Migrants in low-paid, low-skilled jobs: barriers and solutions to learning English in London

COPYRIGHT

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

English language ability is central to finding a job and progressing in work in the UK. Previous research has pointed to the barriers that can confront migrants' attempts to learn English. This report provides an overview of the outcomes of research examining the particular challenges faced by migrants in low-paid, low-skilled jobs in London and outlines actions that can be taken to improve this situation.

The aim was to understand the enablers and barriers impacting on English language learning among migrants in low-paid and low-skilled employment in London and to establish the types of English language learning that are most likely to work for migrants in low-paid and low-skilled employment. A total of 50 migrant workers in low-paid, low-skilled were interviewed, 31 females and 19 males. The youngest was 17 and the oldest was 60. A third of the interviews were fully interpreted. Sixty per cent of the sample were employed as cleaners and 18 per cent worked in adult social care. The remaining interviewees worked in hospitality, retail and child care.

Findings

Ten barriers to learning English were identified as an outcome of the interviews. These were: Information about suitable provision; Cost; Time; Location; Lack of childcare; Lack of support and encouragement at work; Lack of learning opportunities at work; Lack of external support and encouragement at home; Lack of effective personal learning strategies; and, Fear and embarrassment (to interact in English)

Enablers to learning
Enablers identified by migrants for a subset of these barriers were:

Difficulty in finding information about suitable provision
- Advertising in media that are accessed by migrants in low-paid low-skill jobs
- Increased clarity from providers regarding the content, focus and level of provision

Cost
- Migrants used free online provision to get around the issue of cost; this also had the advantage of addressing issues of time and/or inconvenient location.

Timing and/or location
- Migrants said that if provision was available at a location and time that was convenient *they* would be more inclined to participate. Half said they would find learning at work convenient. 40 per cent said they would like to study at or near home[1].
- Many migrants accessed online provision as a way of *overcoming* barriers of cost, time and location.

Time
- Online provision enabled migrants to overcome time barriers.
- One used time travelling to work to study materials saved to a smart phone. (Almost all interviewees had a mobile phone and the majority had smartphones).

Lack of childcare

---

[1] Note that this was a multiple choice option, rather than single preference, so individuals could choose both if they wished.

- Nine women, but no men, said that they would find classes held at or near their child's school convenient. One migrant had attended classes held at her child's school.

Lack of support and encouragement at work

- Some migrants had taken part in learning provision arranged by their employer and found this very helpful.
- One employer had worked with the trade union to arrange on-site learning. Again, the workers found this support and encouragement helpful.
- Just over a third of migrants said that a manager or supervisor was the best person to help people learn English.

Lack of learning opportunities at work

- Migrants reported that where managers provided learning opportunities at work this was very helpful. The workplace was the main area migrants had to use English.

Lack of effective learning strategies

- One migrant had developed learning materials to use while travelling.
- Others used Google Translate to look up words they would need, for example before going shopping.
- Use of such learning strategies enabled people to make the most of their time and to use everyday activities as learning opportunities.
- Migrants with previous experience of language learning and/or higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to report a range of strategies designed to promote their own learning, including use of apps and volunteering

Fear and embarrassment

- Several migrants said that mentoring – and the opportunity this gives to rehearse language skills and receive feedback, usually in private – helped them overcome their fear of speaking English in public.

Models of extended support for learning

Based on what migrants said, three models were developed to help address English language learning needs for migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work in London. These focus on: workplace learning; voluntary coaching and mentoring schemes; and informal learning enabled by technology.

Model 1: Workplace learning

The extent to which employers are able to support learning at work varies. This model sees employers selecting from the following potential actions, depending on their circumstances:

- Encouraging supervisors to support language learning at work and coaching employees
- Encouraging colleagues to support colleagues' language learning at work and coaching colleagues
- Arranging development opportunities for staff (managers/supervisors and/or non-supervisory staff) to learn how to support language learning at work
- Facilitate the use of learning materials at work (possibly buying in sets of available or customised materials for use by employees and their managers)
- Working with trade unions or with employee learning advocate schemes to set up English language learning schemes (possibly with Union Learning Fund support)
- Make facilities available for self-facilitated study groups

- Allow employees to use workplace facilities to access web-based support (eg Skype sessions with volunteer language coaches)

Such actions would have value for employers as well as for migrant workers, as they could:

- Provide a positive image to assist with recruitment attracting more motivated employees.
- Potentially lead to lower turnover rates.
- Upskill staff to different roles within the organisation.

Model 2: Voluntary coaching & mentoring schemes

Many migrants identified a need for support to improve their ability to express themselves orally and gain feedback on progress. This second model addresses this need and envisages a voluntary coaching and mentoring scheme to enable migrants to benefit from personalised feedback and guidance. Given the constraints of time and travel reported by most of the migrants, the use of technologies such as Skype could be harnessed to overcome those barriers and enable contact where face-to-face meetings prove difficult.

The key components of this model are:

- Volunteer coaches and mentors
- Development of guided learning materials to support coaches and learners (e.g. sample plan for 20 minute session, sample plan for set of six sessions, guidance for coach on how to give constructive feedback etc; learner training guidance on effective learning strategies)
- Signposting of migrants to the scheme.

Model 3: Informal learning enabled by technology

This model addresses the needs of migrants who experience particular difficulty accessing formal provision combined with a lack of any other form of personalised support and the lack of effective personal learning strategies.

There is already a wealth of support for English language learning freely available online, including free and very low-cost applications suitable for smartphone download[2]. In addition to resources originating in the UK and other English-speaking countries, there are many English language learning resources produced overseas and designed for specific language communities[3]. Several interviewees pointed to such resources and these have the potential to form the basis for highly accessible bite-size learning around the different language forms (including pronunciation). This model envisages development of short study programmes of bite-size tasks being constructed based around these existing resources. The key components are:

- Development of study guidance for learners in use of the materials and on strategies for maximising time available
- Development of study programmes of bite-size tasks based around existing resources

---

[2] For example, the British Council's *ESOL Nexus* at http://esol.britishcouncil.org/ or the BBC's *Learning English* at http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/
[3] Cf http://www.mansioningles.com/ for Spanish speakers; http://www.loecsen.com/travel/0-fr-67-3-2-cours-gratuit-anglais.html for French speakers; http://www.englishleap.com for Hindi speakers

- Building in of automated emails and/or text messages to give reminders and feedback
- Signposting of migrants to the study programmes.

Additional support components
The models described above aim to create accessible new learning opportunities. Additional components would help bolster the above provisions.

Help for individuals to identify suitable learning opportunities
To be effective, support for migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work to learn English must be highly visible to the migrants themselves. Interviews suggest migrants primarily source information from each other (i.e. friends, family, acquaintances, support organisations), from media (especially free newspapers), from internet search engines and from service providers (including employers and trade unions) – in a variety of languages. These three channels – word of mouth, print and digital media – are required to optimise information distribution.

Help for individuals to develop effective personal learning strategies
The interviews highlighted effective personal learning strategies as a key enabler of English language learning for migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work – and the lack of them as a key barrier. Some learners used all aspects of their lives – social activities, shopping, work, hobbies, travel – as learning opportunities to support their language learning efforts. Given the often limited time that migrants had for language learning, this learner training would make a significant difference to their likelihood of success.

Customisable, self-directed learning syllabus
Allied to this, an English language learning syllabus to help independent learners structure their learning would prove a useful resource for learners and for language coaches/mentors. This would set out a series of self-directed study goals with suggested learning activities (including links to online learning).

Capacity and choice: How the models fit with established ESOL provision
Migrants expressed a strong preference for conventional tutor-led classroom provision. For a variety of reasons, however, they were not in provision. Nor is it likely that existing provision can accommodate any significant proportion of the many thousands of migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work in London with English language learning needs. Even were it able to, formal provision does not suit everybody. The main challenge is to expand the range of provision so that both capacity and participation are increased alongside accessibility.

The models outlined have the potential to significantly increase capacity through a range of routes while increasing individuals' awareness of the range of options available. These models also offer opportunities for ESOL providers to expand their offer in a way that better meets the needs of hard-to-reach learners. Much of the expertise and many of the resources implied by these models are already available – albeit fragmented and scattered across a range of locations. Therefore, the models constitute a low-cost, high-return approach to this difficult issue.

Finally, it is important to note the connection between language skills, individual progression and wider social cohesion. The models proposed here to address the English language learning needs of migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work, many of whom hold high level qualifications gained elsewhere, will also support individuals to progress and integrate.

