

Films for ESOL training

Section 4 - Language and literacy as social practice



Foreword

These resources were compiled with ESOL teachers in the UK in mind. They introduce a number of approaches and focus on giving learners a voice, encouraging them to express their identities and “speak from within”, a highly significant aspect of effective practice in ESOL teaching.

The materials are designed to be used by a group of teachers with a trainer or facilitator, either in teacher development sessions or on in-service training courses. Trainers who decide to use them on pre-service training courses may want to adapt some of them. They can also be used by teachers working alone.

Teachers not working in the UK ESOL context may also be interested in the theme of these resources and materials and should be able to adapt the materials to their own ELT context.

Introduction to the resources

These resources have been chosen for their relevance to teachers working in ESOL in the UK, where groups of learners are often very diverse. The sessions introduce different teaching approaches that focus on the learners - their varying backgrounds, experiences, skill levels, interests and aspirations. It shows how teachers can draw on this diversity to provide a rich and stimulating learning environment. All four teaching approaches featured share a concern with giving learners a voice, encouraging them to express their identities and “speak from within”, a highly significant aspect of effective practice in ESOL teaching.

“the most effective teachers...drew on learners’ own experiences and lives outside the classroom and crucially, encouraged them to ‘speak from within’...Where learners were speaking from within they produced longer, more complex stretches of talk, which we know to be essential for language learning and acquisition to take place.” (Cooke and Roberts 2007)

There are 6 sessions available:

1. **ESOL Learners - from a seminar by Philida Schellekens**

In this clip Philida Schellekens gives background information about ESOL learners in the UK and the skills they bring to class.

2. **Language experience - from a seminar by Judith Kirsh**

Judith Kirsh shows how learners’ own words can be used to develop literacy skills, using the *language experience* approach.

3. **Teaching unplugged - from a seminar by Luke Meddings**

In this clip Luke Meddings introduces the *Dogme* or *unplugged* approach to teaching English. Again, the starting point is the learners’ contributions, but this time the focus is more on spoken English.

4. Language and literacy as social practice - from a seminar by Pauline Moon

In this clip Pauline Moon takes a *social practices* approach to ESOL, arguing that teaching should take account of how learners need to use language in their daily lives, and of hidden assumptions and conventions surrounding and underpinning social interactions.

5. Differentiated learning supported by technology - from a seminar by Amanda Wilson and Callie Wilkinson

This clip focuses on differentiation strategies to meet learner needs and to enhance learner choice in the classroom. It looks in particular at how technology can be used to support differentiation.

6. Online CPD - from a seminar by Phil Bird and Mike Harrison

Finally, clip six shows how the internet can be used by teachers as a tool for continuous professional development.

We recommend using the clips in the sequence in which they are listed. However, each clip can also be used as a stand-alone resource.

Introduction to the photocopiable materials

The activities provided are intended to help ESOL teachers consider the issues raised in the films in more detail. Background information, clips, links to theory and annotated bibliographies are available in the participants' notes.

Each set of materials contains:

- A *trainer notes* sheet for the person leading the session
- An *activities* sheet for participants to use during the session, while watching the DVD. This is to help people consider the issues raised in the films in more detail, and to then apply them to their own practice.
- *Notes for participants*, to be read by the trainer before leading the session and given out to participants, normally at the end of the session. These give background information, expand on the theories referred to in the films and give ideas for follow-up, including a bibliography.

Section 4: Language and literacy as social practice: Trainer notes

Introduction

This video clip comes from a seminar given by Pauline Moon for the British Council.

In the first part of the video Pauline focuses on language and literacy as social practice. She discusses the need for contextualisation of learning to make learners aware of the underlying conventions that govern our interactions.

In the second part of the video she discusses the importance of learner identity and giving learners a voice in the ESOL classroom.

How to use these activities

There are five activities to accompany this video. Activities 1 and 2 are based on the first part of the video clip. Activities 3, 4 and 5 are based on the second part of this video. These are designed to be flexible so that they can be used with teachers working with learners in a wide range of settings and at different levels. Trainers can use all of the activities or select the ones they consider most relevant.

Ideally these activities should be used in group training or professional development sessions.

However teachers can work through them alone using the background information on the notes for participants and the tutor notes for guidance.

