

“Teacher No class because there’s no internet in my phone”, said Zahra-The experiences and perceptions of Pre-entry adult ESOL students and teachers at Derby College towards remote teaching, learning and assessment during the Covid-19 lockdown.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant shift in education, moving all teaching, and learning remotely in just days. Existing literature points to an ‘emergency remote teaching’ (Bozkurt and Sharma,2020) or ‘emergency eLearning’. The rapid, unexpected and ‘forced’ transition from face-to-face to remote teaching has entailed several challenges and constraints but also opportunities that need to be examined. (Carmen Carrillo & Maria Assunção Flores ,2020). This small-scale study determines the perceptions and experiences of students as regards to the impact of remote delivery, barriers in accessing and using ICT resources, the support received from teachers in remote delivery along with teachers' opinions on efficacy, student’s engagement and digital pedagogical practices.

In this study, focus group and online questionnaires were conducted with 8 Pre-Entry ESOL teachers,1 manager/teacher,53 pre-Entry ESOL students and 2 Ed- tech leaders at Derby College. Results showed that disadvantaged pre-Entry students were less likely to fully engage in remote learning for several reasons, including digital poverty (broadband access and/or lack of laptops/desktops), home learning environments not being conducive to study and reduced skills in independent learning due to language barriers. However, both teachers and students reported significant improvement in digital pedagogy and digital literacy respectively during the lockdown. Through this research, I hope to present a rich account of barriers and facilitators in Pre-Entry ESOL remote teaching and learning and determine “what works” and what needs to be done to support improvement planning in the future.

Keywords:Covid-19,remote/online,attitude,perception,experience,ESOL,Pre-Entry

Introduction

In a matter of weeks, the coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic has turned homes around the world into classrooms. The shift from face-to-face to remote/online learning has elicited a variety of reactions from various stakeholders. Numerous research studies on ESL /EFL students’ and teacher’s perceptions of online learning have been conducted in the UK. However, most of it involved children or young EFL/ESL students or university level TESOL students. These studies did not examine the perceptions, attitude, or impact of remote delivery on adult ESOL or Pre-Entry ESOL students, majority of whom are asylum seekers and refugees belonging to the poorest third of the country.

Though not always true, remote learning often relies on digital experiences. The transitioning traditional content to online modes of delivery during an emergency such as COVID-19 warranted unique approaches to teaching and learning of ESOL. (Ferri, Grifoni and Guzzo, 2020). In addition, numerous factors might have affected the experiences of ESOL educators and learners—including access to technology and broadband internet, socio-economic status, training, and experience, institutional or state-level mandates, and age/development of learners. Moreover, many students with lower English proficiency may have had difficulty fully understanding what was

happening and may have struggled to communicate their needs or concerns. (Hartshorn, K.J. and McMurry, B.L,2020)

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of Pre-Entry ESOL students and teachers of remote delivery, barriers in accessing and using ICT resources, the support received from teachers in remote delivery along with teachers' opinions on efficacy, student's engagement, pedagogical practices that worked well and what form of remote teaching and learning practices do learners and teachers desire in the adult pre-entry ESOL programme during the covid-19 recovery year.

Literature Review

Pandemic is hard enough. What if you're still trying to learn English.

Learners requiring 'pre-Entry' ESOL may present with a diverse range of needs, including the need for basic literacy, the impact of trauma and wider issues such as isolation, as well as financial, health and family problems. (COSLA, 2017).

Disabilities and/or mental health issues can also present barriers to engaging with ESOL provision (Stevenson, 2017; Maddocks, 2018).

Learner needs are diverse, as 'pre-Entry' and Entry Level 1 ESOL learners range from those who are highly educated and proficient learners tackling a new language, to those who have had little or no experience of schooling and are not literate in their own languages. This contributes to very different patterns in the type and intensity of learning needed for success. The diversity of ESOL learners is also unevenly spread across providers (Stevenson et al, 2017a; AoC, 2013).

