

Language issues in migration and integration: perspectives from teachers and learners

Edited by David Mallows



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**Language issues in migration
and integration:** perspectives from
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Contents

Foreword	2
Introduction	3
1 Participatory ESOL <i>Dermot Bryers, Becky Winstanley and Melanie Cooke</i>	9
2 Whose integration? <i>Dermot Bryers, Becky Winstanley and Melanie Cooke</i>	19
3 The power of discussion <i>Dermot Bryers, Becky Winstanley and Melanie Cooke</i>	35
4 The paradoxes of language learning and integration in the European context <i>Cristina Ros i Sole</i>	55
5 Beyond the ESOL classroom <i>Trev Johnson and Simon Berry</i>	79
6 ‘Wrong or no wrong, I speak’ <i>Sara Asadullah</i>	95
7 Teaching Welsh to ESOL students: issues of intercultural citizenship <i>Gwennan Higham</i>	111
8 Language and initial literacy training for immigrants: the Norwegian approach <i>Graciela Sbertoli and Helga Arnesen</i>	123
9 Technology and language planning: the case of a Brazilian faith setting in London <i>Ana Souza</i>	135
10 Out in the classroom?: Exploring LGBT lives and issues in adult ESOL <i>Sheila Macdonald</i>	151
ESOL Nexus	170

Foreword

The European Handbook for Integration (third edition) states: *'Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration'*.

This volume brings together a series of chapters that cast new light on this assumption, bringing to bear the perspectives of both learners and teachers. Several of the chapters are based on research projects funded between 2011 and 2014 under the auspices of the ESOL Nexus project: <http://esol.britishcouncil.org>. In many of the chapters the approach is practical; highlighting ways that teachers can engage more successfully with their learners, fostering a sense of integration within the classroom itself. Other chapters provide a perspective on approaches to language and integration in countries where the national language is not English or where English is only one of the main languages spoken.

The British Council's work with migrants in the UK provides access to high-quality materials and training for learners and teachers of English, with an emphasis on developing language skills, skills for life and work, and a growing understanding of UK life and culture. Our materials development process relies heavily on input from learners themselves and is underpinned by practitioner research of the type described in these articles. As we continue to take the work forward, expanding into the areas of EAL, offender learning, voluntary ESOL teaching and work with very low-level learners, we will continue to depend on these two critical voices to ensure that we continue to produce materials and training that are relevant and useful.

We hope that by publishing this volume we will stimulate reflection and encourage more teachers to engage with research in the classroom. We hope too that the volume will contribute to discussions about the role of language in integration, and form a useful reference point for those who wish to engage with them.

Dot Powell

ESOL Project Director, British Council

¹ *Handbook for Integration*, third edition, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union April 2010, page 160

Introduction

This is a book about the role of language in the integration of migrants. The writers of the chapters are all engaged in the education of migrants as teachers, researchers or policymakers in a wide variety of contexts and they provide us with a rich and thought-provoking array of perspectives from teachers and learners on language issues in migration and integration. Through them we hear directly from learners, migrants who have arrived in a new country and are now striving to master the host language. We learn much from them about the place of language and language learning in their new lives.

Each migrant's story is different, but they are all faced with social and economic demands that are far easier to address if they understand the host country's language, both spoken and written. But it is more than language and literacy skills that we need to consider here. Of equal relevance are the social practices in which these language and literacy skills will be required. Newly arrived migrants need to find somewhere to live and a means to support themselves. They often have to navigate the welfare system in the host country, to access health care and other social services. If they have arrived with children, then finding out about the education system and enrolling their child in a local school will be high among their priorities, as will talking to their child's teacher about their progress. These are all practical, functional needs. However, successful integration would appear to require migrants to engage with their host community on an emotional, as well as a functional, level. Migrants benefit from joining the community of parents they see every day at the school gate or of colleagues in the workplace. Greeting neighbours or engaging in small talk while shopping are as much part of the migrants' learning process as the formal language classes, ESOL classes in the UK, that they may take, or be required to take as part of the immigration process. The chapters assembled here remind us that adults learn informally through engagement with a broad range of social practices. Some of this learning is facilitated by formal language learning provision, but much of it is not.

Successful language learning is not only in the interests of migrants. For policymakers it is also a key issue. We live in a time of high levels of migration. For economic and social reasons there has been increased movement of people between countries. The UK is one of many countries that receives thousands of migrants every year, some seeking asylum, others in search of a better economic future. Patterns of immigration have changed. Such migration is necessary of course, meeting the demands for labour in countries with an ageing population and thus fuelling economic growth.

The recent OECD Survey of Adult Skills shows that, in those countries with high levels of inward migration – such as Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK – about one in three of those who performed at the lowest end of the scale were born outside the host country. This should come as no surprise. The OECD tests were offered in the host country’s language, not the language of the migrant, and so those born outside the country, particularly those who had recently arrived and/or are unfamiliar with the host language, faced extra obstacles in demonstrating their competency in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in a technology-rich environment, the areas tested by OECD. However, it does highlight the scale of the issue facing such countries. There are large numbers of adults who wish to make a positive contribution to their new communities and who have a clear need for support in developing their understanding of the host society and its language, deemed essential to successful integration. Support for migrants to learn the host language should be central to any policy that aims to meet the challenge and to help them to contribute to society and to the economy. The papers in this volume make an important contribution to the debate as to what shape that support should take.

1 Participatory approaches

In the first of three related chapters Dermot Bryers, Becky Winstanley and Melanie Cooke describe an exciting new approach to working with ESOL learners. The Participatory Approaches movement draws on the work of Paulo Freire to re-imagine language teaching and learning. A participatory ESOL classroom is driven by the content of exchanges between students rather than the form in which that communication is achieved. And the subject of these exchanges, driven by the students themselves, is always relevant and meaningful to the learners’ lives. We learn about the background to participatory ESOL and its underpinning principles. The authors also share with us some techniques that can be employed by teachers.

2 Whose integration?

In the second of the chapters by Dermot Bryers, Becky Winstanley and Melanie Cooke we accompany the researchers as they structure and record a series of participatory activities with two groups of ESOL students in London around the complex and political concept of integration. There has been much hand-wringing about integration, as countries try to come to terms with the impact, perceived and real, of immigration. Language learning is often central to such debates of course, but migrants themselves are rarely heard. Here we are given the opportunity to hear what they think about this complex issue and the challenges they face to ‘integrate’ and get on in the host society, as they are asked to consider what exactly integration means to them and to those around them.

¹ www.oecd.org/site/piaac/surveyofadultskills.htm

3 The power of discussion

Discussion is central to the Participatory Approach to ESOL and in this chapter Dermot Bryers, Becky Winstanley and Melanie Cooke explore the reasons for this through research with a group of ESOL learners in East London. They highlight the positive impact of discussion activities and describe ways in which they worked with learners to identify topics, structure the discussions and exploit them for language-learning opportunities. The discussions described here provide rich material for language learning, and the paper explores ways in which the teacher can work to maximise these. They also clearly empowered the learners who took part by providing them with a forum in which they could exchange ideas with their peers about issues that matter to them.

4 The paradoxes of language learning and integration in the European context

Integration of migrants is not just an issue for the UK and in this chapter Cristina Ros i Solé takes us through the European policy context with a particular focus on policies aimed at integration of migrants. We learn that language is often central to such policies, with a 'language requirement' often making the learning of the host language a central element in entry to the host country as well as integration. The author uses examples from Germany, the Netherlands and the UK to illustrate her argument and to demonstrate the complex issues involved.

5 Beyond the ESOL classroom

This chapter takes us to the North Highlands of Scotland where Simon Berry and Trev Johnson report on research with ESOL learners in which they explore the link between learning the host language and greater integration of their students within the local community. Their focus is on understanding learners' attitudes to community integration and the particular part that language proficiency and plays in this. It is the learners' day-to-day experiences of shopping and working and socialising in their new community and their reflection on those experiences that informs much of the argument.

6 ‘Wrong or no wrong, I speak’

‘Wrong or no wrong, I speak’ is a quote from an ESOL learner, collected as part of research carried out by Sara Asadullah that focused on the experiences of ESOL learners in relation to learning English in the UK. It was highlighted by the learners as encapsulating something positive about their learning experience and the important role of confidence within that experience. The research used innovative participatory video techniques to encourage reflection on and articulation of stories of significant change. Again, we hear directly from learners about what they value about a learning programme.

7 Teaching Welsh to ESOL students: issues of intercultural citizenship

Gwennan Higham continues on the theme of language provision for migrant adults. However, here she takes us to Cardiff in Wales and Montreal in Canada where the situation is made more complex by the existence of a second official language. Her primary focus is on the policy and practice interplay between the teaching and learning of English and that of Welsh. She uses the example of Montreal to consider policy and practice in another multilingual sub-state context and to reflect on what this suggests for the development of Welsh policy. The chapter has much to say about citizenship and its relationship with language learning and presents examples from Welsh language schemes that suggest some of the benefits that joining a Welsh for speakers of other languages class may bring.

8 Language and initial literacy training for immigrants: the Norwegian approach

In this chapter we turn to Norway as Graciela Sbertoli and Helga Arnesen describe Norwegian migrant language training policy. They draw our attention to a specific and mostly ignored issue, that of the impact of initial literacy levels of adult migrants on the type of support they require if they are to learn the host language and engage in the types of literate social practices that we see throughout this volume. The authors show that Norwegian policy and practice is developing in the right direction, but that there is a gap between policy intent and policy implementation. They acknowledge that there is much work to be done, but also make clear that there is much for other countries to learn too.

9 Technology and language planning: the case of a Brazilian faith setting in London

In this chapter we step away from the language classroom to consider language use within migrant communities, in this specific case the Brazilian community in London and their involvement in the Kardecism movement. In her analysis of language planning in faith settings in London, Ana Souza is particularly interested in language use in the religious practices of migrants and the impact that the language choices of the church have on the language development of migrant communities. We learn that ethnic churches have increasingly adopted the use of technology as part of their services and as a way of maintaining transnational links. This chapter reminds us of the important role that language plays through this rich examination of the interface of language, religion and technology.

10 Out in the classroom?: Exploring LGBT lives and issues in adult ESOL

In this chapter Sheila MacDonald examines the ways in which participants in ESOL provision in the UK experience a social issue, attitudes to sexual diversity. It differs from the other chapters in the volume in its foregrounding of teachers and teaching. While it draws on learner voices, the ESOL profession is the primary source of data. It asks how sexual diversity, of learners and tutors, is acknowledged in practice and how tutors' and learners' lives outside the classroom impact on the development of fair and full inclusion of LGBT adults. It also considers whether LGBT learners experience ESOL as a positive and safe learning environment and shows how teachers and learners have created such spaces where learning, and learners, are supported. It concludes that there is work to be done in developing a common understanding of what a comfortable learning space for LGBT and straight learners, as well as for teachers, might be, but it does reveal a profession able to reflect and adapt to changes in the social environment.

Language issues in migration and integration: perspectives from teachers and learners is of relevance to anyone with an interest in national language policy, and decisions, in the form of rules, regulations and guidelines, about the status, use, domains and territories of languages and the rights of the speakers of the languages in question in a particular country. Through this collection of chapters we learn about language policy and its impact, indirectly from description and analysis of policies and directly through the lived experience of migrants and those who work with them. Discussions about language policy are always about more than language, and this book explores many of the wider social issues interwoven with language learning for migrants.

Learning a new language, while also learning about, and adapting to, a new culture is a great challenge. Language learning is an intensely social activity. We need the company and support and stimulation of others in order to overcome the barriers we face. The classroom plays a part in this, but learning does not stop at the classroom door. Learning also takes place informally through engagement with others in the local community. These papers illustrate the commitment of learners to meeting that challenge and show that we can best understand what contributes to their success by encouraging them to reflect on their experiences and share them with us. Classroom teachers are very aware of the importance of listening carefully to learners to understand their needs and motivations in order to be able to plan, jointly with them, ways to meet those needs. At a policy level a similar level of attention would also be likely to reap benefits.

David Mallows
June 2014

Participatory ESOL

1

Participatory ESOL

Dermot Bryers, Becky Winstanley and Melanie Cooke

Introduction

In this chapter we describe a small but growing movement of ESOL teachers who have been inspired by the work of the Brazilian Marxist educator, Paulo Freire. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), Freire theorised an approach to education that opposed what he termed a ‘banking’ model, in which the teacher deposits a predetermined body of knowledge in the mind of the learner. Instead, Freire advocated the use of dialogic methods that draw out and build upon the experiences of students to develop a shared critical understanding of language and the world. These ideas have greatly influenced the participatory education movement, and educators such as Elsa Auerbach, Henry Giroux, Ira Shor and Peter McLaren have adapted them to contexts outside Latin America.

In the UK participatory pedagogy has been practised by a minority of educators since the 1970s, particularly in the teaching of adult literacy, and was advocated for the teaching of ESOL in the 1980s (see, for example, Baynham, 1988). It has only recently, however, been taken up seriously around the UK, thanks largely to the efforts of Reflect ESOL, a programme initiated by the international charity, Action Aid, which was already using Reflect methods extensively in developing countries (see Moon and Sunderland, 2008). More recently, small organisations such as English for Action have developed these ideas further and combined participatory pedagogy with community action. As an integral part of language and literacy development, participatory approaches involve reflection on the material conditions of learners’ lives and experiences and, where appropriate, involve students in action to effect change.

The participatory curriculum

One of the fundamental principles of participatory ESOL is that the concerns and issues which affect students in their daily lives should be the driving force behind the curriculum. As Auerbach (1992:19) puts it, the direction of the instructional process is ‘from the students to the curriculum rather than from the curriculum to the students.’ This in effect turns the traditional approach to planning on its head; in participatory curricula there is no set scheme of work, or syllabus. Instead, students are at the centre of their own learning processes, identifying their own issues and preparing their own learning materials. As teachers we might sometimes be able to predict what the concerns and language needs of students

¹ www.efalondon.org

are ahead of meeting them, but collaborative investigation and the ongoing process of classroom interaction can help us to do so much more effectively.

In Freire's original conception, classroom content, far from being subservient to grammar learning or literacy acquisition, was the driving force behind the curriculum and the catalyst for learning. Freire was aware, however, that participatory curricula would not come about just by asking people what they wanted to learn, especially if those people had little or no experience of education or had been educated in a very traditional system. Instead, he proposed that in order to plan an educational programme, educators (or 'facilitators') needed to immerse themselves for a period of time in the daily lives of the students' communities and identify critical social issues, which would then become the basis of the curriculum.

After a period of time researching the community, Freire identified what he called 'generative themes' which would form the basis of classroom dialogue; one of the famous examples from Brazil was favela (shanty town). Dialogue around a theme would involve delving deep and exploring all of the issues. Another technique he used was to turn the generative themes into 'codes' – abstract graphic representations of the issues presented in such a way as to provoke discussion and debate.

In this approach, 'content' is central to the curriculum and creates the motivation for students to learn the vocabulary, grammar, discourse and literacy skills that arise from it, not vice versa as in most traditional pre-written language syllabuses and schemes of work.

Most subsequent Freirean-inspired projects have had to dispense with the initial exploratory ethnographic phase, as it is rarely seen as practical for teachers to engage in this kind of time-consuming, intensive activity. Furthermore, 'communities' in urban centres in countries such as the UK and USA are often highly diverse, so identifying issues uniting a single community outside the classroom can be challenging.

This does not mean, however, that the principle proposed by Freire – i.e. investigating the concerns of people in their day-to-day lives as a base for an educational programme – has been jettisoned by participatory practitioners; indeed, listening to students themselves is one of the main strategies for identifying the issues and concerns upon which learning can be based. Many of the teaching materials that have been produced by participatory programmes such as Reflect are also based to some extent on the Freirean principle of investigating communities and tend to incorporate perennial issues facing students, such as housing, discrimination, racism, access to education and social justice (see the Reflect ESOL Resources Pack; Auerbach and Wallerstein, 2005). Of course, not all of these topics and issues will be relevant or interesting to every group of students and nothing can substitute actually getting to know the real concerns of people in the class.

Participatory language learning

As participatory language teachers we adhere to a series of important principles in our classroom work.

The first of these is that the driving force of participatory ESOL is content, the topics and the issues that students bring to class, rather than language form. The work that we do around these issues is an end in itself rather than serving purely as a means to learn aspects of language. Genuine interest in, and engagement with, what is being said in the classroom is key for effective language work. A lot of time is used in discussion and debate, making participatory ESOL classrooms notably language rich. Some of the topics which emerge can be highly political or sensitive in nature. Rather than avoid these, we allow them to become central to our lessons.

The second key element is the use of dialogue. In participatory education the teacher takes a dialogic stance, posing problems and initiating open-ended discussions, rather than acting as the exclusive knowledge holder who needs to provide students with ideas and information about language. This shift opens up the opportunity for more genuine interactions between teachers and students as well as among students. This is not just about providing opportunities for discussion in the classroom, but providing a space for genuine exploration of ideas where all participants, including the teacher, enter into the unknown.

Ira Shor (1987), a contemporary of Freire, working with ESL adults in the USA, points to the human aspects of language, which are very often forgotten amidst the technical complexities of language teaching.

Dialogue as a teaching method returns us to the root of human talk, our desire to learn about, talk about and act upon the world we are in, together. This is a mutual inquiry, not a one-way didactic lecture by the teacher to the students.

Moreover, Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, argued that human cognitive development is rooted primarily in dialogue with others, i.e. interaction happens first and is subsequently internalised in an individual's mind.

Another key point is that language work in participatory classrooms begins from the whole text. This means that teachers work with students to create and develop stretches of meaningful texts, spoken or written. This is very different from a language curriculum in which specific language items are introduced and practised, and students are expected to approximate or copy idealised models. As an example, if students engage in a whole-group discussion on an issue, we allow the discussion to develop and finish with sole focus on content and communication.

The focus on meaning-making results in increased student talk as the group exchanges and develops ideas. This gives us a large amount of contextualised language with which to work. We then follow it up with an explicit focus on any useful, innovatory or impressive language the students used, or any gaps in language knowledge or competency emerging from the discussion. The teacher

normally leads this process, by picking out and noting down aspects of language which appear to be most salient. After the completion of, for example, a discussion, the teacher may open up a space to talk about some of the language aspects arising, with students also participating in the process. Often they will ask for a certain phrase to be repeated or written up, or will want to go back to particular structures. Using board work, quick drills and practice activities, we highlight relevant language at discourse, sentence and word level.

Following these 'meta sessions', we notice students consciously re-using language we had drawn their attention to and this process of incorporating new language into individual repertoires is often immediately effective. We discuss this approach with students so that they are aware that participating in group discussion is not just a chaotic free-for-all but an essential part of their language learning and that too much error correction or focus on form at the wrong moments is counter-productive.

Finally, ESOL students are respected as users as well as learners of language. Treating ESOL students only as learners is to deny the wealth of linguistic experience that students already possess in English and other languages. Instead of presenting or explicitly teaching new forms, discussions are initiated about appropriate language. Teachers might ask how students would say a particular thing in both English and other languages (for example: 'How would you disagree without upsetting someone?'). Teachers and students then engage in a meta-level discussion about language, with discussions about nuance and connotation as well as differences in how concepts are expressed in the languages spoken by members of the group.

Tools and activities

In order to achieve some of these aims in ESOL, participatory practitioners use various techniques adapted from Paulo Freire, Action Aid's Reflect literacy work and other traditions.

Problem posing

One particularly important technique is called problem posing from a code. An issue important to the group is depicted (codified in Freirean terms) and then analysed (decodified) in order for the group to arrive at a deeper understanding of the issue. Problem posing follows a systematic process starting with clarifying the image, then defining the problem, before personalising it, discussing causes and consequences and imagining an alternative. The teacher leads the process, although a participant could also be trained to do it, by asking a series of questions to stimulate debate. The teacher may ask three or four questions for each of the stages listed above. Problem posing may of course be used more flexibly than this and can also be used spontaneously in response to something a student says rather than from a code.

Drama

Drama techniques can also be used to explore important issues. Forum theatre, a method developed by Augusto Boal, can be used to dramatise problems the students face and then collectively work out possible solutions. Students work in small groups to create a mini-play to perform to their classmates. As the students prepare their pieces, the teacher has an opportunity to tweak language and make suggestions. During the performances, the rest of the class (the audience) can intervene in the play to suggest ways of changing the situation. In this way the class practises the strategies and language needed to transform a situation, such as discrimination at work or an argument with teenage children. In addition to forum theatre, tableau is another powerful tool. A tableau is a still shot of actors (students) as if they are frozen. It can substitute for an image and be used to problem pose, as described above. It can also simply be used as a text to generate language and the teacher can ask questions such as: 'What is she doing?', 'What is he thinking?', 'What is about to happen?', etc.

Visual tools

Other techniques include collaborative creation of visual tools, which are then used for language and literacy work. A river can be used to tell a story, a tree to analyse a problem and an iceberg to explore the underlying causes of a situation. The graphic tools provoke discussion, help to unlock meaning through use of image and metaphor, keep the focus on content rather than accuracy, and identify priorities for future language learning. The graphics can then scaffold further work such as re-telling the story, reporting back or deeper analysis.

In the process of creating the visual tool, students discuss the issue and record their ideas in words or pictures, or both. At this point, students 'throw in' ideas using whatever language they know. Students use English or their expert language, and get help with translation, where needed. Together, they create a visual documentation of their ideas in their own words. Typically, in this phase some students are speaking and offering ideas, some students are writing and some students are drawing. The result is a student-generated 'text', which can be used in a variety of different ways to do further work on aspects of language and literacy. These visuals often become works of art and students can feel a great deal of ownership of them. Their non-linear nature also means they can be 'living texts' and students can come back to them in subsequent lessons to make changes and additions.

² Like Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal was a Brazilian Marxist active in the 1960s and 1970s. He developed the Theatre of the Oppressed, a series of methods that used theatre as a tool for social change.

³ Many of these were developed by Action Aid's Reflect project and applied to language learning in the UK by Reflect ESOL during a four-year project www.reflect-action.org/reflectesol.

Introducing ‘input’ or stimulus materials

Many approaches to ESOL use published texts, texts such as newspaper articles, teacher-written model texts, textbooks, other students’ testimonies and online teaching resources as a starting point for generating contexts for language work.

Participatory approaches also see the use of published resources as important in the language class, as they can bring in new ideas and perspectives as well as new language, but we use them in different ways; most notably they are only introduced after work has been done using the tools and techniques described above.

Given that all texts, including pedagogic texts, contain ideological messages, it is important that students and teachers approach them critically rather than unquestioningly, and this means having opportunities to explore our own perspectives on a particular issue, ‘making our own meaning’ (Auerbach, 2005), before going on to ‘interpreting’ the meaning of other texts.

Teacher-student roles and hierarchies

The role of the teacher in participatory ESOL is significantly different to the one expected in traditional approaches to language teaching. As an example, as we have seen, it is not necessarily the teacher’s job to provide language or topics. There is a responsibility, however, albeit a shared responsibility, to enable students to participate.

Participatory ESOL rejects traditional teacher-student hierarchies. As an example, students become initiators, not just passive recipients of instruction, and propose games, organise the layout of the room, set up activities, decide on timings and breaks, negotiate the meanings of words and phrases, bring topics for discussion and evaluate the lessons.

Changing our own role as teachers in this way sometimes proves more challenging for teachers than for students. Balancing the role of facilitator and participant can be difficult. How far should teachers be facilitators and how far should we be active participants speaking with our own voices – and, if the latter, how can we avoid falling back on our role as teachers, instead of participating as equals?

Transformative education

Language development has a key part to play in the processes of resistance, social change and transformation, and we stress the importance of dialogue in these social processes. We also recognise the role that language plays in social control and we are aware that, as language teachers, the language we teach in the classroom can feed into this process. It is therefore crucial that we are able to challenge our own use and selection of language and materials for language development at every stage in the process.

According to Freire, '*dealing critically and creatively with reality*' is a necessary foundation to a transformative pedagogy, but by action we are not just talking about critical thinking. Stopping when injustice has been identified and not asking the question 'What is to be done?' sends the powerful political message that taking action to tackle injustice is either not possible or is outside the remit of education.

A key defining principle of participatory ESOL is that students and teachers are enabled to take action for social/economic transformation. For Paulo Freire, the original inspiration behind most participatory curricula, the process whereby people in an educational or political process come to realise they have power to act and change their world is known as 'conscientisation' (Freire, 1970). Participatory ESOL classes are intended to provide a space in which students and teachers can explore their current realities and the contradictions inherent in them, and, where feasible and appropriate, act upon their reflections.

Transformation is not always dramatic or overtly political; it may be subtle and even incidental and may take years to notice. That said, ESOL students come in the main from working class, minoritised ethnic communities, often suffer high levels of poverty and deprivation and their voices are frequently silenced. The majority of them, as politically aware and engaged citizens, wish to explore these hardships. However, their concerns can be serious ones, which need deep debate and consideration, making it difficult to create the right conditions. Participatory ESOL acknowledges and addresses these concerns in a meaningful and productive way.

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Dermot Bryers is the chief executive of EFA London (English for Action), a popular education charity he co-founded in 2009. He teaches ESOL in several communities across London, trains teachers in participatory pedagogy and campaigns with students and colleagues on a range of social justice issues. He has also worked as a community organiser for Citizens UK and campaigns consultant for Action Aid's Reflect ESOL project. He studied Modern History and English at Oxford University and has a Masters in Development Studies from SOAS. He is particularly interested in the relationship between adult education and taking action to effect change.

Becky Winstanley is an experienced ESOL teacher and teacher educator working in Tower Hamlets and the Institute of Education. Her particular areas of interest include participatory approaches to education, emerging language and language and literacy development for social change. She worked on Action Aid's Reflect ESOL project, adapting the international Reflect model for language learning in the UK and trained with Reflect practitioners in Liberia. She has been an active trade unionist for many years and is interested in teachers' and students' struggles in education and beyond.

Since 2004, **Melanie Cooke** has worked in the Department of Education and Professional Studies and the Centre for Language, Discourse and Communication at King's College, London, having previously taught ESOL in London and EFL in Spain. From 2004 to 2008 Melanie worked on ESOL projects for the National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC). She is particularly interested in participatory pedagogy and the role of socio-political issues in ESOL and is currently completing doctoral research into the teaching of citizenship to ESOL students. With James Simpson, Melanie is the joint author of *ESOL: A Critical Guide* (2008).

Whose integration?

2

Whose integration?

Dermot Bryers, Becky Winstanley and Melanie Cooke

Introduction

The project *Whose Integration?* aimed to use participatory techniques to explore what integration meant to students in two ESOL classes in London. We were interested in integration because it has been a key concept in recent public debates about immigration, multiculturalism and English language learning – debates which directly affect ESOL students, but about which they are not often asked to give their opinions. This chapter shows how two ESOL courses unfolded from week to week. In it we discuss how themes emerged and developed, and how meaning was made collectively through dialogue and debate. We begin with a brief discussion about the term ‘integration’.

Defining integration

‘Integration’ is an example of what Raymond Williams (1976/1983) called a ‘keyword’: a socially prominent, significant term which can mean different things to different people at different times, and which is contested in public and political debate. The term ‘integration’ is frequently linked to other complex terms such as ‘cohesion’, ‘belonging’, ‘diversity’ and ‘citizenship’. Therefore, from the beginning integration was a difficult term to define and a difficult concept to discuss.

Despite this, we wished to explore the term with ESOL students because for over a decade there have been fierce debates about the integration of ethnic and linguistic minority people. The debate has been heightened at times by reactions to happenings such as ‘9/11’, the 2005 London bombings and the events in Woolwich in May 2013; Muslims in particular have been the focus of much negative attention in the media and in political discourse. Politicians of all persuasions have made integration and cohesion central to their policies and rhetoric, and on many occasions have laid the blame for a perceived lack of cohesion at the feet of migrants, in particular the perception that migrants fail to learn English well enough to integrate (see, for example, Blackledge, 2009, for a critical discussion).

There is a growing body of qualitative and ethnographic research about migrants’ real lives, which explores topics such as belonging (e.g. Hamaz and Vasta, 2009), notions of community (e.g. Wessendorf, 2011) and local perceptions of social cohesion (Saggar et al., 2012). This research can act as an antidote to inaccurate and discriminatory top-down discourses and policies about minority communities

and individuals. However, research based on interviews, focus groups and surveys provides only a snapshot of integration and does not capture the nature of integration as a process. We suggest that our project captured a more dynamic picture of people ‘in the act’ of integrating with each other and with us. Also, migrant voices are not often heard being critical or analytical about the debates that directly refer to them. The Whose Integration? project aimed to explore the meaning of the term from the perspective of students and to deliberate with them about what the concept means to them in their everyday lives. Debates arising in this project centred on issues such as:

- What is it like to live in London and bring up British children while keeping up connections to your country of origin?
- How can you hold allegiances to more than one place, or carry on traditions and customs from elsewhere, while at the same time fitting into a new environment?
- What are the barriers to integration and what things help?
- How does the migration experience differ in the UK to other countries?
- Is the situation changing?
- What exactly are we integrating into?
- Is this a two-way street?
- How do people’s experiences fit with the powerful discourses of integration and the current suggestion among politicians that ‘multiculturalism has failed’?

The two classes and the research design

We explored the question ‘What is integration?’ with two different groups of ESOL learners over a period of five weeks. One group was a Level 1 ESOL class at Tower Hamlets College, London (THC). The class was mostly from Bangladesh and Somalia, the majority were women, most were not in paid employment and most had been in the UK for at least five years. The second class took place in Greenwich, London and was organised by a third sector ESOL provider, EFA London (English for Action). The Greenwich class had a greater range of nationalities, first languages and levels (Entry Level 2 to level 1) and, as there were no immigration status requirements to join the class, there was a greater range of statuses.

This chapter presents some of the key points and observations emerging from the project. We track how students talked about integration and how their thinking and language developed. This is reflected in the sub-headings we use: ‘Making meaning’, ‘Going deeper’ and ‘Broadening out’. Throughout the text we have placed a series of ‘toolboxes’ that provide information about how the techniques we used during

the project are actually set up and put into practice in the classroom.

Making meaning

In the first session we began our exploration of the topic. We believed that it was important for the project to be rooted in the ideas and knowledge of students and we were careful in the first session to avoid pre-empting or influencing their thoughts and opinions. In order to keep the discussion as open as possible, we chose two open-ended participatory tools: the picture pack (see Toolbox 1) and the card cluster (see Toolbox 2).

Toolbox 1: Picture pack

The picture pack is a large collection of photos of different things, which are spread out on a surface for students to rifle through. The images trigger associations for students, which provide the basis for discussions. The instruction may be '*choose a photo that says something about you and tell the class why you have chosen it*'. In our case, the instruction was '*choose a photo that says something about integration*'. The picture pack allows students to describe their own experiences. This can be personal or detached, literal or metaphorical, as they wish.

Toolbox 2: Card cluster

The card cluster is a way for a class to pool knowledge and create a group narrative about a topic. Each student is given three pieces of card and told to write three different things about the topic, in this case integration. It can be information, opinion or personal experience and there are no rights or wrongs. The cards are then collected and clustered collaboratively into themes. Finally, when the cards have been clustered, students take turns to create a single narrative, or summary of the statements. This produces a wealth of language and opportunities for further language development work, as well as themes for further exploration.

