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Action Language evaluation Final report

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Trapeze Consulting
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About Trapeze Consulting

Trapeze Consulting is a collaboration of highly experienced independent managers, policy workers, information specialists, researchers and evaluators with backgrounds in the voluntary and community sector, local government and the NHS. Our approach as evaluators is to build capacity within the organisations we work with to encourage stronger self-evaluation and less reliance on external evaluators.

This evaluation was conducted by Neil Shashoua and Stephanie Cole, who can be contacted at neil@trapezeconsulting.co.uk.

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Executive summary

Action Language

Action Language, a project of Action Foundation, a Newcastle upon Tyne based charity providing support to disadvantaged refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants across Tyne and Wear, provides free English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. ESOL learners are migrants learning English as part of adult basic education and ESOL learners need to be understood as migrants as well as language learners. Currently these classes are funded by the Big Lottery Funds Reaching Communities programme.

Our evaluation

Between January 2016 and June 2018 we evaluated Action Language's free classes by

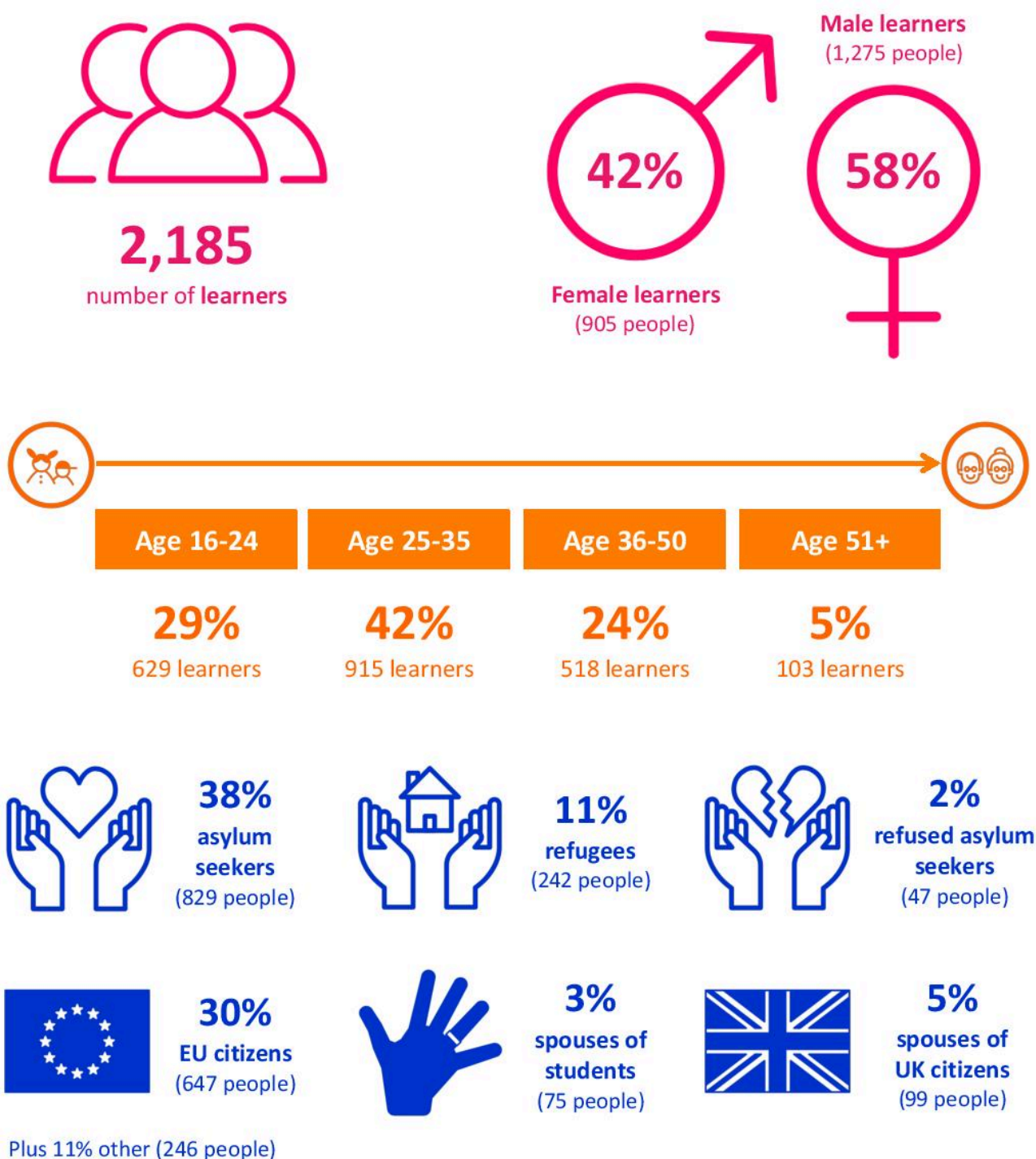
1. Conducting a longitudinal study of a cohort of 90 Action Language learners interviewed every six months. By the end of our study, at Interview 5, out of the original 90 we interviewed 30 Action Language learners and former learners. We conducted 255 interviews in total. From these interviews we collected and analysed quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the difference Action Language makes to learners in terms of their
 - a. English communication skills, empowering them to access basic services and live independently
 - b. Enhanced ability to move on positively to further education, employment or training
 - c. Experience of increased social inclusion, broader social networks, integration into neighbourhoods and reduced exclusion
 - d. Improved self-confidence and self-esteem, leading to improved health and wellbeing

Our literature review of studies on ESOL learners leads us to believe that the cohort for our longitudinal study was the largest of any such study in the country.

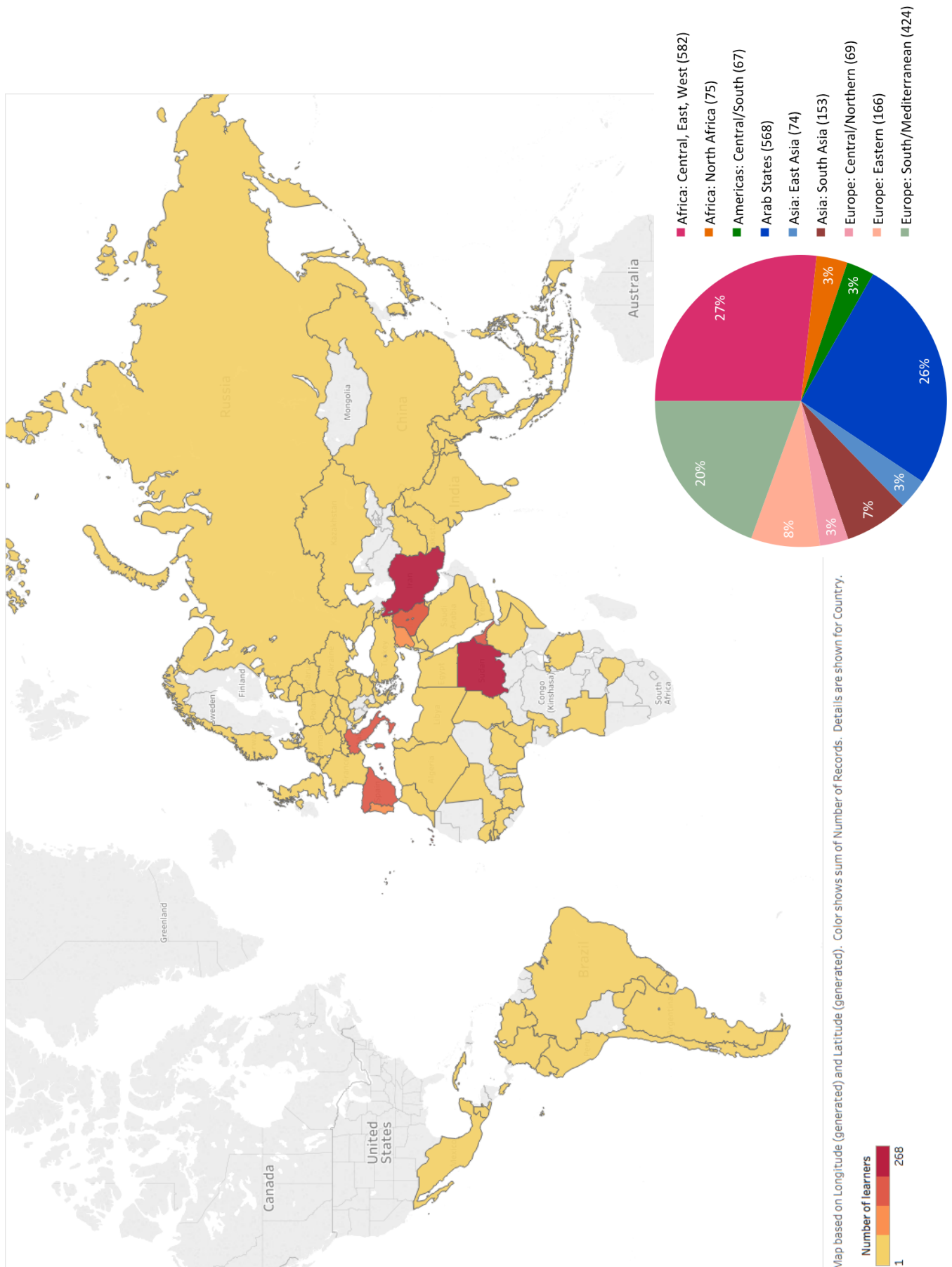
2. Analysing the data that Action Language collected on
 - a. The number of people enrolling on their course, their age, sex, nationality, and immigration status
 - b. The tests given to each person enrolling to determine their level of English ability; used to place them in the class where they would most benefit
 - c. What learners felt about their experience of Action Language and the difference it made to them

Findings

All learners for the whole project 2015-2018



Action Language learners: where in the world?



About Action Language learners

Nearly 2,200 people enrolled in classes over the three years, however less than half of them attended 10 classes or more and a quarter did not attend any. Half of enrolments were of asylum seekers and refugees.

Between September 2015 and July 2018 (ie three academic years), there were a total of 2,635 enrolments by 2,185 people at Action Language; 450 people enrolling more than once over the three years.

The number of enrolments per year for years 1 and 2 were 800, but increased by 31% in Year 3 to 1,039 in Year 3. This level of demand results in the organisation regularly operating waiting lists, especially for the two lowest level classes; Pre-entry and Entry level. Most learners stay for up to one year with some staying for two or more years. Action Language learners are both sexes, mainly male; of all ages (over 16) with those aged 25-35 being the biggest group; from all over the world with large numbers from Africa, Arab States and Europe; and, have a wide range of immigration statuses with around half being asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees, and around a third EU citizens, mainly from South/Mediterranean Europe but also Eastern Europe and Central/North Europe.

However out of the 2,185 people who enrolled over the three years of our evaluation

- 543 people did not attend any classes
- a further 718 people attended fewer than 10 classes

The remaining 924 leavers (42% of the total number) attended 10 or more classes. Of these, 39% attended between 10 and 19 classes; 25% attended between 20 and 29 classes; 12% between 30 and 39 classes, 9% attended between 40 and 49 classes; and 16% attended 50 or more classes.

Improving learners' English language ability, literacy and basic skills

Almost all learners reported that their English had improved by attending Action Language's classes. A quarter of those that attended classes for a year, moved up to the next level.

Of those that attended at least 10 classes over the three years of our study, 896 out of 924 learners (97%) felt their English had improved. Action Language consistently receives positive feedback from learners with 95% to 100% of learners reporting their English was a lot better or better after attending classes. In our study, the average score learners gave Action Language for speaking, listening, reading and writing English was a minimum of 4 out of 5. We also found that use of interpreters when accessing healthcare services decreased over the two years we followed the cohort, as it did in our own interviews with learners and former learners.

Of those who attended 10 classes or more we found that English language ability improved, as measured by progressing to the next level of class. The longer learners stayed with Action Language, the more likely they were to improve. So, after learning English for one year, 25% of learners had gone up to another level, after two years it was 60% of learners, and after three years it was 72%.

Our conclusion is that Action Language helps learners to improve learners' English ability in speaking, listening, writing and reading English, and is particularly helpful around speaking and listening to English. In addition, the longer learners stayed with Action Language, the more likely they were to improve their English.

Improved access to basic services

Action Language classes are successful in helping learners access these types of services.

Access to basic services, such as healthcare, shops and housing services, are all key to meeting the everyday needs of learners. We found that Action Language classes are successful in helping learners access these types of services.

Although a high proportion of learners at baseline could use English to ask for help, communicating with healthcare professionals and teachers of their children at school were areas of difficulty; with 68% needing an interpreter at the doctors. Over time we found that learners reliance upon interpreters reduced and that they felt much more confident in accessing basic services.

Our conclusion is that Action Language classes help learners to gain language skills and cultural understanding to access services that help them in their everyday living; such as shopping, going to the doctors, sorting out housing issues, and finding out how their children are progressing at school.

Independence as a result of attending classes

Learners felt more able to access basic services, get around, use the phone and messaging, and were less reliant on interpreters.

We assessed learners' independence in a variety of ways including finding out about their ability to use English to help them get around, their use of interpreters, and their use of the phone and text based communication (emails, messages and SMS); in addition to asking them to rate themselves on how independent they were.

We found that most learners were adept at getting around using the English they had; complemented with online maps and transport apps. They had difficulty understanding people who spoke quickly and/or with strong regional accents, however most were able to ask people to repeat what they had said and to ask them to slow down their pace of speaking. Almost all of the learners could understand prices and money, however basic their English language skills. Over the course of our study, we found learners becoming increasingly independent; reducing their reliance on interpreters, being better able to make and receive phone calls, and understanding terminology used by professionals.

Those who undertook Action Language's ESOL for Work course reported that it helped them to obtain and change jobs in addition to helping them understand their rights and responsibilities at work.

Overall, our cohort felt more independent at the end of the study than at the beginning, increasing their feelings of independence by an average of 0.5 out of 5. Each of the three groups by immigration status felt their independence had increased over the course of our study. Refugees and asylum seekers felt much more independent, with everyone in this group who remained to the end of the study rating themselves as fairly or very independent; and over half of the EU citizens rating themselves the same. There was some increase felt by other migrants too.

Our conclusion is that Action Language classes help learners become more independent, for learners at all levels.

Moving on positively to further education, employment or training

Action Language's ESOL for Work course was highly praised by learners, a number of whom reported that it directly benefitted their employment.

Most Action Language learners felt that the classes they attended helped them have a better chance of getting work, more education or succeeding in life. Of our cohort of 90; 19 maintained and 12 gained paid work; 44 volunteered and 14 moved on to further education. Of the 83 learners that had left Action Language's classes by the end of our study, 46 (55%) had left their classes within the first six months. A number moved on to ESOL classes in colleges of further education because they were asylum seekers who had been offered free classes there.

Learners were very appreciative of the charity's ESOL for Work course; a number found it of direct and timely help for them to apply for and be interviewed for a job.

We found good success stories of learners progressing with Action Language, moving on to college to study English and Maths and going on to study other subjects of a vocational nature.

Our conclusion is that Action Language's free classes help learners to move on positively to further education, employment or training.

Community participation and volunteering

Volunteering by learners and former learners increased across the three years of our study.

Action Language learners volunteer in their local communities, which helps them to practice their English, be with other people, develop broader social networks, and make friends.

Just over a quarter (29%) of 290 learners that completed feedback forms over three years reported to Action Language that they volunteer. Rates of volunteering increased across the three years of our study with an equal proportion of those 84 volunteers being asylum seekers and refugees and other migrants, with a slightly smaller proportion of EU citizens (the group most likely to be in paid employment) who volunteered.

In addition around a third of the study cohort (29 out of 90 people) reported volunteering at least once across the three-year study period, with 12 people reporting they were volunteering at throughout. Looking at the study cohort, refugees and asylum seekers volunteer the most, which is likely to be because they are not working or not able to work due to their immigration status. EU citizens and other migrants do volunteer but in smaller numbers.

We found that learners learnt about local services and activities from Action Language, which helped them to participate more in their communities. In our study, we found that a minority of interviewees attended local events, for example firework displays, Christmas events, and children's parties. We also found a significant minority (31%) of interviewees regularly attended church, which was a strong support in their lives.

Our conclusion is that Action Language helps learners to participate in society, by teaching English Action Language and offering volunteering opportunities within the language school, however its primary purpose is teaching English not placing volunteers.

Developing friendships and reducing social isolation

91% of learners said they had made friends whilst at Action Language.

There is good evidence that many migrants and people from Black and minority ethnic communities, whatever their reason for moving to the UK, experience social isolation and feel lonely. We found that Action Language helped learners to connect with each other by providing a friendly and welcoming atmosphere; teaching in small groups with teaching assistants; and, organising events in the building for learners to interact with each other and practice their English.

At baseline, although many Action Language learners had friends, most lacked a connection with native English speakers and the areas in which they lived such that they felt at ease. This was due to their low-level of English language skills; their lack of rootedness in local places; their lack of connection via paid work or volunteering; whether they were accepted by the local communities in which they lived, and the lack of opportunities and neutral meeting places for them to get to know their neighbours.

Other drivers of social isolation experienced by learners included the lack of connection with their families and long-standing friends; lack of understanding and harmony with local culture; and, especially for asylum seekers and refugees, the distress they experienced in leaving their home country and coming to the UK.

EU and other migrants experienced more connection with others; mostly made via work and through the friends and colleagues of their spouses.

By providing classes, Action Language helps to create the conditions for reducing isolation and developing friendships by bringing learners together. We found that not all learners who enrol with Action Language go on to attend classes, and of those who do attend classes, most do not attend 10 or more, a level at which could contribute to overcoming their isolation and learning English.

Our conclusion is that by providing classes, Action Language helps to create the conditions for reducing isolation and developing friendships by bringing learners together.

Improving confidence and self-esteem

77% of learners reported feeling happier and more confident as a result of attending classes.

Confidence and self-esteem relate to how learners feel about their everyday interactions with others, their status in the country, and the opinion they have of themselves. As such, acquiring English as a second language is only one factor in helping learners improve their confidence and self-esteem.

We found strong evidence that Action Language classes helped learners, across all class levels, to improve their confidence in using English; and this was true for learners who had remained in the lower levels of classes throughout our study as well as those who progressed to higher-level classes. In addition, there was a positive relationship between increases in confidence in using English and increased ability to access basic services and being more independent.

Our conclusion is that Action Language helps learners to become more confident English users; better able to access basic services and have their needs met, becoming more confident in their interactions with others to undertake day-to-day tasks such as shopping and the doctors, and in travelling around the area.

Improving health and wellbeing

Learners are happier in class than at other times of the week

Using *Five ways to wellbeing* promoted by the National Health Service and other health bodies as a framework to understand and assess wellbeing, we found learners are happier in class than at other times, with 93% over the three years telling Action Language they are happier or a lot happier in class than at other times of the week and 98% reporting they are happier and more confident as a result of attending classes at Action Language. Action Language contributed to learners' wellbeing by providing opportunities to connect, learn and give; and that learners took part in a range of activities themselves to increase opportunities to connect, be active, take notice, learn and give.

In terms of health, we found that asylum seekers and refugees experienced a range of health issues connected to their unique experiences; they spoke about low mental health (such as depression or feeling sad) because they had been forced to flee their home country, were separated from their family, or their families had died. There were also a number of asylum seekers and refugees that were receiving treatment for, or recovering from, physical injuries or mental health problems as a result of violence in their home countries or insufficient access to healthcare before they came to the UK.

Our conclusion is that Action Language does contribute to learners' wellbeing by providing opportunities to connect with fellow learners, teachers and other staff, opportunities to learn English and to give by volunteering with Action Language. And by teaching English language skills, to enable learners to connect with their neighbours and form friendships; to give by volunteering and participate in their communities; build foundations for further learning such as maths, learning to drive and moving on to vocational and academic study.

Conclusions

Action Language has either met all of the targets set for its Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities funded project to provide free ESOL classes or is on track to meet those due at the end of the project.

The language school is open to all needing ESOL lessons and, as a result, has a very diverse student body in terms of their immigration, social and economic status as well as their level of education. At the point of enrolment, learners are not starting at the same point in their English language journey; some are highly literate post-graduates from higher levels of social status; others have not had opportunities for anything beyond basic education in their country of origin. The demand from refugees and asylum seekers, EU citizens and other migrants to learn English at Action Language is high. A quarter of those who enrol do not attend any classes and another third attend fewer than 10 classes. The reasons for this relate to the fluid and unsettled lives of many migrants more than people finding other ESOL provision. Action Language's classes are full and demand has increased, although the impact of Brexit may result in a reduction in learners from the EU.

Overwhelmingly learners told us their experience of learning English at Action Language was positive. They liked the format and structure of classes and found the teachers to be patient, understanding and committed. The style of teaching increased learners' confidence and created a relaxed and comfortable environment in which to practice English, and learners could see improvements after each class. Most gained new friendships with fellow learners.

For those who do attend classes, Action Language is effective in helping learners to improve their English ability in speaking, listening, writing and reading English. This helps learners to become more confident English users; better able to access basic services and have their needs met, becoming more confident in their interactions with others to undertake day-to-day tasks such as shopping and the doctors, and in travelling around the area. In addition, lack of English skills for many learners related to lack of self-esteem; how they felt about themselves living in England and interacting with English speaking people. Action Language classes help reduce learners' anxiety about such interactions.

This, in turn, helped learners improve their wellbeing, especially those who had to flee their country of origin due to conflict; many of whom are far away from their families and friends and perhaps are experiencing poor mental and physical health. Action Language helps them connect with fellow learners, teachers and other staff, opportunities to learn English and to give by volunteering with Action Language.

The ESOL for Work course delivers tangible benefits in applying for jobs and understanding job-related paperwork.

The organisation helps learners participate in the community by providing information on volunteering opportunities and providing opportunities for learners and former learners to volunteer with Action Language itself as teachers and teaching assistants.

Action Foundation has been successful at expanding its language school offer and is continually looking to find ways to make its free classes sustainable.

About this report

This report is of our evaluation of the free English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes provided by Action Language, a Newcastle upon Tyne based charity providing support to disadvantaged refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants across Tyne and Wear. ESOL learners are migrants learning English as part of adult basic education and ESOL learners need to be understood as migrants as well as language learners.

The project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme, started in September 2015 and is funded until September 2019.

This report sets out our findings and conclusions on our evaluation of the project's attainment of the outputs and outcomes set, based on

1. The data collected by Action Language, between January 2016 and June 2018, which we collated and analysed
2. Our longitudinal study of a cohort of 90 Action Language learners interviewed every six months between January 2016 and June 2018, from which we collected and analysed quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the difference Action Language makes to learners in terms of the outcomes of the project
 - a. Improved English communication skills, empowering learners to access basic services and live independently
 - b. Enhanced ability to move on positively to further education, employment or training
 - c. Experience of increased social inclusion, broader social networks, integration into neighbourhoods and reduced exclusion
 - d. Improved self-confidence and self-esteem, leading to improved health and wellbeing

Terminology and house style

Below we set out and define terms we use and their meaning throughout this report.

- Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5 – Interview 1 was our baseline interview; subsequent interviews were conducted around six months after the previous interview
- Interviewees – those who enrolled at Action Language and were chosen to join our cohort of 90. When we first interviewed them, all were learners. In subsequent interviews, there were an increasing number of people in our cohort who we interviewed that were no longer Action Language learners
- Learner – someone who is enrolled and attending classes at Action Language
- Numbers under 10 are spelt out, except for measurements with a unit (eg 8%)
- Percentages – for this report, we used whole numbers by rounding up percentages over 0.5 and rounding down percentages under 0.5
- The project – the free classes delivered by Action Language funded by the Big Lottery Fund

About Action Foundation, Action Language and ESOL

About Action Foundation

Action Foundation is a charity and company limited by guarantee based in Newcastle upon Tyne providing support to disadvantaged refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants across Tyne and Wear. Its main activities include

- **Action Hosting** provides free short-term accommodation for destitute asylum seekers through volunteers in their homes, with support for both hosts and guests
- **Action Housing** provides free accommodation and support to destitute asylum seekers
- **Action Language** provides free English language classes to migrants that cannot reasonably access mainstream ESOL provision and a small number of more intensive English classes to prepare for specific exams those that can afford to pay for them
- **Action Letting** manages property for landlords and lets them to homeless refugees with support to maintain their tenancies and progress to living independently

The charity started as a response to the needs of the local community by City Church in Newcastle in 2006 by the current Chief Executive, Julian Prior. Following research into the greatest needs in Newcastle and an assessment of how the church might be able to help meet these needs, the church felt that it should start with the issue of asylum.

Following further research (supported by Your Homes Newcastle) it became clear that there was no agency in Tyneside set up to provide accommodation for asylum seekers that had been refused the right to remain in the UK yet had not returned home. It was estimated that, at the time, there were over 300 people in Tyne and Wear that were destitute, that had no recourse to public funds and were entirely dependent on charitable organisations or friends for their most basic survival.

Initially Action Foundation was set up as the Tyneside branch of Open Door (North East), a Middlesbrough based charity that housed asylum seekers without recourse to public funds.

In October 2009, Action Foundation became a charity in its own right and works in close partnership with the West End Refugee Service as well as many other organisations and individuals. It aims to plug a gap in existing provision and enable vulnerable migrants to; avoid homelessness and extreme poverty, access vital services, increase their skills and employability, access legal support, integrate and live independently.

Action Foundation has won two national awards: in 2014, the Centre for Social Justice Award for addressing poverty and disadvantage and the following year the organisation was one of only five charities to be awarded a Guardian Charity Award out of over 1,200 entries.

About Action Language

In 2007 Action Foundation realised that the key to many of its residents becoming more integrated and being able to access other services they needed was to be able to communicate in English more effectively. It ran a pilot English Summer School for asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants. This proved to be a great success and sparked the idea for a permanent and more regular ESOL service.

Following the success of the ESOL Summer School the charity started to teach English two days a week in April 2008. On the first day there were four students and five volunteer teachers but by the end of the first term this had increased to 46 students attending three different classes. This is now called Action Language, which has free classes every day of the week during term time.

In 2015, the organisation expanded into Sunderland to teach free ESOL classes, and started to offer fee-paying professional English courses to contribute financially towards the delivery of the Action Language free classes. The following year it rebranded these fee paying classes as Action Language PRO and launched a separate, more commercial looking, website (www.actionlanguagepro.co.uk). It provides exam preparation courses for

- The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Trinity's Integrated Skills in English (ISE) (Academic exams)
- Cambridge English: First (FCE)

Action Language Pro Newcastle is not an examination centre, so learners must arrange to take the exam at another centre.

In September 2017 the charity started developing *Learn English Together* (LET). This pilot project provides training and resources to enable organisations or small community groups and churches to start their own English language sessions delivered by volunteers.

The courses Action Language offers

Currently Action Language provides three sets of free courses for adults who cannot access classes at other schools or colleges.

1. **Skills for Life** - delivered in Newcastle and Sunderland for learners of all abilities; from Pre-Entry to Level 2. This course teaches students practical and appropriate English with the aim of enabling them to build their confidence to progress into employment, further study, access basic services and integrate into life in the UK more easily.

There are 31 classes a week covering all levels from complete beginner (Pre-Entry) up to Level 2. Upon registration, learners are given a short English test and assigned to the appropriate class by level, Pre-Entry, Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 or Level 2. Entry levels are for beginners, levels 1 and 2 are for more confident users. All classes are taught by qualified Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) or above volunteer teachers. In addition, each class has volunteer classroom assistants to provide learners with additional support. There is continuous registration for people to join a class between September and May.

Each student can attend two classes a week, each class being two hours in duration with a short refreshment break halfway. Classes run Monday to Friday; from 9.30am; the latest finish time being 4.30pm. The class times will depend on the level.

Twice a year, Action Language tests learners to assess their progress and decide if they need to be taught at the next level. Annually, learners are given a form to complete to give feedback on their progress, their view of the class and what they can do as a result of learning English that they could not do before.

2. **ESOL for Work** – This intensive 5-week course runs in Newcastle and Sunderland and helps prepare students to apply for jobs and to work in the UK. Topics covered include writing a CV and covering letter; interview practice; teamwork; communication skills; and, employment contracts.
3. **Skills for Life in the community** – to reach isolated communities in Newcastle the charity delivers weekly Skills for Life classes in partnership with women's community centres in Benwell and the west end of Newcastle such as The Millin Charity, the Angelou Centre and West End Women and Girls. These classes are for women only and free childcare is provided.

About the Action Language Reaching Communities programme funded project

The project's aims

The project aims to

1. Maintain Action Language's free classes to learners at their Newcastle city centre base
2. Build on the pilot class based at, and started in partnership with, Riverside Community Health Project in the west end of Newcastle, to target the Roma community, who cannot or will not access Action Language's classes in Newcastle City Centre. Free childcare is provided alongside the English classes to enable women to access the classes. The Reaching Communities funded project enabled Action Language to develop this work and identify and address the isolation of other excluded communities (eg the Bangla speaking community)
3. Set up a base in Sunderland from which Action Language developed and delivered its free ESOL classes in Sunderland
4. Increase the sustainability of the free classes by generating income from fee-paying courses

Timescales

The project started in September 2015 and is due to end in August 2019. Our evaluation covered from the start of the project until June 2018.

Project outcomes and outcome indicators

Outcome 1 - Beneficiaries will improve their English communication skills, empowering them to access basic services and live independently

- 1.1 Beneficiaries will cite improvements in their English language ability
- 1.2 Beneficiaries will cite improved access to basic services
- 1.3 Beneficiaries will evidence that they are more independent as a result of attending classes at Action Foundation

Outcome 2 - Beneficiaries will gain qualifications, enhance literacy and basic skills, improving their employability and educational prospects

- 2.1 Beneficiaries will demonstrate improvements in their literacy and basic skills through progressing to the next level
- 2.2 Beneficiaries will move on positively to further education, employment or training

Outcome 3 - Beneficiaries will experience; increased social inclusion, broader social networks, integration into neighbourhoods and reduced exclusion

- 3.1 Beneficiaries will demonstrate that Action Language has helped them to participate more in their community
- 3.2 Beneficiaries will cite a reduction in their social isolation and develop friendships
- 3.3 Beneficiaries will participate in communities and explore local networks through volunteering
- 3.4 Beneficiaries will overcome their isolation by attending 10 or more sessions
- 3.5 Beneficiaries will demonstrate need for ESOL classes by enrolling at Action Language

Outcome 4 - Beneficiaries will improve their confidence and self-esteem, leading to improved health and wellbeing

- 4.1 Beneficiaries will cite improvements in their confidence and self-esteem
- 4.2 Beneficiaries will cite improvements in their health and wellbeing

Current ESOL provision and funding

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is the term used for English language courses taken by people whose first language is not English and who need English to communicate in daily life. ESOL is delivered in various settings including further education colleges, local authority adult education, and community settings, such as conversation classes held in voluntary and community organisations and churches.

About ESOL¹

In 2001, the Labour government published *Skills for life: The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills*. This introduced national standards and a national core curriculum for adult literacy and numeracy qualifications. ESOL was, for the first time, benchmarked against these national standards and was based on a national Adult ESOL core curriculum. Prior to this, ESOL provision had been informal in nature.

A new suite of ESOL Skills for Life qualifications was accredited by Ofqual in 2014 and has been available to learners since 2014-15. The qualifications are required to meet the requirements of the National Standards for Adult Literacy and demonstrate “a clear relationship to the Adult ESOL core curriculum”, neither of which were changed with the introduction of the new suite of qualifications.

ESOL Skills for Life comprise three modes: reading, writing, and speaking and listening. It is possible for learners to take awards in a single mode, as well as a 'full-mode' certificate that combines all three. Courses may be taken at five levels: Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3 are basic level courses and Level 1 and 2 courses are equivalent to GCSEs. A report by the Association of Colleges in 2013 said that there was “high demand for ESOL at Entry level 1 and Entry level 2, falling off sharply at Levels 1 and 2.”

ESOL funding

Government-funded adult ESOL is funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) in the same way as other further education courses. Previously, the ESFA also funded ESOL learning through its community learning budget but, from 2016-17, funding for community learning has been included within the wider Adult Education Budget and is no longer ring-fenced.

The ESFA will fully fund ESOL learning delivered in the classroom up to and including Level 2 for eligible learners aged 19 and over who are unemployed and in receipt of certain benefits. All other eligible classroom-based adult ESOL learning is co-funded by the ESFA, meaning that the ESFA pays half of the course costs and the provider may pass on the remainder to the learner. There is no funding provided for ESOL provided in the workplace.

¹ Much of this section has been extracted from House of Commons Library, April 2018, *Adult ESOL in England*, <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7905>

As funding for adult ESOL courses is demand-led, there are no future budgets set for their level of funding. Data on past funding levels (not including community learning) has been provided in response to parliamentary questions and shows that, funding from the AEB fell by 56% in real terms between 2009-10 and 2016-17.

Changes to ESOL funding since 2007

Up until August 2007, ESOL courses were eligible for automatic fee remission and, during this time, demand for and expenditure on ESOL increased substantially. Since this time, a number of changes have been made to ESOL funding, including that only people in receipt of certain means-tested benefits (and their unwaged dependents) and asylum seekers who had been waiting over six months for their asylum claim to be processed qualified for full funding.

Community-based English language programmes

In addition to ESOL provision funded through the ESFA, between 2012-13 and 2016-17 the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government allocated funding to six projects delivering community-based English language provision. This included £3.74 million in 2016-17, which was said at the time to be the “first step” in rolling out a £20 million community fund to teach English to isolated women, announced by David Cameron, the then prime minister, in January 2016. The projects were mostly aimed at Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali women and covered the government’s English language target areas: broadly east and north London, east Birmingham, Manchester, towns along the M62 in Yorkshire and Cheshire, Slough, Luton and Bristol.

Policy and strategy

In October 2016, the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA) published *Towards an ESOL strategy for England*. The report aimed to “make the case for an ESOL strategy for England” and set out proposals for inclusion in such a strategy.

The report highlighted the funding reductions to the ESOL sector since 2007 and argued that waiting lists were “at an all-time high” and that “people who want to learn English find that both entitlement to learning and the number of places have dramatically reduced”. It also contended that the government’s emphasis on integration had “not translated into a coherent strategy for ESOL provision in England” and that ESOL policy suffered from a lack of coordination, with the Department for Education in the lead, but the Department for Work and Pensions, the Home Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government also having roles.

Integration

The settlement process of migrants and their children has been termed ‘integration’, as a framework for policies and practices towards migrants and minorities and as an academic concept. Various indicators and types of integration range from social, to economic and cultural. However, the notion of integration has been criticised because it presumes that there is a coherent national society into which migrants can/should integrate.

Policy

In March 2018, the UK government published an *Integrated Communities Strategy green paper* for consultation. The green paper followed the *Casey Review*, published in December 2016, which concluded that good English skills are “fundamental” to improving immigrants’ opportunities, but warned funding for ESOL courses had been heavily cut. The strategy highlighted the importance of English language proficiency for effective integration, before setting out concerns with the current system of English language learning. It then set out a set of proposals, which included

- Developing a new strategy for English language in England
- A new community-based English language programme
- Working with local authorities to improve the provision of English language learning in integration areas
- Launching a new infrastructure fund open to places outside the integration areas to improve their offer for English language learners
- An England-wide scheme to facilitate a network of community-based conversation clubs

About the Action Language evaluation

The evaluation project ran over three years from January 2016 to September 2018 and included four elements

1. Reviewing Action Language's current monitoring and evaluation methods and making recommendations for improvement
2. Building and implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework for Action Language's Reaching Communities-funded project and its outputs and outcomes
3. Reviewing and gathering insights from, and reporting on, agreed quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation methods
4. Conducting and reporting on a longitudinal study of 90 Action Language learners between January 2016 and June 2018 to generate qualitative data to evaluate the difference Action Language makes to learners in terms of their
 - a. English communication skills, empowering them to access basic services and live independently
 - b. Enhanced ability to move on positively to further education, employment or training
 - c. Experience of increased social inclusion, broader social networks, integration into neighbourhoods and reduced exclusion
 - d. Improved self-confidence and self-esteem, leading to improved health and wellbeing

Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 – these are the academic years which Action Language follows ie

- Year 1 = September 2015 to July 2016
- Year 2 = September 2016 to July 2017
- Year 3 = September 2017 to July 2018

Figure 1 on page 22 gives an overview of the evaluation.

