



**THE LEARNING TRUST
ADULT LEARNING SERVICES
ESOL ADVICE SERVICE
REPORT
2009 - 2010**

SUMMARY

Funding from the Migration Impact Fund enabled the development of The Learning Trust's ESOL Advice Service. Regular weekly ESOL Advice sessions are held at The Learning Trust and other venues across the borough. People requiring ESOL classes attend the location most convenient for them. Their level of English is assessed and they are referred to a class appropriate to their level and their needs or placed on a relevant waiting list.

As part of the process of initial assessment, learners are asked questions about their background, their reasons for learning English and their preferences about classes. This information is recorded in a database which provides a wealth of information about ESOL learners in the borough.

572 records of learners were collected during the academic year 2009-2010. This data is analysed in the report under the following headings:

1. Gender
2. Ethnicity and Language
3. Distribution in Hackney
4. Age
5. Levels of English
6. Length of Time in UK
7. Level of Previous Education
8. Referrals
9. Reasons for Learning English
10. Childcare

The Learning Trust is working closely with Hackney Community College and other ESOL providers in Hackney to standardise initial assessment procedures and simplify referrals across providers.

The Learning Trust's ESOL Advice Service has achieved the following aims:

- To improve access to classes for ESOL learners in Hackney by providing a centralised advice and assessment service
- To gain in depth information about the situations and needs of ESOL learners in Hackney
- To enable ESOL providers to recruit appropriate learners to their courses

The service is now recognised as being essential to both ESOL learners and ESOL providers in Hackney and needs to continue beyond the end of MIF funding.

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Analysis of Data	7
Further Developments	21
Conclusion	23

INTRODUCTION

Background

There is a range of ESOL provision in Hackney. The largest provider is Hackney Community College which attracts large numbers of learners due to its reputation. The Learning Trust (TLT) is also well known in the community. Parents of schoolchildren have contacts with the Trust in relation to their children's education particularly when applying for school places, free school meals and other benefits. The Learning Trust receives a substantial number of enquiries related to adult ESOL classes.

The Learning Trust's Adult Learning Services run a number of classes in schools and children's centres and also commission provision from community based providers. These include ELATT, TEDA, City and Hackney Mind and Lifeline. ELATT, a large voluntary sector training provider also has other funding for ESOL provision.

In addition, there are several other organisations running ESOL classes. Metropole College is a private training organisation with a large contract with JCP to deliver ESOL to unemployed people. The Council's Ways into Work programme also co-ordinated funding for the ESOL for parents programme. 5 organisations were funded to provide these classes. These included A4e, Metropole, Lifeline, Care Connect. Job Centre Plus also funds Working Links to run employment-related ESOL for unemployed people

There are community organisations which have gained funding from a variety of sources to run their own ESOL provision. Refugee Women's Association is one of these. Other community groups run classes using volunteers. These include the Turkish and Kurdish Educators Forum and the Salvation Army. There are also ESOL classes run by volunteers held at Homerton library.

All these organisations are working individually to attract learners. Some such as HCC are hugely oversubscribed with waiting lists running into the hundreds while others have trouble reaching the targets agreed in their contracts. These organisations spend time and money doing outreach activities such as running stalls for example at the library. This is a costly process. At the same time migrants and refugees who want to learn English are unable to find the classes they need. The meeting of need and provision is haphazard and unpredictable. This is a key problem both for learners and providers.

The publication in September 2009 of the Hackney ESOL Directory was a first step in addressing this problem. However, the distribution of the directory was hampered by lack of funds. The main distribution was through the libraries and most copies of the directory had been used by September 2010.

The Learning Trust's ESOL Advice Service

In February 2009, TLT's Adult Learning Services started to offer regular weekly ESOL Advice sessions at TLT's offices. In addition, advice sessions were held at a number of venues where classes were held or planned. Over 200 people were seen between February and July of that year.

Initially this service was mainly aimed at filling existing places in ALS's community classes and referring learners to the Trust's commissioned ESOL providers. As the ESOL advice practitioners became aware of other provision in the borough, the range of referrals broadened.

At the end of the pilot period, the advice process was reviewed and changes made. The new system was introduced in September 2009. Funding from Migration Impact Fund enabled further development of the service. New weekly advice sessions were introduced at Linden Children's Centre in Stoke Newington and Robin Redmond Resource Centre in the Woodberry Down area of Hackney. In addition, throughout the academic year over 50 advice sessions were held in a range of community venues such as schools, children's centres and migrant or refugee community organisations.

During advice sessions, migrants and refugees enquiring about ESOL classes are assessed for their level of English in the four skills of Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing by qualified and experienced ESOL practitioners. During the one-to-one interview used to assess speaking and listening, information is also collected about the applicant's background, interests, needs and ambitions. This information enables advisors to identify the provision that is most suitable for that applicant. Improved links with other providers has facilitated referrals. Learners take a copy of their initial assessment documentation to the provider where they have been referred. This means that time is saved at the first meeting.

The Data

The questions asked during the assessment interview have three purposes:

1. to give a framework for a discussion to enable assessment of speaking and listening
2. to gain information about the needs of the learner which will inform appropriate referral and which will be made available to the tutor to help them understand the learner's background and individual needs
3. to gain detailed and reliable data about ESOL learners in Hackney.

The information gathered during the academic year 2009/10 has been recorded in a database. The database has undergone changes during the year as specific problems were encountered and dealt with. Although there are some gaps in information, there is a wealth of data which begins to give us a picture of ESOL

needs in Hackney. 572 records of learners have been collected during the year although the information for all these learners is not complete. For most calculations we have used the number of records for each variable rather than the overall figure of 572.

This is not a random sample. It is based on people who have approached the Learning Trust for ESOL classes so there is no claim that the information here represents all ESOL learners in Hackney. However, certain patterns appearing in this data may be indicative of trends in the wider community.

Inevitably there are errors in the data. There are a number of reasons for the lack of accuracy

- Learners may not understand the question asked
- They may not be able to give a full answer because of their level of English
- They may not wish to answer some questions
- Advisers may forget to ask for or record some information or may misunderstand the answer
- Staff inputting the data may not be able to read or understand some information

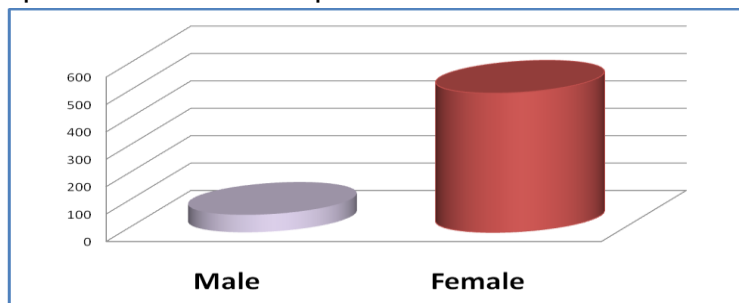
In addition, because of changes to the database during the year and the usual teething problems with new systems, not all information was retained. We therefore, have not been able to analyse how many learners were placed in classes within a specific timeframe nor where they were referred to.