GREATER**LONDON**AUTHORITY

1 Introduction and method

Introduction

English language ability is central to finding a job and progressing in work in the UK. Much previous research has pointed to the barriers that can confront migrants' attempts to learn English. This report provides an overview of the outcomes of research examining the particular challenges faced by migrants in low-paid, low-skilled jobs in London in attempting to learn English and outlines actions that can be taken to improve this situation.

Aim

The aim was to understand the enablers and barriers impacting on English language learning among migrants in low-paid and low-skilled employment in London and to establish the types of delivery of English language that are most likely to work for migrants in low-paid and low-skilled employment.

Objectives

1. Develop a methodology to identify:

- relevant employment sectors
- a suitable sample group that is representative of target learners in London
- research methods, questions and how to ensure participation of non-English speakers.

2. Identify:

- Enabling factors which have allowed some low-paid, low-skilled migrants to successfully develop their English language skills
- Barriers preventing low-paid, low-skilled migrants from developing their English language skills, including barriers to accessing formal and informal provision.
- The views of the target learners on how best these barriers might be overcome.

3. Based on the research evidence, develop a number of potential delivery models that are likely to succeed for the target learners.

Method

Sample
- The research identified and included a suitable sample of migrants with no or low levels of English language who were in low-paid and low-skilled work ('target learners').
- The sample was drawn from those in need of upskilling: where the migrant's English language level is a barrier to, amongst other things, increasing hours/pay, vocational training or applying for higher skilled or preferred jobs. It also included migrants in low-paid/skilled work who:

    — were not managing to learn English or improve their English; and

    — had found ways of learning and/or improving their English, by formal or informal means.

Low-paid was defined as earnings at or below the London Living Wage (£8.55 per hour at the time the research was conducted). Low-skilled work was defined as jobs requiring education attainment level below GCSE A-C, or where no level is required.

Interviewees

Fifty individuals in low-paid, low-skilled work were interviewed between March and May 2013: 31 females and 19 males. The age of the youngest was 17 (a female) and the oldest was 60 (a female). Individuals had been resident in England for between 4 months and 40 years and just over two-thirds (35, 70 per cent) hoped to live permanently in the UK. The remainder were either unsure or planning to move to another country one day.

Language competence

Some 30 per cent of interviews (15) required full interpretation and two (four per cent) were interpreted in part. Distribution of interpretation across the low skill sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Interpretation level required (low skill group) N = 50

Interpretation level	Female	Male	All
Fully interpreted	9	6	15
Some	2	0	2
None	20	13	33

At each interview the researchers gauged the interviewee's spoken English language ability and assigned an estimate of language capability. Over half (52 per cent) of the interviewees in low-paid, low-skilled work were estimated as falling within the QCF[4] ESOL Entry Level 1. A third were estimated as falling within QCF ESOL Entry Level 2. Three had English language skills that the researchers assessed as being at QCF ESOL Level 1 or above, although note that each of these individuals believed their language skills to be poor and were keen to find further language provision and to further improve their skills.

Interviewees reported a range of educational attainment in their countries of origin. Some had left school without qualifications while several had attained post-graduate and professional qualifications. Note that in a number of instances, interviewees gave indication of limited literacy in English and in several cases there was reason to think interviewees' literacy might be limited in any language.

Most – some 31 of the 50 individuals in low-paid, low-skilled work - said that their limited language skills had meant that they had required 'a lot of help' when they had first arrived in the UK. Thirteen

---

[4]   The Qualifications and Curriculum Framework, the national framework that sets out all qualifications levels in England

had been able to do some things independently but needed some assistance; six said they had managed on their own.

Employment

Individuals recruited to the interviews worked in a total of ten occupations; these are shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Job (low skill group)

Jobs by gender			
	Male	**Female**	**Total**
Cleaner	13	17	30
Carer	1	8	9
Kitchen assistant	2	1	3
Admin	0	1	1
Bar tender	1	0	1
Builder	1	0	1
Nanny	0	1	1
Nursery nurse assistant	0	1	1
Sales assistant	0	1	1
Shop assistant	1	0	1
Total	19	31	50

Just over half, 52 per cent, worked full time. Average pay was £6.89 an hour (range £5[5] to £8.50).

Countries of origin and first language

Together, the individuals recruited to these interviews originated from 23 countries, shown in table 3.

Table 3: Countries of origin (low skill group)

Country of birth		
	Frequency	**Percent**
Spain	8	16
Portugal	6	12
Colombia	4	8.0
Somalia	3	6.0

---

[5]   We note this is below the National Minimum Wage. We are unable to determine whether this is actual pay or the interviewee was mistaken in reporting this as their hourly pay.

Country of birth		
Bulgaria	3	6.0
Peru	3	6.0
Latvia	3	6.0
Ecuador	2	4.0
Ethiopia	2	4.0
Italy	2	4.0
Philippines	2	4.0
India	1	2.0
Angola	1	2.0
Bolivia	1	2.0
Brazil	1	2.0
Dominican Republic	1	2.0
France	1	2.0
French Guiana	1	2.0
Ghana	1	2.0
Lagos	1	2.0
Nigeria	1	2.0
Poland	1	2.0
Sierra Leone	1	2.0
Total	50	100

Regarding language competence, many interviewees reported speaking two or more languages in addition to English (including one interviewee who reported speaking 11 languages). Only one reported that they used English at home with their family. An overview of first languages is shown in Table 4:

Table 4: First language (low skill group)

First language		
	Frequency	**Percent**
Spanish	19	38
Portuguese	8	16
Bulgarian	3	6

Somali	2	4
Amharic	2	4
Russian	2	4
Arabic	1	2
French	1	2
Ga	1	2
Gujarati	1	2
Ilocano	1	2
Italian	1	2
Latvian	1	2
Polish	1	2
Sardinian	1	2
Swahili	1	2
Tagalog	1	2
Temne	1	2
Tui	1	2
Yoruba	1	2
Total	50	100

In addition, a small group of individuals who, having found ways of learning and/or improving their English, had subsequently progressed from low-paid, low-skilled work to intermediate level jobs were interviewed. The information from these ten interviewees was retained and separately analysed to inform our understanding of strategies that help people in low-paid, low-skilled positions to progress. We note that these individuals uniformly reported that their level of English remained a limiting factor in terms of career progression.

In the next chapter we report on the barriers faced by the interviewees in gaining access to English language learning in London.

2 Barriers and enablers to learning English

Introduction
This chapter identifies the barriers to learning English and the ways in which learning can be better enabled.

Barriers to learning identified during the interviews
In this first section we summarise the main points that emerged from the interviews regarding the barriers faced by migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work in accessing English language learning[6].

Eleven major barriers to learning English were identified.

Difficulty finding information about suitable provision
Migrants' limited English skills make it difficult for them to find information about language programmes. The sources reported by interviewees included recommendations from their friends, adverts in newspapers in the migrant's own language, or adverts in English or other languages in English newspapers and magazines. Often such adverts gave only a telephone number and/or address (rather than an email address) leaving those with little English language ability either unable to pursue the enquiry further, or reliant on others to enquire about the courses.

Consequently, potential learners may not find the course that is best for their circumstances (ie in relation to where they live, hours worked, etc., as well as programme level or content). Frequently, adverts did not describe the nature of the content or focus of the course (on grammar, reading and writing, conversational English etc.), and so migrants found that the course did not meet their needs, after having paid the fee and joined. Interviewees reported that large classes restrict their ability to advance. Often classes did not lead to certification, which interviewees believed – probably correctly – would be important to employers. Those who had completed programmes were often uncertain of the level.

Some had used the internet to find programmes; while this is an easier process, it does not guarantee success. As an example, one interviewee had used Google to search for local provision and found ten programmes that potentially were convenient. Of these, however, only three were free or charged a price that the interviewee considered affordable. Although most of the interviewees who had taken some type of initial language programme felt that the courses they had found had mostly met their needs, the majority had not continued past an initial basic course.

Cost
Interviewees commented frequently on the restrictive cost of provision. There is often a trade-off between cost and convenience. Several interviewees had found free provision that did not meet their needs, which led them to think the courses were not good, despite being free. By contrast, other interviewees reported satisfaction with private provision, despite considering it expensive.

