

inTUIITION ENGLISH



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An inTuition supplement exploring developments in English education and training

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Learning to fall in love with English

How teachers can open
students' eyes to its
awesome agility p3



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INSIDE BACK COVER

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of unforgettable
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DOING OUR BEST FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

Helping students succeed in English is no easy task, and the thought-provoking articles in this supplement aim to give you extra inspiration. By **David Russell**

The challenge of helping learners with their English skills is not new. Whatever an individual's circumstances or aspirations, the need to develop literacy and written communication is a core part of their life in our society.

The rights and wrongs of curriculum in schools, exam design, teaching approaches and so many other factors have been much debated in recent years, and there is a growing alarm that our young people are lagging a long way behind those in other developed education systems around the world.

Whatever the reason, education professionals in our sector are charged with supporting students to succeed, whether in basic skills for adults, functional skills or GCSE resits. We need to understand how best to help them, whether by overcoming previous misconceptions, boosting their confidence or by wholesale 're-teaching'. It's no small task, and while GCSE resit exam results aren't where any of us might like, teachers are engaged in a professional and pedagogic drive to help their students succeed.

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) has, since its inception, worked to help support the workforce in this challenge. We have delivered over 3,500 English training courses across the country with a range of expert organisations. Our online support modules in maths and English have been accessed over 75,000 times.

The Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers, on which the work of the ETF and the Society for Education and Training (SET) are built, make specific reference to supporting learners with their maths and English needs. We do a great deal to support our profession in meeting this long-standing challenge, but there is always more to be done. While I would recommend you take the time to look at the range of continuing professional development (CPD) and support we have to offer you, teachers are busy people, and sometimes it takes a spark to get things going.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this supplement to *inTuition*. It's a first for the ETF and SET, bringing together ideas and thoughts from our work across the sector that we hope will be interesting, informative, challenging and, above all, thought-provoking. We could never hope to fully address a complex and multi-layered challenge such as this in a short publication, but I hope we can spark debate, inspire further reading and research and, at the very least, erect a few signposts about what other professionals are doing that might support our learners on this complex and often challenging part of their educational journey.

David Russell is chief executive of the Education and Training Foundation

inTUIITION

EDITORIAL

membership.communications@etfoundation.co.uk
The Society for Education and Training,
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SP.

Editor: Alan Thomson alan@createpublishing.uk.com

Editorial readers: Tara Furlong, Sue Southwood, Maggie Gregson.

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CLIMBING THE LANGUAGE MOUNTAIN IS SO EXCITING

Language is our most complex behaviour and its infinite variety and richness are breathtaking. But it's like Everest, and teachers need to equip students well to scale the heights, says **Professor David Crystal**

Why do I enjoy studying language so much? First, because it's always changing. Whatever English was like yesterday, it's different today, and will be different tomorrow. And so unpredictably. Who would ever have predicted Trumpian oratory?

Second, because it changes in different ways in different places. Accents, dialects, varieties, styles... the whole of human identity expressed in an infinite number of ways, from the most everyday of exchanges to the elaborate richness of novels, poems, and plays. It takes your breath away. It is without doubt the most complex behaviour we ever acquire. And it is calling out to all: "Study me!"

Language professionals, like teachers, have the most difficult of jobs, because of this complexity. Every language is an Everest, and teachers have the task of teaching students how to climb. As we all know, even getting students to base camp can be a challenge. But with the right equipment and enthusiastic team leaders, the climb can be made eminently enjoyable, exciting, and worthwhile for all who undertake it.

So what is the most important piece of equipment that a language learner needs in order to scale the linguistic heights? In a word: grammar. Excitement and grammar? The words aren't usually linked. And if you think of grammar as just a matter of drawing circles around nouns and prepositions, and analysing sentences into subjects and predicates, it probably won't excite you very much. But there's far more to grammar than that.

If you're going to communicate anything at all, you need to choose some words, and you have to put those words

into sentences for them to make sense. That is the crucial insight. Words by themselves don't make sense.

A word like 'charge', seen on its own, could mean all sorts of things. Something to do with money? Or electricity? Or cavalry? You have to put it into a sentence to find the meaning. "I need to charge my phone." Ah, electricity.

That's why sentences exist. Sentences make sense of words. And grammar is the study of how they do this. So if we want to convey the excitement of grammar to students, we have to focus on the meanings that the sentences express, and the effects that they convey.

It's an obvious question, but WHY would anyone want to study English language – assuming the answer isn't just "because I have to"? Is it to write like a favourite author? Create lyrics for a pop group? Understand instructions about fixing motorbikes? Learn to rap? Write a good job application? Answering that question is the first task, at the very bottom of the mountain.

Then, once we've elicited an answer, we need to explore how successful writers, lyricists, rappers, and the like, do it. What are the paths up the mountain? It all comes down to the way they choose words and put them in sentences in the most effective places.

So, student, you want to write creepy sentences like Terry Pratchett? Check out your favourite story. Here's one, from *The Carpet People*. "He saw the gleam of 10,000 eyes, green, red, and white". Terry could have written: "He saw the gleam of 10,000 green, red, and white eyes". But he didn't. Why not? Put the two sentences side by side and ask yourself: which is the creepier? Ask your students



For more on the approach below, see David's book, *Making Sense: The Glamorous Story of English Grammar* (Profile Books, 2017).

to put some adjectives before a noun, then after it, and see what happens.

Note that I've mentioned noun and adjective, but casually – certainly not beginning with abstract definitions. Students can work out what adjectives are for themselves, if they're given a set of examples and allowed to play with them.