As a result of the experience of the last year, improvements have been made to the database for the current year. While not all errors can be eliminated, we hope that the improvements that we have made on the basis of what has worked and where things went wrong, will enable us to get a more complete picture for the current year.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

1. Gender

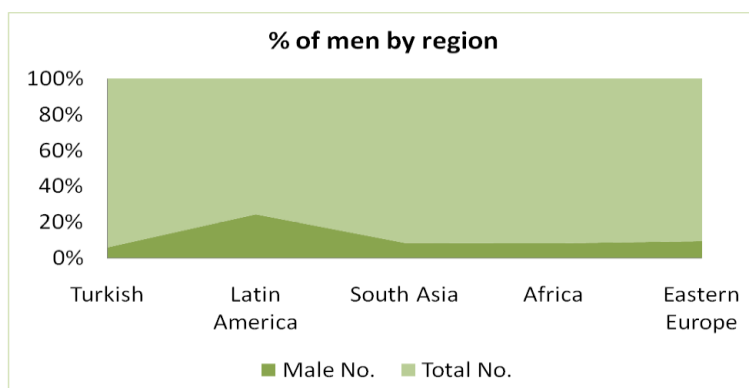
The most striking fact is that a massive 507 or 88% of people approaching The Learning Trust for ESOL classes are women. It would be interesting to compare this split with other ESOL providers.



Male	Female	Total
64	508	572
11.2	88.8	%

The reason for this is not clear. There are a number of possible contributing factors:

- Women are more aware of the Learning Trust because of contacts with schools and children's centres
- Women are more likely to require a class in their local community and the advice sessions and classes run by TLT meet this need.
- TLT community ESOL provision has more crèches than any other provider.
- Fewer women have jobs outside the home and are therefore, less likely to pick up English at work. They have a greater need for ESOL classes.
- Advice sessions are held in the daytime, this may not suit men who are at work.
- As most of TLT community ESOL classes are made up of women, men may be reluctant to join.



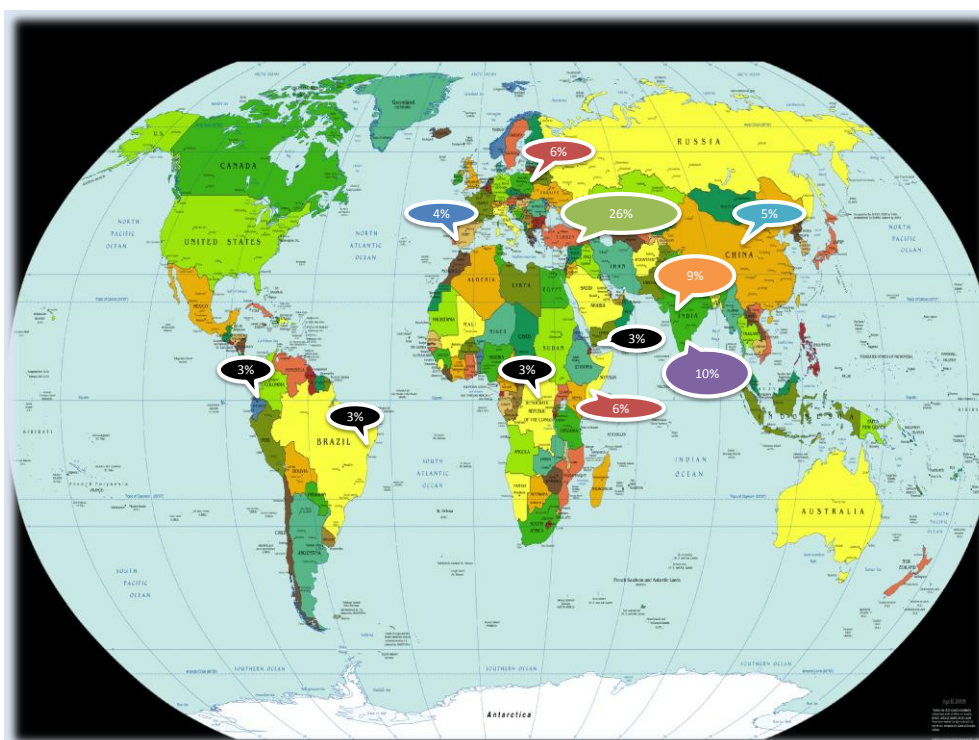
Region	Male No.	Total No.	%
Turkish	9	145	6
Latin America	10	31	32
South Asia	10	109	9
Africa	8	90	9
Eastern Europe	6	58	10

However, there are some differences between communities. Within the Turkish and Kurdish community only 6% of applicants for ESOL classes are men. This goes up to 9% among South Asians and Africans, 10% among East Europeans and rises to a substantial 32% among Latin Americans. So far nobody has offered an explanation for this although anecdotally, it has been noted that Latin American men do not

appear to be worried about being the only male in the class. In addition, the Latin American statistic may not be significant given the low overall number of Latin American learners.

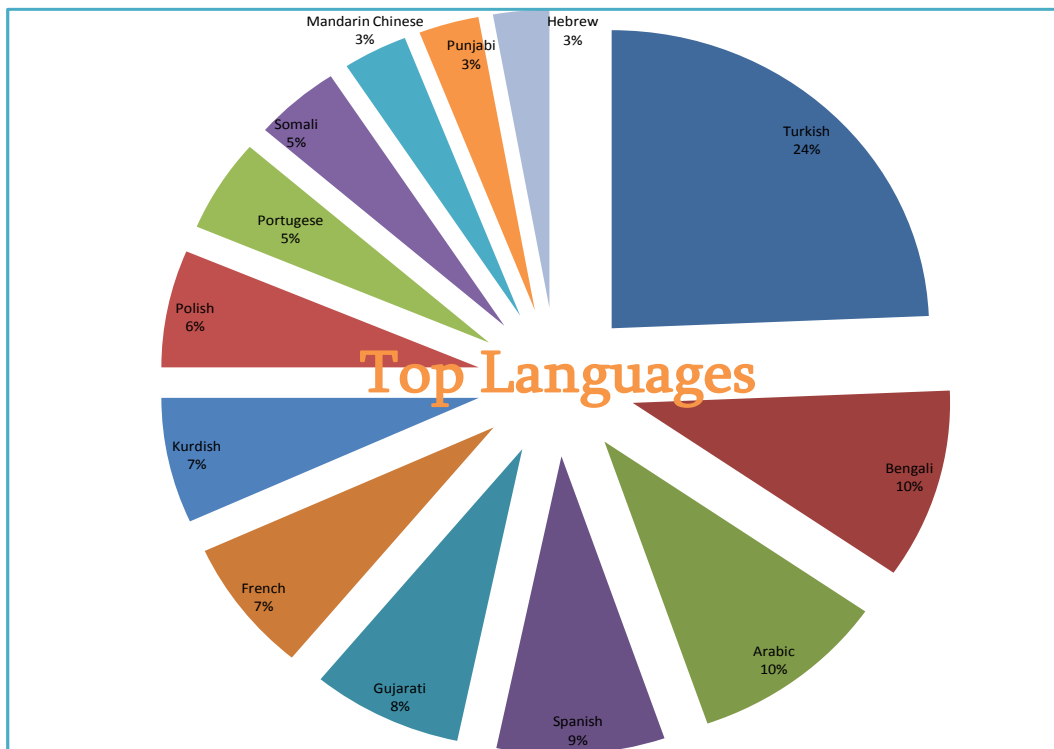
2. Ethnicity and Language

Looking at the breakdown by country of origin, we find that about a quarter of all recorded learners (141) come from Turkey with 31 of these being Kurdish speakers. 10% are from India, with over half of these being Gujarati speakers representing the Gujarati Muslim community in Stamford Hill and a smaller number being Punjabi-speaking Sikhs. People from Bangladesh make up 8%, people from Somalia 6% and from Poland 5%. There are 16 people from the Democratic Republic of Congo with a further 5 from other Francophone African countries, together making up 4% of enquiries.



