ESOL in troubled times:

Learner and teacher voice in English for Speakers of Other Languages at a further education college in England

Ann Nash

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

School of Education, Birmingham City University, August 2025

Abstract

My research contributes to the urgency of the calls from professional ESOL organisations, such as the National Association for Teaching English and Other Community Languages to Adults (2025: 236), the Bell Foundation (2025), and DEMOS (Paget and Stevenson, 2014), for a unifying strategy for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in further education (FE) in England by highlighting specific challenges in the West Midlands region. Paget and Stevenson (2014) pointed out that of the three nations, England, Scotland, and Wales, England is the only country without a national ESOL strategy. They stated that a "coherent" national strategy for ESOL "would help to unlock migrant capabilities, save costs to public services in the long term and promote a more integrated and socially cohesive society" (2014: 128).

Eleven years later, in 2025, in spite of the recommendations, a unifying strategy for ESOL in England has not materialised. This project aims to contribute to a better understanding of why this is, and how this intransigence is impacting the experience of ESOL learners and practitioners. My overarching research question is: *What do we learn about the contemporary environment of ESOL in FE from conversations with the learners and practitioners about their lived experiences in this context?*

Following ideas and methods of Shah (2017), Pink and Morgan (2013) and St Pierre (2021), I adopted a short-term participatory ethnographical approach to my methodology which I describe as post structural. The primary research data is unique to one FE college in England and my positionality as an ESOL practitioner with recent experience in FE has given me unique insights and access to the twenty-nine ESOL learners and six ESOL practitioners in my study. I specifically avoided formal interviews or surveys, aiming instead for more informal conversations or self-interviews after the research of Keightly, et al. (2012), so that the contributions of the participants would be led by them as much as possible and my influence kept to a minimum.

The human ecosystem model of Bronfenbrenner (1979) provided an organising framework for my literature review as well as theoretical insights into the dynamics of the ESOL in FE context. The theories of Foucault (1975; 1977; 1978; 1989; 2001) are used to deepen the understanding of deficit discourses and provided concepts helpful in articulating the dynamics within the context of ESOL in FE. The theories of Berry (2001), Gee (2001; 2014) and Burke and Stets (2009) provided insights into the role language plays in identity and

how the identities of ESOL learners and practitioners are challenged in their environment in ESOL in FE in England.

Previous studies of Courtney (2017), Elizabeth (2021), and Lacey (2018) offer valuable data on the challenges ESOL practitioners face. My study of ESOL in FE adds to these by encompassing the experiences of both practitioners and learners and should be of interest to everyone involved in the FE sector and ESOL provision.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my son,

Miles.

Acknowledgements

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisors, without whom I would not have been able to undertake and complete this thesis. With patient and wise guidance and excellent insight and advice, they directed me on every step of this journey:

Dr Amanda French
Dr Alexandra Kendall
Dr Julia Everitt.

I would also like to thank *Dr Mary-Rose Puttick* for her friendship and encouragement drawn from her experience as a teacher/researcher in the third sector which has parallels with my research.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the participants in my research, the learners and practitioners of English for speakers of other languages who so generously shared the teaching and learning experiences central to this study, and to the administrative and support staff who enabled my research.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my lovely family: *Miles* and *Jess* for their patience as well as material and moral support; and a special thanks to my grandchildren, *Nathan* and *Maddie*, for their humour and welcome distractions from the thesis writing work.

Contents

Abbreviations

ATLS	**Associate Teacher Learning and Skills**
BSA	**Basic Skills Agency**
CEFR	**Common European Framework of Reference for Languages**
CPD	**Continuing professional development**
CRE	**Commission for Racial Equality**
DWP	**Department of Work and Pensions**
EAL	**English as an additional language**
EfA	**English for Action**
EFL	**English as a foreign language**
EMAG	**Ethnic Minority Student Achievement Grant**
ESFA	**Education and Skills Funding Agency**
ESOL	**English for speakers of other languages**
FE	**Further Education**
FEDA	**Further Education Development Agency**
FEFC	**Further Education Funding Council**
ESF	**European Social Fund**
FSE	**Functional Skills English**
GLA	**Greater London Authority**
HE	**Higher Education**
ILT	**Industrial Language Training**
L2	**Second or foreign language being studied**
LEA	**Local Education Authority**
LIMB	**Living in Modern Britain**
LLS	**Life and Living Skills**

LLU	**Language and Literacy Unit**
MHCLG	**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**
NATECLA	**National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages**
NATESLA	**National Association for Teaching English as a Secondary Language to Adults**
NIACE	**National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education**
NCILT	**National Centre for Industrial Language Training**
NPM	**New Public Management**
NSAL	**National Standards for Adult Literacy**
OECD	**Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.**
OFQUAL	**Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation**
OFSTED	**Office for Standards in Education**
ONS	**Office for National Statistics**
PE	**Participatory ESOL**
QTLS	**Qualified Teachers Learning and Skills**
RaPal	**Research and Practice in Adult Literacies**
SfL	**Skills for Life**
SEND	**Special educational needs and disabilities**
TESOL	**Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages**
WMCA	**West Midlands Combined Authority**

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Terminology

The language commonly used in the UK to discuss migrants and migration is charged with meanings and associations with exile, poverty, and even criminality as evidenced in Skills for Life (Department for Education and Employment, 2001) and Mason and Sherwood (2016) which I discuss in Chapter 3. The past and present use of these deficit discourses is voiced by politicians and others in the media, as well as through the terminology and discourses employed in official policy documents around migrants and immigrants. More recently, UK media coverage of illegal immigrants crossing the English Channel in small boats has increased the association of the label '*immigrant'*, whether legal or illegal, with criminality and undesirability. These deleterious terms proliferate reductive and totalising descriptors of identity and the lived experience of the people who are the focus of my study and my work as an English teacher, and following the example of Puttick (2021), I have consciously and purposefully used other terms to avoid pejorative undertones.

1.8.1 People with experience of migration

To refer to the people who are at the centre of my project, I have used the expression 'people with experience of migration' or the term 'ESOL learners'. In this context, it means a learner of English for Speakers of Other Languages in further education (FE) in England, who can be identified as a person learning English because they have experienced migration to the UK from a country with a different majority language. In places, I have also used 'resident ESOL learners' to highlight their legal status as residents. According to ESFA (2023) funding rules, they are entitled to access free education in adult learning in FE colleges in the UK, without which many would not be able to attend. I have also used the term 'newcomer'. Where I am quoting other writers or referring to the words of other writers who have denoted ESOL learners in reductive terms, I have endeavoured to distance myself from these views and to problematise and contest their usage, highlighting the terms, such as *immigrant*, in italics.

1.8.2 ESOL practitioners

My research includes ESOL practitioners who are also central to my thesis as their relationships and interactions with the ESOL learners are important in shaping the ESOL learning experience as they navigate a very difficult policy landscape. I have used 'ESOL practitioner' instead of the more general term 'teacher' to emphasise the expertise involved in teaching English language in a structured and systematic way to people who have had

experience of migration from non-English speaking countries to help them develop knowledge of the language and competency in its use. It is a complex task which, as the ETF (2019) describes, includes tailoring the learning of vocabulary, grammar structure, usage, across the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing for learners who have both personal and learning needs. I follow the example of Butler, et al., (2023) who uses the term 'practitioner' to describe TESOL teachers who are involved in research (Butler et al., 2023).

1.2 Thesis focus

This thesis aims to increase the available knowledge of how the challenges in the provision of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in further education (FE) impact learning and teaching experiences by listening to the feelings, opinions, and stories of ESOL learners and practitioners supported by a short-term participatory ethnographical methodological approach after Pink and Morgan (2013) and Shah (2017). *The study is warranted because a better understanding and appreciation of how ESOL learners and practitioners cope and adapt to continuing hardships in this provision is necessary to support calls for improvements and to confront stereotypes and the continuing deficit discourses against people with experience of migration who are challenged by English language.*

Hardships in ESOL include the lack of funding, which results in limitations to provision, such as cuts in course availability and timing. The report of Foster and Bolton (2018: 3) describes how, since 2007, the funding for ESOL has decreased by over 50% and the complicated way it is funded has also had a negative impact (2018: 3). Paget and Stevenson (2014) emphasise the importance of this provision, pointing out that the learners are highly capable and supporting their English language development would "save costs to public services in the long term and promote a more integrated and socially cohesive society" (2014: 128). A recent report from Curcin, et al. (2022) outlines how ESOL lacks a robust unified curriculum and discusses changes which need to be made to both the ESOL Skills for Life curriculum and examinations which are outdated and unsuitable for ESOL learners. Schellekens, et al. (2023) also report on the unsuitability of the curriculum and they join the call of Paget and Stevenson (2014) for more professionalisation of the curriculum and teaching staff.

1.3 Research question

My overarching question in this research study is: What do we learn about the contemporary environment of ESOL in FE from conversations with the learners and practitioners about their lived experiences in this context?

Eleven years ago, Paget and Stevenson's (2014) publication *On Speaking Terms*, clearly explained the need and the potential benefits to the nation of England of an ESOL strategy. In fact, as related by Rosenburg (2007) the idea of a national strategy for ESOL has been around a lot longer than eleven years as the idea was discussed and promoted by NATECLA as part of their negotiations for a separate ESOL curriculum at the time of the Skills for Life (Department for Education and Employment, 2001) literacy and numeracy strategy of the Labour government of Blair. Rosenburg (2007) points out that despite the report *Breaking the Language Barriers* (Department for Education and Employment, 2000) which explained the differences between native speakers challenged by literacy and numeracy and *migrant* learners of English and why they would benefit from a different curriculum, ESOL is still conflated with Literacy.

Schellekens (2011) clearly explains the differences in language acquisition of native English speakers challenged by language and non-native second language learners who have comprehensive knowledge of their first language and are often multi-lingual with knowledge of more than one other language. The existing curriculum created for ESOL in 2001, which has been discussed and reviewed by Curcin, et al. (2022), and Schellekens (2011; 2023) is judged as unsuitable. We could benefit from a better understanding of why, after many years of waiting, urgent calls for a national strategy for ESOL in England, which would help to address some of the problems outlined above, have not been met.

1.4 Key theories and theoretical framework

The subject focus on people with experience of migration demanded a comprehensive study of the historical background of both UK immigration and FE education. In order to organise and digest this information, much of which was completely new to me as an international student, I needed theories to help me understand and analyse what I was looking at. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecology of Human Development and his model of the Human Ecosystem provided an organising framework. To suit my study of ESOL in FE, I adapted this model as others in the field of education have done before me. In their review of how Bronfenbrenner's theories have been used in educational research, Tong and An (2024)

remark that “Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological perspective on human development is an ideal framework for understanding how individuals negotiate the dynamic environment and their own identities in international and intercultural education settings” (2024: 1).

My first adaptation of this model is in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.3. Its nested rings represent different spheres of influence in the lives of ESOL in FE learners and practitioners, such as the macrosphere, the exosphere, and the microsphere, about which more is said in Chapter 2. In addition to the ecosystem framework, later theories of Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) describe proximal processes and how the dynamic influences of nature and nurture within and between the spheres of the ecosystem set off actions and reactions that ultimately influence the development of the individual who is positioned in the central microsphere. In this way, the model does not represent a static system but a constantly changing and developing dynamic.

To facilitate my understanding and analysis of the complex dynamic of inter- and intra- action within the spheres of the ecosystem, I needed theories that would help me to trace the influence of historical events and macrosphere ideologies that constitute ecosystem discourses and knowledge and have an impact on exosphere policy decisions which stimulate actions and reactions of individuals and organisations in the microsphere. The texts of Foucault, especially (1975; 1977; 1978; 1989; 2001), have helped in the articulation of concepts in the Chapter 5 analysis, such as dominant discourses, governmentality, and conditions of possibility. I found that Foucault’s insights spanned all the spheres of the ESOL in FE ecosystem, and in Chapter 2, I have distributed his insights among the relevant spheres.

The post structural theories of other scholars and philosophers, whose perspectives had departed from linear problem and solution approaches, also informed my critical use of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) spheres and Foucault’s (1984) power dynamics with perspectives that accommodated the complexity of the interaction inherent in my subject. In terms of understanding and analysing the macro ideology of current FE policy, I had to consider concepts of individualisation and responsibilisation in neoliberalism for which I turned to Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024). The identity theories of Gee (2001; 2014), Burke and Stets (2009), and the cultural identity of Berry (2001), provided insights into the role language plays in identity which helped me to understand the affective nature of language learning and how the identities of ESOL learners are challenged in their microsphere environment, which provided valuable insights in the analysis of data.

I acknowledge other theorists and theories, such as Ahmed's (2014) views on affect in learning, Fricker's (2007) conceptualisations of epistemic injustice and how through discourse people are erased, as well as Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) and his concept of the cognitive banking system of knowledge as opposed to more affective education approaches, all of which emerged as relevant, especially in the analysis in Chapter 5.

1.5 Research participants and methodology

I classify my research as a short-term ethnography specific to one FE college. Although the literature, especially publications of NATECLA (2021), shows that similar problems exist elsewhere in other FE colleges, it would not be accurate to generalise based on data which is unique to one FE college in England. The learners of ESOL in this study are people of great diversity who have migrated to the UK and I reiterate that they have resident status or are British citizens. As specified in the eligibility rules of ESFA (2023), they are eligible for government funded ESOL in FE if they have lived in the UK for three years or more and meet financial status criteria.

Most of the ESOL learners are multi-lingual with oral fluency in their home country languages, and other languages of countries they have lived in during their migration journeys. I facilitated the direct focus on ESOL learners in my methodology with my knowledge of languages and by using translanguaging, about which more is said in the methodology chapter. The educational backgrounds of the ESOL learners vary from those who have never attended school to those with university and college level education and professional qualifications from their home countries. They are of different ages and stages in their lives. This diversity makes it difficult, if not impossible, to make generalisations or attempt to categorise the learners according to standardised educational levels. The practitioners in this study are also diverse and many have their own migration experiences. Several are multi-lingual and have come to the UK from different countries and have different levels of teaching experience and qualifications.

My role as researcher in this project is supported by my 30-year experience as an English language teacher and more recently as an ESOL practitioner in adult learning, some of which has been in FE in England, which has given me first-hand experience and an awareness of the hardships in ESOL in FE provision. My positionality also gave me access

to ESOL learners and practitioners who agreed to participate in the study which I conducted in informal conversations and self-interviews, drawing from Keightly, et al. (2012). With reference to Shah (2017), Pink and Morgan (2013), and St Pierre (2021), I describe my methodology as a short-term participatory ethnography which is post structural, about which more will be said in Chapter 4. As some of the learner participants were complete beginners in English, I used a type of translanguaging which I call “transchat” as part of my methodology to aid in our communication.

1.6 Contribution to learning

I would first like to mention the research of Puttick (2021) for although she studied the third sector, which is a less restricted sector than ESOL in FE, her study includes rich data on adult women English language learners in different Family Literacy settings. Additionally, she used translanguaging, mainly in digital form, to which I have added my use of oral translanguaging in transchat. Previous research directly related to ESOL in FE has been carried out on the experience of practitioners of ESOL. These are varied studies that focus on different aspects of ESOL practitioner experience. Courtney (2017), and particularly Lacey (2018), look in depth into ESOL in FE and the challenging impact of policy on practitioners; while in sharp contrast Elizabeth (2021), focuses on the positive role of emotion and emotion labour of the practitioner in ESOL language learning generally.

Elizabeth (2021) considers the experiences of language teachers, particularly ESOL, and the positive impact of emotions in the language classroom. Her data analysis shows that for the most part ESOL teachers experience positive emotions in their teaching on account of their “close professional relationships they share with students” (2021: 65) and that their considerable emotional labour leads to emotional rewards. She recommends that language teachers “could be encouraged to perform action research within their teaching context to critically reflect on their agency, emotions, and emotion labour to enhance their emotional wellbeing” (2021: 64) and she recommends that “language teachers have access to training that supports ethical self-formation” suggesting that “additional practical applications include language teachers developing personal agency and critical awareness concerning the feeling rules at their institutions” (2021: 66). Thus, her work refers to learners indirectly in the context of language teachers’ experiences.

In contrast, Courtney (2017) explores the viewpoints of ESOL practitioners and how “persistent external issues of funding and the contradictory discourse implicit in ESOL policy”

impact ESOL learners. Like Elizabeth (2021), Courtney looks at ESOL learners indirectly through their relationships with practitioners. She posits that “ESOL tutors’ attitudes to learners can unwittingly echo those found in the wider societal discourse regarding migrants” (2017: 26). She discusses issues of integration, prejudice, and ‘othering’ and how ESOL learners are subject to deficit discourses because of their lack of English which is “also reflected in tutors’ attitudes to adult learners” (2017: 29).

Courtney talks about contradictions and incoherences in teachers’ deficit attitudes towards their learners, illuminating how negativity creates conflict in ESOL teachers who are dedicated to “caring for their students” (2017: 31). She concludes that ESOL presents a “bleak picture” (2017: 37), and she makes a strong point on how deficit attitudes can impact teachers’ decisions which can have an impact on learners’ progress and futures (2017: 35). Learners are seen as “autonomous” and “responsible for their own failures” while “little attention is paid to the knowledge which learners bring with them, including their linguistic repertoires and skills” (2017: 36), and she warns that the tensions in ESOL teaching “will become still more complex and intricate” especially post-Brexit (2017: 37). In this way, Courtney’s (2017) focuses on the ESOL practitioner with the aim of increasing our understanding of the problems in ESOL provision that impact the learners.

In Lacey’s (2018) doctoral study, she considers how ESOL practitioners responded to policy changes. Her participants voice the disadvantages to FE of funding changes which impact their teaching schedules and compel them to teach courses to ESOL learners that are not ESOL. In relation to accountability and surveillance practices, Lacey (2018) mentions Ofsted and policies like Prevent that made teachers feel they were not trusted; however, practitioners in her study showed remarkable resilience although policy changes “threatened their practices and their equilibrium” (2018: 150). Lacey shows that teachers were faced with the choice of putting up with surveillance and observations in order to keep working with the students they were committed to. She concludes that policies depend upon how teachers make them work or not work and she recommends “more discussion about the impact of policy changes on the lives not only of teachers but of the students they are teaching” (2018: 152).

These studies offer a comprehensive view of the experiences of practitioners in ESOL teaching and they discuss the impact on learner experience although they do not deal with learner experience directly. However, an American article by McHolme, et al. (2025)looks at three learners of English in the US Midwest and discuss their perceptions of their ability to

speak English. My study includes ESOL practitioner experience but also aims to fill a gap, by eliciting from the learners themselves, their lived experiences of ESOL learners in FE in England.

1.7 Thesis outline

The thesis consists of six chapters. Following this Introductory Chapter 1, in Chapter 2, I develop my theoretical framework and theories and how they apply to my understanding and analysis of ESOL in FE. Chapter 3 contains the literature review which contains key texts and historical events that are a part of the ESOL in FE ecosystem and how they impact the current context of ESOL in FE. In Chapter 4, I discuss my methodology which explains my approach to the primary research, the participants involved, my positionality and the paradigms that have shaped the methodology. Chapter 5 contains the analysis of the research data which is organised thematically according to the emerging issues led by the participants. Chapter 6 contains a discussion of the main issues that emerged from the data analysis and a conclusion with recommendations.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Bronfenbrenner – theoretical framework and theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Human Ecosystem Theory helped me to make sense of the wide range of reading and the complex context of ESOL in FE. It provided both an organising framework and a theory of human development. Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist whose research focused mainly on child development, used his theories in his research, notably in his work on Head Start, "the largest child-centred programme in the USA, whose goal was the elimination of poverty" (2015: 234). Bronfenbrenner's work does not focus on development in adults although his work included parental development "involving parents in the programme [Head Start] was meant to change the way that parents interacted with their children in an ongoing way" (2015: 240). Nevertheless, I could see parallels in his theory, as described by Darling (2015), and that of ESOL in FE.

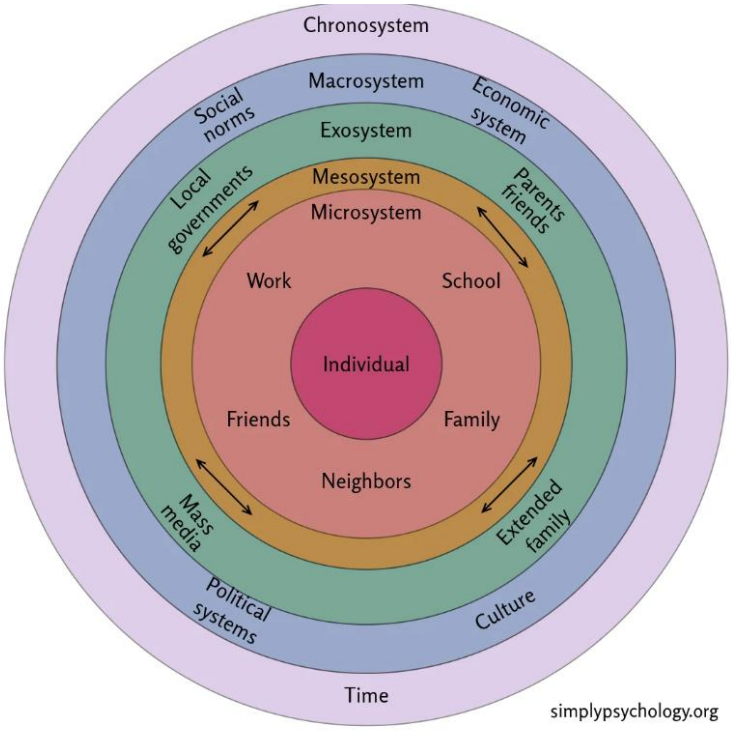
Darling (2015) states that Bronfenbrenner, together with his colleagues, developed an ecological systems theory which perceived human developmental processes as "interconnected and interdependent" (2015: 234). From my first-hand knowledge and my reading, I realised that in a similar way ESOL in FE learners and practitioners were impacted by the inter- and intra- action of different elements in their environment. We learn from Darling (2015) and Crawford (2020) that Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which developed throughout his career, focused on "the importance of understanding the context" and how "we all play an active role in our own development" (2015: 235).

Darling (2015) explains that Bronfenbrenner models for the study of human development focus on the social context of the individual and she explains that the central sphere of this context is labelled a microsystem where the child or subject of the research is located. According to Darling (2015), an individual can have relationships in different microsystems, such as a childcare setting and a family setting and that the interconnection or relationships between these microsystems creates a mesosystem, which can be seen in Diagram 1, below.

I could see similarities between the individual child at the centre of a microsystem with individual learners and practitioners in a microsystem of ESOL in FE who also have other interconnecting microsystems such as their family and other social settings such as schools and health services that interact with and impact their development and activities in the

ESOL in FE setting. Darling (2015) describes other more distant contexts that also impact a child's development, such as parents' workplaces or policies affecting the child's microsystem, which she referred to as exosystems that have an indirect impact and this can be related to the experiences of adult learners in ESOL in FE, especially with regard to immigration and education policies and requirements of college, the DWP, job centres, and workplaces.

The more abstract influences on the development of the individual child such as ideologies and cultural concepts, Bronfenbrenner (1979) labelled macrosystems, according to Darling (2015), and she adds that the concept of a chronosystem was a later development of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory which takes into account the impact of past historical events and the "developmentally investigative characteristics" of human individuals, and she states that a crucial part of this later development was how children played an active role in "selecting and shaping their environments" (2015: 236). Below is a visual example of a Bronfenbrenner ecological systems model taken from the article of Guy-Evans (2025) on the website Simply Psychology:



2.1.1 Diagram 1: a Bronfenbrenner Human Ecosystem model

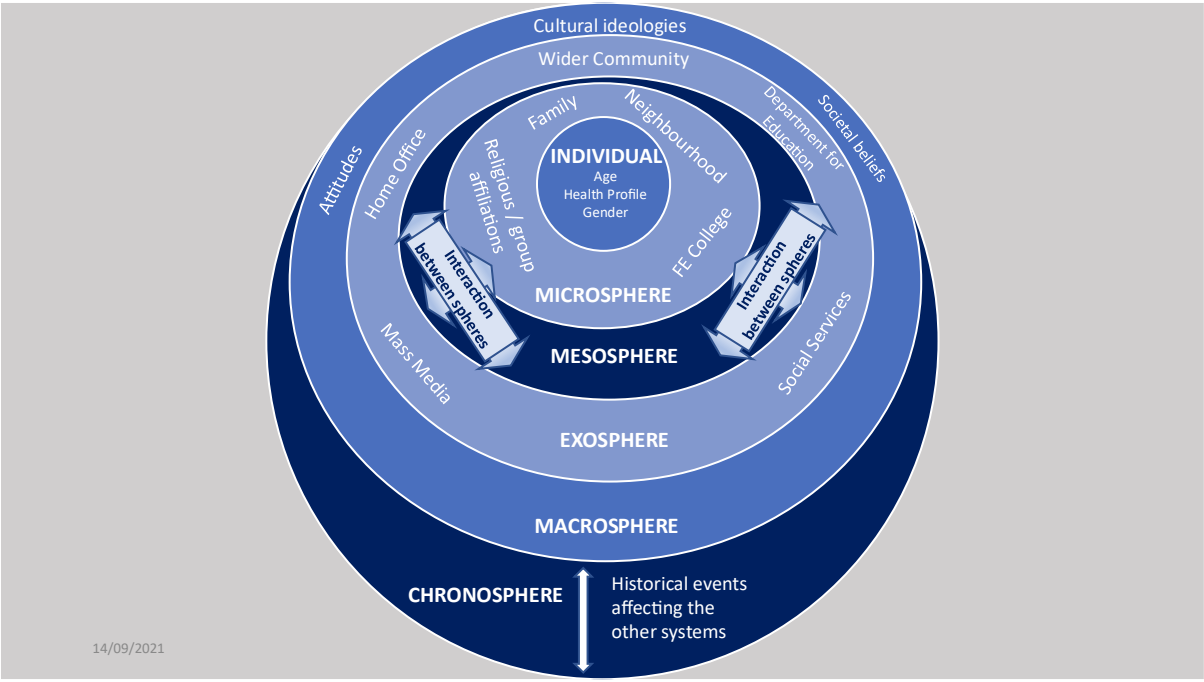
There are many versions of Bronfenbrenner's model, created by students and researchers, one of which I have shown in Diagram 2.1.1, above. According to Crawford (2020) the terms

micro, meso, exo, macro were used in General Systems Theory by Bertalanffy in 1951 and the system labels were also used by Brim in 1975 (2020: 1). Darling (2015), relates that chrono was added by Bronfenbrenner and Morris in 1998 (2015: 236). In my study of ESOL in FE, the features of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model allowed me to visualise the ESOL learners and practitioners at the heart of my study and the complexity of the contexts that encompass and interconnect them. Following the examples given in the public domain by other researchers, such as that of Guy-Evans (2025) above, I created my own version of Bronfenbrenner's model which I call the ESOL in FE Ecosystem, which is shown after the description below.

2.1.2 ESOL in the FE Ecosystem – Diagram description and interpretation

My own version of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) human ecosystem model served a dual purpose for me. Firstly, I used my version of the structure that his model provides to help me organise my thinking and my theoretical framework. My version of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework helped me to both digest the content of various texts and order them in a coherent way that would simultaneously and comprehensively illuminate my area of study.

Secondly, Bronfenbrenner's model served as a theoretical lens as it enabled me to inter-relate such aspects as policy with social and cultural factors and it helped me to structure my thinking and to develop my criticality by thinking relationally about positionality and agency. To map the environmental conditions impacting the microsphere of ESOL learners in FE which emerged from my reading, my version, like that of Diagram 2.1.1, represents a series of nested spheres, which are pictured below. Drawing from Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994), these spheres are not static but are constantly interacting, developing, and changing as the various constituent elements evolve. The success or health of the individual and the ecosystem as a whole depends upon the quality of the intra- and inter- actions of the spheres. Thus, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory is based on relationships within a context which helped to facilitate my analysis of the dynamics impacting the ESOL learners in my research.



2.1.3 Diagram 2 – The ESOL in FE Ecosystem

2.2 Mesosphere

I begin with the mesosphere in ESOL in FE which represents the site of inter- and intra-actions between systems within the spheres of the ecosystem. The mesosphere is not always shown on Bronfenbrenner diagrams, or it is depicted as a thin ring without other identifying labels as we can see from the example in Diagram 1. It is not easy to illustrate in a diagram as it represents, according to Darling (2015), "the interconnection or relationship between two microsystems". Its nature is dynamic, and it does not contain any permanent elements.

In my diagram, I have placed the mesosphere between the microsphere and the exosphere to represent this site of an array of proximal processes or inter- and intra- actions between the spheres that can have both nurturing and destructive impacts on ESOL learners in FE. Mesosphere interaction impacting learners and practitioners may involve many aspects and many locations, especially considering their diverse identities both within the microspheres of their countries of origin and the microspheres of the host country, in this case, the UK.

Darling (2015) points out that the interconnections in meso interaction can be indirect as well as direct. For example, an interaction may affect a child indirectly through its direct impact on the parents, such as the loss of a job (2015: 235). In the same way, an ESOL in FE learner may be impacted indirectly, for example by a change in immigration policy which

impacts their parents' right to stay in the UK or directly owing to a change in FE funding policy that halves the length of their ESOL course.

Using ideas from Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's (1994) biological systems theory, which Bronfenbrenner applied later to his 1979 model, the dynamic processes that ESOL learners go through in their transitions to life in the UK shape their identities and their cultures in the UK. This interaction is represented by the mesosphere in which proximal processes support individual growth and development, or conversely marginalise, depending on the quality of interaction between individuals, between individuals and communities.

2.2.1 Zukas and Malcolm – the entanglement and complexity of the assemblage

The theory of sociomateriality, as used in the research of Zukas and Malcolm (2019), has added to my understanding of mesosphere processes in ESOL in FE by providing an articulation of the complex interaction between exosphere education and immigration policy and the microsphere practices. In harmony with both Bronfenbrenner and Foucault, Zukas and Malcolm's (2019) concept of assemblage and entanglement leads away from simplified, linear understandings and offers confirmation of the complex intertwined influences that shape ESOL learners and practitioners and their ecosystem.

The assemblage in ESOL in FE as conceptualised in this study considers not only the individual participants and their identities and characteristics, but also the discourses, policies, and physical settings that drawing from Foucault (1989) define their conditions of possibility and determine the extent of their agency. MacLeod and Ajjawi (2020) cite Goldszmidt (2017): "Sociomateriality is an umbrella term for a set of research approaches that "share a common interest in decentering the human as the focus of study to allow for a deeper exploration of the complex, messy and non-linear relationships between materials and social practices". . . "Sociomaterialists believe the world— people, things, practices—is constituted through assemblages or heterogeneous entanglements of human and nonhuman elements. Hence, they assert that the assemblage is a central unit of analysis" (Goldszmidt, 2017; MacLeod and Ajjawi, 2020: 851).

I have drawn on the concepts of Zukas and Malcolm (2019) to support my study of the role of policy and the entanglement of the chrono-, macro-, exo-, and micro- in the everyday experience of ESOL for learners and practitioners in FE. Interestingly, both Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Zukas and Malcolm (2019) describe this site of entangled dynamic interaction as the "meso-system" or the "meso-level". According to Zukas and Malcolm (2019),

entanglement as opposed to separateness is central to the theory of sociomateriality as the paradigm views human issues as entanglements between people and things, and what is produced by what actually happens within the entanglements that operate in the setting. The idea of an assemblage of human and non-human entanglements parallels with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) work in which he maps the assemblage of the human ecosystem and the interconnectivity of its spheres, focusing on the proximal processes between and within them in the meso and what these processes or entanglements produce. These conceptualisations helped me to grasp the complexity of the ESOL in FE ecosystem.

2.3 Chronosphere

Leaving the mesosphere, I now move in this exposition to the outermost sphere, the chronosphere, which in ESOL in FE represents historical events that have had a formative impact on the individual and on the development of the ideologies and attitudes in the adjacent macrosphere ring of the ecosystem. Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) identified how historical events shape individual identity. An ESOL learner with experience of migration could be exposed to a wide range of historical events and changes over time, such as wars and economic disasters, both before and after their migration to the host country. Therefore, I sought to learn about historical chronosphere events and their impact on the individual and the ESOL in FE microsphere.

2.3.1 Foucault – archaeology and genealogy

At first, I was looking for a logical process in history. However, I soon questioned this as I studied the theories of Foucault (1989) who did not see human history as a continuum of linear progress that moves in one direction as it develops over time. Rather Foucault (1969) called his approach to human history 'archaeological' in that it is made up of complex, sedimented layers that are interconnected by human relationships and characterised by ongoing processes of change. Thus, in contrast to longitudinal studies of history, archaeology is diachronic; it studies many different things that occur at the same time.

This cross-sectional approach to human history added to my understanding as I moved between social history, educational policy, and immigration law to understand the complexity and contradiction I saw in FE and ESOL in FE in England. Foucault (1977) remarked:

> "The world we know is not this ultimately simple configuration where events are reduced to accentuate their essential traits, their final meaning, or their

> initial and final value. On the contrary, it is a profusion of entangled events" (Foucault, 1977: 155).

In addition to applying Foucault's (1969) concept of archaeology to understand cross-sectional entangled events in ESOL in FE, as opposed creating a linear history of ESOL in FE, I have drawn on Foucault's (1984) related historical approach of 'genealogy' as a way of understanding how the chronosphere events in the past have had an impact on my current ESOL in FE learners in the present (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994). Like archaeology, genealogy for Foucault is not a "linear development". Instead, "it operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (1977: 139). Drawing from McDermott (2021), for Foucault, genealogical study looks at how material and ideological relationships are created and are interconnected in ways that increase and maintain social and cultural power inequalities.

2.4 Macrosphere

The macrosphere, which is adjacent to the chronosphere in Diagram 2, encircles the exosphere, mesosphere, and the ESOL in FE microsphere. It is the site of ideologies, beliefs, and attitudes of the whole ecosystem that influence the policymaking for ESOL in FE in the exosphere, directly and indirectly impacting the ESOL in FE learners and practitioners in the microsphere. Some of these ideologies are known as colonialism, neocolonialism, and neoliberalism with its values of autonomy and responsibilisation, as well as harmful deficit discourses like racism. I drew on a number of different sources relevant to these ideologies and dominant discourses in the UK and the global Western macrosphere to inform my thinking.

2.4.1 Fricker – a lexis to describe the harm of stereotypes

The harmful dynamics of macrosphere discourses are complemented by Fricker's (2007) work. She asserts that 'hermeneutical marginalisation' is the result of a discourse of discrimination which excludes individuals and groups from social experience. Her verbal precision is helpful in terms of articulating the nature of discrimination and she describes the harmful impacts of policies on the marginalised in society, who because of stereotyped identities are not given credence, and are in effect silenced, and erased. In this way, her work provides conceptualisations to describe the harm caused to individuals by deficit discourses, which is relevant to the learners in ESOL in FE, many of whom, as illuminated by Foster and Bolton's (2018) report, are marginalised socially, financially, and by language.

Similar to Foucault's (1989) conditions of possibility, about which more will be said later, Fricker states that the silencing caused by hermeneutical marginalisation, can "cramp self-development, so that a person may be, quite literally, prevented from becoming who they are" (Fricker, 2007: 5). She elaborates:

> "Let us say that when there is unequal hermeneutical participation with respect to some significant area(s) of social experience, members of the disadvantaged group are *hermeneutically marginalized.* The notion of marginalization is a moral-political one indicating subordination and exclusion from some practice that would have value for the participant" (2007: 153).

Hermeneutical marginalisation could be seen in the experiences of the ESOL in FE research participants who are excluded by segregation in their micro communities and by policies that impose requirements of time and unsuitable adaptations to ESOL learning. Importantly for this thesis Fricker emphasises that this discriminatory impact is magnified and intensified when the individual's language is not dominant. Scotland (2012) also remarks that in the critical paradigm "language contains power relations so it is used to empower or weaken" (2012: 13). This type of linguistic injustice speaks to the experience of resident ESOL learners central to this thesis.

2.5 Exosphere

In my diagram of the ESOL in FE ecosystem, the exosphere sits between the macrosphere and the mesosphere. The exosphere represents policy-making institutions, organisations, and government departments that pass laws and measures that impact, directly or indirectly, individuals in the ESOL in FE microsphere.

2.5.1 Foucault – contingencies and haphazard events

I used Foucault's theories to give me a deeper understanding and insights into how power operates in meso processes between people in the microsphere of ESOL in FE and policymakers in the exosphere. Foucault's (1984) theories helped me to explore how exosphere power relations impact education and the way the ESOL learner and practitioner's experience in FE is patterned and framed. Foucault's (1984) theories have helped facilitate my discussion and analysis of historical exosphere education policy in texts such as *The Education of Immigrants* (1965; 1971), documents which exemplify deficit

discourses around people with experience of migration at that time about which I say more in the literature review.

The theories of Foucault (1977) helped me to understand that the study of government policies and manifestations of power within them cannot always be understood as the result of long-term strategies and planning of policymakers, and he stated:

> "The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts. They do not manifest the successive forms of a primordial intention and their attraction is not that of a conclusion, for they always appear through the singular randomness of events" (1977: 154-155).

This theory increased my understanding of how the government policies impacting the ESOL in FE exosphere are not ultimately determined by immutable ideologies or beliefs because these governing macrosphere features are themselves determined by people in response to "the singular randomness of events" in the ecosystem. Thus, according to Foucault (1977; 1978), changes in power relations and policy, which impact communities and sections of society such as ESOL in FE, are pushed forward by the haphazard occurrences of history and the conflicting discourses of the time.

I applied this complex, contingent, and haphazard view of progress over time to the historical exosphere of ESOL in FE. Importantly, in Foucauldian terms, changes in power relations manifested in policy are evidence of ongoing processes, but they do not necessarily represent progress in terms of improvement, as power relations exercised by the policymakers of government often work to maintain the status quo, perpetuating rather than correcting injustices. Jain (2023) states that power offers itself "an intricate web of relationships" that "infiltrates and shapes our lives" (2023: 1). In this way Foucault's (1978) ideas have increased my ability to critically analyse the complexity of the inter- and intra-actions between the exosphere policymakers and the ESOL learners and practitioners in the ESOL in FE microsphere, with their contradictory processes over time.

On all levels, exosphere strategies of power are facilitated by macro discourses. Foucault in Simon (1971) describes discourses as competing, and the dominant discourses of leaders support the existing power structure. Ball (2006) discusses how those in power have routinely deprioritised FE with deficit discourses of lower class educational provision, and I

posit that by association this also impacts ESOL in FE. In terms of the ESOL in FE ecosystem, Foster and Bolton (2018) relate how over time changes to government funding policies in response to contingencies have reduced ESOL budgets by more than half in spite of demand.

Foucault (1997) sees human relations in terms of power relations and power relations are based on strategies that function to achieve a goal or outcome usually to do with the successful management by a leader of a social sphere. This suggests that deprioritisation of ESOL in FE could be linked to a latent concern, described by Rosenburg (2007: 24), around being observed as generous to migrants and not paying attention to the needs of nationals, which emerges at times of large influxes of refugees when anti-migrant sentiments surface. In another example, to counter arguments against Brexit, Conservative leaders, such as May, spoke out robustly against 'illegal' immigrants (Hill, 2017). These verbal attacks affected all migrants and *immigrants*, especially those whose difference was visible and audible in terms of their language, skin colour, or dress, which had an impact on ESOL learners, and all people involved in ESOL in FE ecosystem, which I mention again in Chapter 3.

2.5.2 Berry – conceptualisations of immigration and integration

Berry (2001) identifies two dimensions in the cultural identity of *immigrants*, which are described as firstly "identification with one's heritage or ethnocultural group" and secondly "identification with the larger or dominant society" (2001: 620). Both of these perspectives are illuminated by Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) as constructed on reciprocal interaction/proximal processes of the individual both within their micro community and with the exosphere (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Berry (2001) describes this cultural process theoretically as "acculturation" and "acculturation attitudes" (2001: 620) in which there is some compromise both on the part of the individual and on the part of the host culture to adapt to arrive at a certain level of mutual acceptance (Berry, 2001).

Berry (2001) illuminates concepts which shape exosphere policies towards people with experience of migration, and he discusses how individuals in the microsphere respond. He affirms that acculturation is a complex study that considers both the acculturation strategies of people with experience of migration and the strategies of the host society, which materialise in exosphere policies. Thus, his psychology of immigration looks at attitudes, expectations, and perspectives towards immigration held by both the person with experience of migration and the host society. Berry (2001) identifies possible strategies of *immigrants*

such as integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation, and the strategies of the larger society as multiculturalism, melting pot, segregation, and exclusion.

Not all people with experience of migration will want to integrate with the host culture. Berry (2001) states, “when *immigrants* place a value on holding on to their original culture and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others, then the separation alternative is defined” (2001: 619). This is exemplified in a citation from Rosenburg (2007) relating that a “devout Hasidic father in Manchester refused to allow English books in the house, and if he found one threw it into the fire” (Livshin, 1989: 86) in Rosenburg (2007: 10). However, drawing from Berry (2001), integration is complex, and separation does not necessarily come out of a wish on the part of people with experience of migration to avoid interaction with other communities within the host society. He points out that *immigrants* and *immigrant* groups do not always have a choice as to how they want to engage with the host culture. Berry argues that integration can only be achieved if the host society is “open and inclusive in its orientation toward cultural diversity” (2001: 619).

As expressed in *ESOL for Integration* (2020), integration of people with experience of migration is a government policy. Berry (2001) posits that for integration to develop, there must be “mutual accommodation” which gives all people the right “to live as culturally different peoples within the same society” (2001: 619). This means that immigrants must “*adopt* basic values of the receiving society” while at the same time “the receiving society must be prepared to *adapt* national institutions (e.g., education, health, justice, labor) to better meet the needs of all groups” living together (2001: 619). The segregation of people within the social structure is complex and we need to look at micro community structure and characteristics of that structure that have an impact on identity.

I posit that to make integration an exosphere government policy can be problematic because of the diversity of people with experience of migration and their immigration experiences which comes through in the history of Rosenburg (2007). Berry (2001) states: “Assimilation when sought by the dominant group can be termed the “melting pot” (and when strongly enforced, it becomes a “pressure cooker”!)” (2001: 620). Not everyone will have the same requirements and this must be acknowledged. For some ESOL in FE learners, immigration will have been traumatic, leaving them vulnerable to negative influences. While for others immigration is a relief and an escape from persecution and danger in their home countries. For some immigration can be characterised by mixed emotions, regret at leaving home but

hope for a better future. There is a spectrum of experiences about which we cannot generalise.

2.5.3 Ahmed – multiculturalism and assimilation

I have drawn on the work of Ahmed (2014) to illuminate the entanglements within the micro-sphere with regard to conditions in a nation that has through the idea of multiculturalism "invested in their difference", upholding a multicultural ideal that expects *immigrants*, those who are different, to mix socially and to "pay allegiance and to adhere to conditions, such as learning English, speaking English in the home in order to pass on the ideals to the next generation." (2014: 134).

My experience of teaching ESOL in FE has reified my view of the society we live in as a site of diversity, complexity, and contradiction on all levels, from the individual to the institutional. I have come to realise that the many changing and dynamic ways of understanding the world that I have seen through my learners, my colleagues, and my own research rule out a totalising discourse through which everything can be explained and understood.

2.6 Microsphere

As Diagram 2 shows, at the heart of the ESOL in FE ecosystem is a central microsphere that envelopes the individual and their immediate environment which contains learners' families and communities as well as the educational establishments with which the ESOL learner has regular, direct contact, such as their local FE colleges who predominantly deliver ESOL in their area. This microsphere most directly shapes the ESOL learner and their mentality, behaviour, and agency. The practitioners are present also as part of the FE college in the microsphere of the study. The theories and theorists in this section illuminate both the formation of identity and how identity impacts social behaviour. To better understand the tensions and the complexity inherent in the diversity of learners in ESOL in FE, I turned to theories of identity and behaviour to increase my understanding of the learners, and also the practitioners who work with them, at the centre of the ESOL in FE microsphere.

2.6.1 Gee – personal identity and figured worlds

I found Gee (2001) particularly relevant to ESOL in FE learners as his personal identity theories rely heavily on language which is an important aspect of people with experience of migration in ESOL in FE who are challenged by language. He refers to the complexity of individual identity in relation to different settings and how "The 'kind of person' one is

recognized as ‘being’, at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable” (2001: 99). Gee (2001) discusses the complexity of different layers of personal identity by identifying: a “N” or nature identity, as your genetic makeup or a natural quality an institute has determined you have, such as a health condition; an “I” identity which is related to institutes a person belongs to or is labelled by; a “D” identity or discourse identity which he describes as charisma or a quality of interaction with other people; and an “A” identity or an affinity, which has to do with personal qualities and qualifications, as well as group affiliations. These identity layers interact and lead to an individual being recognised as a “certain kind of person” (2001: 99).

Gee describes this recognition as a “Discourse” with a capital D and he maintains that people can have different “Discourse” identities in different situations. Gee (2014) explains further his use of capitalisation to distinguish what he calls Big D discourses. Gee’s Big D refers to everything that works together to create Discourse identity, for example not just words but also ways of behaving, dressing, and acting that are expected in a social setting; he makes the distinction with a lower-case ‘d’ which is just words. I have employed this style of Big D in places in my analysis for the emphasis of data that represent a certain Discourse identity. These meanings are “local” and “specific social Discourse practices” that are “continually transformed” and they operationalise in figured worlds as being all about what is “appropriate” (2014: 100).

Gee’s (2001) identity theory raises questions about the complexities of ESOL learner identities which may take different shapes depending upon the micro community environment and to what extent the level of English can impact the ‘certain kind of person’ or Discourse identity of an ESOL learner. Since identity depends on interactions between the individual and other people as well as outside organisations, such as institutes and affiliations, communication and language have a role in increasing or decreasing the impact of Discourse identities and the individual’s ability to participate and move within and beyond microspheres. In terms of forming a Discourse identity within the host country, a person who lives in a segregated microsphere community may or may not have an urgent need to go through the process of building their identity in the language of the host country, in this case English, especially if, as evidence from Foster and Bolton (2018) shows, ESOL courses are not always easy to access.

2.6.1.1 Figured worlds

I drew on Gee's (2014) figured worlds to increase my understanding of contradictions in human behaviour which helped in my research analysis of data contributions from both learners and practitioners. His insights helped me to grasp the complex and contradictory nature of identity and tensions in the ESOL in FE microsphere, especially in inconsistent attitudes of both practitioners and learners that emerge in the research data.

Gee (2014) relates that in his theory of figured worlds he has used the theories of scholars, such as Fillmore (1975), and Holland, et al (1998). He credits the latter with coining the expression 'figured worlds' which replaced their former term 'cultural models'. The figured worlds of Gee (2014) coordinate well and complement Foucault, especially with regard to how discourses and power work on an individual level in the microsphere of day-to-day dealings and communications between people and institutions, such as colleges, and in this case ESOL in FE. According to Gee (2014), figured worlds are "an important tool of inquiry because they mediate between the "micro" (small) level of social interaction and the "macro" (large) level of institutions" (2014: 95); in this way, figured worlds also add depth and complexity to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) concepts of proximal process of the mesosphere. Gee (2014) states:

> "Figured worlds are simplified, often unconscious and taken-for-granted theories or stories about how the world works that we use to get on efficiently with our daily lives. We learn them from experiences we have had, but, crucially, as these experiences are guided, shaped, and normed by the social and cultural groups to which we belong" (2014: 95).

According to Gee (2014), world figuring involves simplification of ideas gained from individual and collective experience. He explains that world figuring involves creating simulations which we build mentally which "both help us to understand what we are currently seeing, hearing, or reading, and to prepare us for action in the world" (2014: 97). Gee (2014) asserts that simulations, which we build "on the spot for different specific contexts we are in . . . help us to make sense of the specific situations we are in, conversations we are having, or texts we are reading" (2014: 98-99). Drawing on Gee's (2014) theory, in ESOL in FE, when practitioners voice their frustrations around learner behaviour and engagement, or when learners voice their frustration with teaching styles, this can be attributed to world figuring in which they are trying to make sense of the situations around them in the

microsphere of ESOL in FE; examples of this can be seen in this study, and with regard to practitioners in the research of Courtney (2017).

Gee (2014) posits that there are "'prototype simulations' to capture what is 'typical' (2014: 100). Prototype simulations are a concept which can be linked to Foucault's (1984) theories of power and dominant discourses and how the agency of people is shaped by governmentality and internalised governmentality which delimit conditions of possibility. Gee (2014) explains that ideas of what is typical can lead to judgments of what is "non-normal", "less-typical", "not acceptable", and "not right" and hence deviant (2014: 100); these judgments can be used to control and to exclude.

In the diverse, multicultural environment we occupy in a city like Birmingham, UK, there is an immense variety of ways in which world figuring is used because of diversity and the diverse backgrounds and experiences of people with experience of migration. Gee (2014) discusses examples of models of big D discourse practices which illustrate that individuals and social groups can also adhere to different models of Discourse identity at the same time; for example, a practitioner may have one Discourse identity at work and another, possibly conflicting, Discourse identity at home, which would account for the complex and conflicting world figuring that they employ to make sense of situations.

2.6.2 Burke and Stets – individual identity and the importance of language

The theory of Burke and Stets (2009), like that of Gee (2001; 2014), increased my understanding of individual identity. Burke and Stets (2009) illuminate how moving into a new environment challenges and changes individual identity. They explain, however, that the nature and extent of this challenge and change will be as diverse as the individuals themselves and will depend upon environmental factors. According to Burke and Stets (2009), "the self originates in the mind of persons and is that which characterizes an individual's consciousness of his or her own being or identity" (2009: 9). Significantly in terms of ESOL in FE learners, the identity of the self emerges through language. "Many of those meanings including the meanings of the self are shared and form the basis of language communication, symbolic interaction and, ultimately, social structure" (2009: 9).

Burke and Stets (2009) discuss how identity develops throughout life, and they illuminate the connection between identity, emotion, and language. The identity theories of Burke and Stets (2009) illuminate the implications for ESOL pedagogy both in terms of the importance of more affective and communicative teaching approaches and in terms of social justice,

ideas which have been mentioned by other researchers and scholars such as Garcia and Leiva (2013) and McHolme, et al. (2025). Drawing from Burke and Stets (2009), the identity of the ESOL in FE learner with experience of migration is inextricable from their home language or the languages in which they have developed their identities. Gee (2001) states: "I cannot make up and sustain a language (or any sort of representational system) all by myself. . . . I must learn or acquire this language from others, and this I can only do in interchange with other speakers, including family, friends, and the groups to which I belong" (2001: 112-113).

ESOL learners may face challenges trying to make themselves understood in public situations and significantly, drawing from Burke and Stets (2009) and Gee (2001), difficulty or inability to communicate with English language will have an impact on their identity as the identity of the self emerges through language (Burke and Stets, 2009). Referencing Mead (1934), Burke and Stets (2009) point out that: "the "self" grows out of the mind as the latter interacts with its environment to solve the problem of sustaining the biological organism (person) that holds it" (2009: 9-10). They state:

> "The ability to pick out meanings and to indicate them both to the self and to others gives control to humans. This control is made possible by language, which encapsulates the meaning in the form of symbols. It is when one's self is encapsulated as a symbol to which one may respond, as to any other symbol, that self-control becomes possible and the "self" emerges" (2009: 9-10).

2.6.3 Foucault – conditioning, normalisation, external and internal governmentality

Foucault's contribution to my understanding of the ESOL in FE ecosystem spans and overlaps the spheres. These concepts complement Gee (2001; 2014) and add to my understanding of manifestations in the microsphere of ESOL in FE where ESOL learners and practitioners in FE have been routinely and over time subject to government policies restricting funding and impacting curriculum which have shaped their working environment in restrictive ways and impacted their agency.

2.6.3.1 Biopower and governmentality

In my interpretation of Foucault (1975) in the ESOL in FE ecosystem, external biopower, both human and material, works within the dynamics of the mesosphere to affect people in the FE microsphere. Exosphere strategies of government policymakers designed in the

exosphere and operationalised in the microsphere, restrict and control resources and facilities, for example by cutting funding and time for FE, which I mention in Chapter 3. In this way, the biopower of funding policies compel ESOL managers to require ESOL practitioners to deliver unsuitable literacy courses to ESOL learners for funding, which has a detrimental impact on learner progression and creates resistances among both learners and practitioners. This situation is described and analysed by Schellekens (2011; 2023). Drawing from White (2014), these ESOL events can be understood through Foucault's biopower which "elaborates the ways in which we are produced and organised as docile bodies, or responsible subjects, in the prison house of modern society" (2014: 489).

In terms of the microsphere, in Foucault's concept of internalised governmentality, simultaneously, and alongside biopower, the internal powers of self-conditioning and normalisation are working within the minds of individuals to shape and control behaviour. Self-surveillance and self-control operate not only through the influence of external structures such as policies and political decisions, but also internally from conditioning in the processes of macro discourses of the host society as well as micro discourses within the ESOL in FE learners' communities through religious beliefs, family/community customs, traditions, and cultural attitudes which take shape over time.

The impact of biopower can be seen in moments of stress, for example when under the pressure of accountability in examinations and lesson observations, individuals in ESOL in the FE microsphere employ Gee's "world figuring" (Urrieta, 2007). This is, when in looking for reasons for their difficulties, or to blame others in the local setting, people employ "'prototype simulations' to capture what is 'typical'". Thus, it may be 'typical' for certain kinds of learners not to engage in learning or certain kinds of practitioner to use methods that learners do not accept or expect. As Gee (2014: 100) points out, in stressful moments, ideas of what is 'typical' can lead to judgments of deviance; these judgments can be used to control and to exclude and operationalise in expressions of discrimination and deficit.

In a multicultural setting such as the ESOL in FE microsphere where diverse people with experience of migration come with different ideologies, attitudes, and beliefs, both external and Foucault's (1975) internalised governmentality accounts for much complexity and contradiction. In ESOL in FE, this can be seen for example in instances when learners who are used to a more teacher-centred style of instruction in their home country object to a teaching style of an ESOL in FE practitioner, which causes tension between learner and practitioner.

