



WHEN NEEDS TRANSLATE TO ACTION: THE CREATION AND DELIVERY OF THE LANGUAGE BUDDIES PROJECT

LEEDS CITY COLLEGE

Florence Drayson, June 2023



The Language Buddies project has been operating at Leeds City College since September 2022 and was set up and run by Youth Social Action Apprentice, Florence Drayson. Over eight months, eight students have gained leadership experience and over forty students have benefited from the project. The project aims to provide more opportunities for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students to practise their English through a buddy system where they could interact and engage with native English-speaking students in a fun and relaxed environment.

The idea for Language Buddies initially came about through ESOL listening groups. Florence is a member of the College of Sanctuary steering group, which has been working towards making the college a more welcoming place for refugee students and towards College of Sanctuary status. ESOL listening groups were performed at the ESOL campuses, as they have the highest proportion of refugee students in the college. The aim of the groups was to gain more of an insight into the issues affecting the students.

The students expressed that they wanted more chances to practice English outside their lessons.

Florence had experience teaching English as a foreign language, therefore felt she had the skills to assist in delivering a project to address this issue. She came up with the idea for Language Buddies - a project in which native English speaking students would run activities and events for ESOL students to practice English, socialise and learn new skills. This acts as a great form of

social action as it is clearly addressing an identified need.

Florence advertised the opportunity to students at her campus; she put up posters and shared the opportunity with tutors, particularly in public

services, health and social care and childcare departments, as it gave them the chance to learn more about working with people with English as a second language. Florence then trained the students in facilitating the events, including tips and tricks on how to speak to best engage with people learning English. They also discussed events and activities that they could run.



Students sharing a meal at the cooking event.

"I took part in the project because I came to the UK when I was 5 and didn't speak the language, so I know what it can be like. It has absolutely been a worthwhile experience and I would get every person in my class to do it, if I could."

**Igor Mieczkowski, Music
Production student**



The buddies then started by going over to the ESOL campuses and running activities such as games and challenges. They were able to get to know the students and build up relationships. They continued running these sessions throughout the year but also developed and ran two larger events; a cooking event and a music event.

24 ESOL students attended the cooking event and created dishes from around the world. They gave ideas for recipes beforehand and ingredients were provided. The students got into groups and all made different dishes.

"It was an amazing event; all the students worked so well together and made some delicious food. We all sat around at the end of the event and ate together - we were like one big family, but all from different places and backgrounds."

Florence Drayson, Youth Social Action Apprentice

The music event was instructed by another member of enrichment staff with experience in music. 13 ESOL students attended the event and played rhythm games, they got into small groups and made up their own music and also had a go on different instruments from around the world, from didgeridoos to DJ sets.

The ESOL students that took part said that they enjoy the sessions, with a few of them attending multiple times. They said that the events help them to socialise and spend time with old and new friends and that they have loved taking part in activities and learning new skills like DJ. They also confirmed that it helped them to practise their English; learning new words, adapting to accents and hearing slang.

The buddies that have taken part talked about how they have enjoyed helping people learn. The students commented that they have developed their communication skills and have been more confident with talking to people with low English proficiency and this is a skill that they can use later and take to jobs in the future. They feel like they have more patience and understanding and also they have built upon what they knew about leadership from previous experiences and projects and put it into practice.

Written by: Florence Drayson

"The buddies really demonstrated their leadership skills in the second music event. I noticed how they were able to take a lead in a group and clearly communicate and give instructions. It was impressive to see them. I was very proud of them all."

Florence Drayson, Youth Social Action Apprentice



Students joyfully playing musical instruments.

"This project was a piece of evidence we used for Leeds City College's application to become a College of Sanctuary. It fulfilled a key requirement of the minimum criteria for the award, namely by showing a commitment to supporting active student voice on sanctuary and welcoming activities in the college. Florence has been that key link for the College of Sanctuary steering group for delivering and driving forward initiatives that bring a welcoming and inclusive benefit to students."

James Broadhurst, Project Coordinator for Vice Principal