

“Whenever I go somewhere,
I have to take my daughters with me.”

An enquiry into the progress and strategies used for L2 literacy acquisition
by former refugee adults in New Zealand.

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Outline

Background

Literature

Research questions and methods

Results Literacy and numeracy Assessment Tool

Classroom observations

Interviews

Discussion

Recommendations

Suggested framework

Background

- “There is a gap in the research literature about language learning for adults with no experience of alphabetic print literacy.”
Tarone, Bigelow and Hansen, 2009, p. 1.
- “ it is increasingly probable that literate and illiterate individuals process oral language differently, using different cognitive processes to acquire oral L2’s”
Tarone et al., 2009, p. 26.

Literacy Education and Second Language Learning Acquisition
publications suggest that:

... The process of developing literacy to the level of native speakers may take much longer than if the individual were literate upon arrival.

A Tertiary Education Commission report on ESOL gaps and priorities (TEC, 2008, p. 6) acknowledged in particular that 'learning progress for pre-literate learners is extremely slow. Traditional assumptions about stair-casing to higher level programmes need to be challenged in the case of pre-literate learners.'

Benseman, 2012, p. 95.

Research questions

1. What does the TEC online assessment tool reveal about learners' progress over two years?
2. Were there other social or political affordances and / or constraints that contributed to learners' development of literacy in their first language?
3. Are there other social or political affordances and / or constraints that are contributing to learners' development of literacy in their second or additional language?
4. What strategies do learners consider help them to learn well and gain confidence?

Mixed methods

Instruments:

Quantitative TEC Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool
4 collections Nov 2017 - June 2019

Qualitative Portfolio assessment learners work
Classroom observations
2 collections (3 x 2 weekly)