I've seen some fine games of adjective tennis in class, where students have to choose appropriate adjectives to go with the noun the teacher drops into the court. Or finding a good noun to go with some adjectives. "The ugly, smelly, ferocious NOUN came into the room."

Grammar IS fun, with the right approach. Old grammar books would tell you: "In English, adjectives go before the noun, and that's all you need to know". No. That's only a tiny part of the story. What can be done with adjectives can be done with every part of speech and every piece of sentence construction.

There's no single route through grammar, any more than there's a single path up a mountain. But you only have to go part of the way up to get a great view. And the sense of achievement when you get to the top is wonderful.



Professor David Crystal is a renowned linguist, writer, editor, lecturer, and broadcaster. He has published more than 100 books on the English language and is currently patron of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL), and the Association for Language Learning (ALL). He received an OBE in 1995 for his services to the English language.

www.davidcrystal.com

ENGAGING WITH RESEARCH CAN BE VITAL IN IMPROVING YOUR ENGLISH TEACHING

Teachers can get new ideas, materials and feedback, by getting involved in research. Some may fear the extra time involved, but help is at hand to focus on what you need most. **By Tara Furlong**

So, teaching and learning English – but what kind of English?

Well, English is English. English in the arts and Shakespeare is the same as English in sales, plumbing and business administration; in homes or the community.

Our literacy practices (i.e. what we're habitually doing with reading, writing, speaking and listening, cf. Brice Heath, 1983) use more or less the same sounds, words and grammatical constructs applied in different contexts for different purposes. They interact with other knowledge, including how to work in local hegemonies (Street, 1984; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič, 2000).

Milestone and entry-level English is the same as applied vocational or professional English as we move in to higher education. There is a lot of English. The diversity within teaching English can be overwhelming. And we haven't met our learners or learning environment yet. We do, however, have hard-worked curricula and even harder working teachers.

Research-informed practice

Teachers and learners can be remarkably resourceful. They work out most things themselves. Matching curricula and andragogy/pedagogy to learners in learning environments stretches the best of us and our institutions. Literacies extend from English into numeracy and digital practices. How do we do it?

A significant area of focus in recent years has emphasised educators engaging with research (BERA RSA, 2014). A recent study of experienced

English literacies educators from across the adult learning sector (Furlong, 2017) found that they continuously engaged in their own literacies practices as part of research-informed and research-engaged teaching and learning.

What does this mean and how does it help? To put it simply, they access reading matter regularly to find new ideas and materials, as well as feedback. They discuss their work and present on things they have been working on. They write. They record and process their thoughts. A common characteristic was the focus on their learners, whether their profiles and contexts or materials, andragogy or curricula. Dialogic processes were central.

The adult literacies educators surveyed concluded that their own research-engaged literacies practices contribute both to improving learning outcomes and to their own professional wellbeing. They find teaching and learning more rewarding, it increases their confidence and they become more involved in developing and supporting their peers.

Not research-engaged

We're overwhelmed. We're busy. At some point, we'd like some home time ourselves. Research involves 'data'. Data demands contribute significantly to workload and stress (DfE, 2017). It's involved in performance management, in assessment for learning. How do you track all the data? What frameworks do you use to make sense of it?

There is a lot of research out there. Much of it isn't currently easily digestible

to the average educator (cf. Cordingley, 2008). We may perceive that much of it has little to do with our learners or learning context. We may not be able to find the answers we're looking for, or may hope to have found them but struggle to apply them.

Organisations such as the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), whose work primarily draws on compulsory school-age education and not adult education, help by giving indicative effect sizes for different interventions. On average, any intervention has a positive effect. This area of professional practice alone spurs major debates about what is meaningful and what is manageable (cf. McAleavy, 2016).

In adult education, embedded, integrated and contextualised English approaches are found to be most successful. This is where "vocational and LLN (language, literacy and numeracy) specialists, working together in teams, are likely to be more effective in most contexts" (NRDC, 2006: 22).

English language and literacies specialists work with subject tutors and other professionals to cumulatively



Tara Furlong is a specialist in English language, literacies and digital learning. Tara is the chair of RaPAL (Research and Practice in Adult Literacies). tara.furlong@designingfutures.uk

develop curricula and andragogy tailored to learners and the learning environment.

They may be research-informed or they may be engaging in their own forms of research to make sense of their practice in their local contexts as they are going along. Some of these findings scale up to being useful across the sector, but much is just about us managing to teach in our environments.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

- The RaPAL (Research and Practice in Adult Literacies) journals back catalogue is available at goo.gl/hRBQsy
- The NRDC (National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy) publications catalogue is available at goo.gl/Cx7BSJ
- To access the Excellence Gateway's English Exhibition site visit goo.gl/BLrmeU
- Find Skills Workshop shared andragogy materials at goo.gl/iWiifA
- Visit the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre goo.gl/AQxsJG

ENGLISH JARGON-BUSTER

Teaching, like all professions, is full of jargon, especially in relation to pedagogy and subject-specific pedagogy.

We've compiled a short glossary of a few of the terms you may come across generally in teaching, and specifically in English.

GENERAL PRACTICE TERMS

- **Action research** = a form of continuing professional development (CPD) based around enquiry questions which, when answered, benefit the performance of the practitioner.
- **Andragogy** = the practice of teaching adult learners. Pedagogy traditionally relates to the teaching of young people. Pedagogy is now widely used for both.
- **Community of learning** = a group of practitioners with shared learning aims who support each others' learning goals.
- **EAL** = English as an Additional Language (formerly ESL)
- **ESL** = English as a Second Language
- **Guided reading** = bridges the gap between shared and independent reading. The teacher leads the session, reinforcing reading strategies and focusing on individuals as they read.
- **Integrated, embedded and contextualised learning** = different forms of English taught through the medium of another subject.
- **Mentoring** = a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced mentor and a less experienced mentee.