Action Language evaluation overview

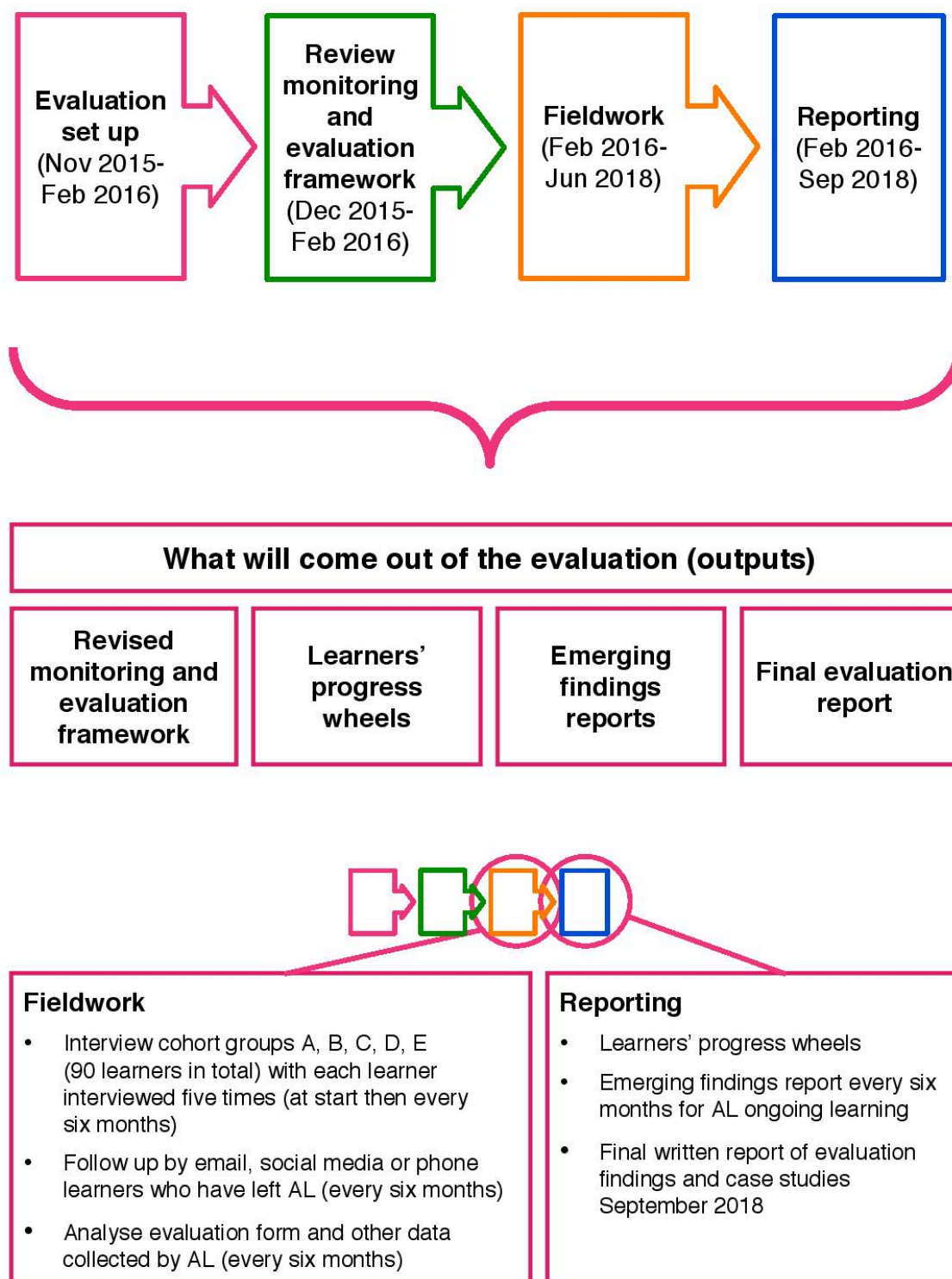


Figure 1: Action Language evaluation overview graphic

About the longitudinal study

The longitudinal study focused on 90 Action Language ESOL learners (the cohort). Each ESOL learner was part of the study for 2.5 years and was interviewed up to five times, every six months from January 2016. We conducted 255 interviews in total. The aim was for each ESOL learner enrolled on the study to be interviewed within four weeks of starting ESOL classes and every six months after that. Between February and June 2016, 105 people were invited to join the cohort and, out of those 105 invited to take part, 90 people agreed to be interviewed for a baseline interview (Interview 1). Our target was 100 learners. Our interviews progressed as follows

- Interview 1 (baseline) February to June 2016 – 90 people
- Interview 2 September to December 2016 – 58 people
- Interview 3 January to July 2017 – 43 people
- Interview 4 September 2017 to January 2018 – 34 people
- Interview 5 January to July 2018 – 30 people

Our literature review of studies on ESOL learners leads us to believe that the cohort for our longitudinal study was the largest of any such study in the country.

Our study was a longitudinal repeated measures study² ie we tracked the same group of people (our cohort) over time where we measure them against certain indicators at five points over two years. The other type of longitudinal study measures the differences between independent groups eg interviewing one group of learners at the start of the study and interviewing a different group of learners at the end of the study. One advantage of a repeated measures study with the same people is that it requires fewer individuals to identify changes as compared with independent group approaches, while maintaining an equivalent statistical power³.

Table 1 below shows the number of people at each interview along with the attrition number and rate. The attrition is the number of people who dropped out of the study. These were people who, despite the best efforts by the Action Language office assistant and interviewers, did not want to continue to be interviewed or could no longer be reached by the contact details we had for them.

Table 1: Attrition number and rate for each interview

	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5	
	Count	% of cohort	Count	% of cohort		% of cohort		% of cohort		% of cohort
Cohort interviewed	90	100%	58	64%	42	47%	35	39%	30	33%
Cohort attrition	0	0%	32	36%	48	53%	55	61%	60	67%

² Repeated measures study compares outcome measurements for the same subjects over time. A repeated measures study is designed for small samples.

³ Statistical power, a mathematical term, is the ability of a study to detect a result that exists in nature. Generally, we want power to be as high as possible. However, setting it too high may result in a sample size that is not practical. A value of 0.8 is often used by scientists. The greater the power value, the more able is the study to pick up small changes in the sample.

By the end of the study, after five interviews, 30 people remained in the study, a third of the original 90 interviewees. We experienced the greatest attrition rate after Interview 1 with a reduction in interviewees of 41% between Interview 1 and Interview 2. Both Action Language and evaluators were concerned about the attrition rate, which was greater than expected. Our original estimated attrition rate, of around 11%, was based on figures included in Action Language's self-evaluation report 2012-2015, showing how long learners stayed with Action Language over time. This attrition rate was not an accurate reflection of the actual rate we saw in the time period of our study.

Reviewing our approach after Interview 2

As requested by Action Language, we revisited our approach especially around the sample size – specifically suggesting more learners to be added to the cohort – after Interview 2 following the large attrition of learners from the study.

We calculated the sample size required to identify subtle changes in our study group (statistical power of 0.8) to a very high confidence level⁴ (statistical level of 0.05 equalling 95% confidence level). We found that we needed to interview a total of 34 people throughout the entire study to have 95% confidence in our findings, and that with only 27 people at Interview 5 we would still maintain 90% confidence. In comparison, a before and after study involving independent groups ie not tracking individuals, as commonly used by others, would require 128 people in total or 64 people in each group to have an equivalent statistical power and confidence in their findings. The large difference in the numbers of individuals needed between study types mostly reflects the large variation between individuals.

We found that the addition of greater numbers of students within the dataset at the remaining interviews would not add greater value or confidence to the analyses, especially as time constraints would not allow the new students to be interviewed over the entire study period (two years). Also, assuming the drop out rate will be much the same for the second cohort as for the first, we would be left with insufficient numbers (ie fewer than 27 people) to draw conclusions with any degree of confidence. Converting the study type to separate groups would reduce our ability to use the repeated measures approach, and weaken our ability to have confidence in our findings.

Instead we proposed to

1. focus on retention of the original cohort to ensure we had sufficient numbers by the end of Interview 5: by the interviewers contacting interviewees before interviews as an additional reminder and after interviews to say thank you. A small incentive was also introduced for interviewees at Interviews 4 and 5. We thought the attrition rate between Interview 1 and Interview 2 to be the greatest drop, and on reflection we were correct in our assumption, and we were able to complete the five interviews with 30 people – enough to have 90% confidence in our findings – although not enough to have 95% confidence in our findings.

⁴ Confidence level can be used to describe how reliable survey results are. In applied practice confidence intervals are typically stated at the 95% confidence level, which means there is a 5% chance of getting this finding by pure chance. The desired level of confidence is set by researcher and is used to test the strength of the findings.

- review and make better use of Action Language's own available data: by expanding on our original methods for analysing Action Language's ESOL level test data and end-of-year feedback data. This enabled us to use a larger sample than our study cohort to maximising the findings we can include in the evaluation, giving us a greater ability to measure performance against outcomes. An additional purpose was to improve Action Language's data collection and analysis methods to build their evaluation capacity after our work ends.

About the longitudinal study cohort

The data tables below show data about the cohort at each of the five interviews. The data below, with commentary on how the cohort changed from Interview 1 to Interview 5, is based on the cohort's age, sex, immigration status, nationality and learner level when they joined the study in 2016 ie their ages and learner levels have not been updated.

Longitudinal study cohort by sex

The drop out rate for female learners was lower than for male learners – 60% of female learners left the cohort by Interview 5 compared to 71% of male learners (table 2). At Interview 5 there were 14 female learners and 16 male learners from 35 female learners and 55 male learners at Interview 1.

Table 2: Longitudinal study cohort by sex at Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5 (count and percentage)

	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Female	35	39%	25	43%	20	47%	17	50%	14	47%
Male	55	61%	33	57%	23	53%	17	50%	16	53%
Total	90		58		43		34		30	

Longitudinal study cohort by age

The greatest drop out of learners were those aged 16-24 between Interview 1 and Interview 5, a drop from 24 to four interviewees, around 83%; there was a decrease in interviewees at each age group but at a lower rate – there were around a third 25-35 year olds remaining at Interview, just under half 36-50 year olds, and a half of those aged 51 and over (table 3). The age group 25-35 remained the largest group throughout the study.

Table 3: Longitudinal study cohort by age at Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5 (count and percentage)

	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
16-24	24	27%	12	21%	6	14%	4	12%	4	13%
25-35	34	38%	21	36%	17	40%	13	38%	12	40%
36-50	26	29%	21	36%	15	35%	14	41%	11	37%
51+	6	7%	4	7%	5	12%	3	9%	3	10%
Total	90		58		43		34		30	

Longitudinal study cohort by ESOL level

The greatest decrease in interviewees between Interview 1 and Interview 5 was from the Pre-entry group from 21 interviewees to three interviewees (table 4). This is based on the ESOL level interviewees were when the interviews started, and were not updated to reflect any individual learner's level change. The group of learners that had started the interviews at Level 2 were the most stable, with only a drop out of two learners.

Table 4: Longitudinal study cohort by ESOL level at Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5 (count and percentage)

	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Pre Entry	21	23%	11	19%	6	14%	3	9%	3	10%
Entry 1	22	24%	17	29%	10	23%	9	26%	7	23%
Entry 2	14	16%	10	17%	6	14%	6	18%	6	20%
Entry 3	12	13%	7	12%	8	19%	6	18%	5	17%
Level 1	14	16%	7	12%	7	16%	4	12%	4	13%
Level 2	7	8%	6	10%	6	14%	6	18%	5	17%
Total	90		58		43		34		30	

Longitudinal study cohort by immigration status

At the start of the interviews, the largest group of learners by immigration status was refugee/asylum seeker, which started with 46 learners or 51% of the cohort (table 5). This group also saw the greatest decrease and by Interview 5 there were only 24% interviewees remaining. In contrast, 40% of EU citizens and 47% of other migrants remained at Interview 5.

Table 5: Longitudinal study cohort by immigration status at Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5 (count and percentage)

	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
EU citizen	25	28%	12	21%	11	26%	9	26%	10	33%
Refugee/asylum seeker	46	51%	29	50%	20	47%	15	44%	11	37%
Other migrant	19	21%	17	29%	12	28%	10	29%	9	30%
Total	90		58		43		34		30	

Longitudinal study cohort by region

The three largest groups by region at Interview 5 were the same largest groups at Interview 1 – Africa (Central, West, East), Arab States and South/Mediterranean Europe however the rate of change was much less for interviewees from South/Mediterranean Europe with 44% remaining at Interview 5 compared to only 19% of interviewees from Africa (Central, West, East) and 32% of interviewees from Arab States (table 6). The remaining region groups were fairly stable after the initial drop in interviewees following Interview 2. The countries in the region groups below are listed in *Appendix 1: Nationality groups* on page 126.

Table 6: Longitudinal study cohort by region at Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5 (count and percentage)

	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Africa										
Africa (Central, West, East)	27	30%	12	21%	10	23%	8	24%	5	17%
North Africa	2	2%	2	3%	2	5%	1	3%	1	3%
Americas										
South/ Central America	4	4%	3	5%	3	7%	3	9%	3	10%
Arab States										
Arab States	25	28%	23	40%	14	33%	9	26%	8	27%
Asia										
East Asia	7	8%	4	7%	2	5%	2	6%	2	7%
South Asia	2	2%	2	3%	2	5%	2	6%	2	7%
Europe										
Eastern Europe	7	8%	3	5%	3	7%	2	6%	2	7%
Southern/ Mediterranean Europe	16	18%	9	16%	7	16%	7	21%	7	23%
Total	90		58		43		34		30	

In general we found young male asylum seekers were the biggest loss from the study, a reflection, perhaps, of the uncertainty and fragility of the life of an asylum seeker in the UK with little control over their own lives. We found asylum seekers left Action Language and the study because they had been moved to another city, attained a place in a college, or had lost contact with Action Language and did not given a reason

When looking at whether interviewees continued to attend Action Language table 7, we found that by Interview 5 only six, or 7% of the original cohort of 90, were still learning ESOL at Action Language, with 24 interviewees having left Action Language. We explore why learners leave Action Language in *Moving on positively to further education, employment or training* on pages 68-73. The reasons included completing Level 2, not having time to attend classes because of work, childcare and other caring responsibilities, attaining a place at college, moving out of Newcastle, moving onto to work and to further education.

Table 7: Longitudinal study cohort learners studying and leavers at Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, Interview 4, Interview 5 (count, cumulative count and percentage)

	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5	
	Count	% of cohort		% of cohort		% of cohort		% of cohort		% of cohort
Learners studying at AL interviewed	90	100%	41	46%	25	28%	9	10%	6	7%
Leavers interviewed	0	0%	17	19%	17	19%	26	29%	24	27%
Leavers interviewed (cumulative)	0	0%	17	19%	24	27%	36	40%	41	46%

Literature review: the context of our evaluation

As part of our work to understand the research context in which our evaluation sat, we undertook a review of academic, practitioner, news and policy literature related to migrants and ESOL. In total we reviewed 23 publications (studies, policy papers and guidance for practitioners) spanning 13 years from 2002 to 2015. The purpose of the literature review was to

1. Provide an overview of other studies to identify topics/sub-topics, compare and contrast methods (for example other longitudinal studies and the cohort size).
2. Put our study in context for example chronology, location, population, sample.
3. See if other studies could inform our evaluation questions and interpretation for example what reduces isolation in ESOL learners.
4. Identify evidence and information that relates to the outcomes chosen by Action Language for this Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities Programme funded project.

Findings

Two of the 23 pieces of literature were longitudinal studies and three were evaluations of ESOL provision. The tables below set out the source of the literature, the topics covered and the methods used in those that were reports of studies.

Source of literature or publisher	Number
Academic institutions	11
Central and local UK government	5
Think tanks and national charities	5
Pressure groups	1
ESOL practitioner	1

Topic	Number
Work and employability	7
Integration	6
Policy and provision of ESOL	6
ESOL learners	5
Pedagogy	3
The teaching workforce	2
The UK's asylum policy and treatment of asylum seekers	2
The impact on lives of learners	2

Method used in study	Frequency
Interviews with learners	16
Focus groups	4
Literature reviews	4
Observations of classes and on visits	4
Case studies	3
Desk research	3
Economic analysis	2
Learning Tree	2
Questionnaire of learners (before and after)	2
Asking students to keep diaries and photographs to be included in study	1
Brainstorming and ranking	1
Discussions with learners in the observed classes	1
Interviews with providers, employers and community organisations	1
Interviews with teachers – repeat in-depth	1
Meetings with key stakeholders	1
Participatory approaches in ESOL classes	1
Questionnaire completed by teachers	1
Survey – audit of ESOL providers	1
Thematic analysis of entire student interview data set	1
Timeline	1
Workshops	1

Population

The populations covered by the studies included

- Non-English students and graduates of higher education, studying abroad
- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Women from the Indian subcontinent and some countries in Africa living in the UK attending ESOL classes

Conclusions

Sample size and population

Compared with the sample for our longitudinal study, the other studies we looked at involved fewer ESOL learners. Whilst we found one recent study (Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, November 2015, *Evaluation of the Creative English Programme*) which had contact with a large number of ESOL learners (although the number is not specified due to the method used – observation in class), the studies that used one to one interviews were of smaller numbers than our study. Studies covering UK-based students focussed more on non-asylum seekers and refugees, mostly female, although there was one case study on asylum seekers.

Outcomes

A number of studies covered issues related to outcomes similar to those set by Action Language, such as the impact of English on learners' wider lives.

Case study formats

There were a few case study formats used from which we could learn for the ones used in our final report.

Ethical issues

One document highlighted the ethical issues involved in studying ESOL learners and was very useful to us in thinking through issues around informed consent.

Evaluation data sources

The data we used for this study is gathered and collected from the following sources (table 8)

1. **Registration form** – collects contact details, demographic details about each learner (sex, age, immigration status, nationality, language, family circumstances, previous occupation), and registration date. Learners at registration complete the form, with support from Action Language staff and volunteers if needed, and it is entered into Action Language database. The information is used to contact learners and run the school, and to understand more about learners.
2. **Level test** – assesses English ability at registration and is repeated mid-year (February-March) and end-of-year (June-July). The level test is one of the methods used to assign learners to the appropriate ESOL level for their ability when they register and to move learners up and down ESOL levels throughout the year. It comprises multiple-choice reading and language sections. We used the registration (start-of-year) and end-of-year level test data in this study. All learners complete the full test at registration, however when the test is repeated through the year, only higher ESOL level learners (Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2) take the full test with lower ESOL level learners (Pre-Entry, Entry 1 and Entry 2) taking a partial test, a more beginner-level appropriate version. The speaking and writing abilities of the learner also influence the assigned level, as judged by the class teacher or those enrolling the learner. This allows a teacher to use their professional judgement and knowledge of the learner and their varied skills and abilities to place them in the most appropriate class. The level test score and assigned level is entered into the Action Language database.
3. **Class register** – collects attendance records for each learner in each class. The register is completed by the class teacher with learners and entered into Action Language's database.
4. **Feedback form (self-completed)** – collects feedback from learners twice a year: mid-year (February-March) and end-of-year (June-July). All learners (except the lowest level learners (Pre-Entry)) attending classes in the designated feedback period are asked to complete forms in class. The forms ask a mix of yes/no/don't know questions, Likert-scale⁵ questions, and free text. The forms are anonymous although ESOL level and class is recorded to help with analysis. The forms are entered into and analysed in a spreadsheet. We used the end-of-year feedback forms from Years 1, 2 and 3 in this study, of which there were 299. There were an additional 250 mid-year feedback forms completed by Action Language learners, making a total of 549 feedback forms completed across the three years of the project.

⁵ The Likert Scale, named after their creator, American social scientist Rensis Likert, is a 5 or 7 point scale that offers a range of answer options from one extreme attitude to another for example "extremely likely" to "not at all likely", typically with a neutral midpoint. Likert scale questions give more granular feedback and are a reliable way to measure opinions, perceptions, and behaviours.

5. **Simplified feedback form (self-completed)** – the lowest ESOL level learners (Pre-Entry) complete a simplified form, reflecting their English ability. The forms ask a mix of multiple-choice questions, Likert-scale questions, and free text. The forms are anonymous although ESOL level and class is recorded to help with analysis. The forms are entered into and analysed in a spreadsheet. We used the comments from the simplified end-of-year feedback forms from Years 1, 2 and 3 (87 forms) in this study because the questions used in the simplified feedback form were not sufficiently comparable with the questions in the main feedback form. There were an additional 103 mid-year simplified feedback forms completed by Action Language learners, making a total of 190 simplified feedback forms completed across the three years of the project.
6. **Longitudinal study** – focuses on 90 Action Language ESOL learners (the cohort). Each ESOL learner was part of the study for 2.5 years and interviewed five times, every six months from January 2016. Learners were enrolled on the study between January 2016 and June 2016; we conducted the first interviews between early February 2016 and mid-June 2016.

Table 8: Total number of data sources used in the evaluation from the years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18

Data source	Number
Enrolments	2635
Registration form	2635
Class register	2082
Level tests	2635
End-of-year feedback form	299
Mid-year feedback form	250
Simplified end-of-year feedback form	87
Simplified mid-year feedback form	103

Personas

We found we were able to group the 90 people we interviewed into eight discrete groups of people. As shorthand we called these personas, a term used in user-centred or service design, other terms include customer groups (marketing, business model canvas) and archetypes (product design). We used these personas to create case studies and to analyse data over the study period. In addition, we feel these personas will be useful to Action Language to help with their service design, business planning and marketing. The eight personas are

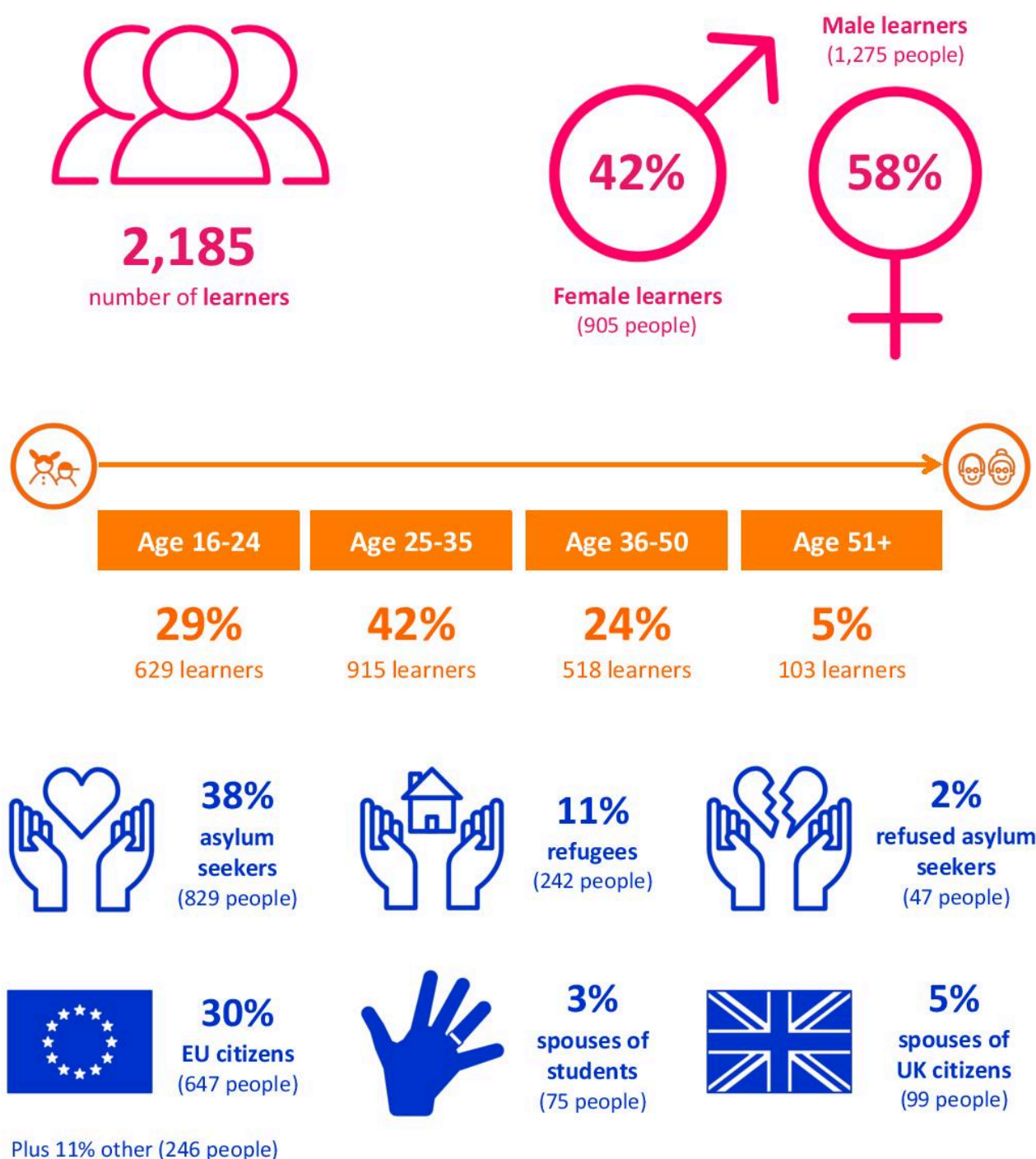
1. EU citizen, fairly young, female or male, white, some restaurant workers, learning English to get a better job and become 'more marketable', learning English is a choice and will make an economic difference to their lives, confident, may find and socialise with community of same language speakers, have choice in their lives.
2. Asylum seeker, young man, aged 16-24, likely to be from Eritrea or Sudan, alone (lonely?), lives in Jomast Housing, sticks together with other asylum seekers, no choice in their lives, learn English because they have to, life on hold, bored, depressed (?), been through the mill, attends church and builds community through the church.
3. Refugee (occasionally asylum seeker), woman, with a family – children and maybe ill husband, children go to school.
4. UK resident, older woman, been in UK for some time, not learnt English before, dependent on husband or male relatives.
5. Refugee or asylum seeker, 'older' man (aged over 30), from Iran/Iraq/Syria, educated, previous good job, ambitious, has assets and resources.
6. Spouse or partner of academic/student/employee of global firm, female or male, planning to live in UK for 2-4 years, plan to 'go back', not much to do and may be bored for parts of the day.
7. Creative people, female or male, non-EU citizen, range of ages, designer/interior designer/cake decorator/food, likely to have chosen to come to UK, want to learn English as a skill to become more marketable in the job market.
8. Older EU citizen who work and are in the UK to stay.

Our findings

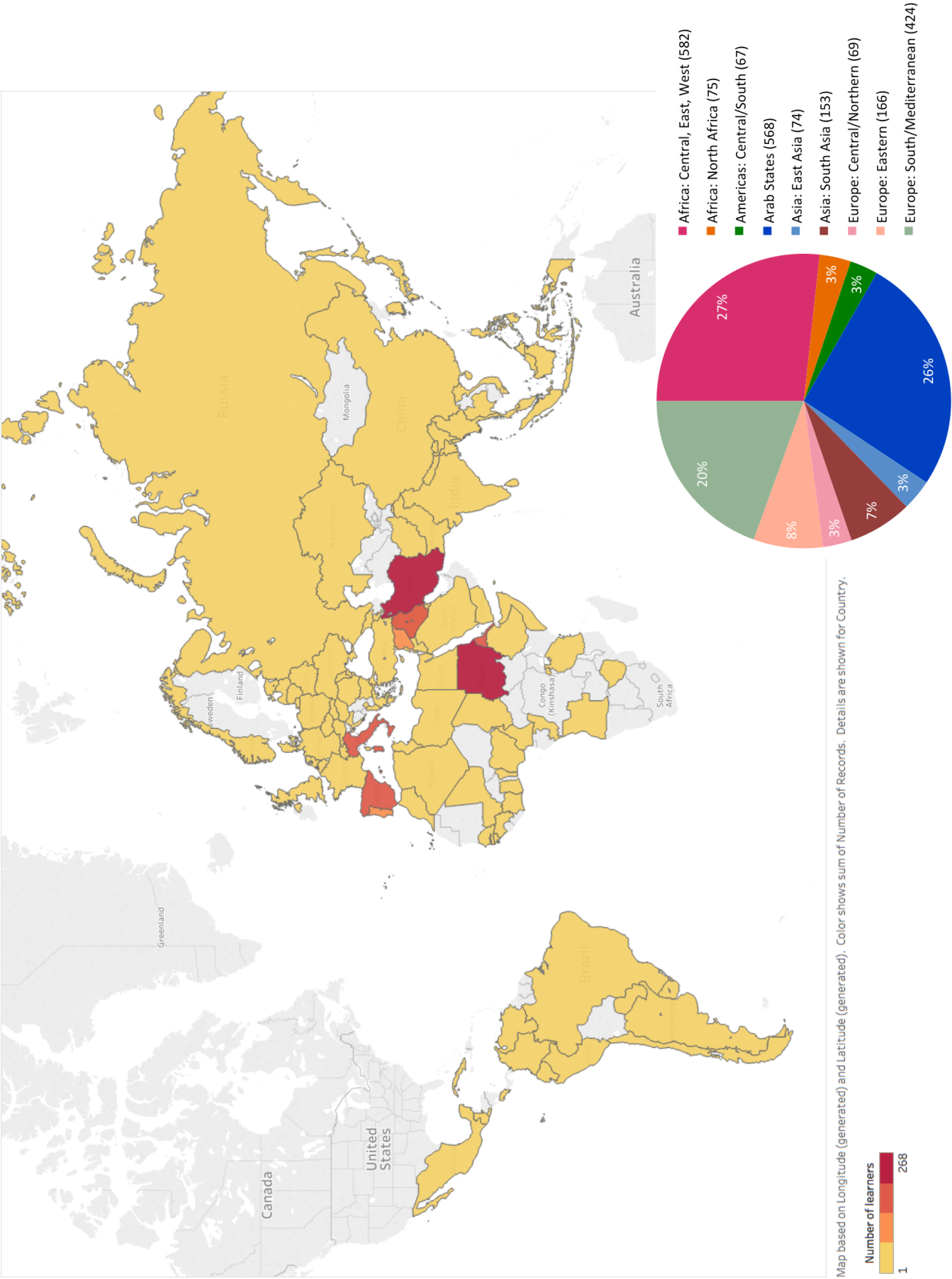
About Action Language learners

This section describes the learners at Action Language including their ages, immigration status, sex and nationality. The data tables for this data of learners as a whole and broken down by year are in *Appendix 2: Data tables*. The data tables about the cohort of 90 learners part of our longitudinal study are on page 129 to 130.

All learners for the whole project 2015-2018



Action Language learners: where in the world?



Learners enrolling at Action Language

In the first three years of the project, there were a total of 2,635 enrolments by 2,185 people at Action Language. The number of enrolments increased year on year; 796 in Year 1; 800 in Year 2; and 1,039 in Year 3, representing an increase of 31% between years 1 and 2. Most learners - 82% (1,801) - stayed for one year or less but some learners stayed for two years (14% or 296 learners) and 4% of learners (88 people) stayed for three years.

From the data, we found there were more enrolments by male learners than female learners (1,507 or 57% male; 1,123 or 43% female) and more enrolments by learners aged 25 to 35 - 42% (1,109 enrolments) - than any other age group. Around half of Action Language learners enrolling are asylum seekers, refugees or refused asylum seekers (1,304 or 49% enrolments) and just over half of learners enrolling come from African countries and Arab States (1,457 people or 55%) with strong overlap with the asylum seekers and refugees immigration status groups. There are a large number of enrolments by EU citizens at Action Language - 792 enrolments (30%) - mainly South/Mediterranean Europeans but also Eastern and Central/North Europeans.

Introduction

This section looks at enrolments at Action Language across the first three years of the project and for each year. We show the numbers of enrolments and who enrolled including how old they are, their sex, their immigration status and what part of the world they are from.

The data we have and what it tells us

Using Action Language's enrolment data, we found there were a total of 2,635 enrolments by a 2,185 people across the three years of the project. There are more enrolments than people because Action Language asks learners to enrol each year irrespective of whether they have attended before. We will first explore the 2,635 enrolments in more detail before looking at enrolments by year.

Who enrolled at Action Language?

From the data, we found there were more enrolments by male learners than female learners (1,507 or 57% male; 1,123 or 43% female), as shown in Figure 2 below.

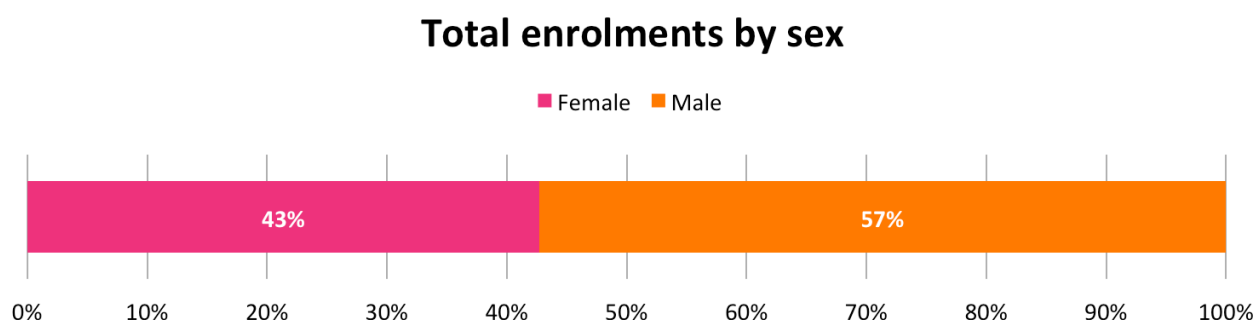


Figure 2: Total enrolments at Action Language by sex as a percentage for the years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 combined (n = 2,630, unknowns excluded)

When looking at age (Figure 3), the largest age group enrolling were aged 25 to 35 - 42% (1,109 enrolments) - and the smallest age group being those aged over 51 (5% or 141 enrolments). The remaining two groups were those aged 16 to 24, the second largest group at 27% of the total (703 enrolments), and those aged 36-50 (25% or 662 enrolments).

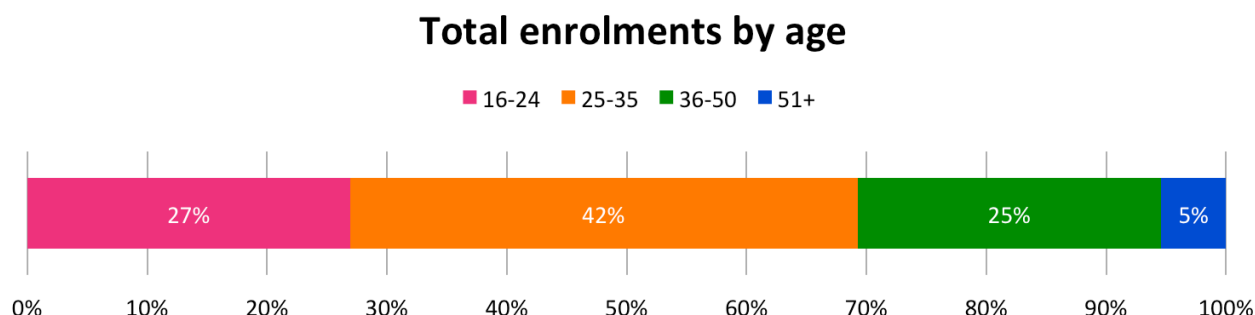


Figure 3: Total enrolments at Action Language by age as a percentage for the years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 combined (n = 2,612, unknowns excluded)

In terms of immigration status (Figure 4), around half of Action Language learners enrolling are asylum seekers, refugees or refused asylum seekers (1,304 or 49% enrolments). The other large group of enrollers are EU citizens, who make up 30% of enrollers (780 enrolments). The other groups of enrollers are accompanying spouses of students (4% or 106 enrolments), spouses of UK citizens (5% or 123 enrolments) and other (12% or 304 enrolments).

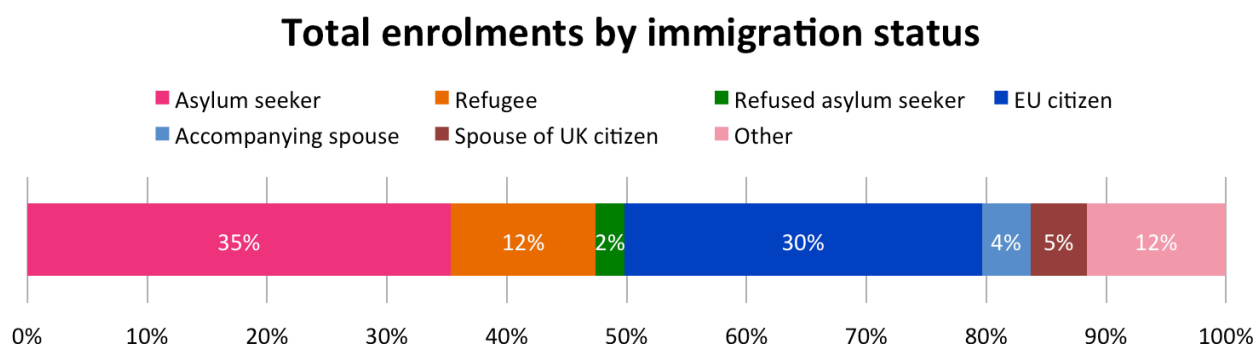


Figure 4: Total enrolments at Action Language by immigration status as a percentage for the years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 combined (n = 2,617, unknowns excluded)

We looked at the number of enrolments by ESOL level (Figure 5). The largest group of learners enrolling were into Pre-Entry classes (29% or 770 enrolments) and the next largest ESOL level groups are Entry 1 (20% or 514) and Entry 2 (also 20%). The smallest group of learners enrolled into Level 2, the highest ESOL level, with 187 enrolling (7%) across the lifetime of the project.

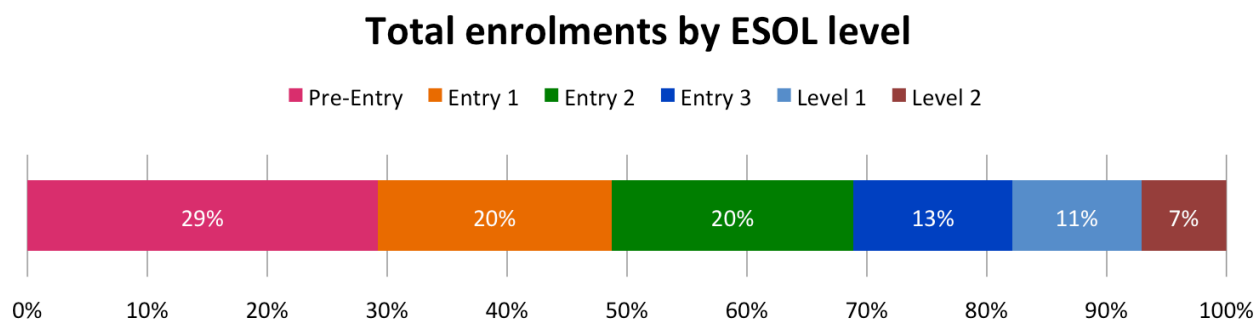


Figure 5: Total enrolments at Action Language by ESOL level as a percentage for the years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 combined (n = 2,635, unknowns excluded)

Action Language also groups learners enrolling by region of origin using nine groups in total (Figure 6), and the three largest groups enrolling are from Africa (excluding North Africa) with 705 enrolments (27%); Arab States with 670 enrolments (25%); and, South/Mediterranean Europe with 519 enrolments (20%).

Total enrolments by region

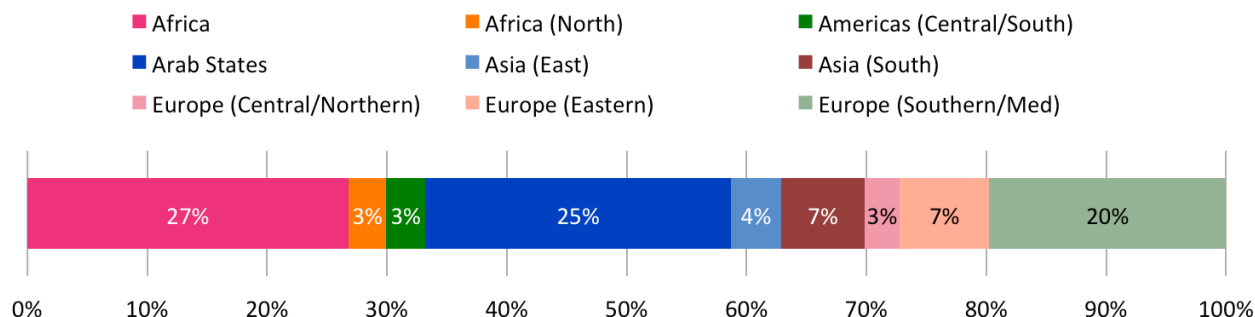


Figure 6: Total enrolments at Action Language by region as a percentage for the years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 combined (n = 2,628, unknowns excluded)

There is a strong overlap between the two largest regions - Africa (excluding North Africa) and Arab States - and the two immigration status groups asylum seekers and refugees; and strong overlap between EU citizens and learners from South/Mediterranean Europe.

