IN THE LEARNERS' HANDS: USING MOBILE PHONES TO EXTEND LEARNING BEYOND THE FORMAL ESOL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

Learners and teachers alike struggle to find more of one valuable learning resource - time. For ESOL learners, it is the time to learn to speak English well; for teachers, the time to cover course content and facilitate enough practice to pass exams. Blended learning has been considered a potential means of extending learning and this study implements mobile blended learning beyond the classroom to investigate this. Very little research exists into blended learning in the adult ESOL sector, particularly with this focus. The research answers three questions:

1. How, and can mobile phones be used to provide appropriate extended learning opportunities for ESOL learners beyond the formal classroom?

2. What pedagogical considerations are needed when designing mobile blended language learning aimed at increasing guided learning hours and promoting progress beyond the ESOL classroom?

3. How, and can learning assisted by mobile phone technology bridge deficits in formal learning hours and promote progress?

These three questions underwent a process of revision initially which clarified their focus. A preoccupation with establishing the efficacy of mobile blended learning ('appropriate and effective learning') and its ability to 'accelerate' progress was soon relinquished when the implausibility of investigating such knowledge within an interpretivist paradigm was recognized. The essence of the study being related to **extending learning** saw the replacement of 'effective' with the word 'extended' and the phrase 'speed up' progress with 'promote' progress.

This practitioner action research study draws on a number of principles and practices of ethnography. A mix of quantitative and qualitative methods are used to provide a broad evidence base for activity and learning beyond the classroom. It takes place at an adult community learning provider in the East of England where 28 ESOL learners (4 men and 24 women) at Entry Level 3 and Level 1 studied on standard ESOL courses.

All participants found mobile blended learning beyond the classroom a suitable and pedagogically beneficial means of English study. The blend of traditional classroom teaching and print materials, with access to digital resources for distance learning, engendered a tangible sense of progress, developed learner digital and independent study skills, and extended time to learn. Teacher motivation and supervision and a user-friendly digital platform were further key elements in the success of the blended course delivery.

Mobile blended learning was found to bridge the deficit in GLH by a number of different means - some in the hands of the teacher - pedagogy, planning and resources - and some in the hands of the learner - a mobile phone, time, motivation, and independent learning skills. ESOL delivery benefits from a fusion of traditional and novel practices to provide a broad range of language practice opportunities and environments which take advantage of key factors of language acquisition to promote learning.

Conference presentations and publications arising from the research

- **March 2020: NATECLA East of England Conference (in-person)**

Workshop - 'Flipping Listening'- Developing listening outside the language classroom'

- **July 2020: SUNCETT Research Conference (virtual)**

Poster and Presentation – 'Mobile learning: how can it extend learning beyond the ESOL classroom?'

- **March 2021: NATECLA East of England and Midlands Joint Spring Conference (virtual)**

Webinar – 'Developing independent learning'

- **July 2021: IPFREC Conference (virtual)**

Poster and Presentation – 'In the learners' hands: extending guided learning hours beyond the ESOL classroom'

- **September 2021: Adult Learning Centre (in-person)**

Workshop – 'In the learners' hands: extending guided learning hours beyond the ESOL classroom'

- **NATECLA Journal Spring 2022 Vol 32.2**

Article - 'Blended learning in ESOL: is this the 'new normal'?'

- **March 2022: Adult Community Education Digital Leaders' Workshops (East of England) (virtual)**

Webinar – 'Using mobile phones to extend guided learning hours beyond the formal ESOL classroom'

- **June 2022: NATECLA National Conference (in-person)**

Workshop 'Lessons learnt from the pandemic - extending learning beyond the ESOL classroom'

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The thesis mentions the significance of motivation and much gratitude is owed to my own motivational forces - my ESOL learners, my patient, loving husband and a wise and creative God.

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Glossary

ACE	Adult Community Education
ACL	Adult Community Learning
AEB	Adult Education Budget
BAAL	British Association for Applied Linguistics
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BYOD	Bring your own device
CALL	Computer-assisted Language Learning
EFL	English as a Foreign Language (international term relating primarily to learners studying but not permanently residing in an English-speaking country)
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
ESL	English as a Second Language (Canada/USA/Australia/NZ - referring to migrants residing in the country studying English as a second language)
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages (UK - referring to migrants residing in the country studying English as a second language)
ETF	Education and Training Foundation
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
FE	Further Education
FELTAG	Further Education Learning Technology Action Group
GLH	Guided Learning Hours
LMS	Learning Management System
L1	A person's expert or native language
L2	A person's second or other learnt language
MALL	Mobile-assisted Language Learning
mLLL	Mobile Life-long Learning
NATECLA	National Association of Teachers of English and Community Languages to Adults
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TA	Thematic Analysis
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

ESOL Levels explained

ESOL Level (QCF)	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages	EFL equivalent
Level 2	C1	Advanced
Level 1	B2	Upper-intermediate
Entry 3	B1	Lower-intermediate
Entry 2	A2	Elementary/Pre-intermediate
Entry 1	A1	Beginner
Pre-Entry / E0		Absolute Beginner

Chapter 1: Meeting the needs of ESOL learners in the 2020s: context and problem

> ***Before I lived in Italy. Italian people lots of talking. Yeah, 1, 2, 3 months I going get to classes Italian. Quickly I can talk Italian but (here) people not talking much so outside; I can't practise. So, and one problem when I talk wrong, not correct me. Britain different to Italian people. Somehow I wrong talk but wrong pronunciation anything, they are correct me. But it's friendly. So (here) nobody correct me. Nobody talk. Supermarket, shop is not. So, it's not enough practice for me. It's my opinion.***

Figure 1 Extract from a participant interview. Learner 1 (Entry Level 3 / Female / Bangladesh-Italy)

1.1 Introduction

This first chapter considers the current UK ESOL context, issues faced by ESOL learners and their needs. The opening quotation exemplifies the predicament facing many learners studying English in my college and beyond. Yet the title of the thesis suggests that the matter of increased practice and progress may be in the learners' hands - both physically and metaphorically.

The first section describes the status of ESOL and migrant language learning in the UK and how the needs within the sector are not properly addressed. It then sheds light on the nature of language learning and issues for migrants both nationally and in the local context, providing reasons for the necessity for new strategies for ESOL provision to facilitate language learning. It concludes with an outline of and justification for the present research study, describing the research landscape, journey and presenting the three research questions.

Why 'learner' and not 'student'?

Throughout the thesis those studying ESOL and participants in the research will be referred to as 'learners' not 'students'. These two words are not necessarily synonymous. The term 'student' can relate, in some minds, to someone attending university or college - no longer a school pupil – an adult, young or old. It might be considered a full-time position. Yet Bunce (2021) reminds us that the traditional identity of a 'student' is that of a 'learner' or 'scholar', one with an overriding interest in learning, gaining and creating knowledge, which posits learner as a positive term. Learner is the preferred term in my organisation and reflects what Biesta (2010:541) has described as the 'new language of learning' popular in current educational parlance. While Biesta takes issue

with the term 'learner', arguing that it emphasises a person's deficit of knowledge or skill, in my organisation it is used to recognise those in pursuit of lifelong learning and development and remove any possible reference to full-time or higher education.

1.2 The national context

The new decade for the UK began with the withdrawal from the European Union. The momentous referendum decision had been preceded by years of debate around immigration from the EU and beyond, arguments that are likely to continue for years to come. The new Government immigration policy and points-based system is a departure from previous regulations but the fact remains that immigration will continue in some form and the country continues to contend with the legacy of previous legislation. Brexit was immediately followed by the Covid-19 outbreak. The pandemic caused the modus operandi of all aspects of society to change, not least education. Moreover, the effects of the migrant crisis and the war in Ukraine have been felt across the UK. Global travel and economic migration are bound to be affected in the longer term by these events but quite how remains to be seen.

In the immediate term immigration continues to rise. There was an increase in all work visas granted between 2019 and 2022 and a 98% increase in some types (ONS, 2023). Indian nationals were the single largest ethnic group to receive such visas. Statistics from December 2022 show asylum applications at their highest since 2003 and double the figure for 2019 (*ibid*). This figure does not include Ukrainian nationals fleeing the current conflict but is mainly comprised of Afghans, Iranians, Eritreans, Syrians and Sudanese. It was family visa applications that saw a 14% decrease between 2019 and 2022 but the number of those being granted permanent settlement increased by 41% (*ibid*).

Many people entering the UK to live and work do so with good existing standards of English. Frontline NHS doctors and nurses from overseas, who were vital during the pandemic, are a case in point. However, many of the nationalities not entering on the points-based system arrive with limited English (Lifelong Education Committee, 2022). Nationally, in the 2011 census, 770,000 people stated they did not speak English well or at all (ONS, 2018 cited in Higton *et al.,* 2019). The 2021 census saw that figure increase to 880,000 with 161,000 not speaking English at all (ONS, 2022). This presents a picture of a continuing need for migrants to improve their language skills.

In a 2019 survey of 162 ESOL providers in the UK 73% identified significant demand for ESOL, especially at the absolute beginner (E0)[1] to intermediate (E3) levels (Higton *et al.,* 2019). All

[1] ESOL Skills for Life Levels in ascending order are: E0 E1 E2 E3 L1 L2

respondents considered levels of Government funding inadequate to meet the demand of potential learners. Likewise, a 2015 report revealed colleges with ESOL class waiting lists of between 175 to 400 people, in addition to an average of a further 600 waiting to be assessed and placed on waiting lists (NRDC & UCL, 2015). These staggering statistics refer to potential learners already in the UK, wanting to improve their English in a formal ESOL setting, but struggling to do so. Given the most recent immigration statistics, this need is unlikely to disappear. Language learning is a long-term process and learners of all levels are anxious to improve their proficiency upon arrival in the UK to open the necessary doors to integration and work (Mallows, 2012).

1.3 The status of ESOL in England

It is an interesting fact that both Wales and Scotland have national ESOL strategies, published in 2014 and 2007 respectively (NATECLA,2017), whereas England was only proposing to formulate one in the Government's 2018 immigration White Paper (Burke,2018; Refugee, Action, 2019). Such a strategy has long been called for by both the National Association of Teachers of English and Community Languages (NATECLA), which represents the ESOL teaching sector, the cross-party think tank, Demos (Paget & Stevenson,2014), and most recently, by the Lifelong Education Committee (2022). Yet one remains unpublished and this has impacted on the funding and delivery of ESOL in England as the following review of major policy over the last twenty years demonstrates.

The year 2000 was important for ESOL in England when the, then, Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE) 'Breaking the Language Barriers' report led to ESOL being acknowledged as a core skill in its own right, as adult literacy and numeracy already were, with a discrete ESOL Core Curriculum, separate from adult literacy. In the years following, funding for ESOL increased and reached its peak in 2006 when 500,000 ESOL class enrolments were funded (NATECLA, 2017). Paget and Stevenson (2014) writing for the cross-party think tank, Demos, outline how, from that point on, policies altered to suit a government employment and skills agenda. Rules around who could receive fully-funded classes changed with fee-remission becoming focused on those receiving active (job seeking) benefits. Maximum funding was tied to exam success and not on the basis of participation alone. A freedom of information request on behalf of Demos saw ESOL funding fall from 7.62 to 4.88% of the adult skills budget between 2008 - 2013, a cut of 39.5% compared to a 5.5% cut for literacy and numeracy (Paget & Stevenson, 2014). Money had been provided to fund crèche facilities for ESOL learners, to facilitate participation (Higton *et al.,* 2019; Refugee Action, 2019), but this funding was removed, then subsequently reinstated, although not to the same degree (Refugee Action, 2019).

For those working in the sector over that period, each new academic year brought revised funding or eligibility rules. From 2009/10 money came from different streams - from both the Adult Skills Budget (from the Education and Skills Funding Agency - ESFA) and later from the then Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Funding from the ESFA was virtually halved from £203m to £104m between 2009/10 and 2014/15, which was offset only marginally by £5.92m from the DCLG (Lord Greaves, 2016). Since 2016, DCLG (now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) funding has sporadically provided pots of money in response to social issues such as improved integration of migrant women or the increase in refugees (AOC,2016). Most recently, funding initiatives such as 'English for Integration' (EFIF) and 'Building Better Opportunities' (BBO) have again seen short-term injections of money to address these issues, with some funding being focused on informal community-based conversation clubs. However, the general funding trend has been downward. Refugee Action (2019) consider there to have been a 60% fall in real terms between 2008/9 and 2017/18. For instance, in my organisation there were nineteen full or part-time ESOL tutors in 2009; that number now stands at nine. This is in stark contrast to adult literacy courses in England, aimed at native speakers of English, which have been free of charge for the past twenty years, and to the position in Wales and Scotland where ESOL provision to upper-intermediate level is fully-funded (NATECLA, 2017). Yet recently there has also been a return to the historical policy requiring migrants to have lived in the UK or EU for three years before accessing government-funded courses (ESFA, 2022), leaving new arrivals unable to access government provision even if wishing to self-fund. This is not the position in a number of countries in Continental Europe.

Countries across Europe have similar stories of historical 'guest worker' migration in the sixties and seventies, in addition to more recent influxes of migrant workers or refugees, yet their approaches to language provision are very different. For our closest neighbours, France, Germany and the Netherlands, participation in language classes for new migrants has been mandatory upon arrival in the country and, with the exception of the Netherlands, fully-funded (Paget & Stevenson, 2014). In France and Spain, many migrants from former colonies arrive with a very good or native command of the host language. This can similarly be seen in the UK with migrants from countries such as Australia or, as was noted above, from India where English is an official language and some prior knowledge is not uncommon. However, with more recent migrants to the UK coming from such nations as Sudan, Ukraine and Iran (ONS, 2023) or Spain and Italy (Higton *et al.,* 2019), a prior knowledge of English cannot be assumed. Therefore, learning the language remains a priority upon arrival if people wish to work and integrate. However, English study upon arrival has never been mandated. Research by Baynham *et al.,* (2007) showed a significant correlation between length of

time in the UK and progress in English, revealing that learners make quicker progress when accessing classes within the first five years of entering the country. The issue of progress will be considered in greater detail shortly.

As discussed, funding for ESOL provision has decreased and likewise the number of formal courses and learners. Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) data reveals that learner numbers dropped from 207,000 in 2007/8 to 131,000 in 2014/15 (NATECLA,2017). Department for Education (DfE) figures show that, from 2016, participation was consistently around 116,000, until 2020/21 when that figure dipped to approximately 90,000 enrolments (Centre for Social Justice, 2022). This might explain, in part, the reason for the historic oversubscription for ESOL classes (NRDC & UCL, 2015) and the ongoing significant demand (Higton *et al.,* 2019) which may continue in the light of the ONS immigration figures given earlier. More recently, in a Lifelong Education Committee (LEC) report, the call was again made for an overarching migrant language strategy and consistent funding for ESOL in England (LEC, 2022) and the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) report (2022) particularly recommends that ESOL funding be streamlined in order to promote the long-term provision required for progression. The table below provides a summary of ESOL enrolments from the peak of provision in 2006 to 2020 and the fall in Government funding.

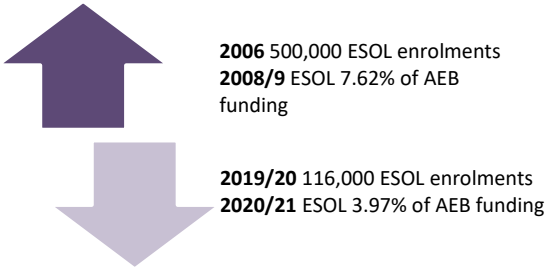

Figure 2 Changes in UK ESOL funding and enrolments 2006 - 2021

The CSJ (2022) highlights the social and economic importance of investment in adult migrant skills, particularly in the light of Brexit, and the LEC (2022) see lack of English as a key barrier to absorbing migrants into a labour market currently requiring more skills. Yet the benefits of more people speaking English have been clear for a long time. In 2000 the DfEE report 'Breaking the Language Barriers' highlighted the social and economic benefits of enabling migrants to learn. The Scottish ESOL Strategy document (Allen, 2015) reiterates this, highlighting how language learning is critical to securing satisfying employment, better health, well-being and community cohesion. The CSJ report foregrounds the role that up-skilling migrants plays in tackling issues of poverty and driving national

productivity. Further arguments in favour of investing in migrant communication skills are the development of resilience and a reduction in vulnerability (British Council, 2016). Improved self-confidence, empowerment to engage with the labour market and healthcare system, pursuing further vocational learning, developing aspirations and interacting confidently with others outside their own community in UK society are all cited as gains of improved ability to communicate in English (Paget & Stevenson, 2014).

In summary, scores of migrants need to start learning English or improve their current level to benefit both themselves and wider society. However, the thorny political issue of immigration, the lack of an over-arching ESOL strategy, together with a short-term approach to funding and delivery, appear to have led to the existing overwhelming need.

1.4 ESOL learners, language classes and learner progress

When discussing ESOL, the picture of learners in an ESOL classroom can vary across the UK in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion, prior educational background, occupation and motivation for being in the UK or learning English. The ESOL classroom is considered to be 'neither homogenous across educational establishments nor stable' (Barton & Pitt, 2003:8). Needs and their solutions may be quite localised and depend on the type and nature of learners, be they refugees or professional migrants, women or men, young or old, the employed or job-seekers. To see all migrants as having the same needs and plan on that basis is naïve, believe Beacco *et al.* (2017 in Bird, 2018). Cooke's (2006) study of ESOL learners led to the understanding that even learners from the same country of origin present different needs according to age, gender, educational background, length of time in the UK and aspirations for the future.

Yet the unifying factor is the need to develop better communication in English. These not-yet fluent speakers, regardless of level, need to continue to develop English language skills for socialisation and employment and require access to language input, practice and time to learn. The acquisition of a second language requires massive exposure to the target language (Ellis, 2005). The importance of sustained meaningful interaction with proficient speakers in daily life, to stimulate and accelerate learning, cannot be underestimated (Ortega, 2008). Research amongst English learners in Australia suggests that 1,765 hours of formalised ESOL tuition is needed to attain a level suitable for working in most jobs (LEC, 2022). Furthermore, research has shown that using language in regular interaction with fluent speakers outside the classroom aids acquisition, rather than solely relying on classroom teaching (Norton 2000; Norton and Toohey 2001, both cited in NRDC, 2008).

However, the participant quotation that opened this chapter demonstrates the difficult experience of language learning for many migrants in the UK. For example, it may appear likely, but is by no

means certain, that learners in employment have more exposure to English. In some workplaces, such as warehouses or factories, employees may all speak the same first language or have low levels of English, which makes exposure to good language models more difficult (Baynham *et al.,* 2007). In addition, women's progress in English appears to be negatively impacted as lack of developed literacy in their first language may inhibit progress, or being the primary caregivers in the family can mean their engagement with formal classes is piecemeal or less intensive (*ibid*). Opportunities to speak with proficient or native speakers may be limited to short casual interactions in shops or more formal meetings with the council or health professionals (Cooke, 2006). In large settled Pakistani or Polish communities, for example, people find many basic needs met within their own community, thereby diminishing the onus to speak English (Baynham *et al.,* 2007), a factor which impacts on English practice and possibly motivation. Pavlenko (2000) writes of access to linguistic resources as being a key variable in language acquisition. She reports on studies with very similar outcomes wherein low status migrants in Europe and Canada felt disempowered to speak with others (Bremer *et al.,* 1996; Heller, 1999; Norton Peirce, 1995;) and where negative interactions - rapid speech, failure of speakers to take non-native listener's needs into account and misunderstandings with native speakers - had led to such interactions being avoided (Bremer *et al.,* 1996 in Pavlenko, 2000).

Formal classes do play an important role in developing and enabling language learning. Cooke's (2006) interviewees found language classes to be valuable and welcomed them. A report into learner progression in ESOL (Higton *et al.,* 2019) found that learners were keen to develop confidence and progress to higher levels. Baynham *et al.'s* participants (2007) and the 'English My Way 'project respondents (Tinder Foundation, 2016) give examples of how increasing ability to cope in daily situations had come as a result of their ESOL courses. However, learners and providers questioned in the Higton (2019) study identified several barriers to progression - circumstantial factors such as lack of access to childcare, cost of the course or inability to change working patterns or intrinsic ones, such as low existing levels of literacy or lack of personal motivation.

As Dörnyei (2018) reminds us, learning a language is unlike other forms of learning.

> ' An L2 (a second language) is more than a mere communication code that can be learned like other academic subjects; knowledge of a language is part of the individual's personal "core", is involved in most mental activities, and forms an important aspect of one's identity. '

Anyone who has ever attempted to learn a foreign language is aware of the deep personal investment required in terms of both time, persistence and mental effort. It is a long-term pursuit comprising formalised and informal learning (Demouy, *et al.,* 2016 in Gaved & Peasegood, 2017).

Thus, when learners enter formal English study, progress for some can be slow. In my organisation learners typically complete a level of study over the course of an academic year but this can extend to 18 months or much more in some cases. Most issues occur at absolute beginner level (E0), where progression to the next level (E1) can sometimes take 2 years. Furthermore, transition from intermediate (E3) to upper - intermediate (L1) finds some learners struggling to adapt to the demands of the level and can take even longer to achieve. The 'Effective Teaching and Learning ESOL ' study (Baynham *et al.,* 2007:33) found that progress was slower amongst 'long-term residents' (in the UK longer than five years) from the settled migrant communities. Characteristically, these residents were older, had less schooling and lower first language literacy levels, any of which could impact on improvement. A study for the Association of Colleges (NRDC & UCL, 2015) found it difficult to agree on a standard number of hours for ESOL courses due to the wide range in learners' prior educational experience and literacy and the implication for the number of hours required to improve. This may explain why for learners with no English language or literacy, just one twelve-week course of 60 GLH is often not sufficient to progress to an exam course.

In summary, would-be learners experiencing a dearth of opportunity to practise and improve English skills turn to formal classes to gain the input and assistance required. Yet a significant amount of time in the classroom is required by some in order to make sustained progress.

1.5 Guided learning hours (GLH)

Attendance on formal courses can play a vital role in an individual's pursuit of their language learning goals and amount of classroom contact time is an important element in the discussion of learner progress. Minimum recommended guided learning hours (GLH) for ESOL vary. City and Guilds, a major awarding body, recommend 214-237 hours to move up a level in all 4 language skills in one academic year (City and Guilds, 2017). In comparison, Cambridge ESOL Skills for Life recommend 270 (Knapp, 2015). Yet learners at my organisation received only 180 GLH (3 courses of 60 hours) per level prior to 2020 and this is not uncommon across the funded ESOL sector, where GLH are mapped to awarding body assessments. Since 2020, courses in my organisation have had split GLH according to mode, as recommended by Ascentis qualifications - reading 60, writing 75 and speaking 120, an annual total of 255. This division at least acknowledges that time to acquire different language skills varies. Nevertheless, what hours can be offered is due to available funding and funding decisions based on ESFA guidance. Since the shift of Government focus to adult skills-building in 2010 and a closer alignment with the skills building agenda in my organisation, GLH for our learners have actually increased from two per week to six and a half and from one class to two or three. This has been a positive development. However, the Lifelong Education Committee (2022) recommend 360 GLH as an appropriate number of annual hours sufficient for making progress, a

figure far higher than the 255 currently offered. The table below provides an overview of suggested notional GLH and contrasts with the number of hours normally offered in my organization.

Organisation	Number of notional GLH per annum to complete a level
Australian study cited in LEC, 2022	1,765 hours to attain level sufficient for employment = 7-8 years of study at 225 hours per annum
Ascentis Awarding Body	225
City and Guilds	214 - 237
Cambridge ESOL	270
Lifelong Education Committee	360
Current research context	**225**

Table 1 Overview of notional awarding body and research context guided learning hours

The financial health of any adult education service depends on drawing down maximum ESFA funding by way of learner numbers and exam success rates. Exam passes draw down maximum funding, which places the onus on providers to enter learners for accreditation. Nevertheless, the amount of funding is capped annually and, as outlined, this amount decreased by 60% in real terms between 2009 - 2016 (Foster & Bolton, 2017). How classes are timetabled and GLH decided is at the discretion of individual organisations, based on exam board stipulations or local context and priorities. Offering additional hours, above the 4-6 per week currently offered, to provide extra assistance to learners means that costs incurred cannot be recovered from the funding available (Higton *et al.,* 2019). Learners and providers in the Higton (*ibid*) report concurred and stated that time to practise and develop language was lacking, which therefore limited progression, especially at beginner to intermediate levels.

One solution to progression issues within learning organisations has been access to RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) non-accredited course funding. The ability to offer RARPA courses using community learning funding rather than Adult Education Budget (ESFA) funding was well received by the six colleges surveyed in the AOC report (NRDC & UCL, 2015), despite them being less lucrative for colleges than accredited courses. Providers questioned in Higton's (2019) report named them 'bridging courses' and considered them crucial to maintaining and progressing learners needing consolidation. Yet, a further 60 GLH to develop skills to a sufficient level may still not be enough to progress to desired levels of fluency, confidence or exam

attainment. Learners are not able to repeat the same course in an academic year and therefore some may remain trapped in a cycle of attending one preparation course, leaving, and returning months later. At the other end of the scale, learners who progress from intermediate to upper-intermediate can follow a similar pattern if unable to make sufficient progress to complete an exam. A course with more classroom GLH is favourable for learners but not for organisations as the cost of running the course can be higher than the revenue generated from funding. These funding arrangements and the resulting decisions appear to work against the interests of learners requiring more consolidation. Organisations would be required to prioritise the GLH to suit their cohorts to their own financial disadvantage. Therefore, unless funding rules change or further funding becomes available, the issue of providing more hours for study in a manner that has no detrimental cost implication for learning providers remains an important concern. Irrespective of the artificial construct of GLH on formalised courses, learning a second language requires regular concentrated application and practice over a period of time that is difficult to enumerate. One certainty is, the greater the time dedicated to learning English, the better.

1.6 Meeting ESOL needs at the local level: experiences of a learning provider in the East of England.

This research takes place at a large adult community learning (ACL) provider in a town in the East of England. The town has a population of 225,300 with a high percentage of bilingual speakers. In 2019, when the research began, there were over 135 languages and dialects spoken and 30% of residents originated from south Asian backgrounds. (Business Intelligence, 2019). Updated information from the 2021 census (ONS, 2022) reveals that Asians now make up 37% of the population and the town as a whole is 54.8% non-white. White British account for 31.8% of residents. The Romanian community has grown from 0.2% to 3.8% since 2011 (ONS, 2022) and the town's hotels have recently become home to large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers.

While recent migration from Europe has seen Polish (3.9%) and more recently, Romanian migrants settle locally (ONS,2022) the town is characterised by a large settled migrant community from the Shylet region of Bangladesh, and Azad Kashmir area of Pakistan. This impacts upon delivery of ESOL classes as the 2011 census showed that nationally, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups contained a larger number of low-level English speakers, 18.9% and 21.9% respectively (ONS, 2018 cited in Higton *et al.,* 2019). The ONS statistics revealed that a larger number of women declared poor English skills and, of that number, it was three times more probable that they lacked educational qualifications (*ibid*). In fact, locally in 2019 12.9% of the population had no formal qualifications compared to 7.7% nationally, and 49% lived in relative poverty (Business Intelligence, 2019). 2021 census statistics revealed that 76% of local residents claimed to speak English very well

or well (compared to 80% nationally) and 25% said they could not speak English well or at all (compared to 20% nationally). The four most commonly spoken languages in the town, apart from English, are Urdu, Polish, Romanian and Bengali (LBC,2023). This paints a picture of a town with shifting populations, increasing not decreasing in ethnic diversity.

Earlier in the chapter it was noted that local circumstances and migration patterns account for a variation in make-up of ESOL classes across the country. In 2018/19, 86% of ESOL learners in my organisation were women, mainly of Pakistani or Bengali origin. In 2020/21, the data collection period, 88% were female with 64% being of South Asian origin. Arab, African, European, south American and east Asian learners are in the minority and this has been the case historically within the service and displays a degree of homogeneity in ESOL cohorts, which may be uncommon elsewhere in the country. In comparison, the national average for female ESOL learners was 70% in 2013 (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013, cited in Foster and Bolton, 2017). In 2019, in some areas nationally, classes were mainly comprised asylum seekers (Higton *et al.,* 2019) but only from 2022 did larger numbers of asylum seekers (from Afghanistan and Ukraine) begin to access our services. Furthermore, organisational LMS data show that in 2018/19, 71 % of ESOL learners were not employed. Many learners have never been employed and some only have basic level education.

Although my organisation delivers adult literacy, numeracy, apprenticeships and other skills-based courses, ESOL is the largest single curriculum area in terms of teachers and enrolments. Prior to the pandemic, enrolments stood at 828[2] (2018/19), with up to 20 different classes per term. Covid-19 impacted learner enrolments, as reflected nationally in statistics given earlier, and the research year saw only 433 learners enrol, 381 women and 52 men. However, in April 2023 enrolments already totalled 496 which might indicate people's confidence to return to group learning contexts.

Currently, all ESOL courses are delivered at a central site and not in community venues. Therefore, despite being a community learning provider, this ACL provision resembles a further education (FE) provider in terms of its ESOL delivery. The service receives an average of 20 ESOL enquiries per week and the current waiting list for an initial assessment stands at 138, with 170 waiting to join courses. The current waiting lists for classes and initial assessments is indicative of the nationwide trend of high numbers, swollen more recently with large numbers of refugees on Government dispersal programmes.

[2] This figure reflects course enrolments not individual learners

Availability of ESOL classes across the town has varied in recent years with two other major providers (FE colleges within a ten-mile radius) having made changes to their provision for organisational reasons. One offers classes at a town campus and in local community centres while the other now focuses on 16–19-year-olds, not adult ESOL. The local university has a Centre for English Language but does not offer classes leading to ESOL qualifications nor run courses suited to students with low levels of English or literacy. A number of small third sector and private training providers exist, some of which receive Government funding. This makes our service the leading ESOL provider in the town at present.

For learners enrolling on courses in my organisation many factors previously foregrounded may have impacted on their learning journey: low GLH on courses, the lack of daily language exposure and practice, low levels of previous education and breaks in learning due to personal and family circumstances or in some cases and the Covid pandemic (those who opted not to join online courses). The table below details the progress of seven female learners from the initial assessment of their level to the present, highlighting a number of salient issues.

Learner & nationality	Time in UK at initial assessment	Year and level of first ESOL course	Level of current course	Time from first course to present	Increase in level	Break in study
A (Bangladesh)	**13 years**	**2016 Entry 1**	**2023 Entry 3**	**7 years**	**2 levels**	**2020 -21 Covid**
B (Bangladesh)	**3 years**	**2017 Entry 1 / Entry 2**	**2023 Entry 3**	**6 years**	**2 levels**	**2020 -21 Covid**
C (Pakistan)	**18 years**	**2018 Entry 1 / Entry 2**	**2023 Level 1**	**5 years**	**3 levels**	**No**
D (Pakistan)	**1 year**	**2018 Entry 1 / Entry 2**	**2023 Level 1**	**5 years**	**3 levels**	**No**
E (Bangladesh)	**12 years**	**2016 Entry 0**	**2023 Level 1**	**7 years**	**4 levels**	**2019 - 2022**
F (Somalia)	**3 months**	**2016 Entry 1**	**2023 Level 1 / Level 2**	**7 years**	**4 levels**	**2020 -21 Covid**
G (Algeria)	**2 months**	**2013 Entry 3**	**2023 Level 1 / Level 2**	**10 years**	**2 levels**	**2014 -22 family**

Table 2 Examples of learner progression in six current learners at the research organisation

First, a number of learners (e.g., A, C and E) choose to attend an English course many years after having moved to the UK. Research previously cited detailed how this fact can act as in increased impediment to learning. Second, despite having lived in the UK for some time, these individuals were assessed at beginner or absolute beginner level which demonstrates a lack of informal

engagement with the language in that time. Third, irrespective of disparity in the amount of individual progress made, none of the learners below have progressed by a level each academic year, as notional GLH expects, although Learners C, D and E have made very steady progress. Finally, the number of years several learners have invested in their language learning implies a desire to learn and improve, and highlights the importance attached to formal ESOL courses.

Furthermore, attaining higher levels of English can prove challenging. In 2018/9, of 130 learners at intermediate level (E3), only 42 progressed to the next level. Only 18 of these were of Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin (43%). This is unusual given that 61% of learners came from that background. There may be several explanations for this. First, female learners may be required to care for family members or encounter family pressure to remain at home and not study. It may reflect a perceived lack of need for a qualification at a higher level if not wishing to work or undertake further study. It could represent a satisfaction with the current language level which is considered adequate to function in English (E3 /intermediate/B1 is the threshold level at which the UKVI set the Citizenship speaking test). However, it might be that learners find the level increasingly difficult or that the content is failing to meet their needs.

Research in 2019 showed that women not seeking work, refugees and asylum seekers were less likely to be studying literacy at Level 2 than other types of migrants (Higton *et al.,*2019). This was considered to be due to the effect of lower initial literacy levels of such cohorts. To illustrate this, in summer 2019 sustained low ESOL numbers and poorer pass rates in reading assessments at the two higher levels (L1 and L2) prompted my organisation to cease offering ESOL qualification courses at those levels for a number of terms. Yet the Lifelong Education Committee (2022) believe that enhancing and tailoring ESOL provision at higher levels to assist in progression to vocational study and skilled jobs is vital. Higton *et al.,* (2019) also consider that a 'lack of provision at higher levels may impact learners 'confidence and motivation to progress their learning' (Higton *et al.,* 2019:79).

This may be further the case if learners are being asked to transfer to an adult literacy course (Functional Skills) rather than continuing with an ESOL qualification. Functional Skills qualifications are designed for native speakers and do not provide the focus on grammar and lexis required by not-yet-fluent speakers (Learning and Work Institute, 2020 in LEC, 2022). ESOL learners often join FS courses at a lower level when transferring from ESOL. For example, in September 2019, sixty-five learners due to progress from E3 ESOL to an adult literacy course were tested for their Functional Skills English level using an online test (BKSB). Only 19 were able to progress to the higher adult literacy level (Level 1) while 46 either remained at E3, dropped one level to E2, or in the majority of cases, moved down two levels to E1. This can be demoralising for learners who may decide to

discontinue when faced with yet more years of study to achieve a higher FS level qualification, albeit a potentially more widely recognised one.

To sum up, ESOL learners of all levels, and most acutely at the lowest and the higher levels in my organisation, require more regular exposure to and practice of English as well as increased hours of study in order to speed up their rate of language learning for daily life beyond the classroom, and progress to qualifications. Satisfying this need would be helped by changes in Government funding policy and an appropriate migrant language strategy (LEC, 2022). However, meeting the current language learning needs of migrants of different backgrounds, genders, ages and circumstances will continue to require ingenuity and flexibility on the part of individual learning providers and teachers.

1.7 Using technology to meet ESOL learner progression needs

Such ingenuity and flexibility were clearly demonstrated during the coronavirus outbreak with the whole UK education sector starting to embrace teaching beyond the physical classroom using digital means. There was a call in the educational press in 2020 for teachers and organisations to take advantage of the 'wide-scale experiment' to measure the impact and effectiveness of digital tools for educational purposes (Luckin, 2020). In fact, it is difficult to imagine education not adopting technology as a key component of any programme of learning in the future, believe Seta, Kukulska-Hulme & Arrigo (2014). A similar view was held by the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (FELTAG, 2014) which sought to drive forward the implementation of learning technology across the sector, including adult community learning. One of their 2014 report recommendations was to mandate that 10% of learning be online from 2015/16, increasing to 50%, where feasible, two years later. The report appeared to focus predominantly upon the delivery of vocational courses yet, in 2015, the group turned its attention to how technology might improve learning of functional skills such as ESOL.

A number of studies chart tentative steps towards this goal of online learning in ESOL. First, a small-scale study at Kirklees College (Shepherd, 2015) investigated manager and ESOL learner attitudes to blended learning which was clearly being implemented to some degree at that time, facilitated by the 'Moodle' virtual learning environment (VLE). Furthermore, between 2013 and 2017 the Good Things Foundation (formerly The Tinder Foundation) 'English My Way' project saw blended ESOL courses delivered to E0/Pre-entry learners in community settings (Good Things Foundation, 2021). Several organisations in an AOC report (NRDC & UCL, 2015) were utilising mobile technology for independent learning and online work to supplement classroom time for higher level learners at the same time. Other colleges in the same report called for more online and blended learning, especially at higher levels, particularly to help employed learners who found it hard to attend classes. Despite

this, before the pandemic it would appear that increasing online provision was not high on the agenda for many FE providers (Zaidi, 2018 and SAGE, 2020 in Hamer & Smith, 2021).

The reports considered above seem to suggest that using technology for learning was becoming more commonplace within the ESOL classroom but to a lesser extent for learning beyond. In my organisation, prior to 2018 and the move to centralised teaching premises, the majority of ESOL delivery took place in community venues (schools, community centres) and access to technology was dependent upon the venue. Many possessed a screen/projector or Smart Board, but with limited internet access. Personal smart phone (as opposed to non-web enabled handsets) ownership was far below current levels. An attempt to introduce Moodle across the organisation was short-lived and to this day no cross-departmental VLE exists.

Interestingly, in 2019 the Higton report chose to investigate the use of technology for delivering ESOL and one of its key research questions was how technology might play a role in learner progression. Results reveal the extent of the progress made to embrace learning technology in ESOL, showing that in 161 UK providers, technology was widely used by learners and teachers in lessons and, in some cases, also for homework. 75% of organisations used mobile phones in the classroom, a slightly higher figure than interactive whiteboards or desktop computers. This also reflected the situation for many ESOL classrooms in my own organisation just prior to the pandemic.

The FELTAG report (2014) made ambitious statements about the transformative potential of learning technology.

> '…enormous strides can be made in the *effectiveness and impact of learning* when digital technology is harnessed and used creatively by learners, teachers and assessors.' (2014:7)
>
> 'Learning technology, when astutely used by teachers and providers, can improve FE learners' chances and successfully influence what students do to learn, so that every student can reach their learning potential.' (2014:6)

75% of respondents in Higton *et al.'s* (2019) survey believed that using technology for learning and teaching was appropriate in ESOL. Technology is clearly being utilised but how is it benefitting learning? What do 'effectiveness and impact of learning' mean in the ESOL context?

Learning technology is a broad term and encompasses many types of devices and tools. As the thesis title suggests, this research is most interested in the device learners have in their hands - their mobile phone. The primary rationale is accessibility. Research has shown that access to a personal or family computer amongst ESOL learners, or ability to use one proficiently, cannot be guaranteed (LSIS/City Academy, 2010; Shepherd, 2015). The blended learning in place at Shepherd's institution

appears to have relied primarily on a computer, not a mobile phone, and it was the hardware itself that presented the largest barrier to respondents - both lack of a computer in the home and the ability to use it. As Higton *et al.* (2019) demonstrate further this continued to be an issue shortly before the pandemic when 48% of FE ESOL providers stated that numbers of learners struggled to engage with technology, particularly lower-level learners, older people and those with little prior education. In addition, a 2021 DfE Edtech survey (DfE, 2021) of English schools saw 61% of teachers placing availability of technology in pupils' homes as a significant barrier to its increased usage in education. With these pupils possibly being children of ESOL learners, the barrier would presumably affect both children and their parents. Yet, in contrast, 75% of the Higton's respondents declared usage of mobile phones to support ESOL teaching and learning in the classroom, and technology and computer hardware were being used by some FE colleges to provide work beyond the classroom. Furthermore, Gaved & Peasegood's 2017 study with ESOL learners in Milton Keynes also described how, prior to the study, participants had already enthusiastically appropriated their mobile handsets for informal language learning.

As considered earlier, ESOL learners require more regular exposure to English, along with time to speak and practise and may present with limited literacy, which can hinder progression on formal courses. Can learning technology be expected to improve their chances and influence their learning? If increased study time and interaction with the language are necessary and possibilities for increasing study hours within an organisation's existing budget and timetable currently appear limited, the chief option remaining is to utilise the time available to learners beyond college walls. While setting paper-based homework has traditionally been the means of extending learning hours outside the classroom, using technology could broaden the range of tasks and sources of interaction to include video, voice recording, interactive self-marking tests and learner collaboration interfaces, for instance. This mix of face-to-face and mobile digital learning can be described as mobile 'blended' learning and may provide a means of promoting learning both radically different and more transformative than what has preceded it. Hamer & Smith (2021) conclude that mobile pedagogy represents a little explored but inexpensive and potentially fruitful way forward for digital edtech. Burden *et al.* (2019 in Hamer & Smith, 2021) believe mobile technologies can effect a paradigm shift in teaching and learning and particularly at the current time when 'conditions and technologies are aligning' to facilitate this (Kearney *et al.,* 2018 in Hamer & Smith, 2021:29).

Learning with mobile phones, say Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler (2013), is a growing area of research and practice which is being shaped by the rapid pace of change in technology and society. Data from 2022 (Hootsuite, 2022) show 68.6% of the global population are unique mobile phone users and

63.5% have access to the internet. UK mobile phone subscriptions increased from approximately 43 million in 2000 to 85.3 million in 2015. The 2022 figure stood at 83.25 million (Hiley, 2023). The steady rise in mobile phone ownership can be similarly seen amongst UK ESOL learners. The UK Government MoLeNET programme funded research projects to implement and support mobile learning between 2007 - 10. At that time several projects needed to provide learners with mobile devices. However, Savill-Smith, Chopra & Haure (2012) note that in the two years following the research, personal smart phone ownership amongst ESOL learners had increased greatly, along with the skills required to use them. The fact that 75% of ESOL providers now claim to utilise phone handsets to support ESOL teaching in some way (Higton *et al.,* 2019) is testimony to the growth and ubiquity of these devices across the sector. In light of this, and my own teaching experience, mobile phones have been chosen as the key device to investigate how learning might be extended and GLH increased. The decision to focus the thesis on smart phones was in place well before the coronavirus pandemic but can now become part of Luckin's (2020) 'edtech experiment'.

1.8 Moving beyond the classroom

Migrant ESOL learners' lack of socialisation and chance to converse at length with other fluent speakers has been well documented (Ali, 2016; Paget & Stevenson, 2014; Savill-Smith, Chopra & Haure, 2012) and discussed. Shepherd (2015) and Baynham *et al.* (2007) explain the importance attached to the classroom in this regard as it is often the learners' primary source of conversation, socialising, new language input and the main means of language improvement. Yet with regard to language learning, Richards (2015, in Reinders & Benson, 2017) argues that success depends on what happens both in and beyond the classroom. UK ESOL learners have the advantage of being surrounded by English. Skilful curation of activities as part of structured mobile blended learning may help learners profit from this. A smart phone can facilitate situated language learning and increase opportunities for learning 'on-the-go', where ESOL learners interact daily with English texts and in conversation with native speakers (Kukulska Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015; MoLeNET, 2010). Sharples *at al.* (2007, cited in Gaved and Peasgood, 2017) emphasise the importance of mobile pedagogy taking advantage of the impromptu learning that is able to occur as people interact in spaces outside the classroom. In this regard phones are superior to computers or tablets, being more portable, discreet and functional. They also can play a central role in the emerging move towards more authentic and social learning (Demouy, 2016 in Gaved & Peasgood, 2017).

Learning beyond the classroom and using a mobile phone to learn may present a new opportunity or a new challenge to ESOL learners. A mobile learning action research study by Dudeney & Hockley (2016) highlighted one participant who reacted negatively to the communicative mobile activities

trialled, finding them of no benefit, and Stevenson & Liu (2010 in Dudeney & Hockley, 2016) believe some learners prefer a more traditional style of learning activity. However, perceptions of learning can change. The remaining participants in the 2016 study enjoyed the new mode of learning, sensing their own language improvement and the researchers noticed increased motivation and engagement. Furthermore, learners from a mobile learning project in Brighton and Hove (Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015:5, 15) voiced positive reactions:

> "Before this practice with apps I've never really used my phone to study before and nowadays I use it every day. In my country is not a common attitude. No one when in the class is using a cell phone. When they are using, it is nothing related to education and here you're free every time to watch it to study, it's a new thing!" Enrico, 19, ESOL student

> "I took a picture of the food hygiene rating in the window of a restaurant so later I could look up the website, prepare for interview and ask my teacher for help [with] the next lessons. It's easy to take a picture and put in notes on your phone." Magda, 34, ESOL student

These learner responses reveal an increased engagement with language learning and practice outside lessons but instigated by participation in a formal course. It was considered beneficial and facilitated by mobile phone technology. Using a mobile phone with a focus on language learning beyond but in tandem with the classroom could provide ESOL learners in my organisation with a new means of interacting with and studying English.

1.9 Pilot study and rationale for research

This mode of learning could be described as 'blended learning' which Jisc (2020:1) define as 'a combination of face-to-face learning and dynamic digital activities and content that facilitate anytime/anyplace learning.' Using technology in a structured, blended approach in ESOL was certainly in its infancy in my organisation when this study began in 2019 and primarily involved recommending websites or videos for further study, using Google Translate and searching the internet. However, in 2017, I had begun to devise materials to develop learner listening skills at home, initially using CDs lent out to learners, often with a Discman if learners had no audio equipment at home. This was then superseded by using mobile phones and the application Padlet. This was well-received by both staff and students. Resources were developed to include ESOL learners from E1 to L1 and were utilised as part of speaking and listening courses. Learners were given a worksheet (see Appendix 2) during the lesson and accessed the online recording at home via an emailed link or, latterly, a QR code or the Padlet app. In this way tentative steps were taken to

blend learning, offering language practice that had not been possible previously and vastly facilitated by mobile technology and the internet.

In 2020, when FE providers were faced with emergency remote teaching and the transfer to online teaching, Welsh Government guidance (Welsh Government, 2020 in Estyn, 2021:8) noted that,

> 'There is a huge difference between moving classroom content online and a planned blended learning programme which effectively integrates face-to-face learning and remote activities. Working in this way requires specific skills for both learners and staff. We recognise that this is an on-going process and that it will take time to establish high standards of blended learning across the whole sector.'

A contrast exists between the teaching and learning conducted during the pandemic, sometimes referred to as emergency remote teaching (ERT) and that of the established delivery of blended learning (Hamer & Smith, 2021). It is the latter that is of interest here. The journey toward the establishment of the structured integration of in-person and asynchronous learning requires time and skill and this thesis investigates how this might happen to positive effect on ESOL courses.

In the very early stages of the current research, between January and March 2020, a pilot study was undertaken with a group of 20 upper-intermediate (L1) learners. The aim was to introduce the learners to using their phone handsets as a homework tool, identify barriers and test the functionality of Padlet as a delivery platform for different types of language skill and activity, not only listening. This would help gauge initially whether learners could and would successfully engage with a systematic programme of activities outside the classroom. The research method was observation. The pilot lasted 10 weeks and observations were recorded in a weekly research diary.

A number of considerations were highlighted. First, although eighteen out of twenty learners were able to access the Padlet website and complete work on their mobile phones without issue, problems with device functionality arose for a small number. Second, learners still required varying degrees of assistance in completing digital tasks such as sending photos by email. Third, it was clear that some language learning activities (vocabulary and spelling activities, reading longer texts, simultaneous reading/listening, writing short texts and grammar exercises) were possible via Padlet whilst others such as grammar presentation, oral practice and error correction feedback were less suited. Finally, it appeared possible to extend guided learning hours by delivering some aspects of language work exclusively in the online setting. During the 12-week course some vocabulary items (collocations with 'get' and six idioms) and spellings (words with double letters) were studied exclusively outside of class time. Assessment took place in class or via online assessment with good results, demonstrating that some discrete language items could be taught and consolidated

relatively easily as part of the course outside the classroom. Nevertheless, the pilot study drew attention to areas requiring further experimentation, problem-solving and insight from the literature, namely issues of functionality and affordances of phones, the suitability of particular language skills and activities to mobile blended learning, how to improve learner digital skills and a pedagogy to maximise language acquisition through mobile blended learning.

1.10 The research landscape and journey

Research and implementation studies relating to mobile language learning (often referred to as mobile-assisted language learning - MALL) exist in some number but many of these focus on higher education (Whittaker, 2013a) or English as a foreign (EFL - see glossary for a definition) not second language (ESL) (Viberg & Grönlund, 2013). Far fewer studies yet relate to UK ESOL and research with migrants as the primary focus is a newer development (Kukulska- Hulme, 2019). Parker & Lynn (2002, in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017) believe that marginalised groups and those with minority languages have often been overlooked in educational research. Of three hundred and forty-five papers in Burston's (2013) annotated bibliography of mobile-assisted language learning, sixty percent were from conference proceedings rather than journals. This may suggest research activity at a small-scale practitioner level. Many relate to the development of learning apps, use of social media or learner attitudes to mobile learning. A mere twenty-one emanated from the UK and only 3 related to a UK adult migrant context. Despite research activity, Burston (2014) argues that MALL as a means of language teaching is 'still on the fringes.' (Burston, 2014:1).

Similarly, the blended language learning research field is relatively novel (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019). However, interest in and literature dedicated to the practice in English language teaching is increasing (Sharma & Barret, 2007; Dudeney & Hockley, 2007; Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013; MCarthy, 2016). Chen *et al*.'s (2021) overview of twenty-five years of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) literature indicated that MALL and BL were the topics of greatest interest in journal articles in the field. Hockley (2018) describes how research in the ELT blended learning field falls into one of two categories, comparison and non-comparison studies. The former attempts to draw comparisons of language learning outcomes when implementing opposing modes (face-to-face versus blended, for example) under quasi-experimental conditions. The latter focuses on design, implementation and attitudes and forms the bulk of the research activity. While this study primarily adopts the latter emphasis, the circumstances of the pandemic have allowed for a measure of comparison between learning modes in regard to learner attitudes and experiences.

Classroom teaching and learning has long been the focus of research with learning beyond the classroom receiving less attention. Studies amongst a variety of learner types have investigated the

effect of out-of-class learning in tandem with formal instruction (Wong & Nunan, 2011; Pickard,1996; Sandqvist & Wikström,2015 in Benson,2017) and more recently research is emerging whose primary focus is self-directed informal learning unrelated to formal learning (Sockett, 2014 and Cole & Vanderplank, 2016 in Benson, 2017).

This study into blended learning draws on the principles of practitioner research, which see the teacher driving the research and using their insider expertise to effect change in their organisation (Denscombe, 1998). Working in this research tradition is a development which English language teaching digital specialist Gordon Lewis believes is the way ahead for the ELT sector and can 'provide a healthy dose of reality and context to the phrase 'informed by research'' (Lewis, 2020). It borrows several principles and practices from ethnography. The study is interpretative. This reflects the shift away from purely quantitative studies in the field of computer-assisted language learning common since the 1980's, acknowledging that language learning is a complex social activity that requires the depth and richness of insight afforded by a qualitative approach (Stickler & Hampel, 2015). That said, a small number of quantitative methods are utilised (a questionnaire and app usage/video view data), enabling data gathering related to learner activity observation beyond the classroom to complement and support the qualitative data (a detailed discussion of the research design and methods can be found in chapters 3 and 4). This is a small-scale study, with a total of twenty-eight participants (4 male/24 female) and data are gathered from three separate cohorts (two at Entry 3 and one at Level 1) over one academic year. A study of this length can contribute a fuller understanding of the attitudes, experiences and practices of ESOL learners in a blended learning setting to complement shorter-term UK ESOL studies or those with less formalised implementation (Shepherd, 2015; Lewandowski,2021; Bryson,2020; Khan,2021; Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015; Gaved & Peasegood,2017; Ingham,2016). The focus here goes beyond the parameters of these studies to explore more fully the design, activities and promotion of language acquisition, providing insights helpful in designing appropriate pedagogically-sound structured mobile blended learning.

The first tentative steps toward this thesis in the form of the listening materials intervention have already been outlined. However, the initial proposal for the current thesis focused on reading. This stemmed from the issue of poor ESOL exam results and the need for increased hours to progress reading skills at higher levels. Yet, whilst reviewing the literature and considering learners in the sector, it became clear that the need for more GLH was a concern across all language skills and acknowledged by many in the sector (Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015; NRDC & UCL,2015; LEC,2022). I believed this broader view would prove more useful both for my own and for other organisations, allowing the focus to be narrowed in future.

At its heart this research aims to meet learners' language needs, increasing their guided learning hours to aid progress and improve educational outcomes. It focuses on learning, not inside, but outside the classroom, by means of a mobile phone, alongside face-to-face teaching. A programme of structured mobile blended study, incorporating activities to promote language practice and communication, might be able to increase guided learning hours by up to 3 hours per week or 30 hours over the length of a course. In order to investigate this and the affordances of mobile phones, their use on programmes of blended learning with ESOL learners and the ability of mobile blended learning to extend learning, the research poses the following questions:

1. ***How, and can mobile phones be used to provide appropriate extended learning opportunities for ESOL learners beyond the formal classroom?***

2. ***What pedagogical considerations are needed when designing mobile blended language learning aimed at increasing guided learning hours and promoting progress beyond the ESOL classroom?***

3. ***How, and can learning assisted by mobile phone technology bridge deficits in formal learning hours and promote progress?***

The first question investigates the supposed ability, suitability and affordances of mobile handsets for extending learning on ESOL courses in my organisation, never having implemented such a mode of study previously.

The second question explores the notion of pedagogy. In devising courses of formalised blended learning McCarthy (2016) and Johnson & Marsh (2016:56) call for any underpinning pedagogy to be rooted in 'the constraints and parameters' that stem from an understanding of how languages are acquired and used in and beyond the classroom. Beyond the sphere of language learning, Hamer & Smith (2021) see general agreement in the literature on learning with technology that widely accepted pedagogical principles should apply, irrespective of context, but contrasting views exist with regard to the need for a new e-pedagogy. In the field of mobile-assisted language learning a pedagogical framework currently exists (Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015) to inform the use of mobile learning in and beyond the classroom. The research will explore and assess the blended ESOL courses implemented in the light of current MALL pedagogy.

The final question prompts a summary evaluation of the ability of structured mobile blended learning to meet the need of learners in my organisation for extended time to study and increased progress.

In summary, this first chapter has outlined how ESOL learners in the research context described are among those identified by census data and previous research as being most in need of time and opportunity to improve their English: women, primarily from South Asian backgrounds, and economic migrants and asylum seekers from countries which do not use English as an official language, in a town where 25% cannot speak English well or at all. Research has shed light on the difficulties of migrant socialisation and lack of opportunity to converse in English, despite residing in an English-speaking country. This translates into extended time required for exposure, study and practice of the language. ESOL providers are limited in what funding allows them to deliver to meet the needs of such learners in classroom courses. Government funding regulations for ESOL in FE and ACL does not allow for the amount of study and practice required to progress rapidly, particularly for learners whose educational background may militate against it.

Therefore, this thesis explores new avenues for increasing and accelerating language learning. An informal pilot study confirmed that a possible means of offering extended learning might lie in structured mobile blended learning. This is enabled by learners using a mobile handset and being active in language learning in the hours available outside the structured course**.** The growth in models of blended learning in all educational sectors and the widespread ownership of mobile handsets amongst ESOL learners opens up a new opportunity to investigate options for language learning and practice over and above what organisations are able, with limited means, to provide.