Pre and post interviews
(Bilingual interpreters)
July 2017 July – Nov 2019

Analysis: Coding and categories emerging

Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool

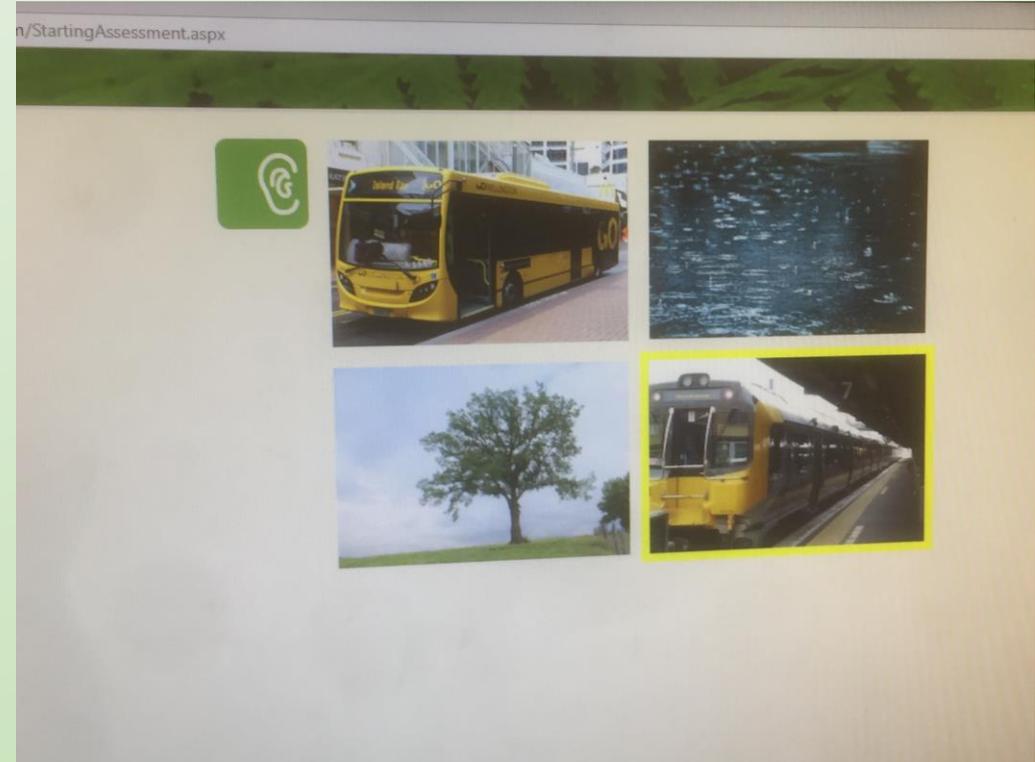
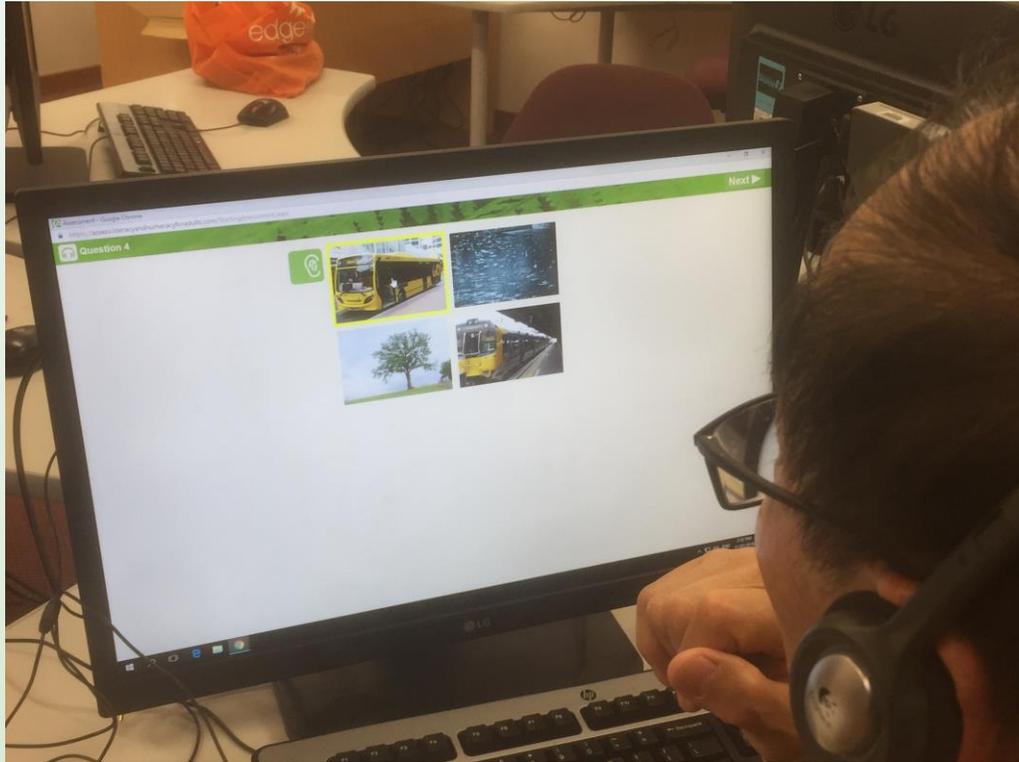
An online adaptive tool

- developed for the TEC by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research