The number of enrolments each year

The number of enrolments increased across each year of the project: in Year 1, there were 796 enrolments, 800 enrolments in Year 2 and 1039 enrolments in Year 3 (Figure 7). Each year of the project saw increasing enrolment numbers, with an additional 243 people enrolling in Year 3 than in Year 1, an increase of 31%. Action Language believes this increase in demand comes from opening an Action Language school in Sunderland in 2016, which had a large growth in enrolments by Year 3, plus a general increase in need for ESOL classes over time and increased awareness of Action Language in both Newcastle and Sunderland.

Number of enrolments at Action Language per year

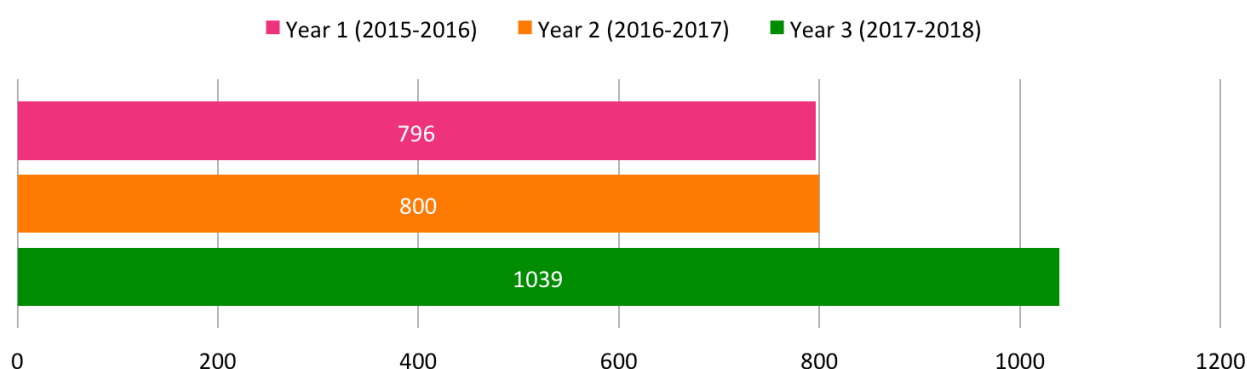


Figure 7: Number of enrolments at Action Language by year (Year 1 (2015-16) n = 796; Year 2 (2016-17) n = 800; Year 3 (2017-18) n = 1039)

When looking at enrolments by sex across the three years, there were consistently more male learners than female learners, with some difference between the years (Figure 8). Year 1 saw the lowest number of female learners (38%) and Year 2 saw the highest (48%), and Year 3, with 42% female learners and 58% male learners, being more reflective of the combined three years of the project (43% female and 57% male).

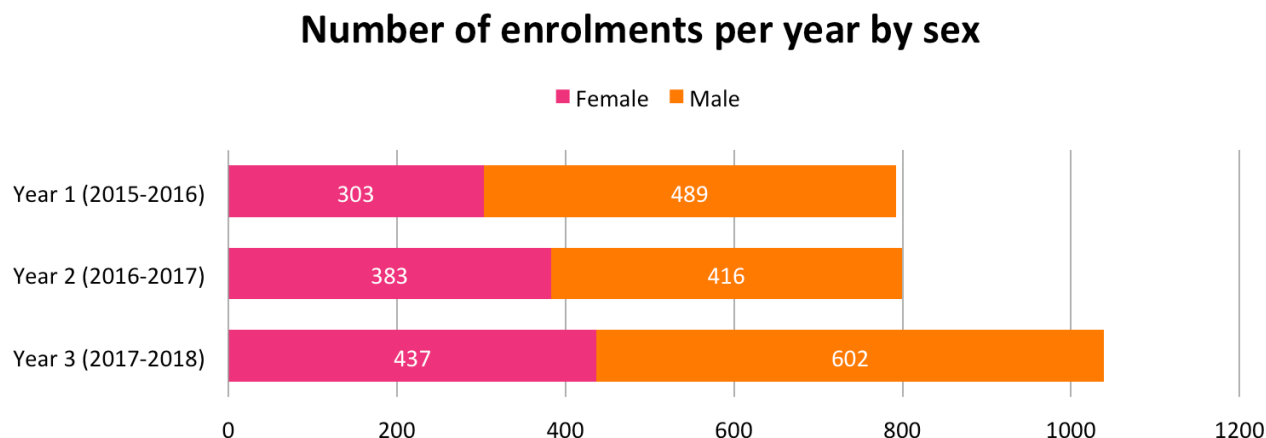


Figure 8: Number of enrolments at Action Language per year by sex (Year 1 (2015-16) n = 792; Year 2 (2016-17) n = 799; Year 3 (2017-18) n = 1039; unknowns excluded)

When looking at the number of enrolments per year by age group (Figure 9), the data shows us the age groups are fairly consistent between the three years. There is a slightly higher proportion of learners enrolling aged 16-24 in Year 3 – 30% – than in the first two years (Year 1 26%; Year 2 24%). The other age group proportions sit within three percentage points in each year: between 41% and 44% of learners enrolling aged 25-35; between 24% and 27% aged 36-50; and between 4% and 6% aged 51 and over.

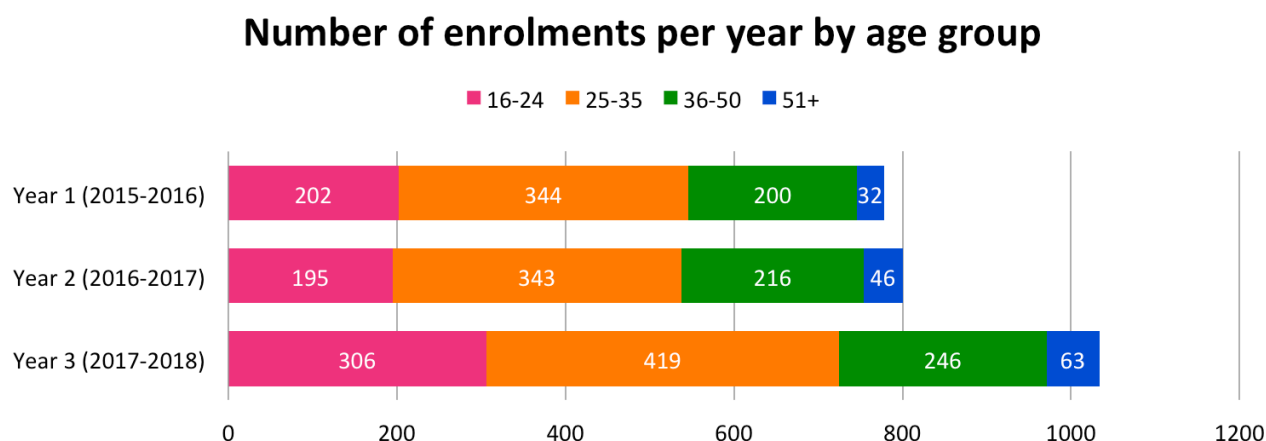


Figure 9: Number of enrolments at Action Language per year by sex (Year 1 (2015-16) n = 778; Year 2 (2016-17) n = 800; Year 3 (2017-18) n = 1034; unknowns excluded)

When we look at the number of enrolments per year by immigration status (Figure 10), there are greater differences between the years, with the main differences being for asylum seekers and EU citizens. In Year 1, 34% of enrollers were asylum seekers, dropping to 27% in Year 2, and increasing to 42% in Year 3.

We expect the increase in Year 3 is partly due to increased enrolment to ESOL classes in Sunderland, which after analysing the end-of-year feedback forms, are predominantly asylum seekers. As for EU citizens, whilst the number of people enrolling is almost the same in Year 1 and in Year 3 (252 and 249 people) with an increase to 279 people enrolling in Year 2, the proportion has decreased from 32% in Year 1 to 24% in Year 3.

Number of enrolments per year by immigration status

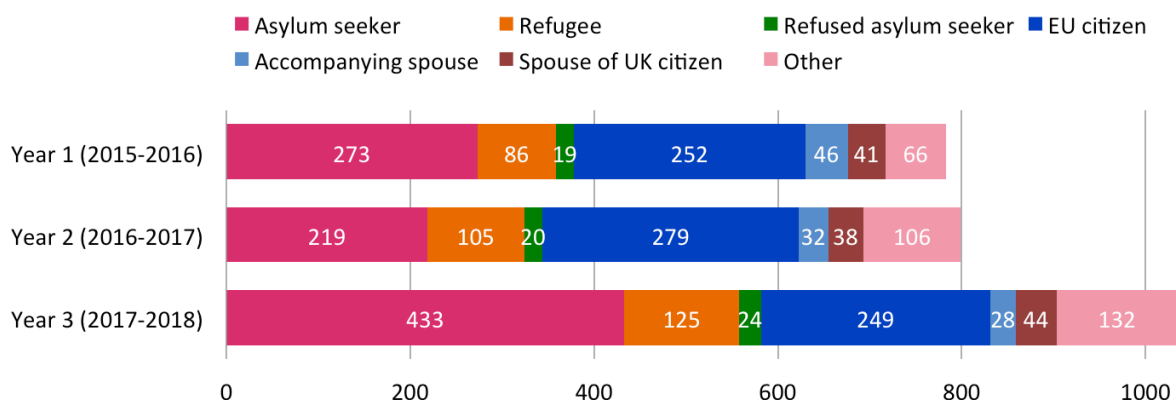


Figure 10: Number of enrolments at Action Language per year by sex (Year 1 (2015-16) n = 792; Year 2 (2016-17) n = 799; Year 3 (2017-18) n = 1039; unknowns excluded)

When we looked at the number of enrolments per year by ESOL level (Figure 11 below), the rates of learners enrolling into the six levels were fairly consistent across the three years of the project. Just under a third of learners enrolled into Pre-Entry classes each year (Year 1 29%, Year 2 30%, Year 3 29%); around a fifth enrolled into Entry 1 (Year 1 21%, Year 2 19%, Year 3 19%); and around one tenth enrolled into Level 1 (Year 1 12%, Year 2 10%, Year 3 10%). There were three ESOL levels with only very slight variations between the years with the greatest difference for Entry 2 enrollers, which changed from just under a fifth to just under a quarter of enrollers (17% in Year 1, 18% Year 2, 24% in Year 3).

Number of enrolments per year by ESOL level

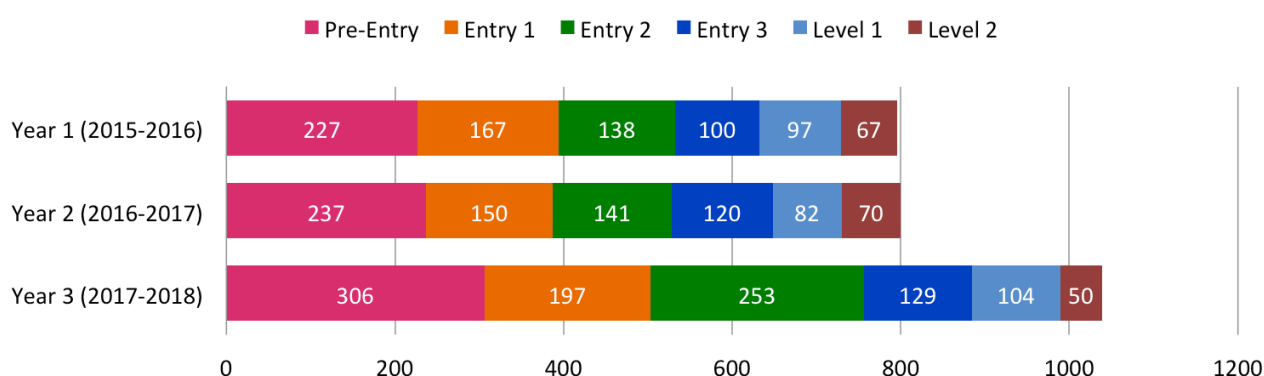


Figure 11: Number of enrolments at Action Language per year by ESOL level (Year 1 (2015-16) n = 796; Year 2 (2016-17) n = 800; Year 3 (2017-18) n = 1039)

And finally, turning to the number of enrolments per year by region (Figure 12), in Year 1 we can see the largest group of learners enrolling are from Europe at 32% of enrollers (when combining the three European regions), very closely followed by people from Africa at 31% (when including North Africa). In Year 2, the largest group of people enrolling are again from Europe (35% of enrollers) with people from Africa and Arab States equally the next largest group (24% and 25% of enrollers). However in Year 3, the largest group of people enrolling are from Africa (33% of enrollers) with people from Europe and Arab States equally the next largest group (25% and 27% of enrollers).

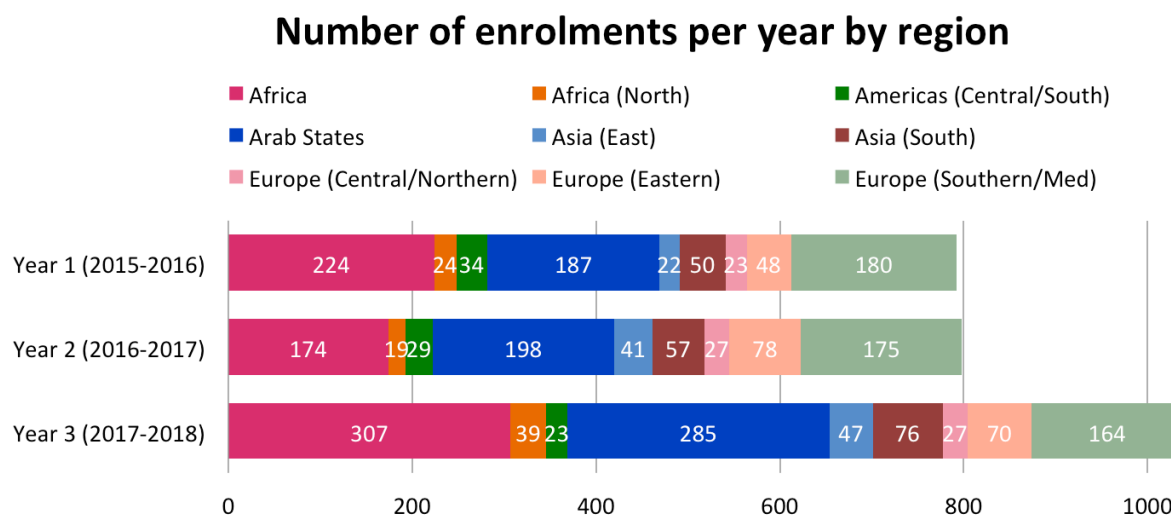


Figure 12: Number of enrolments at Action Language per year by sex (Year 1 (2015-16) n = 792; Year 2 (2016-17) n = 798; Year 3 (2017-18) n = 1038; unknowns excluded)

Outcome indicator target

The outcome indicator target for Action Language about enrolments is beneficiaries will demonstrate need for ESOL classes by enrolling at Action Language. The target is 2,500 learners by the end of Year 4 (the end of the project).

By analysing the enrolment and learner data, we found that there had been 2,635 enrolments by 2,185 people in the first three years of the project. There is one more year left of the BIG Lottery-funded Action Language project, and we expect Action Language to exceed the outcome indicator target.

Conclusion

Action Language has high demand for their ESOL classes with demand increasing over the three years of the project. This level of demand results in the organisation regularly operating waiting lists, especially for the two lowest level classes; Pre-entry and Entry level. Most learners stay for up to one year with some staying for two or more years. Action Language learners are both sexes, mainly male; of all ages (over 16) with those aged 25-35 being the biggest group; from all over the world with large numbers from Africa, Arab States and Europe; and, have a wide range of immigration statuses with around half being asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees, and around a third EU citizens.

Improving learners' English language ability, literacy and basis skills

Almost all learners reported that their English had improved by attending classes at Action Language. Action Language has self-cited improvements in English for 896 out of 924 learners for the three years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18. Action Language consistently receives positive feedback from learners with 95% to 100% of learners reporting their English was a lot better or better after attending classes. In our study, the average score learners gave Action Language for speaking, listening, reading and writing English was a minimum of 4 out of 5. We also found that use of interpreters when accessing healthcare services decreased over the two years we followed the cohort, as it did in our own interviews.

Of those who attended 10 classes or more we found that English language ability improved, as measured by progressing to the next level of class. Over the three years, 356 learners increased ESOL levels: 270 (ie 29% of the total of 924 learners) went up one level; 76 (8%) went up two levels; and 1% went up by three levels.

When we shine a spotlight on asylum seekers, refugees and EU citizens we see that refugees progress to the next ESOL level at a higher rate than the general learner population – 53% of refugees increased ESOL level in comparison to 39% of all learners – while asylum seekers and EU citizens change levels at a similar rate (35% and 34%). A greater proportion of the study cohort than the general learner population increased ESOL levels – 49% in comparison to 39%. And of those, 31% increased by one level, 18% increased by two levels but there were no increases three levels.

Introduction

This section looks at whether learners say their English language ability has improved. It looks at whether learners say their English is better or worse after learning English at Action Language and how helpful Action Language is assisting learners to speak, write, read and listen to English. We also use the study interview responses to explore use of interpreters during the interviews themselves and when using healthcare services. It also looks at whether Action Language learners have demonstrated improvements to their literacy and basic skills by progressing to a higher ESOL level. We measured this by analysing learners' ESOL level test data showing how many learners have changed levels per year, how many learners changed levels after one, two or three years with the project, and the average change in ESOL level across the first three years of the project.

About the level tests and the data

Action Language carries out level test three times a year - September, February and June - with its learners. The purpose of the level test is to assess learners' English levels against the ESOL curriculum, allocate learners to the appropriate ESOL level and contribute to decision-making when moving learners to a higher or lower ESOL levels, or keeping learners at the same level, across the year. In this report we used level test data from the academic years 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. In our analysis we excluded learners who attended fewer than 10 classes from the data because we feel they have not attended enough classes to learn English. There is more on learners attending Action Language on pages 35 to 40 and in *Appendix 2: Data tables*.

What is literacy and basic skills?

The Basic Skills Agency (2002) defines basic skills as “the ability to read, write, and speak in English (or Welsh), and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general”.

For Action Language, working with English language, the focus is on literacy and oral communication (reading, writing, listening, speaking), but by improving these skills and language knowledge, learners are better able to apply them to other basic skills such as literacy, ICT and maths, and to softer social skills such as interactions in everyday life for example getting advice, complaining, looking up information. ESOL classes include some numeracy work in being able to work with English numbers for example using the telephone, telling the time and using timetables.

The data we have and what it tells us

The end-of-year Action Language feedback form asks learners: *Now you are learning English at Action Language, is your English a lot better, better, the same, worse, a lot worse, and don't know?* Out of the 289 that responded to the question over the three years of the project, almost all learners (97% or 280 learners) said their English had got better or a lot better, most (66% or 190 learners) said it had got better and a smaller number (31% or 90 learners) said it had got a lot better. Only seven people said it had stayed the same, and two didn't know. When we look at the data from the end-of-year feedback form by year (see Figure 13 below), there is a slight but not significant difference between the years: in Year 1, 100% of the learners said their English had got better or a lot better, with 95% in Year 2 and 97% in Year 3 saying the same.

Is learners' English better or worse after learning English at Action Language

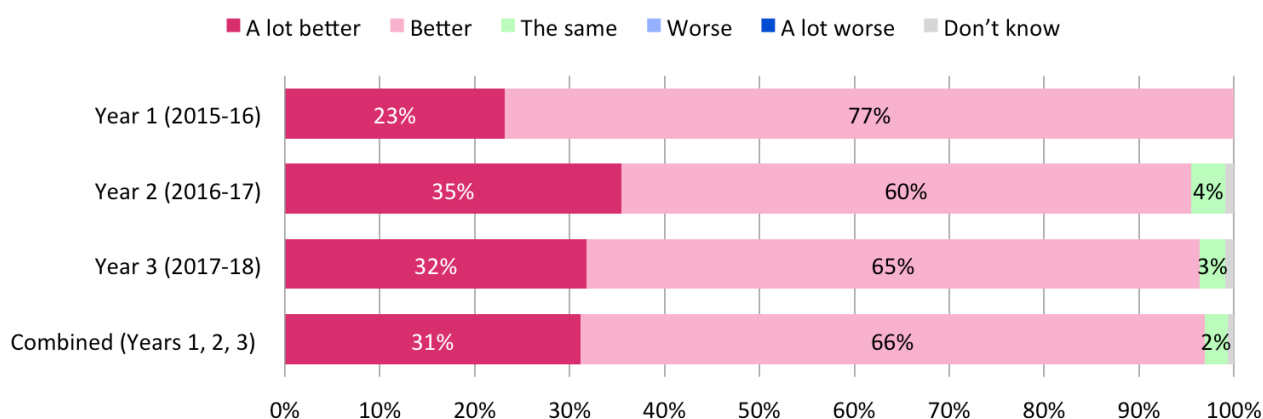


Figure 13: Results from self-completed end of year feedback form Year 1 2015-2016 n=69, Year 2 2016-2017 n=110, Year 3 2017-2018 n=110 (Total n=289) completed by ESOL levels E1, E2, E3, L1, L2

"I am very happy now because when I'm started to learning English at Action Language my English is not good but is [now] better to first."

Learner, 2017-18 end-of-year feedback form

“Of course. The way Action Language teach English even with Newcastle college and Leeds college they don’t do that well. The college doesn’t do all that they need to do for people that English is not a first language but Action Language do it. I think it is very rare that college do what Action Language do.”

Writing 5 out of 5, refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 5 (leaver)

In the interviews with learners, we asked: *Has learning English with Action Language helped you speak, write, read and listen to English?* using a five-point scale where 1 is not helpful and 5 is very helpful. Using a mean average of responses across the four interviews (Figure 14), learners found Action Language was helpful across all four domains (speaking, writing, reading and listening). The highest mean averages were for speaking and listening to English, with reading and writing both being rated less, across all four interviews. When combining the average for all interviews, the mean averages were all rated more than 4 out of 5, with writing the lowest at 4.0 and speaking the highest at 4.4 out of 5. The data may suggest an increase but the number of surveys is insufficient to state a change with any degree of statistical significance.

Has Action Language helped you learn English? (average)

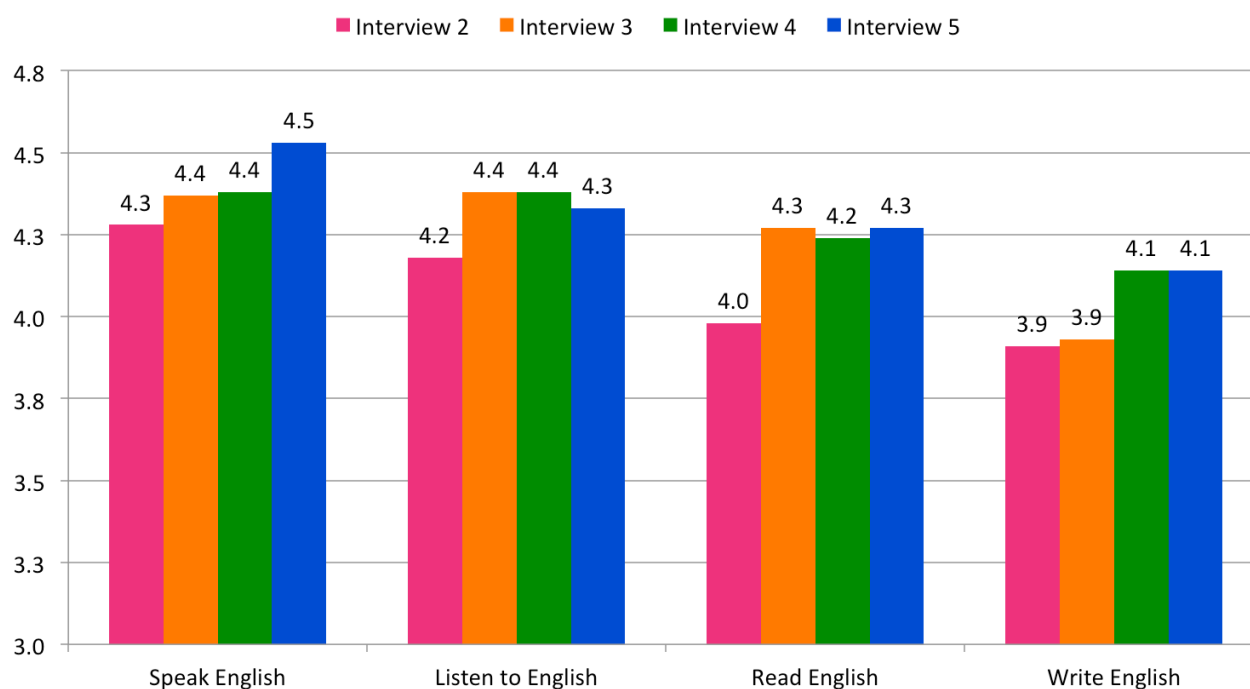


Figure 14: mean average responses from cohort interviews 2 to 5 to 5-point rating question Has learning English with Action Language helped you speak, listen to, read and write English? where 1 is not helpful and 5 is very helpful (Responses: Interview 2 n = 58, Interview 3 n = 41, Interview 4 n = 32, Interview 5 n = 30)

In the interviews, learners were mainly very positive about Action Language particularly speaking English

“5, definitely 5. My boyfriend all the time said it’s helped me. I came to England with grammar but I couldn’t talk - did formal English at school but not conversational English”
Speaking 5 out of 5, EU citizen at Interview 4 (Level 2)

"Action Language introduce me to English. It provided the roots and the overview to continue by myself. I didn't learn all my English from Action Language but I learnt which things I should learn to continue by myself. It was amazing. And I saw that there were limitations (not in a negative sense) so I tried to be involved in IELTS and FCE to have another level. With these courses I consolidated what I should do to learn on my own."

Speaking 4 out of 5, other migrant at Interview 4 (leaver)

"When I came to the UK they helped me to improve my English. Before I came to UK I thought my English was OK because I stayed at school. At Action Language my English improved every day."

Speaking 4 out of 5, refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 4 (leaver)

"The first time I started learning English with Action Language I am like a blank person, can't see or hear everything. I'm afraid to communicate with other people, looking for Iranian guys to help me, but after one year I go in at Entry level and I start to communicate with other people, in the church, in the class, people around me. I don't forget any time with Action Language, they helped me with open arms and accepted me. They sort out everything, very kind, I don't forget Action Language."

Speaking, writing, reading, listening all 5 out of 5, refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 5 (leaver)

I started with Action Language in February 2016 and at the time I wasn't able to speak English. Helen and the teaching assistant helped me a lot. Helen was clear with the English. ESOL for work helped us so much; I was taught by Ruth for four weeks, five hours/day, three days/week. When the boss at Casa Antonio shows me the employment contract I had done about employment contracts at the time. I was also aware of health and safety thanks the course and pointed out to him that the plug on the Hoover was unsafe. So he changed it.

Speaking, writing, reading, listening all 5 out of 5, EU citizen at Interview 3 (leaver)

A few learners gave critical feedback or said how Action Language could help even more

"Because in the class no writing, just a little"

Writing 3 out of 5, refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 4 (leaver)

"Maybe more writing practice would be good because I struggled with it"

Writing 4 out of 5, EU citizen at Interview 4 (leaver)

"Action language's focus is to introduce you to culture, expressions and mannerisms; how to socialise to speak to people and familiarise yourself with the UK. The writing teaching is more elementary."

Writing 4 out of 5, other migrant at Interview 4 (leaver)

"There were a lot of people in her class which meant that I had little time speak English"

Speaking 3 out of 5, other migrant at Interview 3 (leaver)

How could it be better for me? Informal spoken English, more times to practice informal speech, if there would a way to do it, to speak and ways of saying Geordie, more practical English

Other migrant at Interview 3 (leaver)

Change in ESOL level in each year

We used the ESOL level data to assess if learners' English had improved between the start and end of each project year. We excluded those who attended fewer than 10 classes. The total number of learners who attended 10 or more sessions in

- Year 1 was 359 people (45% of the 796 learners who enrolled in Year 1)
- Year 2 was 433 people (54% of the 800 learners who enrolled in Year 2)
- Year 3 was 531 people (51% of the 1039 learners who enrolled in Year 3)

In Year 1, 57 learners (16% of the total 359 learners) changed ESOL level (see Figure 15 and Table 9 below). Of those 57 learners, 53 (15%) increased level with 52 progressing by one level and one learner progressing by two levels. The remaining learners - four - decreased by one level. There was no change in level for 302 learners (84%).

In Year 2, 107 learners (25% of the total 433 learners) changed ESOL level (see Figure 15 and Table 9 below). We saw 102 learners (24%) increase levels - 91 learners (23%) progressed one level; 10 progressed two levels; and one progressed three levels (from Entry 1 to Level 1). The remaining learners - five - decreased by one level. There was no change in level for 326 learners (75%).

In Year 3, 176 learners (33% of the total 531 learners) changed ESOL level (see Figure 15 and Table 9 below). We saw 157 learners (30%) increase levels - 139 learners (26%) progressed one level and 18 progressed two levels (3%). The remaining learners - 19 - decreased by one level. There was no change in level for 355 learners (67%).

Table 9: Change in ESOL level for learners attending > 10 classes showing increase by one, two or three levels, no change and decrease by one level for Year 1 2015-16 n=359, Year 2 2016-17 n=433, Year 3 2017-18 n=531

	Year 1 (2015-16)	Year 2 (2016-17)	Year 3 (2017-18)
Total learners	359	433	531
Increase by 3 levels (+3)	0	1	0
Increase by 2 levels (+2)	1	10	18
Increase by 1 level (+1)	52	91	139
Increased ESOL level	53	102	157
No change	302	326	355
Decreased ESOL level	4	5	19

We saw there was a progressive change in levels from Year 1 to Year 3 with more learners increasing levels in Year 3 than in Year 1. In Year 1 84% of learners did not change levels, 14% increased by one level and only one learner increased by two levels, and by Year 3 the proportion of learners that did not change levels dropped to 67% and those increasing by one level rose to 26% and by increasing by two levels to 3% (18 learners). In Year 3, we learnt additional classroom volunteers were recruited to support and encourage learners during classes, and additional classes were added to reduce waiting list, which may help to explain the increase in numbers progressing.

Change in ESOL level in each year for learners attending more than 10 classes

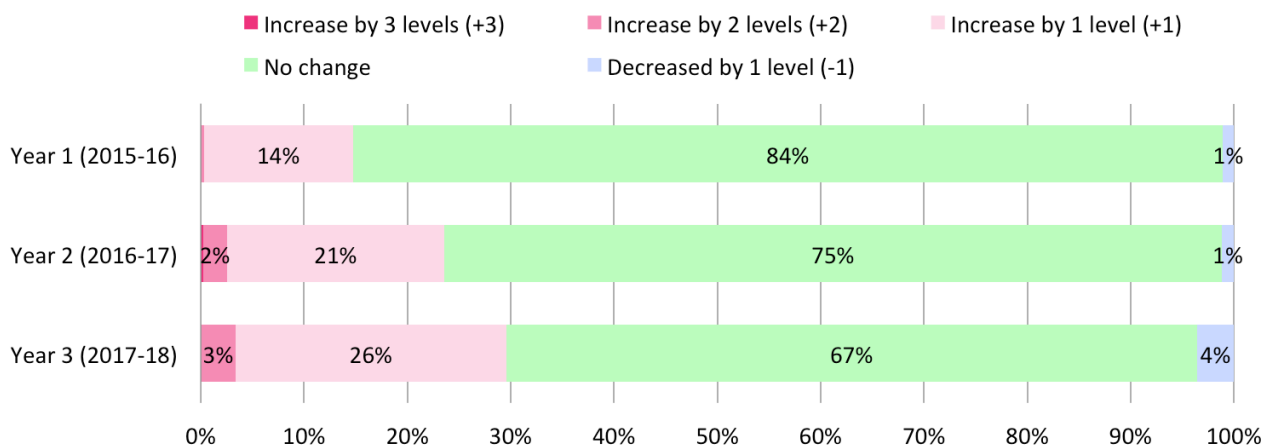


Figure 15: Change in ESOL level for learners attending more than 10 classes showing increase by one, two or three levels, no change and decrease by one level for Year 1 2015-16 n=359, Year 2 2016-17 n=433, Year 3 2017-18 n=531

From talking with Action Language staff, their view is it takes longer than one year to complete an ESOL level. Those students able to study at college receive 8-15 hours a week, depending upon the local authority, and aim to complete one level per year. At Action Language, learners receive four hours a week so are less able to progress through the levels.

ESOL level change for learners by years attending Action Language

We used the ESOL level data to assess how learners' English had improved across the three years of the project. When looking at all learners, we found that 39% (356) of learners had improved their English over the three years of the project (see Table 10 and Figure 16).

Table 10: Change in ESOL level for learners attending more than 10 classes for the whole project n=924 and after one year n=591, after two years n=254, and after three years n=79 showing increase by one, two or three levels, no change and decrease by one level

	Total learners	Learners by time at Action Language		
	Whole project	After 1 year	After 2 years	After 3 years
Total learners	924	591	254	79
Increased by 3 levels (+3)	10	0	5	5
Increased by 2 levels (+2)	76	15	38	23
Increased by 1 level (+1)	270	132	109	29
Increased ESOL level	356	147	141	57
No change (0)	542	425	99	18
Decreased ESOL level	26	19	3	4

After learning English for one year, 25% (147) of learners had improved their English, after two years it was 60% (152) of learners, and after three years it was 72% (57) of learners.

ESOL level change by years at Action Language

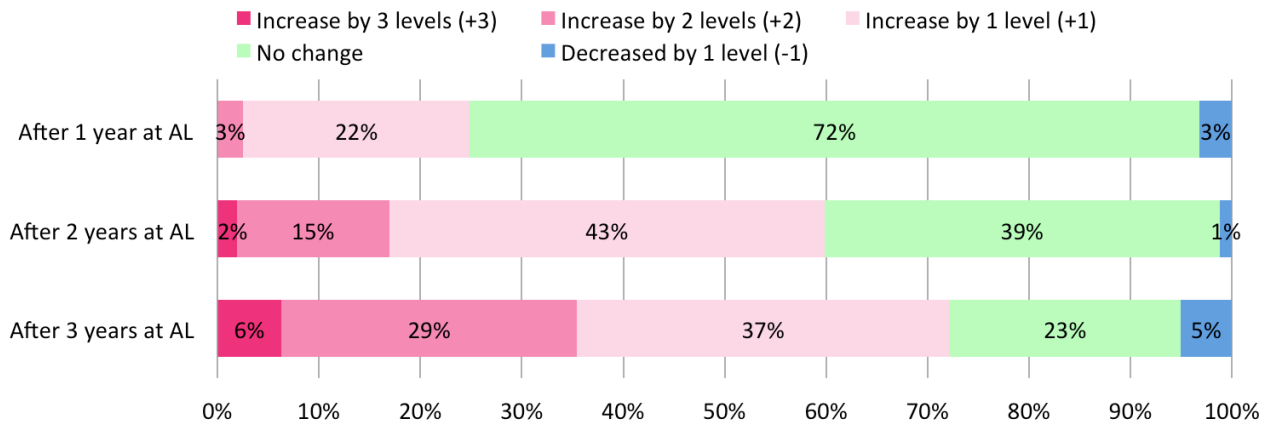


Figure 16: Change in ESOL level for learners attending more than 10 classes by years at Action Language: after one year n=591, after two years n=254, and after three years n=79 showing increase by one, two or three levels, no change and decrease by one level

Average ESOL level change for learners by years attending Action Language

We measured the average ESOL level change by analysing learners' ESOL level test data to calculate the median average change in ESOL level across the first three years of the project. For those who have been at Action Language for three years and had attended more than 10 classes, the median⁶ average change is an increase in one ESOL level, and it is the same – an increase in one ESOL level – for those who have been at Action Language for two years. For those who have been at Action Language for one year, the median average is zero level change.

Spotlight on asylum seekers, refugees and EU citizens

When we shine a spotlight on ESOL level change by immigration status for learners attending 10 or more classes (Table 11), we see asylum seekers and EU migrants changed levels at a similar rate to the general Action Language learner population. For all learners, 39% increased ESOL level and for asylum seekers, 35% increased, and for EU citizens it was 34%. When looking at refugees, there were some differences – a greater proportion of refugees (53%) increased ESOL level than all learners (39%).

Table 11: Change in ESOL level for asylum seekers (n=370), refugees (n=91), EU citizens (n=227) and all learners (n=924) attending more than 10 classes

	Asylum seekers		Refugees		EU citizens		All learners	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Total learners	370		91		227		924	
Increased by 3 levels (+3)	1	0%	2	2%	3	1%	10	1%
Increased by 2 levels (+2)	31	8%	14	15%	12	5%	76	8%
Increased by 1 level (+1)	98	26%	32	35%	63	28%	270	29%
Increased ESOL level	130	35%	48	53%	78	34%	356	39%
No change (0)	223	60%	42	46%	145	64%	542	59%
Decreased ESOL level	17	5%	1	1%	4	1%	26	3%

⁶ The median is the middle point of a number set, in which half the numbers in a list ordered from smallest to largest number are above the median and half are below

This may be because we have seen that refugees appear to be the most settled out of the three immigration status groups, which is likely to mean they can concentrate on their studies.

Spotlight on the longitudinal study cohort

We also analysed the class register and level test data for the 90 people forming the longitudinal study cohort. We found a different picture emerging from the one painted by all Action Language learners. In contrast to all learners where, following registration, most learners (58%) did not attend, most of the study cohort attended 10 or more classes (83%) – Table 12 below. In fact, 39% of the study cohort attended more than 50 classes (Table 13) whereas only 16% of all learners did.