This current research is important for a number of reasons: first, blended learning, which saw a growth in interest and practice sparked by the Covid pandemic, requires further exploration, particularly in a UK ESOL context where studies are less numerous than other sectors of English language teaching and previous studies have been less comprehensive. Secondly, a large proportion of learners in my organisation are women, often from settled communities, who have been identified as those with the lowest levels of English and educational attainment. It is important to discover a means of increasing opportunity and time to learn suited to that specific demographic. Finally, this research can contribute to the literature in the ESOL field due to its deep dive and extended period of investigation and the focus on mobile blended learning course design and pedagogy.

The next chapter explores the literature relating to the three research questions and includes the following broad themes: the suitability and affordances of mobile phones to learn beyond the classroom with ESOL cohorts; the nature and design of mobile blended learning and ways in which learning hours might be extended; pedagogical principles for second language acquisition in a

mobile blended learning context; reconceptualising resources; the role of the teacher and learning in informal spaces.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

- Did you study a lot by yourself before we did these classes?
- No, no. Because in the class our teacher give us work, show the way how to study, then it's easy for me to go the way - what I need to do, what I need to learn, what I need to study. This is the better way to learn. So, I learnt a lot from this year.

Figure 3 Excerpt from participant interview. Learner 20 (Level 1 / Male / Bangladesh-Italy)

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 introduces the literature forming the conceptual basis for the thesis. It discusses a number of areas touched upon briefly in the previous chapter:

1. the migrant language learner and learning outside the ESOL classroom
2. the use of mobile phones and asynchronous blended learning with ESOL/migrant learners
3. the way in which blended learning using a mobile handset might be able to extend GLH and promote learning
4. the nature of language learning and the underpinning pedagogy and their importance in the development of mobile blended learning
5. learning 'on-the-go'

The chapter begins with brief definitions of important terms as used in the thesis and a description of how the review was conducted. This is followed by two sections addressing the research questions. The first considers themes from the first and third questions - how learning hours and progress on ESOL courses might be increased and whether blended language learning using mobile handsets is appropriate for ESOL students. Graham's (2005) blended learning framework assists in considering some key questions around adoption of blended learning in ESOL and there is a focus on blended language learning design. The second section addresses question 2, the pedagogical considerations of language learning beyond the classroom using mobile phones. It discusses the nature of second language (L2) learning in more detail and the potential impact of technology in language learning interventions outside of, but in tandem with, the formal classroom. It explores the role of teachers and the re-conceptualisation of teaching materials and practices for mobile blended learning.

2.2 Key terms

A wealth of terminology exists in the field of English language teaching and clarification is recommended, particularly in the case of digital terminology, where definitions may not be consistent across contexts (Estyn, 2020). Hence, what follows are terms as understood in this thesis. **ESOL** (English for speakers of other languages) is the sector teaching English to adult migrants residing in the UK. In other parts of the English-speaking world, it is often known as **ESL** (English as a second language). **EFL** (English as a foreign language) is the branch of English taught to those living outside an English-speaking country or who might undertake a short course in one, for example pupils in Japan learning English at school or an individual on a short summer language course in the UK. EFL learner cohorts largely consist of school children, young people - often from affluent families (Dudeney & Hockley, 2016) - university students or professionals. As such, their context, educational experience and reasons for learning are often quite different from those of migrants. EFL is a multi-million-dollar global industry (British Council, 2018) and a great deal of English, mobile phone and blended learning research is born out of the EFL world and outside of English-speaking countries. In contrast, there are relatively few studies with a UK ESOL perspective.

The primary focus of this study is usage of personal mobile phones. The words **'mobile phone'**, **'smart phone'** and **'mobile handset'** are preferred to 'mobile device' as the latter would include personal digital assistants (PDAs) or tablets, neither of which are under consideration here.

The most common terms used with regard to learning by such means are: **mobile learning** (or m-learning) which Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler (2013) define as 'learning with mobile devices.' '**Mobile life-long learning'** (mLLL) is relevant, as the current context is adult continuing education. Another important acronym in relation to language learning is **MALL** (mobile-assisted language learning) which is a newer and growing area of research interest. MALL is a sub-division of a much more established term **CALL** (computer-assisted language learning) which has existed since the early 1980s.

This research involves **blended learning**, now a familiar term, which can be defined as 'any combination of face-to-face teaching with computer technology' (Whittaker, 2013a). In this thesis the phrase **'mobile blended learning'** has been adopted to express the particular use of mobile phones as the main digital device employed. A related term, **'flipped classroom',** used occasionally here, is a well-established aspect of blended learning in English language teaching (Bowyer & Chambers, 2017). It is defined as 'the system of choices whereby activities traditionally done in classrooms are 'flipped' to be transferred to the domain of homework and self-study and vice versa' (McCarthy, 2016a:9). In many cases that self-study involves digital media. **Hybrid learning** is a

further term which also sees a combination of face-to-face and computer mediated learning but whose definition has undergone some change. This change will receive more attention later in the thesis.

Digital learning is taken here to mean any learning undertaken using digital hardware, software or products, such as pdfs. **Online learning** is a broad general term incorporating both **synchronous and asynchronous learning**, two increasingly common words referring to different modes of learning with technology. Synchronous denotes face-to-face computer mediated learning (via online teaching in a virtual classroom) whereas asynchronous describes digital learning without a teacher (i.e. self-study using digital means and resources). The latter is the primary blend considered in the thesis.

2.3 Conducting the literature review

Fink (2019) identifies four characteristics of a research literature review - systematic, explicit, comprehensive and reproducible. This section provides details of the system and methods employed in searching the available literature underpinning the thesis. It outlines search terms and parameters to increase reproducibility and details the analysis undertaken.

The research questions contained many of the key terms necessary to commence a search for appropriate sources as seen in the first two columns below. Further terms were added as required, as seen in columns 3 and 4. Initial exploration was focused online. The table outlines the main search terms used with Google, Google Scholar, Sunderland University Library Catalogue, and Discover. In addition, websites Research Gate, Academia and Excellence Gateway were utilised.

1	2	3	4
ESOL **ESL** **FE** **Further education** **Adult education** **Adult learning**	• blended learning • blended language learning • mobile blended language learning • mobile learning • MALL • mobile-assisted language learning	• independent language learning • independent learning • learner training • language learning autonomy • autonomous language learning	• SLA • SLA pedagogy • ESOL pedagogy • mobile pedagogy • language learning motivation

Table 3 Search terms

As this thesis is an implementation study, finding similar studies was paramount to ensure research formed the basis of the literature considered (Oliver, 2013). Aiming to complement and compare the literature in the UK context, ESOL was the primary search term used. Searches via Google/Scholar often utilised the operators ':ac.uk' and ':gov' to maintain a focus on sources emanating from the UK. The former elicited literature from the further and adult education sector (where ESOL is taught) in addition to university research studies into ESOL contexts. The latter gave access to relevant Government reports and papers.

Acronyms were preferred to the full terms in searches, first, as they are widely used in main texts and titles and secondly, as the expanded words, for example, 'English for speakers of other languages' would encompass many diverse, irrelevant fields related to English and languages in general. The acronym EFL was not chosen for reasons of learner demography outlined in the previous section. Inevitably, sources from such contexts were elicited but included on a case-by-case basis.

Although a large body of research exists into blended and mobile learning across all subject areas, only a fraction relates to English language teaching and learning. While some general sources on blended and mobile learning and design were helpful (e.g., Graham, 2005), those primarily related to language learning were considered the most relevant. Not all blended learning involves mobile phones. Therefore, 'mobile blended' and 'mobile learning' related literature was of particular interest. Mobile blended language learning studies relating to UK migrant contexts were targeted but Oliver (2013) highlights a possible dearth of relevant sources and, as this was the case, ESL was included to increase the number of possible relevant results and enable comparison across similar contexts (e.g., migrants in the UK and Canada). Mobile learning projects involving migrants learning other European languages were also considered as learner backgrounds, motivations and contexts resonate quite closely with those in the UK. The date of intervention studies played a role in their inclusion as only more recent research has involved use of smart phones.

As learning beyond the classroom is the main focus here, studies with a similar scope were of relevance. Hence, classroom-based research contexts were less useful. Moreover, there were large amounts of research attending to higher educational and secondary school contexts (particularly in non-English speaking countries such as Japan, Taiwan and Iran), specific app development and usage or interventions with social media such as Facebook. These were likewise largely considered outside the parameters of the study with occasional inclusions, if appropriate. Furthermore, searches into second language acquisition (SLA) produced literature mainly concerned with English but occasionally other second languages (such as French) were considered if context and results had

obvious resonance with the current study. The table below gives an overview of the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
ESOL ESL Adults (19+) Blended learning Blended language learning Mobile learning Mobile language learning BYOD English speaking world EU second language migrant studies Asynchronous learning	EFL – non-English speaking world (with exceptions) Higher education and EAP (with exceptions) Young learners - primary/secondary school (with exceptions) Studies not involving BYOD (with exceptions) Foreign languages (with exceptions) Online (synchronous) learning (with exceptions)

Table 4 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

A number of other search methods were employed:

- Systematic reviews and annotated bibliographies facilitated an overview of the literature in particular fields and allowed smaller-scale studies and conference proceedings to be viewed in more detail. Burston's (2013) review of implementation studies found that nearly 60% of MALL research existed outside of academic journals.
- Several edited print books and journals in the ESOL and English language teaching context offered further insight into important areas and current directions.
- Reference lists from publications were mined for relevant links.
- Quality of sources is an important consideration (Fink, 2019). Therefore, searches were undertaken in relevant peer-reviewed journals: The English Language Teaching Journal (ELTJ), ReCALL, Language Learning and Technology, International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning, Journal of Language Teaching and Research, TESOL Quarterly, and the Journal of Interactive Media in Education.
- Care was taken with web-based sources to ensure there was an ascribed author from a recognised organisation with academic credentials and statistics with a clear provenance.

2.4 Section 1: Learning ESOL by different means - mobile phones

This first section investigates whether smart phones can be the means of assisting migrants in promoting and extending English language learning and what factors require consideration when so doing. The first and final research questions consider these issues.

- ***How, and can mobile phones be used to provide appropriate extended learning opportunities for ESOL learners beyond the formal classroom?***

- ***How, and can learning assisted by mobile phone technology bridge deficits in formal learning hours and promote progress?***

Deleted: *students*

Chapter 1 foregrounded the issue of increasing numbers of migrants requiring more opportunity to progress in English. A dilemma faces many UK ESOL providers, namely the inability to provide learners with more than 5 or 6 GLH per week, primarily due to funding restrictions. An organisation's ability to be flexible in reaching and keeping ESOL learners, with their competing work and family commitments, is an additional challenge. Providers have sought to address these issues in different ways. Online or work-based ESOL provision has been one means but in 2019, only 12% of UK FE providers stated they offered such provision (Higton *et al*., 2019). If such alternative means are to increase, ESOL delivery beyond the classroom requires careful consideration, as borne out in the following example.

A project in Bristol, UK, involving primarily Polish, Somali and Urdu speakers (City Academy/LSIS, 2010), included a distance learning mode. The distance learners were taught via weekly scheduled radio programmes and radio phone-in. This proved problematic as learners with children at home or work commitments were not always available at the scheduled times. The medium of radio was unfamiliar and proved a barrier to learning for some. Access to computers was required but not everyone had a device at home. This demonstrates how appropriate extended study has to be suited and accessible to ESOL learners if it is to take place successfully.

Although the internet, not radio, is currently the most common means of distance learning, difficulties may still be encountered by ESOL learners new to such a course mode. The opening chapter detailed studies in which some learners clearly lacked the hardware and knowledge of software to engage successfully (Shepherd, 2015; DfE, 2021). Meanwhile, other studies showed how mobile handsets were being more readily accepted and used for blended and independent language learning (Savill-Smith *et al.,* 2012; Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015; Dudeney & Hockley, 2016). Demens Epp's (2017) study of Canadian migrants concurred with a number of others undertaken between 2009 and 2016 (Liu 2009; Palalas 2011; 2015; Pearson 2011b; Munteanu *et*

al.2013; Demouy *et al.* 2016 in Demmens Epp,2017), demonstrating that tools for mobile language learning (MALL tools) were being willingly adopted. Stockwell (2013) believes more and more people will embrace using a phone for learning in future. The Canadian study revealed migrant learners were already conversant with digital tools such as Google search, translator and dictionary tools and to a limited extent use of captions/subtitles to support their language learning independently, in addition to traditional print materials and television. All 17 participants made use of the MALL app introduced in the study and integrated it into their repertoire of learning support tools. Dudeney & Hockley (2016) and Ushoida (2013) see great potential in what smart phones offer for language learning and in their view, making learners aware of the range of affordances of using their handsets for learning is a vital step.

In the UK educational context, Laurillaud (2008) argues that public sector digital transformation is slow to happen since it is so costly. However, between 2020 and 2022 there was a significant increase in Government provision of hardware such as laptops to schools and colleges (Clark, 2023), corresponding to the requirements of the pandemic. Nevertheless, some respondents in a National Learning and Work Institute (NLWI) survey (2016) saw a 'bring your own device' (BYOD) approach as financially advantageous to the FE and adult learning sector and a BYOD policy was recommended by FELTAG. Learning with personal mobile phones can be suited to adult learning settings as learners' own devices can be used both in and beyond the classroom with fewer prohibitions on using handsets in lessons compared to schools. However, NLWI survey respondents believed the most important reason for BYOD was pedagogic - to encourage innovative teaching and greater independent learning. This will be discussed in greater detail in the second section.

Nevertheless, a BYOD approach gives rise to a number of issues for individuals and organisations, namely security, data poverty and mobile functionality. As regards security, The National Cyber Security Council considers that BYOD can raise challenges around protection of personal privacy - in this case concerns for learners' and even teachers' personal data or photographs (NCSC,2022) and learning providers had concerns over safeguarding (NLWI, 2016). The mobile learning 'MOTILL' projects encountered the need to comply with institutional privacy and access policies when introducing BYOD (Seta, Kukulska-Hulme & Arrigo, 2014) and personal privacy was a high priority for learners communicating with peers in Wang & Smith's study (2013). Secondly, downloading learning apps may prove impossible if learners' phones are already at data or memory capacity. Data poverty remains an issue for some learners and access to unlimited data cannot be guaranteed (Beech, 2020). Limited bandwidth and poor Wi-Fi connection can cause problems at home and in colleges (NWLI, 2016; Karnad, 2014). Finally, mobile functionality presents both the learner and the teacher

with various challenges. Android and Apple operating systems function differently. Karnad (2014) points out that learning activities have to be adapted to take both into account as well as the constraints and supported formats of mobile handsets. Colley & Stead (2003) and Burston (2010) found small screens required teachers to consider font and image sizes when preparing learning resources and choose compatible formats (e.g., pdf not Word or PowerPoint). These issues do not render mobile learning impossible but certainly provide challenges which teachers need to surmount.

In practical terms, learners' use of personal smart phones offers a potentially lower cost means of extending IT usage and opportunity to create new teaching and learning opportunities but raises issues that require consideration. The next section considers potential affordances of mobile phones for learning.

2.5 Affordances of mobile phones

The previous section told of how learning by means of mobile handsets is becoming more accepted, practised and suited to the pursuit of language learning. Research has highlighted affordances of utilising smart phones for study. Two MoLeNET project mobile learning ESOL case studies examined by Savill-Smith, Chopra & Haure (2012), involved a demographic similar to some learners in this study - migrants with limited access to a home computer and generally low IT proficiency. The authors found learners' use of mobile handsets had a number of positive effects:

- as a bridge to independence in searching for information and usage in a learning context
- the development of literacy skills such as scanning and skimming
- making learning relevant by creating and using personal learning resources such as photos and videos
- making the classroom approach more 'horizontal' with learners sharing items for learning, not only the teacher
- as a bridge to communication with classmates to seek help and decrease loneliness.

Further MoLeNET projects (not restricted to ESOL learners) discovered further impacts were to encourage and support learning in any place, at any time and to assist those who missed lessons (MoLeNET, 2010). Such personal and educational affordances of mobile devices are particularly relevant to ESOL learners as they promote flexible study options and locations (Laurillaud, 2008).

Likewise, the Europe-wide MOTILL adult learner research project (Seta,Kukulska-Hulme & Arrigo, 2014) found a number of advantages across their eleven best practice mobile learning case studies which included:

- increased learner engagement
- a positive impact on learner self-perception
- a transformative effect on the subject matter
- increased access and social inclusion
- ability to respond to learner needs
- learners directing and managing their own learning
- the mass-customization of learning content delivery
- the ability to meet individual needs
- promotion of learning in context
- creation of multidimensional curricula at scale.

These studies highlight aspects of learning with a smart phone which demonstrate impact on learner agency, inclusion, flexibility, motivation and differentiation. There will be discussion of these aspects in the second part of the chapter.

2.6 Increasing guided learning hours through mobile blended learning

If funding does not permit increased classroom time or learner schedules do not allow for attendance more than two or three times a week, how are learning hours to be extended? Blended learning may offer a suitable solution. It is a teaching mode first used in higher education (Hynes & Smith, 2006 in Mendieta Aguilar, 2012) by means of a VLE platform but also commonly in adult education (Bowyer & Chambers, 2017). What Graham (2005) described as a 'buzzword' in 2005 is a well-established model of delivery in many educational contexts nearly twenty years later. In many EFL settings classroom course books offer customised digital homework materials linked to lessons (see McCarten & Sandiford, 2016).

Use of the term 'blended' varies, with different words (e.g., hybrid) sometimes being used with little distinction (Anderson, 2018 in Henshaw, 2020). Blends can be considered in terms of a percentage of online to classroom activity. For example, a blended course could typically expect to see up to 45% of the learning activity taking place online, according to Smith and Kurten's (2007) taxonomy (in Whittaker, 2013a) but the primary mode is face-to-face. Around 45% - 80% of learning taking place online could be termed 'hybrid' according to the same taxonomy (*ibid*). However, for Dudeney & Hockley (2007, in Whittaker, 2013a) a course with 75% online / 25% face- to-face would be considered blended. The term can be defined in other ways. Sharma (2010) outlines three main definitions a) a combination of face-to-face and online teaching (synchronous or asynchronous), b) a combination of technologies (but no physical classroom) and c) a combination of teaching

methodologies. The first definition is the one adopted in this thesis and the blend ratio will be discussed in due course. Graham (2005:13) categorises blends of learning in terms of their being 'enabling, enhancing or transforming.' Enabling blends provide flexibility and the same learning opportunities but in a different mode. An enhancing blend is that which allows small changes to pedagogy to supplement traditional learning. Transforming blends, on the other hand, produce transformative pedagogy and allow for 'intellectual activity practically impossible without the technology.'

Furthermore, within a blended instructional mode Neumeier (2005) uses four terms to describe design: high or low integration (obligatory or optional tasks) and isolated or parallel. Isolated refers to learning activities that take place in either face-to-face or asynchronous but not both. Parallel signifies learning across both modes. Finally, flipped learning (or the flipped classroom) is a model of blended learning first used by Bergman & Sams in teaching high-school chemistry. The key premise was to teach content directly by means of video to learners at home prior to lessons, leaving the classroom time available for group work and individualisation (Bergman & Sams, 2014). Not all aspects of blended learning involve flipped techniques, but some do and Johnson & Marsh (2016) found flipping the classroom to be a model suited to language learning where the hours in the classroom could be utilised for key skills such as speaking.

Structured blended learning has not been a common course mode in Government-funded ESOL delivery although research before the pandemic highlighted a number of examples, as outlined in the opening chapter (Higton *et al.,* 2019; Paget & Stevenson, 2016; Shepherd, 2015; The Good Things Foundation,2021). These showed that with appropriate design, learning with technology even among the most hard-to-reach ESOL learners may be achievable.

For Thorne (2003:2 in Ghazizdeh & Fatemipour, 2017)

> 'Blended learning is the most logical and natural evolution of our learning agenda. It suggests an elegant solution to the challenges of tailoring learning and development to the needs of individuals. It represents an opportunity to integrate the innovative and technological advances offered by online learning with the interaction and participation offered in the best of traditional learning.'

Proponents of blended learning see many advantages of the online learning space as distinct from the classroom yet appreciate that both have their own strengths (Riel, Lawless & Brown, 2016; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008 in Abiladi & Alshareef, 2019). Some purported benefits of a blend are greater learner engagement and community feel (Tayebinik & Putch, 2013), an environment that has

flexibility and accessibility, being interactive, encouraging and inspiring (Zhang & Zhu, 2018) and meaningful (Seffner & Kepler, 2015 all in Albiladi & Alsahrif, 2019).

Pedagogically-speaking, Godwin-Jones (2020) states that SLA research is beginning to point to the fact that optimal language learning takes advantage of online resources in tandem with classroom instruction, especially at beginner to pre-intermediate level. Benson (2017:2) describes how fifty years ago out-of-class language learning was viewed as an 'optional extra'. He explains how the former dichotomy between in-class and out-of-class language learning has given way, in recent years, to consensus in the language research community that formal classroom and informal independent language learning both promote proficiency. He notes the wide acceptance of the notion that using the target language beyond the classroom is a key factor particularly in the achievement of high proficiency levels. A number of studies are cited that demonstrate how learner interaction with English informally, over and above formal courses, led to superior outcomes in testing. Bialystok's (1981 in Benson,2017) French high school learners read newspapers, watched films and listened to English radio. Wong and Nunan's (2011 in Benson,2017) Hong Kong university students sought out opportunity to speak English with native speakers, watch television and read newspapers. The researchers concluded that the higher performing students were 'active and communicative' beyond the classroom while lower achieving students were primarily instruction focused and text-book oriented. (Benson, 2017:137). Although these studies took place in non-English speaking environments and amongst non-migrants, they reveal a mindset and habits which appeared to promote successful language learning. As those studies also made clear, not all students were of that disposition and this division of active and non-active learners may also be reflected in ESOL classrooms. If active communicative interaction with language beyond the classroom can increase acquisition in some measure and drive proficiency at higher levels, how can this be encouraged and facilitated amongst ESOL learners?

The opportunity to increase dedicated time for study, formally and informally, beyond the classroom is a means of extending learning hours seen as a major affordance of mobile blended learning by Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015) in their 'Pedagogical framework for mobile-assisted language learning'. Tomlinson (2013) identifies blended courses as an apt solution, particularly if asynchronous activities build upon classroom learning and afford increased exposure to English, offering opportunities to discover and communicate. In addition, McCarten & Sandiford (2016) found that BL instruction can be superior to traditional classroom only modes of learning.

The following case studies in the Tomlinson & Whittaker (2013) review of blended English courses have extension of GLH as their raison d'être (Sokol *et al.,* 2013; Bilgin,2013, Kern,2013; Ingham,2013;

Krake,2013). These implementation studies using blended approaches serve to show how guided learning hours might be increased as part of formal learning.

For instance, blended methods lent additional practice time to a 4-hour a week course for Turkish taxi drivers needing to make rapid and appreciable progress to engage with English-speaking tourist clients (Kern, 2013). The drivers had a high school education and a basic prior knowledge of English. Unable to attend an intensive course, face-to-face lessons were twice weekly but drivers had significant amounts of time available at work whilst waiting for passengers. To extend the learning hours, podcasts with dialogues and transcripts were provided, accessed via a podcast platform for study. A blog was made available with access to transcripts and additional exercises or website links. Kern attributes the blended component with assisting the drivers in learning and building confidence more quickly, noting the benefit of repeated listening for developing their oral automaticity (Alonso, *et al.,* 2005, in Kern, 2013).

In the UK, an FE college course (Ingham,2013) employed a wiki (an openly editable webpage) to increase learning time on its face-to-face courses. This involved collaborative writing activities online and learners watching personal feedback videos for review and self-correction purposes. The blend was developed as a direct result of insufficient time in class for feedback and self-correction. The collaborative writing wiki was popular and 8 out of 10 learners engaged in their own time, actively editing documents over a 2-month period.

A further example (Krake,2013) shows how the Munich Volkshochschule (Adult Education Institute) added a further thirty percent of GLH to their standard face-to-face courses by means of 'Macmillan English Campus', a professionally-published programme of online study. Learners appreciated that exercises were self-marking and found them an interesting and motivating means of additional practice. McCarten & Sandiford (2016) similarly used a suite of digital materials in tandem with the course book 'Touchstone' to offset deficiencies in learning hours across a number of university English courses. The study credited the addition of increased hours beyond the classroom, and better use of classroom time with higher attainment than in the face-to-face mode only and led to increased ‘learning efficiency and autonomy’ on the learners' part (2016:212).

The examples above demonstrate different ways in which learning continued beyond the scheduled hours and the four walls of the classroom in a variety of adult learning contexts and led to beneficial language learning outcomes.

2.7 Blended learning with ESOL learners

If a blended approach to language teaching has brought benefits in other contexts, what of its implementation in adult ESOL? Reinders & Benson (2017) believe the classroom should cease to be the central place of learning but become one of many centres. Yet, moving formal learning beyond the classroom may not only be a shift of physical location but a fundamental shift in ESOL learner perception. Greater learner awareness is required to accept the validity of all spaces for learning - the classroom, the home and the spaces in between. The first chapter gave examples of ESOL learners who had responded positively to using smart phones for learning beyond the classroom, but how widespread is this attitude? A transition to a BL mode designed with mobile phones in mind may pose problems in ESOL delivery given issues around some learners' IT and independent study skills. In Graham's (2005) consideration of trends and future directions for blended learning six challenges faced by designers considering its implementation are outlined. Each challenge will be considered in turn with respect to the ESOL context.

1. The role of live interaction

A possible reduction of live interaction is the primary preoccupation for teachers and learners when confronted with blended learning, believes Graham. "Many learners want the convenience offered by a distributed environment, and, at the same time, do not want to sacrifice the social interaction and human touch they are used to in a F2F classroom." (Graham, 2005:10). Further studies exist (Lomicka & Lord, 2019 in Godwin-Jones, 2020; Banados 2006 in Whittaker,2013a) in which learner preference for face-to-face teaching is expressed. In the Bristol City Academy distance learning study (City Academy/LSIS,2010) the ESOL participants rejected the proposed one-hour face-to-face class with fewer students in favour of a four-hour lesson with a larger cohort. The decision sheds light on ESOL learner priorities and suggests a desire for maximum available teacher input and classroom interaction. Chapter 1 described the central role of ESOL lessons in providing socialisation, conversation and new language input for learners who struggle to find opportunities to practise despite living in an English-speaking environment. A Canadian ESL study found that 63% of staff and 60% of learners strongly preferred a blended approach with in-person classroom teaching rather than fully online. (Lawrence, *et al.,* 2014 in Shebansky, 2018).

The pandemic of 2020/21 saw UK government-funded educational institutions faced with a crisis-mode transition to online provision in what has become known as 'emergency remote teaching' – ERT (Hamer & Smith, 2021). This offered education providers both the opportunity and challenge of suddenly implementing synchronous/asynchronous learning. For example, in a survey of 15 ESOL teachers who gave online homework during the pandemic (Heyman, 2021), just over half reported

an increase in failure to understand the homework tasks. Educators in the US launching a blended curriculum in 2016 encountered poor student self-management, loss of task focus and difficulties with out-of-class task participation (Riel, Lawless & Brown, 2016). These may be symptoms of 'transactional distance'. This is what Moore and Kearsley describe as the 'physical distance that leads to a communication gap.' (Moore & Kearsley, 1996:200 in Neumeier, 2005). This demonstrates the challenge posed by an asynchronous learning design which expects a certain percentage of the work to be completed outside of the classroom with limited teacher support. In a classroom setting activity management issues are quickly remedied but this presents a challenge when studying asynchronously. For learners to have no immediate recourse to a teacher in such moments can be a source of frustration and has the potential to breed isolation and uncertainty. Therefore, Pennell & Siedel (2003 in Neumeier, 2005) believe minimising transactional distance is part of good BL design. Unlike in synchronous distance learning, Dudeney and Hockley (2016) argue that the teacher's ability to launch mobile and online learning activities from the classroom setting can be key to their eventual success, making this an advantage of a blended approach.

The reason live teaching and classroom interaction is so valued is understandable given difficulties with a virtual classroom and misunderstandings arising from asynchronous learning. Yet Burston's (2013) overview of MALL implementation outlines a number of studies which attempted to offset this lack of classroom communication by stimulating spoken or written communication, interaction and peer learning beyond the classroom using social media (Facebook, Twitter), SMS, video or audio capture or dedicated software such as 'Learnosity'.

However, there can be disparity of preference across contexts. 21 learners who completed a post-Covid lockdown evaluative questionnaire in one London institution concluded that both online and in-person sessions best suited their learning context (Lewandowski, 2021). Two thirds of Lewandowski's learners (n=17) appeared to value synchronous (the virtual classroom) and physical lessons equally, while a third preferred classroom over online lessons. The reasons given were poor internet connectivity, distractions, limited ability to participate and see other learners in online lessons. On the other hand, synchronous learning was preferred for its flexibility with childcare, timesaving and ease of online lessons at home.

2. The role of learner choice and self-regulation

Graham's (2005) challenges to the introduction of BL extend to how learners might choose a blended learning course which he believes is often for reasons of convenience. Many ESOL managers and practitioners believe technology provides a flexibility for learning suited to learners' lifestyles (Higton *et al.,* 2019) and Lewandowski's (2021) participants were attracted by that particular affordance. However, choices are contingent upon availability. Blends can vary between 45% and 80% online delivery (see Smith & Kurten's (2007) taxonomy in Whittaker, 2013a) which is ultimately determined by the provider, to suit their budget or staff considerations. There appeared to be no single approach to delivery during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. NATECLA members' institutions in the East of England, for instance, were engaged in one of a variety of modes from September to December 2020 - online, blended and fully face-to-face teaching as determined by the institution (NATECLA,2020).

If learners generally prefer face-to-face teaching, establishing that as the lead mode when designing courses (e.g., 55% face-to-face) may attract more participants. If organisations offer solely blended courses, learners desiring fully classroom-based teaching will have to look elsewhere. However, a British Council report (2018, in Kukulska-Hulme, 2019) predicts a change in future learner demand in favour of more focused, flexible and individualised delivery which would bring changes in standard provision. This may also extend to the ESOL sector, making formalised blended delivery in some form the norm. Yet Chapter 1 demonstrated how ESOL enrolments dropped during the pandemic with one possible reason being unfamiliarity with the online learning mode. Strake's (2007) investigation of learner withdrawal from BL courses cited low levels of support, lack of connection between online and classroom learning and the perceived decrease in use of paper-based materials as reasons for learner attrition.

Graham (2005) wonders whether learners require guidance to determine how a certain blend may affect their learning. Shepherd's (2015) experience with FE ESOL learners led him to recommend developing a suitable induction programme to outline the benefits of blended learning and assess learner access to and level of IT. Blended learning, like distance learning, requires far greater self-regulation than standard classroom learning and learners need to be made aware of this. Lack of well-developed study skills has been found to be a barrier to achievement (City Academy/LSIS,2010; Paget & Stevenson, 2016). A great deal of self-discipline is required (Graham, 2005) which can be difficult to achieve at home with multiple distractions and demands on time, as Lewandowski's (2021) learners discovered.

3. Models for support and training

The previous sections have touched upon a need for learner support and training with blended learning implementation. For ESOL learners this is in respect to digital skills, study skills and understanding the process of language learning. Many ESOL learners highly value the classroom with its immediate access to a teacher but 'transactional distance' in blended learning poses a potential problem.

First, learner digital skills are integral to success with any type of asynchronous study. Some learners may already be adept in using MALL tools such as translators or digital dictionaries as seen in studies by Demens Epp (2017) and Savill Smith, Chopra & Haure (2012) but research has shown that many may require support to fully access and benefit from the functions and software that are available for language learning (Palalas,2011 in Demens Epp,2017; Stockwell & Hubbard,2013; Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015; FELTAG,2014). Mellar *et al.'s* 2007 report into ESOL and ICT identified that computer skills training aided both learning of ICT in addition to English and an increase in confidence generally. However, older women made the least ICT progress during the study. During the pandemic lockdown this became clear. An inordinate amount of lesson time was spent teaching not language but digital skills. As 59 ESOL teachers polled at a NATECLA webinar in November 2020 stated, knowing how to teach digital skills to learners was their biggest current need (Samlal, 2020). An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report (2018) believes training teachers to embed digital skills is the answer and Bryson's (2020) experience with low literacy learners during the ERT period was to embed new skills little and often. Yet, irrespective of who delivers the training, such support appears vital for ESOL learners prior to embarking on a blended programme of study.

Second, learners require guidance to derive maximum benefit from the time spent studying alone. Becoming capable independent learners requires a high degree of agency. This is the ability to direct and manage one's own learning both inside and beyond the classroom. It has been identified as a key aspect of progress and success in lifelong learning (Seta, Kukulska-Hulme & Arrigo, 2014).

One definition of language learner autonomy is

> '...a capacity ... for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns, and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts.' (Little,1991:4 in Carson, 2010)

Little (2003) argues that learner autonomy is not a cultural construct found in Western education systems, but a psychological one. Therefore, it can be activated in all under the right conditions. Part of the definition of autonomy is an expectation that learners understand the purpose of their activities, are able to engage with them and reflect on what and how they are learning, and manage that learning proactively themselves (Little, 2003).

Paget and Stevenson's (2016) report into progress in ESOL highlighted the fact that activities associated with independent study - self-testing, self-study with books or online resources, organising and working in self-study groups - are underdeveloped in ESOL learners, some of whom may only have a primary education. They make the valid point that, 'Considering that most of a student's time is not spent in the classroom, this is a large impediment to efficiency.' (2016:60). This may have roots not only in level of education but also culture. Relating Bronfenbrenner's concept of cultures to second language learning, Oxford (2016) explains that the ordinarily volitional notions of autonomy, self-regulation and learning strategies, can be influenced by cultures (and educational cultures) in which those concepts are deemed less acceptable and not nurtured. In Butterworth's (2018) experience, ESOL learner independence and tenacity, often shown in regard to aspects of their daily and domestic lives, may not always extend to their learning.

The previous chapter described how the prior educational background of migrant learners has implications for their speed of progression and forms part of the justification for wishing to increase time spent on learning. If that time is to be spent learning beyond the classroom in a blended context, then any impediments need to be removed. For many in the field, the matter of learner autonomy is central to the proper functioning of the blended learning environment (Whittaker, 2013b; Moore & Kearsley, 2006 in Neumeier, 2005; Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue,2015; Demmens Epp,2017) and the removal of barriers to independent learning has to come through learner support and training (Graham,2005). For Oxford & Leaver (1996 in Oxford, 2003) embedding learning strategy instruction into everyday teaching is the most appropriate means. An understanding of independent learning and learner autonomy may be best nurtured in the blended

setting (as opposed to face-to-face only), where teacher and learners can discuss their experiences together face-to-face whilst simultaneously practising the skills beyond the lessons. McCarten & Sandiford (2016) found learner autonomy increased as a result of the regular practice of learning beyond the classroom provided in their blended learning intervention. Demmens Epp (2017) believes mobile learning tools themselves could play a role in supporting and nurturing greater meta-cognition and self-regulation by providing feedback or helping learners track their progress.

Cotterall (2000 in Butterworth, 2018) argues that time needs to be dedicated to awareness-raising around personal goal-setting for learning and identifying resources to aid personal progress. 'Learner training' is the branch of EFL related to fostering independent learning, which 'involves helping learners find out how they learn most effectively...encouraging learners to take responsibility for learning and helping them to develop learning strategies and study skills.' (British Council, nd). McCarthy agrees with Hubbard (2013 in McCarthy, 2016b) regarding the need for more research into the efficacy of learner training and preparation for BL end-users. Ellis & Sinclair's 1989 print publication 'Learn to learn English: A course in learner training' contains activities for learners to use. However, for teachers wishing to promote independent language learning skills, it can prove difficult to find more up-to-date and digital learner training material suited to ESOL learners' language level, as well as relevant to their context and needs. YouTube video dialogue is often of a length and at a speed inappropriate for entry ESOL levels (e.g., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yb9Iag9a07U or BBC Six Minute English). Even with captions, such content remains difficult for lower-level learners (Aldukhayel, 2021). While the BBC and BBC Learning English have produced videos, most pertain to university study skills (e.g., 'Go the Distance' course on BBC Learning English) or for young people learning a foreign language such as French or Spanish. 'The British Council Teaching English' website above has mainly advice for teachers with a limited number of materials for learner use.

Finally, Marin & Salinas (2021) provide a word of caution to educators regarding the balance of guidance and independence in BL - with too little guidance learners may lose their way, with too much, learners may lose aspects of freedom to direct study to their own needs and interests.

4. The digital divide

In 2005 Graham considered the socio-economic divide in access to ICT as a challenge to the introduction of blended learning. There is evidence from studies outlined in Chapter 1 that IT hardware can be lacking, yet the growth in mobile phone ownership globally since then has caused that gap to shrink. Nonetheless, pockets of 'digital poverty' remain and Beech's (2020) report into lack of digital access for asylum seekers in Leeds is a reminder that any increased reliance on digital learning in ESOL may exclude those it is intended to reach. Furthermore, the digital divide may not mean access to handsets but digital literacy, which is not necessarily separated along socio-economic lines. Furthermore, the 2018 OECD report identifies a male/female digital divide, citing 'affordability, lack of education as well as inherent biases and socio-cultural norms' as barriers to women's access (2018:115). The report declares reading to be the foundational skill for accessing digital information, with women being less likely to possess the new type of literacy skills required to function in a digital environment. However, the 'eGo ESOL' project Savill-Smith, Chopra & Haure (2012) saw the mainly female ESOL participants' acquisition of literacy skills being positively impacted through use of smart phones.

The number of learners with no digital skills or prior experience of online learning may be decreasing, given the increased exposure to online learning since the Covid pandemic. However, El-Metoui & Graham-Brown (2021) warn of the danger of believing that all ESOL learners would now be in a position to learn online without acknowledging that some do remain excluded. Refugees, low-income and lower level (namely E0-E2) learners are groups likely to struggle, argue Beech (2020) and El-Metoui & Graham-Brown (2021). That said, teacher resourcefulness during the pandemic led to examples of possibilities for engaging lower language and/or literacy level learners with digital learning, such as Bryson's (2020) use of 'WhatsApp' as an online learning platform. Khan's (2021) study of the lowest level (E0/Pre-Entry) learners at Derby College, UK, during 2020 revealed that 72.1% (31 learners) had managed to access some form of online learning using a mobile phone, with 23.2% (10) using a laptop/PC. 32 participants (86%) had very good to average internet access at home while four had poor and one had no connection. These figures point to a reasonably high degree of access. As Bryson's (2020) experience alludes to, teachers and education providers were able to establish ways for learners to study employing different approaches to suit the abilities of the learners.

5. Cultural adaptation

A new mode of learning requires suitable resources. Seta, Kukulska-Hulme & Arrigo (2014) saw great effort directed at the creation or adaptation of pre-existing course content in the mLLL projects reviewed. Digital materials for asynchronous learning are easily disseminated globally via the internet but may not be culturally relevant across contexts and Graham (2005) identifies cultural suitability as a further challenge to BL designers. Course design requires cultural sensitivity argues Hockley (2018) after a number of studies in the Far East concluded that participants failed to engage with collaborative document editing for fear of making mistakes (Zhu, Valcke, and Schellens, 2009; Liu and Chiu 2016: 61 in Hockley,2018).

Graham believes teachers are best placed to ensure the suitability of content. One impact of the MoLeNet (2010) projects was the burden upon teachers of preparation and production of learning resources suited to a mobile context. This may reflect either a dearth of materials or lack of teacher awareness. ESOL teachers are able to draw upon a wealth of materials from the EFL sector in which both print and digital teaching resources abound. Furthermore, blended learning materials can be drawn from a wide range of countries and educational settings (English for young learners, higher education, Functional Skills English, general or business English, for example). However, not all of them are culturally or practically relevant to the needs of lower skilled workers, stay-at-home mums or asylum seekers new to the UK, such as make up many ESOL cohorts. 'English My Way' (Good Things Foundation) is an example of a free blended course at E0 level and the Blended Learning Consortium (2021) create ESOL materials suitable for VLEs for fee-paying FE college members. The British Council have ESOL resources on the Excellence Gateway site. There may be a lack of useful, appropriate context-specific resources for ESOL compared with EFL but Godwin-Jones (2020) argues that good BL should move beyond ready-made learning materials to bespoke resources that are able to make use of what is relevant, current and enhance core course content.

6. Balance between innovation and production

Finally, Graham (2005) speaks of the tension between what is possible technologically and feasible or appropriate in reality. FE and adult education colleges might wish to adopt fully online learning in future for financial reasons but blended or face-to-face approaches may be preferable for ESOL learners. An 85% online blend may also be advantageous from an organisational standpoint but may not suit many lower level ESOL learners. Tomlinson (2013) warns against the injudicious implementation of BL, citing an example from the Far East where school pupils worked on tedious online exercises as a result of a compulsory quota of computer-mediated learning hours. Whittaker (2013a) and Neumeier (2005) agree that achieving the blend best to suit the context is key.

To conclude, this section opened with two questions. The first related to the use of mobile phones for extending learning. In that regard, it has been seen that learners' own mobile phones can be an inexpensive and often untapped resource for language learning. Used as part of a course of blended learning, a variety of language practice can take place, using digital resources in tandem with face-to-face courses. Blended learning takes into account learners' desire to learn in the classroom but provides opportunity to increase digital literacy, personal independence, autonomy and personalised learning. Maintaining the weekly link with the classroom can help to lessen transactional distance. For ESOL learners an important caveat is the need for support in the area of digital skills and independent learning but studies into ESOL learner attitudes and experience with new forms of learning during the pandemic show a favourable disposition and increasing accessibility. The second question dealt with bridging deficits in formal learning hours and promoting progress. Examples of BL intervention studies demonstrated how learners could be engaged with interactive learning beyond the classroom in ways that contributed to language learning progress and extended learning time. Research discussed showed how individuals who are more active and communicative outside of lessons can make greater progress. The following section will address the notion of progress in language learning through a consideration of language learning pedagogy.

2.8 Section 2: Pedagogy and mobile blended language learning

Introduction

This second section considers a number of key aspects necessarily involved in any discussion of blended mobile language learning pedagogy and is connected to the second research question.

- ***What are the pedagogical considerations in designing blended mobile language learning to increase guided learning hours and promote progress beyond the classroom***

First there is an overview of second language acquisition (SLA) principles and then consideration of the impact of time and intensity on language learning. Motivation is then discussed in more detail as a key variable in SLA. This is followed by an exploration of the impact of technology, the promotion of learning, the role of the teacher and materials in the design and delivery of mobile blended learning and learning beyond the classroom.

The etymology of the term pedagogy implies 'a sense of leading or guiding to learn' (Beetham & Sharpe, 2020:2) which underlies the debate in the field of second language learning between informal language 'acquisition' and formal classroom language learning. Yet it is now acknowledged that languages are learnt in both manners (Benson,2017; Godwin-Jones,2020). Learning a *foreign* language can be more exacting than a second as the learner often does not have access to continuous language input from the immediate environment. A BBC study into distance foreign language learning (Lamping, 2004) noted that adults learning independently at home felt isolated and lacked opportunities to practise speaking which made study hard to sustain longer term. In theory, learning a second language among native speakers offers far more opportunities for language exposure and natural acquisition. However, the experience of migrants outlined in Chapter 1 demonstrates that successful language learning does not necessarily result from this in and of itself; it is not an osmotic process. The fact that English classes exist in an English-speaking environment is testimony to the reality that learners seek guidance to learn. This may be to gain expert advice on grammar and vocabulary, to have opportunities to speak and socialise or to have the accountability of a scheduled time dedicated to the task.

2.9 Promoting language learning

There are numerous factors in and barriers to both implicit language acquisition and explicit language learning, among them, age, prior educational background, amount of dedicated time to learn, access to interactional opportunities, being in employment, the sympathetic support of other good speakers and affective factors such as learner confidence and the absence of stress or worry

(Pillar, 2019). These make language learning a highly personalised activity with equally individualised outcomes.

Language teaching and learning is routinely broken down into four distinct skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. ESOL/EFL courses, resource books and exams are often divided on the basis of these skills but, in practice, language learning and use requires all or several skills to be employed simultaneously – listening and responding, listening and noting down, reading and requesting, for example. This thesis, therefore, uses the notion of four skills to differentiate between the various aspects of language teaching which have in themselves further skill subsets. In the opening chapter Dörnyei (2018) reminded us that learning a language is distinct from learning some other academic subjects. It is not facts or formulas to be memorized. Cook (2008) explains that many divergent models of second language (L2) skill acquisition exist. For example, behaviourist theory influenced the study of language acquisition and teaching particularly in the 1960s and '70s. It considered language a mechanical process to be learnt via external input during interaction, moderated by repeated correction and learnt by means of drills and structured practice whereas Chomsky's Universal Grammar theory (1976 in Cook,2008) assumes the opposite, that the mind already contains a fixed blueprint for language acquisition and external influence has little bearing. The various models often deal with different facets of language learning - core grammar or speech processing, for example. Cook (2008:233) notes that while these theories are not necessarily irreconcilable and each of them may represent 'a piece of the jigsaw', there is currently no framework that integrates them.

As theories of learning began to focus attention on the realm of human cognition the connection between language learning and cognitive processing was explored. Blooms Taxonomy of Learning Domains (1957 in Hoque,2016) was developed in the late 1950s and consists of three key areas – cognitive, affective and psychomotor. The resulting field of cognitive linguistics has developed since the late 1970s and examines the role of mental processes such as memory, concept formation and information processing on learning language (Bakhir,2020). Language learning models past and present may centre to a greater or lesser extent on the role of cognitive or affective factors. The socio-educational model (Gardner 1985, 2007 in Cook,2008), for instance, focuses on the influence of affective factors such as attitudes and motivation on acquiring language. Pilar's list of factors and barriers to language learning cited above contains many aspects of the affective domain. In addition, Cook (2008:246) reminds us that 'language is in part physical behaviour'. Learning and teaching pronunciation could be said to draw on psychomotor skills such as perception and mechanism. Two further influential SLA theories point to the paramount need for learner engagement with

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comprehensible language input (Krashen's theory, 1981) and output opportunities (Swains's theory, 1985) to stimulate acquisition.

Since the late nineties SLA researchers have been proposing that L2 learning is a dynamic and complex system (Lighbown,2000 in Thornbury,2016; Larson-Freeman, 1997 in Oxford,2017) and learners are influenced by their many external contexts and personal internal variables which impose upon the language learning process (Ushoida,2009 in Oxford,2017).

However, decades of research into second language (L2) acquisition and instructed language learning have led to a consensus regarding several foundational principles, listed below, of successful formal learning and informal language acquisition. These comprise both aspects of cognition – understanding and memorizing, noticing, learning and applying rules, categorizing or comparing - and affect – listening and responding to others and valuing the new language, for example (Hoque,2016).

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- a strong motivation to learn, a positive attitude to the second language environment and a strong impetus to use the language.
- paying attention to the language, noticing the forms and rules (McCarthy, 2016).

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- amount of time spent interacting socially with L2 speakers, using them as a resource, incorporating new language from others into own speech and revising own language output (Ortega, 2008).
- having consistent opportunities to process the language in authentic situations and access to memorised sequences and chunks of language (Ellis,2005; Thornbury, 2016).
- amount of time and intensity of time spent learning (Serrano, 2012).
- continual practice involving frequent repetition in real-time authentic processing situations improves automaticity (Segalowitz 2013 in Thornbury,2016).
- vocabulary learning is increased when strong associations are made with new language (Thornbury, 2016).
- receiving informal or formal feedback and correction (Thornbury, 2016).
- absence of high levels of stress or anxiety (Pillar, 2019; Johnson & Marsh, 2016).
- learner autonomy is nurtured (Dixon *et al*., (2012) in Johnson & Marsh,2016).

- learner opportunity and willingness to communicate (Muñoz, 2012; Ellis,2005).
- successful instructed (taught) language learning requires extensive input and opportunities for output (Ellis,2005).
- In instructed language learning teachers need to provide learners with input opportunities beyond the classroom (Ellis, 2005).

Furthermore, Oxford (2017) argues that in addition to self-regulation and autonomy, resilience, hope and a growth mindset are further factors in successful acquisition. She provides examples of people who through creating independent strategies satisfied their own language learning needs by watching YouTube clips, listening to songs, noting and classifying vocabulary, seeking out conversation partners or using a smart phone to translate new words. Despite much debate in the field of SLA as to the role of conscious methods of language learning, she puts forward the case for the efficacy of promoting vocabulary and grammar learning strategies for example and for developing the habits associated with self-regulation (e.g., note-taking, organisation and rehearsal). The status of the self-regulatory habits of ESOL participants in this study is as yet unknown but if the cultural inhibition of such behaviours, as noted in the previous section, is the case, learner training may prove a useful addition to the repertoire of means ESOL learners can draw on to stimulate their progress.

2.10 Quantity versus quality

A number of the principles above make mention of the notion of time. Any study investigating an increase in guided learning hours to accelerate progress will focus on quantity of time. In fact, studies point to the clear benefit of not merely more time to study but more concentrated time. 110 hours of English (EFL) study for adult learners improved a range of language skills when concentrated into shorter intensive courses of 25 hours per week than when undertaken as 4 hours per week over a longer period (Serrano & Muñoz, 2007 in Serrano, 2012). Improvement was noted particularly with intermediate (Serrano, 2011 in Serrano, 2012) and weaker learners (Collins & White, 2012) than those at advanced level. The five or six face-to-face hours per week commonly found in FE and adult learning ESOL courses could certainly not be described as intensive and budgetary and staffing limitations do not allow for such intensive classroom learning. However, a report into reading in UK Skills for Life classes also noticed the impact of increased learning time outside of lessons and argued that 'self-study is essential', recommending more distance learning and ICT-supported study. (Brooks *et al.,* 2007:8). Baynham *et al.* (2007) found a small but, nevertheless, positive correlation between increased learning hours and improved test scores for ESOL learners in their study. Godwin-Jones (2020) also cites research which considers a blend of

both classroom instruction and usage of online resources as being able to optimise learning particularly in the early language learning stages (Andringa & Rebuschat, 2015; Ellis, 2015; Lee, 2016; Little & Thorne, 2017; Ortega, 2017).

Distribution of time can be as important as concentration of time in L2 learning. The field of cognitive psychology has influenced SLA research and studies have led to a general acknowledgment that spaced repetition for learning vocabulary or grammar forms leads to improved long-term retention. However, Serrano (2012) maintains that this organised distribution of practice would appear to have less impact on improving more complex skills such as speaking, listening and writing, where intensity is more beneficial. The distribution of weekly study may be improved in a blended design. A standard ESOL course may feature a lesson twice a week, sometimes on consecutive days. In a blended course learners may, in fact, study part of their course every day, depending on their available time. Activities that can be done 'on-the-go' or involve regular interaction with peers or speakers/texts/language items outside the home could afford more intense and, with planning, distributed learning. To sum up, 'Benefits accrue both when exposure is concentrated and when it is distributed across time in short intensive experiences.' (Muñoz, 2012).

The importance of increasing the intensity of learners' weekly study is clear and the ability of blended learning as a potential means of extending weekly study time has been discussed. However, extending study time may be hard to achieve in reality, given the demands on learners' time touched upon in Chapter 1. Yet, a number of the studies listed above were not undertaken in an English-speaking environment whereas interaction in English outside the classroom in the UK is possible and can be taken advantage of to make learning more intensive. Research by Green & Oxford (1995 in Oxford,2003) revealed that more successful language learners often utilised strategies that caused them to engage actively with language, similar to Bialystok (1981) and Wong and Nunan's (2011) learners discussed previously. Those in second language settings (such as learning English in the UK) naturally employed a wider range of strategies more frequently than those learning the language outside its normal setting.

It is important, therefore, for pedagogy to take advantage of the English-speaking world outside the classroom to highlight and promote the process of natural acquisition, stressing the centrality of and heightening the strategies that promote learners' own engagement with English. In addition, teachers need to devise communicative task-based classroom activities which emulate an out of class context to promote more natural acquisition (Ellis,2005). A key feature of mobile-assisted language learning is its ability to bridge the formal and informal settings and possibly promote

engagement and acquisition in-situ outside of the classroom. This will be explored in more detail in the final part of this section.

However, learning more intensely each week is not the only factor in driving learning; the intrinsic pedagogic quality of the learning activities undertaken should not be underestimated. Kerr (2020) cites an example (from the Guardian, 2014) of an activity in which students of French were to use the language to create a multimedia presentation in French which, instead, resulted in conversations in English about making a Power Point presentation. Clearly, not all activities achieve their intended language learning outcomes. Established pedagogical theories such as constructivism should underpin instruction, promoting deeper active learning through social interaction and task scaffolding by teachers. Such tasks may result in more profound learning, enhanced retention and increased transferability to other contexts (Winterbottom, 2017). Hattie's research (2009 in Winterbottom,2017) led him to conclude that active, guided teaching is superior to facilitative, unguided instruction. Active learning may be promoted through second language acquisition theories such as Schmidt's 'noticing theory' (Schmidt, 1990 & 1993 in McCarthy, 2016a) and inductive approaches to grammar teaching such as 'grammar discovery'. Therefore, any intervention which seeks to merely focus on increasing hours spent learning fails to take account of pedagogy but must adopt practices which aim to promote deeper, lasting language development and develop procedural skill. These practices will be discussed in more detail shortly.

2.11 The role of motivation

Motivation features prominently in lists of factors for success in L2 learning and is a variable whose importance cannot be underestimated. Although not a solely pedagogic notion, motivation is nonetheless intrinsic to the success of a long and mundane activity such as language learning (Dörnyei,2018). If learners are to give more of their conscious thought and time over to learning, sufficient motivation is required to do so. Theories argue that motivation from within is superior to external loci in its ability to produce more profitable engagement due to its emphasis on autonomy and personal control (Ushioda, 2013). Dörnyei (2014 in Dörnyei,2018) comments that language learning motivation has three aspects: motivation stemming from learners' own vision of their potential future reality as competent users, individual experience and group learning experience. Yet Dörnyei admits even a strong internalised vision does not necessarily translate into personal action.

Learners need support in forming reasonable expectations, goals and priorities. This support can come from the teacher who can impact the individual and group learning experience in other manners such as:

- keeping the students' curiosity and attention piqued
- helping learners to expect success and celebrate it
- varying the learning process
- using engaging and interesting tasks
- encouraging often to build confidence and lessen anxiety
- appropriate motivational assessment
- developing a cohesive, cooperative class identity
- providing relevant materials (Dörnyei,2018).

Moreover, Dörnyei (2018) believes that a motivated teacher is a key factor in motivating learners, a belief shared by others (Comas-Quinn, 2016; Murphy *et al.,* in McCarthy, 2016b). In Ellis' view (2005) learners would not make an effort to seek out opportunities to learn more language outside the classroom unless teachers provided suitable resources and training to use them. Particularly in online elements Lund & Snell (2014 in McCarthy,2016b) consider the 'presence and actions' of the teacher intrinsic to success.