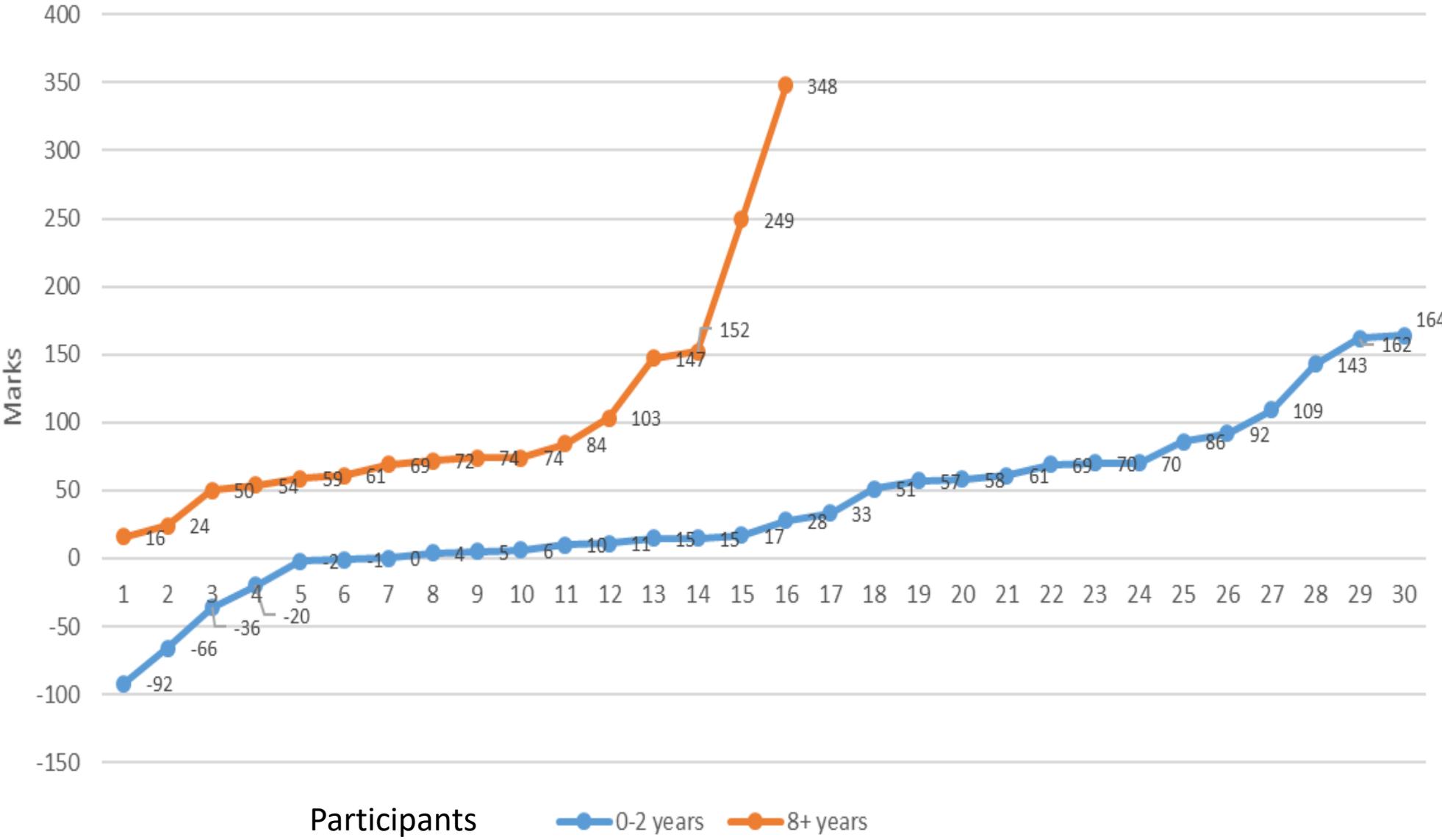
Starting Points

- Starting Points Listening is suitable only for beginning English language learners (ESOL), particularly those new to Aotearoa/New Zealand. It assesses a learner's ability to understand basic, everyday words in spoken English. The main focus is listening

