ILG research Bursary Proforma

April 2015.

(NB all boxes expand) (See pages 3 & 4 for instructions)

1. **Project Title (maximum 10 words)**

ESOL learners: Managing information, managing language, managing lives.

2. **Principal Investigator**

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3. **Co-Investigator(s)**

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4. **Partner(s)**

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5. **Summary of the project – If the project is funded, ILG will use this in any publicity material or announcements. (Maximum 300 words)**

This research will explore ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners' abilities in managing their everyday information. ESOL learners are people who have settled in the UK and are learning English as part of adult basic skills. They are important because there are a significant number of migrants in the UK who lack functional English, and because ability in English has been seen as central both for social integration and unlocking individual capabilities (Paget & Stevenson, 2014). There has been limited previous research about the information literacy of ESOL learners although there is a growing interest in information research on migrants more generally. Equally while information literacy has had little impact on the practice of ESOL teachers, digital literacy is of increasing importance in the sector. This convergence suggests that further research in this area will be mutually beneficial.

This project is a collaboration between an ESOL professional and an information researcher and draws on expertise from the academic and community learning sectors. The outcomes of this research are therefore relevant to both the ESOL and information communities.

The principal investigator's doctoral research suggests we need to understand more about how ESOL learners, particularly those with low levels of education and literacy, manage information in their everyday lives. This

project will therefore explore ESOL learners' ability to manage information through participant- led research where we work with a small number of ESOL learners and their households. A series of home visits mean we will develop an in-depth understanding of their information management literacy practices. We will then use our research to offer these households personalised advice about their information management. The final stage will be to build from this to provide more general guidance to ESOL teachers and IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) workers.

6. **Risk assessment – Please state any risks you envisage on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being a high risk**

We will seek ethical approval for the project through the University of Sheffield's ethics committee and follow their general policies on conducting research in areas such as informed consent, confidentiality and secure data management, to mitigate the risks outlined below. In addition to this, checks and balances are provided by the expertise of LLSC (Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities) who have both substantive policies and many years of experience in working with vulnerable groups. Both researchers also have professional experience of working with ESOL learners, have current DBS checks and have attended relevant training.

Risks to researchers: 3

This research potentially compromises our personal safety as we will be visiting participants in their homes. To mitigate this we will not make unaccompanied visits. Both researchers also have professional experience of visiting clients in their homes and so the risks are commensurate with their working practice. In addition to this we will be working with participants who are known to LLSC as they already attend classes.

Risks to participants: 3

Our participants can be seen as vulnerable for a number of reasons. Most significantly there is the difficulty of gaining informed consent from this particular group of learners. The ethics of researching those with little education is profoundly challenging as they are unlikely to have a concept of what research is. The information sheet will be read to participants in Arabic and their consent will be witnessed rather than recorded in writing. We will check participants' understanding and will renegotiate consent at each visit.

We recognise that newly arrived refugees or asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable and so will not engage people from these groups in the project unless they have been in the UK for more than 12 months.

As our research involves households we may also include children as our research participants. We will seek both their consent and their parent/carer's consent and will only talk to children in the presence of their parent/carer.

We will be visiting people in their ESOL classes to recruit them for the project. There is then a risk that participants may feel coerced into the project which we will mitigate by careful explanation of our research.

We recognise it is potentially very intrusive to visit people's homes to research their information management. We realise that people's documents are very revealing of their lives; a letter from the hospital could show an embarrassing medical condition, a bank statement could reveal debt and a passport will reveal immigration status. However we will mitigate this risk by the participant- led nature of our research. Participants will only show us what they choose to show us. We will also exclude documents from our research if they contain information about someone who has not explicitly consented to take part in our research.

Failure to recruit or retain participants: 1

We have an extensive pool of potential participants to draw on and do not expect to have difficulty in recruiting. Failure to retain participants over the length of the project is a more significant risk. Some of our participants may have external pressures that mean they cannot continue the research (such as having to move area or a change in caring responsibilities). We have therefore recruited a larger number of families than we anticipate needing (some funds of knowledge projects draw on only one or two households). In this way we feel we have secured the viability of our project.

Safeguarding issues: 3

It is possible that as we are visiting people's homes we will become aware of safeguarding issues. If this occurs then we will use LLSC's safeguarding policies. There is a very low likelihood of this but we have given it a relatively high risk level as the consequences could be severe. We will maintain the confidentiality of participants in all circumstances except those relating to safeguarding of vulnerable adults or children.

Failure to meet aims and objectives: 3

The emergent nature of this project, and in particular the fact that it is participant- led, means that our aims and objectives may have to be re-evaluated. However we feel that as research in this area is so limited our findings will still be useful even if the focus changes. We will use our experienced research partners as critical friends to monitor and advise us as the project progresses.