A further aspect of motivation is the perceived personal relevance of course and activity content. This was viewed by Kern (2013) as an important factor in her Turkish taxi drivers' engagement in the implementation of BL, in addition to a number of other studies (Russell, 2013; Gaved & Peasegood, 2016; Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015). Cooke (2006) and Ali (2016) both discovered that where course content was not appropriate to their needs, ESOL learners were less motivated to engage. Breen (1987 in Thornbury,2016) argues that learners will invest effort if doing so is considered beneficial. A similar conclusion was reached in a BL study of young Japanese adults (Wang & Smith, 2013:117) who were offered an opportunity to undertake mobile reading and grammar practice on a non-mandatory basis. Numbers of participants disengaged when they found no benefit in such study. The main conclusions drawn there were the importance of:

> 'a) providing engaging learning materials that are neither too long nor overly-demanding; (b) a proper degree of teacher monitoring; (c) student involvement; (d) the need for incentives; (e) a respect for privacy; and (f) a safe and secure mobile-learning technical environment.'

These conclusions again foreground the importance of external influences - suitable activity design and length, teacher monitoring, incentives and the incorporation of student feedback.

Albiladi & Alshareef (2019) list a number of studies in their review of current literature that claim blended learning itself is a motivating mode of learning (Banditvilai, 2016; Manan, Alias & Pandian ,2012; Marsh, 2012; Liu,2013; Yoon & Lee ,2010). Moreover, some consider that use of mobile devices for learning is inherently motivating and, Savill-Smith, Chopra & Haure (2012) and Mellar *et al.'s* (2007) studies have demonstrated this, accompanied by learning gains. Of the relationship between technology and motivation, Stockwell (2013:158) believes that it is the 'tasks and activities which are performed through these technologies rather than the technologies themselves,' which hold the key to the motivation. Based on a number of implementation studies (Rosell-Aguilar, 2013; Li & Hegelheimer,2013), Ushoida comments that, with device limitations, movement between locations and resources designed for brief engagement, mobile learning may motivate surface and frequent learning far more than deeper learning. Grammar-acquisition activities, which require greater cognitive and meta-cognitive exertion, were undertaken by fewer students in the latter study. Kim *et al*. (2013) found that mobile learning that promotes positive affect and engages at the emotional level plays a vital motivational role but this may still only lead to casual and superficial learning encounters. Ushoida (2013) believes that personal motivation for language learning remains the underlying driver for engagement but how said motivation might be translated into using mobile devices to develop the deeper procedural skills involved in language learning is a matter for more research and may, in her view, be hard to realise.

2.12 Language teaching pedagogy and technology

Human beings have been learning second languages for millennia without the aid of the current technology. What affordances for language learning does modern-day digital technology provide that traditional methods do not?

The field of instructed second/foreign language pedagogy talks in terms of methodology and has seen some major developments since traditional academic grammar-translation was the dominant approach (Cook, 2008). General learning research and theory have influenced language teaching methodology. For example, behaviourism led to a focus on imitation and repetition, spawning the audio-lingual and Total Physical Response methods, emerging in the 1960s and 70s (Cook, 2008). There are humanistic language teaching techniques, the communicative method, inductive and deductive grammar teaching, grammar awareness, CLIL, the 'silent way' and task-based language teaching many of which form part of the existing pedagogy to which ESOL/EFL/ESL teachers wholly or partially subscribe. With the exception of the audio-lingual method, all function without reliance on technology.

This current era of technology enhanced learning with smart phones and the internet, requires theorists and practitioners to consider how to utilize them and evaluate their effect and value in the language learning process. The digital age is characterised by abundant 'resources, opportunities and networks' and pedagogy, in the light of this, clearly has to change, argue Beetham & Sharpe, (2020:3) and believe the challenge is understanding how it needs to change. However, Kerr (2020) believes that for some 'technology is the pedagogy' and its potential and use is unquestioned while sound methodological foundations are lacking. Given that many language teaching methodologies exist, he asks which one should be in the 'driving seat'. Thornbury (2016) insists that pedagogy for BL needs a basis in learning theory and research and any technology used in its delivery be fit for the purpose of language learning.

Beetham & Sharpe (2020) argue that up to now the use of technology has resulted in a few enhancements to learning outcomes and practice but seldom fundamental transformation; they believe that now needs to change. In the language teaching classroom, for example, fifty years of technology - audio players, language labs, overhead projectors, video recorders, Smart Boards, even laptops or tablets - have not fundamentally changed language teaching methodology; they have changed the sources and style of classroom language input and presentation or enriched the range of classroom practice activities but their sphere of influence has remained the four walls of the classroom. In FE ESOL classrooms technology is widely used: 75% of those surveyed used mobile phones, desktop computers (73%) and interactive whiteboards 72% (Higton *et al.,* 2019). Yet the majority of those technologies place more resources in the hands of the teacher. The key difference with mobile phone technology is that it is primarily in the hands of the learner. Moreover, its domain can be both in and beyond the classroom. This is unlike the technologies that have preceded it. Both Harasim in 2000 (Mendieta Aguilar, 2012) and more recently Burden *et al.* (2019 in Hamer & Smith, 2021:29), see a paradigm shift taking place with learning no longer being 'tethered or static'.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, 84% of FE ESOL providers believed that using technology made learning easier and 68% that it improved learners' English skills (Higton *et al.,* 2019). Yet Kerr (2020) is sceptical that evidence exists to support the claim that educational technology is beneficial to learning. He cites a 2015 OECD study showing minimal effect on learning in maths, language and science, despite heavy investment in use of educational technology. For Selwyn (2011, in Thornbury, 2016) the purported evidence of improved learning through digital technology is conflicting and vague. In contrast, a large number of studies in the field of computer and mobile-assisted language learning (CALL/MALL) claim to demonstrate the opposite. For instance, some show benefits such as improved reading proficiency (Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017) motivation (Liu, 2013 in Albiladi &

Alshareef, 2019) motivation and language use/acquisition (Hseih, Wu, & Marek, 2016) vocabulary acquisition using apps (Fathi, Alipour, & Saeedian, 2018), better listening skills (Rahimi & Soleymani, 2015 in Kukulska-Hulme, 2019) and general language progress (Zhang & Zhu, 2018 in Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019). However, the existence of such large numbers of positive studies in the literature may have caused a publication bias and the positive benefits of learning with technology might have been overstated, with more positive than negative studies gaining people's attention.

Mobile learning research and theory has identified a number of pedagogical benefits of utilising smart phones for language learning. The following is a list of possible mobile learning outcomes which span both language and meta-cognition (Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015:9)

- identifying gaps in knowledge
- developing a habit of reflection on language learned
- learning to notice (how language is used, how I use the language)
- connecting language users (more expert and less expert)
- using language for real purposes in real world contexts
- developing ability to respond to a context
- rehearsing, experimenting
- developing multiple perspectives
- learning to learn, developing autonomy
- developing digital (mobile) literacies.

In addition to these outcomes Kukulska-Hulme (2016:9,10) sees a multitude of ways mobile handsets can offer assistance in learning and communicating, several of which are listed in the table below:

Habit-formation Means of rehearsal Cognitive support Directing attention Noticing support Teamwork aid	Scaffolding and fading Association of ideas Memorisation aid Organisation Resource sharing Preparation aid Experience sharing	Revision aid Reminders Available tools Social support Social contact Conversational partner

Table 5 Mobile assistance in language learning (Kukulska-Hulme, 2016)

The list demonstrates that mobile phones are multi-functional in the number of ways they can impact on various areas of the language learning process from memorisation and noticing to communication and collaboration. Kukulska-Hulme & Bull (2009) particularly advocate use of mobile phones for easily capturing spoken or written language noticed whilst on-the-go, recording it in text or speech along with observations, rather like a language diary.

The migrants in the Demmens Epp (2017) study, especially at lower levels, particularly noticed gaps in their vocabulary knowledge and listening skills and used MALL tools informally (apps and phone features) to help in that regard. Yet she argues that smart phone tools should also be found to provide support in a number of other key areas:

- self-regulation
- noticing language
- encouraging greater social collaboration in language learning.
- rehearsing communication and receiving feedback
- understanding varieties of English (accents/dialects).

2.13 Reconceptualising materials and practices for mobile blended language learning

Purushotma (2005) has argued that despite the steady evolution of the classroom in the last 100 years 'the guidance students receive on how to continue learning a language outside of class has remained relatively the same' (2005:81). He sees the value in using ubiquitous gaming and entertainment media as motivational vehicles for language learning beyond the classroom.

A number of tools exist to guide teachers as they implement mobile blended learning, for example: (Digital) learning activities design checklists (Beetham & Sharpe, 2020); Questions for blended language learning course designers (Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013); Twelve principles for assessing new learning tools (Thornbury, 2016). Stockwell & Hubbard's (2013) Emerging principles for mobile-assisted language learning. Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015) have also devised a framework (below) to guide implementation of mobile pedagogy in particular. This considers the roles of the teacher, learner, the mobile device in a given activity and how language learning can be maximised and various aspects of the framework will be highlighted in due course.

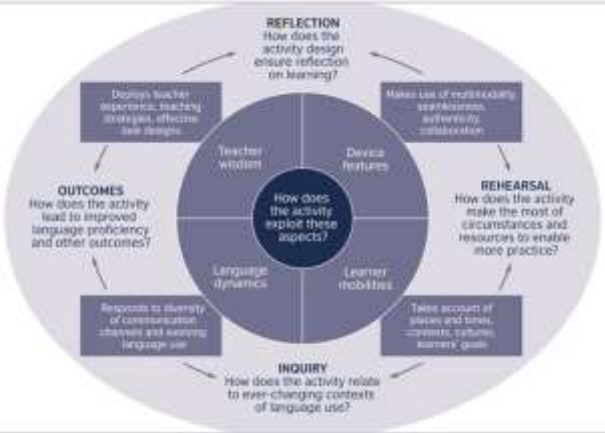

Figure 4 A Framework for mobile-assisted language learning (Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015)

The idea of 'design for learning' is a relatively novel concept and was first used in 2006 to mean the theory and practice of developing structured learning enhanced by technology. Design is a process used by teachers to 'arrive at a plan or structure or designed artefact for a learning situation' (Beetham & Sharpe, 2020:6). Use of technology as an inherent part of blended learning requires astute design decisions. Online and distance learning naturally afford the transmission of large amounts of asynchronous content (e.g., MOOCS) but Laurillard (2008) believes that all too often educational technology has been presentational as opposed to interactive. Mishan (2016) agrees and argues that materials can fail to fulfil the potential of blended learning if they remain allied to outmoded software on college learning management systems. Rather, dynamic, communicative and learner-generated materials express the essence of blended learning and encourage shared enterprise and learner agency. Mishan draws on Gruba and Hinkelman's (2012:18) framework which considers uni-directional materials such as videos and textbooks, vehicles for 'narrative' presentation, at the start of a continuum which moves through increasing levels of learner participation and production. 'Interactive, adaptive, communicative and productive' denote growing dynamism in the way learners can use and produce spoken or written language.

Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015) echo these sentiments when stating mobile learning should exploit opportunities for interaction, collaboration and communication for the practise and authentic use of language (*ibid*). With design in mind, their 'Framework for MALL' gives examples of activities in which mobile phone technology allows in-class and beyond-class learning to intersect. The table below gives a number of examples of the contrast in traditional and emerging materials

pedagogy by comparing a number of typical language learning activities - vocabulary learning, speaking and listening.

Traditional activity	Mobile activity
Vocabulary input and practice via a worksheet with a text or pictures given by the teacher. started in class and completed at home.	Vocabulary and phrases encountered or required by learners from daily situations are brought to class (as words in Notes app or as photos/videos) or shared to a digital platform. The teacher can plan these items into the lesson or learners can study them together with peers. Learners take a photo of an out-of-class location/situation and research the vocabulary needed in it alone or with partners. A digital learner or class picture dictionary could be compiled.
Oral interaction between learners and peer collaboration confined to lessons.	Phone, WhatsApp or Facebook group and virtual class space for posting comments, peer task collaboration, discussion, interviews, sending voice messages or videos outside of class time. Interaction with new communities via social media.
Listening to a text 2 - 3 times in class and answering comprehension questions. Learner recorded using teacher's voice recorder for learner review in class.	Listening to the recording from the lesson online via phone outside the classroom. Ability to listen repeatedly and work at own pace. Record voice or video on learner's phone in the lesson to practise outside the classroom for language review, reflection or repair. Learner records their voice or a conversation outside the classroom and shares it with their teacher or classmates online or in class.

Table 6 Traditional and mobile activities. Based on Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015 pp. 13-15

These examples highlight some key distinctives of mobile learning namely, mobility, learner-generated content and emergent language input, learner-peer-teacher collaboration and greater learner autonomy, which all form part of the new pedagogy (Godwin Jones, 2020; Mishan, 2016;Cochrane, 2013; MoLeNET, 2010;Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008 in Godwin Jones, 2020).In the re-conceptualisation of language learning for the digital age, tasks, processes and interactions can all be defined as materials (Mishan, 2016). That places partner work, collaborative tasks, peer-to-peer emails, WhatsApp messages or phone calls firmly in the realm of 'process materials' (Reinders & White, 2010 in Mishan, 2016) which are not sources of information but vehicles for communicative practice, made possible electronically.

2.14 Promoting language learning

The blended learning case studies in section 2.6 provided examples of activities which demonstrate a number of SLA principles. In the development of oral proficiency 'rehearsal' of and 'reflection' on language are two important SLA concepts (Ortega, 2008; Thornbury, 2016) also included in the pedagogical framework above. The former relates to the opportunity to practise spoken language and the latter to the process of development through correction of output, learner revision of language use and strategies and goals for improvement. First, video or audio files could be used to optimise opportunities for 'rehearsal' and memorisation. The taxi drivers listened to and practised key phrases on their phones in role play form as they waited for passengers (Kern, 2013). The mobile handset allowed for easy rehearsal opportunities in the time and spaces outside the classroom (Thornbury, 2016). They had been given language input at a comprehensible level which they were able to associate and engage with (Sökmen, 1997:241 in Thornbury, 2016) due to its relevance to their job role, further key SLA principles. This provided access to chunks and sequences of memorised language (Segalowitz, 2010 in Thornbury, 2016) to utilise with customers and thereby develop their automaticity in authentic processing (Johnson, 1996 in Thornbury, 2016). In a similar vein, Demmens Epp's (2017) participants in Canada found great value in repetition of audio material from various sources. However, in Mishan's (2016) view, the nature of practice in Kern's study is an example of the 'static, narrative' dimension of materials that perpetuate uni-directional content delivery with minimum learner interaction or novel language production.

Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015:18) see mobile phones as a 'powerful extension' to the classroom, providing the opportunity for authentic communication anywhere, highlighting the possibilities to communicate virtually on social networks. Yet, the extent to which oral communicative practice is facilitated and realised in practice may be unclear. MALL studies between 1994-2012 (Burston, 2013) document the use of tools such as Facebook, Twitter and class blogging in promoting collaboration and interaction between learners beyond English classes. However, this interaction was largely focused on written communication or practising receptive skills, listening and reading. Vlogging was evident but even this may have involved a prepared and rehearsed monologue rather than spontaneous dialogue and interaction. Even MALL tools which enabled spontaneous speaking practice involved interaction with an app and were completed primarily at home rather than socially with live speakers (Demouy & Kukulska-Hulme, 2010 in Burston, 2013). Anderson's (2018 in Godwin-Jones, 2020) survey of blended learning courses in the USA reported low levels of virtual communication with target language speakers or other classmates, with professionally designed BL learning also performing poorly for authentic communicative activity. Savill-Smith, Chopra & Haure (2013) explain how participants in their MoLeNET projects used their

handsets and Skype to communicate between themselves beyond the scheduled lessons and that the project had encouraged a greater tendency for participants to seek assistance from their classmates. The extent to which this happened is not documented, however. The study mentions that the participants had Facebook accounts, which could have offered the possibility of peer communication but it is not clear whether this was actually used in this manner. In Demmens Epp's (2017) study individuals predominantly practised receptive (listening, reading and vocabulary) rather than communicative skills during their independent mobile language learning activity.

Studies have investigated means of promoting spoken language output beyond the classroom - the use of asynchronous computer-mediated communication tools seemed to elicit a greater amount of spoken language than in the classroom for learners who considered themselves to be shy (Hojnacki, 2016) but interactive speech software such as *Learnosity* (Demouy *et al.*,2009 in Burston, 2013) seemed less capable of promoting oral practice outside lessons.

Watching videos falls under the same categorisation (narrative/apprehending/ presenting) according to Gruba & Hinkeman's framework (2012 in Mishan, 2016). That said, in a general survey of over nineteen thousand FE students in 2019/20 (Hamer & Smith,2021) course- related videos emerged as one of the most useful forms of asynchronous learning. With regard to ESOL, some content on Government-funded ESOL courses does not exclusively relate to oral communication; there is a great deal of literacy-skill content in some reading courses, for example: presentational features of and types of texts or use of linguistic devices. In addition, Government-funded courses are mandated to teach learners at all levels about safeguarding, internet safety, equality and diversity and British values, for example. This could be seen as a form of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) whose primary focus is on subject rather than language (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019). Transfer of content is often considered contrary to the spirit of mobile learning which focuses on mobility, authentic communication and learner collaboration. However, UK ESOL course providers are not at liberty to choose their curriculum and teachers are required to work within the constraints placed upon them. Therefore, it is not possible to completely abandon a focus on delivery of non-linguistic related content in ESOL lessons.

However, videos in the form of screencasts, made by the subject teacher, could be considered different to videoed lectures or talks. For instance, viewing personal feedback via an audio-visual source is a key affordance of blended mobile learning offering opportunity for reflection. Error correction and providing correct language models plays a key role in language learning (Ellis, 2008 in Thornbury, 2016). A study in Bulgaria made use of tutor screencasts giving personalised feedback on learners' written work, using real examples from their personal employment context (Russell, 2013).

This type of feedback was similar to the videos provided in Ingham's UK study (2013). The screencast process enabled the tutor to edit and comment on the learner's text simultaneously and may provide a good example of the type of bespoke materials recommended by Godwin-Jones (2020). Such personalised feedback might be more difficult to attain in a classroom context where tutors may lack the time to coach individually and where feedback on writing is traditionally in the form of text annotations and written comments. Clear progress in language ability between drafts led Russell (2013) to advocate the method for improving writing skills. The ability of the corrective feedback to be both oral and visual was very popular with participants in the study and the video format meant that learners could frequently review their tutor's comments, unlike in a face-to-face context. Furthermore, the oral and visual aspect is an important one as research by Aldukhayel (2021) points to the necessity for captions (subtitles) and high visual support for maximised understanding of videos and vlogs for second-language speakers.

A further popular way for institutions to easily provide online learning beyond the classroom is the use of commercially-produced adaptive online content such as Macmillan English Campus, used in the Munich Volkshochschule case study (Krake,2013). The FE learner survey above (Hamer & Smith,2021) also saw online exercises and interactive quizzes valued highly by learners. Such apps/software enable personalised, interactive and self-marking content 'adapted' to the learner. Adaptive and interactive activities feature further along Mishan's (2016) continuum toward dynamic and productive materials. However, adaptive language learning technology has it advocates and critics. Neumeier (2005) believes it lessens the transactional distance, with its ease of learning without the presence of a teacher. For Kerr (2020b), however, its reliance upon a limited menu of task types suitable for automated correction (cloze and multiple choice for example) result in an unsatisfactory pedagogy. There appeared to be similar dissatisfaction with these types of practice materials on the part of educators in a large US study (Anderson, 2018 in Godwin-Jones, 2020:5). Anderson expresses misgivings about the types of exercises offering 'mechanical, form-focused practice, for which there are machine-gradable right or wrong responses,' While a number of learners found these learning activities repetitive and de-contextualised, participants in the Krake (2016) study found them useful.

Further forms of adaptive/interactive technologies used in asynchronous learning are language learning apps such as 'Duolingo' which may prove motivating and helpful for some yet limited and frustrating for others. Kerr (2020) argues that, in some cases, it is no longer the teacher who 'enacts' the pedagogy; rather it is abdicated to app developers and quite possibly those with no educational or language teaching background. Beatty (2003 in Thornbury, 2016) believes apps are often weak on

real-time communicative practice opportunities for oral output processing. Yet Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015) view mobile devices as having the ability to promote language fluency and creativity rather than being used with a narrow output focus as may be the case with some apps. Some apps may help in rehearsing and memorising vocabulary or grammar chunks, focusing learners' attention on linguistic form, or motivating them to spend more time and intense periods with the language. A study amongst beginner foreign language learners at Coventry University (Brick & Cervi-Wilson, 2019) found that use of the Duolingo app was helpful but preferable in combination with a face-to-face course for optimal acquisition and this further endorses a 'parallel' approach (Neumeier, 2005) to asynchronous learning.

In summary, smart phone technology seems able to assist learners in some of the vital aspects of language learning such as rehearsal, memorisation, reflection and review. Teachers can incorporate this type of activity as part of formal learning beyond the classroom. Digital technology may have afforded increased practice, output or input opportunities, motivation to use on a more regular basis and so increase the amount of time dedicated to language use and practice, thereby potentially accelerating progress. Yet finding and using MALL tools for communicative practice and to monitor pronunciation can be more difficult. Demmens Epp (2017) believes that learners should be helped to see that they need not only be consumers of learning content but interact with it and create and share their own. Indeed apps, websites and phone features display an ever-increasing array of means to interact, receive feedback and rehearse which may go some way towards achieving these goals in future. While opportunities for direct oral communication practice are afforded in the classroom, this may not be the most prevalent use of mobile handsets on blended courses.

2.15 Enacting the pedagogy

If teachers control the pedagogy within the classroom, who is responsible for pedagogy outside it? Traditionally, teachers have also had this responsibility. They set weekly paper-based homework but more recently seem to have taken advantage of the affordances offered by learners' mobile phones or computers, according to Higton *et al.'s* (2019) ESOL research. With blended learning joining the worlds in and beyond the classroom, part face-to-face and part online, in Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue's framework it is the teacher who holds the two in tension and 'enacts the pedagogy' (2015:8). They consider the role of the teacher to be vital in maintaining pedagogical integrity with the focus on didactic content rather than the technology being the arbiter of the activity design. Research described earlier (in Godwin-Jones,2020) noted how the integration of asynchronous learning with classroom content was the optimal form of blend, making the teacher instrumental in

realising this. Furthermore, Wang & Smith's (2013) conclusions emphasised the motivational and organisational role of the teacher which concentrates further responsibility in the teacher's hands.

'Teacher wisdom' is one of the MALL framework's four spheres, placing an emphasis on the experience of the teacher with their personal knowledge of and connection to the learners. This places a great deal of responsibility on the shoulders of individual classroom teachers. It is not a straightforward task. Using mobile phones for interactive and communicative language activity beyond the classroom is the essence of mobile learning but is the 'most challenging and disruptive' form as spaces not normally used for learning require greater thought when planning learning activities (Kukulska-Hulme, 2019:). Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler (2013) believe that mobile learning can be spontaneous and ad hoc, requiring little prior organisation or planning, and Seta, Kukulska-Hulme & Arrigo (2014) note that using a mobile phone as part of a structured learning design is far less common than in short, discrete learning activities that take advantage of language in natural settings. Shepherd's (2015) recommendation for FE colleagues was the need for ESOL staff to design suitable activities which are tied to classroom activity (a parallel design).

An earlier section discussed the time and effort involved in designing activities for blended study. Teachers may be inclined to treat the use of mobile phones or laptops for learning in the same way as the printed page, replicating tried and tested writing, grammar or vocabulary practice exercises, but in digital form. For instance, Higton *et al.'s* 2019 survey of technology in ESOL showed that 74% of teachers used online written materials and worksheets, 70% digital visual materials and presentations and 58% used activities sourced from Moodle (VLE). It may be that these contain a certain amount of digital enhancement of common traditional materials. However, Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015) call for a reconceptualisation of materials and practices in regard to mobile language learning, a transformation in the same vein as Beetham & Sharpe's as exemplified in activities in Table 6 above.

Nevertheless, it is entirely understandable that teachers may choose the path of least resistance when faced with pressure to offer more asynchronous learning, thus merely reproducing tried and tested classroom practice and resources using technology without thinking of the linguistic benefit. The oft self-confessed paucity of teachers' own digital literacies and need for development has been a subject of discussion in the literature (Hamer & Smith, 2021; MoLeNET, 2010; El-Metoui & Graham Brown, 2021; Hockley, 2018) and this issue will necessarily have an effect on the amount and type of digital learning activities provided for learners and the ultimate design of BL. Publications such as the 'Framework for MALL' or Tomlinson & Whittaker's (2013) guide exist to assist practitioners wishing to design and implement blended learning. Drawing on others' research and practice, there is a

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certain appetite in the profession to learn from existing models. Dissemination of examples and experiences of blended mobile learning may offer a useful continuing professional development opportunity and provide teachers with a starting point or help solve a particular issue. However, given the multiplicity of teaching contexts, heterogeneity of language classrooms and diversity of teacher skill and experience, the methods and principles outlined do not offer a guarantee of replicability.

Moreover, when the framework for MALL speaks of 'teacher wisdom', the teacher is believed to know her individual learners with their needs, preferences and contexts. Yet this may not always be possible. A study in Milton Keynes (Gaved & Peasegood, 2016) used that knowledge to target specific locations frequented by learners in order to teach specific language in situ via their phone, but one participant stated that the language introduced at her chosen location, an art gallery, (prepared by the app development team) did not match her particular language needs.

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Clearly, it is difficult to meet every learner's exact needs and expectations, but this highlights the importance of collaboration in the learning design process. Several studies have promoted learner participation. Wang & Smith (2013) believe this motivates learners as they will be studying the language they require. For example, Russell's (2013) longitudinal blended learning study consulted with learners after each iteration and adapted the course content accordingly. A 'with, not for ' principle guided a number of studies reviewed already (City Academy/LSIS ,2010). Danielsson *et al.* (2004) used J.M. Carroll's work on participatory design which resulted in the innovation of course design as a result of closer student/teacher consultation. Seta, Kukulska-Hulme & Arrigo (2014) envisage

> 'a future where mobile learning is likely to become a shared enterprise between learners, teachers, learning objects, and more sophisticated technologies that increasingly understand, and provide for, a variety of learner needs and behaviours in context.'

Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler (2013) believe a design principle for mobile learning is the importance of recognition of learner diversity, agency and habits as a starting point and design with these considerations in mind. However, Pegrum notes that mobile pedagogy depends on teachers (and their learners) seeing the benefits of both knowledge construction and collaborative networking (Pegrum, 2014 in Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015).

2.16 Centres of learning

The previous sections have considered the digital tools and pedagogical activities that can be utilised in mobile blended learning beyond the classroom. This final section discusses the settings and behaviours of learning. In the UK, English in spoken or written form is ubiquitous and, in theory, any

migrant learner interaction with the language could result in learning, if appropriated as such. It is clear from the discussion in the first chapter, however, that people fail to take advantage of potential opportunities. Table 2 highlighted learners who had relatively low levels of English despite being in the UK for many years. There may be various reasons for this: lack of motivation or interest, time or know-how or actual exposure to the language.

Traditionally, formal learning beyond the classroom has taken the form of work suited to completion in the home. Yet with the portability of a mobile phone and internet access, the Framework for MALL (Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015) envisions its reach from the classroom to the home and to social (shops, museums, cafes) and virtual settings (forums and Facebook). Mobile phone technology can easily provide an extension of classroom learning and increased attention to it may foster the realisation that 'the classroom is less THE centre of most learners' learning than just one of many centres' (Reinders & Benson, 2017:14). This is a factor in creating what Looi *et al.* (2010) term a 'seamless' learning environment which had been defined by Wong *et al.* (2015 in Hwang, Lai & Wang, 2015:454) as, ‘‘when a person experiences a continuity of learning, and consciously bridges the multifaceted learning efforts, across a combination of locations, times, technologies or social settings". For Kukulska-Hulme (2019:117) mobility 'captures the real essence' of mobile learning. However, learning beyond the classroom depends on learners appreciating the learning that can occur when not accompanied by a teacher in a formal learning setting, which recalls the discussion around autonomous language learning. While this concept may be broadly understood in theory, how can this be used to maximise language learning in practice?

The discreet portability of phones and the ready availability of short audio files and transcripts online provide speaking and listening practice not possible with print only materials, and do so more easily for learners than the use of a less portable audio player in a fixed location. In the Turkish study (Kern,2013) the taxi drivers were able to access the podcasts and other lesson content in their own time. Ease of use and ready access to learning material may well promote amount of use and increase the amount of time spent learning. When learning material is not only available in the physical domain (as with paper-based resources) but accessible at all times online, this may promote more revision and assist people in engaging with learning content they would otherwise have missed owing to absence, a point also noted by Kern (2013).

Mobile phones can afford learners the flexibility to study in non-traditional settings. This was clearly taking place in several of the case studies considered earlier. In pursuing opportunities to increase length and intensity of learning, of vital consideration are the informal spaces where, in an English-speaking country, the majority of real-life communicative interaction occurs. Between the classroom

and the home learners may go to work, visit the doctor's surgery, a school, council offices, food outlets and a variety of other services where they are required to use English and could take advantage of 'just in time learning' (Ortega, 2008). Sharples *et al*. (2007, in Gaved & Peasegood, 2017) believe that learning in such settings must form part of mobile learning theory. They also call for an understanding of how people 'artfully create impromptu sites of learning' (Gaved & Peasegood, 2017:2) as the locations and accompanying learner actions are little researched (Reinders & Benson, 2017).

Advocates of in-situ mobile learning in informal spaces may see its great potential yet this may sometimes be difficult to fully realise. A study in Milton Keynes, UK, (Gaved & Peasegood, 2017) aimed to promote and analyse such learner behaviour and outcomes by providing an app offering situated learning opportunities throughout the town. It contained lessons connected to particular locations (e.g., bus station and art gallery) where learners received an alert offering access to a short lesson with location-specific language. The study found that rather than learning in-situ and using the target language immediately, deeper learning was often deferred to the home setting. Listening to audio dialogues and reviewing vocabulary were the most popular content reviewed briefly in a triggered location, whereas grammar was reviewed at home. Various pressures militated against immediate learning. When the participants had time to check the app and study some of the content in the triggered location, they did so but this did not occur in many cases. Only one of the 25 participants studied entirely whilst at the location but the remainder studied the lessons later at home, free of inhibiting factors such as poor weather or their social surroundings. Practical issues such as not wishing to play audio files out loud or not being able to make notes also pushed the learning to more conventional locations. The researchers identified that socio-cultural factors such as not wishing to stand out as a non-fluent English speaker militated against the use of the app content to immediately engage with speakers in a particular trigger location and that social factors have a role to play in how people learn. Nonetheless, the study showed that participants were motivated to learn using the app albeit not 'on-the-go' for any length of time and the conscious attention to language required for specific social situations encountered may have led to its adoption by the learners on future occasions and its eventual acquisition. The study amongst migrants in Canada (Demens Epp,2017) similarly found that digital MALL tools were primarily employed in private spaces but some more limited use took place 'on-the-go.'

To promote learning 'on-the-go' during a blended learning course could be an aspect of learner training and support. Greater awareness of device features of mobile phones in tandem with suitable resources may be able to assist learners to maximise conscious learning and understand and

value the unconscious learning that takes place in informal settings. This further reinforces the importance of making the learner capable of being their own language teacher. Some are natural autodidacts while others may need guidance to adopt habits to promote learning outside of a formal setting.

In summary, a growing body of research and thought argues for the ability of smart phones to usefully assist in the language learning process. ESOL courses employing a mobile blended learning design may be able to draw on these affordances to help learners to progress, by intensifying their weekly study and encouraging greater independent long-term investment in learning. Such methods have not been common in a UK ESOL context but the recent pandemic has seen an increasing research interest in evaluating the role and viability of such forms of learning in ESOL. Any such move requires careful thought around implementation of blended learning and attention to the matter of pedagogy when appropriating new technologies for language learning. It is thought that this new mode of study, when done correctly, constitutes a paradigm shift in learning, bringing a reconceptualisation of materials and a re-evaluation of the places where learning can take place.

The following chapter outlines and justifies the research approach and methods employed to investigate these aspects further.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods

'Was motivated me homework, working the group. And you tell us to something, looking something, and as well this app which one you sent to us, was good motivation to us because was easy. It was like, you know, you go anywhere, you go waiting for the bus or sit down the train, you just take it with you and you doing when you was free.

Figure 5 Excerpt from participant interview. Learner 12 (Entry 3 / Female / Poland)

3.1 Introduction: Researching second language learning

This thesis seeks to understand how mobile blended language learning can contribute to current ESOL pedagogy, to the benefit of learners, teachers and institutions. It is a study at course level and charts the introduction of a number of interventions to extend learning hours on standard 12-week ESOL courses. The move to increased synchronous and asynchronous learning in ESOL contexts since March 2020 makes researching and understanding this phenomenon ever more relevant. This practitioner action research study contributes to the literature on blended learning in a government-funded UK ESOL context but also more widely within adult and migrant life-long learning. Cochrane's (2013) overview of mobile learning research states that studies had, to that point, seldom bridged formal and informal learning in settings such as FE/adult learning institutions and Kukulska-Hulme (2019) believes great opportunity exists for research and dissemination of practice into the integration of formal and informal learning. Cochrane argues,

> 'There is a significant gap in the literature of m-learning research dealing with *longitudinal action-research projects* (italics mine). With some notable exceptions (for example, MoLeNET), m-learning research has been predominantly characterized by short-term case studies focused upon the implementation of rapidly changing technologies with early adopters but with little evaluation, reflection, or emphasis on mainstream tertiary-education integration.' (2013:29)

This research spans an entire academic year, allowing for a deeper dive into the implementation process and experiences. While other studies may have description of learner preference, habits and experience or the effect of a single intervention on learning (e.g., an app or blogging) as their primary focus, this thesis extends the scope; its focus is on pedagogy for extending learning beyond the classroom and understanding how the design and implementation of mobile blended learning

can drive both personal language learning and longer-term pedagogical change in ESOL teaching and learning. It endorses a 'sustainable' approach to mobile learning integration (Cochrane,2013:30) by advocating BYOD. Cochrane emphasises the need for critical reflection in the research process and the final research question acts as a prompt for such reflection on the ability of the blended courses to impact and extend learning.

The process of learning and using language is fascinating to observe - babies' first words, children's seemingly effortless acquisition of a first or subsequent language or adults' endeavours to master a second language in a classroom setting. Language learning is a common denominator of human experience, the processes of which are an inner, unseen realm, belonging to each individual. A distinction has often been made between research into a second language which is naturally acquired and that which is taught. Research into both first and second language acquisition has been dominated by a positivist ontology for many decades. Second language acquisition research (SLA) and the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) continue to produce numerous data-driven experimental studies which focus on the subconscious language process. They ascertain the effect of certain interventions on a learner's ability to recall language or use grammar structures, usually at word or sentence level. The very names 'Pushed Output Hypothesis' (Swain,1985) and 'Noticing Hypothesis' (Schmidt,1990) highlight this positivist approach. Recent studies into blended learning have tended to adopt a quasi-experimental approach, using pre-test and post-test measures to ascertain effectiveness of asynchronous interventions on reading ability (Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017), writing skills (Adas & Bakir, 2013 in Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019) vocabulary (Tosun, 2015 in Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019; Hwang, & Chen, 2013 in Burston, 2013), or pronunciation (Saran, Seferoglu & Cagiltay, 2009 in Burston, 2013), for instance. This is consistent with the approach used in a great deal of global computer-assisted language learning (CALL)/mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) research but is less appropriate here.

In fact, TESOL (Teaching ESOL) research, it is argued, requires many differing perspectives to reflect the multiplicity of purposes and contexts for language learning and teaching (Cumming, 1994). This research has language learning and acquisition as its goal but falls within the field of instructed language learning (Ellis, 2005) research rather than naturalistic SLA. It draws on the findings of previous SLA research to inform the teaching and learning interventions used. The SLA tradition often asks the question 'how' specific words or grammar structures or vocabulary are obtained, processed in the brain and then used. It is the 'how' of explanation within the quantitative paradigm (Stickler & Hampel, 2015) that is of interest. In contrast, this thesis considers 'how' English is studied and learnt, centering on how particular tools and activities affect the amount of time given to

language learning, and how these tools and activities might affect the amount of language obtained (input) and offer opportunities for the necessary processing and language use (output) for adults on existing English language courses.

These, and other studies in the field of CALL/MALL, often straddle a number of sometimes opposing disciplines - science, education, social science, linguistics, applied linguistics and human-computer interaction. These various research areas traditionally have opposing ontological stances and, consequently favour different methodologies - some positivist, science and technology, others interpretive, education and applied linguistics (Stickler & Hampel, 2015). Likewise, this study encompasses a number of different fields: adult migrant life-long learning, blended learning design, learner psychology, motivation, applied linguistics, second language pedagogy, use of mobile phone technology and digital anthropology. It is not inconsistent then that a mixed methods approach has been adopted here. Nevertheless, the primary mode is qualitative not quantitative. There are a number of reasons for this. It is believed that 'In CALL a focus on better understanding the learner experience in settings where new technology is being employed is critical.'(Levy, 2015:555). Interpretive enquiry can be better suited to exploring lesser-known topics and allow unexpected insights to emerge (Tuffour, 2019) and so 'push the boundaries of knowledge' in regards to how learners appropriate technology for learning language (Stickler & Hampel, 2015:380). Yet, qualitative methods in second language teaching and learning research are relatively novel and this will be discussed in more detail.

3.2 What do I wish to know and how can I find out?

Many studies into instructed language learning examine how teachers and learners behave in classroom settings. In contrast, this thesis highlights beyond the classroom learning by primarily investigating what takes place in learners' homes, workplaces or the spaces in-between, as part of asynchronous mobile blended learning. Unlike a classroom, these arenas are difficult to access directly. Learners cannot be observed first-hand; such research has to rely on the word or actions of the students. How then can this world of language learning be known?

Establishing an ontological and epistemological stance for this thesis invites the fundamental question of what it is I wish to know and how that can be known. As regards the former, I wish to understand if and how mobile blended learning could help teachers and learners increase guided learning hours and motivate learners to study more beyond the classroom, assisting them to learn English more quickly.

The knowledge sought is fundamentally subjective. During the data collection period the participants reflect on their experiences of language study. They evaluate various modes and means

of study, a number of language learning activities and tools and consider the extent to which these develop their English or motivate and assist them in increasing their learning hours and helping them make progress. Such knowledge is derived from stories of personal experience and each participant's context and practices are unique. A learner may claim to have improved her English or studied more during an online course than a face-to-face course, for instance; this is knowledge that can neither be substantiated nor refuted. I may wish to ascertain the ability of an app to promote an increase in learning hours. One learner finds the app motivating while another dislikes it. What can be concluded about the usefulness of the app for learning English? Both viewpoints can be valid. Different versions of reality can co-exist (Roberts, 2006) when reality is constructed from within its social context and not independently as a single objective reality. An objective view of the suitability of an app, preference for a mode of learning or what stimulates motivation, is unattainable. Therefore, a constructivist ontology is more suitable than a positivist stance.

Nevertheless, from a qualitative research standpoint, the unique, subjective experiences of learners in regard to their language learning are valuable and knowledge worthy of pursuit. In forming an understanding of the lived experience of learners using their phones to study beyond the classroom, a picture can emerge through the commonalities which present themselves, even amongst a group of unique individuals. If twenty out of twenty-five learners find listening practice at home useful and say it helps improve their comprehension, a pattern has emerged, a clear representation of a shared reality. If two learners enjoy using an app but observation shows one learner used the app for twenty hours whereas the other used it for only twenty minutes, what can this tell us? How this subjective personal world of learner behaviours, attitudes and preferences towards studying language using technology can be known fully is by means of interpretation. An interpretive approach investigates how people behave and tries to explain 'why people act as they act' (Biesta, 2017:161). It is a search for rich, authentic stories.

From a positivist standpoint, this type of subjective knowledge about learning raises questions of credibility - can the self-evaluation or account of a learner be believed and what of the interpretation the researcher makes of those revelations or observations? Furthermore, the reality presented is based on a participant's subjective understanding of words key to the thesis such as 'learn', 'improve' or 'more time' and by the interpretive filters of the researcher as to the meaning of those same words. This is the nature of an interpretive approach.

The knowledge in this thesis is constructed through researcher observations and participants' voiced experiences. To adopt a purely constructivist stance would be to believe that it is impossible to know the world independently from its expression through the language of the learner. This would lead to

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a 'descent into nihilism' according to Searle (1999:8). This learner world cannot only be made visible through language but also through observation. Learner actions can reveal experience not expressed with language or confirm experience expressed so. If a learner states that she has devoted more hours to study on an online course than a face-to-face one, but there is no observation of work submitted during the online course, the researcher must consider what this apparent dichotomy may mean. Should another learner say she enjoys working on an app and it is observed that she has used it for 50 hours, these two stories converge to build a clear narrative. Any knowledge claims made in this thesis are small parts of a picture, built up of insights into the learner world, which attempts to portray a clearer image of the phenomenon of engagement with mobile blended learning.

In a study concerned with increasing time spent learning and a focus beyond the classroom, it is important to construct reality in a number of ways - stated experience and observed experience. By observed experience I mean using data generated from user analytics or learning management systems (LMS) which can provide a means of observation of study habits beyond the classroom, the exact amount of time spent studying or the number of times a video was viewed, for example. This offers the opportunity for ongoing observation of activity when direct physical observation is impossible. If twenty-five learners watch a YouTube video but only two view it until the end and this same pattern occurs across twenty videos viewed, some knowledge of an aspect of the learners' world has been revealed. Combining both types of experience data can create a stronger and more credible picture of reality from which the researcher can make interpretations and draw conclusions.

In line with its constructivist ontology this thesis considers that the stories of experience learners share should be accepted. For instance, if a participant claims to use a phone to watch videos before going to bed or the app while waiting to pick a child from school, her account should be considered trustworthy, despite those knowledge statements being unverifiable. In fact, 'We operate in the world all the time on the basis of what is plausible to believe (Seale, 1999:10). Gladwell (O'Hagan, 2019) argues that civil society only functions by virtue of its default to truth and Roberts (2009) feels that researchers on both sides of the paradigm debate should suspend disbelief of the other to a certain extent so as to accept each other's generation of social knowledge. Hammersley & Atkinson (2019) conclude that it is possible to engage with our current knowledge while bearing in mind that it might be erroneous.

To sum up, ontological positions can be seen along a continuum from realism to constructivism. Realism centres on a singular objective reality that exists independent of individuals' perceptions. Whilst at the other end, under constructivism, multiple realities can be seen to be constructed by

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individuals. It is the latter position that I take. Following the same continuum, the corresponding positions to realism and constructivism would be positivism and interpretivism respectively (Waring, 2017). Therefore, the epistemological stance used in the thesis is interpretivism as it is congruent with constructivism. However, the 'structures, conceptuality and conventions of language' are ultimately in control of what people can know and are able to communicate (Usher, 1996:27). This ultimately renders any knowledge partial (*ibid*) and particularly that of non-native speakers as will be discussed below. The understanding of the phenomena of mobile blended learning gained during the research period cannot be considered complete. Limitations exist - the researcher's poor phrasing of questions, poor listening skills or faulty interpretations or failure on the part of the participants to understand questions or express ideas clearly. Ultimately, this thesis reflects a version of reality which some will recognise whilst others may not. It may take many iterative cycles of investigation of smaller parts to better understand the whole (Usher, 1996:19).

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3.3 Practitioner action research

McKinley (2019) tells of how, in the late 1960's, practitioner-researchers led the way in investigating the teaching of ESOL but the field was gradually professionalised, leading to a 'bifurcation' of teaching and research, with the latter being more highly valued. In recent times, educational research has often been conducted by outsiders and it is less common that the teachers and learners involved become beneficiaries of that research (Zeni,1988). Not so with action research. Practitioner-researchers are driven to ameliorate their educational environments and, in this case, the desire is to help learners acquire more English and provide a better understanding of ways to increase and maximise GLH, an issue of great relevance for contexts such as my own. Stenhouse championed the belief that curriculum improvement would result from the activity of teacher-researchers (Nunan, 1997). The purpose of action research is to stimulate change by being practice-focused and embedded in a real context. Educational research is centred on helping and improving current practice (Coe *et al.,* 2017) which is best realised when the context exists, with all the real constraints and possibilities of a normal teaching setting. Some in the language teaching sector such as Gordon Lewis (2020) advocate practitioner action research as a means of providing a much-needed foundation of reality and context to the field.

Ultimately, it is the learners who should benefit from the process and outcomes of research and value exists in highlighting learners' stories within their natural, social context for learning. Cumming (1994) believes such decisions of purpose and value underpin any research in English language teaching.

Being a practitioner-researcher places the teacher in a unique position as an insider who is known to the participants. Yet this brings both advantages and disadvantages. In the positivist ontology, research can only be valid if the researcher is located outside its context (Usher, 1996). Clearly, practitioner research is the antithesis of this. As a teacher of my own research participants, that relationship both assists and challenges the course of the investigation. In a constructivist ontology we are necessarily 'embedded in the world of social relationships' (Finlay, 2011 in Tuffour, 2017). In one sense that teacher-researcher relationship may prove positive as a relationship of trust develops over the course of a year. I come to know them all well - their backgrounds, personal contexts, characters, language needs and motivations. For 'full, frank and free-flowing discussions' - there needs to be a reasonable amount of trust (Denscombe, 2017) to encourage learners to speak candidly of their preferences and experiences safe in the knowledge that their contributions are valued and they are accepted. This deep understanding of the participants and their specific ways of learning is further complemented by my having taught ESOL for 19 years and gained a wealth of practical language teaching experience. The learners place hope and trust in me (and teachers in general) to enable them to develop their skills. Aware that they are participating in research, learners surely do so believing that their teacher has their best interests at heart.

However, that same relationship may inhibit honesty. This might stem from fear of causing displeasure or challenging the teacher, a perceived authority figure. Learners' cultures have an impact on this relationship. For instance, several struggle to adapt to the cultural norm of addressing a teacher by their first name, preferring instead to say 'teacher'. This reveals the respect and power distance implicit in their view of the teacher-learner relationship. This may prevent them from ever being totally frank. For this reason, the City Academy/LSIS study (2010) outlined in Chapter 2 made use of known intermediaries, but not teachers, to elicit feedback from their participants, being aware that, culturally, openly criticising those in authority is difficult. For Denzin (2009: 154 in Stickler & Hampel, 2015) the means of knowing is always 'partial, moral and political'. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the limitations and partial nature of the knowledge arising from the teacher-researcher / learner-participant relationship. Nevertheless, the participants now reside in a culture where they are informed of their rights as outlined clearly in a college learner charter and may be more aware of their ability to voice their complaints through organisational channels. This offers them greater agency. Many are aware of the status they are afforded as an adult education learner and this may balance out the teacher/learner power relationship to become one of mutual respect and openness. Whilst as an insider I have some expert knowledge of the context and nature of ESOL learners, I can, however, never be a true insider; I am not a learner and I am unable to experience learning as they do. This limits my ability to access real knowledge but I am not alone in

this. Accounts of research by peers are similarly limited and this partial means of knowing is a reality to be accepted. Hammersley & Atkinson (2019) point out that the effect researchers have on their participants is to be acknowledged but does not invalidate the findings; rather it prompts monitoring or minimizing of that effect.

Common features of practitioner action research, as opposed to practitioner reflection, are systematic data gathering and documentation, a greater tendency for self-reflection and a wide audience for collaboration, presentation and publication (Zeni,1998). Such research 'democratizes' the research process by putting control in the hands of the expert practitioner-researcher (Denscombe, 2017:127) rather than the research professional. That said, action research can often involve partnerships and collaboration with other colleagues within the researcher's organisation and beyond. This can result in issues of data ownership, control and responsibility (Zeni, 1998; Denscombe, 2017). Furthermore, on a practical level, the burden of teaching and researching simultaneously is cited as a disadvantage to the method (Denscombe, 2017).

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Importantly, action research is conducted in cycles which feed improvements directly into practice. Van den Akker *et al.* (2006) argue that the link between educational research and practice is not strong enough but by studying modifiable interventions a number of times in their 'target setting', a greater likelihood exists of them becoming practicable (Collins, Joseph & Bielaczyc, 2004 & van den Akker, 1999 in van den Akker *et al.,*2006). However, despite the potential for successive iterations to lead to further research, Denscombe (2017) points out that rarely is this the case and many so-called action research projects are one-offs.

Critics of action research argue that heavy teacher involvement and personal investment in the research might result in unintentional bias. Therefore, scrutinizing researcher subjectivity is a high priority (Zeni, 1998). A researcher may be tempted to select certain participant responses over others to provide a neat conclusion to the research at the exclusion of other important, but less comfortable, narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). López-Zerón *et al.* (2020 in López-Zerón, 2021) point out that the participants may be viewed as a homogeneous cohort which results in some perspectives and voices being unheard or distorted. Researchers may find it challenging to be open to incongruity or to admit that some interventions were not workable or helpful. Being so entrenched in a local context may render the insider researcher unable to notice what is visible to an outsider (Denscombe, 2017). 'Pre-understandings' of the research situation will always exist and are unavoidable. However, in acknowledging them and being open-minded they can be tested and transformed (Gadamer, 1975 in Usher, 1996:21). For example, one assumption of this research is the belief that learners carry a mobile phone in most contexts beyond the classroom and, if guided how

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to use it to learn more English, will do so. This might not be the case as it also assumes a level of intrinsic motivation and levels of learner competence in using a phone to learn. Learners might undertake their blended work using a laptop not a phone and complete the work given out of fear or duty not motivation. These cases run counter to the fundamental assumption. In addition, I believe mobile blended learning is the mode most suited to ESOL and preferable for the students, yet I must remain open to other views and outcomes. Authenticity is fundamental to the quality of qualitative meaning that the research must present a fair and balanced view, incorporating multiple perspectives (Mertens, 2015 in Mertens,2017), that is free of the undue influence of the researcher.

Finally, practitioner action research in language teaching has been judged as lacking care and rigour (Brumfit & Mitchell, 1989 in Burns, 2005) or viewed merely as a slightly more robust version of teachers' reflective practice or continuing professional development (Wallace, 1991 & 1998 in Burns, 2005). Nunan (1997) is insistent that the same standards and criteria need to be applied to practitioner research as to any other form and Denscombe (2017) concurs that small-scale studies such as this should be judged by their rigour.

3.4 Ethnography

Action research can draw on an ethnographic approach but here it is a form of classroom ethnography rather than its classic form (Zeni,1998). Since the 1980s, ethnography has developed into a major approach in the field of second language learning research, encompassing wide-ranging contexts and findings (Harklau, 2005). Ethnography has its roots in investigating cultures but, more recently, the traditional study of distant unfamiliar people groups has given way to studies of the mundane, encompassing cultures close to home (Denscombe,2017). For instance, Cooke's (2006) ethnographic study of UK ESOL learners led to an understanding that ESOL learners are not a homogeneous cultural grouping. Even learners from the same country of origin present different needs according to age, gender, educational background, length of time in the UK and aspirations for the future.

In the current study, in addition to various learner ethnic and cultural backgrounds, a distinct social group is formed as learners enter a classroom 'culture' of language learning with its 'rules' and practices. This world of classroom study co-exists with learners' own daily lives and social world, involving family, friends, work and home. As these three research groupings learn in a manner entirely new to the majority of them, the researcher observes and listens to their stories and experiences.

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There is debate as to what constitutes ethnography but for Atkinson (2005, in Harklau, 2005) participant observation is the hallmark. This observation is in a naturally occurring setting, over a significant period of time and typically documented using a number of data sources (Harklau,2005; Chapelle & Duff,2003). This research borrows a number of these ethnographic principles and techniques.

Buscatto (2017:2) notes that ethnographic observation permits 'privileged access' to participants' actions as distinct from their words. In this study, that access is to daily learner interactions and engagement with blended learning over an eleven-month period. An attempt is made to gain the emic perspective including participants' emotional, social and motivational behaviour by some of the same means, which also falls within the remit of ethnographic study (Mynard, 2020). However, the observation remains partial. The difficulty presenting itself in this case is the observation of learner activity beyond the classroom, where it is impossible to follow students to their homes, places of work or spaces in-between and observe experiences first-hand. Nevertheless, monitoring the ongoing completion of asynchronous work, regular noting of behaviours, habits and attitudes relating to interaction with the new learning mode during lessons in the research field notes all form part of a consistent observation regime. In addition, the weekly capture of the LMS data from learner use of asynchronous interventions such as the 'Learn English Now' app and YouTube-based videos afford that continual privileged insight into learner actions outside the virtual or physical classroom.

Hammersley & Atkinson (2019) argue that action research is not truly ethnographic as it ultimately aims to change the setting it observes. They believe concerns regarding ethnographic studies in second language learning often stem from the misapplication of the term to studies that are not truly ethnographic and the failure adequately to detail data collection, leaving research open to criticism for lack of rigour. Studies may also lack the required reflexivity and statement of epistemological position (Harklau, 2005). In both these regards this thesis strives to provide clarity and demonstrate reflexivity.

3.5 Can this thesis have an impact?

There has been a brief discussion of researcher assumptions. That this thesis might have an impact may be just such an assumption. As with case study research, it is difficult to argue that highly contextualised findings can be applied universally and the limited size and scope of action research does not produce 'grand' changes (Denscombe, 2017:125). The desire to introduce more blended mobile learning in my organisation based on this thesis may flounder should learners dislike it or organisational practicalities militate against it.

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Observation is at the heart of ethnography but the difficulty presenting itself in this case is the observation of learner activity beyond, not in, the classroom. It is impossible to follow students to their homes, places of work or spaces in-between. In this case, it is observation through oral and written responses and the LMS usage data from asynchronous learning interventions such as apps and YouTube-based videos.¶

In addition, to search for or offer generalisations applicable to every ESOL context (or beyond) would demonstrate confusion regarding the ontological foundations of the thesis. It is impossible to replicate this research exactly in other settings in order to claim its findings have universal credibility. Furthermore, the ability to transfer findings to a wider audience (an enormous variety of English language teaching contexts exist) is an ethical issue. Researchers are required to provide sufficient contextual details to allow others to establish a clear parity with their own and judge whether parallels can be drawn (Lincoln & Guba, 1989 in Mertens, 2017). Hammersley (1990:598) explains that the aim should be to describe the 'concrete reality' of the experiences but allow 'general features of human social life' to emerge. In this instance, the participants' evaluations and experiences may diverge or coalesce to highlight key differences or commonalities which can reveal pertinent aspects related to adult migrant language learning. These many perspectives create authenticity.

The English teaching profession constantly explores new ideas, methods and solutions to problems encountered. Transferability may be assured if colleagues, or other ESOL practitioners, identify their own teaching dilemmas and needs and their own learners' views and experiences in what is read. If trustworthiness and meaningfulness can be established (Mishler, 1990 in Burns, 2005) and the findings resemble understandings of others' specific contexts and practice, then this may establish the accuracy of the representations made as a researcher (Burns, 2005) and allow for transfer. Indeed, in writing this thesis studies were identified from which insights and ideas were drawn. This evaluation and application of existing knowledge and testing of research insights in a real context are two ways action research can impact beyond its immediate context.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Participants are integral to most research studies and ethical guidelines highlight the researcher's responsibility towards them (BERA, 2018; BAAL, 2021). This extends to areas of well-being, privacy and rights (BERA ,2018). First, requiring participant consent to involvement in data collection is a fundamental part of that responsibility. In this study learner consent encompasses the use of observation data such as spoken comments in lessons, and written on Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), digital device usage and questionnaire responses in addition to their responses in termly interviews or focus groups. However, informed consent is a subject of debate which is particularly pertinent for insider researchers (Zeni, 1998). Learners in the 3 classes in this study are automatically involved by virtue of undertaking their standard ESOL course. King & Stahl (2015, in Mertens, 2017) ask if those we teach can legitimately not participate in such a situation. In one sense, learners are obligated; not wishing to engage with the research interventions would require transferring to a different teacher. This option must always remain open. Sin (2005) believes informed consent is that

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which remains current, to be constantly open to negotiation, permitted to respond to evolving circumstances. Neale (2013 in Mertens, 2017) mentions the issue of obtaining on-going informed consent in longer studies. This offers a safeguard against coercion or deception (O'Neill, 2003 in Husband, 2020), both of which would be considered harmful.