As we signalled in the introduction, the term 'integration' is a difficult one to define and this became clear to us from day one. The picture pack produced anecdotes about shopping, challenging racism and everyday encounters, and served to produce a lot of talk and to bond the group. The results of the card cluster were much more directly focused on integration and the following themes emerged: religious practices, sharing cultures, community opinions, language, help and support, equality and freedom.

¹ For more information about English for Action, go to: www.efalondon.org

Racism

The theme of racism emerged almost immediately, with discussions about the meaning of the terms 'racism', 'prejudice' and 'stereotyping'. In the Greenwich class, students provided powerful descriptions of personal experiences of racism. One student told of her mum, who frequently has the bus door closed in her face because of her hijab. Another spoke of physically ejecting a woman from a bus after being racially abused. Racism is a very difficult topic to discuss, though, and it was noticeable that students wished to avoid pointing the finger of blame at the UK in particular; some students dealt with this by resorting to platitudes such as: 'Every country, they have racism,' or 'This country, you have a lot of things to share, good integration.' These comments gradually gave way in later weeks to a more searching, analytical approach to difficult themes, including that of racism.

Money and social class

Another of the themes that developed early on while discussing barriers to integration was money and social class. In week one, students identified the market (in its economic sense) as a major factor in integration: 'If you have money, you can integrate,' said one student. At THC, money and economic wellbeing was seen to be a key element of integration. The students linked it to personal and social confidence: 'If you have money you won't be shy to communicate'. Another student added that not worrying about money permitted people to participate fully in an ESOL class. There was, however, no consensus around the question of money and class. At Greenwich, for example, some students expressed the opinion that in the UK the legal system treats everyone equally regardless of class and wealth, and said that if someone arrived in the country with a sack full of money from ill-gotten gains they would not be welcomed with open arms!

Culture

The complex topic of 'culture' came up in weeks one and two and subsequently throughout the course. Discussions emerged about differences between the UK and other countries and how migrants should go about settling into a new society. One of the areas in which 'culture' became relevant was the theme of parenting and there was a lot of anxiety about anti-social behaviour among young people. One student, for example, claimed that drug taking is not a problem in Bangladesh and questioned why it was happening among some of their children in the UK. Some people felt their culture was challenged by migrating to a different society, particularly when they had to decide how to educate their children. Someone suggested that the broader 'community' cannot play the same role in child-raising in migrant communities as it does at home. Several students said, however, that they were not blaming the UK for these problems and it is parents who carry the weight of responsibility for their children.

One student in Greenwich revealed that part of her motivation for mixing with other parents at her children's primary school was to find suitable friends for her daughters. She was looking for parents with similar 'values', 'manners' and attitudes towards education. She said that she was judged to be a 'pushy parent' and admitted that she was also judging people with regard to how they bring up their children.

Going deeper

By weeks three and four we had moved into our second stage. We began to explore some of the emerging issues in greater depth using group discussion, problem posing (see Toolbox 3) and the iceberg tool (see Toolbox 4).

Toolbox 3: Problem posing with a code

This tool works by focusing the group on a picture or code and using a structured questioning technique to draw out understanding and reactions from the group. The picture here is an example of a code we used in week three and which we discuss below. The questions are graded and stimulate a deepening analysis of the code. The questions are posed by the facilitator and the discussion takes place among the group of participants. The technique works by edging the discussion deeper and deeper in a systematic way rather than a free-for-all open discussion. Auerbach (1992) suggests five stages:

- 1 Describe the content – what do you see?
- 2 Define the problem
- 3 Personalise the problem
- 4 Discuss the problem
- 5 Discuss the alternatives to the problem



By this stage, the word integration was barely mentioned. Instead, the topics explored were related to 'community' and 'culture' and in particular to questions of gender inequality and gender relations. The discussions, which centered mainly on cultural stereotypes and assumptions, were analytical and inquiring and moved beyond the mere replication of mainstream views we sometimes saw in weeks one and two.

She's gone modern: discussions about gender

One of the discussions in Tower Hamlets centered on the notion that 'Muslim women don't ride bikes', which students had brought up in the 'Making meaning' stage when there had been an animated discussion about women riding bikes and the idea that a Bangladeshi woman who does so has 'gone modern'. Although this was not a topic we predicted, we realised that students wished to explore it further. We decided to use 'gone modern' as a generative phrase, a technique developed by Freire and applied to ESOL by Elsa Auerbach (1992). We codified the issue in the form of a picture and then used Freirean problem posing to explore it (see Toolbox 3). The code shows a Muslim woman riding a bicycle past some male community leaders who appear to be judging her negatively. The questioning was done in the systematic way shown in Toolbox 3, and led to an hour-long collective exploration and negotiation of ideas.

The process produced a debate about double standards, community and family pressures, fear of change and restricted personal freedom. One of the striking features of the discussion was the way in which students developed their ideas from a simple stance of 'this is how it is done in our culture' to a more questioning, even resistant position. As an example, one male student said in response to the picture: 'If my wife rides a bike, the men in my culture they don't accept it, my father, my brother my uncle.' This was challenged by a female student, who objected: "But you say the same about your wife!" He then thought some more about his position and explained: 'If you live in joint family then people say, "it's not right, it's not good."' Later in the debate, after several probes and explorations, the same student seemed to shift his point of view and commented: '...in real life maybe you can't ride a bike as a Muslim woman, but what we are saying here is 'why not?'" The students in this debate were able to listen to each other's points of view, to explore underlying reasons for particular opinions and to consider alternatives.

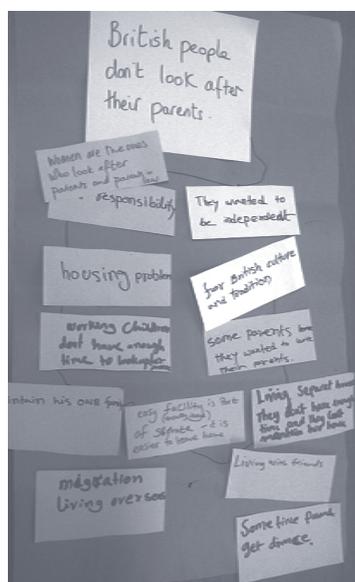
The discussion led on to one of the fundamental issues in the question of integration: the changes and adaptations that people undergo when they migrate to a new country. We discussed how social change occurs and why: is it gradual and inevitable or does it need strong people to act as catalysts? Students pointed to things that were problematic some time ago, but are now accepted as the norm. For example, one student argued that 'five years ago no one came to ESOL classes' because of resistance, particularly to women attending, from conservative members of the community. Now, she claimed, partly due to changes in the immigration process, that resistance has broken down and a lot more people attend ESOL classes. Some students discussed the need for people to resist practices and ideas they opposed and to get the strength to do so by joining with others; there were some creative ideas around taking action and changing people's minds by exposing them to new experiences: we all liked the idea of a 'mass hijab-wearing Boris bike ride' !

Another important feature of this debate was that it created natural alliances between all the women in the room, including the teachers, who felt that they had no choice but to carry out domestic work such as housework, caring and childcare. These alliances crossed religious and cultural boundaries as well as teacher-student roles and put the spotlight on gender above all other social categories; the teachers perceived a feeling of connection and solidarity between the women in the room. One of the female students challenged Dermot on whether he shared the domestic work, her underlying question being: 'Do you practise what you preach?' The discussion showed that the participatory ESOL class can be regarded as an important 'site' of integration, especially if integration means deeper understanding of 'the other' and an acceptance that the concept of 'the other' is fluid, not static. Discussions such as the one we describe here suggest that focusing primarily on identities other than the ethnic, national or religious can foster alliances based on categories such as gender, family and class, which may at times be more relevant. We came to see integration in this session, not as a state a person has reached or failed to reach, but as a *process* of fleeting and constantly shifting alliances, which we were involved in as much as the students.

Toolbox 4: The iceberg

The iceberg tool is used to explore the underlying causes of an issue that is often understood at a surface level. An iceberg is drawn with a small part exposed above the level of the sea and the large part going down beneath the sea's surface.

Students engage in group discussion and try to fill the space below the water line with possible explanations for the theme on the tip of the iceberg. The tool encourages us not to just take things at face value but to explore all the possible circumstances and permeations. This often allows for a deeper understanding of things outside our own experiences and therefore provides a more complex and real understanding of other's lives.



² This refers to the public bicycle rental scheme in London. The bicycles are popularly known as 'Boris bikes' after Boris Johnson, mayor of the Greater London Authority.

Another tool we used to encourage critical discussions was the iceberg (see Toolbox 4). We used this tool in two ways: to illustrate the previous discussion and to explore another issue. After the bicycle discussion we used the iceberg to make a visual representation of the debate. At the tip of the iceberg was the issue (a woman 'going modern') and under the surface were underlying questions. We illustrated how the group had delved into their thoughts and ideas to arrive at deeper meanings. Using the iceberg made the structure and purpose of the speaking activity explicit to students, especially to those who might have been worried that the discussion had been a kind of 'free for all'. We then moved on to use the iceberg as a thinking tool for another discussion in which the surface issue was 'British people don't look after the elderly', another theme brought up by students in a previous session. Again, students delved under the surface of this statement to arrive at a deeper understanding, questioning the role of women as carers, the nature of work and the changing family.

We observed that students continued to reflect on the issues arising from this lesson long after it had finished; for example, a female student at THC said she had continued talking about 'she's gone modern' with her friends later that day and over the weekend. Another posted this comment on the blog after week three:

Yesterday we enjoyed our class. We find massive information from bicycle woman code. We had lots of conversation about it. Some of us said, the woman trying to ride bicycle, some of the religious men trying to stop her. We also did iceberg picture, we found out why British people not look after their parents. We think, they live in separate house also they work full time, so they don't have enough time to look after their parents.

Integrating into British culture

At Greenwich we discussed what it means to try to integrate into 'British culture'. Although it was clear from the start that students were unable to pinpoint an actual thing called 'British culture' and most people appreciated London as a multicultural city, several students did talk about feeling isolated and unsure about how to behave at a local level. One student said that at her children's primary school she hadn't made any friends and just picked up and dropped off her child without lingering to talk to other mums. Another student shared an example of her uncertainty about local norms. She explained that in Turkey it is seen to be rude to speak in the street, instead of inviting the person to your house for coffee. This student was worried that her reluctance to speak at length in the street, or the playground, would be interpreted as coldness. However, when she attended an event at her local children's centre a woman from Turkey told her: "You know here in London, you're not obliged to invite people to your house." For this student, her lack of awareness of local ways acted as a barrier to integration in an important site: the school playground. For us, this pointed to an important point about integration: it might be impossible to define a national culture as such but migrants are still faced with learning how to integrate into the local community and its particular sites whose norms and rules can be hard for newcomers – British-born or not – to fathom. Some students in Greenwich depicted a harsh world

where migrants struggle with language barriers in an unwelcoming, mildly racist atmosphere: 'Everyone here is a little bit racist underneath,' said one student while another commented poignantly: 'If you find people with open mind, your way is a little bit easier.'

By the end of the second stage, class discussions were no longer taking place at the surface level. Ideas had been put forward and explored in depth. Some points of view had been challenged and were starting to change. Both students and teachers had taken the discussions outside the classroom and continued them with family and friends. New understandings and opinions had been formed and we were satisfied with the time and space we had dedicated to the complexities of the themes. It was time to move on to the third stage, 'Broadening out', in which we introduced ideas from outside the group for critical discussion.

Broadening out

The final classes in both Tower Hamlets and Greenwich were characterised by engagement with ideas from outside the classroom about the complex processes and politics of integration. Some students had asked about theories and models of integration in Britain as well as other countries such as France. We brought quotations from key political figures for the class to grapple with.

Politicians and the problem tree

In the final session in Tower Hamlets, we critically analysed the following quotes from speeches on integration made by various politicians:

Immigrants who settle here must do their bit to ensure that future generations grow up 'feeling British'.

David Blunkett, former Home Secretary, Labour

Mass immigration has led to discomfort and disjointedness in neighbourhoods because some migrants have been unwilling to integrate or learn English.

David Cameron, Prime Minister, Conservative

We need British jobs for British workers.

Gordon Brown, former Prime Minister, Labour

We have norms of acceptability and those who come into our home – for that is what it is – should accept those norms just as we would have to do if we went elsewhere.

David Blunkett, former Home Secretary, Labour

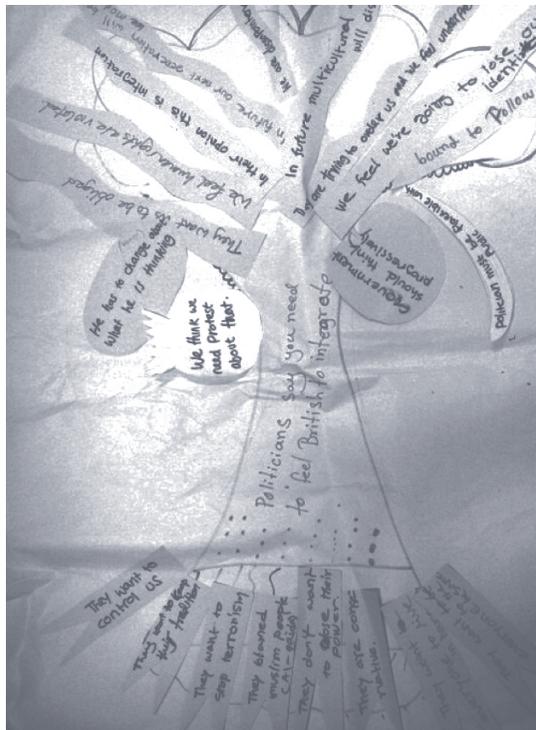
There is a generation of work-shy Britons, leaving the jobs market open for migrants. Figures show that of the 2.5 million extra people in employment since 1997, three quarters were foreign-born workers.

David Cameron, Prime Minister, Conservative

Students discussed their reactions to these speeches and were particularly keen to talk about those that accused migrants of not wishing to integrate or learn English. They then analysed these problematic areas further using a problem tree (see Toolbox 5).

Toolbox 5: The problem tree

The problem tree is a graphic tool that facilitates people to examine the causes, consequences and possible solutions of a problem. A large tree is drawn on a sheet of paper (flipchart size) and onto the trunk students write the problem, in this case 'politicians say you need to feel British to integrate'. On the roots students write the causes of the problem, on the branches the consequences and the fruit of the tree represents the solutions. For the tool to work well, the problem must be clear and agreed as a problem, even if the causes and consequences are more complicated and contested.



One idea students found problematic was David Blunkett's statement that in order to integrate migrants need to 'feel British'. Using the tree tool they were able to read the quotation and discuss not only the surface meaning, but also the intention behind it and their own reactions to it. In the discussion during the creation of the tree, students expressed worry and concern about what they perceived as a move in policy and rhetoric towards a more assimilationist model of integration. They worried that the acceptance of cultural difference was under threat: 'In future multicultural will disappear,' said one student, while another commented: 'We feel we are going to lose our identity.' They also expressed anxiety about increased authoritarianism and coercion: 'They are trying to order us and we feel under pressure,' was how one student put it.

Concluding remarks

What is integration?

During the first two sessions a number of students were still asking: 'What does integration mean?' By the end of the project everyone had stopped asking this question, not because we had provided the answer but because it had become clear that there was no single answer. During the project we came to see integration as a state that people slip in and out of depending on the circumstances of the moment. Unexpected alliances were formed, which transcended the boundaries of culture, nationality, class and religion, and many of us moved out, even if fleetingly, from our comfort zones. Students and teachers have multiple, shifting identities and allegiances, which are national, local, gender based and religious and some of these are more salient than others at different times. The most important thing was to feel a sense of belonging locally. During the project we talked of integration as being a 'two-way street' where the onus should not be just on the migrant to adapt and understand the host nation. The more accurate metaphor to describe the process was as a 'Spaghetti Junction', i.e. a complicated, dense set of intersections, crossroads and junctions going in lots of different directions.

Barriers and anxieties

However, our students experienced significant barriers to creating these alliances with locals, with many of them having to contend with racism, anti-immigration policies and rhetoric, poverty and language difficulties. Racism was a particular concern to the Greenwich group, where students shared several experiences of racism. Not being able to work, low pay, benefit cuts and cuts to public services were examples of material impediments to integration. There was also anxiety about developments in the current climate. Recent changes to immigration policy and hostile rhetoric towards migrants were interpreted by students as a move away from multiculturalism and towards an assimilationist model. Although students were clear that migrants have responsibilities to adapt to the community they are settling into, they were concerned about impossible demands made of them to act and feel British.

Participatory ESOL: a site of integration in action?

Given these barriers, the participatory ESOL class is a particularly important site for migrants to deliberate about issues that directly affect them. The project created a public space for dialogue about issues that affect people's everyday lives.

We noted that the intensity of discussion in the classroom led some students to stimulate the same debates at home and with friends, and as teachers we found ourselves discussing the issues that arose in class long after the sessions were over. It has long been recognised that an effective ESOL class reflects the lives and experiences of students (Auerbach, 1992; Baynham, 2006). Our project extends this concept further and shows that the participatory ESOL class itself is an important part of students' lives and not just a rehearsal for 'real life'. As such, we suggest that it can play a part in shaping the life experiences of those who participate and, importantly, this can be done on students' own terms. In this way, participatory education can help teachers and students alike resist dominant, negative discourses around migration.

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Since 2004, **Melanie Cooke** has worked in the Department of Education and Professional Studies and the Centre for Language, Discourse and Communication at King's College, London, having previously taught ESOL in London and EFL in Spain. From 2004 to 2008 Melanie worked on ESOL projects for the National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC). She is particularly interested in participatory pedagogy and the role of socio-political issues in ESOL and is currently completing doctoral research into the teaching of citizenship to ESOL students. With James Simpson, Melanie is the joint author of *ESOL: A Critical Guide* (2008).

The power of discussion

3

The power of discussion

Dermot Bryers, Becky Winstanley and Melanie Cooke

Introduction

The Power of Discussion was a participatory ESOL project that built on previous work carried out with support from the British Council, the *Whose Integration?* project (Bryers, Winstanley and Cooke, 2013). Participatory ESOL is an approach to teaching English language and literacy that draws out and builds upon the experiences of students and develops a shared critical understanding of the world. This chapter documents a six-week period of research in which we dedicated all of our classroom time to discussions. We describe our reflections on the discussion topics that emerged and the pedagogic tools and techniques we used, as well as our observations on the impact of these lessons. We begin with a brief summary of the potential for classroom discussion for second language development and its significance for education more generally.

Research on interaction, dialogue and discussion

There are various reasons to study the role of discussion in ESOL teaching. The role of dialogue in learning has been a topic of interest since ancient times. In Socrates' famous dialogues, for example, he employed questions and answers to scrutinise his interlocutor's opinions and doctrines in an attempt to move beyond 'false beliefs' to the 'truth'. In the early part of the 20th century, the Russian scholar, Mikhail Bakhtin, proposed that meaning is not fixed but lies in the spaces which open up in dialogue as ideas are exchanged. Also in Russia in the 1920s, the psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, argued that human cognitive development was rooted *primarily* in dialogue with others, i.e. the interaction happens first and is subsequently internalised in an individual's mind. Vygotsky's 'socio-cultural' approach to learning, with its emphasis on dialogue and interaction, has been highly influential in theories of teaching and learning, from primary schools to higher education, as well as language learning.

Our own approach to teaching and learning, participatory ESOL, draws partly on the work of the Brazilian Marxist educationist Paolo Freire. His work raised important questions about the role of power in interaction, which we attempt to address in *The Power of Discussion*. Whose voices tend to be heard? Whose are silenced? How are disagreements managed? Whose opinions are the ones which dominate? How do we deal with asymmetry between speakers?

Discussions in language teaching

Theories of second language acquisition (SLA) stress the importance of interaction, leading to the popularity of classroom tasks that encourage students to talk: classroom discussions, debates, ranking tasks, decision making and so on. Research has shown that different tasks produce different kinds of talk, e.g. tasks that require interlocutors to reach an agreement produced ‘convergent’ talk while tasks such as debates and discussions produced ‘divergent’ talk. Duff (1986) showed that ‘divergent’ tasks such as discussions produced longer turns, extended discourse and complex syntax. Consequently, discussions and debates are common activities in language classrooms and there are a wealth of materials and textbooks that contain ideas for conducting these. However, in our experience, many of these are not particularly motivating for students as they do not speak directly to their interests and concerns and often serve merely as a vehicle to practise ‘target language’. The teachers in the action research project reported in Cooke and Roberts (2007), for example, found that students carrying out textbook discussion activities seemed to just go through the motions of expected classroom behaviour; they rushed through the tasks and did not stretch themselves or they struggled to express their own meanings. They also found, however, that when teachers sought ways for students to ‘speak from within’, discussing issues that were relevant to their lives and made certain discourse patterns such as narratives or types of argumentation explicit, they produced longer stretches of language that were more complex, more fluent and more accurate.

In participatory ESOL we go one step further than this by expecting students to engage in discussions about social and political issues which spring directly from their experiences in the world outside the classroom – an under-exploited resource in ESOL. In previous projects we have experienced what happens when students have a deep personal investment in the content of a discussion and we have seen that students strive to find the most effective ways to use their linguistic resources in an effort to reach understanding.

The ESOL class and the research design

The research took place in one class at Tower Hamlets College, East London over a period of six weeks (one 2.5-hour class a week) between November and December 2013. The class was an Entry level 2 class, which met three times a week for an academic year. The 16 students were from Bangladesh, Somalia, China, Brazil and Portugal. The majority had generally been in the UK for between one and ten years. Most of the students were not in paid employment and were either dependent on their spouses and/or receiving welfare benefits. In a discussion on social class before the start of the project, many of the group felt that their socio-economic status had declined as a consequence of migration to the UK. This may explain why the topics emerged and played out in the way they did (see discussion of topics, page 40).

We followed up each class with a reflective meeting in which we planned for the following session. Our data consisted of the lesson plans and audio recordings of the lessons, observation field notes, reflections, students' written work, visual documentation of tools and other classroom work, and the postings by students and staff on the class blog and Twitter account.

First of all we established with the group what we meant by 'discussion': a meaningful exchange between at least three people which involved a degree of formality and seriousness. We focused mainly on two different types of discussion. Using Carter and McCarthy's (1997:10) categorisation of spoken texts we can say that these discussion types were, respectively, *debate and argument* in which 'people take up positions, pursue arguments and expound on their opinions on a range of matters' and *decision making/negotiating outcomes*, i.e. 'ways in which people work towards decisions/consensus or negotiate their way through problems towards solutions'. These two discussion types provide opportunities for students to practise strategies which are essential in the world outside the classroom – the first type because highly political topics do not always lend themselves to easy consensus so students need to be able to express opinions, listen to those of others, possibly modify their views and live with disagreement and compromise, and the second type because they also need to be able to work effectively with others when attempting to effect change.

We ruled out chats, small talk and one-to-one conversations and focused on 'substantial' social/political topics. For this reason we started out by asking students to share what had interested them in the news and picked out topics from that for discussion. There was a commitment to start in an open way and to avoid overloading the students with texts and 'expert opinion' when they were beginning to explore a topic.

¹ CEFR A2

We used participatory tools to go deeper into a topic, such as the problem tree² and problem posing³.

In this project, we continued to keep meaning at the fore of our pedagogy but shifted some of our research focus from *what* the students were saying to how they were saying it. We recorded all the discussions the students had in the six sessions, listened carefully to their language use at each stage and noted their development over the six-week period.

Listening to the recordings we were impressed with the progress the students made and the way in which they integrated the explicit language work we did into their contributions during class discussions. By Session Three they were having successful, coherent, group discussions for up to 40 minutes. As we discuss below (in section four), students began to employ strategies for taking the floor, interrupting and ceding the floor to others, which helped to make the discussions more equally distributed. By Sessions Five and Six, students were operating with far less input from the teacher than they were at the beginning and were using their discourse strategies to interact with each other effectively and to engage in some of the complex social and political debates of the day.

Participatory pedagogy

In this section we focus on our participatory approach to: a) topics: finding them and sustaining them, b) making participation more equal and c) explicit language work.

a) Finding topics

The critical linguist Alastair Pennycook (1994:132) states that '*the search for content in language teaching is a contentious one*'. He criticises language classes for maintaining a dichotomy between linguistic structures and social structures and thereby failing to link the language being learned to the lives of the students (ibid). English language teaching has also been called a '*blandscape*' (Clarke and Clarke, 1990:39) and '*a subject in search of subject matter*.' (Harrison, 1990:1)

In participatory ESOL we attempt to address this divide by ensuring that both the language being learned and the content of the classes are directly relevant to students' lives. For this reason we believe it is important to begin without a list of topics or set of activities chosen in advance. This allows students to find topics

² A problem tree is a graphic used to record a discussion of the causes and consequences of a problem. The roots of the tree are the causes, the branches the consequences and the fruit the potential action that can be taken (see *Whose integration?* P. 30).

³ Problem posing is a five-stage exploration of a problem shared by the group. The teacher facilitates a sharing of personal experiences relating to the problem and then an analysis of its causes and consequences (see *Whose integration?* P. 25).

Tool: What's New?

Students work in three groups. One group focuses on local news (Tower Hamlets or London), the second on national news (UK) and the third on global news. The prompt is simply: 'What's new? What have you heard in the news or from your friends?' Students have 30–40 minutes to have a discussion and record their ideas on a spider diagram. One member of each group then takes the spidergram and summarises it for one of the other two groups. After 10–15 minutes, a new spokesperson from each original group moves on to the second group. The teacher listens, monitors and finds out where the students' interests lie, which issues are igniting discussion and which are left by the wayside.

that relate to their own lives and experiences, and produces a more urgent need to communicate. At the start of the project we opened out the first session using a tool we have labelled 'What's New?'

At first, the students did not immediately have much to say and they needed time to think and warm up. However, after five or ten minutes the students came across a topic they were able to exchange opinions on – the health service and 'health tourism' – and the discussion took off. We reflected later that during these initial phases it can be very tempting for the teacher to abandon the activity or take it over, but the ability to 'hold your nerve' is important in participatory ESOL and, as we have seen, in this case it paid off quite soon.

From the 'What's New?' tool we generated themes for future discussion. Initially, one of the salient themes that emerged was 'immigration' and specifically 'illegal immigrants'. There had been a large immigration raid in Whitechapel a few days beforehand, which the students had brought to our attention and were anxious to discuss. We decided to focus on illegal immigration for at least three lessons and then assess. At the end of Session Three we consulted the students and the consensus was to move on to something different, so we moved on to the theme of poverty because it had emerged during earlier discussions. Although at first the topic did not take off quite as we had hoped, after changing the angle from a philosophical discussion around poverty to a more practical focus on what action can be taken to combat it, it was far more successful. In the following session the students were re-energised, had more to say and the mood was lighter. We are not suggesting the hard, difficult subjects should be avoided, but if a topic seems wrong it may need to be re-thought rather than abandoned.

b) Sustaining topics

As with our previous research project, *Whose Integration?*, we chose to work with one theme over a number of classes so that students had time to go deeper into complex debates and issues. However, in the time that elapses between classes, it is normal for students to forget what has been said or to lose interest in a topic; bridging the gap between classes therefore becomes crucial and the teachers

often had to help the class remember what had happened previously.

Activities and a variety of interactions can also be used to keep topics going. This relates to 'holding your nerve' and not moving on at the first flat moment. On more than one occasion during the project, a change in dynamic or activity re-energised the group and it wasn't necessary to abandon the topic. For example, in Session Five the group had been discussing action against poverty for around half an hour. We wanted to evaluate the efficacy of a variety of actions the students thought of but felt that the students needed a change of focus. We therefore chose to do this as a spectrum line where students physically position themselves along a line in response to how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement, and by doing so the discussion became lively and funny despite the seriousness of the topic.

c) Making participation more equal

As well as the vital issue of topic, other pedagogical factors contributed to the creation of conditions for real dialogue.

The role of the teacher in participatory ESOL is significantly different to the role in traditional approaches to language teaching. In terms of facilitating discussion it is not necessarily the teacher's job to provide language or topics, as we have seen. There is a responsibility, however, albeit not a sole responsibility, to enable students to participate. One of the chief barriers to a successful discussion is domination by one or two people, with the result that other students disengage. We observed this at several stages during the project, with one student particularly prone to holding the floor for too long. It seemed that the rest of the class, particularly at the beginning of the course, did not have the ability to interrupt, ask for clarification or move the discussion along. Instead they tended to stop listening and the student increasingly addressed his speech to the teachers. This happened far less by Sessions Five and Six, as students developed the skills to keep the discussion on track and to ensure more equal participation.

We addressed the issue of unequal participation through a discussion with students about their own perspectives on the problem. In Session Two some students had said: 'What we want in our discussions is for it to be equal' and 'We are trying to get it more equal'. As sensitively as we could, we juxtaposed the quiet and the more vocal students by doing a 'speaking line' (see box below) in which students positioned themselves according to whether they had participated a lot or a little. In this way, everyone was drawn into the problem and shared responsibility for the solution. In the meta-discussion that ensued, the *features* of discussions were the *object* of discussion, and we believe it had a powerful impact on the group dynamic. After this point, the question of equal participation arose on various occasions and for the rest of the project students appeared to be mindful of ensuring greater equality among themselves.

Tool: Speaking Line

We used the 'Speaking Line' tool in Session Three to nudge the students towards making participation in the discussions more even. After a group speaking activity, the students lined up according to how much they spoke, with the person who spoke most at one end and the person who spoke least at the other.

This activity necessitates negotiation among the group and often provokes fierce debate. This tool is effective because it places the responsibility for making discussion more even in the hands of the whole group. We used it after a discussion, partly to assess whether raising the issue of speaking equally in the previous session had had any impact and partly to provoke further change in behaviour.

Part of the work we did on equal participation involved explicit language work, which equipped students with the language they needed to create more equal discussions. We asked students in Session Two what they could say in order to take the floor if they wanted to speak. They came up with 'Can I interrupt?' and 'Can I say something?' and we debated whether it was appropriate to say 'Excuse me' or not. We also worked on asking for clarifications: 'Sorry? What did you say?', 'I didn't catch that.' We used an activity where the teacher said something completely incoherent and each student had to use a phrase to ask for repetition.

Teacher roles in a class discussion

We experimented with at least five distinct teacher roles during the discussions:

1. The teacher stays out of the discussion and only keeps time and listens.
2. The teacher stays out of the discussion but provides students with individual feedback on post-its to encourage them to use new language or a skill we have worked on.
3. The teacher acts as a facilitator, working to repair, summarise, clarify and bring in quieter students.
4. The teacher acts as an 'equal' contributor and gives opinions.
5. The teacher uses problem-posing questions to lead the group through an examination of the causes, consequences and potential solutions of a shared problem.

The teachers reflected at various points during the project that it is important to decide which role to play before and to be clear about this. Here is an example of one teacher making her role explicit before problem-posing questions in Session Three:

I'm going to try and get you to think about this picture. I'm not going to be part of this discussion. It's going to be you. My role is going to be asking questions. So, I'm not going to say what I think, I'm not going to give my opinion. I'm just going to ask more and more questions to try and get you to think more, to think more deeply.