ENGLISH SPECIFIC TERMS

- **Agreement** = subject or object, and verb or tense match.
- **Antimetabole** = the repetition of words in reverse order for emphasis.
- **Assonance** = Repetition of vowel sound (e.g. cold, told, bold).
- **Connotation** = an idea or image which is suggested by a word, which is not its dictionary meaning.
- **Consonance** = repetition of similar consonant sound in closely associated words (pitter and patter).
- **Dialogue** = the words said by a character in a story/play.
- **Metanoia** = a fundamental change in character or outlook.
- **Metaphor** = a comparison made without using 'like' or 'as', e.g. 'sea of troubles' and 'drowning in debt'.
- **Narrative** = the sequence of events in a plot; a story.
- **Parataxis** = use of very short, sharp sentences.
- **Person** = from the perspective of the self, other individuals, and groups, present or referred to in a text.
- **Simile** = a comparison using 'like' or 'as' to create a vivid image, e.g. 'as big as a whale'; 'float like a butterfly, sting like a bee'.
- **Tense** = relative location in time, continuity or conditionality.
- **Voice** = an agency in the narrative that is visible or invisible.

CONJURING UP THOSE MEMORABLE MOMENTS OF LEARNING MAGIC

When teaching English GCSE resits, you need enough confidence in your knowledge of the subject and what the exam requires to give students lessons they will never forget, says **Paul Clayton**

It takes a very special teacher to teach English GCSE to those retaking the qualification in a further education and/or vocational training setting.

This is not to diminish the challenges facing colleagues in schools labouring with their Year 10s and 11s, but the challenges in FE and training are demonstrably different.

Firstly, by the time the average Year 11 is facing the final run-up to the exam, they have already been targeted, taught and tracked to the nth degree.

However, for the teacher of the retake candidate, there is usually none of this: the student arrives with a grade 3 (a D or an E in old money), and little precise information about how that grade has been attained.

So the further education teacher or trainer has to make some very rapid judgements, identifying the students' strengths and areas for development in reading and writing, in order to determine which skills to prioritise.

Then there is the problem of motivation. In addition to moving to a new establishment – which can be both distracting and stressful – there is the impact of that grade 3 in the summer results.

It is not surprising that students are not overly keen to go through it all again. So the resits teacher or trainer needs to command a very broad repertoire of motivational techniques so as to inspire, energise and instil positivity into their weary and wary learners.

So how should one go about this? The successful teachers in the sector inject

that sense of 'fresh start' that is vital to their learners. This means changing the way the students are prepared.

In all likelihood, the students will be used to lessons forensically focused on the GCSE assessment objectives. This often leads to very arid, formulaic teaching, producing equally arid, formulaic responses in exams.

What the students need is a more holistic approach, which encourages and supports them to appreciate everything they read and write, as well as the detail.

These teachers kindle an excitement about English – about words and their meanings, writers and their views – that ultimately enthralls their students to want to show the examiner what they can do and tell them what they think.

Many of the most effective teachers take into account the knowledge and skills that their students will have acquired through their study of English Literature.

They are likely to be reasonably familiar with the skill of formulating opinions about writers' work and supporting them with textual references. Furthermore, the style of expressing those opinions – a style sometimes dubbed 'the academic register' – is one that the students will have practised during GCSE.

The trick is to move away from those highly structured approaches that seem to characterise work at this level: for example, encourage students to place two adjectives in front of every noun, and have a quota of sentences beginning with a participle ending in '-ing'.

Generally, the students who succeed

are those who want to write, who have a story to tell, not those who plod through a sequence of artificial stylistic and structural manoeuvres.

But what of Functional Skills? In truth, it's much the same. The most effective teachers tend to be those who can re-engage the disenchanted; speak with authority derived from expert subject knowledge; and who are capable of reinventing the wheel, so that it somehow looks and feels nothing like a wheel.

And that's just the kind of desperate metaphor-making these students need to avoid! In a nutshell, the teacher who succeeds with those retaking English GCSE and studying FS English is one who's quick to assess the students' skills; capable of motivating the disengaged; and secure enough in their knowledge of both the subject and the requirements of the exam to be able to create those memorable moments of learning magic.

It's a lot to ask, but as always, teachers are rising to the challenge!



Paul Clayton is director of The National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE).

The NATE Conference 2018, 'So Many Voices, So many Worlds', takes place at Conference Aston, Birmingham, on June 22 and 24. The conference is held in conjunction with the International Federation for the Teaching of English. For details and to book visit goo.gl/jruqBV

CASE STUDY MPhil SUPPORTS INVESTIGATING CIRCLE METHODS FOR ESOL LEARNERS

By Sarah Peters

My MPhil experience is the direct result of two previous practitioner research programmes with the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and SUNCETT. The first considered reading circles, and the second focused on writing circles, to support ESOL literacy development with the use of structured and collaborative language tasks. These projects highlighted overlapping issues in circles methods. The MPhil has offered the time, space, membership of a research community and credibility to continue a deeper investigation.

The process is enabling my practical focus to assimilate the benefits of reading-writing circles with oral 'communities of enquiry' for an integrated ESOL approach. It is also providing me with a better insight into broader contexts for ESOL, which point to the impact of immigration, economic and social policy on classroom-level teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) aims.

The MPhil is creating opportunities to review Schemes of Work and resources, and establish working partnerships, as preliminary findings suggest the circle could provide an integrated method: drawing on controlled reading to promote group discussion/ thinking, to scaffold writing and build autonomy. Its participatory democratic nature could support aims for richer learning experiences and wider policies, such as British Values and employability.