---

[6]   A narrative description of the research is available at http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/report.php?id=gla0001

Time
Time was a key factor influencing participation. Cleaners' jobs typically involved unsocial hours and/or part-time hours; several had more than one job – one in the morning and one in the evening and often at quite a distance from each other. These individuals therefore also spent a considerable amount of time in travel, limiting the time available for study. For many, fitting in classes was therefore a struggle. Interviewees reported being too tired to study after work and being too tired during daytime classes to concentrate.

Note that issues concerning location, timing and costs of provision are often inter-linked. One interviewee had given up part-time study and part-time work due to the burden of travel-to-work time, and the cost of tuition, and had moved into full-time employment. He also pointed to the particular difficulties that arose from attempting to reconcile study programmes with shift/rota patterns at work. Often the choice seemed to be between participation in free community learning that was uncertificated; or take a course at a specific time (that was not convenient) or was too expensive – or both.

Location
Similarly, it had been difficult for many interviewees to identify provision that was conveniently located. They wanted provision that was close to where they lived or worked (or at a convenient place en route). Where there was local provision, it was sometimes not of the type they desired, or ended once a basic level of provision was achieved. Where people spoke positively of the provision they had found, often they alluded to the fact that it had been 'handy' or easy to get to. Mostly such comments related to provision by local colleges. Most of the private provision that had been used by the interviewees had been located in the centre or to the west of London (although interviewees lived across London, with around two thirds living in south and east London) and had been accessed soon after arriving in the UK.

Lack of childcare
For women in particular, childcare remains an issue limiting access to formal language provision. For example, one woman had found a Saturday class and managed to attend the classes twice, but then was unable to sustain attendance due to lack of childcare and as the class had no crèche. Some women said they were unable to attend classes at the moment, due to their childcare responsibilities, but once free of these, would return to study.

Lack of support and encouragement at work
The research suggests that interviewees were generally employed in roles that accommodated their limited English. Interviewees reported some ad hoc coaching from managers and/or colleagues at work, but no systematic, employer-led support – with one exception, a care employer who arranged report writing classes for care assistants. In one other instance, an employer co-operated with a trade union to make an FE-led ESOL course available in the workplace. Otherwise interviewees indicated that English was not viewed as a training issue by their employers. Therefore, a majority of employers had not taken any action to help them develop their English language skills while at work.

Around two-thirds of the interviewees in low-paid, low-skilled positions worked with (and in some cases for) people who spoke their own language and had little interaction with English speakers. Thus we found groups of Spanish and Portuguese, or Latvian and Russian cleaners, who spoke their own language while at work. One woman, who worked as a cleaner, emailed and texted her colleagues in Portuguese about their work assignments because they spoke so little English. Similarly, an Italian man working in an Italian delicatessen spoke only occasionally in (limited) English to customers.

Lack of learning opportunities at work
Because many of the jobs undertaken by migrants are so narrow and involve such minimal interaction with English first language speakers it is often difficult for individuals to progress without additional support. Thus, a majority of interviewees reported both that work was where they spoke the most English, and that their jobs offered them little scope or support for expanding their English. While this was exemplified by a Latvian man working as a kitchen porter who said that his work was so basic it did not require any real communication (with communication tending to be of the 'Put that there' nature) this barrier was also reported by informants who had progressed to intermediate level roles.

A significant number of interviewees reported that they had exhausted the English language learning potential of their jobs, and at the same time expressed frustration at the lack of feedback on their English that they received at work. Some interviewees were frustrated that their UK colleagues did not speak 'educated English' and therefore they had no models for the level of English they aspired to. Interviewees who had progressed into intermediate-skilled roles also reported this issue, suggesting that it can be a persistent problem.

Lack of external support and encouragement at home
With busy lives many migrants found it difficult to study independently. One interviewee said that he had bought books intending to use them to help improve his English, but rarely looked at them because he found it difficult to study systematically on his own - there was always some other distraction at home. For this reason he preferred to go on a course as then he knew he would make time to go to the sessions (although he also reported that he did not have time to attend a course.)

Only one of the interviewees spoke English at home. Several women spoke of only going shopping with their daughters or friends to avoid the need to speak English. Some referred to a lack of encouragement from their families for their attempts to learn English, others about subordinating their own learning to support their families.

Lack of effective personal learning strategies
When asked what they had done and were currently doing to improve their English, some interviewees (typically those with academic training and/or previous experience of language learning) reported a range of sophisticated strategies designed to aid them learn English. Most interviewees, however, did not. Those who reported no learning activity at all were in a minority. However, many reported that they did not know how to improve their English beyond attending formal classes, watching English-language films and television programmes with the English subtitles switched on and reading the free newspapers (The Metro and (fewer) the Evening Standard). This lack of effective personal learning strategies served to discourage interviewees.

Fear and embarrassment

Lastly, fear was a great inhibitor of participation in the communicative activities needed for language rehearsal and development. Many interviewees across the skill and language ability spectrum spoke of their fear of speaking in public because of embarrassment at their poor language skills, including pronunciation. It should be noted that some of the interviewees with the highest level English skills (in the estimation of the researchers) were particularly vehement about their English language shortcomings and their feelings of embarrassment and inhibition in speaking.

Summary

Eleven barriers to language learning were identified. These were:

- Difficulty finding information about suitable provision
- Cost
- Time
- Location
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of support and encouragement at work
- Lack of learning opportunities at work
- Lack of external support and encouragement at home
- Lack of effective personal learning strategies
- Fear and embarrassment

In the following sections we consider the potential enablers of learning, based on what individuals told us during the interviews. While we are mindful that the people interviewed cannot be viewed as representative of the migrant population as a whole we do note that the views reported by interviewees correlate closely with what is known in more general terms about second language acquisition.

Enablers to learning

We first consider the ways in which the various barriers might be addressed in principle. In the final section of this chapter we identify those options that appear to be the more practical and therefore where effort might best be spent.

Table 5 provides a summary of the barriers identified and the various ways in which they potentially might be addressed.

Table 5: Addressing the identified barriers

Barriers	Enablers identified in the interviews
Difficulty in finding information about suitable provision	Adverts in media such as the free newspapers Metro and the Evening Standard; and in foreign language newspapers and journals. Online searches for local provision

Barriers	Enablers identified in the interviews
	Increased clarity of information in adverts and on websites regarding the content and focus of provision would help migrants make more informed decisions.
Cost of provision	Free online provision to reduces costs and has the advantage of addressing the issues of time and/or inconvenient location.
Inconvenient location of provision	Provision at a location and time that was convenient (near to or in work or near to where they lived). While college and private training provision remains popular, increasing access to learning at work and in home both appear to be optimal enablers. Online provision enables learning at convenient location.
Time	Online provision enables flexible learning at convenient times. Online and smartphone apps allows for learning during 'in-between times'. E.g. time travelling to work to study materials saved to smartphone.
Lack of childcare	School-based provision.[7] (Nine women, but no men, said that they would find classes held at or near their child's school convenient.)
Lack of support and encouragement at work	Some of the migrants had taken part in learning provision arranged by their employer and had found this very helpful. One employer had worked with the trade union to arrange on-site learning. Again, the workers found this support and encouragement helpful. Just over a third of migrants said that a manager or supervisor was

[7] School-based ESOL provision was recommended as a suitable model for women learners, particularly those with childcare and/or low levels of language/literacy in the GLA report *English language for all* (August 2012) *http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/equalities/refugees-and-migrants/english-language-for-all*.

Barriers	Enablers identified in the interviews
	the best person to help people learn English.
Lack of learning opportunities at work	Migrants reported that where managers provided learning opportunities at work this was very helpful.
Lack of external support and encouragement at home	Support and encouragement at work from colleagues, union representatives, supervisors and managers.
Lack of effective learning strategies	Develop own learning materials, including smartphone app downloads while travelling.

Online/mobile app translators. These can be used to make everyday activities earning opportunities.

Training for migrants, particularly those with less previous experience of language learning and/or lower levels of educational attainment, in developing learning strategies, including use of apps and volunteering. |
| Fear and embarrassment | Mentoring supports learners overcome embarrassment at speaking. |

We now expand upon the ways in which the barriers can potentially be addressed. This section draws on the preferences expressed by interviewees during the research.

Finding information about suitable provision
Many migrants had found provision through chance, luck or circumstance. Many interviewees told us that they habitually read Metro and the Evening Standard or looked for adverts for ESOL provision in newspapers published in their own language. Many used the internet to search for local provision.