If the teacher always plays the classic role of 'chair' it can encourage students to speak to the teacher. This is a common reason teachers cite for classroom discussions not working. During one discussion one teacher deliberately avoided eye contact with a student who was directing all his comments at the teacher, forcing the student to turn to the group to find an audience. On the other hand, if the teacher is *in* a discussion they can use personal anecdotes to help the discussion along and to encourage other students to disclose.

Meta language: discussions about discussions

At the beginning of the project we spent considerable time 'discussing discussions'. We posed questions for collective consideration as follows: What does a discussion look like? What are the components? What makes people speak during a discussion? What makes them silent? Is discussion different in different languages? We asked students to think of examples of discussions they had had in any language and to describe the context and the purpose of these discussions.

As well as being productive for language work, discussions about discussions were also interesting from a topic point of view, and we heard several examples from students that were useful for our meta work. One of these was a group of friends who had been saving a small amount of money for many years. Recently they had amassed enough to be able to begin a small business. They gathered together to discuss the type of business they would set up. We used this example each time we spoke about an action-planning discussion. Using students' own rather than teacher examples sent a strong message that the language used in the classroom was theirs, not given to them to use by the teacher. Talking with students helped to demystify the language work on discussion skills and to share the expertise, and challenged the usual role of the teacher being the keeper of the expert knowledge about language.

Explicit language teaching

We followed this meta-level work with an explicit focus on particular discourse strategies. Initially we chose three from the students' lists of strategies they regarded as important: *asking for further explanation*, *inviting others to speak* and

taking the floor. Later, three more were added: *making suggestions*, *accepting suggestions* and *rejecting suggestions*. We asked the students to work together to come up with possible language for each strategy. For example, for *making suggestions* students suggested, *let's*, *we could* and *what about*. We then chose some of these to practise before re-incorporating them back into the discussions. In this way we hoped to take students' output and focus explicitly on it in order to build on it. As each student had different strengths, sometimes they were consolidating existing skills, and sometimes they were developing new skills that were initially part of another student's repertoire. In this way we were creating a kind of linguistic pool that all of the students could draw upon.

As the project progressed we found that time spent on more controlled language work became the fun part of the lesson where students could have a rest from serious issues. We found the combination of the two aspects refreshing and productive. In the post-lesson reflective log after Session Two we observed:

Language work in participatory ESOL can feel like a break, whereas, normally the opposite can be true; with an overload of grammar it is the speaking task that is light relief. Our speaking activities stretch students so much that language work can seem easy. Language focus ended up being somehow funny, a laugh. (Post-lesson reflection 2)

We also found that students almost immediately started to incorporate the language we had practised into the discussions. In Session Three, for example, we discussed the government initiative to use an advertising van to 'invite' illegal migrants to go home. In the post-lesson reflections we observed: *Students used several of the realisations to good effect, such as: What do you think? Can you say a bit more?* It appeared that students felt that the controlled practice was of immediate use in their discussion.

Language of discussion

We now look at the possible impact of the six weeks on the students' ability to engage successfully in discussions. After listening to the recordings we were able to observe a marked difference in complexity, coherence and collaboration between the first and the final discussion. Although in the first discussion students showed an ability to make relevant points followed up with examples and to respond to each other, as a jointly produced discourse it lacked coherence. Students made good points and there were some impressive individual contributions but there was limited *dialogue* and the discussion as a whole lacked key features of the genre, such as responding to and developing other people's ideas. In one exchange, which was typical of the first discussion, one student makes a point about some of the problems faced by migrants with student visas: *'Bangladesh coming student apply this college then two three months close college.*

*Very big problem*⁴. Although students showed signs that they were listening, the point is not developed or taken up and is followed by another individual contribution which does not acknowledge or build on the theme of the previous utterance but goes back to the general topic: *'Nobody knows what happened when you go to another country. Same same everybody same. I don't know anything.'* Students displayed limited awareness of co-operation strategies in interaction, talked over each other and interrupted each other frequently.

However, after six weeks of group discussions the strategies displayed by the same students were noticeably more effective and the discussions contained considerably more features of the genre. In contrast to the first session, the final discussion flowed smoothly and it was easier to follow the various points made by the students and the overall development of the discussion. The students can be observed exploring, challenging and even co-constructing their ideas. In the following extracts from the final discussion, we can observe students discussing the difficulties of fulfilling attendance requirements in their ESOL class and can see more evidence of development and follow up:

1. **R:** *Can I say something? My attendance is very low, 75 per cent, because my son every time nose operation, check-up hospital appointment, everything headache my life. Sometimes coming sometimes not.*
2. **D:** *OK, but when you don't coming school, you need prove?*
3. **R:** *Yes, I need letter, every time text Becky.*

Later on in the discussion the students turn to possible solutions and again we see them developing and following up on each other's points:

1. **R:** *What about we could boycott, what do you think?*
2. **D:** *I think it's hard but maybe it can work ... Maybe not all students accept this, what do you think? I think it's [it'll] work.*

There are no examples of students talking over each other without listening and there is evidence of a high degree of coherence. The teachers felt no need to intervene or chair, as the discussion was run and managed by the students themselves and there are many instances of co-construction of meaning, i.e. students working out their ideas in real time during the discussion itself.

⁴ Examples of students' spoken language have been transcribed as near as possible to the original utterance, i.e. the grammar has not been altered. Where this interferes with comprehensibility, we have indicated the probable meaning in brackets.

Conclusion

The first conclusion we can draw is that working almost exclusively on discussion for a period of six classes was enjoyable and produced clear improvements in students' skills. Not only did students successfully employ their existing linguistic resources and strategies, but they also seemed to develop new ones. The comparison of one of the earlier discussions with one of the final ones shows that on a number of levels the students were using language more effectively by the end of the project. From the perspective of the teachers and the students, it was an overwhelmingly positive experience. In their final evaluation, students said that they thought the classes had been unique and, importantly, they were aware that they were learning.

Secondly, the experience of working with real, serious topics was not easy, but there seemed to be something productive about the difficulty. There were periods of silence, awkwardness and occasional discomfort. As we have shown, the work was tiring, to the extent that the controlled language focus felt like a break. The students recognised that the classes had been difficult too. One student stated that sometimes she felt 'sad' and another wrote that: 'When we don't understand we're nervous'. At the end of Session Two students were struggling to express complex ideas, but this urgent desire to find a way to communicate difficult ideas seemed to drive the students to speak beyond their ascribed level.

Thirdly, we felt that the amount of time we spent on explicit language work and the meta-language work we did around discussion itself were crucial ingredients in the students' success, as was working with the class to make the discussions more equal. Talking about the importance of discussion can help to persuade any sceptical students that they are a crucial element in their learning. In terms of the explicit discussion skills work, the power of learning how to take the floor ('*Can I say something?*', etc.) and cede the floor ('*What do you think?*', etc.) should not be underestimated. Working with two or three discussion strategies in the way we describe above transformed the discussions in a short space of time.

Finally, in addition to the power of discussion to develop language, it is also fundamental to the principles of dialogic teaching that participatory ESOL espouses. Dialogic teaching is regarded not only as an effective means of learning, but also as essential for citizenship; in a democracy citizens need to be able to participate in discussions about the issues which affect them and their communities (Alexander, 2007, 2010). Michaels, O'Connor and Resnick (2008:283) summarise this point as follows:

Dialogue and discussion have long been linked to theories of democratic education. From Socrates to Dewey and Habermas, educative dialogue has represented a forum for learners to develop understanding by listening, reflecting, proposing and incorporating alternative views. For many philosophers, learning through discussion has also represented the promise of education as a foundation for democracy.

Throughout the project, but particularly towards the end, we saw the language learning and the students' lives interact in a powerful way. The combination of real-life, collective learning and democratic, collective action we saw in Session Six is testimony to the power of ESOL and the power of adult education in general.

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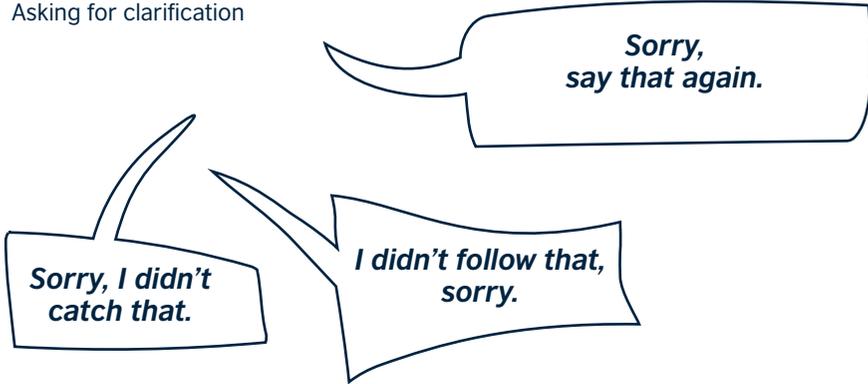
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Since 2004, **Melanie Cooke** has worked in the Department of Education and Professional Studies and the Centre for Language, Discourse and Communication at King's College, London, having previously taught ESOL in London and EFL in Spain. From 2004 to 2008 Melanie worked on ESOL projects for the National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC). She is particularly interested in participatory pedagogy and the role of socio-political issues in ESOL and is currently completing doctoral research into the teaching of citizenship to ESOL students. With James Simpson, Melanie is the joint author of *ESOL: A Critical Guide* (2008).

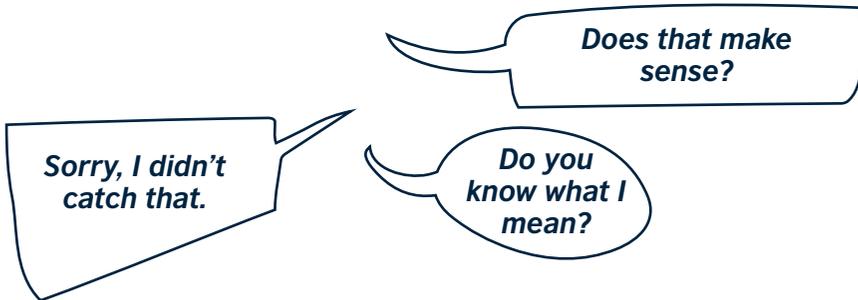
Appendix 1

Discussion skills

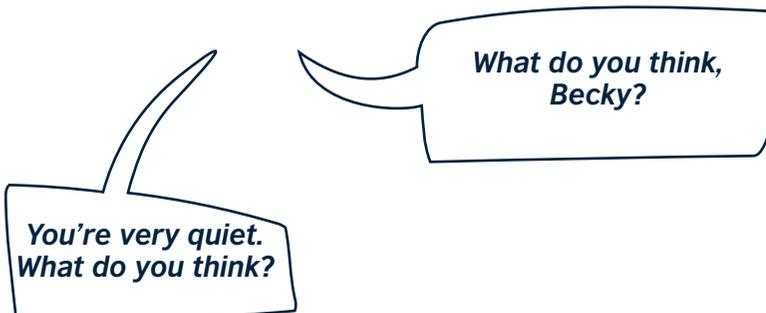
Asking for clarification



Checking others understand you

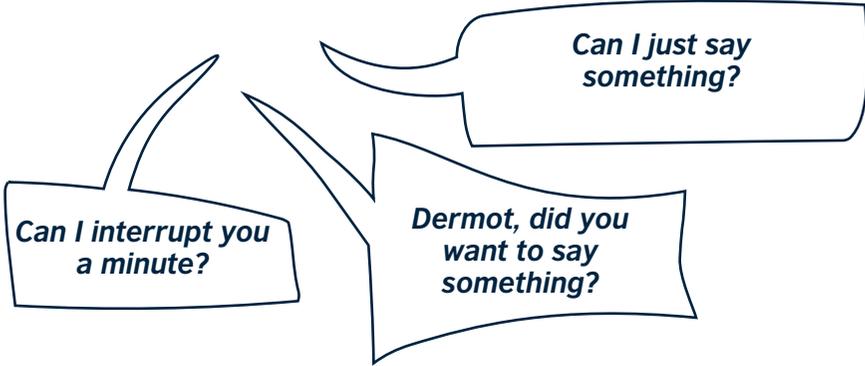


Inviting others to speak

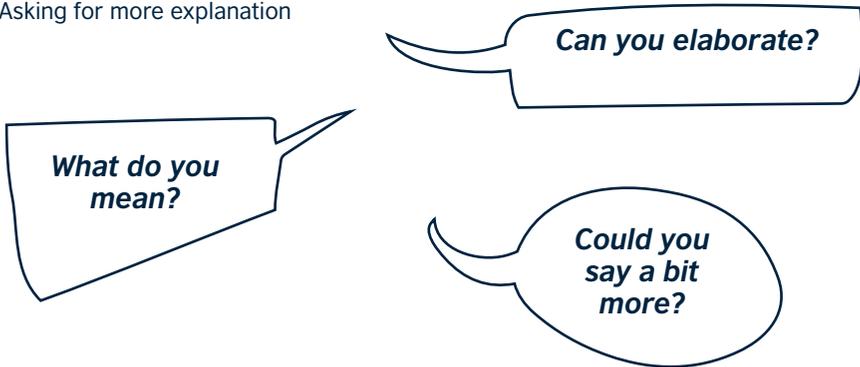


Discussion skills

Getting space to speak



Asking for more explanation



Appendix 2

Discussion skills



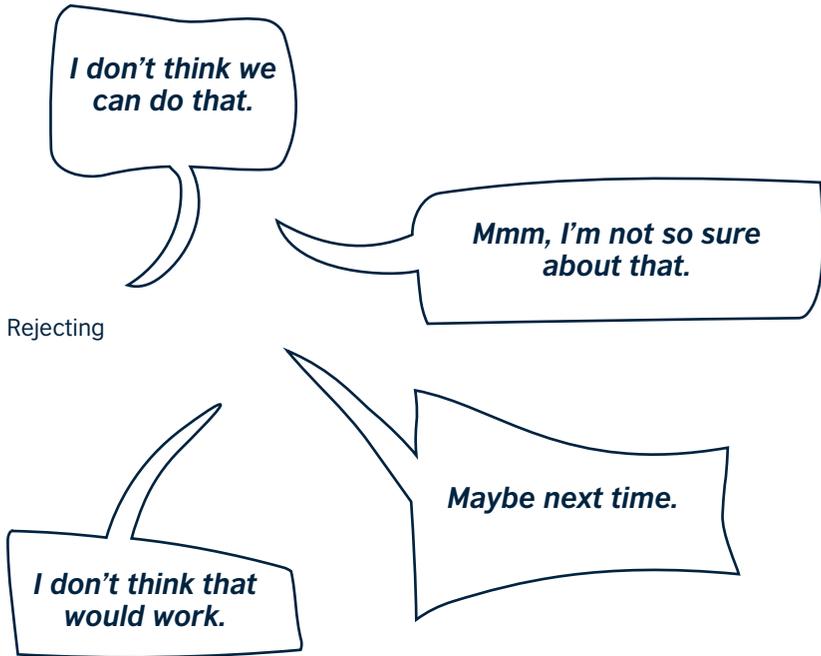
Making suggestions



Accepting



Discussion skills



The paradoxes of language learning and integration in the European context

4

The paradoxes of language learning and integration in the European context

Cristina Ros i Sole

Introduction

In a recent communication from the European Commission it was stated that: 'It is broadly agreed that the acquisition of language skills is critical for integration.' (European Commission 2011:4)

Here, language skills refers to the acquisition of the host language. But is the learning of the national language key for integration in a host society? When and how should this language learning take place? What role should government policies take in the matter? These are some of the questions that surround the issue of language learning and its role in the integration of migrants. Although the integration of migrants in host countries has been an issue of debate for a long time, it is only more recently that national languages have become a key issue in these processes.

Indeed, increasingly, the learning of the national language has become a cornerstone of integration policy in the EU, and the knowledge of the 'host' language is seen as a barometer of migrants' integration in a particular society. Policies in a variety of European countries are making language tests and so-called 'knowledge of society' a compulsory requirement to enter, settle or apply for citizenship, so that full rights and access to jobs, education and social life is closely linked to language proficiency. A number of socio-linguistic studies (Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson, 2009; Avermaet, 2009; Extra and Spotti, 2009), however, point out that European integration policies may not fully reflect the complexity and needs of today's multilingual migrants and their increasing cosmopolitan and transnational realities.

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the relationship between language learning and integration of migrants in the European context that highlights the paradoxes of promoting national models of integration in an increasingly transnational and diverse Europe. It takes a critical approach to discourses on the relationship between language learning and integration by looking at the role of language learning in 'official' processes of integration. In order to do this, it reviews studies and reports on governmental policies on integration across Europe, the execution of these policies and how scholarly literature has reflected on it. At the same time, it looks at the why and how of the increasing relationship between language learning and integration in political discourses by relating it to how societal events are interpreted by politicians and their impact on policies.

The documents reviewed include academic publications such as book monographs and specialist journals, official and institutional reports, governmental legislation and studies, and collaborations between community organisations and academics. Moreover, this review tries to balance information from quantitative sources (such as statistics from online tools that analyse migrant integration indexes in Europe) and qualitative sources (such as analyses of political speeches). Although the issues addressed in this study concern and are contextualised in Europe, it will concentrate on the specific examples of three EU countries to illustrate the points: the UK, Germany and the Netherlands.

The socio-political context of 'integration'

Historically, European countries have built a strong link between language and nation. European states (as opposed to other countries with a long history of migration such as the USA or Australia) were built on the one-language one-nation axiom, so that language has always been the clearest feature that distinguishes one nation from the next (Extra and Spotti, 2009). And yet Europe's identity is 'to a great extent determined by cultural and linguistic diversity.' (Haarman, 1995 in Extra and Spotti, 2009)

This diversity has been intensified by new waves of migration. Since 1991, and after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, immigration patterns have changed: there is more of it and it is more diverse (e.g. new migration from Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia) and it has become more difficult to grasp what a migrant is. Moreover, scholars argue that it is a different type of migration altogether, i.e. it has more layers, it is more mobile and it is more complex; this is what Vertovec (2007) has called '*superdiversity*'. In spite of this, the last decade or so has seen a retreat into monolingual national policies that have sought to control the tide of multilingualism and multiculturalism in Europe (Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson, 2009). Many governments' foreign policies in Europe have reacted towards new immigration by tightening their borders (Van Avermaet, 2009) and using new instruments to control it.

But there are some contradictions in governments' policies. In spite of this tightening of the rules, political discourses and their terminology are eager to emphasise how migrants and their cultures are welcome in today's societies. Two years ago, the UK Prime Minister, started his speech with this message:

Our country has benefited immeasurably from immigration. Go into any hospital and you'll find people from Uganda, India and Pakistan who are caring for our sick and vulnerable. Go into schools and universities and you'll find teachers from all over the world, inspiring our young people.

Go to almost any high street in the country and you'll find entrepreneurs from overseas who are not just adding to the local economy but playing a part in local life. Charities, financial services, fashion, food, music – all these sectors are what they are because of immigration. So, yes, immigrants make a huge contribution to Britain. We recognise that – and we welcome it (...).

Speech by David Cameron (BBC, 2011)

But in the same speech, the counter-argument is put forward: that migrants are at fault for 'lacking' linguistic skills and bringing about conflict (e.g. 'not really wanting to integrate'):

But I'm also clear about something else: for too long, immigration has been too high (...) That's why, when there have been significant numbers of new people arriving in neighbourhoods ... perhaps not able to speak the same language as those living there ... on occasions not really wanting or even willing to integrate ... that has created a kind of discomfort and disjointedness in some neighbourhoods. This has been the experience for many people in our country – and I believe it is untruthful and unfair not to speak about it and address.

Speech by David Cameron (BBC, 2011)

This is how in political discourse, the old term 'assimilation', which denoted a renunciation of one's values and culture, has given way to the more politically correct 'integration', even though the meaning of 'integration' has remained virtually the same as assimilation.

There has been a swing of the pendulum between 'assimilation' and 'multiculturalist' policies in UK discourses and policies. Whereas assimilationist policies are identified with the 1950s and the immigration into the UK from the former colonies, in the 1960s the opposite movement emerged, and the government adopted a clear move towards multiculturalism (Rutter, 2013:23).

By the mid -1980s, however, multiculturalism began to attract criticism. The 9/11 attacks in the USA in 2001, further extremist attacks in London in July 2005 and a steady rise of immigration challenged the multiculturalist approach previously

taken by governments and sparked a series of public policies that run counter to more tolerant policies (Rutter, 2013).

It follows that public opinion's understanding of integration is also centred around assimilationist ideas, i.e. the view that the process comprises migrants becoming more like 'us' rather than a two-way process. In this way, the position of many 'integration' policies is that migrants are an asset to society as long as they conform to the native community's language, customs and way of life. The quote below from a government document illustrates this point by emphasising not only the need for a 'common language' but also 'understanding of life' in the UK, implying a one-way model of integration, i.e. the idea that it should be migrants who should be integrating to 'British' values and way of life, and not the other way round:

Effective integration of those who wish to adopt the UK as their home – including embracing a common language and an understanding of life in the UK – is important to continued good race relations and community cohesion and is a central part of the Government's managed migration policy, which benefits our society and economy.

Home Office, Knowledge of Life in the UK Settlement, cited in Blackledge (2009:92)

Within this context, this chapter will discuss two ways in which 'language' is pivotal in such 'integration' policies. One is the way language is being used in political discourses of integration, and the other is the way in which assessment of migrants' linguistic skills (i.e. the language requirement (LR)) has become a requisite for obtaining citizenship.

Political discourses on 'language and integration'

Language learning is constantly referred to in political discourses on integration. A closer look at how language is used in political discourses, governmental policy and political speeches gives us a complex picture of what is meant by integration.

The use of the term 'integration' in political discourses

When reviewing the links between language learning and integration we first need to clarify what is meant by 'integration' in current political discourse. As Stevenson and Schanze point out, 'the concept of integration is frequently invoked but rarely defined.' (2009:90) Integration is more commonly defined in the context of the problems it brings with it and the 'lack of integration' of migrants rather than the positive aspects of integration. This is despite the fact that political discourses repeatedly recognise the positive impact and the benefits of immigration:

The result is that today, across the country, people from different backgrounds

get on well together. Most people feel they belong to their neighbourhood and to this country, and have a sense of pride in the place where they live. Immigration has often brought benefits to both settled communities and newcomers, and produced some of England's most successful figures in business, sports, arts, politics and philanthropy.

(Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012:3)

In parallel to this, however, the concept of integration is also closely associated to high profile and highly challenging aspects of society (i.e. social cohesion, impact of migration on public services, security policy, the need to combat religious extremism) and processes of naturalisation and citizenship (Rutter, 2013). Indeed, in spite of the highly prominent position of the integration of migrants in government policy, current conceptualisations of 'integration' are clearly based on an asymmetrical view of power where only the migrants are seen as a problem (Horner and Weber, 2011).

Current policies on integration, therefore, could be placed as some way in between the two ideas at the heart of 'integration': 'assimilation' and 'multiculturalism', which would be located at each end of a conceptual spectrum (Extra and Spotti, 2009a). Below, Extra and Spotti (2009) provide definitions for these two terms:

The concept of assimilation is based on the premise that cultural differences between immigrant minority groups and established majority groups should and will disappear over time in a society which is proclaimed to be culturally homogenous from the majority point of view.

(Extra and Spotti, 2009a:64)

The concept of multiculturalism is based on the premise that such differences are an asset to a pluralist society, which actually promotes cultural diversity in terms of new resources and opportunities.

(Extra and Spotti, 2009a:64)

Over the last few years, in European policy, and in particular in relation to the role of the host language for social cohesion, the meaning of 'integration' has moved away from the concept of multiculturalism and shifted towards that of 'assimilation'. Moreover, issues of 'internal peace' (German Interior Minister, in Stevenson and Schanze, 2009:91) and social unrest are often invoked in discussions on integration. Also, migrants' cultural distance from the indigenous population and lack of integration in the job market are problems that accompany discourses of integration. It is mainly agreed by scholars in language policy in Europe (e.g. Hogan-Brun *et al.*, 2009; Extra *et al.*, 2009) that the meaning of the word 'integration' is not only changing but even masking linguistic assimilationist policies.

Integration, as it is conceptualised in public discourses, does not only highlight migrants' deficits but also what new requirements they are expected to fulfil in order to fully participate in the new society, i.e. it is presented as a requirement for citizenship. For example, Michalowski (2009), reviewing citizenship tests in five countries (USA, Austria, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands), points out the increasing formalisation of processes of citizenship and the lack of correspondence of these strict requirements with more liberal and inclusive national citizenship regimes. So, when analysing government regimes, the focus should not be on the governments' definition of or approach to civic integration (that may be quite liberal), but rather on the degree of government intervention through specific requirements (Michalowski, 2009:23). The gap between public discourses and public policies in Europe will be examined later (see section 4) with a detailed analysis of the role of the learning of the national language to obtain citizenship or naturalisation in three different European countries (the UK, Germany and the Netherlands).

Political discourses

In an increasingly *superdiverse* (Vertovec, 2007) and mobile world (Urry, 2007), when discussing their visions for their country and issues of nationhood and cultural identity, political discourses carry very specific values and roles for migrants, their languages and cultures. Below are the main recurring topics in European political discourses that frame migrants as a problem and highlight the type of integration politicians imagine for them:

The maintenance of national boundaries and a specific version of the culture contained within it (Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero, Stevenson, 2009). Such a view is also governed by a fear of the consequences of not doing so (i.e. the ensuing chaos and social unrest) (Van Avermaet, 2009a).

The favouring of national homogeneity over multiculturalism so that integration is achieved through the learning of the 'host' language rather than the promotion of multilingualism¹.

The avoidance of cosmopolitan and transnational realities. Whereas European societies are multilingual and increased opportunities presuppose multilingualism, learning the 'national' language is made the only linguistic requirement for citizenship.

¹ Although government policies broadly agree on the promotion of multilingualism (Van Avermaet, 2009), for a review of governments' policies on the promotion of intercultural dialogue and social inclusion through multilingual provision, see Extra and Yağmur, 2012.

The link to issues of 'security'. Governments' policies are driven by the belief that if new citizens conform to the 'official' language, its identity and its uniform set of values will instil in people a sense of security and confidence even though this may hamper migrants' rights in a new society.

(Van Avermaet, 2009; Shohamy, 2009).

The instrumental argument. Official reports and political discourses imply that the learning of the 'national' language will lead to better job opportunities and women's participation in the labour market.

(CoE, 2011; Villareal, 2009).

Underlying ideologies in political discourses

As a result of governments' promotion of national homogeneity, integration policies seem to be suffering a restrictive turn which retreats from multiculturalism (Goodman, 2012) so that, when talking about the acquisition of 'language skills' in the context of integration, political discourses refer exclusively to the knowledge of the 'national' language (Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson, 2009).

Although populations are becoming more linguistically and culturally diverse and cosmopolitan, indigenous populations are still considered to be monolingual. This has resulted in many countries implementing a policy to require the acquisition of the 'national' language and culture to obtain citizenship and as a way to include the new arrivals in the democratic processes and public life. The promotion of the learning of a national language for the integration of migrants has the ulterior political motive to drive the promotion of 'national identities', and the 'dogma of homogeneity'. (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1988 in Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson, 2009:4) That is, policies on immigration are not used as merely political management, but as an ideological form of resistance to the erosion of national sovereignty in today's transnational and cosmopolitan communities (Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson, 2009:5).

But as some scholars point out (Van Avermaet, 2009; Lo Bianco, 2009), in spite of the fact that many political discourses link lack of integration to poor language skills in the host language, learning it does not necessarily increase security or prevent social unrest. The link between lack of integration (and linguistic skills) and social unrest is an ideological construct that may be explained by the increasing identification of the term 'integration' with social problems. Whereas, historically, government policy used the term 'integration' to refer to economic inequalities as well as social ones, more recently it has been used to refer to religious and ethnicity issues. What is more, the term integration often gets confused with 'social cohesion' where social problems are attributed to a lack of integration. But according to Rutter (2003), although related, the two conditions are two very different things. Integration involves:

... individuals and households from migrant or minority ethnic groups and their relation to wider society. Social cohesion is about the relations between all groups of people, not just migrants but also others, and usually refers to specific places: nations, cities, towns or neighbourhoods.

(Rutter, 2003:21)

So, although lack of social cohesion may be brought about by a lack of integration, it may equally be due to other social issues. According to social workers in areas where there has been social unrest (such as the *'Banlieus'* in Paris), the young people involved had a very good grasp of French. Indeed, it was clear that the cause of these riots was a social one (Van Avermaet, 2009).

Despite official discourses promoting language learning for instrumental reasons (i.e. access to jobs, education, etc.), critics argue that language proficiency may be the result rather than the cause of 'integration' (Van Avermaet, 2009). Indeed, learning the language does not necessarily increase opportunities for work, education or social mobility. Rather, it is access to better jobs, better education and social mobility that increases mastery of the language (Van Avermaet, 2009).

From discourse to policy: 'The Language Requirement'

It is necessary to differentiate between the goals of a particular 'integration' policy and its means, be it the provision of translation and interpreting services, the provision of community languages in the school curriculum or language test policies. In this chapter, I am concentrating on the premise of European governments that learning the host language is key to integration processes, the question of how this LR policy is deployed and the issue of what language learning provision is put in place by different governments in order to fulfil demand.

Europe's answer to integration: the 'Language Requirement'

Nobody would dispute that learning the host language helps migrants integrate into a host society; the question is rather, how is this carried out (see the analysis in the MIPEX index, below) and what purposes does it serve? As mentioned above, as well as seeing it as a positive path to increased access to the host society, some politicians have used the LR in a negative light. They have used it as a way to address fear of migrants by isolating them, thus radicalising their values and posing a threat to society. A speech by Christean Wagner, chair of the Christian Democrats in Hessen, Germany, is illustrative of this point:

Nobody is being forced to become a German citizen. However, German citizenship should only be awarded to someone who clearly shows that it matters to them. This desire includes at least the acquisition of the German language. Germany must not abandon this minimal requirement if it does not want to disintegrate further into ghettos.

(Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,
28.1.2006 in Stevenson and Shanze, 2009:101)

And again, David Cameron recently said:

Mass immigration has led to discomfort and disjointedness in neighbourhoods because some migrants have been unwilling to integrate or learn English.

