



Report

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**ESOL provisions in two charitable organisations in
Manchester**

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1. Introduction, Research Questions & Methods

Our area of interest in this project is ESOL provisions provided in the City of Manchester. Our research is primarily focused upon the Chrysalis Family Centre, alongside additional findings from the Enactus: Speak Up project, both charitable organisations. To recapitulate, we are interested to uncover the different types of ESOL provisions, the providers of such services and the differences between institutes. We also aim to investigate who the courses are available to and if availability depends on individual requirements. In addition, we want to identify how people discover ESOL services and understand their experiences during this preliminary period. Our final aim is to unearth participant's overall impressions of their involvement in ESOL provisions in Manchester, and to identify if the city is administering the utmost effective aid and if any improvements could be made in this sector.

Our aims involve investigating if the fundamental linguistic human rights of people migrating to dominantly English speaking countries, that Simpson (2016) discusses, are rightfully in practice in Manchester. Some of these rights include that individuals should be allowed to maintain the language of their home country, as well as holding the right to learn the language spoken in their new country (Simpson, 2016), as such English in Manchester. To explore this in reality we initially aimed to communicate with those who have migrated and are now ESOL students. In addition, we spoke to those who teach and volunteer in institutes that aim to facilitate these rights and the people who organise, run and fund such services. We aimed to collect data from students from both institutes, but focus volunteer and manager research on findings from Chrysalis. Collecting data from all three groups would help create a complete picture of ESOL effectiveness from every perspective. Also, we believed this would account for any under or over reporting from all angles.

We distributed a devised consent form to participants at both institutions, as attached as (C) in the appendix. In the form we explained the purpose of our study and made clear their identity and answers would remain anonymous and confidential, should they want to take part. We asked that participants answered as honestly and completely as possible. To adhere to ethical guidelines, we verbally reiterated the document to avoid any confusion, considering the participant's differing levels of English comprehension to ensure all was understood.

We began collecting our data on 29th March 2017; two representatives from our group visited the Enactus: Speak up project at Birchfields Primary School in Manchester. Here we distributed a set of printed questions, see (A) in the appendix, for which the ESOL students wrote their own response as elaborately as possible, as encouraged by ourselves and the teachers. The questionnaire aimed to encompass investigation in to all of our aims. Here we accumulated a great quantity of qualitative answers from five participants.

Following this visit, we were made aware that the Enactus: Speak up project also runs at Rushbrook Primary School in Manchester. We contacted the project at this location about our research and they informed us that they operate their own impact measurement questionnaire at this establishment of which they happily agreed to forward to us, alongside a response from one of their ESOL students. The topics and intentions of their questions remained the same as ours, although the wording differed slightly from our original questionnaire; see (B) in appendix for this alternative set of questions. The additional response from the one participant from this establishment was useful and enhanced our collection of data.

On 5th April 2017, we then visited the Chrysalis Family Centre. From experience at the preceding organisation, here we decided to go through the questions, see (A) in appendix, with the students as part of a discussion, interviewing students individually. We believed this informal approach would give us more in-depth responses. We gave each participant a copy of the questionnaire, as well as reading the questions aloud. This method was successful in that we were able to dissolve any ambiguity in translation. We recorded the student's responses in note form and collected a wealth of qualitative data from six participants; making for twelve student responses in total from both organisations.

There were some changes to our initial research schedule, which arose due to no fault of our own. We were recently made aware of organisational issues at the Enactus project. Despite continually pressing for teacher and managerial involvement following our visit, we were left without response. Soon after our initial visit their teaching ended, so correspondence became sparse and difficult. For this reason, we have been left to rely on teacher/volunteer and manager statements from the Chrysalis centre alone. Furthermore, the data from the attendees at Chrysalis was the most extensive and informative due to our altered research method. For these reasons we treated Chrysalis predominately as the basis for our research. The data collected from Enactus would then be employed secondarily.

Aside collecting data from students partaking in ESOL provisions, we circulated copies of our teacher/volunteer questionnaires via email to those working at Chrysalis. This separate questionnaire, see (D) in appendix, aimed to gather information about the services from an organisationally involved perspective. After speaking to some of the teachers we believed to accommodate busy schedules and time restraints, this method was the most suitable and considerate. However, despite continuously pressing for reply, only one volunteer responded to our questionnaire this way. So after further correspondence, we re-visited Chrysalis on the 10th May 2017 and gained three further responses from volunteers first-hand, making for a total of 4 responses.

