

Institution: Nottingham Trent University
Unit of Assessment: C25 Education
Title of case study: Enhancing Social Inclusion through literacy and technology.
1. Summary of the impact <p>The impact of this work is in 2 key areas: using new technologies to raise literacy levels and engage disaffected students and using technology to increase language learning opportunities for primary and secondary students in socially deprived areas. Teachers, trainees, students and teaching assistants report increased confidence in using new technologies; students with low literacy and/or English as a second language report greater engagement, understanding and ability to access the curriculum. As a result of the research, improved literacy levels, greater engagement in lessons and a willingness to use new technologies in the modern foreign languages classroom are evidenced.</p>
2. Underpinning research <p>Research in the Unit of Assessment has investigated the role of technology to support the development of English and foreign language literacies across primary and secondary schools, both internationally and nationally.</p> <p>The work in the area of English language literacies, led by Dr Boulton is underpinned by research into the use of emerging technologies. The Training Development Agency (TDA) funded a project which demonstrated that new technologies could be used in core secondary subjects to improve literacies and engage disaffected students in 5 schools across the East Midlands¹². The origin of this project began when working with trainee teachers in developing the use of a range of technologies such as wikis¹, blogs⁶ and ePortfolios^{6,7}, then identifying how/if these are cascaded into their teaching as a newly qualified teacher (NQT) and whether they engaged students¹. This early research raised some key concerns relating to the lack of confidence of teachers in schools in using new technologies and also the barriers faced by new teachers in using new technologies when qualified^{1,7}.</p> <p>The initiatives and projects in the area of modern foreign language are informed by Dr Hughes' work into blended language learning. He has also looked at the feasibility of developing practical language learning initiatives on a public/private basis. This led to the Learn and Teach Spanish initiative that was jointly funded by Nottingham Trent University and a private sector partner, the Cool Creative Company http://cool-creative.co.uk/. The context, evolution and the impact of the partnership are discussed in "The Ups and Downs of third-stream collaboration in modern languages: the Blended Language Training Initiative at Nottingham Trent University"³. Funding was also made available by the Routes into Languages national project to develop "Ambassadors Learn Languages"⁸. This is a multimedia learning resource with beginners units in: Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Latin, Polish and Spanish. Each unit contains a rich mix of reading, writing, listening speaking (and singing) activities based on audio recordings, visual input and interactive games. It is available in 8 languages via the Routes into Languages website at https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/eastmidlands/resources Latterly internal funding has been attracted for English language learning working in collaboration with a Nottingham-based charity, Education For The Children (EFTC), which runs primary and secondary schools for street children</p>

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in Guatemala.

The research demonstrates the importance of the range and variety of online and face-to-face learning opportunities courses designed on a blended learning basis offer ⁵. Of particular note is the way the blend of elements motivate students to engage outside the classroom, in a focused and sustained way, with many of the types of activities considered effective in promoting foreign language literacies such as exposure to second language input, social interaction with peers and native-speakers and the production of meaning-focused written and oral communication. The results demonstrate that an approach which integrates an emphasis on technology is an effective, efficient and popular method for developing literacy skills that has implications in a range for different learning contexts ^{4,5}.

3. References to the research

The quality of the research is evidenced through the examples listed having been subject to peer review prior to publication.

Journal articles:

¹Boulton H, and Hramiak, A, (2013) Cascading the use of Web 2.0 technology in secondary schools in the United Kingdom: identifying the barriers beyond pre-service training, *Journal of Technology, Pedagogy and Education* Doi: 10.1080/1475939X.2013.802994.

²Boulton, H. and Hramiak, A., 2012. E-flection: the development of reflective communities of learning for trainee teachers through the use of shared online web logs. *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*.

³Hughes, N (2012) The Ups and downs of third-stream collaboration in modern languages: the Blended Language Training Initiative at Nottingham Trent University, *Language Learning Journal*,

⁴ Hughes, N & Rolls, A (2012): Blended learning and disciplinarity: negotiating connections in French Studies in regional universities, *The Language Learning Journal*, DOI:10.1080/09571736.2011.640406

Conference proceedings

⁵Hughes, N (2008) Blended Learning in Languages Education: The Case of Hispanic Studies at Nottingham Trent University, *The International Journal of Learning*, Vol. 15, Issue 9, pp.257-264.

⁶ Boulton, H. and Hramiak, A., 2012. Writing Virtually. In: L. CLUGHEN and C. HARDY, eds., *Writing in the disciplines: building supportive cultures for student writing in UK higher education*. Bingley: Emerald.

Evidence of Grants

- ⁷2012: £5k Research and Development Awards (TDA), Title: EPortfolios in Teacher Education. Award Number: GRANT REFERENCE NUMBER: GL CODE: A133ABAELRGNT3198. The grant was awarded to Dr Helen Boulton from 2009 to 2010.
- ⁸2011: £20k to develop 'Ambassadors Learn Languages' blended learning training resources in Chinese, French, Hindi, Italian, German, Latin, Polish and Spanish for East Midlands Routes into Learning. Available at

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<http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/eastmidlands/resources>.

