

<b>Institution: King's College London</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: UoA25 (Education)</b>
<b>Title of case study: English Language Skills for Speakers of Other Languages</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>King's research in the field of ESOL has had an impact on the education of the most marginalised communities in society by contributing to changes to the national strategy for improving adults' basic skills, the <i>Skills for Life</i> strategy. In particular, the research has informed (i) revisions to the Core Curriculum for Adult ESOL in England and Wales, (ii) guidelines to support the implementation of the national standards for teachers of English in FE, (iii) the development of materials for teaching English to adult migrants, which are widely used in the training of ESOL teachers and in ESOL classrooms, and (iv) the development of employment-related English language programmes and materials. The research also informed two successful campaigns to maintain ESOL provision in the face of threatened cuts.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> [Numbers in brackets refer to references in Section 3.]</p> <p>Based on a series of ethnographic and classroom interactional studies conducted from 2003-2008, the research underpinning this case study challenged decontextualised language learning and the narrow skills-based agenda which prevailed at the time. It argued instead for a reconfiguration of language learning to reflect a wider socio-cultural view of communicative practice based on the concepts of linguistic capital and second language socialisation. The studies were explicitly designed to influence policy and curricula and benefit practitioners through a knowledge transfer paradigm, with anticipated training needs and dissemination strategies for both policy change and practitioner development built into the early stages of the projects.</p> <p>The research, carried out by Prof. Celia Roberts and Melanie Cooke at King's, consisted of seven projects in total, five of which were funded by the Department for Education and Skills through the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC), the research centre set up to support the <i>Skills for Life</i> strategy for improving adult basic skills in England and Wales. The NRDC is the first research centre of its kind to support the skills base of marginalised groups. Two further projects were funded by the Department for Work and Pensions.</p> <p>The NRDC projects consisted of: (i) the only large-scale study of adult ESOL teaching and learning in the UK, carried out with colleagues at Leeds University (Baynham and Simpson) [3, 9]; (ii) an associated practitioner development project [6]; and (iii) case studies of vocationally-related embedded ESOL training [1, 2]. The findings showed that formal instruction for adult learners of English leads to significant progress in using the language, and that, contrary to the assumptions underpinning funding policy, Further Education provision is better quality than community provision [3]. The researchers also produced crucial evidence, from the results of before and after language tests, of the benefits of early ESOL intervention for new arrivals to the UK [3]. This had not been empirically evidenced before and has implications for the funding methodology which does not currently permit newcomers to the UK to access public funds for language education.</p> <p>Further findings from the research were that, in contrast to other areas of adult education, in ESOL persistence and progression are not primarily related to individual approaches to learning but rather to the need to recoup lost cultural capital after migration [7]. These findings have implications for teaching methodology, suggesting that a re-focusing of teacher strategies on learners' lived experiences is needed [10]. The research also showed that: a) 'differentiation' (addressing different levels and abilities) is an interactional process in ESOL, and cannot therefore be evidenced through paper-based methods; rather it requires some understanding of classroom discourse analysis by teachers [3]; and that b) the traditional divide between adult literacy and ESOL programmes was not relevant for multilingual learners and that a more integrated approach was needed [7].</p> <p>The DWP research was commissioned to identify the role job interviews play in the persistent gap between white and black and minority ethnic groups in the labour market. This research, which created the only data base of real, video-recorded employment interviews, showed that job</p>

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interviews created a 'linguistic penalty' for those born abroad who were much more likely to fail them than British born candidates [4, 5]. The challenges of the job interview for ESOL speakers are: the gap between the communicative demands of the selection interview and those of the job [11]; the problem of (re)presenting foreign work experience in job interviews [13]; and the special discourses and narrative styles of job interviews, including, for example, the expectation that a candidate will engage in 'extended talk' [8]. Together, the NRDC and DWP research established the effectiveness of embedding language in vocational and job-seeker courses and the value of designing curricula and materials based on research on real job interviews [2, 12, 13].