Activity 1 - This explores theory of language and literacy as social practice

Activity 2 - This activity gives participants an opportunity to apply theory of language as social practice to the context of a job interview

Activity 3 - This activity introduces the topic of learner identity. Participants are asked to think about their own practice as well as Pauline's suggestions.

Activity 4 - This activity focuses on the choice of topic in the ESOL classroom and the use of controversial topics.

Activity 5 - This activity introduces the concept of "speaking from within" and encourages participants to reflect upon their own practice and discuss practical classroom activities.

These trainer guidance notes give some suggestions of ideas that might arise in the discussion with participants and may be helpful if participants find it difficult to get started or in summing up ideas. Detailed background information with links to theory is available in the notes that accompany this section. This also includes a bibliography for tutors and participants who would like to investigate the topics further.

Activity 1

The aim of this activity is to introduce participants to the theory of language and literacy as social practice and its relevance to an ESOL context. Please refer to the notes that accompany this task for more background information about language and literacy as social practice and a biography for further reading.

Suggested procedure

- a) Invite participants to discuss Activity A in pairs or small groups before they watch the video. Depending on the experience of the participants, they may have very little or a lot of prior knowledge. Encourage them to think about what “social practice” or “socially situated practice” might mean, even if they have not heard of it before. Invite some ideas from the group as appropriate.
- b) Play the first part of the video – *Language and literacy as social practice*
- c) Collect feedback from the group.

Suggested answers**A. What is meant by literacy as social practice?**

Literacy as social practice theory is concerned with how literacy and language is used to create meaning. It does not focus on individual skills but on the way people use literacy and language practices in their daily lives.

B. How is this theory relevant to the ESOL teaching context?

- Learning is influenced by social and power relationships inside and outside the classroom. Teaching English involves recognising and working with the social relationships and identities of learners.
- Language teaching needs to be relevant to learners' lives.
- Learners need to be made aware of social conventions about appropriacy of language. e.g. need for more formal language in an interview, need for standard grammar in writing a job application

- Learners need to be made aware of underlying conventions of both written and spoken English. For example:
 - The weather is a popular topic for making small talk with neighbours.
 - You are expected to say please when making a request. Sometimes requests have a lead-in. e.g. 'Oh dear, I've come out without any money' might precede a request for a loan of cash.
 - Formal letters have a certain format and style. Emails have a different format and style and the conventions of this newer genre are more fluid.
- Classroom teaching should make use of authentic materials which are relevant to learners' lives.
- Literacy and language practices may differ across cultures so it can be useful to draw comparisons.
- Teachers need to be aware of learners' lives and how they use literacy and language practices outside the classroom. This includes multilingual practices.
- Teachers should be aware of learners' backgrounds, experiences, interests and motivations and draw upon these in the classroom.
- Learners should be given space in the classroom to express their identity by talking about issues that affect or interest them.

Activity 2

This activity asks participants to apply theory to practice in the context of a job interview. Participants will be able to come up with a range of ideas, including, but not limited to, those listed below.

In her presentation Pauline Moon describes how our everyday interactions are shaped by the context in which they take place. Social practices or conventions affect how we communicate with each other. Pauline uses the iceberg metaphor to distinguish between the visible events and the social conventions that govern them.

Suggested procedure

Invite participants to discuss Activity a) in pairs or small groups and write their suggestions in the iceberg. Alternatively they could draw an iceberg on flipchart paper. This can then later be displayed on the wall. Feedback can be taken before b) or at the end as appropriate to the group.

- a) Work in a pair or a small group. Make a list of some of the social conventions of a job interview and write them in the hidden part of the iceberg.

JOB INTERVIEW

- You should arrive 5-10 minutes before your interview
- You should wear smart clothes
- You should report to reception (or as directed)
- There may be several interviewers
- Interviews are usually quite formal, so it is important to use appropriate formal language (e.g. greetings)
- You may be offered a handshake
- You will be invited to sit down
- There may be tasks to complete as well as the interview
- You should maintain eye contact with interviewers
- The interviewer will usually start with “small talk” to relax the interviewee
- You will be asked to talk about your previous experience
- You should give specific examples to answer questions
- You will be given an opportunity to ask questions

- b) Discuss the implications for teaching and learning and how you might approach the topic of job interviews in the classroom.