More than half of my pupils sought refuge in the UK after fleeing countries where they feared for their lives. Many of them are worried and nervous because of the damage caused by war and atrocities in their home countries. They are lonely and alone, and many of them have no established support network of friends or family here or anywhere else. This isolation has been exacerbated by the coronavirus outbreak as they have limited spaces to turn for help. In addition, noncitizen immigrants remain disproportionately uninsured and have a harder time accessing medical treatment if they contract the virus (Chishti & Bolter, 2020). Certainly, COVID-19 has amplified the impact language barriers have for immigrants and their families' access to food, work, health services, and information to keep them healthy and safe. The pandemic has reminded us that the topic of visibility is, in many cases, a matter of life and death. (Penton Herrera, 2020)

Migrants in the UK are more likely to have precarious work, jobs like cleaning and in catering and retail where they cannot work from home and less likely to have savings to fall back on. They may face barriers to accessing benefits or have no recourse to public funds. It will also be more difficult for migrants with low levels of English to follow UK advice and information. (Anon, 2020)

(Mellar, H. and Kambouri, M. (2005) explained that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant shift in education, moving all teaching remotely in just days. This shift caused many teachers to face challenges in preparing and delivering quality content

remotely during this pandemic. As teachers shifted their content delivery, they also shifted their pedagogical practices to support remote learning. Teachers had to consider several aspects during this shift: the need for the platform, features of the platform that fit the need, assessment, responsive learning and application and the customization of the learning management system.

The benefit of technology for language teaching and learning has been highlighted in many studies; its role is not only to engage learners in the learning process, but also to promote learners' motivation and learner-centred instruction (Chapelle, 2005). Perceived benefits included flexibility for the teacher and differentiation, availability of rich resources and a way to support learners when in-person instruction is not possible.

Qualitative findings challenges included learner's lack of proper Internet connection and ICT. Technological challenges are primarily related to a lack of Internet connectivity and electronic devices. This problem may increase inequalities through uneven access to the technology needed by students and teachers. Indeed, not all learners have access to the necessary technologies to take advantage of online education such as a fast Internet connection and a powerful computer. (Ferri, Grifoni and Guzzo, 2020)

(Dashtestani, 2014) says that another significant barrier to implementing online instruction is that instructors should develop and prepare appropriate materials for online instruction while this issue places a considerable demand on instructors (Reeves and Brown 2002) providing timely and effective feedback to students would create concerns for teachers in online instruction (Taylor 2003). Moreover, delays in providing feedback and responding to students' questions would cause misunderstanding and frustration. The final restriction of online instruction is lack of interaction and communication in online courses and failure to meet realistic needs of students (Carnevale 2004; Hampel and Hauck 2004).

(Painter, A. & Bamfield, L.(2015) argues that if the benefits of new technology are to be distributed more widely, we must act smartly through the public sector centrally and locally, communities, and the commercial world. The goal should be an inclusive social mobility where all can pursue and accomplish their personal and creative goals. It is conceivable that new technologies could both stimulate greater supply of, and demand for, creativity – and help to develop the creative capacities that allow people to generate ideas that are new and valuable.

If economic, educational and class privilege and disadvantage perpetuate across generations whilst people – those who are disadvantaged – are held back occupationally across the life cycle, we must question very seriously whether we are really a society that has the Power to Create. Greater mobility is not enough alone. Inclusive social mobility means that the individual (in a community context) has constant access to the social, educational, and economic resources that enable them to pursue their creative potential.

Fragmented learning settings, from school and beyond, to online learning communities and workplaces, could be brought together in a way that better meets the frustrated ambitions of many.

Research methodology

For this study, I will be using a variety of methods to gather my findings, I will use a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. The research design will be experimental in nature and the research participants include adult ESOL students, ESOL teachers, ESOL curriculum manager and EdTech Leader. Samples are drawn from 90 pre-Entry ESOL students and 9 pre-Entry ESOL teachers using purposive sampling technique. Triangulation will be achieved by collecting data from students, teachers, managers, and college's EdTech team.

I will gather the thoughts and perceptions of the students via a paper based and online questionnaire on Survey Planet. The survey questions will be formulated in a way that they're comprehensible for Pre-Entry ESOL students. I will ask the students questions regarding their remote teaching experience during the first Covid-19 lockdown to find out:

- The ICT resource/resources students use for remote learning during the lockdown.
- The quality of their internet connection at home.
- The remote learning platform that they prefer the most
- The amount of support that they are getting from their teachers/college
- The kind of remote teaching/learning that they recommend for the foreseeable future

I will also try to gauge the experiences and perceptions of Pre-Entry ESOL Teachers and Ed tech leaders through an online questionnaire on Survey Planet to find out:

- the methods that worked best in engaging learners during the first covid-19 lockdown
- the methods used for providing feedback to the learners.
- the barriers faced by teachers in assessing learners during the lockdown
- the methods that can be adopted to overcome the barriers in future

I will also hold interviews with the students and teachers involved in the research, to see how their answers to the above questions have changed.

Finally, I will be using the qualitative data of the students' and teacher's result to find out about their perception of remote learning during the initial lockdown. To reduce the chance of bias or error the data will be coupled and assessed alongside a wide variety of literature.