### 3. References to the research

Supporting grants: [hard copies of project reports are available on request]

- [1] Roberts (PI) (2003-4). *English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Case Studies of provision, learners' needs and resources*. NRDC and DfES: £42,800.
- [2] Roberts (PI) (2003-4). *Embedded Skills: Case Studies of Provision*. NRDC and DfES: £53,000.
- [3] Baynham and Roberts (PIs) (2003-6). *Effective Practice in ESOL*. NRDC and DfES: £200,100.
- [4] Roberts (PI) (2004-5). *Job Interviews, Ethnicity and Disadvantage*. DWP: £163,100.
- [5] Roberts (PI) (2005-7). *Promotion Interviews, Language and Ethnicity*. DWP: £153,000.
- [6] Roberts (PI), Cooke (2006-7). *Turning Talk into Learning: Effective Practice in ESOL: Practitioner Guides and Action Research*. NRDC and DfES: £30,000.
- [7] Simpson (PI), Cooke, Baynham (2008). *The experience of placement for bilingual ESOL/Literacy students*. NRDC and DfES: £24,000; Leeds and King's: £3500.

Key peer-reviewed publications: [hard copies are available on request]

- [8] Roberts, C., & Campbell, S. (2005). Fitting stories into boxes: Rhetorical and textual constraints on candidates' performance in British job interviews. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2 (1), 45-73.
- [9] Roberts, C. (2006). Figures in a landscape: Methodological issues in adult ESOL research. In C. Roberts & M. Baynham (eds) *Where talk is work: The social contexts of adult ESOL classrooms*. Special Issue of *Linguistics and Education*, 17 (1), 45-74.
- [10] Cooke, M. (2006). When I wake up I dream of electricity: the lives, aspirations and 'needs' of adult ESOL learners. *Linguistics and Education*, 17 (1), 56-73.
- [11] Campbell, S. & Roberts, C. (2007) Migration, Ethnicity and Competing Discourses in the Job Interview. *Discourse and Society*, 18 (3), 243-270.
- [12] Roberts, C. & Cooke, M. (2009). Authenticity in the Adult ESOL Classroom and Beyond. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43 (4), 620-642.
- [13] Roberts, C. (2012). Translating global experiences into institutional models of competency. *Diversities*, 14 (2), 49 – 71. UNESCO <http://www.mmq.mpg.de/index.php?id=1171>

### 4. Details of the impact [Numbers in brackets refer to references & sources in Sections 3 & 5.]

The research has had an impact on the education of the most marginalised communities in society by contributing to the national strategy for improving basic skills – the *Skills for Life* Strategy, and, in particular, to changes in both general and employment-related ESOL policy and practice. The research also informed two successful campaigns to maintain ESOL provision in the face of cuts. More specifically, insights from the research have directly fed into:

**(i) The revised national curriculum for ESOL** The 2006 research [3] was used as part of the evidence base for the 2009 revisions to the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum for England and Wales, [14], especially the addition of lower level descriptors to include learners of basic literacy, and the systematic introduction of discourse level language into the curriculum at all levels. This was as a direct result of Cooke's role in 2008 as adviser to LLU+ (the London Language and Literacy Unit) which was commissioned to carry out these revisions. The Adult ESOL Core Curriculum was a key plank of the *Skills for Life* strategy.

**(ii) Guidelines to support the implementation of the national standards for teachers of English in FE** On the basis of their 2008 research, which had pointed to the need to integrate adult ESOL and literacy teaching [7], Cooke and Simpson were asked to join a panel convened by Lifelong Learning UK, the FE teacher training standards agency of the time, to produce guidelines to enable teacher trainers to interpret and implement the subject specifications for standards for teachers qualified to teach English in the adult learning sector. This was deemed necessary

because the new standards were designed for both adult ESOL and adult literacy teachers and included aspects of language learning that were not part of the traditional knowledge base for teachers of adult literacy. These guidelines, *Literacy and ESOL: shared and distinctive knowledge, understanding and professional practice* (2009), drew on Cooke *et al.*'s research to explicate the shared and distinctive aspects of ESOL and adult literacy teaching and provided practical guidance to enable teacher trainers to interpret the standards and develop courses that integrate adult ESOL and literacy pedagogies. They were published on the Excellence Gateway, the official portal for all courses and teacher training resources in the learning and skills sector in England.