Key discoveries during my MPhil relate to the critical, caring, creative and collaborative dimensions of circles which encourage learners to generate their own questions and answers to difficulties raised by texts and tasks. This is revealing how learners pool literacy knowledge and personal life experiences to access language at word, sentence, text and cultural levels. The method draws on Bloom, Lipman and Vygotsky.

Assessments show a small rise in learner self-confidence, and awareness and achievement of language sub-skills. However, circle work is a long-term process which needs adequate time, and the language tasks and assessment criteria to be explicitly clear, in order for ESOL learners to advance.



ELATT



Sarah Peters is an ESOL Lecturer at Hull College and is a member of SET.

Reading and writing circles involve small groups of students meeting to discuss and build understanding of a particular text or piece of work.

CASE STUDY HOW A TEENAGER TURNED HIS LIFE AROUND

By Mike Boyle

ELATT is an award-winning adult and community learning provider in the East End of London. Mike Boyle tells the story of one learner who has turned his life around.

Paul grew up and went to school in Hackney, just a stone's throw from ELATT.

He first came to us aged 16, having spent three years out of education. He was living with social anxiety and had stopped attending his secondary school, where he was severely bullied.

Paul was referred by the local authority to ELATT, which is an outstanding provider with a strong track record of working with marginalised young people. We developed a tailor-made timetable with Paul, which helped him reacclimatise to attending regular classes.

Through our welfare scheme we were able to provide support to Paul's family to deal with the challenges. Paul has also benefitted from ongoing access to pastoral support provided by an ELATT tutor who is a trained counsellor.

After two years at ELATT, Paul has made dramatic progress. He arrived with Entry 3 level English – now he's about to complete Level 2. His attendance stands at around 90 per cent. In September he will start a Level 3 programme and he is applying for apprenticeships in the tech sector. As his communication skills have improved, his anxiety has decreased.

Paul is now confident enough that we have put him forward for a voluntary position at a tech firm based in the City of London, which would have been unthinkable when he arrived with us.



Mike Boyle is a tutor at ELATT. ELATT has won multiple awards for its provision including, most recently, the Tes FE Award 2018 for Contribution to the Local Community.

THE ROAD TO EFFECTIVE EMBEDDING MUST BE PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS

Finding engaging ways to teach English can be a tricky road for vocational teachers. **Sue Lownsbrough** has compiled some handy advice and good support networks to help them tackle the obstacles

Vocational tutors can struggle to find suitable opportunities to embed English or to choose engaging teaching and learning approaches. Some may struggle with some aspects of English themselves.

I have compiled some examples of how to embed English effectively, and I've also included information about where you can get further support.

First, look at the results of diagnostic assessment to find out what skills your learners need to develop. How will this impact on achieving the learning outcomes on your course?

For example, your learners have to write assignments using technical vocabulary, but the results show some learners have poor writing skills.

One idea is to include planning writing in your lesson. Learners can plan collaboratively using software such as Mindly or Coggle. Give them time to discuss their ideas and to agree how to structure the assignment.

After the first draft, ask them to mark each other's work and give constructive feedback. Online resources such as these are excellent for working with apprentices in the workplace too.

Second, get to know your English tutors. They can tell you what they are teaching so you can support each other. For example we infer meaning all the time, but learners struggle with the concept of inference in English.

Here is a suggestion about how to embed inference in a teaching session. In a health and social care class where

you are looking at child abuse, you can create a scenario using visual images showing a child in a home with visible clues of neglect. You can ask them what they can infer from what they see. You can then ask them to explain what this might mean and what they would do if they came across this in their future job role. Make a link to the English tutor's use of the word 'infer'.

“**Learners can plan collaboratively using software such as Mindly or Coggle**”

Third, getting learners to read. This is often a major challenge. But remember learners on vocational courses will have to follow written instructions as part of their training.

So, using instructions as reading material, why not pre-teach the key vocabulary using a card-matching exercise (image, word and definition). Ask learners to record new words in a vocabulary book. Then cut the instructions into strips and get them to put them in the right order and explain why they have chosen this. Learners will have developed critical reading, and developed their knowledge of technical



vocabulary and their speaking skills by giving complex explanations.

If you would like more support with teaching and learning approaches, the

Education and Training Foundation (ETF) has two excellent one-day courses: Vocational Revitaliser (for those new to embedding) and Vocational Revitaliser – Developing your practice. Go to [goo.gl/CmVbyF](https://www.foundationonline.org.uk/) for more information and how to book.

There is also support to help you develop your personal skills in English, so if you panic over possessive apostrophes, don't know whether to practise or practice, go to Foundation Online Learning to assess your skills and access free modules to brush up and get teaching tips for your lesson planning. Go to <https://www.foundationonline.org.uk/>

The Society for Education and Training (SET) and the Excellence Gateway also have resources and training sessions. Contact your Regional Specialist Lead for advice and guidance on all the support offered by the Education and Training Foundation. For information visit [goo.gl/2Z7Uan](https://www.foundationonline.org.uk/)



Sue Lownsbrough is an Education and Training Foundation regional specialist lead for maths and English.

CASE STUDY BOOSTING ACHIEVEMENT BY READING FOR PLEASURE

Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMet) has run the Reading Agency's Reading Ahead programme since 2013, and had a record 681 participants in 2017.

Reading Ahead invites participants to pick six reads of their choice (short texts, such as poems, and magazine articles, as well as books) and record, rate and review them in a small print reading diary in order to get incentives along the way, and a certificate on completion.

It is run predominantly through the Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) linking with teaching groups throughout the four college sites. The LRCs promote Reading Ahead to students and tutors at the beginning of the academic year via induction activities – the majority of participants sign up at the Freshers' Fairs – and by visiting tutor groups.