(Bryers, Winstanley and Cook, 2013:18)

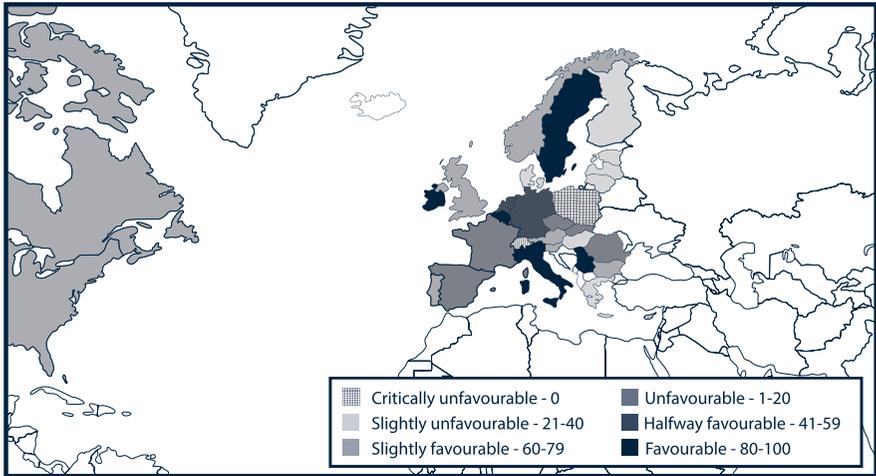
Indeed, language proficiency has been seen as an instrument of social control to increase security in the face of the recent terrorist attacks in Europe and the USA, even though, as we saw earlier, the link of the LR with issues of national security is one that many authors have questioned (e.g. Van Avermaet, 2009; Stevenson and Schanze, 2009).

Therefore, the different ways in which governments interpret the link between integration and language learning, and whether it emphasises positive or negative aspects, will have an impact on the legislation and the programmes established for integrating migrants in a given country and, in particular, the role that knowing the host language plays. Whereas most European governments place language learning at the heart of their integration policies, their practices vary greatly from country to country.

The online survey carried out by the British Council in collaboration with the Migration Policy Group, the MIPEX tool, provides a comprehensive source of information that measures integration policies in all European Union member states, plus Norway, Switzerland, Canada and the USA, across a broad range of differing environments. There are 148 policy indicators, which are grouped in seven policy areas: labour market and mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality and anti-discrimination. Within these areas we can find an analysis of the requirement to speak the national language, i.e. the LR of the host language. Such a tool provides a good overview for comparing how the LR is executed across Europe. A surprising and paradoxical result from this survey is that countries are considered more favourable to integration the lower the LR there is.

In the map below (Figure 1), different countries are given scores (0-100) according to whether their policies to the LR are favourable or unfavourable to integration.

Figure 1: LR in European language policies



Favourable policies to integration (score of 80-100) means:

- Low LR (No assessment or A1)
- Individual abilities are taken into account
- Assessment is done by language specialists or independent of government
- No or nominal cost for LR
- Assessment based on publicly available list of questions and study guide

(See Figure 2, for definitions)

The scores for integration provided by the MIPEX tool show that, in general, Sweden is the country with better scores for integration of migrants, but also with respect to the LR (favourable 80-100), as it requires no assessment or a low level of proficiency, it does not put a financial burden on the migrant and there is transparency in its practices. As we see in the chart below, the lower the level of proficiency required and the more transparency and accessibility to the LR (which can be a test, an interview or another form of assessment), the higher the country scores.

	100	50	0
LR Note: Can be test, interview, completion of course or other forms of assessments.	No assessment OR A1 or less set as standard	A2 1 set as standard	B1 or higher set as standard OR no standards, based on administrative discretion.
LR exemptions (blank if no assessment) a. Takes into account individual abilities ex. educational qualifications b. Exemptions for vulnerable groups ex. age, illiteracy, mental/ physical disability	Both of these	One of these	Neither of these
Conductor of LR (if no measure, leave blank) a. Language-learning specialists b. Independent of government (ex. not part of a government department)	a and b, ex. language institutes	a but not b, ex. language unit in government	Neither a nor b, ex. police, foreigners' service, general consultant
Cost of LR (blank if no assessment)	No or nominal costs	Normal costs ex. If provided by state, same as regular administrative fees. If provided by private sector, same as market price	Higher costs
Support to pass LR (if no measure, leave blank) a. Assessment based on publicly available list of questions or study guide b. Assessment based on Publicly available course	a and b	a or b	Neither a nor b

Figure 2: LR methodology

As we have seen, one of the key instruments for putting into place the LR has been that of the language test. But how is this test put into practice? Even a language test can be a controversial instrument when it comes to assessing migrants' rights to have access to political and civic life. Critics (Extra, Spotti and Van Avermaet, 2009:17) point out the inadequacy of the benchmark instruments used (i.e. the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR²)) for realising their policies, arguing that they are not suitable for the type of language learners that take the citizenship tests, i.e. the CEFR benchmark statements were designed with foreign language learning in mind (i.e. in order to communicate with speakers of the language outside one's own country of residence) rather than for migrant learners learning the host language.

Another criticism made is that the CEFR, which was designed to promote multilingualism, is used in this context to promote monolingualism and focuses on what immigrants lack rather than on what they already possess. In the UK, this questions what kind of language skills are recognised in the ESOL National Curriculum and presents the need to revisit language education from a multilingual perspective – as some scholars have suggested (Hélot and Ó Laoire, 2011). The testing of migrants for naturalisation or citizenship purposes assumes that immigrants do not have the necessary linguistic skills, but this is not necessarily true. Most immigrants are plurilingual and not only master a variety of languages but also the standard form of the host language (Van Avermaet, 2009:20). So, is the multilingual person who is used to using a variety of languages during the day, according to context, a less integrated person than the monolingual with only one language at his/her disposal? Contrary to what one might think, language testing is not being used to boost language learning; rather, it is being used as a gate-keeping mechanism, and some even argue these linguistic requirements are 'biased, discriminating and unattainable requirements.' (Shohamy, 2009:45)

According to Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson (2009), due to stricter conditions for people who want to apply for resident rights, proficiency in the 'national language' of the country has been formalised and more mechanisms (or one may say "barriers") for testing have been introduced. They argue that to make language tests a requirement for entry to the UK or for permanent residence is coercive and socially exclusive. This is demonstrated by the latest government legislation where the LR has been made compulsory for both obtaining citizenship and for settling in the country. Below is an extract from this legislation:

From 28 October 2013, unless they are exempt, all applicants for settlement or naturalisation as a British citizen will need to meet the knowledge of language and life requirement by: passing the life in the UK test; and having a speaking and listening qualification in English at B1 CEFR or higher, or its equivalent.

(Home Office, 2013a)

² There are six levels of proficiency in the CEFR: A1 (Breakthrough) A2, B1, B2 and C2, C2 (Mastery) being the most advanced level. A2 (also called 'Waystage') shows 'An ability to deal with simple, straightforward information and begin to express oneself in familiar contexts'.

It is symptomatic that according to government discourses it is only the knowledge of the host language that guarantees opportunities for work, education and social mobility, even though today's European societies are multilingual and increased opportunities should presuppose multilingualism (Van Avermaet, 2009). It then seems shortsighted that current policies do not recognise migrants' knowledge of other immigrant languages that are spoken in their host communities.

Governments have used the LR as a device to limit the impact of certain categories of immigration, making the LR different for different migrant populations (Goodman, 2010). An extreme example of this is the Dutch, who have used civic integration tests as an unjustified device of discrimination (e.g. they do not require certain migrant populations such as those from the USA and Australia to pass the citizenship test) (Goodman, 2010). The LR, then, has become a convenient way to obscure immigration policies.

Three illustrative examples of 'integration and language' policy: the Netherlands, Germany and the UK

Examples of policies in three different countries – the UK, Germany and the Netherlands – which have very different approaches to policies for integration and the role of language learning in them, may throw some light as to why language learning has become such a key feature of European integration policy. The three different countries discussed below seem to place a different emphasis on 'integration', which is linked to these countries' histories, and their particular approaches to immigration and integration. Whereas all three score similarly in the MIPEX index (i.e. half-way favourable (the Netherlands and Germany) to favourable (the UK)) for integration, they all have very different policies and roles for the host language in processes of integration. Germany is strong on new opportunities for migrants (which includes language provision) from the start. The Netherlands scores poorly in this respect but gives migrants better 'access' to civic life once they have been granted admission. The UK has a tradition of being inclusive and multicultural but its latest trend is to have less accommodating policies towards integration. The next sections will discuss this in more detail.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands is a country with a long tradition of immigration and policies towards integration and, according to the online survey MIPEX Index, it is half-way favourable (41-59) (see Fig 1) to integration, and scores slightly better than many countries in the EU.

Since 2007, newcomers have seen few changes to Dutch policies, still slightly favourable for integration and more favourable than in most corners of Europe. (MIPEX index, 'Netherlands' www.mipex.eu/netherlands)

Political discourses: 'othering'

Qualitative studies point out double standards in the integration policies of some countries at the global, European and national levels. These highlight on the one hand the promotion of multicultural approaches to integration at the European and global level, whereas on the national level diversity is seen as an obstacle. The discriminatory nature of immigration and integration policies in the Netherlands is a good example of this, and is exemplified by the different processes and integration phases used to integrate migrants.

According to Extra and Spotti (2009), one of the discourses on newcomers in the Netherlands is constructed around the concept of 'othering'. The terms *allochtonen* and *autochtonen* distinguish between those who were born (or whose parents were born) abroad and those who were born in the Netherlands, respectively. This distinction occurs even when the so-called *allochtonen* hold Dutch nationality. Such a view is based on the belief that nationality derives from parental origins (*jus sanguinis*) rather than from country of birth (*jus soli*).

Another discriminatory term used in the Netherlands is that of *inburgering*, which refers to 'becoming an integrated citizen' (Extra and Spotti, 2009:65) but which may promote the opposite. The 'inburgering' concept can be seen as a new barrier to integration rather than a help, by emphasising the separation between the indigenous population and migrants. Indeed, the process of 'inburgering' discriminates against those citizens who have been residing in the country for some time by marking them out as lacking in education.

The construction of a Dutch national identity still sees diversity as a problem. A further criticism of the integration policy in the Netherlands is its lack of recognition of transnational and multiple identities. Government policy does not currently accept dual nationality (except in some circumstances).

Language testing

The Netherlands is one of the only countries where passing a computerised test on the national language (Dutch) and knowledge of the national society is obligatory before arrival. In addition, there is no other example of computerised language testing as a condition for admission to the country elsewhere in the world (Extra and Spotti, 2009). It is also one of the most expensive tests in Europe (350–830 Euros) (Van Avermaet, 2009). Finally, newcomers need to go through three different stages in order to qualify as full citizens: admission to the Netherlands (Toelating) – CEFR level A1 minus; Integration in the Netherlands (Inburgering) – CEFR level 2 for oral plus written; and Citizenship (Naturalisatie).

So, in spite of the fact that, according to the MIPEX index, the overall policy for integrating migrants in the Netherlands in terms of the LR is 'slightly favourable', on closer inspection, the enforcement of language tests before arrival and

the surrounding discourses on representations of migrants (e.g. *inburgering*, *allochtonen*) presents a different picture. Integration into Dutch society requires the overcoming of a linguistic ‘obstacle’ rather than using language as an aid to access Dutch society and, ultimately, integration.

Germany

Germany, like most European countries, is giving language learning a key role in processes of integration. Despite some reactionary voices in the government as we saw earlier on (i.e. the chair of the Christian Democrats in Hessen, Germany), there is a movement in Germany towards more inclusive and multicultural policies that begins to recognise and come to terms with its condition of being a country of immigration (Stevenson and Schanze, 2009).

Political discourses

The last few years have seen a change of immigration policy towards a more liberal understanding of who is considered to be a German citizen. In 2000 there was a breakthrough in Germany’s immigration law, through the introduction of a modified version of the *jus soli* (principle based on place of birth) condition in addition to the more restrictive *jus sanguinis* (principle based on descent, i.e. parental origins). On top of this significant change in the law, a new Immigration Act (*Gesetz zur Steuerung und Begrenzung der Zuwanderung und zur Regelung des Aufenthalts und der Integration von Unionsburgern und Ausländern*) came into effect in 2005. This new Act was designed to address both the integration of the migrants already living in the country and as a barrier to new immigration. At the centre of this policy there is language proficiency and the testing of it.

Language testing

The aims of the law were to prevent young members of a family joining them without linguistic knowledge, to boost the knowledge of German of existing ‘foreigners’ and to support access to language learning (Stevenson and Schanze, 2009). It was also addressing contemporary fears for national security sparked by terrorist attacks.

However, more recently, according to a report by the Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, Germany has started to build the integration of migrants not only on their linguistic deficits but also on their knowledge of ‘other’ languages and their intercultural competence (Stevenson and Schanze, 2009). As Stevenson and Schanze put it:

Germany is changing to the extent that the complexity of concepts such as integration and of achieving an inclusive sense of citizenship is being recognised and addressed. Evidence of this can be seen in the significantly

more differentiated and sophisticated approach to language learning, which is the cornerstone of the new integration strategy.

(Stevenson and Schanze, 2009:102)

Finally, in contrast to the Netherlands, Germany carries the bulk of the cost of its language course and charges a nominal fee of one Euro per hour if the candidate completes the course within two years. The level to be attained (B1 within the CEFR benchmarks) is higher than the tests carried out in the Netherlands, but the courses and teaching provided are also more comprehensive (from 400 to 900 hours).

The UK

The situation of the UK in respect of the LR for integration has changed considerably over the last ten years, and has become even more central to the government's policy on integration in the last five years. Although in the MIPEX chart, with data from 2010, the UK scored as 'slightly favourable' to integration, new legislation brought in by the coalition government in 2013 has meant a tougher stance towards immigration and new measures to deal with the challenges of integration.

Language testing

One of these measures has been that of language and cultural knowledge testing. Currently, the law in the UK establishes that in order to settle and become a British citizen in the UK, immigrants are asked to meet both 'the knowledge of English' and 'life in the UK requirements' (GOV UK, 2014). Immigrants can prove their knowledge of the English language by having either an English qualification at B1 level or a degree taught or researched in English.

The language test for residents seeking British citizenship was introduced in the UK in 2002 through the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. This, however, was not implemented until November 2005. It stated that applicants should show 'a sufficient knowledge of English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic'. Later on, from April 2007, those immigrants seeking to settle in the UK (applying for 'indefinite leave to remain') would also have to pass the test. A certain degree of support was provided by establishing that those applicants who did not have sufficient knowledge of English, could attend English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and citizenship classes. These classes were in general not subsidised, although some categories were exempt from the course and test fees (Jacobs and Rea, 2007).

Political discourses

The UK government has always taken pride in its multicultural and liberal policies. However, political discourses on integration in the UK and, in particular, the

introduction of language and citizenship tests has often been criticised for hindering rather than enabling integration into British society (Cook, 2009), and for being a policy not fully endorsing Britain's multicultural and transnational realities

(Blackledge, 2009).

Indeed, it has been pointed out that Home Office documents distance themselves from assimilationist understandings of 'integration':

So to be British does not mean assimilation into a common culture so that original identities are lost [...] There is no reason why loss of a distinctive identity within a wider British identity should occur to immigrants from the new Commonwealth or from elsewhere.

(Home Office, 2004:15, in Jacobs and Rea, 2007)

In line with such a view, questions asked during the citizenship test have no substantive point of view regarding values other than respect for the general principles of the modern democratic state, so that no specific content is given to the idea of Britishness; instead the UK is presented as a society with a multinational character:

To be British seems to us to mean that we respect the laws, the elected parliamentary and democratic political structures, traditional values of mutual tolerance, respect for equal rights and mutual concern; and that we give our allegiance to the state (as commonly symbolised in the Crown) in return for its protection. To be British is to respect those over-arching specific institutions, values, beliefs and traditions that bind us all, the different nations and cultures together in peace and in a legal order.

(Home Office, 2004, in Jacobs and Rea, 2007:6)

And yet, as we saw earlier, the 2002 legislation (and 2005 implementation), which introduced *The Life in the UK*, the English test and the Oath ceremony, both aim at one thing: to foster among migrants a greater sense of attachment to the UK while providing greater incentives to learn English (Rutter, 2013). This direction has been strengthened by the government's approach in the 2006–10 period to have a 'commitment to abandon multiculturalism and adopt a more assimilationist approach, with many references to 'Christian Britain.' (Rutter, 2013: 29)

This period was also characterised by lack of clarity about naturalisation policies and how these could help integration. In general, measures were introduced that made settlement and the acquisition of citizenship a more difficult process. In the same vein, despite the coalition government's stance on the importance of migrants learning English, spending on ESOL (as part of all further education courses) has been cut by 4.3 per cent, as well as specific workplace-based ESOL by 17 per cent and there have been cuts in concessions to fees (Rutter, 2013:30).

It seems, therefore, that the current government's requirement to learn English is not matched by provision and support. A recent report by the Greater London Authority highlights the need to improve support given to low-paid, low-skilled workers in ESOL. Ten barriers to learning English were identified as an outcome of the research, among them information about suitable provision, cost, time, location, lack of childcare and lack of learning opportunities at work (Greater London Authority, 2013:4-5).

All in all, similarly to the Dutch case, although the UK governmental policy uses rhetoric that values multiculturalism and the benefits of migration, the specific political measures and discourses reviewed in this paper point in a different direction. Despite the fact that in the UK the learning of the English language (measured by approved language tests) has become a requirement to obtain naturalisation and citizenship rights, a number of reports and scholarly articles have challenged the efficacy of the legislation and support put in place to achieve this, and the use of more appropriate discourses that promote in newcomers a sense of belonging and entitlement.

Conclusion

We have seen that the last few years has placed the learning of the host language on top of the agenda of integration policies, i.e. the LR has become a staple of European migration policy. As I have discussed, the literature on the subject has pointed out that the emphasis on the accreditation of language knowledge in order to become entitled to participate in the new society is underpinned by certain discourses towards migrants and one-sided representations of European cultures that often deny multiculturalism.

On the one hand, there is a perception that migrants and their minority languages pose a threat to national security and social cohesion; on the other, migrant languages are perceived as a danger to the preservation of an idealised, culturally homogeneous society. Governments and their policies have made the assessment of language learning and society the key instrument not only to control entry into the prospective countries, but also to manage migrants' processes of integration into these imagined cultures. However, a recent report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Skills Outlook*, highlights the need to look at a wider definition of language skills, the different needs of migrants and the better provision for immigrants in order to promote integration. As an example, it was found that immigrants with a foreign-language background who have lower levels of literacy are particularly at risk of not integrating into the labour market, and so better incentives or programmes may be needed to improve these levels (OECD, 2013:30).

Within this climate, we have seen that political discourses have interpreted the LR in different ways according to their historical trajectories and nation-building processes, resulting in different practices. The examples from Germany, the Netherlands and the UK have provided specific cases for reflection.

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Beyond the ESOL classroom

5

Beyond the ESOL classroom

Trev Johnson and Simon Berry

Introduction

The Scottish Executive (SE) in its 2007 strategy paper on future adult ESOL provision pledged:

That all Scottish residents for whom English is not a first language have the opportunity to access high quality English language [teaching] provision so that they can acquire the language skills to enable them to participate in Scottish life ...

The resulting increase in ESOL provision all over the country has more than met the strategy paper's targets but so far we lack evidence on the added (metalinguistic) benefit for students of greater integration within their communities. Many of the classes are using the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) curriculum based on a social practice model. Even so, it is clear that many students who have attained language proficiency learn to live with the immigrant label in a number of areas of Scottish life.

We see integration as being:

... a two-way process that involves positive change in both the individuals and the host communities and which leads to cohesive, multicultural communities. (Refugees in Scotland's Communities – guidance to the themed groups)

Our project¹ aimed to obtain a wider understanding of the process of such community integration/cohesion and its implications, by questioning a cohort of ESOL learners in the North Highlands. The research entailed interviews with a small group of ESOL students and significant others who could offer feedback on our areas of interest (for example, employers, colleagues, schools, clubs and neighbours). The areas we explored included increased confidence (mental health), integration into community (social), FE uptake (education), effect on income and employability (economic) as well as increased linguistic fluency. The project also included a simplified social return on investment (SROI) model. The questions we proposed are as follows:

¹ The complete text of questionnaire responses, a lesson plan for use in ESOL classes and a comprehensive explanation of the SROI calculation can be seen in the full research report *Beyond the ESOL Classroom* <http://esol.britishcouncil.org/beyond-esol-classroom-does-esol-curriculum-contribute-towards-community-integration>

1. *What personal, economic and situational factors need to be in place to generate community integration?*
2. *Can the ESOL curriculum assist with acquiring skills and providing opportunities, beyond language acquisition, to help this process?*

Our project aimed to understand the ways in which the SQA ESOL curriculum and teaching methodology provide opportunities beyond the classroom for learners and other stakeholders. Opportunities were conceptualised in a wider sense than language competency and therefore our research included factors such as personal, social and economic development.

This led us to a series of questions that, as teachers, we hoped the research would help us to answer:

1. *Are we creating learners who are confident users of English outside the classroom?*
2. *Are we aware of all the opportunities for interaction between learners and the host community that exist outside the classroom?*
3. *How do we rate language proficiency alongside other motivators for our learners to develop their sense of belonging (SOB)?*
4. *How important are individual aspirations in areas such as employment, education and community involvement?*
5. *How important are individual and family identity in the process of integration into the host community?*
6. *How important are attitudes, possibly negative ones, of the host community?*
7. *Why do we presume that an ESOL learner is there to increase his/her SOB?*

We hope the research has gone some way to answering these questions.

Context

A 2005 mapping and scoping exercise commissioned by the SE and carried out by team from Abertay University had looked at demand for and provision of ESOL classes. It sought to answer a number of questions such as: Where are students learning English? What kinds of classes are available? Who are the learners? What are their reasons for learning English and their aspirations? What are the obstacles that hinder them from making progress in English? How do students move on from ESOL classes into work or further education?

The Abertay researchers came up with several findings relevant to the current project. It found that four out of five ESOL learners chose FE college for classes. They were mainly female, young and well educated and literate in their mother tongue. Most had been living in the UK for several years. The most frequently cited reasons for learning English were 'to be more independent', to improve job prospects and to make friends with native speakers.

Around half had dependent children so a major obstacle to attending classes was childcare provision. For asylum seekers (more than 40 per cent of the sample) the obstacle was having to attend appointments. Other migrants reported limited opportunities for social interaction outside work, especially for young people.

Many of the issues had been addressed by the SQA ESOL curriculum, which is guided by the principles of social practice methodology.

This starts from the idea that language practised in the classroom should be recognisable from everyday activities and interactions rather than used to demonstrate a particular linguistic point. The shift is away from grammar towards usage, further reinforced by the current development of the new SQA National ESOL Curriculum. It also takes into account the purposes for which language skills are employed and the domains (i.e. employment, leisure activity, meeting professionals, etc.) where appropriate language is required.

The students

We didn't need to read up about the students who came along to our evening classes, often after a physically demanding ten-hour shift. Within two or three years we had got to know some of these mainly young, bright, versatile and over-qualified people really quite well. Some were regular attenders, others less so as the demands of work and wider family commitments intervened. Some whom we believed to have returned to their native country for good re-appeared several months later to pick up where they left off.

We were faced with a quandary. Some students did well in class (they had to sit SQA assessments each year) but did not seem to feel a great sense of belonging in the Scottish Highlands; occasionally the opposite was the case. Some, maybe older, seemed to have plateaued with their progress in English but still felt they had been accepted within their communities. We can sum up the dilemma in three short profiles based on actual more mature students:

A: Has been living in the Highlands for around ten years and has been in work for all that time. He has been doing the same manual job although he has academic qualifications. Now in his 50s he has always worked and socialised with Polish friends. His daughter was educated here and plans to attend university. He studied English from school where he was taught in Russian. He has been attending ESOL classes for the last three years and has made slow

but steady progress. His knowledge of grammar and personal vocabulary are impressive but his speaking is hesitant and full of self-correction. In class he has become less reserved over time. As a reader he is well informed about Scottish politics and sport. Living away from his wife, he can look after himself and cope with the daily necessities of life.

B: Also in her 50s, B left Thailand more than 20 years ago when she met a Highlander. Her marriage ended while she was living here and she has been through an unpleasant divorce. Her daughter is at university. She has been attending ESOL classes for two years but stopped for health reasons. She started working in a factory cleaning job but has since been promoted. Her English is very difficult to understand, initially because of problems of consonant-swap, and her writing suffers from this and other issues. In class she is quite often the dominant character and is liable to make a joke of her communication problems. She has Scottish friends at work and as neighbours. She reads newspapers and magazines and talks of starting up a dressmaking business.

C: In his late 60s and born in London. He has worked and taught in various parts of the UK and abroad. He acquired his CELTA qualification in London in 1997 and has been a part-time TEFL/ESOL tutor for the last 15 years. He has lived and taught part-time in the Highlands for five years. He is married and runs his own business. He is academically qualified in both science and humanities. He feels comfortable within the Scottish cultural community but occasionally pines for activities and entertainment that is not available in his area. He enjoys living and teaching in the Highlands.

Despite having very different linguistic profiles both A and B have found identities, which enable them to feel at home in the 21st-century Highlands. They are people first, with important and varied life experiences, and students second. C is, of course, one of the researchers. Maybe his life experiences and attitudes to Scotland are not so different.

We could also set at the opposite end of the spectrum several younger students, usually without families, who were making excellent progress through the ESOL grades but who admitted to having no intention of staying in the Highlands. In effect, we were helping them to proficiency in a world language that could take them anywhere. At the same time they were working much longer hours than their native UK peers and socialised with them relatively rarely. Because they were unable to follow career paths in the Highlands for which they were qualified, many had picked up a wide range of work experience through minimum wage-type jobs turned down by many Scottish young people, in restaurants, supermarkets, fast food outlets, assembly lines, farms, hotels and care homes

In between there was a large group of mainly female students with young children, usually in part-time work and with a working partner, who took on the usual

workload as well as adapting to a new culture and community. Here, there was more diversity as to whether they saw themselves as ‘becoming Scottish’ (developing a SOB) or not. Most were committed to seeing their children through secondary school, even though in some cases they were quite critical of the education system, but beyond that their aspirations differed.

As teachers we draw on the social practice model in showing students appropriate usage and interactional skills, helping them in becoming part of the wider community, and in feeling they are succeeding. We take it as a given that some degree of community cohesion/integration is considered beneficial and should therefore be an expected outcome from our classes.

We were aware of the UK government’s concerns about fragmented societies and the somewhat superficial remedial approaches such as Citizenship testing (indeed, this had become part of our teaching remit post-2009). What is of more interest to us as teachers was whether there were motivators at work encouraging or discouraging individual students’ SOB. If so, maybe we should be more aware of them in our teaching. To what extent should ESOL attempt to counter potentially negative factors (for example, loyalty to family or same-nation community) or indeed is such an attempt feasible at all with only short bursts of teacher time per week?

Cohesion/integration is of course a two-way process. We were aware from things said during or after classes that students sometimes encountered prejudice and hostility, particularly as the Scottish economy began to falter and jobs became scarce. As a measure of hardening attitudes, YouGov regularly polls on whether we support the freedom of EU citizens to live and work where they please. In 2005, 56 per cent of us supported this right; by last year this had dropped to 38 per cent. (*Economist*, 02 Nov 2013:30). In Scotland there is some evidence of less resistance to immigration than elsewhere in the UK. According to a recent survey by The Migration Observatory at Oxford University, some 58 per cent would like to see fewer immigrants compared to 75 per cent in England and Wales. Only 21 per cent identify immigration as one of the most important issues compared to one in three of the population elsewhere in the UK (*The Economist*, 15 February 2014:25). This might well be that there are far lower migration densities in Scotland, particularly outside the main conurbations; also the majority of ‘immigration’ comes from other parts of Britain.

Methodology

Our small-scale research project obtained in-depth feedback on the experiences of a group of previous and current students (mainly migrant workers) from an ESOL programme delivered by North Highland College with ESF funding. The research, by two qualified teachers and supported by a research fellow at the University of the Highlands and Islands, explored areas of discernible impact on the lives of migrant workers.

Our research methodology incorporated questionnaires and face-to-face interviews with students and several representative stakeholders such as employers, education workers, health and social services and community groups in an area of the North Highlands.

During the research we were made aware of the significance of issues that arose time and time again: the importance of identity or identities in creating a SOB, the meaning of nationality, the significance of linguistic confidence against a background of social cohesion, immigration control and community attitudes.

Cohort selection criteria

An admissions group who had two to three years' experience of ESOL classes in the Highland region was identified and the cohort selected randomly. The next stage was to select a sample size to reflect nationality as well as geographical home across the North Highland College area. Initially the cohort consisted of 19 learners (13 nationalities) with a reserve group of ten. Difficulties with contacting the cohort further reduced our final core group to 17 learners (ten nationalities) and a further three who made up the Review Group. Our final interviewed cohort was reduced to 15 learners (11 female, four male) from eight countries.

Devising the cohort questionnaire (CQ)

A simple questionnaire was formulated to elicit the information that represented our ideas of community integration/cohesion. Six categories emerged that best reflected our understanding of the factors that could best clarify and quantify the change factors which aided this process: ENGLISH LANGUAGE, HOME, WORK, FORMAL SITUATIONS, FAMILY, COMMUNITY and SCOTTISHNESS.

The questionnaire, completed individually by each member of the cohort, was followed by a recorded discussion with an interviewer to understand and expand on why a particular response had been given.

A timeline was used to measure change between 'BEFORE ESOL' and 'NOW' and was quantified using a simple scoring technique so that we could demonstrate movement 'towards integration' to which we could give each participant a value.

The form and language of the questionnaire was kept simple in the present tense to minimise confusion and help students answer the questions. The cohort was invited to agree/disagree on 18 attitude statements relating to a variety of everyday situations. The statements were phrased so that they expressed positive attitudes (e.g. 'I'm happy using public transport'). They were scored on a range of one to five. To indicate that each participant's time at ESOL classes had been effective we were therefore anticipating low scores for BEFORE ESOL (*Disagree a lot*) and higher scores for NOW (*Agree a lot*).

In order to place some numerical value on this change over time we divided the response to each question into five answers, with each answer having a written value ('Disagree a lot' to 'Agree a lot'), an emoticon and a figure (one to five). By subtracting the value BEFORE from NOW it enabled us to obtain an individual change score (ICS), which gave each member of the cohort a measure in 'movement' of towards integration.

There follows some examples of responses from the cohort, reflecting each category of questionnaire. Numbers in brackets refer to recorded interview tracks.

Questionnaire responses

In general, responses to the CQ showed the expected 'positive' change from BEFORE ESOL to NOW. One exception was Q.5 where, as discussed later, the wording was misleading and as a result most participants gave responses that resulted in a wide variation of scores (four zero and six negative scores).

The following narrative indicates our intentions in devising each question and some typical or atypical responses by participants taken from recordings of the discussion held with an interviewer after completion of the CQ.

ESOL progress

Q.1 'I'm pleased with my level of English'

This was intended to discover whether the participant had felt that ESOL classes had been beneficial in improving language fluency. It was intended to measure their opinion of their progress, not their actual progress (which could be discovered from college assessment records): *The English taught in Hungary was very technical and not much use in Scotland (3)*.