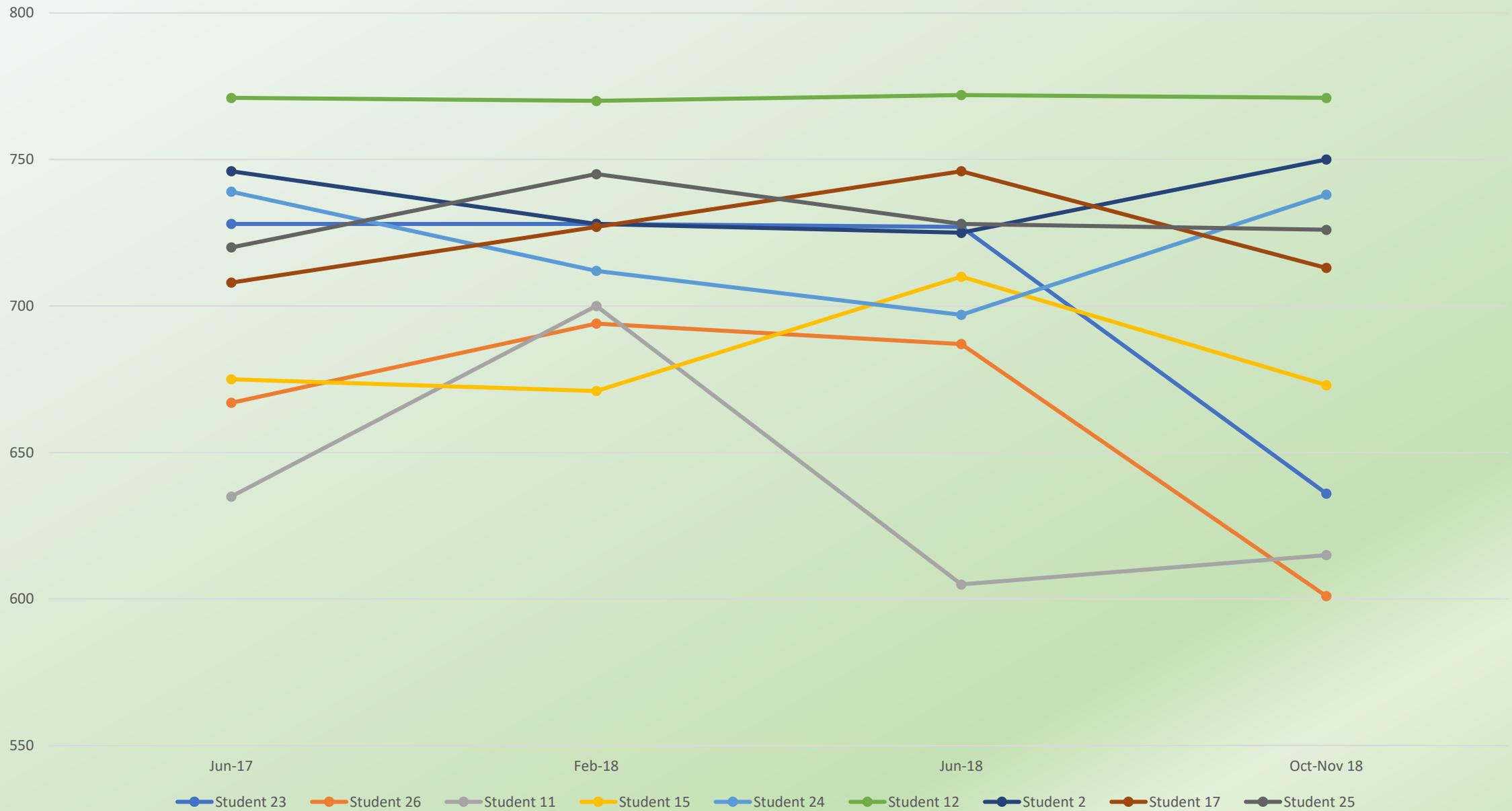
Online assessment



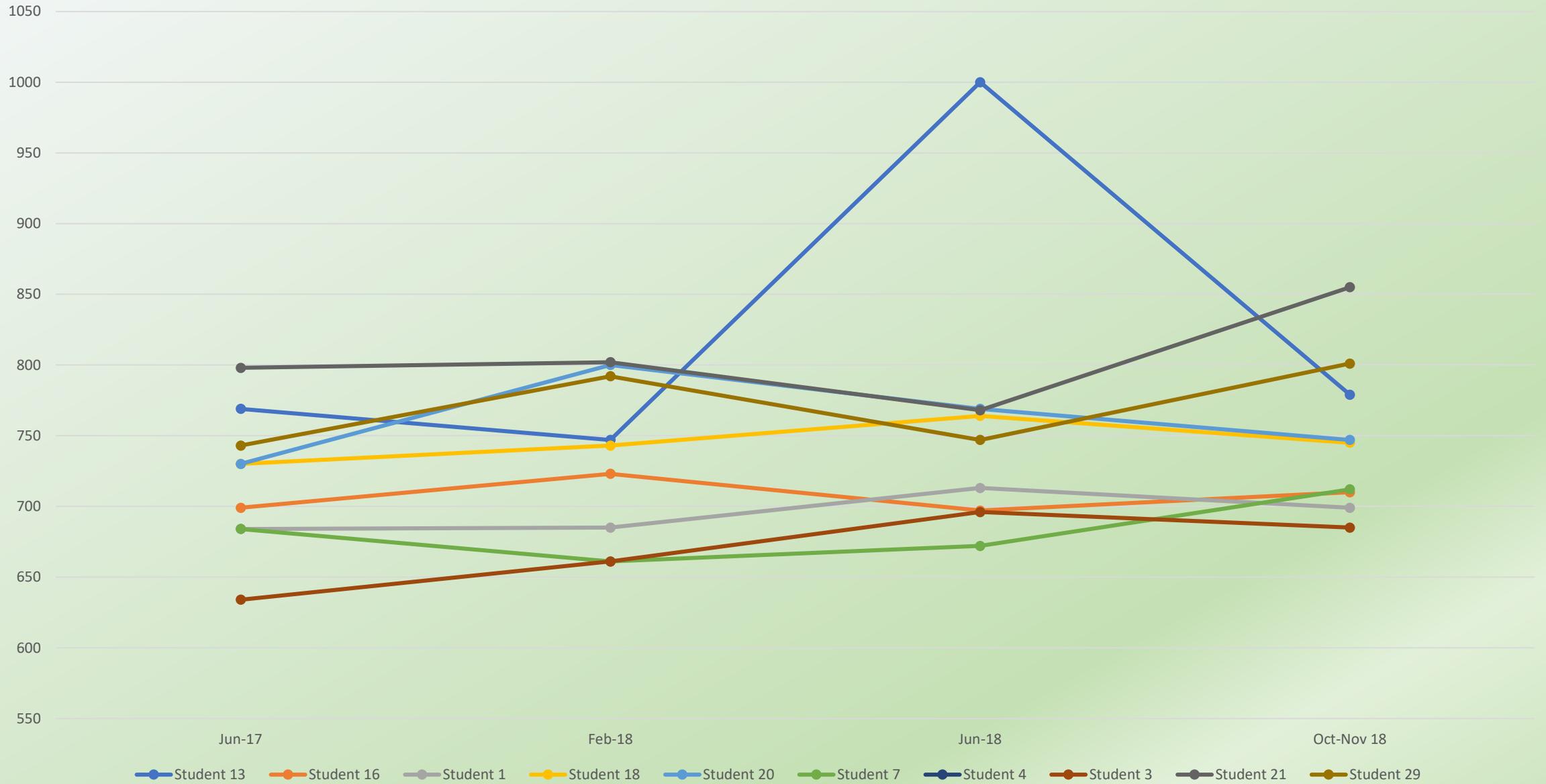
Results from online LNAAT learning tool over eighteen months