Participants will bring their own ideas to this discussion, so there are no suggested answers. You might like to draw out the following points, if not provided by the participants:

- ESOL learners need to develop the language skills needed at interview, such as question formation and how to construct personal narratives. Alongside this they need to know what kind of questions are asked and the degree of politeness required.
- ESOL learners will also need to know about non-linguistic conventions, such as hand-shaking, what to wear.
- Many ESOL learners already work and will have experience of interviews that they can share.
- ESOL learners will need to know that Interview conventions will vary across cultures, and learners may not be aware of this or may not know the conventions in the UK.

Giving learners the opportunity to share their experiences of job interviews both in the UK and elsewhere helps address many of these issues. Meryl Wilkins (2009) addresses the topic of job interviews in detail and provides two example lesson plans of how the topic might be covered in an E3 ESOL class. Trainers might like to refer to this for further ideas and guidance.

Part 2: Identity and speaking from within**Activity 3**

The aim of this activity is to stimulate discussion and raise participants' awareness of the role identity plays in language learning and how teachers can encourage learners to express their identities in the classroom.

Introduce task a) and give learners time to share their ideas. Then conduct feedback as appropriate. Introduce task b).

a) Work with a partner or in a small group. Discuss what approaches or strategies you use in the classroom to encourage learners to express their identities. Does your approach vary from group to group?

Participants will bring their own ideas to this discussion, so there are no suggested answers.

Participants' responses might focus on teaching approaches or teaching strategies, for example:

Teaching approaches

- Promoting a learning environment where learners feel safe to express their opinions
- Recognising and valuing every learner's contributions, and the different life experiences they bring to class
- Being sensitive to how learners' lives have changed as a result of migration

Teaching strategies

- Encouraging learners to learn about different cultures e.g. when looking at topics such as food and drink, learners can discuss food in their countries of origin
- Allowing learners to choose classroom topics - either formally by involving learners in planning or informally as discussions arise naturally in class
- Allowing (or encouraging) learners to use other languages in the classroom where appropriate
- Learner involvement in planning/discussion may be easier at higher levels

b) Now watch the second part of the video and make notes on the strategies Pauline suggests.

Make space for learners to discuss their own ideas and thoughts	<i>Participants' own answers</i>
Negotiate topics	
Use controversial topics	
Listen to our students and what they are talking about when we don't set the topics	

c) Discuss your answers with your partner or in a small group and feed back some ideas to the group.

Activity 4: Choosing topics in the ESOL classroom: a discussion activity

In her seminar Pauline Moon talks about how the choice of topic in the classroom can help learners to express their identities.

The aim of this activity is to stimulate discussion about:

- Who chooses topics in the classroom – the teacher or the learners
- How topics are chosen – as part of a negotiated curriculum or unplanned as a result of discussions that emerge in the classroom
- The use of controversial topics to stimulate discussion

There are no suggested answers for this activity. All of the topics have the potential to be controversial depending on the backgrounds, ideas and interests of the learners in the group and how the teacher approaches the topic. What is controversial for one group of learners may not be controversial for another. It should be remembered, however, that some organisations, and some governments, may place restrictions on what topics teachers are allowed to discuss in the classroom. Teachers also need to be sensitive to cultural and religious traditions.

Ask participants to consider question a) in pairs and small groups for 5-10 mins before taking some feedback.

In your groups discuss these questions:

- a) To what extent do learners choose topics in your classroom? How does this come about?

Activities b), c) and d) are about using controversial topics in the classroom. Depending on their interests and experience, participants can complete each activity in turn with short feedback afterwards, or look at all three questions together before conducting group feedback.

- b) How would you categorise the following topics?

TOPIC	Relatively Uncontroversial	Slightly Controversial	Very Controversial
1. The royal family			
2. Family life			
3. The death penalty			
4. The Government of the UK			
5. Alcohol			
6. Unemployment			
7. Drugs			
8. The role of women			
9. Gay marriage			
10. Smoking			
11. Terrorism			
12. Religion			

c) What are the benefits and problems of using controversial topics in class? Are there any topics in the list above that you avoid?

d) How do you deal with controversial topics when they arise?