Cost
Migrants reported that they used free online provision to get around the issue of cost. As well as being free or low cost and available at all times and not requiring physical attendance at a specific site at a specific time. The great majority (90 per cent) of the migrants in low-pay, low-skilled work said that they had access to and made frequent use of the internet. Almost all interviewees had a mobile phone and the majority (more than six out of ten) had smartphones.

Location

Migrants said that if provision was available at a location and time that was convenient for them they would be more inclined to participate. The research provided in depth information about the locations in which people would prefer to learn. Half of the interviewees said that they would like to study at or near the workplace. Table 6 shows interviewees' preferences for the location of English language sessions. Note that this was a multiple response item and so number of responses overall is greater than the number of interviewees.

See also section on use of online provision, above.

Table 6: If you could choose where you could have English language sessions, where would be a really convenient location? (Low skill group)

Location for English language sessions			
	Male	Female	Total	Per cent
At or near the workplace	11	14	25	50
College/Adult Ed Centre/Training Centre	6	18	24	48
At home	5	15	20	40
Community Centre	8	9	17	34
Library	4	7	11	22
Restaurant/Café/Cyber café	4	6	10	20
At or near children's school, playground/childcare place	–	9	9	18
Local council offices	3	3	6	12
A friend's home	3	2	5	10
Jobcentre Plus Offices	4	–	4	8
Church/mosque/temple	–	4	4	8
At or near local shops/shopping centre	1	2	3	6
Health centre	2	1	3	6
Local leisure centre	1	2	3	6
At or near local housing association	1	1	2	4
University	–	1	1	2
Near bank	–	1	1	2

Additionally, for many migrants in low-paid, low-skilled jobs, work was where they spoke the most English (albeit not much, in many cases). Forty percent said they would like to be able to learn English

at home and 34 per cent identified a community centre as a place that they would like to learn English.

Time
Many of the interviewees worked extended and unsociable hours. Despite this, many said they would be willing to spend several hours a week in learning, if it were conveniently located and timed. Classes on Saturdays had been developed by a trade union [Unite] for workers unable to access provision at work and these had proved an attractive option for migrant workers. Other than pointing to this example, it proved difficult to pinpoint specific times of day outside of work hours that were identified by interviewees as convenient, because this varied so much and was dictated by the wide range of times worked by the interviewees. Many interviewees stipulated simply that any focused language study should take place at a time when they had the mental energy to apply themselves.

See also section on use of online provision, above.

Addressing childcare needs
One woman had attended ESOL classes that were arranged in the school her child attended. Nine women, but no men, said that they would find classes held at or near their child's school convenient.

See also section on use of online provision, above.

Support and encouragement at work and Learning opportunities at work
Half of the interviewees said that learning at work would be a convenient location in which to learn English. A minority reported that colleagues, supervisors or managers gave help to improve their English, and this was appreciated. Around a quarter of interviewees were interviewed at two workplaces at which employers provided support and these illustrate some of the ways in which workplaces can support and provide learning opportunities. These were a residential care provider whose learning and development team had recognised that lack of written English was a problem and had arranged for one-to-one ESOL literacy classes to be provided for staff by volunteers who were retired teachers; and a facilities and building services engineering-related services organisation that had worked with the trade union to provide ESOL provision on site. At the care provider the sessions took place fully within working hours; at the building services engineering-related site the sessions lasted two hours, with one of the hours being counted as work time and one hour in the employee's own time at the end of their shift.

Effective personal learning strategies
Some migrants had developed effective strategies to help them learn English. In addition to private study and participation in formal learning, migrants found various proactive ways of engaging with English, including:

- deliberate participation in English-language social activities,
- local volunteering,

- language exchange with fluent English speaker[8],
- setting up peer learning groups,
- seeking out local mentors,
- self-directed reading programmes, and
- undertaking adult and community learning courses in topics of interest

In addition most said they watched English-language TV and DVDs and reading free newspapers.

Fear and embarrassment
Several migrants said that mentoring – and the opportunity this gives to rehearse language skills and receive feedback, usually in private – helped them overcome their fear of speaking English in public.

Types of help and support that migrants needed
In the interviews we explored the types of help and support that migrants sought to help them learn English. Table 7 shows the types of help that people wanted.

Table 7: Where is help needed from other people? (Low skill group)

Thinking about help from other people to learn English			
	Male	Female	Total
Helping me to practice speaking English	12	22	34
Correcting my mistakes	11	21	32
Helping me with reading and writing English	12	20	32
Helping me with pronunciation	12	19	31
Teaching me new words and expressions	12	16	28
Encouraging me and taking an interest in my learning (to keep me motivated)	12	14	26
Showing me how to learn on my own	7	15	22

In addition to seeking help with the specifics of English language, interviewees also appreciated help with developing the ability to learn. It is worth noting that while 'showing me how to learn on my own' was the item that was endorsed by the smallest number of interviewees, nonetheless some 44 per cent of interviewees desired this type of support, which is critical in enabling informal and self-directed study. Provision of individual support is therefore one of the components of the models of extended ESOL provision described in Chapter 3.

---

[8] For example, a migrant from Columbia who wants to practice her English meets up informally with an English speaker who wants to practice her Spanish. An example of a website offering this for French speakers in London is http://annonces.ici-londres.com/annonce/index/categorie/12/souscategorie/143, last searched 22 August 2013.

In addition, providers might consider building in support to develop study skills into ESOL provision, to help migrants make more use of their environment and naturally-occurring materials that can be used to support language development.

Models that address these needs and incorporate the enablers identified are presented in the next chapter.

3 Models of extended support for learning

Introduction

In the previous chapter we identified a range of ways through which learning can be enabled for migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work. The choice available often appeared to be between free or subsidised community learning, often uncertificated, that helped learners progress only so far and then stopped; and paid-for courses that were inaccessible or expensive (we note that the more expensive options were also often the more flexible).

In writing this chapter however we have focused on developing models of English language learning that would best *extend* the range of provision for relatively little cost. Such provision would operate alongside conventional ESOL provision and complement rather than compete with courses. The language learning models presented are consistent both with the findings and with broader research into effective language learning and are designed to take account of the barriers and enablers specific to migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work in London.

The research identified two principal English language learning needs for migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work in London:
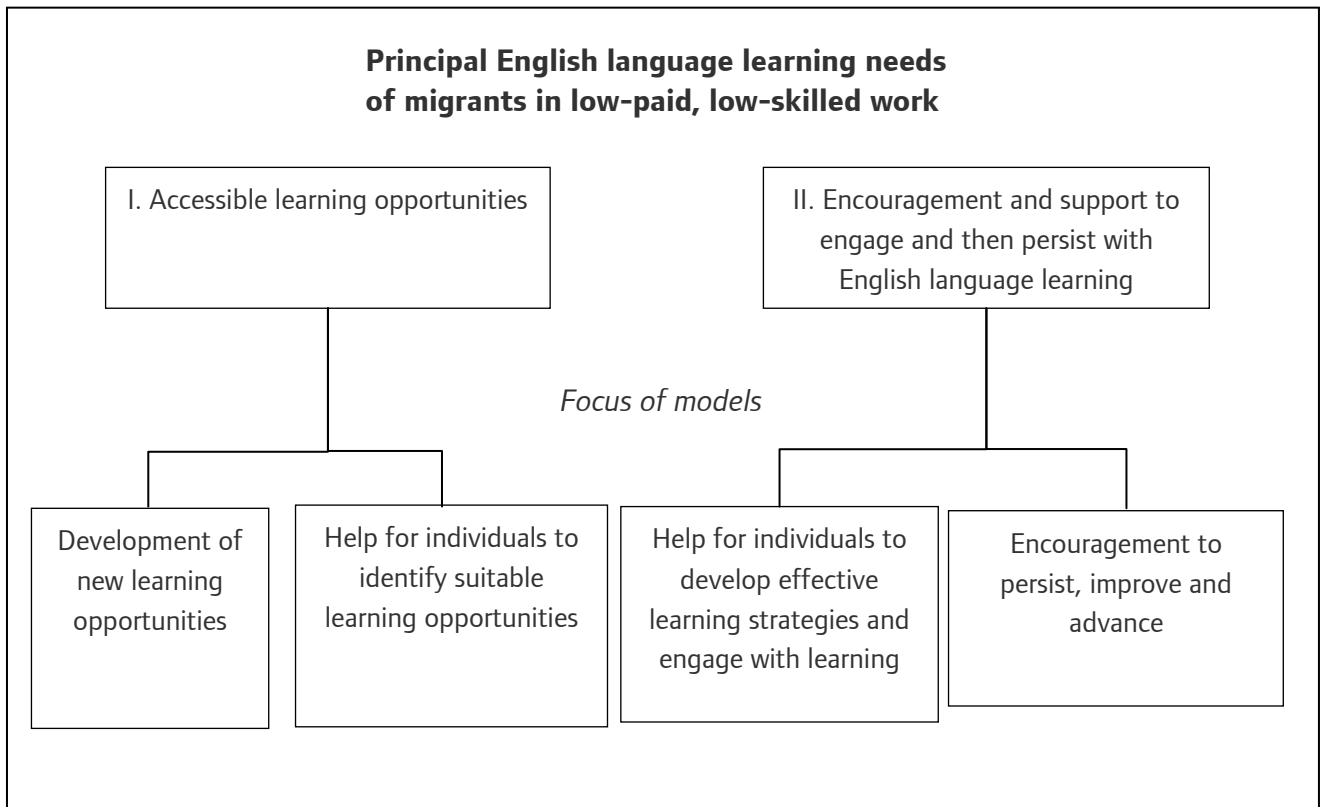
• Accessible learning opportunities
• Encouragement, support and feedback to engage in and then persist and progress with English language learning