Ways of attracting students to the LRC stand have included story writing, where they start with 'Once upon a time' and let students add to, and build up, the story. LRC staff then run a number of 'keeping warm' activities throughout the year, including sending encouraging emails and visiting classes to catch up on progress with the challenge.

Reading Ahead participants are studying on courses ranging from ESOL to GCSE and A level. LRC staff monitor participants' progress in a number of ways to encourage completion.

Fay Dayus, head of Learning Resources, explains: "Notes are added to reader records on our library system to alert LRC staff that the student is a Reading Ahead participant.

"This acts as a 'conversation starter', encouraging them to talk about their reading and motivating them to progress further. Participants are also monitored in liaison with curriculum staff whose groups are taking part. They advise us on progress and we can offer suggestions on how to keep students motivated."

TOP TIPS

- Get support from senior management so that the whole college is on board.
- Promote the library and reading for pleasure from the start of the academic year.
- Find ways to embed reading into every kind of course, from maths to art and sport.
- Keep in touch with participants during the year to check they're making progress.
- Use reading 'selfies' to make it fun and part of students' everyday life.
- Ask committed teaching staff to pass on the message to their colleagues.

CASE STUDY HOW 'HIT TRAINING' MAKES AN IMPACT

By Jill Whittaker

At the beginning of any programme we spend a lot of time looking at where each individual learner is, at that specific point in time.

Whether it's for English or maths (or both), that involves talking to apprentices about their learning preferences or any challenges they've encountered in the past. We also run a series of diagnostics to identify and pinpoint precisely what they know and what they don't.

We take a blended learning approach and our learning materials are accessible in all sorts of ways. We have also produced our own resources for Functional Skills learners.

We don't have classrooms in the traditional sense. We have learning places, where those who need to learn the same topic, learn together. Most of our learning for Functional Skills English and maths is done one to one, and the programme is designed around individual learners.

We include contextualised examples when teaching English and maths. For example, we encourage learners to write about what they do at work. We find that comprehension and grammar are the main issues that crop up.

In most of our hospitality programmes there's some form of business project, or other written work, which form part of the end point assessment that apprentices work towards.

We use these assessments as a platform for new ideas around English and embedding the required grammar skills.

The vast majority of our staff come to us as professionals in their industry rather than teachers, trainers, tutors or mentors and coaches.

We then teach the staff how to teach. We find this works really well because staff, many of whom have faced similar challenges in their careers, are able to contextualise the learning, especially around English and maths, in a way that the learners will understand.

We also have a team of Functional Skills specialists who work with our staff to make sure they have all the skills and all the interventions they need when working with individual learners.

Our success rate for Functional Skills English Level 1 is over 90 per cent, and it's the same for maths. Our success rate for Level 2 Functional Skills English is over 80 per cent, and over 70 per cent for maths.



Jill Whittaker is chief executive of HIT Training, a major apprenticeship provider in the hospitality and catering sectors. HIT Training was voted Training Provider of the Year in the 2018 Tes FE Awards.

A PARTNERSHIP TO HELP STUDENTS WITH THE MOST SEVERE NEEDS

The Achievement for All charity is working with colleges to develop teaching practices that benefit people whose life chances may otherwise be limited. **By Professor Sonia Blandford and Lainy Russell**

Since January 2015, Achievement for All has been working with more than 30 further education colleges, including specialist provision and sixth form, and has liaised with many other colleagues in the sector.

Our Achieving Further Programme is specifically designed for the post-16 sector and focuses on students with the most severe and complex needs, those whose life chances may otherwise be limited and who have disengaged with education in some way.

Delivery is through a strong partnership between an achievement coach and a nominated college leader, working closely with the staff teams, and developing teaching and support practices.

Key findings in English teaching and learning:

- Teachers are often not fully aware, or have an incomplete understanding, of the learner's language deficits. There can be several teachers in different subject areas supporting literacy and often there is not a cohesive learning plan with consistent and appropriate strategies.
- English/literacy approaches need to be adapted to learning difficulties, and also brain function. Some aspects of language may be part of the learner's disability, and they may not have full cognitive understanding. This can be more of a problem when a learner appears outwardly to function at a high level, but there are hidden language/comprehension difficulties.
- Learners may have had an interrupted education due to their disability. English assessments on entering college should identify these gaps and a 'catch-up' scheme started. Teachers often find

it challenging to manage provision for learners missing lessons due to ill health.

- Inclusion – where learners are on study programmes, and on programmes designed specifically around SEND requirements, inclusion in drama/reading/group work and projects etc must be managed well.

Generic findings:

- Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) vary greatly in ability and it is an area we need to focus on. Support goes from too hands-off to too hands-on. Learners, particularly in post-16, need to gain as much independence in all areas of their education and life as possible, especially if we want them to progress in their education and training. Many senior leaders feel this is an area of concern.
- Adapt written work appropriately for learners with limited hand function in handwriting and keyboard use. This can slow learners down and often the correct equipment may not be accessed. Education, health and care plans (EHCPs) are essential. The set-up for a learner with SEND must start from pre-enrolment. Teachers are often nervous of adaptations if not trained or supported.
- Verbal communication for some learners may be challenging and teachers tend to learn as they go, with little training in speech and language therapy (SLT) or communication techniques, leaving both learner and teacher frustrated.

Evaluative feedback

Here are a couple of comments from nominated college leaders involved in

the Achieving Further Programme: "The comments that came from staff said it all – it was the most relevant training in a long time, because it focused specifically on the types of students that staff are working with. 'Achieving Further' really understood students with SEND and working with students with behavioural issues". Tess Cole, managing director of education and skills at Highbury College.