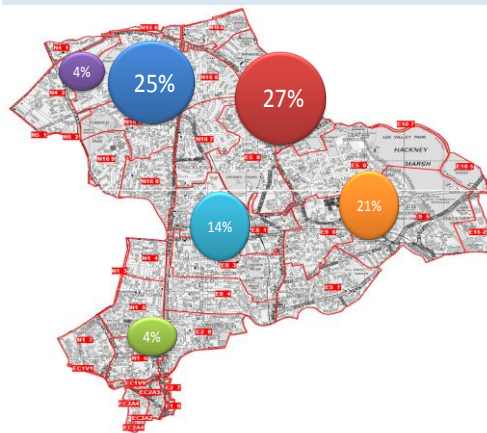
The languages with the largest number of speakers reflect the countries of origin although as people from India are divided into two main language groups, Bengali becomes the second most widely spoken language. Arabic comes high on the list as many people claimed this as a second language and the distinction between primary language and other languages was not made on the original database although this amendment has now been made for the current year. TLT was also running a pilot ESOL project for Jewish women from Yemen and this has also increased the number of Arabic speakers. Spanish is fourth as it includes many Latin Americans as well as Spanish nationals and has been claimed as a second language by a

number of Portuguese speakers. Portuguese speakers come from Brazil, Portugal, Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome.



Apart from the distortions with Arabic and Spanish, on the whole the languages spoken by ESOL applicants quite closely reflect the statistics from schools with the exception of west African languages such as Yoruba, Twi, Asante, etc. Speakers of these languages have usually had an English language medium education and do not need ESOL classes.

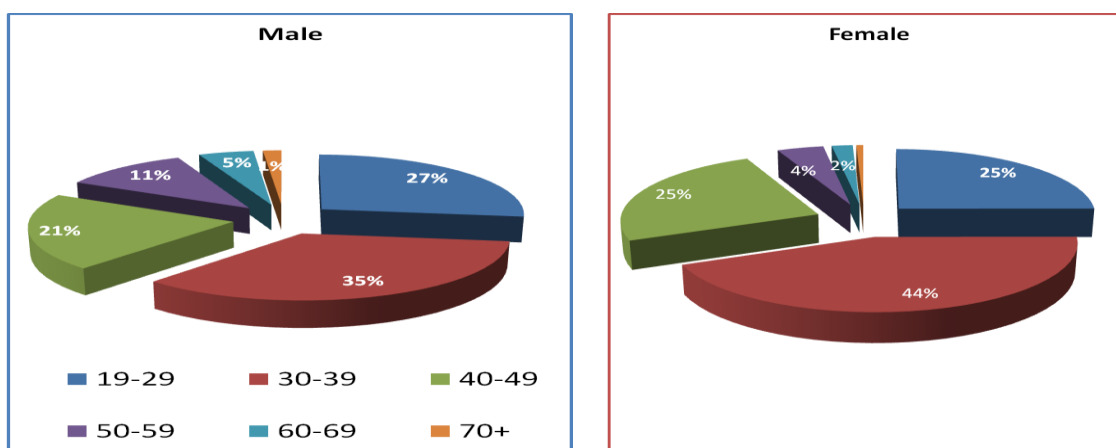
3. Distribution in Hackney



ESOL learners are spread all over the borough with the numbers in each postcode area reflecting the size of the area. People from Turkey are the largest group in E8 and E9 while South Asians have higher numbers in E5 and N16. Africans are represented in all postcode areas with slightly larger concentrations in E5 and E9. E5 has the largest number of East Europeans with very few in E9. There is no suggestion of any ghettoisation in this bigger picture, but it would also be interesting to look at smaller sections of the borough to see if there are any areas where particular communities are concentrated.

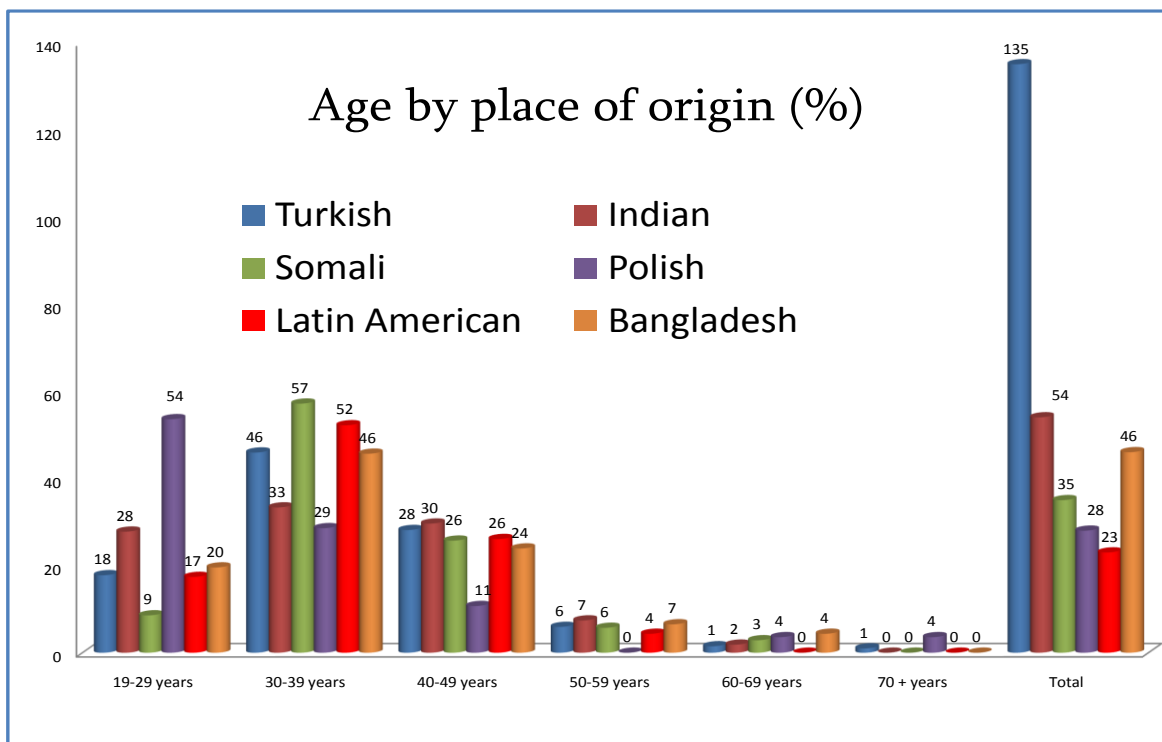
4. Age

The vast majority of those applying for ESOL classes are under 50. The bulge comes in the 30-something age group, representing close to half. This may be the age when many mothers whose children have started school find that they have the time and energy to join a class. Under 30s and people in their 40s each make up about one quarter. 5% are in their 50s, 12 people are in their 60s and even 4 people in their 70s have signed up to learn.



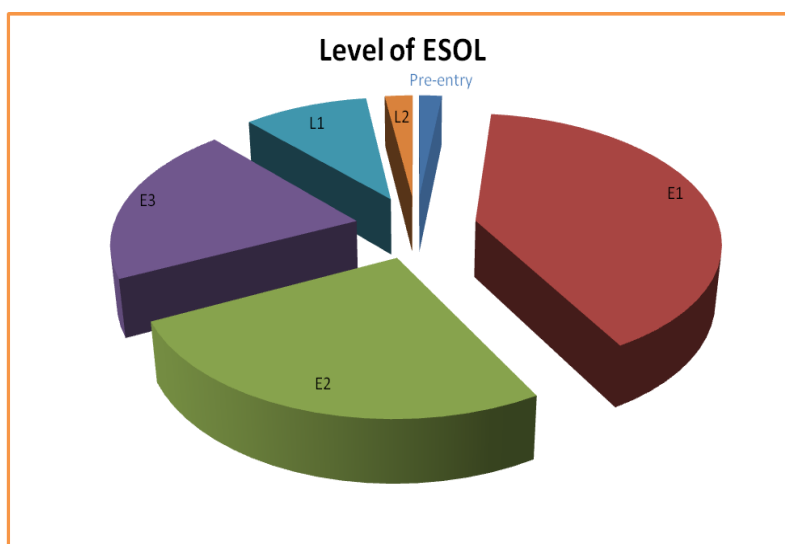
There is a slight difference between women and men with slightly more men in the youngest age group and not quite so many in their 30s. There are also proportionally more men in the older age groups 11% in their 50s and 5% in their 60s.