Site	Participants	Research method used
Online	1 manager	Online and paper based Questionnaire survey Observation
Learner's home	8 tutors 53 learners 2 Ed tech Leaders	One to one interview: 1 x Manager 7 x Tutors 18 x learners

What I plan to do /Intervention

During the national lockdown, national evidence emerged that disadvantaged students were less likely to engage in remote learning for several reasons, including digital poverty (broadband access and/or lack of device), home learning environments not being conducive to study, motivation/reduced skills in independent learning for low-level students and language barriers. The impact on progress for disadvantaged students has been significant. This is true of the pre- Entry and Entry level ESOL provision at Derby College which mostly comprises of refugees and asylum seekers.

Teachers of pre-Entry ESOL Learners at Derby College could avail themselves of limited remote teaching resources as opposed to the vast array of synchronous and asynchronous tools available to other teachers and students. This is either due to learner's low ICT/digital or literacy skills or learner's unavailability of proper ICT equipment and resources at home like laptops /smartphone or good internet connection etc which presented unique challenges during the lockdown.

Through this research I'd like to find out the experiences and perceptions of low level ESOL learners and their teachers at Derby College towards remote teaching and learning during the first Covid-19 in March 2020. I also want to find out the barriers and facilitators of remote teaching, learning and assessment process of the pre -Entry adult ESOL learners at Derby College in Derby.

The research will be carried out over a period of 5 months. I will initially be giving each student and teacher that is taking part in the research, a questionnaire to complete to give me a sense of the starting point of each individual student and the groups.

Once I have examined the answers given in the questionnaire, I will then begin to observe and analyse the effects of remote teaching and learning on students. This continued analysis will take place in the form of ongoing interviews with the students and teachers and through evaluating my own experience as a pre-Entry ESOL teacher. From this research, I am expecting that students and teachers will be more resistant to the changes brought about by remote teaching and learning due to the lockdown.

Ethical statement: Throughout my research I would ensure that everyone who is involved in the research will be specifically told what research is taking place and

why it is being done. The research will look at the perceptions of Pre-entry adult ESOL students, teachers, and other stakeholders at Derby College towards remote teaching, learning and assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each person concerned will be told why their involvement is important and what would happen to the data. The survey questions have been carefully worded in English to facilitate better understanding among all involved.

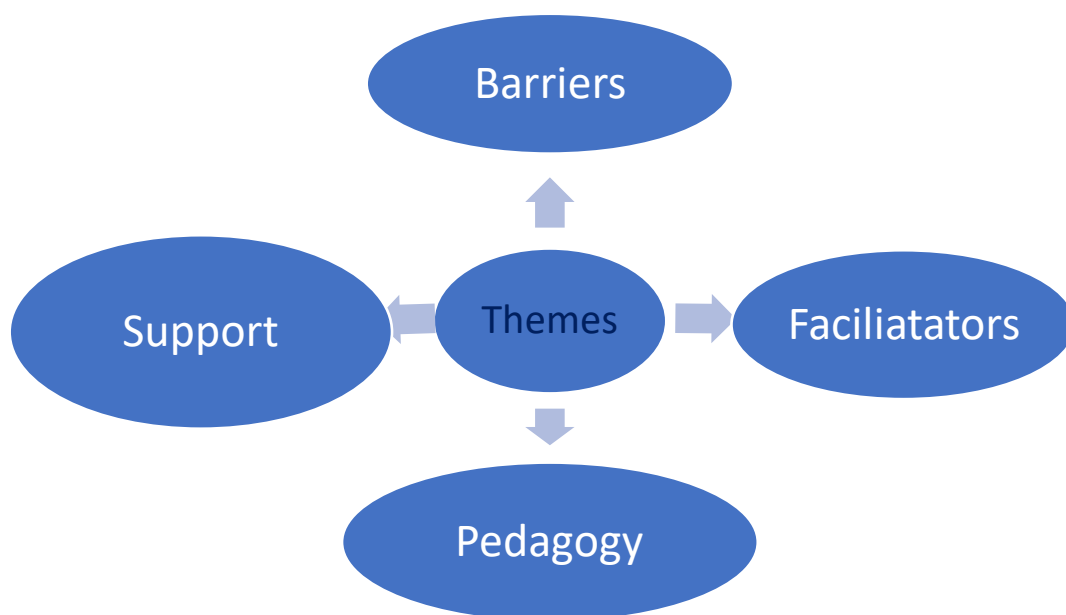
Both teachers and students involved in the research will be asked to give a consent that their work and any quotations or interviews can be used in the study. Participants will be opened to tell their views in confidence but refuse to allow to use their data or not have their information used in the research at any point.