Through Foucault's (1997) theories of dynamic power and resistance, I have been able to increase my critical appreciation of the tensions which I felt and observed in the English language teaching and learning microsphere in ESOL in FE. By power relations, Foucault (1997) does not mean total and absolute domination as power relations can only exist if the subjects have a certain degree of freedom to resist. Foucault argued that resistance is possible because there is freedom, even if it is a very limited sort of freedom. He stated that:

> "[I]f there are relations of power in every social field, this is because there is freedom everywhere. Of course, states of domination do indeed exist. In a great many cases, power relations are fixed in such a way that they are perpetually asymmetrical and allow an extremely limited margin of freedom" (Foucault, 1997: 292).

2.6.3.2 Conditions of possibility

Foucault (1989) used the expression 'conditions of possibility' to refer to the social context which impacts the opportunities for agentic action and change, which is contingent on and limited by a variety of related factors. In the microsphere of ESOL in FE, conditions of possibility and how the agency of learners and practitioners is impacted by the restrictions of policies and discourses became a central concept in my data analysis. A fundamental idea for Foucault (1975), is that individuals are not autonomous, and that "the subject could not, even in principle, have experiences or exercise his reason outside all social contexts" (Bevir, 1999: 68). This reflects a worldview similar to Bronfenbrenner's which positions individual development as social and constituted through the proximal processes informing the microsphere. Drawing from Monbiot and Hutchenson (2024), this worldview, which hinges on interconnections within social contexts, conflicts with the ideology of neoliberalism that began to be seen in FE policy in which the discourses of autonomy and responsibilisation work to isolate individuals in the microsphere of ESOL in FE.

2.6.3.3 Care of the self

In the microsphere context, I found that Foucault's (1997) concept of care of the self, provided a meaningful theory that spoke to my experiences with colleagues in ESOL in FE. By care of the self, Foucault was referring to what happens when people use their agency to challenge a strategy of power or exist ethically within it. Foucault saw resistances to strategies of power relations as forms of moral and ethical care of the self, and he

maintained that this ability was also a prerequisite for good governance or the ability to look after others. For me, this idea put a more constructive perspective on conflicts I had observed in my past experiences working in ESOL, in which ESOL practitioners voice deficit views of learners and vice versa and which I will discuss further in the analysis chapter.

Foucault asserts that:

> ‘‘Care for others should not be put before the care of oneself. The care of the self is ethically prior in that the relationship with oneself is ontologically prior’’ (Foucault, 1997: 287).

Thus, in my interpretation, Foucault’s (1997) care of the self can be understood as the exercise of one’s agency based on one’s individual belief of what is ethical and moral in a given situation. This also includes governmentality where individuals internalise the morals and ethics and constraints or demands of their microsphere. Foucault states:

> “I believe that the concept of governmentality makes it possible to bring out the freedom of the subject and its relationship to others which constitutes the very stuff [matière] of ethics.” (1997: 300).

As mentioned above, power relations exist through resistance, which Foucault illustrated in his 1983 Berkeley lectures on fearless speech or “parrhesia” (Foucault, 2001). In the exosphere genealogy, stories of “parrhesia” and resistance are operationalised in the agency of people with experience of migration in the UK to the injustice of racism and discrimination in the macrosphere. In the interpretation of my research context, the care of the self emerges from the moral and ethical responses of the practitioners and learners in ESOL in FE when they are confronted with the injustices of biopower and governmentality, which lead to resistance through speech and action.

For example, in situations which emerge in the data analysis in Chapter 5, ESOL practitioners and learners voice their dissatisfaction with exosphere government funding policies that erode the curriculum of ESOL thus creating difficulties for learners and practitioners in the ESOL in FE microsphere. The insights from Foucault (2001), have added to my understanding of both actions and words ESOL practitioners and learners using their agency within their limited conditions of possibility to resist the erosion in ESOL curriculum

caused by policy. Foucault contends that care of the self can mitigate potential unfair domination in power relations, and he states that it is:

> "[M]orality, the ethos, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible" (1997: 298).

Through the theories of Foucault (1975) and Bronfenbrenner (1979), my intention in this thesis has been to gain a sense of my participants' lived experiences in the microsphere of ESOL in FE, which do not occur in a vacuum. Foucault's theories prompt us "to critically examine power dynamics, question discourses, and seek pathways for resistance" (Jain, 2023: 3).

2.7 Conclusion

I credit these theorists whose combined theories I have used in my theoretical framework. In the face of complexity and diversity, I have drawn on their theories to guide me through the entanglements of and dynamics of the FE context of ESOL learners and practitioners. They have provided me with conceptualisations that illuminate the nature of the structures and processes that I explore in this thesis; in doing so these theoretical concepts have allowed me to critically examine and interrogate the complexity and contradictions in how ESOL learners and practitioners are impacted in the ESOL in FE microsphere. Through critical interrogation, enabled by theories, I set out through the literature to develop an understanding of the challenges facing practitioners and learners of ESOL in FE microsphere.

Chapter 3: Literature review

3.1 Introduction

This literature review, as the supporting foundation of my study of resident ESOL learners at an FE college in England, required the examination of a range of documents, including those that are historical, in order to contextualise and illuminate the challenges that face today's resident ESOL learners and ESOL practitioners. I set out to review previous research and policy documents related to ESOL in FE. I gravitated towards books whose authors brought history and issues related to ESOL in FE together in one place, such as Rosenburg's *A critical history of ESOL in the UK, 1870-2006* (2007), as well as works that built up the context, such as Wilson's *Finding a Voice* (2018) and *Dreams, Questions, Struggles* (2006), as well as Kwarteng's (2011) *Ghosts of Empire* and Monbiot and Hutchinson's (2024) *The Invisible Doctrine*.

In order to fully appreciate the historical context, I turned to the primary sources and up to the minute information from journals, newspapers, government documents, reviews and reports, and broadcasts. I referred to government policy documents, which include UK immigration legislation, the immigration experience of migrant individuals settled in the UK, the education policies of FE together with the funding policies of ESOL in FE in the UK. In everything I read, watched, or listened to there seemed to be some truth with authors presenting their individual viewpoints or government documents offering the outlook of political interests being supported. This had a prismatic effect and the more I learned, the more complex and fragmented the picture and my view of it became. To help make sense of these diverse texts, I used my version of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) human ecosystem, the ESOL in FE ecosystem and its spheres, as an organising framework.

3.2 ESOL learners UK chronosphere – immigration and deficit views

Rosenburg's (2007) *Critical History of ESOL in the UK 1970 to 2006*, gave me an appreciation of the historical chronosphere of people with experience of migration. The macrosphere discourses that impact them through exosphere policy are inextricable from immigration and the challenges that people with experience of migration face in an English-

speaking country (2007: 84), owing to stereotypes, deficit views, and discrimination. Rosenburg (2007) discusses the different waves of immigration in the UK over time and the diversity of people with experience of migration from which it becomes apparent that it is not possible to make broad generalisations about personal identities of ESOL learners in FE or even to generalise about why people with experience of migration are learning English. Through the historical lens of Rosenburg (2007), the complexity and diversity of the individuals at the heart of the microsphere of ESOL in FE emerges, posing a challenge to stereotyping and deficit views.

Rosenburg (2007) explains that ESOL learners in FE are a diverse group in terms of countries of origin, social status, mother-tongues, ethnic, and religious backgrounds; furthermore, the orgins of ESOL learners are not static. They are a changing population whose identities depend on global political and economic events. She gives the example of how after Britain joined the European economic community, large numbers of people with experience of migration arrived from European countries in search of work and some needed ESOL. These newcomers added greatly to the diversity which was already present among people with experience of migration from the Commonwealth and elsewhere. Describing this fluctuating population, Rosenburg (2007) discusses how, since Britain made its exit from the EEC in January 2021, the national backgrounds of the European ESOL learners have changed again with people of European origin returning to Europe and fewer coming for ESOL classes in FE, which has been confirmed in Higton et al., (2019). However, there are also people with experience of migration who originated from other places, such as Africa and the Middle East, who may have entered the UK through the EEC on European passports, after spending years in European countries.

Data in Foster and Bolton (2018: 5) as well as Paget and Stevenson (2014: 19) likewise shows that ESOL learners are a diverse group whose profiles vary. In terms of country of origin, the 2011 UK Census found that “The top 5 non-UK countries of birth in 2011 were India, Poland, Pakistan, Republic of Ireland and Germany” (Smith, 2013: 1). Paget and Stevenson (2014) state that “the two largest groups of migrants broken down by their first languages are the 37 per cent of people who speak South Asian languages and the 17 per cent of Polish speakers” (2014: 19).

In relation to English language, Paget and Stevenson (2014) as well as Curcin et al. (2022), explain that existing knowledge of English among people with experience of migration depends upon several factors, such as country of origin and the learner’s level of English

when they start their study; in addition knowledge and level of English are influenced by cultural background and personal circumstances as well as the level of general education and whether or not the learner is literate in their own language. Paget and Stevenson (2014) state that all these factors "affect how best, and how quickly, people learn English" (2014: 19).

Foster and Bolton (2018) relate that in 2013, a Department for Business, Innovation and Skills research report on the impact of learning below ESOL Level 2 (which is roughly GCSE level) found that a higher proportion of ESOL learners had no qualifications compared to other below ESOL Level 2 learners, but also higher proportions were qualified at Levels 4 or 5 (2018: 5). Thus, ESOL learners are diverse group that have different educational backgrounds which have an impact on how they learn English. As Rosenburg (2007) illuminates, ESOL in FE learners have rich experiences of migration and the potential to contribute much to society.

3.2.1 Home Office and immigration legislation

The historical chronosphere perspective illuminates a contradictory macrosphere attitude towards people with experience of migration which emerges in the literature. Dinwiddy (1968), states that records regarding immigration to the UK go back to the 1793 Aliens Act which sought to regulate immigration into Britain. In terms of immigration history, there has been a presence of people with experience of migration settled around ports and in big cities in the UK for centuries. However, the beginning reference point for the historical perspective of UK immigration in this thesis is the period after World War II when, with the British Nationality Act of 1948, the government invited people from Commonwealth countries to immigrate to the UK to help rebuild the economy. The fact that they were invited by the government to come to the UK is significant because it challenges past and recent macro deficit framing of migrants in the media, for example linking people with experience of migration with opportunists and criminal gangs (Calgie, 2025). In contrast, Wilson (2006) asserts that the Punjabi men who came in the 1950s and 1960s "came first and foremost to work, not to settle" (2006: 44). Drawing from Morrice (2019), deficit framing creates stereotypes that categorise people, impacting all by association, including resident ESOL learners in FE regardless of their backgrounds.

Rosenburg (2007) relates that after the British Nationality Act of 1948 (UK Government, 1948), the *immigrants* who did not return to their home countries became more invested in

their UK communities and they sent for their families to join them (2007: 84). During the decades that followed, the newcomers entering under the British Nationality Act of 1948 included both people from the English-speaking colonies in the Caribbean as well as large numbers from South Asia and other parts of the Commonwealth and not all spoke English, which is when ESOL in the UK begins to develop.

As the work of Wilson (2006) shows, the recruitment of ex-Commonwealth residents led to problems with macrosphere attitudes of racism. Drawing from Foucault (1984), deficit discourses against *immigrants* remain in the macrosphere and surface during contingencies when problems emerge, such as recently with numbers of undocumented people crossing the British Channel in small boats (Cecil, 2025). Examples of deficit discourses in UK leadership include those voiced by politicians such as former Conservative Prime Minister, Cameron, reported by Mason and Sherwood (2016), as well as former Conservative Prime Minister and Home Office Minister, May, reported by White (2024), and more recently, Reform Party members, as reported by Calgie (2025).

May, Home Office Minister from 2010 to 2016 under Cameron, contributed to the macro deficit discourse around *migrants* by openly announcing in 2012 a 'hostile environment' against illegal immigrants, reported by Hill (2017). Although this was not aimed at *legal immigrants*, or specifically women, it promoted the underlying hostile macro discourse against all people with experience of migration. It is interesting to note that in 2024, twelve years later, as reported by White (2024), May admitted in an ITV documentary that "she did not foresee problems her hostile environment policy would cause for legal immigrants, including the Windrush generation" and "she also said Home Office-sponsored vans in 2013 with 'Go home or face arrest' written on them were 'wrong'". Drawing from Gee (2014), this backtracking can be understood as May's world figuring and how, after Foucault (1978), micro-resistances to the 'hostile environment' of people impacted by Windrush formed a discourse that over time worked to change minor discourses of power, although the macro discourses remain.

3.2.2 Impact of Home Office immigration policies on ESOL learners

I begin this section by critically interrogating UK Home Office exosphere policy as it relates to ESOL learners and impacts their wellbeing. Although the Department for Education and the Home Office both have an influence on people with experience of migration and their communities, the Home Office and its dealings have a wider reach because their policies

and legislation have a direct impact on all people with experience of migration, including ESOL learners. For this reason, mesosphere activity between the Home Office in the exosphere and people with experience of migration in the microsphere becomes apparent and sometimes there is overlap between the policies of the Home Office and the Department for Education, for example Section 11 funding, about which more will be said later, which was provided to the Department for Education by the Home Office.

Rosenburg (2007) and Yeo (2020) illuminate that the UK Home Office exosphere policy has a long history of both welcoming and restricting the entry and the activities of people with experience of migration as it suits their needs. This is important because in terms of learners in ESOL in FE, the variable nature of immigration policies creates instability and anxiety in their microsphere. Immigration legislation is characterised by frequent changes and amendments to the laws that the Home Office makes in response to arrivals. As Yeo (2020) points out, these changes and amendments create insecurity for people with experience of migration by making immigration law complex and difficult to navigate.

Rosenburg (2007) relates that the frequent changes in immigration law have an impact on the well-being of ESOL learners. Even if their own immigration status seems secure, changes may have an effect on close relatives, such as spouses or parents. Yeo (2020) asserts that top judges describe exosphere immigration law as "'byzantine' and an 'impenetrable jungle' that "grew rapidly from the 1990s onwards" (2020: 17). He puts the recent complexity of immigration law down to the way it has been repeatedly amended and distributed around "Acts of Parliament from 1971,1988, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2014 and 2016", all of which amend previous law and also set out their own stipulations (Yeo, 2020). This pattern of changes and revisions follows a well-established historical practice which is pointed out by Rosenburg (2007) who names the restrictive exosphere immigration acts of 1914, 1919, 1920 and 1925, as well as the more recent acts.

The persistent changes and the ever-increasing complexities in immigration law in the exosphere indicate a level of opposition to people with experience of migration that impact their lives in the UK. Constantly enacting and amending immigration law, supports an exploitative attitude towards people with experience of migration which dehumanises them as individuals. This dehumanisation encourages stereotypes, discrimination, and racism. It supports segregation and isolation which impact ESOL learners in FE as analysis data in this study shows. Drawing from Foucault in White (2014), governmentality, applied in policy,

works through the mesosphere to organise and control people with experience of migration in their microspheres in ways that impact their well-being.

3.2.3 ESOL in FE learners and colonialism

In the process of reading, I realised that an awareness of colonialism and neocolonialism was relevant to the macrosphere of ESOL in FE because, as the data in Foster and Bolton (2018) illuminates, a strong connection exists between many ESOL in FE learners and ex-colonies of Britain, especially Southeast Asia, countries in which colonialism has had a damaging impact and where neocolonial deficit discourses still surface in the macrosphere, contributing to the inequitable attitudes, ideologies, and discourses of the macrosphere of ESOL in FE. Kwarteng (2011) has written about Britain's historical and contentious relationship with its former colonies and how the colonial period of British history is now widely criticised. In *Ghosts of Empire*, Kwarteng (2011) writes that the British Empire "openly repudiated ideas of human equality and put power and responsibility into the hands of a chosen elite, drawn from a tiny proportion of the population in Britain" (2011: 7). According to Kwarteng (2011), although the countries of the British Empire have devolved, the colonial legacy still has a powerful influence, which contributes to the attitudes, ideologies, and dominant discourses of the macro environment.

Although anti-immigrant sentiments of the 1960s and 1970s may seem like ancient history, seen through the lenses of Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) and Foucault (1969; 1989), neocolonial discourses of inequality and racism resurface at times of social tension through the influence of the historical chronosphere and the ideological macrosphere. Writers like Kwarteng (2011) and Wilson (2006) argue that colonial viewpoints are not a thing of the past and continue to emerge in policy documents that go on to support discriminatory discourses that impact individuals.

Brown (2022) relates that the groups of people with experience of migration that arrived for work as a result of the British Nationality Act of 1948 were followed by waves of newcomers in the 1970s from Latin America and East Africa, including Asians who were expelled from Uganda by Amin in 1972. As Rosenburg (2007: 115) relates, they were followed by citizens of the member states of the EEC who began to arrive in 1973 after Britain joined the European Union. Recent research from Desai, et al. (2022) points out that migration has had an impact on UK society and *immigrants* have been discriminated against and blamed for problems of employment, housing, social services, and education. Of the Ugandan

Asians who came after their expulsion from Uganda in 1972, Johal and Thompson (2022) reported that they were made to feel unwelcome in their new places of settlement in the UK, such as Leicester where newspaper advertisements were posted warning them not to stay.

Looking back at the history of immigration legislation post British Nationality Act of 1948, which forms a part of the chrono influences that shape the resident ESOL in FE learner and practitioner microsphere experience, an ideological perspective, discussed by both Kwarteng (2011) and Wilson (2006) becomes clear through the language used which reveals a deep-rooted binary view of the superiority of 'indigenous' British and the inferiority of *immigrants* and people of colour, especially those individuals who could not speak English well or at all and whose customs deviated from what was perceived as British (Wilson, 2006).

It can be seen in Kwarteng (2011) and Wilson (2006) that the macrosphere attitudes of racism and discrimination as part of the chronosphere are still relevant in UK society and continue to have an impact on people with experience of migration such as ESOL learners in FE. They argue that colonial viewpoints are not a thing of the past and continue to emerge, especially in times of instability and tension, in exosphere policy documents that go on to support unequitable narratives that impact individuals. Wilson (2006) recounts how racism in the macrosphere served to unite segregated communities of people with experience of migration in the UK, who come from South Asia or other Commonweath regions as oppressed ethnic groups.

The literature shows the complexity and profound level of discrimination. Wilson (2006) remarked that between 1960 and 1980, Indian immigrants (mainly men who were working) suffered discrimination which was redoubled within the micro community for Indians of lower castes, for within the micro communities, there were also problems of discrimination owing to religion, class, and caste. It can be seen through the literature that racism and action against racism emerging from the chronosphere and macrosphere, which can impact learners with experience of migration in ESOL in FE, continued to be an issue which intensified and can be traced to the Racism Act of 1965 (UK Government, 1965) and its subsequent amendments.

Jessop (2015) relates that perceived link between social problems and immigration, supported by binary colonial narratives, had resulted in tightened controls on immigration between 1962 and 1971. He explains that during the Conservative premiership of Thatcher (1979-1990), who led a neoliberal regime shift towards free market capitalism and austerity

about which more will be said in this chapter, further changes were made to immigration law which meant that by 1981 most of the Act of 1948 that had allowed families to join *immigrant* workers was changed significantly. The restrictions which have caused instability and anxiety to families are currently relevant to ESOL in FE learners in their microsphere as meso activity between immigration restrictions and the wellbeing of ESOL learners' and their families is ongoing.

For example, Rosenburg (2007) relates how the British Nationality Act of 1981 (UK Government, 1981) ruled that British nationality by birth right could not be claimed unless one parent was already a British citizen or had the right to stay in the UK (2007: 148). The subsequent Immigration Act of 1988 (UK Government, 1988) placed restrictions on family reunions. Male Commonwealth immigrants had to "prove they could accommodate and maintain their families independently" and it also denied entry for second wives. Overstaying visa expiry dates was made a criminal offence and the right of appeal for overstay was restricted (2007: 149). In the mesosphere, immigration legislation continues to impact ESOL learners who have close ties to family in their countries of origin. Drawing from Foucault (1989), through exosphere laws and policies, the biopower of governmentality restricts the conditions of possibility and impacts the agency of people with experience of migration who are ESOL learners in FE and data in the analysis chapter illuminates these impacts.

3.2.4 ESOL learners and macro discourses of nationalism

Nationalism is another macrosphere aspect of racism which emerges in the literature around people with experience of migration. Its existence in the macrosphere has the potential to impact the wellbeing of ESOL in FE learners in their microsphere. Revell and Bryan (2018) discuss nationalistic and discriminatory macro discourses that have the effect of, drawing from Fricker (2007), hermeneutically marginalising by exclusion the identities of ESOL learners with experience of migration, as these narratives cannot be applied to people whose colour, religion, culture and traditions differ from what is labelled as British. They posit that within narratives, nationalisms "legitimise and rationalise" the tension between a nation's "eternal and timeless ideals above difference and the realities of a state that must enforce separation" and that the narratives make "palatable and explain why and how the unequal treatment of others is not only necessary but desirable" (2018: 38). Goleš (2020) quoting Hall and Du Gay (1996) makes the link between nationalism and colonialism, observing that colonial distinctions of identity exist in the opposition of rulers (superior) and

subjects (inferior) so that “social identity becomes a question of power, what is involved or excluded” (2020: 91).

Revell and Bryan (2018), suggest that the creation of Prevent and British Values are part of the narrative and have a direct impact on ESOL in FE learners whose tutors must apply the policies. They put forward the view that “Britain’s imperial past and the peculiarities of the way Great Britain was constituted as a nation mean that in ‘a fundamental sense the history of Britain is inextricably bound up with racism’” (2018: 39) and that the creation of Prevent and British values is part of an ongoing discursive process of the post-colonial era of rebranding national identity. Drawing from Revell and Bryan (2018), the versions of British national identity over time have an impact on ESOL in FE learners because they exclude people with experience of migration. The ongoing process of rebranding British identity has shaped and changed the macro narrative, but racism remains in the adaptations. It is not just a question of skin colour; it is the idea of strangeness, difference, and inferiority. Citing Hansen (2000), Revell and Bryan (2018) refer to contradictions in government debates about “the immigration of non-white people into Britain” in the 1950s which created a contradictory situation Revell and Bryan (2018) relate in which the open door immigration policy for Commonwealth citizens of the 1948 British Nationality Act existed simultaneously with a secret Labour “cabinet committee to review ‘the further means which might be adopted to check the immigration into this country of coloured people from British Colonial territories’” (2018: 49).

The data of this study shows that an environment of segregation linked to macro deficit discourses can impact ESOL in FE learners by intensifying feelings of fear and isolation that they suffer before coming to ESOL classes. Revell and Bryan (2018) describe the changes in the macro narrative and how in the mid-1960s and 1970s the narrative of Britishness and education with regard to *immigrants* and others was depoliticised, becoming one of culture versus deprivation. The 1973 select committee on race and immigration identified the ‘deprived home’ as “one that ‘is deprived in the sense not of poverty but of English culture and customs’ (Hansard, 1973: 1545) in Revell and Bryan (2018: 53).

Revell and Bryan (2018) posit that defining groups by their culture, which is “something set apart from the national norm” is all part of the process of ‘othering’ and identifying “traditions, practices and values that were un-British” (2018: 54). According to Revell and Bryan (2018), adaptations of macro narratives of national identity are the “by-product of the brutality of Empire” (2018: 45) that attempt to depoliticise race without dealing with the root problems of

racism and ‘othering’ by constructing instead a discourse of national identity that claims universally desirable and admirable characteristics as unique to British nationality and culture.

3.2.5 ESOL learners and the impact of racial unrest

Racism and racial unrest exist in the historical chronosphere and macrosphere and have the potential to impact ESOL in FE. Discriminatory racist ideologies have surfaced in more recent microsphere contexts, for example around the perpetrators in cases of child abuse in Yorkshire (Kwhali et al., 2016) and murder in Southport (Martin, 2024). Kwarteng (2011) writes about the influence of colonialism, illuminating that although this harmful racist ideology is now officially viewed as repugnant, the deficit discourses of superior and inferior human nature remain in the macrosphere and surface in times of crisis and social tension. The social context in 1981 included frustration arising from austerity, discrimination, restrictions on people with experience of migration, which fuelled social unrest that led to riots and police brutality, which became manifest in Toxteth, Brixton and Handsworth, as reported by Beckett (2015). The racial tension was not only white versus black but also racism had spread within the different ethnic groups who also turned against each other. Although the racial tension of the 1980s is in the past, as part of the chronosphere of ESOL in FE, it can through discourses of the macrosphere still impact learners with experience of migration today when they resurface in events such as those mentioned above.

For example, after a series of terrorist attacks were carried out in 2005 in London by British citizens who were the children of people with experience of migration of Muslim origin (BBC, 2005). Mythen et al. (2009) highlight the amount of counter-terrorism legislation that was introduced since 2000, including “the 2000 Terrorism Act; the 2001 Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act; the 2005 Prevention of Terrorism Act; the 2006 Terrorism Act; and the 2008 Counter-Terrorism Act” in addition to New Labour legislation, such as the 1998 Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Act and the 2000 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act”, all of which exemplify the dynamic of Foucauldian governmentality applied in response to racist tensions. Government policies framed *immigrants* of Muslim backgrounds as ‘risky’ and as deficient in values labelled as ‘British’ and in need of training in social awareness as well as close monitoring. Although not exclusively aimed at Muslims, anti-terrorist exosphere policies are directly relevant to many ESOL in FE learners who are Muslim.

3.2.6 Prevent and British Values - an intersection of Home Office legislation and Department for Education policies

Counter terrorism measures have spread into education policy and now directly impact both learners and practitioners in ESOL in FE. The Prevent Duty (UK Government, 2015), is a duty under Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 issued by the Home Office. It specifies in paragraphs 57 to 76 that all schools and later years childcare providers "in the exercise of their functions" have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" (UK Government, 2015). It also applies to a wide range of public-facing bodies. In the educational setting, the Prevent Duty makes it an obligation for teachers and school staff to look out for and report signs of radicalisation in students. This duty applies to any form of radicalisation, not only what is labelled as Islamic. However, Thomas (2020) mentions the dominant "monocultural focus on Islamic terrorism" although supporters of far-right extremism also proliferate (2020: 15). In the Islamophobic context of the times, Prevent has spotlighted as risky *immigrant* learners of Muslim background in ESOL in FE and their views and beliefs.

'British Values' (Department for Education, 2014) have also been introduced, which require the teaching of the 'values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, tolerance, and mutual respect' (2014: 5). According to Struthers (2017) and Guillam (2011), the decision to isolate certain values and label them "British" has attracted criticism, as if other nations do not also respect or hold these values which were previously enshrined in British law with the acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which the British government signed in 1948 (United Nations, 1948). Applying Foucauldian terms, Revell and Bryan (2018) state that when ideologies are challenged by contingencies such as terrorist attacks or events like wars or other national emergencies, the voices of power and authority change the macro narrative. At the root of 'British values' can be seen the binary neo-colonialist attitude which, as Said (1978) highlights, makes a distinction between the superiority of what is 'British' compared to what is 'Other'. ESOL practitioners in FE have to make learners aware of both the Prevent Duty and British Values, both of which have the potential to alienate ESOL in FE learners by making them feel different and isolated and conversely united in their difference, which does very little for integration.

The importance of communication and English language for people with experience of migration was illuminated in the 2016 the government commissioned the *Casey Review: A Review into Opportunity and Integration* (2016), which looked into racism, discrimination, the

segregation and marginalisation of *immigrants* and the role that lack of English language plays in this. While there were good intentions, within the Casey Review there is still the deficit view of the *immigrant* who cannot communicate and who needs remedial action to promote the dominant aim of integration which is more akin to Berry's (2001) description of assimilation. Contradictions of good intentions with deficit views of people who need English in government-commissioned documents like the *Casey Review* (2016) creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and throughout this history there is a pattern of recurring emergencies and emergency responses to the perceived threat of immigration and *immigrants* which echo the haphazard and contingent power dynamics described by Foucault (1977).

Foucault's (1978) words illuminate these conflicts: "where there is power, there is resistance, that power depends for its existence on the presence of a multiplicity of points of resistance" (1978: 92-93). Drawing from Foucault (1978), strategies of power do not operate in a neat and orderly process. Laws and policies are responses of leadership to contingencies, social changes, and eventualities in which different attitudes and interests collide. This can be seen in the policies of Prevent and British Values.

3.2.7 Gendered identities: women with experience of migration

Historical events in the collective memory of the chronosphere and deficit macrosphere views include by association Muslim ESOL learners and especially women learners and frame them as being responsible for the lack of assimilation into British society of their children. In my view, it is important to examine the literature related to women learners in ESOL in FE to increase our understanding, especially as ESOL practitioners. According to Foster and Bolton (2018), many of the ESOL learners with experience of migration in ESOL in FE are Muslim and Muslim women (2018: 10). Research suggests that although there are men resident immigrant learners studying ESOL in FE, the majority are women. Schellekens, et al. (2023) illuminate this actuality indicating that there are not many men who attend courses in ESOL in FE:

> "There is another longstanding phenomenon for which no data, only anecdotal evidence, are available: men are vastly underrepresented on adult post-19 provision, with typically 70-80% of adult ESOL learners identified as female" (2023: 11).

Foster and Bolton (2018) report that women learners with experience of migration from Asian backgrounds make up a large portion of resident ESOL learners in FE (2018: 5). According to a BIS (2013) research report cited by Foster and Bolton (2018), "70% of ESOL learners were women. 30% were from a white ethnic group but the largest group of ESOL learners had Asian ethnicities" (2018: 5). In terms of developing an understanding of the ESOL in FE microsphere, this data is important as Wilson (2006), herself an Asian woman, illuminates that being a woman and Asian are factors which have a formative effect on the identity of women with experience of migration.

Given the majority of Asian women learners in ESOL in FE, Wilson's books are important for both ESOL practitioners and managers to increase their understanding of the challenges these women with experience of migration face in their microspheres. In Wilson's books, *Finding A Voice: Asian women in Britain* (1978 and 2018) and *Dreams, Questions, Struggles* (2006), she writes about the situation of South Asian women in Britain from the 1960s to the 1990s, describing the impact on *immigrant* women of the patriarchical tendency of South Asian society to regard women as property. Wilson (2006) writes that while women brought up with this expectation most often comply, if the marriage (which is normally arranged by parents) turns out to be abusive, it is extremely difficult for them. This suggests that women learners with experience of migration in ESOL in FE may face restrictions and challenges joining ESOL classes. Conversely, as Wilson (2006) shows, it also emphasises that the confidence and agency of women ESOL learners can develop by learning English, which is important for their wellbeing, countering stereotypical views of Asian Muslim women as weak and passive.

In terms of women of other ethnicities in ESOL in FE, Wilson (2006) discusses similar problems with patriarchal systems that impact identity exist in other communities of people with experience of migration, such as the Afro-Caribbean community. Wilson (2006) describes how organisations like the Southall Black Sisters (SBS), Awaz (the first Asian women's group in Britain), and the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD), worked together to provide safe houses for women escaping abusive marriages as well as also coordinating strike action and labour disputes over low pay and poor working conditions. This adds to our understanding of women learners with experience of migration in ESOL in FE because it shows that not all Muslim women ESOL learners impacted by deficit views and cultural restrictions are Asian, and that far from being the weak, passive individuals that macro deficit discourses imply, they are strong, intelligent, and have agency.

Morrice's (2017) illuminations clearly outline macro deficit views that frame and stereotype women with experience of migration who may need ESOL. Morrice (2017) posits that stereotyped views of women with experience of migration have a particular impact on female identity by framing them as deficient. She explains that they are seen as not having English language or "sexual freedoms". They are positioned as being backwards and trapped in domestication, "bearing multiple children and welfare dependent". They do not have "the necessary dispositions" and are "unable or unwilling to engage in self-making and individual accomplishment required of western feminine citizenry". Thus, they are deemed to be of "little value" and have "little to contribute to a modern and progressive state" (2017: 413).

Macro deficit views which impact women learners in the ESOL in FE microsphere have been promoted by political leaders. Rosenburg (2007) relates that Blunkett (2002) as Home Secretary under Tony Blair's New Labour Government, in his paper *Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain: Globalisation and the Renewal of Democracy and Civil Society* controversially drew "a direct relationship between social responsibility and not speaking English" (2007: 244). Rosenburg suggests that Blunkett was implying that mothers with experience of migration were responsible for their children's and grandchildren's disaffection with English. A few years later, as reported by Mason and Sherwood (2016), Cameron, as Conservative Prime Minister, suggested in a speech that "language classes for Muslim women could help stop radicalisation". They also report that in a comment that added to physical and psychological vulnerability of mothers with experience of migration, Cameron also indicated that they would be tested and held responsible for their English abilities, implying that they were not doing enough to learn English.

Challenging the macro deficit views of Asian women, who form a majority of women in ESOL in FE as stated in Foster and Bolton (2018), Wilson (2006) also illuminates that in terms of contributing to the economy and the society, often the woman was the breadwinner because of her ability to gain better employment in a garment sweatshop or because of single family households in which men of the family, such as grandfathers, took over household duties although the cultural expectation was that the woman's place was in the home.

In terms of understanding fear, anxiety, and trauma in the microsphere of ESOL in FE women learners, Wilson (2006) discusses the two-year rule which came into force with the Immigration Act of 1971 (UK Government, 1971). Under this legislation, it had to be proven that the marriage was not a sham (the Primary Purpose Rule). If the marriage ended before a year had passed then the woman had to return to her country of origin. Owing to cultural

taboos on divorced women, if the woman was in an abusive marriage this rule meant either having to put up with an abusive and sometimes violent marriage or face ostricism or possibly death at the hands of relatives or members of the community in Pakistan who would judge her to be worthless if she were deported.

Although amendments to this rule were made in 1997, 1999, 2002, and 2005 which made it easier for women to gain concessions if they were in an abusive marriage, at the same time further restrictions were applied such as 'no recourse to public funds' and the extension of one year under the two-year rule to two years. Wilson (2006) points out that what this shows is synergy at the patriarchal community level with the macro attitudes and ideologies from Home Office immigration law and how over time, and especially in relation to women with experience of migration, abuse has been supported and institutionalised. I posit that this information is important for ESOL practitioners and managers who sometimes encounter trauma and extreme anxiety in learners; it shows that in addition to supporting neocolonial deficit views, at times UK legislation has actively worked to threaten the lives of women with experience of migration from patriarchal societies, such as Pakistan, and an awareness of the historical chronosphere and macrosphere discourses impacting and challenging these women ESOL learners is crucial for a holistic understanding of the learners in their microspheres.

The research of Courtney (2017), previously mentioned in Chapter 1, explores tutor perspectives on ESOL learners in the UK. Her research shows that deficit views of mothers with experience of migration extend even to ESOL practitioners who are tasked with supporting and nurturing their learners' English language skills. The expression of deficit views of learners by ESOL tutors in her research speaks to Gee's (2014) theory of world figuring in which people may voice contradictory deficit views while trying to make sense of complex situations they are in. Courtney (2017) found that what is needed is a better practitioner understanding of how their attitudes towards learners are impacted by frustrations caused by problems in ESOL policy. I posit that her research would support the importance of ESOL practitioner awareness of the learners and how they are positioned in their microspheres which would work against stereotypes and misunderstandings that impact identity

Also relevant to ESOL in FE policy is how successive governments and education authorities, as reported by Mason and Sherwood (2016) have targeted immigrant women spouses as being deficient in English language especially because of the role they play in

the care and education of children. Yet, simultaneously, in another intersection of Home Office legislation with the Department for Education which is applied by ESFA (2023), the Home Office restricts the access of *immigrant* spouses to FE adult education, including ESOL classes, as they must be resident for three years before they can join free ESOL courses in FE, adversely affecting progress in learning English. The more recent limitation enabled by the WMCA (2020) in the West Midlands, reducing Pre-Entry ESOL course time from two years to one year (160 hours approximately) has had a further damaging impact.

Oliver and Hughes (2018) discuss how the effect of the three-year residence rule has been particularly hard on non-EU spouses who are often busy looking after infant children by the time they became eligible for ESOL courses. It is another example of inequitable practice as, before Brexit, the three-year residence rule did not apply to EU settlement family migrants although this has now changed since Brexit (Department for Education, 2025). Asylum-seekers have some rights by international law (IJRC, 2021) but what they can actually receive depends on each case and their individual immigration bail document. Some refugees who meet certain conditions can access FE courses but in some areas funding cuts have reduced provision and there are long waiting lists. Refugees and asylum seekers may find some temporary educational opportunities with charities (FE Week, 2025). This indicates that ESOL in FE is a marginalised provision and potential ESOL learners face barriers to access which intensifies the injustice of deficit discourses and blaming learners, especially women learners, for their lack of English.

4 The ESOL in FE historical chronosphere

The historical chronosphere of FE and macro discourses surrounding FE emerged in the literature. It is significant in terms of how it impacts the wellbeing of learners in ESOL in FE. This section looks at chronosphere events, macro discourses, and exosphere policies as far back as the Code for Evening Continuation Schools of 1891 mentioned in Rosenburg (2007: 275), in order to grasp how these chronospheric events have shaped the context of the ESOL learner in FE.

4.1 Pre 1940s: development of English language provision for people with experience of migration

Rosenburg (2007) illuminates that English for people with experience of migration has a long history in the UK which is related to cycles of immigration and attitudes to adult migrants, specifically their ability to settle and integrate which has been repeatedly scrutinised and

criticised. With each wave of people with experience of migration, the need for English language grew and ESOL provision had its beginnings in this context. Rosenburg (2007) recounts how the start of adult education in the UK was related to the Elementary Education Act 1870 introduced by Forster (UK Government, 1870), in which the government accepted responsibility for the education of children between the ages of 5 to 15. However, there was no government sponsored educational provision that adults with experience of migration wanting to learn English could access in the UK until ten years after the 1870 Act. According to Rosenburg (2007), the Act did not spell out what was meant by elementary education and the age of students was not specified (2007: 17). An amendment to this Act in 1880 (UK Government, 1880) clarified points on school attendance, in particular that working children, or factory children, were required to pass the standard before going to work although it was not specified what “the standard” was.

Following the Elementary Education Act of 1880, provision was made, notably in London, for adults who had left school to continue study for the Elementary standard. Rosenburg (2007) relates that by 1893, the Code for Evening Continuation Schools in London had allowed adult education classes to become established and the curriculum became broader, offering some foreign languages and citizenship classes. This indicates that there was an awareness in London of the needs of people with experience of migration for education which included both language and citizenship studies that would help assimilate them into the London microsphere.

Rosenburg (2007) points out that the dearth of government provision in London in the 1880s, led to self-help educational developments among people with experience of migration. She gives the example of the immigrant Jewish community in London, which accounted for 70% of the Jewish population in the UK, who formed community groups, often attached to synagogues, that encouraged the learning of English as well as the maintenance of first languages which included Hebrew, Yiddish, German, and Russian (2007: 5). There were also volunteer English teachers from the charity, Toynbee Hall (2022), after it was established in 1884.

Rosenburg (2007) relates that whilst the children of immigrants could access government schools after the Elementary Education Act of 1870, it was only later adults could access the Evening Continuation programmes especially to maintain their native languages which shows a significant interest in the cultural and language preservation of individuals with experience of migration which can be seen as challenging assimilationist ideology.

However, in addition to language acquisition, some of the provision in these schools was about acculturation, such as the free classes organised by the Russo-Jewish Committee “to impart a knowledge of the English language, habits and usages” (2007: 12). This indicates that alternative English language provision was important, as it was not provided by the state.

Later, a need for a public-facing body to represent Britain both in terms of the English language and English culture and way of life was created because, as Rosenburg (2007) recounts in her history, during the time of the two World Wars from 1914 to 1945, waves of refugees, escaping Europe and other areas impacted by the wars, which included many non-English speaking people, as well as allied troops, arrived in the UK. Rosenburg (2007) relates that in 1935, Churchill, who was Conservative prime minister at that time, established the British Council and government funding was allocated for the Basic English programmes, for example to support educational needs of allied service personnel in World War II (2007: 42). The British Council is relevant to the experience of ESOL learners in FE and elsewhere as they have established worldwide learning centres to disseminate knowledge of British culture and the English language and have been responsible for the development of a large amount of ESOL pedagogy as well as teacher training (British Council Worldwide, 2025).

4.2 19th century: adult education policy and provision in England

In an archaeological sense, the history of adult education and FE policy and provision are critical to understanding the microsphere of resident learners of ESOL in FE. Green and Lucas (1999) illuminate that in the 19th century, adult education for technical training, which later became FE, was “marginalised from mainstream educational provision and low in status” (1999: 9-10). They describe the early days of adult technical education as a fragmented provision of apprenticeships provided by employers, as well as provision at schools, “self-improvement associations of the labour and co-operative movement”, and “other adult education institutions which received philanthropic and state funding” (1999: 10). Green and Lucas (1999) indicate that early adult technical education’s informal structure and lack of a central strategy was preferred by the government and employers as limiting the state’s role and keeping adult education a low priority” (1999: 13), which is significant in terms of ESOL in FE today, which has also been impacted by the same lack of strategy and deprioritisation.

4.3 1940s and 1950s: establishment of FE

This period saw attitudes and ideologies in education that had an impact on FE, and ultimately, the provision of ESOL. Baldi's (2010) research discusses an exclusive elitist model of education, known as the Tripartite System. This had an impact on the entire education sector, not just the new further education provision. According to Baldi (2020), in 1944 the prevalent attitudes of the Conservative-led coalition government policymarkers appeared to favour the Tripartite System. Baldi (2020) points out that its general popularity was related to its assertion that intelligence was inherited and could be determined by testing which challenged the domination of the upper-class privilege in education which was based on wealth and social position. Ball (2013) states that "The history of English education is then very much a history of social class and the 1944 Act did little to interrupt that history" (Ball, 2013: 8). Ball (2013) maintains that the educational "settlement plan" for 1944 to 1976 was "shaky and unstable" which "made thoroughgoing comprehensive reform difficult, if not impossible" (2013: 9). Jones (2016) points out that elitist attitudes which led to the deprioritisation of the further education project, made the speed of change imperceptible, or at least very slow. "New institutional forms reflected old notions of what was more, and less, important in education" (2016: 42). This meant that ESOL provision in FE would also be caught in this intransigent discourse of FE inferiority, highlighting future challenges for ESOL in the FE microsphere.

FE in the UK was established as the site of educational provision for adults with the 1944 Education Act (UK Government, 1944). This legislation made it compulsory for local authorities to establish further education provision for anyone over school-leaving age, according to the needs of their area. This act made it a legal obligation for Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to outline plans for the Ministry of Education for curriculum and schemes of work for post compulsory education. At the time, as Giles (1946) and Jones (2016) illuminate, it was hoped, especially by more liberal government factions, that this educational provision would support social stability and maintain the ruling status quo by increasing the knowledge and skills of working men and women and improving job prospects and living conditions for the working classes. This would mean that as part of college provision, these aims would also strengthen ESOL provision and be of benefit to ESOL learners.

With reference to the works of Baldi (2020), Ball (2013), and Jones, social attitudes in the UK towards FE have been a factor which have contributed to its instability and continuing low status. Although the 1944 Education Act (UK Government, 1944) took the step of establishing further education for adults, which clearly showed a willingness to open

opportunities for education and training to a wider population, its wording in Section 41b (1944: 41b) suggested that the expectations and the vision for adult FE was limited to the recreational. In terms of what FE has become post 1944, Green and Lucas (1999) argued that there had never been at that point a "national strategic role for further education (FE)" and that "many of the advances made towards local responsiveness in the post-1944 era have been weakened as the sector has become more fragmented" (1999: 9). Importantly in terms of this study, the FE historical chronosphere depicts the context into which ESOL was situated. As Augar et al. (2019) mention, from 1945 onwards, FE colleges became a major provider of adult education, which has included a significant amount of ESOL provision that is impacted by the historical events of FE (2019: 18), foregrounding the future challenges to be faced in the ESOL in FE space.

4.4 Development of ESOL curriculum

With regard to the historical chronosphere of ESOL curriculum, as Rosenburg (2007) describes, before the post-war years, the curriculum of English language for *immigrants* and foreigners, many of whom had some knowledge of the Roman alphabet, focused on grammar, and was based on texts, and teaching methods made extensive use of repetition and memorisation. As Rosenburg (2007) relates, what was called EFL (English as a Foreign Language) could be used for learners who had previous exposure to the Roman alphabet in their own languages as well as prior learning of grammar and texts. However, the world wars and the subsequent British Nationality Act (UK Government, 1948) brought a greater diversity of immigrants to the UK some of whom did not know the Roman alphabet. ESOL learners spoke varieties of English as citizens of former colonies of Britain where, as Kwarteng (2011) relates, English was imposed as the official language of power and administration. Immigrants included doctors and nurses who may have been highly educated in their home countries, but others like transport and factory workers may have had little formal education and their knowledge of English may have differed from UK English, creating barriers to communication. This suggests that the curriculum of ESOL in these early days was tailored to meet learners' needs for integration and employment.

4.4.1 Later development of ESOL curriculum

Rosenburg (2007) recounts developments in the ESOL curriculum that happened over time to meet the needs of diverse learners and gradually the priority for spoken English first became established and a situation-based curriculum was developed to support oral communication which became known as ESL (English as a second language). She explains that linguistic theorists and philosophers highlighted the importance of speech acts and

speech events and how speech determined the use of grammar and she mentions the work of D A Wilkins and his notional syllabus which “brought together the grammatical, the functional and the modal (concerned with the speaker’s perspective)” (2007: 152). Hamilton and Hillier (2009), who inform the reader about the development of ESOL and the problems the provision has faced, describe how it was meant to embrace all four skills, teaching both English for speaking and listening for communication in the community and the workplace along with basic knowledge of English language grammar and structure, essential to the development of reading and writing.

5 1960s and 1970s - ESOL and FE in education policy

In this section, I look at how the history of the FE chronosphere and ESOL chronosphere, which were two separate spheres with their own unique histories start to merge through education policy. ESOL started to develop in the 1960s and 1970s from the government recommendations in *English for Immigrants* (Ministry of Education, 1963), *The Education of Immigrants* (Department of Education and Science, 1965) and *The Education of Immigrants, Education Survey 13* (Department of Education and Science, 1971), although these documents focused on children.

In 1963, fifteen years after the British Nationality Act of 1948 (UK Government, 1948), and early in the development of ESOL, the first document that dealt with how school teachers should respond to the challenges they were facing with *immigrant* children was published by the Ministry of Education. *English for Immigrants* (Ministry of Education, 1963) attempted to identify and address the deficiencies of *immigrants*, both children and adults, in English. Rosenburg (2007) points out that this policy document showed sensitivity by reminding teachers to respect *immigrants’* differences “in dress, religion, culture and language”, as well as showing a respect for the maintenance of *immigrants’* mother tongues (2007: 87-88). However, in conflict with calls for respect, the document also expressed concern about the high concentration of *immigrant* children in certain areas, and it anticipated a possible hostile response to this from British parents (Ministry of Education, 1963: 6).

As Rosenburg (2007) asserts, the small section in *English for Immigrants* (Ministry of Education, 1963) which dealt with adult education showed little awareness or knowledge of ESOL learners in the UK as it was written by an inspector whose experience of English language teaching had been outside the UK. The chapter did not cover learners who might be illiterate in their own languages, or learners who might be literate in a different script, or who might have picked up some vocabulary outside of class (2007: 88). This lack of an

informed approach without recognition of UK ESOL learner diversity in an educational policy document displays a lack of focus, if not obliviousness, on the part of policymakers at that time. The publication of this document in 1963 was during a time of racial tensions, only two years before the Racism Act of 1965 (UK Government, 1965), which highlights in historical chronosphere dismissive tendencies of those in authority towards minority groups.

As Rosenburg (2007) relates, in the historical chronosphere of ESOL in FE, the Industrial Training Act (UK Government, 1964) was brought in to provide on-the-job training for people at work and this included people with experience of migration who needed ESOL. Although it was outside of the FE sector, I mention it here because the work of the people involved in the creation of the ESOL provision in this initiative represented a significant contribution to ESOL in FE, including all those involved in the NCILT (National Centre for Industrial Language Training) thoroughly documented by Rosenburg (2007: 129). The resources produced for ILT were used widely in ESOL both in and out of the workplace. ILT was funded by Section 11, about which more will be said, which meant it was only available to *immigrants* from the Commonwealth until 1993 when for five years until its demise it was available to ESOL learners of all backgrounds in employment.

The Education of Immigrants (Department of Education and Science, 1965), touched on problems mentioned previously that indicated wider social attitudes such as the possible hostility and racist views of (white) British parents objecting to *immigrant* children on the grounds that their childrens' education might be affected and how it was important to 'spread the children', which referred to the dispersal of very young children of *immigrant* descent over long distances to attend school, according to the accounts of Rosenburg (2007) and Wilson (2006). The section of this pamphlet on adult *immigrants*, in which FE colleges were given the responsibility for teaching work-related English, expressed the deficit view that adult *immigrants*, whether or not they intended to stay in the UK, should "have an induction course in English ways of living and learn to speak intelligibly" (1965: 6). This statement reveals the one-sided attitude of mainstream English society voiced in policy documents which, drawing from Berry (2001), expected people with experience of migration to unproblematically assimilate into the host community.

5.1 Early ESOL funding

In 1966, legislation was passed that became instrumental in the development of ESOL. Section 11 of the Local Government Act of 1966 (UK Government, 1966) provided funding

which, as Rosenburg (2007) relates, was used for English language programmes as part of a general *immigrant* settlement package (2007: 90). Section 11 of the Act (1966) stated that the Secretary of State would pay local authorities to employ staff if he was of the opinion that the local authority were "required to make special provision in the exercise of any of their functions in consequence of the presence within their areas of substantial numbers of immigrants from the Commonwealth whose language or customs differ from those of the community" (1966: Section 11). This meant that ESOL courses with government funding could be accessed by learners with experience of migration from Commonweath countries.

Hamilton and Hillier (2009) and Rosenburg (2007) relate that this funding supported the early development of ESOL in England. For instance Section 11 states it was to be used "on account of expenditure of such descriptions (being expenditure in respect of the employment of staff)" (1966). Rosenburg (2007) and Tikly et al. (2005) state that the Section 11 funding provided for the salaries of specialist teachers and personnel for the teaching of English and the benefits were passed on to the learners in the form of ESOL classes. Rosenburg (2007) points out that with the continued support of Section 11 funding, in the 1970s and 1980s organisations such as the ILEA in London, NATECLA, and educational providers in big cities like Birmingham, Manchester, and Leicester produced a significant amount of innovative pedagogy, curriculum, and teaching resources for ESOL. The learning areas to be targeted were different languages and customs, and the government expectation was most likely that it would promote assimilation. However, Rosenburg (2007) emphasises that Section 11 funding was only available for people with experience of migration from the Commonwealth which excluded many other people, for example Chinese or Italian and those seeking asylum, which shows a restrictive stance of policymakers which was unfair to non-Commonwealth migrants who also needed ESOL.

So far, this historical overview suggests that a concern for the interests of learners of ESOL emerged over the 1970s, especially from the organisations and bodies involved in the delivery of ESOL, the production of resources, and teacher training, such as the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA), the Language and Literacy Unit (LLU), the Basic Skills Agency (BSA), the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), and the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE). Progress was made in terms of policy and provision with funding and resources for teaching ESOL but deficit views of people with experience of migration remain.

5.2 Further developments in ESOL policy and provision

Following the reports of 1963 and 1965, the *Education of Immigrants* (Department of Education and Science, 1971) was a wide-ranging report. Item 7 of this document formally identified FE college as a likely provider of English for *immigrants* along with higher education establishments. Rosenburg (2007) relates that the 1971 report recognised the contribution of both voluntary and statutory organisations to the development of ESOL resources and teaching, which included a mention of volunteers in Sparkbrook, Birmingham among other places (2007: 114). This report shows the complexity of the ESOL in FE microsphere that simultaneously contains deficit views of ESOL learners with experience of migration and praises efforts being made to teach and assimilate.

From this time most formal providers of ESOL were further education colleges or adult learning departments within local authorities such as currently exists in London (Greater London Authority, 2025). *English for Immigrants* (Ministry of Education, 1963), *The Education of Immigrants* (Department of Education and Science, 1965) and *The Education of Immigrants, Education Survey 13* (Department of Education and Science, 1971), help to build up a picture of the convergence of ESOL and FE and ESOL's subsequent development. In these documents, the suggestion was that assimilation could be achieved by undergoing a process of training in which *immigrants* would embrace the attitudes, ideologies and values of UK society whilst letting go of the languages, beliefs, and values of their countries of origin. The pattern in ideology which emerges through the language used in these documents reveals, with reference to Goleš (2020) and Said (1978), a deep-rooted belief in the colonial binary view which asserts the superiority of 'indigenous' British and the inferiority of *immigrants*, especially those *immigrants* who could not speak English well or at all and whose customs deviated from those of the wider British population. An awareness of these attitudes in the ESOL in FE historical chronosphere and macrosphere can give us a deeper understanding of tensions that surface in the ESOL in FE microsphere when contingencies arise.

The formation of urban conurbations of people with experience of migration was seen as one of the causes of English language difficulties. *The Education of Immigrants, Education Survey 13* (Department of Education and Science, 1971) states that concentrations of "socially deprived indigenous and *immigrant* children . . . results in social as well as educational concern" and that "numbers of children born in this country to *immigrant* parents living under these conditions are now entering these schools with linguistic difficulties almost as great as those of young children arriving directly from overseas in that, contrary to

expectations, their knowledge of English is either non-existent or extremely rudimentary" (1971: 4). These words, drawing from Bronfenbrenner (1979) are macro deficit discourses of the time around *immigrants* which are relevant today as an indelible part of the ESOL in FE chronosphere.

Although, the *Education of Immigrants, Education Survey 13* (Department of Education and Science, 1971) mentioned unfairness and the negative effects of some government policies, such as the restrictions on who could receive Section 11 funding (1971), the three documents (1963, 1965, and 1971) illuminate a conflict as discussions were taking place between 1963 and 1971 on how best to deal with the problem of large numbers of *immigrant* children entering schools in areas where *immigrants* lived. Documentation of the anticipated reaction of white settled British people to the significant increase in *immigrant* school pupils needing English language, indicates that at the time this problematic view of *immigrant* children was not challenged.