Additionally, we returned to the centre on 17th May to go through our devised questions with a manager at the centre; consult (E) in the appendix. We interviewed the individual in the managerial role and gained insight into their view on ESOL provisions and providers in Manchester and their availability and impact. Focusing on these three aspects allowed for us to create a complete, whole representation of the city.

2. Findings

A. ESOL Students (Chrysalis Family Centre & Enactus: Speak Up)

The data from the interviews with 12 attendees of ESOL classes at the Chrysalis centre and the Enactus project presents a clear picture of the current situation of two charitable ESOL provisions available in Manchester. Below is a detailed examination of the data from the students from three perspectives.

i. Accessibility

Among all the attendees interviewed, 5 people were attending other classes in addition to the one where the interview took place, at the time of the interview. One person explained the reason for not attending any other classes as, "My illegal visa status doesn't allow me to register on any public language schools."

From a general point of view, the ESOL sessions provided by Chrysalis and Enactus are easy to be attended by those interested. Among the 12 attendees interviewed, 5 people were informed of the sessions through their children's school. In addition, 3 found out about the sessions through the job centre, 1 through family members and another through the teacher of a previous language class they had attended. After the very first contact with the session providers, nine of the attendees got the chance to join the course immediately, without waiting on a list. However one person described that they had waited for three weeks.

As for the time arrangement, all of the students mentioned that the session is "suitably scheduled", meaning they all described that they could set aside time to attend without distribution to their daily routine. Nine of the participants told us they walked to the course usually, while one person told us they take a bus.

ii. Impacts

When asked about the effects of the sessions, all of the attendees gave a general positive answer by saying that they "have learned something", on some level. After taking the course, 7 described that they had learned on a great level. To be more specific, we gathered that all of the attendees found the sessions useful in helping with their daily life, especially with their shopping experiences. With the improvements to their English brought about by the sessions, they felt more at home now in Manchester compared to how they once felt in the past.

What's more, ten of the people interviewed said that their confidence has been elevated by the practice in class. However, from the ten students who said their confidence with English had improved, four of these described it had only helped on a low level. In particular situations, such as communicating with a GP or a police officer, 8 individuals said that they felt more confident than ever before. However, four of the students said that "translators are still needed" in these situations. From the 6 attendees who were conducting a job search at the time of being interviewed, half of them mentioned that the courses have helped them with a job application. Whereas, the other half opposed this notion by saying that they still lacked enough communicative skills, including writing and speaking abilities, to do so.

iii. Issues

Even though all of the students interviewed found the sessions responsible for the improvement of their English levels, 9 of them considered problems at the sessions that they had observed personally. The most frequently mentioned problem was about the content of the course. Four people hoped that there could be more emphasis on the practice of oral English in class, while two mentioned that other skills, such as grammar and writing skills, need to be focused on more by teachers. It's interesting to see that three of the students who were dissatisfied by the session content blamed it on that the difficulty of the session; two said it is "too hard to follow" while one other thought oppositely, describing that "sometimes it was too easy for me."

Considering such huge divergence among the students, some attendees suggested that more smaller-scale teaching, especially on a one-to-one basis, should be conducted in class. Three attendees said that it would be appreciated if more classes, throughout the week, were offered by the institutions. One lady explained that she needed to take care of her children, which prevented her from taking class sometimes, so another day or time might be helpful in addition.

B. ESOL Manager (Chrysalis Family Centre)

The interview with the manager at the Chrysalis Family Centre has helped to provide an overview of the ESOL provisions in Manchester. The interview evidence has been organised into three main points we feel encompass our aims in their entirety.

i. Different types of ESOL provisions and providers

According to the manager, Chrysalis Family Centre initially began by aiming to provide a space for young parents who had migrated with children, 24 years ago. They mainly offered parenting and education skills for the young adults. She described their focus area is extended across a whole range of local communities around Moss side in Manchester, encompassing a diversity of migrants and cultures, such as African immigrants.