I will avoid using deceptive practices like plagiarism and letting participants repeat the survey or manipulate the data. I will ensure that there will be no harm arising to anyone that takes part in the research process. Any data taken and all analysis conducted will be maintained in a manner that complies with the BERA 2018 guidelines. I will disseminate the results of research-to-research participants and other interested groups in the form of power-point presentation while protecting the rights, dignity, safety and privacy of research subjects.

I would ensure that I complete my study with fairness, dignity and faith, in addition to ensuring that I follow the BERA guidelines.

Data and its analysis

After the questionnaire was completed by the participants, the **four major themes** that were identified from the data analysis and triangulation of information are shown in the figure below:



Barriers

One of the key themes identified throughout the comment are the 'barriers' that students and teachers experienced in remote teaching and learning during the first COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. This could be further divided into four sub-themes:

- a) barriers due to learner's lack of ICT resources
- b) barriers due to learner's lack of ICT Skills
- c) barrier due to lack of transparency in learner's work
- d) barriers in creating digital resources

Almost every respondent was prepared to acknowledge that majority of pre-Entry ESOL students don't have access to proper ICT resources or the skills necessary to make use of these technologies. One respondent suggested "*The biggest barrier is that most of my students do not have laptops/computers or access to internet. They rely on homework packs sending by post.*" Another respondent said, "*learners are not accessing classes because of resource and domestic reasons, poor connection and technology at either end making it hard to always effectively assess....*".

Ed tech leaders believed that "*barriers faced by the pre-Entry ESOL learners to maximise the use of EDTECH tools was "due to their reduced/restricted communication and the IT equipment that many learners didn't have access to."*

Lack of transparency in learner's work and time spent in creating digital resources have also been identified as barriers to remote teaching and learning:

"It takes time to create a kahoot that will challenge and capture enough progress."

"Transparency in student's work, some of the learner's low level of engagement and learner's inability to send completed work for marking."

"Sent out paper packs, but unsure of achievement for those students who didn't respond. Also, for those who did, how much was done by them and how much was done by their children!"

Facilitators:

What worked well or the facilitators in remote teaching and learning during the lockdown is another major theme which is also quite useful for contingency planning during the Covid -19 recovery year.

Teachers felt that tasks that didn't require any technology like sending homework packs to student's home worked best in engaging learners during the lockdown followed by skype phone calls and sending links to live worksheets/ kahoot quizzes. Majority of student respondents also found homework packs most engaging followed by links to YouTube videos. One student respondent said, "***I recommend teacher for more paper homework and YouTube videos***"

Pedagogy:

It almost goes without saying that for effective remote teaching and learning experience, the digital pedagogy needs to be of a standard to effectively support this and this has also been identified as one of the major themes in the survey comments.

One respondent said, *“I have been assessing my learners through marking home packs, writing tasks, grammar worksheets etc and giving my students feedback”*.

“Talking to them on different topics on the phone, asking questions e.g., about their daily routines during lock down etc. -quizzes -listening tasks/videos+answering questions.”

Another respondent said, *“I use mixture of different methods, depending on the resources the students use: - Kahoot is the most popular now. I usually create my own kahoot and send the link to students via WhatsApp or text message.”*

Support:

Support in the form of college supporting teachers to develop their digital pedagogy during the lockdown and the support students are receiving from their teachers also arose as a major theme in the data analysis. Majority of the students were satisfied with the way their teachers supported them during the lockdown ***“I would like to thank my teacher for helping us”***. Another respondent said, ***“Finally I said Thank you Teacher for your support”***.

Most of the teacher respondent agreed that they would benefit from more ***“Specific, extensive and quality training and support from College.”***

Nothing because my teacher is so great and I thank her

Finally I said Thank you Teacher for everything.

Thank teacher.

