

Action Research

Question

The development of innovative resources and activities, using a wide range of technology, to improve learners' knowledge and understanding in Functional Skills English, focusing on the delivery of Punctuation at Level 1 and Level 2.

Reasoning

I have recently taken over the delivery of the Functional Skills English qualification at In Touch Care and, although, the programme had already been developed I found the resources to be too reliant on paper and not very engaging for the learner. The aim of the project is to determine if the lessons can be made more engaging while maintaining their relevance. I will focus on the Punctuation lesson during the research to determine if the model can be used for all the lessons.

Supportive Evidence

- By 2015 95% of jobs will require E-skills (AELP Webinar 2014)
- In the 21st century, an ability to work with information and communication technologies is becoming as essential to education, life and workplace success as "reading, writing and arithmetic." ICT Digital Literacy should be considered a basic skill by educational systems, something taught to and assessed for all students.
- It has been shown that the use of ICT in education can help improve memory retention, increase motivation and generally deepen understanding (Dede 1998)

What I did

I decided to look at the distance travelled, in terms of learning, of two different groups of learners. Group 1 would be taught using the original Punctuation lesson plan and Group 2 would be taught using a new punctuation lesson plan that would involve the use of technology.

I used a series of questions before the lesson to test their understanding of Full Stops, Commas, Apostrophes, Exclamation Marks and Colons and then gave them the same questions again at the end to determine the improvements that the group had made.

The reason I looked at distance travelled rather than just comparing the results was because the learners were initially assessed at very different levels, so comparing them would not produce accurate results.

Another concern that we had about our programmes was the retention rate of our learners. There seemed to be a consistent drop off rate of the learners on our study programmes. I decided to also look at whether or the not the learners actually enjoyed the new lesson more.

Although I could not test the drop of rates in the time allowed I thought it would be beneficial to our organisation to improve the enjoyment and engagement in the lessons to, hopefully, lead to an improvement in retention. To test this I carried out evaluations and discussions at the end of the lesson to gather the learners opinions.

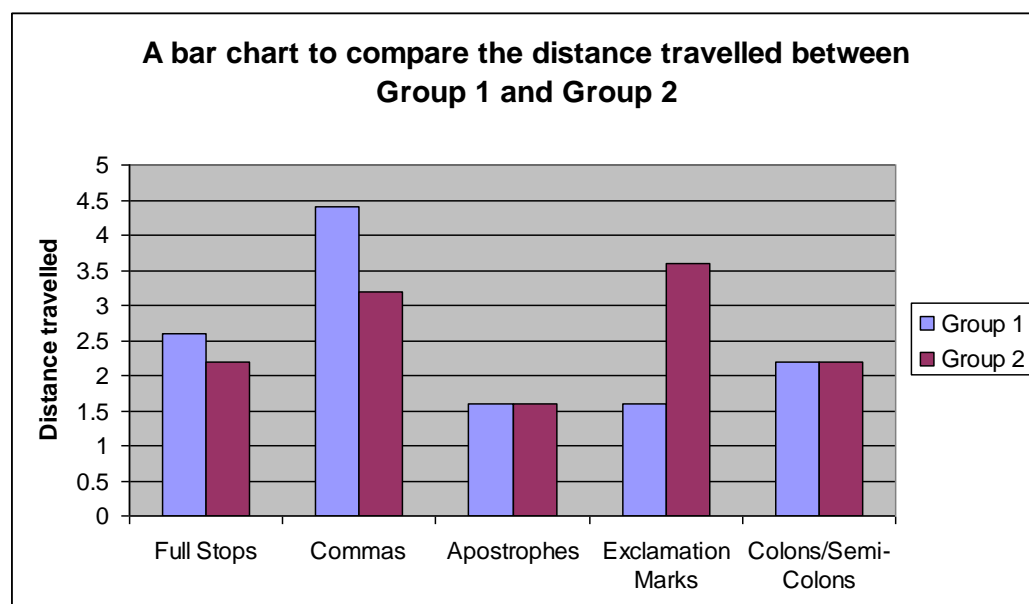
Findings

I found that there was very little difference in the distance travelled between the two groups of learners. Group 1 improved further on Full Stops and Commas, while Group 2 travelled further on Exclamation Marks and Colons.

Overall, out of 50 questions asked on the five topic areas Group 1 made an average improvement of 12.2 marks and group 2 made an average improvement of 12.8. This suggests that the new lesson made more of an impact on learning but it is not a significant difference.

On completion of the questionnaires by both groups, I found that Group 2 scored better. Questions asked included the effectiveness of the teaching, the effectiveness of the activities, how enjoyable the activities were and the effectiveness of the lesson overall. I used the Ofsted scoring system and found that Group One scored 2's and 3's and Group Two scored 1's and 2's. This means that the learners found the second lesson to be more effective.

During the group discussions I found both to be positive in terms of what they learnt but Group 2 had more emphasis on enjoyment and engagement as well.



Wordle



Conclusion

The action research project I carried out gave me several sets of results. After looking at the distance travelled by the learners I cannot see any significant differences between the two groups. These findings suggest that the improved lesson, using a range of technology, had no real impact on learning.

The biggest impact of the new lesson was on enjoyment and engagement with the learners scoring the overall effectiveness of the lesson, on average, as outstanding (Ofsted grade 1) and the enjoyment of the lesson at 1. This shows an improvement on the previous scores of 2 and 3 respectively.

The discussion was also an interesting tool, which allowed the learners to speak openly about the lesson and I just took down key words that were mentioned several times. This showed a movement from terms such as **understood** and **good** to **enjoyed** and **interesting**. Although these are all positive terms I got the feeling that Group 2 were far more engaged in the lesson and enjoyed the activities and using technology.

Overall I feel that the new lesson has not made a significant impact on learning but it has made a difference towards enjoyment and engagement. The success rate of learners taking tests at ITC is 89%, so an improvement in learning was not vital because they are already above the national average. It would be more beneficial if the lessons had an impact on retention.

If I had more time I would adapt all the lessons using the same model and then look at engagement, enjoyment and retention over a longer period of time. This is what I hope to do once I return to my role.

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