Home life

This group of questions attracted a high average change score. The highest changes were in habitually watching/listening to broadcast media in English. There was a wide divergence in change depending on the kind of domestic group from which the respondent came. People with Scottish partners (or flatmates) were

obviously going to record higher levels of English usage. At the other end of the scale, monolingual households (particularly with extended family in the locality) showed much lower change levels

Q.2 'I speak a lot of English at home'

We wanted to discover whether ESOL classes might result in greater use of English at home: *We try to speak Latvian with daughter. Her English is now speaking perfect, but her Latvian sometimes is missing words (4); I have to speak English as my flatmates are Scottish (15).*

Q.4 'I watch English TV/listen to English radio a lot'

This question showed the third highest change score: *I don't watch news on the BBC because I now have a Polish satellite [channel]. Maybe I would understand a little bit [15].* But others have persevered: *Not when I arrived but now I listen to the radio at work with headphones (14).*

Work

Quite low change scores were recorded for this group of questions. This was partly due to the anomalous interpretation of Q.5 regarding job satisfaction, but there were low scores for use of English in the workplace. Complicating factors were situations where a majority of the workforce had a shared mother tongue (e.g. Polish).

Q.6 'I speak a lot of English at work'

This was intended to indicate whether greater language fluency extended to the workplace and might incidentally lead to promotion or job enrichment. It doesn't appear to have occurred very widely, but a few participants noted change: *When I first arrived I didn't probably speak as much, but now I'm at reception so I need to (12).*

There is also the issue of co-workers all being L1 (non-English language) speakers while line managers only speak English: *Sometimes there are too many Polish people, now all the housekeeping staff are Polish. So we speak Polish when we are together, but the manager tells us to speak English (2).*

Formal situations

High change scores were recorded for this question area. Increased confidence, whether caused by improved fluency or by other factors, was shown in responses regarding dealing with officialdom and using the phone.

Q.9 'I'm happy to ask for information by phone'

This is one of the most stressful situations for any learner of a new language, so almost everyone had *Disagree a lot* for BEFORE ESOL. However, it is still perceived as stressful by many participants, although most realise that native English speakers will try to make allowances: *Some companies you explain to them maybe you could speak more slowly. But it's for a maximum of 15 seconds (5).*

Family and social life

This group attracted medium average change scores, the highest being recorded for increased Scottish friends for children. Clearly children at school are learning English in the most effective way by social contact with their peer group. This is not really a benefit of their parents' ESOL classes.

Q.10 'My children have plenty of Scottish friends'

We suspected that the presence of school-age children was a motivator for parents to use their English socially. The same process surely applies to children at school and learning a new language. But the change scores were in the mid-range for this and the next question, even if most found they were drawn into using more English in school-related situations: *My daughter went to school on the first day after arriving in Scotland. She didn't speak in class for six months, but was happy to go to school. Dornoch school very good student support (1); Learned English at home mainly from books. Did some English in Hungary. Daughter now fairly fluent and lot of children come to my house (3).*

Community

In general, low average change scores were recorded here. The exception was regarding increased membership of clubs and groups. Low change scores for using public transport and local shops can be partly explained by a lack of initial resistance to using these facilities, making the Before ESOL score higher than anticipated.

Q.13 'I feel happy using local shops'

Again, the change scores were in the lower band. The temptation to use a supermarket is high where the layouts will be familiar and there is no need to engage in conversation: *Easy in supermarkets as you shop yourself. Happy to use local shops now, more confident (3); Very afraid at first, no confidence, not my country. Now I enjoy the experience of talking (8).*

Q.15 'I belong to one or more clubs or groups'

This question was intended to find out whether increased language confidence led to greater participation in groups of mixed language speakers. It elicited a high change score: *Now I a member of the Polish association and hope to become chair. I attend the leisure centre and am a Homestart trustee (8).*

To join a group with no L1 speakers requires particular confidence, so it was good to find one participant who had joined the parent council at her children's school: *I was thinking of it for a while, then one day a friend made me come to the meeting ... I don't understand everything that happens during the meetings, sometimes I'm a bit lost. Most of what happens I think I understand (10).*

Scottishness/SOB

This group recorded some of the lowest levels of change, particularly regarding preference for native culture against Scottish culture. But 'I feel I belong here' attracted medium levels of positive change. Being more comfortable with a new identity is identified with a number of factors (friendships, job satisfaction, better housing, more leisure, children's social life) but English fluency is rarely mentioned. Possibly it is taken as a given.

Q.17 'I feel I belong here'

Responses here were polarised, with most change in the lower band. Some who feel a sense of belonging (SOB) acquired it early on: *I belong to Latvia as well of course. But here is my job, house and family (5).*

A Polish woman with a Scottish partner, meanwhile, had equally strong feelings but they had changed: *When I first arrived eight years ago (to work at a hotel) I sat on my bed and started to cry. I just wanted to go back home. Now it's different. I go back to Poland and it's nice to see family and friends but I think a lot about what's going on in Dingwall. I really want to get back again (7).*

Q.18 'I prefer Scottish culture to my country's culture'

There was quite a wide divergence on what was meant by culture, but across the board there was little sign of change. The wording of the question certainly prompted discussion. Some willingly embraced the new environment from the beginning: *I always have liked Scottish music. I never tried the food before, but we try it. I like haggis; we have something the same in Latvia (5); It's more friendly here. Council offices are friendly and accept late payments. I like pipe music and vegetarian haggis. Scottish hospitals good with good service from midwives (8); I am proud to be Polish but I like the Scottish culture, it's a small county. I like the kilt. I don't mind if my daughter marries a Scot as long as she is happy (14).*

Perhaps a simpler question, 'I prefer my life in Scotland to my own country', would have produced equally interesting results.

Social return on investment (SROI)

Our research drew on the methodology of social return on investment (SROI) by involving stakeholders in the research, considering impact in a holistic fashion and mapping change over time. Using this model, we were able to consider how this knowledge might be applied to a SROI calculation. We aimed to identify which impacts and existing financial proxies could be used to take forward a full SROI calculation in future studies.

By measuring the individual change score (ICS) for each participant BEFORE and NOW (after participation in the ESOL classes) we could start to place a value on the social impacts created. This is a basis for future consideration and refinement of a SROI calculation for ESOL. Our results should only be considered as illustrative but our ESOL SROI of £3.06 for each £1 invested in the ESOL course per student was indicative of course value (figures used were adapted from previous UHI research – Munoz and Nimegeer, 2011)².

Concluding thoughts

With such a small sample it was difficult to come up with many firm conclusions, but we tried to formulate some recommendations based on the findings:

Initiatives to foster community cohesion should be aware of the limiting factors that govern the lives of many migrant workers: shortage of leisure time, unsocial working hours and low wages, differing tastes and culture, family commitments (immediate and extended), being uncomfortable using the phone and in formal situations, and difficulty making new friendships. But our research shows that once migrant workers feel a SOB they will readily take up community activities such as fitness classes and become involved in community projects (such as committee work).

- Teachers should develop external activities – involving the community beyond the classroom – in line with the new SQA National Curriculum recommendations.

A lot of media coverage relating to migrant workers is devoted to UK government immigration policy. From our research and opinion polling elsewhere, it appears that Scotland takes a more relaxed attitude to immigration but it is still going to be a factor in how measures relating to health provision, welfare and social housing are received.

² Munoz, S and Nimegeer, A (2012) Hospital Grounds Reimagined www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/res-themes/health/centre-for-rural-health/GreenspaceFinalReportandToolkit.pdf

- The media should be more aware of barriers to participation faced by migrant workers.
- ESOL students need better mentoring within colleges, relating to career progression.
- There needs to be more advice on equalisation of professional qualifications.

There may be questions about how people providing social services, health and education view migrant workers and whether they see them requiring different treatment. Immigrants don't want to be seen as special cases but at the same time they sometimes may require extra information or comprehension of how provision systems work in the UK.

- Frontline service providers should be more aware of cultural and bureaucracy issues.
- More awareness is needed generally about barriers to understanding (i.e. grading language).

Our findings point to an effective and supportive ESOL network (although this was not the main motivation for our research). Probably the main thrust of *Beyond the ESOL Classroom* has been to investigate the ways by which learners come to invest in ESOL as a way of creating a new identity that provides a comfortable fit with their new life. ESOL teachers therefore need to treat students as individuals with particular expectations of what their higher language proficiency will bring rather than just as students with pronunciation problems or low grammar scores.

- Invite speakers on specialist topics into the classroom (e.g. volunteers, local business, union representatives, members of support groups).
- Devise better means of monitoring progress to measure quantitative change in practice research.
- Investigate a wider range of ESOL provision including 'at-work' classes.

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Trev Johnson started work as a medical physicist and his varied career path has included psychiatric and youth social work, academic research and lecturing, and teaching. He has written articles for various social work publications and published a variety of research projects. As well as being a part-time ESOL tutor with North Highland College, University of the Highlands and Islands, he runs his own business that offers project management, training, action research and innovation in social care and collaborative working

Simon Berry's background is in publishing, journalism and PR with a more recent move into fundraising and then language teaching. He has also written fiction and biography. From the early 80s (after a spell with *The Scotsman*) he was a freelance business and property writer. Building on fundraising experience as a volunteer he attended the then IOCM (now Institute of Fundraising) foundation course in Fundraising Practice and was subsequently certificated. When this ended he gained a CELTA qualification at the University of Glasgow. In Cyprus he worked mainly with Russian speakers needing to upgrade language skills for business uses. He then devised and ran a series of short courses for ship management companies in Limassol.

**‘Wrong or no wrong,
I speak’**

6

‘Wrong or no wrong, I speak’

Sara Asadullah

Introduction

This chapter reports on the use of participatory video to explore perspectives of learners in relation to learning English. We worked with two groups of learners to support them in reflecting on and articulating their experiences in relation to learning English in the UK.

My learners shared experiences I never knew about, which has allowed me to understand their motivation (and barriers) for learning.

(Teacher, Salford)

Participatory video

Participatory video (PV) is a set of techniques employed to involve a group or community in shaping and creating their own film. Participants rapidly learn video skills through games and exercises. Facilitators help groups identify and analyse their important issues or key research questions and then participants direct and film short videos. The footage is shared with participants and others through regular screenings, and participants always retain full editorial control. The idea behind this is that making a video is easy and accessible, and is a great way of bringing people together to explore issues, voice concerns or simply to be creative and tell stories.

Most Significant Change

The Most Significant Change technique is a participatory form of monitoring and evaluation developed by Rick Davies and Jess Dart in the 1990s, primarily for development programming and organisational change. Many stakeholders are involved both in deciding the sorts of changes to be recorded and in analysing the data collected.

InsightShare has combined participatory video with the Most Significant Change technique. The stories of Most Significant Change are collected through structured story circles and one story from each circle is then selected as ‘most significant’

by the group of participants. The selected stories are recorded on video as testimonies and dramas enacted by the group, and then later analysed by participants to identify key themes. The videos and findings can also be presented to audiences to create opportunities for feedback and learning.

This process enables participants to share stories of most significant change that represent what they value about a programme. Project participants benefit from the reflection process, and video screenings and storytelling can bring different stakeholders together for learning events that nurture a collective understanding of a programme's value.

Project design

During our project the participating learners and teachers came from two further education colleges:

- At Salford City College a class of 16 learners at entry level 2 participated along with their two teachers, Alison and Isla. Participants had been in the UK for between one and four years, and had come from Pakistan, Angola, Portugal, Iran, Guinea Bissau, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kuwait and Hungary. There were two men and 14 women of ages ranging from 16 to 57 years old.
- At Coleg Menai in Bangor ten students were drawn from three different classes to participate, with two teachers, Sarah (teaching entry level 2) and Roz (teaching higher-level learners). Their language levels ranged from entry level 2 to levels 1 and 2, with over half having been in the UK for over five years. Participants were from Turkey, China, Malaysia and Bangladesh. Half of the participants were from China, below the age of 20 and were aiming for a university education.

The key questions we asked them were:

- What is important to learners about learning English?
- What reasons do they have for learning?
- What helps them learn?

The stories, discussions and themes that emerged help us see what learners value, in their own words. Confidence to communicate with others stood out as a priority for learners, an attitude of '*wrong or no wrong, I speak*'.

The purpose of this chapter is to give space to some of the learners' stories and findings, and to look at how the participatory method for research and evaluation worked and what impact it had for learners involved. This chapter will concentrate on two parts of the process – the participatory video baseline and the stories from the Most Significant Change process¹.

Why is learning English important?

We started the project with a participatory video baseline activity for the learners to make a short film guided by these key questions: Why is learning English important to you? What helps you learn?

Participatory video games and exercises broke the ice between participants, helped build basic skills to record and speak on camera, and provided confidence to work together as a team. This included practice interviews around the key questions, rotating the roles of interviewer, interviewee, camera and sound person. Everything filmed was watched back with much interest and enjoyment. The learners were encouraged to respond, express what they liked and didn't like and give each other feedback and encouragement. Three women in the Salford group and two women in the Bangor group decided not to appear on camera, but instead to participate through contributing their ideas and operating the camera, with one lady providing a voiceover while others acted.

In Salford the teachers and facilitator needed to give encouragement in response to learners' fears about speaking English incorrectly on camera. We reassured them accuracy didn't matter as long as we could understand what they wanted to communicate. Exercises helped the group share experiences and opinions, before organising their ideas into a film plan, using a storyboarding technique. Each would take a turn to talk about one or some of the issues they had identified. A rigorous consent process is embedded in the method, with regular screenings and conversations to ensure participants are fully aware of their right to ask for things to be deleted or changed, which happened on several occasions, building their sense of ownership and control over the process.

The main reasons given for learning English by the Salford group were for navigating daily life: going to the doctor, getting a good job, bringing up children and activities such as going shopping.

¹ A written report presenting the stories and findings in detail is available on the ESOL Nexus website, along with nine short videos produced by learners and teachers.

Why is English important to you? (individuals' comments)	
Doctor	For going to the doctor/GP – A translator might say the wrong illness – I don't want to tell the receptionist my problem – If you learn English you don't need a translator, you can have privacy
Jobs	For the future – We want jobs and a better life – Learning English means you can work – You can get a better job (not just cleaning) – I need to talk to people to expand my business from just selling to Portuguese-speaking people to others
Children	You need English to communicate with your children, and they help me to learn too – My child is my personal translator – We need English to help our children in school and with their homework – When your parents don't know English, you need to know English to help them
Shopping	When you're shopping you can feel stressed and ashamed if you don't know the word – When shopping I want to be able to ask about prices and where things are

Table 1: Why is English important to you? (Salford)

In Bangor the answers to the question were different, demonstrating ambitions beyond navigating daily life, with more focus on getting a good education and a good job, making friends and relationships in the community. This reflected the fact that the majority had already spent several years in the UK, three or four of the participants had British spouses and the rest had extended family support.

Why is English important to you? (individuals' comments)	
Communication	Communication – Relationships – Making friends – Networking
Life	Settle into community – Talking to doctor – Shopping – Writing letters – Advice and help – Life skills – Important for my daily life like shopping – Travelling alone – Pass driving theory test
Family	Family – Help for children – Helping my mum and dad to learn English
Jobs	Job – To get a course about accounting or beauty – Get a better job that will be comfortable – Business
Education	Education – University – Academic, Diploma, Degree – Exam
Citizenship	For the life in the UK test – For the nationality
Travel	Travel – International communication – Going to other countries, travelling everywhere
Independence	Independent myself

Table 2: Why is English important to you? (Coleg Menai)

Stories of change

Six weeks after making their first video, the learners were asked to gather in a circle and each tell a story from their personal experience in response to the following questions: What has been the most significant change in your use of English in the areas that are important to you? What has helped you to make that change?

The process took an hour, with people listening intently to each other's stories. The group was asked to select which of the stories they considered to contain the most significant change. This was explained as the change they thought was most important – the changes they cared about most. Each member of the group nominated a story and explained their choice, and these reasons were recorded.

The learner with the selected story was asked to record their testimony on video. At that point, all the previous work to demystify video making and develop the learners' control over the process meant this was not such a daunting prospect, and a small group of learners could undertake the filming and help the storyteller feel more relaxed.

After filming, the storyteller watched their story back and gave consent to screen the video publicly. The group planned and filmed scenes to re-enact key moments in the story, with other group members appearing as actors. This process helped to establish shared ownership over the story of most significant change.

The footage was edited by the facilitator according to their plan, leaving the story intact and just adding the extra scenes. It was sent back via a link to a private site on YouTube for final consent, a process the pilot centres and teachers took responsibility for, understanding the importance for the learners to be given a final chance to ensure they were completely happy about where the films were to be shown.

In listening to the stories that were selected as 'most significant' by the groups of learners we gain an insight into what is important to them.

Gero's story: *'Wrong or no wrong, I speak'*

Gero is a young mother from Ethiopia who has been in the UK for two years. Her story was selected as one of two stories of most significant change by the Salford class.

This year and last year is very different. Last year I came here in Salford college, but now I am very different I can go on my own, I can go GP, I can speak on the phone, everything. But I don't do my homework sometimes, because I am busy at home, but when I am in class, I learn everything. Before I speak everything – past tense, present, simple – I just speak like present.

But now I learn many things! About adjective, present, past, simple, from September until now, I have learnt a lot. Last year with my daughter she swallowed the needle, but now ... I can go! Last year, like something happen for you, your language is not good, but some you speak, that time maybe you're frightened, you don't have confidence, you're shy, you think maybe I'm speaking wrong, I can't speak. But now, wrong or no wrong, I speak. So now sometimes I can go to parents visit, I can go, I can speak, I can ask questions. But last year, no questions just 'yes, yes thank you!' and I'm going ... This is very important ... Maybe they tell me about my daughter, what she did at the school, she's doing good or bad things, I can ask the question 'Is she doing good? She's playing with children? What about ... everything? She eat and drink?' But before, no. 'I have to go now, bye!' Maybe I learn like this in 2014, maybe in 2015, my English will be really good. The more helped me was class. The teacher explain more. Last week we do with Alison – sometimes I use in the class, Alison gave me document [list of links to ESOL Nexus website]. It's very helpful, you look, and you read, and if you miss something you can repeat again. I'm using listening exercises [she used the Parent's Evening section]. I don't have time, but when I have time in the future, I like to do more. I look for something to read, for something to listen, sometimes I can't read – I call my friend – I can ask her in my language to explain to me. Sometimes I can't read, I make a spelling translate.

The reasons why this story was selected by her classmates focused on the important change in her attitude and confidence to speak, which they had witnessed in her. Her phrase 'wrong or no wrong, I speak' was a compelling concept for the class, greeted with applause and repeated by them many times.

Safi's story: *'Now, I am very happy'*

Safi is from Guinea Bissau, a 43-year-old mother of several children and has been living in the UK for three years.

When I start to learn English I was, I have a big problem. I can't speak English. I'm scared for go outside. I can't buy bus ticket, I can't go anywhere. Now, I am very happy. I learn English at Broadwalk Centre, I have a job. When I finish college I go to my job. All my colleagues speak only English. I try always to speak to them. When I finish my job, I come back at home, I do my homework. Before I can't use my computer, now I can use computer. One day Alison tried to teach me computer but I was very frightened. Now I use computer every day. I know mouse, I know keyboard, I know screen. Now I am very happy. I go alone, I go to college, I go to my job, I go shopping, I go hospital. Everywhere I go alone. I like England because people are friendly. Thank you.

Safi's story was selected as one of two stories by her classmates as they considered she had been through the biggest change, and her story featured her job, something many of the group valued. They also considered using a computer

important for many things in life. One learner recognised the confidence the video project was giving her, saying: 'If we choose Safi's story, I think she will get even more confident!'

Alan's story: *'Now I can speak with local people more fluently and feel more confident'*

Alan is a 19 year old from China who has lived in the UK for five years, and aims to go to university.

For me when I first came in UK, in 2009, I came here to the secondary school. When I first came here I know my English is not that good, so I just go to class, and when I try to say something, people always laughed at me, because of my accent or some words I don't know how to use it ... In the lesson, the teacher say something I don't understand it, but I don't want to disturb other people's lesson ... After school, when I just want to ask a question to the teacher I don't know, but the teacher just say: 'Maybe you ask tomorrow, because now school has finished.' But he still doesn't tell me the meaning, he says he forgot it ... So that's why I try to find my own, but it still didn't work. So I don't want to ask my friend, I don't want to annoy them ... At this moment, I really struggled, I don't feel really confident when I speak English. It made me not want to speak English more, because the local people they know any grammar, how to speak really well, professional words they use, but with me just nothing, just like different earth people come here, like for nothing. Just like in the desert, how to survive.

I went to the ESOL in College Menai. It's totally different, their teaching style. Like in secondary school it's like robot system, they just put the notes on the board, and you just copy it, and they will tell you a little bit explain ... But in ESOL, if I can't understand something, they will slow down the lesson, maybe explain what that means definitely. So I think it's really good, they also use the game, video or speaking to other people like the conversation. So I think that's really good. Maybe I have been in the ESOL only half a year or five months, I've seen my English more improved, like my reading or speaking. Now I can speak with local people more fluently and feel more confident. Yeah, I think that is why my English has improved more, since before.

The group of learners in Bangor came to a consensus in choosing Alan's story due to the fact that the main change in his story was in his confidence. Specifically for Alan, confidence to speak to local people and also his focus on improving his English to get a good job in the future, something the majority of people in the group were aiming for. Alan's experience also depicts a situation that many of the young learners had experienced, and was a familiar story to the teachers at the college, of students being left to struggle in mainstream secondary school where they find no support.

Participatory analysis

A group of learners, teachers and ESOL Nexus staff gathered for one day to look at all stories collected from the learners, to identify themes, enablers and barriers to learning. They pulled out all the key changes mentioned, along with key enablers (or contributors to change) and blockers (or barriers to change). They grouped these changes and labelled the groups, thereby establishing themes or 'domains' of change for the learners during the project. The results signal what is most significant to the learners, in terms of learning English to support their lives in the UK.

Key domains of change for learners were identified as confidence, achievements (related to employment and education) and independence (which was seen by the team as closely linked to confidence). Other less significant domains of change were identified as new language and computer learning.

The key enablers were determined as online resources, class, teacher-led activities and communicating outside the class. Others were reading print material, TV and listening to songs.

A key blocker that emerged was lack of confidence. Others included isolation, practical barriers (such as lack of time and not finding the right place to study), translation issues (or not knowing the right word) and not understanding (including having difficulties with people speaking too fast or feeling bored to learn English).

The results of the participatory analysis and the selected stories of change confirm that the learners value confidence above all. Below we have highlighted two key conditions for learning with respect to confidence: a supportive, respectful classroom and freedom to make mistakes.

Not being laughed at

Alan's story of building confidence is one where he experienced a different style of teaching in the ESOL classes and an environment where 'no one will laugh at you'. A learner from the Salford group turned to me and said: 'This is something very important, you should tell everyone – if someone laughs at you, you will never speak. Never. If people don't laugh at you, it's OK.' Her statement was met with emphatic agreement from her classmates and prompted a sharing of examples. Stories were told that the learners laughed about, such as being offered help or food or drinks, or being asked to donate to charity, and saying 'No, thank you,' to avoid speaking, ending up being unintentionally rude, or being left hungry and in need, or else just hiding away from speaking to people in case they made a mistake and became embarrassed. Other stories were from mothers being laughed at by their children. In contrast, the college and class environment is of utmost importance to all these learners, as it is a place where they can meet people in a similar situation to them, share their problems with others and where no one will laugh at them.

'Mistakes are great'

There was one learner who had a transformative shift in her confidence to speak out as a direct impact of the participatory video project. Given that confidence to speak has been identified as a priority for learners, it is interesting to consider what happened.

There are two things unique to this learner in contrast to all the others who participated. The first was that she had never touched or used a camera before. So a feeling of empowerment came when she realised she could use the camera, speak into the microphone and appear on screen – something she had never expected she would achieve. This confirms how confidence can come from trying and succeeding at something you have never done before, overturning your own expectations of yourself.

Another thing different about this learner was her reluctance to sign up to InsightShare's motto: 'mistakes are great'. We introduce this to provoke discussion and ask the participants to sign up to an attitude towards learning during the process, paving the way for the 'learning through doing' approach. During the video exercises participants will film something short and then watch it back immediately, learning from seeing what they like and don't like, or their 'mistakes'. This motto helps them to feel better when inevitably mistakes do happen such as recording the floor instead of the face, or forgetting to record at all.

I asked if everyone agreed with 'mistakes are great', and everyone did except this particular learner. Reactions to this statement often reflect an attitude to learning based on people's experience of the education system, cultural norms of how to behave in a classroom or how to show respect in the teacher-student relationship. In this case, the learner was uncomfortable unless all her work was perfect for the teacher; she was quiet in class, reluctant to speak for fear of making a mistake.

After six hours of participatory video activities we were sitting and watching back the footage from the day, including her interview with another mother about children. This learner suddenly stood up to declare she was very happy, that she *'did not know camera or microphone before, never'*, and now she did. She said if the filming was not very good this time, and there were mistakes, she knew that next time it would be better; thus showing a shift in her attitude towards learning. Reports from the teacher and learners alike were that since the project she speaks in class a great deal more, will ask questions in front of the class and teacher, and is more willing to try things, moving towards an attitude of 'wrong or no wrong, I speak'.

If people can expect to make mistakes as part of the learning process, accept them and celebrate them with others, they will feel more comfortable to try new things, take risks and reap the reward of new confidence.

Side effects of the participatory video evaluation

A month after my last visit, I had an in-depth conversation with teachers from Salford to understand any impact on their class from participating in the participatory video evaluation project.

Sharing stories

In Salford, for the learners who are relatively new to the UK, the ESOL class represents one of the major places they can interact with others and find friendships. Sharing personal experiences in this way helped them get to know one another, and appreciate their individual situations. It created a sense of solidarity in discovering they had experienced common difficulties. Connecting with their reasons for learning English helped to energise and motivate.

Having their shared experiences validated their reasons for studying and they became stronger as a group because of this.

(Isla Crawford, ESOL teacher, Salford City College)

Seeing yourself

A key mechanism of the participatory video process in terms of its empowering effect is recording yourself on video and watching it back with others. More often than not our own projections cloud our judgment of ourselves. Recording yourself on video, watching it back with other people and hearing their reactions and feedback can help to bring perspective. The teachers from Salford confirm this effect for their class, with added specific benefits for language learning.

There's one lady who now speaks more as she's seen what she can do on camera and is aware that other people want to hear her thoughts.

(Isla Crawford, ESOL teacher, Salford City College)

I think being on camera has made one learner realise: 'I can hear myself, and I'm not that bad'. She can see her own progress: 'I am better than I thought I was and I can get better, it doesn't matter if I get it wrong, I'll say it.'

(Alison Masters, ESOL teacher, Salford City College)

It also helped some learners who were previously frustrated through the belief they had been placed in a level that was too low for them, perhaps because they felt they could understand more language than they could produce.

They enjoyed seeing themselves on video, but also saw that it still takes them time to get sentences out, so it has helped them take stock, and accept that the level is not so wrong for them, and they still have things to learn.

(Alison Masters, ESOL teacher, Salford City College)

Seeing others

The learners in Salford watched the video from the Bangor learners. They knew that the learners from Bangor were studying at a higher level, and yet they could hear mistakes in their language. Their teacher reports that hearing what a Level 1 learner sounded like gave them a confidence boost, as they realised:

'... the gap between them was not the immeasurable gulf they sometimes imagine.'

(Alison Masters, ESOL teacher, Salford City College)

Reflecting on the topics

Asking the group to reflect on what helps them learn has helped some of the learners take more charge of their own learning; some are seemingly more motivated and taking their learning more seriously. For one learner whose story was selected, her teacher has noticed a change in her since the project:

She is now not just saying she doesn't know how, she can analyse what the barriers are to her learning. (Isla Crawford, ESOL teacher, Salford City College)

Others are reportedly using online resources more readily, and are not so easily put off if they do not understand the title of the website or if initial searches go awry.

Working with each other

I think the filming and working together, I don't think it came naturally and I don't think it was terribly easy as it wasn't a way of working that happens in an ESOL environment, but I think it had a lasting effect on the group; they are more tolerant, more be involved with each other ... It's important because you can be dismissive of people and, in doing that, in writing them off, or labelling them, you're missing out on something yourself ... also it's about being part of a very mixed society and being really tolerant, so it's important to work together and accept the differences and maybe get to the point where you can laugh at them. (Alison Masters, ESOL teacher, Salford City College)

Teacher-student relationship

The teachers were able to see their learners in a new light while they worked collaboratively, and picked up technical skills in a way that surprised them.

Convincing them to be involved in something, and watching them step into the process, and seeing how they can be in control of that process, is a really good thing for a teacher to do, because so often we want to be the boss and control everything, and want to suggest go this way and that way, but when things were going well, just to leave things, and let them do it themselves ... I should do more of that in the class.

(Alison Masters, ESOL teacher, Salford City College)

The teachers suggested to me that it worked well having an external facilitator for the process.

If we had suggested it they wouldn't have been half as engaged as they were, they would have thought 'there's a right and wrong answer here,' rather than 'let's find the answer'. As it was, ownership was given directly by the facilitator, so they took it on.'

(Alison Masters, ESOL teacher, Salford City College)

Conclusion

This participatory video experience has shown that ESOL classrooms and colleges are crucial spaces. Through ESOL, people new to the UK have access to an experience that helps them grow in confidence and learn about living successfully in the UK – the people, the customs and rituals and official systems – as well as supporting them in developing their language skills. At the same time they interact with and learn about people of all backgrounds, with the opportunity to break down cultural barriers and stereotypes. For learners, their ESOL provider can be an environment of safety and understanding where they are able to build friendships and connections with people in similar situations, motivating them to keep learning and keep making the effort. The contribution of ESOL classes in supporting people to establish a successful life in the UK is clear; providers and the relationships they build there can be a base from which to take charge of their own learning and aims for the future.

The learners' stories paint a picture in which successful use of language is first and foremost about confidence to use the language they have. Some of that confidence of course comes from having the specific language in the first place, but it is interesting to look at those aspects of confidence that do not come from knowing the right words for the right times. Participatory methods can help to build learners' confidence through giving them space to develop their own ideas and capacity,

helping them see that others believe they have something valuable to offer and developing their interest in listening to others and appreciating different points of view.

This chapter has emphasised that participatory video can help promote in learners an attitude of *'wrong or no wrong, I speak'*, by building that confidence in people. This is partly through the mechanism of video for reflection and partly as a group consensus-building process that promotes shared understanding, but also because of the acknowledgement of the value of making mistakes in a safe environment that is at the heart of the method – 'mistakes are great'. This encourages participants to value a learning process where they take risks, embrace their mistakes and realise what they are capable of. The learners we worked with in Salford and Bangor took that risk by making videos to tell their stories. We hope you will watch the videos and take the chance to hear from the learners directly.

You can read the final report and watch the videos here: <http://esol.britishcouncil.org/participatory-video>

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**Teaching Welsh
to ESOL students:
issues of intercultural
citizenship**

7

Teaching Welsh to ESOL students: issues of intercultural citizenship

Gwennan Higham

Introduction

More than 15 years since devolution, Wales now stands at a crossroads with regard to its *prïod iaith* – its native language. Far from facing language endangerment as many other minority languages today, *Cymraeg* rather faces the challenge of functioning as a societal language or language of ‘cohesion’. The 2011 Census showed marked fragmentation of the landscape of the Welsh language, especially in the Welsh-speaking heartlands of North and West Wales. Over one-third of Wales’ population was born outside of Wales while the capital of Cardiff saw an increase in its percentage of Welsh speakers (Jones, 2012).