Don't chage him

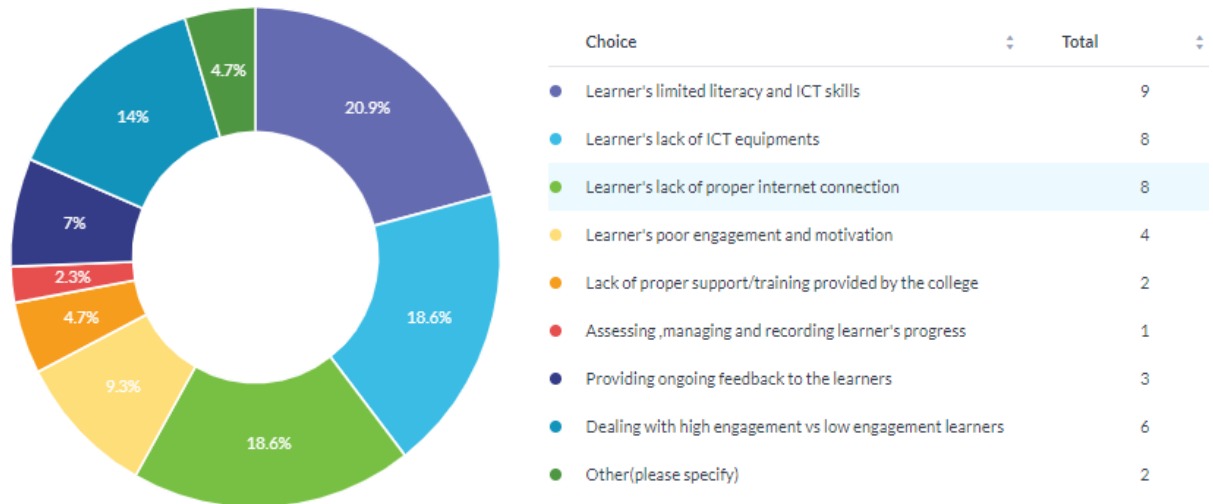
Thanks

Key findings

Teacher's survey

- 71 % of the **main barriers** teachers experienced during lockdown was due to their students' limited literacy and ICT skills, lack of proper ICT resources and disparities in the remote engagement level of the students

Q1 Which of the following barriers did you face in remote teaching adult ESOL learners with basic literacy skills?
Multiple Choice



- Teachers felt that the following methods worked best in engaging learners during covid-19 lockdown:

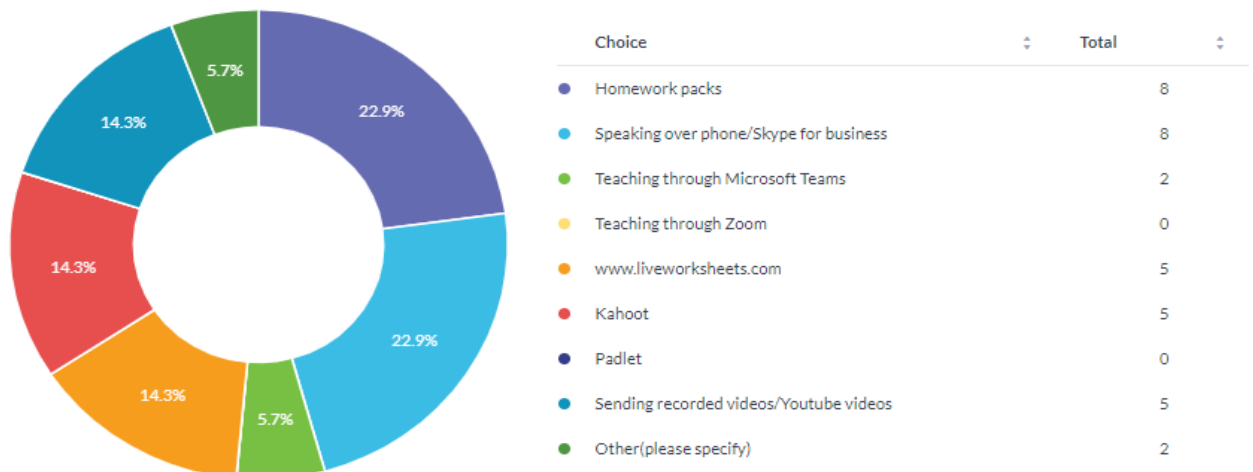
Homework packs (hard copies) (22.9%)

Phone/Skype calls (22.9%)

www.liveworksheets.com (14.3%)

Kahoot (14.3%)