In presenting the models of learning that follow we have borne in mind the particular difficulties for people working in these sorts of jobs, often working long and unsociable lives. We have noted the particular difficulties migrant workers in low-paid, low-skilled jobs encounter in accessing conventional ESOL provision. We note also the fact that motivation is linked to awareness of progress, and the need to gain feedback about progress is therefore a further consideration. For these reasons we set out models of learning that primarily focus on accessibility and contact designed at helping people to gain feedback and remain motivated.

The models seek to address these needs by focusing on:

• Development of new learning opportunities
• Help for individuals to identify suitable learning opportunities
• Help for individuals to develop effective learning strategies
• Encouragement to ensure learners persist, improve and advance

Figure 1, below, shows the principal learning needs identified amongst the migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work.

**Principal English language learning needs
of migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work**

I. Accessible learning opportunities

II. Encouragement and support to engage and then persist with English language learning

Focus of models

Development of new learning opportunities

Help for individuals to identify suitable learning opportunities

Help for individuals to develop effective learning strategies and engage with learning

Encouragement to persist, improve and advance

The models

- accommodate the diversity of their target learners: they offer a wide range of learning pathways, with multiple points of entry, open to all;
- allow for progression and recognition of achievement;
- offer both workplace and community learning;
- complement and reinforce established ESOL provision;
- support integration and social cohesion;
- offer considerable scope for input from a variety of partners, including employers, learning providers, careers advisors, trade unions, community organisations and public sector bodies such as the BBC and the British Council, as well as individual members of the community.

Models to develop new learning opportunities

In principle we see five areas of significant opportunity for developing and delivering additional ESOL learning opportunities:

- Workplace learning
- Voluntary coaching & mentoring schemes

- Informal learning enabled by technology

Model 1: Workplace learning
Work is where the majority of interviewees reported they gained most exposure to English, spoken and written, and had most opportunity to interact in English – two prime enablers of language acquisition. Interviewees also identified work as the single most convenient location for learning. This model aims to harness those enablers, while addressing the barriers that interviewees identified: lack of systematic support (including feedback and study guidance) and limited communicative demands.

The key components of this model are:

- Guidance for employers on how to support on-the-job language learning using guided learning materials[9], coaching and mentoring, supervisory feedback, peer learning and support groups.
- Guidance for migrant workers on how to form self-facilitated study groups at work (including guidance for study groups and their employers on how to create self-directed learning programmes – e.g. a 12 week set of one-hour weekly meetings). Further support for such groups can include linkage to virtual learning communities, to support networks and to voluntary mentors.
- Awareness-raising, support and incentivising of employers to sponsor workplace ESOL learning, possibly involving supporters of workplace learning such as union learning representatives and, in non-unionised workplaces, the Workplace Learning Advocates initiative[10].
- Incorporation of support for ESOL learning within programmes of occupational learning/Continuing Professional Development

Introducing a work-based language learning scheme
We recognise that the extent to which employers are able to support learning at work will vary. There is a range of activity that would enable employers to choose the actions they wish to engage in. At its most basic this could consist of allowing facilities to be used by an informal study group. At the other end of the scale there could be formal provision, funded by the employer, fully incorporated within the organisation's corporate training and development strategy. A company could offer any one or more of the following components:

- Encouraging supervisors to support language learning at work and coaching employees
- Encouraging colleagues to support colleagues' language learning at work and coaching colleagues
- Arranging development opportunities for staff (managers/supervisors and/or non-supervisory staff) to learn how to support language learning at work
- Facilitate the use of learning materials at work (possibly buying in sets of available or customised materials for use by employees and their managers)
- Working with trade unions or with Employee Learning Advocate schemes to set up English language learning schemes (possibly with Union Learning Fund support)[11]

---

[9] Cf Stuart, M, Winterton, J. (2009), Learning through Work – Phase 2 Evaluation Report. Leeds: Centre for Employment Relations Innovation & Change, Leeds University Business School; also Newton, B, Miller, L., Braddell, A (2006), Learning through Work: Literacy, language, numeracy & IT skills development in low-paid, low-skilled workplaces: Audit of Learning. Falmer: Institute for Employment Studies, Research Report No. 434; also http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/publications/Learning_through_Work_guides.aspx; also Arakelian, C. and Braddell, A. (2005) Bite-size adventures in the workplace. Basic Skills Bulletin 37: 6-8
[10] http://www.workplacelearningadvocates.org.uk/
[11] Much work has been undertaken by trade unions in partnership with employers using the BIS-funded Union Learning Fund to support employees in learning English. In recent years BIS has required unions, as a requirement for

- Make facilities available for self-facilitated study groups
- Allow employees to use workplace facilities to access web-based support (eg Skype sessions with volunteer language coaches)

Depending on circumstances, employers may need to do less or more to get schemes to support language learning up and running. The precise nature of what needs to be done varies with what the employer intends to introduce.

An in-house coaching scheme
- Where an employer already has a Training and Development department – or a designated HR learning and development specialist or Learning and Development Business Partner – then organising this would typically fall under their remit. This may or may not extend to actually designing and running the sessions
- In smaller organisations or where there is no training and development facility in-house or contracted in, the employer would probably need to locate a provider who is able to offer staff training in coaching. The provider should ideally also be able to provide or point to resources to support language learning in work (and possibly outside work) or develop customised materials, depending on the needs of the employer. In one of the organisations we visited the employer had recruited retired teachers to provide one-to-one support for language learning.
- The employing organisations would also need to identify a designated person who would be responsible for arranging the learning sessions, publicising them and recruiting staff to the training. This could be a manager, a member of HR or a trainer, or an administrator, depending on organisational size. This person/role may also be involved in agreeing coaching arrangements – this may not be necessary where supervisors are to coach employees but might need to be part of the scheme where it is a colleague coaching another employee.
- The employer might want to consider questions such as whether the learning provision should be one-to-one or group tuition; whether to arrange for individuals' language skills to be tested and certificated as part of this scheme; and/or whether to evaluate the impact of the provision (for example by considering job performance, attitudes at work and/or staff turnover pre-and post coaching).

In-house taught language sessions

- Where an employer already has a Training and Development department – or a designated HR learning and development specialist or Learning and Development Business Partner – then organising this would typically fall under their remit. This may or may not extend to actually designing and running the sessions
- In smaller organisations or where there is no training and development facility in-house or contracted in, the employer would probably need to locate a provider who is able to offer staff training in language tuition. The provider should ideally also be able to provide or point to

---

receipt of grant funding, to undertake outreach activities with non-unionised workplaces. In addition BIS has funded pilot projects in London and the East Midlands which have sought to mirror the activities undertaken by Union Learning Representatives in unionised workplaces through training Workplace Learning Advocates in non-unionised workplaces. There is potential for further work with trade unions and with Workplace Learning Advocates to extend support for ESOL learning in both unionised and non-unionised workplaces. Such activity can be viewed as additional support for the models of ESOL provision in the workplace

resources to support language learning in work (and possibly outside work) or develop customised materials, depending on the needs of the employer.