Activity 5: Speaking from within

(a) Read the quote from the video again.

“...the most effective teachers ... also drew on learners’ own experiences and lives outside the classroom ... – bringing the outside in – and crucially, encouraged them to ‘speak from within’. We observed that where learners were ‘speaking from within’ they produced longer, more complex stretches of talk, which we know to be essential for language learning and acquisition to take place.”

(Cooke and Roberts, 2007)

Write down three ways in which you (can) encourage ‘speaking from within’ in your ESOL classes.

Participants will make a range of suggestions. Here are some ideas if they find it difficult to get started:

- Teach beginner learners how to express their likes and dislikes, feelings and opinions very early in the course
- Expect learners to expand on answers
- Allow time in class to respond to and develop learner-initiated talk and impromptu discussions
- Use good questioning techniques to draw out extended answers
- Plan discussion activities and open ended tasks
- Plan simple activities that enable learners to draw on their experiences outside the classroom (e.g. a simple question what did you do at the weekend)

- Allow learners to choose topics
- Use learner presentations and projects
- Encourage cultural comparisons (e.g. discussing different celebrations, weather, food etc)

Discuss your ideas with a partner or in a small group.

(b) Work with a partner. Look at an activity from the ESOL Skills for Life resources, an ESOL website (such as www.talent.ac.uk) or an ELT course book. Analyse it – How structured is it? – Does it provide space for learners to speak from within? How can it be used/adapted to encourage learners to speak from within?

This activity can be adapted to suit the teaching context of participants. Most ESOL teachers working in the England, Wales and Northern Ireland will be familiar with the ESOL Skills for Life resources, which were developed to support the delivery of the ESOL Core Curriculum. They include learner activities, teacher notes and sound files. They can be accessed via the “Excellence Gateway”.

<http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=201231>

Trainers working in a non-UK context or in EFL might prefer to use an online resource or an ELT course book, especially if centres have prescribed course materials. If appropriate, participants could be asked to bring a teaching resource they have recently used or are familiar with.

There are no suggested answers to this section, as the participants will generate their own ideas based on the actual resources given or chosen. However, some key points that might arise include:

- (a) Highly-structured grammar and vocabulary tasks might not provide many opportunities for learners to speak from within. They can, however, be extended or adapted.

Examples:

- An activity using there is/there are to describe a room can be adapted or extended for learners to describe a room where they live or their ideal room.
 - A vocabulary task can be extended by asking learners to choose two or three words they found useful and write their own sentences
- (b) Learners will often subvert a grammar drill by providing different answers or making additional comments – allow space for this in the classroom and respond to it. This is more important than getting the correct form of the present perfect.
- (c) Role plays can give learners an opportunity to speak from within, if they are not too structured and allow learners freedom to use their own ideas, rather than a prescribed script.
- (d) Discussions will generally enable learners to speak from within, provided that the topic is of interest to the learners and is something they have experience or knowledge of. Making sure that the topics relate to the contexts of learners' lives, as advocated by a social practices approach, will ensure learners have something to say. Topics relating to work practices may well be meaningless to learners who have never worked and have no aspirations to do so.
- (e) Reading texts and listening texts might ask learners for a personal response. If not, think about how it can be personalised.

Examples:

- A reading text about transport in a local area can easily be extended to cover a discussion about whether learners use local transport and what they think of it, or how public transport in the area compares to other areas the learners have lived.
 - A listening comprehension about asking for items in a shop can easily be extended to discuss learners' shopping habits, food preferences etc, even at low levels of English.
- (f) Learners often respond spontaneously to something they read in a text. Make space for this in the classroom and encourage other learners to participate and contribute their own ideas.
- (g) Topic choice is important. Is it something learners have experience of or not? If outside their experience, they may be less able to contribute their own ideas. This may often be the case when using EFL resources with ESOL learners. An example might be an activity to practise question forms to guess the identity of a famous celebrity.
- (h) Many writing activities enable learners to write about themselves, their lives and what interests them.
- (i) A language experience approach to teaching ESOL will give learners an opportunity to use their own ideas as the basis for learning activities.
- (j) Presentation activities can allow learners to express their identities, especially if they can choose their own topic.