Ethical parameters extend beyond participants to context and collaborators. Consent is not only on the part of the learner. Consent from the organisation where the research is conducted is another factor to be considered (BERA, 2018). Financial incentives or conflicts of interest should be declared. Collaborations should establish the precise areas of influence or control over the process and the data. No part of this research is required to be covert. In this instance, there has been transparency with the learners and senior management about the purpose, methods and periods of data collection. No conflicts of interest exist and neither my organisation nor the Education and Training Foundation (which sponsors the Practitioner Research course) have sought to impose strictures or direct the course of the research itself. Senior managers have given consent to the research taking place but chosen not to exert any control over the nature or terms of the project. They have consented to the ESOL learner cohorts being involved and consent has also been given for learner management system data to be used. These do not relate to individual learners but show cohort data, such as ethnicity, gender or employment status. Home-working during the pandemic meant that during that period of the research contact with colleagues was virtual and by implication less frequent than in the physical working environment. Updates and progress reports have been provided and reflections, experiences and findings have been shared at key points during the research process. The focus during the data collection phase is my own practice and the main collaborators are the learners. The project has no other direct funding or collaboration which might influence the outcomes or procedures.

Secondly, researcher responsibility requires avoidance of actions which might harm participants or cause unnecessary disruption, stress or intrusion (BAAL, 2021). In practical terms, involvement in interviews and focus groups is not mandatory. Interviews are undertaken in the learners' own time on a voluntary basis or in lesson time. Participants are at liberty to use whichever device suits them for their online work. Similarly, they are free to choose their study setting and are not coerced to learn in informal spaces for the sake of particular research outcomes. In the day-to-day, learners may not feel the intrusion of constant observer scrutiny as they take part in their courses.

A classic ethnographer enters a classroom to observe rather than change. An action researcher, on the other hand, causes change, which may qualify as putting the participants at risk and abusing the trust relationship (Zeni, 1998). Taking an emic perspective necessitates paying attention to any

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harm-related concerns raised by participants. The matter of causing potential harm through educational research is paradoxical given that teachers would consider their role overwhelmingly beneficial. As this thesis does not proceed from a positivist ontology, Mertens (2017) considers it inappropriate to consider that a single definition exists of the moral behaviour required of researchers. According to Mertens, within non-positivist research traditions it is more apt to subscribe to social justice theories of ethics (though not all qualitative researchers would subscribe to that view, as not all seek social transformation). Rights-based and social justice ethical theories place avoidance of harm as a central focus, emphasising respect and dignity for the individual and offering respect and equality of voice for minority and disadvantaged groups on a societal level (Simons, 2006 in Mertens, 2017). In the realm of education, the adult learning sector is known for upholding the ideals of respect and dignity of all learners, championing individuals' rights, role and voice in their lifelong learning. Therefore, the sector in which this research takes place has a firm basis of ethical responsibility towards its beneficiaries. A great deal of educational research takes place amongst schoolchildren. They may lack the maturity to understand their circumstances fully, and working with adults could be considered different. The teacher-pupil relationship is different from the teacher-adult education learner relationship, the latter displaying a different balance of power and often legitimately being a closer and more mutually enriching one. In adults there should be a greater measure of reflexivity and agency.

Thirdly, in this study two relationships co-exist: the relationship between learners and a teacher and between adults from a variety of nationalities and cultural backgrounds, irrespective of classroom role. The former has been discussed. As regards ethical concerns of the latter, some cultural backgrounds exhibit a heightened sense of shame, for instance, which is vital to avoid. This is particularly pertinent as the process of learning a second language is fraught with opportunity to feel foolish. In addition, learners with limited prior education require time to acquire study skills and habits others take for granted. This can be embarrassing or frustrating. Avoiding harm demands a consideration of how this is respected, treated with sensitivity, how embarrassment is avoided and there is an attempt to share the learner perspective, being aware of how I might misread or misjudge situations during the course of the research (Zeni,1998). While I am an insider in some respects, in reality I am an outsider; I will never be a learner in my own classroom and I can never share the racial and cultural world of my learners. Care needs to be taken not to exert my cultural expectations or fail to take learners' lives and competing priorities into consideration when conducting the research interventions.

Deleted: Therefore, involvement in interviews and focus groups is not mandatory. Interviews are undertaken in the learners' own time on a voluntary basis or in lesson time. Participants are at liberty to use whichever device suits them for their online work. Similarly, they are free to choose their study setting and are not coerced to learn in informal spaces for the sake of particular research outcomes.¶

Furthermore, involvement in the process of research, and particularly interviews, may potentially give rise to phenomena beyond the data (Husband, 2020). A number of Husband's participants found the interview interactions provoked increased reflexivity, resulting in profound personal change and this has ethical implications. Researchers should, he believes, accept the influence they have in co-producing knowledge through the process of interview discussions.

Moreover, Neale (2013 in Mertens, 2017) points to ethical issues relating to the researcher/participant relationship in longer studies such as reciprocity for time taken up or the danger of coercion or dependence. In some research settings it might be unusual to spend 5 hours a week with participants, over thirty-five weeks; it might appear intrusive and possibly harmful. However, the ESOL lessons are a naturally-occurring context, pre-existing irrespective of the research study. It is not unusual for a person to teach the same learners continually over the whole academic year. Neither reciprocity nor dependence affect this particular research context.

Working with bilinguals raises particular ethical concerns. The constructivist paradigm sees research 'embedded in the world .... of language' (Finlay, 2011 in Tuffour 2017). This has particular significance for a study in which all the participants use English as their second or third language. In working with linguistically diverse communities The British Association of Applied Linguists reiterate the importance of making the process of involvement clear and accessible (BAAL, 2021) thus enabling learners to participate as fully as possible. However, it may be that a real understanding of the nature of participation in such a research project may be difficult to achieve in any measure, not only as a result of ESOL learners' lack of language but owing to educational research likely being outside of their lived experience.

In the research interviews, eliciting relevant understandings from learners' comments is contingent upon their ability to choose language to articulate their ideas and feelings. Inability to articulate thoughts may prevent pertinent and important knowledge coming to light. On occasions, this dilemma has led researchers to use interpreters to conduct interviews, thereby allowing participants to express themselves more fully (Roberts, 2006). Yet this is not without issue. The UK 'Effective Practice in ESOL' project utilised bilingual third-party interviewers since its informants were at Entry ESOL Levels (beginner - E1 to intermediate level - E3). The results were 'very mixed' according to Roberts (2006). A variety of issues impacted on the depth and breadth of the information gathered: participants' comments being unhelpfully filtered through the third party, concerns around the appropriate translation of key ideas into English, lack of skill of some interpreters, and the simultaneous presence of both cultural similarities but power differences between participants and some interpreters However, Roberts (2006:12) argues that participants' use of English rather than

their expert language can 'muffle the insights, stories and metaphorical world' under investigation. There is truth in this. It could be argued that ethically, from the viewpoint of valuing participants and causing them the least stress or intrusion, they should be given the choice as to which language they wish to communicate in. This can be difficult to realise in practice, however.

Should learners be required to use English, further ethical considerations arise. These lie in the possible misinterpretation of learners' words which has implications for the authenticity and quality of the research. While this can happen even between native speakers, the occurrence is greater when bilinguals require much circumlocution or their sentence structure and lexis are faulty. A dilemma presents itself as to how to treat sections of oral data that may be linguistically unclear; is it preferable to disregard them if clarity cannot be established? In this respect a teacher/researcher is possibly advantaged by being familiar with a learner's interlanguage[3]. My years of experience teaching bilinguals and knowledge of a number of European languages spoken by learners, facilitate this task immensely.

To mitigate issues with communication, a deliberate choice to engage participants at Entry Level 3 and Level 1 (intermediate & upper-intermediate, respectively) has been made. ESOL E3 (or Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is the citizenship proficiency level required by the Home Office and is considered a good conversational level. The participants are from 12 different language backgrounds. Therefore, bilingual interviewing would be extremely difficult to realise, particularly as the research period takes place during a pandemic. Hence, while during the data collection participants only use English, effort is made to ensure informants understand the nature of the research and are content to share their views and experiences. To guarantee learners understand the process they are consenting to, during the online interview details are shown on-screen and read aloud before they are individually asked to consent (See Appendix 4). During the period of face-to-face teaching, learners are able to reaffirm their consent and sign a printed form. This is written in a language register commensurate with their level of English (see Appendix 3). Furthermore, jargon-free information concerning the research and interviews/focus groups is provided to help learners feel at ease and participate without undue stress. To avoid embarrassment or reticence to share openly or critically, it is clarified orally, and on the consent form, that all views and ideas proffered are valuable. No answers are considered wrong or unworthy. All three cohorts receive the same interventions and no group has preferential treatment.

[3] The learner's language which still shows grammatical characteristics of their other spoken languages.

However, the possibility remains that incorrect or reduced research understandings may be obtained based on unclear expression or faulty interpretation. Credibility is one of a number of ethical criteria in conducting good quality qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1989, in Mertens, 2017) and it is a matter of compromised credibility if the findings are based on misunderstandings and misinterpretation. The learners' experience would not be adequately represented. Yet, checks and balances do exist. For example, statements made by the same participant can be examined to detect incongruence with previously stated experience and member checking can confirm resonance with the findings and results.

Member checks provide transparency. This is fundamental in the analysis and findings of the research. Allowing participants to see the outcome of their involvement by reading the findings, analysed data or interview transcripts is one way to reduce researcher bias (Birt *et al.,* 2016). Such member checks can help to 'validate, verify or assess' the trustworthiness of the research (Doyle, 2007 in Birt *et al.,* 2016:1102) and there are various methods, such as returning raw data to participants, presenting synthesised data or member interviews. Birt *et al.* (2016) state that a positivist epistemology might search for confirmation of results or factual detail in transcripts whereas a constructivist stance may be required to further co-construct new meanings from previous interview data as a result of member check responses or add new data arising from further interviews. Ethically, the process of member checking should not cause distress and data should be anonymised. Data from this study would not be classified sensitive or distressing and should not cause participants trauma in revisiting their experiences. Making the research process accessible and meaningful to multilingual and multicultural participants presents additional issues (López-Zerón, Bilbao-Nieva, Clements, 2021). This would involve considerations such as language level and format of written report back, length of transcripts or texts to be read and feasibility of recalling former learners for fresh interviews. (see transcript excerpt in Appendix 5)

Two final ethical considerations are privacy and confidentiality. These are central to ethically considerate research. Participant anonymity and safe storage of collected data are standard procedure. Some studies collect data of a highly sensitive nature which may expose behaviour and attitudes which, despite anonymity, will leave those concerned open to judgement by all. It focuses attention on the need to handle what learners do and share about their personal lives, habits and attitudes with care and without judgement, avoiding any negative representations (Chege,2015 in Hammersley & Atkinson,2019). That being said, these personal data, though stored with attention to privacy, can never actually be private. In the process of disseminating research findings and conclusions to a wider audience the private inevitably becomes public (Hammersley &

Atkinson,2019). This relates to privacy but also to harm. The consent form states *'When I write about your answers, I will say 'A student said..*' I will never use your name.' It is unlikely that my learners will really understand the implications of that and the extent to which their stories will be shared beyond the written thesis. On the one hand, to record their experiences is to bestow value, yet on the other, it is important not to humiliate them but to provide a fair and unbiased representation.

Confidentiality and anonymity of data is standard research practice (BERA, 2018) and is maintained in several ways. Each participant is assigned a number and transcripts and recordings are referenced by number, not name. Under GDPR these recordings are personal data (BAAL, 2021) and to enhance participant data confidentiality, both oral and visual sources, such as written ILP comments, are stored on my private home computer and backed up to a USB device. Personal or Zoom cloud storage is not utilised as this could leave data more vulnerable (Buchanan & Zimmer, 2012 in Gray *et al.,* 2020). In the text brief biographical data are given (e.g., E3/M/Bangladesh) to contextualise responses and demonstrate that a wide range of participant voices have been represented. It might be that learners involved recognise their classmates from those details but outsiders would not. Any synthesised analysis offered in member checking would omit those details.

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3.7 The research design and questions

Having chosen a practitioner action research approach during a previous study, the method associated with this design is not altogether unfamiliar. Having read second language acquisition research during the former study, the majority being based on experiments and statistical analyses, I initially approached the current thesis with an unconscious disposition towards a positivist ontology and quantitative methods for language research. The development of the methodological foundations of this thesis grew as I understood the value of stories of learner experience in relation to the use of technology and how this was valid and required to extend current knowledge boundaries (Stickler & Hampel, 2015).

This is partly reflected in the evolution of the research questions. These were refined over time but there was a battle to 'prove' that mobile blended learning could accelerate learning and be seen to be 'effective', as many SLA interventions wish to demonstrate. This is reflected in the research questions in February 2020:

1. How can mobile technologies be used to provide appropriate and **effective** learning for ESOL students, especially beyond formal classroom learning?

2. Can learning assisted by mobile technologies which extend opportunities beyond the formal classroom contribute to **speeding up learner progress** and bridge deficits in formal learning hours?

3. What are the contextual, practical, technological and pedagogical considerations necessary for developing mobile assisted learning amongst ESOL students?

The development of the research questions departed from a positivist perspective as considerations such as how plausible it would be to investigate 'effectiveness 'and quantify 'speed of progress ' revealed significant assumptions in positioning. A change in exam providers in my organisation has meant that securing comparative outcome data to undertake such a task would be problematic. The numerous variables that might accelerate or decelerate progress, improve or impede it, would be hard to isolate to show the effect of using a mobile phone for additional language practice. Therefore, it was concluded that the focus needed to be the on evaluation of the means of extending learning beyond the classroom observing and listening to the experiences of learners. The second and third questions were then conflated to form one question that focused on pedagogy that both increased hours and promoted a sense of learning. The final question was retained to provide a summary evaluation of the research interventions overall. The questions were subsequently revised to read,

*1. Can mobile phones be used to provide **appropriate extended learning opportunities** for ESOL learners beyond the formal classroom?*

*2. What pedagogical considerations are needed when designing blended mobile language learning aimed at increasing guided learning hours and **promoting progress beyond** the classroom?*

3. Can learning assisted by mobile phone technology bridge deficits in formal learning hours and promote learner progress?

Finally, a further change was made to the first and final research questions which were altered slightly to read 'How, and can…?' The closed question 'Can mobile phones..' reflected the view that the research should not proceed from the assumption that mobile phones are able to provide appropriate extended learning. The revised question reflects this but also adds the dimension of 'If so, how?' which highlights the research emphasis on the manner in which phones are able to allow for learning appropriate for ESOL learners. Similarly with the third question, the revision reflects both the desire to remain unbiased as to the capacity of mobile phones while, once established, demonstrating ways deficits might be bridged. The final questions read,

1. How, and can mobile phones be used to provide appropriate extended learning opportunities for ESOL learners beyond the formal classroom?

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2. What pedagogical considerations are needed when designing mobile blended language learning aimed at increasing guided learning hours and promoting progress beyond the ESOL classroom?

3. How, and can learning assisted by mobile phone technology bridge deficits in formal learning hours and promote progress?

Regarding the research design, since 1994 methods in language teaching & learning research have diversified beyond statistical analysis to incorporate a variety of qualitative methods (Chapelle & Duff, 2003). Qualitative approaches to investigation recognise the social world as a complex one and learning is likewise considered a complex activity (Tuffour, 2019). Moreover, qualitative researchers 'go to the people' rather than take people out of their natural settings (Rossman and Rallis, 2003:9 in Levy, 2015) and this study is intentionally real-life, not experimental, in two main respects.

First, learners use their own mobile phones. In some earlier CALL/MALL studies (Savill-Smith, Chopra & Haure, 2012; Shepherd,2015) phones or other digital devices were provided but BYOD provides a clearer view of reality by avoiding alteration of real experience through the use of unfamiliar technology. Secondly, the participants and ESOL courses have not been selected or created especially for the purposes of the study. The course modes (reading, writing, speaking/listening) and learners have been assigned by a curriculum support assistant, as is standard organisational procedure. Participants are not selected by age, background or gender but only by level (Entry 3 / Level 1) for the purposes outlined earlier.

Research which sets about making aspects of the world visible by means of interpretive practices adopts qualitative methods. During the data collection phases the research participants' world is exposed as representations of reality, brought to life through observation and conversations, interviews or field notes, for example (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008 in Stickler & Hampel, 2015). Interviews, focus groups and observation field notes are common methods of data collection in qualitative studies. They can produce accounts of experience and rich contextual understanding. Roberts (2006) maintains that the method of data collection is contingent upon the type of knowledge under investigation. Hard, numerical data is superior for communicating certain aspects of knowledge, whilst a process of interpretation of softer data from spoken sources is more suitable for others, for example. The most appropriate strategies stem from the research questions themselves asserts Tuffour (2017). Reflection on this question of knowledge and strategy elicits a list of queries connected to each question and foregrounds a number of areas of knowledge required: learner actions, habits and practices and learner attitudes and preferences. These are outlined in the table below along with methods of obtaining the information.

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Research question 1: How, and can mobile phones be used to provide appropriate extended learning opportunities for ESOL learners beyond the formal classroom?

Area of knowledge	How to find out
Learner habits	
How many learners use their phones to study English normally? What do they use them for? What did they use them for during the course?	observation - research diary user habits questionnaire interview focus group
Where do they use their phones? At home? On-the-go? Which places?	observation - research diary user habits questionnaire interview focus groups
How have they already used their phones informally for language learning (especially on-the-go) or English not related to the course directly? Do they have apps or sites they use or their own practices?	interview observation - research diary
Learner attitudes & preferences	
What do they think of independent digital learning compared to normal paper-based homework?	observation - research diary interview focus group ILP
What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a mobile phone to study outside the classroom?	observation - research diary interview focus group
Do they/Would they prefer blended, online or fully face-to-face classes and why?	observation - research diary interview focus group ILP
What is their opinion of having to work independently during the course? What has helped, what is difficult and what independent learning/ tech support is needed?	observation - research diary interview focus group ILP

Table 7 Research question 1 – Knowledge questions

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observation - research diary

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Research question 2: What pedagogical considerations are needed when designing blended mobile language learning aimed at increasing guided learning hours and promoting progress beyond the classroom?

Area of knowledge	How to find out
Learner habits	
How often do they use the app? What stops them using the app? Do they watch the YouTube videos? What are their video viewing habits? How often do they watch them? How much does partner work extend the time they spend learning and using English?	Observation - research diary YouTube analytics data Learn English Now app analytics data Interviews Focus group
Learner attitudes & preferences	
Which of the pedagogic interventions do the learners find most helpful and perceive to aid their language learning? • partner work • app • recap videos • on-the-go informal learning • standalone content videos	observation - research diary interview focus group ILP
What other aspects of asynchronous learning do they feel have a positive or negative effect on their language learning process?	observation - research diary interview focus group ILP
What increases the learners' motivation to spend more time learning? Which of the five interventions are most motivating in that respect?	observation - research diary interview focus group ILP
What else/instead might they like to be given to do outside class that would help & motivate them to engage more consciously with English so as to learn it?	observation - research diary focus group interview
What do they find easy or not to learn or practise using a phone e.g., listening, reading, Padlet, videos, feedback, apps,	observation - research diary user habits questionnaire interview focus group
Teacher	
What methods of language acquisition do I see in evidence in the learners' out of classroom learning experiences?	observation - research diary interview focus group
To what extent am I able to successfully re-position course content into the online space?	observation - research diary hyperdocs

Table 8 Research question 2 – Knowledge questions

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Observation- research diary

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Question 3: How, and can learning assisted by mobile phone technology bridge deficits in formal learning hours and promote learner progress?

The third research question presents particular challenges. Drawing conclusions about the ability to bridge deficits may be difficult. The effect on learner progress would be particularly difficult to establish given the number of variables involved in the language learning process identified in Chapter 2 and the different understandings of what might constitute 'progress'. Nevertheless, it is considered important to frame some questions that guide reflection and critical evaluation of the study as discussed earlier (Cochrane, 2013) and maintain the focus on the research conclusions. The questions are derived through reflection on the main principles underpinning the questions - methods for extending time, language pedagogy, perceived learner progress and the suitability of mobile handsets. Utilising these as a lens through which to view the results, they can form the basis of the conclusions of the thesis.

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Evaluation questions
To what extent is there clear experience of learners extending their own learning hours beyond the classroom?
To what extent is there a clear experience of learners developing their English language skills in work beyond the classroom?
To what extent can parts of a course be taught exclusively and successfully/with pedagogic soundness beyond the classroom from my own experience?
To what extent are mobile phones an integral part of extending learning beyond the classroom?

Table 9 Research question 3 – Knowledge questions

3.8 A mixed methods approach

The methods listed in the tables above indicate the use of a combination of data collection methods. Some data required can be conveyed numerically, with a focus on recognizing how often something happens (Stickler & Hampel, 2015). Meanwhile, some is conveyed by interpreting the experiences of learners, investigating their feelings about and reasons for what happens (*ibid*). The methods of acquiring this knowledge are part quantitative (questionnaire, video view and app usage data,) and part qualitative (interviews, focus groups, ILPs, classroom observation notes and weekly hyperdocs). This mixed, but primarily qualitative, methodology is reflective of the evolution of CALL research which increasingly investigates the learners' experience of interaction with technology for language learning (*ibid*) rather than testing the linguistic outcomes of its usage.

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Biesta (2017) outlines a number of reasons in favour of a mixed methods approach. These include viewing phenomena with greater accuracy and fullness and corroborating the findings of the various

methods, thereby increasing the warrant of the research. The qualitative and quantitative elements of a study can be weighted differently (*ibid*). In this particular instance the weight is on the qualitative mode supported by quantitative data. This could be described as a 'QUAL+quan' study (Biesta, 2017) where both types of data are collected concurrently but the qualitative methods are dominant. Yin (2011) underscores the importance of integration of the two elements in any study, with both data sets being analysed and interpreted as one.

The quantitative element is small but valuable here due to its easy availability and what it can reveal about important actions and habits beyond the classroom where the teacher cannot observe. However, numerical data is unable to paint a complete picture of experience. It relies on softer data to explain and understand it. Conversely, use of interviews/focus groups and some direct observation as the sole method of collection might result in a weaker foundation for any conclusions concerning learners' habits and actions during the extended periods of time spent studying beyond the classroom. Roulston & Choi (2017) point out that interviewees may be unreliable in their recall of study practices or represent themselves differently (possibly more favourably) in an interview environment. There are data that may be difficult to elicit in an accurate manner, for example exactly how many hours learners spent studying. This is a limitation of interviews, but trustworthiness can be better established by using multiple interviews over an extended period or interviews in tandem with other methods of data collection (*ibid*) both of which are used here. In fact, it is arguable that some quantitative methods, such as questionnaires, could themselves be considered unreliable as a sole data source due to issues with sampling, questionnaire construction, participant responses and low return rates.

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The study utilises the research methods outlined in the table below and each will be considered in turn.

Qualitative data methods	Quantitative data methods
• Semi-structured interviews (Term 1) • Focus groups (T2) • Semi-structured group interviews (T3) • Individual Learning Plan comments (T1-3) • Research observation diary (T1-3) • Weekly learner asynchronous work hyperdocs (T1-3)	• Learner usage & habits questionnaire (T3) • YouTube video analytics (T1-3) • 'Learn English Now' app analytics (T1-3)

Table 10 Overview of mixed methods data collection

3.9 Research methods

Each research method is described starting with the oral data collection methods followed by the document-based methods.

3.9.1 Interviews and focus groups

The familiar term 'interview' is used in many contexts but belies the complexity of its usage in research. For example, ethnographic interviews may differ from traditional research interviews in their structure and management (Roberts,2006). Some may be more akin to conversations (*ibid*) and others may be more formal. Moreover, an interview continuum exists, ranging from structured to unstructured. The locus of control may vary between the interviewer and the interviewee and they can be conducted one to one or in groups. Yin (2011) describes the style for qualitative interviews as conversational and relational.

Although seemingly straightforward to conduct, Denscombe (2017) believes research interviews require careful planning as the nature of the interactions involved can be complex and in Yin's (2011:135) view 'depict a complex social world from a participant's perspective'. Interviews are a method which capture feelings, stories of experience and delve into more complex or nuanced situations in a manner that is less possible with questionnaires and for this reason they form part of the current methodology. Researchers may not share the same perception of qualitative research interviews and different approaches to interviewing exist, for example hermeneutic, feminist or, as here, ethnographic (Roulston & Choi, 2017) as learners are engaged within their natural classroom and EESOL course setting.

The interaction with participants here takes the form of one-to-one, paired and group interviews and focus groups. From a practical standpoint, one-to-one interviews are easier to transcribe and the participant has the opportunity to talk at length. Paired, group interviews and focus groups bring the added practicality of hearing from more participants in the same amount of time but also taking advantage of group dynamics to elicit contributions that are more illuminating (Denscombe, 2017). Group members discuss topics together with the researcher acting as the moderator (Yin, 2011). Yin believes that small group interviews (2-3 people) are not dissimilar in nature to one-to-one interviews.

For this research, semi-structured or 'standardised open-ended interviews' (Paton, 1980:206 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017) are the preferred option. Paton (*ibid*) states that such questions facilitate comparison between participants and ease data organisation and analysis. The questions and order are predetermined but allow for open answers. These strike a balance between eliciting data that is relevant to the questions under investigation while allowing for flexibility to probe and

pursue pertinent ideas and experiences. Those with a minority first language can be considered a marginalised grouping (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017) and in-depth, informal and more open-ended interviews are recommended with participants from minority or marginalised groups (Swain *et al.*1999 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017) to allow for openness and a sense of ease. In this way the locus of control, although ultimately in the hands of the researcher, is shared with the interviewee who can challenge the subjectivity and perspective of a researcher, opening new doors for exploration from her viewpoint. Understanding the interpretations of the learner is a necessary part of constructing a view of the phenomenon that can challenge the researcher's assumptions.

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Pre-prepared semi-structured interview questions such as these are more common when the researcher is aware of and focused on extracting specific information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017). This does not imply that the interviews are inflexible. An informal style has the flexibility to change the order of the questions and offer participants additional explanations or rephrasing (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017) which is particularly important whilst interviewing second language speakers.

The informality also allows for the addition of questions, allowing new aspects of data to emerge. Being semi-structured affords the opportunity to probe more deeply where answers elicit interesting perspectives and experiences or when language inhibits the clear expression of an answer and clarification is required. This necessary openness to new data is a key factor of qualitative interviews, according to Kvale (1996 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017) and includes elicitation of specific and nuanced descriptions. Finally, maintaining the same questions across the three cohorts allows for better comparison of responses (Patton, 1980 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017).

The nature of the questioning and the relationship with the interviewer vary within qualitative interview types. Interviewing in the ethnographic tradition sees the frequency of interviews and the build-up of close links between researcher and participant as key features. In this case the focus is less on gaining understanding of cultural insights, commonly part of ethnography, than in gathering detailed descriptions of their interaction with certain phenomena through open questioning (Roulston & Choi, 2017) - the course, the interventions, using their phone and learning outside the classroom. There would be little value in sharing my personal experiences and perspectives during interviews as might be more common in feminist or hermeneutic styles. Part of the reflexivity required in action research is reflection on characteristics of interviewer talk (*ibid*) as well as sensitivity to questioning style. Leading questions should be avoided. Yin (2013) cautions against a

teacher interviewing her own students. However, the ethnographic nature of the study and the longer, more developed relationship help to justify the current approach.

Focus groups particularly allow space for participants to express the reasons behind their beliefs and actions (Morgan, 2006 in Denscombe, 2017) and are an opportunity to share with minimal researcher intervention (Yin, 2011). Although intimate interviews give participants ample time to talk, the group interviews and focus groups, which are a form of group interview (Morgan 1988, in Denscombe,2017) offer other advantages and a different dynamic. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2017) believe that focus groups can produce insights on a particular issue that might be unobtainable in individual interviews. Furthermore, groups can maximise time and resources but also give rise to more varied simultaneous responses than individual interviews (Watts and Ebbutt ,1987 and Leshem, 2012 in *ibid*). A further distinctive is the focus on the collective response (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017). Such a method is apt in research, which is exploring commonalities amongst the participants. Group interviews can facilitate cross-checking of experiences, with participants supporting and counterbalancing one another's comments (Arksey & Knight, 1999 in *ibid*). The negative issue of individuals potentially dominating a group (*ibid*) has to be considered. This is not only due to confident personalities but, in the case of bilinguals, those with the greatest language repertoire. As the facilitator it is important to guide the conversation to include those who have not contributed on a particular point. With this in mind, thought must be given to size of the groups. Opinions as to optimal numbers vary; minimum numbers range from four to six and maximum from eight to twelve (Morgan, 1998 & Fowler 2009 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison,2017). Smaller groups facilitate greater discussion as participants are able to concur, compare and elaborate on each other's contributions more easily (Denscombe, 2017).

Groups are helpful in eliciting attitudes, values, perceptions, viewpoints and opinions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017:64). 'Sharing and comparing' with others (Denscombe, 2017:179) is a key feature, distinct from one-to-one interviews, that can generate useful data when group members form a consensus on certain topics, or fail to reach one. In this research, the focus groups pre-exist as classes rather than being formed for the purpose of the research, which stands in contrast to commonly contrived groupings (Hydén and Bülow, 2003 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017), and which should strengthen the group dynamic. Finding appropriate language is an acknowledged challenge for bilinguals in interview situations (Roulston & Choi, 2017). Morgan (1996 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017) believes group settings are more favourable for such participants. For example, focus groups or paired interviews enable language to be shared; views that one learner is unable to express clearly can be voiced by another to which the first can agree, disagree or use as a

scaffold for their own contributions. Providing the questions visually, necessary vocabulary and visual aids during the process is one means of providing a linguistic foundation of support. Because Roberts (2006) argues that learner voices are muffled and insights compromised when unable to express themselves in their most familiar language, this is a means of mitigating issues with the questions and offering learners the opportunity to prepare their thoughts and necessary language in advance. In addition, Arkesy & Knight (1999, in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017) note that ability to recall events is an important factor when preparing for interviews and assistance can also be given in this regard.

One recent development in research interviews is the use of internet-based forms of video communication such as Skype or Zoom. As face-to-face contact was prohibited during most of 2020/21, many interviews and all focus groups in this study take place via Zoom. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2017) caution against using software unfamiliar to participants for interview purposes. Although Zoom may have been novel for many at the beginning of 2020, video calling was already a familiar tool, as it is widely used to communicate via WhatsApp or Face Time, for example, and Zoom has become as ubiquitous. Gray *et al.* (2020) list many reasons why researchers may favour online interviews, among them affordances of time, flexibility and convenience (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013 in Gray *et al.,* 2020). A number of studies show that the quality of interviews does not suffer for being online (Basaran & Roberts, 2013 & Deakin & Wakefield, 2013 in Gray *et al.,* 2020). In fact, participants in Mabragana and Deakin & Wakefield's studies expressed themselves more readily and were more open (Mabragana, 2013 & Deakin & Wakefield, 2013 in Gray *et al.,* 2020). Furthermore, establishing rapport did not appear to be an issue in Deakin and Wakefield's study even though the participants were presumably unknown to the researchers.

Interviews by telephone or email have not been considered serious options here. Irvine *et al*. (2013 in Roulston & Choi, 2017) found that telephone interviews decreased the amount of description given by participants and may confirm the advantages of face-to-face interviewing (Gray *et al.,* 2020), albeit virtually. On the other hand, Mason & Ide (2014 in Gray *et al.,* 2020) found participants preferred the speed of communication and data generation by email and James & Busher (2007 in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017) also advocate this method as a means of eliciting extended data-rich responses. However, this may be less favourable for ESOL participants, where oral communication is often preferred to written, the latter being more challenging linguistically and therefore slower. In addition, communicating with an absence of visual clues can make email or telephone interviews challenging (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017).

3.9.2 Observation: field notes research diary

Observation is a key foundation of ethnographic studies. It provides a setting in which to gather data to support the interviews or focus groups (Denscombe, 2017). The teacher is not a stranger and this maintains the naturalness of the observation setting. The key tool in observation is the researcher herself (Yin, 2011) but therein lies the obvious disadvantage of potential observer unreliability. In this case, that might involve failure to notice important actions or comments, or noticing but failing to record them. In addition to that are the sub-conscious filters through which some data may be selected and others not. This study concurs with Yin (2011) who suggests that relevance to the research questions (and the knowledge questions in this case) is a useful arbiter of what to record. This can further help to establish a level of trustworthiness by contributing insights in addition to participants' comments in on-going interviews or focus groups and acting as a means of corroboration. The length of the study allows for some key aspects of observation - regular occurrence of participant behaviours and views and sufficient time for trust and rapport to be built up (Denscombe, 1998). There is no systematic coding of frequency or occurrence of particular events which would lead to quantitative data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017).

This observation comprises access to participants' attitudes (spoken and written in ILPs), completed asynchronous work and use of the app and video views (study habits) and comments in online or face-to-face lessons. It is not observation of learners visibly undertaking mobile tasks at home or other locations beyond the classroom. Some qualitative researchers across different disciplines require participants to complete a study or reflective diary. This can be a method of capturing activity beyond a researcher's direct observation (Rose, 2020; Lewis, Sligo & Massey, 2005). Nevertheless, it has not been used here as it is considered an onerous task to undertake over a long period of time. Furthermore, such an intervention may influence the amount of time spent on study or the methods used and could actually detract from time spent on language study. Despite direct observation outside of lesson time not being possible here, the multiple methods of observation used serve to provide a suitable means of comparison and corroboration.

3.9.3 Documents: Individual Learning Plan / Weekly asynchronous learner task hyperdocs

Documents, in Yin's view (2011), are a valuable source of primary data for qualitative researchers. They can serve to confirm learner spoken responses. He comments that while collecting documentation can be a time-consuming endeavour, careful planning can assist in the task to minimise the number of documents required and prioritising those that are easy to access. In this instance the Individual Learning Plan has been included as part of the observation. This is organisational paperwork participants are required to complete each lesson and at the end of each three-month course, offering summary feedback. ILP documents are easy to collect and a helpful

source of data which are not allied to the research but are a naturally-occurring pre-existing measure of learner attitudes.

Second, data from the weekly asynchronous learner task hyperdocs, document the on-going development of the design of online/blended learning. These provide details of weekly activities used with each of the three termly groups - videos, partner tasks, recordings, hyperlinks to websites and instructions for tasks. They are used in both online and blended modes.

The hyperdocs allow for the charting of the type and frequency of learning activity. Each termly iteration sees the courses changing in some measure, in response to learner feedback, and these documents are able to illustrate the nature of alterations that take place and make observations related to design, efficacy of activities and the extent of reconceptualisation of materials for mobile learning.

3.9.4 Quantitative data: App / YouTube view data / Questionnaire

A challenge of this research setting lies in the inability to observe directly what study is undertaken away from the gaze of the teacher. Two important mobile learning interventions automatically generate data which can deepen the understanding of learner study habits beyond the classroom.

First, the 'Learn English Now' app calculates how much time learners spend on individual activities, how many times these activities are repeated and cumulatively how many hours learners spend using the app each term. Secondly, YouTube analytics allow for tracking of video views, percentage viewed and frequency.

Statistics as a form of data should be used with caution unless they are a type that produces measurements of clear-cut or straightforward events (Denscombe, 2017). The raw data outlined above could fall into this category. It is in the interpretation of data that bias or faulty understandings occur. In this instance, the data set is small and manageable. Once again, the reflexivity of the action researcher seeks to recognise and militate against drawing conclusions that reflect assumptions or desired outcomes and to remain open to whatever the data seem to indicate.

Only one questionnaire is used and its primary aim is to ascertain which digital devices are used, and how, during the study. Survey data benefits from high completion levels yet the poor return rates are quite often the case. However, it is ethically inappropriate to coerce people to respond (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017). The questionnaire in this study gathers quantitative data not qualitative. While surveys are able to record attitude, feeling and opinion data, a fuller and more nuanced view is gathered by means of face-to-face methods such as the interviews and focus groups. Surveys are appropriate when information needs to be standardised and is of a straightforward nature

(Denscombe, 2017). Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2017) advise against long, wordy surveys to avoid unnecessary strain on the respondent. For example, text heavy questions or complicated Likert scales can be challenging and time-consuming for native speakers, let alone ESOL learners. A requirement to write lengthy answers, possibly on a mobile handset, might impede clear and full expression due to issues of literacy or mobile functionality. Similarly, providing simpler, pre-coded answers would not elicit sufficient data for qualitative inquiry. However, the factual information regarding phone usage required is straightforward to obtain through a small number of pre-coded multiple-choice response options (see Appendix 9).

To sum up, this research thesis proceeds from a constructivist ontology with an interpretivist epistemology. Its action research methodology, which draws upon a number of ethnographic principles and techniques, uses a mixed-methods, but primarily qualitative, approach, to investigate how mobile blended learning might increase learning hours and promote progress outside the formal ESOL classroom. It observes and records learners' attitudes, habits, preferences and experiences in an iterative cycle of courses over an 11-month period. The following chapter provides details of the data collection processes, timeframe and the ways in which the data are analysed and presented.

Chapter 4 Data collection and analysis

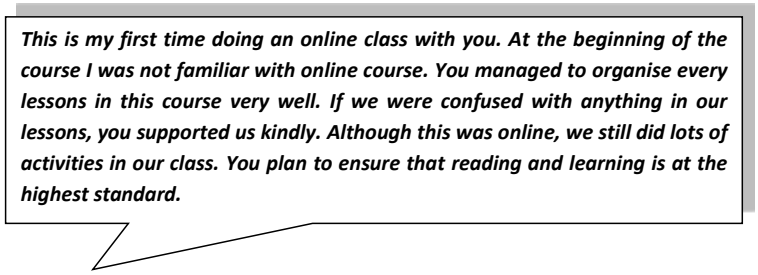

Figure 6 Participant ILP comment December 2021. Learner 19 (Female / Level 1 / Bangladesh)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the process of data collection and analysis during the study beginning in September 2020. This has been guided by the research and knowledge questions. In the initial stages of the research the questions underwent a process of modification as the perspective, goals and ontology of the research became clearer. There was a move away from a positivist perspective and an assessment of effectiveness and acceleration of progress. Reflection led to questioning how plausible it would be to investigate 'effectiveness 'and 'quantify' progress. Thus, progress is measured in terms of learners' perception of their progress. As the qualitative approach of the research was established, the focus shifted to evaluating the means of extending learning beyond the classroom, which relies on observing the lived experiences of learners to discover the nature of 'appropriate extended learning'. The excerpt above offers an example of feedback in this regard. The final research questions read:

1. ***How, and can mobile phones be used to provide appropriate extended learning opportunities for ESOL learners beyond the formal classroom?***

2. ***What pedagogical considerations are needed when designing blended mobile language learning aimed at increasing guided learning hours and promoting progress beyond the ESOL classroom?***

3. ***How, and can learning assisted by mobile phone technology bridge deficits in formal learning hours and promote progress?***

The chapter details the timeline, design and influence of Covid 19. In the first section there is an overview of the participants (see Appendix 1 for full profile) and the ESOL course organisation during the data collection phases. This is followed by a detailed account of how each data collection method was implemented. The second section considers the process of analysis, beginning with a

discussion of issues related to establishing trustworthiness and continuing with an explanation of Thematic Analysis and how the data were analysed.

4.2 The influence of Covid-19 on the research design and timeline

The period of research study began in November 2019 and the original timetable involved investigating learners' use of mobile phones along with their preferences and attitudes to learning outside the classroom from January to March 2021; this would have been followed by the 12-week blended course, comprising face-to-face and asynchronous learning, similar to the January 2020 pilot. This intervention at course level would have taken place from April to July 2021 with two cohorts of learners. The table below gives an overview of the research timeline. From January - March 2020, prior to any real notion of the impact of the coronavirus on the research timeline, a blended learning/flipped classroom approach was trialled with a Level 1 non-accredited ESOL course as detailed in Chapter 1. This aimed to gain insights to further inform the primary research intervention the following academic year (2020-21). However, the pandemic played a major role in reshaping the research design and chronology as can be seen from the table.

Proposed and actual research timetable	
Proposed	
Jan - March 2020	Blended learning informal pilot study (Level 1 course)
April - Dec 2020	Evaluation of pilot and questionnaires with learners. Reading and research design preparation for mobile blended learning intervention
Jan - March 2021	Data collection: Learner habits, views and preferences data E3/L1
April - July 2021	Data collection: L1/E3 blended learning course implementation and evaluation
Actual	
Jan - March 2020	Blended learning informal pilot study Level 1
April - July 2020	Online classes Levels E1 - E3 (informal observation)
Sept - Dec 2020	Phase 1: Online classes (E3 - L1) Course implementation and data collection
Jan - Mar 2021	Phase 2: Online classes (E3 - L1) Course implementation and data collection
April - July 2021	Phase 3: Blended learning classes (E3 - L1) Course implementation and data collection

Table 11 Proposed and actual research timetable

As a result, teaching from April to July 2020 unexpectedly provided further opportunity to observe and trial resources and gain practical blended learning experience. Time that had been assigned for evaluation of the pilot and further investigation of the literature now provided the opportunity to understand learners' attitudes and habits of learning outside the formal classroom when that mode was no longer optional, but mandatory. Such an opportunity to take advantage of the experiences of teaching and learning online using digital devices during the pandemic was invaluable. It allowed for

a deeper exploration of appropriate modes by facilitating a real, non-experimental, comparison of learners' experience of online, blended and face-to-face teaching. More importantly, not only did the teacher/researcher have a vested interest in the success of the online/blended learning experience, so, now, did the learners, and their engagement in the courses came from their intrinsic motivation rather than the result of a research-driven agenda. This extended engagement with the data and period for observation has served to strengthen the trustworthiness of the research (Nowell, *et al.,*2017).

Consequently, the entire academic year 2020/21 provided an extended research period. The organisational restrictions on face-to-face teaching afforded three iterations of mobile learning of three months each - two fully online and one blended. The original research design involving a pilot study followed by more evaluation and data collection would have provided a measure of participant data and design experience on which to base an evaluation, as the informal pilot study had done. Yet with the technological infrastructure then in place across the ESOL department and online learning part of the collective psyche in 2020, it was serendipitous. Importantly, it afforded a more longitudinal study comprising 3 course iterations, with exploration of mobile blended learning theory and development of praxis operating in tandem. It also allowed for the tracking of the same cohorts over a year.

Each term, data were gathered in the ways to be outlined shortly and each had a slightly different focus which became clearer as it progressed. In the first phase of data collection, from September to December 2020, the primary focus was what facilitated and motivated learners to study more and learn well in the time spent studying. This led to a focus, particularly in the second term, on five specific interventions that might lead to study hours increasing in a tangible way:

- partner work
- Learn English Now app
- lesson content for out of class time only
- videos/screencasts
- 'on-the-go' learning/ language photos

The final term of blended delivery was able to draw on the previous experiences and a more profound knowledge of participants' habits and preferences for learning beyond the classroom and allow for a comparison with the previous synchronous mode.

4.3 Participant profile

The decision to include 3 course cohorts in the research was both beneficial and challenging. The original design had envisaged using two separate courses, where feasible within organisational and personal limitations. Involvement of three allowed for access to a greater number and range of participant stories but resulted in a more demanding teacher/researcher workload.

The table below provides a summary of the participants. The 3 cohorts had a combined total of 28 learners. Owing to Covid, the organisation restricted class numbers to eight. Ordinarily, ESOL class sizes are between seven and twelve learners. Learners were assigned to my classes by an administrator. Twelve participants completed the full three terms on all courses, 7 completed two terms and 9 one term only. Cohort 2 (E3 – see full participant table) saw the greatest turnover, with learners changing level, or attending as new learners.

Total number of participants	28	**Age**	20-29 = 1 30-39 = 14 40-49 = 9 50-59 = 4
Gender	24 females 4 males	**Number of different languages**	12
Ethnicity	50% South Asian (Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi & Pakistani) 50% mixed ethnicities (African, European, Latin American)	**Number in employment**	13

Table 12 Summary participant table

For a number of reasons, the decision was taken to maintain the same learners across the three iterations, the primary one being their ability to offer stronger experiential narratives, comparing and evaluating the interventions and different modes of learning. Further considerations were the ability to increasingly build a relationship of trust and observe the learners from novice to more expert users of the technology and the new mode of learning, which provided an insight into the practicalities at each stage. New termly cohorts, each beginning with an inability to use Zoom, Padlet or the app, might have skewed the perceptions of the experience and not allowed the increasingly expert users' views to be heard. In addition, in the search for learning that would be suitable for the maximum possible number of learners, commonalities in response were desirable.

Overall, the response to participation in the research was positive. Learners who attended classes were informed of the research study running in tandem with the course but may have been largely unaware of ongoing observation in the week-to-week routine. None of the participants chose to leave as a result of the research. The main events for the participants (interviews or focus groups at

the end of each term and a questionnaire) were optional and organised to ensure they were not intrusive or disruptive. Much of the oral data collection, focus groups and interviews, took place in class time and online interviews were arranged at times suited to the participants. The act of data collection was a constant one for me but more unobtrusive for the participants.

4.4 Course organisation

During the Covid lockdown of March 2020, Zoom was selected by my organisation as the means of connecting online with learners. It was cost-effective, simple for staff and students to master and proved a flexible platform for activities related to language teaching. I chose Padlet for posting lesson and asynchronous work as I had used it successfully in the pilot course of January-March 2020. I communicated with learners by email once a week providing a reminder of the asynchronous tasks or thereafter, where necessary.

The table below shows how the three courses were organised each term. In the academic year 2020-21 the department introduced Ascentis exams and the notional GLH were in line with the hours prescribed by the Ascentis awarding body. City and Guilds had been the previous awarding body with slightly fewer GLH per course.

Phase	Courses	Course Weekly Notional GLH		
Phase 1 ONLINE Sep - Dec 2020	Level 1 Reading Entry 3 Speaking / Listening Entry 3 Writing	L1R = 5 GLH Zoom class: I hour Self-study: 4 hours	E3 S/L = 10 Zoom class: 1.15 hours Zoom class: 30 mins Self-study: 8.15	E3W = 7.5 Zoom class: 1 hour Zoom class: 30 mins Self-study: 6 hours
Phase 2 ONLINE Jan - Mar 2021	L1 Speaking / Listening E3 Reading E3 Reading	L1 S/L = 10 Zoom class: 3 hours Zoom class: 1 hour (small groups) Self-study: 6 hours	E3R = 5 Zoom class: 2 hours Self-study: 3 hours	E3R = 5 Zoom class: 2 hours Self-study: 3 hours
Phase 3 BLENDED Apr - Jul 2021	L1 Writing E3 Speaking / Listening E3 Writing	L1W = 7.5 Classroom: 3 hours Zoom class: 30 mins bi-weekly Self-study: 4 hours	E3W = 7.5 Classroom: 3 hours Zoom class: 30 mins bi-weekly Self-study: 4 hours	E3 S/L = 10 Classroom: 3 hours Zoom class: 1 - 2 hours Self-study: 5 hours

Table 13 Course organization. Academic year 2020-21

The table shows that between phases one and two of online learning there was an increase in synchronous 'contact ' hours and a decrease in notional self-study hours. This came in response to the learners' desire for more 'face-to-face' teaching time, as expressed in the interviews and corroborated in the observation diary during the term. The final phase of blended learning saw a more even distribution of classroom and independent learning time.

4.5 Data collection phases

The table outlines the three phases of data collection over the course of the academic year 2020/21.

Phase	Knowledge Focus	Methods
Phase 1 Sep - Dec 2020	• Amount of time spent studying • Comparison of face-to-face and online learning study hours • Motivation for study online • Use of mobile phone outside lessons to study • Initial evaluation of partner work, videos and Learn English Now app • Learner perceptions/habits of independent learning and how to improve their own English	8 interviews via Zoom Online class observations in research diary App data YouTube data ILP comments Hyperdocs
Phase 2 Jan - Mar 2021	• Attitudes & experiences of five interventions to increase GLH • Partner work • Learn English Now app • YouTube recap videos • Self-study videos • Language photos ('on-the-go' learning) • preferences and motivation to study	4 focus Groups via Zoom Online class observations in research diary App data YouTube data ILP comments Hyperdocs
Phase 3 Apr - Sept 1st 2021	• Comparison and evaluation of face to face, online and blended learning modes • Evaluation of revised partner work intervention • Evaluation of language photos and other 'on-the-go' interventions • Importance of mobile phone in learning over the past year • Usage habits of different devices for study during the academic year • Continued usage of app during the summer holidays	4 in-person group interviews Face-to-face class observations in research diary App data YouTube data ILP comments Online questionnaire Hyperdocs

Table 14 Data collection phases

4.6 Data collection methods

The collection of data during the pandemic was time-consuming but not difficult. Zoom proved a simple and invaluable tool for interviews and focus groups and the in-built analytical tools of the 'Learn English Now' app, YouTube and Microsoft Forms meant that extracting the necessary data was not overly complicated. ILP data was collected once a term and observation notes were typed up between or after teaching sessions. The section below outlines how data were collected using each method.

1. Interviews

The first interviews, eight in total, took place in December 2020 in the final week of the first term of online study. These were arranged outside of lessons, at times to suit learner availability. Learners volunteered to be interviewed, thus maintaining the consensual ethos of the research. Ten out of a possible twenty-three learners took part in either individual or paired interviews. The rationale was to allow participants to share their stories at length without the time constraints or interruptions found with larger groups.

The second set of interviews (four) was arranged in July 2021. These were group interviews and reflected on the blended learning phase. They took place at the end of lesson time in the final week of the course. Although three out of four occurred during a scheduled face-to-face lesson (and one lesson was via Zoom), learners had the option to leave if they did not wish to give their feedback. Fifteen out of eighteen learners participated. Non-participation was due to absence on the day. The largest group had five learners and the smallest, three. Use of lesson time enabled a potentially greater number of learners to participate compared to the first term, when the interviews were scheduled in learners' free time and numbers were lower.

Zoom allowed for unobtrusive recording and learners' familiarity with the Zoom platform for lessons meant they appeared comfortable with its use for the interviews. Zoom was used in December interviews while a small portable voice recorder was used for the classroom-based interviews in July. Participants who had undertaken oral exams that year would have been familiar with this device as it had been used to record their exam tasks. Zoom was used to conduct interviews and focus groups and was extremely useful from a practical standpoint. All learners could be recorded clearly and unobtrusively using the in-built microphone. I had been teaching via Zoom for eleven weeks prior to conducting the first interviews and encountered nothing I would consider detrimental to the research process. In fact, being able to record using Zoom software removed any conspicuous device and meant that the interviews possibly felt familiar, like an extension of a lesson.

In both sets of interviews learners were asked semi-structured pre-prepared questions scripted to elicit responses required to answer the research questions and knowledge questions (see tables below). An effort was made to phrase the questions as clearly as possible, taking the English level of the learners into account. Furthermore, participants received the questions by email prior to the session to provide time to read and understand them. Interestingly, one lower E3 learner came to a December interview with notes to read out to adequately express her thoughts. A copy of the questions appeared on the shared Zoom screen for reference during the December interviews and on the desk in front of each learner in July to support comprehension. In July, participants were

given time to read and discuss the questions together before the interview began. The December questions are seen below.

December 2020 Paired and one-to-one interview questions
1. **Did you do more, less or the same amount of work this course than in a normal face-to-face classroom course?**
2. **Which parts of the course made you do more work or motivated you and made you want to work and study more?**
3. **How did working with a partner help you or not help you?**
4. **How did watching videos help you or not help you?**
5. **How did the Learn English Now app help you or not help you?**
6. **Did or didn't you use your phone to learn outside the home. Why? Why not?**
7. **Do you know good ways to learn English outside the classroom? If not, how can we help you more with that?**
8. **Do you know good ways to improve your English more quickly? If not, how can we help you more with that?**

Table 15 December 2020 Pair and one-to-one interview questions

The July question schedule demonstrates the shift in focus to a greater evaluation of the overall mode and means of learning.

July 2021 Group interview questions
1. What did you like or not like about learning partly in the classroom and partly doing online work at home on Padlet this term and why?
2. For you personally, what is the best way to study ESOL: classroom only with no online homework, online only (Zoom & Padlet online homework) or a mix of both (classroom & Padlet online homework) and why?
3. This year, you did a lot more English study by yourself at home or outside the classroom - how much do you feel you have got better at studying English on your own and why?
4. How important was your phone in helping you learn English this year?

Table 16 July 2021 Group interview questions

2. Focus groups

At the end of the second term of online learning, focus groups were conducted. There were four groups that took place during scheduled class time. The largest cohort was divided in two and the biggest focus group contained five people and the smallest two (the course only contained three learners at that stage). Non-participation was due to absence. These all took place on Zoom and learners were able to leave the call if they did not wish to participate, although no one chose to do so.

The use of focus areas rather than specific questions provided a contrast to the previous and following terms, and offered more opportunity for participants to talk at greater length about their beliefs, actions and underlying reasoning (Morgan,2006 in Denscombe,2017).

The specific focus of these groups was the five interventions trialled to extend and motivate asynchronous learning as shown in Table 17 below. To stimulate discussion and learners' memories, examples of specific activities were shown on the shared Zoom screen and referred to during the discussion. These were adapted to suit each course and the table below provides an example from a reading course focus group.

1. Partner work Email/phone or WhatsApp a partner or your classmates e.g., send a wellbeing email/ message e.g., send a website screenshot GOV.UK e.g., read an article and talk to your partner - how to save money on food	**2.Learn English Now app** Use the app for the lessons I give you and any extra lessons you want to do	**3.YouTube recap videos** Videos to explain more what we have done in class e.g., What is a review? e.g., Exam practice paper answers + tips e.g., Introduction to word forms - prefix suffix
4. Self -study YouTube videos Work where you learn from a video on your own not in the class with me e.g., Punctuation videos - St Kilda's hotel / apostrophes e.g., purpose of texts video e.g., mark your own exam paper D e.g., present perfect repeating verbs forms	**5. Language photos** Using your phone to take photos of words you want to learn out of class / your home	**6. What about the next course?** - same type of videos or something different? - more or less partner work? - use the app again? - any other ideas? What helps you learn best? Which things don't you like doing? Which things do you like spending time on?

Table 17 Focus group: E3 reading and writing. Notes for participants.

Three out of four groups were given time to discuss the interventions beforehand and activate the language and ideas required. With the final group time was pressing and I went straight into the questions forgetting to give learners time to talk together. Both the pre-focus group discussion and the main group itself were recorded digitally. Comparison of these recordings led to corroboration of learners' opinions and evaluations in the main group time. This deeper insight was not possible with the group who did not have preparation time. Moreover, the lack of preparation might have affected the participants' ability to express themselves with clarity and formulate their ideas quickly.