- As part of planning in-house taught language sessions the employer will need to agree: location and timing; whether the learning provision should be one-to-one or group tuition; any release arrangements for staff (eg half of the time comes from the employee's agreed contracted hours and half comes from their own time); the materials to be provided; any assessment and certification arrangements; whether taught sessions are to be supplemented with coaching and mentoring (if so then the provisions outlined under 'An in-house coaching scheme' would also apply).
- The employer might want to consider whether to evaluate the impact of the provision (for example by considering job performance, attitudes at work and/or staff turnover pre-and post coaching).
- The employer may also want to consider whether to involve any trade unions in designing and supporting the programme and any coaching or mentoring.

Facilitating employee- or trade union-organised language sessions

Smaller employees may feel unable to provide the extent of support described in the first two sections. They may however be able to provide facilities free of charge for any sessions that the employees themselves or their trade union representatives/union learning representatives arrange. There are three main points to bear in mind in order to ensure these activities are implemented smoothly:

- It is a good idea for the employer to agree a contact person on the managerial and staff sides ahead of discussing arrangements
- The employer will need to agree timing of the sessions (and in particular whether these will take place in paid working time or in employees' own time, or half and half) and the location
- Responsibility for the resources (ensuring any IT equipment is used safely and in a way that does not damage the property provided; ensuring facilities are locked after use, where appropriate; signing people in and out, where it involves people attending in an area outside their normal work location) will need to be agreed between management and staff/union.

Where trade unions are used it is sometimes the case that the employer provides the room for the session (and possibly the broadband connection) while the trade union provides the technologies to support the learning, with the ULR taking on responsibility for security and organising the sessions.

Value to employers of encouraging/supporting English language learning at work

In addition, efforts to further extend employer-supported ESOL schemes in the workplace may require some effort to persuade employers of the value of such schemes. It is possible that employers will have concerns that helping their employees to improve their language may be counterproductive – they may fear losing employees if their English language improves. However, some (admittedly larger) employers already offer English language provision in the recognition that this helps them both in their retention efforts – they have found that they attract more motivated workers if they offer language learning as part of the overall package – and helps with retention – people are less likely to leave when their current job offers such a 'perk'.

It should be noted that it is rare for a job to require no English language capability at all: in the sample of people we spoke to, this was mainly those who were employed as carers or cleaners with families of foreign nationals or those who cleaned empty apartments. In most other settings however workers will encounter other people during their work and need to speak to them. In addition there are language demands related to employment rights and responsibilities even when tasks themselves require minimal communication. It is difficult to see, for example, how an employee would be able to comply with the requirement to summon emergency assistance for an injured colleague without adequate English.

Model 2: Voluntary coaching & mentoring schemes
We note that much of the need identified by migrants was for support to improve their ability to express themselves orally (i.e. general speaking skills) and migrants ideally wanted this support to include some feedback on progress. This second model therefore addresses these two learning needs in particular: the need to interact in English and the need for personalised feedback.

The model envisages a voluntary coaching and mentoring scheme to enable migrants to benefit from personalised feedback and guidance. We note the constraints of time and travel present in many working migrants' lives and therefore envisage that technology such as Skype can be harnessed to overcome those barriers and enable contact where face-to-face meetings prove difficult.

The key components of this model are:

- Volunteer coaches and mentors
- Development of guided learning materials to support coaches and learners (e.g. sample plan for 20 minute session, sample plan for set of six sessions, guidance for coach on how to give constructive feedback etc; learner training guidance on effective learning strategies)
- Signposting of migrants to the scheme.

Note 1: A well-developed example of this model exists in the Netherlands, described below.

Note 2: It is likely that the support materials will have elements in common with the materials envisaged for the models of workplace learning and learning.

Note 3: Employers with Corporate Social Responsibility schemes might agree to employees acting as coaches from their work desks at specified times.

Introducing a voluntary coaching and mentoring scheme
The key component that would determine whether such a scheme would succeed or fail is the system to put potential learners in touch with volunteer coaches and mentors. This could be arranged most easily via the internet. Therefore the components are:

- A web page or function to facilitate requests for/volunteers for coaching would need to be established in the first place, which would involve some initial costs. The web function will need to allow individuals to volunteer on specific days at specific times, and to indicate any specialist occupational or interest areas about which they can converse. Note that this does not have to be a

separate site – it could be an additional function of an existing website. There are already many volunteer exchange websites.

- While the web page or function would not need much subsequent attention it would nonetheless require some monitoring by an individual or individuals, either on a voluntary or paid basis, to ensure it continues to operate smoothly and is not abused. It is possible that volunteer exchange websites might be willing to undertake this role, although it is likely that this would involve a fee.
- Materials would need to be identified or developed to provide volunteers with training input on coaching people who are speakers of other languages (this could be accessed via the website)
- In addition, materials would either need to be identified or developed for use by coaches with learners in these conversations.
- Development of a standard information pack for volunteers and/or learners to pass to their employers to use if requesting permission to use online facilities at work would be helpful.
- A publicity scheme would need to be created in the early days of the initiative to direct people to the facility. Some subsequent regular promotion would be needed. This could be undertaken by groups who offer support to migrants in London.

Model 3: Informal learning enabled by technology
This model addresses the needs of migrants who experience particular difficulty accessing formal provision combined with a lack of any other form of personalised support and the lack of effective personal learning strategies.

There is already a vast wealth of support for English language learning freely available online, including free and very low-cost applications suitable for smartphone download. In addition to resources originating in the UK and other English-speaking countries, there are many English language learning resources produced overseas and designed for specific language communities[12]. Several interviewees pointed to such resources and they have the potential to form the basis for highly accessible bite-size learning around the different language forms (including pronunciation).

This model envisages development of short study programmes of bite-size tasks being constructed based around these existing resources.

Building an informal learning scheme enabled by technology
In order to create an informal learning offer for migrants the following activities would need to take place:

- Development of study guidance to instruct learners in use of the materials, learning strategies for maximising time available (eg use of phone apps to maximise the 'in between' spaces in people's lives and free up learning from necessity to be at a terminal or able to use a laptop)
- Development of study programmes of bite-size tasks based around existing resources (as in the Netherlands where migrant media are used to deliver bite-size language lessons, *described further below*)

---

[12]   For example see http://www.mansioningles.com/ for Spanish speakers; http://www.loecsen.com/travel/0-fr-67-3-2-cours-gratuit-anglais.html for French speakers; http://www.englishleap.com for Hindi speakers

- Building in of automated emails and/or text messages to prompt the learner to complete a series of learning tasks and give feedback and then providing a link to the next learning package.
- Signposting of migrants to the study programmes. Migrant support organisations could help with this.

The main cost would be in identifying existing materials, gaining permission to incorporate them within an access site and designing any additional materials to link between and integrate resources. Migrants pointed to materials that they had found. The British Council Nexus website provides access to materials relating to low-paid, low-skilled work which might be included[13].

Maintaining the web function would also involve a cost. There are various options for management of an online facility. It is possible that providers might wish to form a consortium to develop and co-host this facility – in which case though it is likely that the site could be offered on a commercial basis (although the costs would be likely to be low). Alternatively one or more migrant support organisations might seek funding for the development costs. Later maintenance costs could be financed through advertisement revenues.

An online resource

All of the above models involve access to online resources to a greater or lesser degree. We recommend this for reasons given by migrants themselves:

- With busy lives, access to online learning resources minimises the time spent in travel
- Online facilities enable people to study at home, avoiding problems in arranging childcare
- Online learning can be accessed at any time that is convenient to the learner
- Online materials are typically free or low cost.

Most importantly, though, 90 per cent of the migrants interviewed said that they had access to the internet either through computers or phones. Few used computers at work but the great majority had access at other times.

Online learning, while convenient, may not offer the opportunities for interaction and personal feedback that attract learners to classes with professional tutor support. For this reason we have recommended that other components are offered: coaching, tutoring, conversations with volunteers. However, should an individual find themselves unable to access these other supporting components we envisage the online facility offering at least some support for learning.

Additional support components

The models described above aim to create accessible new learning opportunities. Set out in this section below are additional components that would help bolster the above provisions. The first relates to signposting, the second to supporting the development of effective learning strategies, the third to support in developing a learning programme.

---

[13]   http://esol.britishcouncil.org/english-for-work

Help for individuals to identify suitable learning opportunities
Interviewees reported considerable difficulty identifying appropriate learning and many evidenced no more than a very limited understanding of what learning and other relevant support is available in London. To be effective, support for migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work to learn English must be highly visible to the migrants themselves.