"In the two years that we've been working with 'Achieving Further', my entry 3 success rates have gone from 69 per cent to 93 per cent – a massive increase." Debbie Collinson-Bolles, learning manager for inclusive learning, Havant and South Downs College.

Find out more about the Achieving Further Programme: goo.gl/SXmzA4



Professor Sonia Blandford is chief executive of Achievement for All. **Lainy Russell** is their post-16 programme manager.

NOTES

Achievement for All is a not-for-profit charity that aims to improve outcomes for children and young people, regardless of their background, challenge or need.

The Achieving Further Programme framework is structured around four interdependent and interrelated elements:

- Leadership and Management
- Teaching and Learning
- Engaging with learners, their parents or carers and others
- Wider outcomes and opportunities including employability skills.

CASE STUDY BUILDING UP CONFIDENCE IN LEARNING ENGLISH SKILLS

By Rachel Percival

Learners at Derwen College are young adults who often have learning difficulties or other barriers to learning. Many have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition, some may have Down's Syndrome, others have a combination of medical and/or learning issues that have prevented them gaining formal accreditation in exams.

Discrete classes are taught where learners are grouped according to their levels, so that sessions can be directed towards Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3 or 'Advanced' (Level 1/2) skills. These are taught by specialist staff, with experience of teaching both their subjects and students with autism, learning and behaviour difficulties. Functional Skills are also embedded within vocational areas, with learners' objectives being worked towards in a whole-college approach.

Looking at our English Functional Skills at Entry 3 group, one student has a GCSE grade E in English, another has prior learning at Entry 2, and two have no formal qualifications in English.

All learners undertook an initial diagnostic assessment on starting at college and showed they had potential at around Entry 3 level.

Teaching and learning strategies included a wide and varied approach to sessions, whenever possible including projects on students' interests and/or topical issues. Objectives in each skills areas – speaking and listening, reading and writing – are targeted in progression, allowing for small steps to be recognised.

This enabled us to recognise learners' ability and progress, and boost confidence in their learning. We could also work towards all three of the formal assessments, and ultimately overall accreditation when appropriate.

Successful approaches included: discussions focused on themselves/families and homes; hobbies and interests; a debate on classical versus other-types of music; favourite TV and films. This then led into a film project, involving film reviews in TV listings magazines, where reading and writing skills were both developed. Learners had ownership (through their individual choice of film), and exam skills were practised using past papers. This encouraged overlearning, and teacher and peer-marking, and interest levels were maintained to strengthen engagement.

Teaching took a multi-sensory approach with visual (the more traditional whiteboard/worksheets), auditory (music/soundbites/YouTube/verbal) and kinaesthetic (word-cards etc), but also included Makaton signing and symbols (supporting speaking and listening).

In terms of learner outcomes, all four students passed Functional Skills English at Entry 3 in speaking and listening, and in reading. In writing, one learner passed at first attempt and a second passed on a resit. Two learners continue to work towards the writing assessment.

Rachel Percival is a teacher currently supplying maternity cover in Functional Skills English at Derwen College.

CASE STUDY GAMES MAKE A WINNING WAY TO TEACH ENGLISH

By Martin Shepherd and Shelley Nicholson

Tutors Martin Shepherd and Shelley Nicholson have made use of games to engage SEND students in the Foundation Learning Department at Myerscough College.

Games such as Bingo and Snakes and Ladders have been used to show students that English (and maths) can be fun as well as functional.

In Bingo, numbers called can be linked to questions on spellings etc. In Snakes and Ladders, advancement can be linked to learners answering questions on English language and usage.

Both games can also be used to introduce maths into English lessons, for instance by asking students how many moves they must make to reach the next ladder.

This has had a significant impact in the department, allowing students with SEND, including autism, who might previously have become disengaged, to find the classes fun rather than overly challenging.

The resources and good practice developed have also been shared in the wider English department, and these have been used as fun starter activities across college.

This dynamic approach to teaching has allowed SEND students to progress with their English, and there are several specific success stories of students obtaining their qualification when previously this has been a massive challenge.



Shelley Nicholson is a lecturer in GCSE English. **Martin Shepherd** is a lecturer in mathematics and English Functional Skills. Myerscough College is a specialist land-based and sports college.

CHALLENGE OF MOTIVATING DISENGAGED LEARNERS HAS TO STEP UP A GEAR

Low levels of literacy continue to plague the UK, and a huge shift in focus is needed to address it. Young people need to be really inspired to develop good written and spoken English, says **Sue Southwood**

The UK has a long-standing issue with low levels of literacy. Lord Moser's report, *A Fresh Start*, published back in 1999, shocked the general public when it revealed that one in five adults struggled with everyday reading and writing tasks. The report drew attention to the issue of low basic skills and in 2001, funding followed through the Skills for Life Strategy.

Fast forward to 2013, and government policy lifted its focus from functional literacy to a good pass at GCSE. Young people leaving school, sadly with the same low levels of literacy as the generation before them (and indeed the one before that), are now having to rise to the challenge of critically evaluating challenging texts, writing creatively using a range of linguistic devices and commenting on the language and structure of a range of current and historical texts.

This means that, for large numbers of young learners, English teachers are faced with the challenge of building skills that are significantly beyond everyday requirements, and preparing students for an exam they may not see as relevant or important.

We have to persuade young people of the value of good written and spoken English for their current and future lives, as well as the value of an English qualification. This needs to be a whole organisation approach that is consistently reinforced at every opportunity through careful timetabling, embedded delivery, strong visual

images and enrichment activities. All English learning should have a context, not be taught as a set of atomised skills. We read for a purpose, we write for a purpose and we speak for a purpose. And, as with all learning, English doesn't happen in a vacuum.