The ESOL provisions which Chrysalis offer has changed over time. In the past, they offered the ESOL provisions for English certification; an organisation called WEA sent the ESOL qualified teachers to run the sessions. However, this ended due to a halt in funding at WEA, which included a stop to funding for hiring and distributing qualified teachers. They now offer informal ESOL provisions which combine English learning with recreational activities, reliant on volunteers they source. In whole, the manager of the centre focused on the fact their sessions are conversationally based. These provisions do not offer an English qualification yet they aim to fulfil high demands of English based learning.

ii. Accessibility

There are limitations when it comes to fulfilling all demands for their service users. The manager described that Chrysalis does not have specific criteria in place for people to use the services, due to the informality of the sessions. Unlike other credited ESOL provisions, which hold certain criteria such as unemployment, services are available for all people who need support with English. However, the availability is run on a first come first served basis, meaning waiting lists can sometimes be put in place. Specific sessions such as 'Sewing and English' sometimes require a wait because of lack of facilities and it's popularity, according to the manager. This is related to funding; they do not receive regular funding, thus, most of sessions are run by volunteers.

The centre manager highlights the importance of ESOL provisions availability without cost. The fund raising Chrysalis conducts allows them to offer ESOL for free of cost to new arrivals who have not enough money to support themselves and in need of help with English.

iii. Impacts

Chrysalis Family Centre ESOL provisions offer opportunities for people to interact as part of society and provides practical support such as help with citizenship or job seeking. Some of the ESOL provisions they provide that combine recreations provide not only life skills such as sewing or computer skills, but also provide opportunity for practicing and speaking English. For example, sewing sessions offer the practice of how to buy or communicate in local shops in order to prepare the materials for sessions. This gives attendees confidence, according to the manager, and helps them to integrate more in their local community.

C. ESOL Teachers/Volunteers (Chrysalis Family Centre)

The interview with four student volunteers from the University of Manchester, working at Chrysalis, have shown how ESOL provisions provide positive impacts for not only service users, but also for themselves. The data is organised two main points we found most relevant.

i. Different types of ESOL provisions and providers

The conversational English sessions provided by Chrysalis are organised uniquely, as described by the volunteers at the centre. The sessions are highly dependent on student volunteers namely choosing topics, preparing resources and structuring the sessions. Most of the student volunteers said that their supervisor sends suggested topics to them and provides guidance, then they individually actively prepare the resources in preparation for the weekly session. They prepare visualised worksheets for people who cannot read or write confidently. In addition, they prepare back up plans and activities for unexpected situations, which they told us is a normal occurrence.

All of them actively use free, internet resources; one volunteer normally uses Google to search for resources. Another volunteer consults with a partner who works as an English teacher at a secondary school with a lot of EAL learners. They told us they then find appropriate exercises and conversation prompts on the session's theme from free resources, such as from the British Council. On a couple of occasions, the volunteers draft their own worksheets containing simple word-fill exercises.

The sessions start by introducing a general topic before studying related vocabulary as a whole group. After that, the sessions run flexibly one-to-one and in small groups, depending on topics and number of attendees. The student volunteers/teachers said that there are about 4 or 5 volunteers per session and the attendees are spilt up into groups depending on level of English. They say they provide one-to-one sessions for those who lack basic English knowledge, so that they can follow the sessions more closely.

The above led to discussion about issues and improvements with the teachers. Firstly, three out of four volunteers mentioned about the different levels of English among attendees; one mentioned that preparing original, personalised resources would aid this issue. Another expressed concern about ruining informality and causality of sessions, which they believe sets aside Chrysalis conversation sessions from other ESOL provisions. In order to deal with this problem, they suggested that training the volunteers with specific techniques for entry-level learners would be useful. Secondly, a student volunteer claimed that organisationally it is better to encourage communication among student volunteers and share progress to improve the quality of the sessions for the attendees.

ii. Impacts

Conversational ESOL sessions have impacts on practical language learning as well as helping with integration into society. All of the student volunteers believed that the sessions help attendees to learn English. A student volunteer highlighted that attendees "live in a quite close community where sometimes people are all refugees or immigrants, so they don't meet people who speak English as their first language". In addition to this, two out of the four student volunteers agreed that providing opportunities for speaking helps them to learn English as well as improving confidence. For this reason, one volunteer believes this type of provision is more effective than academic driven ESOL provisions. On the other hand, two of the four student volunteers agreed that attendees with higher proficiency seem to learn more than those with little or no English.

All of the student volunteers agreed that this ESOL provision at Chrysalis helps attendees to integrate in society. Topics used in sessions that are related to Manchester and UK politics and health care help to do this. For example, an interviewee found an attendee talking about British politics with a student volunteer, a topic covered in the previous session. This has the secondary effect of bringing attendees from different cultures together.