Evidence of a predisposition to 'other' people with experience of migration and their children as a problematic group against 'white' children can be seen in *The Education of Immigrants* (1971). Although it gives a detailed study of the challenges authorities faced and the actions and programmes they put into place to help *immigrant children* settle into British schools, the tendency was to problematise *immigrant adults* and *immigrant children* as one big deficient group, which can be seen in statements like:

> "So many immigrant children are often deprived in their homes of so much that is necessary to develop the language they need and so often do not find the required intellectual stimulus there, that it is little cause for surprise that not only the intellectual performance but also the intellectual status of so many of these children is depressed" (1971: 66).

Drawing from Foucault (1984), this deficit macro discourse of the families and cultures of people with experience of migration was accepted knowledge at that time. This deep-seated deficit view of people with experience of migration emerges in times of tension and has an affective impact on the learners in the ESOL in FE microsphere.

Adding to this, the *Education of Immigrants 1971*, also points out that in addition to cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences and differences in "backgrounds, attitudes and educational needs; the great majority are distinguishable by colour" so skin colour further problematises

many people with experience of migration as they have to “contend with the very complex problem of colour prejudice” (1971: 4). Thus, the discussion of problems perceived to be caused by *immigrants* and immigration surfaces in education policy documents which exemplifies how, inferring from Foucault (1984), deficit discourses become knowledge enshrined in government policy documents, resulting in ongoing deficit discourses of exclusion and discrimination in the macrosphere that impact learners with experience of migration in the microsphere of ESOL in FE.

6 1980s: ESOL and FE funding policy changes

During the 1980s, major exosphere changes and instability in funding impacted the microsphere of ESOL and ESOL in FE. It was not until the Education Act of 1993 (UK Government, 1993) when the stipulation of “*immigrants* from the Commonwealth” was removed that Section 11 funds were made available to any learner from an ethnic minority background and this policy lasted for five years until 1998 (Rosenburg, 2007). Nevertheless, ESOL does not seem to have been a high priority at the time as government policy to make the provision of ESOL a requirement for local authorities within further education did not take place until twenty years later.

In 1980, the Conservative government put the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) in charge of developing adult literacy, which included ESOL, and numeracy (2007: 155). While most practitioners were “driven by a commitment to empower the individual” (2007: 156), government was of the opinion that funding for adult literacy (including ESOL) was about employability and improving the UK skills base (2007: 156). This opinion was an early indication of how the language learning needs of ESOL learners were overlooked by treating ESOL as an offshoot of literacy, which is inaccurate, as Schellekens et al. (2023) later confirms. Section 11 government funding for ILT ceased in 1989 (Rosenburg, 2007: 161). Roberts et al. (1992) stated:

> “The decision to cease funding was in line with government policy to move from nationally organised, long-term-funded training to employer-led, financially competitive short-term courses. This decision, no doubt, also reflected a lack of commitment to fund a service with a substantial research and development element, and one which aimed to tackle issues of racism and equal opportunities as well as language” (1992: 380-381).

Neoliberal ideas in government, such as the one mentioned above which reduced nationally "organised, long-term-funded training", were popularised under Thatcher's Conservative premiership (1979-1990). Jessop (2015) relates that Thatcher sought to stimulate the economy by regenerating market forces which would lead to prosperity by "tight control over the money supply, public spending cuts, attacking trade union privileges" (2015: 19). She was also very keen under the leadership of Keith Jospeh, Secretary of State for Education and Finance, to apply market logic to the educational sector. As part of increased accountability, colleges had to submit detailed applications for funding to the council based on student numbers and a complete report of the yearly requirements to be submitted before the start of the academic year. This impact of neoliberal accountability in FE can be traced historically to the Education Reform Act (Department of Education and Science, 1988) which stopped direct funding for FE through LEAs and established funding councils.

For example as Lucas (1999) illuminates, in the case of polytechnics and colleges of technology this became the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC). In the context of FE, this meant that regimes of standardisation, quality control, and accountability were applied which involved FE teaching and administrative staff in increased paperwork, observations, and inspections, which have continued and intensified into the present day. In the case of FE and ESOL in FE these regimes have created tension impacting both learners and practitioners which is in the current microsphere of ESOL in FE as this study and that of Courtney (2017) illuminate. According to Gillard (2018), during the Conservative government of Thatcher, the neoliberal free market formula was widely applied in inflexible government policies in an attempt to stimulate competition and productivity and at the same time to strengthen central government authority.

As Rosenburg (2007) relates, the loss of the commitment of government funding for ILT impacted people with experience of migration who were in work as educational provision was not always prioritised by employers. Drawing from Rosenburg (2007) and Wilson (2006) South Asian women were factory workers, and also doctors, teachers, and members of other professions, highly educated in their home countries who came to the UK with the intention of continuing to work in their professions. However, drawing from Fricker (2007), with the funding policy changes that came with the marketisation of education provision for adults in employment, these workers were marginalised and their need for English language largely forgotten and effectively erased. This suggests a lack of awareness, coordinated thinking and planning among policymakers who fail to gauge the impact and repercussions of their decisions on FE and the needs of adult learners of ESOL in FE.

Paget and Stevenson (2014), in their report *On Speaking Terms*, state that ESOL was seen as a short-term problem despite long waitlists for courses and there were conflicts between the Home Office and education departments on who should be responsible for ESOL funding. There were also tensions around the pedagogy, which for ESOL was more focused on oral skills in comparison with basic literacy skills. ESOL providers' efforts at the time were weakened by fragmentation of opinion, approach, and lack of financial support (Rosenburg, 2007). In more recent criticism, Paget and Stevenson (2014) remarked on the absence of a unified and legitimised approach for ESOL and the continual struggle for continuity of government support and funding, which was as true in the 1980s as it is now in ESOL in FE.

The exosphere of funding policy at this time in the 1980s, and earlier, had a localised focus; there was no national funding formula for FE, and Lucas (1999) relates that each LEA (local education authority) had "different models and calculations reflecting the complicated funding formulae used by local government" and finances for further education were "funded by a mixture of local and national taxation" (1999: 43), allocated by the central government to the local education authorities (LEAs) to spend as they saw fit for the provision within their region. FE college allocations were retrospectively calculated based on the previous year's full-time equivalents (Lucas, 1999). As Green and Lucas (1999) state, and as outlined above, mechanisms of funding for FE were complex, fragmented, and inadequate. This indicates that in the FE exosphere there was a lack of a long-term strategy for FE which also impacted ESOL in FE by affiliation. Drawing from Foucault (1984) and Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024), this inadequacy created a gap which was filled by a neoliberal strategy that has had serious implications for the wellbeing of microsphere of FE and ESOL in FE.

This period in the historical chronosphere of ESOL in FE introduced a period of intense exosphere policy activity. As illuminated by Green and Lucas (1999) and Smith and O'Leary (2013), the shift to a quasi-market economy in education has had a significant impact, not only on the UK's economy and society; they observe that the application of market logic to the education sector caused what later became known as neoliberal free market formula and new public management (NPM), to emerge. Although these researchers do not focus on ESOL in FE, I posit that this marketisation also impacted the pedagogy and curriculum of ESOL for learners with experience of migration.

6.1 Neoliberalism

At this juncture, the influence of macrosphere neoliberal ideology requires a closer examination in order to further illuminate its impact and how it relates to FE and ESOL in FE. Its importance in terms of my study can be seen in how its discourses, through the policy-making government departments of the exosphere, impact the individuals and communities of the ESOL in FE microsphere. Drawing from Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024), the lack of strong and stable funding strategies for FE provided an opportunity for what is known as neoliberalism to fill the ideological vacuum. Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024) illuminate that as an ideology, neoliberalism is uniquely relevant to the direction and development of twentieth- and twenty-first century government policy impacting all areas of public sector services, including education. Owing to its pervasiveness, neoliberalism has been identified in various places in this thesis, including the historical documents of this literature review as well as in the research conversations and self-interviews in the analysis.

Drawing from Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024), discourses of neoliberalism value the human capital of the autonomous, hard-working, responsible, and independent individual. This idea of the individual and the extent to which they are autonomous and in control of their destiny contrasts sharply with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theories of the complex inter-dependence of diverse humans within their societies and relationships and with Foucault's (1978) theories of the complex interaction of human power dynamics that have underpinned my thinking. Drawing from Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024), in the neoliberal concept of "responsibilisation", the onus is on the individual rather than the state to struggle for and contribute to economic success through conformity to the idea of autonomous hard work, effort, and personal expenditure. This neutralising view puts everyone in society on the same level, which is inaccurate and reinforces structural inequalities. The concept devalues and rejects as undesirable the idea of the individual as part of a socially interactive and supportive microsphere of cooperation in which inequalities can be addressed with social assistance provided by the state. The neutralising neoliberal discourse of responsibilisation supports the idea of personal autonomy and freedom which encourages individuals to blame themselves and crucially to also be blamed for their economic hardships as their difficulties and failures are understood as arising from deficits in their characters rather than the fault of the state (Monbiot and Hutchinson, 2024). As Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024) point out, the problem with this ideology is that it dismisses people who are marginalised for any reason as being inferior and therefore unsuccessful and I posit that this would include those who are marginalised by language, such as ESOL learners with experience of migration in FE.

Interestingly in terms of how macro discourses can change, Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024) state that soon after the end of World War II, even the mention of neoliberalism was avoided because of opposition to its viewpoints which were seen as immoral and unfair. Historically, books promoting a neoliberal agenda, notably those of the Austrian/British economist and philosopher Hayek (1899-1992), had enjoyed some popularity, but after 1951 "the neoliberal programme of empowering the rich and letting the devil take the hindmost was met with widespread public revulsion" (2024: 21). Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024) explain that neoliberalism thus deprioritises public and social services and it increasingly behoves each individual to work hard with a minimum amount of support from the government to meet their own needs in terms of finance, health care, housing, transportation, and most importantly to the focus of this study, education. The neoliberal viewpoint is based on the myth of meritocracy which, drawing from Young (1958), falsely assumes that life is a level playing field where everyone has the same advantages and those who are disadvantaged have only themselves to blame. If this were true then ESOL in FE, which is grounded in helping people marginalised by language and funded by the state, would be undesirable in neoliberal terms. However, drawing from Foucault (1971, 1977), although exosphere policies are influenced by ideologies that seem immutable, they are not ultimately determined by them because these governing macrosphere discourses are themselves determined by people in response to "the singular randomness of events" in the ecosystem (1977: 154-155).

7 1990s – influences of neoliberal ideology ESOL in FE provision

In terms of my study of ESOL in FE, the research of Schellekens, et al. (2023) and Curcin, et al. (2022) confirm that educational marketisation in FE has had a significant impact on ESOL in FE today, shaping current funding policies, leading to serious anomalies in ESOL provision which will be discussed in Chapter 3, Section 10. Smith and O'Leary (2013) detail how New Public Management (NPM) was set in motion by the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 (Department for Education, 1992). The exosphere impact of this Act effectively turned FE into a business. Smith and O'Leary (2013) relate that, like a commercial business, under the 1992 Act, FE colleges had budgets and produced market information and became accountable to stakeholders who were the students and funders. This meant that the FE "market" was under yearly surveillance to see where its performance as a market could be enhanced with policy changes, which created constant instability. Additionally, accountability to local education authorities, who had been democratically elected, was

replaced by corporations with two-thirds of the membership made up of local employers. As Smith and O'Leary (2013) explain, "At the heart of this FE model lies a funding methodology that not only makes institutions accountable in terms of performance but is also amenable to centralised intervention from a palette of educational policy" (2013: 245). This has had a direct impact on ESOL because of its affiliation with FE and the same rules apply in its management.

7.1 FE and ESOL policy and provision

According to Beckmann, et al. (2009) and Chitty (1997), the 1990s continued to be a period of intense exosphere activity and change. The New Labour government of Blair (1997 to 2007), which succeeded the Conservative government of Thatcher, increased the amount of public funding for education, including further and adult education, and ESOL. However, as Beckmann, et al. (2009) and Chitty (1997) illuminate, the Blair government maintained the neoliberal approach in the marketisation of education and centralised managerial strategy in line with the marketized government of the Thatcher years. Critics Green and Lucas (1999) and Smith and O'Leary (2013) blame the decline of education as a whole on the marketisation of the sector, which involved cuts in funding together with tight regulation, especially FE. They argue that NPM, an offshoot of neoliberalism, is responsible for this decline.

In the same vein, Jones (2016), going back in history to the creation of FE in 1944, records how the initial enthusiasm for FE in the Education Act of 1944 never developed into the socially transformative project envisioned because it was seen as an inferior provision for a lower class of learners. This is an early indication of the way neoliberalism, in favouring financial independence, prioritises the wealthy class and their interests. Thus, social class and all types of discrimination that can be related to social class, such as race and ethnicity, are features of neoliberal policies supported by the super-rich. Ball (2016) also sees the emphasis on accountability, normalisation, and standardisation in the FE sector as part of neoliberalism.

Hamilton and Hillier (2009) relate that after 1998, Section 11 funding, which had been significant in the development of ESOL, was replaced with the Ethnic Minority Student Achievement Grant (EMAG) in England through the Learning Skills Council. This grant continued to support EAL (English as an Additional Language) programmes which Tikly, et al. (2005) suggest resulted in some limited improvement among Asian recipients but was

criticised for not doing enough to support Afro-Caribbean learners who did not improve as a result of the grant. They also state that EMAG was also criticised for not providing sufficient funding to make a significant difference. Unlike the funding of Section 11, which was determined by numbers of *immigrant* and ethnic minority learners in LEAs (local education authorities), a case had to be made for LEAs to receive funding through EMAG. Tikly et al (2005) warned that by dividing up potential beneficiaries of the funding, it created a fragmented focus which never really tackled the root issue of racism. Furthermore, that the government would need to increase the size of the grant if they want to "more effectively tackle minority ethnic underachievement" and "demonstrate more commitment to tackling institutionalized racism within the education system and the national curriculum" (2005: 283). This indicated troubles ahead for the provision of ESOL in FE in terms of funding which has, as Schellekens, et al., (2023) and Curcin, et al. (2022) have later confirmed, created problems with curriculum and the use of unsuitable assessments in ESOL in FE, about which more will be said in Chapter 3, Section 10..

Lucas (1999) explains that the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, brought in both standardisation in HE and FE as well as cost cutting. Through this act, FE was incorporated under the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). It was intended to "create a sector with a higher national profile, being more standardised so that it could be judged by national criteria for efficiency and effectiveness and operate at reduced unit costs"(1999: 45). According to Green and Lucas (1999: 45), the impetus for this change came about through two documents, a government White Paper, *Education and Training for the Twenty-first Century* (UK Government, 1991) that confirmed the importance of FE for adult education and training and *Unfinished Business* (Audit Commission, 1993), which highlighted "inefficiency, waste and poor completion rates for younger full-time students" (Green and Lucas, 1999: 26). Although these documents were not aimed at ESOL in adult learning FE, they were based on deficit discourses of potential FE learners in FE which by affiliation have implications for learners in ESOL provision in FE colleges.

O'Leary and Smith (2012) relate the significant change that under incorporation in the FEFC, the previous method of funding per student was changed to funding per unit, the unit being based on the progress toward the attainment of a qualification.

> "This means that colleges are funded according to 'success' rates. In other words, FE funding is based on the current formula: retention x achievement =

funding allowance. Only courses resulting in a recognised qualification are funded" (2012: 439).

Green and Lucas (1999) highlight that although the FEFC also gave extra funding for fee remission, learning support, and childcare for learners from deprived areas determined by postal code, the benefits were based on learner progress towards a qualification rather than on their more holistic needs. O'Leary and Smith (2012) point out that the unit funding formula required careful auditing and brought in an aspect of accountability which meant that teachers and administrators spent a lot more time record-keeping and reporting which would otherwise have been spent on their primary teaching duties. Green and Lucas (1999) state that the unit system led to manipulation of units and other abuses of the system to show achievement and maximise funding which also introduced and increased competition between colleges leading to duplication of courses rather than more efficiency. Smith and O'Leary (2013) call this performativity "managerialist positivism" (2013: 246) which encourages "teachers and colleges adopt practices that present their "outputs" – often in statistical or quantitative forms" - in a favourable way" which "can also extend to the fabrication of 'outward-facing' market data for audiences such as Ofsted or potential students" (2013: 247).

As my study shows, the unit funding formula is applied to ESOL in FE in the same way and has resulted crucially in a focus on qualifications as the products of education rather than meeting learners' needs which has had implications for ESOL learners as ESOL. This is an FE situation which has become a problem in the microsphere of ESOL in FE as well, as these practices are also present in ESOL in FE which is evidenced in the data in my study.

8 2001 - Skills for Life (2001): a curriculum for ESOL

Significantly in 1999, the Moser Report, *Improving Literacy and Numeracy: a fresh start,* (DfEE, 1999) represented a step change in both the nature and scope of ESOL provision due to the New Labour administration of Blair which brought in more recognition for ESOL. It continued the intense exosphere activity which had significant impacts on the ESOL in FE microsphere. The report outlined a national strategy for adult basic skills in response to an OECD report (OECD, 1997) and an ONS survey in 1997 (Carey, 1997), which remarked on low levels of literacy and numeracy in the UK. These reports controversially claimed that around 7 million UK adults lacked a basic level of ability in literacy and numeracy, making it clear that the literacy problems were not the sole province of non-English speaking people with experience of migration. Indeed the Moser Report did not directly address the problems

of ESOL learners. However, as part of the *Skills for Life Strategy* (Department for Education and Employment, 2001), which was subsequently developed in response to addressing basic skills needs, ESOL was included as a key strand alongside Literacy and Numeracy. Hamilton and Hillier (2009) and Rosenburg (2007) explain that this was after much deliberation and lobbying by NATECLA for a separate ESOL curriculum, which suggests that there was a level of disregard or dismissal of the different needs of ESOL learners which were well known by those in the ESOL microsphere. NATECLA was part of a committee of ESOL specialists set up to lobby for ESOL needs (2007: 226) and they produced the report *Breaking the Language Barriers* (Department for Education and Employment, 2000). By its publication in 2000, the report argued for recognising ESOL learners as a separate group from literacy learners. It publicised and identified the ways in which ESOL learners' language needs were different from the needs of basic skills learners for whom English was their first language (DfEE, 2000). Under the subsequent *Skills for Life Strategy* (DfEE, 2001) a national ESOL curriculum was developed and Rosenburg (2007: 223) relates that training for teachers on how to implement it was established.

The *Skills for Life Strategy* (DfEE, 2001) was the New Labour response to the basic skills problem in the UK, highlighted in 1997 by Carey (1997), OECD (1997), and the Moser Report (1999). A theme that developed rapidly, which was a main concern expressed in the *Skills for Life Strategy* policy document (DfEE, 2001), was the Thatcherite emphasis on the importance of economic prosperity and the cost to society of having an unproductive workforce holding back economic progress. In his Foreword to the *Skills for Life Strategy* (2001), Blunkett emphasised this, stating "the cost to the country as a whole could be as high as £10 billion a year" and "The cost to people's personal lives is incalculable" (2001: 1).

The intention of *Skills for Life* (2001) was to improve lives primarily in an economic sense by making basic skills and ESOL learners productive members of the workforce (Department for Education and Employment, 2001). New Labour pledged £1.5 billion on this strategy which supported the growth of adult ESOL learning in FE by providing the funds for resource development and for teacher training. Appleby and Bathmaker (2006) discuss how the *Skills for Life Strategy* (Department for Education and Employment, 2001) is important as an example of how New Labour gave large-scale support to an adult education initiative which was later subject to cuts by subsequent Coalition and Conservative governments.

The neoliberal neutralising view which levels people and groups them in deficit categories emerged in the words of Blunkett's (2001) who was Home Secretary in Blair's Labour

government. In the Skills for Life (2001) strategy, when Blunkett defined his groups "at risk of exclusion" (2001: 27), he also conflated in a reductive way the diverse groups of non-native English speakers and refugees, some of whom were highly educated in their countries of origin in their home languages, with indigenous basic skills learners: "homeless people, those with drug and alcohol problems, refugees and other non-native English speakers, and some who live in disadvantaged communities" (2001: 27-28). Despite its neoliberal foundation, the Skills for Life strategy is a testament to how, in spite of the inherent contradictions in the deficit view of learners, as "unemployed people", "benefits claimants", "prisoners", and "low-skilled people" (2001: 6), it provided support for educational institutions and practitioners for example by making free courses available to learners to try to help those marginalised by lack of basic skills, including "refugees and other non-native English speakers" who need English (2001: 13).

Blunkett also suggested that people on a low salary were more likely to develop health problems and become criminals (2001: 1 and 9). Although this comment may be true, in this context of Skills for Life (2001) it also represents a burden on the state and the emergence of Blunkett's neo-conservative, neoliberal narrative supported this view, implying that improved economic conditions, which would result from education to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills, would cure these social ills, which is debatable as Young (1958) illuminates in *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. This terminology shows that although the Skills for Life strategy of Blair represented a considerable financial investment in basic skills and ESOL, the driving force behind it was economic and deficit views of the recipients of this initiative did not change.

Cooke (n.d.) relates that *Skills for Life* (2001), which stayed in place under Blair's New Labour (1997-2007), experienced gradual and progressive funding restrictions, leading up to the world-wide banking crisis and the sharp downturn in the economy in 2008. In 2010, Labour and the premiership of Brown was followed by the change to a coalition between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, which was subsequently followed by Cameron's Conservative premiership in 2015. Drawing from Foster and Bolton (2018), during these governmental changes, the funding for *Skills for Life* (2001) and educational funding in all sectors was subject to cuts. Foster and Bolton (2018) and Cooke (n.d.) illuminate how the funding support gained from *Skills for Life* (2001), which was meant to transform ESOL provision as part of the adult learning sector, turned out to be temporary and short-term, and bedevilled by complicated funding regimes, although according to Curcin et al. (2022) the curriculum, examinations, and resources from *Skills for Life* (2001)

are still used in colleges. Duckworth and Smith (2019) describe reductions in FE funding, which no doubt includes ESOL, as “the wrecking ball of austerity measures and budget cuts” and frequent, disruptive government changes and “successive waves of reform” as “systemic government vandalism” (2019: 9). This suggests that in many ways, ESOL in FE is a site of instability in terms of funding which has an impact on the provision and on ESOL practitioners and learners.

Smith and O’Leary (2013) asserted that since the Skills for Life (2001) strategy, the government’s funding of FE “has been subject to a policed set of targets, a rigid prescription of centralised assessment but, most significantly, it has been delivered within the existing marketised structure” (2013: 245). Writing about the impact of managerial policies on newly trained teachers in the Skills for Life (2001) strategy, which included ESOL, they theorise “that new public management (NPM) plays an important role in a reductive kind of knowledge production for policy-makers which fuels and legitimises on-going policy intervention” (2013: 244). This maintains instability in FE and ESOL in FE which impacts learners and practitioners, which can be seen in the regimes of accountability, which are mentioned later in Chapter 5 of this study.

Drawing from Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024), maintaining instability by depriving FE and ESOL in FE financially through funding cuts also has an ideological perspective in the macrosphere of ESOL in FE which can impact learners as it chimes with neoliberalism which rejects social initiatives like ESOL and also with the colonial distinctions of superior and inferior people exposed by Kwarteng (2011). The macro-attitude of ‘Western’ cultural superiority, influenced by neoliberal ideology, discriminates against marginalised people as being inferior and can be traced back to exploitative and discriminatory tendencies in human behaviour which can be observed in the history of colonialism. Fundamentally, the macro-attitude that distinguishes superior and inferior in people allows dehumanisation, commodification, and exploitation in order to achieve benefits for the minority of powerful and wealthy. For example, colonialist viewpoints and actions such as those that were acceptable in the Victorian age of empire (around 1837 to 1901) during British rule, when for the benefit of the minority of the powerful and the wealthy, whole nations of people, such as the people of Southeast Asia, were exploited. This is history, but I posit that an awareness of its impact as part of the historical chronosphere of many learners with experience of migration in ESOL in FE is important, especially for the awareness of practitioners in ESOL in FE.

Morrice (2019) traces these macro attitudes of superior and inferior back to “the construction, elevation and projection of an essentialised superior Western culture” (2019: 24). Morrice points out that this binary social divide “does not reflect the reality of modern global societies and inequalities which newly arrived migrants map onto in unpredictable ways” and Morrice expresses agreement with Korteweg (2017) who suggests that “the focus on migrant integration serves to deflect attention for social, political and economic problems of the ’host’ society” (2019: 24). In these ways, deficit views around ESOL learners with experience of migration can create tension in the ESOL in FE microsphere.

9 2024 - ESOL funding

Higton et al.’s (2019) report, *English for speakers of other languages: Access and progression,* which was written for the Department for Education, aimed to provide information on how ESOL provision meets the needs of adult learners over 19, to gain a better understanding of the needs of potential learners and any barriers they may experience in accessing ESOL courses. NATECLA (2025), cited in Higton et al. (2019), is the foremost professional body for ESOL practitioners. It has a yearly conference and also hosts online meetings and seminars for ESOL practitioners and researchers. NATECLA (2025) routinely produces studies and data on ESOL provision and supports the wellbeing of learners and practitioners. Roden and Cupper (2016) produced a report published by NATECLA, *Towards an ESOL strategy for England*, intended for policymakers. It includes assessments of provision and justifies the need for an ESOL strategy with case studies and detailed information on who ESOL learners in England are and the barriers they face in coming to learn ESOL, such as cost and availability of courses.

Higton et al. (2019), NATECLA (2025), and Roden and Cupper (2016) all agree that in order to develop, ESOL, ESOL in FE and other sectors, needs consistent, long-term support and funding, but cuts continue at the time of writing this thesis, resulting in serious shortages of resources, including course and teacher availability. These sources stress that lack of continuity and stability in ESOL provision in FE produces insecurity which not only impacts practitioners and resources but also the progress of ESOL learners. As Augar et al. (2019) point out, funding cuts to post-compulsory education are a reflection of discriminatory macro social values which find expression in microsphere educational policy, and I would stress that ESOL as part of FE adult learning is also impacted. Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024) in their research of neoliberalism, argue that funding cuts and formulas are evidence of the impact of neoliberal policies based on discrimination against marginalised people who are held responsible for their marginalisation.

Higton et al. (2019) in their report mention the complexity of ESOL in FE funding. ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) currently manages further and adult education funding for eleven devolved areas in England, which includes the West Midlands. The ESFA (2023) funding rules lay out who is entitled to funding and the combined authorities are responsible for verifying the eligibility of learners for funding. This eligibility procedure is carried out by the individual providers who delegate the job of gathering the necessary information from learners to the ESOL practitioners, which Lacey's (2018) research illuminates is stressful and time consuming (2018: 122). Lanahan (2019) states, "The vast majority of ESOL provision is funded through the Adult Education Budget (AEB), although there are a number of other sources including ESFA and MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) funding which may duplicate provision" (2019: 3). However, according to Lanhan, since 2019 most of the funding in the West Midlands has devolved to the WMCA.

9.1 Macro ideologies in recent funding schemes

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework, recent exosphere policies, such as the *Integrated Communities Strategy* (Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government, 2019), attempt to fill the funding gap in ESOL. However, the *ESOL for Integration Fund Prospectus* (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2020) relates that it is intended for English in family and community centres and does not include other types of ESOL setting, such as that offered in FE colleges, which is the dominant form of provision in many areas like the West Midlands, although an FE adult learning centre might benefit from the fund indirectly in liaison with local authorities or charities working in the community. Despite the fact that this programme does not apply directly to ESOL in FE, I mention it here because it provides an example of the macro ideologies and discourses that have emerged in recent funding schemes that impact all people with experience of migration in the ESOL microsphere. The *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper* (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019), gave plans for promoting integrated communities in which people can "– live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities" (2019: 5). The document listed a range of proposed actions, three of which were:

- "Support newly arrived migrants to integrate and improve communities' ability to adapt to migration;

- Make sure all children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain and have the opportunity for meaningful social mixing with those from different backgrounds;
- Boost English language skills to enable people to take advantage of the opportunities of living in modern Britain such as getting a job, mixing with people and playing a full part in community life" (2019: 5).

In the first point cited above, adaptation of communities to *migrants* is mentioned although there are no details of what that might look like, but one of Berry's (2001) conditions for integration is that there should be mutual adaptation. In the second and third points, the focus is on what people with experience of migration need to do to adapt to British life. As no mention is made of reciprocal changes and adaptations in British culture, the points seem to be describing, after Berry (2001), a kind of assimilation. Morrice (2019) elucidates ambiguities in policies like this one, remarking that "in the face of growing diversity and the acceleration of global transnational migration, increasingly integration and assimilation have become blurred as policy and public debate shift towards a more assimilationist understanding of integration" (2019: 23).

The discourse around divided communities as a problem and integration as a solution can be challenged. Berry (2001) articulates that in acculturation psychology integration is a process in which *immigrants* and the host country learn from and adapt to each other, developing an altered cultural identity incorporating features of both *immigrant* and host culture. On the other hand, he describes assimilation as a one-way response in which *immigrants* let go of their original cultural identities, including languages, and embrace those of the host country. Therefore, keen awareness of the nature of adaptation is called for and I posit that the language used in this policy displays a problematic view of ESOL learners and their microsphere communities that supports assimilation.

The aims of the *ESOL for integration fund prospectus* (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2020) state that they want isolated individuals and communities to learn English to communicate with confidence and "engage with people outside their immediate community – mixing with those from different backgrounds and accessing services" (2020: 6). One of the stipulations of the funding is that community centres will also run social mixing activities alongside ESOL classes as "The Government favours a mixed adult learning environment" and "this is the approach we would like to see adopted", which they support with the remark that existing providers receiving the fund have been successful in

running mixed gender classes (2020: 6). This introduces an element of ideological confrontation as many people with experience of migration, especially those from Muslim cultures, for whom as Mogra (2020) points out, there is an ethical dimension to gender mixing (2020: 155). Thus, assimilationist views are suggested which envisage changing cultural traditions of people with experience of migration to fit in with British cultural expectations.

The ESOL for integration fund prospectus (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2020) acknowledges that some communities, such as the Muslim or the orthodox Jewish community, are against social mixing but also indicates that although this will be tolerated initially, "we would want to see clear steps as part of the information, advice and guidance to prepare participants for progression, where single-gender provision is likely to be unavailable" (2020: 9). This stipulation in an ESOL funding policy can be seen as an ideological challenge, aimed more at assimilation than integration in terms of both culture and language. It can be argued that formal compulsory social mixing activities are unnecessary as many potential learners already mix with people from different backgrounds and genders within their community settings as migrant neighbourhoods are made up of a variety of linguistic and ethnic groups. Morrice (2019) suggests that such ideas of integration are based on false assumptions that "There is an assumed host society, existing on this side of the line that is a largely unchanging group sharing common understandings and values, unfractured by class, racial, ethnic, religious, gender or other lines of affiliation" (2019: 24-25). Contrary to this false assumption social mixing is already going on within musjids (mosques), churches, temples, markets, and commercial centres, where ethnic backgrounds are varied.

The stipulation of social mixing in the policy of *ESOL for Integration Fund Prospectus* (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2020), and the ideas expressed in the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper* (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019), are examples of Foucault's (1978) theory of how discourses of power work through governmentality which he explores in *the History of Sexuality, Vol 1* (Foucault, 1978). Through a Foucauldian lens, in the details of these policies, governmental biopower asserts views and attitudes on individuals in ESOL microspheres with external constraints of conditions that must be met and internal discourses that challenge the ideologies of many people with experience of migration in a neo-colonial effort to normalise, indoctrinate, and assimilate the resident ESOL learner to the macrosphere ideology. This suggests that over the years the deficit discourses of the macrosphere around people with

experience of migration who are marginalised by language have changed in exosphere policy from criticisms of lack of English language and impoverished cultures, as expressed in *The Education of Immigrants* (Department of Education and Science, 1971), to more direct challenges of cultural practices and the expectation of assimilation.

In terms of developing an understanding of ESOL in FE, the Casey Review (2016) which discussed the challenges of UK *immigrant* communities isolated and marginalised by poverty, extremism, and lack of English language skills has provided justification of discourses and initiatives around isolated and segregated communities. The *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper* (2019) which preceded *ESOL for Integration* (2020) has added to this. However, drawing from Ravell and Bryan (2018) the idea of hard-to-reach people is another deficit label that sidetracks from the realities of segregation and racism that are responsible for othering *immigrant* learners in the first place. The long waiting lists at colleges for ESOL and places on ESOL courses mentioned by Higton, et al. (2019) speak to the efforts of people who need ESOL to reach out for opportunities to increase their ability to engage with the wider community.

A weakness which can be seen in initiatives like the *ESOL for Integration* (2020) programme discussed above is that the government regards the English needs of *immigrants* as part of a wide range of needs that can be met with one scheme designed to achieve integration. As Roden and Cupper (2016) illuminate, this can be seen as avoiding the complexities of the English language requirements. It places a central responsibility for integration on the practitioners and providers of ESOL. It does not address the needs of ESOL for a unified strategy and status which will support ESOL programmes and practitioners throughout England by requiring the government to share responsibility for fair policy and high-quality English language teaching provision. This suggests that exosphere policymakers are sidestepping their responsibilities and not addressing the need for an ESOL strategy for England.

Regarding the question of assimilation or integration, a further complexity for ESOL learners in FE is the government policies for benefits claimants. As previously pointed out, many ESOL learners in FE in England earn below the “real living wage” (currently below £30,000 per annum) or they are unemployed, which is verified by ESOL practitioners on course enrolment following WMCA (2020) rules . Consequently, they receive benefits, such as Job Seeker’s Allowance or Universal Credit and they qualify for full fee remission. To receive their benefits, people with experience of migration are required to register with government

Job Centres and will be appointed a work coach who will outline any training required, such as an ESOL course. As the DWP (2024) rules stipulate, attendance on training courses is required for the receipt of benefits and lack of attendance means that benefits can be withdrawn. The rules also state that ESOL learners can also be required to attend weekly meetings with their work coach who tracks their progress (DWP, 2024). This suggests that an element of coercion is introduced in ESOL class attendance for learners on benefits which can cause worry and anxiety for both learners and practitioners, especially in cases where there is absence due to illness of learners or their children.

10 FE and ESOL: impact of funding policies on ESOL pedagogy and curriculum

Drawing from Smith and O'Leary (2013), ESOL in FE funding shifts the focus of learning away from the learners' language needs to the college's need to show it is achieving targets for economic progress, in terms of certificates, required by government funding policy. In this way funding policies influence education policy and impact pedagogy. Policies give priority to certain examinations and assessments that attract more funding for the college as well as to administrative procedures to evidence the achievement of educational products (certificates) which are considered to be of paramount importance as they may be used to predict future economic productivity, which is what Smith and O'Leary illuminated in their article of 2013.

Schellekens, et al. (2023), Curcin, et al. (2022), and Higton, et al. (2019) illuminate that in order to achieve the required learning outcomes in ESOL in FE, there is pressure on practitioners to deliver the information necessary for the achievement of qualifications and certificates which takes away time from meeting learners' needs. This influences and delimits the ESOL practitioners' choices of teaching methods they can use in the classroom and often results in recourse to more traditional behaviourist pedagogical approaches, such as teaching to the test, in which speaking, listening, reading, and writing are delivered "in a curriculum where each subject is taught discretely", resembling what Freire (1972) called the "banking system" and this emerges in Chapter 5 of my study.

10.1 FE, Literacy, and ESOL curriculum: product-centred versus learner-centred

The changes that were made to the economic structure during the Thatcher era were so profound that now over thirty years later, Thatcher's neoliberal approach is still firmly in

place. Regarding the public education sectors, which include FE colleges and ESOL learners, Jessop (2015) details the consolidation of Thatcher's neoliberalism as the "introduction of market proxies . . .to promote, allegedly, efficient, effective and economical delivery of public services" but that this reduced "the scope for non-market logics in the public sector, especially when these measures are reinforced by cuts in state budgets" (Jessop, 2015: 23). Thus, FE colleges are forced to compete within a quasi-market with the focus on the educational product, which is the achievement of qualifications (Green and Lucas, 1999; Smith and O'Leary, 2013). The limited funding is determined by competition and productivity which is measured in qualifications. Thus, product-orientation now defines the pedagogical approach to learning in FE and in ESOL in FE.

Tett et al., (2012) point out that a neoliberal approach to teaching and learning is demotivating as what literacy learners, and by affiliation ESOL learners, need or want to learn is sidelined (2012: 3). Tett, et al. (2012) speak directly to the challenges in literacy studies; however, these challenges can also be applied to ESOL studies which is illuminated by Curcin, et al. (2022) who state that in terms of summative internal assessments "Some authors suggest this can create a scenario where candidates are coached to comply rather than learn" (2022: 32) . Standardisation of curriculum for the perceived purposes of measuring what is considered progress towards employment and economic prosperity by policymakers is not unique to literacy studies but impacts all education sectors. Policymakers "define what counts as 'real literacy' and silence everything else" (Tett et al., 2012: 3). This indicates that an overemphasis on testing and gaining certificates and qualifications as part of the marketisation of ESOL in FE has a detrimental impact as learners' needs are being deprioritised.

Tett, et al. (2012) argue that literacy, including ESOL, is seen "as a ladder that people climb up" (2012: 2) so that if you are at the bottom of the ladder, you are seen as deficient and lacking the skills you need. Furthermore, they point out that in this model, the emphasis is on "standardising literacy accomplishments" in the form of "tests, core skills and uniform learning outcomes that are specified in advance of the learning process" without negotiation with or knowledge of the individual learners, leads to an examination centred curriculum. They add that literacy has become "linked with economic prosperity as part of a corporate model of human resource development" and that "This narrowly conceived model of literacy squeezes out opportunities for thinking more broadly about what literacy means in social worlds and the issues involved with developing alternative practices" (2012: 1-2).

Tett, et al. (2012) posit that what literacy and being literate means varies from one learner to another and cannot be limited to a homogeneous model. They advocate a pedagogical change of focus from the narrowly conceived and standardised model to one based on how adults "can and want to use the many varieties of literacy" (2012: 3). This stops the deficit narrative by changing the focus to what the learners have rather than what they are lacking. In terms of ESOL, this approach demands a broad and flexible curriculum and experienced practitioners who can tailor the schemes of work to meet the learners' needs, which chimes with Paget and Stevenson's (2014) remarks regarding ESOL practitioners (2014: 47-48).

Duckworth and Smith (2019) point out that the new managerial policy in FE that emphasises the attainment of qualifications and procedures of accountability goes against the idea of FE as a provision that enriches learners in a more holistic sense of changing lives, which takes into account learners' needs and allows them to benefit from communicative and supportive approaches that respect learners as individuals, especially those learners who enter FE for a second chance at education. The views of Paget and Stevenson (2014) envisage transformative roles for ESOL learners through education which demonstrates that this pedagogical shift is also relevant to ESOL learners in FE. Duckworth and Smith (Duckworth and Smith, 2019: 1) describe the supportive learning process as "transformative learning" and claim that although beleaguered by funding restrictions and excessive managerialist policies, "transformative learning" is still going on between lecturers and learners in FE (Duckworth and Smith, 2019). This positive dynamic in the microsphere between ESOL practitioners and learners is also possible and this can be seen in my study data.

10.2 ESOL curriculum: standardisation, conflation of literacy and ESOL

The research of Curcin, et al. (2022) undertaken for OFQUAL in 2022 focused on ESOL Skills for Life curriculum, developed for ESOL courses during the time of Skills for Life (Department for Education and Employment, 2001) and the ESOL Skills for Life (SfL) examinations accredited by OFQUAL in 2014 (Curcin et al., 2022: 12). They suggest that "the SfL qualifications may not be sufficiently well aligned with the curriculum" (2022: 15). They found that funding decisions for ESOL in FE are influenced by what is effective in terms of examinations. Issues with the curriculum and examinations are given in part to justify why ESOL government funding has decreased gradually since 2007 and continues to be threatened. The report states: "The lack of recognition of [ESOL] SfL (2014) qualifications by certain key stakeholders such as employers or further education institutions suggests that these qualifications may not have or may not fulfil some of the information-related purposes

that they should or could have" (2022: 26). This lack of coordination between the curriculum and the examinations provides justifications for manipulation of the examinations and curriculum that has resulted in the use of unsuitable literacy curriculum and examinations in ESOL. They state: "This potentially raises questions about whether mapping qualifications such as ESOL SfL (2014), which is an English as a second language qualification, to standards such as NSAL [National Standards for Adult Literacy], intended for English as the first language qualifications (for instance, Functional Skills) is entirely appropriate" (2022: 16). I have observed in my ESOL in FE research that the result has a negative impact on the teaching and learning of ESOL in the FE microsphere.

10.3 Problems arising from ESOL SfL (2014) examinations

Schellekens (2011) confirms some of the barriers to learning that have emerged for ESOL learners in the ESOL in FE microsphere impacted by this policy, which are important to know:

> "Since native English speakers already have language competence, their main objective when attending literacy courses is to improve their ability to handle the skills of reading, writing and speaking and listening. By contrast, the priority for second language speakers is to develop their language competence as well as the four skills. . . . there is growing research evidence that learners cannot achieve the latter without the former. This means that the learning load, stages of achievement and strategies for learning are essentially different from that of first language speakers, especially in the early stages of language learning." (2011: 8).

In this statement, Schellekens (2011) articulates the difference between the learning needs of native speakers and non-native speakers of English. Native speakers already have a level of competency in English language although they want to improve their skills. Non-native speakers, especially beginners, do not have this competency and they need the alphabet, vocabulary and grammar, and a knowledge of how words fit together to make meaningful utterances. Also, she adds that literacy examinations that put Speaking and Listening together as Communication are challenging for non-native speakers as often their listening skills may not be equal to their speaking skills as they may understand what they hear but not yet be able to respond. Schellekens (2011) found that by following literacy courses, ESOL learners may reach ESOL Entry Level 3 or even ESOL Level 1 but without

sufficient skills in grammar, vocabulary, and communication, which will impact their progression and disadvantage them in continuing to further study or employment.

The research of Curcin, et al (2022) examined all aspects of ESOL SfL (2014) examinations. Some of the issues that relate to ESOL pedagogy and curriculum included, for example, teaching to the test in the sense that examination and qualification recognition determine ESOL pedagogy in terms of what happens in the ESOL in FE classroom and in particular influence the value examinations are given for what the report authors call “an engagement perspective” (2022: 25).

Curcin et al., (2022) posit that ESOL examinations should be mapped onto CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) which is the standard used for international ESOL examinations for non-native English speakers that are recognised for education progression and employment. They add that mapping the ESOL examinations onto the wrong standard creates gaps in learning which in turn create barriers for progression, especially at the higher levels of EL3, Level 1, and Level 2. This means that ESOL SfL (2014) examinations, mapped onto NSAL curriculum, are unsuitable for use with ESOL learners which creates problems of learning and progression for ESOL learners.

There is also a problem with funding. For instance, Curcin et al. (2022) raise the issue of a funding anomaly which is caused by the lack of recognition for ESOL SfL (2014) examinations in FE ESOL. This anomaly has led to a tendency for providers to direct “potential [ESOL] SfL learners to qualifications that might have a more well recognised and socially valuable information purpose (for instance, Functional Skills English) . . . which may be detrimental for both ESOL learner engagement and their ultimate expertise and potential for progression” (2022: 26). Since, as Schellekens (2011) has explained, these other courses for qualifications, designed for native speakers of English, do not provide the language basics that the learners need to develop English language skills. This suggests that in ESOL in FE funding requirements are prioritised over learners’ needs.

The Bell Foundation (2025), a British charity founded by Frank Bell, supports research and advocates for positive change in ESOL. Their website gives the history of Bell who established a school in 1955 when he returned to England from captivity in Java after World War II. In 1972, he founded The Bell Educational Trust. “Through generating and applying evidence, the Bell Foundation aims to improve policy, practice and systems to enable children, adults and communities in the UK that speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) to overcome disadvantage through language education” (2025). Recent research by Schellekens, et al. (2023) completed for the Bell Foundation highlights problems with both

ESOL qualifications and curriculum. They assert that ESOL examinations are preferable for ESOL learners because the four language elements of speaking, listening, reading, and writing are examined separately, which is appropriate as learners do not always have a consistent level of knowledge or progression across the four skills. However, Schellekens et al. (2023) acknowledge that "the Skills for Life ESOL curriculum and qualifications are 20 years old and in need of revision" (2023: 1). In agreement with Schellekens (2011), they mention that grammar, language structure, vocabulary, and listening are among the skills that ESOL learners need as opposed to native-speaker literacy learners who have already developed a certain level of competency, particularly in vocabulary.

Roden and Osmaston (2021) and Schellekens (2011) have confirmed that putting ESOL learners on literacy courses for the sake of funding, together with cuts in ESOL learning time, make it more difficult and stressful for both teachers and learners and raises questions about policy and professionalism. This can be seen in the data of my research as well as that of Lacey (2018). A view expressed in my study data is that it reflects a sad situation when colleges must choose between offering a high quality ESOL provision and a limited quality hybrid provision that does not adequately meet learners' needs.

10.4 ESOL learner needs and diversity ignored

In *Breaking the Language Barriers*, one of the main points made by Grover, et al. (2000), which highlights the diversity of ESOL learners and distinguishes them from literacy learners, is that "in any group of ESOL learners, each individual may have very different levels of skills in the different areas of literacy, oracy (and numeracy)" and that ESOL learners may already be "highly literate and numerate in their own languages" (2000: 3), and highly qualified in their countries of origin, which can significantly affect the learning approach and strategies a teacher can use. The report stressed that "It is essential that the specific needs of this group of learners are not sidelined or seen as secondary to the needs of adults with poor basic skills" (2000: 3). This suggests that there was concern at the time that the unique needs of ESOL learners would be disregarded. As the data in this study shows the use of unsuitable literacy examinations for ESOL learners is indeed deprioritising ESOL learners' needs for high-quality English language provision.

Roden and Osmaston (2021) consider the question of whether to teach FSE or ESOL to *immigrant* English language learners. The report found that although it is widely agreed that ESOL learners are better off in ESOL classes where their specific needs as second

language learners can be met, they often end up in FSE for reasons such as full funding for FSE and wide recognition of FSE qualifications, as ESOL qualifications are less widely recognised for admission to vocational or higher education courses. Furthermore, they mention that tutors for ESOL need the knowledge of how to teach a new language, while for FSE tutors the assumption is that they do not need this knowledge as they will be teaching native English speakers. Schellekens, et al. (2023) posit that imposing literacy standards on ESOL curriculum through the addition of FSE curriculum and examinations has an impact on the quality of teaching and learning and that this is wasting government funds. They state:

> "Government spending is not being used effectively or efficiently because too much time is being taken to meet first language speakers' goals which are not relevant to the learning of a new language" (2023: 6).

This quote asserts that the content of the curriculum and examinations for Functional Skills, which is designed for native English speakers, is not meeting ESOL learners' needs for English language so it will not achieve the government's aim of bringing ESOL learners' language skills up to the standard needed for employment and further education opportunities. This objection applies equally to the other literacy assessments in use in lower levels of ESOL in FE, which are ESOL Entry 1, 2, and 3, such as Life and Living Skills (LLS). For ESOL practitioners and learners this means that there is a level of frustration around the lack of course time to learn and develop the language skills they need.

Roden and Osmaston (2021) state that organisers are not always aware of the differences between FSE and ESOL and the decision of whether or not to choose FSE or ESOL for ESOL learners is "made more often for reasons of policy, cost or recognition than to best meet the English learning needs of the learner" (2021: 23). The report remarks that "This leads to teachers and managers developing ingenious 'work-around' solutions, to provide the best learning experience, described by one manager as "fitting a square peg in a round hole" (2021: 23). This illuminates that ESOL in FE practitioners and managers need to be adaptable to work in this microsphere.

The research around the use of literacy curriculum and examinations with ESOL in FE learners, such as that of Schellekens (2011), Roden and Osmaston (2021), and Schellekens et al. (2023) shows that the use of Functional Skills literacy with ESOL in FE learners does not meet the learners' needs. This is especially disturbing in view of the bigger picture of macro deficit views and discrimination of immigrants and people marginalised by language in

their microspheres discussed by writers like Ravell and Bryan (2018), Wilson (2006), and Kwarteng (2011). This suggests that ESOL in FE learners, who are already discriminated against in other parts of their microsystems, may be marginalised further by misconceptions and expectations around ESOL and Functional Skills classes, examinations, and qualifications.

The data in this study shows that discrepancies in a hybrid Functional Skills/ESOL learning programme have repercussions that impact learners' engagement and practitioners' wellbeing. All teachers, including sessional, who are on zero-hours contracts, are impacted as they are responsible for supervising norms of attendance and behaviour and delivering the kind of learning that supports the achievement of examinations, along with completing large amounts of accompanying paperwork and undergoing frequent quality assurance observations and inspections. Administrators at all levels are tasked with overseeing the processes and ensuring that every step is facilitated and carried out according to the inspection framework and the college norms. The FE college heads bear the ultimate responsibility for making sure that everyone in the organisation is working for the same aims of satisfying the demands of the outputs-oriented framework as well as maintaining morale by promoting the discourse that the existing framework is what is best for everyone involved.

10.5 Language learning misconceptions

Roden and Osmaston (2016) state that there is "a lack of awareness within education and government of the huge task involved in learning an additional language" (2016: 16). Studies show that the time it takes to learn a language is significant and this has implications for everyone involved in the ESOL in FE microsphere. In the neoliberal context, time is an essential part of the measurement of productivity, and a time must be allocated to a task to determine its success or failure. Paget and Stevenson (2014) in their report *On Speaking Terms,* point out that for adults, the time needed to succeed in learning a language depends on a variety of factors, which must all be taken into account, such as previous education and exposure to the language, age, time spent studying the target language, access to learning resources, and responsibilities outside of the learning setting.

Strand and Lindorff (2021) and Roberts (2025) mention several factors including what level of language the learner wants to achieve, whether the learner is an adult or a child, what learning method is employed (total immersion or weekly language classes), and the similarities and differences between the learner's home language and the language they wish to learn. According to the USA Foreign Service Institute website (2023), an adult

English speaker trying to learn a language which has a different alphabet and structure can take a considerable amount of time. This is relevant to resident immigrant ESOL learners in FE as differences in alphabet and structure exist in the home languages of many of the ESOL learners at FE colleges in England, which are anecdotally such languages as Urdu, Arabic, and Bengali. As Higton et al. (2019) and Schellekens (2024) remark no discrete data about ESOL learners' first languages has been collected. In view of the short lengths of time allocated to ESOL in FE courses, and the decline in teaching hours mentioned by Foster and Bolton (2018: 20) and Casey (2016), questions can be raised as to whether the aims to provide, in ESOL in FE a level of language knowledge sufficient for employment or further education is realistic.

Some specific information about the time needed to learn a language with a different alphabet is available from the US Foreign Service Institute (2023). They estimate that for a learner whose home language is English, who is trying to learn Urdu, it would take around 1,100 class hours or 44 weeks at 25 hours per week, 5 hours per day to reach a standard needed for work. For an adult learner to learn Arabic, they estimate it would take around 2,200 class hours or 88 weeks at 25 hours per week, 5 hours per day. These estimations raise questions about whether outcome expectations of standardised ESOL programmes that are subject to cuts and capped funding are realistic in terms of the approximate time it should take for immigrant ESOL learners to learn English.

Schellekens et al. (2023) cite information specific to ESOL learners in FE in Australia, verified by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and collected at Canberra Technical and Further Education College, which determined that on average it takes ESOL learners 1,765 hours to become independent in English language and find jobs. Schellekens, et al. (2023) state that what this means for ESOL in FE learners is that "On the basis of four hours' language lessons a week, the average adult learner would need 14.5 years to use English well enough to get a job or attend a vocational course" (2023: 5). Schellekens, et al. (2023) also cite the National Center for ESL Literacy Education which calculated that it would take 1,000 hours for a learner with no English to "reach survival level, i.e., cope with basic daily interaction" (2023: 5). Government funded ESOL provision being offered to ESOL learners with experience of migration in England is patently insufficient in terms of course length, given the expectations of stakeholders, and should therefore be revised accordingly.

11 ESOL Teaching – issues of quality

The Moser Report (DfEE, 1999) was concerned with the quality of teaching and learning in adult education in FE generally. It stated "Without enough good teachers there is little hope of achieving the proposed targets. At present, too many teachers teach part-time, and some are inadequately prepared" (1999: 14). After the introduction of Skills for Life (2001) the government introduced regulations for the professionalisation of FE teaching staff which also impacted ESOL teachers in FE. Coffield (2000) discusses what were at the time objections to the increasing control and regulation of the education. The *Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007* (UK Government, 2007) required new teachers to either be working towards QTLS (Qualified Teachers Learning and Skills) or ATLS (Associate Teacher Learning and Skills) and they were required to register with the Institute for Learning (IfL). Increasing objections to the growing regulations in FE led to the Lingfield Report (2012) and action to remove the 2007 regulations for FE teachers' qualifications.

Since that time, debate has followed on the de-professionalisation of FE teachers that by association also includes ESOL in FE practitioners. FE teachers themselves expressed their fear that the deregulation of qualifications for FE teachers would not support the quality of the learning experience. A group of practitioners signed an article in the Guardian (Eliahoo, 2012) stating, "We are gravely concerned about the Lingfield Review panel's proposal to stop requiring further education college lecturers to be qualified as teachers" and they asked if "members of Lord Lingfield's panel advocate flying with airline pilots who have no training or qualifications". They made the point that, "Students have the right to be taught by professional, trained and qualified staff". This indicates an instability around teacher training and qualifications in the microsphere of ESOL in FE, caused by problems that stem from the repercussions of the marketisation and the tight control of regulations impacting FE and ESOL in FE.