Section 4: Language and literacy as social practice: Activities (part 1)**Background information**

You are going to watch an extract from a presentation by Pauline Moon at the British Council in London. In her presentation Pauline focuses on the theory of language and literacy as social practice and how this relates to ESOL teaching.

Activity 1

- a) Work in a small group. Discuss what you already know about the theory of literacy as social practice and make some notes. If you have not heard or read anything about this theory, consider in what ways literacy can be seen as a social or socially situated activity.

A. What is meant by literacy as social practice?

B. How is this theory relevant to the ESOL teaching context?

- b) Watch the extract. Think about your answers to the questions and add any new information/ideas to your notes.
- c) Discuss your answers with the group.

Activity 2

In her presentation Pauline Moon describes how our everyday interactions are shaped by the context in which they take place. Social practices or conventions affect how we communicate with each other. Pauline uses the iceberg metaphor to distinguish between the visible events and the social conventions that govern them.

- b) Work in a pair or a small group. Make a list of some of the social conventions of a job interview and write them in the hidden part of the iceberg.



- a) Discuss the implications for teaching and learning and how you might approach the topic of job interviews in the classroom.

Identity and speaking from within (part 2)

This extract discusses the importance of learner identity and giving learners a voice in the ESOL classroom.

Activity 3

- a) Work with a partner. Discuss what approaches or strategies you use in the classroom to encourage learners to express their identities. Does your approach vary from group to group?
- b) Now watch the video and make notes on the strategies Pauline suggests.

Strategies	Do you use this strategy? What do you think about the strategy?

- c) Discuss your answers with your partner or in a small group and feed back some ideas to the group.

Activity 4: Choosing topics in the ESOL classroom – a discussion activity

In your groups discuss these questions:

- a) To what extent do learners choose topics in your classroom? How does this come about?
- b) How would you categorise the following topics?

TOPIC	Relatively Uncontroversial	Slightly Controversial	Very Controversial
1. The royal family			
2. Family life			
3. The death penalty			
4. The Government of the UK			
5. Alcohol			
6. Unemployment			
7. Drugs			
8. The role of women			
9. Gay marriage			
10. Smoking			
11. Terrorism			
12. Religion			

- c) What are the benefits and problems of using controversial topics in class? Are there any topics in the list above that you avoid?
- d) How do you deal with controversial topics when they arise?

Activity 5: Speaking from within

- (a) Read the quote from the video again.

“...the most effective teachers ... also drew on learners' own experiences and lives outside the classroom ... – bringing the outside in – and crucially, encouraged them to 'speak from within'. We observed that where learners were 'speaking from within' they produced longer, more complex stretches of talk, which we know to be essential for language learning and acquisition to take place.”

(Cooke and Roberts, 2007)

Write down three ways in which you (can) encourage 'speaking from within' in your ESOL classes.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Discuss your ideas with a partner or in a small group.

- (b) Work with a partner. Look at an activity from the ESOL Skills for Life resources, an ESOL website (such as www.talent.ac.uk) or an ELT course book. Analyse it – How structured is it? Does it provide space for learners to speak from within? How can it be used/adapted to encourage learners to speak from within?

Section 4: Language and literacy as social practice: Notes for participants

In her presentation on language and literacy as social practice Pauline Moon draws upon David Barton and Mary Hamilton's work on literacy as social practice. This theory is based upon the following six propositions about the nature of literacy:

- Literacy can be understood as a set of social practices; which can be inferred from events and are mediated by written texts.
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others.
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and literacy practices.
- Literacy is historically situated.
- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making" (Barton et al. 2000:8)

Literacy events

"Literacy events are activities where literacy has a role. Usually there is a written text, or texts, central to the activity and there may be talk around the text. Events are observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them. The notion of events stresses the situated nature of literacy, that it always exists in a social context." (Barton et al. 2000:8).