Interviews suggest migrants primarily source information from each other (i.e. friends, family, acquaintances, migrant support groups), from media (especially free newspapers), from internet search engines and from service providers (including employers and trade unions) – in a variety of languages. This suggests that use of these three channels – word of mouth, print and digital media – would optimise information distribution.

As a consequence of changes to Skills Funding Agency learner eligibility there is reduced access to free and subsidised ESOL provision. Increasingly, fee remission is restricted to those on learners taking a course in order to get a job. It would be helpful if provider advertisements identified those groups for whom provision would be free or reduced cost. In addition, all agencies with an interest in promoting learning and supporting migrants should ensure that local provision is promoted, including libraries, places of worship and advice centres. Also, providers and agencies should consider working with local shops, launderettes, etc., to widen publicity for existing courses

Help for individuals to develop effective personal learning strategies
The interviews highlighted the value of effective personal learning strategies as a key enabler of English language learning for migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work – and the lack of them as a key barrier. Some learners used all aspects of their lives – social activities, shopping, work, hobbies, travel – as personal learning opportunities to further support their language learning efforts. Given the often limited time that migrants had to dedicate to language learning these strategies would make a significant difference to their likelihood of achieving success.

This suggests that learner training for migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work would be a valuable additional component of these three models. This provision would include

- Learner training modules to be delivered by learning providers and appropriate others (e.g. migrant support organisations), either as a separate option or as part of an English language course
- Guided learning materials for direct access by learners, volunteer coaches, employers (see materials described above in models 1, 4 and 5; also 8 below). To help ensure relevance to diverse learners, these might include testimony from successful learners of varied backgrounds.

Customisable, self-directed learning syllabus
Allied to this, an English language learning syllabus to help independent learners structure their learning would prove a useful resource for learners and for language coaches/mentors. This would set out a series of self-directed study goals with suggested learning activities (including links to online learning). This would consist of:

- Customisable, self-directed English language learning syllabus, available in print and digital versions.
- Guidance on how to use the syllabus (including guidance for learners and also for intermediaries, e.g. employers, learning providers, migrant support organisations.
- Signposting of migrants to the syllabus.

In the final chapter of this report we set out how these models complement established provision and describe in some detail the previous work that has led us to propose these approaches.

4 Capacity and choice: How the models fit with established ESOL provision

Introduction

Our sample of migrants expressed a strong preference for conventional tutor-led classroom provision. For a variety of reasons, however, they were not in provision. Nor is it likely that existing provision could accommodate any significant proportion of the many thousands of migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work in London with English language learning needs. Even were it able to, formal provision does not suit everybody. The main challenges therefore are to expand the range of provision so that both capacity and participation are increased alongside accessibility.

We believe that, taken together, the models described offer coherence and synergy and constitute a low-cost, high-return approach to this difficult issue. There is reason to think that much of the expertise and many of the resources implied by these models are already available – albeit fragmented and scattered across a range of locations.

As well as the interview findings and previous GLA reports, these models draw on recent developments elsewhere aimed at supporting migrant language learning and adult basic skills development. In this final section we provide a short account of this work.

Work in Scandinavia

Two recent projects in Sweden suggest possible approaches. The Språkskap project (2009-10) [14] aimed to support Swedish language learning outside of the classroom by maximising the learning potential for migrants in everyday interactions with Swedish speakers. The SpråkSam and ArbetSam projects (2009-2013) applied similar principles to workplace learning.

Språkskap[15] (2009 to 2010)

The Språkskap project brought together learners of Swedish, teachers of Swedish to speakers of other languages, researchers, designers, and un-trained language coaches to investigate ways to help migrants and other foreigners living in Sweden make better use of informal language learning opportunities. To this end it developed guidance and tools for migrants on language learning; for Swedish speakers on how to support migrants acquire Swedish in everyday interactions; for learning providers on how to support second language migrants learn outside the classroom; and for private and public service providers on how to create opportunities for language learning by migrants

Premised on language acquisition theory that stresses the importance of authentic communication in language learning, the project identified everyday interactions with Swedish speakers as a powerful yet largely untapped learning resource. By making that resource more accessible to learners, the project hoped to support not only classroom learners, but also the many migrants not in formal provision.

The project developed a model of language learning based on three 'pillars':

---

[14] Cf Brendon Clark, Karl Lindemalm (eds) (2011) *Språkskap – Swedish as a Social Language*. Sweden: Ergonomidesign, Folkuniversitetet and Interactive Institute. pp 63-64 www.tii.se/projects/sprakskap

[15] Språkskap means 'language box', or 'language landscape'. For a full description of this project, see Brendon Clark, Karl Lindemalm (eds) (2011) *Språkskap – Swedish as a Social Language*. Sweden: Ergonomidesign, Folkuniversitetet and Interactive Institute. www.tii.se/projects/sprakskap

- **Community building** – the learner builds social relations with Swedish speakers to gain access to Swedish-speaking communities.
- **Communicating** – participation in Swedish-speaking communities gives the learner exposure to authentic language, practice and natural feedback, motivating the learner to pay attention to language forms.
- **Studying** (i.e. 'paying attention to language forms') – this includes not only grammar and vocabulary, but also relevant contextual factors (sociolinguistics and pragmatics).

In contrast to formal classroom language learning, which focuses on study and places the responsibility for learning on the individual learner and their teacher, Språkskap emphasised community building and communicating and experimented with new roles, responsibilities and learning artefacts. This included:

- Recasting students as active community-based learners, Swedish citizens as informal language coaches, language teachers as facilitators of community-based language learning, and a range of public and private providers of goods and services as providers of arenas for language learning
- Developing tools and concepts for influencing the structure of Swedish-language encounters between learners and other people
- Making use of technological platforms for the learner to easily document and reproduce interactions
- Establishing time-and-place to attend to language matters

Examples of tools and technological platforms include

- A study notebook to mediate encounters between the learner and Swedish speakers, for example, by prompting the learner to do things such as ask the Swedish speaker to note down a phrase in writing.
- Use of Twitter as a virtual classroom/coaching and mentoring scheme
- Mobile devices with audio recording functionality, to create recordings of interactions for the learner to study later
- Smart phone application and community website (based on learner-generated content rather than preprogramed expert content)
- Physical rehearsal space: e.g. practice café, shop, workspace where learners could practice interactions
- Drop-in sessions where a language teacher was available to support learners to prepare for interacting with others in Swedish, e.g. before a trip to the tax office or a job interview.

At its conclusion, the Språkskap project offered suggestions for further developments including workplace peer coaching and a '1000 Metre Club', where a language learning provider (e.g. an FE college campus or a language school) invites providers of goods and services within a radius of one kilometre to participate in a support scheme for language learners, in return for the language learning provider directing learners (via e.g. a map) to the provider of goods and services, who may wish to increase business at specific hours on specific days, or guide discussions around specific types of services.

SpråkSam[16] *(2009 to 2011) and ArbetSam*[17] *(2011 to 2013)*
These closely related projects have aimed to develop the competences of employees at risk of labour market exclusion due to a lack of knowledge of Swedish, i.e. to increase occupational competence by developing language competence. Both projects have been formulated and delivered by the same partnership of local authorities and research centres in Stockholm. ArbetSam implements a methodology developed by SpråkSam. Both are based on the core premise that Swedish-speaking and non-Swedish speaking staff have a shared responsibility for language competence and development at the workplace: learning Swedish is hard work and support is needed from those who do speak it.

Delivered in social care workplaces in and around Stockholm, these projects seek to:

• create workplace environments that support migrant staff to develop their Swedish
• enhance cooperation between learning providers and employers by developing the knowledge base around language learning and language use at work
• produce new research-based language learning methods and models.

Key methodological features include

• Employers taking responsibility for the language skills of migrant staff
• Peer support from Swedish-speaking staff trained to act as language coaches, mentors and advocates for migrant colleagues
• Collaboration between vocational trainers and teachers of Swedish for speakers of other languages
• Informal study-groups of migrant staff meeting at work for regular sessions of structured reflective practice

Results suggest that these approaches have changed attitudes towards language learning among those involved as learners, their managers, colleagues, teachers and many others. From 'lack of Swedish' being a problematic, conflict-generating issue that was difficult to discuss and handle, language learning is now beginning to be seen as an important part of care work.

Note: some materials describing project methodology are already available in English. Translation of others is currently being undertaken.