Table 12: Longitudinal study cohort attending more than and less than 10 classes (n=90)

	Count	%
Attended 10 or more classes	83	92%
Attended fewer than 10 classes	7	8%
Total	90	

Table 13: Longitudinal study cohort attending more than 10 classes by increments of 10 classes (n=83)

	Count	%
Attended >50 classes	32	39%
Attended 40-49 classes	10	12%
Attended 30-39 classes	9	11%
Attended 20-29 classes	13	16%
Attended 10-19 classes	19	23%
Total	83	

We also found that proportionally more of the study cohort stayed at Action Language for two years and three years (Table 14). For our cohort, for those attending more than 10 classes, 37% stayed for two years and 28% stayed for three years; for the general learner population, 27% stayed for two years and 9% stayed for three years.

Table 14: Longitudinal study cohort attending 1, 2 or 3 years at Action Language (all (n=90) and attending more than 10 classes (n=83))

	All		Attending 10 or more classes	
	Count	%	Count	%
1 year	34	38%	29	35%
2 years	31	34%	31	37%
3 years	25	28%	23	28%
Total	90		83	

And when we look at progression through the ESOL levels, the differences continue. For our cohort for those attending 10 or more classes, 49% or 41 people increased their ESOL level with around a third (31%) increased by one level, just under a fifth (18%) increased by two levels, and no one increased by three levels. For the general learner population, 39% increased levels – 29% by one level, 8% by two, and 1% by three levels.

Table 15: Change in ESOL level for longitudinal study cohort showing increase by one, two or three levels, no change and decrease by one level (all (n=90) and attended > 10 classes (n=83))

	All		Attending 10 or more classes	
	Count	%	Count	%
Total learners	90		83	
Increase by 3 levels (+3)	0	0	0	0
Increase by 2 levels (+2)	16	18%	15	18%
Increase by 1 level (+1)	26	29%	26	31%
Increased ESOL level	42	47%	41	49%
No change	47	52%	41	49%
Decreased ESOL level	1	1%	1	1%

We do not know why these differences occurred. It may be that the most committed learners were invited to take part in the study or by being part of the study increased their commitment to learning English. We think this is most likely. We also cannot totally discount the possibility that our 30-60 minute conversations with learners affected their confidence in speaking English or their English language ability, even in an extremely small way. One learner remarked that the conversations she had with us were the longest conversations she had in English about herself, and another how pleased he was to be able to have a conversation in English without an interpreter.

How using interpreters changed for our cohort

We found that the use of interpreters changed for our cohort between Interview 1 and Interview 5 both in terms of using interpreters during the interviews themselves and when using healthcare services. We cannot attribute all the change to improvements in English ability because the greatest attrition rate from our study were those at lower ESOL levels most in need to interpreters but, from what learners told us and from our own observations, some of the reduction in use of interpreters was due to improvements in English.

Interpreters when using healthcare services

In the interviews, we asked learners about their use of interpreters when visiting their GP, dentist, optician or the hospital. We then asked whether they could tell the doctor what help they needed, whether they could understand the doctor, and whether they needed an interpreter.

We found that use of interpreters decreased over time suggesting that learners' English had improved. For our final 30 interviewees, at baseline, 18 of them (60%) needed an interpreter in the healthcare settings. By Interview five, only two of the 30 did (7%), showing a significant reduction on our cohort's dependency on interpreters. Of the final 30 interviewees, 16 had been to see a healthcare worker since we last interviewed them. Of these, only one was not able to tell the healthcare worker of their needs and understand the healthcare worker. Two needed an interpreter, one because of the complexity of the health issue.

We found from talking to our interviewees, over time and as learners' confidence in using English grew, they did not need interpreters for routine appointments but still needed an interpreter for less routine appointments because of technical medical terms used by healthcare professionals.

"Sometimes interpreter with me but sometimes just me. I can talk to doctor on my own but sometimes medical words are hard. Doctor very important and very important to understand. In GP don't always book interpreter. Today I thought I understand but when got to pharmacist, realised I didn't so went back to GP but could only speak to receptionist."
Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 4 (leaver)

"In the GP, interpreter come but sometimes if make appointment same day go by myself but sometimes hard and - give example - hard as only 10 minutes [appointment] - a problem, problem for me and for GP. In RVI, phone interpreter."
Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 3 (leaver)

"When I go to those places sometimes need an interpreter and have to do on my own, other times an interpreter there. Used to ask sometimes but now don't always need."
Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 3 (Entry 2)

"When make appointment, can make it myself with receptionist, can't do by phone but can do face to face. [I have] been with GP for 9 years and know me so cooperate with her"
Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 2 (Entry 1)

A small number of interviewees told us that as their English improved they realised that not all interpreters interpret accurately for example a refugee/asylum seeker told us in Interview 3 she uses an interpreter at the GPs and with the psychiatrist but sometimes she prefers to speak to them in English; partly because she finds the interpreters do not always translate her words accurately.

Using interpreters during interviews

We also saw a decrease in the use of interpreters during our interviews with learners. At Interview 1 (baseline), 51% of learners (46 out of 90 people) were accompanied by an interpreter, dropping to 19% (8 out of 42 people) of learners interviewed at Interview 3, and 10% by Interview 5 (3 out of 30 learners). When we look only at the 30 learners we interviewed across all five interviews, nine people used an interpreter at Interview 1 (baseline) which reduced to only three wanting an interpreter at all five interviews.

While we can say through our observation of learners in interviews that people's English, especially conversational English, did improve over time, it is not possible to say with any degree of certainty that interviewees' English improved so interpreters were not required. It is true to say that fewer people at Interview 5 did not need an interpreter - only three people out of 30 people at Interview 5 that felt they still needed an interpreter.

In addition, when interpreters were not available in person, and after a few poor experiences of phone interpreters, we chose not to use an interpreter at Interview 4 or 5 if a phone interpreter was the only option. In this event, as we had built up sufficient rapport and trust with interviewees and demonstrating to learners we would not interrupt or rush them during the interview, we were able to put learners at ease and together agreed to conduct the interview without an interpreter.

We used learners' own language apps to translate any words that were difficult – the most common being 'independence/independent' and 'belong/belonging'. We found that learners appeared proud they had been able to talk to us for around 45 minutes without an interpreter.

Outcome indicator targets

There are two outcome indicator targets for Action Language for improving English language, literacy and basic skills

1. beneficiaries will cite improvements to their English language ability and the target is 200 learners per year
2. beneficiaries will demonstrate improvements in their language ability, including literacy and basic skills, through progressing to the next level and the target is 150 learners per year

The outcome indicator is beneficiaries will cite improvements to their English language ability

The end-of-year Action Language feedback form asks learners: *Now you are learning English at Action Language, is your English a lot better, better, the same, worse, a lot worse, or don't know?*, and this question is used to measure this outcome indicator target. By the end of Year 3, 299 end-of-year feedback forms had been completed by learners at levels Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2, and the response rate for this question was 97% (289 responses).

Overall, across the three years, 97% (280) of respondents cited improvements in their English, with around a third (31%) citing their English was a lot better and around two thirds (66%) citing it was better. The self-cited improvements in English (answering a lot better or better) ranged from 95% to 100% each year, which shows learners consistently reported improvements in their English language over the first three years of the project.

If we consider the feedback form responses to be representative of the 924 Action Language learners that attended more than 10 classes across the three years, it suggests that 896 learners would cite improvements in their English by the end of Year 3. The target is 200 learners per year, leading to a total of 600 learners citing improvements by the end of Year 3. We consider this outcome indicator target has been met.

The outcome indicator is beneficiaries will demonstrate improvements in their language ability, including literacy and basic skills, through progressing to the next level

By analysing Action Language's level test data, for those who attended 10 classes or more we found that English language ability improved, as measured by progressing to the next level of class. Over the three years, 356 learners increased ESOL levels: 270 (ie 29% of the total of 924 learners) went up one level; 76 (8%) went up two levels; and 1% went up by three levels. The outcome indicator target is 150 learners per year, leading to an expected total of 450 learners progressing to the next level by the end of Year 3.

We consider that this outcome indicator target has not been met, with 94 fewer learners progressing to the next level than planned. We expect the increasing number of classes at the Sunderland language school and run in partnership with community organisations in Newcastle coupled with the increase in volunteer support at the Newcastle language school will continue to increase the number of learners that progress to the next ESOL level. It may be that the target of 150 learners per year (450 by Year 3 and 600 by Year 4) is slightly unrealistic if a learner requires 8-15 hours a week to complete an ESOL level – as expected for students attending college ESOL classes – when Action Language is only able to provide four hours per week with its resources.

Conclusion

Action Language helps learners to improve their English ability in speaking, listening, writing and reading English, and is particularly helpful around speaking and listening to English. Some learners thought there could be more reading and writing practice, and more around understanding the local accent, Geordie. ESOL for Work is a practical course with learners reporting tangible benefits in applying for jobs and understanding job-related paperwork. The style of teaching at Action Language increased learners' confidence and created a relaxed comfortable environment in which to practice English, and learners could see improvements after each class. Learners consistently gave positive feedback to Action Language, believing it to give a better experience than local colleges.

Action Language learners do demonstrate increased ability in learning English by progressing to the next ESOL level. We saw learners change levels at a higher rate the longer they attend Action Language, and a greater proportion of learners progressing to the next level in Year 3 than in Year 1. If Action Language was able to secure additional funding to increase the number of ESOL teaching hours to more than four hours per learner per week, it is likely learners would benefit by progressing to the next ESOL level over a shorter time period and at a higher rate.

Case study: Omar Wassef

Omar, a Sudanese Arabic-speaker in his late 30s, came to the UK with his family seeking asylum.

Before Action Language

Omar and his family arrived in the UK in July 2015 and claimed asylum. They were soon granted leave to remain in the country and settled in Tyneside.

Omar spoke very little English and could not read and write English at all.

He wanted to learn English to find a job; he and his wife had two young children with a third on the way and he was keen to work to provide for his growing family. The North East Refugee Service told him about Action Language and he went along to enrol in classes.

At Action Language

He started in the pre-Entry class; aimed at beginners. His spoken English improved and he learned to read and write in English a little. After a year at Action Language, he found work; in a warehouse.

Unfortunately his shifts clashed with his classes and he was no longer able to attend lessons. This was a shame as although his English had improved he was not a confident speaker and needed to use an interpreter for important conversations with his doctor. In addition, his children had started school and he was not able to speak much to the teachers about how they were getting on.

After Action Language

He worked in the warehouse for over a year then got a job in a bakery. Because he rarely served customers and some of his colleagues spoke Arabic, he had few opportunities to practice his English, which did not improve. With a job and a young family he found it hard to make time for studying English on his own.

As his children got older, he realised that if he was to help them at school he would need to improve his English and he has since enquired about returning to Action Language to pick up where he left off.



Figure 17: Omar's outcome scores at his first and last interview (persona 5)

Moments of truth

Realising he wanted to help his children with their schoolwork as they got older.

The difference Action Language made

Helping him to speak English to go shopping, make an appointment at the doctors and sort out him and his family's housing needs.

Case study: Felipe Martínez

Felipe, a Spanish speaker from South America. He's 50 and he came to the UK looking for work and a change of career having lived in Spain for many years.

Before Action Language At Action Language

Felipe arrived in the UK in August 2013, having already arranged to work in a restaurant as a chef.

At first he was confident to get by with a few words. However, he felt lonely because, although he met other Spanish speakers, they were much younger and looking for different things in life.

He took an English course at a local FE college but his attendance was poor.

A housing officer took him along to the school when he asked where he could learn English.

He started in the Entry 1 class in June 2016, attending both classes each week. He benefitted from the classes by learning keywords: at the bank, shops and doctors. As a result he became more relaxed in situations with English speakers.

At work he got by on little English; pointing to items he needed in the kitchen and asking a fellow Spanish speaker to interpret for him when he did not understand. His dream job was to study to be an interior designer and his neighbours marvelled at how he turned the interior of his council flat into a work of art.

Unfortunately he fell ill in February 2017, collapsing at work one day, and was diagnosed with diabetes. He stopped working and classes for some months. He was helped by a social worker from the council who sorted out his benefits. He returned to classes in September 2017 for a few months before visiting friends and family in Spain and South America.

After Action Language

In May 2018 he got a temporary job in Edinburgh and left Action Language.

Felipe is planning to finish work in Newcastle, and return to Action Language. His English has improved, but not sufficiently for him to be no longer dependent on interpreters and not to study interior design in England. He remained in the Entry 1 class throughout his time.

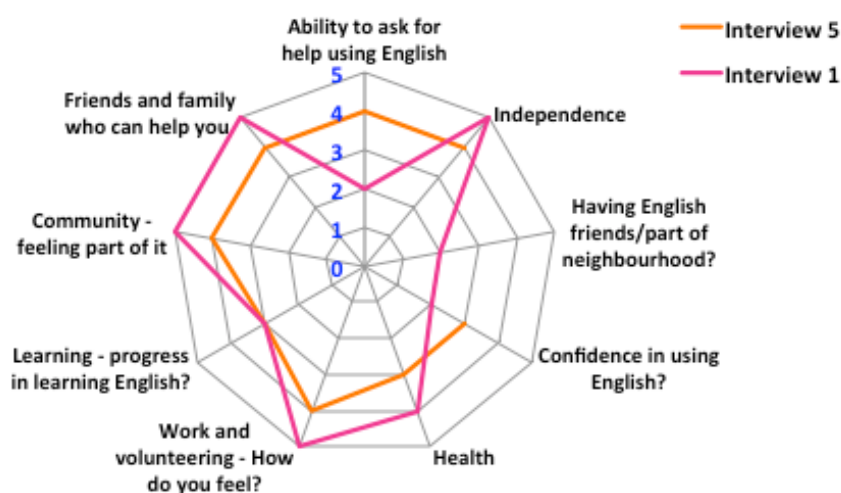


Figure 18: Felipe's outcome scores at his first and last interview (persona 7)

Moments of truth

Trying to exchange a shirt in a shop but he did not have enough English to do the exchange. He felt ashamed because people were being very patient.

The difference Action Language made

He's now more relaxed with English speakers. After learning with Action Language he was complimented on his English by a friend of a friend.

Improving access to basic services

Access to basic services, such as healthcare, shops and housing services, are all key to meeting the everyday needs of learners. We analysed data from Action Language's feedback form in addition to our own longitudinal survey and found that Action Language classes are successful in helping learners access these types of services.

Although a high proportion of learners at baseline could use English to ask for help, communicating with healthcare professionals and teachers of their children at school were areas of difficulty; with 68% needing an interpreter at the doctors. Over time we found that learners reliance upon interpreters reduced and that they felt much more confident in accessing basic services.

Introduction

What do we mean by basic services?

Basic services are ones that provide for meeting basic needs. One definition comes from the Institute for Global Prosperity's report *Social prosperity for the future: A proposal for Universal Basic Services* (2017), which defines Universal Basic Services (UBS) as a collection of "seven free public services that enable every citizen to live a larger life by ensuring access to safety, opportunity, and participation."⁷ These services are: healthcare, education, legal and democracy, shelter, food, transport, and information.

For our longitudinal study we asked learners about local services and specified healthcare, shops, and housing. Action Language's feedback survey of learners referred to services and specified 'the doctor's and the post office'.

Action Language's marketplace events

In addition to lessons that include content on how to ask the help in shops that the doctors, Action Language organises an annual marketplace event for learners to test out their English in a variety of situations. Teachers, teaching assistants and learners set up, run and interact at 'market stalls' featuring mock ups of shops, a post office, pharmacy, hairdressers, library and other local services in Action Language's building. Learners use 'pretend money' to buy goods and services and interact with those running the stalls and other 'customers'.

Our observation of the marketplace event in May 2017 found that it was very well attended, very interactive and great fun; key ingredients for assisting learners in their language skills and to develop their confidence. Importantly, it provided a safe space in which learners could practice their English in a friendly and supportive setting.

⁷ *Social prosperity for the future: A proposal for Universal Basic Services*, Institute for Global Prosperity, 2017 <https://bit.ly/2zguGnp> (accessed August 2018)

The data we have and what it tells us

Action Language's own surveys of all of its students over the three academic years of our evaluation found that 89% of the 294 learners that responded, reported that Action Language had helped them a lot or a little to use services (such as the doctor's and the post office). Only 6% responded neutrally (ie that it did not help or hinder them) and 3% reported that it had not helped them much or at all, with 2% not knowing whether it had helped or not.

Further, 82% stated that they knew more about local services and activities as a result of attending classes at Action Language.

Of the 90 learners we interviewed at baseline only five (6%) stated that they could not ask for help, in English, when they were shopping. All five were male and at Pre-Entry or Entry 1 and had interpreters present during the interview. The proportion of interviewees that could not ask for help in English when shopping reduced at Interview 2 to 2%; and everyone could ask for help in English in subsequent interviews.

This shows that interviewees became accomplished at shopping quickly, at least for everyday essentials. Many reported having some difficulty with buying items acquired infrequently, perhaps for one-off items. Less quickly acquired were the levels of language skills needed by interviewees to communicate with healthcare workers comprehensively or without the need for an interpreter: less so to make an appointment but more to explain the problem or symptoms and to understand healthcare workers response. Medical and anatomical terms are the ones that interviewees felt less confident at understanding. Some learners who were at higher levels of Action Language's classes still preferred to have an interpreter present at hospital because they recognised the importance of good communication in that setting.

As shown by Figure 19 below, of the 76 learners at baseline that had visited the doctors, 67% could tell the doctor/dentist/hospital what help they needed, 63% could understand what the doctor/dentist/nurse said to them, and 34% did not need an interpreter.

Of the 50 learners (68%) that did need an interpreter at baseline, only three of the 20 that commented further (15%) needed one every time; the remainder could book an appointment without using an interpreter, and when they did see the doctor, dentist or optician, needed one only for some of the time, for some words, particularly complex medical ones or if the matter was serious.

Of the final 30 interviewees, 16 had been to see a healthcare worker since we last interviewed them. Of these, only one was not able to tell the worker of their needs and understand the worker. Two needed an interpreter, one because of the complexity of the health issue.

How learners communicated with healthcare professionals (% of interviewees at Interview 1)

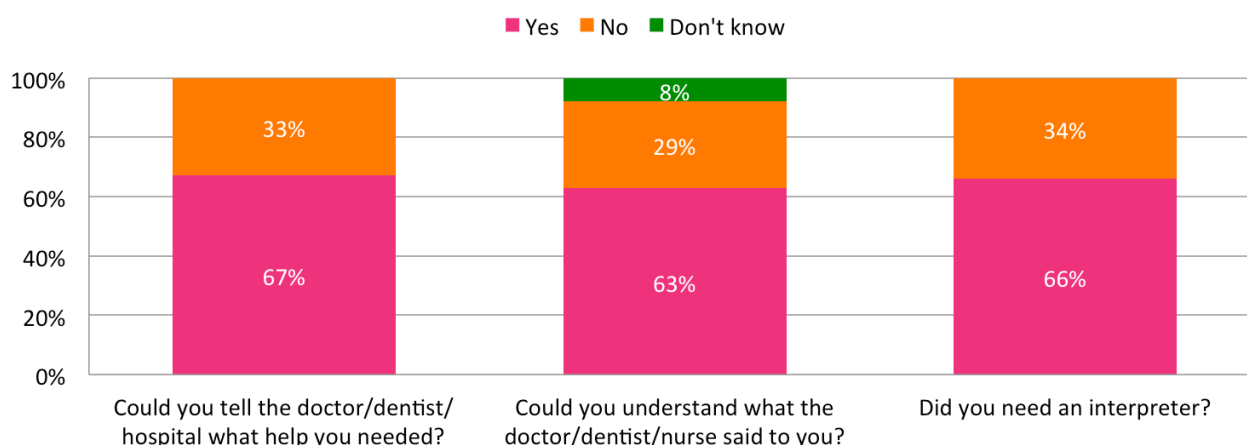


Figure 19: Responses to questions on learners' abilities to communicate with healthcare professionals at Interview 1 (n=90)

When we asked interviewees to rate how able they were to ask for help, using English, in shops, at the doctors, and for housing, on a scale between one and five (one being not at all and five being very much) at the baseline interview, we found that 73% scored 3, 4 or 5, showing that most interviewees felt able to use English to ask for help, however basically, although around a quarter (27%) felt ill equipped to do this.

As you can see from Figure 20, the scores for the proportion of the final 30 interviewees at Interview 5, compared with the baseline scores for those same interviewees shows a marked increase at the two highest ratings (4 and 5). At baseline, 13 of the 30 learners (ie 43%) scored 4 and 5. At Interview 5 this has increased by 15, to 28 (93%). This left only one interviewee scoring for each of ratings 2 and 3.

[Yes, can understand what the GP said] "For example, yesterday, booked interpreter but not come, sometimes doctor need an interpreter because words hard, I tried to speak to doctor and he understand me, it was easy. For me, I understand him, just one sentence not understand. And same day in afternoon husband went to appointment and interpreter came. But doctor say to interpreter don't interpret, let [learner name] say if she doesn't understand. It help me practice my English."

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 5 (leaver)

"Sometimes interpreter with me but sometimes just me. I can talk to doctor on my own but sometimes medical words are hard, doctor very important and very important to understand. In GP don't always book interpreter. Today I thought I understand but when got to pharmacist, realised I didn't so went back to GP and could only speak to receptionist."

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 4 (leaver)

[Yes, can understand what the GP said] "But not very. Understand if say slowly but husband come too and say my wife has broken English, but before when see GP, hard if Geordie, as sound is different."

Other migrant at Interview 4 (Entry 3)

How able are you to ask for help using English for example in shops, at the doctors, for housing? (Number of interviewees at Interviews 1 and 5)

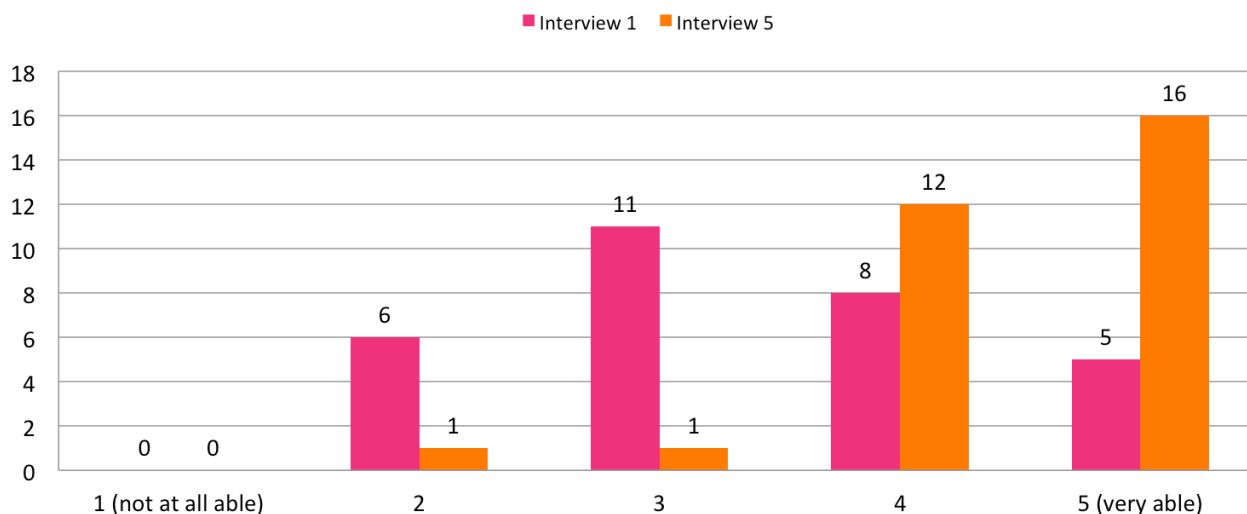


Figure 20: Ability of interviewees to ask for help in English at the shops, at the GP and for housing showing responses at Interview 1 and Interview 5 for final 30 interviewees (n=30)

“When I am living in Newcastle sometimes I organise appointment for GP, dentist, some place, but at the moment I don’t need interpreter...I can now speak to GP and dentist but never enough but can handle the problem in the dentist, in the shop, every place. Not very good but can organise.”

Scoring 4 out of 5, refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 5 (leaver)

“It has changed, more confident I’d say, I’m not afraid of asking things. In the beginning I would think about it twice before asking people, thinking about building the sentence, now more confident but still thinking about what I’d like to say and how to say it.”

Scoring 5 out of 5, other migrant at Interview 5 (leaver)

School

We asked parents of school-age children living with them whether they could talk to their children’s teachers in English and what about. Further, we asked them whether they can help their children with their schoolwork, using English and what subjects they found easiest or most difficult to help with. Talking to teachers requires some level of English skills; however helping children with their schoolwork is more complex because it requires some understanding of the topic and the level of the topic for which assistance is needed. Native English speaking parents and guardians may struggle with helping older children with schoolwork too because of the subject matter and the level at which it is being taught.

“Some general help but otherwise I suggest they use the computer.”

Other migrant in Interview 1 (Entry 2)

At baseline, of our cohort of 90, 18 (20%) had school-age children living with them. Of these

- Twelve (67%) felt they could talk to the teachers in English. Sixteen of the 18 made comments to us; most saying they could talk to the teachers a little, their spouse or child interpreted for them, and they were limited as to what they could talk to teachers about (eg dietary or school uniform matters). In a number of cases, learners stated their children spoke English better than they did.

"And they help me as they speak English very, very well."

Other migrant in Interview 1 (Entry 2)

"I was two weeks ago at evening class - parent evening - I talk to English, Maths, Childcare teachers. The [English] teacher is good. He told me about [daughter's] progress with English class, making GCSE, need a bit more help but she has more English than me and difficult to help my daughter...she help me with MY homework!"

EU citizen at Interview 3 (Entry 3)

- Nine of the 18 (50%) felt able to help their child with their schoolwork. In terms of reading and writing, adults with young children felt most able to help; once children had reached GCSE level, most of the nine felt unable to help. Those who could help were well-educated spouses of postgraduate students who had come to the UK to study for PhDs.

At Interview 5 there were only two of our cohort living with school age children; too small a sample from which to make valid conclusions.

Outcome indicator target

The outcome indicator target for Action Language around access to basic services is beneficiaries will cite improved access to basic services and the target is 150 per year (450 by Year 3, 600 by Year 4).

As mentioned above, Action Language's own feedback forms from its students over the three academic years were responded to by a total of 294 learners. Of these 263 (89%) reported that Action Language had helped them a lot or a little to use services (such as the doctor's and the post office).

If we consider the feedback form responses to be representative of the 924 Action Language learners that attended more than 10 classes across the three years, it suggests that 822 learners would cite improvements in their access to basic services by the end of Year 3. The target is 450 learners by Year 3 (ie 372 less than our estimate of the actual attained by Action Language), and therefore we consider this outcome indicator target has been met.

Conclusions

Action Language classes help learners to gain language skills and cultural understanding to access services that help them in their everyday living; such as shopping, going to the doctors, sorting out housing issues, and finding out how their children are progressing at school. In addition to lessons in class, the organisation's marketplace events are a fun and interactive approach to helping learners to use basic services.

Increasing learners' independence

We assessed learners' independence in a variety of ways including finding out about their ability to use English in getting around, their use of interpreters, and their use of the phone and text-based communication (emails, messages and SMS); in addition to asking them to rate themselves on how independent they were.

We found that most learners were adept at getting around using the English they had, complemented with online maps and transport apps. They had difficulty understanding people who spoke quickly and/or with strong regional accents, however most were able to ask people to repeat what they had said and to slow down their pace of speaking. Almost all of the learners could understand prices and money, however basic their English language skills. Over the course of our study, we found learners becoming increasingly independent: reducing their reliance on interpreters, being better able to make and receive phone calls, and understanding terminology used by professionals.

Those who undertook Action Language's ESOL for Work course reported that it helped them to obtain and change jobs in addition to helping them understand their rights and responsibilities at work.

Each of the three groups by immigration status in our cohort felt their independence had increased over the course of our study. Refugees and asylum seekers felt much more independent, with everyone in this group who remained to the end of the study rating themselves as fairly or very independent; and over half of the EU citizens rating themselves the same. There was some increase felt by other migrants too.

Introduction

What we mean by independence

Whilst a number of studies we reviewed highlighted increased independence as one of the impacts of ESOL learning, they did not define independence. So we used our own definition related to self-determination, the process by which a person controls her or his own life. This includes not depending on others for meeting day-to-day living needs and being able to use English to ask for assistance to have those needs met; to not have to rely on friends and family to translate; and, to be able to go to appointments alone.

Independence is

- situational, learners are independent to different levels depending upon the situation in which they are using English
- relative rather than absolute
- comparative, based on culture and expectations
- subject to the Dunning–Kruger effect ie learners at a low level of independence may mistakenly assess their independence as greater than it is

How we tested independence

To assess the level of independence of learners, we asked them about

- their use of English in getting around: on the bus and their understanding when asking for directions in the street
- use of interpreters in accessing healthcare
- ability to use English on the phone and in messaging/emailing
- whether they could correctly identify the cost of an item from a list of food products and also if they can identify the cheapest product from that list
- their own rating of how independent they were at travelling around, speaking English, understanding money and getting the help they need
- what they needed most and least help with

The data we have and what it tells us

As mentioned in the section on accessing basic services (pages 55 to 59), Action Language's own surveys of all of its students over the three academic years of our evaluation found that 89% of the 294 learners that responded, reported that Action Language had helped them a lot or a little to use services (such as the doctor's and the post office). Only 6% responded neutrally (ie that it did not help or hinder them) and 3% reported that it had not helped them much or at all, with 2% not knowing whether it had helped or not.

Further, 82% stated that they knew more about local services and activities as a result of attending classes at Action Language.

Getting around

Different forms of transport require different levels of engagement with native English speakers. When we asked learners at the baseline interview how they travelled to the interview, as you can see by Figure 21, most walked, travelled by bus or used both forms of transport.

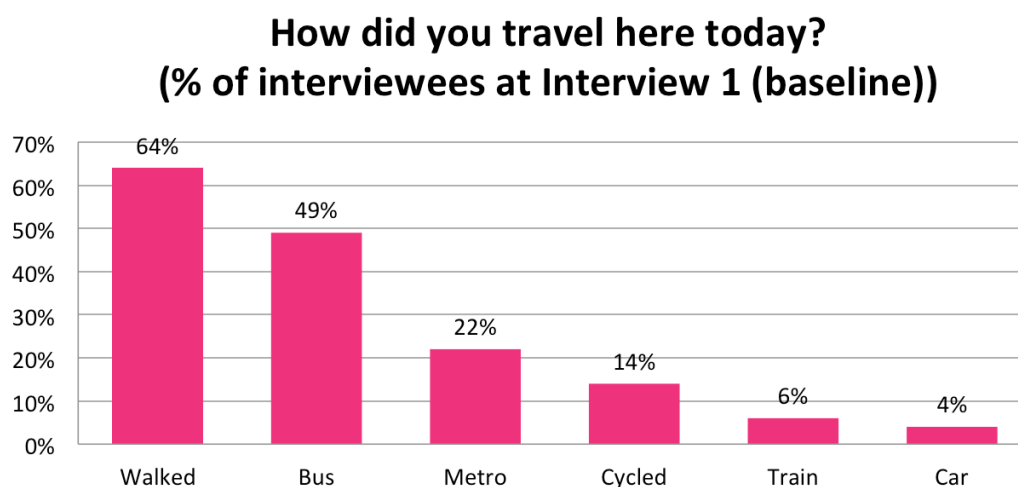


Figure 21: Method of transport by which learners attended Interview 1 (n=90)

The type of transport used by members of our cohort depended upon the cost, accessibility from where they live, onward journeys, weather, whether they were getting a lift from a friend or family member, and so on. Some of the travel time of learners was substantial: one learner telling us that they walked for an hour and a quarter each way to get to class. Whilst there was little difference in the method of transport used by learners of different immigration status, with walking ranging from 63% to 68% all learners in each of the three types of immigration statuses, it was only the refugees and asylum seekers who noted that lack of money was a barrier to using buses.

At baseline, 87% of learners stated they knew enough English to ask for a bus ticket.

When we asked learners what they would say if they didn't know where to get off or where the bus stop was, 70 (78%) of the 90 felt they would be able to ask the bus driver or fellow passengers where to get off. The remaining 20 learners were not sure if they had the skills and confidence to ask the driver or passengers or knew that they were not able to do this. However, across the cohort, eight learners said that they would use their smartphone to identify where they need to get a bus or look it up beforehand on the Internet. One told us of the time when he phoned his friend to ask them to explain to the bus driver where he needed to get off, handing the phone over to the bus driver to talk to his friend.

At Interview 5, we asked this question only of those who had not left Action Language and found that learners were much more confident to ask the driver where to get off the bus.

We then asked learners to imagine they are lost in the street and, as we were also happened to be in the street too, to ask us for help in English. 82 of the 90 (91%) at the baseline interview felt they could ask for directions, however 20 of the 90 (22%) preferred to use their smartphone's map as the first resort because it was not easy to understand people's responses to their questions.

"But they speak quickly, I prefer to use GPS. I have no problem asking the question, biggest problem is understanding the answer"

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 1 (Level 1)

Stepping back into the imaginary situation of them being lost, we then gave learners three consecutive directions (go straight ahead for 100m, turn right at the shop, then go straight ahead for 50m) and asked them if they understood this. Seventy-four (82%) said that they did and this enabled us to have a conversation with them about their experience of comprehending English in such situations.

Many struggled with the local accent, Geordie. At baseline, this was mentioned as being difficult to understand by 13 people (26%), and people speaking quickly to them (18 learners (36%)) were the biggest barriers to them not understanding directions. However a number of learners commented on how friendly and helpful people were.

"Sometimes I can't understand what people say if they speak very quickly or their accent is difficult."

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 1 (Pre-Entry)

We found at Interview 5 there was an improvement in learners' abilities to ask for help and understand directions when in the street; with the five of the six who were still at Action Language telling us confidently how they would ask for help and being able to understand the directions that we gave them in the interview.

Use of interpreters in accessing healthcare

At each interview we asked learners if they had accessed healthcare since our last interview ie visited the doctor, dentist, optician, or hospital. We then asked whether they could tell the doctor what help they needed, whether they could understand the doctor, and whether they needed an interpreter. There is more on using interpreters in *Improving learners' English language ability, literacy and basis skills* on pages 41 to 52.

Ability to use English on the phone and in messaging/emailing

We asked learners about their ability to communicate on the phone and using messaging and emails because these are often communication channels used to communicate with professionals, work, friends and family and assist in learners being more independent.

Phone

Of the 59 out of the 90 (66%) at baseline who reported that they used the phone, many stated that they did so only with difficulty due to not getting visual clues from speakers, in addition to struggling to understand speakers who talk quickly and/or with strong regional accents.

In terms of the segment of our cohort who we talked to at Interview 5: at the baseline Interview 23 of the 30 learners (ie 77%) we interviewed spoke English on the phone. At Interview 5 this had increased to 100%, as shown by Figure 22.

Do learners use the phone and send emails, messages and/or texts? (% of interviewees at Interviews 1 and 5)

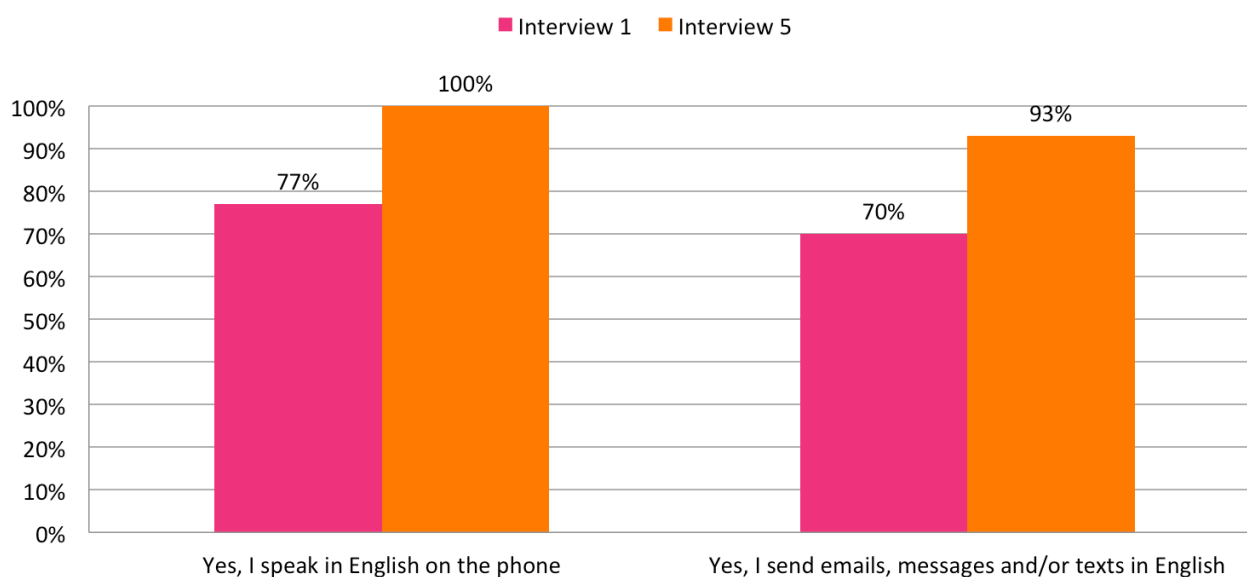


Figure 22: Ability of learners to communicate via phone and text based methods (final 30 interviewees)

At each interview, we asked learners with whom they communicated on the phone. We found that the category contacted by the highest proportion of those who used English on the phone were doctors, lawyers and other professionals/workers. Mostly learners used the phone to make appointments.

“Speak to my solicitor. Sometimes when people ring me and speak English I can understand, sometimes I can’t”

(Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 1 (Pre-Entry))

“The Home Office and my solicitor ring me. With the Home Office I can I understand what some of the people say but some speak too quickly. I can understand what my solicitor says.”

(Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 1 (Entry 1))

Using English in emails, messages and texts

We found the responses when we asked learners about their use of English in emails, messages and texts (Figure 22) similar to those we found for use of the phone: over the course of our study an increasing proportion of learners used English in their text-based communication.

As with phone use, 59 out of the 90 (66%) at baseline reported that they used emails, messages and texts in English. This 59 included 21 of the 30 interviewees we talked to at Interview 5 (ie 70%). Their usage of text-based communication in English had increased over time: at Interview 5 28 of the 30 (93%) used English in emails, messages and texts.

A large proportion of learners used text-based communication channels in preference to the phone for two main reasons

1. It gave learners the opportunity to be more in control of their communication in English, by be able to check the spelling and grammar of what they had written before sending it.

“Better than phone, think and look for words to make a sentence.”