Specifically related to ESOL, the lack of high-quality ESOL teaching in FE colleges has been a recurring theme over time. For example, Mobbs (1977) wrote in his survey, *Meeting their Needs: an Account of Language Tuition Schemes for Ethnic Minority Women*, that "there were considerable problems in developing an appropriate methodology" for ESOL teaching and learning and he "identified the need for good volunteer/teacher training". Rosenburg (2007) reports that in 1981, a NATESLA survey *English as a Second Language: Teaching for Adults from Ethnic Minorities* which revealed "wide variations in the quantity and quality of ESOL provision in England and Wales" and remarked that there was "an over-reliance on volunteers and that too many staff were untrained" (2007: 166). *Basic Education* (FEFC,

1998) pointed out that many ESOL teachers were not “suitably qualified” (2007: 220). Clearly, the quality of teaching staff for ESOL is a problem that a unified strategy would help to solve.

Paget and Stevenson’s (2014) research shows that the downplaying of teacher qualifications in FE post Lingfield Report is a problem that also impacts ESOL in FE owing to the laissez faire approach towards teaching qualifications that it introduced which means that there was no longer a requirement “for FE ESOL teachers in the UK to have (or be working towards) a recognised subject-specific teaching qualification” the level of qualification required being left up to the college principal (2014: 47). In 2014, Paget and Stevenson stated with regard to ESOL that “the quality of provision is an important issue” (2014: 46) and that although there was now a core curriculum for ESOL, this did not guarantee the quality of provision. They highlight the “trend towards de-professionalisation” and the high numbers of part-time ESOL teachers on zero-hours contracts and how this “is likely to work against a stable, knowledgeable teaching profession” and they emphasise the importance of ESOL providers having “the same teaching performance standards” to ensure that learners are “properly served” and that taxpayers’ money is spent wisely (2014: 46-48). These problems in the microsphere of ESOL in FE indicate that there is a perceived problem with the quality of teaching staff, which is being blamed on deregulation, but in order to attract high quality teachers, fair employment contracts are also needed.

11.1 Responsibility without status

The standard of teachers emerged in the Integrated Communities Strategy: Action Plan (Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government, 2019) and the subsequent ESOL for Integration Fund Prospectus (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2020), discussed in Section 9 of this chapter, which mentions that provision of ESOL should be “high quality” (2020: 11) but leaves how this should be achieved rather vague with the recommendation that practitioners have a qualification at Level 5 or higher. These documents do not give guidance about the terms of the employment, which is an issue for many ESOL practitioners who work under inequitable zero-hours contracts. There is a lack of understanding and appreciation of the complexity of language teaching which can be seen in the absence of any attention to this point.

The absence of equitable terms of employment for ESOL teachers is common to other recent funding initiatives. For example, the National Lottery Community Fund has been

giving grants to community projects since 1994. In 2019-2020, they gave £588 million of which 83% were for projects under £10,000. Unlike ESOL for Integration, the NLCF is not specifically targeted at integration or any particular ideology. The main corporate goal is to support “ideas and projects that matter to people and communities” and they have participated in setting up several ESOL projects. However, the NLCF document mentions that teachers would be sessional which means zero-hours contracts (NLCF, 2020: 47). In the absence of fair employment contracts for what is a complex job, it is unlikely they will attract the high-quality teaching staff they expect.

11.2 Need for an English national strategy for ESOL

In Chapter 3, Section 9, I mentioned the report of Roden and Cupper (2016), *Towards an ESOL strategy for England,* intended for policymakers and produced on behalf of the ETF (Education and Training Foundation). It includes assessments of provision and justifies the need for an ESOL strategy, providing case studies and detailed information on who ESOL learners in England are and the barriers they face in coming to learn ESOL, such as cost and availability of courses.

Roden and Cupper (2016) of NATECLA and Simpson and Hunter (2023) look at policies and the coordination of ESOL provision and programmes for people with experience of migration in England. They both argue that a national strategy for ESOL in England is important for many reasons. They maintain that it would pull together the current fragmented policies and provisions offered throughout the nation of England under a united body with professional standards for the subject, and it would legitimise and professionalise ESOL as a subject specialism and support a viable career path for practitioners, many of whom are marginalised by lack of training and fair employment contracts. As part of their research Roden and Cupper (2016) spoke to Scottish and Welsh ESOL practitioners, whose nations already have ESOL strategies, to get their opinions on the benefits of having a strategy. The Scottish ESOL practitioner cited by Roden and Cupper (2016) said of the Scottish ESOL strategy:

> “It unifies those who deliver the service and professionalises what we do. It makes it easier to bid for funding and serves as a benchmark for practice and evaluation” (2016: 12).

Simpson and Hunter (2023) pointed out that there was still no national strategy document for ESOL in England in 2023, and this is still the case at the time of writing this thesis in 2025. Foster and Bolton (2018) state that a strategy was promised in the autumn of 2019 but it has not been issued. Having a strategy would mean outlining details relating to provision such as course offerings and their details and practitioner qualifications which would lead to basic standards being put in place which would support arguments for investment in a quality provision and a fair employment contract for teachers such as that put forward in the ESOL Manifesto (Action for ESOL, 2012: 8). In this regard, the nation of England is well behind Scotland, which developed its national strategy for ESOL in 2005 (Scottish Executive, 2005) and Wales which published its strategy for ESOL in 2014 (Welsh Government, 2014). The fact that ESOL strategies have been achieved in the nations of Scotland and Wales suggests an intractability in England that invites speculation as to why and is hard to overlook. In relation to a national strategy for ESOL in England, Cook et al., (2021) point out that the conflation of English language teaching for *immigrants* with integration, rather than giving ESOL its own status, may have negative implications for people with experience of migration who want to learn English as well as for teachers who need expensive training and secure contracts with fair salaries and benefits. Drawing from Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024), these needs are unlikely to be met by government policymakers who apply the neoliberal ideology which does not support spending on public sector education.

Several organisations and research groups have added their voices to the call for a ESOL strategy for England. The 2021 ESOL Policy Briefing of the Bell Foundation, which focuses on combatting social exclusion through language education, with researchers from UCL Institute of Education stated:

> "What is required is a cross-government national English Language Strategy to co-ordinate all the different Government policies and funding streams. While responsibility for the delivery of ESOL can be decided at a local level, there needs to be an overarching vision for the future of ESOL provision and delivery based on need on a national scale" (Cook et al., 2021: 7).

In my view, it would be naive to suppose that an ESOL Strategy for England would solve all the problems in the ESOL in FE microsphere, but it may be a start.

11.3 Diagram 3 – ESOL in the FE Ecosystem

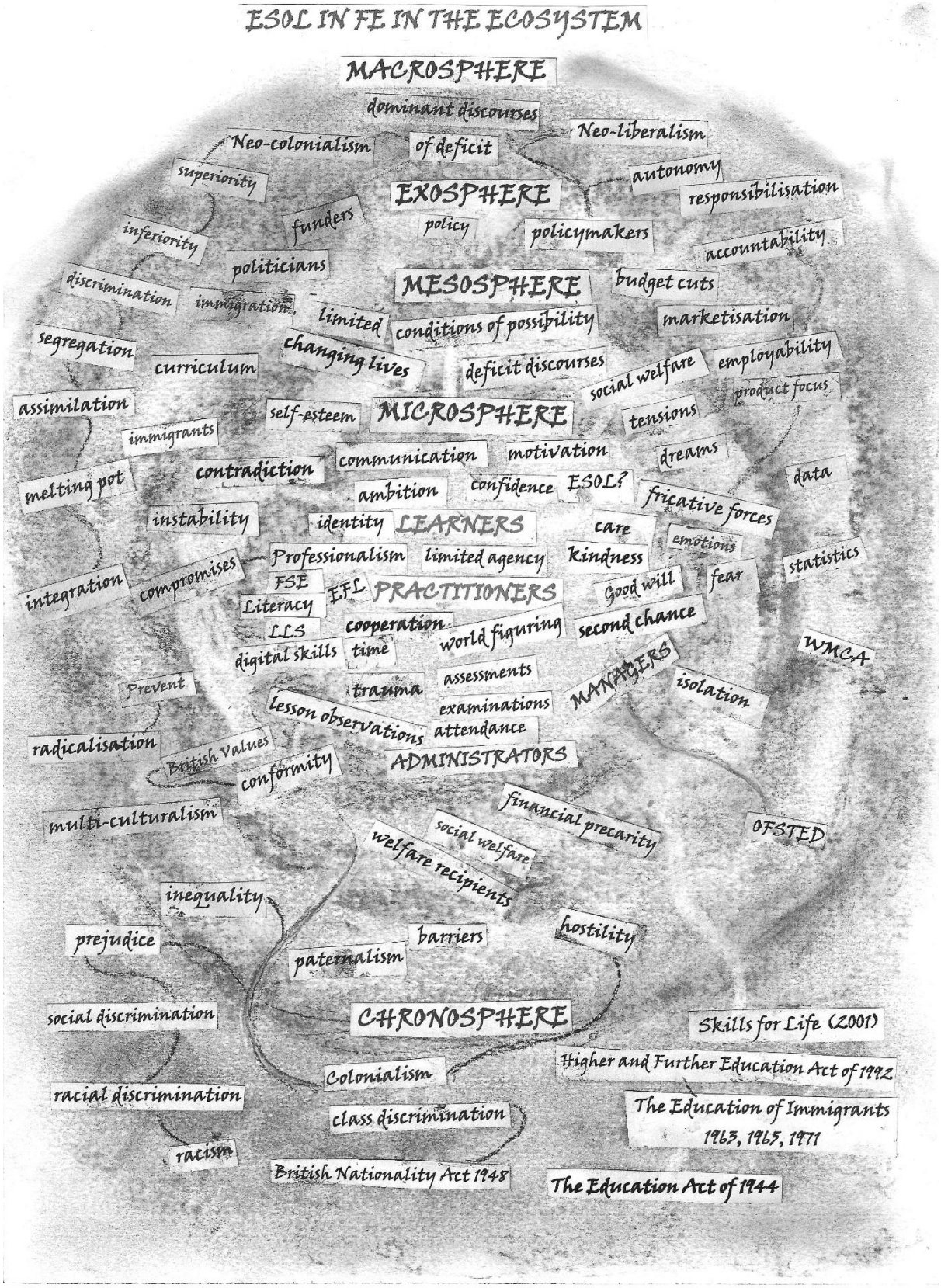
After completing this literature review, I was inspired to create another diagram of the ESOL in FE ecosystem that, after Foucault (1977), reflects the haphazard and contingent meso dynamic of the ESOL in FE ecosystem, attempting to show the permeability and complexity of the mesosphere beneath the surfaces of the models of ESOL in the FE ecosystem in Diagram 2.1.1 and Diagram 2.1.3.

11.3.1 Description/interpretation of Diagram 3

In Diagram 3, I have endeavoured to peel off the surfaces of Diagrams 2.1.1 and 2.1.3 in Chapter 2 to illuminate the dynamic intra- and inter- ongoing meso actions which involve all bodies in the ESOL in FE ecosystem. In Diagram 3, the spheres of the ESOL in FE ecosystem can still be distinguished and are labelled. The linked elements within the spheres are also labelled and associated with their respective spheres.

The microsphere is crowded with different elements that reflect how despite neoliberal product-centred policies that impact the quality of the ESOL curriculum, it is succeeding in keeping the adult learning centres open, but it is struggling with English language teaching which is gradually getting squeezed out by literacy courses, producing an ESOL curriculum which is misshapen by macro-influenced funding policies. Deficit discourses of the macrosphere portray *immigrants,* or people with experience of migration as welfare dependents who are a burden on the economy, as suggested by Blunkett (2001) in the Skills for Life Strategy. Deficit discourses and negative stereotyping in the macrosphere creates instability, fear, and tension.

Diagram 3 attempts to illustrate how the inter- and intra-action, influenced by the dominant discourses and policies, results in a dynamic that limits the conditions of possibility and creates barriers to learning in ESOL in FE with an increasing focus on ways of maximising funding and cutting expenditure rather than on meeting learners' needs for a high quality ESOL provision, producing a hybrid curriculum, misshapen by macro-influenced funding policies. Genealogical links can be made, but the dynamic of ESOL in FE ecosystem does not present a neat, linear progression. The complexity of this ecosystem had an impact on my methodology.



11.3.2 Diagram 3 – ESOL in FE in the Ecosystem

Chapter 4: Methodology

12 Introduction to methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate my approach to the primary research in this study and how I planned to achieve the aim of gaining a better understanding of ESOL in FE through research. I discuss my ontological perspective and the theoretical framework that supports the design of the research, followed by my research methods and the processes involved in organising the research activities and how I intended to analyse the data.

12.1 Methodological approach

Given the diversity of ESOL learners with experience of migration, and that of the ESOL practitioners, in addition to the complexity of the problems in ESOL in FE, I adopted a post-structural ontology. In doing so I considered the diversity of the potential participants in all aspects, including language, age, education, and social background which meant that I needed to be flexible in the design and execution of the research process. In addition, the complexity and entanglement of the problems in the ESOL in FE microsphere ruled out applying a hierarchy to these problems in which an over-arching one was responsible for all the others which might then offer a neat solution.

12.2 My ontological journey thinking with theory

The post-structural lens complements my ontology as it does not discern 'deviation' within complexity and diversity but instead accepts differences as part of the ongoing human ecological processes. Drawing from Morrice (2019), a single vision establishes binaries that marginalise, 'other', and create the idea of deviance. These binary divides go on to perpetuate and support injustices and marginalisation. For this reason, I have avoided the application of a single, mono-methodological lens to my research setting that could only present diversity as deviation from what is considered normal and correct.

MacLure (2013) and St Pierre (2014) illuminate that a post-structural ontological view is deeply entangled with the structural relations of a diverse and changing environment. This reflects the fact that the site of my research of ESOL in FE is characterised by change and structural diversity because of the varied chronospheres of the participants who have experienced migration and their existing microspheres which are a part of local FE spaces. Guided by the post-structural perspective of the theorists I have followed, I have endeavoured to look at my research in a way that is flexible. Drawing from Scotland (2012),

the use of these concepts and theories allows me to embrace the complexity and contradiction inherent in my research setting and critically interrogate its values and assumptions.

The point of a clear theoretical framework for this study was to enable me to carefully and critically contextualise my subsequent primary research in which I would ask the learners and practitioners about their experiences of ESOL in FE. The idea of chronology and being able to locate participants' statements and their lived experiences within the wider policy and practice of the ESOL in FE landscape was facilitated by my adaptation of Bronfenbrenner (1979) which was very important for me initially in gaining an accurate understanding of the issues. As I continued my journey, my thinking developed to include other theorists and scholars that complemented Bronfenbrenner (1979) and provided additional theoretical tools to facilitate my study. Thus, I am drawing on a range of post-structural concepts from Bronfenbrenner (1979), Foucault (1975), Zukas and Malcolm (2019), Gee (2014), Ahmed (2014), and others which will be discussed here who acknowledge the complex inter-relatedness inherent in the multicultural nature of the subject which involves the lives of people with experience of migration.

12.3 Post structural views

Like Lather and St Pierre (2013), I believe that there is no central underlying structure that can be discovered through researching discrete problems but instead, drawing from Foucault's (1989) concept of archaeology, there exists a structure of imbricated and entangled relationships for research to illuminate. For this reason, Lather and St Pierre (2013) ask: "How do we think a "research problem" in the imbrication of an agentic assemblage of diverse elements that are constantly intra-acting, never stable, never the same?" (2013: 630).

The changing diversity of people with experience of migration in ESOL in FE and the unstable and changing education policies, as well as social and immigration policies that impact them, make it impossible to hold on to a single narrative with which to illuminate and resolve the research problem. In terms of my research approach, I interpret St Pierre's (2013) statement as remaining open to the diverse and changing nature of the participants, including myself. I concur that by avoiding judgments and maintaining a heightened awareness of the importance of giving the participants a chance to speak out, and listening to their diverse views, the research will illuminate the relationships and the impact they have on each other. Given the complexity and diversity, I have drawn on the range of theories to

guide me through the entanglements of and dynamics of the FE context regarding ESOL learners and practitioners in FE. In the next section, I look at the literature and how theories can be applied to the historical chronosphere.

12.4 Post-qualitative inquiry

A post-qualitative inquiry, inspired by the perspectives of St Pierre (2021) and the theorists I have read and discussed, has allowed me both to approach my research with the awareness of the complex and diverse nature of my subject, and all the issues and questions this has brought to mind, as well as to apply a critical intellect which is ready to resist single viewpoints and openly embrace the diversity of the perspectives I have encountered from my participants, in order to let their voices and diverse perspectives be heard.

St Pierre (2021) cautioned against traditional methods of qualitative research which set out to prove hypotheses, to generalise, categorise, code, and analyse. St Pierre (2021) discovered conflicts between poststructuralism and humanist qualitative methodology in her own research, and she states: "*So it was in the thinking that writing produces* that I first understood that poststructuralism and conventional humanist qualitative methodology are incompatible" (2014: 5). St Pierre (2014) advises researchers and students "not to think about their studies using qualitative methodology and its grid of normalizing human concepts" (2014: 10). The post-qualitative view conflicts with the humanistic tradition of methodology with its rigid processes which seek to capture and order information and in so doing often end up contradicting the theoretical view. This can lead to a situation in which "The structure, indeed, deconstructs itself" (2021: 6).

St Pierre (2013) posits that thinking post-qualitatively demands a new methodological approach. She proposes post-qualitative inquiry which is not locked into traditional humanist qualitative methodologies but is flexible and develops from what theory and philosophy have to say about the research problem. St Pierre (2014) assures us that methodology emerges through considering how a theorist or philosopher might explore the problem. She explains that 'post' inquiry should be left to develop from theory (2014: 10). Rather than following a traditional approach of applying a methodology, the post-qualitative researcher conducts what St Pierre (2019) called an 'inquiry' that would lead to creative means of exploring research questions. Thus, post-qualitative inquiry embraces theory, multiple perspectives, and requires diverse research methods. A single, dominant perspective may miss or ignore injustices that are embedded in the status quo. Brown et al. (2021) illuminate that post-qualitative inquiry seeks to trouble and to expose injustices and to disturb norms in order to

reveal how meaning is positioned in power, which harmonises with my overall aim to develop a better understanding of the problems and challenges in ESOL in FE.

The so called 'posts' provide me with vocabulary and conceptualisations that illuminate the nature of changing structures and processes and how they impact individuals in ESOL in FE spaces. Working with the concepts of Bronfenbrenner (1979), Foucault (1971), Fricker (2007), and Gee (2014); I am drawing on a range of perceptions that have emerged from poststructuralism. A post-structural lens embraces complexity and contradiction as quintessential allowing a flexibility in methodological approach which can accommodate and illuminate the variety of possibilities that are a part of my research world of diverse microsystems and, after Scotland (2012), the critical interrogation of values and assumptions so central to my approach.

12.5 Ethnography

My research methodology has much in common with ethnography, which is an approach of deep and meaningful participation that captures the lived experiences of participants by allowing a greater researcher/participant proximity and equality than I would normally have as a researcher. Anthropological ethnography supported my methodological approach which was based on my participatory interaction with the ESOL learners and practitioners. Drawing from Pink and Morgan (2013) and Ingold (2014) "Anthropological ethnography involves doing research *with* rather than research *about* participants" (2013: 359). In this way, it disrupts traditional ethnographical research processes in which the researcher retains a distance to avoid influencing the outcome. Thus, the research process is not controlled or dominated by the researcher but is shared with participants. Pink and Morgan (2013) describe the qualities of ethnographic research as:

- intense involvement,
- engagement and collaboration with participants, which adds empathy,
- creativity.

Although my ethnographic research could not be long-term because of the time restrictions of my doctoral study, my broad approach reflected in the long-term anthropological participatory ethnography described by Shah (2017), which:

- takes seriously the lives of others,
- reveals relationships between history, ideology, and action,
- explores how things remain the same and how dominant powers can be challenged,
- is crucial to revolutionary change (2017: 47).

Drawing from Pink and Morgan (2013), my research could be characterised as short-term ethnography as it did not employ a "long-term engagement with other people's lives but involved intensive excursions into their lives" (2013: 352). According to Pink and Morgan (2013), in short-term ethnography the researcher is at the centre of the action and states this clearly when engaging participants in the study. Instead of being characterised by the detached observations of traditional long-term ethnographical research, short-term ethnography involves an intrusion into people's lives, which is what produces its intensity.

In short-term ethnographic studies Pink and Morgan (2013) discuss how intensity is achieved through collaboration with participants. She states, "the intensity of the research encounter becomes part of the way that we learn and empathize in short-term research" (2013: 356). I can identify with how Pink and Morgan (2013) describe their research encounters:

> "Both of us began to feel overwhelmed by the depth and intensity of our respective research encounters. We had journeyed into what was important to the participants, learned about elements of their everyday home and work lives that they normally did not talk with anyone about. These were encounters with moments in other people's worlds that could feel very serious and were fundamental to how they experienced the everyday" (2013: 356).

Pink and Morgan (2013) explain that the intensity of short-term ethnography can also be linked to the use of digital technology, such as video recording, which captures details in verbal and non-verbal data and can be revisited many times (2013: 355). Although, I did not use video in my study, I used audio, and the same intensity applied as I revisited my audio recordings and transcripts multiple times. I anticipated that the short-term period would be compensated for by the richness of the data produced which could be revisited in the analysis phase.

Short-term ethnography also fits with the paradigm of post-qualitative inquiry which I adopted for my study. Both short-term ethnography and post-qualitative inquiry do not set out to prove a theory. Pink and Morgan (2013) describe short-term ethnography as being "in dialogue with theory" rather than being led or structured by theory (2013: 357). It is an inductive approach in which the purpose is not to prove a theory but to draw on and adapt theories. Thus, the intention is to elicit knowledge which is not known or anticipated by the researcher in hypotheses or theories. However, they state that there is "a sharply focused

dialog between research and theory" (2013: 352). Although it is flexible and open to changes in approach or a more roundabout way to arrive at it, short-term ethnography requires a sharp focus on the question together with links to theory and analysis. In these ways, short-term ethnography and post-structural inquiry can work together as my data analysis chapter shows.

12.6 Short-term ethnography and my research

I wanted to find out about the participants' experiences of learning and teaching English, particularly ESOL in FE. I was interested in finding out whether participants' experiences and views confirmed or conflicted with the injustices, found in my literature review, which existed in the meso interaction of the multiple spheres of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) human ecosystem. In line with post-qualitative inquiry, I was not trying to prove a hypothesis or develop a theory.

Bergold and Stefan (2012) discuss how the participatory nature of a non-traditional research approach requires continued discussions and negotiations with participants during which the research focus may be altered which means that the outcomes may differ from aims. They explain that collaboration with research participants in non-traditional research can be objected to by traditionalists because it goes against objectivity as it involves building relationships with participants to develop the trust needed for collaboration. Their observations illustrate the divide between traditional qualitative research and post-qualitative inquiry. I would argue that outcomes should be left open for the data to reveal through the participants which was precisely the point of the non-traditional approach of post-structural inquiry I took. Otherwise, like a traditionalist, I would be trying to prove a hypothesis or a theory which would be locked into my own point of view.

Drawing from Pink and Morgan (2013), a short-term ethnographic study was appropriate both in terms of the timeframe and the social justice intentions, being theoretically engaged with a more interventionist approach (2013: 353). They explain that short-term ethnography is useful "when the research objective is to focus on detail as a route to addressing a wider question across different sectors" (2013: 356). This view harmonised with my research aims which were concerned with injustices stemming from more than one sphere of the ESOL in FE ecosystem. Drawing on Bergold and Stefan (2012), my participatory interaction with research participants involved conducting the research process "*with* those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study" (2012: 3).

The descriptions of ethnographic studies offered by Pink and Morgan (2013) and Bergold and Stefan (2012), characterise the dominant features of short-term methodology as intensity, empathy, collaboration, seriousness, and intervention. However, the steps a researcher needs to take to achieve proximity to and collaboration with participants will vary widely according to their relationship and the details of the study. In my research to achieve the methodological aim of getting the participants to speak openly about their experiences, whether they confirmed or conflicted with my opinions and with what I had read, I needed to have a relationship of trust so that the participants would be assured that their contributions would not be misused. They had to be confident that I would respect their personal views and maintain confidentiality. They needed to know that I was not seeking proximity to them only to get information for my research project after which they would be abandoned.

12.7 Positionality and trust

The ethnographical nature of my research is important to consider with regard to positionality and developing trust. Drawing from Glesne (1989), unlike traditional ethnography, in which the researcher maintains a distance and strives for objectivity in research, the participatory short-term ethnography of my research was characterised by collaboration and subjectivity in the rapport I had with the participants. I had built up this rapport because of my association with the college over a period of time although not all of the learners had been my students and none of the learners or practitioners were friends in the sense of close personal relationships. Glesne (1989) makes the distinction that “Rapport is a relationship marked by confidence and trust, but not necessarily by liking” (1989: 46). After Lather and St Pierre (2013), post structural ontology and post-qualitative inquiry methodology meant that my research would be *with* and not *about* my participants and that it would be collaborative and for that I needed the trust that comes from rapport.

My openness to use my knowledge of other languages, mainly Arabic and French, created an interest about my background, especially among the learners, which gave me the opportunity to tell them about my previous experiences as a teacher in non-anglophone settings outside of the UK. Generally, sharing my life experiences as a teacher served to increase the rapport with the learners who then knew that I had an awareness, and in some cases, a deep understanding of other cultures with similarities to their own. This awareness, as well as my early upbringing in a multicultural context, has given me a deep respect for other cultures and languages which influences my behaviour. Another remark from Glesne (1989) with regard to ethnographic research is appropriate here:

> “One's behavior must be culturally appropriate. Through continuous conscious awareness of our speech and actions, we get our others to trust us. And if our others trust us, we will find that their information is soon shared” (1989: 48).

At the same time, drawing from Kwarteng (2011) and Wilson (2006), I was aware that my ethnicity as a white Western woman linked me in some way to the abuses of colonialism, in particular to the impact of changes and instabilities of unfavourable immigration legislation, perceived as colonialist abuse, and the hostile anti-immigrant discourses of politicians which are both factors that have the potential to impact trust. This stereotypical view had to be considered, and, drawing from Glesne (1989), I had to work to mitigate it by being honest, transparent, and sincere in my research aims. As bell hooks (1994) explains, to facilitate the research, an existing strong and positive relationship with participants is essential. Over time, I had developed a relationship with the learners and the practitioners, and my research was intended to strengthen this relationship.

13 Research methods – informal conversations

In line with the principles of ethnography, discussed by Shah (2017), the method of data collection was an informal conversation, drawing on ideas from Yeomans, et al. (2023), which would be negotiated with learners and practitioners in collaboration with the researcher insofar as the researcher was able to accommodate their preferences. According to St Pierre (2019), the aims of short-term ethnography, discussed above, align with post-qualitative inquiry in that being collaborative they are flexible, have multiple perspectives, have space for creativity, and are guided by theory. Thus, I judged that informal conversations, led by the learners and practitioners, would be more flexible than traditional qualitative methods, such as interview or survey, in which the researcher’s viewpoints and questions would shape the data.

One of the purposes of my research conversations was to move towards a more informal way of talking about teaching and learning ESOL in FE which was open-ended, and which would elicit individual, unique learner and practitioner viewpoints with the minimum of researcher influence. I wanted to be as flexible as possible to achieve collaboration and to avoid dominating and shaping the outcome, so that both the learners and the practitioners could exercise their agency. To achieve the aim of the research within this methodology, I

needed to maintain my collaborative role by keeping the focus on their experiences in ESOL in FE.

13.1 The research participants

The learners and practitioners were recruited from the adult learning department of an FE college. Those who were recruited were 29 learners and 6 practitioners, which were made up of:

- A class of 16 ESOL Pre-Entry adult women learners,
- A group of 5 adult women learners who were recruited from a different class of ESOL Pre-Entry learners,
- A class of 8 ESOL Level 1 women learners,
- 6 ESOL practitioners who were both men and women.

Following examples given by Broesch, et al. (2020) and Block, et al. (2012), I extended the invitation to participate to all the learners in these groups and to all the ESOL practitioners in the adult learning department.

13.2 Research conversation questions

As the aim of this research has been to contribute to a better understanding of the ESOL in FE provision at a college in England and the challenges it faces by listening to the experiences of the ESOL learners and practitioners at that college, my overarching research question was:

- *What do we learn about the contemporary environment of ESOL in FE in England from conversations with the learners and practitioners that increases our understanding of their lived experiences in this context?*

Areas of focus for the researcher were:

- *How do ESOL learners and practitioners describe their lived experience of learning and teaching in ESOL in FE?*
- *How has the ESOL in FE learning experience been impacted by the microsystems of the learners and practitioners in terms of their families and communities?*
- *How have government policies on access to ESOL in FE impacted teaching and learning in ESOL and the learners' integration into the wider community?*

- *How have the neo-liberal FE policies that prioritise certification and the job market impacted the ESOL teaching and learning experience of the learners and practitioners?*

It should be noted that there were no men in the groups that were to be recruited. The study did not have a deliberate focus on women but the all-women cohorts of learners reflects data in Foster and Bolton (2018) that there are significantly more women than men learners in ESOL in FE in England.

13.3 Reflection on possible responses

As part of my research planning, I anticipated and reflected on possible remarks and observations that might emerge and how I would maintain the focus on drawing out participants' experiences and perspectives. I expected remarks on the following areas related to my version of the spheres of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) human ecosystem and the impact of government policies on the microsphere that were discussed in the following sections of the literature review:

Chapter 3, Section 6 - neoliberal marketised policies: The impact that neoliberal government policies that restrict funding and prioritise examinations and certifications have on ESOL on learning and teaching. The impact of the neoliberal prioritisation of certification and employability on ESOL learners and ESOL practitioners.

Chapter 3, Section 10 – funding policies: The impact that government funding policies have on access to ESOL in FE and on the teaching or learning experience. The impact of these policies have had on the ability as a learner to integrate, or as a practitioner to help learners integrate into the wider community.

Chapter 3, Section 10 – ESOL in FE courses: The impact that decisions on course offerings have from the point of view of the ESOL learner or practitioner, including lack of course availability.

Chapter 3, Section 10 – ESOL in FE learners and microsphere: The impact ESOL in FE courses have on learners with their families and communities, or on practitioners when working with learners in the context of their families and communities.

These were deep and searching points that would require some specialist knowledge and understanding. Thus, I anticipated the challenge for the learners especially and reflected on how I would use languages and images to adapt the subjects if they emerged for different levels of participant using translation and translanguaging, as I explain later.

13.4 Researcher perspective

In this research, it had to be considered that I was not only an international PhD student but also a person with experience of migration in my life experience. I was a researcher with experience of migration looking at ESOL learners with experience of migration. Migrant status raised questions, such as whether I saw myself in my participants and if there was a danger that I might project my feelings and experiences onto theirs. The question of whether I was I drawn into making assumptions based on perceived parallels in my migrant and feminist experiences also had to be considered.

These were ethical points which I had to remain aware of at all times, keeping the potential risks in mind. However, drawing on Pink and Morgan (2013), I also had to reflect on what the parallels in my past teaching and personal migrancy experiences could add to my current research experience and retain the positive outlook that a "researcher drawing on past experiences creates bridges" (2013: 356). They state:

> "The technique of drawing from past experiences to understand the principles of what participants are seeking to achieve offers a means of creating bridges between their and the ethnographer's experiences" (2013: 356).

13.5 Hearing impairment

A significant factor in the data gathering of verbally delivered information was my hearing impairment. Although the impairment is not profound, it can interfere with communication and lead to misunderstandings, especially in a room with background noise where other people are speaking at the same time. The hearing impairment could have caused anxiety and loss of confidence in terms of my ability to capture verbal data accurately. However, like Spreckley and Kuper (2016: 4), "I could introduce practical compensatory behaviors and physical adjustments" (2016: 115), which included lip reading, making sure I could see the speaker's face, and making whatever adjustments were possible to control the noise levels in the conversation locations.

Audio recordings were also enabling because they allowed me to go over the conversation contents as many times as necessary. I ensured that the participants knew about my impairment and, drawing from Spreckley and Kuper (2016: 115), this openness helped in "cultivating mutual understanding and respect". To help mitigate the problem, I had access to a radio aid system which included a table transmitter and a small transmitter on a lanyard which the participant would wear during the conversation. Ultimately however, this equipment was not necessary because of the proximity of the participants and the low noise levels, together with my ability to read lips and non-verbal clues.

14 Ethics– confidentiality and anonymity

I explain in the following paragraphs the research procedures and the ethical measures that I put in place to safeguard the research participants. Throughout the research, I followed the 2024 guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). According to BERA (2024) guidelines, "All social science should aim to maximise benefit and minimise harm" (2024: 4). Therefore, it was important to consider the research design in terms of confidentiality, anonymity, and any other risks.

14.1 Information Sheets and Consent Forms

There were two different Information Sheets and Consent Forms, which can be seen in Appendices 2 and 3, one for practitioners and another for learners. Both Information Sheets began with an introduction to the research and a topic guide to orient the participants to the research subject, followed by the full GDPR declarations, according to BCU and BERA guidelines, thus providing the information needed for voluntary and informed consent. Each participating individual received and signed a Consent Form.

14.2 Learner confidentiality

An important ethical point to be considered in the case of the learners was that they were known to each other as classmates in their ESOL classes and they were aware of each other's participation in the research. Therefore, it was not possible to keep anonymity between the learners present in the classroom settings. BERA (2024) guidelines acknowledge that "anonymity may not be possible in some contexts and cases" (2012: 21). However, by offering them the choice of conversation format as either one-to-one, in pairs, or in small groups, I was seeking to mitigate this by providing a privacy level that the learners would be most comfortable with. I explained verbally and on the Learner Information Sheet that because we were carrying out the conversations in the classroom during class time,

there was a possibility that what was said may be heard by the whole class. Therefore, I asked them not to share anything private and confidential that they would not like the other people in the class to hear. This point was stated on my ethics application and all the learner participants agreed to this.

14.3 Practitioner confidentiality

The practitioner conversations were in different informal conversation formats but all one-to-one so that, unlike the learner situation, there was no possibility of confidentiality being compromised by being overheard. Neverthless, the practitioner conversations were kept confidential and all conversations for both learners and practitioners were recorded, encrypted, and stored in the secure BCU repository according to BCU research regulations.

14.4 Anonymity of learners and practitioners

Following BERA (2024) guidelines, it was important to keep the identity of both the learners and the practitioners anonymous. Therefore, the utmost care was taken to anonymise all the data collected and transcribed by using alphanumeric codes for all individuals. Care also had to be taken to protect the identities of the locations and the learning centres. Thus, I did not use institutional, place, or street names that might reveal either the locations or by association the identities of the people involved.

14.5 Consent and right to withdraw

I was aware that those invited might not want to take part for any number of reasons. Following BERA (2024) guidelines that there should be no coercion involved in research, I made it clear that there was no requirement to participate, no judgments would be made on the basis of participation, and that participants who agreed to take part could withdraw at any time, without prejudice. I made it clear to the learners that participation in the research was not a part of their ESOL course or assessment.

14.6 Learners – preparation for research

The research design for learner participants had an ethnographical foundation. Drawing from Shah (2017), each group was invited to participate in the research during class time in the FE facilities, and facilities used by FE, which they were accustomed to. One venue was the learners' classroom situated in the main adult learning centre. The other venues were in two community centres used by the college, one in the room where the learners normally had their ESOL class, and the other in the centre common room. With reference to Shah

(2017), these arrangements preserved the ethnographic character of the research by enabling the researcher to work with the participants in their usual teaching and learning settings.

Following BERA (2024) guidelines to ensure learners' understanding of the research, during class time, I provided a face-to-face introduction by giving short presentations explaining the purpose of the research, the aims, and why I wanted them to be involved so that they would understand the research context and my reasons for doing the research. The learners were given the research Information Sheet, which I explain below. The language used to discuss the research was adapted to the English language levels of the learners and involved the use of pictures and translanguaging, about which I will say more. I allowed time for questions and discussion during the pre-consent activity. The ESOL learners were given a Consent Form to sign if they agreed to be part of the research activity.

14.6.1 Learners Information Sheet

In my ESOL Learners' Information Sheet, I included the following topic guide which was discussed and translated in class:

- How you came to study English at college: How did you find out about the course? How long did you have to wait to join your course?
- How you like to learn English: Do you like to learn in pairs or groups? Do you like to learn from both the teacher and from each other?
- Your English course: What do you like about your ESOL course and what do you dislike?
- Other English classes: Have you studied English before? How was it?
- How do you feel about learning English?
- How has studying English affected your life?

For the lower-level Pre-Entry learners, I used verbal translations to explain the Information Sheet, which also included the BCU data protection declaration, and I had support for this from another multi-lingual staff member who was present. With the topic guide, I was touching areas of experience that could lead in different directions. I consciously avoided direct questions about learners' opinions as it was not my aim to collect evidence to prove a hypothesis or to discover themes and patterns of my own perception and I wanted to avoid steering participants away from their narratives.

14.7 Practitioners – preparation for research

The practitioners were a diverse group of individuals of different genders, ethnicities, and different levels of experience and training in ESOL teaching. They were invited by email and face-to-face in a staff meeting at which I explained the purpose of the research and why I wanted them to take part, stressing that participation was completely voluntary. I explained that the time commitment for the conversations and self-interviews would be from ten to twenty minutes. The research Information Sheet and Consent Forms were handed to them at the meeting and also sent to them by email. At this time, I also explained the Information Sheet and Consent Form so that participants would fully understand the content, the aims of the research, and what their commitment would be, and I pointed out that it was a valuable opportunity to reflect on their ESOL practice. They were requested to return the Consent Form to me either through the college post or by email within two weeks if they wished to participate. There was a total of twelve practitioners on the staff, and I had expected a maximum of ten and a minimum of six to participate. Ultimately, six practitioners participated in the study.

14.7.1 Practitioners' Information Sheet

In my ESOL Practitioners' Information Sheet, I included the following topic guide for consideration:

- How would you describe your experience as an ESOL teacher?
- How has your experience changed, either recently or over the years?
- How have inspections and the prioritisation of examinations and certificates for learners impacted the way you teach ESOL?
- What are the memorable moments you have had as an ESOL teacher that you would like to share?

Both the practitioner and learner topic guides were aimed at drawing out their experiences and although they touched on areas that could be problematic, they avoided shaping responses, leaving the opportunity for the conversation to develop in different ways. I explained to both the learners and the practitioners that the point of the research conversation was to hear their voices, experiences, and perspectives. Drawing from Lather and St Pierre (2013), attempting to control the conversation one way or another was not intended as that would have been against the post-qualitative nature of the study. I was aware that responses could develop in different directions and would not necessarily confirm my views. During the period of recruitment for the study, I discussed my progress and

sought the advice of my supervisors. An Information Sheet was also given to the Adult Learning administrator and the two Community Centre administrators along with letters requesting permission to carry out the research with the ESOL learners on the respective premises.

15 Creative adaptation of traditional data collection methods

In keeping with post qualitative inquiry, flexibility and negotiation with the participants regarding the research methods was required for which I followed the principle of collaboration in short-term ethnography, drawing from Pink and Morgan (2013) and Shah (2017). As part of this collaboration and flexibility, for the practitioners, the self-interview method of Keightly (2012) was proposed and for the learners, transchat, an adapted version of translanguaging drawn from Garcia (2016) was employed.

15.1 ESOL Practitioners

The practitioners' conversations with me and the two self-interviews were straightforward in terms of language as they were all conducted in English. The time commitment of ten to twenty minutes was specified. In keeping with post-qualitative inquiry, the ESOL practitioners were given some flexibility in the format of their conversations. My justification for this had a basis in methodology but was also pragmatic as I was aware that the practitioners were busy with full workloads and extra administration duties at the end of the academic year. Thus, I anticipated difficulties in arranging the individual meetings given the timescale which was quite close to the summer holidays. To maximise flexibility, I offered self-interview as a format for the informal conversation. This method was first used by Keightly, et al. (2012) as an addition to memory work and diary methods in memory studies.

As Keightly, et al. (2012) explain, qualitative research interviews involve memories as well as narratives of experiences and events. They argue that through self-interview, which can be conducted with an audio recorder, the emphasis can be placed on remembering. The participant can use the pause facility of the recorder to stop talking and reflect or give themselves time for recollection, if necessary, perhaps with long pauses that would not be possible in a two-way conversation. They state that self-interview is:

> "particularly suited to the exploration of everyday remembering as it is able to incorporate long pauses and discursive disruptions, record both practices of remembering and reflection on them without imposing restrictive genre

> conventions on responses and retain a focus on the dynamic relations between individual and social dimensions of remembering" (2012: 508).

For the self-interview, the practitioners were asked to make a recording of themselves talking about their experiences of ESOL teaching in FE. On the Information Sheet, they had available the over-arching research question and the topic guide to help them, if needed. I believed that for some of the busy practitioners, self-interview would encourage participation as it could be done at a time and place which was convenient for them. Ultimately, two of the six practitioners recorded a self-interview. One of the pre-recorded self-interviews I collected in person and the other was sent to my BCU email. The remaining four practitioners opted for face-to-face conversations. One of these was on MS Teams and the other three were in person. I recorded these four conversations which, along with the two self-interviews, were encrypted and stored securely on the BCU research repository.

15.2. Pre-Entry Learners

I negotiated with the learners the format of the conversations, which could either be one-to-one, in pairs, or in small groups. For the Pre-Entry learners, we decided on small group conversations of three to four learners in which they would discuss their experiences of learning ESOL in FE, in the familiar setting of their ESOL classroom. The small group design was especially important to ensure equal opportunities for communication and to facilitate the use of transchat, our version of translanguaging for the ESOL Pre-Entry participants, which I discuss below. I explained verbally and on the Learner Information Sheet the time commitment of ten to twenty minutes in class time, which could be repeated up to three times, making a maximum total of 1 hour. As it happened, our research time was restricted to one session for each class or group, as ethics approval was received shortly before the end of the summer term, so the repetition and longer time commitment was not used.

15.3 Level 1 Learners

In the smaller Level 1 class, which was made up of eight learners, the possibility existed to have a single group discussion in which each participant was given time to voice their views. It would also have been possible to carry out one-to-one conversations with some translation for more difficult concepts, while the other learners were engaged in pair and small group activities. In line with my methodological approach, the method used for the Level 1 participants was negotiated with them and they decided on a whole group conversation in which each member would take turns to speak.

15.4 Translanguaging and transchat

The verbal communication in the conversations with the ESOL learners, especially the Pre-Entry learners, involved features of translanguaging, mentioned in my Ethics Application, which uses a mix of the different languages shared between the researcher and the participants. Garcia and Leiva (2013) define translanguaging as "an act of bilingual performance" (2013: 199). They use the term 'translanguaging' which was first used in Welsh in 1994 by Cen Williams (1996). Garcia and Leiva (2013) explain that in translanguaging, learners, who are emerging bi- or multi-linguals, draw from their language repertoires the words that best express what they want to say. It goes against the monolingual idea in language teaching pedagogy that the learner's flexible use of their home language mixed with the target language, in this case English, is a sign of "incomplete acquisition" of both the target language and the "heritage language" and should be understood in assessment as an indication of language deficit (2013: 200). Garcia and Leiva (2013) challenge this notion, and in reference to Hispanic students learning English in the USA, they go a step further by asserting that translanguaging is linked to social justice as a type of resistance to "the historical and cultural positionings of English monolingualism or heritage language bilingualism in the USA" (2013: 199-200).

The idea of translanguaging as a vehicle of social justice and a resistance to the domination of one language over others was relevant to my ontological position as an ethical and collaborative researcher and teacher who believes in the equal value of all languages. It is through my shared knowledge of different languages, such as Arabic and French, that I can carry out research with people of other languages. Translanguaging does not have to be word-perfect; the meaningful communication comes with dedication and perseverance to connect with speakers and negotiate meaning. Garcia and Leiva (2013) posit that through translanguaging the "voices of emergent bilinguals who otherwise would have been silenced are released" (2013: 210).

Garcia and Leiva (2013) state that for the students "translanguaging serves three important discursive functions"; it enables:

"1. Participation
2. Elaboration of ideas
3. The raising of questions".

For the teacher, the discursive functions of translanguaging are:

"1. to involve and give voice,
2. to clarify,
3. to reinforce,
4. to manage the classroom, and
5. to extend and ask questions" (2013: 210).

My use of translanguaging is an adaptation of this method of communication that I call 'transchat'. The prefix 'trans' refers to the crossing over of meaning from one language to another, and the word 'chat' reflects the informal and multi-lingual nature of friendly negotiation of ideas and meaning. The interaction involves a conversation of shared words and phrases to arrive at the meaning of what the participant wishes to say. For example, if I am speaking to a Tigray speaker and something needs to be clarified to me or to the others, we can use Arabic or English. The speaker with the stronger language skills can lead with their language repertoire in translating and explaining between Tigray, Arabic, and English to the point where the meaning is clear, and we can all understand and respond. This process demands careful listening and reading of non-verbal clues and close concentration, followed by rephrasing and confirmation. Garcia and Leiva (2013) describe translanguaging practices as "a new different social, cultural, and political context" (2013: 204). In my research, both transchat and the flexible conversation format involved collaboration and meaning clarification with the ESOL learners who played a pivotal role with their language repertoires, which, drawing from Garcia and Leiva (2013) and Pink and Morgan (2013), is in keeping with the social justice and collaborative aspects of short-term ethnography.

Translanguaging was already operationalised in my teaching and my research in this adapted way through transchat. This can happen because of my knowledge of Arabic and when I have a class with a shared knowledge of Arabic, such as the Pre-Entry groups that participated in my research, we use this language to put points across when our shared knowledge of English is not enough. Although Arabic is not the home language of all the learners in the class, often most of them are multi-lingual with some Arabic knowledge. I am also a French speaker and sometimes there is a student who speaks a European language, who also has knowledge of French, Italian, or Spanish which can be helpful in the transchat process.

In class, we also use translation tools, like Google translate to facilitate communication when our shared repertoires are not sufficient. When new ideas and new words come up, transchat takes place between English and Arabic, Arabic and Tigray, Swedish and Arabic, Portuguese and English until we are satisfied with our understanding. Garcia and Leiva (2013) describe translanguaging as "dynamic bilingualism" (2013: 204). In the diverse environment of the ESOL in FE classroom, especially at the ESOL Pre-Entry level, the dynamic is multi-lingual. I value translanguaging for the flexibility it creates and for the chance it gives me to use and to show appreciation for, and to learn from, the learners' rich linguistic backgrounds. It also allows me to take the collaborative approach that I have outlined, above. It gives the learners equal control over the learning process, provides learning opportunities for everyone, increases rapport, and deepens relationships. In terms of combatting the ever-present macro deficit views of people with experience of migration, the words of bell hooks (1994) are apt:

> "The power of this speech is not simply that it enables resistance to white supremacy, but that it also forges a space for alternative cultural production and alternative epistemologies— different ways of thinking and knowing that were crucial to creating a counter-hegemonic worldview" (1994: 171).

Through my use of translanguaging in my teaching, I have been able to see the difference in the participation and involvement of learners, especially at the beginning Pre-Entry level, when they realise that in their ESOL class their languages are respected and that I am interested in understanding what they are saying, whether it is in English, or in Arabic, or another language and that we can learn by comparing our differing languages. In my research, I did not discourage participants from negotiating meaning through whatever languages we shared in the classroom and the translation tools available, both to increase their knowledge of English and drawing from Williams (1996) to maintain and enrich their knowledge of their home languages and other languages. It must be used with care and respect in groups where the educational level of the learners is varied and the languages are super-diverse as there will always be differences. Learners with more English language knowledge may want to prioritise English. All class languages and learner levels must be considered and given equal status.

Owing to logistical and language factors, it was necessary to plan carefully in order to accommodate the varying English language levels of the learners, and the language levels the researcher in other languages. I rehearsed my potential input for the conversations in

various ways beforehand. Through transchat, I was able to consider both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the discussion to arrive at an accurate account of what was said which an outside translator working from a recording, without the non-verbal information or knowledge of the participants, would not be able to do. As Sutiyatno (2018) maintains, posture, facial expression, eye contact, and gestures reveal a great deal about what a speaker is trying to say. Although non-verbal communication sometimes varies from culture to culture, it is useful in gauging emotion and feeling. I observed closely facial expressions, gestures, and posture, which contributed a great deal to understanding the sense and meaning of what was being said. I was confident that with the learners in my research the use of transchat and close attention to non-verbal features of communication, clear and accurate understanding of my participants could be achieved.

My transcription had a column layout on which I recorded both utterances and key non-verbal features of the conversation, an example of which can be seen in the Appendices. I had planned to verify the transcriptions with the participants, but this was not possible as by the time they were written it was the end of the summer term, and the participants were no longer in college. With the ESOL Level 1 class, since their spoken English level was more secure, the participants used English in their conversations, although they were also free to use their language repertoires to negotiate meaning if necessary. If, ultimately, there were utterances that were ambiguous and remained ambiguous, this would be acknowledged in the research.

In my research, the techniques of translanguaging and transchat, especially with the ESOL Pre-Entry class, meant that I did not have to engage translators to carry out my research. Although from a traditional qualitative research view point it may be argued that professional translators would not be influenced by bias or a personal knowledge of the speakers, in my opinion, in the context of this post-qualitative inquiry, which is characterised by subjectivity, valuable interpretive data could have been lost in translation by a non-participant translator. However, in case of necessity, I had access to other college staff members familiar with the learners' languages whom I could ask for help.

15.5 Risks

The venues I used with the learners were in their usual places of study. They were secure education facilities with monitored entry and exit systems. It was desirable for ethnographic as well as safeguarding reasons that the learners were not asked to meet in other locations and at other times which may have posed risks related to the venues being in inner-city

areas where there could be hazards for both the researcher and the learners related to travelling in unsafe neighbourhoods at times outside of normal routines. In terms of the three practitioners whom I met face-to-face, the conversations took place in secure settings. Following the BERA (2024) guidelines, physical risks had to be considered; these were minimal as the research took place during daytime class times and in secure venues at all times with both learners and practitioners. However, talking about life experiences, and in particular government immigration and education policies, could have led to emotional responses including emotional upsets or the recall of past traumas. Following the BERA (2024) aims that no harm should result from the research I took steps "to prepare for and be in a position to minimise and manage any distress or discomfort that may arise" (2024: 19). I confirmed that counselling to mitigate ill effects of emotional upsets was available through college pastoral care staff and in addition my supervisors were also available during the research periods and could be reached by telephone in case I needed their support.

15.6 Non-participant learners

Ethically, since the research was carried out in class time, I had to ensure that class members who chose not to participate were not excluded from class activities and that they would have a learning experience during the time that they were in class as any learners who opted out of participating could find it demotivating to be present as observers only. Therefore, pair and group work was planned for the lesson during the time in which the conversations were taking place. Ultimately, one class member in the larger Pre-Entry group declined. Consequently, the teaching assistant who was there to help me ensured that the learner who did not wish to take part was occupied with learning activities during the group research conversations.

For the learners I had planned to have an informal class discussion of the issues raised in the research which would take place after data collection and include the non-participants, but as the research was carried out on the last day of the summer term, I did not have an opportunity to meet with them again. For both the learners and the practitioners, it was planned that they would be informed of the outcomes of the research at a later date.

16 Method of analysis

Using a post-qualitative approach, my methodology has been led by theories that add to my understanding of this complex and diverse area of study. The ideas of Foucault, Bronfenbrenner, and other theorists and thinkers as discussed previously, have supported

my analysis of the problems in ESOL in FE. With the theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979), I have identified spheres of human ecosystem activity, restated below, which have impacted the lived experiences of those learning and teaching ESOL in FE spaces.

- **Microsphere**: the diverse microsystems that shape the identities of ESOL learners and practitioners in FE,
- **Chronosphere**: the influences of historical events shaping the present of the practitioners and learners,
- **Macrosphere**: the realm of ideologies, attitudes, and beliefs that through the discourses and dynamics of power shape policies and impact the research participants,
- **Exosphere**: the Home Office and the Department for Education - further education and ESOL in further education, whose legislation and policies impact the research participants and their communities in the microsystem.
- **Mesosphere**: the mesosphere is the site of inter- and intra- actions between and within the spheres. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1998) this sphere allows the researcher to critically examine the dynamic, reciprocal, proximal and remote processes between the bodies in the microsphere and the institutions and organisations in the exosphere, as well as the elements of influence and discourse of the macrosphere and the chronosphere.

16.1 Corpus of statements

In relation to each of these spheres, drawing from Kendall and Wickham (1999), I identified a "corpus of statements" from the data which I could position or align with wider social, cultural, and pedagogical discourses. In sifting through the historic layers of information in the literature review to discover the key historical contingencies which kindled the discourses, I have employed Foucault's 'archaeology' (Foucault, 1978; Kendall and Wickham, 1999). The problems and what I saw as injustices, listed below, form the foundation of my post-qualitative inquiry:

- Government policies, such as the ESFA (2023), 3-year residency rule, highlighted by Oliver and Hughes (2018), that restrict and limit access to ESOL courses have a detrimental impact on immigrant ESOL learners, especially spouses, and the restriction time for Pre-Entry ESOL to 1 year.

- The tendency toward assimilation in anti-ethnic policies that is a kind of thinly veiled racism that positions people with experience of migration as inferior because of their cultural beliefs and practices which is apparent in historical Department for Education documents and more recently in publications such as the Casey Review (2016) and funding policies such as English for Integration (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2020).

- Government failure to acknowledge the complexity of language learning and the time it takes to learn a language which has been highlighted by Paget and Stevenson (2014) and Schellekens, et al. (2023), as well as reports, some of which were government commissioned such as Curcin, et al. (2022).

- Deficit views of FE in England that manifest themselves in funding cuts and lack of government support and the dearth of development in policy for FE and for ESOL in FE, such as expressed in Jones (2016), Sibieta, et al. (2022), and Tett, et al. (2020).

- Deficit views of ESOL learners in historic adult education apparent in Department for Education policy documents in which both *immigrant* men and women along with English-speaking literacy learners are framed as deficient, disorganised, and slow learners, such as *English for Immigrants*, Ministry of Education (1963) and Skills for Life (2001) and in the books of Wilson (2006; 2018).

- Stereotypes in which colonialism and patriarchal structures work in synergy which are illuminated by Kwarteng (2011) and Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024). One example of this, evidenced in both Department of Education reports and in books by Wilson (2006; 2018), is the negative, stereotypical portrayal of women by both government and microsystem agents as 'weak' *immigrants* who need English, while men are stereotyped as strong bread winners.

