked to select the correct spelling from a variety of options, the majority did better on that task. This might mean that the words were in their working memories but had not yet become internalised ready for use.

The impact of COVID- 19 has been massive this year. It is impossible to say whether the results we got were entirely down to the shift from face-to-face teaching, or whether there was a missing element (the breathing exercises) that meant the learners didn't feel as relaxed and ready to learn when they weren't in college, which then impacted on their ability to remember. However, it is possible that the reason

learners remembered words learnt in term 1 more effectively than those learnt in term 2 was because of the greater emphasis on welfare.

Appendix 15 – Sample spelling lesson

This is a spelling lesson that was delivered online to refresh the learners' memories about using strategies even when we were not meeting face to face. Most learners in this class preferred to use the chunking method and some used it very successfully even through lockdown.

This is a link to the lesson: https://padlet.com/c_collins2/NCDOTLA21



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