Social integration is not only for ESOL services users, but also for student volunteers. The general understanding among the volunteers was that ESOL provisions also gives them a better understanding of Manchester and actively integrate in society. Two of the student volunteers noticed more about the multicultural diversity that is present in Manchester, after working at the sessions. For example, a volunteer explained they learned about an Iranian new year family celebration, enriching their multicultural understandings.

Student volunteers described that participation in sessions aided their future career pathways and understanding of available opportunities. Two of the student volunteers said they enjoy teaching and communicating with people from diverse cultures and with different life experiences. In fact, one volunteer said she is considering a future career in teaching because of their experience at Chrysalis. Two student volunteers referred to the refugee and migrant

situation in Manchester; one mentioned that “these groups are often marginalised and socially excluded through lack of English proficiency, this session would be a worthy scheme to work.” In all, the sessions at Chrysalis have obviously provided learning, personal and social advantages for the attendees as intended, as well as supplying similar benefits for those volunteering to work at the centre.

3. Discussion

We found that the general trends outlined in the literature review of our previous report were sustained in our own findings, although some differences prevailed. Below is a discussion of our findings in light of our previously reviewed literature.

A. ESOL Students

i. Community cohesion and accessing public services

Our research found Manchester is in dire need of ESOL provisions as a massive 70,000 residents (2011 Census) have a language other than English as their main, thus the one they predominantly use to communicate. This is reiterated in our data as none of the interviewees from either Chrysalis or Birchfield Primary School answered that English was their main language. However, some answered that they use a mixture of languages at home, particularly if they have younger children who speak English at school. In reality, it can be inferred that ESOL provisions are required on a large-scale in order for communication in the national language.

Interviewees highlighted the importance of this, especially when communicating outside their homes and away from family and friends. Our research found that ESOL provisions do seem to help in this sector; all our interviewees answered that they felt more comfortable speaking English in their everyday lives, especially with shopping and going to the doctors. This could be due to the skills they have learned during the sessions, or even because they have had opportunity to communicate with other speakers of English at the organisations. However, four of the students said they still require translation in these situations. From our literature review, we know this is a drain on government funding as translation has been shown to cost a great deal, as oppose to charitable English sessions. This suggests that more funding directed towards ESOL provisions, for instance for more classes or longer duration classes, would help prevent this cost.

Our research also showed that women in particular were affected by cuts to ESOL provisions. This is in line with the women’s equality sector of the UK shadow report (2013), which outlines some ESOL provisions are only available to those on job seekers allowance, excluding women who are primary care-givers and therefore do not actively seek work as much. However, Enactus: Speak Up is exclusively run for parents of the children at the school who want to learn English, for example to help their children with homework and to apply for jobs. As the lessons run during school hours and have no mandatory attendance, this grants women the time to care for their children without hindering their English learning. It seems this establishment is actively targeting this issue.

ii. Impacts

Most of the students believed that the English provisions helped them to better their English skills in some way. Overall the provisions we studied in Manchester proved effective, as many of our students were using the skills they had learned to write job applications. In turn, this works to provide independence and financial stability, thus confirming these types of provisions are a necessity.

The literature review shows that some provisions were exclusively for those actively seeking work and others were dependent on some prior level of English skills (Appendix 12 English for speakers of other languages, women’s equality in the UK shadow report, 2013). However, both Enactus and Chrysalis offer drop-in type sessions without required prerequisites, allowing for open attendance. This has obvious advantages as there is no bias, as was found in other cases across the UK in the literature review, meaning there is accessibility to provisions for a wealth of people in Manchester. However this notion does create some issues, as uncovered in the interviews. One issue lied with the differing levels of English among the attendees that this open-to-all policy creates. Some complained the sessions were too hard to follow, whereas others complained they were too easy; the teachers would find it hard to cater for all, leaving attendees feeling dissatisfied.

Other attendees complained that not everything was covered sufficiently in class, for example some believed a focus on oral English would help their personal learning. This could be due to major government cuts to the ESOL provisions

budget, leaving Enactus and Chrysalis having to heavily rely on volunteers. These may not be well enough equipped or trained to cover everything a qualified teacher might in a short period of time.

