11. How important are levels of English proficiency for first and second generation immigrants and what could be done to increase them, including through support for ESOL classes? Are there particular barriers faced by newcomers to Britain? Could the naturalisation process, including the citizenship test, be improved and if so, how?

NATECLA\(^1\) believes that there is ample evidence to support the argument that language is the key to integration and that ESOL provision (more than just ‘classes’) is vital for promoting citizenship and civic integration. The recent APPG report on social integration Integration not Demonisation echoes our call for a comprehensive strategy for England, as already exists in Scotland and Wales. NATECLA’s report ‘Towards a draft strategy for England’ can be accessed at  http://www.natecla.org.uk/content/631/ESOL-Strategy-for-England

Regarding the naturalisation process, many ESOL professionals believe that the former option available to lower level ESOL learners – the ‘ESOL course with Citizenship materials’ provided an excellent way for migrants to learn more about British culture and traditions (political system, history, geography, diversity, community engagement, etc.) whilst at the same time improving their English language skills, meeting new people and getting into the habit of learning. Many continued their studies after the course finished, either continuing to develop their English or going on to vocational courses. NATECLA believes this option should be reinstated. The materials were updated in 2010 and are still available for ESOL teachers to use in class if they wish to do so.

Australia and Norway provide examples of comprehensive language and integration programmes for immigrants:

- Norway: Immigrant integration [https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Immigrant-integration/#ob=9658,9649,12844,9700,9659](https://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Immigrant-integration/#ob=9658,9649,12844,9700,9659)

The following reports/websites provide evidence of barriers faced by newcomers, case studies and examples of good practice:

- Demos (2014) On Speaking Terms [http://www.demos.co.uk/project/on-speaking-terms/](http://www.demos.co.uk/project/on-speaking-terms/)
There have been many initiatives and projects such as those funded by the European Integration Fund which have focused on language and integration, e.g. Active Citizenship and English [http://www.learningunlimited.co/projects/ace](http://www.learningunlimited.co/projects/ace) A project which trains local volunteers to support ESOL learners is Talk English [https://www.talk-english.co.uk/](https://www.talk-english.co.uk/)

Another example is a recent Scottish project which built on a peer education model. Sharing Lives, Sharing Languages: A Pilot Peer Education Project for New Scots’ Social and Language Integration enabled peer groups to bring together non-native English speakers and local community members under the coordination of peer educators. The project aimed to complement the existing ESOL provision by providing group-based activities which aided language acquisition.

NATECLA would be happy to provide oral evidence to the Committee on request.

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1 National Association for Teaching English and Community Languages to Adults (the professional association for ESOL practitioners, managers and volunteers in the UK)