There is some variation in the age profile of different communities. Among Turkish speakers there are slightly less learners under 30: 17% compared to the average of 25%. In the Indian community the split between people in their 20s, 30s and 40s is fairly even with only a slight increase in the 30+ age group. 57% of Somalis are in the 30-39 age group with only 9% under 30. In contrast, the Polish community is much younger with 54% under 30, 26% 30-39 and only 11% in their forties.



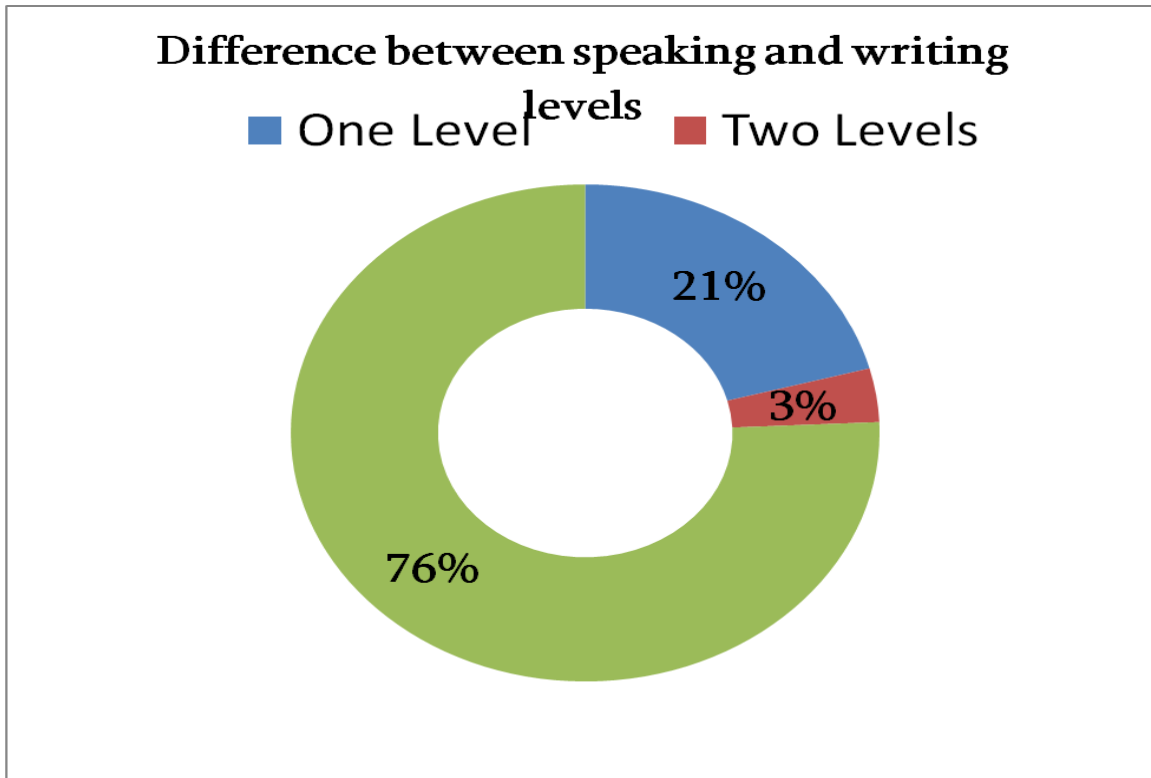
5. Levels of English

As expected, the largest number of learners are at the lowest levels. 42% have been assessed as being at Entry 1 or pre-entry. There are also substantial numbers at Entry 2 and Entry 3, but very few applicants at Levels 1 and 2.

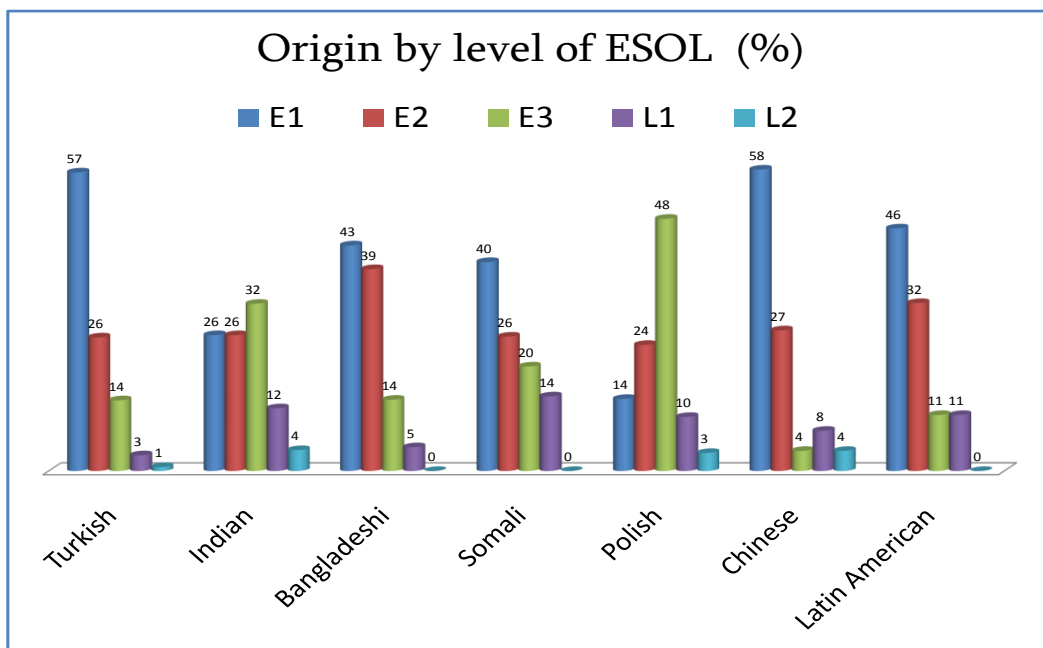


Anecdotal evidence suggests that many ESOL learners struggle with reading and writing in English and that generally, levels of speaking and listening are higher than reading and writing. We found that 21% of learners had speaking skills one level

higher than their writing skills with 3% having a gap of two levels between speaking skills and writing skills.