The Welsh Language Measure of 2011 places English and Welsh on the same equal status and one of the main objectives of the Welsh language Commissioner, created as part of this Measure, is to ensure that citizens of Wales can live their lives through Welsh, if they so wish. Welsh language education is compulsory and demand for Welsh-medium schools exceeds current provision.

Official attitudes to the use of Welsh in public life have changed greatly since the days when speaking Welsh was banned in schools, as well as other stigmatisation of the language. Today, the Welsh language is an intrinsic part of a civic, inclusive and multi-ethnic Wales and citizens of Wales gain certain economic benefits by learning the language. Encouraging Welsh language provision to new citizens of Wales can thus be linked to notions of social cohesion and ‘citizenship’.

Inward immigration has a long history in Wales; the Huguenots, the Romani, the Irish and the Italians, among others, have left their mark on the Welsh language. Many made renowned contributions to the Welsh literary and cultural scene, such as the German-Jewish immigrant, Kate Bosse-Griffiths, recognised today as a pioneering and renowned Welsh-language author, who found expression to her views on feminism, nationalism, pacifism and religion through Welsh (Higham, 2012). By the beginning of the 19th century, the Cardiff docks ‘Tiger bay’ community was one of

the UK's first multicultural communities, with groups such as the Somalis and Welsh Indians still thriving today.

Immigration today is nevertheless impacting on the vitality of the language. Welsh speakers may expect new arrivals to adopt their language, yet the norm is that new arrivals, the majority of whom come from England, assume English is the *lingua franca*. Wales is bilingual after all, giving immigrants the choice of English over Welsh. While some have raised questions with regard to Welsh speakers' attitudes towards incomers (Williams, 2008), little research has been conducted on immigrant attitudes towards the Welsh language.

Issues of integration, citizenship and language in Wales

The UK is increasingly diverse and successive governments have introduced policies to support the integration of newcomers. These were mostly aimed at accommodating diversity by encouraging 'multiculturalism'. However, present initiatives focus more on 'community cohesion', 'interculturalism' and 'common citizenship'³³. UK integration policies have developed primarily in response to post-immigration and 'new' diversities (Modood and Meer, 2012). The UK home nations, with their respective languages, have been given less attention, despite being essential ingredients of the UK's diverse melting pot.

New conceptions of integration, however, do not symbolise a return to a homogenous concept of culture. Interculturalism claims to respect the rights of ethnic minorities, with an emphasis on 'dialogue' and 'exchange' between host and immigrant communities. Thus, language, a central mediator of dialogue, has an important role to play.

One factor in the changes to the citizenship agenda has been the possibility of conducting the British Citizenship test through the medium of Welsh or Scottish Gaelic. Such developments open new paths to official UK citizenship through Welsh or Scottish Gaelic. As Kiwan (2007:17) points out: 'English language skills and 'citizenship' knowledge of life in the UK are centrally important in achieving economic, civic and social integration of immigrants settling and making their lives in the UK.' However, while the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) framework supports an English-speaking path to citizenship, it is questionable what support, if any, is given to those who wish to take the test in Welsh. One must already be a fluent Welsh speaker, such as Welsh-speaking immigrants from Patagonia, in order to be eligible for this test. It remains true that English is the *lingua de facto* of British citizenship and, thus, the language of social cohesion.

While acknowledgement in official policy discourse is given to Britain's indigenous languages, both intercultural and citizenship discussions in Britain focus on the importance of a 'shared language' as well as a 'shared sense of belonging within the UK', and this is achieved via English.

Although Wales cannot attribute official citizenship, the devolved government of Wales has power over matters concerning education and community cohesion in order to govern how citizens of Wales conduct relations with one another, including the role of language. The Welsh Government's welcome pack to migrants defines modern Wales in the following way:

Wales is an inclusive, multicultural and multi-faith country and we welcome the diversity of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in Wales and recognise that whilst they all share a common experience, they are far from homogenous [...] We have already undertaken a significant amount of work to ensure Wales is an inclusive nation. Wales has a language of its own, that we are rightly proud of. The Welsh Language is spoken throughout Wales, and you will find television and radio programmes, publications and signs in both Welsh and English. We would certainly encourage you to learn Welsh, as well as English.

(Welsh Government, 2012a:4)

Wales acknowledges and embraces diversity. Its languages, both Welsh and English, are acknowledged. Its 'language of its own', however, is singled out as portraying Wales' 'uniqueness'. It notes further that the government encourages migrants to learn Welsh as well as English. A recent government report, *Getting On Together – a community cohesion strategy for Wales*, emphasises the importance of learning the 'local' language to 'help you feel part of your new community, to make friends and to access any important information and services you may need.' (Welsh Government, 2012a:137) Another report on refugees to Wales links language skills with intercultural competence and inclusion:

Good language skills provide firm foundations from which asylum seekers and refugees in Wales can achieve their potential. As well as being the means through which individuals within a community communicate and learn about each other, language carries important cultural and historical signals, which can facilitate inclusion.

(Welsh Government, 2013:19)

Although the Welsh government's strategy on community cohesion and social inclusion models the case of England, it commits to supporting and encouraging both Welsh and English languages.

However, it is notable that language provision does not reflect this rhetoric with regard to adult immigrants to Wales. While *encouraging* immigrants to learn Welsh, there is no strategy or pathway to *facilitate* Welsh language learning for immigrants. ESOL is subsidised in Wales and contextualised to the Welsh setting (Welsh Government, 2010), but there is little mention of Welsh language provision in its strategies. Rather, it would seem that efforts to protect Welsh language

communities are separated from efforts to encourage immigrants to enrol on ESOL courses. Learning English is provided on a 'supply and need' basis while Welsh is deemed optional and linked to culture and heritage.

As a result, there are contradictions between policy and practice in language learning for immigrants to Wales; the English government promotes the importance of learning English to British immigrants and provides English classes for them. The Welsh government promotes both Welsh and English to immigrants in Wales but only supplies and subsidises English classes for immigrants. The contradiction is further seen in relation to Welsh language policies with its bold claims about creating a 'truly' bilingual Wales:

But we want to look beyond mere numbers of people who can speak Welsh. We want Wales to be a truly bilingual nation, by which we mean a country where people can choose to live their lives through the medium of either Welsh or English and where the presence of the two languages is a visible and audible source of pride and strength to us all.

(Welsh Government, 2006:11)

Despite the contradiction in policy and practice, this does not mean it is impossible for migrants to learn Welsh. Indeed, they may decide to seek out a course provided by the Welsh for Adults Centre or come across online courses such as www.saysomethinginwelsh.com. However, lack of funds, information and accessibility mean that immigrants learning Welsh are more of an exception than the norm. As Brooks points out, ignoring power inequalities between English and Welsh languages opens '*the door to the possibility that the minority language might be identified as a barrier to the social inclusion of certain marginalised groups.*' (Brooks, 2009:22) To what extent is Welsh a barrier to social inclusion or an asset to new citizens of Wales?

Welsh language provision at the ESOL Centre, Cardiff

The reality of ESOL practice in Wales is that it does reflect the Welsh setting. Reports by *Estyn*, the inspectorate for Education in Wales, show that some elements of Welsh culture and Welsh language are incorporated into ESOL practice, such as teaching the national anthem in the run up of the Six Nations tournament (Welsh Government, 2010). More explicit attempts to incorporate elements of Welsh are evident in ESOL in North Wales, reflecting the higher percentage of Welsh speakers in that part of Wales. However, in a climate where ESOL and Welsh for Adults resources are stretched and funding has been cut, it seems unlikely that ESOL centres will be able to pursue new innovations in Welsh language learning.

In this climate, a Welsh language scheme among ESOL learners was piloted between the Welsh for Adults Centre and ESOL Centre in Cardiff. Welsh taster sessions were first held with ESOL classes in 2011 on St David's Day, the national

day of Wales. Following positive response and feedback from such events, a Welsh learning scholarship was launched by the Welsh for Adults Centre in order to fund a group of ESOL students on a Welsh language learning journey. Although many students showed keen interest and applied for the scholarship, co-ordinating practicalities of holding classes in an already tight ESOL schedule proved difficult.

As a result, individual groups were targeted and currently two ESOL classes are undertaking Welsh classes during the course of this year.

In conversations with ESOL students undertaking Welsh classes, learning an additional language to English did not appear to pose a problem; rather they expected to have to do so in light of Wales' official bilingual status. Students often drew comparisons with their native countries, where multilingualism was often in play, including those countries where minority revitalisation initiatives were at work. Even though students had not necessarily had prior contact with Welsh, they considered the learning of Welsh their 'duty' as citizens of Wales. When asked if they were in favour of more Welsh language teaching, they were overwhelmingly so. Some mentioned that as their children were learning Welsh in primary or secondary education, they, too, would benefit from this opportunity to learn the national language. While government reports link English with essential skills and Welsh with heritage and culture, students included socio-economic advantage in their motivations for learning Welsh. This complies with increasing demand for job positions that require Welsh as both desirable and key skills, suggesting speaking Welsh is viewed as having both social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1982).

However, some scepticism was noted on the part of the students with regard to learning Welsh and English simultaneously. Some students wished there were clear pathways linking English courses to Welsh courses, or vice versa. Other students had adopted certain common myths of non-Welsh speakers concerning the language, such as that it is unpronounceable as it does not have any vowels. By explaining that 'w' and 'y' are additional vowels in Welsh and that the language is very phonetic, students appeared more disposed to learning Welsh. ESOL teachers' attitudes to the Welsh language proved to be a crucial factor in the students' motivation to learn Welsh. Some tutors appeared to be surprised at the students' response to learning Welsh.

While students appeared eager to learn Welsh, their motivation was influenced by their ESOL teacher's personal view of Welsh. There was often an underlying assumption that learning Welsh was a step to be taken after mastering English. This is reflected in citizenship texts where Welsh language texts are offered to those who already have a command of English.

Although taster sessions are good starting points and can raise language awareness, these are only small windows to the language learning process. They may run the risk of being tokenistic gestures towards learning the language, which, in turn, send contradictory messages to immigrant learners. More substantial

courses for ESOL students and other immigrants would need to be supported financially and resources created in order for Welsh language learning to be taken seriously. The results of the initiatives show that many learners have greater facility with pronunciation and intonation of Welsh, the sounds of which resemble those in a variety of languages such as Arabic. The courses also helped to build bridges between cultures.

Bearing in mind the role of teaching in forming contact with the language and culture of the 'other' (Bourdieu, 2001), this initiative is part of a wider research project which examines more deeply the link between integration and Welsh language learning in Wales. Participant class observations with elements of action research are underway in Welsh language classes for immigrants in conjunction with or following on from English (ESOL) classes. Semi-structured interviews are being carried out with the individuals, focusing on their 'linguistic trajectories'. While some research has been done on the language socialisation of 'new speakers' from within the UK (Mac Giolla Chríost et al., 2012), the project's aims are to analyse how adult learners from immigrant backgrounds appropriate the minority language on their journey to becoming new speakers of Welsh and how members of the host communities respond in turn. One of the main outcomes is to identify ways of improving Welsh language provision for immigrants. In this respect, considering policy and practice of other multilingual sub-state contexts is of benefit to this research.

Language provision for immigrants in francisation classes in Montreal, Canada

Québec, a province of Canada, has historically been one of the linguistic groups often compared to Wales, Catalonia and the Basque country. In Wales, while English is more widely spoken than Welsh, French is the dominant language in Québec. Consideration of the relationship between immigration and language learning in Québec shows how immigration can be used to revitalise a language.

In the 1960s the linguistic situation in Québec and Wales was similar. Immigrants to Québec would learn English and send their children to English-speaking schools. However, as part of the introduction of French as the sole language of Québec with Charter 101, a coherent strategy (the *francisation* programme) was established to enable immigrants to Montreal and the rest of Québec to learn French (Lamarre, 2013).

A research visit was conducted to adult language classes in the city of Montreal, in which English, French and many other community languages coexist. Class observations were conducted in five adult learning centres of the *Commission scolaire de Montréal*, all in multi-ethnic populations of Montreal. Interviews were conducted with the French tutors as well as with students who had completed the *francisation* programme. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with researchers and policy makers on language integration and social cohesion.

While onlookers have judged Québec's language legislation as coercive due to its 'unilingual' status, language policy had been based on the notions of 'interculturalism' and 'social cohesion'. Indeed, interculturalism, which was coined in Québec, aims to establish a path between assimilation and separation. Thus the emphasis is on encouraging participation in a 'common' culture while respecting rights of ethno-cultural diversity (Bouchard, 2012:50). Learners are encouraged to participate, contribute and help change what it means to be Québécois in a modern and multilingual society:

The official and common language of Québec is passed on to everyone living in the territory of Québec, whatever his or her origin.

(Gouvernement du Québec, 2001)

The concept of 'social cohesion' was developed in the Québec context with an attempt to promote French on the basis of social justice. Although identification with Québec and its language is seen as desirable by the Quebec government, emphasis is placed on providing French classes as a basis of equal access to education and employment. Thus, the Quebec government puts forward that fuller integration can be achieved by offering French language classes and encouraging the use of French in public life. While Montreal is multilingual and the majority of immigrants need English, efforts are made to ensure that immigrants develop a motivation and even preference to learn French (Pagé, 2005).

For the majority of immigrants, the adult learning centres are their first contact with the language and speakers of Québec. The teachers interviewed felt that they must act as ambassadors for the language. Thus, their roles are larger than simply second language course instructors – they consider themselves rather as facilitators of integration. Courses are offered on a full-time or part-time basis or as an evening class. For a large number of students, the courses are subsidised by the Immigration office or *Emploi Québec*, the employment agency of Québec. The link between learning French and obtaining a job is thus the main motivation (Pagé and Lamarre, 2010). Teachers note that it is often after initiation into the language that students discover an interest in the culture of Québec.

Interviews were undertaken with students who had completed the *francisation* programme over the course of one or two years. The majority appreciated the programme and described it as a fundamental step to understanding Québec. It furthermore provided them with a good grasp of the French language. However, it appeared that using the language outside of the classroom was still an obstacle for some. Much was dependent on whether the learner had secured a job in a French-speaking environment or not, giving access to French speakers with whom to practise. Some learners showed frustration at not being able to use their language skills, while realising that English could be used for many jobs. This in turn encouraged some to seek other paths to employment via the English language. The bi-directionality of integration is apparent in challenges and opportunities for

intercultural understanding in Québec. Language partnership schemes such as the *jumelages linguistiques* have been set up in order to break down cultural barriers as well as provide opportunities to practise language, often with the aim of multilingual exchange. Indeed, the scheme does not aim to celebrate diversity per se but tackles stereotypes, prejudices and inequalities as well as build bridges between cultures (Bourhis et al., 2013).

The challenges of integrating into the host community show that policy may not be able to have an impact at a local level. Intercultural education and community-based initiatives are thus needed to facilitate integration into a linguistic community. However, linguistic legislation in Québec is a distinct advantage for immigrants to Québec, providing a coherent language-learning framework and open gateway for immigrants to learn French.

Opportunities and challenges to Welsh language integration in Wales

The demographic stability of French in Québec strengthens the cause of promoting their language to immigrants. In Wales, the demographic fragility of Welsh speakers means that the public policy response for integrating immigrants through Welsh has been weak.

For this reason, Welsh language provision to immigrants may be strengthened through collaboration between Welsh and English language teaching providers. Initiatives such as the example in Cardiff could be emulated, creating clear pathways to Welsh language courses from ESOL classes throughout Wales. However, such projects need investment if they are not to appear mere tokenistic gestures towards the language. While ESOL counterparts would benefit from the Welsh for Adults experience, Welsh for Adults, too, would need to readdress course materials in order to cater for the multi-ethnic classroom.

As seen in the example of Montreal, creating bridges between the classroom and the community is fundamental for social engagement with a language group. This is particularly key for a minority language community such as Welsh where often the challenge for learners is not ‘*drowning in Welsh [...] but finding a puddle of it in which to dip their feet.*’ (Translation of Crowe, 1988:88) Thus, recent discussions have focused on establishing Welsh language centres, especially in areas where the language does not have a ‘natural’ community (Gruffudd and Morris, 2012). It is hoped that there will be increased ‘spaces’ where new and native speakers can interact. Moreover, language partnership schemes between members of the host community and immigrants such as the *jumelages linguistiques* in Québec and *Voluntariat per la llengua* in Catalonia could be emulated in Wales, allowing language practice but equally deepening interpersonal and intercultural relations.

For immigrants, learning Welsh deepens their intercultural understanding as well as increasing their participation as citizens of Wales, giving them distinct economic

advantage. Consequently, this opens the way to breaking down ethno-linguistic barriers, allowing Welsh and concepts of 'Welshness' to be redefined from 'within' (Lamarre, 2013), as well as contributing to language revitalisation efforts. New Welsh speakers from immigrant backgrounds may increasingly find new outlets of expression in a multilingual Wales.

The British Council's *Language Rich Europe* proposes that 'increased mobility and migration forces us to re-think the language requirements of our societies.' (British Council, 2011:4) Connections need to be made between policy and practice in the adult learning education system in Wales. Good practice from Welsh language schemes such as the present example in Cardiff could offer ways to encourage intercultural 'citizenship' in Wales.

So, as Wales stands at the crossroads in terms of its *prïod iaith*, and while education bodies in Welsh suffer cutbacks in funding and restructuring, strategy and action need to be wisely considered with regard to integrating new learners of the language, on an individual, community and state level.

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**Language and initial
literacy training
for immigrants: the
Norwegian approach**

8

Language and initial literacy training for immigrants: the Norwegian approach

Graciela Sbertoli and Helga Arnesen

Introduction

Providing equal access to lifelong learning for all adults in the country is an important principle of Norwegian educational policy. To ensure that this principle is implemented in practice, it is necessary for policy to focus especially on adults with low levels of education. Their involvement in lifelong learning activities in Norway is promoted with a threefold objective: to enhance the quality of life of the individual, to benefit society by ensuring active citizenship, and to serve the interests of the country's economy by increasing the employability of the workforce.

These principles are of particular importance when applied to a relatively new sector of Norwegian society: immigrants. According to a 2012 White Paper from the Norwegian Government, *'the most important goal for the Government's integration policy is to ensure that all people who live in Norway are able to utilise their resources and participate in the community.'* (NOU, 2102) For all citizens this involves both oral mastery and a good level of literacy in the Norwegian language. For immigrants and those who work with them, this presents a particular challenge.

Understanding of literacy within the educational field working on immigrant integration has undergone many changes in the past 40 years. Literacy is no longer perceived in terms of a dichotomy – literate versus illiterate – nor simply as a set of autonomous skills to be mastered. A focus on functional literacy now permeates current Norwegian educational policy at all levels. This chapter will focus on the implication of these developments for migrant language and literacy education in Norway.

A brief history of immigration to Norway

Norway is a comparatively young country, only declaring its independence in 1905. In the decades that preceded its birth as a nation and until World War II, immigration to Norway was very low. However, in 1946 the Norwegian Refugee Council was created to meet the needs of displaced persons in the aftermath of World War II. Norway's reputation as a promoter of humanitarian aid had already been established by Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian Arctic explorer and diplomat, who in 1921 became the first High Commissioner for Refugees of the League of Nations. Despite this international activity, Norway's population remained unchanged. Until the 1960s, most immigrants to Norway came from the other Nordic countries, with which Norway had established a common passport control and economic area in 1952.

The late 60s saw the start of labour migration from developing countries such as Turkey, Morocco and particularly Pakistan. Feeling threatened by the possibility of an uncontrollable flow, the government enacted an 'immigration stop' in 1975. The first significant group of refugees came in the mid-70s, from Chile and Vietnam. The mid-80s brought a strong increase in the number of asylum seekers (8,600 in 1987), who came from countries such as Iran and Sri Lanka. The next big wave came from the Balkans, and by the end of the 90s most asylum seekers came from Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan. Asian immigrants continue to be the largest group among refugees, but since 2006 the most significant increase is in labour immigration from countries within the European Economic Area.

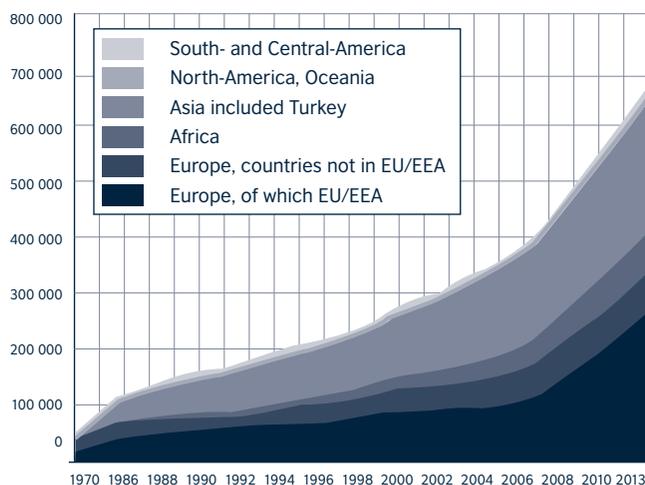


Figure 1: Immigrants and Norwegians born to immigrant parents, by country background. 1970-2013

Source: Statistisk sentralbyrå, SSB (Statistics Norway) <http://ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvgrunn>

The most dramatic increase since the turn of the century corresponds to labour migration (mainly following the enlargement of the EU/EEA in 2004, although a significant part of this increase is due to a wave of young labour immigrants from Sweden), followed by immigration on the grounds of family reunification. The increase in the number of refugees is comparatively much less noticeable.

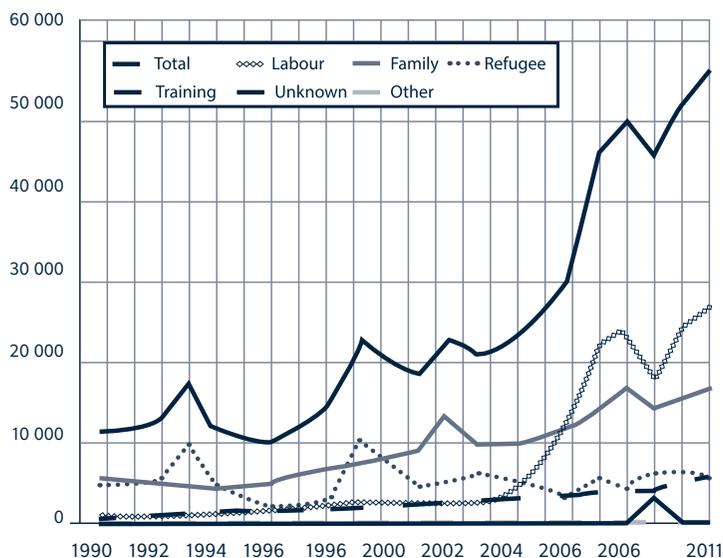


Figure 2: Immigrants by reason for immigration, 1990-2011

Source: Statistisk sentralbyrå, SSB (Statistics Norway) <http://ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvgrunn>

The interdependency of language and literacy training

As was the case in most European countries when first attempting to understand and meet the educational needs of immigrants with low levels of education, the main focus in the 80s and most of the 90s was on language training, with little attention given at policy level to literacy. Yet, within the very heterogeneous target group of adult immigrants, there were a considerable number of adults who had not completed basic education in their home language and who were totally illiterate, with little concept of written text. The number of hours a learner was entitled to would vary according to their needs, and teachers certainly did their best to adapt their teaching to the diversity of their learners, but until 1998 there was no structural differentiation in national training plans to take account of the impact on learning needs of the learners' literacy skills in their home language.

Many of the unsolved issues in the first 20 years of organised training for immigrants were caused by the fact that this training was a completely new discipline. Most of the staff had been recruited to the field because they were specialists in the Norwegian language, with little or no knowledge of literacy

training, and indeed very little experience of teaching Norwegian as a foreign language. The particular challenges involved in teaching adults with little or no schooling came as a surprise to these pioneering teachers.

A research project undertaken from 1992 to 1995 at the University of Oslo (Hvenekilde et al., 1996) showed that learners with less than five years of previous schooling were to a great extent unable to actively take part in the learning process, to make use of writing as a tool for learning, or even to understand what happened in the classroom. Teachers reported that such learners seemed unable to retain what they had learnt or transfer their learning to new arenas. What was learnt in the classroom, stayed in the classroom.

In an effort to solve these problems, a 'two-track system' was created, differentiating the progression expected from groups with more or less than five years of schooling in their country of origin, but even then the plight of the illiterate immigrant remained to a large extent hidden.

Vigdis Rosvold Alver remarks that teachers have often *'taken it for granted that participants could use the written word as a tool in their language training, assuming their literacy would increase more or less automatically.'* (Alver, 2013) Not surprisingly, the results were often frustratingly poor.

Progression in this field has been slow and painful. The current structures make provision for not two but three different tracks, with the possibility of also creating separate groups for learners in need of concentrated literacy training. New national curricula (2012) focus on the need to see literacy training and language training as interdependent. To acquire initial literacy through the means of a language one doesn't master is an arduous task, while it is equally difficult to learn a language without being able to use the written word as a tool. The challenge is to find flexible teaching models and approaches which can break this vicious circle.

Mother tongue as help or vehicle for initial literacy training

Most studies about the use of mother tongue in literacy training have been undertaken in relation to multilingual societies, and the debate has been about whether or not it was legitimate to use the dominant language or languages of the country to train learners from linguistic minorities in initial literacy (Ouane, 2003). There seems to be evidence that the use of the mother tongue substantially shortens the learning process, even in cases where the alternative is to be taught through a majority language that the learner has mastered to a reasonable degree. However, teaching through the majority language has often been given priority for practical and economic reasons.

In the case of Norway, this discourse was made even more relevant by the fact that illiterate immigrants here are in a very different situation from that of Commonwealth immigrants to the UK or those that arrive in France from French-

speaking African countries. They have simply never heard a word of Norwegian before. This being the case, it seems obvious that, if at all possible, their mother tongue should be used; if not as target for the coding/decoding process, then at least as a helping element.

This understanding, however, has been difficult to implement in practice. Part of the reason is that it was more or less impossible to provide qualified literacy trainers for all the different linguistic groups that have been arriving in Norway in the past 40 years. However, the main obstacle was created by what developed into a major political debate focusing primarily on the basic education given to children and young adults of immigrant origin.

An Official Norwegian Report (NOU: 1995), written in 1995 documents the debate. Based on the declaration of the Norwegian government that *'immigrants be given the possibility to keep their own cultural identity so that plurality in origin, language and way of life can enrich the totality of our society'*, one side argued that learning their language of origin should be the right of all pupils in Norway. The opposing side considered that such instruction should only be 'a transition policy', i.e. a measure applicable only until a pupil was fully able to use Norwegian as the vehicle for his/her education.

Norwegian policy is typically based on universal rights. If a measure is not easily applied to everybody, it will be difficult to advocate that it should be at least applied to some groups. For practical reasons it was difficult to extend this offer to all linguistic groups, some of which included very few pupils. Staff quality was also a major concern, and few mother tongue speakers had teacher qualifications. Unqualified teachers were used as assistants, creating a notion of 'second-class' teachers, which was very much at odds with traditional Norwegian values.

Current educational laws have established a sort of compromise between the two sides, and the interpretation of the law is very much left to the individual municipal school authorities. In practice, mother tongue-based assistance is normally given only in cases where it is essential to ensure the progress of an individual learner.

As has often been the case, however, the debate forgot to a large extent to take account of the needs of adult immigrants. In an effort to compensate for the lack of mother tongue assistants, a few pedagogic centres started developing a novel idea: using adult learners in other 'tracks' (i.e. with more years of schooling and being more advanced in the Norwegian language) as assistants to the Norwegian teacher in initial literacy classes. The project *Literacy training with native speaker support* (Buanes and Lehne, 2013) started in the autumn of 2011 at Nygård skole, Bergen and, following promising results, is now being adapted and implemented in many other schools and municipalities. It is important to note, however, that in most cases the support is focused more on establishing a bridge of comprehension between the teacher and the illiterate learner than on the use of mother tongue as a vehicle for breaking the literacy code. The native speakers supporting the process are not

trained to actively engage in the literacy acquisition process. The acquisition of literacy itself is conducted through Norwegian, except in the few cases where the literacy teacher is a speaker of the minority language.

Until very recently the immense potential of digital tools as an instrument to solve this issue has gone untapped. A very interesting Vox project, STL+¹, is testing an application that enables adults to learn reading through writing. The software makes use of synthetic language and gives the sound of each pressed key, as well as that of the finished word. Although the learners still have to make use of the Norwegian language as a vehicle for literacy development, they are motivated by the fact that they only use words they are familiar with. The more vocabulary they learn, the more variety they can apply to their writing, while still only writing words they can actually pronounce.

Training the trainers

The problem caused by lack of adequate teacher competencies has already been identified several times in this chapter. Despite the fact that most of the staff involved in language and literacy training for immigrants, with the exception of the ‘mother tongue teachers’ mentioned above, have been recruited from among the ranks of qualified teachers, it has been documented again and again that this type of training required competencies the teachers had not acquired during their initial training. The Official Norwegian Report of 1995 (NOU, 1995) mentions, for instance, the ‘varying quality of teacher competencies’ as one of the five main challenges facing basic education for immigrants at that time. Increased awareness of that challenge did not, however, lead to any revolution in policy or practice.

Fourteen years later, an OECD review stated that *‘priority should be given to improving the capacity of teachers and school leaders to be more responsive to linguistic and cultural diversity.’* (Taguma et al., 2009) The review also advocates that priority should be given to *‘implementing the Basic Skills and Mother Tongue curricula, training all teachers to be able to teach second language learners, integrating language and subject learning and advancing research on effective language support.’* Interestingly enough, no mention is made here of the need to train at least a fraction of the teachers to be able to meet the specific challenges involved in teaching initial literacy to speakers of other languages.

Vox, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning, is responsible under the Ministry for Children, Equality and Social Inclusion for the development of content and pedagogical approaches related to the teaching of Norwegian language and social studies to adult immigrants. The agency was created in January 2001 and has been working ever since to promote and implement adequate schemes for

¹ www.vox.no/no/Norskopplaring-og-integrering-/Metodisk-veiledning/Skrive-seg-til-lesing-med-tastelyd-og-talesyntese-STL/

the continuous professional development of teachers and trainers involved in the education of adult immigrants. Following the common demand, however, most of the in-service training courses offered by Vox have focused on the methodological approach to teaching the Norwegian language and the Social Studies curricula.

The same lack of focus on the issue of initial adult literacy has been apparent in the provision of teacher training given by the tertiary sector. A considerable number of Norwegian universities and university colleges do offer initial or postgraduate studies in Norwegian as a Second Language and Migration Pedagogics, and many of them have been doing so since the 90s. To meet the need to increase the number of qualified mother tongue teachers, nine university colleges, led by University College Hedmark, are co-operating in the organisation of a menu of flexible courses leading to bachelor-level qualifications for this target group. Although none of these studies has so far focused on the specific competences needed for these graduates to be able to teach initial literacy courses, they are undoubtedly a step in the right direction.