B. ESOL Manager

As aforementioned in section B of findings, we can see that the ESOL sessions run efficiently, in the case of Chrysalis, because they are at low cost and are openly accessible. However, the manager still highlights the need for more funding for ESOL provisions. From our prior research we saw that the budget was almost halved from 2009/10 to 2014/15 (Manchester City Council report, 2017). The manager highlights how this has impacted Chrysalis in not only how the centre is run, but also how teaching is organised. Despite these cuts Chrysalis, among many other organisations across Manchester and the UK, has successfully managed to continue providing efficient provisions.

C. ESOL Teachers/Volunteers

The Talk English provisions we saw in the literature review were so successful because of volunteers, without the use of government funding. We found this is how Enactus and Chrysalis function, also. The teachers dedicate their own time complimentary, and use Google to find cost-free resources. This demonstrates that if the government can continue to fund adequate locations for the sessions to take place, they can run from there on out without much cost. However, the voluntary nature means there no obligation to teach; volunteers can miss sessions due to other arrangements. This inferably can result in less staff at some sessions, which could make sessions seem disorganised and crowded.

References

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Appendix

A. Student Questionnaire (Chrysalis & Enactus: Birchfields)

1. How did you find out about the course?
2. Did you join a waiting list to join the course? If so, for how long did you wait?
3. Do you find it easy to attend the classes? For example, is transport easy and are the scheduled classes suitable?
4. Do you think you have learnt a lot from the course so far?
5. Do you think what you have learnt is useful in your everyday life?
6. Has what you have learnt helped your confidence when speaking English?
7. Do you think what you have learnt has helped you to feel at home? If so, how?
8. Do you have an opportunity to practice with native speakers weekly? If so, where? For example at home or at work.
9. Do you feel more confident communicating with a GP or Police officer now, more so than before beginning the course?
10. If applicable, has the English you have learnt in the classes helped you with any job opportunities?
11. Have you attended any other English language classes? For example in compulsory or voluntary education/ other ESOL service.
12. Have you experienced any barriers in developing your learning of English? If so, what have they been?

13. Do you believe there are any issues or improvements that can be made in to how the class or course is run?

B. Student Questionnaire (Enactus: Rushbrook)

1. How have you found 'Speak Up' this year? Have the lessons been useful?
2. Have these English lessons helped to increase your confidence?
3. Have you been able of use the things you have learnt in you daily life?
4. Do you have any feedback about the course?
5. Will you be returning next September?

C. Consent Form

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Please take time to read the information carefully, ask any questions if anything is not clear or if you want more information.

As a group, we are part of the Multilingual Manchester project at the University of Manchester. We are going to study how effective English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provisions are, who attends the classes and how these people find the service.

We will use the data we are collecting today to create a picture of Manchester's ESOL provisions as a whole. We want to understand the services from those who are involved and your answers will help us to do this.

Your answers and identity will remain anonymous and confidential. This means that your name and personal details will not be written on our research paper, only some detail of your answers. We will ask a set of questions and you can answer if you want to. You are free to stop and not answer at any time, without giving a reason.

We ask that you please answer as honestly and completely as you can ask we thank you in advance for taking part.

If you are happy to take part please sign below.

'I confirm that I understand the information about the research and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I also understand that I am free to stop at any time and not answer questions if I do not want to, without giving a reason.'

D. Teacher/Volunteer Questionnaire

1. How do you organise and run sessions for students?
2. Is the majority of teaching one-to-one or group focused?
3. Do you think the service is helping students to learn English effectively?
4. Do you think the teaching you provide is helping students to integrate in society?
5. What were your motivations to begin volunteering/working in such a line of work?
6. Do you believe there are any issues or improvements that can be made in to how the classes are run?

E. Managerial Questionare (Chrysalis)

1. Can you tell me about the background of the Chrysalis centre and your work/aims?
2. Can you tell me about the English course that you offer now and that you have offered in the past? If there was ever a time the course wasn't on offer, why?
3. When did you start providing these English courses?
4. Why did you start providing these English courses?
5. For the English courses that Chrysalis offers, or has offered in the past, has there been high demand? How are places allocated to students? Are there certain criteria that people must meet to access the course?
6. How are the English courses at Chrysalis funded?
7. Do you think the English courses at Chrysalis have been effective in meeting people's needs?
8. Can you tell us more about the Talk English and sew sessions? What are the benefits of these courses?
9. Are you aware of any other local English teaching services? If so, do you believe the services you provide differ to them?
10. In general, is there anything else you would like to address in terms of availability of ESOL provisions in Manchester?

11. Do you want your answers to remain anonymous or are you happy to be named in the research paper?