- *Immigrant* women singled out in this deficit view in policy documents and political discourse as poor, reluctant, or slow learners. This judgment was also implied by Conservative prime ministers Cameron (Mason and Sherwood, 2016) and May (Hill, 2017).

Having identified problems and what I saw as injustices, both coordinating and conflicting in my literature review, I was looking for corelations and conflicts between these and the

perspectives of my participants as well as possible unexpected views which I thought were likely to emerge in the research conversations.

16.2 Foucauldian discourse analysis

I anticipated that my conversations with the participants would evidence of some of the problems and injustices that I discovered in my literature review. However, I did not ask the participants direct questions about the points my literature review raised as one might in a formal interview. The reason for this, as I have discussed earlier, was that the formal interview is a method in which carefully crafted questions elicit responses regarding matters that the researcher wants to explore. This can result in the researcher shaping the participants' responses and the outcome of the study. In keeping with post qualitative inquiry, the format of the researcher/participant interactions in this study was an informal conversation led by the participants.

For guidance on how to conduct a Foucauldian discourse analysis, I have drawn on Kendal and Wickham (1999). An initial step for identifying what constitutes a discourse is that there should be "no fixed point of reference for all words and symbols" (1999: 43). I applied this to my methodology by not measuring the conversations and self-interviews against a hypothesis in order to prove a central theory or point. Instead, I remained open to all participant viewpoints and recorded these faithfully in line with the post-structural diversity, complexity, and contradiction in the area of study.

16.3 Framing ESOL: Governmentality and conditions of possibility

Kendal and Wickham (1999) discuss identifying 'what is sayable' in one's data. In the context of my study what was sayable took on different dimensions including what is sayable linguistically as well as socially, culturally, and politically. According to Kendal and Wickham (1999) in conducting a Foucauldian discourse the rules by which statements are made involve looking at how what is sayable is limited and what limits it. They illuminate that this also involves finding the rules which create spaces for new statements to emerge and being wary of statements which invite "closure" as discourses are dynamic and evolving, looking for contingencies instead of causes, and being as sceptical as possible in regard to all political arguments. Thus Foucault's (1975) and (1989) concept of governmentality can limit what is sayable and produce particular conditions of possibility in different settings which shape in turn individuals' lived experience and social realities.

I wanted to hear from the learners and practitioners about their experiences in ESOL in FE. I was interested in what was sayable in this context. Indeed, I expected there to be limitations on what I heard. Moreover, I did not always hear the content that I was anticipating in relation to the issues raised in the literature review. In the research conversations, I avoided making statements or observations that would inhibit or limit participant voices. I wanted the conversations to be as open-ended and non-judgemental as possible while at the same time allowing, as part of the analysis, reasons for any limitations in what was sayable or not and why.

By maintaining this position, I hoped to allow accounts to emerge that I was not aware of which could provide a window onto how different discourses around ESOL in FE and migrancy to support, maintain, and compete and conflict with the government perspective as expressed in restrictive ESOL in FE policy. In this way, I discovered different perspectives and ways of seeing and understanding that did not necessarily address the problems and injustices I had identified but offered valuable information that helped to build our mutual understanding and enrich our relationships.

Therefore, my analysis not only compares my perspective on the problems in ESOL in FE with the views of participants experiences but also showcases different perspectives. According to Kendal and Wickham (1999), the test of a discourse analysis should ensure that “a practice is material and discursive at the same time” (1999: 42), in other words a discourse is not merely verbal but has a material aspect which involves matter and action for example how the problems and injustices mentioned in my list above were revealed to have physical impacts on the learners and practitioners in the social and educational spaces that I was researching. I compared the learners’ and practitioners’ statements to the corpora of discourses in the literature review by applying a genealogical method of comparison that was non-linear and allowed the critical examinations of statements over space and time. This helped in the identification of iterative as well as conflicting patterns and themes which raised awareness and deepened understanding of the research issues.

It was not possible to say exactly how the analysis would look until I had completed the research conversations and heard the self-interview recordings. This was in line with my post-qualitative approach, after St Pierre (2021), which resists single viewpoints and openly embraces the diversity of the perspectives in order to let voices be heard. In this way I retained a perspective open to the diverse views and contradictions that were inherent in my study, and which were reflective of the complex and diverse nature of my participants.

Chapter 5: Analysis

17 Introduction

In this analysis, I will present the findings of my primary research by first identifying the emergent theme or topic. This will be followed by data which I will then discuss in light of relevant literature, offering comparisons, opinions, and summaries. The analysis is divided into two main sections. The first section of Chapter 5, from 17.1 to 17.16, contains data from the ESOL practitioner participants, and from 18.1 to 18.7, the data is from the ESOL learners.

Practitioner Data

17.1 Course organisation

The organisation of courses emerged as a theme in the findings. It was not always clear from the data the root cause of the problem with organisation. For example, practitioner PD4 observed:

> "Before October half term, we're sorting out all our timetables and, you want to teach things, but you can't really do as much as you need to because it's all a mess" (PD4).

PD4 does not explain precisely why sorting out the timetables takes so long, but they indicate below that the FE enrolment practice of not finalising timetables before teaching starts poses challenges for ESOL practitioners. They stated:

> "What I found most difficult was how much admin and sorting out we have to do at the beginning of the year, for example, the timetable changes and the registers being wrong. Just having to get our numbers for the courses and ring up students ourselves. That is a lot of extra stuff" (PD4).

PD4 describes issues with timetables and "getting numbers for the courses" and chasing up learners with telephone calls, which indicates that the number of students recruited for a course is significant. Similarly, PJ10 also expressed frustration at the amount of administrative work FE practitioners are expected to do and not just at the beginning of the academic year:

> “I spend my time as a teacher dealing with administrative problems. People on the wrong course, people at the wrong level. I'm trying to deal with that myself during my classes, which obviously detracts from my teaching time but also weakens the students’ learning experience because they don't want to go through these problems either” (PJ10).

PJ10 makes an important point that the negative impact of practitioners having to address administrative problems in class time weakens the teaching and learning experience. Lacey’s (2018) research participants, who were also ESOL practitioners in FE in England, made the same observations about practitioners having to do enrolments and questions around accreditation, which they called “chaotic” (2018: 122), with some problems and changes continuing until almost the end of courses.

PJ10 also remarked, “we don’t have a consistent admin staff . . . It’s Friday afternoon and there’s no one in the reception to answer students’ queries” (PJ10). They add that not even the managers know what to do; “So it's not just us that are confused. It seems like that confusion goes from top to bottom” (PJ10). The systemic problem of lack of available administration on hand to help was also commented on by Lacey’s (2018) participant who remarked about administrative staff “the whole team has now been moved to Yew Tree we have nobody there at Manor Hall for guidance and support” (2018).

PD4 and PJ10’s remarks on admin and sorting out of courses identify issues with administrative duties being assigned to ESOL practitioners. The lack of available administrative staff was echoed in the experience of practitioners in the research of Lacey (2018) . The findings in my research and Lacey’s agree but they do not illuminate exactly why these administrative challenges are happening in this microsphere context of ESOL in FE. In the data, the practitioners either assume or are not fully aware of root causes for the apparent weak administrative support and are more focused on the impact of the problems on their ability to successfully execute their role in the classroom.

As PD4 and PJ10 suggest, the contingencies in ESOL in FE create tension for both practitioners and learners as course time and teaching is being curtailed and interrupted further on the administrative tasks of course organisation. Paget and Stevenson (2014) suggested that the precarious situation in ESOL in FE is linked to the de-professionalisation of staff many of whom are on zero hours contracts, and

the problems of inadequate ESOL provision. I would argue that although there may be de-professionalisation, the precarious nature of ESOL in FE is also related to what appears to be administrative disorganisation at the beginning of term which continues well into the academic year rather than to ESOL practitioner de-professionalisation. Administrative tasks being relegated to ESOL practitioners is disruptive and robs them and the learners of precious class time. Therefore, it may be unfair to suggest that de-professionalisation of teachers is the main factor in weaknesses in ESOL teaching and learning. I posit that although late registrations and alterations to course lists may look like disorganisation and chaos, it may actually be deliberate and more accurate to acknowledge that to ensure that costs are met, management is keeping course lists open as long as possible, trying to make ends meet by maximising registrations; a marketisation strategy, which can be traced back to Smith and O'Leary's (2013) account of the introduction of NPM into FE in the 1990s.

17.2 How time is impacted by curricula

Class time

The ESOL practitioners spoke of the encroachment of Functional Skills English (FSE) and Life and Living Skills (LLS) on ESOL in recent years, owing to funding requirements, and how this has had an impact on time for ESOL. As PH8 stated:

> "The time we have in our classroom with the learners is now quite short, and we are not developing the skills that they really need like communication skills or fluency skills, listening skills" . . . "what we're doing now is using a lot of time to bring in lots of other things into the lessons, which can be quite rushed, preparing students to get through [literacy] exams and assessments to show that they are progressing. Our classroom time is not used effectively because we are trying to fulfil the requirements of our funders [rather than learners' needs]. All we are trying to do is move them [the learners] up to the next level" (PH8).

PH8 says that they feel "rushed" because of having "to bring in lots of other things into the lessons"; the rush is the consequence of not having enough time to meet learners' needs for ESOL skills, which they blame on having to meet "funders' needs". Roden and Osmaston (2021) also acknowledge the funding link with the addition of "other things" to ESOL. They remark that "ESOL has become more marginalised" since budget cuts in 2007, and that the decline in ESOL funding "is in part responsible for the increase in enrolments of ESOL

learners on non-ESOL qualifications, as English qualifications (FSE and GCSE) are fully funded and ESOL qualifications are not" (2021: 22). They also agree with PH8's assessment that literacy courses do not meet the learners' needs for English language development. The importance of ESOL curriculum and exams for ESOL learners is supported by the responses to Roden and Osmaston's research surveys indicating that most providers agreed that "the most important factor in favour of ESOL qualifications is that they meet students' language development needs better than FSE" (2021: 13). Yet, although providers acknowledge this, funding requirements override this judgment.

In PH8's observations there is also the suggestion that providers and policymakers are focused mainly on progressing quantities of learners with certificates through the course levels, whether or not what they are doing in class is helping them to develop English language skills. Institutional acceptance of the attitude that both prioritises progression and seems to disregard the concerns of ESOL practitioners also appears in Roden and Osmaston (2021) and they relate that "issues such as cost and recognition often make FSE or GCSE seem preferable to the institution and/or the learner, and staff have to use their ingenuity to create pathways that support good language development" (2021: 22). In other words, ESOL practitioners are expected to adapt to a system that puts ESOL learners on unsuitable courses. It is not acknowledged that this represents a contradiction in their roles as ESOL practitioners which may be stressful and inacceptable, who like PH2 feel "rushed" and clearly unsatisfied with what they are expected to do. Interestingly, Roden and Osmaston's research reflects a high opinion of ESOL practitioners and there is no mention in their report of de-professionalisation of teaching staff, as in the last section on lack of organisation, although it can be argued that expecting teachers to teach their learners unsuitable curriculum content can be questioned as unprofessional.

The link of time poorness and unsuitable curricula to ESOL in FE funding can be traced to O'Leary and Smith (2012) who relate that after the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, FE colleges started to be run like businesses. The relevance to ESOL in FE funding is that at that time, the previous method of funding per student was changed to funding per unit, and crucially the unit was based on the progress toward the attainment of a qualification and this is basically what is still going on. In terms of the ecosystem of ESOL in FE, this is a result of the macro influence of neoliberalism, which seeps through from the chrono- and macro- spheres, putting the provision in FE in an unstable and precarious position because the English language content that the learners need is being squeezed out to fit in "other things" to meet funders' requirements. As practitioner PG7 expressed it:

> "Because from above, the government and the local authorities, as you know discourage ESOL; they say have less students. Explicitly. We are not going to fund you with too many students. Put them on other courses" (PG7).

It seems significant to me that providers knowingly deprioritise learners' needs by requiring ESOL practitioners to teach material to their ESOL classes that is unsuitable for ESOL learners. PG7's remarks chime with Roden and Osmaston's (2021) confirmation that the restrictions on ESOL enrolments are related to the funding of ESOL qualifications. One of their recommendations was that "All English and ESOL courses and qualifications should be fully funded, as this would avoid the current distortion in course choices for reasons of cost" (2021: 5). Although PG7 does not specify what they mean by "other courses", they are referring to literacy courses, such as LLS and FSE, designed for native speakers of English, which are fully funded and have a widely recognised progression path. Although FSE literacy courses may be more highly recognised and preferred by providers who may for these reasons want to limit ESOL enrolments, as stated by Roden and Osmaston (2021), it remains that their curriculum is unsuitable for ESOL in FE learners.

Practitioners voiced their disapproval of the cuts in ESOL time and how this affected the amount of support that they could offer on programmes to ensure learner progress, especially for lower-level ESOL learners. As PD4 remarked:

> "I think it is getting to the point where if they cut off any more [ESOL time], the students are going to be failing" (PD4).

Course length

PB2 made the following observation on the course length allowed for the beginner level Pre-Entry ESOL classes, which had recently been halved by the provider:

> "The Pre-Entry classes I teach are only taught for four hours a week, which is nothing to improve or learn to read or write a language. These are the people who need the learning the most to get on to the ladder and we give them a year" (PB2).

With these words, PB2 expresses firm disapproval of the cuts in ESOL course time. Their comments reflect the incoherence and injustice of ESOL in FE policy, which impacts the

learning time of lower-level learners who have the greatest need. It is interesting that they refer to the restrictive policy of a year's funding for Pre-Entry as something that "we" do. However, the choice of the pronoun "we" (which was pronounced with emphasis) instead of "they" can be interpreted as PB2's awareness and disapproval of the compliant position that they and other teachers are forced to occupy within their Foucauldian conditions of possibility as ESOL tutors in FE which is delineated by a governmental, centralised power structure that supports restrictive policies affecting what colleges can and cannot fund.

Practices are cited in the research of Curcin, et al. (2022) which indicate agreement with PB2's opinion that the curtailing of course time as unfair but that providers do not think about the impact on the learner. For example, one of Curcin, et al.'s (2022) research participants noted:

> "We know at the very low end there are a lot of learners who we probably aren't catering for as well as we'd like to, anybody below Entry 1. Well, pre-entry skills, pre-entry courses are often not funded, so you might have a pre-entry learner who's put into an Entry 1 course because that's the only way they can access the course" (2022: 56).

Although this might solve the immediate problem of no funding for pre-entry, it could prove disastrous for the learner who may subsequently have great difficulty progressing and reaching their ESOL learning goals.

PB2 followed their initial comments above in even stronger terms with the statement that it was "ludicrous" to limit Pre-Entry ESOL learners to one year because cutting the time in the first course impacts the progression through all the ESOL levels which will eventually reduce the number of learners progressing in ESOL in the college, thus defeating the overall purpose of the ESOL in FE learning programme. They continued:

> "It is just awful for learner confidence that they have built in that classroom . . . it's just a horrible thing to say to these students that they can't continue if they can't write a sentence by the end of the year" (PB2).

PB2's disapproval and frustration with the way they are positioned by provider practices around course planning, or lack of it, echoes the feelings expressed by the practitioners in Lacey's (2018) research.

PB2's emotive language in their choice of the words "awful" and "horrible" reflects the embodied nature of language learning for learners and practitioners which is often ignored (Swain, 2013). In their words, there is a depth of feeling about how funding restrictions exclude Pre-Entry learners who cannot reach a certain standard in writing within the very restricted course length. Researchers Schellekens et al., (2023), would agree that this is unfair in view of the diversity inherent in ESOL classes where learners' entry points often vary considerably. PB2 added:

> "I do love to see people improve and progress, but it is very frustrating when you know that you're not giving the students enough and they are not getting enough hours. Often you know that they are not really going to go very far. There is not enough support for people who are often illiterate in their first languages too, and they are the ones we should really be focusing on" (PB2).

PB2's mention of the need to focus on the Pre-Entry level of ESOL, "people who are often illiterate in their first languages", is significant because it draws attention to the gap between learners who have knowledge of an alphabet and have been reading, writing, and interacting with texts in their home languages since their youth, as opposed to other people with experience of migration, especially women, who may have been excluded from school in their countries of origin. Again, Schellekens' (2011) research agrees as she points out that some learners have little experience with the written word and need more basic information about the language and more time to learn. PB2's words show that they are aware that their ESOL teaching is insufficient because of lack of time, but their agency to do anything about it is limited. In Foucauldian terms, their conditions of possibility as ESOL in FE teachers are restricted by government policy which impacts their agency to make any changes in this space.

Time to learn a language

How the restriction of time available for ESOL in FE that PB2 points out could potentially play out for learners in terms of their chances of achieving English language goals was articulated by PB2:

> "I think if you were to start an ESOL [learner] from Pre-Entry and then go through each level, to get to Level Two to get access to university courses,

> and then get to university, you may be talking 10 years to get to university" (PB2).

This estimate has been confirmed in several pieces of research, notably that carried out by Canberra Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college data, verified by the Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade in Australia who "found that it takes on average 1,765 hours for learners to gain independence and employment. On the basis of four hours language lessons per week, the average adult learner would need 14.5 years to use English well enough to get a job or attend a vocational course". Schellekens et al. (2023) also cite a study by the National Center for ESL Literacy Education that calculated it would take an ESOL learner "1000 hours to reach survival level, i.e., cope with basic daily interaction" (2023: 4-5).

Despite the availability of this information, there is little acknowledgement of the huge task involved in learning an additional language. PB2's view that "unfortunately" they had seen this kind of progress happen "very rarely" expresses agreement with the research cited above. PB2 describes a learning journey that demands time, consistency, and dedication on the part of both the learner and the provider, confirming the estimates of language experts regarding the time it takes to reach a language level that would support higher study or skilled employment, emphasising that a considerable number of years would be required to achieve this level of English proficiency. PB2 remarked:

> "People usually fall out along the way or get hit by so many barriers to accessing higher learning that they just don't do this" (PB2).

Thus, PB2 draws attention to the barriers ESOL in FE learners with experience of migration face and the false expectations of both providers and learners and the misconceptions regarding the time it takes to learn a language that underpin policymakers' decisions. A point of agreement emerges here with Curcin et al. (2022) regarding misconceptions when they relate that ESOL curriculum and exams are "undervalued in terms of funding" and "not sufficiently recognised for their potential to enable learner progression" (2022: 39). They report that this "affected stakeholder attitudes" which was "also partly to do with a lack of understanding, on the part of some stakeholders, that ESOL qualifications have an enabling function in terms of developing broad language skills of learners with ESOL needs, from very basic to advanced, rather than just focusing on literacy skills" (2022: 39).

PD4 described the ESOL they teach in FE dismissively as a “limited quality service” because of policies that restrict time that have an impact on the value of what can be taught in terms of language content, which can be traced back to the marketised product focus in FE and ESOL in FE, mentioned by O’Leary and Smith (2012), that does not prioritise learners’ needs but rather focuses on marketisation and management’s needs, for example:

> “I don't feel like we meet the individual needs of the students because it seems the needs of the college, the needs of the teacher who is also under pressure to meet their own targets [take priority]” (PB2).

PB2 makes the point that tutors feel compelled to prioritise their individual institutional “targets” over learners’ needs, a procedure of accountability that adds to the tensions of time restrictions already mentioned, which is discussed further in Chapter 5, Section 18.4.

There was a range of intensity of feeling with which the practitioner participants articulated their views regarding how government funding policy has impacted and restricted their time for creative and effective ESOL in FE pedagogical approaches. Their statements suggest how, drawing from the ideas of Foucault (1975) in *Discipline and Punish,* the impact of government policies on the ESOL in FE workplace normalise, through internalised as well as external forms of governmentality, practices that they do not agree with. Drawing also from the ideas of Gee (2014), in this way practitioners are conditioned to self-regulate in ways that allow them to conform to the dominant macro-Discourses of the government policies around ESOL in FE provision. With reference to Foucault (1975), to exercise agency within these limited conditions of possibility individuals must align, at least on the surface to some extent with normalised neoliberal discourses of power operating institutionally, which destabilises them further and increases their precarity in the workplace, creating a very debilitating double-bind.

For PH8, the need to comply with the restrictions of policy, generated feelings of resignation and disappointment about their ability to teach ESOL in FE effectively when the priority was to meeting funders’ requirements rather than learners’ needs:

> “We [now] have to improvise and compromise and make do or make the most out of the situation” and “obviously, we have to be accountable to our funders and their requirements” (PH8).

In this study, I noticed differences in the words of the practitioners that indicated the degree of practitioner compliance to the policies that curtail ESOL learning time as they dismissed the problem of time poorness as something they could do nothing about, as PH8 stated:

> "I don't blame management. No, it's at a government level, and we have to make the most of things that we have" (PH8).

PH8 capitulates reluctantly to institutional policies by voicing their intention to make the most of a difficult situation. They focus blame on a higher level of government. With the idea of "blame", they express a dislike of the funding policy that reduces time for ESOL in FE and are fully aware that their agency to teach in the ways that they want is compromised. I understand their compliance as unavoidable for the continuance of their jobs and the learning centre. Thus, they feel coerced into accepting a position that reflects the precarity and lack of agency experienced by many ESOL in FE practitioners.

PF6 also expressed resignation and a reluctant compliance with current policies on course lengths. Echoing PH8's comments cited above, they commented:

> "It's kind of like we don't have the space [time] to experiment, but we have to make the most of things that we have" (PF6).

However, experimentation, is important in constructivist pedagogical approaches such as those advocated in this thesis, as expressed by Severs (2023), that "a lesson might include individualisation, a slower pace, hidden outcomes", which would clearly not be encouraged. Drawing from Severs (2023), this kind of creative pedagogy might include the use of drama, such as Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert (1995), in which learners learn through imagination with the direction of the teacher which is far removed from what seems possible given the restrictions of time and curriculum content that ESOL practitioners in FE face. In the current climate of ESOL in FE, as PF6 and PH8 describe, their time is restricted to teaching to achieve assessment and exam results. In my final chapter, I discuss more indirect, exploratory methods that prioritise the diverse needs of learners that can be used instead of traditional, behaviourist pedagogy characterised by less flexible teacher-centred information transfer that, in the case of ESOL in FE, prioritises an educational product-centred curriculum that aims to shape learners in ways that benefit the economy but not necessarily the learner.

The repetition of PF6 and PH8, both longer-serving ESOL in FE practitioners, that they "have to make the most of the situation" indicates, drawing on ideas from Gee (2014) and Foucault (1975), a kind of fatalism or weakened agency and resistance when faced with the restrictive exosphere policies and macro-Discourses of governmentality which they have internalised. Their compliance suggests that over time the restrictions on practitioner experience helps to pattern and frame the limited conditions of possibility for teaching in ESOL in FE.

In contrast, practitioner PJ10 was direct in voicing concern over the ethical and moral compromises and risks that everyone in the ESOL in FE microsphere is faced with in the current environment in which ESOL in FE has been made precarious by government policies:

> "There's too much of a focus on extracting cash from the students through doing exams and qualifications which don't benefit them and are not relevant to them just to get money for the college. This is not the college's fault, necessarily, it's to plug the funding gap, so it's more of a systemic problem than an individual college problem, which I find disheartening" (PJ10).

PJ10's view here agrees with one of Curcin et al.'s (2022) research participants who said that providers "choose the qualification that was more accessible for them in terms of drawing down funding and things. It's a lot easier to deliver a qualification where it's all being funded by the government than chasing learners for money" (2022: 45).

With regard to systemic problems, PJ10 made this political statement, which at the time of the data collection in 2023, was during the Conservative government of Rishi Sunak:

> "We have a conservative government made up of ministers who don't use state education. Ideologically, [they] don't believe in state education and don't care. It's kept along by the good will of teachers who do care" (PJ10).

In this statement, PJ10 blames the central government for the institutional policy problems in ESOL in FE and points out that their discriminatory macro ideologies work to disadvantage ESOL in FE as part of "state education", which according to the critiques of Ball (2013) and Jones (2016), has been seen historically as a lower form of education that does not enter the Conservative politicians' realms of experience.

They credit the “good will of teachers who do care” which illuminates positive feelings and emotions in the affective nature of teaching and learning which are disregarded by government policymakers.

Like the other practitioners, PJ10 voices disapproval of the use of literacy material in ESOL. However, unlike the other practitioners, they were more open with me about their dislike of the literacy curriculum and how they express this to the learners as well:

> “It’s something which [I] have become a bit cynical about. I tell my students so that the college can get some funding, we're going to go through this [literacy assessment] for 20 minutes. I'll put the answers on the board. We can go through it together and then carry on” (PJ10).

PJ10 shared with me how, by giving the literacy assessment answers to the learners, they break the norms of procedures for assessments and examinations which they believe have no outcomes for the learners. Their actions could be risky because they go against the expectations of professional behaviour by stepping outside of the boundaries set for assessment protocol, but they shared this with me anyway.

With regard to teaching timetables, PJ10 states that they were being expected to teach “less and less ESOL and more and more LLS.” They explained that in their Entry Level classes, they were meant to teach three lessons per week, two for LLS and one for ESOL. However, they confessed, “In reality, I undermine that by teaching ESOL three times a week” (PJ10). They described the LLS assessments as too simple, so they teach their own topic-based curriculum and then “shoehorn the [LLS] exam bits in at the end”. They remarked:

> “I think all good teachers are subversive in the sense that we all take the curriculum but then mould it the way we want it in any setting, but particularly here” (PJ10).

PJ10 describes their attitude towards teaching in ESOL as “subversive” because they make changes to their timetable in defiance of instructions in order to fit in more ESOL. They are candid with their learners about their attitude towards the assessments and literacy material. They adapt the content to minimise the amount of time it takes out of the lesson. They see their behaviour as “subversive” in the sense that they do not comply with the norms expected of them in the ESOL in FE microsphere.

Speaking out with intensity of feeling is a form of “fearless speech” according to Foucault (2001) which depends upon the level of conditioning and the positioning of the speaker. Foucault describes “fearless speech” as speaking the truth to authority in spite of the dangers this might pose to safety or well-being. In the precarious space for practitioners in ESOL in FE, speaking out in this way could result in censure or even job dismissal. It should be considered that although practitioners spoke directly in the confidentiality of the research setting, they might not have been so direct if they had been talking to their employer.

Interestingly, the other practitioners did not share their dislike of what ESOL in FE has become in the same way. They said nothing about speaking to their learners about the “mess” in the ESOL in FE microsphere. In my view, the difference between PJ10 and other practitioners in this regard is one of professional identity. For the other practitioners, to share with me, another ESOL practitioner, how they talk to their learners about college funding problems for ESOL may have seemed undesirable in view of their professional identities as this talk draws into question the value of the ESOL specialisation. However, although PJ10 is a highly qualified FE practitioner, they did not qualify in ESOL but came into ESOL from another speciality. Thus, they identify as an ESOL practitioner only by default which may not have the same intensity as others who are invested in and qualified in ESOL.

In the practitioner comments semblance of compliance with authority among longer-serving practitioners inhibits criticality and this could work to mask and perpetuate inequalities and injustices and increase the precarity of ESOL and their identities as ESOL practitioners. With reference to Foucault (1975) and Gee (2014), their compliance could be because macro-Discourses of governmentality have been internalised over time, thus making strong resistance difficult. I speculate that possibly their compliance with the requirements of authority is what has allowed them to be longer serving, staying in the job they care about, but at the expense of their agency and professional identity.

By going through literacy assessments with the learners and putting the answers on the board, thereby producing false assessment scores to satisfy the provider, PJ10 is technically engaging in what would be considered cheating in the college context, something akin to what Smith and O’Leary (2013) call the “fabrication of ‘outward-facing’ market data” (2013: 247) or Duckworth and Smith (2018) call “spoonfeeding” and “gaming” (2018: 531). PJ10 was acting on their opinion of the literacy assessments as an inappropriate use of class time for these learners. It is their way of coping with encroachments on ESOL teaching time,

clawing back time for ESOL by curtailing the assessment time to 20 minutes. They do not consider their action cheating but using their agency to “subvert” and “undermine” the encroachment of literacy curriculum to make time to fit in some meaningful ESOL teaching. Although their learners are spending more time learning English because of their resistances, they could face discipline or even dismissal if found out or presumably the learners’ outcomes drop.

Managers may argue that these actions could encourage cheating on a wider scale and cause the learners to question the value of subsequent examinations in a more direct confrontation with product-centred, neoliberal influenced policy. I reflected that the strong feelings of this practitioner led them to confess to acting on those feelings. It made me wonder if they were the only ones resisting on behalf of the learners in this way. Other practitioners may be equally cynical and may be doing similar actions on behalf of their learners but hold back expressing it – even in a confidential research setting - in case it had an impact on their job security. Listening to the practitioners about how they feel about their work, I also reflected, inspired by Swain (2013), on how second language learning is emotional and how negative emotions are intensified by precarity.

Specifically, in terms of ESOL in FE, the research participants of Lacey (2018) did not discuss the details of how they carried out assessments, as PJ10 did, but they did mention that they had changed exam boards because their “Reading and Writing results have not been very good or as good as they needed to be” (2018: 98). They explained that with the new exam board there was a lot of flexibility around how assessments were delivered “allowing the college much more flexibility in managing the assessment regime” (2018: 98) which parallels with the experience related by PJ10.

Remarks in Courtney’s (2017) ESOL research also chime with the data from PJ10. She highlights the influence of funding that puts pressure on practitioners and learners because funding is dependent upon predicted achievement in examinations, which puts the focus on successful exam results. She reports that one of her participants stated: “the pressure to teach particular vocabulary linked to employability, as well as having to get learners through the exam, restricts lesson time allocated for “improving” learners’ English for everyday life” (2017: 32). What this evidence shows is that in ESOL in FE there is an overriding concern with assessment and examination results for courses which are not ESOL; this concern shapes teaching practice causing examinations and assessments to dominate over meeting learners’ needs for high-quality English language instruction.

17.3 Professional status of ESOL in FE practitioners

Several practitioners, including PJ10, admitted that they started ESOL in FE teaching without any formal ESOL training. The words of PJ10 illuminate that ESOL in FE is not regarded a professionalised space.

> “It doesn't seem like you have to have much experience teaching ESOL before you get into this environment. They never stipulated that I get a TEFL qualification. . . in terms of the grammar, as a native speaker, I didn't know how the grammar worked. It's just something that I've had to learn, as I've gone along” (PJ10).

This is reflected in government documents, such as the ESOL for Integration Fund Prospectus (2020) in which only a basic Level 5 or CELTA qualification is mentioned and volunteers with no qualifications are encouraged to come forward. This problematic view compares with Paget and Stevenson’s (2014) who highlight that the professional status of ESOL in FE teachers has been questioned, especially after the Lingfield Report (2012), which effectively eliminated the need for FE teachers to be qualified, echoing the comments from Eliahoo (2012) on the de-professionalisation of FE teachers after Lingfield. Paget and Stevenson (2014) mention specifically “the trend toward de-professionalisation” in ESOL in FE and they state:

> “Ideally, there needs to be provision of nationally defined courses and qualifications designed for pre-service training and in-service (lifelong) development so that we can be sure that providers of different types are aiming at the same language goals and using the same teaching performance standards” (2014: 47).

Literature supporting this problematic view of practitioner professionality appears in the research of Lacey (2018: 88) illuminating that colleges appoint as ESOL teachers, practitioners who may be qualified in other subjects, such as maths, to teach ESOL without any training. This was the case with PJ10 and other practitioners who participated in my study. Rosenburg’s (2007) history also challenges the notion that ESOL does not require specialist knowledge citing examples of criticism of the quality of ESOL teaching over the decades, mentioned in this thesis, such as a 1981 NATESLA survey revealing “wide

variations in the quantity and quality of ESOL provision in England and Wales" and remarking that there was "an over-reliance on volunteers" and that too many staff were untrained (2007: 166). In another example from Rosenburg, *Basic Education* (FEFC, 1998) pointed out that many ESOL teachers were not "suitably qualified" (2007: 220).

The lack of a requirement to qualify as an ESOL teacher suggests that funders and organisers for ESOL in FE misunderstand or disregard the importance of higher-level training for ESOL practitioners. The de-professionalisation of ESOL lowers the status of practitioners, which is also pointed out by Action for ESOL (2012), providing excuses for further cuts in funding and inferior employment conditions, such as zero hours contracts. It also promotes the idea that unqualified teachers can teach ESOL, which although it may work out for some, like PJ10 who held a level 7 qualification in another subject, completely devalues the Level 7 ESOL training that other practitioners have invested in.

The kinds of problems that de-professionalisation can cause, such as staff retention, quality of provision, and learner disappointment, are apparent in Chapter 5, Section 18.1 of this analysis, in which a ESOL Level 1 learner expresses her views. PJ10 remarked, "ESOL in FE has become a lot more difficult, as is evidenced in things like staff turnover, recruitment and retention" (PJ10). This difficulty reflects how simultaneously ESOL in FE has a strong culture of practitioner accountability, which is in conflict with de-professionalisation and provides another example of how policies passed down to ESOL in FE from the exosphere lack support for practitioners and operationalise to increase professional precarity which impacts the quality of teaching and learning. The view supported in this thesis is that ESOL practitioner training is important as ESOL in FE learners expect and deserve a standard of learning which will help them to reach their aims of learning English to communicate, improve job prospects, and enter further education. However, the inflexibility of the practitioners' conditions of possibility in ESOL in FE also impacts their professionality.

17.4 Impact of policies on practitioner identity

The desire and determination of ESOL in FE practitioners to make time, however limited, for meaningful and affective teaching and learning is exemplified in PB2's remark:

> “I love it in my classes when it's as communicative as possible with people helping each other and trying to speak the lingua franca in the classroom” (PB2).

Hearing these words, I believe there is a glimmer of hope in ESOL in FE as practitioners adhere to their identities as language teachers and use their agency to make time to fit meaningful, communicative English language teaching into their ESOL classes. So, there are moments when practitioners can make them, like this one, in which meaningful ESOL learning experiences happen.

In the work of Rittelmeyer (2022), Swain (2013), and Ding (2019), theorists who explore the affective nature of learning and teaching, there is support for the passages in the data in which ESOL practitioners voice their views. These passages illuminate how teaching ESOL in FE is emotional work and this comes up again in Chapter 5, Section 18.5. The impact English language teaching has on the emotions is linked with the individual’s sense of identity. Teaching the encroaching literacy content is frustrating for ESOL practitioners because it limits their agency to teach the learners the English language that they need to settle and thrive in this country. Significantly, it also has an impact on practitioner identity, especially qualified ESOL practitioners, as their considerable skills in language are disregarded. They are being asked to teach other things and ignore what they know the learners need and importantly they are not being given opportunities to grow and develop as practitioners in their chosen subject of expertise, which increases the precarity of their identity, a situation similar to EAP practitioners in HE exposed by Ding (2019).

In agreement with the importance of practitioner identity, Atherton et al. (2024), Olsen and McIntosh (2024), and Ding (2019) document how government policies can impact practitioner identity and agency in other educational contexts, such as schools and HE. The doctoral research of Lacey (2018) also provides specific examples in the context of ESOL in FE. The data of her ESOL practitioner participants showed that the colleges they worked for did not offer “any support to the teaching staff for the transition from teaching ESOL specialist qualifications to teaching more general English or maths to the same cohort of ESOL students”, and Lacey remarks that “by not supporting staff with this transition, these institutions were devolving all the pedagogical decisions and policy appropriation processes related to the policy changes to the teachers, absolving themselves from direct responsibility for success or failure of the change” (2018: 140).

On top of these role changes, in FE there are lesson observations and accountability, Lacey (2018) remarks that practitioners "have to decide if the perpetual surveillance and the repeated grading of their practices is a price worth paying for working with the student group they are highly committed to" (2018: 150). This agrees with my questioning of the ethics of contradictory policies that on the one hand do not require specialist teaching qualifications or support teachers' transitions between subjects while at the same time conduct observations with grading that, as O'Leary (2020) posits, have no developmental value. This means that ESOL practitioners who want to carry on teaching the hybrid mix of courses that does not adequately support English language learning, must accept the complexities of the curriculum and setting they find themselves working in.

The research conversations and self-interviews in this study show that to continue their work ESOL practitioners in FE are compelled to grapple with the impacts of funding policies and terms of employment that challenge their identities. To work in this space requires moral and ethical choices they must take in order to continue the availability of ESOL in FE studies. In this context, the research has shown practitioners take risks with the curriculum to meet learners' needs, while despite funding difficulties, managers and administrators work to keep the learning centres open. However, I posit that policies restricting the agency of ESOL in FE professionals have deleterious impacts on professional identity and well-being and do not support staff retention. However, as Lacey (2018) wrote:

> "ESOL has been poorly served by the policies of recent governments and often poorly supported by college systems. But the teachers I interviewed still loved the work they do and were committed to making the best of it" (2018: 150).

17.5 ESOL versus EFL

The precarity of ESOL in FE's place in English language teaching and learning and how it has become entangled with other curricula emerged in the comments of PB2 and PG7. Both practitioners had previous experience in the private English language teaching of EFL (English as a foreign language) and commented on the difference between ESOL and EFL as they experienced it. Their comments centred on the differences in the curricula of the two provisions. Practitioner PB2 stated:

> "Teaching ESOL there's a concentration on exams going through the levels and getting entry level qualifications and tagging on other things like

> vocational courses, computing, British Values and lots of other things, whereas with EFL it's more about language development and being able to use that language effectively" (PB2).

This data draws attention to the dilemma of different approaches to teaching English to speakers of other languages. Sutter (2012) and Rosenburg (2007) both point out that a main focus in EFL is on teaching and practising grammar forms and building up grammar knowledge and accuracy. In her history, Rosenburg posits that EFL was initially intended for people who knew the Roman alphabet. On the other hand, Sutter (2012) describes ESOL as having an "acute contextual or social awareness of the learner's lifeworld" and that "ESOL appears to have a greater awareness of the 'local', in the sense of both the local context, and the individuality of the learners (2012: 180). Sutter illuminates that with changes brought in by Skills for Life (2001), ESOL practitioners have experienced increased accountability and bureaucracy, such as SMART targets, lesson planning and observations. In effect, he states, there has been a focus on grammar and language structure that amounts to "a colonisation of ESOL by EFL" (2012: 179).

Practitioner PG7 also referenced their previous EFL experience which they valued as being more language focused.

> "I learned a lot about teaching [in FE], as opposed to teaching English as a foreign language [EFL] in my home country. I came here with the idea of grammar, and so on, and things like the phonetic alphabet and they did not work" (PG7).

There is a sense that the differences between ESOL and EFL have had an impact on PG7's identity as an English language teacher. PG7's professional identification with the EFL they trained in emerges in further statements suggesting, as PB2 does, that the lack of grammar or language focus is a pedagogic problem with ESOL in FE provision.

Sutter (2012) discusses how ESOL teachers today are expected to teach grammar and have language targets for lessons that satisfy the curriculum but at the same time maintain learner awareness by differentiating, making the language useful, and having pastoral concerns for the learners. He points out that these varied

expectations can be contradictory. This means that the tension in ESOL in FE pedagogy between EFL and ESOL impacts the practitioners and learners and adds to the precarity of the provision.

In the conversations with PB2 and PG7, there was also an indication of inequality in English language provision, suggesting that EFL was a higher class of provision than ESOL. PB2 highlights an inequity that learners who can pay for private tuition can access a better-quality provision than ESOL in FE.

> "University students and older people, usually people with quite a lot of money who want to come and learn the language for academic reasons or for work, always in private colleges; it was really good as my first teaching experience" (PB2).

PB2 clearly valued the teaching experience they gained in this elite, private EFL provision, implying that it helped to develop their abilities as an English teacher. The implication in PB2's statement is that compared to ESOL, EFL is a better provision because the focus is on learning to use language effectively rather than "lots of other things" (PB2). They also mentioned that their EFL experience included exclusive language learning programmes, available for purchase, that are not taught in public education. As PB2 and PG7 point out, EFL serves a particular group of learners "university students and older people who want to come and learn the language" who are paying for their courses (PB2). On the other hand, ESOL learners in FE have British resident status or are nationals who have settled here, and many are receiving government funded ESOL. The difference between these learners and what they can access in terms of education is significant. This contrast illuminates a neoliberal notion that a person's value is material, and anything related to social assistance is inferior.

The inequalities around EFL and ESOL provision emerge again when PG7 related how university students they coach privately who were used to EFL learning were astounded by the lack of grammar usage they had encountered in England remarking that when they come here "it's like, wow, what is the grammar exactly?" (PG7). PG7 indicates that they identify professionally more with EFL provision, stating:

> "I squeeze in grammar whenever I can. But there is no sense of continuity. You don't really have the time to do it" (PG7).

In this comment about squeezing in grammar, the impact on time of the varied teaching expectations of ESOL in FE emerges. They feel that time is important and necessary for what the learners' need, which has an impact on both their job satisfaction and on their identity as ESOL practitioner. This echoes the research of Ding (2019) on EAL professional identity in HE which has been undermined and degraded by bureaucratic changes. The comments of both practitioners express dissatisfaction with how they are expected to teach ESOL in FE. Their words also speak to social inequalities that blight FE by suggesting that if people have money to pay for private English classes or gain entrance to university education, they can access a higher quality of English language provision. These ideas echo Ball (2013) and Jones (2016), mentioned in the literature review, who point out the chronosphere and macrosphere connection that English education is linked to social class discrimination resulting in an FE sector which is not prioritised.

Roden and Cupper (2016) illuminate that the government regards the English language needs of *immigrants* as part of a wide range of needs that can be met with one scheme designed to ultimately achieve integration, but as they point out, in order for this to work a central ESOL strategy is needed. Without central organisation and guidance, this wide range of needs can result in "lots of other things" getting added to ESOL classes. In my view, this creates tension and a feeling of reduced agency owing to lack of time. As PG7 said "there is no sense of continuity". I posit that this situation in the microsphere of ESOL in FE does not provide a framework for creativity in teaching approaches and methods and it does not encourage practitioners to think of other learner-centred approaches that also incorporate grammar and language learning such as Dogme and Reflect for ESOL that are mentioned by Sutter (2012) or participatory ESOL methods promoted by Bergold (2012) and Cooke (2023). As it stands, the situation in ESOL in FE perpetuates a reduced quality of ESOL provision, adding to marginalisation and a semi-skilled workforce, which in the case of ESOL learners who are people with experience of migration, is also racialised.

All the ESOL practitioners who participated in this study (not just the ones with experience of EFL as discussed above), suggested that ESOL in FE is not providing a high-quality English language provision, and this has an impact on learner achievement and progression. PB2 voiced their concerns on the same subject when they discussed the damaging impact on their learners' progression that these funding requirements have caused over time:

> "People get through the [examination/course] levels. It seems to me at ESOL they maybe do Entry One, Entry Two, Entry Three, and then they kind of get stuck at Level One, Level Two, which is the level they really need to do other courses or start a job" (PB2).

In terms of the debate around ESOL and EFL, as voiced in this study, it can be argued that the deterioration of ESOL which has been described by practitioners, has the effect in the long term of holding back learner progress but that EFL is not necessarily the answer. In terms of ESOL learners' futures, it is difficult for them to gain enough English language skills to enable them to progress out of economic marginalisation in semi-skilled jobs into more skilled employment and higher education. In the short term, the doubts about ESOL pervade in the microsphere as policies imposed at college level degrade provision and impact working practices in a way that creates not only problems with curriculum content but also organisational difficulties for ESOL in FE practitioners and learners.

17.6 Processes of accountability at FE college

The topic of accountability of practitioners in ESOL in FE in terms of lesson observations and other Foucauldian technologies of surveillance emerged. PD4 commented, "I'm under pressure to get my results". This practitioner's comment reflected tensions around practitioner accountability in the context of a pedagogical system that values and prioritises the metrics of results. Practitioner PB2 observed the intense emotional impact of processes of accountability on college management:

> "I've had three Ofsted inspections in a very short time, and that's when you really see the panic and what pressures the colleges and managers are under to report data and to get students into work and to be progressing towards that" (PB2).

As Smith and O'Leary (2013) illuminate, since the Skills for Life Strategy (2001), the practices of FE colleges and practitioners have come under increased scrutiny. In Chapter 3, Section 7, I discussed the marketised approach to education beginning in the Conservative Thatcher years, which brought in an emphasis on accountability across all educational sectors in the UK. In the case of ESOL practitioners, accountability means lesson observations and increased paperwork and examinations to measure learner engagement and achievement. Scrutiny and accountability are particularly contentious and troubling in view of the eroded condition of ESOL in FE, in which, as this study and the study

of Lacey (2018) show, practitioners, some without specialist qualifications, are struggling to teach English language alongside other curriculum requirements.

At the FE college, a formal lesson observation is one of the accountability procedures, in which a manager or senior practitioner comes into the class and watches part of a lesson and then gives an evaluation. This agrees with what O'Leary (2020) calls a "snapshot" observation and what the observer sees is part of a performance of a model lesson, for which the practitioner has supplied a detailed lesson plan that is meant to showcase the practitioner's knowledge and skills in their subject specialism. It is not what happens on a day-to-day basis.

O'Leary (2020) points out that many FE colleges retain the practice of grading lesson observations although the requirement for grading was removed by Ofsted (2020: 15). The formal observations at colleges are graded 1 to 4. One being 'Outstanding' and four being 'Inadequate'. One of the areas listed under the evaluation of curriculum intent and implementation is "How expert and extensive are the subject knowledge and/or vocational skills of the teacher?" (further education college criteria, 2025). This criterion is similar to Danielson's (2013) criterion: "The teacher displays extensive knowledge of the important concepts in the discipline and how these relate both to one another and to other disciplines" (2013: 9). This is ironic, given what we know about the lack of professional status and training of some of the practitioners at this college.

The criterion also requires the observer to comment on the English language knowledge of the ESOL in FE practitioner and the extent to which it is "expert" and "extensive". In view of what I have already pointed out in previous sections of this analysis about the professional status and training of ESOL practitioners and the systematic degradation of ESOL that has been going on through policies that seriously cut into time for ESOL in FE as well as organisation and administration, observation criteria such as these are grossly unfair. In terms of my research aims to understand the experience of the ESOL practitioners and learners, I posit that the application of this criterion is totally inappropriate. As Lawy and Tedder (2013) state: "It is the achievement of the standards rather than a critical engagement with them that is important" (2013: 3).

As I pointed out previously, some ESOL in FE practitioners in my study like PJ10 never qualified in ESOL, and this lack of qualifications and training in ESOL is not uncommon.

Other ESOL in FE researchers in the West Midlands, such as Lacey (2018), also pointed out the lack of ESOL training of some of the participants in her research. Clearly, a significant gap exists at the college level between expectation and reality around the provision of ESOL in FE. The criterion to measure the ability of the practitioner to use their skill as a teacher to "transmit knowledge to the learners in a way that they will understand" must depend to some extent upon teacher training. Therefore, the de-professionalisation and precarity of ESOL in FE teachers together with the degradation of the provision already pointed out makes these observation criteria patently not fit for purpose in the context of ESOL in FE. There are other ways of operating, such as the example of "lesson study" described by O'Leary (2020). However, as the conditions of possibility for any alternative such as lesson study are not available at this college, teachers and managers cannot yet imagine them.

17.7 Discourses of accountability

Accountability measures are part of a surveillance culture in college microsphere that creates stress in ESOL in FE, especially among newer practitioners who are insecure because they feel that their performance and performance statistics are being scrutinised more than those of longer-serving practitioners. This can be seen in PD4's statement:

> "Teachers like me, who are not at the top of the pay scale, are still having our results scrutinised - it's a results-driven industry" (PD4).

Lawy and Tedder (2013) write in the broader context of teachers and teacher trainers in FE, referring to the FE system of "regulation and control of teacher performance using documented 'standards' and with subject-specific mentoring", and this agrees with what I have seen in ESOL in FE. In harmony with O'Leary (2020), they "argue against the performative nature of the reformed system and in favour of pedagogical mentoring to support professional formation and development throughout the sector" (2013: 1). Although Lawy and Tedder are discussing FE teachers and not specifically ESOL practitioners in FE, in my opinion their work is relevant because the lesson observations at the college in my study are centralised with the main FE college so there is no difference between the adult learning lesson observations and feedback and those of the main FE college departments; they are carried out in the same way by either adult learning or main college observers.

PD4, who was a lower-level practitioner perceived accountability as a primarily evaluative process within a hierarchical system in which practitioners at or near the lower levels are more robustly scrutinised by those higher up who judge them on their results and how much

their work contributes to the system. However, I observed differences in the view of practitioners towards accountability policies. Despite the conflict between accountability in lesson observation and the de-professionalisation and precarity of ESOL in FE teaching staff, practitioner PF6, a longer serving practitioner, had a positive view of their experience of observations:

> "[Lesson observation] is not a bad thing because the moment that you don't have a structure; you don't have leadership and [these are] times when you can fall astray. So having a benchmark, if you're a good teacher, you can improve from there" (PF6).

Interestingly, in contrast with the ideas of O'Leary (2020), they make sense of lesson observation both as a method of control exercised by the leadership of FE to prevent "falling astray" and as a developmental process of CPD because by "having a benchmark, if you're a good teacher, you can improve from there" (PF6). They voice this remark as a piece of conventional wisdom in favour of lesson observations in a way that suggests that this is a discourse they have been conditioned to accept. PF6 asserts:

> "It's part of the quality assurance and part of standardisation. Also, what's really important, structure and accountability has always been there, more so now reflected in the paperwork and the things that we have to do" (PF6).

PF6's view does not find fault with Lawy and Tedder's "performative criteria and judgements and systems that have increasingly been used to measure the effectiveness and efficacy of practice" (2013: 7). PF6 complies with the FE culture of observations as part of accountability because they have "always been there" and it is a "thing we have to do". These statements reveal that lesson observations have for PF6 become a normalised process of accountability. They exist as part of the ESOL in FE accountability culture in which conditions of possibility do not easily enable practitioners to question or imagine any other ways of functioning. Not surprisingly peer review and alternative models of peer review were not mentioned in the practitioner conversations or self-interviews.

PF6 gives credit for their development and evolution as a teacher to evaluative observations:

> “I've never thought of lesson observations as a bad thing because you can get positive feedback and you can learn from that . . . Observations, I think on the whole are good because you do evolve, and I've seen myself evolve as a teacher” (PF6).

Here PF6 does not distinguish between formative developmental training and performative and evaluative processes. They describe evaluative lesson observation in ESOL in FE as a constructive developmental experience referring to the “positive feedback” they have obtained from their observations. However, there are differences between “formative” models of training and “performative” models of evaluation as Lawy and Tedder (2013) and O’Leary (2020) point out. Formative models are confidential and “focused on personal and professional development” (2013: 24) . They are also led by the trainee (in this case the ESOL practitioner). This is in opposition to the “performative” model of evaluation in FE, referred to by PF6, which is public as the results are not confidential, and the focus is on a “judgment of performance” of the professional standards. Further, it is led by the observer/evaluator and the results are used to survey and control teaching practice at the college (2013: 24).

Through the lenses of Foucault (1975) and O’Leary (2020), the ‘performative’ formal lesson observation is a mechanism through which power operates with surveillance and evaluation to control and normalise subjects in ESOL in FE. Although the feedback PF6 refers to is within the context of an evaluative framework, they understand it as part of their personal development as an ESOL in FE practitioner. Thus, in their understanding of the lesson observation process, which is essentially surveillance and evaluation to prevent practitioners from “going astray” (PF6), they have internalised the process as developmental.

Although in their view, they have been able to build on “positive feedback” tensions can be seen in PF6’s response, above. They qualify their opinion with “on the whole”, which can be taken to mean that sometimes in some ways observations may not be so good; however, they are still an important part of their professional identity. Despite the conversation being anonymised, they may have held back remarks that could implicate their employer in a negative way. PF6’s words express their awareness of observations as inherently subjective processes, and they mention the impact of grading:

> “Sometimes it depends on who's observing you. They may be looking for something completely different to another person. So, I think it is quite subjective as to what grade you get because of the person who is actually observing you” (PF6).

This means that a drawback of the practice of lesson observation is subjectivity as so much depends upon the viewpoints, experiences, preferences, and professional position of the observer. PF6 acknowledges in this statement that the grading of observations may be subjective, but they do not challenge this. Instead, perhaps because they have been conditioned in a “culture of perpetual observation” (O'Leary, 2020: 51), they accept the subjectivity of observation grading as a necessary part of their professional identity and development as an ESOL in FE teacher.

O’Leary (2020) makes the key point that lesson observations are carried out in a hierarchical context so that the higher rank of the observer is assumed. Even though an observer may be very willing to discuss the evaluation afterwards, they are still in a superior position and their judgment could have a bearing on the practitioner’s job security. O’Leary (2020) asserts that for this reason lesson observations are often being misused as a technology of accountability. He connects this, as I do, with Foucault’s (1975) concepts of power/knowledge which expose how lesson observations for evaluation and quality control, supported by the dominant discourses of government education authority, are accepted as knowledge in FE colleges.

This means that what gets measured in FE lesson observations and surveillance techniques is significant because it is an indication of what is valued; however, so often these measurements of engagement do not adequately reflect learners’ needs, something which is acknowledged in the thesis by practitioner and students alike. Accounts in the study suggest that accountability encourages blame over issues of engagement which results as well as potentially positioning ESOL in FE practitioners and learners in opposition to each other. For example, PD4’s remark, which was said in an ominous tone, that their results are still being “scrutinised”, suggests that these processes can be stressful. Accountability based on measurements of engagement also impacts teaching methods, leading to an over-emphasis on examinations and assessments. As I go on to discuss in the next section.

17.8 Teaching to the test

Teaching to the test was another problematic aspect of ESOL in FE which emerged in the findings.

> "Now it's exam criteria. So, you're sort of teaching them how to pass the exam. That's the priority in terms of what we need to teach them" (PF6).