EU citizen at Interview 1 (Entry 1)

“Use translator, helps to see if getting it right”.

EU citizen at Interview 1 (Entry 2)

“When I send message to my friends and my daughter, in English, I don’t send in my language as very important to improve my English.”

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 4 (leaver)

2. It enabled them to use social media, mostly with their friends.

“Not email. Use Facebook and use English to chat with friends but limited skill.”

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 1 (Pre-Entry)

Most learners who used English for text-based communication did so with friends, using it less for contacting professionals, although there were a number of comments from interviewees at each interval that they emailed to apply for work or did so online.

Understanding money

From Interview 2 we asked learners to pick out the most and least expensive item from a shopping list; 93% (41 out of 44 learners) were able to do so, although some needed prompting. Unsurprisingly this level of understanding of money continued throughout the study.

ESOL for Work

One aspect of independence is finding and maintaining paid work. A significant proportion of our cohort is not eligible to work – those applying for leave to remain in the country for asylum. However for all learners that are in classes of levels Entry 3 and above, Action Language offers them the opportunity to attend its free ESOL for Work course to prepare them for working in the UK.

In total, 11 of our cohort of 90 undertook this course; of these, nine found or maintained their paid work; two changing employer; and, two returned to their home country, one to run the family business. There is more about work in *Moving on positively to further education, employment or training* on page 68 to 73.

Learners were very positive about the course, favouring it being more intensive than their usual Action Language class and feeling they made progress quickly. A number highlighted the course as being of direct help in applying for a job and being interviewed. One mentioned that she signed her employment contract on the same week as she learnt about contracts on the course, which was very helpful.

Level of independence felt by learners

At every interview interval we asked learners: *How independent you are at travelling around, speaking English, understanding money, and getting the help they need?* giving five choices where 1 was 'not at all independent' and 5 was 'very independent'. Figure 23 shows the results for learners, by immigration status, at Interview 1 (baseline).

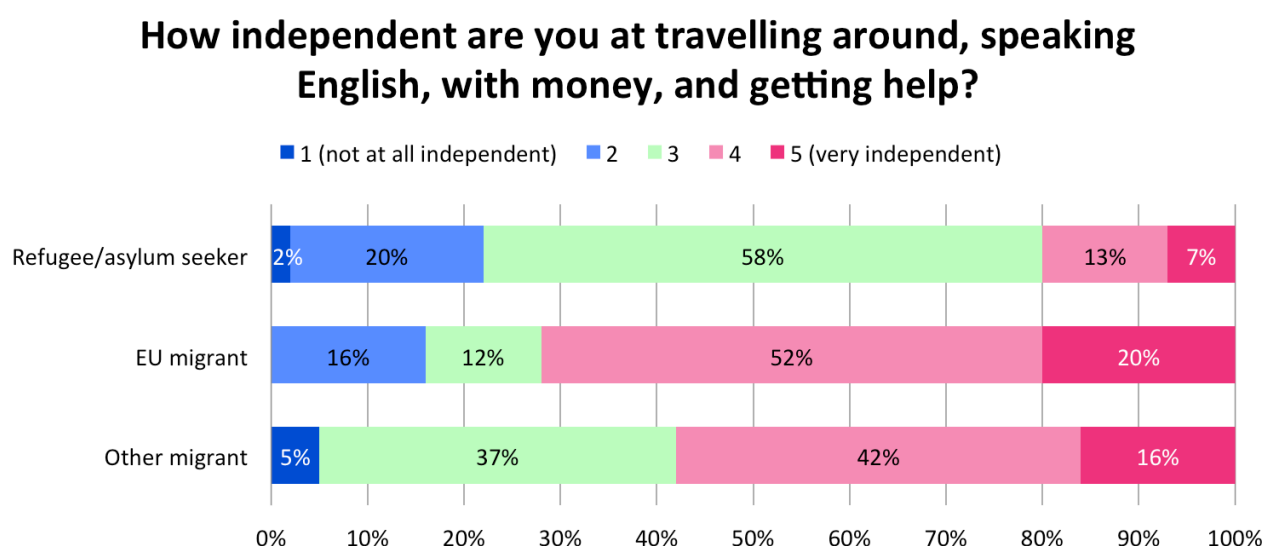


Figure 23: Feeling independent; scores between 1 and 5 for learners, as a % of learners, by immigration status, at Interview 1 (n=90)

As you can see, 74 of the 89 learners (83%) that responded to this question at baseline scored themselves between satisfactory (3) to very good (5). Table 16 shows the differences in levels of independence between learners of different immigration status; with EU citizens feeling most independent, followed by other migrants, and then refugees/asylum seekers.

Table 16: Feeling independent; average (mean) score between 1 and 5 for learners at Interview 1, by immigration status (n=90)

Immigration status	Average (mean) score
Refugee/asylum seeker	3.0
EU citizen	3.8
Other migrant	3.6

Looking at the 30 we interviewed at Interview 5, comparing how they rated themselves at Interview 1 (baseline) with Interview 5 (Figure 24), we find that there has been an average increase in their feelings of independence for all 30 learners; from a weighted average score of 3.7 at baseline to one of 4.3 at Interview 5; ie an increase of 0.5 of a score. Breaking this increase down for each of the three immigration status groups. Most significantly there was

- An increase in those from the refugee/asylum seeker group; at baseline 45% rated themselves as either fairly or very independent (ie 4 or 5 out of 5). At Interview 5, this increased to 100%.
- An increase in EU citizens rating themselves 4 and 5 between baseline and Interview 5; with increases of 46% and 37%, respectively.

How independent are you at travelling around, speaking English, with money, and getting help?

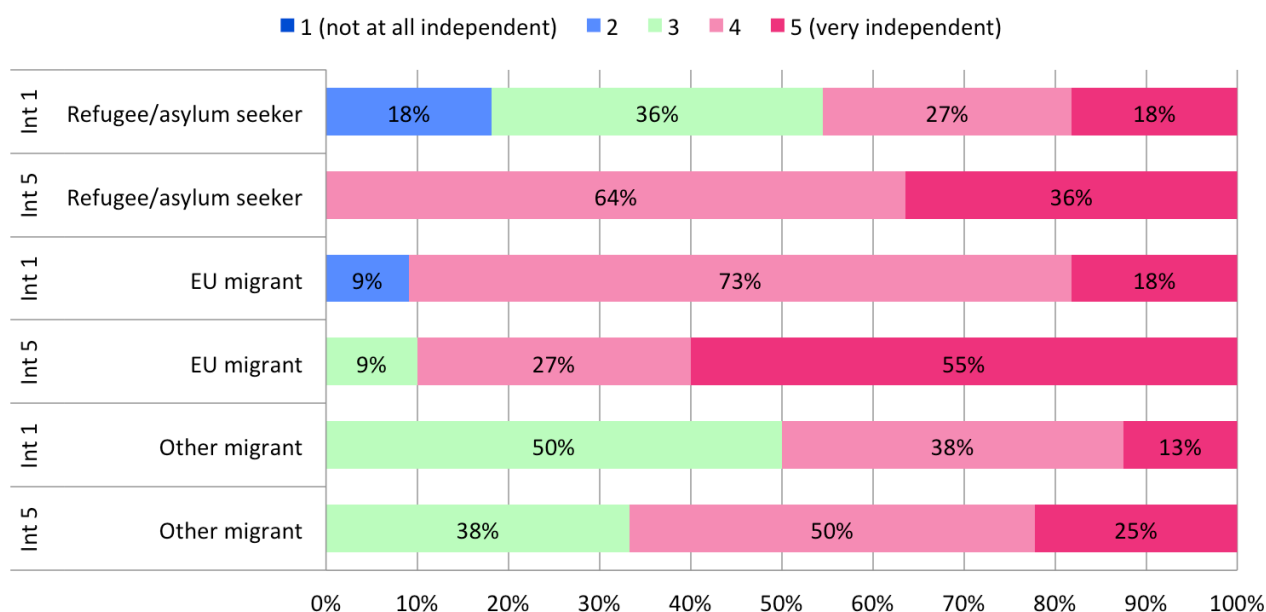


Figure 24: Feeling independent; score between 1 and 5 for learners at Interviews 1 and 5, by immigration status (final 30 interviewees)

What learners needed most and least help with

At Interview 5 we asked the six learners in our cohort who were still attending classes at Action Language what they needed most help with, so that we could assess the impact that Action Language had made on learners from our cohort who had spent the most time attending classes. Of the six remaining learners, two identified needing help to understand some medical terminology used at the doctors; one needed help for specific items when they went shopping, and the rest felt they occasionally needed help in certain situations, such as travelling by plane.

Most felt they needed least help when shopping or getting around.

Outcome indicator target

The outcome indicator for Action Language around independence is beneficiaries will cite that they are more independent as a result of attending classes at Action Foundation, and the outcome indicator target is 750 students by year 4.

Action Language does not ask its students a direct question on how independent they are, but does ask them about whether the language school has helped them to know about and access basic services. As mentioned earlier, Action Language's own feedback from its students over the three academic years were responded to by a total of 294 learners. Of these 263 (89%) reported that Action Language had helped them a lot or a little to use services (such as the doctor's and the post office).

If we consider the feedback form responses to be representative of the 924 Action Language learners that attended more than 10 classes across the three years, it suggests that 822 learners would cite improvements in their independence by the end of Year 3. The target is 750 learners by year 4 (ie 72 less than our estimate of the actual attained by Action Language 12 months before the target is due), and therefore we consider this outcome indicator target has been met.

Conclusion

Action Language classes help learners become more independent, for learners at all levels. Those at the most basic levels found the classes helpful in enabling them to communicate in everyday situations such as shopping, travelling around and making an appointment at the doctors. Those of more advanced levels found Action Language's ESOL for Work course helped them gain the skills and knowledge to obtain a job in the country and to understand their rights and responsibilities in that job.

Moving on positively to further education, employment or training

Most Action Language learners felt that the classes they attended helped them have a better chance of getting work, more education or succeeding in life.

Of our cohort of 90, 19 maintained and 12 gained paid work; 29 volunteered; and, 14 moved on to further education. Of the 83 learners that left Action Language by the end of our study, 46 (55%) had left their classes within the first six months. A number moved on to ESOL classes in colleges of further education because they were asylum seekers who had been offered free classes there.

Learners were very appreciative of the charity's ESOL for Work course; a number found it of direct and timely help for them to apply for and be interviewed for a job.

We found good success stories of learners progressing with Action Language, moving on to college to study English and Maths, and going on to study other subjects of a vocational nature.

Introduction

Action Language does not routinely measure where learners move onto when they leave. This would be challenging to do so with any accuracy due to their sizeable proportion of learners that enrol but do not attend class or attend for only a few classes.

Many Action Language learners have little stability in their lives; this is especially true of those seeking asylum as they can be moved to another part of the country without notice. In most cases, if the Home Office has moved them to Newcastle or Gateshead, it is likely that they will stay there until their application for leave to remain in the country has been considered.

However, if their application is unsuccessful and they are not able to submit a fresh claim, they are no longer able to stay in the property in which they have been placed, adding further to the instability of their living situation.

Action Language has no resource to track learners, however, for our longitudinal study one of their staff dedicated much time to inviting members of our cohort, including those that left Action Language, to attend interviews with us. Even with her great dedication and persistence in this work, it was a challenge to get some learners to attend interviews and to keep in touch. Many dropped off the radar.

Eligibility to work in the UK

Not all Action Language learners are eligible to work in the UK. Below are details of the eligibility to work of each of the three categories of immigration status used by Action Language.

- Refugees and asylum seekers – those who claim asylum in the UK are not normally allowed to work whilst their claim is being considered. The Home Office may grant permission to work to asylum seekers with claims outstanding for more than 12 months. If they do, their work is restricted to jobs on the shortage occupation list published by the Home Office. Asylum seekers are allowed to volunteer whilst their claim is being considered and the Home Office encourages this. Refugees (ie those who are granted leave to remain in the country) have unrestricted access to the labour market.
- Citizens of the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland are eligible to work in the UK, and do not need to obtain a work permit.
- Other migrants – this category included British citizens who were born abroad but married a UK citizen and were now living in the country. Most of the learners classed as other migrants were the spouses of postgraduate students. If overseas students have been given a visa for at least 12 months, their spouse and children will normally receive immigration permission, which does not place any restriction on working. If this is the case they will be able to work either part- or full-time, or be self-employed.

Eligibility for ESOL classes at colleges of further education

Asylum seekers are eligible to have their ESOL classes at colleges of further education paid for if they have lived in the UK for six months or longer while their claim is being considered. Once learners take up a place at college Action Language's policy is not to provide those learners with free classes, so freeing up a place for those unable to get into college.

EU citizens and other migrants in the UK have access to ESOL classes in colleges of further education, however on a paid for basis.

The data we have and what it tells us

Action Language asks learners in their end of year feedback survey whether they feel they have a better chance of getting work, more education or succeeding in life because of attending classes.

Over the three years of our evaluation, 86% of the 292 respondents to that question felt either that the classes has helped in this respect a lot or a little. Only 8% responded neutrally and only 1% felt that they had not helped.

Leavers

Of our cohort of 90, of those that we interviewed, 41 had left Action Language by Interview 5. For more than half of our cohort (53 out of 90; 59%) we were either no longer in contact or members of our cohort had decided they no longer wanted to be in our study. As a result, it is highly likely that members of our cohort left Action Language to paid employment, voluntary work, further education or training, but that we were not aware of this because we (and Action Language) were not in contact with them.

Move on to further education and training

Of the 46 in our cohort that did not have a second interview (six months after Interview 1), we know that eight of these had moved on to college. All were asylum seekers who, after having been in the country for six months or more, had been offered a free place at a further education college.

In total we were aware of 14 in our cohort that moved on to further education or training, attending ESOL, maths and IT courses at Newcastle or Gateshead College and LearnDirect.

Paid employment

At Interview 1 (baseline) there were 19 in our cohort of 90 (ie 21%) who had paid work. By Interview 5 a total of 31 members of our cohort had had paid work (34%) over the course of our study and Figure 25 shows the immigration status of both those who were paid workers at baseline and those who were paid workers throughout the life of our study.

**Immigration status of those with paid work
(% at baseline and across the lifetime of the study)**

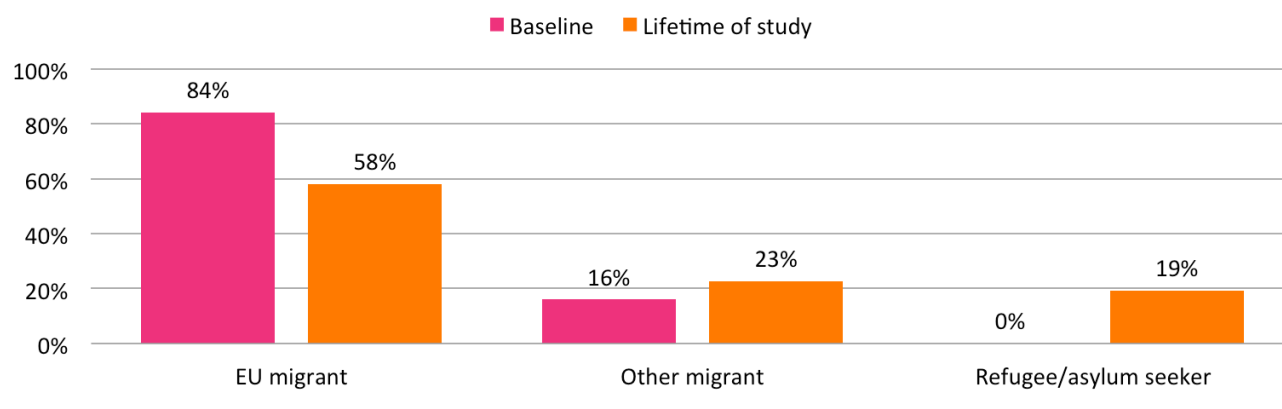


Figure 25: Members of the cohort with paid work by immigration status at Interview 1 (baseline) and across the lifetime of the study

What is noticeable is the change of proportion of our cohort, by immigration status, in paid work. As mentioned above, it is unsurprising that there are no refugees or asylum seekers in our cohort with paid employment at the start of the study. By the end, nearly one in five of that group within the cohort were in paid work, as a result of them being successful in the application to remain in the country and success in seeking employment. There was a small increase in the proportion of the other migrants in paid work; in some cases this was due to spouses of postgraduate students (who are classes as other migrants) getting paid work. For the EU citizens, although the number of them in paid work has not changed; the overall proportion of them within the cohort has due to the increase in paid employment of the other two groups.

This finding is reinforced by the finding for our final group of 30 interviewees from our cohort of 90; specifically the change in numbers in paid work between Interview 1 (baseline) and Interview 5, as shown in Figure 26.

Immigration status and paid work (final 30 interviewees)

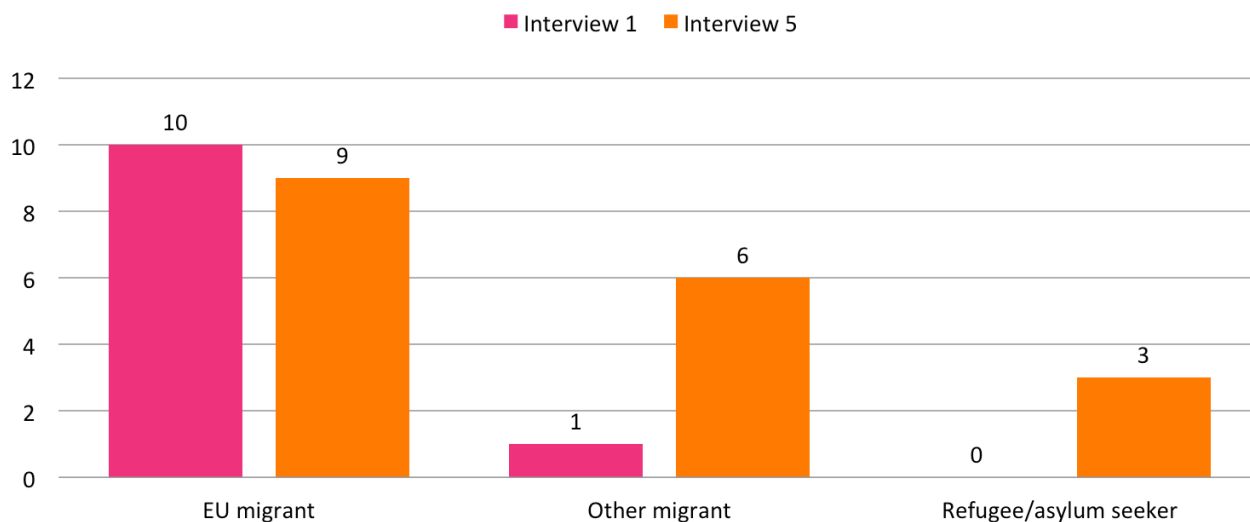


Figure 26: Those with paid work, by immigration status; comparison of baseline and Interview 5 (final 30 interviewees)

All but two of the 31 in our cohort with paid employment by the end of our study used English in their job; mostly for talking to fellow workers and for serving customers, with a few talking on the phone to customers (eg to take a booking for a restaurant).

Hospitality and catering (18 people)
 Manufacturing (2 people)
 Care (2 people)
 Car mechanic (1 person)
 Creative (1 person)
 Customer services (1 person)

Hairdresser (1 person)
 Retail (1 person)
 Security (1 person)
 Teaching (1 person)
 Technical (1 person)
 Warehouse and factory (1 person)

Those in paid work had an average (mean) score of 4.1 out of 5 when asked: *How do you feel about work/volunteering (or not working or volunteering)?* This compared with the mean score of 2.3 for those who did not have work or were not volunteering. In fact, those with paid work rated themselves feeling better about all of the domains in which we asked them; asking for help in English; confidence in using English; their health; feeling part of the community; their friends and family; and helping their children at school. The one domain in which those without work or volunteering scored themselves as feeling better (and only by 0.1 out of 5) was how well they felt they were learning English.

Given that the largest number in our cohort of those not in paid work were those not eligible for paid work (ie asylum seekers), there are factors other than employment which had an impact on their response to our questions on how they felt about aspects of their lives.

Across our cohort, many, especially men, did tell us how unhappy they felt not working and not being able to work.

“Would like a job now am bored sometimes, if live here would look for work.”

Other migrant at Interview 4 (Entry 3)

“I’m a man, working important, worked in my country, here not job, in Jordan had apartment.”

Asylum seeker at Interview 2 (Entry 2)

One reason that those in paid employment leave Action Language, and we found this to be true of EU citizens in particular, is that those who start classes with paid work are usually working part-time and, over time, their working hours increase and/or their shifts at work clash with class, such that they can no longer attend.

ESOL for Work

In total, 11 of our cohort of 90 undertook Action Language’s ESOL for Work course, which is available to learners that are in classes of levels Entry 3 and above.

At Interview 1 (baseline), there were seven learners who had or were in the process of undertaking the course. Of these, one had paid work and two were not eligible for paid work, and two were volunteering.

Over the time of our study, of the 11 who undertook the course

- Class level: One was Entry 3, six were Level 1, and four were Level 2
- Immigration status: two were refugees/asylum seekers, five were EU citizens and four were other migrants

Of the 11, nine found or maintained their paid work; two changed employer; and, two returned to their home country, one to run the family business.

Learners were very positive about the course, benefiting from it being more intensive than their usual Action Language classes and feeling they made progress quickly. A number highlighted the course as being of direct help in applying for a job and being interviewed. One mentioned that she signed her employment contract on the same week as she learnt about contracts on the course, which was very helpful.

“When I started ESOL for Work I was afraid. In fact I was terrified during my interview. I’d never studied a topic in English – I needed to listen and write at the same time. The first week was very stressful. After that I felt I was improving in my listening. The things I learned in the course; my work is directly connected with.”

EU citizen at Interview 3 (leaver)

“Action Language is very helpful for foreign people. I got the chance to improve a lot my English language and to meet new people and friends. Thanks to Action Language and ESOL for Work course, I got my job in the UK, I really feel much more confident.”

Comment from 2015-16 end-of-year feedback form

Outcome indicator target

The outcome indicator for Action Language around training, work and education is beneficiaries will feel more able to move on positively to further education, employment or training, including through volunteering. The outcome indicator target is 200 students by the end of the project.

The findings from Action Language's own feedback survey are that at the end of Year 3 (ie one year before the end of the project), 251 learners feel they have a better chance of getting work, more education or succeeding in life because of attending these classes; therefore we consider this target to be on track to be achieved.

Conclusion

We found strong evidence that Action Language's free classes help learners to move on positively to further education, employment or training, including through volunteering.

There are many factors outside the control of Action Language which have an impact on this outcome, including

- Government policy and regulations which prevent asylum seekers from paid employment, although not volunteering
- Local labour market conditions related to the availability of work and the type of work available
- The availability of further education and training

Action Language's support for its learners to gain paid employment, via its delivery of free ESOL for Work classes is especially positive and these classes are effective at increasing the confidence of

- Those who already have work to understand their rights and responsibilities and to progress in their career.
- Those looking to get paid employment in how to present themselves in their written application and interview to potential employers.

The organisation provides leaflets on volunteering opportunities and provides opportunities for learners and former learners to volunteer with Action Language itself as teachers and teaching assistants. For the latter, Action Language trains learners in how to assist other learners in classes.

In terms of further education, Action Language provides an essential service to asylum seekers who are not yet eligible to attend ESOL classes at colleges of further education. Although there are conversation classes run by community organisations in which asylum seekers (and others) can take part, Action Language is the only provider of structured ESOL lessons, which follow a national curriculum, to this group of people. The result is that once asylum seekers become eligible for ESOL classes at college, they are further ahead than had they not attended Action Language.

Case study: Sofia Mancini

Sofia, a university graduate from Italy, is in her late 20s, and came to the UK looking for work.

Before Action Language

Sofia came to the UK in January 2016 with a friend, looking for work. She had studied English in college but found talking with native English speakers was very different. She struggled to understand the local Newcastle accent and when people spoke quickly.

A few weeks after coming to England she started work in a local Italian restaurant. She had a very busy social life, meeting friends and going dancing.

Wanting to improve her English she asked if anyone knew of a language school and friends recommended Action Language.

At Action Language

She took a test for Action Language to find out which class would best suit her ability and she started a few weeks later in the Entry 3 class. The class fitted around her shifts at work and she attended both lessons each week.

After six months she progressed to Level 1 and they felt her English was good enough to do the ESOL for Work course. Sofia learned all about interviews, writing CVs, and legal matters (her rights at work, employment contracts and health and safety).

She felt this course helped her get a job in a restaurant nearer to where she lived where she met her partner; a man from Newcastle. He didn't speak Italian so she spoke English at work and, when they moved in together, at home.

After Action Language

Her work became so busy that she no longer had time to go to class and she left Action Language a year after she started.

But by now she was immersed in English; speaking it at work, at home and speaking Italian to only a few friends and very infrequently. At one point she returned to Italy to see her parents and forgot some Italian words.

Now that she is so settled in England she is not planning to return to Italy permanently.

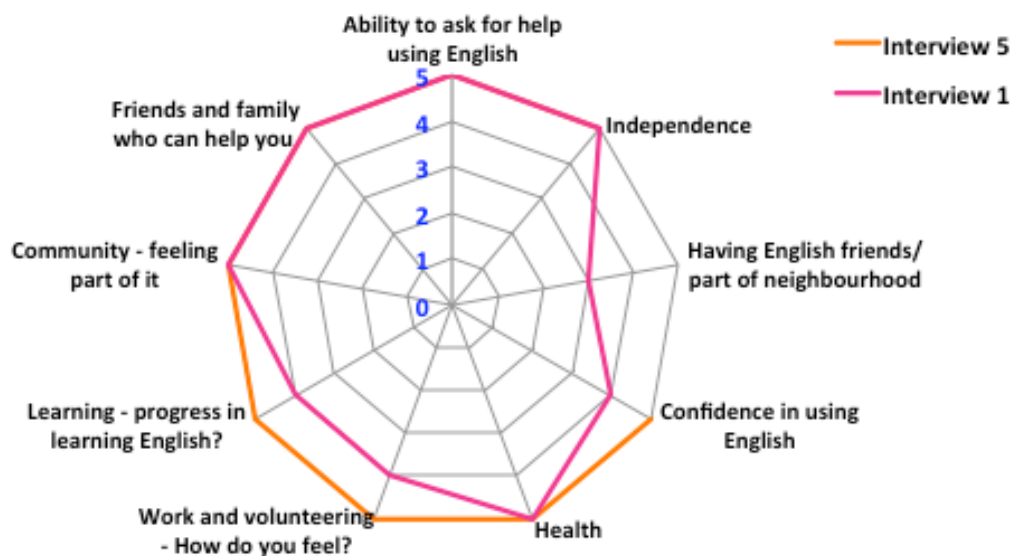


Figure 27: Sofia's outcome scores at first and last interview (persona 1)

Moments of truth

When dealing with a complicated tax matter over the phone, she realised her English was good enough for her to be understood well.

The difference Action Language made

Helping her to understand the local culture and issues related to working in the UK.

Case study: Amanuel Kelati

Amanuel is an Eritrean national in his 30s who came to the UK seeking asylum.

Before Action Language

Amanuel arrived in the UK in December 2015 and claimed asylum. After being interviewed by the Home Office with an interpreter present was sent to Yorkshire and then to Newcastle.

He found the local accent hard to understand and he spoke little English.

He wanted to learn English to integrate and to continue his education; he'd been at college when he fled Eritrea. The people he lived with took him to Action Language.

At Action Language

He started in the Level 2 class, spending six months in that class. He found the class really interesting and liked how the teacher ran the lessons. Later he took the ESOL for Work course.

He was a very diligent student, completing the homework given him and taking every opportunity to speak English in and out of class.

Outside of class, he was soon helping his housemates to go to the GP, opticians and dentists by interpreting for them and spending much of the weekend at church.

After Action Language

After six months living in the UK he became eligible for a place at the local FE college for ESOL and left Action Language in July 2016. His application to remain in the UK was accepted and he volunteered as a Teaching Assistant at Action Language one day each week when he was not at college. He also continued helping out at his church and helping other Eritreans and Sudanese people to adapt to life in England.

Having successfully passed his exams at college he applied and was accepted by the local university to study accountancy. To pay for his studies he works in a convenience store serving customers.

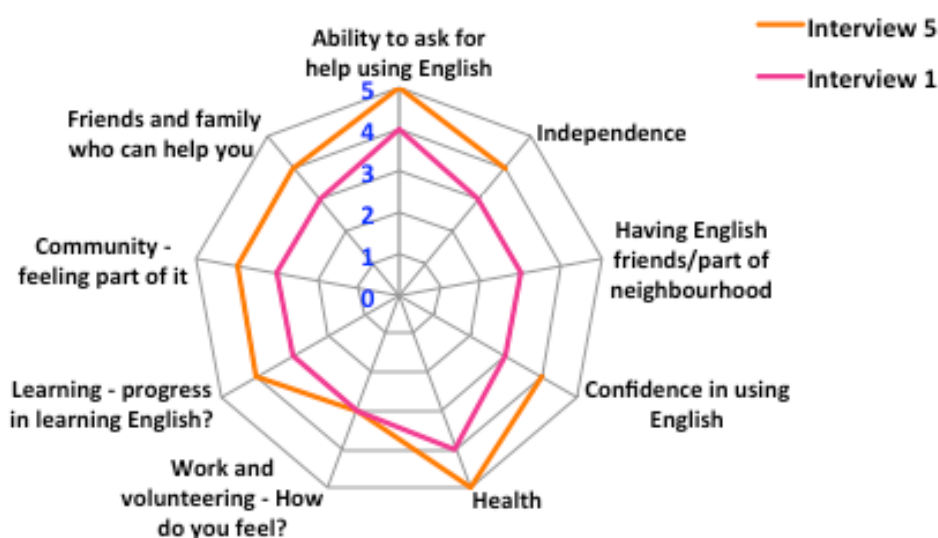


Figure 28: Amanuel's outcome scores at his first and last interview (persona 2)

Moments of truth

After four months at Action Language he accompanied his friend who was injured to the hospital and did all the explaining to the doctors, who asked him a lot of questions to find out what happened.

The difference Action Language made

Amanuel found Action Language helped him to speak, write, read and understand English to a good level. He became a confident speaker and it provided a firm foundation for continuing learning English at college.

Community participation and volunteering

Action Language learners do volunteer in their local communities, which helps them to practice their English, be with other people, develop broader social networks, and make friends.

From the available data - Action Language learners completing end-of-year feedback forms – we found around a quarter of learners volunteer, with 84 of the 290 respondents (29%) to the feedback forms over the three years saying they volunteered. We also found that rates of volunteering increased across the three years of the project, and it was mainly asylum seekers, EU citizens and other migrants who volunteered.

In addition, looking at the study cohort, around a third of the interviewees (29 out of 90 people) reported volunteering at least once across the study period, with 12 people volunteering at multiple interview intervals. Of the interviewees, refugees and asylum seekers volunteer the most, which is likely to be because they are not working or not able to work due to their immigration status. EU citizens and other migrants do volunteer but in smaller numbers.

We found that learners learnt about local services and activities from Action Language, which helped them to participate more in their communities. In our study, we found that a minority of interviewees attended local events for example firework displays, Christmas events, and children's parties. We also found a large minority (31%) of interviewees regularly attended church, which was a strong support in their lives.

Introduction

This section looks at learner in community participation and volunteering. It specifically looks at whether learners know more about local services and activities and whether learners are valued members of the community as a result of attending classes at Action Language. It also looks at the responses from the study cohort about whether they go to events and other things to do in their area. It also looks at rates of volunteering for Action Language learners including who volunteers and where they volunteer.

What is participation?

In *Getting involved: How people make a difference*⁸ (NCVO, 2017), participation is grouped into three main categories

- **Social participation: the collective activities that people may be involved in. The associations people form between and for themselves are at the heart of social participation** This includes being involved in formal voluntary organisations (eg volunteering for a charity shop or being a trustee), informal or grassroots community groups (eg a tenants' and residents' association or a sports club), and formal and informal mutual aid and self-help (eg a peer-support group or a community gardening group)

⁸ *Getting involved: How people make a difference*, NCVO, 2017
www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/participation (accessed August 2018)

- **Public participation: the engagement of people with the various structures and institutions of democracy. Key to public participation is the relationship between people and the state.** This includes voting, contacting a political representative, campaigning and lobbying, and taking part in consultations and demonstrations
- **Individual participation: the individual choices and actions that people make as part of their daily lives and that are statements of the kind of society they want to live in.** This includes buying fair trade or green products, boycotting products from particular countries, recycling, signing petitions, giving to charity and informal helpful gestures (such as visiting an elderly neighbour)

Speaking English and ability to participate

English – speaking and understanding English – is a necessary condition for taking part in society but not the only condition. The other barriers⁹ (NCVO, 2017) include

- barriers to volunteering: having other commitments – work, family, studying and doing other things with their spare time – not hearing about opportunities or groups to help and not thinking about volunteering
- barriers to public and democratic participation: asylum seekers, refugees, other non-British citizens are unable to vote in local, national and European elections; EU citizens are unable to vote in national elections (but can vote in local and European elections)
- barriers to individual participation: fewer people on lower incomes give regularly to charities and fewer people on lower incomes are able to take part in ethical consumerism and take part in product boycotts

The additional barriers to asylum seekers and refugees to take part in volunteering include lack of documentation for DBS checks, language barriers, lack of knowledge about local area, and from volunteer-involving organisations themselves such as confusion on the legality of asylum seekers volunteering, complicated application process, and lack of support for people with basic English.

The evidence that English language is an important element of integration is strong. *The Casey Review*¹⁰, published in December 2016, highlighted the link between English language skills and integration. It identified English language as ‘a common denominator and a strong enabler of integration’, with an impact both on social and economic integration. The report recommended prioritising improved English language skills as a way to reduce exclusion, inequality and segregation. In addition the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration *Interim report into integration of immigrants*¹¹ states: ‘Research has shown that language competency is key to expanding people’s social networks, as well as increasing access to work, and thus has positive spill over effects to many aspects of integration.’

By providing ESOL classes, Action Language helps with learning English but is unable to act on the other barriers.

⁹ *Getting involved: How people make a difference*, NCVO, 2017

¹⁰ *The Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration*, Dame Louise Casey, 2016, www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration (accessed August 2018)

¹¹ *Interim report into integration of immigrants*, All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration, 2017, <https://socialintegrationappg.org.uk/reports/> (accessed August 2018)

The data we have and what it tells us

Taking part in their community

The end-of-year Action Language feedback form asks learners: *Do you know more about local services and activities as a result of attending classes at Action Language?* Out of the 293 learners that responded to this question over the three years (Figure 29), 82% (240 people) said they knew a lot or a little more; 8% (24 people) said they knew neither more nor less; and 3% (9 people) said they didn't know. There were 20 (7%) learners who said they knew not much or not at all more. When looking at each year, Year 1 appears different to Year 2 and Year 3, with fewer people reporting they knew a lot more (27%) than in Year 2 and Year 3 (53% for both years).

Do you know more about local services and activities as a result of attending classes at Action Language?

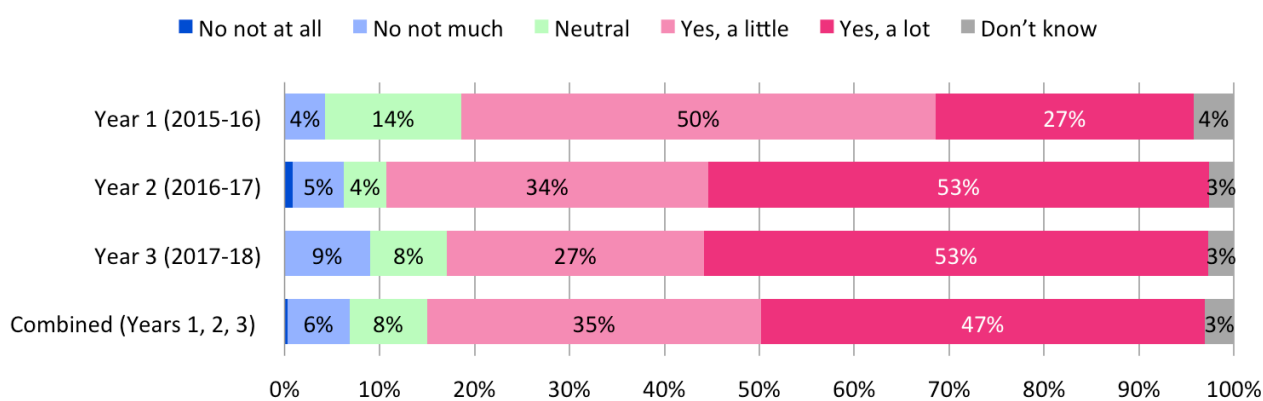


Figure 29: Results from end-of-year feedback form to question *Do you know more about local services and activities as a result of attending classes at Action Language?* Year 1 (2015-16) n=70, Year 2 (2016-17) n=112, Year 3 (2017-18) n=111, and combined (Years 1, 2, 3) n=293

Many of the members of our cohort attended church regularly: 28 of the 90 cited going to church once a week. Some were very involved in the church: teaching bible studies, making food for other congregants, and helping out in other ways. Two learners in our interviews talked about how they wanted to use their skills and passions to help others. When we spoke to them, both had been given leave to remain, were active churchgoers and were starting to feel more settled in their lives and looking to the future.

"One other interesting thing, I spoke with church and going to church here, every week, I speak to them about a project to give hot food to refugees, playing billiards and other help for people to write a CV, register with dentist and GP. The church is very excited, after about a month, will look to start a project, start a small Red Cross office. But not Red Cross, [name of interviewee] Cross!"

Refugee in Interview 5 (leaver)

"The Eritrean community [at the church] are thinking of running English courses including driving theory. Many fail their theory exams."

Refugee in Interview 4 (leaver)

Taking part in local events

We asked learners and former learners in the study if they took part in events or other things to do near their home. Of the 159 responses to this question across the five interviews, there were 47 'yes's (30% of responses) from 36 people. And of those 36 people, three said yes they took part in events in three interviews, five said yes in two interviews, and the remainder – 28 people – said yes in one interview. The types of events and other things to do included children's parties, firework displays, Christmas and New Year parties, tattoo show, and Star and Shadow Cinema. And a number of interviewees talked about events and activities linked to the church they attend.