Literacy practices

Literacy practices are defined by Barton and Hamilton as "the general cultural ways of utilising written language which people draw upon in their lives". These practices are influenced by values, attitudes, feelings and relationships. (Barton et al. 2000:7)

These literacy practices involve both the language conventions, such as the characteristics of genres, choice of words or use of tenses and the physical, mental and interpersonal practices that create the context. (Clark and Ivanic,1997:12)

A social practice approach to teaching

A social practice approach recognises the importance of social and emotional aspects of teaching and learning and takes account of the differences in peoples' lives - their culture, language, class and status. It uses these as the starting point for learning and connects what people know and use outside the classroom to what they learn inside. This makes it possible to achieve a 'closer fit', making the learning relevant and useful. (Appleby and Barton, 2008:27)

Social practices differ across groups within society and across cultures. ESOL learners may, therefore, need explicit teaching about social conventions in the UK. This relates not just to literacy practices, but also spoken communication.

In his chapter "Second Language acquisition and the contexts of UK ESOL Practice" John Sutter (2009:63) gives a simple example of leave taking. He describes how leave taking is preceded by phrases such as "anyway" and "well" or, more directly, "I'd better let you get on" and by physical indications such as moving away or picking up a bag. Many ESOL teachers will have their own experiences of ESOL learners who haven't picked up on signals and recognised the end of the lesson.

References and further reading

Appleby, Y. and Barton, D. (2008) *Responding to people's lives*. Leicester: Niace.

Barton, M. and Hamilton, D. (2000) *Literacy Practices*. In: Barton, D., Hamilton, H. and Ivanic, R. (eds) *Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context*. London: Routledge. Chapter 1. pp. 7–15.

Clark, R. and Ivanic, R. (1997) *The Politics of Writing*. London: Routledge.

Sutter, J. (2009) *Second Language acquisition and the contexts of UK ESOL Practice*. In: Paton A. and Wilkins M., *Teaching Adult ESOL. Principles and Practice*, Maidenhead: OUP.

Job applications and Schema theory

In her chapter “Language and Context in ESOL Teaching” Meryl Wilkins (2009) addresses the topic of job interviews and the skills ESOL learners need to be successful at job interviews. She provides two example lesson plans of how job interviews might be covered in an E3 ESOL class. She also discusses the importance of schemata.

According to schema theory, knowledge is organised into a network of mental structures, called schemata. These schemata are developed through experiences over time and are refined and restructured in the light of new experiences. All individuals will have different life experiences and backgrounds and will develop different schemata based on these experiences.

“Sometimes texts present difficulty, not because of the language but because learners lack the requisite background knowledge to understand them. In some cases learners do have background knowledge, but their schemata are based on a cultural model which is different from the model in the mind of the writer.” Wilkins (2009:34)

This is particularly relevant to ESOL learners. When preparing for an interview, ESOL learners will draw on their previous knowledge, experience and understanding of job interviews. They will already have a picture, or schema, in their mind of what the job interview will involve. Research carried out by Philida Schellekens (2001:16) found that the two main barriers to second language speakers finding employment were their low level English language skills and their lack of ability to sell themselves at job interviews. Employers interviewed questioned whether second language speakers had sufficient cultural understanding of the interview process.

Meryl Wilkins suggests the following issues might arise with ESOL learners:

- ESOL learners with experience of job interviews in their own countries may need to re-learn something they believe they are already familiar with, as cultural conventions differ.
- Interviewees need some understanding of what interviewers expect e.g. how much detail to give when answering questions.
- Interviewees need to be aware that communication will be more difficult if interviewers have different schemata. (Wilkins, 2009:34-35)

In addition, John Sutter points out that ESOL learners will need to be made aware of contextual elements such as:

- Where people sit in the room.
- How they sit and what they wear.
- The need to 'sell yourself' to the interviewers. (Sutter, 2009:64)

References and further reading

Schellekens P., (2001) *English Language as a Barrier to Employment, Education and Training*. London: DfEE.

Sutter, J. (2009) *Second Language acquisition and the contexts of UK ESOL Practice*. In: Paton A. and Wilkins M., *Teaching Adult ESOL. Principles and Practice*, Maidenhead: OUP.

Wilkins M. (2009) *Language and Context in ESOL Teaching*. In: Paton A. and Wilkins M., *Teaching Adult ESOL. Principles and Practice*, Maidenhead: OUP.

Speaking from within and learner identity: background information

In her presentation Pauline Moon refers to the importance of *speaking from within* and the NRDC research into ESOL effective practice.