### **(iii) Teacher Training and ESOL classroom practice**

**Teacher training:** The NRDC research formed the basis for Cooke and Simpson's textbook: *ESOL: a Critical Guide* [16], which has been widely adopted as a key text in initial teacher training and CPD. The book uses the research to provide teachers with the critical insights to help them design and teach ESOL programmes appropriate to a context of 'super-diversity'. As part of the NRDC research, the team also developed two practitioner guides, published by NIACE/NRDC [17] to support CPD in ESOL. They were designed and written with practitioner involvement at all stages of their development. These guides include examples of classroom discourse from ESOL lessons, and materials on how to work with learner-produced language in a systematic way, reflecting key insights from the research, namely, the value of refocusing on learners' everyday and institutional interactions and of encouraging complex and extended stretches of talk (e.g. explanations, giving accounts) [3, 12]. Approximately 500 copies were produced and sold by the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) (2007-2009). The practitioner guides and the NRDC research reports were also embedded in a module attended by 200+ teachers and teacher trainers on the national CPD programme set up as part of the *Skills for Life* strategy: the *Skills for Life Improvement Programme* (2008). The guides are widely referenced in ESOL teacher training courses, including those at the Institute of Education (PGCE Post Compulsory), LLU+ at South Bank University, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Greenwich, University of Warwick, and University of Wales, Newport/Prifysgol Cymru. The guides have been enthusiastically received by teacher trainers and trainees, as being, for example, 'of clear practical relevance ... a perfect "way in" to developing research-informed practice' (Rachel Stublely, Programme leader, adult ESOL teacher education, Newport, 20.03.13).

**ESOL classrooms:** The messages contained in the practitioner guides from the key findings about pedagogy – i.e. the importance of focusing on everyday interactions and of including extended stretches of talk in a way that assists more differentiated forms of assessment [3, 10, 12] - have also been adopted in a wide variety of FE colleges and adult learning institutions. These include large ESOL providers in disadvantaged London boroughs, e.g. Tower Hamlets College, Greenwich Community College, and the Language and Literacy Unit in Southwark. Take up has been a direct consequence of wide dissemination of the research, with the NRDC disseminating 2,000 hard copies of each of the six research and development project reports with messages on how to improve practice and extend the curriculum. Over 21,300 copies have been downloaded from the NRDC website and the reports have had over 39,300 individual views. Approximately 40 conference presentations have been given by Roberts and Cooke to policy makers, including Ofsted teachers and FE managers (2003-13, 20 of these since 2008). Key audiences have included: London ESOL research network, the Leeds ESOL research network, local and national branches of the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA) and NATECLA Scotland. And all the research has been disseminated and discussed on the ESOL Research email network ([www.jiscmail.ac.uk/esol-research](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/esol-research)) (2006-2013), the main source of information on ESOL nationally (membership c. 800).

**(iv) Employment-related English language programmes** Recommendations from the DWP-funded research [4, 5] led to an acknowledgement of the 'linguistic penalty' faced by migrant jobseekers and a policy decision by the Equalities Division of the DWP to fund and disseminate educational DVDs directly based on the DWP research – *Successful at Selection* and *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)* - to all 147 Jobcentre Plus offices for their ESOL courses, to all 219 FE colleges and to adult learning institutions teaching ESOL (1000 DVDs disseminated 2008-10). The job-seeker DVD, FAQs and associated materials [18], partly funded by Leicester Jobcentre Plus, consist of recordings and analysis of real job interviews designed to support a teaching focus on