"I would like to take part in something, to feel more part of something but don't have any...don't really have time"

EU citizen in Interview 4 (leaver)

"Went to Catalyst festival. Sometimes church tell us about some events and some festivals and I would go with them and I'm so glad about them. Two Sunday's ago there was a conference in the city church and I went there and served something. [It was] bringing together Christians from the north of England."

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 5 (leaver)

"Tandem partners - Italian and French meet ups, go to Star and Shadow Cinema, follow Cluny and others on Facebook."

Other migrant in Interview 4 (leaver)

"In the city centre: festivals, Sage Gateshead, and pubs"

Other migrant in Interview 5 (leaver)

"Go to library, also Discovery museum, things never seen before"

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 3 (Entry 2)

"Nunsmoor Apple festival. Millin Centre. Activities in school. St James Stadium party for children. Disco party."

Other migrant in Interview 2 (Level 1)

The majority of those that answered the question (70%) said 'no' saying they did not have time because they were at work or with other things, did not know about local events, and a small number felt nervous about going to events and meeting new people.

Volunteering by Action Language learners

The end-of-year feedback form asks *Are you volunteering anywhere since starting to come to Action Language?* From 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18, we found that 84 (or 29%) of the 290 learners answering the question had started volunteering - 18 learners in Year 1, 30 learners in Year 2 and 36 learners in Year 3 (Figure 30).

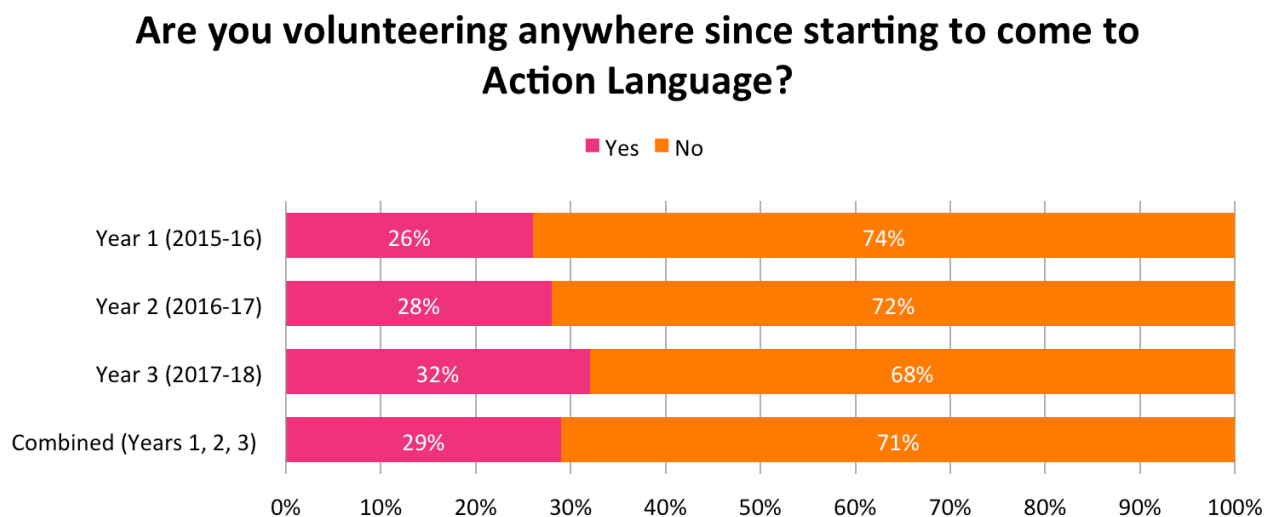


Figure 30: Results from end-of-year feedback form to question *Are you volunteering anywhere since starting to come to Action Language?* Year 1 (2015-16) n=70, Year 2 (2016-17) n=109, Year 3 (2017-18) n=111, and combined (Years 1, 2, 3) n=290

The rates of volunteering for Action Language learners are the same as the rates of volunteering across the general population in England as shown by the Community Life survey¹². This is the UK government's annual survey that tracks trends in volunteering and other areas that encourage social action and empower communities.

When looking at the rate of volunteering in England reported in the 2015-16 Community Life survey, 27% of people formally volunteer (for example giving unpaid help through a club or organisation) once a month and 34% informally volunteer (for example giving unpaid help to someone who is not a relative) once a month.

In our study interviews, we asked if interviewees had a volunteering role. As Action Language found in its end-of-year feedback form, a minority of learners have a volunteer role, in common with the wider UK population. The proportion of learners with a volunteer role changed over the study period from just under 20% to around 30% for Interviews 2 and 3 to 20% at Interview 5 (Figure 31). However the absolute numbers of learners volunteering were similar for Interviews 1, 2 and 3 (15, 16 and 12 people) and dropping to six people at Interview 4 and Interview 5.

In 55 of the total 252 interviews, interviewees told us they volunteered. When looking in more detail at the response data to establish unique individuals, we found a total of 29 out of the cohort of 90 (30%) had volunteered with some appearing more than once in the data shown here, a similar proportion to the data gathered by Action Language.

¹² *Community Life survey 2015-16 statistical bulletin*, UK Government Cabinet Office, 2016, www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-life-survey-2015-to-2016-statistical-analysis (accessed August 2018)

Number of interviewees volunteering by interview

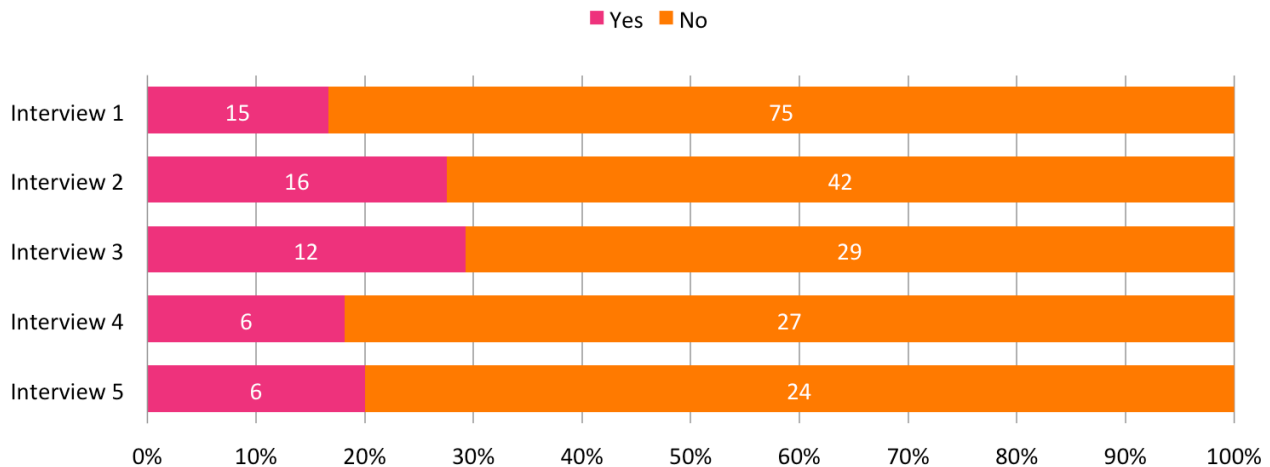


Figure 31: Number of longitudinal study cohort volunteering at Interview 1 (n=90), Interview 2 (n=58), Interview 3 (n=41), Interview 4 (n=33), Interview 5 (n=30)

Two of the people we interviewed were volunteering at all five interview intervals, both refugee/asylum seekers; one was volunteering at four of the five interviews; five were volunteering at three out of five interviews; five at two out of our interviews; and the remaining 16 people had a volunteer role at one of the four interviews.

Example of Action Language learner volunteering

Hamid, a refugee, was volunteering at each interview

- Interview 1 WERS and Globe café.
- Interview 2 [did not say where]
- Interview 3 I'm a volunteer at West End Refugee Service, spend my time there I work in clothes store, have clothes store there, bring things in clothes store from storage, tidy up, cleaning up, and helping them find what they are looking for. Everything is free: clothes and things for kitchen, dishes.
- Interview 4 Volunteering, when I can, in Star and Shadow cinema, to help build new cinema.
- Interview 5 Sometimes in my work in Star and Shadow Cinema, they need help, and if I have time I go there or in the church once in a month I'm in the welcome team and sometimes I help for to do the coffee and tea, and sometimes I stay outside to open the door for people.

Which learners at Action Language volunteer?

From the end-of-year feedback forms from 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18, we can see that it is mainly asylum seekers, EU citizens and other migrants who volunteer – together making up 69% of the total 84 people who volunteered in Years 1, 2 and 3 (Table 17).

Table 17: Volunteering by Action Language learners by immigration status for Year 1 (2015-16) n=18, Year 2 (2016-17) n=30, Year 3 (2017-18) n=36 and Total n=84

	Year 1 (2015-16)		Year 2 (2016-17)		Year 3 (2017-18)		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Asylum seeker	5	28%	5	12%	10	28%	20	24%
Refugee	0	0%	5	17%	5	14%	10	12%
Refused asylum seeker	1	6%	0	0%	1	3%	2	2%
EU citizen	4	22%	9	30%	6	17%	19	23%
Accompanying spouse	5	28%	4	13%	5	14%	14	17%
Other migrant	3	17%	7	23%	9	25%	19	23%
	18		30		36		84	

However, when looking at the study cohort the results were different. Out of the 29 people who had a volunteer role, we found it was mainly refugees and asylum seekers (18 out of 28 people) that volunteered, with six other migrants, and five EU citizens also volunteering.

Example of Action Language learner volunteering

Meron, a refugee, was volunteering at each interview

- Interview 1 Saturday - volunteers at church - baking the communion bread. Volunteers 2 days/week in Walker.
- Interview 2 At church. Wood recycling. Conversation group at Tyneside Irish Centre (goes once a week). LearnDirect - reception for 4 days/week, 2hrs a day.
- Interview 3 Volunteers at church - teaches English to children and basic bible teaching and adults once or twice a week. He noted that you have to be very careful with new words.
- Interview 4 Monday to Friday - volunteers at LearnDirect in the reception, 1 to 5 PM... been training in independent living with the Red Cross; the service to visit older people once a week. ...being DBS checked at the moment and will then visit older people.
- Interview 5 Monday to Friday, 1 to 5 PM - volunteers in reception at LearnDirect. Shadows someone at the Red Cross where volunteering to do independent living to support older people.

When interviewing the study cohort, we found that learners with jobs or family caring commitments were not able to volunteer even if they want to because they did not have the time or interviewees' own ill health stopped them for participating in society in this way.

"I want to have a job or do some volunteering. I'm interested in this. My friend told me I can do sometimes English Chinese translation or something maybe after my baby go to nursery. I do not have enough time, you need to keep two eyes on him, he is curious about everything. I'm so tired." [Scored 1 out of 5 on how she felt about working and volunteering]
Other migrant in Interview 5 (leaver)

"Like volunteering but I can't do it because [have 4] children and husband is sick. Psychologically I am tired [and] because of that GP gave me some pills, not getting better and that's why can't help children [with English and school work]. I have headaches, still waiting for help from hospital, still waiting, getting no help."
Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 3 (Entry 2)

Where Action Language learners volunteer

Again, from the self-completing evaluation forms at the end of 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18, learners reported that they volunteered with a wide number of charities, churches, museums and other places. The list included Oxfam, the food bank in Bensham, Hospitality and Hope in South Shields, Marie Curie, Great North Museum, Laing Art Gallery, Great Exhibition of the North, Whitley Bay Green Beans Market, Crisis Cafe and Action Language itself. In addition, those in the study volunteer at Oxfam, Culture Kitchen, older people's group, teaching Arabic to children, West End Refugee Service, Star and Shadow Cinema, Kittiwake Trust, their children's school, church and at Action Language.

"Culture Kitchen. Not every week, sometimes every 2 or 3 weeks - volunteering to cook 26 October - have to cook something, have to make something. Last year volunteer in [children's] school to make breakfast but not very well. I am happy as I like to volunteer 10.00 till 13.00 or 14.00 [while children are at school]"
Female asylum seeker in Interview 3 (Entry 1)

"Every two weeks volunteer at a charity. [We] cook together and share with other people, English people, on a Saturday and take son with me. He is happy as he is like me, he likes to see people be happy. I talk into a microphone say what the dish is called and 'thank you for coming'. Started two months [ago]. It's hard for me sometimes, I am sick, but when I see the people happy, I forget my health and I am happy [too]."
Female asylum seeker in Interview 2 (Entry 1)

"Volunteering, when I can, in Star and Shadow cinema, to help build new cinema"
Asylum seeker in Interview 4 (Entry 3)

"Works in the Oxfam shop opposite the Haymarket bus station. Helps with hanging clothes and putting books on shelves"
Asylum seeker in Interview 2 (Entry 2)

"Have been volunteering at Action Language as a teaching assistant in Christine's class (Entry 1) on Wednesdays and Thursdays and sometimes on Fridays when help a partially sighted woman from Sudan who speaks Arabic."
Other migrant in Interview 5 (leaver)

"My voluntary work allows me to improve my English, I meet people"
Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 3 (leaver)

Those who volunteered had an average (mean) score of 3.8 out of 5 when asked: *How do you feel about work/volunteering (or not working or volunteering)?* This compared with the mean score of 2.3 for those who did not have work or were not volunteering.

Similar to our findings for those in paid employment, there were other domains in which those who volunteered felt better than those who did not nor had paid work. These included asking for help in English and confidence in using English, although the results for the other domains (health; feeling part of the community; their friends and family; and helping their children at school) were very similar to those not in paid work.

How Action Language helps learners

Action Language helps learners take part in their communities and to volunteer in a number of ways including

- sharing information about local services, activities and opportunities by displaying posters, making announcements in classes, maintaining a 'local opportunities' table with leaflets and flyers, and maintaining a list of free activities in the local area for learners. This started as an ad hoc sharing of information in Year 1 and became more structured and intentional from Year 2
- when learners ask about volunteering, giving information about other local volunteering opportunities where they would be welcomed as volunteers with their English abilities because language is a barrier for volunteering
- running a regular marketplace event with 'mock' supermarket, hairdresser, GP/pharmacy, library, job centre, post office, mobile phone shop, greengrocer (sponsored by a local wholesaler who provided real fruit and veg), café, ticket office, letting agency and book shop. To make this even more lifelike, and where possible, Action Language volunteers took on their areas of expertise for example real housing officers and careers advisors taking on those offices. Also at these events, volunteers registered learners online with Newcastle Libraries and Unison Bridges to Learning programme participated to tell learners about their courses, particularly popular with higher-level learners
- when learners ask about local asylum seekers/refugee groups, other charities and organisation, giving information one on one with a volunteer or staff member so it is specific to the individual. This is an area Action Language is looking to develop in drop in sessions
- explaining what learners need to know to live in the UK via the ESOL Skills for Life curriculum, which is strong on situation-based language such as going to the GP. Teachers also lead class-based discussions for example talking with a Pre-entry class about schooling in the UK, how it may be different for different countries such as age of children, uniforms, punishment and behaviour management, and talking with a Level 2 class at election time about voting

Action Language is developing additional ways to help learners participate in their communities and volunteer including at drop-in sessions where there is more time to discuss interests and different community activities for example people who are Farsi-speakers, live in a particular area such as Gateshead, Benwell in Newcastle or Sunderland, and young people.

Outcome indicator targets

There are two outcome indicator targets for Action Language for participating and volunteering in communities

1. beneficiaries will cite that Action Language has helped them to participate more in their community and the target is 150 learners per year
2. beneficiaries will participate in communities and explore local networks through volunteering and the target is 25 learners per year

Beneficiaries will cite that Action Language has helped them to participate more in their community

The end-of-year Action Language feedback form asks learners: *Do you know more about local services and activities as a result of attending classes at Action Language? Yes a lot, yes a little, neutral, no not much, no not at all, or don't know?*, and this question is used to measure the outcome indicator target around participation.

By the end of Year 3, 299 end-of-year feedback forms had been completed by learners at levels Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2, with a response rate of 98% (293 responses).

Overall, across the three years, 82% (240) of respondents said they knew a lot or a little more about local services and activities as a result of attending classes at Action Language, with 47% citing they knew a lot more and 35% citing they knew a little more. The self-cited increases in knowledge (answering yes a lot and yes a little) were less consistent than other questions in the end-of-year feedback forms, ranging from 77% (Years 1 and 3) to 87% (Year 2), which gives us less confidence to extrapolate these findings across the whole learner population.

If we consider the feedback form responses to be representative of the 924 Action Language learners that attended more than 10 classes across the three years, it suggests that 757 learners would cite increases in knowledge of local services and activities by the end of Year 3. The target for this outcome indicator is 150 learners per year with a cumulative target of 450 by the end of Year 3 so we consider this outcome indicator has been met.

Beneficiaries will participate in communities and explore local networks through volunteering

The end-of-year Action Language feedback form asks learners: *Are you volunteering anywhere since starting to come to Action Language?*, and this question is used to measure the outcome indicator target around volunteering.

By the end of Year 3, 299 end-of-year feedback forms had been completed by learners at levels Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2, with a response rate of 97% (290 responses).

Overall, across the three years, 29% (84) of respondents said they had volunteered – 18 learners in Year 1, 30 learners in Year 2 and 36 learners in Year 3. When using the cumulative total number of responses of 84, Action Language has achieved its outcome target of 25 learners volunteering each year (75 learners for the three years of the project).

Conclusion

Action Language learners do volunteer, and volunteer at a similar rate to the general population in England. Learners volunteer with a wide range of local charities and organisations including with Action Language itself. A small number of learners also aspire to lead their own social action projects. The benefits from volunteering and participating in their communities to learners include making friends, improving wellbeing, feeling valued and useful, reducing isolation and practicing English.

As speaking and understanding English is fundamental to people's ability to participate in society, by teaching English Action Language helps create the conditions for learners to be more able to volunteer and participate in their communities. It is less clear there is systematic, structured help to volunteer from Action Language however Action Language's primary purpose is teaching English not placing volunteers. There may be opportunities to collaborate with Volunteer Centre Newcastle and other volunteer infrastructure organisations to encourage increased volunteering. Action Language collects and shares information about local charities, social activities and other services, and the marketplace events help to connect learners with local services for example registering with Newcastle Libraries.

Developing friendships and reducing social isolation

There is good evidence that many migrants and people from Black and minority ethnic communities, whatever their reason for moving to the UK, experience social isolation and feel lonely. We found that Action Language helped learners to connect with each other by providing a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, by teaching in small groups with teaching assistants, and by organising events within the building for learners to interact with each other and practice their English.

At baseline, although many Action Language learners had friends, most lacked a connection with native English speakers and the areas in which they lived such that they felt at ease. This was due to their low-level of English language skills; their lack of rootedness in local places; their lack of connection via paid work or volunteering; whether they were accepted by the local communities in which they lived, and the lack of opportunities and neutral meeting places for them to get to know their neighbours.

Other drivers of social isolation experienced by learners included the lack of connection with their families and long-standing friends; lack of understanding and harmony with local culture; and, especially for asylum seekers and refugees, the distress they experienced in leaving their home country and coming to the UK.

EU and other migrants experienced more connection with others, mostly made via work and through the friends and colleagues of their spouses.

By providing classes, Action Language helps to create the conditions for reducing isolation and developing friendships by bringing learners together. We found that not all learners who enrol with Action Language go on to attend classes, and of those who do attend classes, not all attend 10 or more, which we view as being sufficient to overcome their isolation and learn English.

Of the 2,185 people that enrolled across the three years of the project, 543 people did not attend any classes, and a further 718 people attended fewer than 10 classes. This means only 42% of learners that enrol at Action Language attend 10 or more classes. We saw that asylum seekers, the largest group of people enrolling, attend at just over this rate (45%) however refugees and EU citizens have a lower rate of enrolment and attendance at 38% and 35%.

Introduction

This section looks at social isolation and the relationships Action Language learners have in their lives including friendships with fellow classmates, connecting with neighbours and making friends in the UK. We also look at whether learners have a sense of belonging where they live and a connection with their communities plus the extent of their support networks by asking about their ability to ask their friends and family for help.

We also look at how many learners attend 10 or more classes once they enrol with Action Language across the first three years of the project as a whole and for each year, and how this contributes to reducing social isolation. We look in detail at attendance by asylum seekers, refugees and EU citizens.

Social isolation

Social isolation has been defined as a lack of interactions and relationships with other people: ‘a deprivation of social connectedness’¹³. Social isolation is distinct from but connected to loneliness, which has been defined in a variety of ways, but is generally recognised as an emotional state, linked closely to feelings of boredom, unfulfilment, detachment and lack of communication and connection to other people. Isolation and loneliness affect individuals at any age or life stage, though people over 65 and under 25 report the highest rates of loneliness in the UK. The health risks of loneliness and social isolation are increasingly documented. Both have been found to result in harmful effects on cognition and a range of physical and mental health problems.

Migrants and people from minority ethnic backgrounds face particular risks of social isolation and loneliness as a result of

- disadvantage and deprivation such as poverty, poor housing, unemployment. For instance, at neighbourhood level, minority ethnic people and migrants are more likely to live in areas characterised by high unemployment, poverty and poor quality public spaces
- racial discrimination (eg insults, fear of attack) can increase social isolation and mental ill-health
- how society perceives migrants and a negative media portrayal can undermine a sense of belonging and self-worth
- limited English language skills
- uncertain legal status
- lack of familiarity with processes related to day to day living
- lack of ties with people who share the same culture, language and backgrounds can hamper the development of supportive social networks

In late 2014, The Forum, a charity supporting migrant and refugee communities and individuals in their integration into British society, published *This is how it feels to be lonely*¹⁴, research that explored the experiences of loneliness through the eyes of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in London. The researchers found that although there were a number of reasons for people moving to the UK, 58% of the 33 migrants and refugees taking part in the research described loneliness and isolation as their biggest challenge. Regardless of the reasons for migration, in many cases migrants feel isolated in the new country due to

- loss of family and friends, status, identity, job or career
- lack of social networks, access to services and resources
- language barriers
- cultural differences
- discrimination and stigma connected to being a foreigner
- isolating impact of government policies

¹³ Zavaleta D, Samuel K, Mills C. (2014) Social isolation: a conceptual and measurement proposal. POPHI Working Paper No 67, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

¹⁴ *This is how it feels to be lonely*, The Forum, 2014 <http://www.migrantsorganise.org/?p=24923> (accessed August 2018)

In summary, social isolation and loneliness are complex and widespread problems, with migrant and minority ethnic people facing some particular risks.

The data we have and what it tells us

Making friends at Action Language

Action Language's end-of-year feedback form includes a question asking learners if they have made new friends whilst at Action Language. Across the results for the three years of our study, 91% of the 462 learners (ie 419) that responded felt they had made new friends whilst at Action Language, 7% had not, and 2% did not know (Figure 32).

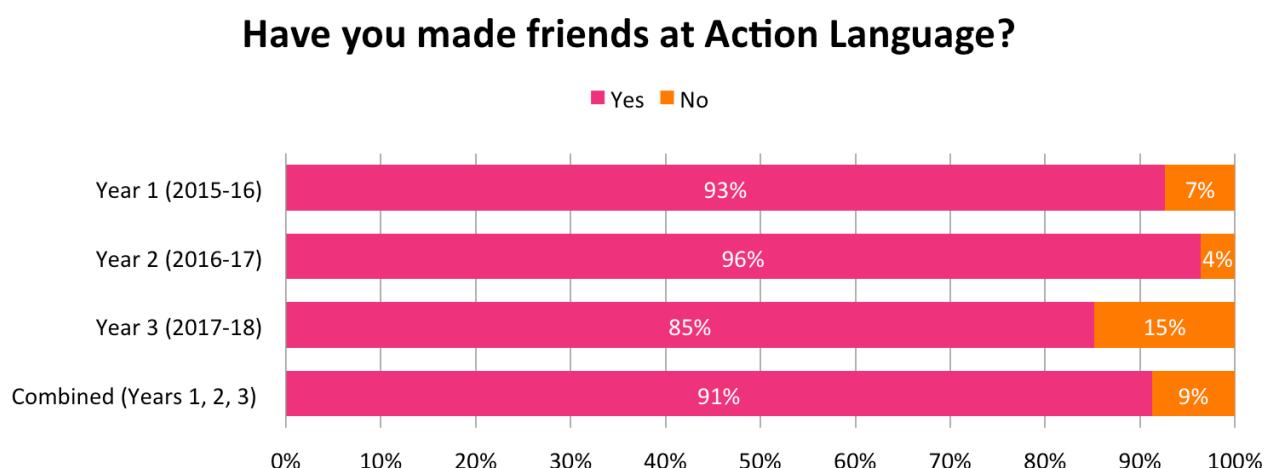


Figure 32: Results from end-of-year feedback form to question *Have you made friends at Action Language?* Year 1 (2015-16) n=68, Year 2 (2016-17) n=113, Year 3 (2017-18) n=112, and combined (Years 1, 2, 3) n=293

When we asked whether learners had made friends whilst at Action Language we found that, at baseline, 57 (ie 63% of our cohort) had made friends there; 31 had not; and, 2 did not know. Of those who had made friends 28 (49%) were refugees and asylum seekers, 15 (26%) were EU citizens, and 25% were the other migrants. This is close to the proportion of those categories at baseline suggesting that being at Action Language helps people equally with different immigration statuses, to make friends.

Forty-two of the 57 (74%) who made friends at Action Language saw them outside of the class.

Although the sample was small, of the 11 asylum seekers and refugees we interviewed at Interview 5, four noted that they were no longer in touch with their former classmates at Action Language, often because their classmates had moved away. This was a higher proportion of than of the other two categories of immigration status: of the 10 interviewees who were either EU citizens or other migrants, only one commented that they no longer see their former classmates because they had moved away. This highlights the difficulty of asylum seekers maintaining relationships when they do not have stability in an area.

"It gave me a push to get used to being around people and it helped me make friends; this is the main benefit of Action Language; they improved my language but the main thing was helping me connect with others."

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 5 (leaver)

"I couldn't even say a word when I just came to England. After one year's study at Action Language I am more confident. It helps me a lot in my everyday life. The teachers are all patient, friendly and helpful. I have made several friends with my classmates. Thank you very much."

Learner, end-of-year feedback form, 2015-2016

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to study English free. Here, I have made a lot of friends, and teachers are very kind and caring. I also like the way you teach us as you more focus on learning English through a conversation way."

Learner (Level 2), end-of-year feedback form, 2016-2017

Action Language creating the conditions for friendship and reducing isolation

Whilst Action Language's activities are directly around teaching English, the atmosphere the charity creates and the attitude and approach of its paid and voluntary staff is such that interviewees reported feeling welcomed and found that they made friends in the class break times. Those who had left Action Language to attend ESOL classes in colleges of further education reported that they preferred the less 'clinical' atmosphere of Action Language.

We attended two Action Language events

- a marketplace event in May 2017 designed to help learners practice their English with each other and with more advanced learners, teachers and teaching assistants running stalls which gave learners an experience of using basic services, such as the post office, the GP, the barbers and the library. In this way, learners had the opportunity to connect with a wider range of learners than those in their own class alone.
- the 2017 Christmas party to celebrate the achievements of Action Foundation as a whole and to offer an enjoyable experience to learners; with games, food and entertainment.

We found both to be highly engaging, fun and celebratory and observed learners from different classes interacting. The marketplace event gave learners opportunities to practice their numeracy skills, test out different ways of asking for goods and services, as well as registering with Newcastle City Library and related organisations who brought a selection of English books aimed at ESOL learners.

In addition to the atmosphere and ethos of Action Language, some of Action Language's learners are involved with the City Church (which originally developed Action Foundation and remains a key supporter of the charity) as well as a weekly lunch club Open Arms.

Making friends in the UK

In the longitudinal study baseline interview (Interview 1) we asked learners if they had any English friends because we were interested in finding out about their connection with native English speakers. Fifty-five of the 90 (61%) did not have friends who are native English speakers. A number of learners expressed their sadness at not having such friends, in part because they felt their English would improve if they had. A number acknowledged the lack of opportunities to meet English people.

"Not easy to know English people when not English. Most of [my] friends from other countries. Need to go places to meet English people, not easy. Perhaps need someone to bring you more introductions, not easy."

EU citizen in Interview 1 (Level 1)

"It would be 5 if I can hold a full conversation. When you change countries it's difficult to make friends. I have made friends through work, Action Language, and the pub. Sometimes being the foreigner here is a way for people to talk to you."

EU citizen in Interview 5 (Entry 2)

"I hope to have English friends but I don't have English friends now."

Other migrant at Interview 1 (Entry 3)

Of the 35 people who had English friends, eight (23%) were asylum seekers or refugees, 17 (49%) were EU citizens and 10 (28%) were other migrants.

Comments from interviewees as to how they made connections with native English speakers shows that asylum seekers and refugees are likely to be at a disadvantage; the interviewees made such connections at work, through partners and spouses who were working or studying, or met them when they were volunteering in English conversation classes. Some of these avenues (especially paid work) are not open to asylum seekers and therefore their opportunities to connect with English people are reduced, aside from their English language skills.

"Friends of husband - sometimes understand me, sometimes not - Geordies speak very fast and they are helping me to speak."

Other migrant at Interview 1 (Entry 2)

We know that paid work and volunteering can help reduce social isolation and help learners to make friends¹⁵. When we asked learners what they did when not in class, during the week and at weekends, at baseline, 19 of the 90 (21%) had a paid job and 18 (20%) were volunteering at Action Language and other charities in the area; with one learner combining paid and voluntary work. Paid work is not a legal option for those whose application for leave to remain in the UK has not been approved, thus around half of our cohort were not eligible to work. In addition, a further two members of our cohort had retired from paid work. We also found that the refugees and asylum seekers in the cohort felt least satisfied with having English friends or feeling part of their neighbourhood; with a weighted-average score of 3.0, compared with 3.4 for the other two categories of immigration status (See Figure 33).

¹⁵ Healthwatch Devon case study 8: Volunteering <https://healthwatchdevon.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/8-Volunteering-case-study.pdf> (accessed August 2018)

How do you feel about having English friends and being part of your neighbourhood? (Weighted average)

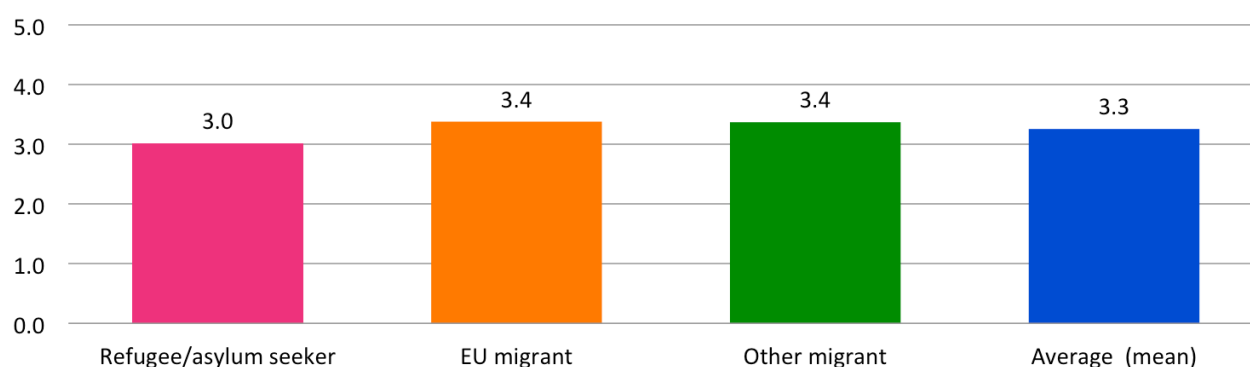


Figure 33: Longitudinal study cohort weighted average score when answering out of 5: *How do you feel about having English friends and being part of your neighbourhood?* At Interview 1 (n=90)

In contrast to this finding, the comments from those throughout the interviews, whether they were still attending classes at Action Language or had left, reported they had made friends whilst in the UK.

“Mostly the friends I know are from Action Language, some are colleagues of my girlfriend.”
Other migrant at Interview 4 (leaver)

“I have two friends: my first friend is from my country, the other is from Europe. I sometimes talk with her by phone and when stay in Newcastle I meet her outside in the café or sometimes in restaurant and sometimes visit at home.”
Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 4 (leaver)

“3.5 – why no 5?! – I spend a lot of time working in the work. The team we are co-worker but not friendly friendly, it’s good team but a friend for me is a person I can ask for help, talk in confidence, a friend is very near to me, and at the work it is co-worker, we are friendly. The rest of the time I spend with my family. I need to improve my social life and make some friends. When move country it is difficult. You leave friend, leave contact, but not have technology Skype, WhatsApp but when here need to make friend, spend time to make new friends, two or three real friends.”
EU citizen in Interview 5 (Entry 3)

“I don’t have much English friends just classmates. I see my classmates on the street so last week I see one classmate, last year we were in the same class, we say some English, to say hello how are you”
Other migrant at Interview 5 (Level 1)

“I am very grateful about the people I know. I am surprised about English people – we have the idea that English people were very cold and distant. This is not the case. I am feeling well about people here but I miss my family and Spanish friends. I am very grateful to my friend who referred me here [Action Language].”
EU citizen in Interview 1 (Level 1)

Connecting with neighbours and in their communities

However, the responses were more similar when we asked whether learners felt part of the area in which they now live (Figure 34), with all three categories of learners by immigration status giving an average score very close to 4.

For the 30 in our cohort who remained to the end of our study, their baseline score averaged at 3.7. At Interview 5 their scoring had risen to 4.2; 0.5 more than at baseline, showing they felt better about living in their location at the time. Breaking these figures down by immigration status

- For the 11 refugees and asylum seekers in this group of 30, their average scoring at baseline was 3.5. At Interview 5 it had increased to 4.5 ie by one whole rating. This may reflect, in part, that some of the asylum seekers we interviewed at baseline had been granted leave to remain in the country by the time of Interview 5 and they may have felt more settled as a result.
- For the nine EU citizens, their ratings reduced only by 0.2; from a baseline of 4.1 to 3.9 at Interview 5
- And the score for the eight other migrants increased from 3.8 at baseline to 4.6 at Interview 5. This was the most settled group; generally living in areas less deprived than the above two groups. The increase in their ratings may reflect them feeling more comfortable in their neighbourhood due to being able to speak to their neighbours (most had English neighbours) and, although some worked, it was part time work that left them enough time to meet friends and others in their area.

Do you feel part of the area you now live in? (Weighted average)

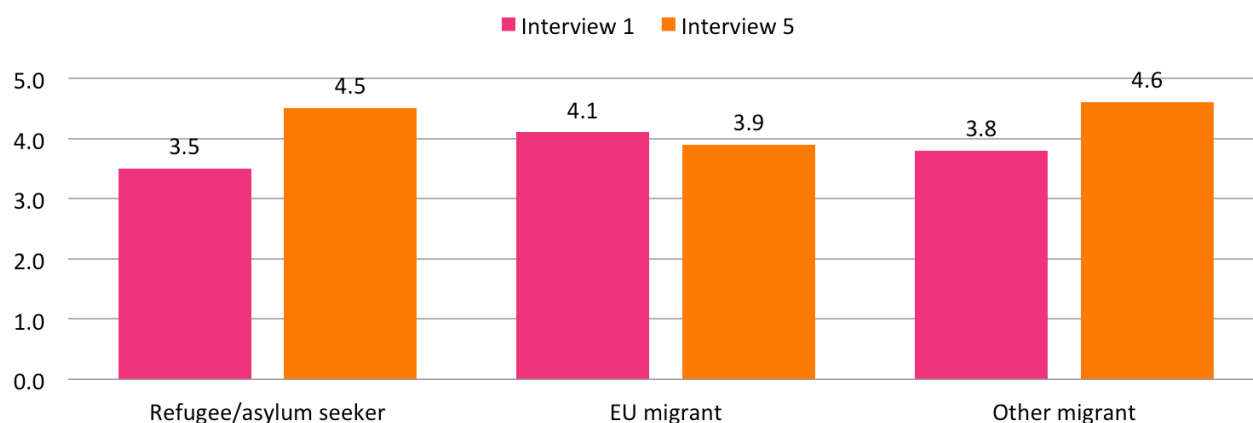


Figure 34: Longitudinal study cohort weighted average score for final 30 interviewees when answering out of 5: *Do you feel part of the area you know live in?* at Interview 1 and Interview 5 shown by immigration status (n=30)

Of the 54 in our cohort at baseline (ie 60%) that knew they had English neighbours where they lived, 72% spoke to them in English; mostly greetings. A few learners highlighted that where they had had closer connections with English neighbours, their neighbours were older people and those not busy with work or young children. In addition, those living in apartment blocks rarely saw their neighbours.

"In my first home behind the Freeman Hospital, the old people were very friendly and had time to spend. But now in Walker the behaviour of people is different. They are always busy and fast and have younger children. Young people don't have the respect for older people – it's in all countries, even in Egypt."

Other migrant in Interview 1 with interpreter (Entry 3)

Some interviewees had positive experiences to share about their neighbours and the community they lived in.

"...because our country very bad. My area very good. I'm settled in West Denton. good for me good for my children."

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 5 (Entry 2)

"Everyone very canny, friendly as well."

EU citizen in Interview 3 (Level 1)

"People help me always, they take care of us. We are very comfortable, can read everything new and it's a safe country and safe city. There are a lot of organisations helping us, even with food. Sometimes I go to the library to study."

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 1 with interpreter (Pre-entry)

Other interviewees had negative experiences though fortunately for some their circumstances improved when they moved house or area.

"I'm not happy about neighbours. My children don't sleep, other children outside all the time. My children don't get enough sleep. The children want to stay out with others and don't get home before 10.00pm. I ask for help now to move outside of Byker."

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 3 (Entry 2)

"In Newcastle, living in council house and around me some dodgy people smoking weed, fighting. After I came here [Doncaster], I started my real life with real people around me, nice people. My feeling is good." [Score 5 out of 5]

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 5 (leaver)

"Neighbourhood very bad, not hospitable, big difference between us and them."

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 1 (Entry 2)

Learners and their support networks

In terms of data from our study, we asked interviewees whether they had people around them to help when they need it. All in our cohort scored this fairly highly at baseline; at 4.1 between scores of between one and five. Figure 35 shows the results by immigration status; as you can see those refugees and asylum seekers scored this, on average, 3.5 out of 5; 0.8 less than other migrants and 1.0 less than EU citizens; showing that refugees and asylum seekers felt they had fewer people in their lives who could help them if they needed it.

We found that, mostly, refugees and asylum seekers were living with others of the same immigration status who were equally disempowered and disadvantaged so not in a position to help.