Work in the Netherlands

Work in the Netherlands to support migrants to learn Dutch includes innovative use of local migrant broadcast media. The specialist Instituut voor Taalonderzoek en Taalonderwijs Amsterdam (ITTA, an Amsterdam University-based teaching institute for Dutch as a first and second language[18]) has

---

[16] Språksam means 'talkative'. For a full description of the project see Lundborg, B/Lidingö Stad, (2012), *Better language skills, better care SpråkSam is leading the way*, Sweden, Lidingö Stad, available online at http://www.lidingo.se/download/18.2493972d13b1df01aa0c5/Spr%C3%A5ksam_handbok_engelsk_version%5B1%5D.pdf
[17] ArbetSam means 'industrious', i.e. hard-working, productive. For more information and a short film, see http://www.lidingo.se/toppmeny/omsorgstod/projektarbetsam/arbetsaminenglish.4.1df940d7136538bffed421.html
[18] http://www.uva.nl/en/about-the-uva/organisation/organisational-structure/content/affiliated-institutions/uva-holding-bv/itta-uva-bv/itta-uva-bv.html

developed a series of about 100 Dutch lessons, each introduced, explained, and summarised in the language of the target migrant group (Turkish[19], Ghanaian English, Chinese, Spanish, Arab, Berber, etc.). These lessons are broadcast by migrant media companies via radio and the internet, with extra exercises available free from a central website.[20]

The Dutch government has supported the development of a large, web-enabled network of 'language buddies', i.e. local, volunteer language coaches, who offer migrants e.g. two hours coaching and mentoring a week[21]. ITTA developed training for these coaches including a guide on how to work with learners. Other organisations involved in this initiative include the Dutch Council for Refugees[22], the charity Humanitas[23] and the Red Cross[24]. ITTA is now investigating the development of learner training for migrants.

The City of Amsterdam devotes a section of its website to practical support for migrants to learn Dutch[25], including signposting to language coaches and to formal provision. The City promotes language learning integrated with an introduction to Dutch culture through visits to museums etc.[26] The City's libraries are at the heart of an intensive programme of support, based in part on digital learning material, including specially developed tv series, and in part on 1:1 coaching. [27]

Web-enabled language exchange in Denmark and Germany

There is a well-developed system of web-enabled language exchange in Denmark and Germany, described as tandem language learning.[28]

Learning through Work approach in the UK

In response to the difficulties encountered in securing release for workers in low-skilled roles to attend ESOL and Skills for Life learning, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and others funded the Learning through Work project (2005-09)[29] to explore the potential for on-the-job basic skills learning, led by employers and facilitated by learning providers. This project found there was significant potential for guided learning materials, supported by coaching and mentoring, to support basic skills learning - even in narrow jobs with limited communicative demands. Since then Skills for Care, responsible for the skills of the adult social care workforce, has developed and published a resource based on this approach: the *Learning through Work* guides[30]. This has proved popular with a range of care employers, including employers based in London.

---

[19] See http://www.demettv.nl/?page_id=100 for Dutch lessons for Turkish migrants
[20] See http://www.stationnederlands.nl/publicaties/stationnederlands/
[21] See http://www.hetbegintmettaal.nl/
[22] https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/english
[23] http://www.humanitas.nl/over-humanitas/about-humanitas
[24] See http://www.taalcoacheseindhoven.nl/ for an example of a local website
[25] http://www.amsterdam.nl/immigratie/inburgering/
[26] http://www.amsterdam.nl/immigratie/inburgering/handige-links/handige_links/stad_en_taal/
[27] http://www.amsterdam.nl/onderwijs-jeugd/volwassenenonderwijs/artikelen/taalspreekuren/
[28] Cf the Danish www.tandempartners.org/; also the German www.cafelingo.de/tandem/tandem_partner_berlin.html and www.international.hu-berlin.de/an_die_hu-en/studierende/orbis/sprachboerse
[29] Cf Stuart, M, Winterton, J. (2009), Learning through Work – Phase 2 Evaluation Report. Leeds: Centre for Employment Relations Innovation & Change, Leeds University Business School; also Newton, B, Miller, L., Braddell, A (2006), Learning through Work: Literacy, language, numeracy & IT skills development in low-paid, low-skilled workplaces: Audit of Learning. Falmer: Institute for Employment Studies, Research Report No. 434.
[30] http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/publications/Learning_through_Work_guides.aspx

The Learning through Work approach built on an earlier project that developed a functional, bite-size ESOL curriculum for hospital ancillary staff which tutors delivered to staff 1:1 in the work area using innovative materials designed to support peer learning and coaching by managers. This project took a little-but-often approach to language learning (e.g. three 15 minute sessions per week) and tutors involved noted that this accomplished more than an hour once a week.[31]

Conclusions

This report has described the barriers which migrants encounter in their attempts to learn English and the enablers identified by migrants which help to overcome the barriers and enable them to learn English. We have outlined models that have the potential to significantly increase capacity through a range of routes: employer-led informal workplace learning, increasing and supporting access to existing online learning, use of volunteer mentors etc., while greatly increasing individuals' awareness of the full range of options available to them and making it much likely that many more will progress to formal learning. These models also offer opportunities for ESOL providers to expand their offer in a way that better meets the needs of hard-to-reach learners.

The models proposed here to address the English language learning needs of migrants in low-paid, low-skilled work, many of whom hold high level qualifications gained elsewhere, will also support individuals to progress and integrate. Given the connection between language skills, individual progression and wider social cohesion any actions taken to implement these routes to learning are likely to have significant impact.

---

[31] Arakelian, C. and Braddell, A. (2005) Bite-size adventures in the workplace. Basic Skills Bulletin 37: 6-8

Acknowledgements

We are indebted to a range of individuals and organisations that helped us make contact with and recruit the interviewees:

- Workbase and GHARWEG;
- the Latin American Women's Rights Service;
- the Migrants Resource Centre;
- UNITE the Union;
- Praxis Community Projects;
- Jewish Care;
- Innovation Environmental Ltd;
- Unison;
- Yarrow Housing; and
- Romec.

In particular we would like to thank: Donna Anderson, Fabricio Cappello, Tom Cleverley, Carlos Cruz, Caroline Gottardo, Frances Graham, Lucila Granada, Elwine Halewijn, Kerry Hunn, Kirsi Kekki, Emma Lipscombe, Laura Marziale, Dharmi Mehta, Margaret Ofori-Koree, Joycelyn Opong, Barbora Stepankova, Judith Swift and George White for their assistance with the research.

Other formats and languages

For a large print, Braille, disc, sign language video or audio-tape version of this document, please contact us at the address below:

Public Liaison Unit

Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA

Telephone **020 7983 4100**
Minicom **020 7983 4458**
www.london.gov.uk

You will need to supply your name, your postal address and state the format and title of the publication you require.

If you would like a summary of this document in your language, please phone the number or contact us at the address above.

Chinese
如果需要您母語版本的此文件，
請致電以下號碼或與下列地址聯絡

Hindi
यदि आप इस दस्तावेज की प्रति अपनी भाषा में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निम्नलिखित नंबर पर फोन करें अथवा नीचे दिये गये पते पर संपर्क करें

Vietnamese
Nếu bạn muốn có văn bản tài liệu này bằng ngôn ngữ của mình, hãy liên hệ theo số điện thoại hoặc địa chỉ dưới đây.

Bengali
আপনি যদি আপনার ভাষায় এই দলিলের প্রতিলিপি (কপি) চান, তা হলে নীচের ফোন নম্বরে বা ঠিকানায় অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Greek
Αν θέλετε να αποκτήσετε αντίγραφο του παρόντος εγγράφου στη δική σας γλώσσα, παρακαλείστε να επικοινωνήσετε τηλεφωνικά στον αριθμό αυτό ή ταχυδρομικά στην παρακάτω διεύθυνση.

Urdu
اگر آپ اِس دستاویز کی نقل اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم نیچے دئے گئے نمبر پر فون کریں یا دیئے گئے پتے پر رابطه کریں

Turkish
Bu belgenin kendi dilinizde hazırlanmış bir nüshasını edinmek için, lütfen aşağıdaki telefon numarasını arayınız veya adrese başvurunuz.

Arabic
إذا أردت نسخة من هذه الوثيقة بلغتك، يرجى الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو مراسلة العنوان أدناه

Punjabi
ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀ ਕਾਪੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਰਾਬਤਾ ਕਰੋ:

Gujarati
જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજની નકલ તમારી ભાષામાં જોઇતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી આપેલ નંબર ઉપર ફોન કરો અથવા નીચેના સરનામે સંપર્ક સાધો.

GREATER**LONDON**AUTHORITY