3. Observation: 'Learn English Now' App usage data

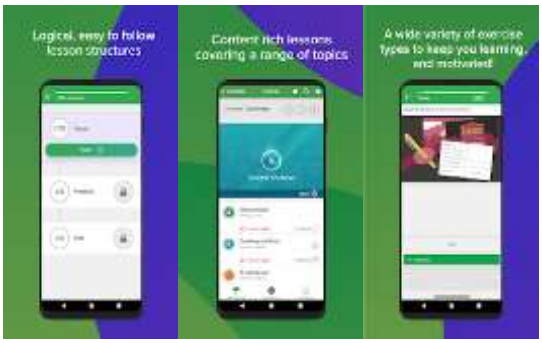

Figure 7 Learn English Now app – example learner interface

The 'Learn English Now' app (see Google Play for image above) was used to varying degrees in all three terms and data were gathered using the learner management system (LMS). The LMS data showed the number of hours and minutes each learner had spent studying various language lessons, such as grammar or listening. The amount of time learners spent working on the app was recorded at the end of each term. This was noted on the master participant profile table and Table 18 shows an excerpt. Scores were available to record but were not considered relevant for this particular study, save to show that some participants repeated exercises to improve on low scores. Details of exact time and frequency of log-in were unavailable.

Learner 21	**TERM 1** Academic Skills 4.54 Reading 3.07 Grammar 4.34	**TERM 2** Pronunciation 1.30 Vocabulary 1.17 Listening 2.40/0.54/1.41 Grammar 3.18	**TERM 3** Writing 0.03 Grammar 1.15 Reading 0.12 Vocabulary 0

Table 18 Example of app usage data per learner in hours/minutes

4. Observation: YouTube video view data

Over the course of the year, 66 bespoke screencast videos were uploaded to a private YouTube channel and learners were provided with a link via email and Padlet. This simplified the collection of data as YouTube analytics measure the total number of viewings, average viewings per person (not named individuals), percentage of video viewed, view duration and date of viewing. Categories and number of videos can be seen in Table 28 in Chapter 5.

The preparation of YouTube video view data consisted of taking screenshots of online data available for each of the 66 videos uploaded. This information was recorded on an Excel spreadsheet which was organised into seven video categories e.g., grammar, reading, writing. Unfortunately, the data regarding the number of views per learner were only available for the first three months after posting the video. As a result, this data had been lost by the time it was extracted from the website in July 2021. This resulted in views per learner having to be calculated manually. This figure was required to establish that learners watched videos multiple times. Table 27 in Chapter 5 shows a number of calculations to this effect. The number of views was divided by the maximum number of participants who had access that a particular video during their course and this resulted in the average views per learner. The numbers involved here were limited and easy to access, minimising impact on accuracy of data.

5. Observation: Field notes research diary, ILP comments and weekly hyperdocs.

An observation diary was a further tool of week-by-week observation of and reflection on the three teaching phases. It proved invaluable for gathering data over a sustained period of time. I had access to learners on a twice-weekly basis, over 11 months, thus providing a holistic and contextual insight, which increases credibility (Denscombe, 2017). The diary was first started in January 2020, during the pilot period of blended learning prior to the coronavirus pandemic (see Appendix 6). It contains notes of key decisions, descriptions of actions taken, comments from the learners, learner actions and reflections on the research questions and the thesis in general. It also contains observations of how work was completed beyond the classroom and learner comments regarding the mobile learning interventions, their study practices and use of their phones. Observation was semi-structured and qualitative in the sense that there were a number of pre-set parameters in respect of the data to be noted which aligned with the knowledge questions.

A reflective log was not required of learners in this study as I believed it could have become too onerous over a long period of time. The weekly mandated course learning reflection form (the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is disliked by many learners (as noted during their interviews and focus

groups). Therefore, to have asked them to continually record their reflections would probably have been similarly disliked. Learners had a great deal of work to complete independently without placing an additional burden upon them. Furthermore, such an intervention may have influenced the amount of time spent on study or the methods used; a reflective diary might have rendered them more conscious that their activity was being monitored and influence results. The first interview question in December centred on the amount of time spent learning. Consequently, when asked, learners could only give a perception of time spent rather than an exact tally of hours. However, the app and YouTube data were collected discreetly and allowed for a fuller picture of time spent on certain activities to strengthen trustworthiness. The ILP feedback was collected at the end of each term. Not every participant completed the summative feedback comment in the first two terms as this had to be submitted online. In the final term comments were handwritten in the ILP document in lesson time. Comments were observed and those which contained specific reference to the course mode and interventions were separated for analysis. These further corroborated comments made in interviews. As this activity was a compulsory aspect of the course (despite some non-completion), data was captured from participants who did not voice opinions during the research interventions in any other way.

Finally, the weekly asynchronous task hyperdocs (see Figure 25 in Chapter 5) posted on Padlet contained a summary of the weekly homework and hyperlinks for the digital content to be viewed. Gathering this data offered the opportunity to assess how the design and language activity of the course altered over the academic year as learners had expressed preferences and made requests and the praxis of designing asynchronous learning had developed. The eleven or twelve hyperdocs for all 9 courses were printed out and retained for analysis.

6. The questionnaire

A Microsoft Office form was used to create a short online questionnaire regarding habits and usage of devices during the year (see Appendix 9). All learners who had taken part in the study at any stage were sent the questionnaire by email and those who were currently studying in term three had the option to complete it in lesson time. It comprised five questions and was pre-coded for ease of completion, with only one option requiring a short, written response. No Likert scales were included as these were considered too confusing for ESOL learners. Response was by means of simple tick boxes easy to complete on a mobile phone. There were sixteen out of twenty-eight respondents and data served to triangulate interview/focus group data regarding use of device and activity beyond the classroom.

4. 7 Practical and ongoing ethical considerations in data collection

Chapter 3 highlighted the issue of flexible and recurring informed consent (Sin,2005; Neale, 2013 in Mertens,2017). Learners were required to give consent several times over the eleven-month research period, both orally and in writing. Participants were given the option to leave the course but no learners requested to leave purely as a result of the interventions and data collection. Any withdrawal or transfer to a non-research related course was due to natural progression or personal reasons.

A number of situations arose during the research period which illuminate ethical dilemmas inherent in conducting research. The following example highlights issues discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to potential disruption or intrusion of the research intervention. In research regarding the amount of time spent studying, one salient consideration was harm related to the amount of work learners were to complete during the course of a week. An excessive workload given with the best of intentions may have put pressure on participants, albeit unwittingly, to complete more work at home than was feasible or force a pace of change in learning mode they were unready for. This issue did arise. When asked if the term's workload had been too high, a number of participants agreed but quickly qualified the statement, saying this was positive; they were learning a great deal but it was hard to fit study in around other daily commitments. One learner (L17/L1/F/Morocco) commented on sometimes staying up until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning as she wished to complete her homework on time. This presented a clear issue regarding the extent to which these learners' lives were being 'harmed' or they were being caused unacceptable disruption or stress. It could be argued that learners expect to be challenged and desire a teacher who requires them to study hard and hold them to account. However, thinking reflexively, a desire to drive positive outcomes and increase time spent studying might have been an implicit motivator of my actions. The benefit of an iterative design is that changes can be made when potential harm comes to light. In the following term I was able to address this issue.

Husband (2020) advocates researcher acknowledgement of their influential role in co-producing knowledge in interview settings and the potential interviews have for participant affect. Comments in one particular interview (L8/E3/F/Ghana-Italy) demonstrated how the learner was processing her own engagement with independent learning as the line of questioning progressed. Her words,' *And what have come to my mind right now is if I want to learn English quickly, any chance I will get, I have to take a book and read; I have to do some research.'* reveal she is no longer merely commenting on the past term's actions but recognising her underlying perceptions and unconscious habits as she processes.

The final example relates to the use of Zoom to conduct the interviews and focus groups. The controls allow for the host's camera and microphone to be switched off, enabling the teacher to 'disappear' from the view of those on the call. This facility was used often in Zoom teaching sessions enabling small groups of learners to practise speaking freely without feeling under constant observation. However, it was possible to monitor errors to address later in the lesson. Yet when I found myself using this same technique during pre-focus group preparation time, I suddenly questioned its legitimacy as a potential source of data due to the 'covert' observation. The focus group learners were given time to prepare answers to the questions together orally. It was clear from learner comments that there was no awareness of my presence on the Zoom call at that point. However, I was, in fact, continuing to listen and finding their comments very illuminating. Thankfully, negative or critical responses were not in evidence and interestingly, feelings and attitudes shared between one other were similarly expressed in the main group. Nevertheless, in order to make use of this 'covertly' acquired data, the situation was explained and their permission was requested.

Analysing the data

4.8 Introduction

Research methodology comprises both collection and analysis of data. The first section of the chapter has detailed how the data collection methods were employed and what follows is a similarly detailed consideration of the methods and process of analysis. When adopting a qualitative approach and methods, it is crucial to account for the exact analytical processes used to elicit the findings from the data (Denscombe, 2017) to establish trustworthiness for the reader and enabling findings to be evaluated sufficiently (Nowell *et al*., 2017) from clear links forged between the data and the results. Therefore, efforts have been made here to document and clarify the process sufficiently. This section first considers the notion of trustworthiness, followed by the methods, and then details the process of analysis, including use of codes and themes.

4.9 Qualitative data analysis: The trustworthiness factor

Quantitative studies abound in second language acquisition (SLA) and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) research. Statistical analysis of language test data produces findings which boast reliability, validity and replicability (Stickler & Hempel, 2015). Qualitative data, on the other hand, in the eyes of its critics represents the 'unsystematic cherry picking of quotable quotes' (Roberts, 2006:6) which lack the rigour of its rival. In its defence, qualitative research in the field of SLA, CALL and language teaching can draw upon four key criteria outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985 in Nowell *et al.,* 2017) with which to strengthen the trustworthiness of its analysis and findings: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility considers whether the findings ring true to others. Transferability regards the ease with which interested parties are able to assess the case given and transfer any findings to their own context. Dependability offers the opportunity to scrutinise each stage of the methodological and analytical process. Confirmability requires researchers to be transparent as to how findings were interpreted and conclusions reached (Nowell *et al.,* 2017).

Actions which assist in achieving the above criteria are cited below and their use in the current research is indicated.

Trustworthiness actions			
Prolonged engagement with data	Yes	*Clear, traceable documentation*	Y
Persistent observation	Y	*A decision audit*	Y
Data collection triangulation (data taken from a number of sources)	Y	*Participant checking*	Y
Peer debriefing	No	*Researcher triangulation (inter-coder reliability)*	N

Table 19 Trustworthiness actions. Based on Nowell et al.,2017:3,4

Data collection triangulation is made possible in the current thesis through its mixed methods approach which is suitable for obtaining a fuller picture of the phenomenon in question and stories of participant experience, whilst continuing to ensure some means of corroboration (Biesta, 2017). A wide range of sources, including ones that can support the spoken data, help to strengthen credibility. The table below provides a review of both qualitative and quantitative sources.

Qualitative data sources	**Quantitative data sources**
• Semi-structured individual and paired interviews (Term 1) • Focus groups (T2) • Semi-structured group interviews (T3) • Individual Learning Plan comments (T1-3) • Research observation diary (T1-3) • Weekly learner asynchronous work hyperdocs (T1-3)	• Learner usage & habits questionnaire (T3) • YouTube analytics (T1-3) • 'Learn English Now' app analytics (T1-3)

Table 20 Overview of mixed methods

Triangulation proved useful as the following instances demonstrate. First, in interviews participants commented on the number of hours spent using the 'Learn English Now' app. The app's LMS provided additional evidence to give a clearer picture of the learners' experience. Secondly, responses were given which suggested that the majority of learners watched each video several times and the YouTube analytic data were able to confirm this as the case. Finally, participants spoke of how they had used their handsets for many aspects of their learning and the mobile usage questionnaire was able to strengthen the narrative relating to phones being the primary device employed.

The opportunity for any form of bias in the collection or analysis process requires mitigation by means of robust auditing of procedures and decisions throughout the research to assure dependability. 'Insider' practitioner research may be considered particularly prone to bias. On the one hand, the proximity of the researcher to the participants and the high level of understanding of the research context leads to unparalleled access and insights. On the other, potential participant bias and the vested interest of the researcher can lead to inappropriate subjectivity, making reflexivity vital (Harklau, 2005; Zeni 1998). Certain aspects of the collection and analysis procedure that can ensure more rigour to mitigate any bias are shown in Table 21.

Maintaining data files and records of data	Making sure the data is complete and easy to access
Ongoing field notes	Containing rationale for choices regarding, method, participants, practicalities, logistics
A reflexive journal	Containing insights about the researcher's self and thought processes during the research investigation. This acknowledges and is transparent about the role the researcher's own beliefs and background have in the process (Denscombe, 2017)
Producing transcripts	Seeing clearly what has been said so that nothing can be overlooked

Table 21 Assuring dependability. Based on Nowell et al., 2017:3

A number of examples highlight an attempt to establish dependability. First, the reflexivity process was in action during the study. Regarding underlying assumptions, for example, during the interviews, I became aware of my belief that learners would say they had spent more time studying in the first term online than they had in the physical classroom, and though many had, I was forced to acknowledge my surprise and presupposition when not all learners responded in that manner and this nuance of response needed to be acknowledged. Likewise, it was assumed that every learner

would use their mobile phone in some manner for the asynchronous learning but two participants did not and this result likewise needed to be documented.

Secondly, the observation field notes/reflexive journal was a valuable weekly record, leaving less to the fallibility of memory and serving as a prompt for regular reflection. Finally, transcripts were produced for every recording and printed out for ease of viewing and note-taking. Files and recordings were numbered and labelled clearly and stored in a separate computer folder.

Given that dependability is established, transferability of the findings is reliant upon sufficient detail being provided in the final document to facilitate transfer beyond the research context (Denscombe, 2017) and to clearly discern that the findings are grounded in the data. Prolonged engagement with the data (Nowell *et al.,* 2017) also means returning to them at regular intervals in the analysis process, which is advisable to ensure the observations made are truly borne out by the raw data. The process of analysis is described in detail below. Its cyclical nature became apparent in the current study as transcripts were read and re-read at many different points during the year. Increasing layers of analysis through the on-going collection of quantitative data were added to deepen the understandings, and final checking of all data sets against the results assisted in establishing a credible story. The results are necessarily curated by the researcher but care must be taken to present a full, clear and balanced picture. Oliver (2013) provides steps to ensure this, and these were followed as detailed below:

1. the various data have been organised into themes and related information and excerpts have been drawn from across the quantitative and qualitative sets to provide triangulation

2. brief biographical information is presented in Chapter 5 with the qualitative data to demonstrate that excerpts reflect both learner levels (E3 & L1) and a variety of participants' ethnic backgrounds. Gender data is provided. Despite over three-quarters of the participants being female, in some instances the knowledge of gender is a helpful addition. Institutional and contextual course/activity background details are also provided, if required, to aid understanding and transferability, where appropriate

3. majority viewpoints and experiences have led to inclusion; likewise significant opposing positions are given, as appropriate.

4.10 Method of analysis

In analysing the data in this study there is a desire to examine differing participant viewpoints, compare and contrast their experiences and produce unexpected insights. Thematic Analysis is considered a useful method in these regards. In thematic analysis (TA), themes are used to paint a picture of the data and it has the advantage of 'providing a rich and detailed, yet complex account.' (Braun & Clarke,2013; King 2004 in Nowell *et al.,* 2017).

TA is one of a number of across-case pattern-based approaches to qualitative analysis which include qualitative content analysis, grounded theory and interpretative phenomenological analysis However, there is no focus here on developing a new theory or of analysing content in terms of frequency of themes occurring (Denscombe, 2017). Braun & Clarke argue that all these and other methods of analysing qualitative data are of equal value. Yet TA can often be considered inferior for its supposed lack of rigour (Braun & Clarke, 2021). However, if researchers can assure readers of its trustworthiness (Nowell *et al.,* 2017) it has a number of advantages. It is a particularly good tool for beginner researchers and can suit small data sets such as this (Braun & Clarke, 2013 in Braun & Clarke, 2021) where the goal of the research is interpretation of patterns, not theory development (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

4.11 The process of analysis

Prior to analysis, both sets of data need to be prepared (Cresswell & Plano Clarke, 2007 in Denscombe, 2017). In this study the qualitative data set was comprehensive but not large (16 transcripts / a 9-page research observation diary / 14 ILP comments / 80 A4 hyperdocs). The transcripts and the diary could be read through reasonably quickly. The hyperdocs did not require deep textual analysis but rather the counting of instances of certain activities.

To record quantitative data, a spreadsheet was used to log video views from YouTube analytics according to category. Microsoft Forms provided questionnaire data in graphic form, in addition to an Excel spreadsheet, detailing individuals 'responses, and the app LMS provided the number of hours spent on study with the number of times a lesson had been repeated. This data was taken from the online LMS system which was viewed weekly as part of the course but recorded termly on the participant profile form.

Some interview and focus group data were transcribed on an ongoing basis but after the collection of the entire spoken data set (in July 2021) outstanding recordings were transcribed by simultaneously listening and dictating via the 'Notes' function on a smartphone. The resulting documents were emailed and printed out with margins for notes and time references for easy location of particular data (Denscombe, 2017). Learner names were replaced with numbers and each

Deleted: The three research questions, reiterated at the opening of the chapter, have led to a number of important areas for investigation - quantity of time and motivation for time spent on study, the blended learning mode, independent learning, the role of the teacher, SLA and mobile pedagogy and the way in which inherent features of mobile phones might aid learning. These themes can be examined using a thematic analysis approach which was used to discover the participant stories in these various areas of investigation….

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recording and transcript was given a corresponding reference number. Transcribing the spoken data provided an opportunity for familiarity and proofreading the transcripts offered a further chance. Chapter 3 raised the issue of handling data from speakers of English as a non-native language. Faithfulness to the original spoken word and appropriate punctuation were carefully monitored to obtain a trustworthy representation of the interactions and participants' intended meaning. In fact, a number of errors were detected during the proofreading process which might have led to misinterpretation of some data had this step not been taken. Knowing the context of the utterances and vast experience of learner interlanguage assisted in deciphering challenging statements. Instances where comments were not clear due to poor sound recording/interference or meaning was not recognizable due to compromised language were labelled 'unclear' and disregarded from the analysis. This occurred on six occasions throughout the sixteen transcripts. Other data such as the research diary/observation notes and learner feedback comments were already in written form.

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The process of analysing the qualitative data collected can be split into stages. Cresswell & Plano Clarke suggest five (2007 in Denscombe, 2017:):

1. **Data preparation** - transcribing and cataloguing
2. **Initial exploration of the data** - recognising themes and noting ideas,
3. **Analysis of the data** - more formal recognition of categories or themes & making comparisons & identifying concepts
4. **Representation and display of the data** - written interpretation & illustration
5. **Validation of the data** - triangulation & member checking

Nowell *et al.* (2017) name six steps. Nevertheless, there is commonality between the necessary stages listed. Analysis of quantitative data can follow a similar procedure to qualitative but there are distinctions in the procedural details.

1. **Data preparation** - categorizing & checking the data
2. **Initial exploration of the data** - look for obvious trends and correlations
3. **Analysis of the data** - use of statistical tests
4. **Representation and display of the data** - tables, written interpretation of statistics
5. **Validation of the data** - internal consistency, external benchmarks,

(Cresswell & Plano Clarke, 2007 in Denscombe, 2017)

Regardless of the nomenclature, the linear representations belie the actual nature of the process, which is an iterative one, with analysis and collection often happening in tandem (Nowell *et al.,*

2017) and which can be 'messy, time-consuming and creative' (Marshall & Rossman, 2011 in Denscombe, 2017:323).

The current case illustrates this. The data were not first analysed at the end of whole collection process but the collection and analysis processes happened concurrently and the research became responsive to the data at that time as learner views were taken into account. Initial exploration of the December interview data (by repeated listening, comparison and noting of recurrent themes) led to the adoption of five main interventions used to promote increased learning beyond lessons in the second phase. These provided a greater focus on pedagogy and the means of motivating and extending learning. After the second phase of data collection (Jan- Mar 2021) there was a further period of initial exploration of the five interventions. This involved transcribing the five focus group recordings from March 2021 to investigate views on the usefulness of each intervention with a view to modifying or rejecting any in the final iteration in April 2021. Consistent learner views emerged on all but one intervention – partner work. Divergent experiences called for a closer examination. All data excerpts regarding partner work were conflated into one document which enabled a more thorough examination of the theme. The result of this was a review and modification of partner work for classes in the final term. Thus, ongoing interaction with the data during collection illuminated new paths and examination to inform the course design and pedagogy. Certain aspects of the research were determined deductively but the latter examples reveal ways in which the research analysis was inductive, with the learner data being allowed to guide the teaching process.

As with the spoken data, some initial exploration of quantitative data was undertaken before the end of the entire research period. Observing the app data weekly and logging the data each term enabled the tracking of learner usage and decision-making regarding its continued use as an intervention. In addition, cursory but regular checks of video data, particularly the number of views, meant I could ascertain if learners were actually engaging with the work set. In the March 2021 focus group, a learner commented on a dislike for long videos, suggesting that 10 minutes should be the maximum length. This prompted a more careful look at the percentage of time videos were viewed. It was clear that learners did not always view videos to the end, especially long videos, and this was subsequently borne in mind when producing videos for the final term.

The goal of analysis is to represent all the data collected in a fair and cohesive way. To avoid the 'cherry picking' alluded to earlier, detailed, systematic analysis of raw data is required. Reduction of the collected data is a key strategy in qualitative analysis and use of codes or categories is a useful technique in doing this (Lee & Fielding in Attride -Stirling, 2001).

Data need to be coded to give them the structure lacking in their raw state (Denscombe 2017:332) The on-going engagement with the data saw a number of salient codes and larger themes emerge but the more formal process began after July 2021 when these were then finalised. Computers help greatly with quantitative data analysis but to a lesser degree with qualitative (Denscombe, 2017). In this case, computer software, such as NVivo, was not utilised as the data set was a manageable size. No computer-based statistical testing of quantitative data was undertaken as the participant numbers were far too low.

The process of TA moves from a broad number of codes or categories (which embrace large parts of the qualitative data set) to a much smaller number of overarching themes which are clearly distinct from each other, wide enough to include ideas from across the data collected (Nowell *et al.,* 2017) and to summarise concisely salient aspects (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The initial codes can be drawn up with reference to the research questions or in response to what emerges during initial engagement with the data. Having a number of researchers checking codes and themes lends more credibility to the analysis (Nowell *et al.*, 2017) which is not possible for the solo researcher.

4.12 Coding and themes

After the initial exploration of the data, at the beginning of the more formal stage, the main task was to read repeatedly through all documents, qualitative and quantitative. The graphic video view data and spreadsheets, phone usage graph and tabular app usage data were initially analysed in tandem with the qualitative data. All the transcripts and the research diary were colour-coded according to the various themes. Information pertaining to each theme was extracted from the source and collated into one large hand-written document per theme. This was to done to reduce screen time and to make it available in a larger A3 format. Colour-coding assisted in finding related information easily when returning to the various source documents. The source data were read on different levels; one level was information related to the research and knowledge questions; a second noticed preoccupations of the participants arising but distinct from the main line of questioning; a further one was viewing through the lens of gender, course level and culture. This cycle of noticing, sorting and classifying is succinctly described by Hammersley & Atkinson (2019:146)

> 'The iterative process of identifying instances and cases, relating those to broader, more generic classes or categories, which in turn drive further examination of the data and one's understanding of them.'

An initial list of twenty-three codes were selected. Some deductively, with reference to the research questions, but also inductively, in response to participant's data and recurring topics as Oliver notes, 'Respondents may themselves suggest a hierarchy of data, indicating that some issues are more significant than others.'(Oliver, 2013). Nevertheless, King (2004 in Nowell et al., 2017) suggests

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starting with a number of predefined codes which may originate with research questions to guide the initial stages. A number in this instance did so, namely tools for extending learning (the six interventions) and the use of mobile phones to study. Other codes explored independent study habits, preferences and attitudes to learning outside the classroom, all of which stemmed from the knowledge questions posed in Chapter 2. Six related to pedagogy and language acquisition, and a number arose from participant preoccupations within the data for example, extrinsic motivation, the role of the teacher and the use of paper. The codes were then conflated into ten manageable, broad themes.

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Whilst reading the data collated by theme, annotations pertaining to possible interpretation and issues for discussion were made, in addition to any emerging results. These ten themes were then organised into two broad groupings - one comprising data regarding the six interventions, the notions of improvement, SLA & pedagogy and motivation to learn beyond the classroom; the second was the experience of blended / online learning modes, independent learning/autonomy and use of a mobile phone to study.

To further underscore the non-linear nature of the process, a final broad theme was added at a later date, after a review of Chapter 2, which saw the addition of a further data set (the hyperdocs) and a theme of course design and management. This ensured that pertinent stories regarding design and materials explored in the literature review were likewise examined in the light of the data. Certain data from the existing themes were placed in the new one alongside the new data.

From these three broad themes a number of findings were elicited, related to the research questions, ready to form the basis of the presentation in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 Findings

I like both of them, the Padlet and come to class because in Padlet, when I relax at bed, my mobile at me, or I think, I saw Padlet link teacher give, which homework teacher give. And I saw when I sleep in the bed, I saw the homework. I don't need paper and anything. That's why I like Padlet homework. I came to classroom. When I meet to Zoom, I can't talk more. I was all time quiet and when I class, I talk more. That's why I like class.

Figure 8 Excerpt from participant interview. Learner 16 (Level 1 / Female / Bangladesh)

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides an account which aims to reflect the views and experiences of the twenty-eight participants who spent the whole, or part, of the 2020/21 academic year learning in an online or blended mode, most for the first time ever. The participant quotation above reflects one of the key findings - that asynchronous mobile blended learning is a desirable mode for ESOL learners in my organisation. There are twelve findings presented in three sections:

Section One: ESOL learners and asynchronous mobile blended learning (Findings 1 - 4)

Section Two: Promoting and extending learning beyond the classroom (Findings 5 - 9)

Section Three: Learning design, management and materials (Findings 10 - 12)

The table below provides a recap of the data sources.

Qualitative data sources	Quantitative data sources
• Semi-structured individual/paired interviews (Term 1) • Focus groups (T2) • Semi-structured group interviews (T3) • Individual Learning Plan comments (T1-3) • Research observation diary (T1-3) • Weekly learner asynchronous work hyperdocs (T1-3)	• Learner usage & habits questionnaire (T3) • YouTube analytics (T1-3) • 'Learn English Now' app analytics (T1-3)

Table 22 Overview of data sources

All participant quotations from interviews and focus groups are supplied with biographical information related to gender, ethnicity and course level. These are set in separate paragraphs while the written responses from ILP data are distinguished by a text box. Questionnaire and LMS data are given in graphic or tabular form.

Section One: ESOL learners and asynchronous mobile blended learning

5.2 Introduction

The first section centres on findings related to learners' attitudes, habits and experiences of learning in a synchronous and asynchronous, independent manner beyond the physical classroom and the devices used to do so. These findings are linked primarily to the first research question:

Q1: How, and can mobile phones be used to provide appropriate extended learning opportunities for ESOL learners beyond the formal classroom?

There are four findings.

Finding 1: Prolonged engagement with asynchronous (and synchronous) learning develops both digital capabilities and capacity for independent learning amongst participants, irrespective of ethnic background and gender.

Finding 2: Asynchronous blended learning is an appropriate and desirable mode of ESOL provision to extend learning for the vast majority of participants.

Finding 3: A small number of participants would appreciate a blend design incorporating a synchronous element.

Finding 4: Learner mobile phones are suitable devices for engagement with asynchronous learning.

The section below provides data to support each finding and considers the following themes in turn: digital and independent study skills, attitudes to asynchronous learning, the home and classroom as places of study, online and blended learning and the mobile phone as a study tool.

5.3 Digital learning skills

Synchronous and asynchronous learning inherently utilise digital means and resources. The research participants were at different stages in their experience of and ease with a virtual classroom and asynchronous independent learning when starting their first course during 2020/21. According to the observation diary, of 23 participants questioned (of the annual total of 28) during lessons at the beginning of the first term, only 8 had undertaken some type of formal (synchronous or asynchronous) online learning previously.

Presenting the data by ethnic origin reveals that South Asians (Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sri Lankan), the predominant learner ethnicity in my organisation and this study (50%), started their courses with slightly less experience than those of other nationalities.

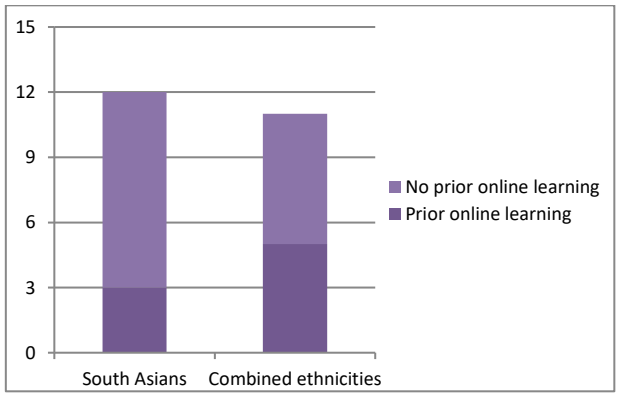


Figure 9 Previous experience with synchronous or asynchronous learning (n=23)

Difficulties adjusting to digital learning were encountered initially by many learners of various backgrounds, for example finding and following the weekly homework, downloading and logging on to Zoom and Padlet apps, uploading or downloading documents. The observation diary recorded a poll of 59 teachers taken during a NATECLA webinar (NATECLA,2020) which demonstrated that the primary issues for ESOL tutors at that time were how to teach digital skills to learners and the need for tools for teaching online. In addition, the diary recorded that eight learners were withdrawn from the three courses in the initial weeks of September 2020. The reason was unknown in some cases but for an L1 Bangladeshi couple it was difficulty studying via Zoom and managing online coursework and for an E3 Algerian lady the demands of her family at home were too great to continue. Although during the pandemic learner numbers were reduced to eight per class, it was clear that a reduction in ESOL learner numbers overall in 2020/21 (see Chapter 1 for data) may have been due to the reasons highlighted above.

Yet participants who persevered had a heartening story to tell of surmounting obstacles to access the course as finding 1 expresses.

Learner 26 (E3/F/Bangladesh) How to send email I did and I didn't before use anything online. That time is my first time but first of all I lot of difficulty. Then I used to how to use it and someone help and teacher help. I improve.

L2 (E3/F/Bangladesh) and lots of item I understand. Padlet picture and sending. First time I don't understand this, now .....(interrupted by another learner).

The interview responses show that learners believed they grew in competency during their courses by means of digital skills training videos, help from family members and increasing familiarisation with digital learning. A number of participants, particularly of South Asian origin, stated overcoming their fear of technology and appreciated the opportunity to improve their digital skills as a result of the courses.

L19 (L1/F/Bangladeshi) First I was scared how to use Internet, Padlet, but then slowly, slowly, I have learned how to use this and this is very beneficial.

Learner 8 explained how she became more familiar with using a computer as result of asynchronous learning.

L8 (E3/F/Ghana-Italy) When I start online learning with you, I actually don't know how to use the Padlet because I just look through the screen and look at what you've written but my mind didn't tells me to tap it and open it……. My son told me, look at the three dots on your right, the three dots and I put my hand on the three dots and type it. Then it's open. Then it opened for me to get all the information and I say, 'Oh I've lost so many works'. So since from that day when you sent the work, I try to type the three dots so that I can get the message or the work that you sent me. So, I can say it has helped me, sincerely speaking, it has helped me because I can also say, because of the online lesson that we've made, it have helped me learn how to go into the work in … I don't know. It has helped me work on computer.

A more competent learner also noticed these developments.

L17 (L1/F/Morocco) We knew a lot of things new. It's good because a lot of people didn't know how to use computer; they learn it.....Now all the people know how to use the computer, how to use the phone. If you haven't laptop, you can do with your phone Zoom meeting, homework, Padlet - a lot of things!

Words such as 'beneficial', 'good' and 'improving' were often used by other learners in regard to their experience of the benefit of having undertaken digital learning and a far wider value for their daily lives was perceived. The following case study foregrounds the experience of an Entry 3 learner from Bangladesh who was significantly impacted by her engagement with mobile blended learning.

Case Study 1 Learner 3 (E3/Bangladesh)

Learner 3 was a single mother with an imperative to find work to support her family. She was the only learner in her class with a weekly voluntary job to obtain some work experience. Her engagement with online and blended learning during the pandemic helped build her confidence, her language and, particularly, her digital skills. The frequent use of email and apps led her to say *'That's the one thing we learned. It's really important for us, for using our phone and lots of app we going to use because we don't know before.'* She could perceive a steady improvement in both her own and others' skills over time *'First of all, we use first time so I'm slowly; slowly we used to and now easy for us.'* She believed that such knowledge was '*really improving for ourselves'*. In a world increasingly reliant on digital skills for daily life, the opportunity for regular practice as part of a structured blended course was invaluable.

Improving communication skills was also vital and, in her view, the digital course components enhanced her language learning *'And video they have English, like proper, then I repeat again so I think is online, the videos and link you send me more improving me. I try to, like, watch so many times.'*

In 2021, after the data collection had concluded, the learner was interviewed about her experiences and spoke of how she had used her new skills to help her search for jobs online, email prospective employers and attach her CV. She went on to gain employment at the start of 2022.

To sum up, there was clear difficulty and fear in undertaking digital learning for the first time but learners, including those from the demographic least conversant with the mode, developed the necessary skills over time and used these skills beyond the immediate course of study.

5.4 Independent study habits and skills development

Digital skills were not the only pre-requisite for successful online learning that were initially lacking. Prior to the research period, self-study habits beyond the classroom appeared quite undeveloped. During interviews some admitted to having lacked the habit of undertaking focused self-study at home and one participant talked of attempting to finish his homework in class before the end of the lessons. A mature, working E3 learner confessed her pre-pandemic habits.

L8 (E3/F/Ghana-Italy) It's because for me, for instance, after face-to-face class when I came home, I came and continue my work so sometimes I don't have time to look through what I went and learn. I don't have time to go through what my teacher taught me. I keep on doing things because thinking of the kids and work then the time came for me to go to class again, without looking through.'

A fellow E3 participant reflected on the pre-pandemic habits of her classmates when the teacher gave homework,

L5 (E3/F/Nigeria-Spain) Sometime give us three homework a week or four homework a week to do. Some students do this. Some students say they are so busy, they forgot.'

These comments reveal various attitudes to formal homework outside the lessons - those who complete it, those who try to avoid it and those who do not prioritise it.

In the December 2020 interviews, when asked to name good ways to learn English independently beyond the classroom, learners' most frequent responses were watching movies, the news and studying or talking with their children and native speakers. These activities are valuable, informal practice but are not specifically language study oriented. Regarding use of digital resources, the majority utilised Google Translate, bilingual dictionary functions and, on occasions watched YouTube English teaching videos. A small number of predominantly L1 participants, did profess to some well-developed self-directed focused language learning habits: listening to English songs, following the lyrics in English and noting vocabulary, reading English language books borrowed from the library or revising and consolidating lesson notes and handouts between lessons.

Yet during the year, the necessity to engage regularly with a variety of new language learning practices promoted a measure of adoption and use. The final term's questionnaire in Figure 10 below shows the continued use of Google products and the dictionary but seems to point to a wider range of digital language learning practices than previously commented on.

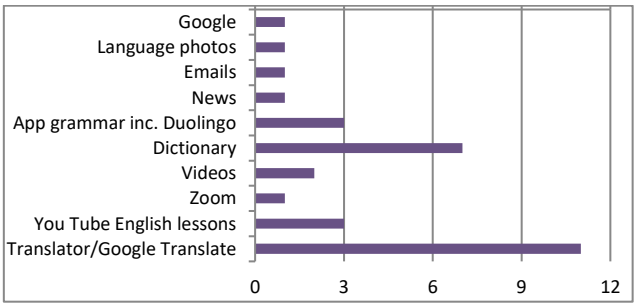


Figure 10 Questionnaire July 2021: Q5 What other ways did you use your phone yourself to help you learn more English outside the classroom? N=16

Some study practices introduced during the formal synchronous and asynchronous courses had never been encountered. It was a new experience for most to watch bespoke videos related to their course and note vocabulary, answer questions and search for information related to their English learning online. It was considered difficult but worthwhile.

The second case study exemplifies a clear theme within many learner responses and summarises the experience of the majority of learners with regard to the development of autonomous practices.

Case Study 2 Learner 18 (L1/F/Spain)

Learner 18 came from Spain and was working as a cleaner in a local school. In a conversation during the course she spoke of some negative school experiences earlier in her life. Returning to study as an adult had proved far more positive. Whilst initially sceptical about online learning, her comments reveal the benefits asynchronous activity brought in enabling her to learn at her own pace. *'What I like is when in the class the teacher she explains things and sometimes I don't understand very well and she says, 'Don't worry I'll send a video'. And I like that because I can watching many times. On the end, I say, 'Okay, now I have the point. Now I understand.'*

The necessity to be proactive and display a degree of autonomy in learning was initially challenging. Nevertheless, the benefit was clearly recognised. *'Yes, it's more harder. For example, grammar. Sometimes before in the classroom if I don't understand, the teacher put some examples but now it's difficult. I have to do research, look video many times… It's very good thing for me… Sometimes it's frustration because it's not only one video.'*

The following comments display how her decision to use the subtitles resulted in a richer and more satisfying language learning experience. '*Maybe I look more and sometimes, the good thing, I put on YouTube the translation, how they writing in English not in Spanish. I take my paper and my pen and I still writing. Like a copy. That is good for me….I follow how they pronounce and I follow the subtitles. Sometimes, I say 'Wow!' I didn't know this word. The pronounce is like writing this way; I didn't know. I like.'*

Her independent investment in her own learning can also be seen in the comment, *'I try more for Padlet and the homework you send to me as well. For example, in my job, I take my phone I put my (headphones) and I listen the news or the radio or music. When I am at home, do the cleaner, I have a app on my phone and I listen program. I like that you know. Always I listen in English.'*

She was one of a small number of learners who also found synchronous learning positive due to the time flexibility it afforded. From being someone who had never studied in any online mode previously, she demonstrated her adaptability and agency and strengthened her identity and skills as an able lifelong learner.

Highlighted within this case study is the development of important independent language learning study habits such as watching videos multiple times, using subtitles as a resource and noting down vocabulary and listening dictation practice. Additional learner study skills mentioned in interviews and focus groups were:

- watching additional, independently sourced but complementary YouTube videos
- repurposing the course grammar videos as general listening and pronunciation practice
- recording a mock- exam presentation onto a phone to review and practise prior to the exam
- becoming more active in looking at and learning from written English around them (stimulated by the language photos homework activity discussed in detail later in this section)
- one learner was prompted to reactivate use of the Polish-produced 'Rock your English' YouTube channel she had followed prior to the pandemic.

These actions support the first finding that on-going usage led to a growing learner-directed acquisition of independent study skills and habits.

Dedicated language learning apps were not mentioned as having been used independently prior to this study. The course required learners to complete exercises on the 'Learn English Now' app and this led to a new habit with some, particularly at L1, undertaking far more than the three allotted weekly tasks, using it daily or regularly, sometimes whilst outside the home. (The app will be discussed in more detail later in section two).

Learners were studying in a new way and in the first term interviews, when asked about the amount of work completed outside of the classroom compared to their previous face-to-face courses, a significant number of learners, though not all, felt they had undertaken more work in the online learning mode than in their previous face-to-face courses. Completion of digital rather than physical worksheets was time-consuming. Working independently on asynchronous tasks involved learners searching for information online to support their homework, either prompted by the set task or of their own volition. In the main, attitudes to this were positive as expressed succinctly by one learner below.

L17 (L1/F/Morocco) I feel that I did more work than in class but really, it's not bad things. I like it because I do my effort to search for words, for grammar. It helped me a lot more than in class. In class we found lots of things prepared. We found all. We have all in our hand but when you are at home, you are obligate to search for yourself and in searching you learn more.

Yet a number admitted that while they believed searching in itself was beneficial, on occasions time was lacking to study as thoroughly as desired.

L1 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Italy) And lots of homework. Actually, we don't have time. A week is homework lots of things.

Participant responses have alluded to a measure of family support in using devices and accessing learning. In addition, during the year learner training was attempted through ad hoc advice and coaching in lessons. In addition, I gave an in-lesson presentation to all reading classes on noticing and noting language beyond the classroom (as an introduction to the 'Language Photos' intervention). There was a presentation regarding the development of automaticity through regular language use and spaced repetition during the speaking and listening courses as an attempt to convey some tenets of SLA theory.

The observation diary detailed how it proved difficult to find learner training material that was both suitable for ESOL learners' language level, particularly E3, and relevant to their context and needs. In many YouTube videos dialogue was often too fast and lacked the necessary supporting text or images. While the BBC and BBC Learning English had produced videos, most pertained to university study skills or for young people learning a foreign language such as French or Spanish. The British Council website mainly contained advice for teachers rather than materials for learners.

5.5 Attitudes to asynchronous learning

Not only did learners begin to view digital and independent learning differently over time, participant responses above testify to changes in their view of the asynchronous mode. The observation diary notes that in the first week of the course learners often sought clarification on the number of weekly lessons. There appeared to be no awareness of the asynchronous course component at that time. This feedback response on the Individual Learning Plan indicates the mistaken belief that the course consisted of one hour on Zoom.

I am very happy that I attended reading course. In the beginning of this course, I was nervous and confused. I didn't know where to start and how to start and if I am going to get something from online 1 hour Zoom class. But I am glad that I have done this course. It helped me a lot with my grammar, punctuation, vocabulary.

Figure 11 ILP comment December 2020. L21 (L1 / F / Pakistan)

It clearly signals a reversal of the low expectation of online learning. Further responses show that fundamental attitudes to the new mode of learning were undergoing change as the weeks progressed.

L27 (E3/F/Brazil) I never believe before in the online course. Is a distance course but after the lockdown we need to do it. And then when I started, the beginning of the year, I was in the other class for the term and I felt very well, very confident because it was good.

Along with changes in attitude to the mode itself, awareness and understanding of the individual's role in that new mode of learning seemed to develop as learners grew in familiarity.

L3 (E3/F/Bangladesh) Because this term is really helpful with my listening what my teacher said. And I just, if I am saying, I'm just understanding with my teacher, like friendlier, improving my English because what my teacher said then I focus. *It's not everything. Like, you need to, like, only not teacher because you have to try as well because I'm focus on this. And I don't know how to explain ..*

This participant seems to have experienced that focusing her consistent attention on improving her listening comprehension herself aided her progress (see italics). Another E3 learner appeared to have an epiphany during her interview regarding the importance of her own regular investment in progressing her English more quickly.

L8 (E3/F/Ghana-Italy) What have come to my mind right now is if I want to learn English quickly, any chance that I will get, I have to take a book and read. Any time that I'll get, I have to make some research. If I do this, it will help me learn English fast. That's why I say, we know the thing but we don't do but we teach our kids to do this. We should do this! It will help. Because of time we put ourselves back. We don't.

The examples above appear to show participants' meta-cognition and development of greater learning agency through their regular exposure and interaction with the new mode of learning.

Attitudes to asynchronous aspects of the course, and the increased time and engagement in learning that demanded, changed positively during the year amongst learners from a variety of nationalities. In contrast, attitudes to changing the fundamental place of study did not and will be discussed in the next section.

5.6 The home as a place of study

The global pandemic converted many people's homes into places of work or study. Unlike younger learners, adults have multiple demands on their time - work, family and running a household. This situation was exacerbated for some who were homeschooling for a large part of the year. These factors impacted on the experience of studying at home. 83% (24 out of 28) of participants in this study were female and predominantly homemakers (this constitutes a typical figure, given that an annual ESOL data snapshot taken at the outset of this study in 2019 showed 86% of learners were female). School runs, helping children with homework and cooking made huge demands on their time. Some learners worked shifts. One female learner talked of completing her homework in the early hours after her children had gone to bed. Regardless of children, even looking out of the window or in the mirror was a continual distraction for another learner. One participant stated,

L21 (L1/F/Pakistan) I think I did learn at home but for me I think in the class is more better. Yeah. Because all my kids, whenever I start to work, then they come with something and I have to help. Then I got distracted and that whole thing of learning will go out of my mind and then I'll start with something else.

The following dialogue between L1 learners, which took place during the pre-focus group preparation, further reflects the dilemma.

L23 (L1/F/Sri Lanka) Which thing do you learn best? What helps you learn best?
L20 (L1/M/Bangladesh-Italy) I think everything was very useful but…
L23 Yes, but I don't have a time
L20 We didn't use everything.
L23 Yes, Yes, lots of helpful.
L20 Because of time, because of concentration, because of work or because of our family, we didn't look everything.

A clear tension existed between learners wishing to avail themselves of the support for their language learning but sometimes lacking the time to do this as fully as desired.

This was not the whole picture, however. A smaller number felt that learning at home during the pandemic gave them more time to study or was flexible enough to suit their lifestyles. One spoke of having time to do things such as reading, listening, reviewing notes and searching vocabulary 'properly'. Another learner enjoyed extended study time when her baby was asleep. Others enjoyed waking up just prior to the online Zoom lesson, especially after a late shift, or not having to travel into college straight after work but instead, being able to allot that time to study.

5.7 The home versus the physical classroom

One constant theme across all recorded dialogue during the synchronous phase (T1&2) was the desire to return to face-to-face classroom learning. The key reasons given during interviews and focus groups were:

- ability to obtain an instant response to queries
- immediate error correction
- the obligation to speak and use English (the classroom provided some learners with their chief opportunity to speak English)
- having the teacher as a model of good English

- socialising and collaboration with peers
- having a dedicated place of study away from distractions at home
- ability to make notes easily and properly
- use of physical worksheets & handouts.

Some of these reasons relate to physical and material aspects of learning. Learners complained of the physical disadvantages of spending extended time on screens and impact on well-being. Physical handouts and a white/Smart Board were preferred for taking notes and completing exercises. Some digital sources, particularly those accessed from a mobile phone, raised issues of small font size and file compatibility. Having to upload homework documents to Padlet, write ILPs electronically and annotate pdfs was a source of frustration for many, particularly initially and further reinforced the preference for paper (It also added to the teacher burden of preparation and marking). Some learners spoke about enjoying using books for learning, even wanting a course book for ESOL.

L13 (E3/F/Greece) In class it's more helpful because we have the works, for example, in the paper. It's more easy than online.

L28 (E3/F/Poland) Yeah, I like homework on Padlet. Listening on video, yeah, because everything is very clear and good preparation from you but when I must, when I have exercise, sometimes I have problem with put words on gap. I can't put.

LHW Yes you mean on your phone or on your tablet?

L28 Yes. On my tablet, yes, and on my phone too. But sometimes I better more for me is when I have paper and I can write on the paper.

L19 (L1/F/Bangladesh) Sometime I write on the paper. If teacher give us some photocopy we can because I can't stay long time in front of internet. That's why sometimes I write in my notebook then I read from my notebook.

Furthermore, some of the reasons relate to the pedagogical and social aspects of the classroom. The teacher's correction of linguistic errors and the ability to receive immediate explanations, particularly of grammar, were two further oft-repeated views.

L22 (L1/M/Morocco-Italy) In the class it's better. When I watch the video, I can't ask. In class, I can ask.

L23 (L1/F/Sri Lanka) Face -to-face, you know, when I make a mistake, you can correct me. That's the best way; very helpful.

Although all these aspects are possible in a virtual classroom, learners made frequent mention of their preference for a physical classroom in this regard. Learners talked about not having to wait for email replies to questions and reducing the time spent looking for answers alone, despite this activity often being described as useful.

L12 (E3/F/Poland) If I want to ask you something, there was not enough time, yeah? And sometimes, you know, when we send the email to you, we will sometimes have to waiting answer for a few hours or maybe next day.

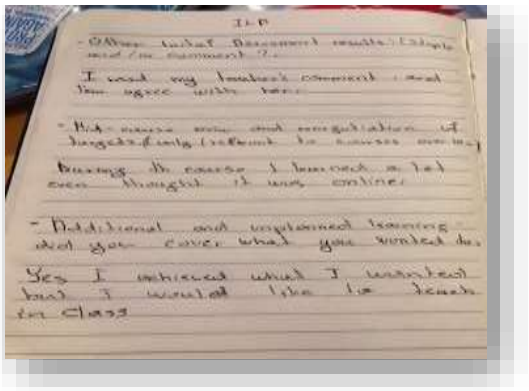
Although learners saw each other online and worked in Zoom break-out rooms in pairs or small groups, a physical classroom with face-to-face interaction was preferred. One participant felt more confident to ask questions in a real rather than virtual classroom.

L28 (E3/F/Poland) Yeah, I like both, lessons online and in classroom but I prefer lessons in class because I feel more confident and I am more expression. And online I am more closed and I like when I can meet with other students. Face-to-face is better for me.

Participants considered the classroom a relaxing place away from the pressures of home and a welcome change of location. It made talking with multiple partners easier than online and afforded more opportunity to collaborate and learn together. It was clear that learners valued the classroom as a place to practise speaking English and this experience was not properly replicated in fully online courses as this comment from December 2020 shows.

LHW So let me ask you a similar question. What do you do in the classroom that's better than learning outside the classroom?
L9 (E3/F/Albania) To speak more. I think this. To speak more. I need to speak more English because I speak only Albanian. In class I need to speak more English.

The same learner's end of course ILP feedback comment demonstrates that, despite a positive online course experience, the classroom remained paramount.



During the course I learned a lot even thought it was online. Yes, I achieved what I wanted but I would like to teach *(i.e. learn)* **in class.**

Figure 12 ILP comment December 2020. L9 (E3 / F / Albania)

Another E3 learner, despite a positive attitude to synchronous study at home, demonstrated the same ultimate preference.

L26 (E3/F/Bangladesh) I like online, in the classroom, in the house but we are enjoy my classroom because that one is live. We are talking to live. Teacher say anything, I understand. Is eye contact. Really good is. Environment is good like we are classroom and when is at home, a lot of days, we are stay home is boring but when is class is start on Zoom, then, like, very happy. Happily we are class. That was better, not bad. We are enjoy. I want to see my friend, my teacher. That's like class reading, writing is anything is good but actually, I like my class. I miss my class.
LHW So when you say 'I like my class' you mean in the classroom?
L26 In the room, yeah. That's better for my. When I am working in the college, that's better for me.

One participant saw the relationship between study undertaken in and beyond the classroom in the following way:

L22 (L1/M/Morocco-Italy) Yeah (the app is) a good way but always we need the class. I like studying in class. I like studying in class because you give the base to learn, to learn more. Without class, in home, you can't know many things. The class you give the way how you can study at home.

He does not appear to decry the out of lesson interventions or studying at home but believes that the lessons are extended beyond the classroom with the teacher's guidance. Clearly, learners were grateful for and benefitted from online distance learning during the pandemic but there was no doubt that face-to-face lessons in a classroom were their preference for language learning.

5.8 Blended and online learning

A fundamental question in this study and the subject of the final term interviews was learners' ultimate preference for learning mode. 15 learners took part in the final group interviews, of which 10 had experienced both fully online and blended courses and five blended learning only. The question posed is given below.

For you personally, what is the best way to study ESOL: classroom only with no online homework, online only (Zoom and Padlet online homework) or a mix of both (classroom and Padlet online homework). Why?

Figure 13 Group interview question 2 July 2021

Of the fifteen participants, all bar one (who appeared to prefer face-to-face only) stated a preference for a blended mode of learning (classroom and Padlet online homework) over face-to-face only or online only in the future and made their reasons clear (Section 3 provides results on blend design).

Participants spoke of a huge difference between the online and the physical classroom which resulted, as discussed, in a preference for the most part, for face-to-face lessons. The majority of participants were content with synchronous online learning via Zoom while it facilitated the continuation of courses during the pandemic but it was not seen as a long-term replacement for the physical classroom.

With the majority having never experienced virtual ESOL courses prior to the pandemic, many found synchronous lessons a challenge. Online lessons posed problems for speaking, particularly initially, as learners noted their diffidence to talk in a virtual context, with the lack of proper eye contact.

L16 (L1/F/Bangladesh) When I meet to Zoom, I can't talk more. I was all time quiet and when I class, I talk more that's why I like class.

The attempt to avoid prolonged screen time initially prompted shorter lessons (1-1.5 hours as agreed by the ESOL department). However, learner demand for more lesson time eventually led to synchronous lessons of two and sometimes three hours in terms 2 and 3. This was a long period in front of a screen and the experience of learning did not equate to that in a face-to-face classroom.

The third case study details one participant's experience with the different learning modes.

Case Study 3 Learner 5 (E3/F/Nigeria-Spain)

Learner 5 came to the UK having lived for many years in Spain. She was brought up in Nigeria by an extended family member who denied her the opportunity of a full education. Now in the UK, she was working as a care assistant and improving her literacy *'So I'm still waiting if I can get more writing, reading. My own vision future to be a nurse. That's my future, my plan right from a child but there is no money. My parents - I come from a poor home. Difficult for us so I looked towards the future if I can be a nurse. I really love that.'* She found online learning via Zoom challenging stating, *'It can't stay in your brain. The moment she left the Zoom, forgot everything in the Zoom there. We sitting in the class. Teacher, you and the Zoom there is a lot of difference.'* As her son made use of the family tablet for his online lessons, she used her handset which she found unsatisfactory for synchronous sessions, complaining of poor font size and screen fatigue.

However, she spoke more positively of the benefits of asynchronous activities for reviewing grammar and developing digital skills. She commented,' *Also we go to online, check the Padlet, the presentation and about present and past and future so those things really helped. To be in the (physical) class also help a lot….on the video (asynchronous) not in the class, is good. It's help us saw how to use phone, how to use the laptop; all of that is helpful.'* She had already developed a habit of using YouTube and Google to improve her English, prompted by her son, and now she was expanding her sources of language input.

Such was her drive to keep learning that, when having to return to Spain for two weeks for a family emergency, she continued using the 'Learn English Now' app and became the female learner with the highest app usage (see Table 25). Synchronous learning was not a suitable mode for her but asynchronous provision had enabled her to stay connected with the course and continue improving her language to achieve her goals.

Ultimately, the majority of participants had an ambivalent attitude towards the home classroom and synchronous learning via Zoom and wholeheartedly preferred a return to full-length, face-to-face lessons. However, in spite of the challenges of undertaking more independent study at home, learners did not wish to lose the asynchronous aspect of the course delivered via Padlet as seen in finding 2. In the final interviews, participants made their views towards this form of blend clear as exemplified in the following responses,

L7 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Spain) I liked both of because in the classroom we can connect to you face-to-face and you can see lots of work directly. And partly doing online work I liked because sometimes

we don't come to the class, we missing lots of work. On Padlet is very easy way to learn English and I can get your work for my homework. That's why I like both of.