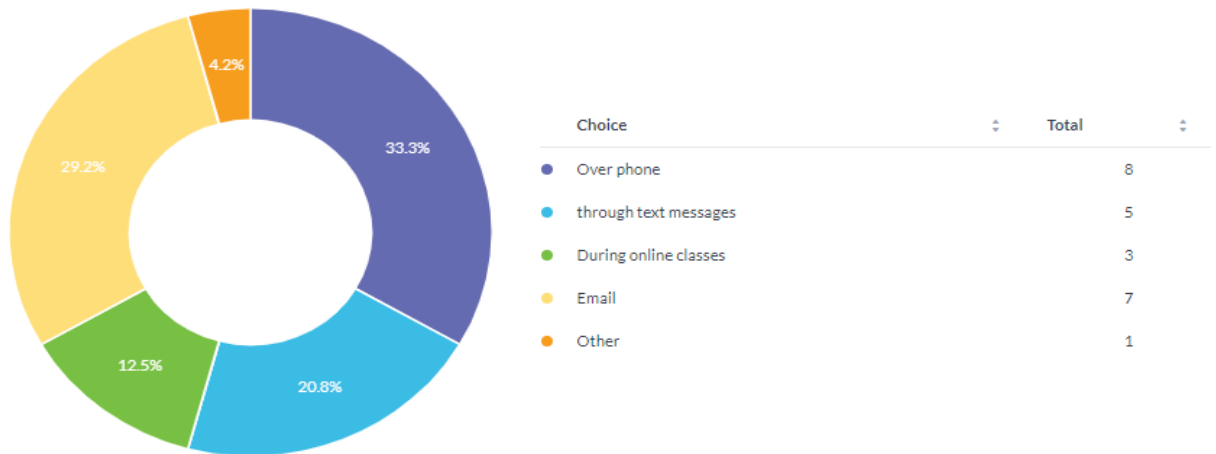
Q2 Which of the following remote teaching methods worked well in engaging learners with basic literacy skills?
Multiple Choice



- Teachers used diverse methods to provide **feedback**, depending on students' resources and capabilities.

The most successful were **Phone calls, text messages and emails**. Other methods included: liveworksheets.com, Face to face via Teams, marking homework packs.

Q3 How did you provide ongoing feedback to your learners with basic literacy skills?
Multiple Choice

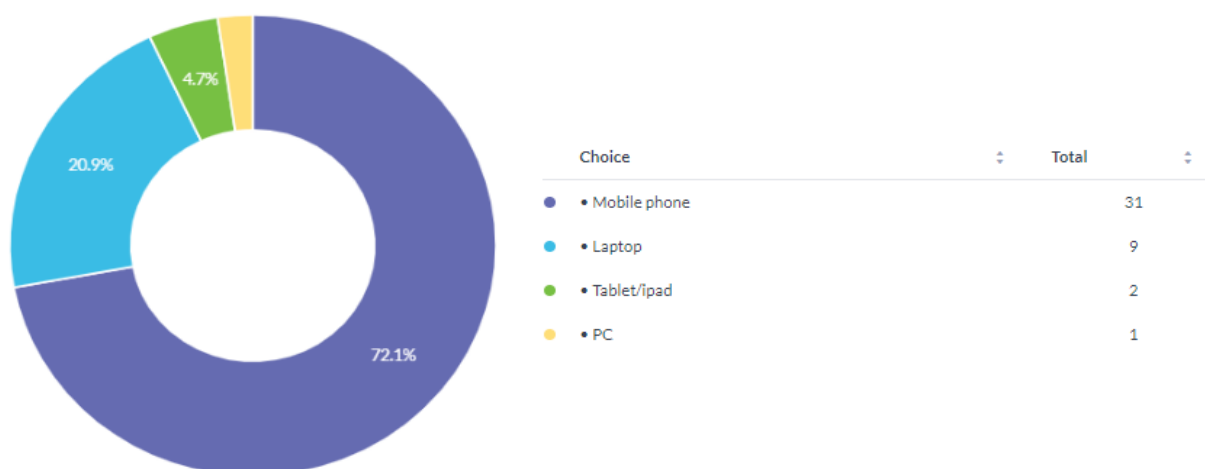


Student's Survey:

Students' ICT resources:

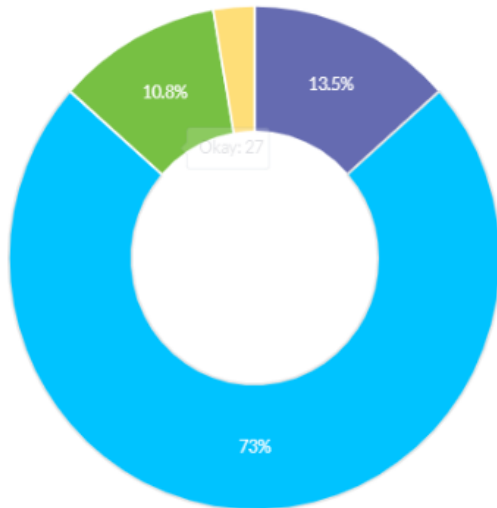
72.1% of students use a mobile phone, which limits the resources available due to small screens and only 20.9% use a laptop for online learning.

Q3 What do you use for learning online at home?
Multiple Choice



Majority of the students have rated their internet connection 'okay' and not 'very good'.

