



Innovation, exploration, inspiration:

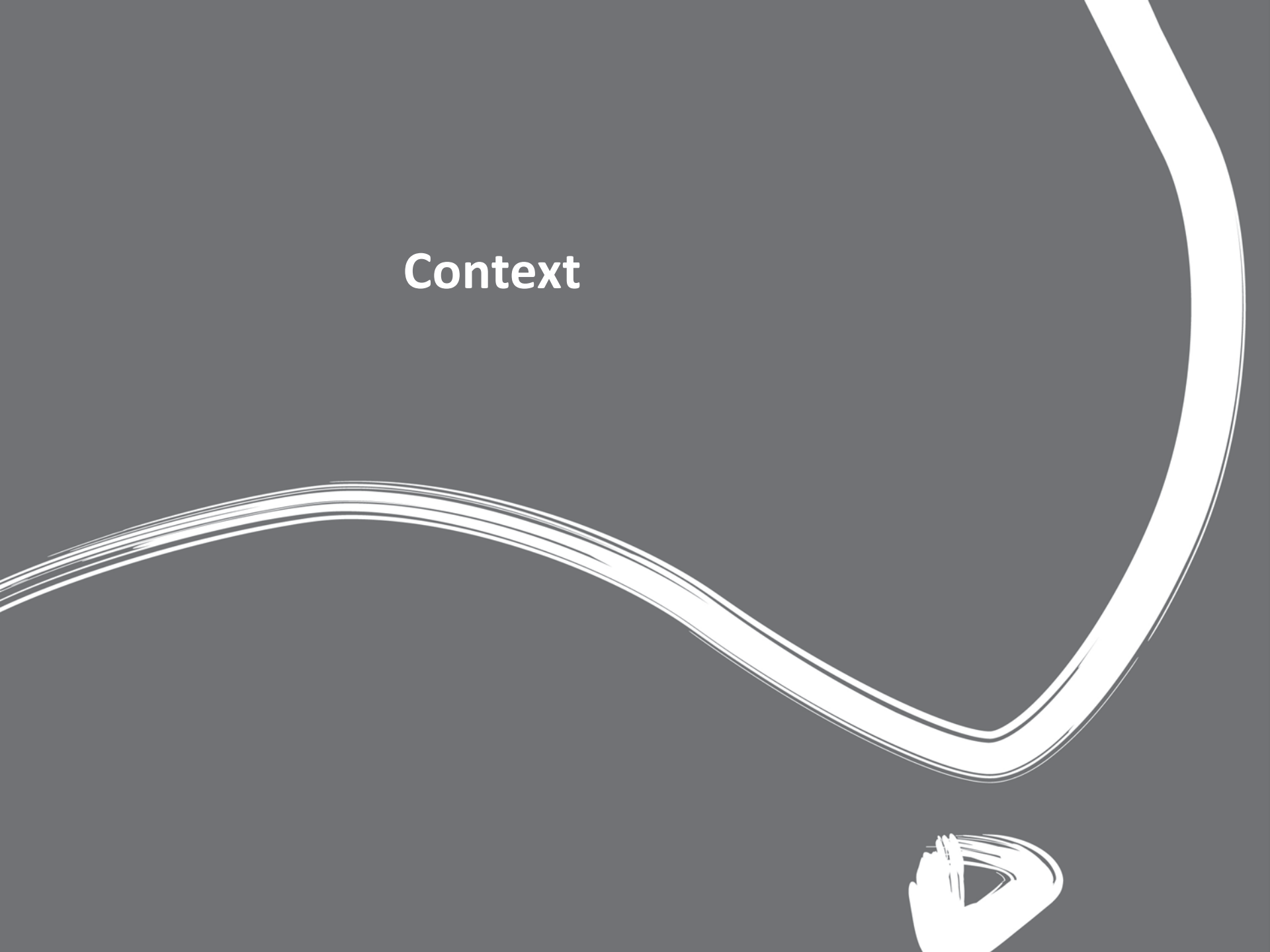
The impact of a national
action research program
on ELICOS

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English Australia
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- Context of the study
 - English Australia and professional development
 - action research
 - Action Research in ELICOS Program
- Findings
- Conclusions
- Questions

Context



Action Research in ELICOS Program

- English Australia initiative
- To achieve strategic goal 'to facilitate higher levels of professional practice' in ELICOS
- Anne Burns key reference person
- Open to any ELICOS teacher in Australia
- Jointly funded by Cambridge ESOL & employer

Goals of the program

- to equip teachers with the skills to enable them to explore and address identified teaching challenges in the context of Australian ELICOS; and
- to share outcomes of this research.