In addition, many participants mentioned the ability to use various digital sources in any location on their phone, without the necessity of a folder or notebook. (Further discussion of this in Section Two)

L10 (E3/M/Egypt/Italy) For me a mix of both classroom and Padlet online homework. This it's useful for me because in classroom I talk with you face-to-face. I am feeling we are in group, studying together. Maybe this for me it's very important because sometimes I need information face-to-face. Sometimes for me Padlet online, just when I can listening more times, recording, videos and try with myself answer the questions. This and for me it's very good. I have two ways. Take useful as home in class and useful for me in Padlet online. Two ways with me is very good. And for and time I can come two times classroom but one time, it's good, easy and the Padlet online. I can follow you be at home, I'm outside in the car. This can good for me.

Despite their penchant for paper handouts associated with the physical classroom, many participants highly appreciated the intrinsic features of digital resources in the asynchronous homework for offering stimulating and interactive practice at home or beyond.

L3 (E3/F/Bangladesh) In last year we do like (in college). Just we do paperwork and do like in a class. But this time is different because you give me recording, you give me link so if I am need like past tense, future tense, if you need more, I'm just repeat and just playing 2×3 times. Just I'm practice myself.

The interview responses are corroborated by the following observations from ILP feedback which reflects the opinion of many participants towards a blend of classroom and asynchronous teaching, emphasising the beneficial role of the study beyond the classroom in the learners' eyes.

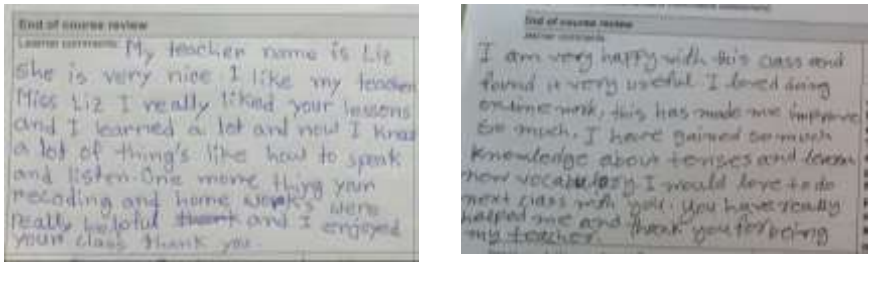


Figure 14 ILP comments December 2020 L6 (E3 / F / Bangladesh) and L4 (E3 / F / Bangladesh)

However, finding 3 illustrates how a small number of participants had a preference apart from the three options they were offered. In term 3 the on-going restrictions with the Covid pandemic produced a blend of short synchronous paired tutorials (via Zoom), a 3-hour classroom lesson and 4-5 hours of asynchronous study. This term three blend of virtual classroom, physical classroom and Padlet was not provided as an option in the final interviews as it was unclear how feasible it would be as a future option from an organisational perspective once the emergency remote teaching mode was at an end. However, in the interviews a few participants stated that a synchronous virtual classroom in tandem with a physical one would also be a satisfactory design option. One participant justified her opinion saying,

L18 (L1/F/Spain) Because sometimes maybe you don't have the time to explain in Zoom and, yes, it's okay; it's good because the next day or after I know I see my teacher and she can explain to me face-to-face. That's why. But you know as well, sometimes, maybe I'm just confused. I used to enjoy a lot when the course was only on Zoom and we don't have to come to class because, you know, if you wake up in the morning... You know what I mean?

And her meaning is indeed clear - waking up just in time to join the class on Zoom was very convenient. This expresses an appreciation for the flexibility synchronous sessions can provide for learners with busy lives or shift schedules. Another working learner explained how, with synchronous lessons at home, she could repurpose the travel time for study.

L8 (E3/F/Ghana-Italy) But the online lesson, I've set a time. On this time, I'm coming to learn online so before I will come, the work that my teacher gave me, I have time to go through at home and did many and do what I can ….. the difference is, I thought, for me, moving from home, go take the bus, come and sit at the classroom, I thought I have spent about two or three hours. So, that two or three hours, I have spent that two or three hours at home. So, it makes me learn more.

In addition to reducing the stress and time of travelling to the lesson, the virtual classroom had facilitated learners joining the lessons on a number of occasions when they would otherwise have been absent, such as a lady who joined whilst at work in a care home or a man who took part whilst in his car.

The following participant's ILP comment after the second online course expresses his desire for and recommendation of future synchronous learning.

First of all, I would like to thank our teacher for being very clear and simple. It was a great opportunity for me to learn English. I am really benefitted from this course. I feel much more confident to speak English.

Thanks again (*organisation name****) for promoting this course. To be honest, this was my best online course. I am looking forward to taking more courses and I would like to recommend it for the future students.***

Figure 15 ILP comment March 2021. L20 (L1 / M / Bangladesh-Italy)

To sum up, the most commonly preferred design was a blend of face-to-face teaching with an asynchronous component. Synchronous teaching (via Zoom) was not widely appreciated as part of standard future delivery. Yet, had that option been available in addition to classroom teaching in the final group interviews, it was a choice suited to a small number, primarily for reasons of flexibility.

5.9 Using a mobile phone to study

This research is founded on the premise that a mobile phone would be a potential learning device common to ESOL learners of all levels and backgrounds. Although participants were not mandated to use a mobile handset, learning was devised to be mobile phone compatible. From observations it was clear that a variety of devices were being used but to obtain a clearer picture, the questionnaire at the end of the year focused on the devices learners had used. The results in Figure 16 show that all but one respondent had used a phone in some way and 55% had used their handset exclusively. Further to the data in the graph below, one learner's interview (L8 E3/F/Ghana-Italy) revealed that she had used a tablet only for all aspects of the course.

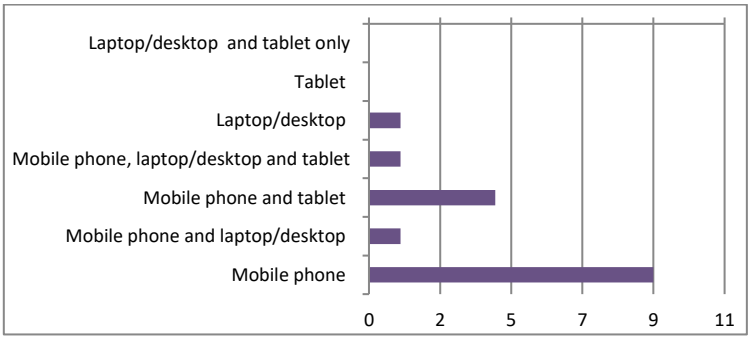


Figure 16 Questionnaire Q3: Which devices did you use to learn English during your courses this year? (Tick one answer only) N-16)

When multiple devices were utilised, it was often for particular tasks. Participants spoke of using a laptop or tablet for Zoom lessons but a mobile handset for the app and checking/completing Padlet homework, for example.

There were differences in usage according to level and ethnic background. Level 1 learners used a greater variety of devices than E3. Breaking the data into ethnic origin, the graph shows that South Asians utilised a handset less than other nationalities and one Bangladeshi man used only a laptop throughout.

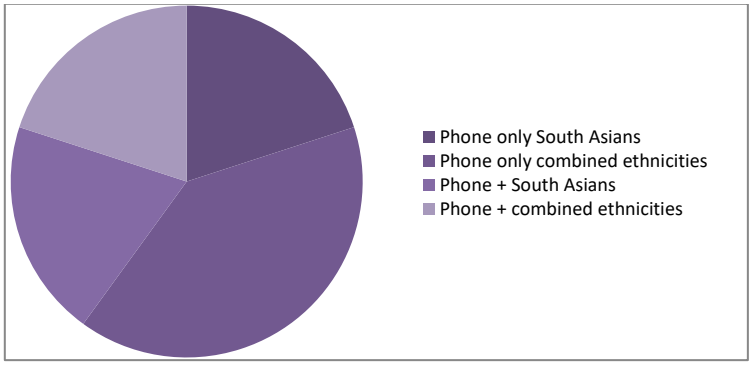


Figure 17 Questionnaire: Use of mobile phone for learning by ethnicity. N=16 (SA n=16 CE n=9)

Only three learners in total used a desk/laptop although two participants stated that they would also have used a laptop, had they known how. In summary, the results here, in addition to the use of taking language photos shown later in Figure 18, show a clear tendency for learners to use a mobile handset for many aspects of asynchronous study also. Participants availed themselves of other hardware where it was available and suited to study.

Nevertheless, the following interview conversation illustrates the challenging aspects of using a phone to study.

L5 (E3/F/Nigeria-Spain) Also the screen is not good.

L3 (E3/F/Bangladesh) Internet.

L7 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Spain) Yeah!

LHW Internet problems?

L3 Slow sometimes.

L5 The screen is not good.

L26 (E3/F/Bangladesh) Sometimes is eyesight down.

L5 Eyesight.

LHW And sound sometimes?

L3 And online we can't, sometime we can't join the Zoom; sometimes network problem, sometime delay.

L7 Not always.

LHW Any problems with doing homework and writing? You know, because this term you've had paper but before, was it a problem?

L7 Letter very small. We didn't see.

L26 That's my problem. Not of all. Sometime is little things, like, is good, like, is capital letter and sometime screen is like small. Video was, like, small, small letter. I can't see. Not zooming. Sometime some of letter is zooming then more bigger.

This places the onus on the teacher to make fonts as large as possible in bespoke videos and handouts. Although occasional participants spoke of a lack of mobile phone data for learning outside the home, the observations diary and interviews seemed to indicate that lack of Wi-Fi or poor connectivity was rarely an issue for synchronous sessions or completing asynchronous work in the domestic setting. Overall, the vast majority of learners used a phone to suit their needs and found it manageable after training and extensive use and this gives rise to finding 4. Section two gives further details of the way in which mobile phones were able to encourage and extend learning.

5.10 Part one summary

As finding 1 expresses, those who chose to engage with online and blended learning courses improved their digital skills through coaching and practice and saw benefits both for learning English and in their daily lives. The range of independent study habits broadened from use of Google Translate, watching movies and using an online dictionary to regular engagement with apps, videos, recordings and links. For most learners this spelt an increase in the amount of language study carried out at home. Although some learners admitted to lacking time to view or complete all the work given, the majority claimed to be content with the demands as they perceived them to be beneficial. There were clear positive changes in learner attitude to online study and an increase in awareness of their own role in learning. A modest amount of dedicated learner training and ongoing teacher and family coaching and growing experience assisted in building learner habits and expertise.

It was evident that the physical classroom was valued above all other places of learning. A smaller number appreciated the home as an equally suitable place for synchronous study in their particular circumstances, as shown in finding 3. All but one learner opted for future classroom-based ESOL courses with a blend of asynchronous study at home via a suitable platform such as Padlet as demonstrated in finding 2. This choice stemmed from participants seeing the benefits of digital forms of homework activity, use of paper-based materials, access to peer collaboration and teacher assistance in the classroom.

Participants of different nationalities and with different prior experience of synchronous and asynchronous ESOL courses demonstrated it was possible for all to participate, using a variety of devices, sometimes concurrently, but the majority of learners used their mobile phone to some degree. Despite occasional issues of connection, compatibility or data availability, all aspects of online and blended courses were accessed successfully by participants via a smart phone, as made clear in finding 4.

Section Two: Promoting and extending learning beyond the classroom

5.11 Introduction

This second section considers the suitability of the asynchronous activities and tools implemented during the study for motivating and promoting language learning outside the classroom. This relates to the second research question:

Q2: What pedagogical considerations are needed when designing blended mobile language learning aimed at increasing guided learning hours and promoting progress beyond the classroom?

There are five findings.

Finding 5: Videos, recordings, the app and phone features facilitate language input, motivate practice and extend study to the home and informal spaces.

Finding 6: Videos, recordings, the app and phone features promote a number of key factors of language acquisition, namely repetition/rehearsal, memorisation and noticing.

Finding 7: Asynchronous mobile blended learning provides opportunities for input and practice which ESOL learners believe lead to improved language learning.

Finding 8: Embedding real-time spoken interaction in asynchronous mobile blended learning is challenging.

Finding 9: The teacher plays a critical role in sustaining asynchronous learning by providing extrinsic motivation and accountability.

The first term of online learning saw the introduction of various asynchronous interventions to promote learning outside the classroom. Interview data analysed in term one had highlighted four in particular which became the subject of focused attention regarding their perceived benefit in the focus groups in term two, namely the 'Learn English Now' app, screencast videos & recordings, self-study videos and partner work. In addition, a desire to develop language noticing in informal settings informed the introduction of the fifth intervention, 'language photos'. Each of these will be addressed in turn. This is followed by results related to learning on-the-go, learner perceptions of progress and the role of the teacher in motivation.

5.12 'Learn English Now' app

All 28 participants had the opportunity to use the app free of charge during their courses (but paid for by my organisation). Two learners did not register. Three learners engaged minimally (less than 1 hour). For comparison, app usage figures are based only on the first term of usage by any learner, as all twenty-six registered participants used the app for one term but not necessarily for more than one, owing to transfer to other courses in subsequent terms. The learning management system captured data regarding the amount of time learners used the app and the type of activity (e.g., grammar or listening) and the specific lesson studied (e.g., 'At the market'). It was not possible to determine how often, which days or where learners used the app.

First, App LMS data revealed distinct differences in the amount of activity according to level. The table below compares usage by E3 (2 groups) and L1 learners. The median is given as a more accurate reflection of general usage as outliers skew the average figures. The weekly online study hyperdoc data showed that 30 app-based lessons were mandated in the first term, (E3=9, E3=11, L1 = 10) 36 in the second (E3 =10, E3= 10, L1 = 16) and 38 in the final term (E3= 5, E3=12, L1=21). Overall, L1 courses were given slightly more lessons yet this would not seem to account for the obviously greater median usage on their part.

E3 Lowest usage	0.03 minutes	Median = 2.48 hours
E3 Highest usage	15.59 hours	
L1 Lowest usage	1.04 hours	Median = 12.07 hours
L1 Highest usage	51.56 hours	

Table 23 Comparison of app usage at E3 and L1 in the first term of use

Similar median disparity can be seen when comparing ethnicity.

South Asian Lowest usage	1.04 hours	Median = 3.41 hours
South Asian Highest usage	51.56 hours	
Combined ethnicities Lowest usage	0.03 minutes	Median = 8.54 hours
Combined ethnicities Highest usage	22.34 hours	

Table 24 Comparison of app usage by ethnicity in the first term of use

Despite the highest usage overall being recorded by a South Asian learner (51.56), in general, that demographic did not dedicate as much time as the combined ethnicities. Further ethnicity data will be considered shortly.

There was a clear gender difference. Two of the four male learners in the study were the highest users of the app overall, with a female Nigerian in third place.

Top 3 male app users	Top 3 female app users
L20 L1 Bangladesh - Italy 51.56 hours	L5 E3 Nigeria -Spain 15.59 hours
L22 L1 Morocco - Italy 22.34 hours	L12 E3 Poland 13.54 hours
L10 E3 Egypt 1.33 hours	L17 L1 Morocco 13.15 hours

Table 25 Top 3 app users by gender

Taking the data from the three tables, the results appear to show that men made more time to use the app than women and that lower-level South Asians dedicated less time than other learners.

In interviews, learners revealed a variety of app usage habits. Some did not use it regularly, while another studied 20 minutes every day, another an hour a week and others engaged on an ad hoc basis. Some used the app at home exclusively, while others also used it outside - at work or waiting to pick up children, for example. The Nigerian learner above missed a number of weeks of the course but continued using the app while she was away in Spain and LMS data showed that two L1 learners continued using the app during the summer holiday.

Clearly, E3 and South Asian learners used the app less by comparison but irrespective of usage rates, learners spoke very positively about the app, using terms such as 'enjoyed', 'really helpful', 'really good' and 'fabulous'. Only two learners professed to having used such an app previously. The rationale of the highest user (L20) was "It's like I'm playing games."

When asked to rate the six interventions during the focus groups, the app was frequently in the top two preferences. Learners appreciated the instant error correction and the ease of use. Lessons offered a variety of skills practice and participants spoke of its usefulness for improving listening, reading and speaking but particularly grammar and vocabulary.

L22 (L1/M/Morocco) The application 'Learn English Now', yeah I like it. Now I every day I do some homework, some courses reading and grammar and the skills writing.....good way to improve your language .... it's easy, not difficult.
LHW But did you use the app to learn outside your home?
L9/22 Yes
L9 (E3/F/Albania) I use this app when I am in car or when I am waiting for my daughter. When I go to pick up her I use.

Another focus group participant explained,

L25 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Italy) I enjoyed this, using this app.
LHW Great. Tell me more about what you enjoyed and why you enjoyed it
L25 I enjoyed what score I got. I did better or what I did, where is my problem. My free time I using this app. I enjoyed this.
LHW Good. If you enjoy things, do you do them more?
L25 Yes. Last lesson you gave me five reading lessons. I did two and when I free, I did another one

Despite her enthusiasm, Learner 25 used the app for 2.16 hours which is slightly below the median for her demographic and level. In interviews other participants mentioned that attempting to improve scores was a motivating factor and there was evidence from the LMS data that some learners repeated lessons if their score was lower than desired. Along with the app, videos were a highly popular resource with learners which will be discussed next.

5.13 YouTube screencast recap videos / Self-study screencast YouTube videos

Delivery of course content, practice and assessment by means of video is commonplace in online distance learning but most participants were unaccustomed to it when commencing their course. Sixty-six bespoke screencast videos were created during the academic year and uploaded to a private YouTube channel. The number of videos created increased as the course progressed with nineteen being made in term one, twenty in term two and twenty-seven in term three.

Videos served different purposes: review, practice and consolidation of content from the virtual or physical lessons; flipped classroom style preparation and information; introducing and practising content not taught in lessons but as self-study only to extend teaching content. Videos were created on a week-by-week basis according to course and learner requirements.

For analysis, videos were categorised into seven broad groups as shown below. The data here do not include videos obtained from other sources such as Oxford Online English or the British Council for which viewing data is unavailable.

Category and number of videos	Average views per video	Average view duration (mins)	Average % viewed	Average length of video (mins)
Speaking skills - 3	14.3	5.37	108	4.29
Reading skills - 12	24.2	5.05	**54.4**	**8.14**
Writing skills - 17	16.8	4.15	60.9	7.03
Grammar - 18	16.3	5.19	68.9	6.39
Exam prep - 9	16.7	5.13	**50.6**	**10.21**
Digital skills training – 3	13.3	1.55	69.2	3.01
Course info and induction - 4	15.7	3.05	55.5	5.46

Table 26 Overview of video view statistics

Some general trends in learner viewing habits are discernible from the data above. First, the longer the video, the shorter the viewing percentage (see Exam preparation and Reading skills highlighted). Looking at all 'percentage viewed' figures, videos between three and six and a half minutes appeared to garner the longest viewings.

Secondly, individuals viewed a video multiple times. The maximum number of L1 and E3 learners studying the same course at any time during the year was eight and ten respectively and the two levels shared a limited number of videos in common, usually for reading and grammar. Table 27 below gives course and YouTube data related to number of views per learner which demonstrate the habit of repeated viewing.

Video information Level / title / number of possible learners to view	Total number of views
L1 School presentation task preparation (8 learners)	19
E3 & L1 Features of websites and newspapers explanation (17 learners)	59
L1 Money Saving Expert text vocab & exercises (8 learners)	24

Table 27 Individual examples of video views per learner

Finally, weekly online task hyperdocs broke down videos into further discrete categories for analysis.

Breakdown of video categories
• Grammar presentation • Grammar presentation with practice exercises • **Reading skills presentation** • Reading skills presentation with practice exercises • Writing skills presentation • Writing skills presentation with practice exercises • Writing task introduction and support • Listening videos with comprehension/language questions • **Speaking - watch, listen and repeat / respond** • **Speaking task introduction & support** • Vocabulary presentation • Videos for homework/exam practice self-correction • Learner training/study + digital skills/course information • Topic/general interest/fun/culture/safeguarding/news • Exam tips and information

Table 28 Breakdown of seven video categories for comparison

Reading skills videos were viewed more often than any other category (despite not being watched for as long as others) while speaking skills videos were watched more intensively and fully. For instance, the three bespoke speaking skills videos garnered the highest average percentage viewing of all seven categories (108% compared with the next highest, 68.9%). In the first video participants could read, listen to and repeat pronunciation of age/ege sounds, in the second, 'interact' in a structured role play with the teacher and the third, receive language input from a model oral presentation, to extract vocabulary for their own presentation.

Dialogue with learners corroborates some of the points above. One E3 learner stated,' ...maybe one videos I listened 10 times,12 times." (L4). The subject of long videos was broached by an L1 learner

who confessed to not having time to view them (L19). Her suggestion was a 10-minute maximum. In fact, only ten of the sixty-six videos were longer than ten minutes but a further thirty crossed the six-and-a-half-minute threshold. Like the app, videos were consistently mentioned as a preferred intervention.

Apart from the delivery of teaching content, learners found videos useful

- as a source of native speaker input
- for teacher explanations
- to learn spellings via subtitles
- to learn grammar and vocabulary (from non-language specific videos)
- for pronunciation
- for listening practice and encouraging careful listening
- for memorisation
- for taking notes
- for improving confidence in listening and speaking
- for the ability to replay to assist understanding
- for encouraging and helping the learners to search for additional videos
- for helping absentees catch up
- for being available to watch in any location.

The following focus group responses summarise these points.

L1 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Italy) It's helpful because other lessons help supporting. Supporting me. It sort out the problem and also we listen to your voice and we improve is accent and problems. Sometimes vocabulary we find out hurry and we find out your vocabulary and follow your voice, everything how do you explain.

L12 (E3/F/Poland) So the video is very good. They're helpful to understand so many things.

The main disadvantage to learning via videos was the inability to ask a teacher questions. Nevertheless, learners showed ingenuity and tenacity in overcoming issues.

L1 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Italy) I practice that somewhere. I done my homework. I was done my homework and stuck in somewhere, I recap Liz videos, making videos, so it’s sort out my problem.

As findings 5 and 6 show, both videos and the 'Learn English Now' app offered a wide range of language content input and skill development and practice opportunities for participants beyond the classroom. What proved more challenging was to provide access to communicative oral language practice and collaboration.

5.14 Collaboration - the partner work intervention

In an attempt to mitigate the lack of peer contact whilst learning online in the first term, activities were introduced to stimulate and facilitate communication between classmates beyond the lessons. As noted in previous chapters, lack of opportunity to use English outside the classroom is an unfortunate daily reality for many learners which was exacerbated during the pandemic. Collaborative initiatives were an opportunity to address the problem in the immediate term but also to assess their longer-term usefulness. Moreover, using smart phones for authentic communication has been seen to be a key tenet of mobile learning pedagogy (see Figure 4 Framework for MALL).

Participants were matched with a peer from the same group for a number of weeks before being allocated a different partner for a further period. Learners were asked to share their contact details with their partner. It is worth mentioning that, in most cases, learners had not met in person previously (during a prior course, for example) and only saw each other during the weekly Zoom sessions. While partner work tasks were part of the prescribed study, it was never possible to force learners to take part, which led one participant to comment on a weakness of partner work, saying that at least in the classroom partners are obligated to speak.

Prescribed activities differed by course. On writing courses the learners were predominantly tasked with writing partner emails and peer proof-reading by email; speaking courses provided opportunities to plan action together, discuss a topic or practise presentations and in reading groups the learners were encouraged to discuss a shared text or elicit unknown information from a partner's text.

Partner work provoked the most contentious and disparate responses of all the interventions. Some pairings produced a positive experience whereas others were negative.

L9 (E3/F/Albania) It helps me to be honest when I speak with my partner S., you remember S? We, first we did homework together. We speak; we change numbers. We speak with phone; we speak with WhatsApp.

L8 (E3/F/Ghana-Italy) Working with the partner, it helped me a lot because, as I said earlier, because I know I'm working with my partner, I don't know my partner's, what do you call it? I don't know my partner's knowledge. I don't know his grade.

LHW Yes or level. I think you mean level. I don't know my partner's level.

L8 I don't know my partners' level. I don't know the person whom I'm sending it to him so I have to be very careful of what I'm writing. So that one has helped me.

L21 (L1/F/Pakistan) I think also for the partner work as well. We do some work together. Like, sometimes you are totally blank so your partner or your colleagues can help you and give you some ideas and you get more and more.

These views focus on the benefits of partner work for socialization, peer learning, support, accountability and self-reflection. The following excerpts demonstrate some inherent difficulties of partner work beyond the classroom, making time in busy schedules and disparity in language level between partners.

L17 (L1/F/Morocco) Really, I wish that partner helped each other. I tried for my best. Each time when I had homework, I send it to them but it was, I think, one time or two times. 22 and 19 they send me a message then nobody send me message. I send only. I send to them message or I tried to change phone with 22, 19 and 23 only but other partner, I asked to change phone or to work together, they didn't. I didn't receive any response.

L7 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Spain) (My partner) was little quiet and she felt nervous and she talked very, how to say, this confident is a little bit low.

LHW Yes, and you said before that sometimes it is a bit boring. You helped her but it was a bit boring for you sometimes.

Table 29 summarises the positive and negative comments made in interviews/focus groups in relation to contacting their peers outside of lesson time.

Positive reflections	Negative reflections
• Writing emails to a partner prompted greater content editing and proof-reading prior to sending • Writing partner role-play emails represented real-life tasks (e.g., send an email to a college asking for information about a course) and was a particularly motivating activity • Organised group homework was motivating and offered a sense of teamwork • Some pairings resulted in provision of useful, general peer support for all aspects of the course • Proof-reading a partner's written work or homework was helpful for self-reflection • Some weaker/shyer learners appreciated the help of stronger partners and a more relaxed setting for speaking practice • Some partners provided helpful error correction • For those who managed to connect with a partner regularly, it was generally a positive, helpful experience • It was mostly straightforward to maintain contact by email	• The benefit of the partner work was contingent upon the quality of the partner • Some Muslim women did not feel comfortable contacting a man, especially by phone • It did not compare with partner or group work in the physical classroom • Varying daily schedules led to difficulties in finding times to connect • A partner could not notice or correct errors like a teacher • Some learners struggled to understand their partner when talking by phone • It was frustrating when partners did not respond or engage • Partners with the same first language sometimes struggled to maintain their conversations in English • Some learners did not wish to share their contact numbers with classmates • A small number of learners clearly stated they did not like partner work for many of the above reasons

Table 29 Positive and negative reflections on the partner work intervention

Participants communicated by phone, WhatsApp, text message and email. None mentioned utilising video calling of any kind. Some participants felt written communication, text message or email, was more useful as it circumvented the need to arrange a meeting time. Talking by phone also brought the allied difficulty of communicating without important visual cues. On occasions, E3 learners of the same language background found it difficult to avoid reverting to their home language.

Nevertheless, some particularly positive experiences were shared: one quite introverted participant found talking to a partner on the phone more liberating and useful than talking in a classroom setting (L16); a weaker E3 speaker found real language support and coaching when she was paired with a sympathetic stronger speaker (L2); there were some particularly successful pairings which led

to peer course and homework support in addition to friendship which continued after the course was completed.

Observations midway through the first term noted that partner work on the writing course (Entry 3) seemed to be more productive and less practically problematic than speaking/listening (Level 1) as reflections in Table 29 demonstrate.

Some groups did instigate their own opportunities to socialise and communicate. A term three E3 blended speaking class (three females and two males) spontaneously set up a WhatsApp group to communicate generally about class matters and share videos or other items of interest but communication appeared to be written not oral. Observations noted how I attempted to take advantage of this for partner work. On one occasion learners were asked to contact each other during the week to chat about weekly activities but only the female learners did so. A further task was to share a news item link with each other, but this was not completed.

To sum up, partnering learners with each other during the academic year resulted in peer support and some positive collaborative learning experiences, particularly in writing, but this was tempered with frustrating experiences and may not have provided the type and measure of spoken input and practice anticipated or required. As frequency, length or quality of interactions could not be captured nor subject to in-depth scrutiny, it is difficult to obtain an accurate reflection of its ability to promote spoken communication.

5.15 Language photos and on-the-go learning

The language photos activity encouraged learners to engage with English around them by noticing and taking a photo, which was then shared with the class via Padlet. This 'on-the-go' intervention was aimed at extending learning between the home and the classroom and promoting autonomous language learning habits such as noticing. On two or three occasions during each course from the second term onwards learners were tasked with finding and uploading photographs of specific language items (e.g., modal verbs - could, should etc) currently being taught on the course or share images of unknown vocabulary they encountered.

Observation field notes show a small number of learners were diligent in remembering to complete these tasks but the majority required reminding on several occasions. The images below give examples taken by participants during their courses.

Example images taken within the home (during lockdowns)

Example images taken outside the home

Figure 18 Examples of language photos uploaded to Padlet by participants

These pictures were used in lessons as a basis for learning new vocabulary, looking at British culture and discussing examples of grammar. Observations recorded learner comments from lessons when this intervention was introduced. It was clear that a good number of learners already used images to assist them, though not necessarily directly for language study. One lady had taken photos of road signs for her driving theory test and others photographed leaflets or posters at the Council offices or doctor's surgery to record important information.

The focus groups and interviews produced responses which showed that, for a number of learners, this deliberate practice of taking language photos had increased general language noticing even if it had not prompted learners to physically take a picture.

L13 (E3/F/Greece) I don't take a picture but every time that I see something, I think 'Oh let's start. Let's read. What are they meaning?'

L17 (L1/F/Morocco) Yeah, I learn a lot from juggling words, from pictures that we find. Now when I go, I read every papers, every notice outside and I learn because before I didn't care if I found something. Sometimes I read, sometimes no. But now, no! I have this to read everything and to search the meaning. *I remember the words*. Sometimes I write it and when I came, I search what is the meaning so it help us a lot.

The phrase 'I remember the words.' highlights an interesting pedagogic notion that vocabulary memorisation is strongly linked to association and the intervention tried to capitalise on this fact. This is particularly exemplified in the response below which shows how a learner's language broadened from using the word 'car' only, to being able to differentiate between car and van.

L23 (L1/F/Sri Lanka) And I learnt lots of new words, when you take the pictures but now I saw the new words. I can see and I type the Google Translate. I learn the 'vans', 'van', you know. Before I tried the car, before the van. So many new words. I can see new words and I compare my language.

Taking language photos was part of the broader remit of promoting interaction with language not only at home but in spaces beyond. The interviews in December 2020 drew limited responses in regard to language learning activity beyond the home as a result of pandemic restrictions on movement. Later in the year when restrictions eased however, learners talked about using the app or listening to recordings while waiting outside school for their children, waiting in the car or at work. The graph in Figure 19 shows learner responses from the end of year questionnaire regarding aspects of the course they undertook on such occasions facilitated by their phones.

Figure 19 Questionnaire Q4: Which course activities did you do using your phone when you were not at home or in class (e.g., at work, in the car/bus, in a waiting room, waiting for your children?) n=16

The questionnaire offered only nine options which were directly linked with the prescribed asynchronous course activity. Using Google Translate or a dictionary were not included as their use was not directly linked to the coursework and were known to be pre-existing habits.

The top two responses (Read course emails, Check Padlet) relate primarily to the practicalities of asynchronous learning - checking the reminder, accessing the Padlet link or feedback emails and viewing the set tasks on Padlet. The joint second (Learn English Now app) corroborates learner interview data regarding their use of the app whilst out and about. The third highest response (Complete Padlet homework) seems to indicate that certain aspects of weekly language study could be undertaken on-the-go, including tasks which may have involved deeper learning and technically challenging device features.

These results show clear evidence of engagement with their course when neither in the classroom nor at home. They also further emphasise the range of independent study activities participants undertook using a mobile handset (see Figure 10 to compare questionnaire data). A picture is emerging of research participants having broadened their language study in place, time and manner through mobile blended learning. The next section considers the extent to which participants perceived themselves to have made progress.

5.16 Progress in language learning

It falls outside the ontological and epistemological scope of this study to assert whether participants succeeded or failed in using English more expertly as a result of their study. Nevertheless, the research questions call for a measure of evaluation in respect of the ability of mobile blended learning to 'promote progress' to assist in the future design of blended learning courses. To that end, part of the interview and the focus group questioning concentrated on perceived improvement and elicited which aspects of the courses participants felt had helped them learn English best.

For a number there was genuine surprise at their improvement in an online setting.

L3 (E3/F/Bangladesh) Like, obviously, is online is different for us. So, if I'm saying very happy with this. Really improve my English. And not less. Like, more improve myself.

The ability to re-watch videos until understanding was achieved was linked to a sense of making progress as was use of the app which gave users a sense of measurable progress, by being able to repeat lessons and better their original scores.

Although videos and the app were regarded as primary interventions, learner voice recordings and recordings for listening practice, pronunciation, feedback and memorisation of verb forms were similarly commented upon in relation to repetition and progress.

L3 (E3/F/Bangladesh) But this time is different because you give me recording, you give me link so if I am need like past tense, future tense, if you need more, *I'm just repeat and just playing 2 times, 3 times. Just I'm practise myself.*

L10 (E3/M/Egypt-Italy) If I have recording because this *it's easy for me.* Every time if I want to listen it, it's very good for improve my language and for *refresh my memory* with English.

L21 (L1/F/Pakistan) You know like we have to do that listen and answer. In the past I didn't even thought about what I was listening, the words that I pick up, but now *I know exactly how deep I can listen* and I can pick up the words, yeah.

L18 (L1/F/Spain) in my opinion as well I learning a lot. I like the way Liz teach us. Like when she send videos, *I can see at home or at my work* or when we did the sound record and she give the feedback. For me helped me a lot because I can listen to me. I say *'Wow. I have to work on this or that'*. I like, you know?

These responses contain references to key aspects of language learning theory and pedagogy (in italics) - active autonomous engagement, repetition & rehearsal, memorisation of chunks of language, maximising opportunity for language input, deeper language processing, learner reflection on own inter-language, impact of error correction and ease of learning leading to motivation.

The asynchronous mode, by its very nature, obliged learners to be more active independently outside the lessons, searching the internet and using support materials provided to consolidate. This modus operandi was also credited with prompting improvement. This E3 learner expresses how she felt stretched and pushed to work hard at home.

L4 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Spain) I had made work more harder the presentation. Presentation and vocabulary, grammar. Everything is make the sentence and I'm more work harder. I have now more improved but you, same to you, made harder work. You help me more, more.

Although during the online courses learners could email when encountering difficulty in home study, many recounted how they were driven to search the internet and replay teaching videos to find the answers themselves rather than wait for a response. There was talk by many of needing to concentrate more and work harder than on some previous courses, as touched upon in section one,

and, in one participant's words, make time to look, listen and write ' properly, understanding is properly.' (Learner 4). The ILP comment below reflects the opinion of many learners.

I feel that my reading/writing/listening and speaking had improved. Whole the course was very interesting even though it was online because I did more homework and I tried to listen more and more to videos lessons, news, songs and more listening things.

Also, I read more than before when searching for a topics given to us by teacher Liz, and in the same time I've learned more grammar. Doing exercise in the app and speaking in Zoom class and speaking with partners all those helped me to speak better than before, and teacher Liz did all she could to correct our mistakes in speaking, listening, writing etc...

The homework that teacher Liz gave us every week helped us a lot, because when you find yourself forced to do your weekly homework in time you do all your best to succeed. Really I feel so happy for my improvement in English, so now I can understand English better than before and I don't feel embarrassed when I make a mistake, and I feel more confident speaking.

Figure 20 ILP comment March 2020. L17 (L1/F/Morocco)

The following learner also connected a more active independent learning style with increased ability to store and remember language and information.

L18 (L1/F/Spain) Because now I have to put more effort. Because before I say, 'Okay if I don't understand, I go to the classroom and the teacher explain to me' but now I say, 'No, no I have to enfoque.'[4] It's good thing because I can see I learning more and *many things I keep in my mind.*

The notion of remembering/forgetting arose a number of times during interviews. Participants admitted forgetting the set homework activities once the lesson had finished, but found the ability to check on Padlet very helpful. One learner described it as 'a diary'. Some participants also made mention of the need for task reminder emails during the week, even on the blended courses. More crucially, others mentioned how lesson content was often forgotten after lessons, regardless of delivery mode. Here the videos appeared able to aid memorisation (see italics in quotation above).

Numbers of learners spoke of how all aspects of the course together had been helpful in promoting learning, not solely interventions in isolation. One learner considered everything was 'connected' and the integration of the varying aspects of the online/blended courses led to increased learning.

Nevertheless, in regard to improving speaking, there was a clear belief that being in the actual, rather than virtual, classroom was better, with its face-to-face error correction, peer interaction and teacher explanations. Some learners mentioned feeling less anxious to talk when in a face-to-face situation. Two learners went as far as to say that their L1 speaking and listening course would have

[4] translation from Spanish = focus

been better had it not taken place during the pandemic as it would have afforded more opportunities to speak. Another learner stated that she learnt 'more fast' when in college than in a virtual classroom, due to feeling more confident and having a teacher's intervention.

Learner responses clearly express their own sense of progress, owing to a number of interrelated factors - the necessity to work independently, being more active in constructing their own learning and the various interventions that provided input, stimulus, repetition and motivation as finding 7 outlines. Finding 8 tells of speaking output remained the more challenging skill to enact beyond the classroom. Motivation will be the focus of the next section.

5.17 Motivation

When asked if enjoyment of the app resulted in increased usage, Learner 25 replied 'Yes' and told of how she had used her free time to complete as many activities as possible. This is an example of intrinsic motivation, a vital factor in language learning and acquisition. To persist and engage in language learning in or beyond the classroom requires motivation and the interview/focus group questioning sought to elicit the factors that had driven participants to study more.

Enjoyment was a strong motivational impetus. Some learners told of how both the enjoyment and pedagogic value of the app had stimulated them to use it daily or to search for the unknown words, which frequently arose. Its simplicity of use and self-correction function had contributed to this.

A number of other course activities were especially motivational for some: sending emails to a partner which had inspired a greater measure of accuracy; short, fun videos (such as Wallace & Gromit) posted on Padlet for informal 'free-time' viewing with no accompanying language activity. A class of E3 learners were asked to watch one for fun (no task was ascribed) and by the following lesson one learner had watched all six.

Further examples of intrinsic motivation were apparent. Participants spoke of their perceived need to improve particular language skills, especially speaking; seeking employment or progressing to a higher level drove others to work harder; language learning was a hobby in one participant's case and thus online and blended courses offered many opportunities to extend her knowledge;

Desire to consolidate particular language skills led to frequent re-watching of videos; two learners sought to improve spelling independently by checking words in a dictionary when undertaking listening dictation tasks or copying new words from video subtitles. These listening dictation tasks proved a real incentive for one learner to replay the recordings numerous times until he felt he had caught every word in the text.

The final case study offers one learner's insight into the asynchronous homework activities.

Case Study 4 Learner 8 (E3/F/Ghana-Italy)

Learner 8 was a mother of adult children who worked full-time as a housekeeper in a local hotel. At the end of her interview she expressed how *'The tablet and the online course help me a lot'*. She was part of an online writing course and when she could not attend the regular classes because of work shifts, she attended a weekly Zoom tutorial in the evening and completed the asynchronous work via Padlet.

When asked to explain what motivated her to study more, her interview comments reveal how features of the asynchronous activities had promoted learning and motivated independent activity. When required to send an email to her partner who would proofread it she said, *'because I know I'm sending it to my partner to check so after I finish writing, I have to go through and check the mistakes. And when I'm writing and I came across something that I don't understand, I quickly check the dictionary and get the meaning before I put it on the paper because if I am putting something on the paper and I don't understand, I won't know what I've written so that's motivate me to learn more.'*

She found the act of sending regular authentic partner emails developed her reading skills, '*The second one too is the email sending. Yeah, because for me, for instance, reading is very hard for me. I'm telling you the truth; reading is very hard for me. So, if I'm sending the email, I have to by first read it before sending it, so email too sending has helped me.'*

Regarding the affordances of watching videos with specific language focused activity, her comments reveal the process of acquisition as she reflected on and corrected her interlanguage, *'Watching videos, really, it helped me a lot because sometimes when I watch the video, the actions they made, also speaks, and watching the video, it open my mind for me to listen to what they are saying very clearly. For example, the pronunciation. Because my reading is not good, my pronunciation is not clear so sometimes when I watch the video, it helps me to pronounce because, I can't remember, I was watching one video you sent, I think it was sentences, the improvement sentences you sent to improve. Yeah, that one helped me a lot because I don't remember, I think it was third or fourth one, I used to say, oh I forgot, I used to say something but your explanation made me ask, 'Oh, so we don't used to say this, but this is how we used to say it.' That one in my mind. Yeah, so I think watching the videos to help me for my pronunciation.'*

Communicating easily and naturally with classmates beyond the lessons by email, watching videos and studying at home in the evening via Zoom were all novel learning experiences, made possible by current technology. This participant found motivation for learning beyond the classroom through the tasks made possible by digital means.

As a further example of growth in personal agency and intrinsic motivation for independent study, when discussing which singular intervention helped them learn best, two learners responded:

L4 (E3/F/Bangladesh) Best option is try. More learn.
L1 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Italy) More try. Yeah, more learning.

However, another participant suggested that her improvement was due to pushing herself as a result of the 'push' by the teacher through the asynchronous work provided. The number of participants who spoke of requiring extrinsic motivation to study over and above the lessons was notable. "I need push" stated one learner. Another participant wrote the following ILP comment.

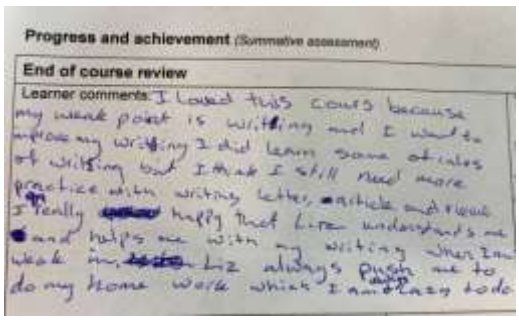


Figure 21 ILP comment July 2020. L21 (L1/F/Pakistan)

A further learner confessed that she 'switched off' from English study during the summer, because there was no teacher pressure or expectation. Others also appreciated the role of extrinsic accountability, mentioning feeling uncomfortable if they had not completed the work expected of them. While intrinsic motivation played a part in sustaining learners navigating a new style of learning, the teacher's extrinsic presence and pressure was a necessity on a continual basis. The learner below also appeared motivated herself by a motivated teacher.

L4 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Spain) I have now more improved but you, same to you, made harder work. You help me more, more.

Finally, being in the physical classroom itself was credited with motivating learners to speak as they were 'obligated' to do so in a way that virtual learning collaboration did not require. Moreover, the

Covid pandemic was attributed with, serendipitously, having forced participants to undertake an online course as no other options existed.

5.18 Section 2 summary

This second section has considered the various ways in which learning was promoted and extended by means of a number of pedagogic interventions. The 'Learn English Now' app, videos, recordings and taking photos played key roles in this, leading to findings 5,6 and 7.

For the vast majority the app was enjoyable, highly motivating and often extended learning time and activity beyond the prescribed lessons and in places outside the home for learners of both genders and all backgrounds. However, it was generally used more frequently by higher level, non-Asian learners and was particularly motivational for the male participants. The app promoted repetition, vocabulary acquisition and increased the rhythm of weekly learning for many learners.

Likewise, videos were watched multiple times by all participants, whilst at home but sometimes outside. This practice of re-viewing aided learners in assimilating lesson content and supporting them in homework tasks. Learners seemed equally happy for some videos to present certain aspects of the course in lieu of lesson time, thereby extending course content. Videos longer than seven minutes were watched less intensely and those between three and six and a half minutes were found to be a preferable length.

The partner work intervention was very helpful in providing live spoken communication and collaboration for those who were able to connect with a suitable partner often enough. However, this was not always possible and rendered the intervention somewhat unreliable as a means of promoting and extending speaking regularly for all learners on a course, resulting in finding 8. In regard to writing, on the other hand, collaboration stimulated learners to focus and promoted accuracy in writing and was far easier to manage and coordinate than oral partner work.

The language photos intervention appeared to have promoted noticing and engagement with language in situ, assisting with extension and memorisation of vocabulary or grammar forms for some participants in particular.

Extrinsic motivation played a major and essential role in the participants' experience, particularly the motivational force of the teacher to set expectations, monitor task completion and provide practical reminders, as expressed in finding 9. Nevertheless, learners' intrinsic motivation seemed to increase with their growing sense of learning, enjoyment and achievement and was expressed by mentioning changes in attitude towards their own role in the learning process.

Many learners felt that having more supported independent learning during the courses increased the amount of work undertaken compared to the experience of previous courses. This led to perceived benefits for their language learning progress.

Section Three: Learning design, management and materials

5.19 Introduction

The final section foregrounds findings regarding the design and management of learning which are related to both research questions one and two. The literature review explained how implementation studies have often provided scant detail of blended learning design. This final section provides analysis of the design and management of the three terms' courses in order to redress this. There are three findings.

Finding 10: Maximum face-to-face teaching hours with a structured asynchronous component is the optimum blend in this research context.

Finding 11: A user-friendly learning platform (e.g., Padlet) is pivotal in assuring ease of access to learning at all times and places.

Finding 12: Learners favour a combination of print and digital resources to afford multi-skill language practice.

This section first considers finding 10 and the question of blended course design. This is followed by finding 11 and issues of learning management. The final part deals with finding 12, learning resources.

5.20 Blended course design

Different blended learning designs exist. In this instance, the synchronous/asynchronous/face-to-face modes were parallel, providing concerted input, consolidation, feedback and assessment on the topic/learning aims for the week. That said, a number of self-study-only activities extended the course input as will be examined in more detail shortly. There was high-integration, meaning (most) activities were obligatory, not optional. Each course was implemented within the parameters set by my organisation in 2020/21 and the notional GLH prescribed by Ascentis awarding body. Each new termly iteration allowed for changes based on learner feedback and observation or practical necessity. Therefore, one main change over the year was the increasing length of the synchronous and face-to-face class times. In contrast, the notional hours of asynchronous learning decreased. The table below shows the design of the final term was a fusion of asynchronous, synchronous and face-to-face sessions with almost as many contact hours as asynchronous study.

Phase 3	**L1W = 7.5 GLH**	**E3W = 7.5 GLH**	**E3 S/L = 10 GLH**
BLENDED Apr - Jul 2021	**Classroom:** 1 x 3 hours **Zoom:** 1 x 30 mins bi-weekly **Self-study:** 4 hours	**Classroom:** 1 x3 hours **Zoom:** 1 x 30 mins bi-weekly **Self-study:** 4 hours	**Classroom:** 1 x 3 hours **Zoom:** 1 x 1 - 2 hours **Self-study :** 5 hours

Table 30 Design of final iteration. Term 3 blended learning.

Regardless of notional asynchronous GLH, it is clear from learner responses in section one that participants studied to a greater or lesser extent depending on the time allowed by personal circumstances, not what notional hours dictated. Under normal non-pandemic circumstances learners could expect up to six hours (2 lessons) in college per week. The following ILP comments, from March 2021 and December 2020, reflect the broad desire for maximised 'class' time.

The reading course has really helped me to improve reading for English. I have learnt lots of new vocabulary and this helped me a lot with day-to-day life. I can understand new words meaning now. I learnt suffixes and prefixes and Purpose of the text also writing formal and informal documents. Not just this but I learnt a variety of other things too.

I think the only suggestion is to have more class so I can get more help but otherwise am very happy that the homework I am getting and the apps are very helpful too.

Figure 22 ILP comment March 2021. L4 (E3 / F / Bangladesh-Spain)

I learnt vocabulary, grammar and purpose of texts. I learnt lots of new words. It sometime difficult learning from Zoom. I need more hours to study because that's helpful for me.

Figure 23 ILP comment December 2020. L23 (L1 / F / Sri Lanka)

Finding 2 reflects the learners' option for a blended approach for future ESOL provision and both the comment above and the evolving design appear to point the way towards a combination of maximum classroom learning with additional asynchronous study, as expressed in finding 10.

5.21 Blended learning management

Finding 11 expresses how a system of communication and file sharing that is easy for ESOL learners to navigate is vital to the successful management of asynchronous learning. In this case it was Padlet which is an online file sharing website and app, used by both individuals but also in many educational settings. Files, videos and links were posted and learners uploaded work to a dedicated course page each week. Below is an example of a course Padlet page.

Figure 24 Padlet page for L1 Speaking/Listening course Jan-Mar 2021

The interview data revealed positive participant attitudes to using Padlet for managing asynchronous learning.

L3 (E3/F/Bangladesh) It's like your diary. You can see if you need more learn. You can see and watch like improving your English.

L19 (L1/F/Bangladesh) Because in Padlet I can see again this work. If I forgot, then I can see again. Everything is there in Padlet. I really liked.

Other perceived advantages were:

- Absentees could check Padlet to catch up on work missed
- Digital work could be accessed at any time, in any place
- Having course learning notes/videos/pdfs readily available on Padlet was a useful aid to memorisation and reinforcement.
- Its use developed learner digital skills.

All learners in the study possessed an email account at the beginning of the course, even if, on occasions, it belonged to another family member. However, email was used to a lesser extent in course management.

Observations in the research diary noted how the first six weeks of term one were difficult in helping learners function and study in the online distance setting. These learner struggles and experiences were explored earlier in this chapter. From a design and teacher management perspective a number of salient aspects emerged from the observations of asynchronous learning:

- Launching and communicating weekly tasks had to be done simply and in a consistent format in order to create a habit. A weekly hyperdoc was created (see Figure 25) with links to videos and websites. The same format was used each week to facilitate accustomisation. A weekly email was sent containing a link to Padlet and a summary of the work.
- A separate Padlet page for each course was preferable to using one for multiple courses
- Finding suitable file formats required time. All documents needed to be converted from WMA to m4a or mp3 and Word and PPT documents to pdf. Occasionally, links embedded in the hyperdoc did not work on some learner devices and links also had to be placed separately on Padlet.
- Devising and managing asynchronous work in that period was very time consuming and challenging as was teaching digital skills at a distance. The research diary notes that participants in the NATECLA East of England forum (NATECLA,2020) believed that blended learning may potentially increase teacher workload as both the face-to-face class and asynchronous aspects require preparation. The use of professional BL materials was mooted as a possible means of mitigating the amount of preparation required
- Feedback in both the distance and blended settings was made possible via voice recordings and video and during Zoom tutorials.

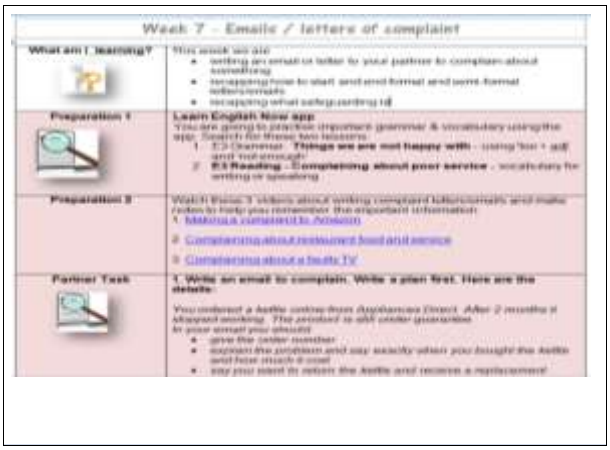


Figure 25 Example of a weekly hyperdoc – E3 writing Sept – Dec 2020.

One final aspect of management is the role of the teacher. The response below alludes to the necessity for monitoring submission of work and communicating with learners throughout the week. This was achieved by the weekly email.

Lastly, I am very happy with Liz as a teacher. ***The homework she sets every week is very good too. She also keeps an eye on which homework we are missing and sends us a reminder that we still have the homework pending.***

Figure 26 ILP comment March 2021. L4 (E3 / F / Bangladesh-Spain)

5.22 Materials and activities for blended learning

The course hyperdocs were analysed to gain insights into the types of materials and activities that had been employed as the courses developed. An initial course scheme of work had been devised which set out the key learning content to be covered during the term and activities were developed week by week in response to it. No published course/text books were used during the year and all materials and activities were either drawn from pre-existing teacher hard copy resources, activities used previously, publicly available internet sources, or were created for the purpose of the courses.

One unexpected outcome of the interview data analysis was the number of instances in which learners expressed preference for paper resources. The two terms of purely online learning led to the exclusive use of digital resources for learning in addition to having to digitise all learning outputs for uploading, which increased the learner workload over and above the asynchronous tasks themselves. Numbers of learners expressed sentiments similar to the one below,

L10 (E3/M/Egypt-Italy) I want if we can class take more sheet for the Padlet online, second time. This is very important because I have sheet, I can follow the videos. Follow maybe something about grammars because for me this recording and videos very important and try and make homework but if I have a sheet both together, I can follow the recording. And I have sheet, I can write my notes. This is very important.

Videos played a dominant role in the asynchronous content of the course and these were used as part of a flipped classroom technique or as past lesson recap and consolidation. This had not been the case in my teaching prior to September 2020. Reflecting on the blend of paper and digital resources, the following learner had realised the multi-skill practice affordances of videos, in particular, as expressed in finding 12.

L16 (L1/F/Bangladesh) I think this two way is helpful because when I watch the video altogether, I have improving listening and writing and when I get paper and only I writing not listening. I think video and paper. Two is useful.

Other participants commented on using grammar videos as general listening practice and subtitles on videos as helpful for improving spelling. For managing their own study and note-taking, learners deemed handouts extremely necessary. Other advantages of using paper commented on by participants were

- the opportunity to break from using a screen
- as an aid to concentration
- greater ease of reading and following written texts (due to font size)
- sheets could be kept for revision
- completion of worksheets digitally occupied more time than using paper.

The balance of paper to digital resources varied according to the course. Hyperdoc analysis demonstrated that for reading and listening use was made of text and paper-based resources (converted to pdf) which had been tried and tested in courses prior to the pandemic. Reading and writing courses in general had less variety of input and resource types than listening and speaking courses.

In reading courses there was a reliance upon authentic print texts, converted to pdf format, in the first term which later gave way to greater inclusion of 'live' digital texts such as websites, live forms and interactive exercises as the terms progressed. The number of videos (14, including two non-bespoke videos) remained the same over reading courses at both E3 and L1 levels.

Category and total number of bespoke screencast videos						
Speaking	**Reading**	**Writing**	**Grammar**	**Exam prep**	**Digital skills training**	**Course info and induction**
3	12	17	18	9	3	4

Table 31 Categories of screencast video

In writing courses, the number of videos used increased with each iteration. To grammar and writing skills videos, more input on spelling was subsequently added. Unlike reading, writing courses used fewer interactive online activities over time. The collaborative email practice and proof-reading that

started online in term one, continued into the blended course despite learners seeing each other in the classroom, although such tasks became slightly less frequent.

In speaking and listening courses, the total number of videos (including speaking, grammar and exam preparation) employed was slightly fewer than for reading and writing. However, speaking courses provided a wider range of video and recorded input and practice: grammar teaching, listening development, listen and repeat speaking practice, vocabulary input and cultural/factual content. The online mode saw more videos used for grammar teaching/recap while the blended course used videos for a more eclectic mix of language input and practice (e.g., language of suggestions, how to prepare a presentation). The means of listening practice changed over the year - term one online made more use of the app and several non-didactic videos for listening practice, while terms two and three saw use of non-didactic videos, greater use of dedicated listening development, audio recordings and worksheets (that had been developed as part of a previous research intervention), but less student use of the app. Exam-related tasks produced positive washback effects - oral presentations led learners to spend time practising beyond the lessons with a partner, and one learner to record her voice on her phone to listen back. It was a model oral presentation video that achieved the highest percentage viewing of all, at 121%. Organised post-lesson partner work was a weekly feature of all courses in the first term, less so in the second, and featured little in the term when participants were in the classroom. Many of these modifications came as a result of learner feedback at the end of each iteration. Yet a number of commonly-used asynchronous activities and resources were not utilised namely, Google docs, blogs, vlogs, wikis and podcasts.