- ⁹2009: £30k in-kind incubation funding from The Cool Creative Company. <http://www.blendedlanguagetraining.co.uk> <http://cool-creative.co.uk/> with matched £10k NTU investment to develop the Blended Language Training initiative in partnership with the Nottingham-based SME.
- ¹⁰2009: Grant to develop a blended learning exemplar in French Studies for the Centre for languages, linguistics and area studies, LLAS. Available at <http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/mb/6146>
- ¹¹2012: £5K Literacy and Technology: Towards Best Practice (TDA). GRANT REFERENCE NUMBER: GR00416, GL CODE: 2080. The grant was awarded to Dr Helen Boulton from 2011 to 2012.

4. Details of the impact

The extent of community impact of the research is with primary and secondary teachers, classroom assistants, pre-service teachers and students, many of whom are now using the resources developed from these research projects. Statements by teachers evidence changes in practice which impact on students and increased knowledge, understanding and skill in meeting the needs of students with low literacy levels, and those identified as disengaged; this is evidenced through teacher's class records. This addresses a significant area of concern raised at Government level where a) students with special educational needs are identified as underachieving in schools, and b) newly qualified teachers report that they are unprepared to meet the diverse needs of students with special educational needs in their classrooms'. For example of 70 teachers involved in the project led by Dr Hughes, 60% indicated they are using the resources and methods acquired during the training in their teaching; this is evidenced by evaluations completed by participants. While students involved in Dr Boulton's research found the use of technology engaging through working collaboratively and co-constructing new knowledge with 5 secondary schools who have higher than average levels of students with English as a second language and free school meals. Many students reported that the technologies made learning fun and enjoyable. Teachers reported increased levels of literacy for most students, increased confidence in learning by all students and increased levels of engagement for all students who had been identified as disengaged learners by their school. Significant engagement was observed by students who had English as a second language. One school reported significant benefits for a physically disabled student.

Hughes' 2009 project impacted on approximately 70 primary school teachers and teaching assistants across the region taking part in training programmes using Learn and Teach Primary Spanish 1. The nature of this impact has been on teachers' increased knowledge, understanding and skill in meeting the language needs of primary school students and confirmed by teachers, see Section 5. Two of the primary schools involved in the project, Seagrave and Cantrell Primary, are located in deprived parts of the city and have significantly above-average numbers of students entitled to free meals and/or with learning difficulties. The project was the catalyst for the development of a new primary language upskilling strategy in Nottingham modelled on the train-the-trainer principle in 2009/10. Developing collaborations with Cool Creatives, Education for the Children (EFTC), and schools is contributing to one of the most important aspects of the university's external agenda, providing support for the community within which it is embedded and thus providing further evidence of wider impact within the community; see Section 5.

Dissemination has been through international and national conference presentations by both Dr

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Hughes and Dr Boulton for example:

HUGHES, N., 2009. Blended learning: an effective, efficient and popular approach to language learning in HE. In: Fourth International Blended Learning Conference, University of Hertfordshire, 2009. pp. 53-63.

BOULTON, H., 2012. Can technologies raise literacy levels? In: Association of Information Technology in Teacher Education Annual International Conference, Oxford University, Oxford, 5-7 July 2012.

As a result Hughes has been invited to speak at international, national and local conferences and invitation to visit University of Newcastle in New South Wales, Australia (2009 and 2010).

Resources from the projects are located on national websites and made available via CDROMs such as 'Learn and Teach Primary Spanish 1', and via <http://www.itte.org.uk/> > Resources> Resources for Use in Schools for CPD, <https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/eastmidlands/resources> - click link under 'Ambassadors Learn Languages', <http://partners.bte.sws.ntu.ac.uk/moodle/> and <http://www.itte.org.uk/node/837>, thus reaching a wide readership and audiences both nationally and internationally.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Head of Languages, Walton Girls' High School and Sixth Form corroborates the claim that the blended learning approach is an effective and efficient approach to language teaching and training. She also states that as a direct result of involvement in Dr Hughes' project '*Spanish will be rolled out at Key Stage 3 from September 2012*'.

Principal of the City of Peterborough Academy corroborates the claim that the approach to training and up skilling developed as a result of the research, was adopted as model by Nottingham City Council in 2009/10

Head of Science, National Academy will corroborate that involvement with the research project led by Dr Boulton 82% of the students involved in the project enjoyed the lesson more than usual with 63% rating their own engagement in the lesson as more than usual. More than half of the students commented that the technology used in the lesson helped them to learn about the concepts, believed that the ICT used helped them understand keywords more, and the technology impacted on their learning more than usual. As a result of the project various staff development has taken place across the school on using new technologies in the classroom resulting in an impact on the confidence of teachers in using technologies and more innovative classroom practice.

Deputy Principal, Greenwood Academies Trust corroborates that the students achieved higher literacy levels and engagement through the project and became more confident learners and dissemination of the project has contributed to an increased confidence in the use of technologies in the classroom.

Head of French, Newcastle University (Australia) corroborates the effectiveness and popularity of the blended leaning approach in a range of language learning and teaching contexts.