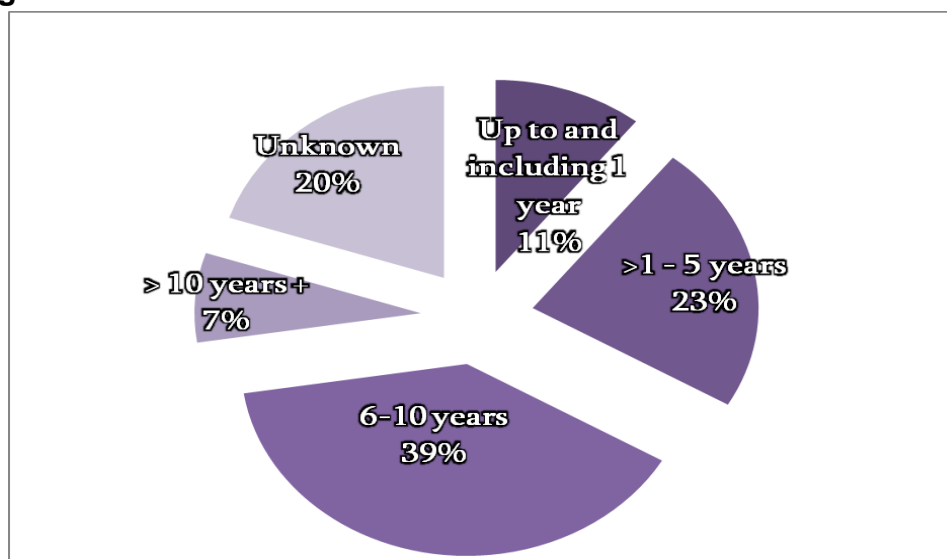


The differences in levels of English between men and women are not significant, but there are some interesting differences across communities.



Migrants from Turkey and China have the highest numbers at Entry 1. For the Turkish speaking community the numbers decrease as the levels go up. This is also true for the Somali community, but the drop in numbers across levels is not so marked. Learners from India are equally represented across different levels while Bangladeshis are mainly at E1 and E2 and then the numbers fall. Polish learners are more likely to have a higher level of English. As already noted the Polish community has a younger age profile and some of the young people will have studied English at school in Poland.

6. Length of Time in UK



Surprisingly, well over half of applicants for ESOL classes had been in the country for more than 5 years. This is quite a worrying statistic as research commissioned by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC), found that ESOL learners, who had lived in the country for five years or less 'made more rapid progress' than those who had been in the country over 5 years (Baynham et al., 2007, p.69). It is possible that some of our 572 applicants have already attended ESOL classes before. We have not analysed this information yet, but from our advice experience we do know that some of the people interviewed who have been here more than five years, have never been to an ESOL class before.

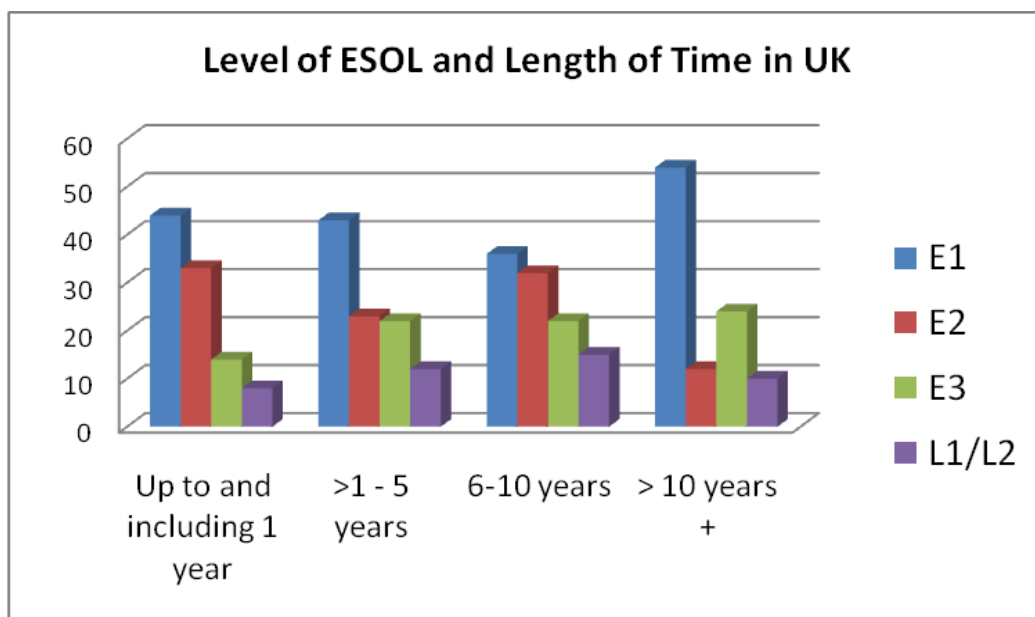
More research is needed on why it takes so long for a person living in the UK to come to the stage of applying for an ESOL class. Some obvious reasons are:

- There are not enough ESOL classes to meet the need
- It is not easy to find out where classes are held
- Government regulations about eligibility for ESOL classes prevent learners joining a class when first arriving in the UK

- Working long hours in low paid jobs prevents people from finding time to study
- Women with young children cannot find a class with a crèche or do not have the energy for study.

In addition, there are people who have joined classes before, but after 5 years in the country do not speak enough English for their needs or their ambitions. It often takes longer to learn the language than people expect and this can lead to loss of motivation and therefore, withdrawal from learning.

Looking at the relationship between level of English and time in the UK, we see a rise in levels over the years of residence. 43% of people living in the UK less than five years are beginners and this figure has gone down to 36% for those here more than five years. More learners in this group are at Entry 2 level. It is interesting that among learners who have been here more than 10 years, over 50% still require Entry 1. Although the number in this group is small, this is evidence that there are people who after 10 years residence in the UK are still beginners in English.



Level (Speaking)	E1	E2	E3	L1/L2
Up to and including 1 year	44%	33%	14%	8%
>1 - 5 years	43%	23%	22%	12%
6-10 years	36%	32%	22%	15%
> 10 years +	54%	12%	24%	10%

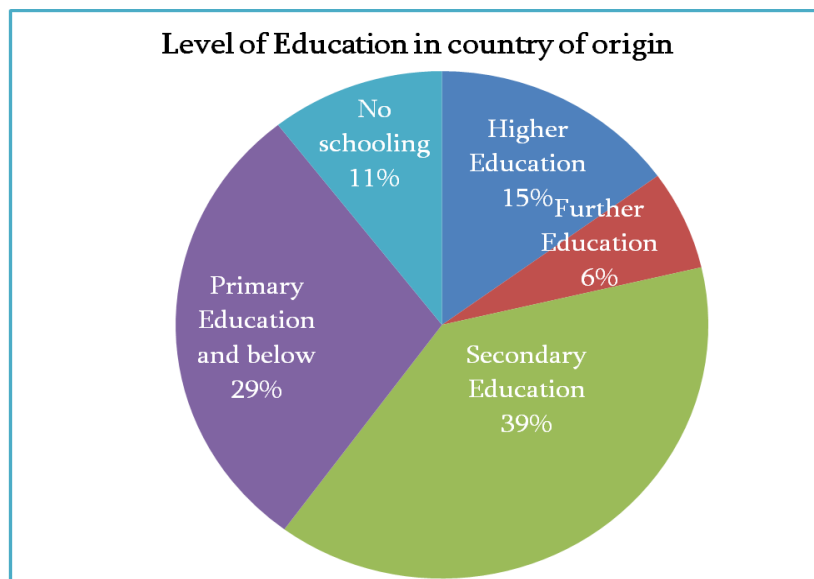
There are a number of barriers to learning English which may have impacted on these people:

- Where a particular linguistic community is large in numbers and organised in the services it offers, there is little need for people to learn English

- People living in close contact with extended family members, where there is always someone else to deal with the outside world, may not have the opportunity to learn. This is most likely to affect women arriving in the UK as spouses of British citizens.
- Regulations about recourse to public funds and access to publicly funded ESOL courses exclude newly arrived spouses and some asylum seekers from access to English classes at the point when they are most in need of learning.
- People working long hours in a community language workplace, will not have the time to study and will learn only very basic English in the workplace.
- People, mainly women, with care responsibilities may not find the time or opportunity to study.
- Language learning is a very specific skill and not everyone has the aptitude for it. In addition, low levels of literacy and general education in mother-tongue will act as a barrier to language learning.