The asynchronous study hyperdocs contained details of course input which was not explicitly taught in synchronous/face-to-face sessions nor part of flipped activities. They provided additional input of a general nature, grammar, vocabulary or discrete skill practice. These complemented the weekly topic and language objectives but extended learning by being delivered and practised exclusively outside the classroom setting. Activities were often self-marking but completion was monitored. Table 32 shows examples of such activities which consisted of videos, web-based interactive tasks and, occasionally, printed worksheets.

Items taught in the asynchronous setting only	
Vocabulary	Newspaper vocabulary - worksheet Phone call vocabulary & phrases - video Adjectives to describe food - video Health/hospital vocabulary - video
Grammar	Contractions - video Conditionals - video The passive - video Prepositions of place; in-on-at – interactive activity
Listening/reading	'News in Levels' website/app articles - website General interest YouTube videos - videos
Culture/topic	Safeguarding - staying safe online / types of abuse - screencast National parks in the UK - video The UK school system - video
Writing Skills	Spelling homophones / irregular plurals - video Capital letters - screencast Punctuation marks - screencast Use of apostrophes - video

Table 32 Examples of items taught in the asynchronous mode only

Participants' comments express the belief that it is possible to learn from such videos and web-based activities in a similar way to the classroom.

L7 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Spain) Because when I saw video, I can understand where, how to use grammar and vocabulary.
LHW And is that the same as in the classroom or is it different to in the classroom? Because we do grammar and vocabulary .....
L7 No, same. Same as in the classroom, not different.

Another participant commented,

LHW Where the video is your teacher, what do you think L25?
L25 (E3/F/Bangladesh-Italy) Yeah, it's good. It's OK. No problem. I enjoyed.

The app was a further example of learning that was connected to the classroom by topic, language or grammar but was discretely undertaken and corrected. This also proved an acceptable form of learning activity to participants despite there being no direct teacher input.

To conclude, structured programmes of blended learning require careful and proactive management, aided by software suited to the task, as seen in finding 11. The design of the course and activities altered gradually over time. There was an increase in teacher-led sessions, responding to the participants' desire for more classroom interaction, alongside a steady rise in the number of digital and non-paper-based sources of input and increasing maximisation of mobile device features and learner mobilities. That said, access to physical worksheets remained a key feature in the preference for blended delivery and the combination of print and digital provided valuable language practice as shown in Finding 12. The majority appreciated the combination of maximum face-to-face classroom exposure with additional asynchronous study, noted in finding 10.

5.23 Member checks

The responses of participants to the simplified findings statement (see Appendix 7) were positive and showed overwhelming agreement (see Appendix 8). One learner (L17) singled out finding 9, the motivational role of the teacher, as the most salient in her view, while another recalled her enjoyment of partner work and the period of blended learning as a whole.

5.24 Chapter summary

The outcome of the data analysis is a snapshot of an academic year that impacted learners not only in terms of their use and knowledge of the English language but also extended their digital skills, meta-cognition and autonomous study behaviours. Participants overcame obstacles from within (attitude) and without (use of new technology) to engage with digital learning and finally chose to adopt it as a new mode of study in their ESOL classes going forward. Only having access to a mobile handset did not preclude learners from participating fully in the courses and their affordances enabled learning in a variety of settings. The pedagogic interventions and activities used during the courses were found to engender a sense of improvement and progress due, in part, to their ability to promote important features of language acquisition such as repetition, memorisation and noticing. Improvement itself was found to be an intrinsic motivator but a further crucial locus was external - the teacher.

Chapter six will reiterate the three research questions and discusses the findings from the present chapter in the light of them, the main conclusions of the study being drawn in chapter seven.

Chapter 6 Discussion

> *The world is changing. Now many things will be online and then we need to be preparated for this new times. For me it is hard now but it's better because I'm used to do and you learn more; you improve more.*

Figure 27 Excerpt from participant interview. Learner 24 (Entry 3 / Female / Brazil)

6.1 Introduction

The following chapter discusses the interpretation and findings from Chapter 5. It is divided into the same three overarching sections followed by a fourth summary evaluation section prompted by the final research question.

Section One: This section focuses on the suitability of asynchronous mobile blended learning for ESOL learners relating to findings 1-4

Section Two: This part foregrounds pedagogy and the ways in which mobile blended learning promotes and extends learning beyond the classroom related to findings 5-9

Section Three: This considers learning design, management and resources related to findings 10-12.

Research Question Three: Summary evaluation. The final section evaluates the intervention in relation to the chief purpose of the research: **How, and can learning assisted by mobile phone technology bridge deficits in formal learning hours and promote progress?**

The findings and related discussion suggest it is indeed possible to extend formal learning hours, with pedagogical soundness, and generate a perceived sense of progress by a number of means:

- motivating tasks that are compatible with a mobile device and suitable for completion in a home or outside setting
- activating, promoting and supporting learner independence
- active teacher management and motivation
- structuring courses to embed distance learning style activities that can be completed in the asynchronous space only
- employing pedagogical activities and mobile tools that promote acquisition - repetition/rehearsal, memorisation of chunks/ noticing.

Section One: ESOL learners and asynchronous mobile blended learning

6.2 Introduction

The four findings below are linked primarily to the first research question: **How, and can mobile phones be used to provide appropriate extended learning opportunities for ESOL students beyond the formal classroom?** Findings 1 and 4 are discussed first, followed by findings 2 and 3. This first section reveals a good measure of resonance with studies from the literature but occasional divergence.

Finding 1: Prolonged engagement with asynchronous (and synchronous) learning develops both digital capabilities and capacity for independent learning amongst participants, irrespective of ethnic background and gender.

Finding 2: Asynchronous blended learning is an appropriate and desirable mode of ESOL provision for the vast majority of participants.

Finding 3: A small number of participants would appreciate a blend design incorporating some synchronous elements.

Finding 4: Learner mobile phones are suitable devices for engagement with asynchronous learning.

6.3 Appropriate means - mobile phones

The first research question focuses on the means to provide *appropriate* extended learning for ESOL learners. The 2010 City Academy study detailed in Chapter 2 showed that a reliance on radio programmes and computers for learning beyond the classroom was an unsuitable mode for many at that time. Years later the technological landscape has changed. The questionnaire and interview data (see Figure 16) showed that, during the year, fifteen out of seventeen learners had used a mobile phone, either exclusively or in tandem with another device. This identifies mobile handsets as the current common denominator amongst ESOL learners, which resonates with other studies (Khan, 2021; Bryson, 2020) and, although usage habits varied, in this case handset usage was suited to both levels, genders and all ethnicities. Despite occasional issues, learners found mobile phones suitable for the requirements of the asynchronous courses such as watching videos, checking and writing emails, completing reading and writing coursework, using the app and contacting partners.

I assumed upon commencing the research that the majority of participants would not use a laptop as access was limited or learners were not skilled in using them. The literature likewise suggested that levels of IT literacy and laptop ownership were low amongst many ESOL learners (City Academy

/ LSIS,2010; DfE2021; Shepherd,2015) particularly of the demographic in point, but that mobile phone ownership and usage was higher (Higton *et al.,*2019; Savill-Smith, Chopra & Haure, 2012). It has become clear, however, that numbers of learners had access to laptops or tablets and used them for specific aspects of study but participants did sometimes have insufficient knowledge to use them well, or other family members took priority in their use. Furthermore, learners who enrolled and completed online courses in 2020/1 already had, or were subsequently able to develop, sufficient skills to manage their digital learning using their available devices - a phone, computer or tablet.

Nevertheless, a measure of assistance was required, as predicted by Graham (2005) in his six challenges for the implementation of blended learning. On-boarding learners remotely at the beginning of the courses did prove to be both an enormous challenge and a huge necessity, as only 35% of participants had prior experience of online learning (see Figure 9). Learner difficulties owing to 'transactional distance' documented in Chapter 2 (Riel, Lawless & Brown, 2016; Heyman, 2021; Neumeier, 2005) were clearly in evidence, particularly initially. To mitigate that, learners appreciated and availed themselves of a combination of short training videos, family and peer assistance and teacher coaching to support them. Teacher coaching was far easier in the blended course in term three than the online setting, since face-to-face lesson time could be used to address issues with the app or Padlet and this is an advantage of blended over distance courses. The bespoke training videos were reasonably successful but learners spoke a great deal about the informal help their family members (and sometimes classmates) gave them. Despite the initial struggles, learners valued the opportunity to learn digital skills and a primary finding was that they were able to do so by whatever means. Bryson's (2020) recommendation was to embed those skills, a strategy that worked in the current study. Finding 1 makes clear that prolonged engagement with blended ESOL courses provided the necessary on-going embedded training to develop digital skills. Several participants lacked skills in using computers and well-known software and this highlights areas where courses of digital skills study could usefully extend their capabilities.

Up-skilling women in digital literacies is particularly important in the light of the gender digital skill divide (OECD,2018). The participant quotation that opened the chapter expresses the perceived importance of acquiring digital skills in the current digital age. This underscores the need for continuing digital exposure and skills training. El-Metoui & Graham-Brown (2021:14), in their reflections for the ESOL sector post-pandemic, speak of the disservice it would be to fail to incorporate some form of digital learning into ESOL classes in the future. In their view, this means facilitating access to and usage of digital learning for all.

Finding 4 states that mobile phones are suitable as a device for blended learning. In 2005 Graham wrote of the socio-economic divide in relation to ICT and its potential effect on the introduction of blended learning. The pandemic did highlight the issue of digital poverty nationally (DfE,2021) yet participants here were found to have access to a variety of devices. A number of learners touched upon mobile data costs but this seemed to affect their 'on-the-go' learning more than study at home. For the cohorts researched here, mainly economic migrants from settled communities or their spouses, access to devices and broadband were not an obvious barrier in the transition to online and blended learning. The twelve learners who withdrew at the beginning of their courses, the observation diary records, did not all do so for lack of internet connectivity or technology but rather unfamiliarity with the learning mode or lack of time. Neither did it seem that local hard to reach ethnicities (namely South Asian) were precluded from courses, despite relative lack of experience with digital learning. This latter point was also born out in UK research by Khan (2021) and Bryson (2020). Similarly in Khan's study, the predominant device was a mobile handset (72.1%) but with some clear use of other devices (23.2%). In both this and Khan's research, lack of broadband connection was not a major barrier to access or learning, but there were issues of poor or no connection in some cases.

While it is still right to acknowledge, as El Metoui & Graham-Brown (2021) argue, that not all who wish to learn ESOL will be able to do so digitally, the emerging picture from this and other recent studies is that appropriate digital learning opportunities can be provided for all ESOL levels, particularly facilitated by a mobile handset. With colleges, libraries and cafés offering free internet access, learner access to Wi-Fi is possible even if not available at home. Furthermore, the return to the physical classroom enables greater on-going coaching for novice users and those with low literacy on courses with blended learning components. To make learning suited to a mobile phone is to offer an appropriate means of additional study to the vast majority of ESOL learners, whilst simultaneously affording regular digital skills practice.

The suitability of a BYOD approach (FELTAG,2014; NLWI,2016) is further confirmed by the positive experiences of participants, and the access to learning personal devices allowed during the pandemic. However, a small number of issues considered in the literature were evident. Small handset screens, lack of compatibility and functionality did present some challenges regarding font sizes (Karnad, 2014; Colley & Stead, 2003) and participants clearly chose the size of device to suit the task, where possible. As with Wang & Smith's participants (2013) concerns around privacy and sharing personal phone numbers for partner work may demonstrate there are limits to the collaboration learners are willing to engage in with their own devices.

6.4 Appropriate mode – asynchronous mobile blended learning

In respect of the future of ESOL teaching and learning, El-Metoui and Graham-Brown (2021:14) appear cautiously optimistic towards blended learning as a new development, "Considering these positives (of digital learning during the pandemic), there is probably a place for remote ESOL teaching post pandemic, perhaps in a blended approach." Details of this approach are not outlined. However, findings 2 and 3 contribute to the conversation around the nature of blended learning for ESOL. This current section reflects on the blend in terms of delivery mode while section three addresses questions of design blend ratio (finding 10).

Participants gained a unique comparative perspective afforded by having studied ESOL in two or three different modes. A significant finding was that that the vast majority of learners questioned in July 2021 opted for asynchronous blended learning as a future mode for ESOL courses. This ultimate preference was corroborated by positive learner attitudes to online homework, a desire to return to face-to-face teaching, a preference for a combination of digital and print resources and some negative responses towards learning via Zoom and studying permanently in the home environment. The choice alludes to a degree of suitability in the manner in which the final term's blended courses were delivered. There is congruence with other migrant blended learning studies which also resulted in a learner preference for a blend rather than fully online learning or courses with no digital component (Lawrence *et al.,*2014 in Shebansky, 2018; Lewandowski, 2021).

However, this study also found there was a clear desire by a small number for a blend employing a different mode. Lewandowski's (2021) post-lockdown evaluative questionnaire with 21 ESOL learners showed a similar division of opinion amongst learners, but a different outcome. That study concluded that a course comprising both synchronous and in-person sessions best suited their learning context. Two thirds of Lewandowski's respondents (n=17) appeared to value online face-to-face and physical lessons equally while a third preferred classroom-based lessons only, for many of the reasons given by participants here. Synchronous learning was preferred because of the flexibility and ease of online lessons which resonated with the small number of learners in this study who stated that it fitted well around work shifts or childcare. A growing familiarity and ease with synchronous classrooms and a desire for access may have resulted in a leaning towards such means of delivery. This supports the assertion by the British Council (2018 in Kukulska-Hulme, 2019) that learner demand may drive changes to more flexible forms of learning.

One form of blended delivery in ESOL, hybrid learning, has become more common since 2020. Several National Association of ESOL teachers (NATECLA) CPD webinars and conference workshops have been dedicated to this practice of combining the live and virtual classrooms. The term 'hybrid'

has existed for some time in the literature, and was briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, where it was used to denote a form of blended learning with a higher online weighting, according to Smith & Kurten's 2007 taxonomy (in Whittaker, 2013a). At that time, it seemed to be a less ubiquitous synonym for blended learning. For example, the index in Beetham & Sharpe's (2020) 'Rethinking pedagogy for a digital age' makes multiple references to online, distance and blended learning but no mention of hybrid. Likewise, in McCarthy's (2016a & b) 'Blended Learning for Language Teaching' it is mentioned only in the introduction and closing chapter as an equivalent term to blended learning. Currently, however, it is being used, particularly in the UK, including the ESOL sector, to signify a virtual and face-to-face lesson running concurrently (UCL,2021; University of Bristol, 2020; Education and Training Foundation,nd; Estyn, 2021). Nevertheless, it continues to be used in other contexts (outside the UK) as a term denoting a blend of face-to-face and asynchronous learning (Zepeda Orantes, 2022). In the former definition the benefit is derived from learners joining the lesson virtually if they are unable to attend physically. High attendance rates during the pandemic, not only in my own lessons but also nationally (El-Metoui & Graham-Brown, 2021), revealed this hitherto latent opportunity for learners to attend a physical classroom session virtually. Hybrid learning now adds an additional blend option rare before the pandemic.

The table below summarises the three forms of a blended mode as discussed above but with a fourth possibility, a combination of the existing elements.

Type	Components
Blend Type 1 (current study)	face-to-face lesson(s) + asynchronous activities
Blend Type 2 (cf: Lewandowski)	face-to-face lesson(s) + synchronous lesson(s)
Blend Type 3 Hybrid	face-to-face lesson(s) with simultaneous synchronous session
Blend Type 4	hybrid + asynchronous activities

Table 33 Possible designs for blended learning in ESOL

With regard to the extension of learning, within hybrid delivery extension exists in the sense of access and inclusion. Yet it is not extended in terms of promoting additional learning over and above face-to-face lessons. In blend types 2 & 3 the focus is on flexibility and access for learners by removing impediments to attendance. Both could have asynchronous activities bolted on. In these two blends the use of technology replaces the physical classroom with a virtual one. Types 1 and 4 address a different need - increased time for teaching and learning. Yet interestingly, a key benefit of synchronous provision for Lewandowski's (2021) context was the opportunity to increase contact

time. Extra virtual lessons could be added to existing delivery without the need to hire a venue. This is a potential way to extend learning which may be popular with and appropriate for some organisations and ESOL learners, noted in the current study.

Unlike Lewandowski's respondents, the majority of learners in this study expressed the view that the learning from home was not always conducive to study, especially for extended periods (2 - 5 hours synchronous + asynchronous study) such as on the distance courses. Designating the home as a place for increased study raises issues of time, attitude and capacity, as noted above. Adult learners have work and home commitments. However, a factor affecting the data collection period was learners homeschooling their children, which is not the case currently.

Any blend needs to take into account the reality of ESOL learners' lives and the percentage of time that can feasibly be allocated to the asynchronous modes in blended ESOL courses. Participants expressed their own frustration at not always being able to give their fullest concentration or effort to their studies due to the legitimate time pressures involved. This rationale is part of their rejection of online learning as a suitable mode. In addition, while participants favoured structured asynchronous learning, GLH cannot to be infinitely extended into learners' time - there are limits and teachers/course designers need to take this into account. For example, one learner liked videos but asked for them to be shorter, which echoes Wang & Smith's (2013) participants' desire for short, non-demanding activities. As Graham (2005) highlighted, there is a balance between innovation and production in introducing blended learning. Making ESOL learners study online to suit staffing, room allocation or budgets justified on the grounds of widespread social acceptance and ease of the mode since the pandemic, may go against the wishes of many learners, in my organisation at least. Distinctions between Lewandowksi's cohorts and participants here draw attention to the previously cited notion that ESOL classrooms are not homogeneous and appropriate strategies are contextual (Cooke, 2006; Barton & Pitt, 2003).

Autonomy and self-regulation are prerequisites of asynchronous learning. On the one hand, the results paint the recognisable picture of disparity in independent study habits, as described by Paget & Stevenson (2014) and others (Riel, Lawless and Brown, 2016). On the other hand, the first finding highlights that the capacity for independent learning grew from extended engagement with asynchronous study. This supports Little's (2003) assertion that learners of any cultural or educational background can become more autonomous and that using mobile tools and engaging with courses of blended learning can develop learner autonomy (Demmens Epp, 2017; McCarten & Sandiford, 2016). Indeed, for Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015:9) a potential outcome of mobile learning is 'learning to learn, learner autonomy' and that would seem to accord with the

results. Through undertaking asynchronous work, learners started to take their own decisions, unprompted by a teacher, to replay videos, check new vocabulary, search for learning- related information via Google, use video subtitles as a language resource and complete lessons on the app or watch additional videos unprompted. The literature spoke of the importance of training and support when implementing blended learning (Graham, 2005) and the need for awareness-raising and having resources to aid autonomy (Cotterall, 2000 in Butterworth, 2018) and this was indeed the case. This study has shown that one way to extend learning is to make individuals more proactive in their own informal and situated learning, becoming more conscious language learners, able to take advantage of every opportunity. Some learners clearly testified to this process taking place (e.g., language photos, listening recordings) and learner training could stimulate that further.

This study describes, of course, a measure of autonomy within the parameters of a formal learning environment. It could be said that this independent learner activity was unprompted but it was certainly 'guided 'and we were reminded that this is the etymology of the word 'pedagogy' (Beetham & Sharpe, 2020). The existence of a structure (Padlet and a weekly task hyperdoc), readily available resources and links, digital skills videos, learner training and tips for language progress could all have played a role in driving the learners to innovate in their own study habits. For Seta, Kukulska-Hulme & Arrigo (2014) these skills are crucial if learners are to succeed in mobile lifelong learning. Hattie's (2009 in Winterbottom, 2017) research into active learning in school classrooms showed the impact of the right measure and style of guidance from the teacher on learner progress. Similarly, the learners here appreciated being shown 'the way how to study' (L20) and what to study rather than being left, literally, to their own devices.

In moving learning beyond the classroom, a positive attitude is a key factor in the success of mobile blended learning which cannot always be guaranteed (Dudeney & Hockley, 2016). Despite the time and effort involved in learning asynchronously, all learners displayed evident changes in attitude to greater independent learning outside the classroom which actually seemed to be fostered through familiarisation and positive experience. Unwillingness to have that attitude challenged was seen in some learners' initial resistance to joining courses. However, those who did participate in this research certainly demonstrated a changed perspective. Furthermore, the literature emphasised that not all learners have the perception of a phone as a learning tool (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2013) yet, like Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue's (2015) participants considered in Chapter 1, learners in this study developed the new habit of using their phone to learn English. That said, some habits were not entirely new; it was clear that, similar to Demens Epp's (2017) participants, learners often used their handset as a dictionary or translation tool. Yet as research by Abdous, Camarena & Facer

(2009 in Stockwell & Hubbard, 2013) points out, learners may not know how to use all the functions of a phone (e.g., downloading a podcast) to their language learning advantage and that was certainly the experience of participants here. Many had never downloaded a language learning app or recorded their voice, for example. This emphasises the benefit of having both a course and a teacher to promote learner training and guide greater independent activity.

Although attitudes to asynchronous study and using a handset changed, fundamental attitudes to learning in a classroom did not. Reinders and Benson (2017) view the classroom as one of many potential centres of learning yet, despite experiencing this, the vast majority of learners here continue to regard the classroom as central to their learning needs. Graham's (2005) assertion, that learners desire convenient modes of study yet do not wish to forego classroom interaction, is given credence. McCarthy (2016b) believes the reason lies in the very nature of instructed language learning where speaking a language is the both the subject of study and the medium of instruction. This transforms all classroom interactions into learning opportunities and these are crucial for communicative competence (Walsh, 2016). The reasons voiced by participants in Chapter 5 - receiving language correction, gaining new knowledge through questioning, social interaction and decreasing isolation, hearing models of good language - correspond to Walsh's own justifications. Given the dearth of opportunity to acquire the language naturalistically for many learners, this participant's view rings true, 'I like studying in class because you give the base to learn.' L22 (L1/M/Morocco-Italy). This aspect may distinguish ESOL classrooms from those of other subjects in which classroom interaction may be less intrinsic to learning. Numbers of participants declared that learning synchronously via Zoom was not comparable with the face-to-face classroom and this begs the question whether fully online ESOL courses will or should ever become the norm given such attitudes and preferences, in my organisation at least.

Nevertheless, in learning asynchronously an element of difficulty and frustration was clearly involved. The 'transactional distance' inherent in blended learning (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, in Neumeier, 2005) did result in struggles with management of learning, particularly initially in the fully online phase or for new starters thereafter. Yet the use of Padlet, regular teacher motivation and prompting and the digital training already discussed, assisted in the ability to form and maintain habits of learning when a teacher was not present. One final consideration in the discussion of learners' preference for the physical classroom is the ability for asynchronous activities to be explained and issues addressed by the teacher face-to-face. This minimises problems with transactional distance and can lead to greater success (Dudeney & Hockley, 2016) which was certainly the case during the blended term three courses. Finding a design that minimises

transactional distance is considered important (Pennell & Seidel, 2003 in Neumeier, 2005) and the blend utilised here, face-to-face and asynchronous, seemed to be appropriate.

6.5 Mobile blended learning - appropriate for all?

Findings 1 and 2 highlight blended learning that enables any ESOL learner to engage. The analysis focused some attention on difference - level, gender and ethnicity - in order to determine how appropriate the courses had been for the variety of ESOL learners who participated. The research cohort was reflective of organisational norms for ESOL in terms of gender (over 80% female) and ethnicity (50% South Asian compared to 64% departmentally). The literature review and Chapter 1 discussed the implications of these aspects and concluded that migrant ESOL learners, particularly those from South Asian backgrounds, may tend to have lower initial levels of English, and less prior education and experience with independent learning. It was evident from both the quantitative and qualitative data that while habits and preferences varied by gender, level and ethnicity, no obvious preclusions to accessing and succeeding in learning existed. Mellar *et al.'s* ICT study (2007) found that older female ESOL learners struggled to make progress but the ten female learners in this study over the age of forty certainly showed evidence of developing the necessary skills to take part.

The interviews tell of how numbers of South Asian ladies particularly overcame their initial fears and grew in digital competency. This has similarities with Savill-Smith, Chopra & Haure's study (2012). In contrast, the 'English My Way' report (Good Things Foundation) and Bryson's (2020) experience focused on learners at the opposite end of the spectrum to this study - E0 - and showed that degrees of asynchronous learning using mobile phones are nonetheless possible. There appear, therefore, to be no insurmountable material barriers, from broadband connection or device, to engagement for any gender, ethnicity or level. Work, lack of time, childcare or lack of digital skills were potential barriers to all and hindered to varying degrees but did not ultimately prevent anyone from engaging.

Data showed that South Asians were more likely to use a phone with other devices than the combined ethnicities. The reasons for this are not clear from the data. Female South Asian participants talked of using a tablet or laptop for the Zoom sessions and this may have been their only role. There may be a connection to size and age of handsets or familiarity with all the affordances of the phone. Six out of the ten non-South Asian respondents who only used a phone were employed and might have been more accustomed to upgrading and using their phones more readily for a wider variety of tasks.

Analysis of app usage highlighted differences not commonalities. The vast majority of participants used the app but Level 1 and male learners used it more. Entry 3, female and South Asian learners used it least. Inferring from responses in the interview data the reasons for this may be the greater

need to focus on household priorities, the amount of time other aspects of asynchronous work took, leaving little time for the app, or greater unfamiliarity with application software. It would not appear to be due to lack of interest or perceived benefit as the majority of participants enthused about the app. Given there were over twice the number of E3 learners, it is surprising that Level 1 participants used the app more and this could be to do with a greater drive to improve their English. Furthermore, the gender digital divide (OECD, 2018) might account for some aspects of this result. It may be that what the OECD highlight as socio-cultural norms, posited as one reason for the divide, see it as less acceptable for South Asian women to spend time on an app 'playing games' as one participant referred to it, than being busy with home and family or using the phone to communicate with family members. A language app was a new experience for many learners and the required literacy and digital literacy may not have been in place for E3 South Asian learners. In addition, achievement of qualifications at E3 level is often a natural juncture at which many learners in my organisation cease learning; numbers progressing to, or joining courses at higher levels are generally lower. To study at Level 1, learners often have a clear employment or study goal in mind which requires advanced English competence. This may account for why L1 learners used the app more. Nevertheless, the difference in habits does not detract from the fact that the app was suitable for all types of learners mentioned.

In summary, the first research question asked if, given their ubiquity and affordances, mobile phones could provide appropriate extended learning opportunities for ESOL learners and if so, how?. The discussion of the results and the literature point to their ability to do so by means of a variety of activities as part of structured asynchronous mobile blended learning. This asynchronous activity was deemed highly beneficial and is considered the preferred mode for ESOL course delivery but with option to include synchronous lessons as required.

Section Two: Pedagogy for promoting and extending learning beyond the classroom

6.6 Introduction

The following findings link with the second research question: **What pedagogical considerations are needed when designing blended mobile language learning aimed at increasing guided learning hours and promoting progress beyond the classroom?**

Finding 5: Videos, recordings, the app and phone features facilitate language input and motivate practice and extend study to the home and informal spaces.

Finding 6: Videos, recordings, the app and phone features promote a number of key factors of language acquisition, namely repetition/rehearsal, memorisation and noticing.

Finding 7: Asynchronous blended learning provides opportunities for input and practice which ESOL learners believe lead to improved language learning.

Finding 8: Embedding real-time spoken interaction in asynchronous mobile blended learning is challenging

Finding 9: The teacher plays a critical role in sustaining asynchronous learning by providing extrinsic motivation and accountability.

Difficulty learning English in the UK may be a peculiarly British problem, according to two learners who had migrated to Italy prior to coming to Britain. The interview excerpt recapped below reveals a dearth of opportunity to converse and practise language outside the home, which further emphasises the need to extend opportunities to use English.

(L1/E3/F/Bangladesh) Britain different to Italian people.... Nobody talk; Supermarket, shop is not. So, it's not enough practice to for me. It's my opinion.

Chapter 2 discussed increasing the 'quantity' but also 'quality' of time to learn. The extent to which the research interventions and the course design were able to extend learning opportunities and hours, 'the quantity', will be addressed in the final evaluation. This section considers the *pedagogical considerations* - 'the quality' - in designing mobile blended learning and foregrounds findings related to the pedagogical affordances of mobile blended learning, addressing Thornbury's (2016) belief that embedding SLA principles should act as a gauge for suitability in the adoption of technology.

In spite of its detractors, technology clearly played a pivotal role for ESOL learners in my organisation and beyond during the 2020-21 pandemic lockdowns as teaching and learning might have been rendered virtually impossible without digital hardware and software such as Zoom and Padlet. In this study, participants' mobile handsets came to the fore for language learning and communication in ways which support many of Kukulska-Hulme's (2016) assertions regarding mobile assistance for language learning, namely means of rehearsal, cognitive support, noticing support, scaffolding and fading, organisation, memorisation aid, revision aid, social contact and support and resource sharing.

Learners used their phones for language learning in ways that were hitherto largely unfamiliar but which were found to be immensely useful: watching videos and bespoke screencasts, listening to recordings, recording their own voice, interactive web-based activities, taking language photos and using apps. Novel experiences present potentially new means of language acquisition (McCarthy, 2016b) and the following discussion of finding 6 draws attention to a number of the pedagogical principles evidenced in using technology in the asynchronous interventions, namely repetition/rehearsal, memorisation and noticing. This is followed by discussion of findings 8 and 9. This section concludes with a consideration of the extension of learning to informal spaces from finding 5 and then finding 7, mobile blended learning and the link with improvement.

6.7 Language acquisition in mobile blended learning - repetition/rehearsal

The Pedagogical Framework for MALL, (Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015) places rehearsal as a key tenet, identifying the creation of opportunities for practice as a fundamental part of mobile learning design. This was the primary pedagogical affordance of asynchronous study in the learners' opinion. When asked about perceived improvement, learners related this with frequent review of language made possible by the technology. Recap is standard practice, but the opportunity to repeat lesson material by video, practise language orally at home and listen to texts as often as required, was highly desirable and beneficial for many participants. Although this affordance was a feature of language labs, tape recorders, CD players and video recorders previously, the latest technology has allowed for wider access (i.e., at home) and portability, not forgetting the visual stimulus and multi-modality of videos.

The review of SLA principles in Chapter 2 noted that the ability automatically to recall chunks of language was vital for fluency and that automaticity stems from massive repetition (Thornbury, 2016). The popularity of the three speaking videos, which drew the highest average percentage viewing figures, points to a desire to rehearse speaking. Kern (2013) identified the beneficial nature of practising language sequences on the Turkish taxi drivers' confidence and progress. Demmens Epp

(2017) similarly identified that the Canadian migrants particularly desired opportunities for oral rehearsal and communication but instead had mainly used their existing MALL tools (e.g., Google translate, dictionary) to fill gaps in receptive skills, such as vocabulary (further discussion of this to follow). She points out the communicative shortcomings in many MALL tools regularly used by learners and this endorses the view that learners need guidance in appropriating MALL tools for optimum language learning (Dudeney & Hockley, 2016; Ushoida, 2013). This appetite for speaking practice - planning and rehearsal - is seen amongst the learners in both studies.

Automaticity refers to listening as well as speaking. Participants here appreciated the ability to replay recordings or videos multiple times in activities which served to develop deeper listening and comprehension. Activity sheets (see Appendix 2) included dictation, phrase correction and word counting to provide training in phonological distinction and deciphering connected speech. One learner summed up her experience,

L21 (L1/F/Pakistan) *You know like we have to do that listen and answer. In the past I didn't even thought about what I was listening, the words that I pick up, but now I know exactly* ***how deep*** *I can listen and I can pick up the words.*

Such intensive training is not feasible in lesson time, and may seldom be afforded naturally beyond the classroom where access to competent speakers is limited. Yet such repeated exposure is vital in successful listening development (Field,2009) and is realisable in a blended course design. The words 'how deep' reveal that this is an activity that promotes deeper not superficial learning. Furthermore, it encourages noticing of language and form which can lead to acquisition. The blended courses offered many opportunities for casual authentic listening and interaction and learners have listening exposure through television, radio and personal interactions. However, this 'guided' practice, facilitated by available technology, caused the learner to attend to language in a very methodical manner which would otherwise be difficult if listening texts could not be repeated. Another learner talked of listening repeatedly because he was driven to catch all the words in the text. This would appear to bear out Stockwell's (2013) assertion that it is not the technology itself that motivated the participants but the activities and tasks it affords. Finally, the participant statement above reveals this as an activity which promotes not only listening 'rehearsal' and fluency but also 'reflection' (see Pedagogical Framework Figure 4), with the learner able to notice gaps in her language and receive feedback in lessons to improve her comprehension further.

A further advantage of repetition is consolidation of course content. The move to online distance learning with initially reduced lesson times (1 - 1.5 hours in the first term) resulted in a great deal of content being delivered by video - common practice in online and flipped learning (Bergman & Sams,

2014) - but less conventional in ESOL. Use of bespoke screencasts, giving access to the lesson content, enabled repetition of key knowledge and language at home. For example, ESOL reading courses are particularly content heavy and reading exams test a range of literacy concepts which many ESOL learners find unfamiliar even in their first language. This might explain why reading skills videos attracted the highest average views per video (24.2, see Table 26). One in particular, 'Features of websites and newspapers', was viewed a total of 59 times between just 17 learners, demonstrating the extent to which learners availed themselves of the chance to re-watch. As discussed in Chapter 2, MALL literature views transmission of content as contrary to the true spirit of mobile learning and this is valid. Yet several participants spoke of forgetting everything they had learnt once no longer in the lesson; therefore, such videos clearly played an important role in helping ESOL learners review and consolidate certain types of lesson input. Moreover, not all learners fully understand the concepts or language presented in one session, thus repetition at home proved invaluable for consolidation as this learner explains,

L18 (L1/F/Spain) *What I like is when in the class the teacher she explains things, and sometimes I don't understand very well, and she says don't worry I'll send a video. And I like that because I can watching many times. On the end, I say 'Okay now I have the point. Now I understand.*

Furthermore, the end of year questionnaire (see Fig 10) showed that a number of learners used other videos, of their own accord, to supplement their learning (e.g., YouTube) and the interviews highlighted that learning via video as part of a structured course was both acceptable and useful. Although the major disadvantage of videos in the learners' minds was the inability to ask a teacher questions, the clear advantage was the ability to replay until understanding had been achieved. Participants spoke of repetition bringing clarity and a firmer grasp of lesson content, the chance of regular focused exposure to areas requiring improvement such as tenses, and the ability to regularly *'refresh'* (L10/E3/M/Egypt/Italy) the memory with English, arguably vital given the amount of time participants use their L1. Moreover, what Learner 10 may be expressing in non-expert terms is an appreciation of the SLA principle of rehearsing and memorizing chunks of language ready for use in daily conversation. Crucially, the ability to repeat videos and recordings at home was linked to improvement in the minds of many learners as the seventh finding and this learner response expresses.

L3 (E3/F/Bangladesh) *And video they have English like proper then I repeat again. So, I think is online the videos and link you send me more improving me. I try to, like, watch so many times.*

This improvement will be considered in greater detail in section 6.12.

The screencast videos were created in response to emergent needs as the courses progressed and this lends support to the view that 'parallel' activities (Neumeier, 2005), with a strong link to classroom activity (Shepherd, 2015), enable review and extended time for cognitive processing of new language or content. Strake's (2007) participants pointed to lack of connection between beyond class and classroom learning as a reason for withdrawal from the course, but a strong intentional link can be highly beneficial.

Furthermore, repetition extended to feedback and correction. Receiving corrective feedback is a foundational principle of language acquisition (Thornbury, 2016) and one learner mentioned how listening to her own voice recording and the allied recorded teacher feedback *'helped a lot'* (L18 (L1/F/Spain) in recognising her current interlanguage and areas for improvement. In the classroom spontaneous utterances and attendant feedback can be lost after the event but recorded speech and feedback facilitate repeated review and reflection for the purpose of improvement, similar to Russell's (2013) screencasts for providing writing feedback.

Similarly, repetition was a feature of the 'Learn English Now' app. A number of participants commented on repeating lessons to consolidate weaker language areas and improve their scores by means of the app error correction/feedback function. This concurs with studies such as Krake's (2013:217) adult learners using Macmillan English Campus practice activities. 78% of Krake's learners (n=141) enjoyed automatic marking which prompted them to re-do exercises. 73% particularly enjoyed listening and pronunciation and 32% agreed with participant L20 in enjoying gamified activities. Results in the current study also concurred with findings from the literature for app usage such as high levels of learner motivation and increased vocabulary acquisition, albeit perceived in this instance (Liu, 2013 in Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019; Fathi, Alipour & Saeedian, 2018). Participants in a 2013 study in Bulgaria (Kétyi in Bárcena *et al.*, 2015) found using the app 'busuu' for language learning novel but its simplicity promoted uptake and usage. When tested, they outperformed the control group.

Yet scepticism was seen to exist in some literature as to the pedagogical benefit of some asynchronous app or web-based language learning activities (Kerr, 2020; Selwyn, 2011 in Thornbury, 2016; Thornbury, 2016; Godwin-Jones, 2020) and not all of Anderson's respondents (2018 in Godwin-Jones, 2020) found the activities helpful. However, none of the participants in this study levelled this kind of criticism against 'Learn English Now'. A small number did choose not to engage with the app but, overall, it garnered overwhelmingly positive feedback. Apps can vary in breadth and authenticity of language content, opportunities for 4-skills practice, language scaffolding and

quality of feedback and error correction. Learners may be unaware of this, perhaps basing their positive evaluations primarily on functionality, enjoyment, easy-completion or visual sophistication. Wang & Smith's (2013) participants preferred short and not overly demanding asynchronous activities, and learning via the app may have provided similar tasks that led to learner preference in this case also. Likewise, learners may not appreciate that, in some cases, some traditional methods from their childhoods (e.g., rote learning) lack pedagogical value, particularly in language learning where application in context is the goal, not merely memorisation.

6.8 Language acquisition in mobile blended learning - noticing

The link between repetition and content consolidation, memorisation of chunks of language and increased attention to spoken language (listening) have already been discussed. In addition, mobile devices are considered useful tools with regard to noticing and attending to written language forms (Demmens Epp, 2017; Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015; Kukulska-Hulme & Bull,2009.) Noticing and assimilating authentic language beyond the classroom was the primary purpose of the language photos intervention and the data showed some evidence of this happening in a number of learners. While several participants had taken photos to help them remember important words or useful information (e.g., at the doctor's) prior to the research, most had not. A small number of learners expressed the benefit, and stated that their propensity to notice and actively search for new language around them had increased even if they did not take a physical photograph to record the language. Vocabulary is acquired when strong associations are made (Thornbury, 2016) and an example of this is the learner who had noticed the word 'van' for the first time, having previously said 'car'. The new word was now in her vocabulary. Furthermore, this participant had identified a gap in her knowledge as a result of the activity, and this is also a potential pedagogical outcome of mobile learning according to Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015).

Taking photos and noticing language in a purposeful way was a new learning habit for many and required monitoring and regular reminding, as finding 9 highlights. Seta, Kukulska-Hulme & Arrigo (2014:3) discuss the development of the person of the lifelong learner who continues to learn and change 'continuously, independently of space and time context and institutions'. Experience with asynchronous study and activities that promote vocabulary acquisition beyond the formal classroom may be able to form or develop life-long learner identity and practice as was seen in all the case studies but particularly case study three. In that way language learning is enhanced and learning hours potentially increased far beyond a 12-week course or one year in a learner's life.

6.9 Language acquisition in mobile blended learning - partner work learner collaboration and language output

The partner work intervention was an attempt to foster regular collaboration and language output beyond the classroom, both of which are crucial in language acquisition and instructed language learning (Ortega, 2008; Thornbury, 2016; Ellis, 2005). Mobile learning pedagogy sees the possibility for authentic spontaneous practice and communication (both listening and speaking) as a major affordance of mobile devices beyond the classroom (Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015). Yet finding 8 foregrounds the challenge in promoting authentic real-time interactions outside of lessons.

The results demonstrated that the most successful experience of learners communicating with peers, both practically, motivationally and pedagogically, was by email, in authentic or simulated communication activities. In contrast, attempts to communicate orally beyond the lessons were sometimes marred by practical or cultural considerations - busy schedules made finding time to connect difficult, some learners did not respond to their partner's messages or calls, and some women did not wish to contact a man, which draws attention to the need for cultural sensitivity (Hockley, 2018). Others did not wish to share their personal phone numbers (see Table 29). Oral partner work primarily took place during the online courses, on which learners had never met. However, some participants stated that even had that not been the case, contact beyond the classroom would have been similarly difficult. Although Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015) believe mobile phones open up a world of virtual communication via social networks, it is difficult to imagine these ESOL learners taking advantage of that affordance with strangers if they struggled to communicate with their own classmates. 'Learners may seize for themselves opportunities to communicate in English and share outside class with peer groups of interest.' write Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015:18. The hedging apparent in the word 'may' is very valid here. Some participants in this study 'seized' the opportunities afforded them to practise with peers but not all. Similarly, Russell's (2013) drive to have learners collaborate with their peers on writing via a forum thread produced low levels of participation.

Pegrum (2014 in Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015) notes that learners' ability to see the benefits of collaboration is vital in mobile pedagogy and numbers of participants did find the intervention very useful. Contact of a supportive nature beyond lessons seemed to have been particularly welcomed, with partners discussing individual homework tasks, providing peer clarification, coaching or correction in some cases and this chimes with findings in the MoLeNET ESOL projects (Savill-Smith, Chopra & Haure, 2012). However, some of this support took place in the learners' first language not English. Unsurprisingly, those who benefitted from peer support and chance to practise language sustained more engagement. Aspects of mobile assistance (Kukulska-

Hulme, 2016) - teamwork, social support and contact - were clearly in evidence. Whilst setting specific collaborative language tasks (e.g., planning a weekend away, reading a text and discussing with a partner, text information gap activities) were valued by some who enjoyed the 'teamwork' aspect, it seemed that the mechanics of arranging and carrying out the task, with the attendant frustrations, might have influenced some participants' negative evaluation. While Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015) are right to argue that mobile learning should exploit opportunities for interaction and collaboration, practical concerns may, on occasions, militate against it. Incidental language learning gains in these situations were impossible to capture and potentially difficult for learners to detect or verbalise in interviews. SLA theory states that having opportunities to process language and negotiate meaning in authentic situations (Thornbury, 2016) can lead to acquisition and that might indeed have been the case.

Some pairings and group activities were highly successful whilst others were not and although some negative responses do not necessarily negate the validity of the intervention, it demonstrated that success is contingent upon the learners and their context. Some learners found partner oral work a significant help while others did not, and in general the intervention may not have led to regular language use to the extent that participants require it. As Stockwell (2013: 160) concludes,

> The context in which language learning occurs greatly affects the players within it and this in turn will have a significant effect on how both learners and teachers select and identify with technologies.-

One inhibiting factor might, in this instance, have been the prescribed partner pairings which may not have led to the most fruitful language learning experience. It might be that informal, spontaneous learner-driven oral communication may prove more useful. The WhatsApp group initiated by E3 learners in term three provides an example of a peer-driven opportunity but the true extent and nature of the communication between the learners is unknown, as is the extent to which it was oral or text-based. It seems that opportunities to develop interactive text-based communication are more easily achievable than spoken. This may be a reason many studies in Burston's (2013) annotated bibliography focused on text-mediated interaction and Kenning (2007, in McCarthy, 2016b) believes that this type of language use is an equally important part of second language communicative competency.

Examples from the literature also appeared to highlight a similar challenge in promoting real-time oral interaction, with speaking taking place in the form of vlogging or in interaction with an app or computer software. For ESOL learners in an English-speaking environment, who have the allied goal of social integration, it may prove more worthwhile for institutions to promote and facilitate

physical not virtual social encounters that build confidence to engage with voluntary work or connection with community groups as a means to greater language practice and social inclusion. It could be argued that not all aspects of language learning have to be transferred to the asynchronous domain but that rather the most beneficial elements of face-to-face teaching remain in that context.

6.10 Language acquisition in blended mobile learning - motivation

Finding 9 highlights how motivation, a further important aspect of SLA, (Dörnyei, 2018) promoted learning beyond the classroom. There were clear examples of both intrinsic and extrinsic forces at play. An example of intrinsic motivation is explicit in the ILP comment below. This learner's 'love', and consequent application to her online English study, led to discernible perceived learning.

L4(E3/F/Bangladesh) *'I am very happy with this class and found it very useful.* ***I loved doing online work and this has made me improve.****'*

As Kim *et al.* (2013) discovered, participants' emotional engagement with mobile learning and positive feelings towards it was motivational. Other participants in this study cited enjoyment of the 'Learn English Now' app or watching fun videos as having encouraged them to give time over to more English language activity. The feeling that the asynchronous tasks were of benefit and supported progress added further motivational impetus and this resonates with Cooke (2006), Ali (2016) and Wang & Smith (2013).

Dörnyei (2014, in Dörnyei 2018) speaks of how a learner's intrinsic motivation and future vision of themselves as a competent speaker was a key motivator. In the interviews, learners talked of wanting to get a better job, being able to move to a higher-level course or seeing a need to improve particular skills, like speaking or writing. Two learners, including the participant cited above, seemed to realise, possibly for the first time, the role their own motivation played in their progress in the comment *'Best option is try. More learn.'* **L4(E3/F/Bangladesh)**.

However, it was the external locus of motivation that emerged as a prominent finding - the need for teacher monitoring, an external 'push' and expectation, even amongst the most proactive learners. This chimes with other research (Wang & Smith's, 2013; Lund & Snell, 2014 in McCarthy, 2016b) which appreciated the role of the teacher in ensuring completion of asynchronous learning tasks. Despite a few participants in the current research making their autodidactic tendencies clear through observation, in the interviews, or with their extensive use of the app (L17, L20, L10, L21, and L5), even they expressed the need for a level of oversight and obligation. For the remainder, there was seemingly little previous deeper or formalised investment in their learning independently, beyond translating vocabulary, watching English movies or videos and talking to family members.

Joining a formal course seemed to provide the guidance and stimulation required to focus on improving their language accuracy and range. In fact, learners stated their desire for face-to-face lessons precisely because of the obligation to speak. The L1 learner, who spoke of having 'loved' her course, even admitted her own laziness, requiring her teacher to exact the necessary self-discipline. While in some studies learners were not content with online work being compulsory (Bilgin, 2013), others considered it preferable to mandate asynchronous learning (Fleet, 2013) and for ESOL learners in this study, a teacher and a structured course seemed to provide the necessary framework and accountability to assist in managing their learning beyond the classroom. Perhaps for this reason Ushioda (2013) argues that use of mobile technologies for consistent language study might be best integrated within organised courses rather than such activity being at the mercy of potentially capricious independent learners. Encouragingly, this study has clearly found that learners new to formalised blended learning developed increasing levels of personal agency and direction over the eleven months, displaying motivation and tenacity to search for additional websites, re-watch videos and use new digital tools for language learning of their own volition.

Finally, Dörnyei's (2018) comment concerning the motivational teacher impacting the learner seems to be echoed in the following learner comment,

(L17/L1/F/Morocco) *Really there is nothing that I don't like. Because when the teacher do lot of work and they do the best to gave lesson, to gave us exercise, a lot of things, we can't tell that it's not good. We learn. They gave us all the things to be better, to improve our English and we tell that I don't like. I like all. Everything I like.*

Quite distinct from the human aspect of motivation, some studies have pointed to the inherently motivating qualities of mobile devices and finding 5 identifies the ability of certain activities and phone features to motivate practice. First, the ease of use and already central position in people's daily routines meant there were few barriers to a phone's easy adoption as a learning tool. Despite research finding a measure of resistance to repurposing what are ultimately personal, social devices for learning (Stockwell, 2013), that was not the case here. Ten participants only had recourse to a mobile handset for all aspects of the course and any unremitting difficulty or unwillingness to do so did not emerge from the data.

In addition, the ready access to short chunks of mobile-mediated learning (for example the app, videos, the Padlet homework page with quizzes and links to class work and email) seemed to prompt use of handsets whilst on the move among many learners as seen in the questionnaire (see Fig 19). This may lend credence to Stockwell's (2013) notion that it is the tasks not the technology - the

mobile phone - that is motivational; the device merely makes those activities readily available. Ushoida (2013) argues that mobile-learning in particular suits less cognitively demanding tasks (e.g., tick-box or drag and drop quizzes) and user-friendly MALL tools are favoured. This might be considered a more superficial form of learning. Yet participants who used a handset for all activities, from using the app and sending emails to reading/annotating texts and intensive listening practice, performed tasks which would require much deeper and extended concentration. This usage was not without issue initially as learners were growing accustomed to repurposing their phones for new tasks. Possibly influential in maintaining motivation by making digital learning accessible was the use of appropriate formats and file types, as recommended by Karnad (2014) and allowing users to choose their preferred devices (Ushoida, 2013) and manner of uploading homework tasks (e.g., word-processing and uploading writing tasks or writing by hand and uploading a photo).

Wang & Smith's (2013) study identified the importance of engaging learning materials and a number of particularly motivating asynchronous activities were identified from the results - exam practice, preparing for oral presentations, *the app, videos, listening development (mp3.m4a recordings and worksheets) and sending emails to a partner.* Interestingly, four out of these six activities (in italics) rely solely on digital materials or means. It is unlikely that in language classrooms prior to the internet age, ESOL learners would have sent real letters or postcards to each other's homes yet current technological and social norms makes doing this by email an entirely authentic task. Emailing a partner takes advantage of the motivational impetus that comes from interacting with an authentic audience as identified by Hoffman (1994 in Stockwell, 2013). Writing such real-life texts is considered good practice in writing (Grief *et al.*, 2007). Comments from participants centred on their enhanced sense of obligation to make communication accurate and clear, and research by Stockwell & Harrington (2003 in McCarthy, 2016b) has shown that exchanges by email can lead to accompanying syntactic improvement.

6.11 Centres of learning – informal / 'on-the-go' learning

The previous section has briefly touched upon motivation to learn in spaces between the home and the classroom. In addition, finding 5 focuses on participants' experience of using their phones in informal spaces - in the car, waiting outside school, at work. The pandemic lockdowns that restricted movement outside the home at many points during the year may not have enabled a full picture of the extent to which this might have taken place. The questionnaire demonstrated that administrative tasks (checking the weekly email task sheet and accessing resources on Padlet) were key activities undertaken 'on-the-go'. This may mirror other ad hoc habits of work or other personal administration. It could be argued that the attention required for these tasks corresponds to the amount that can actually be given in such transient settings. Studies have shown that in language

learning beyond the classroom, more intensive learning is often undertaken by learners in the home setting (Gaved & Peasegood, 2016; Demmens Epp, 2017) leaving tasks that require only superficial attention to the 'on-the-go' setting.

The 'Learn English Now' app was used outside the home possibly because apps are well suited to short bursts of activity by virtue of task design and ease of use, similarly with taking a language photo. Unlike Gaved & Peasegood's study, the research data is unable to detail the amount of intensive, deeper learning that may have taken place amongst learners whilst outside the home. However, ten participants claimed to have completed homework using their handset outside the classroom and home but no data exists to break this activity down into deeper or more superficial learning.

6.12 Promoting progress

This study has made no attempt to test or measure improved learner language production or comprehension, unlike much quasi-experimental SLA research referred to in Chapter Three. Instead, the lens of learner experience has been chosen through which to view the language learning journey. Finding 7 considers perceived learner improvement. The aim of this research is to investigate how to extend learning and increase guided learning hours beyond the classroom to promote progress. As the literature review discussed, this is a matter not just of quantity of time but also quality of time spent on language learning. It has been argued that intensive and repeated time (Muñoz, 2012) spent on activities that promote active learning (Hattie, 2009 in Winterbottom, 2017) and SLA principles ought to lead to a measure of progress. Furthermore, people who were active and communicative beyond lessons saw greater learning gains (Bialystok, 1981 and Wong & Nunan,2011 in Benson, 2017) and this appears to have been borne out here. The data showed learner comments did correlate perceived improvement with a number of key actions: undertaking various types of repetition/rehearsal activity, opportunities for deeper listening, independently searching more actively for language and meaning, peer interaction and concentrated attention to vocabulary, making associations and working harder. Possibly unbeknown to participants, the activities they described in their responses as aiding their improvement were those able to increase depth and quality of learning, consolidation and memorisation. As one learner described in her ILP,

L17 (L1/F/Morocco) *I feel that my reading/writing/listening and speaking had improved. Whole the course was very interesting even though it was online because I did more homework and I tried to listen more and more to videos lessons, news, songs and more listening things.*

The homework that teacher Liz gave us every week helped us a lot, because when you find yourself forced to do your weekly homework in time you do all your best to succeed. Really, I feel so happy for my improvement in English, so now I can understand English better than before and I don't feel embarrassed when I make a mistake, and I feel more confident speaking.

Bearing in mind what is known about learning and language acquisition, the responses of pleasantly surprised participants ought not to be a revelation. Godwin-Jones (2020) considers that language learning theory endorses the advantage of a blend of GLH inside and beyond the classroom and studies cited in Chapter 2 claim to show the added impact of self-study (Brooks *et al.,*2007) or the ability of CALL/MALL to improve discrete aspects of language (Kétyi in Bárcena *et al.,* 2015; Hseih, Wu, & Marek, 2016; Fathi, Alipour, & Saeedian , 2018, Rahimi & Soleymani, 2015 in Kukulska-Hulme, 2019; Zhang & Zhu, 2018 in Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019) and the advantages of blended instructional design (McCarten & Sandiford ,2016).

However, detractors argue that there is little evidence for improvement as a result of learning with technology (Kerr,2020; Selwyn 2011 in Thornbury, 2016; Dewar & Whittington in Whittaker, 2013a). Yet participants use of the word 'improve' seems to indicate that some change has taken place, albeit one that participants may find difficult to adequately elucidate or that any third party may measure. Different aspects of the asynchronous activity may have featured larger and been more productive than others, according to learner and context, but with a clear sense that they were motivational and led to opportunities for extended practice. To attribute the change to the technological hardware or the blended mode may be too simplistic and Salaberry, 2001 (in Whittaker, 2013a) is as sceptical about the current devices as the previous generation was of much lauded technologies, such as language labs and cassette recorders. Insightfully, the participant above attributes her perceived improvement to a range of both internal and external factors: personal interest, drive to succeed, independent study habits, externally imposed tasks and teacher accountability. Such is the complex nature of second language learning. Yet, had this participant's course taken place purely in the classroom, with no recourse to asynchronous learning or mobile devices, many of the factors contributing to her perceived improvement would not have existed.

To sum up, the second research question asked about the pedagogical considerations of mobile blended learning which involves both quantity and quality of study. Tasks which promote language learning through attention to factors of language acquisition, such as repetition and noticing, add

quality to learning. Those which are motivating and can be completed in any location encourage an increase in the amount of time given to study. The findings demonstrate that these factors in tandem resulted in a perception of improved language learning.