The ESOL Effective Practice Project was a research project carried out on behalf of the NRDC (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy) between 2003 and 2006. The aims of the study were to examine which factors contribute to successful learning and how teaching can be improved. The study drew on observational data from 40 classes with over 500 students. The study can be downloaded from the NRDC website.

One of the key findings of the report relates to giving learners a voice. This is the quote that Pauline Moon uses in her video:

“The most effective teachers ...drew upon learners’ own experiences and lives outside the classroom ... and, crucially, encouraged them to ‘speak from within’. We observed that where learners were speaking from within they produced longer, more complex stretches of talk, which we know to be essential for language learning to take place.” Cooke and Roberts (2007:2)

As Pauline discusses, allowing space to speak from within is one way in which teachers can enable ESOL learners to express their identity in the classroom. Drawing upon learners’ lives and experiences outside the classroom shows learners that their experiences and opinions are valued and allows them both to express their identities and to develop their identities as English speakers.

Other strategies might include:

- Drawing on learners’ expert knowledge of other languages and cultures, such as by discussion of different customs in different cultures or by language comparisons.
- Allowing learners to choose topics of interest and relevance to their lives.
- Fostering a classroom environment which accepts multilingualism and use of other languages in the classroom.

However it is important to acknowledge this responsiveness to learner talk does have implications for teaching:

- Teachers need to be flexible in their approach to planning and delivery to enable them to respond to learner talk as and when it arises. They need to be prepared to move away from the lesson plan and ‘go with the teachable moment’. This is not unproblematic when teaching in a context where pre-defined lesson outcomes are the norm.

The ESOL Effective Practice Project found that:

- As Pauline mentions, allowing the learners to choose topics in the classroom may lead to the discussion of topics the teacher considers sensitive or difficult.
- Learners may need to be supported to use language beyond their current level to get their ideas across. This is something that Luke Meddings also talks about in his presentation.

Language and identity: Bonny Norton

In her presentation Pauline Moon also refers to the work of Bonny Norton. Bonny Norton has carried out research over many years and written widely about theories of language learning and identity. For more information about Bonny Norton’s work see the participants’ notes for Section 3: Teaching unplugged.

References and further reading

Baynham et al., (2007) *Effective Teaching and learning ESOL*, London: NRDC. Available to download at: http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=89

Cook M. and Roberts. C., (2007) *ESOL. Developing Adult Teaching and Learning: Practitioner Guides*, Leicester: NIACE.

Reflect for ESOL

In her presentation Pauline Moon talks about the Reflect approach to ESOL teaching. The Reflect approach is an approach to adult learning and social change, which was developed from the theories of Paulo Freire and PRA (participatory rural appraisal) in pilot projects in Bangladesh, El Salvador and Uganda in the 1990s. This approach makes use of visualisation tools such as trees, rivers, maps and other diagrams, as well as other participatory methods including theatre, role-play, video and photography. The visualisation tools are used as a means to structure and record the points of a discussion.

Using a Reflect approach to teaching in ESOL enables the teacher to step back and give the learners space to explore a topic from their own perspectives through discussion, analysis and reflection. Learners are able to contribute their own experiences and ideas to the discussion of topics that are relevant to their lives. Teachers observe the learners engaging in discussion and use the real language learners need to express their thoughts as a starting point for language work on discourse, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

An evaluation of the Reflect approach by Moon and Sunderland (2008:25) concluded:

“By using the Reflect tools and positioning learners’ (and teachers’) thoughts, ideas, lives, and experiences at the centre of the learning and teaching process, the teachers have been able to facilitate authentic and extended talking which learners could ‘speak from within’ (Cooke and Roberts, 2007). Subsequently, teachers have built on the language that emerged during Reflect activity in order to ‘turn talk into learning’. In this way, they have provided opportunities for English language development.”

Action Aid supports the development of Reflect ESOL in the UK. More information about this approach can be found on the website <http://www.reflect-action.org/reflectesol>. You can also download a Reflect for ESOL resource pack which contains a description of the approach and the visualisation tools, as well as detailed lesson plans for the ESOL classroom.

References and further reading

<http://www.reflect-action.org/>

Moon P. and Sunderland H. (2008) *Reflect for ESOL Evaluation: final report.*, London: LLU+. Available from the reflect-action.org website.