7. Level of Previous Education

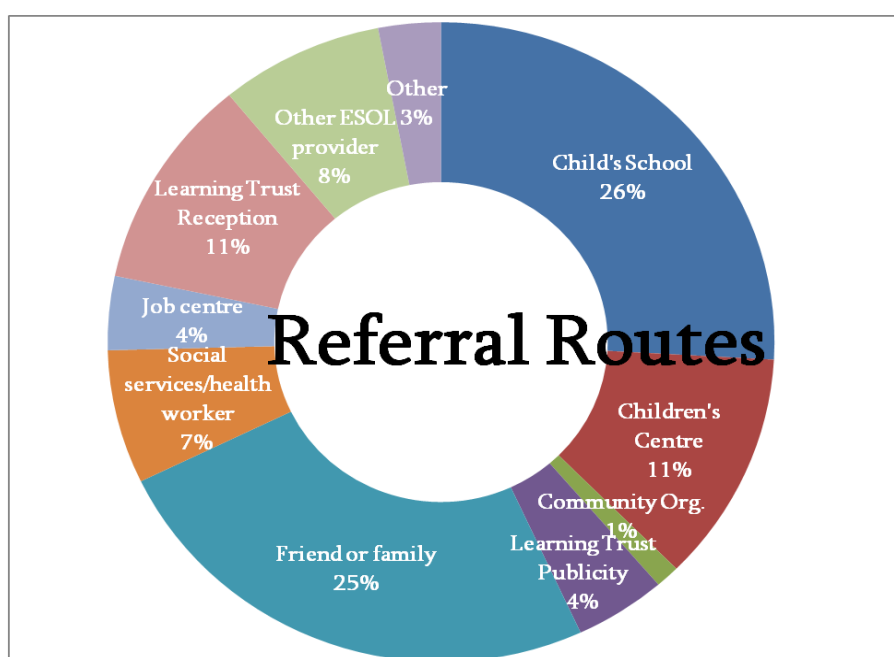
One of the reasons why learners find it difficult to make progress in the learning of English is related to the level of education in their own country. 29% of those requesting ESOL classes have had only primary education while a further 11% have never been to school. This is a very high proportion of learners with very little or no experience of formal learning and creates an enormous challenge for the teaching and learning of English. When we consider how few English people speak a foreign language, including highly educated people, we begin to understand why some learners find it difficult to make progress.



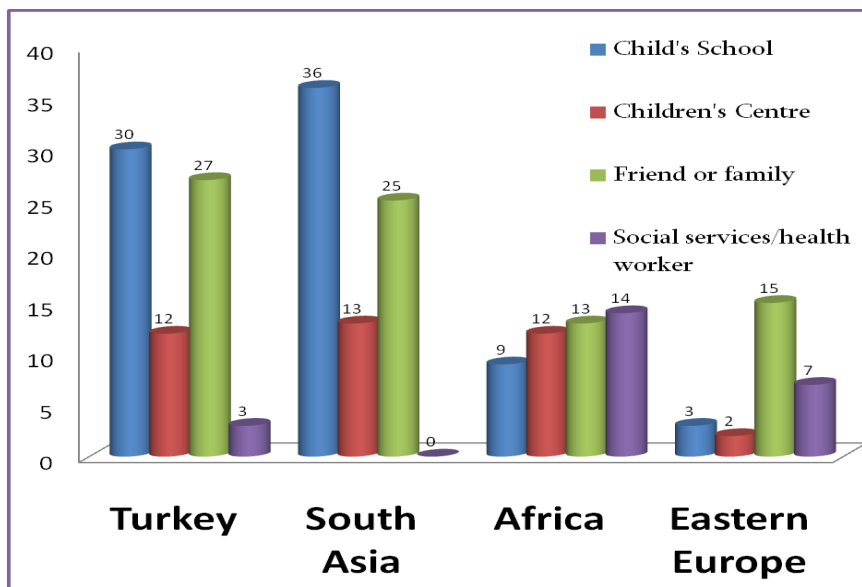
More analysis is needed on level of education related to level of English and also a gender and ethnic comparison.

8. Referrals

Many of the ESOL advice sessions were held in schools and children's centres, where teachers, parental involvement officers or community development workers noted the need for ESOL classes. A large number of referrals, making up about one third therefore, came from these services. Over 100 came on the recommendation of friends or family, demonstrating the importance of word of mouth. A substantial number, about 15% saw Learning Trust publicity or asked about ESOL classes at The Learning Trust's reception and were informed about the ESOL Advice service. Referrals also came via other ESOL providers (8%) and through social workers, health visitors and other similar professionals (7%). Smaller numbers were referred by the Job Centre or Community organisations. The missing information for this point is quite high, as not all learners were able to understand the question.

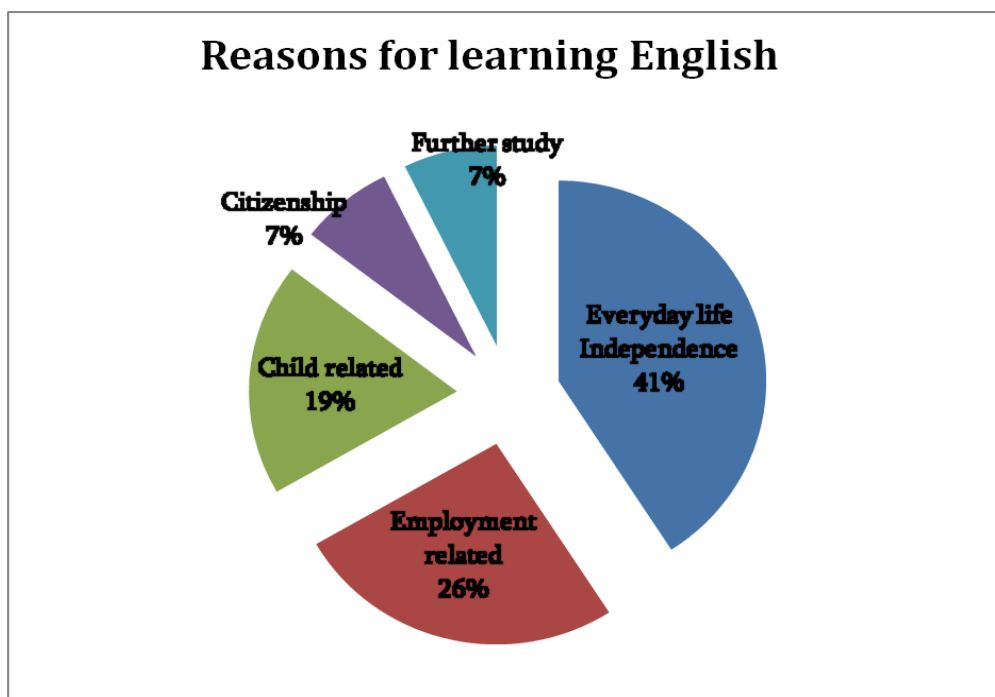


There are differences among communities' routes to advice session. Schools are the most common recruitment method for the South Asian communities, 38% coming through this route compared to an average of 26%. Proportionally more Africans were referred through children's centres, social services or health workers, while very few found out about classes from their child's school. We need to develop relationships, with those schools with large numbers of African children, whose parents need to learn English. Word of mouth has also not been very effective in bringing people from African communities into ESOL classes: 19% against an average of 25%. In contrast, 36% of East Europeans find out about ESOL Advice through friends and family, suggesting strong community networks. Large numbers of East Europeans are also referred by health and social workers.