7. Stakeholders

ESOL teachers working in community learning and beyond

IAG workers/ Learning Champions

Community Learning providers, including Sheffield City Council and local grassroots organisations

ESOL learners

Aspiring Communities Together (previously Yemeni Community Association) – a local organisation that provides a range of services to the community, including advocacy for Arabic speakers.

8. Aims and Objectives

In our research we will explore what strategies the participants already use to organise their information, and then at the end of the project build on their knowledge to suggest how they might adapt their existing practices to the demands of the society they now live in, as well as provide guidance to service providers.

Research question: Explore the information literacy practices that ESOL learners are employing in their everyday information management, within their household.

Objectives

1. Make recommendations for individual households on how to manage their information more effectively.

We will then use these individual prescriptions to make more general recommendations to the ESOL and community learning sectors.

2. Make recommendations for IAG workers on how they can improve the service they offer to ESOL learners. The community learning sector faces increasing pressure to make efficiency savings. If we can provide guidance on how ESOL learners prefer to access information, and what they do with information they have received, then our findings could be of real value to the sector.

3. Inform development of ESOL teaching resources on information management. This is relevant to the OFSTED key judgement area of Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare, and the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum. The understanding and assimilation of information is necessary to facilitate and support language learning, but also to scaffold the autonomous use of that language outside of the classroom, in situations that are pertinent to each individual learner.

4. A further objective will be to use this as a scoping project, particularly in testing the methodological approach, for an application to ESRC/AHRC with Sheila Webber as principal investigator where the information management of ESOL learners can be explored more widely. In this way we are working with communities of learners that we know particularly those from Yemen and Syria. This means that we will be able to test our methods with learners where we have already developed mutual trust. We will then aim to extend the research to communities that may be more challenging.

9. Milestones

Activity	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6
Literature review	■			■	■	
Complete and submit ethics application	■					
Recruit participants		■				
Visits to families. We will make at least 3 visits to each household and talk to a minimum of one person in each household.		■	■	■	■	
Write blog posts			■	■	■	
Analysis of data collected		■	■	■		
Produce prescription for families				■		
Workshop for IAG workers					■	
Workshop for ESOL tutors					■	
Write and submit journal article						■
Final report						■

10. Description (Maximum 1,000 words)

Background and rationale

There has been increasing interest from Library and Information Studies on the information literacy and more generally the information behaviour of migrants and how this relates to their settlement, most notably from Australia (Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson & Qayyum, 2013) and North America (Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2010) . Research from within the UK is however much more limited. ESOL learners are an important migrant group as language is widely seen as a key driver for settlement. However despite definitions of ESOL learning and information literacy having similar outcomes in term of individual empowerment and wider social inclusion (Grover, 2006: Garner, 2005) their relationship has not been widely explored (Elmore, 2015). Equally while information management is recognised as an aspect of information literacy it is also generally under-researched particularly in the context of the everyday. Previous research on personal information management (McKenzie & Davies, 2012) suggests that is a fruitful area for further investigation.

While our interest in the ability of ESOL learners to manage everyday information comes from our experience of research and practice in this field, the need for research in this area has also been recognised more widely by information researchers (Oliver, 2016). This ability can be seen as central if learners are to successfully make lives in their new communities whether this is defined as active citizenship, employment or more general social integration. This is particularly true when learners have little formal schooling and also have to adapt to a society where written literacies are dominant (Richards, 2015).

ESOL teachers have to manage multi-lingual classes and rarely have access to interpreters. Transferring information to learners is complicated and demands a lot of effort, yet is crucial for the successful running of classes, for exams and in order to maximise the learning experience. Resources and information that can improve the transmission of information, as well as enable learners to manage that information, could have a transformative effect on the efficiency of language learning.

Recruitment of participants

We have approval from LLSC to recruit five learners from their ESOL provision. Our participants will be Arabic speakers and will include people from settled communities as well as newer arrivals such as refugees. Research has shown that language and literacy remains a barrier for many people from settled communities, particularly women (Darby, Farooqi & Lai, 2016) and so we do not want to exclude this group. We have chosen Arabic speakers for practical reasons and not because we expect to make any generalisations about culture or

language. We expect the Arabic speakers will have a range of countries of origin, including Yemen and Syria. We will also select participants who have had little formal schooling.

Methodology

We will use funds of knowledge as our methodology (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2004) to explore how learners are managing their information. This methodology focuses research on households and builds on families' existing knowledge and practices to develop a curriculum for particular groups of learners. Caroline Norman has already investigated the use of this methodology in relation to language learning, in a small action research project. This approach has not been used to our knowledge by information literacy researchers.