A new and very important development is about to be implemented. Bergen University College has announced a new offer for the spring of 2014²: a postgraduate-level course on 'Literacy training for adults and young adults with little or no previous schooling'. The study gives 30 ECTS credits³, scheduled over two semesters, and will offer the flexibility needed by teachers who want to combine it with their full-time work.

What has been called 'the ostrich syndrome' (i.e. trying to ignore the existence of the issue) regarding the problems involved in adequate provision of initial literacy training doesn't seem to be a purely Norwegian phenomenon. After the Nordic Alfa Council was created within the Nordic Network for Adult Learning, NVL, in 2006, its members, representatives from all the Nordic countries, agreed that one of the most urgent needs in their field was the issue of teacher training. An English version of the product of their work, a *Description of Teachers Competence in initial and functional literacy for adults with non-Nordic mother tongue*, was completed in May 2013 and can be found on the network's website⁴.

² See www.hib.no/studier/studie.asp?studieID=B30LES

³ European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a standard for comparing the study attainment and performance of students of higher education across the European Union and other collaborating European countries. For successfully completed studies, ECTS credits are awarded. Two England/Wales/Northern Ireland credits are equivalent to one ECTS credit.

⁴ www.nordvux.net/page/864/formalsyfte.htm

Respect and relevance

Respect for the individual learner's previously acquired competence and experience is one of the main tenets of andragogy. It would be very wrong to say that immigrant learners have ever been treated with a lack of respect, but it is nevertheless true that many teachers who taught typical 'track 1' learners in the 80s and 90s remember today with shame that they used to treat some of them as 'tabula rasa'. Faced with a daunting lack of basic education, often coupled with an almost total ignorance of cultural aspects that the industrial world took for granted, many teachers felt that these adults 'had to be taught everything'.

Fortunately, the discourse has changed radically in recent years. However, it is still true that these adults have a lot to learn. Functional literacy is a moving target, and demands keep increasing, creating an ever-widening gap between literate and illiterate adults. But it is equally true that illiterate adults possess a wealth of other competencies and skills that should be valued and recognised. Life competencies that have enabled them to make the practical transition to a new country will hopefully also enable them to learn the new country's culture and systems. Work training from the country of origin can be validated as part of a vocational qualification once a certain degree of mastery of Norwegian has been achieved. Validation of prior learning, coupled with specific schemes for career guidance, is an issue of extreme importance for this target group.

Another important andragogic principle is the need to make learning relevant and motivating. The prospect of having to spend many years at a school desk, from language and literacy through basic education and to hopefully achieving a qualification, is not likely to motivate the learners. But learning does not need to take place in schools, and the process will certainly be more efficient if it is combined with activities that are relevant for the adult learner. For example, work-related language learning combines the notion of motivation and relevance with the current governmental focus on ensuring a rapid transition of the adult immigrant into the workforce. Pedagogical models and resources have been created and a number of projects have created a rich knowledge background for further development. Family learning schemes and course models for learning through activities organised by civic society groups have also been developed with considerable success.

A new approach

The system: introductory programme and Norwegian language instruction for newly arrived immigrants⁵

⁵ The Act on an introduction programme and Norwegian language training for newly arrived immigrants (the Introduction Act), www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-20030704-080-eng.pdf

Since September 2005 it has been compulsory for newly arrived adult immigrants to participate in 600 lessons of instruction in the Norwegian language and social studies. Beyond the compulsory instruction, those who have further need for instruction have the opportunity to take more classes (up to 3,000 lessons, depending on the needs of the individual). This system applies to those who are refugees, persons granted humanitarian status, persons who have collective protection and family members of these categories. It also includes persons who have been granted family reunification with a Norwegian citizen. Persons who come from outside the EEA/EFTA area and have a work permit are entitled to take part in 300 lessons of instruction, but have no legal right to receive the courses free of charge. People from the EEA/EFTA area have no legal obligations to take part in language courses.

Refugees, persons granted humanitarian status, persons who have collective protection and persons who are family members of these categories have a statutory right and obligation to take part in a training scheme, the introductory programme. The purpose of the programme is to provide basic Norwegian language skills, basic insight into Norwegian society and prepare for participation in working life and/or education.

In 2012 a new curriculum for the subject Norwegian as Second Language was introduced. It is still built on the Common European Framework for Languages, but there is now a new module, designed for illiterate learners, which will enable the creation of courses where literacy learning runs parallel to the acquisition of basic Norwegian.

New tests in the Norwegian language will be made compulsory from 2014. The tests are adaptive and constructed so that they will be able to show the learners' 'spiky profiles', i.e. differentiated profiles that show the learners' competencies in the different aspects of language learning (reading, writing, listening, speaking).

Alongside the new curricula and tests, Vox has prepared a series of guidelines, handbooks and teacher training schemes designed to ensure that there is a clear differentiation of course offer based on the learners' different needs. The focus on the needs of the illiterate learner is very clear. Motivational measures are also in place, since new rules declare that no application for permanent residence in the country will be accepted unless the applicant has attended Norwegian and Social Study courses and taken the corresponding tests.

Conclusion

Progress is slow, but Norwegian policy and practice in this field does seem to be developing in the right direction. This chapter has focused on a core area and on the recent developments intended to meet an urgent need: that of the adult immigrants who have no or very little previous schooling and who are in need of both language teaching and initial literacy training. The impact of measures dealing

with this group may be limited, but to borrow a Norwegian metaphor: if you put together a firm and solid core, your snowball will increase in size as it rolls, and then you can stand back and watch it impact.

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**Technology and
language planning:
the case of a Brazilian
faith setting in
London**

9

Technology and language planning: the case of a Brazilian faith setting in London

Ana Souza

Introduction

The UK is one of the ten countries with the largest number of international migrants, i.e. individuals who have been living for one year or longer in a country other than the one in which they were born (UN, 2013). As migrants move, so do their faiths (Connor, 2012). As a consequence, the presence of religious groups from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds is common in cosmopolitan cities such as London.

London is the most ethnically diverse area in England and Wales, with over 40 per cent of its population belonging to minority ethnic groups (ONS, 2012). Churches have long considered these migrant groups to be in need of support as well as having an important role in supporting their formal religious activities. Father Steven Saxby¹, for example, has highlighted the role of churches in supporting migrants to connect with their religious identity and to integrate into the host society. Similarly, the role of migrants in contributing to the growing number of churches in England's capital has been noticeable. The London Churches Census shows that 27 per cent of the churches in London are either Pentecostal congregations attended by Black ethnic followers or smaller denomination churches attended by followers who are non-English (Brierley, 2013). This estimate is in addition to the number of migrants who attend larger denominations, such as Roman Catholic and Anglican churches.

In this chapter I focus on how the creation of virtual communities has impacted on the language choices of a Brazilian religious group based in London, the Kardecists. I will explore the interface of language, religion and technology with a focus on the faith lessons offered to the children of Kardecist Brazilian families. I will argue that the Kardecist faith leaders use technology to develop virtual transnational networks that support their language ideologies in relation to the transmission of religious beliefs.

¹ www.saintbarnabaswalthamstow.co.uk/resources/What+role+churches+in+supporting+migrants+dec+2013.pdf

The study

There are three main religions in Brazil that have been transplanted to the UK by migrants, and all of them are Christian: Catholicism, Pentecostalism and Kardecism. All three, represented by faith leaders from specific religious settings in London, were the focus of a pilot study I conducted in 2009. I explored issues of religious, ethnic and linguistic identities with the faith leaders through semi-structured interviews, with the aim of understanding the language planning and policy (LPP) being applied to the faith lessons designed for the children of the migrant families who attended their services. In addition to these interviews, I observed lessons, which allowed me to witness first hand the negotiation of languages between teacher-children and children-children.

In trying to understand the LPP of faith settings, it became clear that technology, more specifically the internet, was playing an important role in the activities they organise. As Franklin (2007) highlights, *'accessing and moving with/in cyberspatial realms, engaging with other actors there ... remind us that any field, however defined, is porous rather than hermetic'*. In other words, there is an interaction between online and offline domains. This interaction was acknowledged in this study and the websites mentioned by the faith leaders during their interviews were visited for a better understanding of their impact on the LPP of the faith settings and vice-versa.

The findings on the Catholic and the Pentecostal churches have been published elsewhere (see Souza et al., 2012). Therefore, this chapter examines the LPP of the Kardecist group with a special focus on the way technology is used to reinforce the language ideologies of its faith leaders.

Kardecist Brazilian migrants in London

The UK is in the top five European countries that contain the highest number of Brazilian migrants (IBGE, 2011). The latest official estimates show this group to have 118,000 members (MRE, 2012). This figure, coupled with unofficial estimates, means that Brazilians are the largest group of Latin Americans in London (McIlwaine et al., 2011), even though the movement of Brazilians abroad only started in earnest in the 1980s (cf. Jouët-Pastré and Braga, 2008). Moreover, Brazilians – unlike most migrant groups – are not linked to a specific area of London (Evans et al., 2011). Therefore, the Portuguese language can be used in all 33 boroughs of the English capital to do anything from buying food to attending therapy sessions (Souza, 2010). The significance of Portuguese was acknowledged in the 2012 London School Census, which shows it to be the eleventh most-spoken language among pupils in London schools (NALDIC, 2013). The *Languages for the Future* report reinforces the importance of Portuguese in the UK context and identifies it as one of the ten languages that should be learned to secure *'the UK's prosperity, security and influence in the world in the years ahead.'* (Tinsley and Board, 2013:3)

It is in this context that at least 34 Brazilian churches in London flourished (Souza, forthcoming). One-third of these churches are in fact Kardecist groups. Kardecism

is a Christian religion, which originated in France in the 19th century and which combines spirit-mediumship and reincarnationist beliefs. Brazilian migrants brought it to London in 1992 at a time when no other church catered for this specific group of migrants. Brazilian Kardecists in migration felt the need to meet for the study of the Spiritist Doctrine. Study groups are core activities for Kardecists, as the main aim of Spiritism is to 'morally transform individuals through rational faith'². The groups slowly grew and currently there are 11 Kardecist groups based in different boroughs in the four corners of London, including Greater London³. These groups, together with those in other parts of the UK, decided to organise themselves under one body. Therefore, the British Union of Spiritist Societies (BUSS) was founded in 1994. In fact, many of the BUSS workers belong to small centres (Centros Espíritas). BUSS is directly linked to the Spiritist Federation in Brazil (FEB⁴), which has an international council (CEI/ISC⁵). One of the main activities of BUSS is to promote and disseminate the Spiritist Doctrine through the organisation of international events with Brazilian guest speakers. However, each centre is responsible for organising its own activities, which may include open sessions to the general public, healing sessions, Spiritism Doctrine study groups, mediumship training, mediumship sessions, activities of social assistance, sessions catering specifically for families and study sessions for children.

The Kardecist study sessions for children

The Kardecist study lessons for children (*Evangelização*) take place once a week in parallel to the adults' study group meetings. They last one hour and 30 minutes and have an average of ten children per group. They aim to support the children in their psychological, emotional and moral development, with a focus on Christian values. In addition, depending on the children's age, the more scientific⁶ aspects of the Doctrine, such as reincarnation and life after death, are also explored.

Generally, the Kardecist co-ordinators in London have experience of Kardecism in Brazil and meet twice a year to design a curriculum. The co-ordinator of each centre and their teachers may also meet once a month to discuss the planning of individual lessons. The co-ordinators meet every two months with the co-ordinators of the adults' study groups in order to ensure symmetry between what is being studied by the children and by their parents. However, there is flexibility in relation to the time spent on a topic depending on the children's reaction and needs. The type of activities planned can also change, as in any teaching context.

² <http://esde.febnet.org.br/conceito.html>

³ www.buss.org.uk

⁴ www.febnet.org.br

⁵ www.febnet.org.br/blog/geral/movimento-espirita/conselho-espirita-internacional <http://cei.spirite.org>

⁶ The use of the word 'scientific' might seem strange in this context, but as explained by Allan Kardec himself, the founder of Spiritism: 'Spiritism is a science which deals with the nature, origin and destiny of Spirits, as well as their relationship with the corporeal world.' (Allan Kardec, *Qu'est-ce que le Spiritisme?* – Préambule) – www.buss.org.uk

One important aspect of Kardecism is that it has no intention of converting people from other religions. Science, philosophy and religion are three interconnected aspects of this Doctrine, which claims to respect and accept all other religions, as explained by one former co-ordinator:

*We do not consider Spiritism to be the best religion in the world ... the Spiritist Doctrine is this, if you want to come, if you want to participate, you do not have to be Spiritist.*⁷

As a consequence, Spiritism is taught to the children but the aim of the Evangelização sessions is not to ensure that they become Spiritists. Nevertheless, the former co-ordinator acknowledges that *'if [the children] become Spiritist, it is good because they are the ones who will take Spiritism forward,'* a view that seems to influence the language policy of the activities being planned for their children.

Language planning and policy

In 1998, 75 per cent of the internet was in English and only 0,82 per cent was Portuguese⁸. The reasons for this were varied, but included the economic and geo-political status of the different countries where these languages are spoken and the status of English as a lingua franca in business, science and education (Palacios, 2001). Nevertheless, considering that the world population has three per cent more speakers of Latin languages than of English, the need for language planning in defence of cultural diversity and national identities was advocated by Alain Rouquié, the French Ambassador to Brazil between 2000 and 2003 (op.cit). The ambassador's perceived threat of the dominance of English on the internet in the beginning of the 21st century was also felt in relation to the maintenance of Portuguese by lay people in Brazil (Fiorin, 2008). English has indeed maintained its position as the dominant language on the internet. However, its use fell to 45 per cent in 2007⁹ and, contrary to the initial pessimistic forecasts, statistics in 2013 showed Portuguese to be the fifth most used language on the internet¹⁰ in general and third on Facebook and Twitter¹¹.

⁷ Quotes in italics were originally in Portuguese.

⁸ www.ciberduvidas.com/noticias.php?rid=1688

⁹ www.ciberduvidas.com/noticias.php?rid=1688

¹⁰ <http://observatorio-lp.sapo.pt/pt/noticias/portugues-quinta-lingua-internet>

¹¹ www.publico.pt/cultura/noticia/o-portugues-conquistou-a-internet-e-agora-quer-ser-lingua-oficial-nas-organizacoes-internacionais-1606507

Nonetheless, the threat of technology to the transmission of minority languages due to English being accepted as the language of this medium remains and has been highlighted by Annamalai (2005). In his article on Indian languages, Annamalai presents the example of the Andamanese to discuss the negative impact of technology on multilingualism. This example is an extreme one, as acknowledged by Annamalai himself, in which a language did not have time to adapt to the technology introduced into a community as a consequence of social change. Independent of the depth of social change that accompanies the introduction (and/or development) of technology into a community, it is useful to know how technology is used, by whom and for what purpose to better understand its impact (Annamalai, 2005). In relation to language, it is relevant to consider the multiple functions of a language such as expressing thoughts and feelings, relating to others, experiencing life and praying (Fiorin, 2008). Indeed, religion plays an important role in the maintenance and shift of languages (Spolsky, 2003).

It can be argued that religious organisations should be included in the group of institutions that can make their own language policy (Souza *et al.*, 2012). Religious institutions are social spaces that have their own policies. They may control the internal forces of their domain but are also influenced by external forces (Spolsky, 2007). As internal forces of a domain, Spolsky (2007) presents three components of language policy: practices, beliefs, and management.

- Language practices are what people do with the languages in their repertoire
- Language beliefs, also referred to as ideology, are the values assigned to the different languages and their varieties.
- Language management, also known as planning, is the effort made to modify the practices and the beliefs of a group.

These components are used to explore the LPP of the Kardecist group in this chapter.

Language practices

As explained above, Kardecism is mainly practised by Brazilian Portuguese speakers and its roots have been moved from France to a mother institution in Brazil, FEB – the Brazilian Spiritist Federation. The language used on FEB's website¹² is Portuguese, including on the sub-link for CEI¹³, their international department. In order to find information in English, a number of pages in Portuguese have to be read before the link to the page in English¹⁴ is found. Even within the international link, the prevalence of Portuguese is obvious. The international newsletter available through this link is downloaded in Portuguese at least twice as many times as in English. Interestingly, however, the number of downloads of courses on Spiritism is the same in English but falls to zero in Portuguese.

¹² www.febnet.org.br

¹³ www.febnet.org.br/blog/geral/movimento-espirita/conselho-espirita-internacional

¹⁴ www.intercei.com

These differences appear to indicate that the English speakers are new followers who are learning its basic concepts. The Portuguese speakers, in turn, seem to be accessing recent information on the activities of the different centres as well as articles on recent developments of the Doctrine.

The prevalence of the use of Portuguese by Kardecists is confirmed by the fact that most of the books available for adults in the FEB online bookshop are in Portuguese¹⁵. There is a rich collection of Kardecist books for children in Portuguese but these are only found via other publishers. Nonetheless, FEB has a special department dedicated to the religious education of children and young people, DIJ. The information here is also in Portuguese, both for the co-ordinators and teachers¹⁶ as well as for the children¹⁷ themselves. Even TVcei¹⁸ – a site within the FEB's international DIJ and which links the Spiritism Doctrine to everyday life through a large number of activities including videos, music, painting, poetry, art craft, stories, science experiments, games and health tips – is all in Portuguese.

There is a striking change in the online language practices of the Kardecist centres in London in comparison to the ones in Brazil. As explained above, the Kardecist centres in London were started by Brazilian migrants. Therefore, it was natural for their first websites to be in Portuguese as all of their face-to-face services were offered in Portuguese only. As time went by, despite not having conversion as a key issue, migrant Kardecists realised the importance of ensuring the survival of their beliefs by disseminating them to people of other ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, many of the centres nowadays offer separate services in English. It is also usual practice for events to be translated into English to the small groups of non-Brazilians who attend, as can be seen in a number of presentations available on YouTube¹⁹. This change from mainly supporting Brazilian migrants to also disseminating the Doctrine has led to the adoption of the local language online. The spiritists website BUSS²⁰ is nowadays entirely in English.

This change in the language practices of Kardecists in London has also affected the study sessions they offer to children (*Evangelização*). Until 2009, Portuguese was the language used in these sessions by both the teachers and the children. From 2010, however, English has been selected as the language of communication in the delivery of these lessons. Both practices, the initial adoption of a Portuguese-only policy and the present English-only policy, were based on the values assigned to these languages by the Kardecist leaders (i.e. co-ordinators and teachers).

¹⁵ www.livrariamundoespirita.com.br/departamento.php?idg=20&ids=0

¹⁶ www.dij.febnet.org.br

¹⁷ www.dij.febnet.org.br/crianca

¹⁸ www.dij.febnet.org.br/blog/evangelizacao-espirita/cartazes-folder-e-videos-da-campanha/colecao-querer-saber-tvcei

¹⁹ https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=british+spiritist+society

²⁰ www.buss.org.uk

Language beliefs

Traditional religions that are part of larger denominations tend to give importance to the maintenance of the original language of their sacred texts (Spolsky, 2003). As typical examples, it is possible to mention the sacred role of Arabic for Muslims and Hebrew for Jews (Joseph, 2004). Latin used to be a sacred language for Catholics, but was replaced by the use of vernacular languages in the Second Vatican Council of 1962–65 (Woods, 2006). Protestant and Pentecostal Christians have always favoured communication with God in vernacular languages to emphasise the personal nature of their relationship with God (Woods, 2004). The case of Kardecism is very interesting as it originated in France but really flourished in Brazil, meaning that Portuguese is the main language used in publications and online sources, as described in the previous section. With the emigration flows from Brazil in the last 30 years or so, Kardecist leaders in the UK and other English-speaking countries have considered it relevant to adopt the local language in their activities. One of the reasons given by one of their teachers is as follows:

It is important to learn the words, as they are different from the ones we use in everyday life. There are specific words [and] I had to buy the Book of the Spirits in English to learn them ... this way I can explain [what Spiritism is] to other people. I think that all [our activities] should be in English ... [so that] we can disseminate [the Spiritism to non-Brazilians].

The strong links of migrant churches with religion are to be expected. Nevertheless, as shown in a 2012 study by Souza *et al.*, the strength of the links with ethnicity and language vary among different religious organisations. The REL triangle – a three-dimensional framework which examines religion, ethnicity and language as relevant aspects of identity being negotiated in migrant churches – was developed in that study. The application of the REL triangle shows that the theological orientations of the faith leaders in Catholic and Pentecostal congregations – along with the linguistic and cultural identity they and their followers hold to their countries of origin, as well as those held by their teachers, the children who attend the faith lessons and their parents – guided their decisions about language planning for the children’s faith lessons. In the case of the Kardecist leaders, language was initially seen as closely linked to ethnicity as well as providing support for the adult Brazilian migrants and enabling the children to maintain links with their Brazilian heritage. This view changed in 2010, as the teacher explains:

[The children] are born here but have Brazilian parents, the parents want the children to practise their Portuguese in the Kardecist study sessions ... but these lessons are not Portuguese lessons. Of course, we are Brazilian but everything is in English.

In other words, the Kardecists value their religious identities over their ethnic and linguistic identities, in spite of highlighting the links that speaking Portuguese and being Brazilian have for them. These beliefs have led to explicit management of the language practices in the Kardecist study sessions offered to the children.

Language management

The Kardecist parents had expressed their preference for the use of Portuguese in the *Evangelização* sessions as a way of developing their children's linguistic competence in this language, as illustrated above. The first group of co-ordinators and teachers respected that and ensured that Portuguese was the only language used in the sessions. However, conflicts between the beliefs of different stakeholders are common (Spolsky, 2007; Souza *et al.*, 2012). In 2010, the Kardecist groups signalled a move towards a stronger emphasis on the religious aspect of their identities and away from their linguistic identity as speakers of Portuguese. Therefore, English was selected as the language of communication, an imposition on both the parents and the children, as explained by one of the teachers:

[The children] have no option; they have to speak English. It is so much so that when I told them [about the use of English in our sessions], they said no, they did not want it ... they are children of Brazilian parents, the parents know each other, they socialise, so the children are used to speaking Portuguese to each other.

Nevertheless, the Kardecist leaders' decision to adopt English for the *Evangelização* has found support elsewhere, as explained by the present co-ordinator:

[One of our teachers] has personal and online contacts in other English-speaking countries. We access the plans provided by FEB online in Portuguese and translate them. We then exchange lesson plans [with the groups in other English-speaking countries] via the internet.

In other words, the teaching materials that used to be produced locally in Portuguese are now exchanged online with Brazilian Kardecist migrants in other parts of the world such as Canada and the USA. Besides translating the booklets made available online by FEB, materials designed in Portuguese by Kardecists based in Brazil are shared online with other groups in that country and abroad via the website of a Brazilian Kardecist centre. This is an example of online connections that have offline roots (Hutchings, 2010 in Lundby, 2011:1,225). In this case, the roots are based on the Kardecist centre called *Seara do Mestre*, which is based in a small town in the south of Brazil. The Kardecists abroad select the materials that they find interesting and translate them, mainly into English, but there are also translations into Spanish and German, reflecting Brazilian migration to countries that speak these languages. That most of the materials are produced in Portuguese and then translated into English, however, is clear from the list of links presented on the *Seara do Mestre* website²¹ – a result of patterns of Brazilian emigration which has resulted in over 40 per cent of its members living in English-speaking countries (MRE, 2012).

²¹ www.searadomestre.com.br/evangelizacao

This website is an example of Web 2.0, with the user seen as a producer of information, instead of just a consumer (O'Reilly, 2005 in Shelton et al., 2012:604). This technology enables interplay between old and new media, which allows for new forms of participation and collaboration and, thus, transforms how producers and consumers relate to each other (Jenkins, 2006 in Oosterbaan, 2011:58). In the case of the Kardecist group in London, traditional lesson plans are being shared through the use of a website. This sharing is allowing their religious beliefs and identities to be maintained at the same time as it enables the faith leaders and teachers abroad to implement changes to their LPP.

Concluding remarks

The use of media by organised religions increased in the 1980s (Lindlof, 2002), when it also started to be documented (Campbell, 2005). The global spread of Pentecostal churches has been accompanied by a steady appropriation and use of many types of mass media (Oosterbaan, 2011). Although there is a belief that mass media solely target evangelical Christian churches, this chapter shows that other Christian religions, such as Kardecism, also draw on media and technology to reach their followers. More specifically, this chapter focuses on the internet, a new way through which people can make connections to engage in religious matters (Campbell, 2004). The internet is an online space, which interacts with, and influences, offline spaces (Oosterbaan, 2010). One example of this online-offline interaction is in language maintenance. The internet enables contact between migrants and their countries of origin and thus can support the maintenance of multilingualism (Annamalai, 2005). The Catholic congregations in Souza *et al.*'s 2012 study confirm the role of technology in supporting the maintenance of heritage languages through links with their countries of origin, while also supporting the addition of the language of the host country to the linguistic repertoire of migrants. In other words, they are part of a transnational context in which they have been established in a host country but continue to have links to their countries of origin (Levitt, 2003). In the case of the Kardecist group in this chapter, it is clear that their transnational links are not limited to these two places – host country and country of origin. On the contrary, the Kardecists have developed a web of different links in the modes of the *transnational religious spaces* described by Sheringham (2011), and which includes Brazilians in Brazil and Brazilian migrants in other parts of the globe. Furthermore, the Kardecists' transnational religious spaces include Brazilian and other ethnic groups that share the same religious beliefs both in the UK and abroad.

This complex web has led Portuguese to be maintained as a key language within Kardecism. Nevertheless, spaces have been created online and offline for the use of other languages, such as English, Spanish and German. In the case of the centre discussed in this chapter, the faith leaders report that they believe that the Kardecist lessons for children should always be delivered in English. Nevertheless, the power that the language practices of individuals has in the micro-level of language planning (Ferguson, 2010) is noted by the faith leaders themselves at two different levels. Firstly, there is the autonomy that the different centres linked to

BUSS have in relation to the choices they make about a number of issues, including LPP. As illustrated below by a teacher, there is recognition that not all centres adopt English with the children.

A previous co-ordinator in [this other centre] said: 'I will only be the co-ordinator if [the Kardecist study lessons for children] are in English.' ... now I think they are back using Portuguese because [this co-ordinator] has left.

The quote above also shows that the language policies in the centres may change as migrants move. The movement of migrants also affects the language practices, especially when newly arrived migrants are yet to master the local language. In spite of being encouraged to improve their English, both newly arrived teachers and children are allowed to draw on Portuguese in order to fully participate in the religious activities. Nevertheless, the use of Portuguese by children who have already mastered English has also been witnessed in the lesson observations and acknowledged by the co-ordinator:

... all the children speak Portuguese [and] it is interesting [to notice] that they mix [languages]. They are speaking English [as part of the lesson] then suddenly they turn to a colleague and speak Portuguese.

In conclusion, this chapter shows that Kardecist faith leaders in London use the internet for two purposes. The first is to connect with offline spaces that strengthen their religious beliefs, while the second is to implement changes in the language practices of the sessions they offer to children via the creation of a virtual community. The micro-perspective adopted in this chapter (i.e. the focus on micro-planning initiatives of a community) has enabled an understanding of the internal forces of the language policy Kardecist faith leaders adopt in the religious context and how these choices are supported by the use of technology. This initial exploration of the interface of language, religion and technology suggests a set of new questions: How are the language choices of the Kardecist leaders affected outside of the study lessons they deliver? What is the effect of the limited number of materials on Kardecism in English for children, both online and offline? How far, how and for what purpose is technology being used by the children? Addressing these questions will enrich future studies on whether technology is contributing to or threatening the transmission of minority languages.

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**Out in the
classroom?:
Exploring LGBT lives
and issues in adult
ESOL**

10

Out in the classroom?: Exploring LGBT¹ lives and issues in adult ESOL

Sheila Macdonald

Introduction

Female Albanian student: 'Why are there so many lesbians in England?' ... I said there are probably no more than in other countries but it is more acceptable here ... Iraqi male student chips in: 'Yes it's the same everywhere.' Albanian student giggles: 'I no like'. My response was matter of fact and I was quick to move on but with hindsight I wish I'd challenged her attitude more. The conversation happened when I was monitoring group work and did not relate to the work they were doing, so I didn't want to get sidetracked.

(Survey respondent 69)

A middle-aged European learner began to talk about his family in class and wondered if his daughter was gay. I was taken by surprise, as this was different from what the class had been talking about ... As I was unprepared, I decided to look at what remained constant, i.e. she was still his daughter.

(Survey respondent 42)

Adults migrating to the UK from around the world bring questions, beliefs and personal experiences into their English language classes. Working out what is locally the same or different, legal, acceptable or prohibited is key to successful navigation and integration into a new community, and is especially significant and complex in the area of sexual diversity.

Background to the research

Learners rightly expect that their ESOL² class is the arena in which not only the grammatical structure, but also the meaning-making of language is examined, interpreted and co-constructed in a way that enables them to effectively enter into their new lives, a challenge which informs much ESOL practice. Questions about LGBT lives appear to be increasingly common, and leave many tutors, like those above, unprepared or uncertain about how to respond. A national conversation got

¹ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender

² English for Speakers of Other Languages

under way in the profession with a conference: *Breaking the Ice: LGBT Issues in the ESOL classroom*.

Organised by NATECLA³ (2012) and hosted by the British Council, it opened the debate for practitioners and managers to exchange views and hear about developments in the field. Despite a professional ethos of social justice and action on behalf of learners, LGBT issues seldom appear to be integrated into classroom activities. Feedback from 43 conference participants indicated that, despite positive intentions, many lacked confidence, were concerned about others' feelings and reactions, and could not locate appropriate resources or support. There was subsequently a lively email debate (www.jiscmail.ac.uk/esol-research), which highlighted connections between ESOL and people's everyday lives and identities; the complex dilemmas faced by those whose religious beliefs present a challenge to full LGBT equality; the nature of tolerance and mutual respect and middle ground; and duties to comply fully with the law. It was a respectful, articulate debate, which prompted this research project and showed how tutors are acutely aware of how formative experiences influence attitudes to LGBT people and their place in society. The full research report is available at: <http://esol.britishcouncil.org/exploring-lgbt-lives-and-issues-adult-esol>

Contemporary LGBT issues in the UK

The theme of LGBT integration may be explored through different lenses. While the focus of this research was on classroom experiences of LGBT lives, there is another process taking place in the country's legal and social life. Rapid, and very recent, legislative changes have placed the integration of LGBT people and their rights into the heart of social, cultural and religious debate, as outlined below.

Education: the legal and inspection framework

The Equality Act 2010 consolidates nine previous pieces of legislation to create the UK's first unified equalities legislation. It places a positive, active new duty on public services, particularly relevant to the highly diverse ESOL student population, which is to:

have due regard to the need to:

- a) *eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation ...*
- b) *advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- c) *foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. (DCMS, 2010:96)*

The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Three of these are therefore directly related to sexual diversity. Both direct and indirect discrimination are 'prohibited conduct'. The UK's education inspectors, Ofsted, require that in schools:

³ National Association of Teachers of English and Other Community Languages to Adults

'when judging behaviour and safety inspectors should consider:

... prejudice-based bullying related to special educational need, sexual orientation, sex, race, religion and belief, gender reassignment or disability ...

the effectiveness of the school's actions to prevent and tackle discriminatory and derogatory language – this includes homophobic and racist language ...'