9. Reasons for Learning English

The categories chosen for this section came from the advice experiences of the first period February – July 2009. At this time, ‘why do you want to learn English?’ was an open question. Looking at the range of answers we were able to create a list of 10 reasons. These can be seen on the initial assessment record form. For the analysis we have grouped these into 5 reasons.



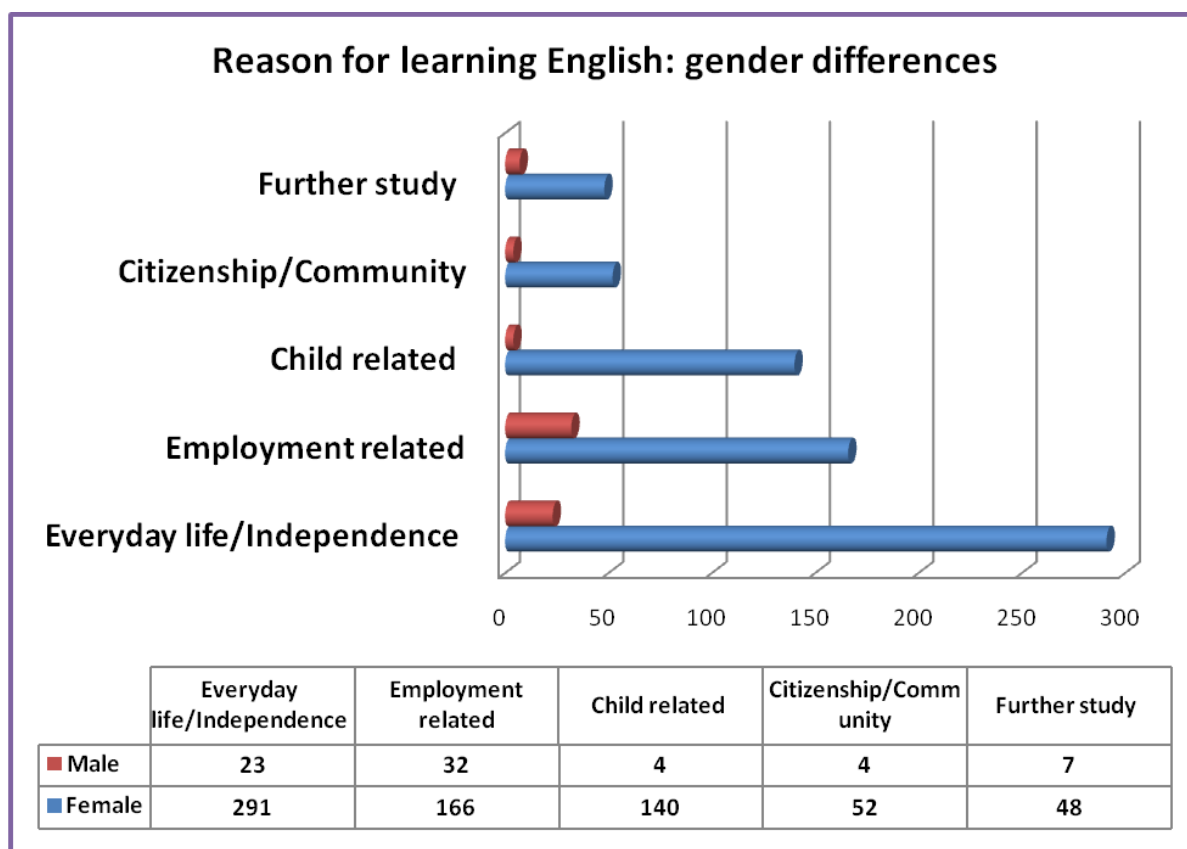
By far the most common reason for learning English is to cope with everyday life: shopping, going to the doctor, filling in forms, etc. – all the content of standard ESOL courses. Next, comes employment, with nearly a quarter wanting to learn English

because they need it in their current job, want to find a job, or because they want a better job than they are currently doing. We see many people with vocational skills or higher education working as cleaners. They want to move on.

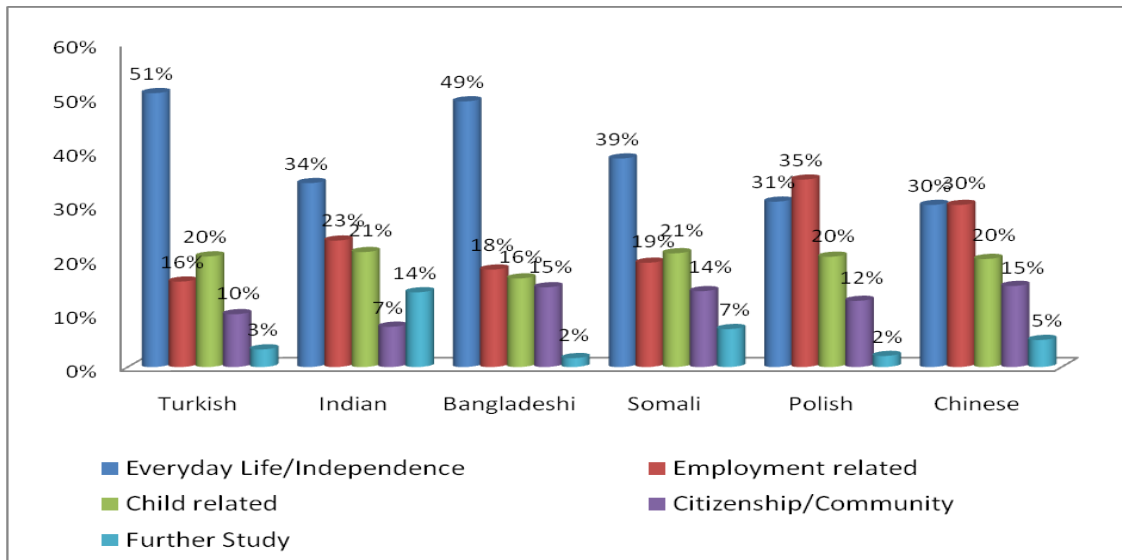
Then there is another large group learning English because of their children. We often find that women in particular feel the need to join an English class when their children start school. The children start speaking to each other in English and the mother doesn't understand them. They can't help them with homework or support them through their education in other ways. The need to learn English becomes urgent.

In spite of the increasing need to pass English exams to gain British citizenship, this reason is not mentioned as often as might be expected. 36% of the applicants already have British nationality and those from the EU would not have any reason to change nationality. It may also be possible that learners are not aware that they need to attend an ESOL class in order to gain British citizenship. Or possibly, assume the only route to citizenship is by sitting the Life in the UK test.