“Family not heard from since came to UK, church help with gospel, friends help give hope”
Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 1 (Entry 2)

For the final 30 interviewees of our study, their average weighted score at baseline was 4.6. At Interview 5, this had actually reduced to 4.0, showing that at the end of the study, on average, our cohort felt they had fewer people to turn to for help than at the start.

Do you have friends/family/people to help you if you need it? (Weighted average)

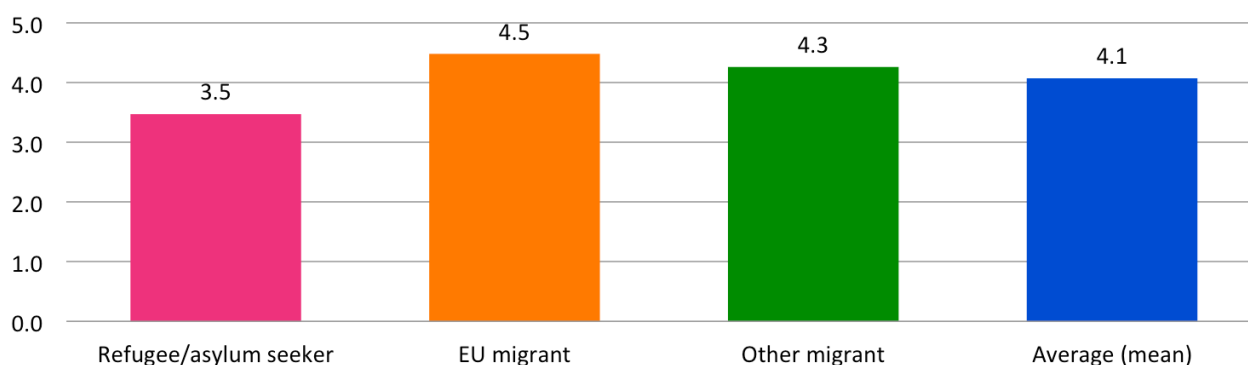


Figure 35: Longitudinal study cohort weighted average score for final 30 interviewees when answering out of 5: Do you have friends/family/people to help you if you need it? at Interview 5 shown by immigration status and mean average (n=30)

“Fortunately we have Venezuelan friends there is feeling the same we need to help each other, reciprocity, there are three or four family near Longbenton so help each other.”
EU citizen in Interview 5 (Entry 3)

“I do have a family. Friends and people at work who can help me. For example I claimed back some income tax with help from the chef at work who told me how to do it by phoning HMRC”
EU citizen in Interview 5 (leaver)

“I live with my partner and we can help each other and have friends we can rely on. I’m not worried about being here and having problems.”
Other migrant in Interview 5 (leaver)

Women with children found it difficult living in the UK away from their families, in particular, and friends.

“The question mean...? I have friend in this country, no family, [just] friend. If I ask, yes help, but maybe all friends have family and busy. For example, I need to take new tablet, may affect me, may make many problems, it hard to know. Maybe when take tablet make me sleep in the bed and need help with my small daughter. Last week the tablet make me not eat for five days. Maybe if have sister here I can ask to come and she come quickly but friend don’t have to come quickly. I wanted help today but can’t ask anyone as know they are busy.” [Score 3 out of 5]

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 4 (leaver)

“When my baby is only two months, my husband family have an accident so he go to China and I stay here alone. I need my friends then, they want to help me, but they also have their baby and family to look after so I was alone. I know that if stay in my country I have friends and family to help me; at that moment I missed my friends a lot. My husband's father, he pass away, he go for three weeks. At that time a new mum I don't know how to look after baby. After that my husband's mum come here to help me. Now my mum is here for six months. Interviewer: Is that good? Or is it a long time? Interviewee: not a long time for me! Because I haven't gone back to my country for two years, six months is too short for me.”

Other migrant in Interview 4 (leaver)

“Only one friend but very good for me, very good friend, at hospital [with me] for 9.00. She very good when first time here, need help but God helped me giving me the friend. My mother died four years ago. My family still in Syria, don't know where they are now. Tired thinking about them. I don't have a chance. I'm happy children have good health - I've lost everything only the children [left].”

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 3 (Entry 2)

Reducing isolation by attending classes at Action Language

As we discussed above, by providing classes, Action Language helps to create the conditions for reducing isolation and developing friendships by bringing learners together. Using Action Language’s enrolment and class register data, which records how many classes each learner attends, we found that learners enrol and attend varying numbers of classes. As we discussed in *Improving learners’ English language ability, literacy and basic skills*, there is a correlation between the number of classes learners attend and learners’ progression through ESOL levels. Those learners that do not attend classes or attended fewer classes, do not progress as well as learners that do attend classes.

Using Action Language’s enrolment data, we saw that 2,185 people enrolled across the three years of the project and attended 31,241 classes between them.

When analysing the class register data, we found not all learners attend the same number of classes, or attend at all. The class register data records the total number of classes attended by each student for each academic year.

Table 18: Attendance by learners at Action Language by number of classes attended (0, 1-9, 10-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49 and 50+ classes) showing all learners (n=2,185) and learners attending more than 10 classes only (n=924)

Total project, all learners			Total project attending >10 classes only		
	Count	%		Count	%
>50 classes	144	7%	>50 classes	144	16%
40-49 classes	79	4%	40-49 classes	79	9%
30-39 classes	112	5%	30-39 classes	112	12%
20-29 classes	233	11%	20-29 classes	233	25%
10-19 classes	356	16%	10-19 classes	356	39%
1-9 classes	718	33%			
0 classes	543	25%			
Total	2,185		Total	924	

After three years of the project, out of the total 2,185 people enrolled, 924 (42%) attended 10 or more classes and 1,261 people (58%) attended fewer than 10 classes (Table 18).

Of the 924 learners that attended 10 or more classes, most learners (356 or 39%) attended 10-19 classes, 233 learners (25%) attended 20-29 classes, and a significant minority of learners - 144 (16%) - attended more than 50 classes.

Of the 1,261 people who enrolled but did not attend 10 or more classes, 543 people did not attend any classes at all and 718 people attended only 1-9 classes.

Number of classes attended by learners

When we explore the enrolment and class register data in more detail by year, we see a slightly different pattern for each year (Table 19). In Year 1, out of the 796 enrolments, most learners - 55% - attended fewer than 10 classes however in Year 2 the position is reversed with most learners - 54% of 800 - attending 10 or more classes. This continues in Year 3 with just over half of learners (51%) attending 10 or more classes. Note: There are more enrolments than people because Action Language asks learners to enrol each year irrespective of whether they have attended before.

Table 19: Attendance of 10 or more classes and fewer than 10 classes by learners at Action Language by year: Year 1 (2015-16) n=796, Year 2 (2016-17) n=800, Year 3 (2017-18) n=1089, and three years combined n=2635

	Year 1 (2015-16)		Year 2 (2016-17)		Year 3 (2017-18)		Total project	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Attended 10 or more classes	359	45%	433	54%	531	51%	1323	50%
Attended fewer than 10 classes	437	55%	367	46%	508	49%	1312	50%
Total	796		800		1089		2635	

Length of time learners stay at Action Language

When looking at the data for the first three years of the project (Figure 36), we found that the majority of learners - 82% (1,801 learners) - stayed at Action Language for one year or less and some learners stayed for two or more years (14% stay for two years and 4% for three years). When we exclude learners that do not attend or attend fewer than 10 classes, there are 924 learners in total, with a significant drop in the number of learners staying for one year. This shows that many learners register with Action Language but do not attend any or many classes.

Number of years learners stay at Action Language

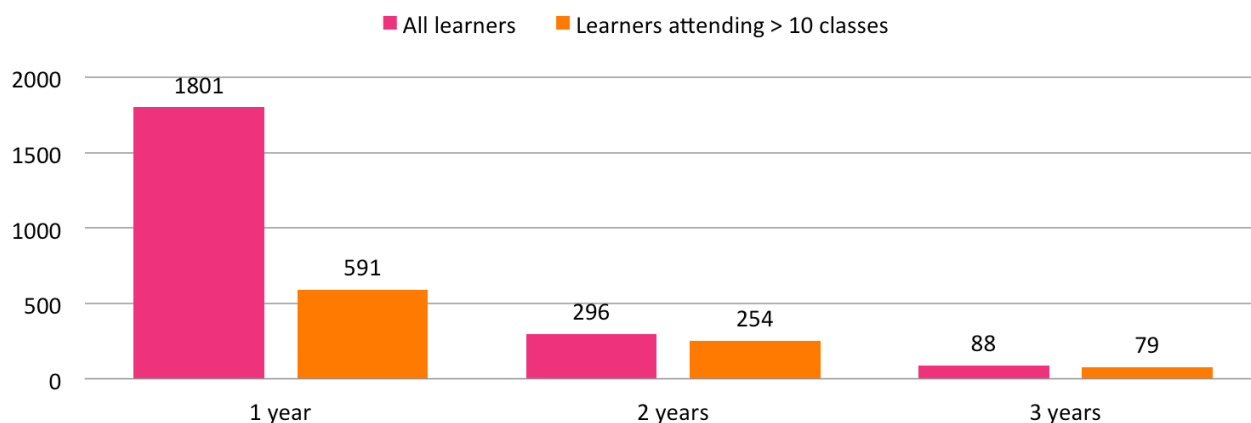


Figure 36: Number of years – one year, two years, three years – learners stay at Action Language for all learners (n=2,185) and learners attending more than 10 classes (n=924)

Why do learners not attend all classes?

As part of the longitudinal study, we asked learners at each interview if they had attended class since their previous interview, and if they had, had they attended class each week. For those who stopped coming to Action Language, the reasons included leaving the UK, learning the area, no longer being eligible to attend for example by getting a place at college, completing all ESOL levels and getting a job. We explored why learners leave Action Language in more detail in *Moving on positively to further education, employment or training* on pages 68 to 73.

For those who were still enrolled at Action Language but could not come each week, the reasons included a clash between working hours or volunteer responsibilities and class hours, family caring commitments, having a baby, illness, visiting family in their home country (EU citizens), and being on the waiting list for a class.

"Some mums have problems with the kids, sometimes we can't make some courses or attend the classes because the times are very problematic."

Learner, end-of-year feedback form, 2015-16

"I stopped because many appointments and I registered with Gateshead college. Gateshead college not far with my home but still not started as many appointments so sometimes not come. I tell the teacher, she say no problem, sometimes I go to appointment and go after to college. It is good it is near my home. And sometimes I change my appointment to another time. Today three appointments – it's hard."

Refugee/asylum seeker in Interview 5 (leaver)

“Just around baby! 24 hours 7 days a week and 365 days a year! I can’t adjust to this kind of life so I had baby blue. Now I’m a super mum I think! Weekends, still around the baby! We take the baby to shopping, take the baby to sometimes the museums sometimes to the farm, baby like animals, sometimes to the playground, soft play. Don’t have any time for ourselves.”

Other migrant in Interview 5 (leaver)

“My wife, a PhD student at Newcastle University, become much busier now it is her final year...now doing more domestic work and childcare and the class times clash with school drop-off and pickup times.”

Other migrant in Interview 5 (leaver)

Spotlight on asylum seekers, refugees and EU citizens

When we compare, again using the class register data, these three groups of people – asylum seekers, EU citizens and refugees – we see a slight difference between the groups. In the three years of the project, 829 of Action Language learners were asylum seekers, 647 were EU citizens and 242 were refugees.

We saw that attendance varies between the groups with a greater proportion – 45% (370 learners) – of asylum seekers enrolling and attending than the other two groups. We saw refugees and EU citizens enrolling and attending equally poorly as each other – 35% of EU citizens and 38% of refugees attended more than 10 sessions – although there were three times as many EU citizens enrolling than refugees (Table 21).

Table 20: Attendance of 10 or more classes and fewer than 10 classes by learners at Action Language by immigration status: asylum seekers (n=829), refugees (n=242) and EU citizens (n=647)

	Asylum seekers		Refugees		EU citizens	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Attended 10 or more classes	370	45%	91	38%	227	35%
Attended fewer than 10 classes	459	55%	151	62%	420	65%
Total	829		242		647	

Asylum seekers attended a total of 10,858 classes; EU citizens attended 8,108 classes; and refugees attended 3,424 classes.

When we look in more detail at the number of classes asylum seekers, EU citizens and refugees attend (Table 22), we see that around 40% of each group of people attend 10-19 classes, and then

- For asylum seekers, the next largest proportion is 33% of learners (122 people) attended 20-29 classes and the smallest proportion is 8% or 28-29 people attending 40-49 classes and more than 50 classes
- For refugees, the second largest proportion is 22% of learners (20 people) attending more than 50 classes
- For EU citizens, the proportions attended 20 and more classes was different to asylum seekers, with 21% (92 learners) attended 20-29 classes and 17% (39 learners) attended more than 50 classes

Table 21: Attendance by learners at Action Language by number of classes attended (10-19,20-29, 30-39, 40-49 and 50+ classes) showing asylum seekers (n=370), refugees (n=91) and EU citizens (n=227)

	Asylum seekers		Refugees		EU citizens	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Attended >50 classes	29	8%	20	22%	39	17%
Attended 40-49 classes	28	8%	10	11%	16	7%
Attended 30-39 classes	43	12%	10	11%	32	14%
Attended 20-29 classes	122	33%	15	16%	48	21%
Attended 10-19 classes	148	40%	36	40%	92	41%
Total	370		91		227	

And when we shine a spotlight on how long asylum seekers, refugees and EU citizens stay at Action Language, we see that most asylum seekers (81%) stay for one year as do EU citizens although at a lower proportion (57%). The pattern for refugees is slightly different with an equal proportion of refugees staying at Action Language for two years as staying for one year – both 43% (Table 23).

Table 22: Number of years – one year, two years, three years – asylum seekers, refugees and EU citizens stay at Action Language for all learners and learners attending more than 10 classes

	Asylum seekers				Refugees				EU citizens			
	All		Attending 10 or more classes		All		Attending 10 or more classes		All		Attending 10 or more classes	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1 year	741	89%	300	81%	179	74%	39	43%	536	83%	130	57%
2 years	72	9%	57	15%	48	20%	39	43%	84	13%	72	32%
3 years	16	2%	11	4%	15	6%	13	14%	27	4%	25	11%
Total	829		370		242		80		647		227	

Outcome indicator target

There are two outcome indicator targets for Action Language for developing friendships and reducing social isolation

1. beneficiaries will cite a reduction in their social isolation and develop friendships and the target is 150 learners per year
2. beneficiaries will overcome their isolation by attending 10 or more sessions and the target is 350 learners per year

Beneficiaries will cite a reduction in their social isolation and develop friendships

The end-of-year Action Language feedback form asks learners: *Have you made new friends at Action Language?* and this question is used to measure this outcome indicator target. By the end of Year 3, 299 end-of-year feedback forms had been completed by learners at levels Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2, and question 6 had been answered 293 times (by 68 learners in Year 1, 113 in Year 2 and 112 in Year 3).

Overall, across the three years, 89% (261) of respondents said they had developed new friendships at Action Language, with 9% (25) of respondents saying no and a further 2% (7) saying they didn't know. If we consider the feedback form responses to be representative of the 924 Action Language learners that attended more 10 or more classes, it suggests that 823 learners would cite a reduction in their social isolation and develop friendships by the end of Year 3. The target is 150 learners per year. We consider this outcome target indicator has been met.

Beneficiaries will overcome their isolation by attending 10 or more sessions

The Action Language class register data records the total number of classes attended by each student for each academic year. This data is used to measure this outcome indicator target. When we analysed the class register data, we found not all learners attend the same number of classes, or attend at all. However, we did find that more than 350 learners did enrol and attend 10 or more session each year and the number attending and enrolling each year increased year on year – 359 in Year 1, 433 in Year 2, and 531 in Year 3 (see Figure 36 above). Because learners stay at Action Language for more than one year and are asked to enrol each year, the year on year figures may count learners more than once. The total number of learners enrolling and attending across the three years of the project is 924 people. We consider this outcome indicator target has been met.

Conclusion

Social isolation and loneliness are significant issues for many of Action Language's learners, for a variety of reasons. Although different groups of learners are impacted by social isolation to different levels, many are likely to experience it at some point whilst living in the UK, especially those who lack close contact with their family and friends, are discriminated against, and struggle to make new friends due to their lack of English, their lack of roles (such as employee) within which they can make friends, and for other reasons.

Action Language contributes to reducing social isolation and helping learners make friends in a number of different ways: teaching English language skills that helps learners to connect with local communities and other ESOL learners who speak a different first language, and using teaching methods and organising events that help learners connect with each other.

By providing classes, Action Language helps to create the conditions for reducing isolation and developing friendships by bringing learners together. Learners attended Action Language at different rates with a significant minority attending almost all classes and others registering and not attending or attending only a handful of classes. We found that half of learners register and do not attend or attended fewer than 10 classes. This means they are not able to benefit from learning English or reducing their isolation and making friends. Having said that, if everyone that registered did attend, Action Language would struggle to provide classes for everyone with their current level of service (limited by resources) and waiting lists would increase.

We found in our study that learners stopped coming to Action Language because they secured a place at Newcastle or Gateshead colleges; they move away; caring responsibilities and lack of childcare and respite care prevented them from attending when they very much wanted to; or, found work or increased or changing working hours clashed with classes. In addition, Action Language often finds it hard to maintain contact with people with unsettled lives, and at times struggle to make themselves understood by phone and/or text by people who do not speak English well.

Case study: Diego Morales

Diego is Spanish speaker from Chile. He's 40 and came to the UK with his wife who had an academic job. His educational level was postgraduate, teaching history in a university in Mexico.

Before Action Language

Diego had come to the UK in 2014 with his wife who had a job at a university.

At first he found it very difficult living in the UK because he did not have the confidence to talk to anyone in English.

His wife's English was much better and so she took charge of household matters, which meant that Diego had few opportunities to speak English.

At Action Language

In 2015 his wife looked for English classes for him and found Action Language. He went along; they tested him and put him in the Level 2 class. He then took the ESOL for Work course, finding it helped him learn about working in the UK: security, contracts, finding job, CVs in the British style, and interviews.

"It's an amazing course. It was my first opportunity to talk to other people a relaxed atmosphere; the first time I could make friends that did not speak Spanish."

He went on to take the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Cambridge First Certificate in English classes at Action Language, passing the exams for both. He found that Action Language benefited his spoken English above all else.

After Action Language

Diego left Action Language in January 2017; two years after he started, having reached the highest level of class they teach. He returned for a short time, but this time to help, as a teaching assistant.

He's since been studying on his own and, after getting a temporary job at a university, has taken two of his employer's short English-language courses aimed at academic English. He is hoping to find more permanent work in a university.

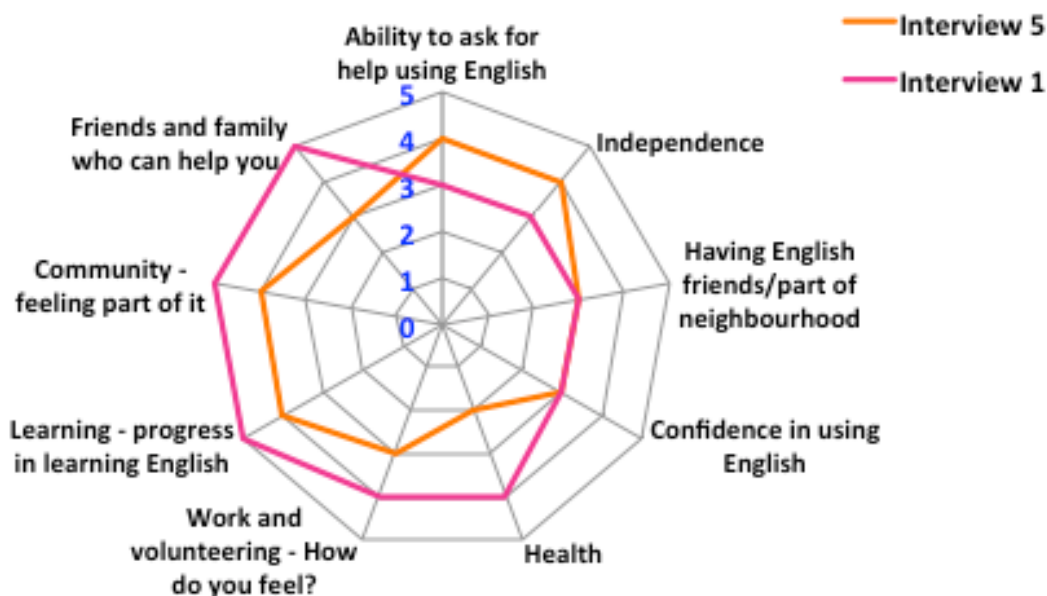


Figure 37: Diego's outcome scores at his first and last interview (persona 6)

Moments of truth

When he was went to a GP and he took his wife along to interpret. He said that it was as if he was not there; the doctor talked to his wife only.

The difference Action Language made

"It helped me talk to different people easily and to really understand the structure of language such that I can now study it on my own."

Case study: Isabella Ramirez

Isabella, a Spanish speaker and national in her late 30s, came to the UK to look for work, following her partner who had a job in IT on Tyneside. She's a graduate with a technical occupation.

Before Action Language

Isabella and partner both had good jobs in Spain. After the 2008 Spanish recession they both found it difficult to find work. Her partner came to England for an IT job and, a year later, she followed in March 2015.

She had studied in English at school but like others, she found talking with native English speakers quite different. She was able to ask questions but often could not understand the reply.

She wanted a job but not in a Spanish restaurant because she wanted to be more immersed in English. Friends of her partner told her about the ESOL for Work course at Action Language and she started in April 2015.

At Action Language

The course was important for her, as it was intensive and focused on work issues. It difficult, so much so that she told her partner she was going to quit the course. She persevered, at the end starting Level 1 class.

She noticed being more confident and more fluent in her English, finding that she could understand people with different accents.

She progressed to Level 2 and took the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) class at Action Language. Meanwhile she found a job where she spoke English to her colleagues all the time.

An accident in October 2016 stopped her coming to class again.

After Action Language

Her partner got a job in Manchester and they both left Newcastle in April 2017. Isabella continued studying English at home and found an ESOL course near to her new area. In addition, she enrolled in an interpreting course so she could train to interpret for Spanish speakers and hopes to get a job in that field.

She is an avid reader of English books and regularly watches English films and TV programmes without subtitles.

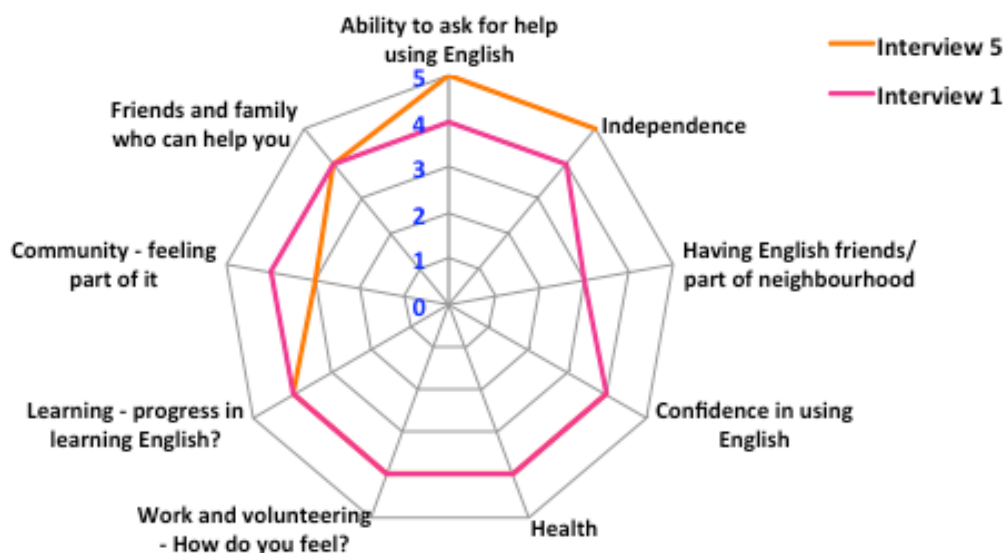


Figure 38: Isabella's outcome scores at her first and last interview (persona 8)

Moments of truth

She knew if she wanted to improve her English whilst she did not have a job, she would need regular contact with other people learning English.

The difference Action Language made

Learning with Action Language helped her to meet a wide range of people, not only fellow Spanish speakers. She took her English to a higher level.

Improving confidence and self-esteem

Confidence and self-esteem relate to how learners feel about their everyday interactions with others, their status in the country, and the opinion they have of themselves. As such, acquiring English as a second language is one factor only in helping learners improve their confidence and self-esteem.

We found strong evidence that Action Language classes helped learners, across all class levels, to improve their confidence in using English; and this was true for learners who had remained in the lower levels of classes throughout our study as well as those who progressed to higher-level classes. In addition, there was a positive relationship between increases in confidence in using English and increased ability to access basic services and to be more independent.

Introduction

Confidence and self-esteem

Self-confidence can be defined as an individual's trust in his or her own abilities, capacities, and judgments, or belief that he or she can successfully face day-to-day challenges and demands. It is related to self-esteem, which can be defined as "the disposition to experience oneself as being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness. It is confidence in the efficacy of our mind, in our ability to think. By extension, it is confidence in our ability to learn, make appropriate choices and decisions, and respond effectively to change. It is also the experience that success, achievement, fulfilment – happiness – are right and natural for us. The survival-value of such confidence is obvious; so is the danger when it is missing."¹⁶

We reviewed two studies that showed a strong link between ESOL and learners increasing their self-esteem and confidence^{17 18}. Both studies, which were of women from Black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) communities, found that enhanced language skills improved self-esteem and confidence, communication, and lifestyles.

The data we have and what it tells us

Action Language end-of-year feedback form asked two questions relating to confidence and happiness experienced as a result of attending classes at Action Language.

The first asked learners if they felt happier and more confident as a result of attending classes at Action Language and second asked the level of happiness learners felt when they were in class compared with other times of the week.

¹⁶ Nathaniel Branden, <http://www.nathanielbranden.com/what-self-esteem-is-and-is-not>

¹⁷ Naeema Hann, Ivor Timmis, Ali Ata Alkhalidi, Beverley Davies, Carlos Rico Troncoso, Yong Yi, British Council (2014), p11 <http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/research-publications/research-papers/impact-english-learners-wider-lives>

¹⁸ Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University (2015), *Evaluation of the Creative English Programme* <http://www.creative-english.org.uk/stories/evaluation-of-the-creative-english-programme/>

Figure 39 sets out the results of the responses to this question across the last three academic years and for each academic year. As you can see, it shows consistently learners positive feelings as a result of attending classes at Action Language. 77% reported that they feel a lot happier and more confident as a result of attending classes, 21% felt a little, and only 2% felt neither more or less so. 47% stated they felt a lot happier and 46% happier when in class than at other times of the week; with only 5% responding neutrally and no-one reporting they felt sadder.

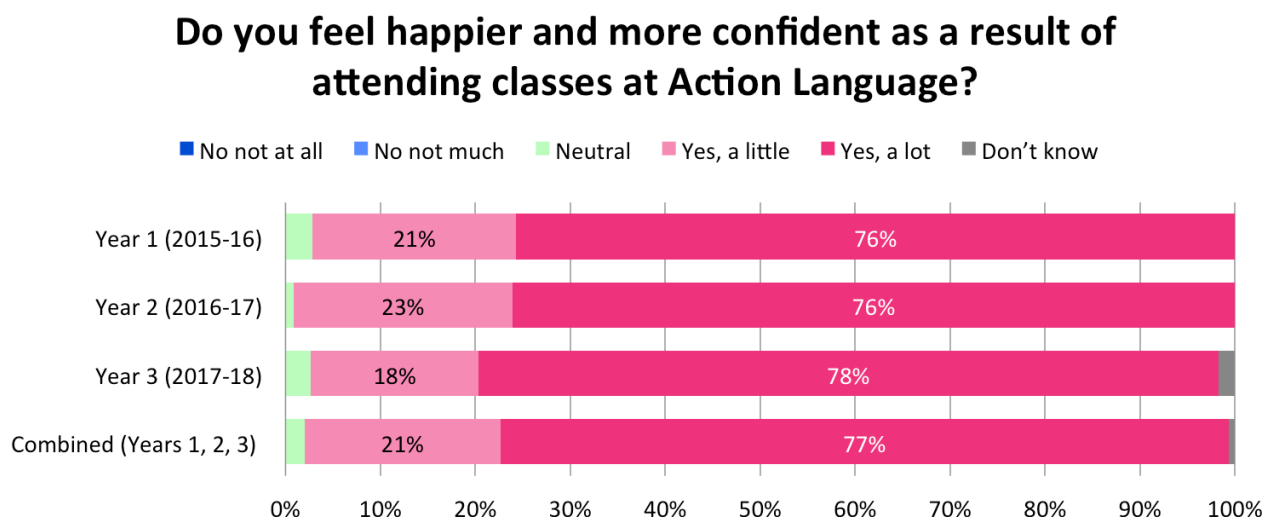


Figure 39: Results from end-of-year feedback form to question *Do you feel happier and more confident as a result of attending classes Action Language?* Year 1 (2015-16) n=70, Year 2 (2016-17) n=113, Year 3 (2017-18) n=113, and combined (Years 1, 2, 3) n=296

"It was a good experience attending English class in Action Language. I'm feeling more confident speaking and writing. I want say thank you all for this opportunity and I suggest everyone to attend Action Language because you can improve your English and meet new people."

Learner (Level 1), end-of-year feedback form 2016-17

"The best thing about Action Language was helping me to be much more confident. You have to speak English here and at times feel embarrassed because you don't speak English well. So coming here gave me more confidence with English."

Speaking 5 out of 5, EU citizen at Interview 5 (leaver)

Our longitudinal study included collecting data from learners on their confidence in using English, what learners can do now, using English, that they could not do the last time we interviewed them; their ability to use English to go shopping to go to doctors and to seek the help they need in day-to-day living; and how independent they felt.

Confidence in using English

When we compare the confidence that learners in the final group of 30 that we interviewed felt using English at baseline, compared with how those same learners felt at Interview 5 we found that there was an average (mean) weighted score (where 1 was not at all confident and 5 was highly confident) of 3.21 for the 90 learners. For the 30 in our cohort that we interviewed at Interview 5, this baseline score was very similar, at 3.33. For our 30 learners, this average score increased to 3.83 at Interview 5, indicating an increase in confidence in using English of 0.5 of a score.

Learners reported that their confidence was situation-dependent; often citing shopping as the context in which they were most confident and visiting the doctors the one in which they felt least confident, in part because these were situations in which they did not want to make a mistake that adversely affected the outcome.

"I don't use English with Home Office or hospital, don't want to get it wrong and affect decision."

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 1 (Entry 2)

"It depends upon the people I am communicating with. Some people don't understand me and I feel uncomfortable as a result. Some people are not very patient."

EU citizen at Interview 1 (Level 1)

"I am not super confident. It depends who I talk with. If there are posh people in my restaurant my confidence goes down, so I think 4."

EU citizen at Interview 5 (leaver)

"Here talking to you [in the interview] feel 5! Before I never know how to speak English, now I am good"

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 5 (Entry 2)

In addition, some learners mentioned that they were more confident speaking to other non-native English speakers but far less so when speaking to native speakers of English. It also made a difference when the person with whom they were speaking was clear that they understood them.

Figure 40 shows the difference in levels of confidence in using English per ESOL level of class to which learners were assessed at baseline. Other than the pre-Entry level, the average weighted score (between 1 and 5, where 1 is low) falls between 3 and 4, showing there is a mixed picture in levels of confidence between learners of different classes and within each class; some basic English users felt very confident in using English and some proficient English users lacked confidence in using English.

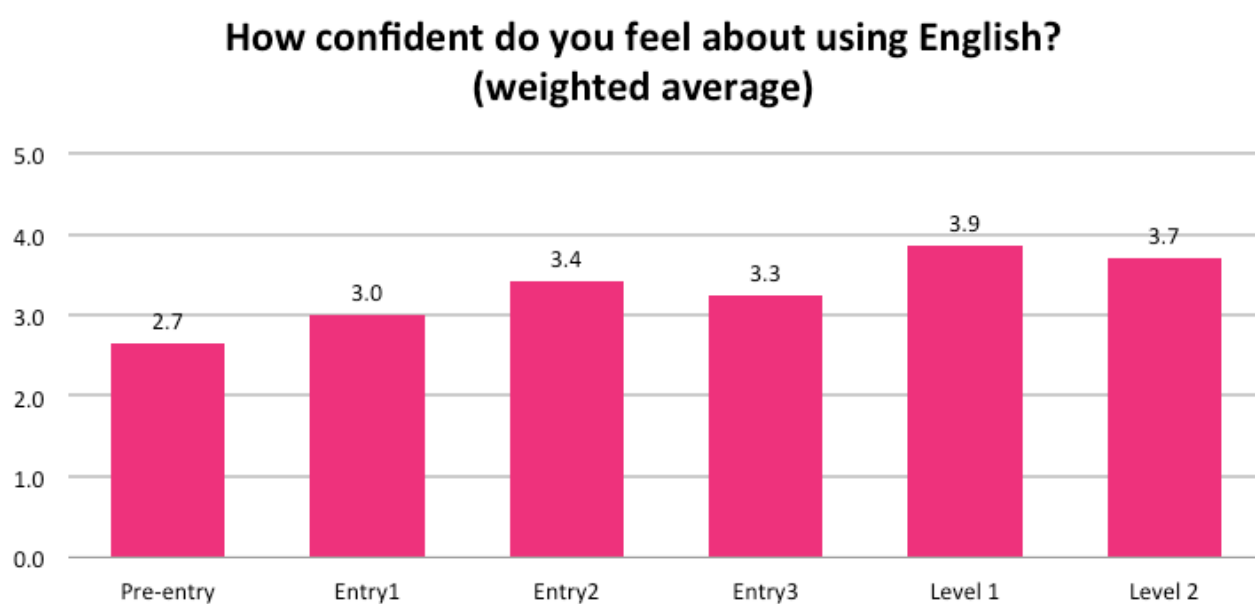


Figure 40: Longitudinal study cohort weighted average score when answering out of 5: *How confident do you feel about using English?* at Interview 1 shown by ESOL level (n=90)

Breaking these figures down to class level (Figure 41) at baseline we find that there were only two that scored themselves as 1 (not at all confident); one of each in the Pre-entry and Entry 1 classes. In terms of those scoring themselves as a 2, there were a large number in the Pre-entry and Entry 1 classes compared with more advanced ones.

How confident do you feel about using English? (Number of interviewees)

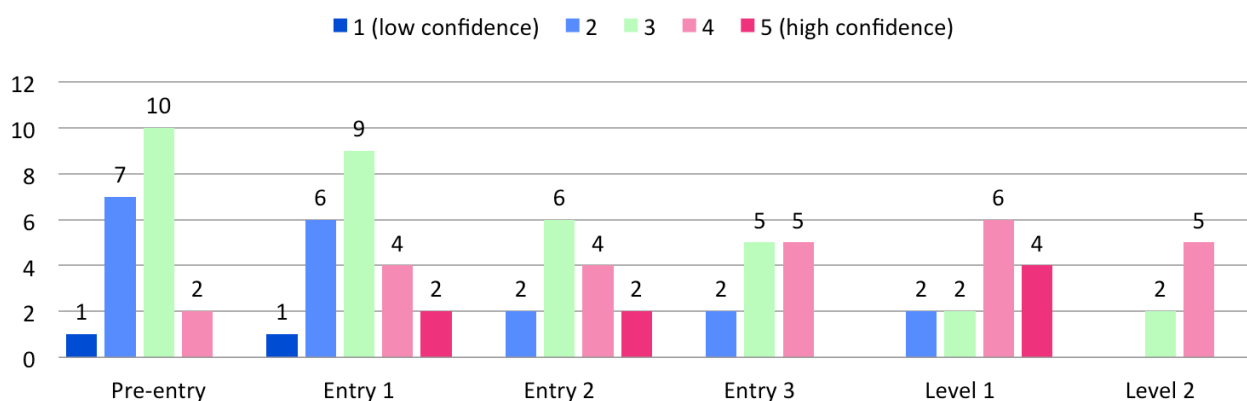


Figure 41: Longitudinal study cohort score when answering out of 5: *How confident do you feel about using English?* at Interview 1 shown by ESOL level (n=90)

Comments at Interview 5

"I'm less confident when speaking with a group of people; three or four."

EU citizen in Interview 5 (Entry 2)

"I don't feel I am losing face when I make mistakes when I speak English I just try to speak and let people understand me."

Other migrant in Interview 5 (leaver)

"When I speak to people face to face it is more confident for me it is a four out of five but when I speak to people on the phone I speak not much confident I think three out of five because of my problem understanding them."

"Four out of five, because my accent, I want my accent to be like English."

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 5 (leaver)

"The only reason a 4 is I think I'm not fluent, to be a 5 you need to become an English version of yourself, and I'm still building an English [name of interviewee], I'll get there but I'm not there yet. It has changed, more confident I'd say, I'm not afraid of asking things. In the beginning I would think about it twice before asking people, thinking about building the sentence, more confident but still thinking about what I'd like to say and how to say it."

Other migrant in Interview 5 (leaver)

However, although there is strong evidence that the confidence of Action Language learners increased as they learnt more English

- Learning English is not by itself sufficient for improving confidence and self-esteem; due to the diversity of factors involved in gaining and maintaining confidence and self esteem

- Self-perception of English language ability does not necessarily increase with an increase in that ability. There was not a linear progression in confidence such that those at level two were the most confident. We found that a number of those at levels 1 and 2 felt less confident in the English because they had reached level where they were aware of how much they did not know. This is known as the Dunning-Kruger Effect; when people compare their own ability and performance to those of others, a common finding is that those with poorer ability will be more likely to overestimate it than those with better skills.¹⁹

"When I came here, I couldn't speak English - can't open my mouth! - after I learn English here, I still feel very shy to speak with people, don't know what to say. If ask a question, can answer, if chat with me, don't know what to say."

Other migrant at Interview 4 (leaver)

"4 – yes, 4, there's always some... I don't know, maybe my expectation is high, I just feel not good, I keep saying I'm not good, but my sister has been here for Christmas, first time. She listened to me and watched me speak and she said you can speak! I don't understand why do you say you are not good. You can make a discussion, you can speak. But sometimes I'm not feeling good. I always think there is something missing, no flow, but I think it is normal. I think I am the first one to judge me so I think other people are judging me and I worry that people think I am an idiot when I speak but maybe not, maybe they understand me OK."