Popham (2001) and Styron (2012) explain that teaching to the test happens because of the over-emphasis on examinations and results, which is the case in the ESOL in FE microsphere as well as elsewhere in other educational sectors. PB2 continues, making their opinion clear that the examinations being offered in ESOL in FE do not merit the teaching time being spent on them:

> “It ends up that maybe half of the course is spent in exam preparation and it’s not like doing a GCSE or A-Level. In my opinion, they don’t really help unless you get a Level 2 qualification and even then, that’s just a minimum level of English” (PB2).

The data shows that the tests and assessments to measure and prove progress colonise a significant amount of time in ESOL in FE. Lanahan’s (2019) report makes the point that “Funding is tied to qualifications which drives delivery models” (2019: 7). Drawing from Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024), the priority exams are given is linked to macro attitudes of neoliberal responsibilisation and accountability which are entangled with funding.

As Styron (2012) illuminates, the over-focus on learner evaluations and qualifications leads to the well-documented phenomenon of “teaching to the test”. Popham (2001) explains that this creates an over-emphasis on examination revision which involves a strong focus on practice papers, or “mocks”, in which teachers guide learners through rehearsals of the test as well as close analysis of rubrics, exam criteria, and examination techniques. This process embodies the characteristics of Freire’s (1972) “banking system” in which learning happens more by repetition and memorisation to replicate information without analysing the content deeply or exploring its meaning. PB2 articulated this problem with teaching to the test thus:

> “For example, we always have to teach the students how to make a doctor's appointment, how to fill in a form. But there's no point making the doctor's

> appointment if when you get to the doctor, the doctor doesn't understand what you're saying, and the student doesn't understand what they're saying." (PB2).

PB2 makes a significant point that passing an ESOL examination is not the same as communicating in a live situation, which is what learners want to be able to do. As Roden and Osmaston (2021) and Schellekens (2011) illuminate, an examination is a static thing on paper, and a Speaking and Listening exam is a performance of a skill in a narrow and controlled context. This means that when testing and evaluating, language skills become the aim of a course of learning, as it has tended to do in the case of ESOL in FE (because we need the proofs of achievement because we need the funding); it does not mean that this evaluation will achieve meaningful development of English language skills that are transferrable into highly flexible and varied real-life situations.

Practitioner PH8 is very clear about how time consuming all the exam preparation is and how it takes time away from what they consider more important learning:

> "We are spending a lot of time trying to prepare students to get through exams and assessments to show that they are progressing. . . . .This kind of progress doesn't necessarily mean that they've progressed and are able to go into the wider community and participate there. So, some of them may have the qualifications but may not have the skills to communicate, which are really, really important for them to get by" (PH8).

For PH8 and PB2, passing an examination does not necessarily mean that this knowledge will transfer to a dynamic, real-life situation. Examination content for Speaking and Listening is often a rehearsed performance and PG7 mentions this in Chapter 5 Section 17.9. PH8 makes the point that the time taken out of the course to rehearse and practise for what is not a spontaneous, natural verbal exchange but something prescribed on paper would be better spent on developing more authentic communicative skills. Their remarks also chime with that of practitioner PD4 in Chapter 5 Section 17.9 who reported a colleague's observation that learners who pass examinations and then stop attending class regularly, come back in September "having forgotten everything", which indicates, with reference to Freire's (1972) banking system, that this kind of examination-based learning is not authentic or meaningful or retained by the learner.

The over-emphasis on learner evaluation in ESOL in FE clearly involved practitioners in descriptions of manipulations and tactics that skew the course content and teaching approaches that they employ for the sake of getting exam results. Practitioners commented on their disapproval and distress over the professional compromises involved in teaching to the test in ESOL in FE rather than concentrating on meeting learners' needs. For example:

> "As teachers I don't feel like we meet the individual needs of the students because it seems the needs of the college, the needs of the teacher who is also under pressure to meet their own targets [are prioritised], and it just means that the concentration is on exams" (PB2).

The question of professionality also emerges over this issue when teachers, under scrutiny and the pressure of accountability, put getting results and meeting examination targets over meeting the learners' needs. PB2 shows their disapproval:

> "It's almost like we have to dig up these exams and pretend that they are important and get the students to think they are important when in effect, they're not really. They're only important for the college . . . In my opinion, getting an Entry One, Entry Two, Entry Three certificate doesn't really help anyone except the college for the funding" (PB2).

These ESOL in FE practitioners described an unsustainable, risky, and precarious professional environment in which they find themselves that disregards recognised pedagogy and what they, responding to their learners, believe to be valuable. More specific resistances regarding the pedagogical value of certain examinations and assessments emerged, for example PJ10 stated:

> "For instance, on LLS, students aren't allowed to make a mistake before they submit their final assessment. So, what sort of learning can take place in which students have to get 100%? If you don't make mistakes, you haven't learned anything" (PJ10).

PJ10 also described how teachers compromise their personal and professional ethics to meet these unrealistic demands and how that made him feel:

> “They [the learners] seem to understand because they know that the college needs to be funded. But it's just a sad state of affairs because it's a lot of work for me to fill out all of these bits of paperwork. There’re no learning outcomes for them, and it's just purely a finance exercise to get money from the college” (PJ10).

PB2 also brought up other curriculum, mentioned before, which is added to ESOL, maintaining that the focus on examinations, together with employability, and digital skills should not be prioritised for ESOL in FE learners and that initially:

> “The focus should be on improving language more so than exams, more so than employability, digital skills. It should just be a big push, especially in those first couple of years when they start that we get them through” (PB2).

PB2 remarked on the need to “improve language”, a broad aim that includes grammar, vocabulary, and structures that the learners need in order to communicate in dynamic, real-life situations. Their argument reflects wider research that the kind of behaviourist conditioning that underpins teaching to the test does not produce the flexible and transferable knowledge of language acquisition which requires the knowledge of language structures and how to use them to communicate in different situations. Sutter (2012) and Lawy and Tedder (2013) also illuminate the tension between the narrow aims of achievement in ‘standardised’ tests and the complex and diverse language needs of learners in real-life situations and the inherent conflict of teaching approaches that attempt to do both.

17.8.1 Differing viewpoints

Disagreement over learners’ examinations and compromise over exams and assessments also emerged in the practitioner study data. PD4 stated:

> “We do teach them how to pass an exam. Sometimes that approach, I think it does help them. But from what I have heard, not all would agree, but I haven't been around as long as people who have been there 10 years, 20 years” (PD4).

PD4’s view differs from their colleagues’ views discussed previously. They voice a more compliant opinion about teaching to the test, which shows how Foucault’s (1978) fricative forces of power do not always play in one direction. They acknowledge that other

practitioners may disagree and voice less compliant opinions, pointing out that this may be related to length of service. They did not explain this remark, but the suggestion was that longer-serving staff could make comparisons to their practices the past. As Zukas and Malcolm (2019) demonstrate, individuals with different lengths of experience and status in teaching departments may react differently to the impact of the assemblage.

PD4's favourable view of external examinations accepts the traditional mode of evaluation and does not address the point made by other practitioners that the time required for examination preparation is disproportionate and interferes with learners' ESOL development. From a pragmatic perspective, this participant could be said to be reaffirming the argument that teaching to the test helps the learners to pass examinations which is what they need to satisfy the funders and theoretically in order to progress through the ESOL in FE courses and arrive at a level that will help them find employment or a place in higher education.

With regard to examinations and measuring progress, PD4 had more to say in support of the external examinations and assessments as a way of maintaining the "legitimacy" of ESOL in FE courses and measuring achievement, as opposed to other ways, such as in-house assessment. PD4 stated:

> "I think the exam board is really good for the amount of time that we have as teachers to teach them and to do the exams because it does have a legitimacy in terms of external people who come in and assess. And I think the colleges like that although they have to spend more money on it. I don't think there's much appetite for people doing loads more paperwork, internally assessed stuff, and I don't know, it just doesn't feel legitimate" (PD4).

In this statement, PD4 is not commenting on whether a curriculum biased towards assessment meets learners' needs or the value of learning outcomes of examinations and assessments for ESOL in FE learners. They are remarking on the question of legitimacy of assessments, assuming that from their professional viewpoint there needs to be some externally validated proof of learning. They also mention a lack of "appetite for people doing loads more paperwork" in any kind of internally produced assessments and crucially in this context they mention as a factor in their opinion the restricted "amount of time that we have as teachers to teach them and to do the exams". Their remarks strongly suggest that in the current limited conditions of possibility for ESOL in FE, other methods of assessment which they assume would involve "loads more paperwork" may not be sustainable.

For PD4, internal assessments do not feel “legitimate”, but they add, “I don’t know” without going into detail about what that means. It may be that they support external examinations because internally set examinations demand time, “loads more paperwork”, expertise, and may involve teacher partiality. Drawing on Foucault (1975), PD4’s view on internal examinations and assessments may have been influenced by previous conditioning from their training and experience as well as official views put forward in reports, for example the Wolf Report (2011) on FE vocational education, which acknowledged the need for externally assessed tasks.

The question of legitimacy in the instance of ESOL in FE also rests on the assumed quality of the examinations in terms of the accuracy and alignment of the ESOL in FE curriculum and assessments. However, Curcin et al. (2022) have shown that the appropriateness of current ESOL SfL (2014) examinations has been questioned as well as Roden and Osmaston (2021) who have questioned other practices in ESOL in FE provision, such as the unsuitable use of literacy exams and curriculum.

Differences in practitioners’ opinions on examinations and how they impact teaching and learning means that this is an area of concern in ESOL in FE which merits further study of possible ways to resolve this issue. The data shows that the drawbacks of teaching to the test may be acknowledged by practitioners in ESOL in FE, but not to the extent needed to change the approach to testing and teaching. This means that there is a strong argument, which I would support, in favour of exploring other pedagogies and teaching methods, advocated by Sutter (2012) and Cooke, et al. (2023), mentioned previously. In my view, this requires the support of an ESOL strategy for England, as well as time and investment in ESOL practitioner peer work and mentoring among peers, which is developmental and not evaluative, which could be facilitated by the elimination of time-consuming and stressful formal lesson observations and other forms of practitioner surveillance, outside of initial job interviews. Changes to the teaching and testing model would also impact funding. However, this might also get the support of Ofsted which stated, as Lawy and Tedder (2013) illuminated, that in FE “there is a lack of systematic mentoring and support in the workplace” (2013: 4).

17.9 Professional/personal conflicts

Tensions between ESOL in FE learners and practitioners emerged in the data over issues of engagement with learning, such as attendance, independent learning, study skills, and examinations. For example, PF6 stated:

> "I know exactly the ones who will go home and open their books and the ones who get the same feedback every single time and they're still not going to practise. . . You always find some students who just won't do any independent work because they think that they don't need to do it" (PF6).

ESOL is known as a social and caring provision as the many examples in Rosenburg's (2007) history illustrate. However, the emergence of deficit views, such as this, call to mind Courtney's (2017) research and the similar deficit views expressed by her participants. Courtney explains deficit views as ESOL practitioners trying to make sense of their experiences as ESOL teachers, what Gee (2014) illuminates as 'world-figuring', or how we construct narratives from macrosphere discourses that offer explanations and help us make sense of our lives.

This situation in which learners do not do their homework assignments causes tension in the ESOL in FE microsphere when practitioners interpret it as the learners not meeting expectations of independent learning. Since learner engagement in terms of rates achievement and progression are used to assess tutor performance and come up in annual reviews, these metrics can cause considerable stress for practitioners, especially if they have learners on their courses who do not engage in independent learning by doing their homework or who tend to be absent. The fact that learners (and practitioners) are adults with many other obligations in their lives tends to be disregarded in the presence of requirements to prove achievement and progression that are part of practitioner appraisals. As PF6 stated:

> "You always find some students who just won't do any independent work because they think that they don't need to do it. But they do. But there's always some other priority, such as 'Oh, teacher, my kids had parents evening'. And I'm thinking, I've got kids. I've got a job; I have to do the cooking. I have to do the cleaning, you know, or maybe you've not got a helpful partner. I know that things happen, but to be honest, as teachers, we go out of our way to help our students" (PF6).

PF6 points out that they ‘go out of their way’ to help their students, and they expect their learners to do the same to meet course requirements. It is interesting that PF6 mentions twice “independent work”. Drawing from Gee (2014), in PF6’s world figuring, they clearly place a value on learner autonomy in education which recalls neoliberal attitudes of responsibilisation that value autonomy and independence. However, there is a conflict here between their ideality and neoliberal assumptions about learning and learner autonomy which do not reflect the reality of the teaching situation they are in.

The words of PF6 show that the practitioner, who is under pressure to meet their targets and to maintain learner engagement, employs Gee’s (2014) world figuring by assuming that the learners are at fault because they disengage owing to their inflated idea of their knowledge and ability. They feel resentment towards the learners when they mention other obligations because they too have obligations which they assume are not recognised by the learners which can be seen when they say, “there's always some other priority, such as ‘Oh, teacher, my kids had parents’ evening’. . . And I'm thinking, I've got kids”. This comment suggests that PF6 does not acknowledge any unequal power relations in their position as teacher. Additionally, there is the pressure of their need for favourable learner engagement data for their annual review. As part of their world figuring, PF6 assumes the deficit view that learners look for excuses to be absent and disengage from the learning process.

In a more subtle way, practitioner PG7 makes deficit distinctions between “good” and “not so good” ESOL in FE learners, indicated that their “good” group “bonded” and worked outside of class time. They observed:

> “I think it’s quite interesting. I had two different class groups doing the same thing working in teams for Speaking and Listening [exam practice]. One group did not bond properly, and their performance was not so good while the other group bonded and practised amongst themselves when I was not there. I encourage teamwork and to work in a team beyond class time is really useful, I think” (PG7).

Without more information from PG7 about the group that did not bond properly we are left with the deficit impression that the performance of this “not so good” group was inadequate, a judgment made on the expectation of the practitioner for something that demonstrated “bonding” and independent group work. However, PG7’s remark is also a comment on the

importance of sociality in learning and how haphazard it can be to establish in an under resourced environment like FE.

The word “performance” to describe this work emphasises that the speaking and listening practice in this case was not a spontaneous dialogue but examination practice. Therefore, the “bonding” could have been experienced as part of the performance in which the learners practised their parts for an examination. PG7 makes sense of this by suggesting that the performance of the “not so good” group was owing to their perceived unwillingness to practise outside of class time which amounted to a lack of teamwork, which was expected of learners properly engaged in their learning. The question of learner disengagement was also mentioned in the context of examinations by PD4 who related:

> **“**A colleague said to me, I never put my students in for the February writing, the early one, because what they do, some of them will pass. And then they think they're really good, and then they don't come back. Then they come back in September and they're not ready, you know, because they've forgotten everything” (PD4).

Here PD4 mentions a colleague who managed student absences through the examination schedule by limiting the number of exam sittings and resits. As PD4 relates, their colleague took this measure to prevent learner absences. It is advantageous for the practitioner in terms of their annual review attendance statistics, and it is also advantageous to ensure funding for the smooth operation of the adult learning centre although clearly the attitude stems from a deficit view of the learners and a viewpoint in which examinations take priority over learners’ needs.

Lawy and Tedder (2013), with reference to studies carried out in the 1990s such as Shain and Gleeson (1999), point out how middle managers in FE “mediate the pressures made on them” in different ways including “rejection, resistance, compliance or strategic compliance” (2013: 8). The example PD4 gives above shows how a practitioner employs strategic compliance to retain some control in an increasingly managerial culture in FE. This practitioner’s action indicates that the actions of practitioners in the ESOL in FE microsphere with regard to examinations are determined by the pressures on them which result in the prioritisation of engagement statistics and the examination, which does not encourage deep and meaningful learning that learners can retain. PD4 did not share their colleague’s strategic compliance and expressed a different compliance strategy:

> “I think, OK, just get them through. Put them in, see what comes back, and they can go again. Maybe they'll be less nervous than they were the first time around. And, you know, do a bit of a dummy run for it” (PD4).

In the remarks about ESOL in FE learners and exams, not much attention is paid to the affective impact of exam stress except for here when PD4 says “maybe they’ll be less nervous”. PD4 also remarks that near the end of the summer term with results coming in “people start fearing and it becomes quite painful” (PD4).

PD4 explains how they actively mediate the pressures of exams by offering their learners chances to take all the available resits. They concentrate on the learners who have trouble passing in order to give them as many opportunities as possible to pass rather than holding them all back until the end to ensure good attendance statistics. PD4 expressed their opinion of their colleague’s strategic compliance which they saw as more manipulative than their own:

> “I understand that [point above], but I also think I can't have those kinds of principles where I'm under pressure to get my results. . . But you do feel as if you're fighting this battle with the students’ personal lives with everything else that you're just buying their attention” (PD4).

With reference to Lawy and Tedder (2013), in this way, PD4 voices their resistance to being positioned along with other practitioners “uncomfortably as active mediators between student experience and the policy discourse” (2013: 9). Lawy and Tedder (2013) add, “performative demands of policy have thus created conditions whereby tutors and managers responsible for policy implementation construct fabrications – that is organisational representations which meet auditable and accountability frameworks” (2013: 9).

ESOL in FE practitioners respond to the “performative demands” of policy in different ways. In the context of examinations, the learners’ attention is not intrinsically motivated but manipulated with strategic compliance tactics and even fear. PD4’s comments are an indictment of an ESOL in FE policy which constructs this performativity through “surveillance, control, and accountability” (2013: 9) to satisfy funders’ requirements for data, to show proof of engagement and certification to show progression. However, it needs to be remembered that although these proofs may not indicate a high-quality course or positive

learner/practitioner relationships, they do somewhat ironically help to ensure that the adult learning centre gets the funding necessary to continue offering courses to learners and paying teachers' salaries.

Thus, conflicting discourses emerged in the study among practitioners with regard to learners' engagement with a curriculum that puts a premium on accountability and proof of engagement through examinations and assessments in ESOL rather than on their English language needs. This means that in FE and ESOL in FE the accepted ways of measuring the engagement of learners such as attendance, independent learning, and engagement with a curriculum biased towards assessment procedures, create unhelpful tensions and points of conflict that, for many practitioners and learners, interferes with teaching and learning in the ESOL in FE microsphere.

17.10 The question of trauma and learning disabilities

Trauma and learning disabilities was a point of concern that emerged in the research. ESOL practitioners were aware of the potential issues with learners with experience of migration in the ESOL in FE microsphere but felt a lack of support on how to deal with these challenges. PF6 stated:

> "You get to know when somebody is not focused or when they're not happy, when they're thinking, when they're somewhere else and they're not in your classroom" (PF6).

ESOL practitioners expressed an unease around making sense of learner disengagement, or what might look like a lack of engagement, by employing deficit discourses. ESOL practitioners who had expressed deficit discourses of learners also questioned themselves, expressing doubt in their judgment and questioning the accuracy of their evaluation of learner engagement, based on feelings they had, observing that lack of engagement may not always be wilful or based on a lack of commitment. PF6 said:

> "My worry is how do you know whether it's [disengagement] because of dyslexia or some other thing that's keeping them behind some kind of trauma or something? On paper, we've got access to these [SEND] services but for adult learners, it's not sufficient, and sometimes it takes a long time to figure out what exactly is the problem" (PF6).

Although learners' disengagement and failure to practise, to go home and do their homework or assignments, may be explained with a deficit view, PF6 voices a doubt and a concern that acknowledges the possibility, which could exist with any learner in any educational sector, that this disengagement is an indication of a learning disability or other problem that is impacting their agency and being overlooked. PH8, another experienced ESOL in FE practitioner confirmed this view, stating, "I feel that in addition to their linguistic needs, these learners also come with a range of psychological challenges" (PH8). PF6 and PH8 demonstrate keen observation of their learners. Drawing from Swain (2013), they remind us that language learning is emotional work. The embodied nature of language learning has influenced these practitioners and given them intuitive insights into the emotional and mental states of their learners.

As Dunn (2024) stated people with experience of migration have often gone through violent traumas such as wars and environmental disasters and the psychological impact of trauma may not have been addressed and can interfere with learning processes. Even though migration trauma may not be recent, such as those experienced by newly arrived refugees, they are nevertheless significant. Additionally, as Dunn (2024) points out, learners with past traumas can be retraumatised by unwelcoming treatment they might face in their new microspheres in the UK.

In their remark, PF6 mentions that the support ESOL practitioners can access is insufficient which wastes time when finding a timely solution could be crucial to the well-being and to the success of the learner in their class. ESOL practitioners and all tutors at college have to pass a safeguarding training which stresses the importance of reporting concerns to facilitate early intervention in well-being issues, but intervention seems to lack urgency in the case of adult learners in ESOL in FE. This can be seen in the experience of practitioner PD4, who talked about the problems of one of their learners:

> "I had a student that was fluent in English. They actually passed the writing. . . . but they could not pass the reading. They just had this mental block, and I didn't know why. I did get someone over from the (special needs) to support, and they were really good and really supportive. But then they got pulled in other directions" (PD4).

Here, PD4 relates their experience of trying to access help for one of their learners which was good but not sufficiently sustained. They added:

> “I think there's loads of students with undiagnosed learning difficulties or even trauma that interferes with their processing. I don't know. You're just thinking there's something going on here; some sort of in-house department might be handy. I'm certainly not qualified to [diagnose these problems]” (PD4).

PD4 refers to the need for an “in-house” department to support students. The discourse of learning disabilities is one which adds to the dynamic of tension and stress for ESOL practitioners. From my own experience, practitioners can access different coloured papers and simple testing equipment for dyslexia. However, often as PF6 pointed out, it could be a complex emotional or psychological problem caused by past and/or present trauma and the adult learning department does not have its own specialist staff available to help in these cases.

Practitioners mentioned insufficient access to professional SEND services which exist in the college but are only available to adult learners as a peripheral service. According to *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25* (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015) colleges have a duty “to use their best endeavours to secure the special education provision that the young person needs” and “it applies in respect of students with SEN up to age 25 in further education” (2015: 112). This represents a limitation of SEN facilities for the well-being of learners, many of whom are over 25 years old, and is another somewhat contradictory aspect of ESOL in FE which reflects, despite the implementation of official safeguarding policies, the reduced level of priority to support the holistic health of ESOL in FE adult learners. As pointed out by other practitioners, it is not necessarily that the college wants to be unhelpful, rather, that everyone involved in ESOL in FE is impacted by these restricted conditions of possibility which control the ways in which they can use their agency in the ESOL in FE microsphere.

> “It [the policy] excludes people. And there may be a lot of, for example, learning disabilities that may be barriers to their learning. But we don't really have the backup.” (PF6).

The data indicates that policy limits facilities in FE for learning support and drawing from Courtney (2017) the “way of thinking” which is valued and rewarded is one that conforms to marketisation. This can result in learners being excluded if they are having difficulties engaging in the learning or cannot meet the course targets in time. This means that there is

an urgent need for a SEND provision that is not a part-time peripheral service but instead is dedicated to adult learning that can look after the needs of ESOL in FE learners.

17.11 Discourses of digital divides

The subject of digital learning technology (DLT) emerged in the ESOL in FE practitioner conversations. Now that education sectors are back to face-to-face teaching post COVID pandemic, ESOL practitioners (and learners) voiced their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages DLT in which discourses of engagement and exclusion emerged.

17.11.1 Advantages of DLT

Some of the ESOL in FE practitioners remarked on the advantages of DLT. For example, the use of Google Drive for administrative purposes was noted, as PG7 stated:

> "We have a lot of forms that we used to do on papers . . . now it takes one minute. So, in a way, technology has reduced the amount of paperwork and the amount of time we spend on it" (PG7).

As the data in Chapter 5, Sections 17.1 and 17.2, has shown, ESOL in FE is time poor. Therefore, digital resources and methods that can save time for practitioners in the classroom are valued. PG7 reported that for DLT use in the classroom, their learners valued Goggle Classroom as well and even reminded them to share the lesson resources from the digital interactive whiteboard software, Jamboard:

> "Teacher, have you uploaded the Jamboard? Have you done this?" (PG7).

PG7 pointed out other advantages of DLT for learners, such as sharing useful electronic English language learning resources and internet links.

> "The material is there in the cloud. They [the learners] can access it whenever they want. You can save it as PDF. So, from this point of view, I think some online classes are excellent" (PG7).

PG7 describes DLT resources that learners could "access whenever they want" which support the neoliberal values of independent learning. Practitioners made other positive comments, below:

> “They [the learners] are able to access Google classrooms, Zoom on their phones. They're able to even do some work on Google forms and even worksheets. There are many, many online, interactive resources as well that they've got access to” (PF6).

Drawing on Coleman (2021), in the post-pandemic context, these remarks show the enthusiasm of teachers who would have found it very difficult to continue their profession during the pandemic without DLT. PF6 talks about what the learners “are able to access” and PG7 points out “online interactive resources” with which the learners can continue their learning outside of class time. Adding to this, PG7 “welcomed Google Classroom”, stating that:

> “It opened my mind to a variety of resources. I think all the teachers benefited from the fact we discovered during the pandemic so many electronic resources that we could share with the students, and that helped them” (PG7).

What is noticeable about the blanket approval of DLT is that it assumes a parity among both learners and practitioners without acknowledging the great diversity that exists in terms of language levels, technological experience, as well as social and financial status.

PG7, who still uses meeting software for some of their classes, pointed out an engagement advantage of online classes:

> “I find that I have more attendance on those days online. The attendance is almost 100%. Whereas if I had gone to the classroom, I would have had 50% attendance” (PG7).

What these positive comments show is that during the COVID pandemic there were benefits in DLT in terms of keeping the teaching of ESOL in FE going, and post-pandemic some practitioners are finding that their DLT practices are still useful. Additionally, there are benefits for some ESOL in FE learners who have smartphones or computers, internet access, and enough knowledge of English language already to help them navigate the English language user interface of DLT. However, not all ESOL in FE learners fit this profile.

17.11.2 Digital diversity

The data shows that DLT created a danger of exclusion even at higher levels of ESOL in FE when it was made a requirement rather than a teaching resource, which is apparent in PG7's remark to a ESOL Level 1 class:

> "I told the class everybody needs to be on Google classroom. There will be materials there which will only be accessible in electronic format. I sent one or two students away because they couldn't face that" (PG7).

This exclusion of learners because they could not or did not want to access digital resources seems unfair, and in Coleman's (2021) research she cites Ghobadi & Ghobadi, 2013 and van Dijk, 2005, who remark that digital divides can:

> "include 'motivational access' also termed mental or attitudinal access which . . .refers to an individual's motivation or attitude towards using technology and includes factors such as technology anxiety" (2021: 9).

However, it should also be noted that behind PG7's insistence on their higher ESOL Level 1 students' use of DLT illuminates the pressure of a government funding policy for ESOL in FE in the West Midlands region that focuses on vocational skills and employability in which, according to WMCA (2020), funders "expect colleges and ITPs to establish on-line learning related to ESOL" (2020: 60). PG7 further qualifies their attitude and their intentions:

> "I feel that if you are at [ESOL] Level 1, Level 2 and you can't use the Internet properly and access Google classroom, there is something that you should do in order to do it. So, at Entry Levels, because you've just come in the country, it's more forgivable. But in a way, you need a bit of a [push]. I push my students a lot. I think it's good. I think the students do need to push sometimes" (PG7).

The word "push", which PG7 uses to describe their teaching style, emerges again in the learner analysis sections. Drawing from Swain (2013) it illuminates the embodied nature of language learning that requires emotional and physical effort. Also, the use of the word "forgivable" indicates that PG7 recognises that the lack of DLT skills and experience is understandable in lower-level learners but perhaps feels they can do little about it.

PG7's views illuminate the point that if ESOL in FE learners do not have access to DLT, it is perceived as a deficit by some practitioners. During the COVID pandemic, there was some assistance for ESOL in FE learners who needed help accessing DLT. However, post-pandemic, learners are responsible for having their own equipment and data packages. Drawing from Morrice (2019), this draws an 'abyssal line' between the haves, who can afford the devices and equipment to conform to policy, and the have nots, who do not or cannot conform.

PF6 and PG7 both seem inclined to dismiss any excuses for not conforming to the use of DLT in ESOL in FE. PF6, to counter the point that not everyone has the devices necessary for DLT, asserts, "nowadays, people have phones" (PF6). However, using a phone to read and complete worksheets and writing assignments depends upon having a good quality device with generous screen space and a reliable internet connection. Coleman (2021) states, "it is more challenging to access and engage in digital remote education through a mobile phone than a laptop due to the screen size and small keyboard" (2021: 9). PF6 also admits that other difficulties may pose barriers:

> "The internet is a difficult one because if they don't have access to the internet, then they wouldn't be able to access some of the things like online teaching, Google Classrooms, and Zoom and so on" (PF6).

17.11.3 DLT and learners' needs

The research data indicates that practitioners had doubts related to learners' English levels and whether the use of DLT was important in meeting learners' ESOL needs. PD4 remarked:

> "I find that they don't always check it [Google Classroom and email], or sometimes they forget it exists. But there is always one or two people a bit more switched on who check it and use it to communicate. They kind of use it when they need it, but I wouldn't say that's universal in terms of using it as a study tool" (PD4).

Their comment that "they forget it exists" is telling because it suggests that some ESOL learners do not prioritise DLT in their learning. The inclination to "forget it exists" may be because they are just not used to using it, which is a developmental issue. In my view, it may have to do with a sense of confusion and disorientation which the learners feel when

they have to pass through a user interface which is not in their language to access programmes. PD4 suggests a minority of their learners, “one or two”, are “switched on” to DLT. I posit that being “switched on” is related to their English language level and the point is made that avoiding or just not using DLT is more common in the lower-level classes:

> “Across my lower-level classes, there’s maybe one or two students that really know how to study or maybe have studied in their own country who have that sort of knowledge of how to use technology” (PD4).

In this statement, by implication, PD4 implies that the students who do not use DLT are mainly the lower-level learners who have not used DLT before. In this context, PG7 made a comment that illuminates how DLT can unfairly eliminate already marginalised ESOL in FE learners who do not have educational capital from their past experiences and may also be financially disadvantaged and unable to afford data packages or expensive and powerful computer devices:

> “It puts some learners, especially those who come from poor backgrounds in their own country and from rural backgrounds who haven't had access to laptops or whatever, at a disadvantage” (PG7).

There were also ESOL in FE practitioners in the study who pointed out that DLT has the distinct disadvantage of taking up precious classroom time which could be put to better use, as PH8 remarked:

> “Another change that has recently come about is the [requirement to] use more technology in the classroom. The students need to be more aware of using technology, and I feel like I spend more time trying to educate myself using the different platforms and trying to teach them using the devices that they have. That classroom time is not used as effectively as it could be because we are trying to fulfil the requirements of our funders [to integrate the use of technology]” (PH8).

PH8 refers to spending “more time trying to educate [themselves] using the different platforms and trying to teach them using the devices that they have”, which means using technology is also a developmental issue for practitioners and yet another burden on busy teachers who are already hard pressed for time and lack DLT training and support. Thus,

PH8 feels that, like the literacy courses inserted into ESOL in FE discussed previously, DLT takes away from the already reduced lesson time because learners must be taught how to use devices to access software. No one suggested that using technology was not a useful life skill, but they questioned how appropriate DLT was for ESOL learners, especially at lower-levels. Additionally, it is a challenge for practitioners who also have to learn. As a result, ESOL in FE learning time "is not used as effectively as it could be" (PH8).

Learning to interact with computer programmes or with other people via computer programmes often seems to, by the inclusion of an electronic device, create a physical barrier and move learners a step away from embodied communicative contact with other people, which is basic in language learning. This is especially problematic for ESOL in FE learners at lower levels, who, as Schellekens (2011) points out, need information and skills like using the English alphabet and basic vocabulary, and who benefit from more personalised and embodied communicative approaches.

As practitioner PG7, commented:

> "I wouldn't do away with it [face-to-face learning] ever because you have that physical presence there. For example, for writing it's so important that you move about, and you look at what they are writing. You give them feedback, instant feedback so that you can't do online" (PG7).

In my experience with DLT, I have seen how learners can get isolated further in online classes when they mute themselves or switch off their cameras, which may well be because of distractions in the spaces they are in, such as their homes, where childcare and other activities may be going on simultaneously and where allowing other people visual access into their private spaces may feel intrusive and unwelcome. As Coleman (2021) remarks "the surrounding context is an important factor" in the digital divide (2021: 10). So, although DLT has the advantage of being convenient for some learners and practitioners who can access it easily, DLT in ESOL can limit the communicative value of the experience which makes learning memorable. PB2, referring to the lower levels of ESOL in FE, stated:

> "The focus should be on improving language more so than exams, more so than employability, digital skills" (PB2).

By “improving language”, PB2 was referring to learning and consolidating the skill of communication, which is particularly important at the beginning stages of language learning. However, in ESOL in FE, even at the lowest level, Pre-Entry learners are expected to open a college email account and enrol in Google Classroom and be able to send emails to the college to report the reasons for absences. Speaking anecdotally, this can require a lot of class time as their mobile devices, assuming they have these, are all different, may have non-English interfaces, and the email systems now require setting up two-way authentication. Often the learners have never set up an email before and there is trouble with passwords and teachers have to contact the IT department to sort the problems out, which is particularly challenging for practitioners working off the main site in community centres. Subsequently, after a lot of time being spent on it, some ESOL in FE learners, as PD4 says, “forget it exists”.

Furthermore, although DLT may be more useful after gaining a basic acquisition of the language, the challenges it poses are not unique to lower-level ESOL learners; the data from a higher level ESOL in FE in Level 1 learner, suggested that for some at least DLT did not engage them either. ESOL Level 1 Learner P16 said:

> “I can't do it [use technology]. I try my best. Sometimes it's too many passwords they're putting in there. It's very hard to do. I find it hard to concentrate and I forget all the time” (P16).

P16 describes as “very hard to do”, a barrier that makes her lose concentration and forget passwords. Their resistance to DLT may be explained by a lack of familiarity with it but there may be other reasons, such as an inferior quality device or even, as Coleman (2021) explains, a more generalised “technology anxiety” (2021: 9).

Practitioners PB2 and PH8 both suggest, above, that there is a developmental aspect to the use of DLT in ESOL in FE in that its use was more of a challenge for the lower levels who need to acquire basic communicative language skills before DLT could be of use to them. However, Level 1 ESOL learners in this study also expressed resistances in engaging with DLT. I posit that it is possible that the problems these higher-level students mention in relation to DLT could be understood in the context of the erosion of ESOL owing to funding policy and curriculum. This is because, as Curcin et al. (2022),Schellekens (2011), and Roden and Osmaston (2021) illuminate, through the use of literacy courses, like FSE, ESOL in FE learners are being progressed to the higher levels, such as ESOL Level 1, without the

concomitant English language acquisition they need to cope with the level. This means they are reaching higher levels without the skills they need, which results in them getting “stuck in Level 1 and Level 2” (PB2) and I posit that this lack of English language acquisition at the higher level can impact confidence and may also have an impact on their use of DLT.

Learner P19, also from ESOL Level 1, indicated that their use of DLT (on their smartphone) for exam revision was disappointing and did not produce the desired result:

> “I think in the class you don't need the phone at all. I think it's better to ask the teacher and [not] the phone. I was getting 100% on my practice readings but then I failed the examination” (P19).

In expressing their view that “the phone” is insufficient and it is “better to ask the teacher”, P19 is referring to the need for more human contact in their ESOL teaching and learning experience and how the use of DLT has the potential to create barriers between the learner, especially in the affective aspects of learning.

Thus, although the use of DLT is a requirement of funders, it has also become a basis for exclusion in ESOL in FE for some learners because their access is limited by their reliance on smartphones. Additionally, funding policies that impact curriculum by taking away time for ESOL in FE language learning at all levels, also by extension have a negative impact on progression and the use of DLT in ESOL in FE. This situation indicates that a more flexible approach to how DLT is applied in ESOL in FE would be advantageous, especially for the lower-level ESOL learners who would benefit from a more gradual introduction to software like Google Classroom.

17.12 Teaching methods - affect in oral communication

In my research, data emerged that illuminated how ESOL learning was affective as well as cognitive. In the practitioner topic guide, Chapter 4, Section 14.7.1, I asked practitioners to share with me a memorable moment as an ESOL teacher. Practitioners gave examples of communicative learning in which, drawing from Swain (2013), both learner and practitioner emotion played at least an equal role with cognition.

Practitioner PB2 related memorable examples from their experience in which learners told them that they had started speaking in English outside of class to their children and to other parents at their children’s schools because after their ESOL in FE classes they felt more

confident to speak in English. They related how one of their learners told them that after doing nearly a year of the ESOL in FE course "she started to speak to her children in English and that she'd never felt confident enough to do that before and the children really appreciated that" (PB2). PB2 remarked:

> "The knock-on effect means that she'll develop her language and acquire more language through her children so that maybe she will be able to overcome the barriers to learning that institutions have" (PB2).

With this last statement, PB2 illuminates the impact of policies that create barriers and limit the conditions of possibility in learning that learners may have to overcome outside of learning institutions like FE. Drawing from Sutter (2012), opportunities are needed for the affective aspects of oral communication in ESOL in FE to emerge by shifting the focus away from accountability and the narrow curriculum of standardised examinations and allowing ESOL practitioners increased opportunities to listen to their learners and develop their practice around their learners' needs.

In this data, an incongruous sense of gratitude emerges in the voices of the ESOL in FE learners who express their appreciation of their teachers and in the satisfaction of the practitioners whose efforts have played a part in the learning. The problem here, which neither learners nor practitioners critique, is that gratitude reinforces the hierarchical structure which establishes the superiority of those who know as opposed to the inferiority of those who do not know. Drawing from Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024), in the context of ESOL in FE, this gratitude reinforces the dominant neocolonial and neoliberal deficit discourses around people with experience of migration.

PH8 gave an example of communicative and affective learning in a class they had about 17 years prior to this study, in around 2006 when Skills for Life (2001) was still having a positive impact in terms of time and funding. They related that this was:

> "[W]hen we had a lot of time with our learners, where we could spend, a whole year just teaching them communication, speaking and listening, followed by a year of reading and writing. We could consolidate these learners' skills" (PH8).

PH8 related that the learners in this class, who were suffering from traumas and other problems, started to try and speak to each other in English. They bonded together and formed what PH8 described as a "self-help" group, sharing their traumas, health problems, and troubled emotional states in the safe space of the classroom, which PH8 was able to encourage at that time, in an activity that calls to mind Ahmed's (2014) reference to Boler (1999: 200) in the context of feminist studies:

> "Emotion work within the classroom is uncomfortable work, which invites students and teachers to live 'at the edge' of their skins" (Ahmed, 2014: 181).

Ahmed explains that the "intrusion of emotions" into the classroom can cause anxiety when the emotions are negative and seem to create "blocks" to learning and the acquisition of knowledge. However, she cites Probyn (2001) and Boler (1999) who "both try to counter this anxiety about emotion by showing how it can lead to new forms of knowledge" and that "emotions do not only operate as blockages, they can also open up lines of communication". Thus, Ahmed (2014) asserts, emotions in learning do not have to be "'good' or necessary to critical thinking or learning" (Ahmed, 2014: 181-182).

Importantly, as PH8's experience shows her encouragement of the learners, and crucially the time they had to create a sympathetic and safe environment in the classroom, facilitated their learners' progress in oral communication. Speaking in English and bonding together in class increased their confidence to the point where they were able to undertake activities in the community outside of class time, which they initiated themselves, such as litter picking and going to the gym. They observed the learners' remarkable progress in developing the confidence to go out and meet new people and use their English in the community. PH8 voiced their desire to be able to support this kind of communicative learning again:

> "I hope we can do something in our classes to build them up and push them into the communities so that they can get jobs and become active citizens" (PH8).

However, as PH8 points out, this kind of communicative activity grounded in the development of confidence and skill in oral communication was what they "used to do when we had a lot of time" before funding and curriculum policies had restricted the amount of time in ESOL in FE classes. Now product-centred policies have resulted in no "time in the

classrooms to do this kind of work" because "we're just constantly trying to make sure that they pass their exams and assessments" (PH8). As practitioner PH8 said:

> "I think they probably come to ESOL with a certain expectation of being able to communicate, you know, to have English classes. But in reality, what we're doing now is using a lot of time to bring in lots of other things into the lessons, which can be quite rushed".

17.13 An affective/cognitive example from ESOL Pre-Entry

PB2 related an experience they had with a learner who wanted to improve their handwriting. This moment occurred in a communicative classroom context in which the learner was motivated to ask the practitioner for help. PB2 took the learner aside and spent time with them, showing them how to use the lines printed on writing paper to guide their letter formation. The learner copied what they showed her. After that the learner practised, and their writing improved until it was "fantastic" (PB2).

PB2 said, "she welled up with tears because they said that no one had ever shown her that before". The learner's reaction to her progress was significant and demonstrated the affective nature in language learning. PB2 observed that "these little things that we do can make a massive difference" (PB2). I would posit that on one level the "little thing" of giving help with handwriting had the potential to make a massive difference on another level. Their action, as the face of the white, English-speaking society in the classroom, helping the learner with something they had struggled with, had the potential to have an affective impact on them on a social level as well as a personal learning level.

Teaching this learner how to write was this practitioner's job for which they were paid, but in the context of the limited conditions of possibility in ESOL, in which practitioners face increasing demands on time, doing tasks which are unrelated to ESOL, the time the practitioner took to teach the learner individually can be seen as an embodied learning experience that had meaningful and memorable power to potentially have a deeper influence on the learner's confidence and future interactions in English in the wider community. As Swain (2013) claimed, "learning another language is not just a cognitive process but an emotional one as well" and "emotions are an integral part of cognition" (2013: 195). The emotions involved in this example ESOL in FE learning came from the communicative interaction between the practitioner and the learner and were as much a part of the learning

process as the cognitive information on how to form the letters of the Roman alphabet. I posit that this indicates the importance of communicative teaching and learning in ESOL which is not supported by approaches such as teaching to the test which prioritise cognitive skills and leave little time for the affective, communicative aspects of learning.

17.14 Teaching ESOL - curriculum limitations and adaptations

The conversations and self-interviews with the ESOL in FE practitioners included some remarks about their teaching methods within their limited conditions of possibility which PD4 described as a “mess” before October half term and after the start of the summer term. Nevertheless, it emerged in the data that individual practitioners make the most of the limited time for English language by devising ways of teaching ESOL in FE that deviate from product centred, teaching to the test approaches. For example, for basic levels, PJ10 said:

> “I try to teach them topic-based learning about food and going to the restaurant or their jobs or their local area and then use assessment related activities just as a side. At the end of these lessons, maybe let's fill out a form about, for example, applying for a service in the local area or writing an invitation to a restaurant. So, it's mainly I go with my topics and shoehorn in the exam bits at the end” (PJ10).

PF6 talked about their teaching strategy. They explained that they have learned how to plan their lessons to try and encompass more things instead of going into detail with one thing. They will sometimes “squeeze in one or two points because we don’t have the luxury [of time]”, but they explained that it was “about making use of the time and trying to get as much out there and deliver as much as possible to the students” (PF6). PG7 also remarked that “whenever we don't have to prepare for exams I squeeze in some more grammar. Let's do some tenses. Let's do some . . . whatever! I squeeze it in whenever I can”.

The idea of squeezing in as much as possible, and having to shoehorn exam bits into lessons, illuminates the ever-present product-centred pressures of examinations and assessments Popham (2001) and Styron (2012) refer to that practitioners cannot escape from which produce a continual risk of transactional and teacher-centred learning in which, drawing from Freire (1972), practitioners attempt to transfer as much information as possible to the learners, rather than listening to them and meeting their needs to develop more agentic participation.

PB2 gave examples, mentioned above, of their successful incorporation of speaking activities in their ESOL in FE classes. PD4 mentioned the period after October half term when “We're all moving forward in the class together. There's momentum. There's quality there” (PD4). They do not go into detail, but we could assume that the activity is communicative and affective; there is learner participation as they “are all moving forward in the class together”. PG7, who mainly teaches higher levels, expressed their desire to create resources, such as grammar readings, as they had done in the past when there was more time and they recalled the books they had which were geared for the Skills for Life (2001) examinations.

> “I think we could get together teachers for a level and come up with materials. There is hope, especially because we have some time at the beginning of term, which hopefully will not be colonised by other paperwork and stupidities. We could design and discuss in principle and then contribute materials and so on to having a proper reliable textbook that would be sort of addressing the exam, but also their needs the grammar needs related to the communicative skills they are expected to have” (PG7)

In this example, PG7’s choice of words expresses their opinion of “other” tasks not directly related to their teaching that they must do and their desire to work to improve the delivery and resources of ESOL in FE although the limited conditions of possibility that they are in prevent them from realising this ambition.

The data shows the flexibility of the practitioners, which echoes the data in Lacey (2018), and how they adapt their practice to the limited conditions of possibility in ESOL in FE although the result is limited in quality because time is curtailed by examination related activity. Crucially, these ESOL practitioners enjoy their jobs and want to keep them despite the drawbacks. Drawing from Foucault (1975; 1989), their tacit acceptance and conformity in these conditions in the ESOL in FE microsphere shows how governmentality shapes their practice and how it restricts their development of more learner-centred teaching approaches.

What needs to be carefully considered is whether adapting to the limited conditions of possibility and squeezing in as much meaningful ESOL learning as possible is the best way to meet the learners’ English language needs. In my view, this is not what is needed to help people with experience of migration to integrate into the wider society, as Casey (2016)

recommended, with the ability to contribute to the economy, and crucially, to access opportunities to develop the skills and flexibility for more than unskilled or semi-skilled work. It needs to be considered that the ESOL being offered to people with experience of migration is unlikely to help them realise their ambitions and gain the kind of work or study opportunities that will result in integration with equal opportunities.

17.15 No examinations for the lower levels of ESOL

The opinion was voiced by practitioners that in the first few years of study in ESOL in FE there should be no formal examinations. For example, PH8's contribution, cited above, clearly shows how the current policies have restricted the conditions of possibility in ESOL in FE which has impacted their work and the kind of activities that they can facilitate in their ESOL classroom. PH8 acknowledged that examinations and assessments are a way of measuring progress, but they did not believe that prioritising examination and assessment preparation was going help the learners to develop the skills that they need to integrate in the wider society. PB2 said:

> "I would just love to see intensive Pre-Entry and Entry Level courses that are not about accredited exams. Let's get them started and then come to that later" (PB2).

In this analysis, examinations and assessments emerge as tools of domination and control which take up an inordinate amount of time in the course timetables. PD4 acknowledged the legitimatising role of examinations in Chapter 5, Section 17.8.1, but the value of assessments was questioned by practitioners such as PB2 and PH8, at least for the first three years, at Pre-Entry, Entry 1, and Entry 2 levels.

In the views of several practitioner participants in this study, including my own as well as those of Roden and Osmaston (2021), the value of the examinations and assessments is not seen as equal to the course time they require. Several of the practitioners remarked that the main value of the examinations and assessments was the funding that they bring in for the college. This was abundantly clear in PJ10's views expressed in Section 15.8. PB2 remarked:

> "I would like to see courses that don't necessarily have exams. [There could be] internal tests with grammar playing a big part in that. They [the learners]

could then maybe do formal exams when they get to higher levels, like Entry 3 and Level 1" (PB2).

PB2 envisages for the lower levels of ESOL in FE, informal tests, done in class, which focus on grammar, with language points related to the speaking skills being developed at the lower levels. This kind of informal, internal test would allow continual assessment of progress to continue, but in a more affective and less fixated, stressful, and product-centred way. This means that the method of assessment, especially for lower-level learners needs to be reconsidered.

The study data in Chapter 5, Sections 17.12 and 17.13, and especially from the learners in Section 18, shows that emotion, cognition, and the motivation to learn are linked. Drawing from Ahmed (2014) and Swain (2013), emotion and cognitive skills work together in learning and show in the data that the motivation to learn can be linked with both negative and positive emotions. As the learners' contributions in Chapter 5, Section 18 illuminate, ESOL in FE practitioners need to be sensitive and aware of learners' emotions and the affective aspects of learning, more so because many learners have had traumatic experiences in their histories of migration. Krashen (1982) pointed out that care needs to be taken to protect learners' self-esteem and motivation. As Dunn (2024) explains, in cases of trauma, practitioners need to avoid re-traumatising learners which can result in barriers to learning. Drawing from Lloyd (2012), this means that as cases of traumatisation are ongoing in ESOL in FE learners, practitioners must have access to professional support, a point stated in Chapter 5, Section 17.10.

17.16 Language learning - a right or a privilege?

In this section, I look at the discourse that emerged from the practitioners around ESOL in FE classes as a right or a privilege. As discussed in Chapter 3, Section 4.3, access to adult education was established as a right for British citizens and residents by the Education Act of 1944 (UK Government, 1944) and by the Local Government Act of 1966 (UK Government, 1966), funding was made available for teaching English language to people with experience of migration from the Commonwealth. As ESFA (2023) funding rates illuminate, to exercise their right to learn ESOL in FE, learners must show that they have lived in the UK for three years and that they are either British citizens or have resident status. Therefore, if learners have satisfied the residency requirements, by law the provision of ESOL in FE is their right to have, but the discourse that it is a privilege has become dominant. This emerges in

practitioners' comments on the gratitude of the learners. Practitioners PF6 and PD4 mention learners being grateful for the learning opportunity of ESOL in FE. PF6 remarked:

> "We go out of our way to help our students, and I talk to my students. If there's any way that we can help with their work and their learning, we'll do that. And I've done that so many times. And they've been so grateful" (PF6).

Although this gratitude may indicate the measure of their politeness, it also suggests the influence of a discourse that says they should be grateful for the privilege, not the right. In the context of talking about a previous job where learners did not want to be there and showed no gratitude, PD4 said about ESOL in FE, "I enjoy teaching students that want to be here and are really grateful".

Both the learners and the practitioners indicated that they perceive ESOL in FE as "a privilege" that they should be grateful for because they are reminded by the persistent repetition of the dominant discourse that it is a privilege: the cost is met with taxpayers' money, there are not enough resources, there are long waiting lists, and they are lucky to have a place on an ESOL course. PF6 observed:

> "I think students now know that it is a privilege to be in a learning environment. And I'm not saying they didn't then [in the past], but because they knew that there was more funding. [Now they are] more aware that it's not easy to go into a learning environment" (PF6).

What gets repeated is the discourse that ESOL in adult education for citizens and residents is a privilege for which recipients should feel grateful. What gets overlooked in this discourse is that ESOL in FE learners are British residents and citizens who have a legal right to education. Attitudes that imply otherwise would not be tolerated in the microsphere of other UK education sectors, such as Primary or Secondary. It indicates that there is discrimination and 'othering' of people with experience of migration in ESOL in FE.

The matter of right or privilege in ESOL in FE is significant in that no one is resisting the idea of education as a privilege for ESOL in FE learners. Importantly, this example illuminates the ways in which, drawing on Gee (2014) and Foucault (1984), dominant discourses pattern figured worlds for both practitioners and learners. As Casey (2016) emphasised, being able to communicate in the language of the country you live in is essential on all levels of social

interaction. This means that de-prioritising the need for high quality ESOL provision in FE in England by not challenging the dominant discourse that it as a privilege and not a right is wrong.

Learner data

18 ESOL in FE Learners' Experiences - introduction

At this point in the analysis, there is a shift of focus from the experiences of the ESOL in FE practitioners to the ESOL in FE learners who participated in conversations in my study. As explained in Methodology, the learner study participants were from three different groups and two different levels of ESOL: two groups of Pre-Entry (the beginners' level) and one group of the higher ESOL Level 1. All the learner participants were given equal chances to speak. Most of them offered brief comments on aspects of their experiences in ESOL in FE; however, a few of them had more to say about their experiences. In this part of the analysis, I start the section with the longer contributions as vignettes, and these are followed by the shorter comments of the other learners, which are thematically arranged.

18.1 An ESOL Level 1 learner's experience

The data from this ESOL Level 1 learner showed her dissatisfaction with the experience on her course. For her the conversation provided an opportunity to express her opinion of several aspects of the course, including organisation and teaching methods.

> "Maybe it was a bit harder because we didn't have the same teacher. The teacher was changed more than once, so we had four teachers. Teacher 1 left, and then Teacher 2 left. I know every teacher has a different way to explain. So, we were a bit confused when we start the grammar, the writing, and the reading" (P19).

In the statement above, learner P19 identifies problems she had with the teaching of the course which met on two days with a different teacher for each day. The team teaching she describes is common as it maximises the availability of teachers on full-time contracts for other courses with higher funding. A justification which is often given by practitioners and administrators in favour of team teaching is that students can have a more enriching experience with different teachers, a view which has been confirmed in Western university studies carried out by Baker and Pollard (2020) and Davis and Winter (2019). However, in ESOL in FE that beneficial claim also masks another reason, which may be more

fundamental, that it serves current funding policies as it allows maximum flexibility in course scheduling, which is something the college has to do to ensure adequate adult learning provision across its centres.

When learner P19 says “the teacher was changed more than once”, she highlights the issue of staff shortages and staff retention, which are also mentioned by Schellekens et al. (2023), as during the course teachers left and were replaced. As Paget and Stevenson (2014) illuminate, many ESOL teaching staff are on precarious zero-hours contracts, which leads to problems with recruitment and retention that have an undesirable impact on learner experience. The learner, here, speaks of confusion caused by team teaching and the lack of consistency caused by changes of teacher. These problems can be traced to the precarity of ESOL in FE caused by cuts in ESOL course time and funding.

P19 continued, giving more details of why the organisation of lessons according to examination modules created problems for her:

> “I find it very hard when the teacher changes because [what] I learned [from] Teacher 1 is different. For example, Teacher 1 focused on the grammar, but after that we didn’t learn any grammar at all. Teacher 2 was more focused on the writing or the reading. Teacher 3 was more focused on the spelling [pronunciation] or on the discussion. So, every teacher has a different [approach]” (P19).

The splitting up of ESOL subject material between practitioners according to the examination modules the class is planning to take, for example Speaking and Listening, Reading, and Writing makes sense in ESOL because, as Schellekens (2011) explains, the skills are focused on and tested separately as learners can have different abilities in the skills, for example they may be able to speak but not write. It is also a strategy intended to maximise the efficient use of staff in terms of budgets and examinations, but it does not necessarily meet learners’ holistic needs. In this case it impacted the integration of the subject matter and caused difficulties for the learner which was clearly not what she was expecting from her ESOL class, and she met this with resistance:

> “We had two lessons of the grammar with Teacher 1, and then we stopped. How to speak about the past, about the present and the future is very important. [Without this] we mix everything. I may want to say something to

> you, like “I went to London” and instead I say, “I go”. So, you understand that I'm going. But no, I went there!” (P19).