At the heart of English is communication so, more than any subject, it lends itself to social interaction and collaboration. Learners practise using spoken English in group work

“**All English learning should have a context, not be taught as a set of atomised skills**”

and collaborative activities, they widen their vocabulary, and learn to listen and respond appropriately.

Debating the merits of *The Voice* and *Britain's Got Talent*, or the music of current hip-hop artists, can help students develop the skills of comparing and contrasting a topic of their choice.

When learning is fun, interactive and relevant to a young person's life, they are more likely to engage, and to stretch and challenge themselves to structure an argument than when faced with a topic that holds no interest for them.



The teacher's job is to make skills explicit so learners can understand what they are doing and why, enabling them to transfer these skills to other contexts both in

life and in the exam. As with all learners, young people do best when they are learning in an environment where they feel they can ask for help.

GCSE re-sit and Functional Skills students have often not been successful with learning in the past and may have developed a very strong sense of "I'm not good at this". They have already invested 11 years in learning English, so encouraging a growth mindset and self-belief is critical.

Learners need to feel that engaging with learning can make a difference. Listening to what learners ask for, in the classroom, through learner focus groups and quick online surveys they can complete on their phones, should be going on throughout the academic year.

The key to good English teaching is good communication.



Sue Southwood is head of maths and English at the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). Sue is currently on secondment at Barking & Dagenham College.

CASE STUDY YOUNG OFFENDERS AIM FOR GOOD ENGLISH SCORE ON FOOTBALL COURSE

By **Ros Helliwell**

Tutors have taken a different approach to Functional Skills at HM Youth Offender Institution (YOI) Feltham – they have designed a football course which focuses on developing English skills.

Learners are selected for the course and take part in football training sessions that develop their English reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. At the end of the course, learners organise and attend a celebration event with their families to share in their success.

Funded through a partnership with Fulham Football Club, the project enables the prison education team to run two dedicated English sessions a week over an eight-week course. Each session gives the young men an English class with resources, contextualised through football and sports.

Learners are given an initial assessment to establish their knowledge and skills in English. The sessions are then pitched at an appropriate level. Running the course in this way engages learners who would not normally choose to study Functional Skills, or have a negative attitude towards exams.

The feedback has been positive, with almost all the learners showing an interest in returning to education to complete their full qualifications.

Debbie Cousins, project tutor, said: "Fulham Football Club have been very impressed with the lesson delivery. They have already asked me to work alongside them to improve their course further and incorporate the written work they need the learners to complete into my lessons.

"All of the resources relate to a topic the young men love. The course gives us an opportunity to build a rapport which can be used to encourage progression in the core subjects after the sports course has finished."

Following their success, the education team are developing a maths course with the same structure and ethos to share across other prisons.



Ros Helliwell is communications officer for LTE Group, which includes The Manchester College and Novus, the UK's largest provider of offender education. Novus delivers skills and employability across more than 60 sites.

NOTES

- According to the Centre for Social Justice, half of those entering young offenders' institutions aged 15 to 17 have a reading age of 11 or lower. And around 7 in 10 young offenders reoffend within a year of their release.

CASE STUDY THE 'QUICK READ' ROUTE TO ENJOYING BOOKS

By **Genevieve Clarke**

Quick Reads – the short books written by best-selling authors and well-known names, designed for people who do not normally read – have always been hugely popular in workplaces, colleges, adult and community learning settings and prisons.

Many employees have been introduced to the books, thanks to the support of the TUC's learning branch, unionlearn, and individual trade unions.

They have certainly played a part in a reading revolution at Merseytravel over the past 10 years. The UNISON union learning rep, Ya Ching Darnell, has inspired her colleagues to use Quick Reads for the Reading Agency's Reading Ahead challenge every year.

Merseytravel has also worked with the Liverpool City of Readers campaign on a project called Moved To Read. This involved Merseytravel employees sharing Quick Read books with members of the public using ferries, trains, buses, taxis and Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

Quick Reads are also the focus of a thriving book club at the DHL Argos warehouse in Castleford, near Wakefield.

Run by Usdaw union learning rep, Sean Dixon, this starts in January each year, once the busy Christmas period is over.

"Some learners who signed up for our reading group struggle with large books. The size of the Quick Reads gives someone the satisfaction of completion without being overawed," Sean said.

Ushaw's literacy offer at the site has expanded over the years to include the Reading Ahead programme, author visits from big names such as Andy McNab and Martina Cole, and links with the local public library.

They have also had some creative writing sessions with a local writer resulting in publication of their own ebook, *Workers' Reflections*, which includes haikus, sonnets and short stories.



Genevieve Clarke is a programme manager at The Reading Agency.

QUICK READS INFORMATION

Quick Reads has been run by The Reading Agency for the past three years (and previously by World Book Day). The charity had feared that 2018 would be the last year for the programme due to a lack of funding. However, a donation from author Jojo Moyes has secured Quick Reads' future for another three years. Learning providers can 'bulk buy' Quick Reads from publishers and the books remain available from libraries. readingagency.org.uk

EXPLORING THE OPPORTUNITIES OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

An ETF-funded 'digital teaching' project is reaping good results. But using technology needs to be shaped by an understanding of subject-specific pedagogy in English teaching. **By Bob Read**

In the past two years English practitioners in the Eastern region have been working together in a Professional Exchange Network, funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), to explore different ways of using digital technology in their teaching.

A key finding has been that using technology needs to be shaped by an understanding of subject-specific pedagogy in English teaching, and not just by a concern to tick a box on an Ofsted checklist or by a desperate attempt to 'engage reluctant learners'.