Raise teacher professionalisation by

1. direct **development** of teachers involved;
2. development of teacher **peer networks**;
3. increased teacher **engagement with research**;
4. teachers **furthering their professional development**.



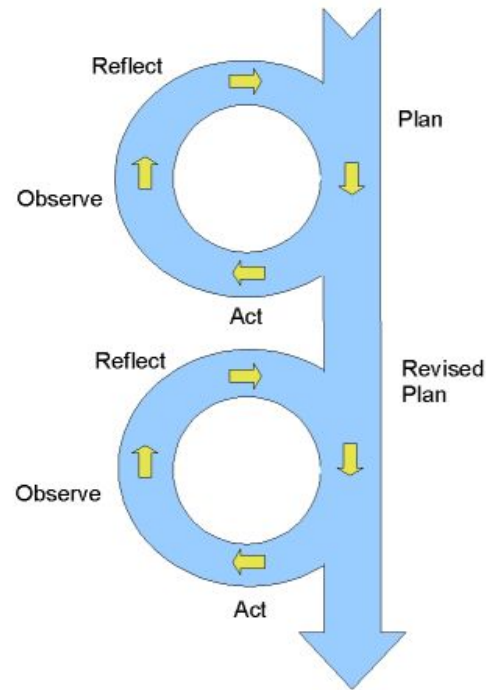
- a **self-reflective, systematic and critical** approach to enquiry
- participants are also researchers
- aim to identify ‘problematic’ situations or issues
- bring about critically informed changes
- underpinned by democratic principles

(Burns, 2010)

- **Plan** - develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening
- **Act** - act to implement the plan
- **Observe** - observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs
- **Reflect** - reflect on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action, [etc.] through a succession of stages.

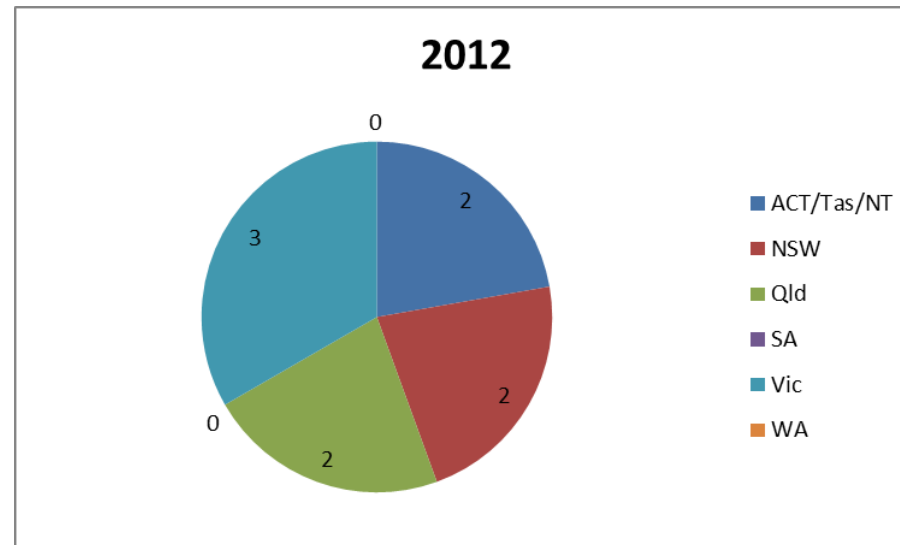
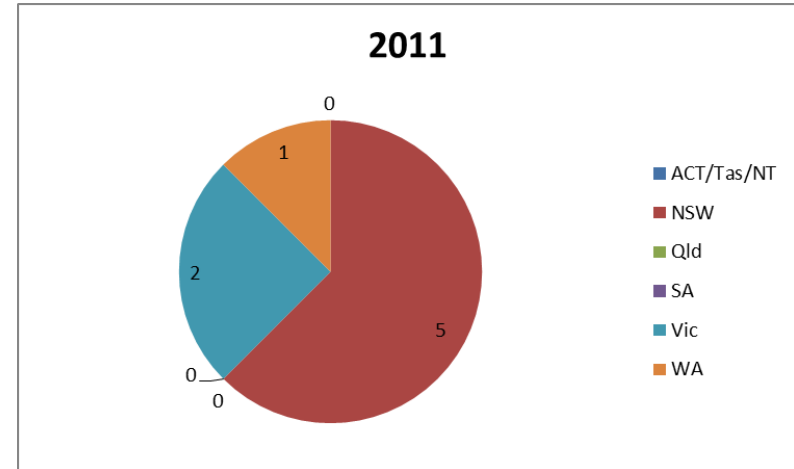
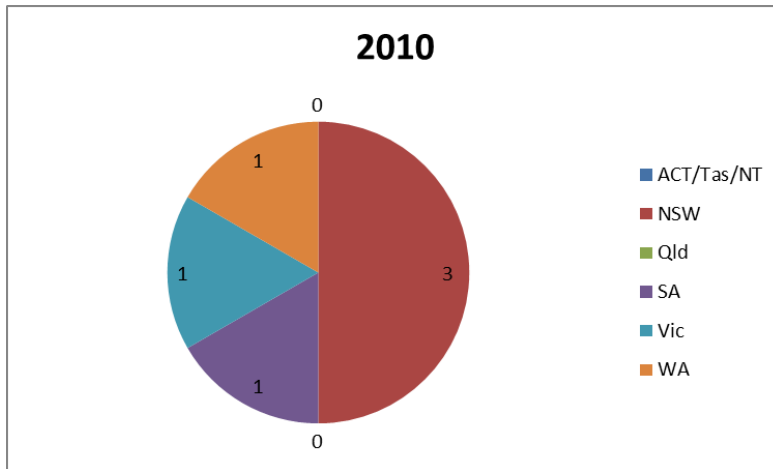
(Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 10)