Section Three: Learning design, management and materials

6.13 Introduction

This final section considers a number of the practicalities of implementing and managing blended learning. It addresses the design of blended learning in terms of ratio as expressed in finding 10 and the issues of management from finding 11. Finally, finding 12 prompts a consideration of the benefit of the reconceptualisation of materials for language learning.

These three findings are linked with both the first and second research questions regarding appropriateness and pedagogy.

Finding 10: Maximum face-to-face teaching hours with a structured asynchronous component is the optimum blend in this research context.

Finding 11: A user-friendly learning platform (e.g., Padlet) is pivotal in assuring ease and opportunity to access learning at all times.

Finding 12: Learners favour a combination of print and digital resources to afford multi-skill language practice.

6.14 Design ratio

Finding 10 expresses that learners appear to prefer maximum weekly classroom teaching (5-6 hours in this instance) combined with regular structured asynchronous work outside the classroom (notionally 1-2 hours). This would accord with Smith and Kurten's (2007 in Whittaker, 2013a) definition of blended learning as up to 45% online but the primary mode being face-to-face, but not with Dudeney & Hockley's of 75% online/25% face-to-face (2007, *ibid*). Given ESOL learners' predilection for the classroom, the latter design ratio would not appear to suit most participants, particularly if the online mode were synchronous. Yet they are not alone in this. Graham's (2005:10) observation has proven correct, "Many learners want the convenience offered by a distributed environment, and, at the same time, do not want to sacrifice the social interaction of the classroom." Interaction via Zoom was not equal to that of the classroom in most learners' eyes. Moreover, it is clear that for language learners it is more than merely social interaction at stake; the classroom offers instant teacher error correction and the opportunity to ask questions in a less stressful environment. Nevertheless, earlier in this chapter, there was discussion of the recent growth in popularity of hybrid learning, and a blend incorporating synchronous elements also appealed to some participants on the grounds of increased flexibility of access, but clearly this foregrounds the importance of classroom, physical or virtual.

6.15 Blended learning management

Finding 11 reflects the practical side of managing blended learning. Weak student self-management (Paget & Stevenson, 2016) and issues with transactional distance made it crucial to find a user-friendly method of communicating clearly with learners, and findings showed that Padlet achieved that goal. It proved a useful tool in displaying asynchronous tasks, in addition to notes and materials from the lesson for review in the absence of an existing VLE. Wang and Smith (2013) also concluded that an appropriate technical environment was important in mobile learning. For some, Padlet was like a 'diary' with week-by-week task schedules and hand-in dates, and such tools for organisation seem to be a clear necessity for learners to find and engage easily with asynchronous learning. Padlet maintained a connection to the lesson and homework for those who were absent. Moreover, it encouraged and facilitated 'on-the-go' learning and autonomy which enable greater mobility in learning. A disadvantage of Padlet over teachers who use other platforms (such as Smart Assessor, Moodle or Google Classroom) is the lack of ability to manage learner work and grading, create some class learning activities or create a class announcement stream. For Mishan (2016), the benefit of not using a VLE is that activities are not dictated by out-of-date software, and for Godwin-Jones (2020) the necessity and opportunity to produce and display bespoke and learner-generated materials is greater.

The asynchronous section of the course would have been far less satisfactory to administer by email. Participants would have needed to create and use email folders diligently to store and access the weekly task sheets, lesson notes and materials for easy recap, requiring a large amount of skills training. Moreover, email is unable to visually organise information on a single page. However, it usefully served as a prompt and homework reminder during the week. Bryson (2020) found WhatsApp to be an underrated tool in her experience with low literacy learners but its more limited functionality and need to share personal contact details mean it is a far less viable permanent option as a VLE.

6.16 Reconceptualisation of materials

Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015) and Beetham & Sharpe (2020) called for a 'reconceptualisation' of materials and teaching practices for the mobile, digital era and Table 6 provided examples of re-envisioned practices for language learning. The blended ESOL courses delivered during this study brought a transformation in terms of structuring and embedding a measure of pedagogically-driven digital learning into ESOL courses unseen in my organisation before 2020. Regarding the materials and activity types used, the analysis of the weekly task sheets showed there was a fusion of both traditional and emergent practices.

For example, videos and screencasts played a dominant role in both the online and blended courses. What were a necessity for transmitting required course content initially, gradually came to be used for a wider range of language learning tasks, involving more interactive activity types. There was an increasing interweaving of more traditional digitised copies of printed worksheets or texts with questions and interactive self-marking app and web-based texts. In these ways resources became increasingly less narrative and static (Mishan, 2016). The participants' language photos, own voice recordings and emails provide three examples of how learner-produced language became the content for the lesson and demonstrate Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue's (2015:14) notion that 'Learning, knowledge and texts can be created, curated and constructed by learners for peers and teachers as well as selected by teachers.' Large numbers of bespoke videos reflect Godwin-Jones' (2020) assertion that good BL materials should be customised. The report into ERT by Estyn (2020) believed that planned programmes of blended learning will be distinct from those implemented during the pandemic. This is true in terms of materials and activities, where time and opportunity to search for and experiment with new materials in future could result in more dynamic and productive task types.

An interesting understanding leading to finding 12 was that in some regards the learners were reactionaries in the digital learning revolution. In addition to a preference for the physical classroom, their clear desire was to receive paper handouts and worksheets, similar to Stracke' s (2007) participants, but in tandem with digital resources. Working solely in digital formats in the period of online learning had proven difficult and the blended course offered the opportunity to combine both digital and printed resources to maximum benefit as far as the learners were concerned. Their rationale was the multi-skill practice afforded by a combination of the two. As one participant succinctly stated,

Deleted: discovery

L16 (L1/F/Bangladesh) I think this two way is helpful because when I watch the video altogether, I have improving listening and writing and when I get paper, only I writing, not listening.

Learners combined skill practice in many ways. Videos served secondary purposes with learners demonstrating degrees of autonomy in repurposing activities to meet their language learning needs, such as for listening comprehension, grammar practice, learning and noting spellings and vocabulary from subtitles, which are shown to be a necessary aid to comprehension for L2 speakers (Aldukhayel, 2012). Participants in the Demmens Epp study (2017) had made similar use of subtitles and likewise used videos as a key language input resource to provide the necessary exposure to good models of authentic language required for acquisition (Thornbury, 2016; Ortega, 2008).

Finding materials suited to ESOL learners, the context and exams was often a challenge. Seta, Kukulska-Hulme & Arrigo (2014) commented on the amount of time taken by teachers to source suitable resources in their research, and in this study a great deal of time was spent on locating or creating resources. However, creating bespoke materials often proved more time-efficient and allowed the materials to suit the learners' needs and complement the course more exactly.

The interventions and activities used during the study represent a fraction of possible asynchronous tasks or uses of technology. Chapter 2 pointed out that the teacher 'enacts' the pedagogy in and beyond the classroom (Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue, 2015), inferring that pedagogy is also at their mercy. The teacher must have both the time for and the interest in investigating, implementing and evaluating new methods and resources for teaching. The Welsh Government (Estyn, 2021) has recognised that this calls for specific skills on the part of both teachers and learners. The development in task types over the course of the research may reflect the journey many other teachers will undertake in reshaping practice for the digital age. Unsurprisingly, Hamer & Smith (2021) conclude that teaching staff will require training to bring their digital literacy skills to the level demanded by teaching in the current FE sector.

The hyperdoc analysis, and reference to previous research, shows that some common asynchronous activities were missing from the range offered - learner blogging, vlogging, use of podcasts, social media and interactive quiz software such as Wordwall or Memrise, as seen in Burston's (2013) bibliography, or the game software used by Purushotma (2005). Learners enjoyed multimodal digital texts (such as videos, screencasts, presentations) but were not required to create and share any as Kukulska-Hulme, Norris & Donohue (2015) suggest is part of reconceptualised materials and practices. This reveals a reticence on my part to push learners to experiment digitally whilst already somewhat overwhelmed with the mode, but also reflects practical considerations - size of video file types to upload to Padlet, functionality and compatibility in addition to privacy issues. Numbers of the resources utilised have since been adopted in subsequent iterations of my BL ESOL courses. Sharpe & Oliver (2007 in Whittaker, 2013b) argue that the transition from a traditional to a blended course design can take up to four iterations and in some cases more (Russell, 2013) and this consideration extends to materials within a course.

To sum up, a further pedagogical consideration in blended learning is the ratio of face-to-face and computer-mediated interaction and this section has made clear that maximum face-to-face teaching is of paramount importance to learners. At the foundation of all blended learning is the technological means to facilitate and manage it, and in this case Padlet was found to be highly suitable. Finding ESOL resources to form the asynchronous part of the course can be a challenge and

reconceptualising materials to take real advantage of learner mobilities and phone features can take several iterations and requires more continuing professional development.

6.17 Research Question 3: Evaluation

How, and can blended learning assisted by mobile phone technology bridge deficits in formal learning hours?

A variety of possible areas for evaluation exist - choice of software and materials/balance of time in each mode/teacher and learners' attitudes/value for teaching and learning purposes (Whittaker, 2013b) and several of these have been addressed and reflected in the findings. Further criteria for success are enjoyment/ ease of use/ measurable achievement (McCarten & Sandiford, 2016) and these have also been discussed. The preoccupation in this study, however, is with the ability to extend time and bridge deficits in formal learning hours. It is argued that technology is able to 'complement and enhance teaching' (Sharma & Barrett, 2007:13-14 in Whittaker, 2013b) but what of extending learning?

A number of case studies in the literature documented how singular activities, such as listening to regular podcasts for language rehearsal, regular use of course book language learning software, or collaborating on a group wiki were able to extend the time learners focused on learning English beyond the classroom. In this thesis, an entire course with a multiplicity of interventions and materials, is in the spotlight. Four evaluation questions were posed in Chapter Three (see Table 34) by which to judge how learning might be extended, the degree to which it is clear learning took place, the ability to extend content exclusively in the online setting and the role of learners and their mobile phones in extending learning.

Evaluation questions
1. To what extent is there clear experience of learners extending their own learning hours beyond the classroom?
2. To what extent is there a clear experience of learners developing their English language skills in work beyond the classroom?
3. To what extent can parts of a course be taught exclusively and successfully with pedagogic soundness beyond the classroom from the teacher's viewpoint?
4. To what extent are mobile phones an integral part of extending learning beyond the classroom?

Table 34 Extending learning hours – evaluation questions

However, extending learning is contingent upon a number of factors - learners having time, a favourable attitude to studying outside of lesson time (especially at home) and the ability to manage their learning independently.

In answer to the first question, it was evident from interviews/focus groups that many learners were investing more time in homework tasks and applying themselves to formal English study more than they had tended to do in traditional pre-pandemic ESOL courses. This was partly related to the time-consuming nature of using an unfamiliar learning mode and the associated technology, in addition to the large amounts of work commensurate with high notional asynchronous learning hours. Yet learner responses and habits showed evidence of regular active independent searching online, independent checking and noting of vocabulary as well as other autonomous interventions to aid personal study such as frequent repetition/rehearsal, noticing and taking photos and partner work interactions outside lesson time.

Lack of time was a theme in interviews and not all participants were able to commit large amounts of time to study or engage to the degree they would have liked. Nonetheless, evidence from app and YouTube viewings show good levels of sustained engagement by the majority, in addition to extra time spent reviewing videos and improving app scores. Use of the 'Learn English Now' app saw most learners complete weekly language lessons, with one learner's usage almost equivalent to an entire classroom-based course (60GLH). The fact that a small number of participants used the app when out of the country or on summer holiday is a clear example of extra time investment. In addition, editing and improving written email communication presumably resulted in increased time and concentration being spent on such tasks, thereby extending study. Furthermore, enjoyment and positive affect were shown to promote task completion. It could be also argued that this degree of additional English learning may have not taken place had it not been mandated by the course or monitored closely by a teacher, and finding 9 shows the importance of the teacher's motivational role in extending learning.

Furthermore, undertaking English study in some form did not only take place at home but extended beyond and thus potentially expanded the time made available to learners to continue interacting with English. Canadian migrants built regular time for vocabulary learning into their daily routines such as commuting, (Demmens Epp, 2017) similar to the taxi drivers in Turkey who rehearsed phrases for conversation with their passengers in their quiet periods (Kern, 2016), thereby contributing to the intensity of weekly learning. The mobility of learning can provide more opportunity to learn beyond the formal lessons, thereby helping learners engage more frequently (Kim *et al.,* 2013). Participants in this research mentioned using the app while waiting to pick up children or watching course videos while at work. The language photos intervention encouraged some participants to take more notice of language around them and check meanings of new words in their day-to-day activities. In this way it could be concluded that exposure and active engagement

with English was distributed over the entire week rather than merely two days in the classroom, and was intensified by the increased amount of regular activity. As Chapter 3 acknowledged, it is difficult to gain a true understanding of learner habits and activity outside the classroom, nonetheless, the observation and interview data suggest that participants applied themselves to study more regularly and intensively than normal during the online and blended courses, thereby extending time and exposure to English.

The second evaluation question is focused on evidence of learning. Chapter 2 discussed the 'quality versus quantity' dichotomy but clearly the key is quality and quantity. Frequency and intensity of learning with 'concentrated exposure' distributed over time in shorter intensive bursts provides the optimum basis for learning (Muñoz,2012). A pedagogical benefit to this increased effort and intensity of independent study was expressed particularly succinctly by one learner but echoed by many others,

L17 (L1/F/Morocco) *'....you are obligate to search for yourself* ***and in searching you learn more.'***

In this example the learning required was active, offering examples of problem-solving, experimentation and personal knowledge construction which appears to have led to increased learning. The internet itself is a constant source of language input and practice is readily available on learners' phones. Concentrated learning in intensive bursts may not require more face-to-face lessons if meaningful, active study to promote progress can take place at home or beyond.

The earlier discussion of learner progress does appear to indicate that, in many cases, learners believe their asynchronous activity directly led to improved English and confidence. Would traditional paper-based resources have had the same transformational effect and resulted in similar expression of improvement? A number of participants spoke of the benefits of paper and digital in tandem to simultaneously practise a variety of language skills which may have increased the quality of language practice. In addition, the existence of parallel activities that consolidated the key aspects of the lesson, allowing learners opportunity to review until clarified, is afforded in an asynchronous setting but far less in the classroom only. Activities that promoted acquisition - noticing, the deeper processing required of listening development activities, collaboration and communication, active learning, rehearsal, autonomous activity - were among participant responses that allude to a quality of learning, some superficial but some deeper.

In response to the third question, quantity of time can be seen not only from the learners' point of view but also the teacher's. Exam preparation, the ESOL core curriculum and inspection requirements impose a great deal of content to cover in limited time. Extending GLH beyond the

classroom can also be evaluated in terms of material covered but beyond normal lesson hours. The results showed a list of language and content areas (see Table 32) that proved to be feasibly delivered in the asynchronous mode only, thereby releasing classroom-time for activities best suited to that domain. Although it is correct to acknowledge that a parallel blend design is superior to an isolated one, these components are not isolated in the sense of having no connection to the topic or course, but complementary, and the language being taught (e.g., vocabulary, prepositions, and apostrophes) can easily be referred to and further embedded into classroom/home practice tasks. Learners did not appear to take issue with this means of course delivery or find it inferior. This means that some elements best suited to this mode could routinely form part of the asynchronous element of the course and increase the amount of course content. This involves careful planning not an ad hoc approach. Schemes of work, such as the example in Figure 28, can outline the tasks to be undertaken beyond the classroom and ensure that they are an intrinsic part of the overall course. In this way a 10-week course of 60 classroom GLH could legitimately be considered to have 80 GLH if two hours of asynchronous activity is planned, monitored and assessed each week.

Session No. & Date	**Content/ Topic**	**Learning Objectives:** *by the end of the session students will be able to*
Session 1	Staying safe online - discussion Questions - What ....like? feedback Listening DA feedback Induction quiz	Name and talk about LAL induction key points Recognise ways to improve listening exam scores Ask and answer What...like? questions
Session 2	**Technology - Inventions** Grammar: Plurals to talk generally Comparatives intro Discussion: Invention Balloon debate will - discussion - future technology	Choose between different inventions using articles and plurals appropriately State preferences and make comparisons about inventions Use will to talk about future predictions
Session 3	Exam role play practice: choosing a new vending machine Stating preferences/giving suggestions Vocab - vending machines	Use language of negotiation to make a decision Use a variety of phrases to state their preference
Online independent study 2 hours	Listening development recording: Changes 2 - Technology Websearch: Inventions Video: discussion vocabulary - ways to agree in English	Listen for gist, detail and phonological detail Find information about inventions on the web for class discussion Recognise phrases to agree/disagree and interrupt

Figure 28 Example of extending GLH on a scheme of work

The final question asks how integral mobile phones were to the delivery of asynchronous learning, and they were found to be extremely so for two main reasons: without a smart phone ten learners would have been unable to participate in the course as they had no other means of digital access to learning; many participants accessed coursework and learning 'on-the-go' which was only made

possible by using their phone. Only two of the seventeen learners who responded did not use a mobile phone at all, preferring a tablet (also potentially a mobile device) or a laptop.

In conclusion, the findings and discussion in this chapter suggest that it is indeed possible to extend formal learning hours by means of,

- A structured, mandated set of pedagogically sound, motivating beyond-lesson tasks, well monitored by the teacher, which promote engagement with significant amounts of language study over and above study in the classroom
- Activities suited to mobile handsets that allow learners to undertake tasks without the need for books or pens, and make use of time at work, waiting or 'on-the-go' to continue their course learning
- 'Isolated' but complementary tasks and content which can be successfully taught in the asynchronous mode with brief follow-up, and assessment in lessons.

Over and above these are aspects that have the ability to extend learning by a potentially prodigious amount of time but in a less formalised way,

- The development of independent study skills and language learning awareness to increase opportunities to interact with and acquire language independently in time between lessons
- Learners' enjoyment and intrinsic motivation to learn that results in an increase in their own time engaged in language learning
- Greater learner confidence and improved communication skills which lead to a greater ability and propensity to interact in English in the community.

Learners attend formal ESOL classes to improve their English, seeking the pedagogical guidance of a teacher. Learning hours are not termed 'guided' for no reason. The mobile blended learning intervention has seen traditional face-to-face GLH coupled with further carefully-guided asynchronous hours beyond. For Thorne (2003 in Ghazizdeh & Fatemupour, 2017) this development is the natural evolution of teaching and learning which combines the best of traditional and innovative means.

Chapter 7 follows with the final conclusions and recommendations of the research.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

> In my opinion, about learning in classroom, is more better than at home. Also, learning is doing online work, was helpful for me. I enjoy (the Zoom class). First I was scared how to use the internet, Padlet, but then slowly, slowly, I have learnt how to use this and this is very beneficial because in Padlet I can see again this work. If I forget, then I can see again. Everything is there in Padlet. I really liked. I am happy because now I know how can I handle online work and for me both of them is okay.

Figure 28 Excerpt from a participant interview. Learner 19 (Level 1 / Female / Bangladesh)

7. 1 Introduction

Just as the participant excerpt above comprises views reflected across a number of the findings, this final chapter draws together the key elements to form the factual and conceptual conclusions, the key contributions to knowledge and recommendations for practice. The chapter provides a summary research overview followed by a critique of the study. Answers to the research questions, the contribution to knowledge and the factual conclusions are described, and then these conclusions are discussed conceptually. The final part of the chapter considers the potential for impact, avenues for further research and final recommendations. It closes with a teacher/researcher reflection and a final word from a participant.

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7.2 Research overview

The research has set out to address a need common to many educational sectors and subjects but particularly pertinent in the pursuit of second language learning - time to study, practise and consolidate. Given the need for English learning, and strictures placed on ESOL classroom delivery in adult education by Government funding and eligibility rules, summarised in Chapter 1, a viable solution has had to be sought elsewhere. The widespread use of mobile handsets amongst ESOL learners and my belief in their potential for language learning were the two seeds that grew into a small listening skills intervention, which became an initial pilot study and finally, a year-long piece of research considering the potential suitability of mobile blended learning for extending learning hours beyond the college walls. The primary motivation has been to ascertain whether a model of asynchronous blended learning could offer teachers more hours to deliver course content and learners increased opportunities to engage with and practise English, and this goal is reflected in the final research question. Allied to that question has been the need to develop an understanding of

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the type of blended learning that would be both accessible and pedagogically beneficial to the ESOL learners in my organisation, factors which underpinned the first two research questions.

A key turning point in the eventual design and scope of the research came early on, namely the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic, which afforded a unique opportunity for the actual not 'experimental' implementation of synchronous and asynchronous learning. Following the same set of participants over the course of one academic year has allowed for the tracking of changing attitudes, expanding experience and maturing skills. Three cohorts, with a total of 28 participants, from twelve different language backgrounds, studied on 12-week courses focused on different skills - reading, writing and speaking/listening. The only self-imposed boundary related to the language level of the participants to ensure adequate ability to express their views without translation. Gender and nationality profile were not controlled and participants came to their course by the means usual in the organisation. A maximum class size of 8 was externally imposed due to Covid restrictions.

Researching learner activity beyond the classroom has called for a number of ways to gain insights into unseen activity and led to a mixed methods approach. Qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, ILP feedback, on-going observation and course hyperdocs) have allowed for a deep and nuanced learner perspective and are commensurate with the overall constructivist orientation of the study which views reality by means of interpretation. However, quantitative methods (YouTube / app analytic data and a questionnaire) have been used to observe patterns of activity beyond lesson time to triangulate results and enhance trustworthiness. Some methods were continual (observation, analytic data capture, hyperdocs) and others took place at the end of an academic term (focus groups, interviews, questionnaire).

Chapter 1 stated that research into blended and mobile learning has been the topic of greatest interest in CALL literature to date. This study contributes by building the picture of current migrant blended language learning experience and practice, with the discussion in Chapter 6 highlighting both congruence and a measure of divergence with other implementation studies. It provides an insight into mobile blended learning with UK ESOL learners to complement shorter, less comprehensive studies and maintain the currency of mobile and blended learning research emanating from the UK adult education sector. This thesis has gone beyond details of preference and habit and is an implementation study with a broad focus, examining matters of technology and language pedagogy, structured blended learning design and the nature of materials used in mobile blended learning. Now that the phase of emergency remote teaching is over and ESOL departments and teachers may be considering the future role of blended learning within their organisations, the findings of this thesis can advocate for its value from a learner perspective, provide practical

guidance for implementation, and some linguistic foundation to asynchronous activities mediated by digital technology. In addition, it offers a number of concrete ways learning can be extended to provide increased notional guided learning hours on ESOL courses in addition to developing the person of the independent ESOL learner who increasingly finds ways to be active in learning beyond lessons.

7.3 Critique of the research

Chapter 3 spoke of how I had utilised practitioner action research in my MA degree and this doctoral research has been a continuation of my interest in and commitment to the approach. The chapter detailed both the strengths and weaknesses of researching one's own learners, particularly from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The research has resulted in a rich body of data, with genuine, insightful comments from participants. Significant protections had been put in place to ensure this, and mitigate potential issues. For instance, consistency of participants across the extended data collection period facilitated the building of rapport and trust. Both online and physical interview consent forms assured participants of the acceptability and validity of all contributions and that honesty was paramount. Learners were given questions prior to the meetings and time to prepare, discuss answers and activate the necessary language together before starting. Transcripts and recordings were reviewed many times to achieve faithfulness to the original utterances. Participant checks were undertaken (see Appendix 7) and responses corroborated the findings (Appendix 8). The observation field notes supported the spoken data, maintained checks on bias and assured reflexivity, and Chapter 4 has described a number of instances where aspects of the research were responsive to this.

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Regarding the ethnographic nature of the study, the research observation was said to have taken place in a naturally occurring setting (courses and learners randomly assigned with no special experimental conditions). However, this setting in other respects was far from natural. A major pandemic in the UK had not been seen for 100 years. Learners had no option but to learn synchronously /asynchronously and this may have influenced their attitudes and habits. Such conditions would be extremely difficult to replicate and it may be that future cohorts of learners may not see the need or perceive the potential benefit of learning beyond the classroom as did those who had no option but to do so. The imperative to undertake online work in the same way as their peers during the pandemic no longer exists.

Chapter 2 foregrounded the role of the teacher to 'enact' mobile learning pedagogy which, the Chapter 6 discussion argued, placed it at the mercy of the teacher. The activities and pedagogic interventions in the study were drawn from a wide range of possibilities and the discussion outlined

a number that had not been employed. The choice not to use screencasts or recordings or to utilise 'Memrise', editable Google docs, a wiki or a podcast would possibly have elicited different experiences of asynchronous learning and drawn attention to different SLA features. The eventual design of asynchronous activities partly reflects ideas drawn from the literature, but also my own digital capabilities and preconceptions. I have limited experience using editable Google docs and felt it would require too much time to teach both myself and the participants how to use them. Nor did I have any knowledge of 'Memrise' or wikis and, therefore, this impacted the overall design. On the other hand, screencasts, using authentic emails, hyperdocs and an app were all novel experiences which I learnt in the course of the research. In this sense the design was at my mercy, and this may make direct comparison with similar structured programmes of blended learning difficult.

A final possible limitation is providing evidence of work completed beyond the classroom where direct observation is absent. Nevertheless, the app and YouTube data were able to provide clear observable evidence of on-going engagement and the data set was a suitable size. Furthermore, observation was maintained through course task completion/grade sheets kept during the courses and noteworthy observations were recorded in the field notes regarding learner engagement with asynchronous tasks in order to demonstrate that tasks were undertaken and completed on a regular basis.

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All this being said, this research has, to a great extent, achieved its purposes. Although the participant sample was small, and not all participants contributed to the research to the same extent, the breadth and depth of data elicited were sufficient to provide answers to the key questions. The choice of a mixed methodology, multiple methods and length of the study all contributed to this.

7.4 The research questions and conclusions

The research findings provide a clear answer to the first question that for those who chose to use one, a smart phone was a suitable means of learning beyond the classroom. Though not entirely without difficulty, and requiring practical functional considerations, participants nevertheless managed to fulfil most, if not all, of their course requirements using their handset. Furthermore, smart phones facilitated the delivery of structured programmes of asynchronous learning via Padlet that participants valued highly and considered beneficial for improving their English, and which made digital learning accessible to those who had no recourse to other digital hardware.

In response to the second question, there are a number of pedagogical considerations in the design of blended mobile learning to increase GLH and promote progress. Activities must be motivating, not overly long, in a suitable digital format, requiring some tasks that particularly lend themselves to

completion ‘on-the-go.’ Learner motivation can stem from enjoyable, self-marking, gamified style activities, but also those that facilitate repetition/rehearsal, noticing and authentic interactions, which can promote acquisition, consolidation and fluency and stimulate learners' sense of progress. In addition to providing the pedagogical guidance of what and how to study independently, teacher motivation and accountability play an influential role. Finally, decisions need to be made, first, as to which parts of a particular course can be placed in the asynchronous space only, and secondly, how to encourage greater oral interaction outside of lessons that may not be fully achievable in the asynchronous component.

In answer to the third research question, the previous chapter concluded by asserting that it is indeed possible to extend guided learning hours on ESOL courses by means of mobile blended learning. From the teacher's perspective certain elements of the course can be undertaken asynchronously by learners yet not impact on lesson time. Both qualitative and quantitative data sets reveal evidence of regular learner completion of tasks which, in many learners' view, increased the amount of English study undertaken compared with their courses pre-2020/21. The vast majority of participants did not resist this type of study but rather embraced it and saw the benefit of being more active beyond the classroom. Independent searching, repeating, noticing and activity on the app were all under the learners' control and it is clear that they took time, in some cases large amounts of time, to perform these actions. The mobility afforded by learner handsets and ease of accessing digital content also promoted and, thereby extended, study into informal spaces.

The twelve findings lead to a number of conclusions. First, the choice of classroom component for blended learning - virtual, physical, hybrid - is contingent upon the learners and the context. Irrespective of that choice, accompanying structured parallel asynchronous blended learning, geared to a smart phone plays a significant role in expanding course delivery time, developing learner autonomy and digital literacy and promoting a sense of linguistic improvement.

Secondly, digital media afford language learning practice more pedagogically beneficial than traditional paper resources alone, and mobile devices actualise formal and informal learning beyond the classroom. However, regardless of the usefulness of technology and talk of an educational paradigm shift, the teacher, the classroom and print materials remain foundational to ESOL teaching and learning.

Finally, asynchronous mobile blended learning can provide a wide variety of beneficial language study yet authentic, spontaneous oral interaction remains a challenging skill to practise in the asynchronous mode, primarily for practical reasons.

7.5 Contribution to knowledge

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This research offers a unique, prolonged insight into a UK adult ESOL context and responds to Cochrane's (2013) identification of a significant gap in the literature for action research that evaluates the extended integration of mobile learning in tertiary sector provision.

With its distinctive methodological approach and focus on learning not in, but beyond the classroom, it has strengthened the understanding that structured asynchronous mobile blended learning is both suitable and beneficial for ESOL learners and has the capability to extend GLH on ESOL courses. It has illustrated that cohorts of predominantly female learners, often from South Asian backgrounds, should not be considered unable to participate actively in blended learning but rather they would welcome it. The vast majority of participants voted in favour of continuing with a blend of face-to-face teaching in tandem with asynchronous homework activities for future ESOL delivery as it greatly assisted their language learning. Furthermore, it has demonstrated that there is also a place for online and hybrid sessions as part of ESOL course provision. The BYOD solution to device usage in the study did not appear to significantly preclude any of the participants from learning and common technological issues were not insurmountable. This further endorses personal mobile phone usage as an integral part of ESOL study. In fact, using devices for learning on a day-to-day basis increased learner confidence and skill in the digital realm which, in turn, had impacted their daily lives far beyond the classroom. The research, therefore, has established, from the learner's perspective, the important role of asynchronous mobile learning in equipping them in the current digital age. Not only that, it has shown from a teacher's perspective that mobile blended learning can serve as a vehicle for increasing guided learning hours by a variety of means, which could see ESOL courses increase notional delivery by up to 2 hours per week if structured and planned sufficiently.

The decision to examine design, blend ratio and resources for asynchronous learning in this research contributes a deeper insight into blended learning methodology suited to the UK ESOL context. Practitioners wishing to understand how asynchronous learning could be structured, which activities are suitable for different language modes and known to increase GLH and obtain practical advice on implementation specifically in an FE context can find details within the study.

Furthermore, it contributes to knowledge on language-learning pedagogy and technology by demonstrating that mobile phone features and mobile-mediated activities can stimulate specific significant aspects of language practice and acquisition. The observation of learner experience of mobile blended learning throughout the year highlighted examples of repetition, rehearsal, reflection on interlanguage, noticing, motivation and collaboration in action in the language learning

process. Moreover, it has evidenced the key role of this structured, parallel asynchronous learning activity in promoting a sense of progress for ESOL learners. This goes beyond the scope of some UK studies which focus purely on practicalities of implementation and ability to access learning rather than the evaluation of the experience of language learning in action.

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7.6 Conceptual conclusions

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During this study, mobile blended learning has proven to be a valuable pedagogical tool for many reasons and justifies the great interest it has received in the literature in recent years (Chen et al, 2021). Whittaker's (2013a) argument that the blend should suit the context is very valid as the discussion has highlighted there are a variety of possible blend designs which are not all universally appropriate.

This study has not focused primarily on the blend of virtual/physical classroom, but rather the blend of physical classroom and complementary asynchronous elements. Indeed, it is crucial that this is complementary - parallel - for learners to derive maximum pedagogic benefit. The findings concur with the literature that benefits of mobile blended learning go beyond immediate content or language. It influences the meta-cognitive domain and enables the embedding of independent learning and digital skills in a way that could promote continued lifelong learning and enhance life chances, particularly for women.

However, the issue of developing spoken English remains allied to traditional forms of learning. The research has shown that the classroom is considered one of the main arenas for language input, rehearsal, negotiation and correction for many migrant learners. Speaking is a mandatory classroom activity, unaffected by lack of time or other demands for attention. However, other forms of asynchronous oral practice can be helpful; videos and recordings for rehearsal and memorisation of chunks of language; vlogging or computer-mediated interaction can assist if done as spontaneous utterances. However, promoting real-time authentic oral interaction as part of asynchronous learning may not be feasible in all cases. The research literature contains many examples of authentic spontaneous text-mediated communication (e.g. WhatsApp or email) but less frequently oral interaction, and the former was helpful and promoted learning in this study. Yet the issue remains of how to promote speaking beyond the classroom. Some in this study had a very positive experience of beyond class partner oral collaboration while others did not. It may be that to aim for asynchronous oral practice beyond lessons, and so benefit only those who avail themselves of the opportunity, is preferable to not aiming at all.

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The learners' subjective sense of linguistic improvement may not satisfy positivists looking for measurable increases in language learning, but should be accepted as their version of reality.

Perceived improvement and progress from learning beyond the classroom has been a goal of the study, and the asynchronous learning intervention achieved that in line with other studies from the literature.

Thorne (2003 in Ghazizdeh & Fatemipour, 2017) has argued that blended learning represents the next stage in the evolution of learning in which the innovative and the traditional coalesce. The conclusions above certainly concur and endorse the benefit of BL for multi-skill language practice. A reconceptualisation of learning materials as communicative, dynamic and productive is made possible by innovations in digital media and mobile devices. The current study revealed a steady but sure growth towards the use of new concepts or resources, many of which were deemed beneficial. Nevertheless, in the early 2020s, the era of robot teachers and the demise of printed resources seem some way off in the eyes of the participants, at least. Any declared paradigm shift in the nature of teaching and learning may be so, but only in certain regards - the activity and agency of the learner, the location of learning, digital materials, means and mode - while teacher guidance, wisdom and motivation remain foundational, alongside the physical classroom and the printed word. McCarthy (2016b:251) likewise believes that, 'the delicate fabric of the classroom interaction and its contribution to the fostering of interactional competence is best left undisturbed for those tasks where conversation, negotiation and collaboration are essential'.

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During the year participants requested more hours in the classroom but the option to increase these beyond the six currently in place is unlikely in the future. Therefore, the proposition of asynchronous mobile learning to extend GLH is attractive and made possible if it is truly 'guided' by the teacher in terms of activity, frequency, accessibility and mobility. However, the future of blended learning is both in the learners' and in the teachers' hands - teachers have to become conversant with the new technologies and design of blended learning; current learners need to adopt an open attitude and willingness to use their phones for learning and repurpose 'free' time for asynchronous study.

7.7 Recommendations for practice

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This research suggests and demonstrates several key recommendations for practice that could be usefully explored in wider contexts. These are offered with the understanding and consideration of contextual appropriateness, the needs of specific groups and communities and specific sites of learning.

1. This research has demonstrated the benefits of pedagogically robust, structured, level-appropriate asynchronous components to encourage learning beyond the classroom within the studied ESOL courses. It is recommended that ESOL providers undertake the same exploration, and trial similar and appropriate interventions.

2. Where extending course content in the asynchronous realm would be considered beneficial, careful prior planning is recommended to ensure the inclusion of extension tasks such as those outlined in the thesis, complementary to the course but suitable to be studied apart.

3. The research has highlighted learner views with regard to forms of synchronous and asynchronous blended ESOL provision suited to their educational needs and personal circumstances. A review of the extent and modes of blended delivery is recommended, and, where possible, soliciting learner views, in order to maintain learner-responsive ESOL provision.

4. The research has demonstrated that regular embedded digital and independent study skills practice is advantageous, in the learners' minds, both for immediate study and achieving future goals. An evaluation of the extent and promotion of such embedded learning on ESOL courses is encouraged.

5. The findings identify the key role of the combination of print and digital materials and multi-modal resources in providing multi-skill language practice. A review of the use of videos, recordings and apps and phone features on ESOL courses is recommended to maximise their affordances for language learning.

6. Throughout the research learners successfully used their own mobile phones in the classroom and beyond. Giving due consideration to privacy and cultural concerns, and technical support where required, a BYOD is recommended in ESOL delivery, with a focus on promoting the affordances of the mobility and features of smartphones for language learning.

7. Given the crucial role of the teacher in enacting and sustaining blended learning identified during the study, provision of suitable staff CPD opportunities in the planning and delivery of mobile blended learning is highly recommended.

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7.7 Contribution to knowledge¶

This research offers a unique, prolonged insight into a UK adult ESOL context and responds to Cochrane's (2013) identification of a significant gap in the literature for action research which evaluates the extended integration of mobile learning in tertiary sector provision. ¶

With its distinctive methodological approach and focus on learning not in, but beyond, the classroom, it has extended the understanding that structured asynchronous mobile blended learning is both suitable and beneficial for ESOL learners and has the capability to extend GLH on ESOL courses. It has made clear cohorts of predominantly female learners, The specific focus on design, blend ratio and resources for asynchronous learning contributes a deeper understanding of blended learning methodology suited to the UK ESOL context.¶

It contributes to knowledge on language-learning pedagogy and technology by demonstrating that mobile phone features and mobile-mediated activities can stimulate specific significant aspects of language practice and acquisition. ¶

It has evidenced the key role of structured, parallel asynchronous learning activity in promoting a sense of progress for ESOL learners. ¶

7.8 Can this thesis have an impact?

This study has demonstrated significant direct impact in a number of ways. First, it has brought a transformation in my own course design and delivery and, in growing measure, within my organisation. Secondly, the impact upon the participants' learning and skills has been clearly seen and, finally, a means of bridging the gap in GLH has been found. The goal of action research has been achieved.

In addition, the research has highlighted learner voice to a greater extent than recent studies based only on questionnaires or pre-test and post-test analysis. El Metoui & Graham-Brown (2021) emphasise the importance of consulting with learners regarding the future direction of ESOL and

such views have been foregrounded here. The focus on achieving trustworthiness makes this investigation of learner views and experiences more transferrable and can help support the same sort of developments in other ESOL delivery contexts. Above all, by encouraging organisations to experiment with extending GLH in a formalised way by asynchronous means, there is the potential to transform the dichotomous view of classroom/non-classroom learning and to appreciate the impact the blend of both has on enhancing ESOL delivery and learner's perception of improvement.

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7.9 Avenues for further research

Chapter 1 explained how the original proposal for the research focused on improvement of a single skill through a blended approach - reading. The decision then taken to broaden the scope has resulted in a study with a wider general reach and contribution to literature on mobile blended learning in ESOL and adult learning. However, there would now be benefit in narrowing the focus. A renewed investigation into promoting authentic oral interaction in an asynchronous setting could continue the progress made in this research; alternatively, concentration on developing reading skills would be useful, as this remains an area of weaker external exam results particularly in my organisation. In so doing, the cycle of action research continues and would counter Denscombe's (2017) observation that action research is rarely cyclical in practice.

As section 7.6 pointed out, these iterations of mobile blended learning were unique to my courses. Given that different examples of mobile blended ESOL courses currently exist within my organisation, delivered by various colleagues, finding if other cohorts in the organisation have similar attitudes and experiences to those in this study would be of interest. This could help determine further the extent to which a learner's experience of blended learning is contingent upon the teacher. Furthermore, studying blended learning currently, in my own or another classroom, would be of particular interest now that the unique pandemic conditions have given way to a return to normality and the former pandemic motivators are largely absent. Furthermore, the research highlighted several significant digital interventions not examined in this research which could be further implemented and tested utilising the current research design.

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Finally, participants at higher levels (E3 and L1) were chosen for this study whereas other research during the pandemic demonstrated a number of the issues related to blended learning with lower levels (E0). The literature spoke of how concentrated, more intensive learning opportunities resulted in greater progress amongst lower level and weaker learners (Collins & White,2012). The findings of this study could assist in devising mobile blended learning at E0 - E2 levels, which could then be investigated.

7.10 The personal research journey

Not only have the 28 participants in this study overcome hurdles and challenges, broadened their skills and expanded their understanding. This applies to myself as a teacher/researcher. Organising and managing my own learning at a distance and collaborating via Zoom or Teams was novel initially. Designing blended learning, teaching and collecting data simultaneously during the pandemic was demanding and tiring. Understanding and appreciating differing research paradigms at a much deeper level, the need for establishing trustworthiness in research practice and the ethics of working with bilinguals have been new areas of knowledge to grapple with. I was made to engage with new technology to enact the study and developed new skills in the process.

Similar to the learners, the endeavour has been independent, yet guided. Without regular input and supervision, I may have floundered. Introduction to invaluable research methods and study tools, such as an annotated bibliography, greatly facilitated the research and will remain significant in my on-going academic life. As one learner stated, 'The class give you the way how you can study at home.' *(Learner 22)* and the practitioner research programme certainly did that.

Finally, the process of doctoral research and study has afforded the opportunity to actually share the participants' perspective and understand better what it is to be a learner studying in a new way and likewise find that 'in searching you learn more'(*L17*). The chapter closes, as it started, by my echoing words from another protagonist of the research,

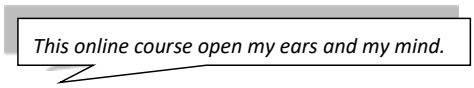

Figure 29 Excerpt from a participant interview. Learner 8 (E3 / Female / Ghana-Italy)

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Participant table

Participant number	*Modes completed in academic year: SL speaking + listening R reading W writing*	*M/F*	*Age in 2020*	*Nationality*	*Job status*	*Interview Dec (ID) Focus Group Mar (FG) Interview Jul (IJ)*	*ILP data*	*Learnt online before 2020*
Cohort 1 Entry 3								
1.	Online SL R Blended W (4 weeks only)	F	30-39	Bangladeshi /Italian	T1+ 2 NE T3 E	ID/FG	Yes	Y
2.	Online SL R Blended W	F	40-49	Bangladeshi	Self-employed	FG/IJ	No	N
3.	Online SL R Blended W	F	30-39	Bangladeshi	Volunteer	ID/FG/IJ	N	N
4.	Online SL R	F	30-39	Bangladeshi /Spanish	Not employed	ID/FG	Y	N
5.	Online SL R Blended W	F	30-39	Nigerian /Spanish	Employed	FG/IJ	N	N
6.	Online SL	F	30-39	Bangladeshi	Not known	None	Y	N
7.	Online SL R Blended W	F	30-39	Bangladeshi /Spanish	Self-employed	ID/FG/IJ	N	N
26.	Online R Blended W	F	30-39	Bangladeshi	Not employed	IJ	N	N
Cohort 2 Entry 3								
8.	Online W	F	50-59	Ghanaian /Italian	Employed	ID	N	N
9.	Online W	F	30-39	Albanian	Not employed	ID	Y	N
10.	Online W Blended SL	M	40-49	Egyptian /Italian	Employed	IJ	N	N
11.	Online W	F	30-39	Egyptian	Volunteer	N/A	N	Y
12.	Online W R	F	40-49	Polish	Employed	ID/FG	N	Y
13.	Online W Blended SL	F	40-49	Greek	Employed	IJ	N	Y
14.	Online W	F	50-59	Somali	Employed	None	N	N
15.	Online W	F	30-39	Nigerian	Not employed	None	N	N
24.	Online R Blended SL	M	40-49	Bangladeshi /Italian	Employed	N/A?	N	N

25.	**Online R**	**F**	**30-39**	**Bangladeshi /Italian**	**Not employed**	**FG**	**N**	**N**
27.	**Blended SL**	**F**	**40-49**	**Brazilian**	**Employed**	**IJ**	**Y**	**Y**
28.	**Blended SL**	**F**	**30-39**	**Polish**	**Not employed**	**IJ**	**N**	**N**
Cohort 3 Level 1								
16.	**Online R SL Blended W**	**F**	**20-29**	**Bangladeshi**	**Not employed**	**FG/IJ**	**N**	**Y**
17.	**Online R SL Blended W**	**F**	**50-59**	**Moroccan**	**Not employed**	**ID/IJ**	**N**	**Y**
18.	**Online R SL Blended W**	**F**	**50-59**	**Spanish**	**Employed**	**ID/FG/IJ**	**N**	**Y**
19.	**Online R SL Blended W**	**F**	**30-39**	**Bangladeshi**	**Not employed**	**FG/IJ**	**Y**	**N**
20.	**Online R SL Blended W**	**M**	**40-49**	**Bangladeshi /Italian**	**Employed**	**FG/IJ**	**N**	**Y**
21.	**Online R SL Blended W**	**F**	**30-39**	**Pakistani**	**Not employed**	**FG/IJ**	**Y**	**N**
22.	**Online R SL**	**M**	**40-49**	**Moroccan**	**Employed**	**ID**	**N**	**N**
23.	**Online R SL Blended W**	**F**	**40-49**	**Sri Lankan**	**Not employed**	**ID**	**Y**	**N**

Appendix 2 Listening Development materials

E3	**Listening Development** Listen to the recording at: **Website:** https://padlet.com/liz_wood2/2h9xfgh4axtk **password:** esol **Padlet App: (don't sign in)** continue as guest / paste URL / password: esol **QR Code:** Scan with QR code reader or iPhone camera. Open URL.	

Phoning about symptoms	Recording :DfES Skills for Life, E3, Unit 3, p7 Act A

Section A. Listen to the recording without stopping it. Listen three times. Answer the questions.

1. Who is the telephone medical advice for? .....
2. How old is she? .....
3. What is her problem? .....
4. What symptoms does she have? .....
5. What does the man say the problem is? .....
6. What tablets should she take first? .....
7. Where should she buy the tablets? .....
8. What should she do in future? .....
9. Who is the caller talking to? Tick one answer.

a) a chemist/pharmacist ❑

b) an NHS Direct advisor ❑

c) a GP ❑

---------- **fold here when you listen to section A** ----------

Section B.

When people speak at normal speed, they say some important words strongly and clearly but less important words sound weaker and quicker because parts of the word sound are missing, changed or joined together with other sounds.

Some of the clear, stressed words are given to you here. Fill in the gaps with the weaker or quicker words you can hear. Listen to the recording as many times as you want.

The man has a standard English accent and the lady has a West Midlands accent.

Nurse: Well..... migraine. ..... give..... ..... paracetamol now .....go ..... chemist's later - ..... tablets especially ..... migraine. Of course, ... rest, preferably..... .....darkened room.

Martha: ..... take paracetamol now ..... then ..... chemist's.

Nurse: That's right. ..... remember ..... condition..... worse.....contact ..... GP.

Liz Hulford Wood

Appendix 3 Participant consent form – physical

Mobile blended learning: How can it extend guided learning hours outside the ESOL classroom?

Invitation

I want to invite you to take part in some research about learning more English outside the classroom using your mobile phone. I want to help you learn English better and quicker - that is why I am researching this topic.

What do I want to know?

You will study as normal on your course during the year. You will tell me your opinions about the work you do when you are not in the classroom (e.g. online homework, the app, watching videos, partner work). I want to know what you like, dislike, what makes you want to study more and what you think helps you to learn more English. I want to know about how you use your phone and your study habits.

How will I get that information?

I will listen to what you tell me in class. I will do some interviews and small group chats (focus groups). I will look at what you write in your ILP. I will look at how many hours you work on the app and how you use the videos.

I need your permission to do this.

- **This research needs your honest opinions. There are no wrong answers.**
- **When I write about your answers, I will say 'A student said ...'.I will never use your name.**
- **I will record the interviews and focus groups because I can't remember everything you say and I need to listen again.**
- **I will record you when you talk together on Zoom without me there and also when I am there.**
- **I will store recordings on my private computer and delete it when the research is over.**
- **I will write down some of the things you say in class that show me your ideas and opinions.**
- **I will see how many hours you spend using the app and how often you watch videos.**

- **I understand that I don't have to take part if I don't want to. It is voluntary. ❑**
- **I understand what I am doing in this research and I am happy to take part. ❑**
- **I give my permission to be recorded ❑ use my ILP comments ❑ take my photo ❑**

Your signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix 4 Participant consent form – online example

Learner online interview questions December 2020

This research is about mobile blended learning. That means using your phone to learn English outside the classroom.

This research needs your honest opinions. There are no right and wrong answers.

When I write about your answers, I will say 'A student said ...'. I will never use your name.

I will store this recording on my private computer and delete it when the research is over.

Are you happy to continue with the interview?

Appendix 5 Excerpt from a transcript

Transcript Rec 9 Learners 1,2,4,5 Focus Group 1 E3 Reading 2080A

(4) Yes me
LHW Any reason why you didn't use the app? Sometimes too busy? What was different this term?
(5) It's not that I'm too busy. Sometimes we forgot. Sometimes not be in the mood so that's the situation for me.
(4) I'm a little bit busy because when my children's school start, now I cook every day because my husband, my children they are every day fresh eat that's why I don't have is lots of time. Cook and homework and cleaning every day and little bit come back is tension. Sometimes I don't feel well, that's why. Sometime when I feel well, then I do the apps.

28.29

LHW What about you (2)? What's your feeling about the app?
(2) I feeling is good.(1) I didn't understand that.
(1) Liz means that how do you feel is English app?
LHW Yeah, is it helpful for you?
(2) Yeah helpful.
LHW Do you want to use it a lot or only sometimes?
(2) Only sometimes.
LHW That's fine. Why only sometimes (2) too busy? Too difficult?
(2) I'm also lost a lot of time. Most of the time I'm not well but I'm free then I do apps and I will try.
LHW And (1) what about you?
(1) Compared to last term I use more less this app but is helpful. Maybe I feel is this term you give lots of homework so we are always busy. Every day one hour I spend on homework. I feel like that but I try my best but when is school, early to bed so that's maybe one point of less use.
LHW So let's look at number three. There are videos that recap things we've done in class- just explain a little bit more. How do you feel about these videos?
(1) Who can start? Can I? This is very helpful for me. Sometimes we finish homework, stuck somewhere. You nicely explain your videos and we tap these videos and sort out my problem. It's very helpful. And I did 2, 3 times that. And exam practice, I saw that video and pre-fixing and suffixing.
(2) Lots of class, maybe five class I'm missing. Suffix, prefix I don't understand. Then I watched YouTube then I little bit understand.
LHW So did you see my YouTube video or different YouTube video?
(2) Your video and another ....grammar
LHW So you understand a little bit better now (2)

Appendix 6 Excerpt from research observation diary

Induction week	Some of the issues coming up are • how to keep things as simple and organised as possible for learners to access work • How to help learners get online and use Zoom on their phones - make pdf with screenshots and send out before the class/have screen shot pictures up on Zoom to be able to see where microphone is as they look at the screen - but often can't see the screen when they log on. Has to be one image only and very big. Probably need to watch a short video first. • most learners are using their phones for the Zoom calls even if they also have a laptop • a good number of learners did not do the lockdown course so are coming to online learning for the first time • how to adapt things for mobile viewing - website (enlarge the screen using magnify function on browser page/make the font as large as possible on Word/PPT documents • Some learners were having difficulty with the link on the hyperdoc but it worked on my phone - so may have been learner error? Had to post the links separately on Padlet also. • I sent a Zoom tutorial You Tube video - not sure how many viewed it or what helped to get them on Zoom - sent screenshot but not sure if they helped. • Learners still asking 'how many classes' we have a week
Week 1	• Not having done online classes before I don't think come of them get the idea that they need to be looking at the work they and get on with it. Perhaps they are waiting for an email with the work. It's good to have the class then the tutorial to be able to check how they are getting on initially. • It will be important to show them what to do with their feedback. Maybe they read the email and look at the attachment then don't know how to put that email in a folder. Part of the learner training. But good to also give feedback face to face during a tutorial. Also good to show them what to do with feedback and how to learn from it. Do a PPT about it in the main class. • One of the key things teachers are talking about for teaching online is how to minimise the amount of prep time setting and marling work. • At the **East of England NATECLA forum** there was the idea that blended learning may even be more work than fully online learning because there is all the classroom lessons to prepare and then all the online work as well. This is especially the case of resources for online work that suit ESOL learners are few and far between or are there but not known to the teacher who has to find them. One teacher talked about using the course book 'Life' by National Geographic because it already has online blended resources built in. Really English is also a way to cut down the work load by having off the shelf resources.
Week 2	• Thinking about ways to give feedback to learners in a meaningful way and how they can take it on board. This is true for face to face teaching also. There is much learner training needed around the aspect of how to implement feedback. Looking online for videos that are aimed at learners - they are quite hard to find for adults. They seem to exist for children of primary age but not adults. University students yes - but not those who are in the lifelong learning sector. • I got an n email about the affective side of learning in an online setting. Perhaps more needs to be done to keep the learning face to face and personal - so maybe more feedback videos by teachers. • Also the aspect of where learners keep the feedback - need training in how to organise their emails and have a folder with the work emails and the feedback and important documents.

Appendix 7 Excerpt from simplified member check findings document

Liz Hulford Wood PhD Research September 2020 - July 2021

Research findings: What did I find out from my research?

During the year I interviewed you on your own, in pairs or groups. I looked at your ILP comments. I could see how much work you did on the 'Learn English Now ' app and how often and how much you watched of the 'YouTube' videos. I looked at the questionnaire you filled in at the end of the year. I listened to what you said about learning online while we were in the classroom - online or in college. After checking everything, there were 12 important things to learn from your opinions and experiences. **DO YOU AGREE WITH WHAT I FOUND??**

Finding 1: Prolonged engagement with asynchronous (and synchronous) learning develops both digital capabilities and capacity for independent learning amongst participants, irrespective of ethnic background and gender.

This means that all of you, men and women, of any nationality, were able to improve your digital skills and skills for learning English on your own because you practised them regularly during the year.

Finding 2: Asynchronous mobile blended learning is an appropriate and desirable mode of ESOL provision for the vast majority of participants.

This means that all of you, apart from one person, said that a mix of studying English in the classroom and also studying at home using Padlet was the best way to study ESOL in the future.

Finding 3: A small number of participants would appreciate a blend design incorporating a synchronous element.

A few of you said that you enjoyed lessons at home on Zoom because it fitted round work or childcare and you would like a mix of classroom lessons, Zoom and study at home using Padlet in the future.

Finding 4: Learner mobile phones are suitable devices for engagement with asynchronous learning.

Nearly everyone used a mobile phone to study during the year. You were able to use it for different types of study tasks and so a mobile phone is suitable to use for learning English outside the classroom.

Finding 5: Videos, recordings, the app and phone features facilitate language input and motivate practise and extend study to the home and informal spaces.

You said that the app, videos and listening recordings were the most useful and easy-to-use tools to help you learn more English and motivate you to study more at home and when you were outside your home.

Appendix 8 Member check responses table

Member checks	
Participant number	**Participant comments**
Participant 5	Yes, everything is fine.
Participant 16	Yes I agree with the things you found and I am happy to help your university research.
Participant 17	Yes, I would like to read the transcript of my interview and my group interview and see the ILP comments that I used, so please send them to me and I will be very grateful. Regarding the research that you did during the pandemic, I agree with everything in it. As for. the ninth point, this is true as the role of the teacher is very important to push us to work hard and remind us of the weekly homework tasks and make sure that we have done them - otherwise we might have studied less or forgotten to do our work.
Participant 12	Yes, I agree with you that working in a pairs group was an interesting experience, because everyone was from a different country, everyone has a different accent. I liked learning online. I agree with your 12 points. I think all my life I will remember the times when I was learning online but also in the classroom. I really had a good time with you as a teacher and colleagues.
Participant 1	Yes, everything is fine.

Appendix 9 Questionnaire – Using your phone to learn outside the classroom