(Ofsted, 2014:40-41)

It is hoped that this will shortly be extended to Further Education institutions. The Act recognises that aspects of a curriculum may upset or offend some learners, but is clear that:

... you are not restricted in the range of issues, ideas and materials you use in your syllabus and will have the academic freedom to expose students to a range of thoughts and ideas, however controversial. Even if the content of the curriculum causes offence to students with certain protected characteristics, this will not make it unlawful unless it is delivered in a way which results in harassment or subjects students to discrimination or other detriment.

(EHRC, 2011:42)

So ESOL tutors are permitted to introduce LGBT topics and materials that may offend, for example, those with religious objections to homosexuality. This only becomes unacceptable if a tutor harasses or discriminates against such learners. However, a key point here is to remember the overall duty and spirit of the Act to 'foster good relations'.

Family life legislation

Significant changes during the past decade have incorporated rights to family life into UK legislation for LGBT people. They may enter into a civil partnership (2004) or get married (2013). They may apply to adopt children (2002). Despite controversy and opposition, these developments have both reflected and promoted changes in social attitudes, which many newcomers to the UK recognise as an environment of acceptance or tolerance of sexual diversity.

LGBT asylum seekers

Some learners may be seeking asylum due to oppression resulting from their sexual identity. Despite the ongoing decriminalisation of homosexuality globally, state-sponsored homophobia in the form of legislation designed to persecute those identifying as LGBT is currently on the increase in many parts of the world; homosexuality is still illegal in between 76 and 83 countries and punishable by death in eight countries (www.stonewall.org.uk).

Setting up the research

How are LGBT lives brought into, and experienced, in adult ESOL classrooms?

We asked:

- Does the ESOL profession recognise the sexual diversity of its learners and tutors alongside other areas of diversity?
- Do LGBT learners experience ESOL as a positive and safe learning environment in which diverse sexual identities are recognised, respected and their potential as a learner fully developed?
- How do tutors' and learners' lives outside the classroom impact on the development of fair and full inclusion of LGBT lives?

Almost 100 tutors and managers participated in either the survey or interview. An online questionnaire was open to all UK ESOL practitioners, managers and teacher trainers. This included closed questions about workplaces and knowledge of equality legislation and open questions about incorporating LGBT issues at work. Responses came from around the country, mainly in further education and community colleges. Eight tutors were interviewed. The initial intention to include several LGBT-identified learners was unsuccessful, so we decided to include a focus group of learners in an established class; during this, one learner disclosed that he was gay and agreed to be interviewed. We did not set out with pre-conceived expectations or hypotheses, but allowed themes to emerge from interviews and survey responses. Further detail, including survey data, can be found in the full report: <http://esol.britishcouncil.org/exploring-lgbt-lives-and-issues-adult-esol>.

The tutors' stories

Lucy's story: *'It had never crossed my mind.'*

Lucy⁴ is an experienced tutor committed to social justice issues and anti-discriminatory practice, and is one of several tutors who said that LGBT issues are hidden in ESOL, including in her own practice. At the NATECLA conference and subsequently she began to understand more about LGBT issues and said: *'I feel ashamed of myself really. I wonder how many LGBT students I've had over the years that I haven't noticed.'* Lucy began to recall where students had driven the agenda, such as an unexpected situation in a warm-up with a new group when inviting students to ask her questions; she put circles on the board to represent aspects of her life such as house type, and her middle name, which is Mary. A young Iranian woman, B, raised the possibility that she, Lucy, was a lesbian by asking if Mary was her partner. Lucy said no, that she could be, but wasn't, and this produced laughter in the group. B insisted that she still could be the teacher's partner even though she was called Mary and this resulted in sniggering. Lucy understood that B was trying to make a stand about sexuality but felt unable to take this further, although she had validated the possibility by not denying it.

⁴ Pseudonyms used throughout

Some minutes later, the students continued this activity, during which a Polish learner struggled, saying he didn't know what names to write in his circles. Lucy asked him: 'Are you married?' He said no. 'Have you got a girlfriend?' No. 'Have you got a partner?' Yes. Lucy said she had never previously considered that a student might be gay, but then asked: 'What's his name?' He replied: 'Peter'. She invited him to write Peter's name, and he did.

A critical reflection of this exchange allowed her to see that LGBT learners want and need to be visible in her classroom, and that she could, by recognising that possibility and not closing it down, make the space one in which sexual diversity is acknowledged as part of people's family life. B was an asylum seeker, a politically active feminist, who clashed with her classmates around the Qur'an's interpretation of women's rights.

A second example of unexpected learning came when Lucy introduced the topic of how many children people should have; this included references to celebrity couple Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. The learners 'went off at a tangent' about gay singer Elton John and expressed outrage at the notion of two men having children and gay adoption. The group and Lucy appeared to be on opposite sides of the debate and she tried to explore their views, concluding finally that they disagreed with each other. Here, Lucy's assumption that they would only be talking about heterosexual people meant that she was unprepared for the learners' wide cultural knowledge and willingness to discuss parenthood decisions in the context of a sexually diverse society.

Lucy's approach to sexual diversity and ESOL has changed as a direct result of this conversation 'coming out' into the open, a link to the well-known concept of individuals disclosing their LGBT identity to families, friends or colleagues. She understands how 'seeing' a gay learner enabled him to enter as an authentic participant in language learning about families, but she remains unsure about how to introduce LGBT lives into her practice or manage unexpected moments.

Samira's story: *'It's private.'*

Samira has never knowingly met an LGBT learner and is unsurprised by this, saying it is still taboo, undercover and people will be reluctant to tell their tutor or classmates. We discussed her duties to all students, regardless of sexual orientation, such as the importance of integration, and how tutors encourage this by equipping learners with the skills they need to participate outside the classroom:

... we're teaching everything ... it's the integration into work, accepting the other, the differences, accepting the diversity, being a good neighbour, being in the heart of the community. I think that's being a Sfl tutor, being in the heart of the community, I strongly believe that.

However, sexual diversity, although part of that community, is an area which her background and Muslim faith has led her to think of as private, which causes tension when personal and public worlds meet. Here her professional identity and code of practice collide with her personal views:

In ESOL work I have never ever, in any of my schemes of work or in any of my lessons, I've never come across or looked for resources that would cater for LGBT ... and it's not an area that I feel comfortable ... from a personal belief, personal upbringing, personal religious belief, it's an area which I feel is private.

A reflective discussion about civil partnership and gay marriage revealed a strong resistance to the idea of introducing this topic:

I wouldn't feel comfortable designing or delivering something like, you know, the rights of gay people, for example, or the lesbian people, any sexual orientation. I would not be happy or willing to deliver that.

These conflicting positions result in Samira being unable to reconcile her own discomfort with her passionate wish and intention to provide all her learners with the very best experience:

I know that they are all equal and need to have a fantastic experience when they come to our classes.

She recalled a teaching moment when her lack of knowledge and confidence had prevented her from sensitively managing an incident where a class were sharing international customs and traditions. In this Entry 2 (basic) group it was raised that in the Middle East, two men can hug when they come out of prayers, but this could be interpreted differently elsewhere. In retrospect, this was clearly a 'critical moment' with the potential to open up ideas and views in relation to the interpretation of same-sex behaviour in public places. At this point, a pair of learners demonstrated what Samira regarded as 'looking down' on gay people through facial expressions, and she felt unable to deal with the situation. She wished that she could have behaved differently because:

I need an LGBT student to feel comfortable and respected in the class, regardless of what I think – I am a tutor, I've got my own opinions, but as a student, he or she is entitled to all the respect and I would not allow anything to happen to their feelings to make them feel inferior for some reason or another.

Considering a hypothetical scenario, Samira reflected on her strength of feeling about the privacy inherent in sexual diversity and what she might do differently if she knew that half her class were LGBT:

I wouldn't have a clue! I would be searching on Google, OK, I would be trying to give them support, I'd be seeking help, I'd be speaking to my line manager, OK, I'd be ... I wouldn't know where to start.

Samira's approach, strongly personal and supportive, here places constraints on her ability to resolve her dilemma and move forward with the professional coherence she values so highly. She conflates the incorporation of sexual diversity at work with the actual presence of an LGBT learner. Secondly, the presence (or rather, disclosure) of such a learner appears to trigger an expectation that the learning would focus on their sexuality:

We're laughing about it but if you tried it, how would it go with the others? How would it work (with the straight students?) with any group of students? Say, today, the lesson is about sexual orientation. Would they like it?

This, unsurprisingly, becomes a point of high anxiety. Thirdly, she suggests that LGBT people have a set of beliefs and rights to which they are entitled; although she will teach the legal minimum, she would actively avoid topics such as civil partnerships and gay marriage. Samira's willingness to discuss her struggle with sexual diversity and ESOL was a most valuable contribution to the research. She raised issues such as the effort involved in sustaining invisibility, the fear of disclosure, fear deriving from lack of personal knowledge and letting her students down. For such a conscientious tutor with a strong focus on her role in promoting integration, this highlights a significant gap in supportive organisational and training provision.

Mary's story: *'That's what you want to teach anyway, tolerance.'*

In contrast to Lucy and Samira, Mary always assumes there is somebody who is gay in the classroom and says she has no need to know who this might be, raising a significant point about the range of matters that learners hold as private or risky. She is aware of those who experience domestic violence, have fled civil war or had family killed, have disabilities or live with someone without declaring this to the benefits office. Such sensitive secrets are brought into all ESOL classrooms. She notes that many learners are teenagers or very young adults, will be working out their own sexuality, never mind how to fit in with another country, and regards LGBT as no different to many other issues they are grappling with. In thinking about 'someone who is gay' Mary usefully includes the friends and families in students' lives as part of the classroom population and context. Her broad understanding of equalities, diversity and hidden information underpin her view that all staff have a responsibility to teach tolerance. She does not regard it as her job to try and change the views of those with strict religious beliefs, but to ensure that they are aware of what is acceptable in the UK.

Following this national debate, Mary is exploring ways to include LGBT lives in low-level classwork; she recently used visual clues with her low-level class, drawing family trees which included two women partners, and notes wryly that it didn't work quite as she planned: the learners decided that her use of 'she and she' was incorrect and their not-yet-established knowledge of personal pronouns caused confusion. She aims to offer information about diversity in a light-hearted way, offering options in different situations. Sometimes this causes laughter, but in an adult way, which she thinks means it is accepted and people are learning.

Despite a higher level of confidence than many others in this work, Mary highlighted two important professional issues. During interview, she referred eight times to 'trying to get it right', emphasising conscientiousness and concern about her lack of knowledge and potential to offend. Secondly, she noted that while questions about LGBT lives might catch her unawares, so do many aspects of language learning, and tutors are expected to be prepared and able to respond appropriately in a wide range of situations.

David's story: *'Take some risks and be productive.'*

Mary's sensitivity to the range of issues that students may not wish to disclose resonates with a key aspect of David's approach to sexual diversity matters in ESOL. Like her, he does not regard LGBT issues as a different or a special subject. He has a theoretical and political engagement with critical pedagogy, aiming to connect people's language learning with community action and participation. David positively encourages stimulating debate to question and challenge prejudices, so that people learn how to participate in difficult situations in English. His view is that learners are resilient and can be less fearful of conflict than tutors. However, this does not suggest careless or full disclosure of all personal information and he teaches learners that they are in control of what they choose to disclose, with linguistic strategies to manage this. He intentionally opens up discussion about contemporary themes which have implications for learners' understanding and behaviour in diverse local communities; same-sex relationships were one such theme, highly topical following a landmark ruling in the UK House of Lords (TSO, 2013), which paved the way for gay marriage in 2014. The language aims were to practise agreeing and disagreeing (polite and appropriate), reading an authentic text (online news item) and informal or formal debating skills.

An 'impassioned' debate, where religion was a major theme, immediately took place in which a variety of views were expressed about the rights and wrongs of gay people having the right to marry. This class was experienced in holding discussions with a focus on integration, which had included religious beliefs, clashing ideologies and how they were differently defined by their varying backgrounds and ways of participating in their community. David had consciously created an environment where people practised language skills such as tactful disagreement and how to actively listen and process, taking turns to participate; however, equally important was the groundwork in fostering an atmosphere where learners would be prepared to take risks, choose how and when to disclose sensitive information, and challenge and support each other when they disagreed. During this lesson, for example, learners disagreed about the teachings of the Qur'an in relation to two men kissing in the street; one person said it was wrong and she would challenge them, a position to which others reacted strongly. Others said they didn't all get their values from the Qur'an and they had to work out how to share public spaces like this. In this way, learners were both expressing and developing new identities, in a space in which their tutor participated and allowed the reality of strongly held views to be shared and explored.

Making mistakes is an essential and integral part of language learning with which ESOL tutors are familiar and accepting, using them to create new learning and levels of deeper understanding. In this co-construction of new cultural identities, mistakes also occur and may cause upset or misunderstanding. David suggests that it is useful in this event to hold a post-discussion evaluation during which learners say how they felt. This process enables *'some healing to come at the end when they can acknowledge where they messed up, said something they didn't mean or couldn't speak'*.

Jaffrey's story: *'Sitting in the fire.'*⁵

Jaffrey also chose to introduce gay marriage with upper-intermediate teenagers. His practice is based on previous experience as a therapist and a theoretical framework of humanist, person-centred work. His approach is to support learners to engage fully in debate from a non-judgemental position in order to encourage their personal learning, understanding that they are also learning about and developing new identities as they are changed by language. Following a reading activity, learners completed a worksheet designed to encourage expressive language about gay marriage, in preparation for formal debate. At this point, the lesson's critical incident occurred, when a young woman, K, wrote that:

... it is disgusting and abnormally (sic) ... If I see these people I want to kill them because they destroy all nature rules!

Jaffrey had to quickly make a number of decisions: whether to continue with the debate format; how best to respond to her violent attitude; whether to tell her that he is gay. He told me that he saw his task at this critical moment as being to counter K's extremely homophobic views without judging her, her country or background. The class continued with the debate, providing a learning environment that allowed her to hear others and their ideas, and experience their reaction to her views without being personally attacked. If she had been challenged or admonished, it was likely she would have resisted and been closed down. He judged that this, probably unique, experience would provide K with an opportunity to reflect on her given position. Regarding his own sexuality, Jaffrey said he was at that point 'bracketing my own response to it'. I asked him to reflect on the process:

It's interesting, the word 'disclosure', because it implies something that is kind of held or hidden and that's not how I see my sexuality at all ... So I wouldn't say 'disclosure'. I mean, obviously my sexuality is not an issue when I'm teaching adolescents. It doesn't come up in conversation.

In this situation, his focus was on supporting K in the most productive way possible, trusting the emotional intelligence of the group to work through the conflict and abide by their ground rules of not making personal attacks. He said:

I'm also supporting the person with the extreme view because I don't believe that homophobia is good for the soul ... in addressing homophobia within the classroom, in creating some kind of clarity around that, and in deconstructing these views or examining them, you're giving that homophobic student the opportunity to maybe cause themselves less suffering because – I mean, everything is a projection ... I mean, if I 'hate queers' there is certainly something in myself that I'm hating at the same time.

Although their background training and experience differ, David and Jaffrey work from the premise that ESOL classrooms are spaces for exploration, critical enquiry into discourse and the power of language, and identity development. This approach invites examination:

⁵ Mindell, 1995

I think the ultimate responsibility as a gay person when meeting homophobia is just to open up the space and give it its life – you know, look at it. You’ve got this image of – imagine this kind of poisonous black beetle on the table under a glass. Let’s have a look at the poisonous black beetle! Where has it come from, why is it here? (Jaffrey)

The learners’ stories

Tutors told me ... I haven’t got anybody lesbian or gay in my class, I know my students. (Interviewer)

“Well, hello!” (Milan, gay student)

The narrative running through the research is that it is part of tutors’ professional duty to act as a kind of conduit between learners and wider communities, usually described in social liberal terms as supporting them to integrate positively into UK society. In the field of sexual diversity, however, we have seen that there is a distinct sense of unease that tutors are not equal to this task, some of which can be located in a fear, or experience, of learners’ homophobia. In our survey of 85 tutors, we asked whether and how LGBT themes had been raised in class in addition to induction. Twenty tutors had done so, and there were 26 records of learner input. These 26 included a range of attitudes, grouped broadly as follows:

18 positive responses

Themes

- UK freedoms, protection
- Learners able to talk about themselves safely
- Learners keen to discuss LGBT lives as not possible in home countries
- Peer challenge and respectful listening

In some of these examples, tutors mentioned trying to evolve classroom cultures in which differences are expected and discussed in an atmosphere of careful and sensitive listening. Tutors do not take sole responsibility for challenging homophobia, and LGBT tutors can be supported by the class, although this was rare.

29 negative responses

Themes

- Linguistic response: disgusting (many)
- Should not have children/adopt
- Male gay couples a problem
- Body language – sniggering, shock, embarrassment (many)
- Against religion (4)
- Violent intent/kill (1)

Many of these responses occurred in unplanned or unexpected learning moments, reflecting the experiences of our interviewed tutors that being unprepared meant that such moments passed by with attitudes either just checked or unexplored. Tutors remained dissatisfied with their own handling of these instances, and said discussions, training, materials and managers' support are needed to improve practice. Interestingly, just four instances of open religious prejudice were noted, while the more common embodied antipathy was very difficult to address.

LGBT learners

Two gay men were interviewed: Carlos and Milan were both 'out' in their home countries (Spain and Hungary) and moved to the UK for economic reasons. Milan had been on the point of marriage when a chance encounter at a party led to a kiss that changed his life:

... after that my heterosexual world completely collapsed, but OK the world didn't come to an end.

Both men recounted that telling their mothers was the most difficult aspect of their changing sexual identities, during their late twenties, and now, years later, they are open, dealing confidently with homophobia and questions. Neither expected nor required protection in class; in one case, Carlos had been asked to explain the meaning of 'bisexual' and a female student had said that this makes her vomit. He moved seats. He advises that teaching 'naturally' is key, including sexual diversity as part and parcel of a person's whole identity. Milan agreed, noting how important it can be not to push too hard when people arrive from all over the world, possibly at a point of change or discovery about their sexuality. He stressed the value of LGBT images, such as a poster he noticed in college reception:

... and small paper something about LGBTQ⁶ – ohpa! Oh my God! I didn't have enough time to read but recognised the letters LGBTQ I wanted to investigate.

The sense of recognition and excitement produced by this poster was enough to provide Milan with the information that he, as a gay man, was visible, welcome and may be able to connect with other people at college. Its significance lay in it being 'just a picture' so that, while an LGBT student doesn't have to do anything about it, all visitors get the message. Interestingly, the secure accommodation education centre visited in this project displayed more equality and diversity posters than other locations, including a briefing on the Equality Act and support phone numbers for LGBT detainees.

Milan had been an equal rights/LGBT tutor, and presented this charity work as part of an ESOL class project; his co-students accepted him, and wanted to ask questions about his life, which he finds a common occurrence. He stresses how ignorance of gay relationships causes rejection, resonating with tutors whose confidence is constrained by lack of knowledge. For those less confident, he advises 'gentle visibility is a positive message', noting that in ESOL there are issues of very different starting points regarding sexuality, cultural understanding and language ability. He was extremely hesitant about when and how to introduce LGBT

⁶ lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, queer

topics such as gay marriage, recognising the risk that recent arrivals with little English may feel exposed and confused, but did support embedding LGBT lives in a positive way in materials and introducing topics at advanced levels to increase awareness and explore prejudices.

The focus group's stories

In this next section, we listen in detail to the views and experiences of a mixed set of learners from a current ESOL class. The group comprised eight L1-L2⁷ learners; five others chose not to participate. Their tutor is interviewee, Lucy. Previously, LGBT themes had not been part of their language learning and Lucy had no knowledge of their sexual identities. The data from this group is striking. Six learners had direct personal experience of LGBT lives:

For instance, I'm gay, and I knew that since all my life, but I know many people who doesn't know they are gay, and after having kids and they realise or sometimes it's because they didn't realise about their sexuality, or they had to be hiding for the society. (Carlos)

In my home, one girl she has two mothers. (Alejandro)

I have one friend, a girl, yeah. She has a boyfriend for long years. After seven years something misunderstanding, is leave the boyfriend. She said I don't want any more boyfriend, I want girlfriend. He (sic) said now I know I'm a lesbian. (Dilman)

I have an uncle. I had, because he used to be married to my aunty for about 15 years. They had two children, and after 20 years of marriage, he tried to be gay. I don't think he decided to be gay, I think he was gay already. And then he said, you know what I'm not going to be hiding any more, and so decided to split up and be with his boyfriend. (Simon)

I knew in Poland one woman she has four children. Now she changed her sex. Now she is a man. (Ana)

Not only did this group have rich and diverse experiences, but they were able to articulate their relationships and observations with an awareness of global differences, of developing and changing sexual identities, and to question and express a range of views about how homophobic attitudes could be challenged. They reveal a level of sophistication and sensitivity to the subject and to each other's positions, which enabled their discussion to range far beyond classroom behaviour in an example of the emotional intelligence referred to above.

⁷ Upper-Intermediate

Respect, tolerance

Respect was a word used consistently and with some insistence by all participants. Within an expectation of liberal tolerance of those who are different and possibly not liked or understood, they were clear that respect was still required:

Definitely we have to learn to have more empathy with everyone. Always when we don't understand something because it's different from you ... you have to respect regardless everything ... I don't need to know many things about you, only if you are polite with me, if you are friendly, if you are respecting me.

(Carlos)

However, this is a two-way street and mutual respect is an expectation regardless of another's views. There was a keen awareness of homophobia and a desire that sexual diversity be treated 'as any other normal topic.' (Simon) In a later interview, Carlos reiterated this:

Well, always I thought we have to teach this naturally. I told last week in the group ... I'm gay, but I'm Spanish. I have black hair, I don't like beans, many things of my life ... So we have to treat this as something normal in your life.

Veronika wanted to protect those who were hurt by homophobic comments, suggesting: 'We have to hurt them on the way how they hurt other people'. Alternative suggestions were tested out, such as moving away, or using the most polite language and eventually she thought: 'Just to leave the angry people to be angry for themselves.' In negotiating these possible responses, this group were comparing and checking their previous life experiences and room for manoeuvre with their current situations, reflecting on how much safer and luckier they felt to be in a modern part of Europe where they did not face violent arrest. The extent to which this freedom for LGBT people was recognised was summed up by Alejandro, who said:

You must be free to say if you want. If you don't want, [it's] because you don't need to say it.

Changing lives

The group did not take the view, or have the experience, that sexual identity was fixed and they acknowledged that some people change their sexual orientation when they are adults. This may occur apparently in reaction to a shock or disappointment in a heterosexual relationship, or after a long knowing which cannot be denied, as in Ana's transgender acquaintance:

Now she changed her sex ... She told me that all her life she feel ... man.

Simon's insights into his uncle's decision to leave his wife and children to be with his boyfriend tell us that he has a keen awareness of the damage an individual can experience if she or he hides within a heterosexual identity they do not own:

I think you already know deep inside of you, if you are straight or if you are gay, if you like men or women or not. But I think after a certain age, you have got to stop hiding, because of what society's going to think about you. You just think, you know what I'm not going to be hiding any more, I'm going to just free myself ... most freedom depends on what's your conception of freedom. Because before, if a guy, 25 years old, he was hiding from society because he thinks that society will screw him, he was not free, you know, he was captive somewhere.

This perspective was not shared by Dilman, who used the interview opportunity to raise a question about transgendering; he said four times that he did not understand why, as an adult, a woman would want to become a man. Others suggested that it's a person's will, or it's natural, or lives are complicated, but Dilman did not accept this, arguing five times that those who change their sexual identity 'misuse the freedom' and are against 'the natural'. He connected this to: 'God creates ... and you can protect the world.' Again, others engaged with him to try and understand his meaning, and Veronika queried: ' ... but when do you think that somebody feels freedom? Don't you think that's freedom for them?' While Dilman did not receive the support he may have wished for his opinion, he did experience a thoughtful, sensitive exchange of ideas and knowledge, articulately expressed in an atmosphere of careful listening.

Transformations

It was striking that these learners, who had, apart from one, not volunteered for this research, brought into their learning space a wealth of experience, complexity and identity development which had been entirely invisible to their tutor, Lucy. They were sensitive to other's backgrounds, able to manage homophobia and, crucially, able to use this conversation to develop their thinking. Both everyday classroom learning and the research process can be a transformative experience, as Lucy wrote afterwards:

After the focus group, I felt LGBT became more a part of ordinary conversation in class. Subjects such as same-sex partners and transvestitism came up quite spontaneously ... I felt that the students were more comfortable discussing the topics as a normal part of everyday life, as they had been sanctioned as acceptable. Dilman, despite his assertion that homosexuality was 'against the natural', was the first to bring the subject back ... He returned to the next lesson with an article, which he had clearly read and thought about and which he had very carefully cut from the free daily paper. It was about a gay marriage proposal that had taken place that week in parliament. He told me: 'It's in the government, it's OK teacher, it's in the government, I understand.' I felt that he was trying to somehow reconcile the different view that he had expressed within the group and he didn't want me to think badly of him.

Practice and policy issues

Our research explored how LGBT lives and issues are brought into and experienced in ESOL classrooms with migrant adults. The law is clear: in addition to eliminating discrimination, an active duty is placed on public services to ‘foster good relations’ between those who share and do not share protected characteristics, including sexual orientation. There is no ‘opt-out’ clause for those who disagree, nor hierarchy of equalities. We found that, within a commonly accepted anti-discriminatory framework of practice, approximately one-third of tutors introduced an LGBT-related theme or activity but three LGBT tutors remained hidden about their sexuality, and their stories are of concern:

I fear being outed ... I hate being closeted and I hate failing my students but what can I do?

(Survey respondent 25)

Tutors’ most common approach, of tolerance and respect, is a place from which to develop more confident, positively critical practice. We found that it is helpful to start from an assumption that all learners either are, or have contact with others who are, LGBT and their personal experiences are deeper and often more nuanced than might be expected. Tutors are aware that, as part of community integration and personal development, they need to find ways to enable learners to express their views and engage in discussion about sexual diversity in a contemporary UK context. Although we found agreement that this is a theme like any other, nevertheless a fear of homophobia, reluctance to cause distress and anxiety about lack of knowledge is inhibiting. Most participants wish to learn and develop a more active and confident approach to sexual diversity matters. For those who bring an ideological or religious view which conflicts with LGBT equality, there is a particular need for supportive learning and debate to explore these complex issues. Some tutors who follow certain religious faiths had noted that there are ‘divine decrees’ which prohibit, for example, ‘practising’ LGBT. This might be interpreted to include not only sexual activity but also marriage, adoption and family life in general. It is important to note that attitudes and practice vary widely among those from faith and non-faith backgrounds, and that a range of issues such as gender roles might also be disputed. This complex intersection of sexuality, religion and ESOL practice is further debated in a related ESRC seminar series (<http://queeringesol.wordpress.com>).

Learner participants found their tutors respectful and fair, but support for LGBT students was rarely overt. This research provided an opportunity to discuss sexual diversity, which led to change for both tutors and learners.

Training and materials

Most respondents wanted much more support to improve their practice; straight tutors wished to meet LGBT people from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds in safe learning environments to answer their questions and share their stories. In other words, they hoped to explore their own prejudices, fears and lack of knowledge by making this 'real'. Personal connection is vitally important, but also has drawbacks: this relies on skilled, confident LGBT trainers being willing and able to take on this role; it risks them becoming representative of others; it denies the valuable role of heterosexual trainers; and it models an individualising approach, which may consolidate a position of straight tutors wanting to protect LGBT learners. Good practice on sexual diversity does not need to depend on, and cannot wait for, materials to be developed. However, a key theme of this research is tutors' request for materials that incorporate LGBT people without it being the main topic, but which address the continuing invisibility of much LGBT life.

Management support

There was notably little expectation of management understanding or support for tutors or learners in LGBT work. Practitioners did not know who to approach for teaching guidance, or how to support learners needing personal guidance. Visual, policy, procedural and other organisational structures were frequently absent, relied on invisibility or an assumption of heterosexuality. Training appears to be urgently required to put in place easily accessible, appropriate and robust systems that embed LGBT issues in all equalities work.

And finally, is it safe?

The research shows that there is work to be done around what tutors hope to establish and achieve when they desire a safe or comfortable learning space for LGBT and straight learners and tutors alike. It appears to be intrinsically paradoxical; for some, this is a 'non-issue', meaning nobody's bothered by sexual diversity these days, so we don't need to address it. For others, it is just part of an equalities list, or irrelevant, or challenging just by existence, which is constantly socially reproduced as LGBT people are generally invisible until self-declared.

For many LGBT people, having had direct experiences of discrimination, family discord, violence and other oppressions, safety can appear an illusion and cannot be taken for granted through invisibility. Fear finds its way into the classroom from all sides of this question, and one person's safety is another's challenge. Words such as 'safe', 'comfortable' and 'respect' can evoke neutrality, hiding or pretence and can result in miscommunication and confusion when, for example, gay tutors pretend to be straight or those with strong religious views feel obliged to deny them. Feeling truly safe implies being able to take risks, make mistakes and try things out, which is surely uncomfortable at times. Can tutors and learners together create such spaces where such learning is supported? This is challenging for the profession, but developing such skills can positively support successful integration of LGBT issues into ESOL and of adult migrants into the wider community.

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ESOL Nexus

Our ESOL Nexus project, co-funded by the European fund for the integration of third country nationals, addresses the needs of learners, teachers and volunteers, and other professionals who work with migrants to support the development of English language skills. The project works with learners and teachers in the adult state sector, including further education colleges, adult and community learning, a wide range of voluntary organisations, prison education and learning in the workplace.

The project recognises the significant role the British Council can play in addressing training and resourcing needs across the whole sector. Some of our key activities include:

- *Developing an 'ESOL resource specialist' team of resource writers*
Our team are practising teachers and we have invested significant time into providing ongoing training. This has both improved the quality of the resources we have developed, and has been recognised by managers as a valuable input into the professional development of their staff teams.
- *Working with pilot centres*
We have provided professional development workshops free of charge to pilot centres throughout the UK. Feedback forms indicate that at least 95 per cent of respondents at teacher development workshops stated that they would 'totally' or 'mostly' use what they had learnt in the classroom. 'Link teachers' in pilot centres work with us to pilot resources for the ESOL Nexus website, and in the process develop their own understanding of pedagogy and effective use of resources.
- *Publishing high quality learning and teaching resources*
The ESOL Nexus website <http://esol.britishcouncil.org> is now home to over 1,000 high quality self-access resources and notes for teachers written specifically for the UK context. By June 2014 the website had achieved over 600,000 unique users since its launch, with 30 per cent of these being from the UK.
- *Funding new research in the area of ESOL and integration*
Several of the chapters in this book report on the outputs of research projects funded by ESOL Nexus – full reports can be downloaded from the website: <http://esol.britishcouncil.org/policy-research/research>
- *Helping to shape UK ESOL policy and practice*
Our advisory group includes representatives from each of the four UK nations, including teacher organisations and those responsible for the development of ESOL policy.



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