The challenges learner P19 complains about are related to administrative decisions on course organisation, which is turbulent, ultimately because ESOL in FE is funded in a way that focuses on a transactional process of productivity and funding rather than on the affective issues of practitioner and learner well-being, learners’ language requirements, and the more holistic need for consistency and communicative support.

Unlike many of the ESOL in FE women learners, P19 had completed secondary school in her country of origin. She came to the UK from a different ecosystem with its own unique history, ideologies, method of government and policymaking, as well as cultural and social background. To use Foucault’s (1975) terms, as an adult P19’s normalisation to her conditions of possibility in her country of origin was complete. Thus, her process of transformation and adaptation to her new microsphere in the UK was complex and ongoing as she made comparisons with her previous experience. Thus, P19 described problems she had with the pedagogical approach which impacted her on her ESOL in FE course, with regard to error correction:

> “If I say something wrong, Teacher 2 does not say it's not right. Teacher 2 leaves me [with my mistake]. She does not correct me. But I know I do many mistakes in the spelling [pronunciation]. I would like more correction. When I do not speak the right words, correct me straight away. I don't mind. I will not be [upset]. I know maybe the teacher will take more time because to correct, every person will take a long time, but I think this will [help us to] improve our language much more” (P19).

When P19 made this point, the embodied nature of language learning emerged as she spoke with feeling. She perceived not being corrected as the teacher “leaving her” with her mistakes, which in her opinion, was an unhelpful and even unethical practice for a teacher who is meant to support students. Her impression of being abandoned relates to the lack of a more supportive and affective holistic approach in which her concerns would have been listened to and her learning needs addressed.

The importance of correction to the learner may have come from P19’s experiences of pedagogy in her home country which set up resistances to the teaching pedagogy she

experienced in her new environment. Rigorous error correction may have conflicted with the practitioners' understanding of good practice, learned in their teacher training from studying the ideas of researchers like Krashen (1982) who said:

> "Error correction is a serious mistake because it puts students on the defensive and causes them to avoid complex constructions" (Krashen, 1982).

However, practitioner PG7 observed that learners, especially those with language learning backgrounds from their home countries, may have different expectations of teaching methods when they come to ESOL in FE, and she remarked:

> "Now they tell you especially that you must not overcorrect learners because you cause embarrassment and hamper confidence. But the learners are so different, and some are used to that from their background at home" (PG7).

This is an example of how the diversity of ESOL in FE learners can impact the learning experience for both learners and practitioners. Probably the learner's most telling remark is that "to correct, every person will take a long time", and this may be one reason why the practitioners avoid it. As illustrated in previous sections in this thesis, the restrictions on the conditions of possibility in FE, mean that no ESOL practitioner has enough time to correct learners' errors in the way that would meet this learner's expectations. However, from the learner's point of view, practitioner delivery of grammar knowledge and the verbal correction of mistakes is very important for an effective, professional language teacher; in fact for her it is essential and she pointed out that it was something she said she experienced 'here' and not in her previous experience of learning English in her home country which also highlights that she is speaking from her experience of other teaching approaches in English in her home ecosystem.

> "I think it's a very big mistake here because you don't correct the people [to show them] the right way to speak. If I say something wrong, I think the teacher should know. If she's saying it's OK, then I will think it's OK. So, I'm gonna speak with mistakes. But, if the teacher corrects me, I will speak correctly" (P19).

What mattered for this ESOL Level 1 learner is that her needs for a course which would help her develop the understanding of the language and the accuracy she valued and expected

to learn were not met. She speaks with emotion which illuminates her dissatisfaction with the course organisation and teaching methods of her experience of ESOL in FE. In her view, there was a lack of attention to what the learners wanted and needed, thus making the outcomes of the learning ineffective and unsuccessful for her, and she holds the practitioners, who represent the institution, responsible, which should be an issue of importance to ESOL in FE teacher trainers and anyone thinking of a career in ESOL in FE.

In some ways, she is right. Practitioners and administrators have a responsibility to resist Gee's (2014) D/discourses of education policy that cause problems and obstruct their work. Drawing from Foucault (1975), teachers who are conditioned under the normative D/discourses of governmentality, conform to systems of pedagogy that perpetuate tensions in the ESOL in FE microsphere that compromise their practice and ethics. As bell hooks (1994) posits, to develop a progressive, holistic education or "engaged pedagogy":

> "[T]eachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (bell hooks, 1994: 15).

With regard to practitioner wellbeing, the research conversation provided by this learner is important because it illuminates an outcome of the erosion of ESOL in FE and how policies of the exosphere institution impact the training and employment status of specialist ESOL practitioners, increasing their precarity. In learner P19's contribution, the running of ESOL in FE courses in troubled times is not always smooth and could have resulted in her withdrawing from the course. Her criticism emphasises the lack of consistent teaching staff as well as the lack of time in a curriculum which focused on examination modules rather than on learners' needs. Although she focuses on the shortcomings of the practitioners, the problems she identifies are also linked to the influences of the exosphere policies which impact course organisation and delivery, as discussed previously. This means that, as Lacey (2018) pointed out, to work in this microsphere requires dynamic degrees of negotiation and compromise that do not suit everyone. To meet learners' needs demands a learner-centred approach which requires time to be spent on how best to achieve this in the limited conditions of possibility.

18.2 Experiences of three ESOL Pre-Entry learners

The following three vignettes are from ESOL Pre-Entry learners who were in the same class at one of the community centres at which the college held classes.

18.2.1 ESOL Pre-Entry Learner 19N

Learner 19N referred to her past to describe how her education experience in her home country had impacted her ESOL in FE learning in England:

> "I forget words, just for writing, reading. Because in (my country) my father really strict about school, no girls" (19N).

The words of this learner reflect, after Foucault (1989), her restricted 'conditions of possibility' in her home country where her father did not allow her to attend school, a point related to learner P19 and how previous ecosystems influence people with experience of migration. She connects her problem with memory of vocabulary for reading and writing with not having had formal education as a child. The challenges that some ESOL learners face, especially women, from not having had any formal education in their own languages and how this can impact their ESOL learning have been remarked on by Rosenburg (2007) and Schellekens, et al., (2023) among others. Learner 19N went on to explain why she likes learning in ESOL in FE:

> "I am very happy with English classes and both teacher very helpful. Sometime I am off because I look after my children. . . I miss classes. He says ok. I am dyslexic. He changed [my worksheets] for a different colour. He give me yellow sometimes, green sometimes. I can see properly. [The texts] moving around too much. I am happy here. I like more English here" (19N).

The possibility of undiagnosed learning impairments such as dyslexia in migrant learners have been commented on by Rosenburg (2007) and also the practitioners in this study in Section 17.10. Unfortunately, this learner was one of several in the class who would not be continuing because they had not achieved sufficient reading and writing skills in their one year of Pre-Entry ESOL in FE study, although they did not know this at the time I spoke to them.

This curtailment of time in which a Pre-Entry learner is not allowed to repeat the level or progress to the next level in ESOL in FE is partly to do with funding because ESOL in FE learners who are able to progress from Pre-Entry to Entry 1 after one year (160 hours) of study can continue to bring in funding. Terminating an unsuccessful ESOL in FE learner's

enrolment also frees spaces for other potential ESOL in FE learners who are on waiting lists. Moreover, the FE adult learning centre depends on the funding from enrolments and examination registrations in order to remain open, a conundrum described in Chapter 3, Section 10, which means it would be financially damaging to allow unsuccessful learners to repeat levels although anecdotally the college sometimes makes exceptions in extenuating circumstances, such as for learners who start the course very late in the academic year.

Regarding her absences, 19N stated: “Teacher says ok”. This makes it seem like her teacher was relaxed about attendance. Although it is permissible to miss classes because of illness affecting the learner or their children, the college or the teacher must be informed by email or telephone so that the reason can be logged in the register. If absences happen frequently, the teacher and the administrative staff follow up, usually by telephone, to find out why, both in the safeguarding interests of the learner and to meet attendance and engagement targets. In some circumstances, it may impact the learner’s registration. For example, after three absences in a row without giving an acceptable excuse, such as illness or medical appointments, the learner will receive a letter of warning from the college and if the reason for absences cannot be resolved, they will be removed from the register.

Practitioners are meant to track and query absences closely, rather than just say “ok”, an answer which gives the impression that the practitioner might have resisted monitoring this learner’s absences closely, perhaps out of a sense of unfairness being aware of her family situation and responsibilities to “look after” her “children”. The strict rules around attendance monitoring are to ensure fairness in course enrolments and to enforce the rules and procedures which are meant to be for the good of all in keeping the learning centres open, but which are, at least in part, motivated by funding which brings the argument back to budget cuts, and what seems to be the systematic degradation of FE, discussed by Jones (2016) and O’Leary and Smith (2012), the fairness of which can be questioned.

The expertise of the FE in ESOL practitioners in this case, knowing how to help a learner with suspected dyslexia and the level of care and skill displayed in the way they were trying to help her, exemplifies dedication as well as effective training. That 19N and some of the other members of this group were not going to be able to continue in ESOL in FE because they had not achieved sufficiently in the time of their course must have been especially disappointing for both the practitioners and the learners.

18.2.2 ESOL Pre-Entry Learner 16N

Another ESOL in FE learner,16N, related how her family situation and relationships in her UK microsphere motivated her to study English:

> "In this country [English] is important. Everything English, that's why I keep [studying] English. British country everything is English, my childrens born here, my husband born here. Everything's born here! I come to [ESOL] classes that's why is hard for me" (16N).

She describes her experience of having to learn a new language in "British country" as "hard" and learning ESOL in the FE centre as "hard". These are words that illuminate language learning as embodied, demanding effort of ESOL in FE learners. When she says, "Everything's born here!", she emphasises her position as an outsider, a separateness which is also part of what makes learning English "hard" for her. The way these learners describe their feelings in relation to their learning experiences is a reminder that as Swain (2013) states: "learning another language is not just a cognitive process but an emotional one as well . . . emotions are an integral part of cognition" (2013: 1) and this can be observed in different ways throughout this section.

18.2.3 ESOL Pre-Entry Learner 18N with Learner 16N

In this conversation, a significant affective dynamic took place. When I asked 18N about her experience, she said:

> "I no speak".

However, reading her body language, I understood that she felt she was not able to speak, not that she did not want to participate. Learner 16N, who had finished talking about her experience (related in 18.2.2), encouraged her, saying:

> "Just two, three words make!" (16N).

This statement came as a plea from 16N, and I felt that there was something very special about learner 18N that her classmate wanted me to know. However, although 18N could not continue in English, she used her Punjabi dialect with one or two words in English and 16N trans chatted with me.

Then, 18N said: “Reading, writing, listening . . .speaking, don’t”.

Through the transchat of 16N, a process which I describe in Chapter 3, Section 15.4, I understood that 18N had been in this country for 33 years. She said that in the early days there was no ESOL class. She was married with children, but her husband had died. I noticed by her body language that 18N could follow her own story, voiced to me in English by 16N, and she repeated aloud in English 16N’s words that she recognised that clearly held significance for her, saying:

> “Yes, children. Husband died” (18N).

16N repeated, “husband died; that’s why no come til now. No time” (16N).

From this repetition, I understood that the death of her husband was clearly a significant event that marked a turning point in her life. 16N related that in the years since his death, 18N had been busy with “children, house, chores, work . . . no time” (16N). These words described the restricted conditions of possibility for women with experience of migration like 18N to learn English in England, especially widows with families to look after, which illuminated for me the unfairness of criticism levelled at them by politicians like Cameron (Mason and Sherwood, 2016), mentioned in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.7.

16N continued on behalf of 18N, saying:

> “Reading is really good, writing is hard”.

This statement was followed by animated talking in Punjabi and there was clearly something more that 18N wanted me to understand. Then 16N, referring to 18N, said emphatically:

> “No shy, no shy . . . told me pure Mirpuri, no British born, pure Mirpuri” (16N).

Through 16N’s transchat, I understood that 18N was telling me about herself, her identity, so that I would understand more. I learned later that Mirpuri, their language, is a dialect of Punjabi related to Urdu. Skutsch (2013) explains that “Kashmiris from Azad Kashmir (the Mirpur and Kotli districts) relocated to Britain in the 1950s, especially to the towns of Bradford, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, and Luton, on account of the availability of unskilled work” (2013: 694). 16N continued:

> "No school that's why no speaking English. She from Pakistan, that's why speaking no English. She is speaking Mirpuri at work, that's why. The manager speaks Mirpuri. Reading in Urdu" (16N).

This statement illuminated for me the nature of 18N's micro-community where, because of segregated communities, it is possible to work and live your life without much knowledge of English, a point made in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.1, in relation to Gee's (2001) identity theory.

Then 18N surprised me by speaking for herself in complete sentences in English, saying:

> "My language is Mirpuri my reading is Urdu. My mum dad speak Mirpuri. I am go school Urdu. That's why my reading good. Urdu writing good" (18N).

Then 16N added, "She understands good reading" (16N).

Reading 18N's body language and listening to her voice, I could feel through the transchat process that 18N gained motivation and confidence to speak for herself and that she had the language knowledge to do this. It was important for her to communicate to me her story as a person with experience of migration to establish and validate her unique identity as an educated woman in her country where she went to school and learned to read and write the official language, Urdu. Her experience of life after her migration to the UK clearly had a significant impact on her but the educational and cultural capital of her early life in Pakistan remained an indelible part of her identity. I understood that her value and desire for education drew her to learning English in ESOL in FE when the time was right for her. With patience and the social interaction of the transchat conversation she was able to begin to speak for herself and share her story.

The conversation with 16N and 18N demanded some time and patience as well as intense concentration and observation of body language, and transchat, our version of translanguaging. Throughout, from their body language, facial expressions, and animated exchanges between their language and English, 18N with 16N communicated the desire to make me understand who 18N was through positive and reciprocal social interaction. This vignette was an example of the importance of affective power in language learning and how aspects of an individual's life experience and microsphere impact education.

Although 18N did not have previous opportunities to extend her experiences beyond her micro-community in England, now, through the ESOL courses at her local community centre, sponsored by the FE college, she is using her agency to start the process of learning English while at the same time holding on to the valuable rich knowledge of the languages of her roots that are an important part of her identity and her self-esteem. The example of 18N with 16N also illuminates why the time is not enough and ESOL in FE Pre-Entry courses should not be limited to 160 hours (1 academic year).

18.3 Themes from the experiences of ESOL in FE learners

In the following ESOL in FE learner sections, I move away from vignettes to a thematic focus on several aspects of ESOL learning that emerged, including Time, Motivation, Affect, and Learner Agency. This facilitates the organisation of data from learners in ESOL Pre-Entry and ESOL Entry 1 that overlap thematically.

18.4 Time: ESOL in FE learners' views on course timings

The impact of the current restrictions of course time can be heard in the voices of the student participants in this study regarding what Payne and Wattchow (2009) call "time poorness" or "time dissonance". Thirteen learners from the different groups in the study complained that the time of two hours per lesson, or four hours per week, was not enough for them to achieve their learning goals. They suggested longer class sessions and an increase in the number of sessions per week, stating:

> "Three days or four days, better." **(Pre-Entry)**
> "Time not enough. I need four (lessons)." **(Pre-Entry)**
> "I think we need more hours or more days. I think two days a week is less [not enough] because the language is not so easy." **(Level 1)**.

Here, it is remarkable that the lower-level learners, who had limited English to articulate their points of view, in some cases using their home languages in transchat, nevertheless made their feelings known by putting forward clear criticisms which refer to several well-documented aspects of ESOL time poverty in the extant literature on ESOL. Level 1 learners who had more English to articulate their thoughts also mentioned time poorness, such as the learner above who said that two days per week was not enough.

In terms of ESOL learning time, the timetabling change the Pre-Entry learners suggest would mean six hours over three days or even eight hours per week over four days. This would come closer to the number of hours for ESOL study recommended for work or further education in Roden and Osmaston's (2021) discussion. The clear articulation of these ESOL learners is an example of how adult learners know as well as, and often better than, policymakers what their learning needs are, a point discussed further in the conclusions. Roden and Osmaston (2021) reported that according to providers one of the strategies used to provide more time for ESOL learners was to add fully funded FSE literacy to ESOL (2021: 15). However, although this strategy might help higher-level learners who have reached a plateau in their English learning and need more time to consolidate, the research data of this study shows that this practice actually results in *less* time for ESOL, which disadvantages lower-level learners like ESOL Pre-Entry, who need ESOL content to develop their knowledge of English language.

18.5 Motivations for learning – embodied and situated language experiences

Some ESOL in FE learners related that they were encouraged to learn English by family and friends at home or in their neighbourhoods who helped and supported them in their efforts to learn English:

> "Yes, sometime with my husband, with my children [I speak English]. They push me [to] speak English" (17N).

Learner 17N speaks of efforts made at home by her family to encourage her to learn English. She uses the word "push" to describe her family's encouragement. This word can be understood in different ways. "Push" may suggest some reticence on her part which might have been because, like 16N, she felt it was "hard", and especially hard having to surmount a feeling of exclusion from the communication challenge within her own family. It could also indicate that her family approached her learning of English with a sense of urgency, perhaps realising the importance for her of being able to communicate in the majority language of the country.

The persistence of both her husband and her children at home in her experience of learning English within her family resulted in the embodied physical effort that she made at their insistence. Again, the learners' assertion that language learning is "hard" speaks to its effect on the body and, drawing from Swain (2013), this embodied nature of learning raises

questions around pedagogy and teaching approaches that focus mainly on cognitive processes, which is apparent throughout this analysis, for example as part of the discussion in Chapter 5, Section 17.5 by FE college ESOL practitioners who compared their experience of EFL and ESOL.

This data shows that in homes of people with experience of migration, there is whole family engagement with language and communication, and joint efforts are made which demonstrates coherence in family relationships and a concern with learning in their microsphere which includes school children as a significant motivation and help towards learning English. As P19 stated:

> "What I learned, I learned from what I discussed with my son when he came from the school" (19P).

Learning English as part of a community and family effort recalls the historical chronosphere experience documented by Rosenberg (2007), mentioned in Chapter 3, Section 4.1, of Jewish immigrants in the 19th century, receiving help from family members who spoke English, especially from children who were attending English-speaking schools. This is especially effective because, drawing from Burke and Stets (2009) and Gee (2001), learning as part of human development is essentially a social activity. Children who are in English-speaking schools are learning alongside their native speaker counterparts, yet many of them will also know their home languages which makes them excellent teachers and interpreters for adults.

Hearing these statements, I noticed an incongruous contrast, which shows the flaws in the often professed macro deficit views of *immigrant* women held by policy makers and politicians, such as ex-Prime Minister Cameron, mentioned in Marson and Sherwood's (2016) report cited in Chapter 3 in Section 3.2.7, in which he implied that *immigrant* mothers were not doing enough to stop radicalisation by learning and promoting English language in their homes and communities. The data in this section of my analysis, counteracts the deficit view by recording the embodied efforts of these women with experience of migration to learn English and to cooperate with and benefit from whole family efforts to learn English. Other learners had friends attending ESOL in FE who encouraged them to join their classes, demonstrating the effectiveness of reciprocal proximal processes of relationships and local networking that I discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.1 and Chapter 3, 9.1 which, drawing on Singh (2021), also challenge the deficit view of the government that ESOL learners in FE are

‘hard to reach’. Rather, Participant 17P describes a camaraderie between ESOL in FE learners:

> “I started English 20 years ago, but my son is small and then I didn't know how to speak English, and my friend said to me, ‘Come, let's go in the English classes’” (17P).

In this statement, 17P shares the connection between women unable to speak English who are fully occupied looking after small children and how English classes in the community can help them make friends and develop the confidence to join ESOL in FE. One of the Level 1 learners also described her experience when she first decided to take ESOL classes which happened through friends she met at a neighbourhood bus stop:

> “I started my English class first from some friends at the bus stop. My friends went there [to ESOL class], and I joined for 1 year. After that, I went to the FE college, and sometimes I stop and sometimes I go for one year” (18P).

It is interesting that this learner attended ESOL in FE courses when it suited her as she would sometimes “stop” and sometimes “go”, indicating that her attendance did not follow course and examination schedules, which contrasts with current expectations and pressures of engagement and attendance mentioned in Chapter 5, Section 17.9, and above, in which funding depends on successful completion of assessments and exams. Locations and moments in time are crucial in spreading the word about ESOL in FE classes in the community and the participants’ comments show the spatial and temporal aspects of embodied language learning processes.

In recounting their experiences of coming to learn English in ESOL in FE, the learners related how local informal word-of-mouth networks of friends and family in the micro community, were instrumental in spreading the news about the classes and encouraging others to join rather than formal recruitment drives by colleges or government initiatives. Interestingly none of them mentioned coming to ESOL in FE classes through contact with people outside of their immediate micro communities.

The words of these ESOL in FE learners illuminate the role of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) proximal processes in the social microsphere at a local level in the lives of people in embodied ways that influence their education and development and the considerable impact

this can have on their well-being and ability to settle in their new environment. It also contributes to the debate that, according to Singh (2021) migrant communities are not “hard to reach” but “hardly reached”. This evidence reflects the core ideas on identity, discussed in Gee (2001), and after Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Foucault (1975) on the centrality of human interactions and relationships which can be applied to the microsphere of ESOL in FE learners.

Like other adult learning centres that are often located in communities away from the main centre, the college in this study supplies publicity for distribution at the community centres where the classes are being held. However, this publicity is not distributed until shortly before the courses are due to start and, anecdotally speaking, I have heard remarks from potential and continuing learners that they would appreciate having more advanced notice, even at the end of the academic year in June, in order to make plans to attend.

This means that longer-term course planning for community centres is needed, but it is another conundrum for ESOL in FE because of the precarity around funding and staffing. Providers would have to commit further in advance to offering courses, which is a delicate balancing act between college resources in terms of budget and staffing and a firm idea about what the demands for courses are in terms of student numbers from the respective communities. For this reason, enrolment is delayed until the beginning of the Autumn term rather than trying to recruit learners earlier. This precarity also leads to ethically questionable situations in which ESOL courses are advertised but ultimately what is delivered is LLS or FSE ‘with ESOL’, which is not strictly ESOL. This is not intentional misrepresentation but to provide funding and recognised certification, without which the adult learning centre could not operate.

18.6 Embodied aspects of ESOL in FE - learner emotions and anxiety

In this section, the data shows that, drawing from Foucault (1989), the conditions of possibility for ESOL in FE learners give precedence to English language. This is part of integration, or assimilation, that puts pressure on people with experience of migration to prioritise English over their home languages. This can cause feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and lack of self-esteem, so that the motivation to learn stems from these negative feelings. Where there is a lack of support for ESOL, and unequal access to English language learning, this creates an even bigger challenge.

Anxiety-filled embodied experiences in relation to language learning surfaced in the ESOL in FE learners' comments. One ESOL in FE learner described the physical symptoms she felt while trying to speak English:

> "[I was] too much shy. My body aching and my mouth dry with talking. Like I don't know what happened [to me]" (16N).

Drawing from Volkman, et al. (2024), these words describe medically recognised symptoms of anxiety. Having to try and communicate in a language which is not your own can result in physical reactions such as dry mouth, body aches and pains, and feelings of weakness. 16N's remark is a reminder of the embodied nature of language learning and how it is physical and emotional, rarely cognitive, especially when there is so much at risk for people with experience of migration in terms of human interrelationships, preserving and developing identity, as well as avoiding hostility and gaining safety in time and space.

Embodiment theorist, Rittelmeyer (2022), discusses how in the language learning experiences of learners, the mind and the body are as one. In this study, in terms of expressing and making sense of their experiences in ESOL in FE, the learners did not distinguish between mental and physical aspects of learning but spoke about their physical feelings and emotions. The embodied and emotional experiences many ESOL in FE learners have in learning English were expressed with powerful statements by some participants in this study. Gee (2001; 2014) and Burke and Stets (2009), illuminate the cause of ESOL in FE learner anxiety in their discussion, referred to in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.2, and how feelings of anxiety relate to language in their identity theories. McHolme et al. (2025), whose research looks at raciolinguistic chronotopes in learners' language portraits, identified in adult ESOL learners in the USA the feelings of "anxiety, resistance and deferral" (2025: 6).

In terms of injustice, Foucault (1975) describes emotions of shame and fear such as those expressed by many of the participants in this study as 'mechanisms of power', how powerful groups use emotions as a tool of governmentality to produce 'disciplined subjects' (Wüschner, 2017). Importantly, as Burke and Stets (2009) and Gee (2001) assert, as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.6.2, not only is the ability to communicate restricted when a person with experience of migration cannot speak the majority language but also a major part of their identity which has developed in the home languages is unjustly erased. Drawing from Burke and Stets (2009), this appears to threaten many participants' sense of control

which results in anxiety. bell hooks (1994) in *Teaching to Transgress* also speaks of the emotional nature of language and the injustice of the imposition of English when migrating people experience the fear of not knowing the dominant language. Too often in the classroom the rich knowledge of the learners' home languages is devalued or simply ignored in the exosphere and wider microsphere by organisations and agencies ESOL learners deal with, and in education, such as ESOL in FE.

In contrast to previous examples in this analysis, for some participants it was apparent that in some cases there was less support because people in the learner's micro community were busy. This resulted in an apparent absence of support or outreach from either the local community or the host society, as one learner expressed it:

> "I can't [couldn't] speak English and did not understand. I don't know where I can go. Everybody is busy" (16P).

16P described the emotions she felt from not being able to communicate using English even within her microsphere:

> "I have the same problem when I have appointment . . . So many times, I asked people: Can you come with me? Can you call for me? This is a shame for me, actually" (16P).

For 16P, the feelings and emotions expressed included visceral reactions such as loss of self-esteem, and sadness from being made to feel let down by people in her close relationships who could not or would not help her. She mentions "shame" which is her way of describing her feelings of regret and lack of agency at having to repeatedly ask for help. Her comments emphasise how the processes of language learning are deeply emotional for different reasons, sometimes to do with identity and sometimes with disappointments in relationships and social isolation. Sometimes the experience described by participants was traumatising as friends in the community who were approached for help were rude and dismissive:

> "Before I ask somebody, and they ignored me. I'm upset. Can I go to the doctor, hospital? One day I had very bad problem . . . And then one of my friends, she pushed me outside. She said, you have to go, you alone, and then I went alone" (17P).

The imperative rejection of her friend, “you have to go, you alone”, after she had already been ignored by someone else, establishes the learner’s isolation. The word “push” returns in the embodied nature of this rejection: “she pushed me outside”. 17P’s friend made her go “alone” when she had a serious problem, which shows that hard lessons are learned in the microsphere within communities and there is a sense that her friend did not help in order to compel 17P to develop some independence, and this was a hard and even traumatic experience for her.

In these descriptions, the learners who experienced an absence of outreach and support, show how their feelings of anxiety were exacerbated by instability, uncertainty, and fear around isolation and not being able to communicate. The anxiety the learners suffered can be understood in terms of the embodied nature of language learning and their lack of control in situations where, drawing from Burke and Stets (2009), they did not have the language necessary to interact with others, or the agency to access ESOL for themselves.

In this study the ESOL in FE learners’ efforts to learn English when motivated by a lack of self-esteem and negative feelings of fear of possible hostility in the wider community work to nurture neoliberal ideas of autonomy and responsibilisation, discussed in Chapter 3, Section 7. Instead of making language learning something that unites people, it creates binary divides in the microsphere between people who cannot speak English and people who can. Santos (2016) in Morrice (2019) calls this an “abyssal divide” (2019: 23). Thus, drawing on Monbiot and Hutchinson (2024), neoliberal value of “the extreme individuation of human life” (2024: 54) is promoted and the work of integration becomes an individual rather than collective responsibility which intensifies anxiety because “human beings, ultra-social mammals whose brains are wired to respond to other people, are being forced apart” (2024: 54).

For an example of how this works in practice, 19N, a Pre-Entry ESOL learner, described her humiliating experience around expectations and assimilation:

> “When first came here I did not understand about ‘excuse me’. I go for shopping. I understand nothing, the price. It [was] very hard that time. I cry. No understand the prices, how much the food. It was very, very difficult. Very hard” (19N).

19N describes carrying out routine chores like shopping for food without knowledge of English “hard”, which she repeats, and “difficult” which created extreme anxiety and the reaction of crying, again evidencing the emotional embodied nature of language and how distressing it can be, physically and psychologically, for an adult, who is competent in her own language, to cope with lack of language and agency to carry out everyday activities like shopping for food.

For others, a fear, close to panic, of being isolated, excluded, and unable to survive alone without friends or family members to help also emerged as 19P explained:

> “After six months, when they [my brothers and sisters] left, they go back [to the home country]. I say what I'm going to do, I'm going to die” (19P).

What 19P describes with words like “I’m going to die”, is a traumatic experience of her close family members leaving her in what she perceives as isolation in a strange and possibly hostile space. Drawing from Dunn (2024), in connection with ESOL teaching and learning in FE, trauma and the importance of trauma awareness for practitioners and staff working with ESOL learners is a current area of concern. Trauma related to people with experience of migration is often perceived as the result of experiences that have happened in migrants’ home countries that have precipitated their migration, such as wars and famines. The data given by the learners in this study strongly suggests that traumatic experiences for ESOL learners can continue in the host country and we are reminded that, as Swain (2013) points out, language is emotional and, as Dunn (2024) elucidates, traumatic experiences can also cause psychological barriers to learning, such as hyper-vigilance and problems with concentration.

Even for ESOL in FE learners who have had English classes in their countries of origin before coming to the UK, serious challenges to their language learning in addition to their isolation and segregation remain because of the challenges of learning language such as the varieties of accent as well as the differences between learning in a classroom situation and learning on the street, as 19P described it:

> “When I came here and I start to listen to people I say I will never, ever learn the language. I don't know but I find it very, very difficult. Even [though] the alphabet is same like mine. . .. But I find when I came here and I start to hear

> the pure English, oh my God, I will never, ever I say, I think it's better to go back in my country because here I will not survive at all" (19P).

In this learner's statements, where she speaks with emotion with phrases like, "oh my God", describes her experience as "difficult" and even questions her ability to "survive", there is a strong sense of fear, even horror, of the potential of isolation and hostility related to not knowing the English language that speaks to the ESOL in FE learners' fear within their microsphere. It is also interesting that she mentions "the pure English". Although we do not learn what she means by this, it suggests that for ESOL learners the wide variety of accents and dialects of English also cause anxiety as they try to identify what is "pure". Learner 19P stated:

> "I pushed myself by my mind. I say I have to survive here in different country than mine. I have to do something for a better life and [not] to have someone at my back to ask all the time for the help. Sometimes life pushes [you] to do some things that you don't want, but you have to" (19P).

The language used by 19P emphasises the effort and the urgency the learner felt. She uses the word "pushed" to indicate that the motivation to learn English came from a position of necessity because she saw it as a question of survival. She mentions what she "has to do" to "survive" which are powerful terms to describe the imperative for her of learning English, especially in her isolation without her family, and speak to the embodiment of language learning.

The way the word "push" is used by the learner participants is significant in different ways. It is a physical action in which one body causes another body to move by physical force; it also means to compel or urge (OED, 2024). It indicates a kind of strong and uncompromising force and there is a sense that the learners need this intensity of encouragement because the task at hand is "hard" and they feel some reticence to undertake it because in an embodied sense both physically, and psychologically in terms of identity, it is challenging and uncomfortable. As used by these learners, it emphasises, as Swain (2013) posits, that the language learning experience, and indeed all learning experiences, are not always pleasant and that the reward of learning can come from both pleasant and unpleasant experiences.

This learner data means that it is crucial not to underestimate the importance of English for these learners. ESOL providers and practitioners need to develop sensitivity to the emotions

involved in language learning as well as an awareness of the trauma ESOL learners may have experienced, not only on their migration journeys to this country, but also in their microsphere communities in England. High-quality ESOL in FE provision should be prioritised with adequate funding and course availability which is necessary if government is serious about integration, with equal opportunity, for people with experience of migration to enable them to move into more skilled employment and further education.

18.7 Learner agency

Alongside the affective nature of ESOL in FE learning, learner agency also emerged in the data. The stories of learners' experiences and struggles to settle in the UK and learn the language, as Singh (2021) illuminates, challenge the deficit 'hard to reach' label that has been used to discredit them. As this study shows It was the determination despite hardships of these people with experience of migration which enabled them to seek out English classes. The data illuminates how, through their own agency, they have developed language confidence and the ability to function in the wider society.

Interestingly, the word "push", which is used above to describe learning that takes effort and may be hard and unpleasant, is also used by the learners to describe the encouragement of their teacher, which they see as positive:

> "My teachers (name) and (name) really good. Push, push, push. Really hard time. All ladies push, push, push. One each, one by one. Good teachers. Treat like baby" (16N).

16N said this in a very positive way, making it clear that "push" in the context of her ESOL in FE class was something good that she appreciated in her teachers. She also describes the learning as a "really hard time" suggesting in this context that "hard is something positive in the embodied language learning process as their efforts will be rewarded. They expect learning to be "hard", but in their ESOL in FE class, it is delivered in a supportive way, hence the remark "treat like baby" (16N). These words have implications for the importance of relationships and rapport in the ESOL in FE classroom learning context and the use of communicative approaches in ESOL pedagogy. This approach clearly paid dividends for some participants.

The word “slowly” in relation to the speed of learning is repeated in the ESOL in FE learners’ statements, which is significant and confirms the reports mentioned in Chapter 3, Section 10.5, on the time it takes to learn a language. 16P, who was from another ESOL group, describes how she gained confidence from her ESOL in FE classes, which helped her to develop her English language ability at an unhurried, gradual pace, resulting in a knowledge of English which has enabled her to act independently and participate in the host society:

> “I decided I do everything myself. Then I start English from the pre [entry] and slowly, slowly. Now I do everything myself” (16P).

Her statement, especially the words “I do everything myself”, speaks to the pride she feels in her achievements and how, through her own efforts, she has developed resilience and resourcefulness. Her repetition of the word “slowly” also emphasises the importance of having enough time, discussed in this chapter.

Similarly, participant 18P described how her classes enabled her to gain the specific language skills of listening, speaking, and writing which she needs to interact in the host society:

> “After I start an English class and then slowly, slowly I understand. Now, I [am] listening or speaking or writing a letter” (18P).

It is important to note that the gradual and unhurried pace that characterises a communicative language learning approach is the antithesis of working to a strict assessment timetable.

The Pre-Entry and Level 1 ESOL learners repeatedly identify the specific skills that they need to prioritise in order to develop their independence in the wider society. The value the ESOL in FE learners place on functioning independently in their social interactions speaks to their desire to develop their agency in which language learning plays a part. Learner 17P remarked on how developing her linguistic skills of speaking and listening has improved her access to and communication with healthcare professionals:

> “I find out they [ESOL classes] here and then I always carry on here. I think it's very good for the learn English because I can speak English with my doctor with the hospital, and then I've got no problem” (17P).

Learner 19N expressed the relief and the confidence she feels now that she has developed her understanding and opportunities to study and interact in the host society. She uses an expression from her own language, Arabic, which means "praise be to God" to describe her feelings:

> "Alhamdulilah, fine now I understand, Alhamdulilah. Now I go to school, [I can do] anything" (19N).

Her learning experience and being in "school" has given her the confidence and increased independence to interact in English and she asserts this with positivity and pride when she says, "I can do anything" (19N).

Practitioners recognised that the learners' decisions to come to ESOL classes required bravery. Recent government policies, detailed in Chapter 3, Section 10, have created bureaucratic obstacles, such as described by Lacey (2018: 122) around enrolment and accessing ESOL in FE, and macro-Discourses discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3, around *immigrants* and *immigration* have supported a hostile environment of discrimination, racism, and fear through which the ESOL learner has to navigate.

Practitioner PB2 stated:

> "Many of our learners are middle aged ladies from more traditional backgrounds who don't leave the house very often. To come to ESOL class is big for them. Often, they come when their children are a little bit older. I just think it's very brave of them to do it" (PB2).

ESOL in FE learners have exercised their agency to change their often-restricted conditions of possibility, compounded by the disadvantage of not knowing the majority language, by moving out of social isolation and into wider social interactions with members of the host society, such as teachers and doctors, where potentially the responsibility for the interaction is shared. Although access to ESOL courses and the quality of courses has been limited by lack of government funding, language learning clearly has an important function in participants' lives.

The learners' data speaks to language learning as a human right as described by Garcia and Leiva (2013) and McHolme et al. (2025); a developmental embodied process, which to obstruct is a form of injustice. The data in this section is crucial to my research focus because it illuminates how learning English in ESOL in FE has implications for social justice and for pedagogy, which I will consider in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions and recommendations

19 Introduction

In this chapter, I summarise how this study has given me a better understanding of the challenges in teaching and learning in ESOL in FE in England. I discuss the impact of policy on ESOL teaching and learning in an FE college and how teachers and students are practising and learning in this context. I respond to my research questions, and consider the contribution of my study to practice, theory, and methodology. This is followed by recommendations for change to those working in ESOL in FE spaces as teachers and leaders. Finally, I give my reflection and a remark on the limitations of the study and suggest ideas for future research and dissemination.

19.1 Summary

The aim of ESOL in FE is to deliver language learning to people with experience of migration so that they can participate fully in the wider society. Participation in ESOL classes is often the first step for people with experience of migration towards adapting, and being agentic in, their new microsphere. ESOL in FE is a microsphere of dynamic interaction in which there is a desire to teach and learn English, establish and develop identity, socialise, and build relationships. In this way it serves the aims of integration and social justice. However, as this study shows, government policy does not prioritise ESOL in FE and this creates significant challenges for teachers and students.

ESOL practitioners use their creativity and skill to devise innovative ways to adapt to the restricted conditions of possibility in ESOL in FE in England. This study surfaces their motivation and commitment to help ESOL learners to integrate into the wider microsphere and the mesosphere beyond. The study suggests that ESOL practitioners, find their work both challenging and stimulating, which may be said regarding teachers in all sectors; the more difficult it is, the more creative and adaptable to the conditions of possibility they need to be. What gets overlooked is the experience of the ESOL learners. Their needs for a high quality, learner-centred provision are not being met. As practitioner PH8 said, “I think they probably come to ESOL with a certain expectation of being able to communicate, you know, to have English classes. But in reality, what we're doing now is using a lot of time to bring in lots of other things into the lessons, which can be quite rushed”. The learners’ views about the provision are clearly expressed in Chapter 5, Section 18 of this study regarding lack of time for learning and the quality of the teaching.

Offering a limited-quality provision has consequences that impact social justice. People with experience of migration need English for employment and for further education. The findings of this research add to the research of Schellekens (2011), who confirmed that a reduced-quality provision will result in a limited level of achievement which means that many people with experience of migration accessing government-funded ESOL in FE, after completing Entry Level 3 or Level 1 ESOL, may still be facing unskilled or semi-skilled employment. This is likely to be in factories or businesses within their communities in which they do not need to use much English, thus perpetuating their segregation as opposed to achieving integration in the wider society and limiting their chances to establish their identities with increased opportunities.

Linguists and ESOL researchers have been calling for an ESOL strategy for England for over a decade, as this study shows. A strategy for ESOL would provide official recognition and a framework for the provision. This would support practitioners, learners, administrators, and managers by setting out clearly the aims and benefits of ESOL, not just for learners but for wider society, and how these will be achieved, empowering the strong representative lobby of existing organisations such as NATECLA, professionalising ESOL staff and increasing quality of provision.

Ideas for alternative learner-centred ways of teaching ESOL to adults are coming from research/practitioners. For example, in Wales a learner-centred website, *Learner Literacy Narratives: A Library of Love and Loss* (Adult Learning Wales, 2025), can be accessed in which ESOL learners contribute their stories and artistic outputs, which receive recognised certification. ESOL teaching programmes, founded on the ideas of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), aim to be learner-centred and are based on social justice, such as Participatory ESOL or PE of Cooke et al. (2023), which is a programme related to Action Aid, Reflect ESOL, and English for Action (EfA) (2023: 8). The Participatory ESOL (PE) community of practice has recently published research, accessible through the reference above, looking into ways of integrating PE into mainstream ESOL teaching and learning, including those environments with severely limited conditions of possibility like ESOL in FE colleges. Although they remark that, "there is a concern that it may be easier to do participatory ESOL in a third-sector organisation like EfA than in state-funded further and adult education colleges, where, for example, student-teacher relationships are often regimented by institutional codes" (2023: 18).

19.2 Answering the research questions

The research aimed to find out what we could learn about the contemporary environment of ESOL in FE in England from informal conversations with learners and practitioners that would increase our understanding of their lived experiences in this context. Below, I give my responses to the research questions presented in the methodology:

19.2.1 How do ESOL learners and practitioners describe their lived experience of learning and teaching in ESOL in FE?

This research has identified negative and positive descriptions from both learners and practitioners. Learners voiced satisfaction that their knowledge improved their ability to communicate in English to fulfil daily needs. The practitioner data demonstrated dedication, and they expressed satisfaction on seeing learners progress in English. Conversely, disappointment emerged from the learners around the short length of ESOL courses and how they needed more time; also voiced was dissatisfaction with the organisation of the courses and teaching approaches. Practitioners expressed frustration with restrictions to practice caused by policies impacting course time and curriculum.

The data shows that the timing of courses to one year and the requirement to gain certificates, upon which government funding depends, puts tremendous pressure on everyone for learner success in examinations and assessments. This inflexibility leads to test-centred learning which shapes ESOL teaching and learning in a reductive way. It also highlights a misunderstanding of the difference between higher- and lower- level learners which has led to misconceptions around the realities of language learning. Employability and digital skills may be useful ideas for higher-level learners, but they discriminate against lower-level learners from Pre-Entry up to Entry 3, who need the time to develop a strong language foundation. This actuality means that stakeholders should become more cognisant of learner diversity to provide all ESOL learners with learning that meets their language needs, and is transferable outside of class into social settings, rather than being based on content which exists only on paper.

19.2.2 How has the ESOL in FE learning experience been impacted by the microsystems of the learners and practitioners in terms of their families and communities?

The research identified the impact of family and community on ESOL in FE learning. For the most part, families of learners were very supportive of learners' efforts in ESOL; the encouragement of children and spouses was emphasised and English use in the home was supported. In one case a learner experienced rejection from a friend in her community when she requested help accessing medical services, indicating that people in the community could get exasperated with requests for help with English. In terms of accessing ESOL in the community, data showed that people found out about courses from friends by word of mouth, demonstrating the cohesiveness that exists in learner communities. The advantage to learners of having supportive families was remarked on by more than one practitioner. This knowledge of learners and their communities counters the suggestions, made by politicians, and debated by Singh (2021), that people who need ESOL are reticent and 'hard-to-reach'. It highlights for the sector the need to avoid stereotyped views of ESOL learners and the need to invest in a wider and more robust ESOL provision that concentrates on learners' needs.

19.2.3 How have government policies on access to ESOL in FE impacted teaching and learning in ESOL and the learners' integration into the wider community?

The research identified the impact of segregation in communities and the 3-year residency rule for access to ESOL in FE. Older resident women learners showed how out of necessity people with experience of migration can spend whole careers and lifetimes within their ethnic/linguistic communities, completely separated from the wider English-speaking community until their domestic and career responsibilities become less and they have time to seek out ESOL in FE. Regarding the residency rules, learners gave painful accounts of their feelings of isolation and fear, close to panic, living in England and not knowing the language during the time before they were able to access ESOL.

As women learners it was also apparent that small children prevented their attendance, which attests to the fact that a newly arrived young woman spouse who must wait three years for ESOL will most likely have small children by the time she can apply. The data shows complex domestic situations, involving changes in situation and more than one child that hamper attendance, despite the availability of free childcare. Simultaneously, the research highlights contradictory policies and politicians who have blamed learners for their lack of English. This knowledge should be followed with tolerance, understanding, and

moves to bring flexibility into the residency rules applied in FE as well as more government investment and support for ESOL providers in the FE sector.

19.2.4 How have the neo-liberal FE policies that prioritise certification and the job market impacted the ESOL teaching and learning experience of the learners and practitioners?

This research identified how the emphasis on certification and employability, inspired by neoliberal ideology, has led to a deterioration of English language teaching in ESOL in FE, particularly for the lower-level learners. Practitioners point out that for the sake of increased funding it has meant an increasingly hybrid curriculum which incorporates elements of literacy for native speakers, which does not meet ESOL learners' language needs, depletes the already restricted course time, causes obsession with certification, and impacts professionalism. Although some of the hybrid course content may be suitable for learners who already have a secure foundation in English, further consideration is needed on how it might be introduced at lower levels without jeopardising English learning. Both higher- and lower- level learners in the study voiced their need for ESOL courses with sufficient time and focus on language, illuminating that the needs of the ESOL learners are being overlooked. Integration should be more than social mixing. If ESOL in FE remains a reduced-quality provision, we are not working to enable integration with equal opportunities that would give learners access to skilled employment or further education.

In terms of practitioners, the product-focus of certificate-centred courses works to degrade professionalism as over time it impacts language knowledge because it is not developmental insofar as increasing agility and flexibility to meet learners' needs, or to enhance professionality by learning new skills and pedagogies. The practitioner data shows that delivering unsuitable content also impacts professional identity and wellbeing. It also emerged in the research that college accountability procedures, such as lesson observations contain evaluation criteria so badly matched to a practitioner without specialist training as to be absurd. This knowledge outlines clear areas of improvement for the government and for providers in terms of human resources, course conceptualisation, funding, and curriculum planning.

19.3 Contribution

This study has contributed to practice, theory, and methodology. First, I assess my progress toward achieving the overriding research aim to gain a better understanding of the troubles

in ESOL in FE by summarising the main points concerning practice that have emerged in the conversations with practitioners and learners in the ESOL in FE England microsphere. I address the following main points: the inflexibility of, after Foucault (1989), the conditions of possibility in ESOL in FE, the question of de-professionalisation, and the priority of integration.

19.3.1 Inflexibility

ESOL in FE policy is framed by an inflexible neoliberal ideology that prioritises the achievement of qualifications and certificates. Learners, from ESOL Entry Level 1 on, are expected to pass assessments and examinations for their level within the time of their course, which is limited to one year, and then to progress to the next level. Crucially, as Smith and O'Leary (2013) pointed out, government funding for FE courses (including ESOL) depends on students successfully completing assessments and exams. At the college in the study, ESOL Pre-Entry as yet does not have external examinations but because of restricted funding, this beginners' course is limited to one year. This puts ~~a~~ tremendous pressure on all bodies in ESOL in FE to get the learners, from ESOL Entry 1 to ESOL Level 2, to succeed in examinations and assessments and this in turn shapes teaching and learning in the classrooms.

Roden and Osmaston (2021) and Schellekens (2011) make the point that this emphasis on examinations and assessments, or 'product' focus, may work for higher-level learners who already have some basic knowledge of the English language; however, it is much harder, if not impossible, for most lower-level learners, especially those in ESOL Pre-Entry, whose knowledge of the alphabet, basic vocabulary, and language structures may not be secure. In this way, the policy focus on 'product' in ESOL in FE, restricts time for learning and support for students which leads to exclusion and discrimination based on learners' backgrounds and previous learning experiences.

The literature shows that the difference between the higher-level and the lower-level learners is misunderstood, which has led to misconceptions around the realities of language learning. Roden and Osmaston (2021), Curcin et al. (2022), and Schellekens et al. (2023), as well as ESOL practitioners in this study, all point out that to reach a level of English for employment or further education would take years, even with intensive study. Lanahan's (2019) report gives the ideas of both providers and local authorities around an emphasis on employability, vocational ESOL, courses for English with special purposes related to certain industries, where people with experience of migration could find employment. Again, although this may

be helpful or enabling for higher-level learners, it discriminates against learners, from Pre-Entry up to Entry 3, who have basic language needs. Although the differences between lower-level and higher-level ESOL learners are well known, they seem to get at best overlooked and at worst dismissed when it comes to planning and provision.

The literature examined in this study, especially that of Bronfenbrenner (1979), Gee (2001), and Burke and Stets (2009), alongside the findings from the learners and practitioners participating in the research, illuminate that language learning is bound up with learner identity and the development of learner identity, which depends on relationships. This means that, after Swain (2013) and Garcia and Levia (2013) language learning is affective as well as cognitive, and therefore, for teaching methods to be successful, especially for the lower-level learners from Pre-Entry up to Entry 3, practitioners need to focus on the affective domain. This means they must be learner-centred, learner-driven and memorable rather than product-centred.

This study shows that ESOL should provide the kind of learning experience that the learner internalises and continues to use outside of class in social settings, rather than being based on a curriculum or examination which only exists on paper. Practitioner PH8 observed that with the emphasis on exams and progression, “we are not developing the skills that they really need like communication skills or fluency skills, listening skills” *(Chapter 5, Section 17.2)*, and they lamented that affective learning and consolidation had been possible in the past when “we had a lot of time with our learners, where we could spend, a whole year just teaching them communication, speaking and listening, followed by a year of reading and writing” *(Chapter 5, Section 17.8)*. In PJ10’s opinion the kind of learning that comes from the use of literacy assessments is a waste of time because “There’re no learning outcomes for them [the learners], and it's just purely a finance exercise to get money from the college” *(Chapter 5, Section 17.8).*

19.3.2 De-professionalisation of the workforce

The significance of de-professionalisation of the workforce, which is such a key dimension of the research literature came through strongly in this study. It is another issue in ESOL in FE that is misunderstood. Although training for all occupations is important - would you like to fly with an untrained pilot? – reduced-quality ESOL is not only caused by untrained teachers. Indeed, teaching quality is not always related to levels or degrees of training. This study suggests that inflexibility resulting from the ‘product focus’ and associated funding policies is equally damaging and maybe even more so than an untrained teacher. The ‘product focus’

in ESOL in FE has at least two detrimental impacts on the quality of the provision: teaching to the test and unsuitable course content, which as this study has shown, can both harm professionalism.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Section 17.8, teaching to the test only meets the learners' needs in terms of gaining a certificate, which may involve a lot of work on practice papers, the interpretation of unfamiliar rubrics, and testing in timed conditions. As the practitioners in this study pointed out, this kind of learning does not build communicative competence or confidence and so does not mean that a learner will be able to go out in the community and use the language and knowledge. In terms of professionalisation of teaching staff, teaching to the test also works to degrade a teacher's experience and 'knowledge about language' because over time it is not developmental. It does not increase the mental agility needed to adapt complex content on the spot to meet learners' needs. It does not encourage learning new pedagogies or progressing in the profession as it is limited to an instrument on paper.

Unsuitable course content in ESOL in FE also contributes to de-professionalisation of ESOL practitioners because of the addition of literacy content, such as FSE and LLS, to the ESOL syllabus. The data in Chapter 5, Section 17.2, adds to the studies of Schellekens (2011) and Roden and Osmaston (2021), confirming that this content is especially unsuitable for the lower-levels (Pre-Entry through to Entry 3) who need to acquire, and feel confident with, the basics of English before advancing to literacy. Immense pressure exists for colleges to use this content from ESOL Entry 1 on because it is a means to access funding and cross subsidise ESOL which adult learning centres depend upon. It impacts the professionality of ESOL in FE practitioners who are expected to deliver content that may sit outside their expertise, and which may also be unsuited to their learners needs. This has an impact on both the quality of the English language teaching and learning and on the professional identity and wellbeing of the practitioners.

In addition to a flawed reputation, mentioned by Rosenburg (2007) as well as Paget and Stevenson (2014), practitioners, with or without specialist training, have to endure accountability procedures, such as lesson observations, with criteria so badly mismatched to a practitioner without specialist training as to be absurd (Chapter 5, Section 17.6). Practitioners also have responsibility for maintaining levels of attendance and completing sensitive administrative tasks, as Lacey's (2018) research also reports. In this working environment, it becomes ever easier to blame practitioners' lack of training for problems in ESOL provision. Yet, in spite of these challenges, ESOL in FE practitioners speak warmly of

their work and how much they enjoy it when people are chatting and using the language in their classes.

19.3.3 Integration

The final and very important point is the integration of learners with experience of migration. In the Casey Review (2016), integration is identified as a key priority for the government. Yet, as the data in this study corroborates, and as illustrated in papers like ESOL for Integration (2020), integration is more than just social mixing. The question is: In ESOL in FE, are we are aiming for integration with equal opportunities for learners with experience of migration? ESOL learners, at least lower-level learners, will reach Entry Level 3 with a minimum ability to use the language which will limit them to unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. If ESOL in FE remains compromised through funding regimes, we are not really doing our best to provide integration with equal opportunities, and this should be rectified.

19.3.4 Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Human Ecosystem has been widely used to study the development of children in early education; however, my use of his theories contributes to these by building a framework for the study of adult ESOL learners in FE. As Diagrams 2 and 3 in this thesis show, my adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's human ecosystem framework of inter- and intra- acting spheres, both in terms of an organising principle and a theory of development, has been instrumental in my thinking and in ordering of the complex and diverse elements of my research throughout the chapters of this thesis.

19.3.5 Methodology

My post structural ontology and use of post-qualitative inquiry in short-term ethnography produced a methodological approach unique to the requirements of my research, which included flexibility and negotiation with research participants on data collection formats which shaped interesting and unconventional methods of data collection, such as self-interview and the data collection of experiences with participants together in one room. My methodology also involved the use of adapted translanguaging, called transchat, which entails a dynamic multi-lingual mixture of spoken languages. Although translanguaging in ESOL research has been used before, notably in Puttick's (2021) study using primarily digital translanguaging through telephone messaging, my methods have added to hers by adhering to an oral form of translanguaging owing to restrictions on the use of personal telephone applications between learners and teachers in the FE setting.

20 Outcomes - Recommendations

This research has some important implications for those delivering, leading and managing ESOL provision in FE, as well as those involved with policymaking and funding legislation. The following recommendations emerging from this research are addressed to ESOL practitioners, potential practitioners, teacher trainers, and managers, and policymakers.