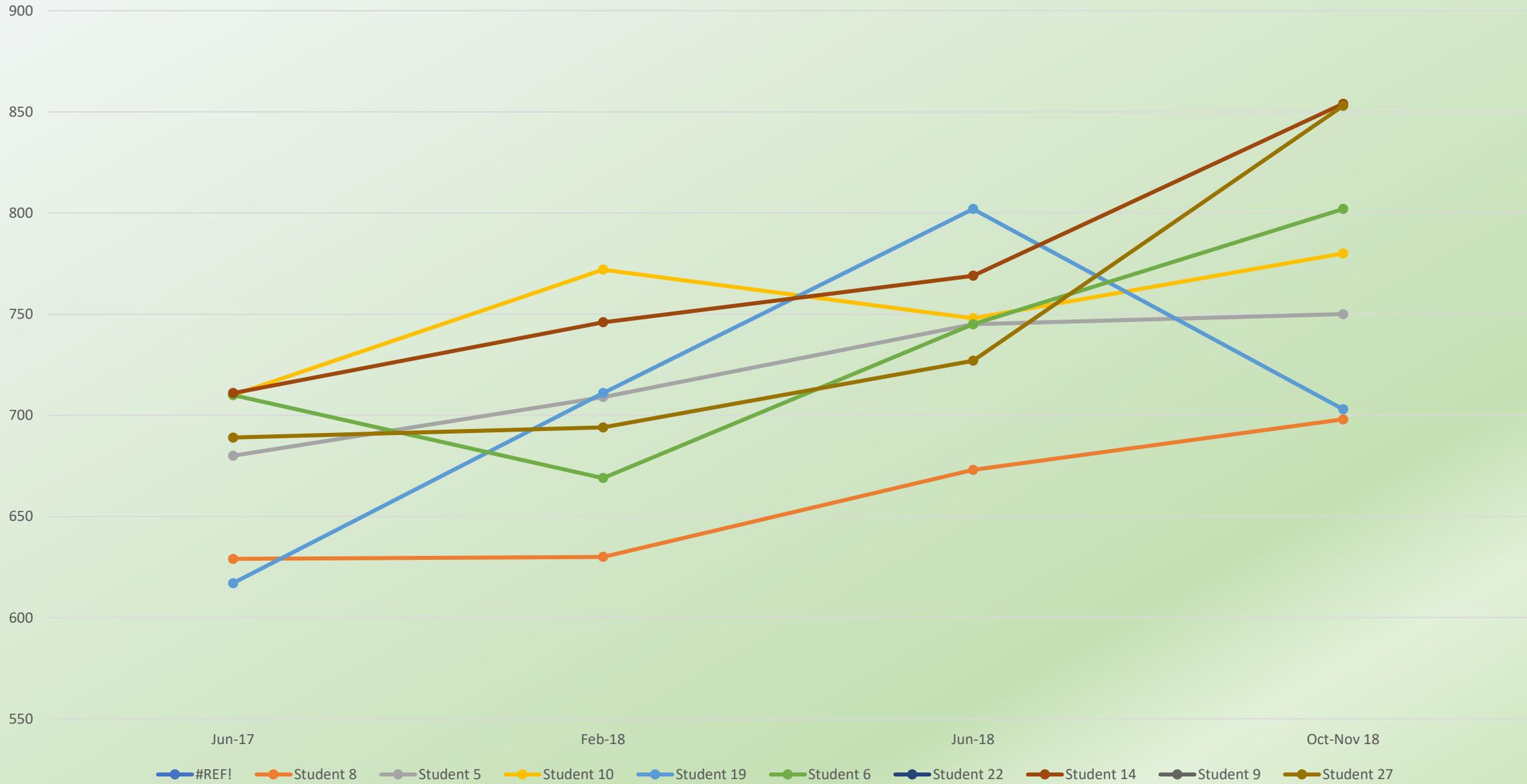
Year 0-2 Group 1



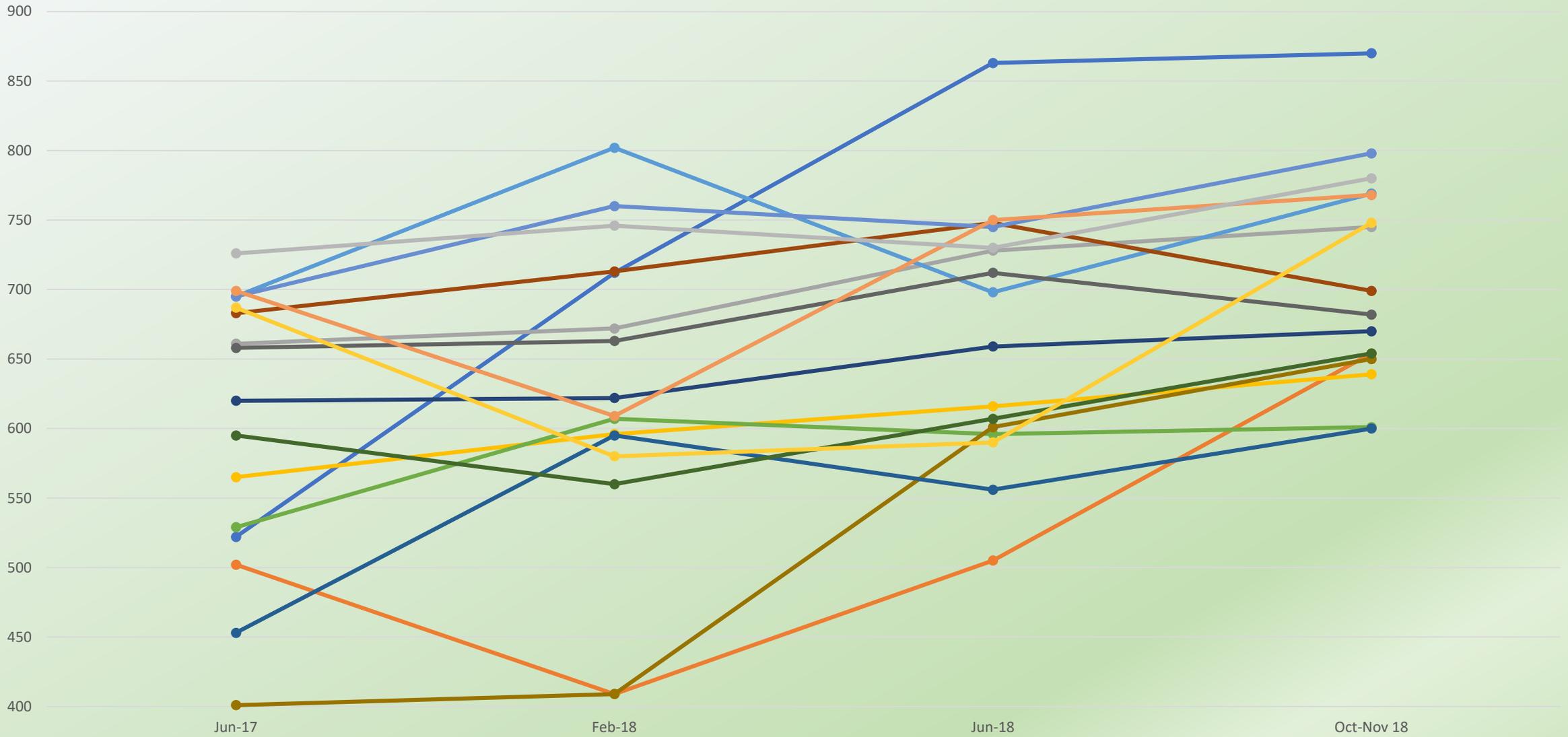
Year 0-2 Group 2



Year 0-2 Group 3



Year 08+



Student 31 Student 32 Student 33 Student 34 Student 35 Student 36 Student 37 Student 38
Student 39 Student 40 Student 41 Student 42 Student 43 Student 44 Student 45 Student 46

Results: Classroom observations

- Participants cooperate with others and support each other.
- Initially construct meaning through L1
- Actively listen
- Use repetition and imitation
- Copy then read
- Learn new words as whole words
- Use phones.

Results from pre - interviews

0-2 years

- All participants reported that their main goal was **independence**
- Parents' goals were focused on their children's education and training
- Some younger participants aimed to find work after they become functional in L2

I want to be independent. I don't want to depend on others. Just I want to go to the doctor without an interpreter.

8+ years

- Participants wanted to improve their communication skills and literacy skills
- They had goals for further training and employment

To take my children to school, to know what's going on at school. I want to know how they're going, shopping, doctor. I want to do things by myself.

Results from post-interviews

- students were able to identify their own progress over the two years
- able to identify gaps they still encountered
- felt more confident about their ability to participate in simple conversations
- felt more independent; answer the phone and answer the door
- were pleased to have the chance to learn at their own pace
- some older learners were somewhat discouraged
- were forming plans for the future