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extended talk, on learners' lived experience, and on translating the cultural capital gained from work abroad into workplace narratives that fit UK job interview practice, reflecting key insights from both the NRDC and DWP research. These materials are integral to several ESOL employability initiatives, reflecting the emphasis on employment-related programmes in the *Skills for Life* ESOL strategy [19]. For example, they were used in the *Work Focused ESOL for Parents* programme delivered by LLU+ in 2009 as part of the City Strategy Pathfinders initiative (in West and East London) established by the DWP to tackle unemployment in disadvantaged communities [20]. Presentations were given to the DWP Ethnic Minority Task Force and Jobcentre Plus at national level, as well as to NATECLA and 20 FE colleges. Reception amongst trainers has been very positive, especially about the research-based data used in FAQs: 'before this there were no clear examples of the kind of barriers bi and multilingual speakers face' is one of many comments made to this effect (Jennie Turner, Greenwich Community College).

**(v) The Action for ESOL campaign** Funding for adult ESOL is particularly vulnerable to government cuts and the research has fed directly into the struggle to maintain provision. The policy-related findings from the NRDC research (i.e. that formal instruction works, that learning is more effective soon after arrival post-migration and that FE provision is better quality than community based courses) [3] have been used to hold to account the Government's policy to cut aspects of ESOL funding, by providing evidence to two successful campaigns (in 2011 and 2013) to maintain provision. The 2011 campaign successfully opposed the abolition of fee remission to people not on 'active benefits', which would have affected up to 80% of provision in some parts of the country, for ethnic minority women and low paid workers in particular. In 2013 a proposal to severely limit the time allotted for progression from one level to the next was also successfully opposed. The research directly fed into (i) briefings for MPs in 2010 and 2013, which were disseminated nationally both in face-to-face lobbying and on-line; (ii) the declaration of a statement of principles [21]; and (iii) campaigning materials written by the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults and the NIACE. The MP for Lewisham East, Heidi Alexander, a Parliamentary supporter of the campaign, commented that the literature produced for MPs informed by the research was 'very crucial for understanding the issues in the sector during the campaign against funding cuts in 2011-13' (personal communication, 25.05.13).

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact [Hard copies of documents are available on request.]

[14] *Adult ESOL Core Curriculum*

([rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/ESOL/Adult%20ESOL%20core%20curriculum/](http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/ESOL/Adult%20ESOL%20core%20curriculum/))

[15] LLUK (2009). *Literacy and ESOL: shared and distinctive knowledge, understanding and professional practice*.

(<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://89.31.209.91/llukimages/LLUK/Literacy-and-ESOL-companion-guide-January-2009.pdf>)

[16] Cooke, M. & Simpson, J. (2008). *ESOL: A Critical Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[17] Cooke, M. & Roberts, C. (2007a) *Developing adult teaching and learning: practitioner guides* and (2007b) *Reflection and Action in ESOL Classrooms*. Leicester/London: NIACE/NRDC.

(Available in hard copy and at: [www.nrdc.org.uk](http://www.nrdc.org.uk).)

[18] *Frequently Asked Questions DVD and materials*. (Hard copy available.)

[19] *Integrating employability into ESOL teaching and learning*

([excellencegateway.org.uk/node/15048](http://excellencegateway.org.uk/node/15048))

[20] *Work-focused ESOL for Parents* (<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/18656>)

[21] Action for ESOL (2012) *The ESOL manifesto* ([http://actionforesol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ESOL\\_manifesto\\_BW.pdf](http://actionforesol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ESOL_manifesto_BW.pdf))

##### Individuals:

Director, Learning Unlimited. [Impact on revised national curriculum for ESOL, employment-related ESOL, teacher training and ESOL classroom practice.]

Former Policy Advisor, Lifelong Learning UK. [Impact on guidelines to support the standards for teachers of English in FE.]

Senior Project Officer for ESOL, NIACE. [Impact on teacher training and classroom practice.]

Head of Faculty, Foundation and Progression Studies, Greenwich Community College. [Impact on classroom practice and employment-related ESOL.]

MP for Lewisham East. [Impact on ESOL campaign.]