The action research cycle



Kemmis & McTaggart (1988)

Participation by English Australia branch



Experience in ELICOS

- **2010** 4 – 22 yrs
- **2011** 2 – 28 yrs
- **2012** 4.5 – 19 yrs



- Extensive reading, motivation and vocabulary development (EAP)
- Use of digital dictionaries
- Listening and speaking development
- Extensive reading for beginners
- Obligation and motivation
- Progress, motivation and high level learners

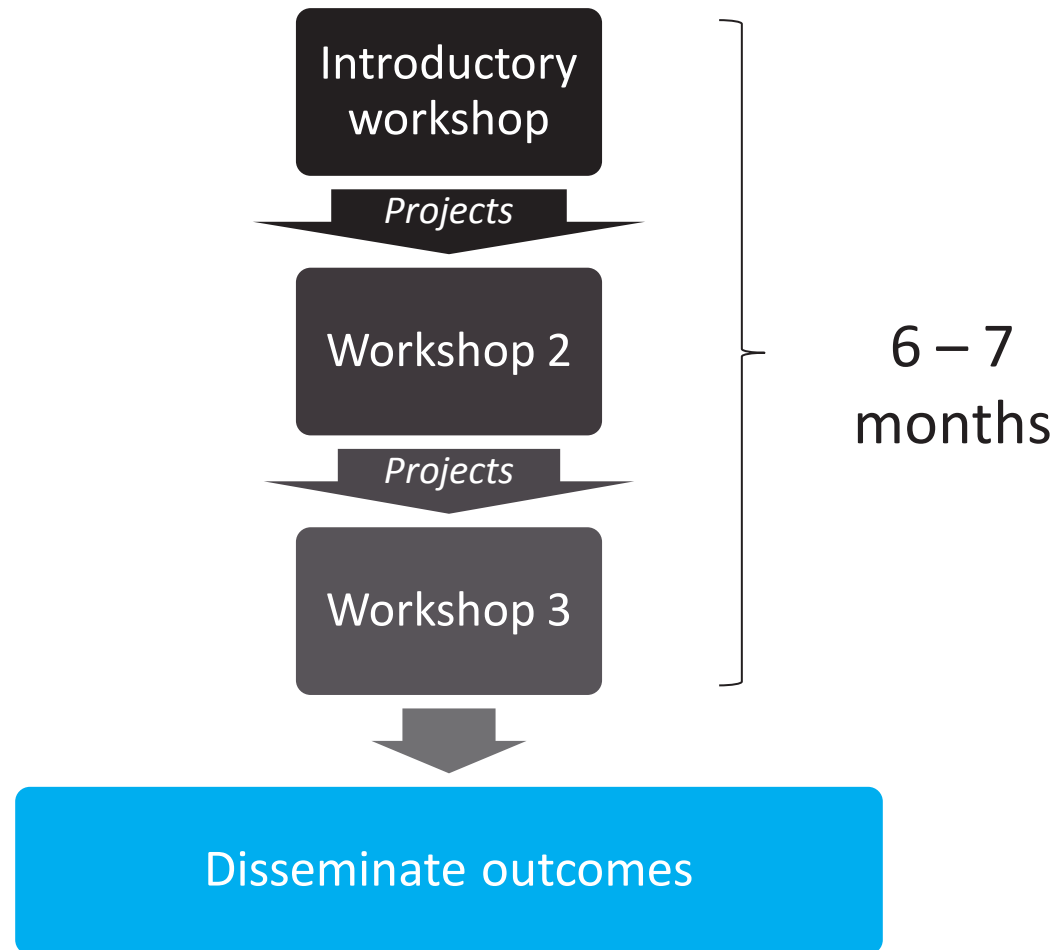
- Using blogs for assessment
- Raising pronunciation awareness
- Using assessment rubrics as explicit teaching tool
- Teaching grammar in EAP
- Reading skills for Arabic students
- Developing skills for independent learning