EU citizen at Interview 4 (leaver)

What learners can do after learning English

When we asked learners: *What can you do now you have learnt English that you could not before?* at Interview 4, 29 of the 32 interviewees responded. The most frequent responses related to being more able to talk to their doctor, understanding more in general, feeling more confident in their engagement with people; with nine, six and three respectively of the 29 citing these.

"Speaking better, writing better. Better but not 'full' - first can't do anything now can go to GP about appointment, sometimes go to GP for tablets but still can't go myself."

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 4 (Entry 1)

"Last time we met I could listen bit and understand less; and now I can understand more. I know more vocabulary. I speak more."

EU citizen at Interview 5 (leaver)

"I do most of my jobs myself - enrolling in the college, going to GP, shopping and paying bills, I do this myself. Before never understand when listen, now very good, not very good but can understand."

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 3 (leaver)

"Can go everywhere alone, feel proud of myself, good for self-esteem, feel better, can do anything."

EU citizen at Interview 1 (Level 1)

¹⁹ Trofimovich, P., Isaacs, T., Kennedy, S., Saito, K., and Crowther, D. (2016). *Flawed self-assessment: Investigating self- and other-perception of second language speech*
<http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/13310/3/13310.pdf>

In addition to the positive changes learners reported as a result of their improved English, seven of the 90 learners during our baseline interviews expressed the negative feelings they had because they could not speak English well; especially feelings of shame and embarrassment. We did not ask learners directly about their feelings on their English language skills; these comments were made unprompted and it may be that other learners felt the same way too. At Interview 5, no learners expressed such feelings, whichever Action Language class they were in or had been in, leading us to believe that their learning English had all but removed these negative feelings.

"I can read basic words but can't speak well, feel embarrassed."

Other migrant at Interview 1 (Entry 3)

"When in UK, need to learn English for children and others, feel ashamed when have to have translator."

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 1 (Pre-entry)

"Could not reply, feel ashamed to answer, been in UK for eight years but not learnt English before because with husband."

Other migrant at Interview 2 (Entry 1)

"Sometimes feel ashamed to speak English words. I want to communicate with people when I go outside. Came here and want to communicate."

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 1 (Pre-entry)

We found some evidence that Action Language helps learners to be more assertive in complaining, an indicator of their confidence. In class, Action Language teaches learners how to complain and we found that number of learners felt more confident to ask for what they wanted if it had not been given them in a café or shop.

"I can complain about something; for example, in a supermarket I bought cheese that I thought was on offer but when I took it to the checkout it turned out not to be. In the past I'd have paid but now I speak up and they change it."

Learner at Interview 2 (Level 2)

Some felt reluctant to complain, including those who felt the same in their home country.

Outcome indicator target

The outcome indicator for Action Language around confidence is beneficiaries will cite improvements in their confidence and self-esteem, and the target is 150 per year.

Action Language's own data shows that over the three years of the project, 158 of their learners have reported they feel happier and more confident as a result of attending classes at Action Language. Clearly this is only around a third of their target of 450 over three years. However, extrapolating the proportion of learners who reported that they felt a lot happier as a result of attending Action Language (77% of those who completed the Action Language feedback forms) against the 924 learners that attended at least 10 lessons over the three academic years of our study, we estimate that 711 learners felt a lot happier and more confident ie 237 per year; 87 above the target figure.

Conclusion

Action Language helps learners to become more confident English users; better able to access basic services and have their needs met, becoming more confident in their interactions with others to undertake day-to-day tasks such as shopping and the doctors, and in travelling around the area. In addition, lack of English skills for many learners related to lack of self-esteem; how they felt about themselves living in England and interacting with English speaking people. Action Language classes help reduce learners' anxiety about such interactions.

However, increase in English language skills is not sufficient to increase confidence and self-esteem alone, because there are many other factors involved; including learners' levels of self-esteem and confidence prior to coming to the UK; the impact on their confidence and self-esteem in coming to the UK; and the situations in which learners are using English and with whom; and their status (social and immigration) in the UK.

Improving health and wellbeing

Using the *Five ways to wellbeing* framework promoted by the National Health Service and other health bodies we found that learners are happier in class than at other times, with 93% over the three years reporting to Action Language that they are happier or a lot happier in class than at other times of the week and 98% reporting they are happier and more confident as a result of attending classes at Action Language. We found that Action Language contributed to learners' wellbeing by providing opportunities to connect, learn and give; and that learners took part in a range of activities themselves to increase opportunities to connect, be active, take notice, learn and give.

In terms of health, we found that asylum seekers and refugees experienced a range of health issues connected to their unique experiences; they spoke about low mental health (such as depression or feeling sad) because they had been forced to flee their home country, were separated from their family, or their families had died. There were also a number of asylum seekers and refugees that were receiving treatment for, or recovering from, physical injuries or mental health problems as a result of violence in their home countries or insufficient access to healthcare before they came to the UK.

Introduction

This section looks at whether Action Language learners report their health and wellbeing has improved. We also look at whether what learners do at Action Language and what they do in their own time could contribute to their wellbeing.

What is wellbeing?

In *Five ways to wellbeing: The evidence*²⁰ (2008), New Economics Foundation describes wellbeing as: "The concept of wellbeing comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement are characteristic of someone who has a positive experience of their life. Equally important for wellbeing is our functioning in the world. Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes of wellbeing."

From its research, New Economics Foundation identified five ways to wellbeing – connect, be active, take notice, learn and give.

- **Connect** - There is strong evidence that indicates that feeling close to, and valued by, other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world. It's clear that social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.
- **Be active** - Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. Exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting wellbeing.

²⁰ *Five ways to wellbeing: The evidence*, New Economics Foundation (2008)
<https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-evidence> (accessed June 2018)

- **Take notice** - Reminding yourself to ‘take notice’ can strengthen and broaden awareness. Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing and savouring ‘the moment’ can help to reaffirm your life priorities. Heightened awareness also enhances your self-understanding and allows you to make positive choices based on your own values and motivations.
- **Learn** - Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the opportunity to engage in work or educational activities particularly helps to lift older people out of depression. The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing.
- **Give** - Participation in social and community life has attracted a lot of attention in the field of wellbeing research. Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

The data we have and what it tells us

Feeling happier in class than at other times of the week

The end-of-year feedback form asks learners: *When you are at class are you...than at other times of the week?* with a five-point answer choice scale from A lot happier to A lot more sad. The figure below (Figure 42) shows that most people – 94% – are happier or a lot happier at Action Language than at other times of the week, and no one said they were sad or a lot more sad.

When you are at class are you more happy or more sad than at other times of the week?

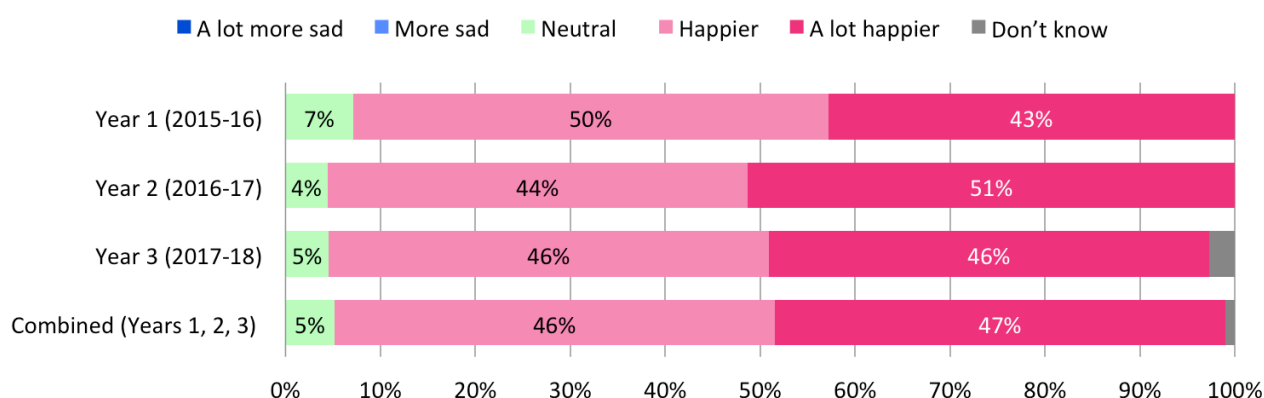


Figure 42: Results from end-of-year feedback form to question *When you are at class are you more happy or more sad than at other times of the week?* Year 1 (2015-16) n=70, Year 2 (2016-17) n=113, Year 3 (2017-18) n=110, and combined (Years 1, 2, 3) n=293

Feeling valued in their community

The end-of-year Action Language feedback form asks learners: Do you feel that you are a valued member of the community as a result of attending classes? Out of the 282 learners that responded to this question over the three years (Figure 43), 79% (224 people) said they were more or a lot more valued; 10% (28 people) said neither more nor less valued; and 9% (26 people) said they didn't know.

When looking at each year, Year 1 appears different to Year 2 and Year 3, with significantly fewer people reporting they felt a lot more valued in Year 1 (12%) than in Year 2 and Year 3 (35% and 30%). And again looking at each year, Year 2 and Year 3 show similar results to each other.

Do you feel that you are a valued member of the community as a result of attending classes?

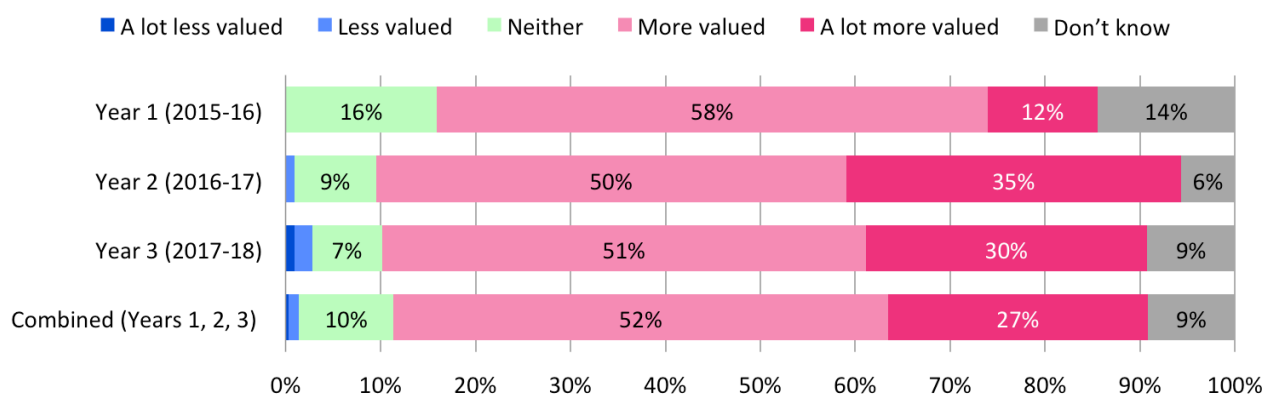


Figure 43: Results from end-of-year feedback form to question *Do you feel you are a valued member of the community as a result of attending classes?* Year 1 (2015-16) n=69, Year 2 (2016-17) n=105, Year 3 (2017-18) n=108, and combined (Years 1, 2, 3) n=282

There were only four learners who said they felt less valued or a lot less valued. The three people who said they were less valued were a EU citizen (Year 2), an ‘other migrant’ in the UK on a Tier 5 visa (Year 3), and an asylum seeker (Year 3). The one person who said they were a lot less valued was a refugee learning English at Action Language’s Sunderland classes (Year 3).

Feeling healthy

In the longitudinal study we asked about interviewees’ health, about their physical and mental health. We did not ask for details as it did not feel appropriate, however, some learners did share some details.

It appeared that asylum seekers and refugees experienced an additional range of health issues to EU citizens and other migrants connected to their unique experiences as a refugee or asylum seeker. We found that asylum seekers and refugees spoke about low mental health – depression or feeling sad – because they had been forced to flee their home country, were separated from their family and had not seen them for many years, their families had died or were homeless. There were also a number of asylum seekers and refugees that were receiving treatment for, or recovering from, physical injuries as a result of violence in their home countries or insufficient access to healthcare before they came to the UK.

“Physical is good. Still going to gym and need to have a lot of rest. My health has improved now and I don’t worry about anything.”

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 5 (leaver)

“Bad back and tired from looking after others. I have lupus. Today I have meeting with nurse to talk about tablets, because tablets make many problems for the body, confused about take or not take, same tablets as give to cancer people.”

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 4 (leaver)

"Sometimes I worry. When you feel everything is going wrong. When you tell yourself everything will be okay; sometimes I'm not always strong enough to be always positive. When I think about what's going to happen next, I start to get worried."

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 4 (leaver)

Interviewer: What do you do during the week? Interviewee: "Nothing, just walking, about three weeks don't have anything to do just walking on the street. Yesterday I walked about 15k. It is not the first time I have been homeless, also 2.5 years ago. Time passed, time goes anyway, it is important how it goes. Are you happy or sad? It is important how you feel all day. When I was homeless, the time affected me on those days, [and] on my today, not just that time, it has bad influence during next time."

Refugee/asylum seeker at Interview 5 (leaver)

How Action Language contributes to learners' wellbeing

Using the *Five ways to wellbeing* framework, we found that Action Language contributes to learners' wellbeing in the following ways

- **Connect** – bringing learners together in a safe, warm, welcoming environment with tea, coffee and biscuits for regular English classes, marketplace events and other parties and events and encouraging community building and friendships between learners; sharing information about local services and activities
- **Learn** – providing English classes to learn English in a way – goal-setting and progression through levels – that encourages incremental learning and acknowledges progression and lending books for learners to practice reading English outside of classes
- **Give** – encouraging learners to give their time through volunteering within Action Language or with other local organisations

Action Language has also started to help learners 'be active' and 'take notice' by taking trips out of class and walking together to places they have not been before or with a particular task to focus on linked to what they are learning in class. Each class goes to the library, and some classes also visit the quayside, train station and city centre. This is something Action Language is developing. In Year 4, Action Language will display the *Five ways to wellbeing* postcards in each classroom.

How learners contribute to their own wellbeing

From our interviews with learners and former learners, we know that learners contribute to their own wellbeing in a number of ways

- **Connect** – developing friendships and relationships with fellow learners, parents of their children's friends, fellow church goers, work colleagues, fellow volunteers, with neighbours and others
- **Be active** – joining exercise classes, going to the gym, walking and taking part in other exercise
- **Take notice** – visiting new places and being outside in nature at the park or by the sea
- **Learn** – self-directed learning at home by reading books, newspapers, watching films with English subtitles on, listening to the radio and practicing with their children; and using their English classes at Action Language as a foundation for further learning such as maths, driving and moving on to further study at college or university

- **Give** – volunteering with local charities, voluntary organisations and community groups; and helping neighbours, friends and taking part in other informal volunteering

“...Meet others through language exchange where teach Spanish and learn English...try to meet with people every week to improve my English”

EU citizen at Interview 4 (leaver)

“[I] now jog every afternoon picking up a boy from school and looking after him until 7 PM. His father is from the US and his mum is Romanian so I teach the boy Romanian. Every day read in English – a biography or personal history. Go on the Internet watches TV news and entertainment (X factor and the Voice). Listen to radio.”

EU citizen at Interview 3 (Entry 3)

“[I’m] really busy. Monday go to swimming and gym, Tuesday go to bible study in church, Wednesday tai chi, Thursday South Mountain help older people with lunch, Friday class and, after class, gym. At the moment retired, don't need to work, life more active, help my health be more healthy.”

EU citizen at Interview 3 (Level 1)

Outcome indicator target

The outcome indicator target for Action Language for improving health and wellbeing is beneficiaries will cite improvements in their emotional health and wellbeing and the target is 100 learners per year.

The end-of-year Action Language feedback form asks learners: *When you are at class are you...than at other times of the week? with a five-point answer choice scale from A lot happier to A lot more sad*, and this question is used to measure this outcome indicator target. By the end of Year 3, 299 end-of-year feedback forms had been completed by learners at levels Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2, and the response rate is 98% (293 responses).

Overall, across the three years, 94% (275) of respondents cited improvements in emotional health and wellbeing, with 47% reporting they were a lot happier at Action Language than at other times of the week, and 46% reporting they were happier. The self-cited improvements in emotional health and wellbeing (answering a lot happier or happier) ranged from 93% to 96% each year, which shows learners consistently reported improvements in their emotional health and wellbeing over the first three years of the project.

If we consider the feedback form responses to be representative of the 924 Action Language learners that attended more than 10 classes across the three years, it suggests that 867 learners would cite improvements in their emotional health and wellbeing by the end of Year 3.

We consider this outcome indicator target has been met.

Conclusion

Wellbeing is complex and influenced by many factors. It is made up of two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. The five ways to wellbeing found by the New Economics Foundation are connect, be active, take notice, learn and give.

Often learners' health and wellbeing is poor or reduced due to factors outside of Action Language's, and their own, control, particularly asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers who have fled their own countries because of conflict and threats of violence and face an uncertain future away from friends and family. New refugees can experience a period of homelessness as support provided to them as asylum seekers is removed, can find it difficult to secure work and suitable work (unemployment and underemployment), or find it difficult to make time to keep up their own learning with the pressures of work. And some EU citizens are working in jobs that do not meet their future goals and ambitions, such as hospitality and service industry work. Some learners particularly asylum seekers and refugees experience poor mental health and physical health because of their previous experiences such as torture or other physical violence.

However, Action Language does contribute to learners' wellbeing by providing opportunities to connect with fellow learners, teachers and other staff, opportunities to learn English and to give by volunteering with Action Language. And by learning English, learners are able to connect with their neighbours, other parents and form friendships; to give by volunteering and participate in their communities; build foundations for further learning such as maths, learning to drive and moving on to vocational and academic study.

Learners report feeling happier in class at Action Language than at other times of the week, and feeling more valued after attending Action Language.

In addition, learners improve their own wellbeing through self-directed learning, going to the gym, walking and taking part in other exercise, visiting new places and being outside in nature, helping their neighbours and taking part in other formal and informal volunteering.

Case study: Yosef Taame

Yosef is seeking asylum in the UK from Eritrea. He is in his mid 20s and speaks Tigrinya and Arabic.

Before

Yosef came to England in 2014 and claimed asylum straight away. He was confident speaking English but knew it was poor. One time he went to a supermarket wanting to buy soap; they could not understand and thought he wanted soup. He got by day-to-day using a translation app.

To improve his English he joined a weekly conversation group at a local community group. There he saw an Action Language leaflet and enrolled with a friend.

At Action Language

After assessing his English level, Yosef was placed in the Entry 1 class in September 2015 where he learned grammar and how to ask questions. He started to make himself understood better and he progressed to Entry 2. While at Action Language, he started learning maths and IT at LearnDirect. He spent most of his weekends in church, teaching Bible and baking bread for the Sunday breakfast.

His doctor noticed the improvement in his English; at his second check-up he did not need an interpreter.

He became eligible for a place learning English at the local college and left Action Language a year after he started.

After

In addition to college classes three days every week, Yosef attended LearnDirect five days and volunteered there; helping other learners. At LearnDirect he completed his Level 2 IT course and Level 1 maths.

Unfortunately his application to remain in the UK was rejected and he lived for over a year with no public funds – he no longer received any money for living nor could he stay in his accommodation. He 'sofa surfed' every night. In that time he was not allowed to continue his studies at the local college.

He continued to be active in his church and started volunteering with the Red Cross, supporting older people who are vulnerable. Eventually he would like to study to become a doctor to help others.

Recently he received confirmation that he can stay in the UK on humanitarian grounds.

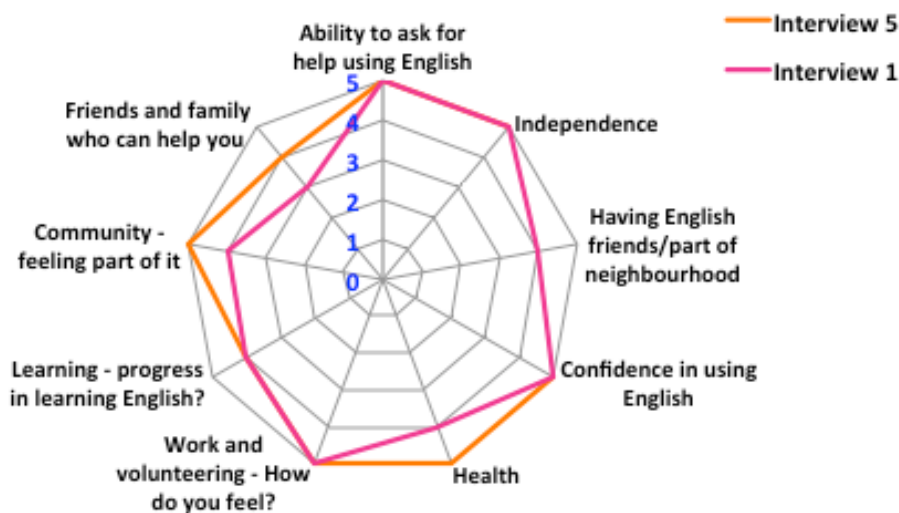


Figure 44: Yosef's outcome scores at his first and last interview (persona 2)

Moments of truth

Yosef was keen to learn English as quickly as possible to make himself better understood in shops, with his doctor and with housing services.

The difference Action Language made

Yosef liked the teachers at Action Language and found the lessons fun and interesting. He benefitted by the interactive teaching approaches and group learning style.

Case study: Ibrahim Quereshi

Ibrahim is an Arabic speaker from Iraq. He's 37, married man, with two sons (aged 12 and 6), and came to the UK with his wife who had a place at a local university to study for a PhD.

Before

Ibrahim came to the UK in September 2014 with his wife. He did not learn English at all in his first year in the country and relied on his wife to speak English when they went shopping and to talk to their sons' teachers and neighbours.

His neighbour, also from Iraq, while talking to his wife recommended that he went to the conversation class at a city centre church. He went for two days a week and made friends, one of whom was also going to Action Language and he encouraged Ibrahim to go.

At Action Language

Ibrahim joined the Entry 1 class in September 2016 and really liked the friendly atmosphere. He learned how to introduce himself, how to shop, to ask for help and to pay for things. He went on to the Entry 2 after a few months; feeling good because "I could understand the teacher better and the students better too".

He found shopping easier; before he came to Action Language he would shop only with his wife; now he could do this on his own and ask for help from shop assistants. For the first time he was able to talk to his sons' teachers at school to find out how they were progressing.

It has also made a big difference to his social life; from not speaking to anyone outside his family, he has made friends from all over the world through learning at Action Language and he sees them outside of classes. He particularly enjoyed the marketplace event that Action Language organised; setting up stalls for students and teachers to from the whole school to practice asking for items at shops, the hairdressers, the library and post office.

After

He left Action Language in July 2017 to take on more responsibilities at home as his wife needed to spend more time completing her PhD; which she will finish in April 2019, when all the family will return to Iraq.

Ibrahim did not want to leave Action Language completely so now volunteers there as a teaching assistant. This will help improve his English and give something back to the school.



Figure 45: Ibrahim's outcome scores at his first and last interview (persona 6)

Moments of truth

When his youngest son's teacher needed a copy of his son's passport but he could not understand this so had to phone his wife and hand the phone over to the teacher for them to talk.

The difference Action Language made

Ibrahim is now more independent and can shop on his own; less isolated by making connections with other people in the class; and can help his sons with their schoolwork.

Action Language outputs 2015-2018

Year 1 (2015-16)

1. **Start providing 4 ESOL classes each week in Sunderland for 50 beneficiaries**



Began working from The Place in Sunderland in January 2016 following classroom renovations and recruiting a coordinator

54 learners enrolled in Sunderland between 17 March and 30 June 2016

ESOL sessions run four days a week, one group per day at first, growing to two groups

2. **Work with one new partner organisation to deliver ESOL for particularly isolated communities attended by 30 beneficiaries**



Weekly session run in partnership with Riverside Community Health Project, with crèche facilities provided

3. **Start external evaluation project 100 beneficiaries to be interviewed**



Evaluation project started January 2016 with cohort of 90 interviewees recruited and interviewed February to June 2016 for Interview 1 of longitudinal study

4. **Gain accreditation with the British Council**



Pre-inspection briefing completed, application made and stage 1 documents submitted by March 2016

Successful completed two-day inspection in July 2016

Accreditation confirmed in October 2016

Year 2 (2016-17)

1. **Develop employability activities to compliment ESOL for Work course. 50 beneficiaries to be involved**



Job club designed and launched in Sunderland in October 2016, with referrals from Job Centre to free classes

2. **Work with one new partner organisation to deliver ESOL for particularly isolated communities attended by 30 beneficiaries**



Weekly session run in partnership with The Millin Centre with crèche facilities provided (from September 2016)

Continued weekly session run in partnership with Riverside Community Health Project, with crèche facilities provided

3. Increase numbers of classes offered in Sunderland from four per week to eight, enrolling 100 new students



162 learners enrolled in Sunderland between September 2016 and July 2017

ESOL sessions run four days a week – two to three sessions per day

Year 3 (2017-18)

1. Conclude external evaluation project having interviewed 50 learners over three years



Evaluation project concluded and report published September 2018 by Trapeze Consulting

30 people interviewed five times over 2.5 years; 20 less than planned because more people learners dropped out of the study or left Action Language than anticipated. However enough people remained in the study for reliable, valuable results

2. Work with one other organisation to support THEIR delivery of ESOL provision and build THEIR capacity to teach 50 students



Began LET (Learn English Together) pilot with funding from Paul Hamlyn Foundation and NEMP to enable community organisations to deliver ESOL sessions in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, County Durham and Teesside

3. Work with one new partner organisation to support their delivery of ESOL for particularly isolated communities attended by 30 beneficiaries



Weekly session run in partnership with Angelou Centre, with crèche facilities provided (from January 2018)

Weekly session run in partnership with West End Women and Girls' Centre, with crèche facilities provided (from February 2018)

4. Increase numbers of classes offered in Sunderland from 8 to 12 per week, enrolling 150 new students



ESOL sessions run four days a week in three classrooms each with one to two sessions per day – 14 weekly sessions in June 2018

Moved classes to FuseBox, Coronation Street, Sunderland with more space and lower rent

Conclusions

Action Language has either met all of the targets set for its Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities funded project to provide free ESOL classes or is on track to meet those due at the end of the project.

Overwhelmingly learners told us their experience of learning English at Action Language was positive. They liked the format and structure of classes; found the teachers to be patient, understanding and committed; and most gained new friendships with fellow learners. The language school is open to all needing ESOL lessons and, as a result, has a very diverse student body in terms of their immigration, social and economic status as well as their level of education. Action Foundation has been successful at expanding its language school offer and is continually looking to find ways to make its free classes sustainable.

Demand for Action Language's free ESOL classes

Action Language has high demand for their ESOL classes with demand increasing over the three years of the project. This level of demand results in the organisation regularly operating waiting lists, especially for the two lowest level classes; Pre-entry and Entry level. Given that much of this comes from refugees and asylum seekers, it is unlikely to reduce in the near future, although the as yet unknown impact of Brexit may mean there is less demand from migrants from the EU.

Learners attended Action Language at different rates with a significant minority attending almost all classes and others registering and not attending or attending only a handful of classes. We found that over half of learners register and do not attend or attended fewer than 10 classes. However, if everyone that registered did attend, Action Language would struggle to provide classes for everyone with their current level of service (limited by resources) and waiting lists would increase.

Learners stopped coming to Action Language because they secured a place at Newcastle or Gateshead colleges; they move away; caring responsibilities and lack of childcare and respite care prevented them from attending when they very much wanted to; or, found work or increased or changing working hours clashed with classes. In addition, Action Language often finds it hard to maintain contact with people with unsettled lives, and at times struggle to make themselves understood by phone and/or text by people who do not speak English well.

Improving learners' English language ability

Action Language helps learners to improve their English ability in speaking, listening, writing and reading English, and is particularly helpful around speaking and listening to English. Some learners thought there could be more reading and writing practice, and more around understanding the local accent, Geordie. ESOL for Work is a practical course with learners reporting tangible benefits in applying for jobs and understanding job-related paperwork. The style of teaching at Action Language increased learners' confidence and created a relaxed and comfortable environment in which to practice English, and learners could see improvements after each class. Learners consistently gave positive feedback to Action Language, believing it to give a better experience than local colleges.

Improving access to basic services

Action Language classes help learners to gain language skills and cultural understanding to access services that help them in their everyday living; such as shopping, going to the doctors, sorting out housing issues, and finding out how their children are progressing at school. In addition to lessons in class, the organisation's marketplace events are a fun and interactive approach to helping learners to use basic services.

Increasing learners' independence

Action Language classes help learners become more independent, for learners at all levels. Those at the most basic levels found the classes helpful in enabling them to communicate in everyday situations such as shopping, travelling around and making an appointment at the doctors. Those of more advanced levels found Action Language's ESOL for Work course helped them gain the skills and knowledge to obtain a job in the country and to understand their rights and responsibilities in that job.

Moving on positively to further education, employment or training

We found strong evidence that Action Language's free classes help learners to move on positively to further education, employment or training, including through volunteering.

There are many factors outside the control of Action Language that have an impact on this outcome, including government policy and regulations which prevent asylum seekers from paid employment, although not volunteering; local labour market conditions related to the availability of work and the type of work available; and the availability of further education and training.

Action Language's support for its learners to gain paid employment, via its delivery of free ESOL for Work classes, is especially positive and these classes are effective at increasing the confidence of those looking to get paid employment in how to present themselves in their written application and interview to potential employers; and those who already have work to understand their rights and responsibilities and to progress in their career.

The organisation provides leaflets on volunteering opportunities and provides opportunities for learners and former learners to volunteer with Action Language itself as teachers and teaching assistants.

In terms of further education, Action Language provides an essential service to asylum seekers who are not yet eligible to attend ESOL classes at colleges of further education. Although there are conversation classes run by community organisations in which asylum seekers (and others) can take part, Action Language is the only provider of structured ESOL lessons that follow a national curriculum, to this group of people. The result is that once asylum seekers become eligible for ESOL classes at college, they are further ahead than had they not attended Action Language.

Community participation and volunteering

Action Language learners volunteer, and volunteer at a similar rate to the general population in England. Learners volunteer with a wide range of local charities and organisations including with Action Language itself. A small number of learners also aspire to lead their own social action projects. The benefits from volunteering and participating in their communities to learners include making friends, improving wellbeing, feeling valued and useful, reducing isolation and practicing English.

As speaking and understanding English is fundamental to people's ability to participate in society, by teaching English Action Language helps create the conditions for learners to be more able to volunteer and participate in their communities. It is less clear there is systematic, structured help to volunteer from Action Language however Action Language's primary purpose is teaching English not placing volunteers. There may be opportunities to collaborate with Volunteer Centre Newcastle and other volunteer infrastructure organisations to encourage increased volunteering. Action Language collects and shares information about local charities, social activities and other services, and the marketplace events help to connect learners with local services for example with Newcastle Libraries.

Developing friendships and reducing social isolation

Social isolation and loneliness are significant issues for many of Action Language's learners, for a variety of reasons. Although different groups of learners are impacted by social isolation to different levels, many are likely to experience it at some point whilst living in the UK, especially those who lack close contact with their family and friends, are discriminated against, and struggle to make new friends due to their lack of English, their lack of roles (such as employee) within which they can make friends, and for other reasons.

Action Language contributes to reducing social isolation and helping learners make friends in a number of different ways including by teaching English language skills that helps learners to connect with native English speakers and with other ESOL learners who speak a different first language; and by using teaching methods and organising events that help learners connect with each other.

By providing classes, Action Language helps to create the conditions for reducing isolation and developing friendships by bringing learners together.

Improving confidence and self-esteem

Action Language helps learners to become more confident English users; better able to access basic services and have their needs met, becoming more confident in their interactions with others to undertake day-to-day tasks such as shopping and the doctors, and in travelling around the area. In addition, lack of English skills for many learners related to lack of self-esteem; how they felt about themselves living in England and interacting with English speaking people. Action Language classes help reduce learners' anxiety about such interactions.

However, increase in English language skills is not sufficient to increase confidence and self-esteem alone, because there are many other factors involved; including learners' levels of self-esteem and confidence prior to coming to the UK; the impact on their confidence and self-esteem in coming to the UK; and the situations in which learners are using English and with whom; and their status (social, economic and immigration) in the UK.

Improving health and wellbeing

Wellbeing is complex and influenced by many factors. It is made up of two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. The Five ways to wellbeing framework (connect, be active, take notice, learn and give) was useful for understanding and measuring the level of wellbeing of learners.

Often learners' health and wellbeing is poor or reduced due to factors outside of Action Language's (and their own) control, particularly asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers who have fled their own countries because of conflict and threats of violence and face an uncertain future away from friends and family.

New refugees can experience a period of homelessness as support provided to them as asylum seekers is removed, can find it difficult to secure work and suitable work (unemployment and underemployment), or find it difficult to make time to keep up their own learning with the pressures of work. Some EU citizens are working in jobs that do not meet their future goals and ambitions, such as hospitality and service industry work. Some learners, especially asylum seekers and refugees, experience poor mental health and physical health because of their previous experiences such as torture or other physical violence.

However, Action Language does contribute to learners' wellbeing by providing opportunities to connect with fellow learners, teachers and other staff, opportunities to learn English and to give by volunteering with Action Language. And by learning English, learners are able to connect with their neighbours, other parents and form friendships; to give by volunteering and participate in their communities; build foundations for further learning such as maths, learning to drive and moving on to vocational and academic study.

Learners report feeling happier in class at Action Language than at other times of the week, and feeling more valued after attending Action Language.

In addition, learners improve their own wellbeing through self-directed learning, going to the gym, walking and taking part in other exercise, visiting new places and being outside in nature, helping their neighbours and taking part in other formal and informal volunteering.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Nationality groups

We used the nationality groupings used by Action Language as follows

1. **Africa**
 - a. Central - Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe
 - b. West - Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo
 - c. East - Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles, Réunion, Mayotte, Mozambique, Madagascar, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe
2. **Arab States** (Western Asia) - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen
3. **East Asia** - China (includes both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan), Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea
4. **Eastern Europe** - Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Ukraine
5. **North Africa** - Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Western Sahara
6. **South America** - Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela, French Guiana, Falkland Islands, the ABC islands, Trinidad and Tobago
7. **South Asia**
 - a. Southern Asia - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
 - b. Southeast Asia - Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam
8. **Southern/Mediterranean Europe** - Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Gibraltar, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Vatican City

Appendix 2: Data tables

All learners for project as a whole

	Count	% of total learners
All learners	2185	100%

All learners by sex

	Count	% of total learners
Female	925	42%
Male	1275	58%
Unknown	5	0%
	2185	

All learners by age

	Count	% of total learners
16-24	629	29%
25+35	925	42%
36-50	518	24%
51+	103	5%
Unknown	23	1%
	2185	

All learners by immigration status

	Count	% of total learners
Accompanying spouse of student	75	3%
Asylum seeker	829	38%
EU citizen	647	30%
Other inc unknowns	246	11%
Refugee	242	11%
Refused asylum seeker	47	2%
Spouse of UK citizen	99	5%
	2185	

All learners by region

	Count	% of total learners
Africa		
Africa (Central, East, West)	582	27%
North Africa	75	3%
Americas		
Central/South America	67	3%
Arab States		
Arab States	568	26%
Asia		
East Asia	74	3%
South Asia	153	7%
Europe		
Central/Northern Europe	69	3%
Eastern Europe	166	8%
South/Mediterranean Europe	424	19%
Unknown	7	0%
	2185	

All learners enrolling by year and total enrolments

We have excluded the number of unknowns in the data tables below.

All learners enrolling each year and in total

	Year 1 2015-2016		Year 2 2016-2017		Year 3 2017-2018		Total	
	Count	% of total	Count	% of total	Count	% of total	Count	%
Learners	796	30%	800	30%	1039	39%	2635	100%

All learners enrolling each year and in total by sex

	Year 1 2015-2016		Year 2 2016-2017		Year 3 2017-2018		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Female	303	38%	383	48%	437	42%	1123	43%
Male	489	62%	416	52%	602	58%	1507	57%
	792		799		1039		2630	

Unknowns: 5 (Year 1 = 4; Year 2 = 1; Year 3 = 0)

All learners enrolling each year and in total by age

	Year 1 2015-2016		Year 2 2016-2017		Year 3 2017-2018		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
16-24	202	26%	195	24%	306	30%	703	27%
25+35	344	44%	343	43%	416	41%	1106	42%
36-50	200	26%	216	27%	246	24%	662	25%
51+	32	4%	46	6%	63	6%	141	5%
	778		800		1034		2612	

Unknowns: 23 (Year 1 = 18; Year 2 = 0; Year 3 = 5)

All learners enrolling each year and in total by immigration status

	Year 1 2015-2016		Year 2 2016-2017		Year 3 2017-2018		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Accompanying spouse of student	46	6%	32	4%	28	3%	106	4%
Asylum seeker	273	34%	219	27%	433	42%	925	35%
EU citizen	252	32%	279	35%	249	24%	780	30%
Other	66	8%	106	13%	132	13%	304	12%
Refugee	86	11%	105	13%	125	12%	316	12%
Refused asylum seeker	19	2%	20	3%	24	2%	63	2%
Spouse of UK citizen	41	5%	38	5%	44	4%	123	5%
	783		799		1035		2617	

Unknowns: 18 (Year 1 = 13; Year 2 = 1; Year 3 = 4)

All learners enrolling each year and in total by region

	Year 1 2015-2016		Year 2 2016-2017		Year 3 2017-2018		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Africa								
Africa (Central, West, East)	224	28%	174	22%	307	30%	705	27%
North Africa	24	3%	19	2%	39	4%	82	3%
Americas								
Central/South America	34	4%	29	4%	23	2%	86	3%
Arab States								
Arab States	187	24%	198	25%	285	27%	670	25%
Asia								
East Asia	22	3%	41	5%	47	5%	110	4%
South Asia	50	6%	57	7%	76	7%	183	7%
Europe								
Central/Northern Europe	23	3%	27	3%	27	3%	77	3%
Eastern Europe	48	6%	78	10%	70	7%	196	7%
South/Med Europe	180	23%	175	22%	164	16%	519	20%
	792		798		1038		2628	

Unknowns: 7 (Year 1 = 4; Year 2 = 2; Year 3 = 1)

The countries in the above nationality groups are listed in *Appendix 1: Nationality groups*.