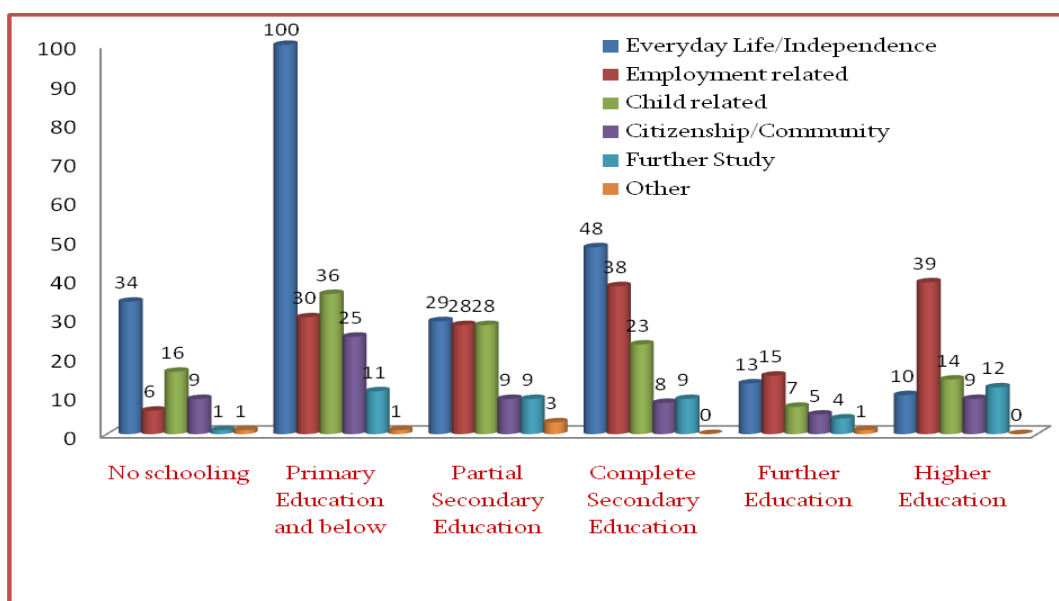
Men are proportionately more interested in jobs and further study, while women have more interest in survival skills and helping their children. Child-related reasons are particularly important in the 30-39 age group.



There are interesting differences across communities in reasons for learning English. About half of Turkish speakers and Bangladeshis want to learn English for everyday life while for other communities about one third fall into this category. Work-related reasons are most important for the Chinese and Polish communities. It is also interesting that further study is particularly important for people from India.

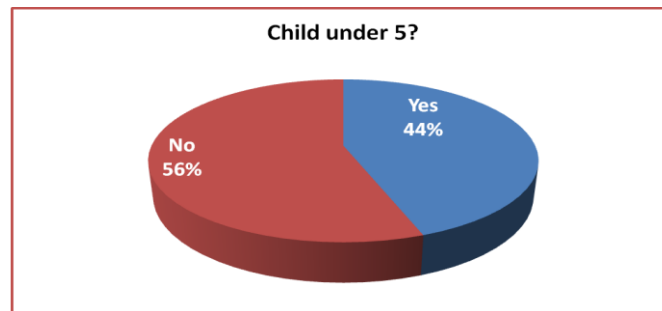


Level of education also impacts on reasons for learning English. People with lower levels of education are more likely to stress survival skills as their main reason for wanting to learn English, while employment related reasons are most important for people with the highest levels of education. Child related reasons are also more important for people with lower levels of education. This is linked to the fact that women usually have lower levels of education than men. The numbers for further study and citizenship are probably too low to be significant.



10. Childcare Needs

A very large proportion 44% of people approaching The Learning Trust for ESOL classes have children under the age of 5 and need childcare in order to attend a class. This is probably not representative of the overall population needing ESOL classes. TLT does run a number of classes with crèches and therefore, is more likely to attract learners who have childcare needs. However, it is an important indication of the need for childcare provision linked to ESOL.



FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

1. ESOL Advice Co-ordinator

MIF funding has enabled the appointment of a part-time ESOL advice co-ordinator at the Learning Trust. The creation of this post has led to some important developments:

- The setting up of an ESOL advice line.
- Regular weekly ESOL advice sessions at Homerton library and an additional assessment session at TLT, bringing the total of weekly advice sessions around the borough to five.
- Updating of information about all ESOL provision in Hackney.
- Establishment of effective student referral routes between the Learning Trust and other organisations offering ESOL.
- Analysis of data from last year's records used for this report.
- Improvements in the structure of the database based on a review of last year's issues.
- More effective distribution of publicity about the advice service
- Dedicated response to organisations contacting the Learning Trust about setting up new ESOL classes or arranging additional one-off advice sessions.

2. Partnership work

The Learning Trust and Hackney Community College have agreed to unify their initial assessment procedures. This will simplify referrals between the college and the Trust and learners will not need to be assessed again. More organisations accepting referrals from the ESOL Advice service are also receiving and accepting the initial assessment documentation, thus saving time and avoiding repetitive assessments of learners. Additionally, all organisations funded by the Learning Trust to run ESOL classes are encouraged to use the Trust's initial assessment procedure. As this process becomes streamlined, information about these learners can also be added to the database.

The ESOL Advice service maintains close links with all ESOL providers in Hackney and refers learners to relevant provision. Providers starting new courses approach the advice service and an adviser will check waiting lists to find learners who are eligible for the course and could benefit from it. Letters are sent to these learners offering them a place on the course. Providers are therefore, able to fill their courses with people who have already expressed an interest in an ESOL class rather than spending time and money on ineffective publicity.

In some cases people who do not have ESOL needs approach the ESOL Advice Service. These learners may be fluent enough in English to be able to access

mainstream courses at college level or may be more appropriately placed in literacy classes. The ESOL Advice Service refers such learners to the Literacy Curriculum Manager or the Education and Training Adviser at the Learning Trust.

3. Data Collection and analysis

Improvements in the database for the current academic year will improve the quality of data. Analysis of the data should inform developments in ESOL provision. For example the low numbers of men has led to the decision to set up an evening advice session and more evening classes. Information about referral routes enables better targeting of publicity for particular communities. Changes in the database will also enable tracking of learner referrals to monitor the effectiveness of the referral process.

CONCLUSION

The work currently being done by the ESOL Advice Service has enabled larger numbers of learners to find a class appropriate to their needs simply and quickly. The availability of regular ESOL advice sessions locally facilitates a first contact with the ESOL world. Additional one-off sessions organised through schools, children's centres and community organisations, brings the service to the users. Learners no longer need to approach a variety of organisations to find an appropriate class. Referrals are made easy when an adviser books an appointment and the learner takes their initial assessment documentation with them.

Statistics show that increasing numbers of people who want to join an ESOL class are contacting the service. Approximately 300 new people have been seen between September and December 2010, compared to approximately 600 for the whole of the previous academic year.

The ESOL Advice Service is collecting a range of information about ESOL learners in Hackney. With increased collaboration across providers this information will provide important insights into the backgrounds and needs of ESOL learners in the borough. Improvements to the database will enable more effective monitoring of how the provision meets the need.

The service has built a reputation among ESOL providers for its effective referral system. Providers contact the service when they have vacancies in classes and advisers then refer new clients to these classes and also check waiting lists to inform learners of the availability of a place. The benefits of the service are obvious to both users and providers. It saves time, money and frustration and offers information which informs provision. For those who have benefited from the work of the Learning Trust's ESOL Advice Service, the existence of such a service is seen as essential.

The service needs to be safeguarded beyond the funding of the Migration Impact Fund. The need for a borough-wide ESOL advice service has been demonstrated and the service needs to be maintained and further developed.

The following developments would increase the value of the service:

- All ESOL providers in the borough to provide up-to-date information on ESOL provision
- A move toward all ESOL providers in the borough using a single ESOL initial assessment process
- Data collected during initial assessment from all participating providers to be collected in one borough-wide database

- The Council's statistics department to take responsibility for the database after the transfer of the Learning Trust's services to the Local Authority
- Information about ESOL needs gained from analysis of the data to be disseminated to all services working with migrants and refugees
- The planning and commissioning of any ESOL provision in the borough to be informed by the evidence of needs demonstrated by the ESOL Advice Service data
- Funding for a full-time Community ESOL Advice Co-ordinator

Marta Paluch
ESOL Curriculum Manager
marta.paluch@learningtrust.co.uk

Data Analysis
Khadijah Amani
Community ESOL Advice Co-ordinator
khadijah.amani@learningtrust.co.uk

December 2010