Assessment theme

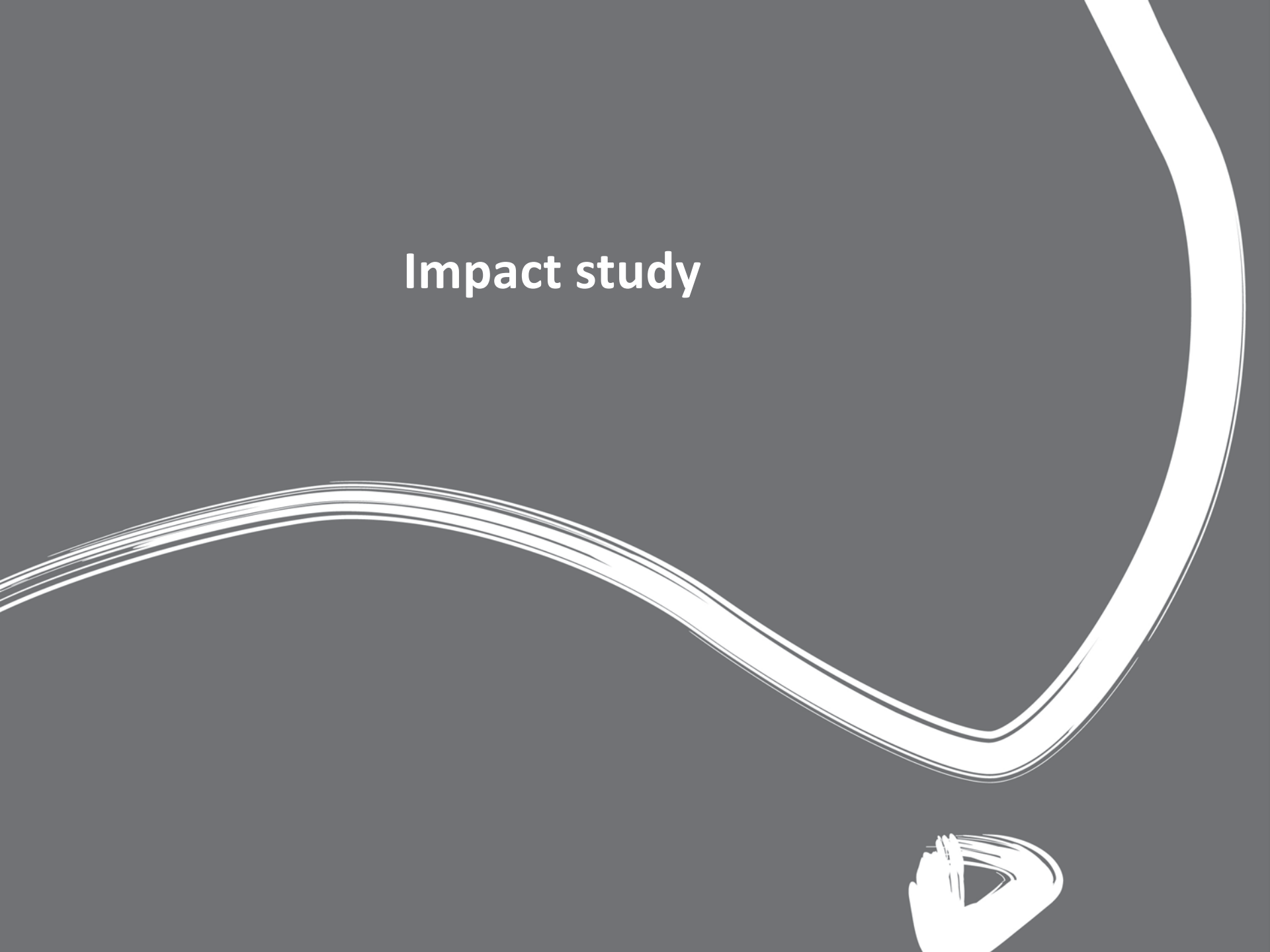
- Self-assessment – speaking
- Developing learner autonomy through assessment
- Using technology to assess speaking
- Portfolios
- Formative speaking assessment
- Using music to develop pronunciation