Data collection

The two investigators will visit participants' households to explore their existing information management strategies. We will take an ethnographic approach, making notes and drawings and, if participants are happy, taking photographs. We will make at least three visits to each household. We will ask participants what information is important to them, what strategies they currently employ and what challenges they face in managing this information. We will involve all members of the household who are happy to take part in the research but our focus will be on the participant recruited through their ESOL class.

Data analysis

We will analyse the data we have collected in a two-step process. Firstly we will analyse the information we have collected from individual families so we can understand each household as a unit of analysis and offer them their personal prescription. Secondly we will analyse across the families using a process of open coding which we will use to generate common themes.

Results

We will then build from our analysis to offer families their prescription. This may be how to preserve precious photographs or artefacts from their home countries, to collate the evidence of their employment history, to manage the correspondence from their child's school or the documents from their own learning. We will then use these prescriptions in combination with the themes we have identified to provide the more general guidance to service providers.

The researchers

Jessica Elmore is in the third year of her doctoral research which is a case study exploring the information practices of ESOL learners. She has previously worked as a learning champion. She has also published research on home educating families which involved visiting participants in their homes to understand family information literacy practices.

Caroline Norman is an ESOL teacher with extensive experience of working with ESOL learners who have low levels of literacy and education. She has recently completed a Masters in Education and English as an Additional Language, and manages a language and orientation project involving new arrivals from Syria, Congo and Ethiopia. She is the manager of an innovative ESOL programme with the Slovakian Roma community.

11. Dissemination strategy (maximum 500 words)

One of the major strengths of this proposal is in its collaboration. We have the opportunity not only to draw on expertise from the university and community learning sectors but also to disseminate through both these sectors.

As our research progresses we will contribute blogposts to an ESOL community learning blog. Our partner Sheila Webber will also post updates on her widely read blog http://information-literacy.blogspot.co.uk/. We will use these blogs as well as mailing lists and other social media to communicate progress in our project.

On completion of our research we will continue to disseminate our findings to both sectors.

A central part of our dissemination strategy will be two workshops we will deliver in Sheffield. The workshop for ESOL teachers will include presentation of the resources that we have developed. We will share these resources and invite further development to ensure their sustainability. There will be a workshop for IAG workers, and possibly for senior leadership at LLSC.

The project's findings will have implications for other communities, and the resources will be transferrable to work with other Sheffield City Council projects such as a large DCLG funded Roma project and refugee support.

There are also several networks through which we can disseminate our findings locally, regionally and nationally. These include the regional interest group of NALDIC (National Association for Language Development In the Curriculum), NATECLA (National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults) and the Sheffield ESOL Forum which brings together providers from across the city. There are also less formal groups using social media such as Action for ESOL and the ESOL Research Group. The researchers have contacts in all of these organisations and groups.

Case studies will be an appropriate and accessible way to disseminate the findings to all of the above and to the learners themselves.

We will also share our findings with the information community through publication of a journal article, a summary of our findings for the Information Literacy Group website and on Sheila Webber's blog. The resources developed for ESOL teachers will be also be shared with relevant information professionals (for example Further Education librarians).

All outputs will be released using Creative Commons licenses and shared as open educational resources.

12. Outputs

We will produce a prescription for each household. This will be led by participants. It could include provision of photo albums, folders, notice boards, recommendations of digital applications. It could also be communicated by different methods; as a story, a video or a visit.

We will produce teaching and learning resources for ESOL teachers based on the prescriptions for individual families

We will develop two workshops that we can deliver to other stakeholders once the project has ended

We will submit a journal article to a relevant publication within the Information field

13. Evaluation strategy

We will keep individual field diaries reflecting on the progress of the research. These will focus on recording methodological challenges, changes to our project's objectives and emerging themes for analysis.

We will also submit a short reflective report to the ILG and our partners at four milestones namely on completion of initial visits to households, completion of our analysis, completion of the final visit to households where we deliver their prescription and after delivery of the workshops.

We will invite households to evaluate the prescriptions we provide for them. This process for this will be negotiated with the individuals but could involve conversation either with their own ESOL teacher or with the researchers.

We will invite ESOL teachers to evaluate and develop the resources we produce. We will also ask all workshop participants to provide structured feedback.

We will hold meeting with all partners on completion of the project to evaluate how far our objectives have been met.

14. Financial breakdown

20 days work over 6 months for both investigators at £100 a day: £4000
5 days work for interpreter at £70 a day: £350
Delivery of two workshops (refreshments and room bookings): £150
Expenses for participating families (refreshment and resources estimated at £50 per family): £250
Total requested: £4750

15. References

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