Q4 How is the internet connection at your home?
Multiple Choice



Choice	Total
Very good :)	5
Okay	27
Bad :(4
No internet :(1

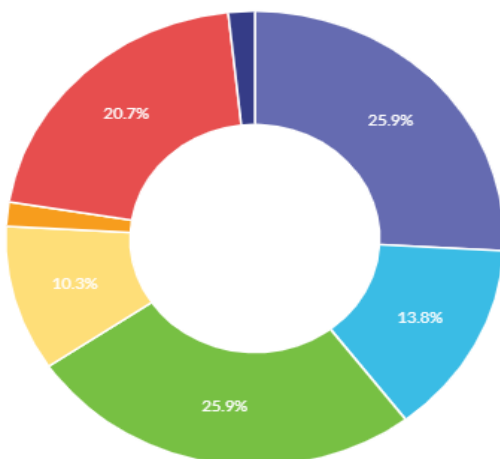
Students' most preferred remote learning methods are:

25.9% Homework packs (hard copies)

25.9% www.liveworksheets.com

20.7% YouTube videos

Q5 Which one of these do you like the most?
Multiple Choice

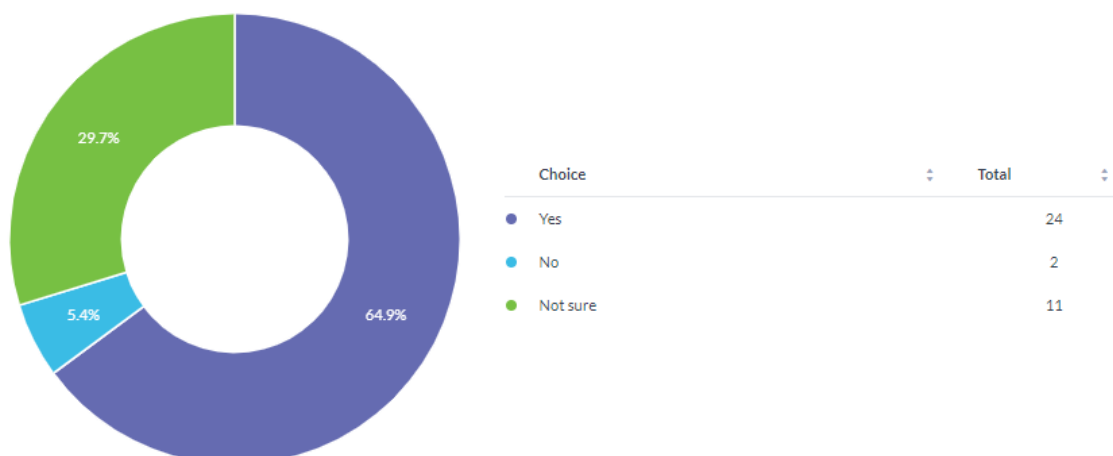


Choice	Total
Homework books	15
Speaking to your teacher over phone	8
worksheets on www.liveworksheets.com	15
Kahoot Quizzes	6
Microsoft Teams Classes	1
Youtube videos	12
Other	1

Student's progress:

64.9.7% of students think they have made some progress in their learning during the lockdown while 29.7% aren't sure whether they have made any improvement.

Q6 Do you think your English has improved?
Multiple Choice



Recommendations:

Teachers and Ed tech leaders recommend providing students with digital skills training (face to face) and ICT resources (to those who don't have them). Teachers and Ed Tech leaders recommended the following:

"In my case, most of them would benefit from having a tablet or a laptop. Teaching them to use them plus then go onto Teams/Zoom or similar would definitely require face to face ICT lessons."

"MS Teams, Padlet and many other options including the embedding/linking of Moodle as a VLE and direct links to websites should be promoted."

Liaising with community partners who work closely with these student populations and their communities could also help in supporting learners during the lockdown. *"a campaign to explain to learners the reasons for and the benefits of a blended approach in the current circumstances. Translanguaging praxis and involving community leaders in embedding learning programmes at home and in the community."*

Students recommend video call lessons for learning, provision of picture-based dictionaries and better communication from their teachers.

"Video call lesson, it will be better".

"Please provide vocabulary books containing English words and pictures and their meaning in the book "

"I think my teacher needs to communicate with me more often."