2012 Vicki & Megan & group, ICTE-UQ





Impact study



- commissioned by Cambridge ESOL
- focus on 2010 & 2011 program participants
- mixed methods – qualitative & quantitative
 - surveys, evaluations, interviews, photos, invitations to present/publish
- ‘insider’ point of view – participants, Directors of Studies, English Australia board members, representatives of English Australia member colleges

- Participants
 - greater consciousness-raising and curiosity about classroom practice
 - deeper ability and confidence to face and resolve issues in classroom practice
 - ‘ripple’ effect on colleagues
 - satisfaction of learning more about and completing research
 - sense of professional credibility

Participant comments

“It’s been an awesome experience... I honestly can’t think of a negative comment – it was a really positive experience, really worthwhile, I’d recommend action research to anyone. It’s been a little bit hectic but no big deal.”

“[Doing action research] is awkward, lumpen and whatever...like giving birth to a cow. It had to come through me first to go – there. I want to share it now.”

“There are definitely things I’ll take back to my own teaching, especially ‘going from technician to professional’ – [I’m now] a reflective practitioner.”

(From recorded interview with participants from 2010 program)

- Directors of Studies
 - strengthened practice
 - professional development
 - positive engagement with action research
 - development of professionalism
 - change to the organisation
 - motivation of/engagement with colleagues

“Too often staff only see things that they can do and this [program] gave them the chance to step outside their daily role at [the college].”

“The project enlivened the staffroom with action research discussions.”

“The program was very important for staff self-esteem and professionalism.”

“Their experiences became very motivating for others, who applied [for the 2011 program].”

(Excerpts from email correspondence with academic managers of the 2010 participants)

- Staff from English Australia member colleges
 - little awareness of the program and its outcomes (study survey)
 - general support for the program (2011 member survey)
- English Australia board members
 - new dimensions for the sector
 - rejuvenation of teachers and teaching practice
 - impetus to engage in professional development

- English Australia Conference delegates (colloquium)
 - overwhelmingly positive
 - ‘inspiring’
 - “It was interesting to hear what some other teachers have been working on/find worthwhile focusing on. Their findings and conclusions raised questions, which was great”.
 - colloquium was ‘highlight of the conference for me’

- invitations to present & publish
 - national and international conferences and symposia
 - books, articles, chapters
 - webinars and workshops
- interest by professional associations and researchers outside Australia



Conclusions & recommendations



- Substantial innovation for English Australia and for Cambridge English
- Program not widely known [at point of study] but very well received by those who have been involved with it
- Strategic goals being achieved
- Effective framework for implementation

Recommendations

1. Program extended
2. Continue current implementation framework
3. Focus on single theme for research projects
4. Continue voluntary approach, encourage pairs
5. Consider inviting non-teachers to participate
6. Consider other forms of dissemination

Thank you



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