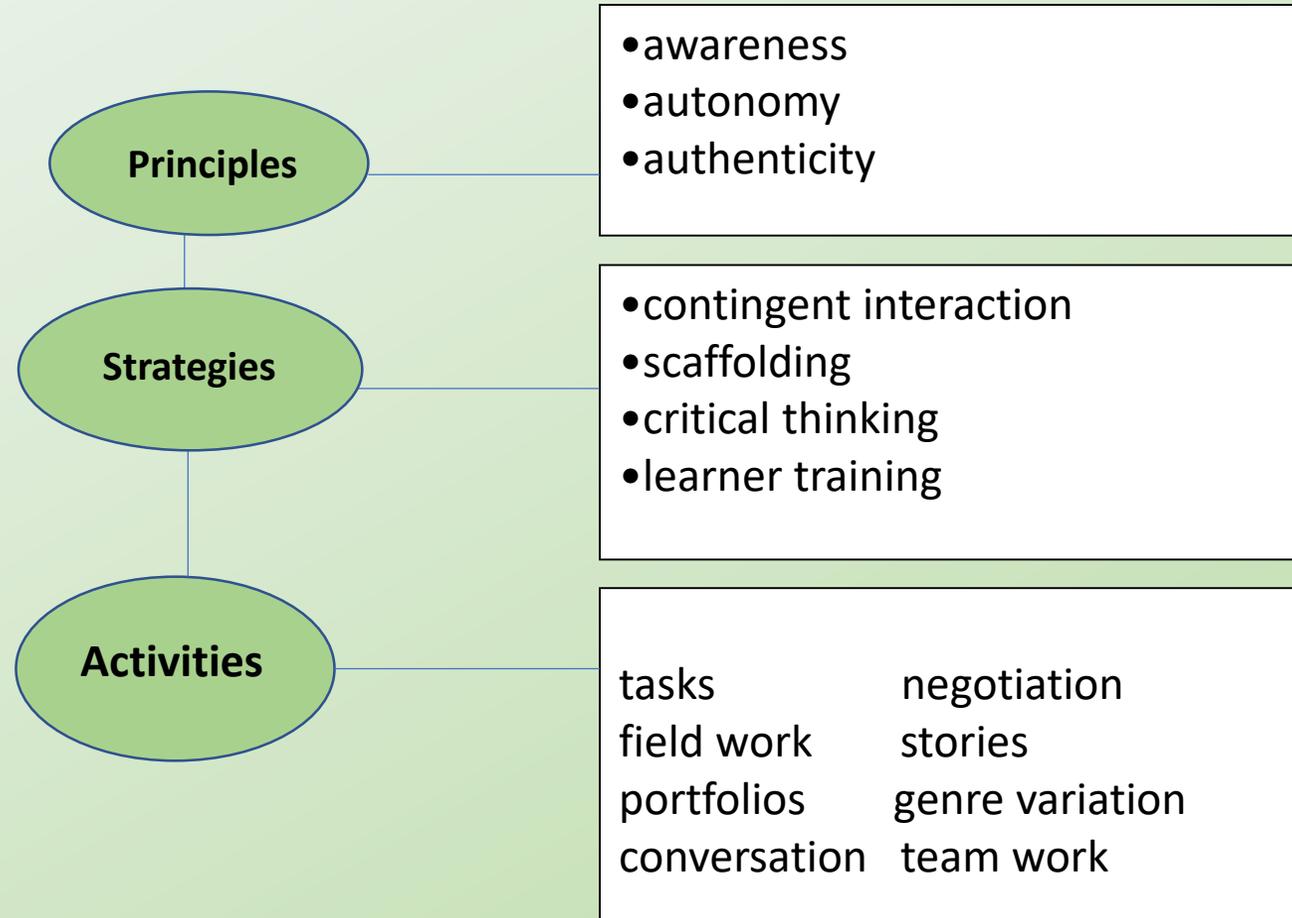
Discussion

- extra education in their L1 assisted learners with some prior education to progress more consistently, and a little faster than those learners who have little or no prior education in L1
- both groups are impacted by socio economic factors and past trauma
- 0-2 years learners bring much to the learning environment which can be built on. Initially they need support from their L1 to create meaning.
- learners use memory, repetition, imitation, careful listening, copying, phones and cooperation as strategies to learn.
- their present lives may be complex and learning may be interrupted

Recommendations for learning assistants

- be aware of learners' backgrounds
- make entry free from barriers
- start from concrete and known
- a negotiated syllabus which focuses on the process of learning
- enjoy the learning experience
- limit formal teaching of letters and sounds until learners are ready
- use awareness / noticing approach in early stages
- limit paper and worksheets

Suggested framework for teaching adults with limited L1 background education; adapted from Van Lier (1996)



Adapted from Curriculum Design (Van Lier, 1996, p. 189).

Activities

Tasks: Based on real experiences, (Language Experience Method) Learners dictate, T. writes. Noticing phonemic aspects of text then read text together. Explicit teaching of sound-letter connections may follow later. Use pictures to build meaning. Discuss, question, agree. Learners read own stories which are meaningful. Use repetition and patterns to build oral language. Use new language outside classroom. Use oral platform to build tasks; brainstorm, build vocabulary orally. Recycle and revisit tasks in the next lesson.

Fieldwork: Visits in community, visitors to classroom. Interaction with native speakers. Surveys to find out more about community. Discuss and record, and analyze findings.

Portfolios: Collection of work for own portfolio to read at home. Collection of naturally occurring evidence for assessment (if required).

Negotiation: Negotiation of syllabus, goals and outputs, methods, evaluations. Transparency with learners

Genre variation: Start with oral discussion then move to written e.g. Forms, short recounts and descriptions.

Conversation: Simple and often. Pairs and groups. Every lesson starts with conversation, leading to enquiry. May use phones to record conversations.

Stories: Tell stories from own culture, and current experiences; share them, record them on phones or write them. Those with an oral tradition are likely to enjoy hearing and telling stories

Team work: Inclusive practices in class so that learners feel welcomed. Recognition and praise. Feelings of success.

0-2 year learners

“Less is more”

Recommended approaches

- L1 assistance is essential particularly for older learners
- Collaborate and dialogue
- Pace / stress free environment is important
- Exploratory enquiring approach
- Utilise their social / cultural knowledge and their ways of learning
- Simple routines
- Lots of recycling of new material

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Thanks for your attention

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