20.1 Recommendations for ESOL practitioners and potential practitioners, and teacher trainers

- The affective domain is at one with the cognitive domain. Emotions, as part of identity development and experience, are an integral part of language learning, motivating learners to express themselves. Practitioner/learner co-creation in ESOL learning through flexible practices like translanguaging and collaboration with learners on resources and activities facilitates affective learning that is meaningful and transferable to real life situations outside of the classroom, in opposition to product-centred teaching to the test.

- Prioritise communication with teaching approaches that balance the cognitive aspects of language learning with the affective according to your learners' needs, bearing in mind the emotional nature of language learning and making opportunities for learner-centredness and communicative approaches wherever possible.

- Form communities of practice to share ideas on how to meet the demands of what is progressively a hybrid ESOL/Literacy curriculum, increasing critical awareness of your practice, the impact of policies, and what you can do about it in your classroom.

- Maintain rapport with learners and cultivate an awareness of how both practitioners and learners try to make sense of tensions and challenging experiences in the ESOL learning environment by blaming each other and how this negativity can impact practitioner/learner rapport. Make sense of challenges in ESOL in an informed and constructive way by critically interrogating policies and practices.

20.2 Managers

- Be explicit about policy developments and their implications to teaching staff and open opportunities for discussion and understanding.

- Solicit course feedback from learners at all levels, especially the lower levels, as it can inform management about the quality of the provision.

- Accept and acknowledge that learners and practitioners know best what they need and that their voices are important.

- Plan the academic calendar to organise administrative tasks around enrolment and examinations in a way that maximises time for teaching staff to reflect, collaborate, and develop their practice, in response to comments by practitioner PD4 *(Chapter 5, Section 17.1)*, and as suggested by practitioner PG7 *(Chapter 5, Section 17.14)*.

- Improve organisation and administrative procedures so that student and staff services are always available in response to the observations of PJ10 *(Chapter 5, Section 17.1)*.

- Coordinate and increase SEND provision for adult learners in response to the comments of practitioners PF6 and PD4 *(Chapter 5, Section 17.10)*.

20.3 Policymakers and politicians

- Engage with English language learning and the challenges around ESOL in FE by following the government and academic publications.

- Build awareness of how funding regimes for ESOL in FE in England impact the English language learning of learners with experience of migration and their integration with equal opportunities in the wider society and the implications this has for social justice in England.

- Support the calls for an ESOL strategy for England which would unify and strengthen the provision.

- Currently, racism between nations and ethnic groups is on the rise. The practitioners in this study spoke about different qualities of ESOL provision for different types of learners, illuminating that in the ESOL mesosphere there is a range of racisms that attach to different groups of ESOL learners. The rise in Islamophobia means that in ESOL Muslim learners with experience of migration are more likely to experience racism than white European learners, such as Romanian, Ukrainian, or Polish. As politicians and policymakers, it is crucial to be cognisant of systemic racism in ESOL, illuminated in this study, which shows financially and educationally marginalised learners of the global majority struggling to gain

access to what is a reduced quality ESOL provision in FE. The principles expressed in British Values affirm that people should have equal opportunities and not be treated differently or disadvantaged because of their origins, ethnicity, or race. This study shows that anomalies in ESOL policies and provision discriminate against and between people with experience of migration in a way that is racialised and this must be rectified.

21 Reflection

I found this research absorbing, inspiring, and deeply meaningful. If I were to conduct it again, I would try to ensure to have more time for discussion and feedback with participants about the research after data collection. It was my intention, but my time was limited with the learners to the day of data collection, so it was not possible to get their feedback on the research experience. I was able to get some feedback from the practitioners, but time was also an issue because the primary research was conducted at the very end of the summer term. Time for discussion and feedback would have provided a valuable evaluation of the methodology and implications for the findings.

22 Limitations

The main limitation of the research is that it involved only one college in England. Research with more than one college, especially in the same region, would have enhanced the validity of my findings and provided valuable comparisons with implications for all involved, especially local authorities and managements regarding funding and curriculum. As it stands the findings are applicable to the college in the study and cannot be generalised to all ESOL in all FE colleges in England.

23 Future research

I would like to conduct future research on the same topic of ESOL in FE for adult learners but involving more than one college so that benefits may be obtained from comparisons. I am especially interested in undertaking a comparative international study and the opportunity to investigate different models of international FE provision of ESOL for adult learning. I would also like to take part in a study that includes male as well as female learners, comparing their experience of learning in ESOL in FE which would yield valuable information and further increase our understanding. I am also interested in conducting research on researching ESOL with hearing impairment and how hearing impairment works with the use of translanguaging/transchat.

24 Dissemination

In alignment with the British Educational Research Association's (2024) guidelines, researchers have a responsibility to disseminate their research, and I look forward to disseminating the research and findings of this study, especially in the anticipation of contributing to the calls for improvements and reforms in provision and a strategy for ESOL in England. Dissemination of this research could be done in the form of journal articles and book chapters which focus on language learning for people with experience of migration. This work would be of interest to specialist organisations that have publications, such as NATECLA's *Language Issues*, the *NALDIC Quarterly* and their publication *EAL Matters*, the *RaPal Journal* (Research and Practice in Adult Literacies) and other ESOL and TESOL publications in the UK and overseas. I would be keen to disseminate my research in the form of talks and presentations at conferences, such as the annual conferences of CSPACE and NATECLA. I have disseminated portions of my research through the CSPACE Conference 2025 as well as online and in person at Birmingham City University (BCU) Post-Graduate Researcher Events in 2023 and 2024. I have also contributed to online seminars on ESOL and translanguaging. Additionally, I have written think pieces for the CSPACE blog and *RaPal Journal* Spring 2022 on themes of physical impairment and exceptional teachers.

References

Action for ESOL (2012) *The ESOL Manifesto.* Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/65e6e9b135ec9206af43228f/t/666f581ec527c8741a8eb874/1718573087296/ESOL_Manifesto.pdf.

Adult Learning Wales (2025) *Learner Literacy Narratives: A library of life, love and loss.* Available at: https://lifeloveloss.digital [Accessed 1 June 2025].

Ahmed, S. (2014) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion.* Second Edition edn. 1 vols. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Appleby, Y. and Bathmaker, A.-M. (2006) The new skills agenda: increased lifelong learning or new sites of inequality? *British Educational Research Journal,* 32, pp. 703-717. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920600895742.

Atherton, G., Lewis, J. and Bolton, P. (2024) *Higher education in the UK: Systems, policy approaches, and challenges*. online: commonslibrary.parliament.uk (9640). Available at: https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9640/CBP-9640.pdf.

Audit Commission (1993) *Unfinished Business: Full-time Educational Courses for Young People Aged 16-19.* London: HMSO.

Augar, P., Crewe, I., de Rojas, J., Peck, E., Robinson, B. and Wolf, A. (2019) *A Review of Post-18 Education and Funding.* London: HMSO Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications.

Baker, M. and Pollard, J. (2020) Collaborative Team-Teaching to Promote Interdisciplinary Learning in the Undergraduate Classroom: A Qualitative Study of Student Experiences. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education,* 9(2), pp. 330-354. https://doi.org/10.32674/jise.v9i2.2273.

Baldi, G. (2020) Britain I: The Tripartite System. In: *Ideas, Institutions, and the Politics of Schools in Postwar Britain and Germany*. Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

Baldi, G. C. (2010) *The Politics of Differentiation: Education Reform in Postwar Britain and Germany*. Doctor of Philosophy Thesis. Georgetown University.

Ball, S. J. (2006) *Education Policy and Social Class.* UK: Routledge.

Ball, S. J. (2013) *Education, justice and democracy: The struggle over ignorance and opportunity*. CLASS. Available at: http://classonline.org.uk/docs/2013_Policy_Paper_-_Education,_justice_and_democracy_(Stephen_Ball).pdf.

BBC (2005) *London bombers 'were all British'.* Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4676577.stm [Accessed 12 August 2021].

Beckett, A. (2015) Toxteth, 1981: the summer Liverpool burned - by the rioter and economist on opposite sides. *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/sep/14/toxteth-riots-1981-summer-liverpool-burned-patrick-minford-jimi-jagne.

Beckmann, A., Cooper, C. and Hill, D. (2009) Neoliberalization and managerialization of 'education' in England and Wales – a case for reconstructing education. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies,* 7, pp. 311-345. https://www.jceps.com/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/07-2-12.pdf.

Bell Foundation (2025) *Supporting ESOL in Devolved Authorities*. online: Bell Foundation. Available at: https://d4hfzltwt4wv7.cloudfront.net/uploads/files/ESOL-Report-Final.pdf.

Bergold, J. and Stefan, T. (2012) Participatory Research Methods: A Methodological Approach in Motion. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research,* 13, https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-13.1.1801.

Berry, J. W. (2001) A Psychology of Immigration. *Journal of Social Issues,* 57(3), pp. 615-631. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00231.

Bevir, M. (1999) Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy. *Political Theory,* 27(1), pp. 65-84. https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591799027001004.
Block, K., Warr, D., Gibbs, L. and Riggs, E. (2012) Addressing Ethical and Methodological Challenges in Research with Refugee-background Young People: Reflections from the Field. *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 26(1), pp. 69-87. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fes002.
Blunkett, D. (2002) *Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain: Globalisation and the Renewal of Democracy and Civil Society.* London: The Foreign Policy Centre.
British Council Worldwide (2025) *Our history.* Available at: https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/history [Accessed 3 July 2025].
British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2024) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. 5th ed. London. Available at: https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-fifth-edition-2024 [Accessed 29 July 2025].
Broesch, T., Crittenden, A. N., Beheim, B. A., Blackwell, A. D., Bunce, J. A., Colleran, H., Hagel, K., Kline, M., McElreath, R., Nelson, R. G., et al. (2020) Navigating cross-methodological and ethical considerations. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Britain,* 287, pp. 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2020.1245.
Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The ecology of human development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Bronfenbrenner, U. and Ceci, S. J. (1994) Nature-Nurture Reconceptualized in Developmental Perspective: A Bioecological Model. *Psychological Review,* 101, pp. 568-586. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.101.4.568.
Bronfenbrenner, U. and Morris, P. (1998) The ecology of developmental processes. In: R. M. (Ed.) Lerner, ed. *Theoretical Modes of Human Development*, *1*. Fifth edn. edn. New York: Wiley, pp. 993-1028.
Brown, S. P., McKesson, L. D., Robinson, J. C. and Jackson, A. Y. (2021) Possibles and Post Qualitative Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 27, pp. 231–234. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800420922266.
Brown, T. (2022) *Ugandan Asians: 50 years since their expulsion from Uganda.* Available at: https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/ugandan-asians-50-years-since-their-expulsion-from-uganda.
Burke, P. J. and Stets, J. E. (2009) *Identity Theory.* USA: Oxford University Press.
Butler, G., Kim, M. S. and Kurth, L. (2023) From Practice to Publication: Two Case Studies of ESOL Teachers. *English Teaching Forum*, pp. 1-12. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1407003.
Calgie, C. (2025) Reform finally unite with Tories over key migrant issue to humiliate Labour. *Express*. Available at: https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2074995/reform-finally-unite-tories-jenrick [Accessed 30 June 2025].
Carey, S. (1997) *Adult Literacy in Britain: a survey of adults aged 16-65 in Great Britain carried out by Social Survey Division of ONS*. London: Stationery Office [Accessed 6th August 2021].
Casey, L. (2016) *The Casey Review: A Review into Opportunity and Integration.* London: Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf [Accessed 1 November 2020].
Cecil, N. (2025) UK public services 'struggling under strain' of illegal immigration, says Starmer as he hosts border summit. *The Standard*. Available at: https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/keir-starmer-home-office-illegal-immigration-small-boats-b1219719.html [Accessed 30 June 2025].
Chitty, C. (1997) Privatisation and Marketisation. *Oxford Review of Education,* 23, pp. 45-62. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1050656.
Coffield, F. (2000) Lifelong learning as a lever on structural change? Evaluation of white paper: Learning to succeed: a new framework for post-16 learning. *Journal of Education Policy,* 15, pp. 237-246. https://doi.org/10.1080/026809300285926.

Coleman, T. (2021) Digital divide in UK education during COVID-19 pandemic: Literature review. *Cambridge University Press & Assessment*, https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.110826.

Cook, L., Hutchinson, V., Cara, O., Mallows, D. and Tereshchenko, A. (2021) *Policy Briefing: Education and employment outcomes of young people who use English as a second or additional language*. Cambridge, UK. Available at: https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/esol-programme/research/policy-briefing-education-and-employment-outcomes-of-young-people-who-use-english-as-a-second-or-additional-language/ [Accessed 1 October 2021].

Cooke, M. (n.d.) ESOL after 2000: Skills for Life. *Post-16 Educator,* (64), https://post16educator.org.uk/resources/archive/64/PSE-64.pdf.

Cooke, M., Rampton, B., Winstanley, B., Bryers, D., Belecova, A., Blackman, K., Griffiths, T., Jadallah, F., Jowett, A., Malakouti, S., et al. (2023) Participatory ESOL: Taking Stock. *Urban Language & Literacies,* (319), pp. 1-32. https://wpull.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/WP319-Cooke-Rampton-et-al-2023.-Participatory-ESOL-Taking-stock.pdf.

Courtney, C. (2017) Making Sense of ESOL policy: Tutor Perspectives. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature,* 10, pp. 25-40. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/jtl3.769[1].

Crawford, M. (2020) Ecological Systems Theory: Exploring the Development of the Theoretical Framework as Conceived by Bronfenbrenner. *Journal of Public Health Issues and Practices,* 4, pp. 1-6. https://doi.org/10.33790/jphip1100170.

Curcin, M., Cadwallader, S. and Sweiry, E. (2022) *Understanding ESOL Skills for Life qualifications: Assessment properties, comparability, core curriculum and CEFR alignment.* Coventry, UK: Ofqual Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-esol-skills-for-life-qualifications/understanding-esol-skills-for-life-qualifications-assessment-properties-comparability-core-curriculum-and-cefr-alignment.

Danielson, C. (2013) *The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument*. [pdf]. Available at: https://doe.sd.gov/Effectiveness/documents/Danielson-Instru.pdf [Accessed 10 July 2025].

Darling, N. (2015) Bronfenbrenner and the ecology of human development. In: T. David, K. Goouch and S. Powell, eds. *The Routledge International Handbook of Philosophies and Theories of Early Childhood Education and Care*. London: Routledge.

Davis, M. and Winter, R. (2019) Team Teaching the Active Way: A Case Study About the Student Learning Experience. *Journal of Instructional Research,* 8(1), pp. 33-38. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1226398.pdf.

Department for Education (1992) *Further and Higher Education Act, 1992 c. 13.* London: HMSO Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/13/contents/enacted [Accessed 15 April 2022].

Department for Education (2014) *Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools.* London: Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental-british-values-through-smsc [Accessed 1 August 2025].

Department for Education (2025) *Adult Skill Fund: Funding Rules 2025 to 2026.* [online] London: Department for Education.

Department for Education and Department of Health (2015) *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years.* London: Department for Education Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf [Accessed 28 May 2025].

Department for Education and Employment (2000) *Breaking the Language Barriers: the report of the working group on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).* London: DfEE [Accessed 12 August 2021].
Department for Education and Employment (2001) *Skills for Life: The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills.* London: DfEE Available at: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/19064/1/Skills for life - the national strategy.pdf [Accessed 28 November 2020].
Department of Education and Science (1965) *The Education of Immigrants.* London: Available at: http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/des/circular7-65.html [Accessed 15 August 2021].
Department of Education and Science (1971) *The Education of Immigrants - Education Survey 13.* London: HMSO Available at: http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/des/survey13.html [Accessed 5 February 2022].
Department of Education and Science (1988) *Education Reform Act, 1988 c. 40.* London: HMSO Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/pdfs/ukpga_19880040_en.pdf [Accessed 15 April 2022].
DfEE (1999) *A fresh start: improving literacy and numeracy. Report of the Working Group chaired by Sir Claus Moser.* London: Crown Available at: www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/moser1999/moser-report.html.
Ding, A. (2019) EAP Practitioner Identity. In: *Specialised English*. First edn. Routledge, p. 14.
Dinwiddy, J. R. (1968) The Use of the Crown's Power of Deportation Under the Aliens Act 1793-1826. *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research,* 41, pp. 193-211. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2281.1968.tb01248.x.
Duckworth, V. and Smith, R. (2018) Breaking the triple lock: further education and transformative teaching and learning. *Education & Training,* 60(6), pp. 529-543. https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-05-2018-0111.
Duckworth, V. and Smith, R. (2019) *Transforming Lives - Further Education: Learning Hope*. online: University College Union. Available at: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10385/transformative_teaching_and_learning_in_further_education_july_2019/pdf/transformativeteachingandlearninginfurthereducationjuly2019.
Dunn, O. (2024) ESOL classes as trauma-sensitive physical spaces. *ELT Journal,* 78/1, pp. 88-91. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccad020.
DWP (2024) *Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).* Available at: https://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance/your-jsa-claim [Accessed 13 January 2025].
Eliahoo, R. (2012) Review threatens quality of teaching in FE. *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com//education/2012/may/15/review-quality-teaching-fe [Accessed 9 August 2021].
Elizabeth, C. (2021) *Language teacher agency, emotion labour and emotion rewards in ESOL language programs*. MA TESOL Thesis. Birkbeck College. Available at: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/2022-08/MDA2022_Birkbeck_Elizabeth.pdf.
ESFA (2023) *ESFA Funded Adult Education Budget Funding Rates and Formula 2023 to 2024.* UK: Crown Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1186272/Funding_rates_and_formula_2023_to_2024_v2.0__002_.pdf.
ETF (2019) *New to ESOL and New to Literacy Learning Report*. Online: Education and Training Foundation. Available at: https://esol.excellencegateway.org.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/informational-page/New_to_ESOL_and_New_to_Literacy_Learning_Report_Aug_2019%20%281%29.pdf.

FE Week (2025) *Why young asylum seekers and refugees are struggling to access college courses.* Available at: https://feweek.co.uk/why-young-asylum-seekers-and-refugees-are-struggling-to-access-college-courses/ [Accessed 12 May 2025].
FEFC (1998) *Basic education: curriculum area survey report.* Coventry: Available at: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/15038/ [Accessed 1 August 2025].
Foreign Service Institute (2023) *Foreign Language Training.* Available at: https://www.state.gov/foreign-language-training/ [Accessed 6th September 2023].
Foster, D. and Bolton, P. (2018) *Adult ESOL in England.* Online: House of Commons Library Available at: https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7905/CBP-7905.pdf [Accessed 20 October 2021].
Foucault, M. (1969) *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* UK: Routledge.
Foucault, M. (1975) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* UK: Penguin Random House.
Foucault, M. (1977) *Language, counter-memory, practice.* New York: Cornell University Press.
Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality.* 4 vols. UK: Penguin Random House.
Foucault, M. (1984) *The Foucault Reader.* Edited by P. Rabinow. UK: Penguin Modern Classics.
Foucault, M. (1989) *The Order of Things.* 1 vols. UK: Routledge Classics.
Foucault, M. (1997) *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth.* New York.
Foucault, M. (2001) *Fearless Speech.* Los Angeles, USA: Semiotext(E).
Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* London: Penguin.
Fricker, A. (2007) *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing.* UK: Oxford University Press.
García, O. and Leiva, C. (2013) Theorizing and Enacting Translanguaging for Social Justice. In: A. Blackledge and A. Creese, eds. *Heteroglossia as practice and pedagogy*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 199–216.
García, O. and Lin, A. M. Y. (2016) Translanguaging in Bilingual Education. In: O. Garcia, A. M. Y. Lin and S. May, eds. *Bilingual and Multilingual Education*, *5*, Cham: Springer, pp. 117-130.
Gee, J. P. (2001) Identity as an Analytic Lens for Research in Education. *Review of Research in Education,* 25, pp. 99-125. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1167322.
Gee, J. P. (2014) What is Discourse Analysis? In: *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*. New York: Routledge, pp. 16-29.
Giles, G. C. T. (1946) *The New School Tie.* London: Pilot Press.
Gillard, D. (2018) *Education in England: a history.* online: Education in England: The History of Our Schools.
Glesne, C. (1989) Rapport and friendship in ethnographic research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 2:1, pp. 45-54. https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839890020105.
Goldszmidt, M. (2017) When I say … sociomateriality. *Medical Education,* 51(5), pp. 465–466. https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.13291.
Goleš, I. K. (2020) Constructing Identities in postcolonial theory. *Research Gate*, Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339229595_Constructing_identities_in_postcolonial_theory [Accessed 7 February 2022].
Greater London Authority (2025) *Supporting the ESOL sector.* Available at: https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/communities-and-social-justice/migrants-and-refugees/english-esol-classes-london/supporting-esol-sector [Accessed 1 August 2025].
Green, A. and Lucas, N. (1999) From Obscurity to Crisis: The Further Education Sector in Context. In: Andy Green and Norman Lucas, ed. *FE and Lifelong Learning: Realigning the Sector for the Twenty-first Century*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

Guillam, P. (2011) This multiculturalism debate is not about culture. *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/apr/26/multiculturalism-debate-british-values-culture [Accessed 23 August 2021].
Guy-Evans, O. (2025) *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.* Available at: https://www.simplypsychology.org/bronfenbrenner.html [Accessed 16 June 2025].
Hall, S. and Du Gay, P. (1996) *Questions of Cultural Identity.* London: SAGE Publications.
Hamilton, M. and Hillier, Y. (2009) ESOL Policy and Change. *Language Issues,* 20(1), pp. 4-18. https://www.lancaster.ac.uk//fass/doc_library/edres/hamilton_07_esol_policy_and_change.pdf.
Heathcote, D. and Bolton, G. (1995) *Drama for Learning: Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert Approach to Education.* Portsmouth: NH: Heinemann.
Higton, J., Sandhu, J., Stutz, A., Patel, R., Choudhoury, A. and Richards, S. (2019) *English for speakers of other languages: access and progression.* Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-for-speakers-of-other-languages-access-and-progression [Accessed 25 November 2020].
Hill, A. (2017) 'Hostile Environment': the hardline Home Office policy tearing families apart.(28 November 2017), Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/28/hostile-environment-the-hardline-home-office-policy-tearing-families-apart?CMP=share_btn_link [Accessed 2 December 2020].
Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Skinner, D. and Cain, C. (1998) *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
hooks, b. (1994) *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom.* New York: Routledge.
IJRC (2021) *Human Rights Law.* Available at: https://ijrcenter.org/human-rights-law/ [Accessed 2 August 2021].
Ingold, T. (2014) That's enough about ethnography! *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory,* 4, pp. 383–395. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau4.1.021.
Jain, S. (2023) *Power and Resistance: Exploring Michael Foucault's Concept of Power Dynamics.* Available at: https://medium.com/@sambhavjain.mail/power-and-resistance-exploring-michel-foucaults-concept-of-power-dynamics-81bec544863b.
Jessop, B. (2015) Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism: Dead but not buried. *British Politics,* 10(1), pp. 16-30. https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2014.22.
Johal, N. and Thompson, K. (2022) I was chased by skinheads when I arrived in Leicester. *BBC News*. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-62306155.
Jones, K. (2016) *Education in Britain: 1944 to the present.* 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Keightly, E., Pickering, M. and Allett, N. (2012) The Self Interview: a new method in social science research. *International Journal of Social Research and Methodology,* 15(6), pp. 507-521. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2011.632155.
Kendall, G. and Wickham, G. (1999) *Using Foucault's Methods.* London, UK: Sage.
Korteweg, A. C. (2017) The failures of 'immigrant integration': The gendered racialized production of non belonging. *Migration Studies*, pp. 1-17. https://doi.org 10.1093/migration/mnx025.
Krashen, S. (1982) *Principles and practice in second language acquisition.* 1 vols. New York: Prentice-Hall.
Kwarteng, K. (2011) *Ghosts of Empire: Britain's Legacies in the Modern World.* London: Bloomsbury.
Kwhali, J., Martin, L., Brady, G. and Brow, S. J. (2016) Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation: Knowledge, Confidence and Training within a Contemporary UK Social Work Practice and Policy Context. *British Journal of Social Work,* 46, pp. 2208-2226. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcwl54.

Lacey, C. V. (2018) *New Times for ESOL in Further and Adult Education. A Study of ESOL Teachers' Accounts of the Changes in Their Working Lives*. Ed. D.: Language Practices Thesis. University of Birmingham. Available at: https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/9433/1/Lacey2019EdD.pdf.

Lanahan, M. (2019) *Unlocking Potential - Making Sense of ESOL in the Region*. Available at: https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/3537/making-sense-of-esol-in-the-region-v4.pdf.

Lather, P. and St Pierre, E. A. (2013) Post-qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 26, pp. 629-633. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2013.788752.

Lawy, R. and Tedder, M. (2013) Beyond compliance: teacher education practice in a performative framework. *Research Papers in Education*, pp. 303-318. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2012.690241.

Lingfield, R. (2012) *Professionalism in Further Education: interim report of the Independent Review Panel.* London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (URN 12/1198) Available at: https://education-uk.org/documents/pdfs/2012-lingfield1-professionalism-fe-interim.pdf [Accessed 10 July 2025].

Livshin, R. (1989) The Acculturation of the Children of Immigrant Jews in Manchester, 1890-1930. In: D. Cesarani, ed. *The Making of Modern Jewry*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 79-96.

Lloyd, T. L. (2012) Providing emotional support to ESOL and EAL students. In: D. Mallows, ed. *Innovations in English language teaching for migrants and refugees*. London: The British Council, pp. 117-128.

Lucas, N. (1999) Incorporated Colleges: Beyond the Further Education Funding Council's Model. In: A. Green and N. Lucas, eds. *FE and Lifelong Learning: Realigning the Sector for the Twenty-first Century*. London: Institute of Education University of London.

MacLeod, A. and Ajjawi, R. (2020) Thinking Sociomaterially: Why Matter Matters in Medical Education. *Academic Medicine,* 95(6), pp. 851-855. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000003143.

MacLure, M. (2013) Researching without representation? Language and materiality in post-qualitative methodology. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 26, pp. 658-667. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2013.788755.

Martin, A.-C. (2024) Southport stabbing suspect appears in court accused of murdering three children and terror charge. *Independent*. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/southport-stabbing-axel-rudakubana-court-b2646252.html?form=MG0AV3.

Mason, R. and Sherwood, H. (2016) Cameron 'Stigmatising Muslim Women' with English Language Policy. *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jan/18/david-cameron-stigmatising-muslim-women-learn-english-language-policy [Accessed 11 November 2020].

McDermott, R. (2021) What Foucault Meant When He Said "Genealogy". *Genealogies of Modernity*, Available at: https://genealogiesofmodernity.org/journal/2021/6/8/what-foucault-meant.

McHolme, L., De Costa, P. I. and Curiel, L. C. (2025) "Yeah, But I Don't Speak English": Critical Language Portrait Dialogues with Adult Multilingual Language Learners. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2024.2441681.

Ministry of Education (1963) *English for Immigrants.* London: HMSO Available at: https://education-uk.org/documents/minofed/pamphlet-43.html [Accessed 30 March 2022].

Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (2019) *Integrated Communities Strategy: Action Plan.* London: HMSO Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm

ent_data/file/778045/Integrated_Communities_Strategy_Govt_Action_Plan.pdf [Accessed 25 October 2021].
Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2019) *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper.*HMSO Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777160/Integrated_Communities_Strategy_Government_Response.pdf#:~:text=In%20March%202018%2C%20the%20Government%20published%20the%20Integrated,together%2C%20based%20on%20shared%20rights%2C%20responsibilities%20and%20opportunities.
Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2020) *ESOL for integration fund prospectus.* London: MHCLG Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/873910/ESOL_prospectus.pdf [Accessed 18 August 2021].
Mobbs, M. (1977) *Meeting their Needs: An Account of Language Tuition Schemes for Ethnic Minority Women.* London: Community Relations Commission.
Mogra, I. (2020) *Understanding Islam: A Guide for Teachers.* London: Sage.
Monbiot, G. and Hutchinson, P. (2024) *The Invisible Doctrine.* 1 vols. Allen Lane Penguin Books.
Morrice, L. (2017) Cultural values, moral sentiments and the fashioning of gendered migrant identities. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 43(3), pp. 400-417. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1211005.
Morrice, L. (2019) Abyssal lines and cartographies of exclusion in migration and education: towards a reimagining. *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* 38(1), pp. 20-33. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2018.1489425.
Mythen, G., Walklate, S. and Khan, F. (2009) I'm a Muslim, but I'm not a terrorist': victimization, risky identities and the performance of safety. *The British Journal of Criminology,* 49, pp. 736-754. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azp0.
NATECLA (2021) *Our beliefs on current issues.* Available at: https://www.natecla.org.uk//content.aspx?CategoryID=684&ArticleID=536 [Accessed 15 March 2021].
NATECLA (2025) *The ESOL Strategy.* [Accessed 2 June 2025].
NLCF (2020) *National Lottery Community Fund: Annual Report and Accounts*. online: (HC 595). Available at: https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/corporate-documents/TNCF-Annual-Report-Accounts-2019-20.pdf?mtime=20200717110259&focal=none [Accessed 17 August 2021].
O'Leary, M. (2020) *Classroom Observation: A Guide to the Effective Observation of Teaching and Learning.* Taylor & Francis Group.
O'Leary, M. and Smith, R. (2012) Earthquakes, cancer and cultures of fear: qualifying as a Skills for Life teacher in an uncertain economic climate. *Oxford Review of Education,* 38, pp. 437-454. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2012.710545.
OECD (1997) *Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society*. France: OECD. Available at: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED465012.
OED (2024) Oxford English Dictionary.
Oliver, C. and Hughes, V. (2018) Bordering education: migrants' entitlements to post-compulsory education in the United Kingdom. *International Studies in Sociology of Education,* 27(2-3), pp. 128-144. https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2018.1464104.
Olsen, B. and McIntosh, J. (2024) *What is teacher agency, and how can it improve education throughout the world?* Available at: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-is-teacher-agency-and-how-can-it-improve-education-around-the-world/.
Paget, A. and Stevenson, N. (2014) *On Speaking Terms*. Creative Commons. Available at: https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/On_speaking_termsweb.pdf [Accessed 20 October 2021].

Payne, P. G. and Wattchow, B. (2009) Phenomenological Deconstruction, Slow Pedagogy, and the corporeal turn in wild environmental/outdoor Education. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education,* 14, pp. 16-32.
Pink, S. and Morgan, J. (2013) Short-Term Ethnography: Intense Routes to Knowing. *Symbolic Interaction,* 36(3), pp. 351–361. https://doi.org/10.1002/SYMB.66.
Popham, W. J. (2001) Teaching to the test? *Educational leadership: journal of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, N.E.A.,* 58(6),
Puttick, M.-R. (2021) *Reimagining family literacy: co-creating pedagogies with migrating mothers in third sector spaces*. Doctor of Philosophy Thesis. Birmingham City University.
Revell, L. and Bryan, H. (2018) *Fundamental British Values in Education: Radicalisation, National Identity and Britishness.* UK: Emerald Publishing.
Rittelmeyer, C. (2022) Embodied Cognition: A Methodological and Pedagogical Interpretation. In: A. Kraus and C. Wulf, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Embodiment and Learning*. First edition edn. Macmillan, pp. 107-128.
Roberts, C., Davies, E. and Jupp, T. (1992) *Language and Discrimination: A Study of Communication in Multi-ethnic Workplaces.* London: Pearson Education.
Roberts, J. (2025) *How long does it take to learn a language?* Available at: https://ancientlanguage.com/how-long-does-it-take-to-learn-a-language/ [Accessed 5th September 2023].
Roden, J. and Cupper, J. (2016) *Towards an ESOL strategy for England*. Online: NATECLA [Accessed 30 October 2021].
Roden, J. and Osmaston, M. (2021) *ESOL Learners and Functional Skills English*. Education and Training Foundation. Available at: https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ESOL-Learners-and-Functional-Skills-English-2021.pdf [Accessed 20 December 2021].
Rosenburg, S. (2007) *A critical history of ESOL in the UK, 1870 - 2006.* UK: NIACE.
Said, E. W. (1978) *Orientalism.* UK: Penguin Random House.
Schellekens, P. (2011) *Teaching and Testing the Language Skills of First and Second Language Speakers.* Cambridge ESOL.
Schellekens, P. (2024) Briefing Paper: The Need for ILR Data on Learners of ESOL in Further Education and Skills. Available at: https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/12/Briefing-The-Need-For-ILR-Data-On-Learners-Of-ESOL-In-Further-Education-And-Skills.pdf [Accessed 10 July 2025].
Schellekens, P., Richardson, S., Sutton, D. and Scott, R. (2023) *ESOL Qualifications and Curriculum Review*. UK: The Bell Foundation. Available at: https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk//app/uploads/2023/11/TBF-ESOL-Qualifications-and-Curriculum-Review-Final-.pdf.
Scotland, J. (2012) Exploring the Philosophical Underpinnings of Research: Relating Ontology and Epistemology to the Methods of the Scientific, Interpretive, and Critical Research Paradigms. *English Language Teaching,* 5,
Scottish Executive (2005) *Adult ESOL Strategy for Scotland.* Online: Crown Available at: dera.ioe.ac.uk/5911/1/0015988.pdf [Accessed 1 October 2021].
Severs, J. (2023) What is pedagogy? *TES*.
Shah, A. (2017) Ethnography?: Participant observation, a potentially revolutionary praxis. *HAU: Journal of Ethnography,* 7, pp. 45-59. 10.14318/hau7.1.008.
Sibieta, L., Tahir, I., Waltmann, B. and 2022, P. o. J. (2022) Plans will leave spending on adult education and apprenticeships 25% below 2010 levels by 2025. *Plans will leave spending on adult education and apprenticeships 25% below 2010 levels by 2025*. Available at: Institute for Fiscal Studies (ifs.org.uk).
Simon, J. (1971) A Conversation with Michael Foucault. *Partisan Review*,
Simpson, J. and Hunter, A.-M. (2023) Policy formation for adult migrant language education in England: national neglect and its implications. *Language Policy,* 22, pp. 155–178. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-023-09655-6.

Singh, J. (2021) *Not 'hard-to-reach' but 'hardly reached'.* Available at: https://spotlight.leeds.ac.uk/world-changers/empowering-communities/ [Accessed January 2024].
Smith, C. W. (2013) *2011 Census analysis: Immigration Patterns of Non-UK Born Populations in England and Wales in 2011*. Online: Office for National Statistics. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/immigrationpatternsofnonukbornpopulationsinenglandandwalesin2011/2013-12-17 [Accessed 25 May 2022].
Smith, R. and O'Leary, M. (2013) New Public Management in an age of austerity: knowledge and experience in further education. *Journal of Educational Administration and History,* 45(3), pp. 244-266. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2013.796913.
Spreckley, M. and Kuper, H. (2016) Hear my story: the reflective experience of a hearing impaired researcher conducting a study on the impact of hearing loss in Guatemala. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal,* (11(1)), pp. 111-118. http://journal.km4dev.org/.
St Pierre, E. A. (2014) A Brief Personal History of Post Qualitative Research Toward "Post Inquiry". *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing,* 30, pp. 2-19.
St Pierre, E. A. (2019) Post Qualitative Inquiry in an Ontology of Immanence. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 25, pp. 3-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800418772634.
St Pierre, E. A. (2021) Post Qualitative Inquiry, the Refusal of Method, and the Risk of the New. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 27, pp. 3-9. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419863005.
Struthers, A. E. C. (2017) Teaching British Values in Our Schools: But Why not Human Rights Values? *Social & Legal Studies,* 26(1), pp. 89-110. https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663916656752.
Styron, J. (2012) Teaching to the Test: A Controversial Issue in Quantitative Measurement. *Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics,* 10(5), pp. 22-25.
Sutiyatno, S. (2018) The Effect of Teacher's Verbal Communication and Non-verbal Communication on Students' English Achievement. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research,* 9(2), pp. 430-437. http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0902.28.
Sutter, J. (2012) A 'social turn' in ESOL? In: D. Mallows, ed. *Innovations in English language teaching for migrants and refugees*. London: The British Council.
Swain, M. (2013) The inseparability of cognition and emotion in second language learning. *Language Teaching,* 46(2), pp. 195-207. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000486.
Tett, L., Hamilton, M. and Crowther, J. E. (2012) *More Powerful Literacies.* UK: NIACE.
Tett, L., Merrill, B. and Fragoso, A. (2020) Editorial: The changing landscapes of literacy and adult education. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults,* 11(1), pp. 7-11. https://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.relae20.
The Bell Foundation (2025) *The Bell Foundation's History.* Available at: https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/about-us/the-bell-foundations-history/ [Accessed 10 July 2025].
Thomas, P. (2020) Britain's Prevent Strategy: Always Changing, Always the Same. In: J. Busher and L. Jerome, eds. *The Prevent Duty in Education*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
Tikly, L., Osler, A. and Hill, J. (2005) The ethnic minority achievement grant: a critical analysis. *Journal of Education Policy,* 20, pp. 283-312. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930500108619.
Tong, P. and An, I. S. (2024) Review of studies applying Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory in international and intercultural education research. *Frontiers in Psychology,* 14, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1233925.
Toynbee Hall (2022) *The History of Toynbee Hall.* Available at: https://explore.toynbeehall.org.uk/explore/the-history-of-toynbee-hall-a-timeline/?msclkid=22a0ba3bc3e011ecb2a93cc63ca389b3.

UK Government (1870) *Elementary Education Act 1870, c. 75.*HMSO Available at: http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1870-elementary-education-act.html.
UK Government (1880) *Elementary Education Act 1880, c. 23.* [online] London: HMSO Available at: https://www.education-uk.org/documents/acts/1880-elementary-education-act.html.
UK Government (1944) *The Education Act 1944: 7 & 8 Geo. 6 c. 31.* [online] London: HMSO Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/7-8/31/enacted?view=plain.
UK Government (1948) *British Nationality Act 1948: [11 & 12, Geo. 6. c. 56].* [online] London:: HMSO Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/11-12/56/enacted [Accessed 26 January 2022].
UK Government (1964) *The Industrial Training Act 1964, c. 16.* London: Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/16/contents [Accessed 1 August 2025].
UK Government (1965) *Race Relations Act 1965: c. 73.* [online] London: HMSO Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk.
UK Government (1966) *Local Government Act 1966: c. 42, s. 11.* [online] London: HMSO. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1966/42/section/11/enacted.
UK Government (1971) *The Immigration Act 1971, c. 77.* London: Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1971/77/contents [Accessed 1 August 2025].
UK Government (1981) *British Nationality Act 1981: c. 61.* [online] London: HMSO Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/61/contents [Accessed 10 July 2025].
UK Government (1988) *The Immigration Act of 1988, c. 14.* Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/14/enacted [Accessed 1 August 2025].
UK Government (1993) *The Education Act 1993, c. 35.* London: Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/35/contents [Accessed 1 August 2025].
UK Government (2007) *The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007.* London: HMSO (SI 2007/2264) Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/2264/made [Accessed 10 July 2025].
UK Government (2015) *Counter Terrorism and Security Act, c. 6, Section 26.* [online] London.: HMSO Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/section/26/enacted [Accessed 12 August 2021].
United Nations (1948) *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* Available at: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights [Accessed 2 August 2021].
Urrieta, L. (2007) Figured Worlds and Education: An Introduction to the Special Issue. *The Urban Review,* 39(2), pp. 107-116. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-007-0051-0.
Volkman, J. E., Wolf, B. M., Morse, C. R., Browning, E., High, A., Lacey, H. P., Trunzo, J. and Sampter, W. (2024) Exploring College-Aged Student Anxiety: Aggravating Factors and Coping Strategies. *American Journal of Qualitative Research,* 8(4), pp. 1-23. https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/15163 AJQR.
Welsh Government (2014) *English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policy for Wales.* Wales: OGL Available at: https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/english-for-speakers-of-other-languages-esol-policy-wales.pdf [Accessed 15 October 2021].
White, M. (2024) *Theresa May admits mistakes over migrant policies.* Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-69066773.
White, R. (2014) Foucault on the Care of the Self as an Ethical Project and a Spiritual Goal. *Human Studies,* 37, pp. 489-504. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-014-9331-3.
Williams, C. (1996) Secondary education: Teaching in the bilingual situation. In: C. Wlliams, G. Lewis and C. Baker, eds. *The language policy: Taking stock*. UK: CAI Language Studies Centre, pp. 39-78.
Wilson, A. (2006) *Dreams, Questions, Struggles.* 1 vols. London: Pluto Press.
Wilson, A. (2018) *Finding A Voice: Asian women in Britain.* 2nd edn. Daraja Press.

WMCA (2020) *West Midlands Combined Authority Adult Education Budget Funding Rules.* UK: Available at: https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/4037/wmca-aeb-funding-rules-2020-2021-draft-version-21.pdf.
Wolf, A. (2011) *Review of Vocational Education - Wolf Report.* Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180504/DFE-00031-2011.pdf.
Yeo, C. (2020) *Welcome to Britain: Fixing Our Broken Immigration System.* UK: Biteback Publishing.
Yeomans, M., Boland, F. K., Collins, H. K., Abi-Esber, N. and Brooks, A. W. (2023) A Practical Guide to Conversation Research: How to Study What People Say to Each Other. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science,* 6, pp. 1-38. https://doi.org/10.1177/25152459231183919.
Young, M. (1958) *The Rise of Meritocracy 1870-2033.* Penguin Books.
Zukas, M. and Malcolm, J. (2019) Reassembling academic work: a sociomaterial investigation of academic learning. *Studies in Continuing Education,* 41:3, pp. 259-276. https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2018.1482861.

Appendices

1 Information Sheet for Learner Participants

Information for Learner Participants

Migrant learners' experience of English as a Second Language policy and practice in Further Education: a case study from the West Midlands, UK

Ann Nash

Dear Learner

I would like to invite you to join my research project. The project is part of my doctoral study in education.

My project is about the experience of learners like you who are studying English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at further education college.

I would like to have a conversation with you about your experience of studying English at college to include in my study.

What we will do

- We will have a conversation in our classroom in class time about your experiences as an ESOL learner. You can talk to me by yourself (one-to-one), in pairs, or in a small group with other class members. We will talk for 10 to 20 minutes. You may decide to join up to 3 conversations (1 hour total). I will audio record our conversations.

  You could tell me about:

  - How you came to study English at college: How did you find out about the course? How long did you have to wait to join your course?
  - How you like to learn English: Do you like to learn in pairs or groups? Do you like to learn from both the teacher and from each other?
  - Your English course: What do you like about your ESOL course and what do you dislike?
  - Other English classes: Have you studied English before? How was it?
  - How do you feel about learning English?
  - How has studying English affected your life?

- While we are talking, the other class members will be learning in small groups in the same room. They will be able to hear us so you should not share anything private.
- Another teacher will be in the classroom to help the other learners while we are talking.
- Your information will be private and confidential. I will use the recordings of our conversations in my study, but I will not use your name or any names or details that will identify you.

Do you agree to join?

To join my research, you will need to sign the Learner Consent Form. Please take time to think about it and ask any questions. Please give the Learner Consent Form back to me next week in class. You cannot join a conversation without the signed form. Please note:

- Your participation is voluntary.
- You do not have to accept the invitation.
- You do not have to join because you are a student in my ESOL class, and it is not a part of your assessment.
- You can stop the conversation at any time without giving a reason. You can leave the room without saying why if you are upset. You can take a break and come back to the conversation or not as you wish. There will be no problems if you do not want to participate or if you want to stop the conversation during the study.
- You can remove your information from the study up to 31st August 2023.

What are the benefits?

- Your experiences learning English at college are very important, and you can help others to understand this.
- The conversations will give you valuable speaking and listening practice.
- The conversations will reach people who may help to make ESOL better.
- Government and education leaders can learn about how to make ESOL better by learning about your experiences.
- I will write about my conversations with you and the information will be printed in my thesis and on the university website.
- I may talk and write about what I learn from you in meetings, conferences, and articles.
- I may use your words but I will not use your name, or any names and details that would identify you. All contributions will be anonymous, which means no names will be used.

What happens to the information?

1. I will record the conversations on an encrypted audio recorder. 'Encrypted' means that your information will be protected by a special password. Only I will have this password and I will make sure that your information will be kept safely and securely.
2. I will transfer the recording from the encrypted BCU audio recorder to an encrypted BCU laptop.
3. I will write out the conversation on the BCU encrypted laptop and delete the audio file.
4. Then, I will save the written conversation to a secure cloud storage file at Birmingham City University (BCU). The writing will be deleted as soon as I have finished using it.

These steps will protect your information at each stage and keep it private and confidential.

GDPR Statement

Data protection and your rights

Birmingham City University ('BCU') is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible. BCU will use your name, and contact details to contact you about the research study, and make sure that relevant information about the study is recorded to oversee the quality of the study. Individuals from BCU may look at your research records to check the accuracy of the research study. The only people in BCU who will have access to information that identifies you will be people who need to contact you to disseminate findings, people who audit the data collection process and people who manage data storage and archiving.

BCU will retain evidence of your participation in this study through the signed consent form for up to ten years after the project has been completed. Therefore, we anticipate retaining some of your personal data up until 2034. This is in accordance with the University's legal obligations and the time you have available in which you may wish to raise any issues or concerns with us about your participation in this study.

After this period, BCU will securely destroy information held about you.

You can find out more about how we use your information by contacting Ann Nash, email: ann.nash@mail.bcu.ac.uk.

For more information about how the University can process your personal data for research, please see the University Privacy Statement, available here: https://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies-and-procedures/privacy-notice-for-research-participants

If you have any concerns about how we use or handle your personal data, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer using the following contact details:

By Email to: informationmanagement@bcu.ac.uk

By Telephone on: +44 (0)121 331 5288

By Post to: Data Protection Officer
Information Management Team
Birmingham City University
University House
15 Bartholomew Row
Birmingham
B5 5JU

If you are not content with the how we handle your information we would ask you to contact our Data Protection Officer to help you who will investigate the matter. However, you do also have the right to complain directly to the Information Commissioner at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Information about the Information Commissioner is available at: http://ico.org.uk.

Other information

If you decide by 31st August 2023 that you do not want the information about you from our conversations to be included in my study, please tell me (Ann Nash). I will delete it from the project. There will be no problems for you if you decide to leave the project.

Contact details

The researcher, Ann Nash (ann.nash@mail.bcu.ac.uk), is a post-graduate doctoral research student in the Department of Education, Faculty of Health, Education and Social Science, at Birmingham City University and her Director of Studies is Dr Amanda French (Amanda.French@bcu.ac.uk). You can contact either Ann Nash or Dr Amanda French if you wish to discuss anything related to the research project.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Birmingham City University ethics committee. The Ethical Review Reference Number is [xxxxxx].

If, after contacting Ann Nash or Dr Amanda French with any concern, you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Ethics Committee (hels_ethics@bcu.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please sign the Consent Form that comes with this information sheet and return it next week in class to Ann Nash.

May 2023

1.1 Learner Participant Consent Form

LEARNER PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Migrant learners' experience of English as a Second Language policy and practice in Further Education: a case study from the West Midlands, UK

Name of Researcher: Ann Nash

Project Code:	*Participant identification number:*

	Initial box
1. I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet [date; version]. I have had a chance to think about it and ask questions. I am happy with the answers to my questions.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I do not have to join the study. I can stop participating without giving a reason. I can remove my information from the study up to the point analysis begins on 31st August 2023. I do not have to give a reason and my legal rights will not change.	
3. I understand that some of my data collected during the study may be looked at by individuals from Birmingham City University and from regulatory authorities if it is important to my participation in this research. I give permission for these individuals to look at my records.	
4. I understand that personal information about me will be collected for the research study, such as my name. The information about me will be kept securely, as described in the information sheet [date; version].	
5. I agree to audio recording. I agree to the use of words I have said that do not include my name or any information that can identify me. I agree to anonymised quotes of my words being used in the research reports and publications.	
6. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or writing that results from the research.	
7. I agree to take part in this study.	

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated Participant Consent Form, and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

2 Information Sheet for Practitioner Participants

Information for ESOL Practitioner Participants

Migrant learners' experience of English as a Second Language policy and practice: a case study from the West Midlands, UK

Ann Nash

Dear Colleague

I would like to invite you to take part in my research project which is a part of my PhD study. I am looking at the experience of migrant ESOL learners in further education. By talking to me about your experience as an ESOL practitioner you can add a valuable perspective to the data which I will gather from the learners who are also taking part in the study.

My research aims to gather evidence by giving voice to ESOL participants and practitioners in the FE space in order to build an understanding of the value of ESOL and how it is being impacted by government policies, such as policies on ESOL learners' access to courses and funding, as well as the prioritisation of gaining certificates and the job market.

My overarching research question is:

- How do government policies for FE operationalise to position particular bodies in FE spaces and what are the impacts of this positioning for migrant ESOL learners and practitioners?

I believe that further education is an invaluable educational sector which gives adults an opportunity to return to education. Adult education in further education colleges is tasked with the provision of courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) to residents of immigrant backgrounds to help them settle in the UK and integrate into British society. In this way, it has the power to transform lives.

Your involvement

I would like you to record an individual self-interview of 10 to 20 minutes on your telephone, or audio recorder, in which you share your experience of teaching ESOL in further education college and any thoughts you may have about the issues mentioned above, or any other issues you think are important about ESOL in FE. You may like to consider the following:

- How would you describe your experience as an ESOL teacher?
- How has your experience changed, either recently or over the years?

- How have inspections and the prioritisation of examinations and certificates for learners impacted the way you teach ESOL?
- What are the memorable moments you have had as an ESOL teacher that you would like to share?

After you have recorded your self-interview, I would like you to share the file with me by sending it to my university email at ann.nash@mail.bcu.ac.uk. I will download your file onto a Birmingham City University (BCU) encrypted laptop and then transfer it to secure BCU One Drive cloud storage. After downloading your audio file, I will delete it from my email. I will make a transcript of your interview on an encrypted BCU laptop. The transcript will be fully anonymised so that no one will be identifiable. It will be stored securely in BCU One Drive cloud storage. I will delete the transcript as soon as possible after I have finished using it.

Giving your consent

To take part in the research I would like you to fill out the Practitioner Consent Form that you have received with this information sheet. Please return the form within two weeks, either by hand to me or to my university email, given above. I cannot include your contribution if you do not return the form. Your participation is voluntary and there will be no negative repercussions if you decline the invitation to participate or if you decide to withdraw from the study. If at any time up to the point of analysis on 31st August 2023, you decide that you no longer want to participate and would like your contribution to be withdrawn, please inform me and I will remove it from the study.

What are the benefits?

Your contribution is an opportunity to reflect on your work as an ESOL teacher, and it will give other people insights into the importance of ESOL. If you give your consent, your contribution may be publicly shared on a BCU research centre website and some of the work will be included in conference presentations and articles. All contributions will be anonymous.

What happens to the information?

All information collected during the project will be kept safely and in compliance with GDPR regulations for a period of 10 years. Safety and confidentiality will be ensured through anonymisation and the encrypted and password protected transfer and storage of your data in BCU cloud storage as described above.

GDPR Statement

Data protection and your rights

Birmingham City University ('BCU') is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you

withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible. BCU will use your name, and contact details to contact you about the research study, and make sure that relevant information about the study is recorded to oversee the quality of the study. Individuals from BCU may look at your research records to check the accuracy of the research study. The only people in BCU who will have access to information that identifies you will be people who need to contact you to disseminate findings, people who audit the data collection process and people who manage data storage and archiving.

BCU will retain evidence of your participation in this study through the signed consent form for up to ten years after the project has been completed. Therefore, we anticipate retaining some of your personal data up until 2034. This is in accordance with the University's legal obligations and the time you have available in which you may wish to raise any issues or concerns with us about your participation in this study.

After this period, BCU will securely destroy information held about you.

You can find out more about how we use your information by contacting Ann Nash, email: ann.nash@mail.bcu.ac.uk.

For more information about how the University can process your personal data for research, please see the University Privacy Statement, available here: https://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies-and-procedures/privacy-notice-for-research-participants

If you have any concerns about how we use or handle your personal data, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer using the following contact details:

By Email to: informationmanagement@bcu.ac.uk

By Telephone on: +44 (0)121 331 5288

By Post to: Data Protection Officer
Information Management Team
Birmingham City University
University House
15 Bartholomew Row
Birmingham
B5 5JU

If you are not content with the how we handle your information we would ask you to contact our Data Protection Officer to help you who will investigate the matter. However, you do also have the right to complain directly to the Information Commissioner at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Information about the Information Commissioner is available at: http://ico.org.uk.

Other information

If you do not want your contribution to be included, or you want it withdrawn from the project at any time up to the point of analysis on 31st August 2023, you can tell Ann Nash.

Contact details

The researcher, Ann Nash (ann.nash@mail.bcu.ac.uk), is a post-graduate doctoral research student in the Department of Education, Faculty of Health, Education and Social Science, at Birmingham City University and her Director of Studies is Dr Amanda French

(Amanda.French@bcu.ac.uk). You can contact either Ann Nash or Dr Amanda French if you wish to discuss anything related to the research project.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Birmingham City University ethics committee. The Ethical Review Reference Number is [xxxxxx].

If, after contacting Ann Nash or Dr Amanda French with any concern, you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Ethics Committee (hels_ethics@bcu.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please sign the consent form that comes with this information sheet and return it to Ann Nash by hand or at the email above.

May 2023

2.1 Practitioner Participant Consent Form

ESOL PRACTITIONER PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Migrant learners' experience of English as a Second Language policy and practice in Further Education: a case study from the West Midlands, UK

Name of Researcher: Ann Nash

Project Code:	*Participant identification number:*

	Initial box
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet [date; version] for this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw up to the point of analysis on 31st August 2023, without giving a reason and without my legal rights being affected.	
3. I understand that relevant sections of my data collected during the study may be looked at by individuals from Birmingham City University and from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
4. I understand that personal data about me will be collected for the purposes of the research study including my name, and that this will be processed in accordance with the information sheet [date; version].	
5. I agree to audio recording and the use of anonymised quotes in the research reports and publications.	
6. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or writing that results from the research.	
7. I agree to take part in this study.	

Continued overleaf

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated Participant Consent Form, and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.