Case Studies

The project followed an action research approach which in this case meant implementation of a key idea centred around the introduction of audio recordings and a review of the impact on teaching and learning. Two classes were used as a basis for the action research.

Case Study 1

Case study 1 will consider the processes that supported the classroom practice of developing the audio recordings, upskilling lecturers to access the resource in class and the Head of Department's generation of the materials.

The original plan was to work with Performing Arts students to create the texts as part of an engaging induction exercise. This would also continue to promote positive English and maths links to vocational areas. However, there were challenges with the logistics of implementing such an activity within the induction timeframe.

The 2 lecturers were able to identify suitable texts for recording rapidly. As a result, the Head of Department (having a background in audio technology) was able to secure simple resources in order to create the audio files and ensure they were readily accessible.

Initially the recording of texts proved challenging. The reading and editing of the texts proved time-consuming. Background noise was a regular interruption as was some unfamiliarity with the software. Concerns about the overall quality of the audio resulted in several re-recordings that also contributed to the time factor.

Once several of the recordings were created there was some staff CPD to ensure the team could confidently access the recordings and play them in their classrooms. This involved setting up audio equipment and identifying a shared space online where everyone could access the material.

This proved to be key as increased lecturer confidence ensured they were more willing to engage with the material. Equally, over time the purpose of the audio recordings evolved as the lecturers identified more uses for them.

Initial feedback was positive overall however there was key feedback received on a regular basis that had a significant impact on how the material was recorded:

- The pace of the recording was too slow.
- The voice used was 'boring'.
- Many students fed back that the lack of background noise was distracting.

After taking the feedback on board the texts were reworked with background noise (such as news beds and environmental sounds like winds and waves) to create more immersion and interaction with the recordings.

Feedback was more positive after this alteration and student engagement visibly improved according to the lecturers.

As students and lecturers became more comfortable with integrating the resources into lesson the recordings evolved into a both a flipped learning exercise and a focussing resource prior to a timed writing assessment.

Using the audio recordings to focus students before the writing task proved especially successful, with good feedback from both students and lecturers.

With regards to specific progress, one lecturer fed back that there was 3% improvement in mock exams results from September to November 19 and the other lecturer reported that her 2 ESOL students had improved by a minimum of 4 marks.

Other observations included that overall, most students were able to complete the written exercise when compared to previous tasks and that attendance did not appear to impacted by this project.

Head of Department and lecturers both found the project to be engaging and are keen to manage the logistics to ensure more resources and a greater range of talent are used for next academic year.

What Went Well ...

- Students fed back that audio felt more natural than using the reading pens.
- Students explained that they could understand some complicated words when they were read out because they did not understand how to pronounce them.
- Lecturers noticed that ESOL students improved their mock exam scores once the recorded texts were introduced. They fed back that they felt more familiar with the texts.
- Some students reported that could focus more on the text by listening to the audio.

Even Better If ...

- Greater variety of voice talent needed to keep students interested.
- Can take a long time to produce to material, making it challenging to work to deadlines.
- More integration into college platform software and system (Google Sites / Classroom)

Case Study 2

Case study 2 will look at the impact on the teaching role in the classroom.

One of the key focuses of the project was aimed at reviewing the changes that the 2 lecturers implemented in their teaching and learning approaches as they introduced the audio recordings into their lessons.

There were 2 focus points for the lecturers:

1. "What went well" in the project,
2. and "Even better if" ?

Initially, the audio recordings were played as part of the lesson either prior to reading the text or part of reading the text itself. This proved to be an interesting activity as an introduction to the project and set the scene.

However, the activity quickly developed and the two lecturers found that an element of flipped learning could be introduced by referring to the texts in the lesson prior to which they will be studied. This allowed the students to access to the text (as an audio file or as a reading document)

By releasing the material early there has been positive feedback from the students who need more time to process large amounts of text effectively. This has enabled a flipped learning approach although has required more planning on the part of the two lecturers to ensure material was prepared for the right lessons.

Additionally, a second successful adaptation included revising the teaching and learning approach to setting up and supporting an in class practice assessment.

As part of the practice exam week in November, the audio recording was played for the first 15 minutes of the lesson. This activity appeared to help focus students and acted as a good starter activity to engage the class to focus on the assessment.

What Went Well ...

- Some students explained it was a novel and engaging way to connect to texts.
- Students that had not enjoy reading felt this was an activity that included them.
- Less confident students could access the audio for clarification instead of asking for support.
- Students that read slowly felt they could access the text quicker than if they were reading on their own.
- Material was accessible via lots of media

Even Better If ...

- Initial issues with the accessing the technological resources to record.
- Still have preference for tutor to read aloud the material and clarify points throughout
- Greater adoption is necessary to have continued impact through the academic year.