

Case Study 2 – Dedicated reading in Functional English teaching

The students read the assigned novel, *One of Us is Lying* by Karen McManus within their designated reading sessions every week. The novel is to be completed by the end of the academic year. These reading project windows are once a week at the beginning of the timetabled reading session and last for approximately 15 minutes including group reviews.

All the students involved in the project are a mix of 10 Entry Level 3 and Level 1 Functional Skills English students.

Evidence of learner progress is formulated by the following:

- When students have read for ten minutes, brief verbal reviews of the story so far for each are offered for peer group discussion.
- The tutor guides the micro reviews - this will often involve a brief enquiry into elemental structure, character, and language analysis.
- Any relevant applications to current coursework topics and/or examination preparation are also flagged and discussed.
- Peer reviews of the story are exchanged, discussed and summarised by the tutor at the end of the reading project session.

Starting points of view were initially, and unsurprisingly, tepid and quite negative. This was largely due to students not belonging to, or feeling they belonged to, any type of obvious reading culture. Subsequently, the enthusiasm for reading as an activity under any reasoning was seen as laborious and of little utility to them.

Impact

The initial impact of the reading project has been overwhelmingly positive. We started the project at the beginning of the academic year. This began with an initial group discussion about their reading histories:

1. Are you currently a regular reader?
2. Were you read to when you were younger?
3. Can social media be considered a legitimate reading platform?
4. Is there a consensus about the activity of reading among your demographic?
5. What obvious beneficial applications exist with the activity of reading?

As time has gone by, there has been and continues to be incremental changes in attitudes to the activity of reading by the students. This is evidenced in the practical activity itself as well as the feedback that follows each short reading session. For example, when the students are reading, a palpable sense of concentration and interest in what they are undertaking can be objectively monitored and assessed – tutor observation/Q&A and reviews offered up by the students individually and as a small core group. The students will complete short written summative reviews once they have completed reading the novel in the lead up to their exams towards the end of the academic year.