Wider research suggests:

- Comprehensive set of policy and institutional interventions should be designed to maximise the beneficial economic and social impact of new technology.
- Lessening the technology gap has been one of the biggest considerations for teaching ESOL students in a remote setting as digital divide is a huge issue for pre-Entry adult ESOL learners.
- Organizations should develop content in as many formats as possible, recognizing that pictorial, audio, and video content is easier to access and absorb for many people.
- It is critical to develop teachers' skills. A high-quality remote learning experience for all students is predicated on an education system's ability to provide teachers with technological and pedagogical support to cope in the short term and remain resilient.
- Incorporating translanguaging strategies in providing digital training and covid-safe practices. (Covid-safe practices and digital skills training handout can be made available in learner's native language)
- Several tasks that require little or no access to technology are still needed in order to cater for everyone. Consider a hybrid model for at-home learning to ensure equity of access.
- The economic impacts of Covid-19 are causing great distress to many of our families, making it more important than ever to have social-emotional learning spaces, personal connection, opportunities to ask questions about what is happening, and a semblance of continuity and community. Social-emotional support could be woven into academic learning.

Limitations of research:

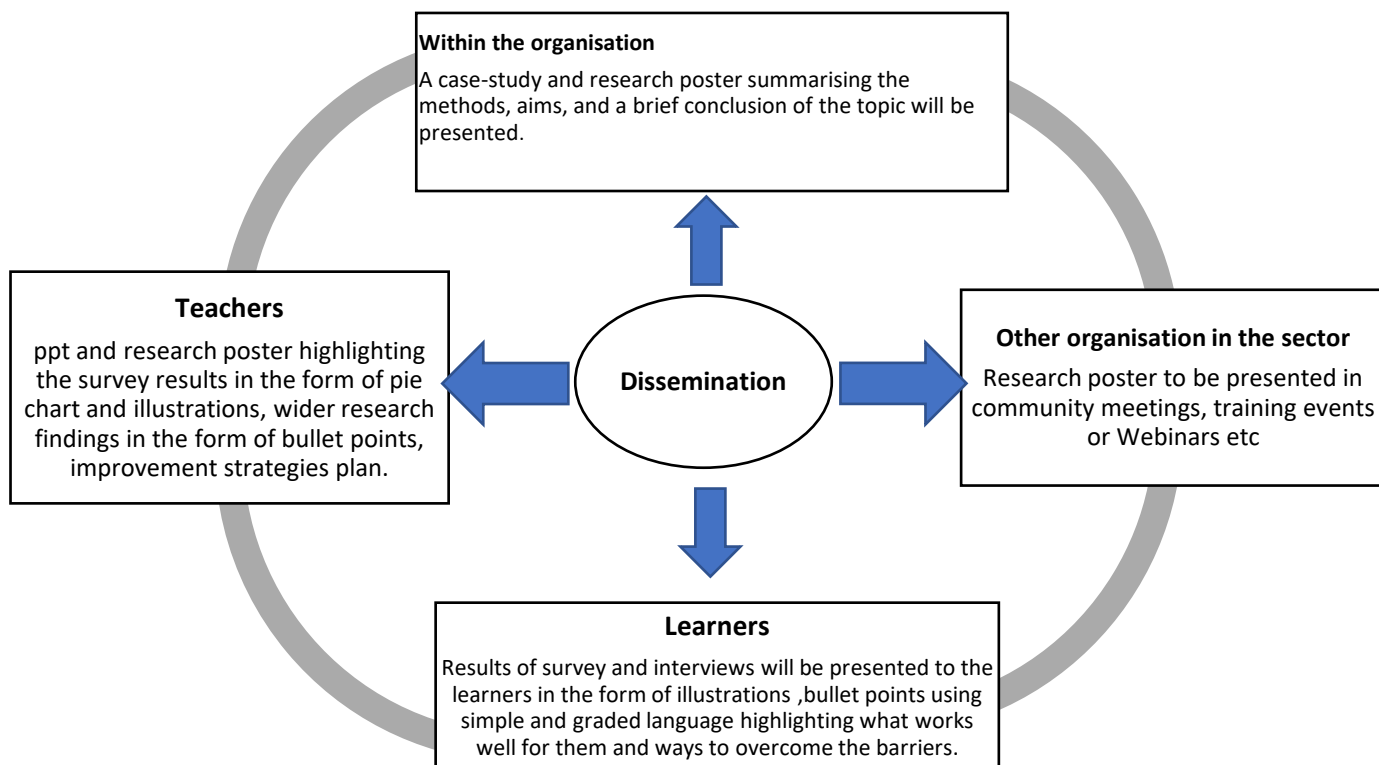
Research is contextualised and local in character.

Difference in the level of students within the basic literacy group who were part of the experimental group.

Respondents may have varying capacities for being able to complete written surveys or questionnaires.

Questionnaires does not allow respondents the opportunity to fully express themselves. Some are usually restricted to some predefined options because of respondents' low literacy skills.

Dissemination strategy:



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