For example, modelling, peer critique and feedback on written work are increasingly recognised as a key element in the development of writing skills and these processes are now so much easier and effective through the use of a visualiser.

As students undertake writing activities, their work can instantly be shared on an interactive whiteboard and their strengths and features highlighted.

Similarly, helping learners understand how different connectives can alter the

meaning of a sentence, how clauses can be reorganised, how the structure of words can be analysed – these are key areas of subject knowledge that can be explored effectively on a smartboard.

Try using different tools, such as those on the Triptico website to create matching, classifying, colour coding or sequencing activities which, in a digital form, are much more quickly created and adapted than comparable card-based resources.

One of our members, Liam Alderton, a Functional Skills tutor at East Coast College, has been featured in a recent ETF video case study (see links below).

Liam feels his use of digital technology has greatly enhanced the collaborative atmosphere of his classroom and provided new forms of revision and self-testing opportunities for his learners. For example, Liam uses Padlet to organise his course materials in an online format that learners can easily access with a single click on a mobile device and without time-consuming log-ins and passwords.

While Liam uses Triptico-based resources for collaborative tasks in the classroom, he uses Google Forms to develop quizzes that students can complete between sessions, which then provide him with data on learner performance that he can use to plan the next lesson more effectively. Liam has also enjoyed using the Edpuzzle website to insert questions into YouTube videos so that they become interactive teaching resources.

Padlet is probably the most popular

tool among network members, who use it regularly to share resources not only with their learners but also their colleagues.

Another member of our network, Jo Loss, from Essex Adult Community Learning, has developed a Padlet resource that's become very popular with GCSE teachers across the Eastern region. Jo and her team have also been exploring using screencasting as an innovative way of providing personalised verbal feedback to learners on their written work, as well as a way to create their own video tutorials for exam revision.

If you would like to find out more about using digital technology in English teaching, contact your regional specialist lead for English who can provide you with more information about courses and other support opportunities in your area.

To find your regional specialist English lead visit goo.gl/C6wwv8

VIDEO

If you are reading your digital version of *inTuition* then click the play button below to watch Liam Alderton's video for ETF. You can also watch the video on YouTube at goo.gl/YMnstL



Bob Read is the ETF regional specialist lead for maths and English in the East of England. He is a training and development adviser for ACER, the Association of Colleges' Eastern Region organisation.

RESOURCES WRAPAROUND ENGLISH RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

A range of resources and benefits are available from the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) to support practitioners delivering English courses.

Each year 4,000 of practitioners complete face-to-face, online and blended courses to improve their teaching and assessment approaches in English and maths. Support and courses are available to help with effective teaching of English for teachers of GCSE, Functional Skills, apprenticeships and study programmes.

Many practitioners start with the ETF's self-evaluations tools. There is a combined English GCSE and Functional Skills assessment tool. It is designed to identify which areas of your English knowledge need updating.

A range of English modules is available from Foundation Online Learning covering topics such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, crafting your own writing, reading critically, effective writing, speaking and writing for impact.

The English exhibition site on the Excellence Gateway provides a portal to a range of tools, resources and case studies which you may find useful.

Teachers and trainers can contact their regional specialist English lead for more advice, guidance and support (see Specialists panel, right).

Practitioners are also invited to join the ETF's Professional Exchange Networks (PENs) to explore regional challenges and reflect on effective practice in the sector.

Education and training providers can also engage with our dedicated team of specialists to receive an English strategic support visit to identify high-level areas of need.

To discuss a strategic visit, please contact the ETF's head of maths and English, Imke Djouadj, at: imke.djouadj@etfoundation.co.uk

To find out more about the PENs visit goo.gl/9cjjk9

EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNTS

Don't forget that SET members are eligible for an exclusive 15 per cent discount on most English courses (and many others) run by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF).

For information on all member benefits visit the SET website and click on 'Membership'. <https://set.et-foundation.co.uk>

RESOURCES

The Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers reflect and support the efforts of practitioners to help learners overcome the barriers to maths and English learning. Read the standards at goo.gl/KgH1iL

RESOURCES ENGLISH REGIONAL SPECIALIST LEADS

If you have questions about the type of support and professional development you need in English, then the Education and Training Foundation's (ETF) Regional Specialist Leads are here to help.

They are all experienced practitioners and can advise you on, and signpost you to, courses and activities that will best suit your needs.



East of England

Bob Read
bob.read@acer.ac.uk



East Midlands

Dianne Robinson
Dianne_robinson@ntlworld.com



London

Sonia Thomas
sonia.thomas@etfoundation.co.uk



North East

Lianne Abraham
lianne.abraham@ncl-coll.ac.uk



North West and Cumbria

Sue Lownsbrough
sue.lownsbrough@gmx.co.uk



South East

Claire Callow
clairelcallow@gmail.com



South West

Alison Pearson
alisonpearson1@yahoo.com



West Midlands

Catriona Mowat
catrionamowat@ntlworld.com



Yorkshire and Humber

Gail Lydon
gaillydon@me.com

RESOURCES

- For more information on the Professional Exchange Networks visit goo.gl/5KQLgq
- To find out more about Triptico visit goo.gl/vk8kYn
- To find out more about Padlet visit goo.gl/FS7qig
- To find out more about Google Forms visit goo.gl/saMbT2
- To find out more about Edpuzzle visit goo.gl/RfM3Tp



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One of the many benefits of SET membership

As the only membership body for professionals working across further education, teaching and training, we are here to support you in your career. Membership grants you access to the latest research in maths and English in addition to opportunities to achieve excellence and to gain recognition in your profession and community.



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