How can socially-situated practices help adult migrant language learners in Ireland make meaning of their lived experiences and forge stronger English language identities? A narrative inquiry.

(Volume 1 of 2)

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August 2015

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other University, and that it is entirely my own work.

______________________________

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Peter Sheekey

August 2015
Summary

This thesis examines the post-migratory lived language learning and socialization experiences of adult migrant learners of English who are members of an intercultural drop-in centre in Ireland. It proposes the use of learners’ stories as relevant texts for promoting language and literacy learning for border-crossing students. This study draws on the work of scholars in the area of social learning to assemble a model of situated language learning to help adult migrant learners of English build their language skills by sharing their migration stories through social literacy practices. Social learning approaches and the research method of narrative inquiry are combined in this study as an innovative praxis of problem-posing pedagogical theory and collaborative methodology to foster meaning-making of lived experience and the construction of stronger English language identities for border-crossing learners. This thesis proposes that this praxis would benefit teachers and researchers in the field of second or other language learning by providing further insights into the challenges and opportunities presented to these learners while helping them address language conflicts and participate more fully in the host communities which are their new homes. The stories of the lived experiences of members of English literacy groups at the drop-in were collected in two phases over the course of a year using collaborative, problem-posing practices. The second phase included other members of the drop-in centre in a published storytelling project. Finally, follow-up narrative interviews were carried out with thirteen core members of the groups to expand their stories and reflect on their experiences of the whole project.

The Introduction to this thesis presents an overview of the theories informing my research and the rationale for this study, which emerged from almost a decade of working with refugee and migrant language learners. Chapter One starts by describing the sociocultural context of this study with regard to migrant integration. It then describes the characteristics and uses of socially-situated approaches to language learning, suggests participation as a metaphor for learning, and proposes a model for situated learning and language identity work in collaborative communities. Chapter Two will outline the nature of narrative inquiry as a research method and describe the relationship and relevance of this approach to the issues facing this cohort of learners. This chapter will describe how narrative inquiry has been shown to help border crossers make meaning of their lived language socialization experiences, and
how social learning theories and this research method can combine to help these learners build stronger English language identities.

Chapter Three starts by describing the research sites and participants involved in the pilot and final sample of this inquiry. It outlines the research design for this study as a classroom-based social research, explains how learning theory and research method were combined to act as data collection tools and pedagogical instruments, and discusses some ethical considerations for working with marginalized groups. Chapter Four provides a detailed description of the pilot and final research sites and participants, and the application of narrative frames as data collection instruments. It presents the two phases of shared socially-situated storytelling, sharing and collecting, and provides a description of the follow-up narrative interviews. Chapter Five explains the approaches to the transcription of the audio interviews and the methods of coding and analysis of the various forms of handwritten, published and transcribed data using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. This chapter ends with a description of how the central themes and categories from the data were arrived at using cross-analytical thematic and temporal narrative methods.

Chapter Six presents the results of my interpretation of the themes in the lived experiences of these border-crossing learners which emerged from the narrative cross-analysis of the data: (i) Displacement and Resettlement, (ii) Identity Work, (iii) Participation in Social Practices, and (iv) Trajectories and transformations. Chapter Seven presents the conclusions which I draw from my evaluations of these themes. These show that this form of inquiry can reveal the sources and effects of socially-mediated constraints or affordances across time and space, such as identity positioning and gender-mediated access to language learning resources and socialisation opportunities for these learners. Many of these learners seem to use their reflections on their storied experiences to identify and reflect on disruptions and transformations in their social and linguistic trajectories. In their reflections on sharing stories of lived language learning experiences, many learners showed they could draw meanings and identify outcomes for their social and linguistic identity growth and socialisation practices, and the value of participation and identity work as being coeval to learning is verified in many cases. Finally, the implications of situated narrative practices for teaching and researching with migrant learners are discussed.
Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincere and warmest thanks to: my supervisor Dr Lorna Carson for her unwavering guidance, insights, patience and encouragement; all the staff and volunteers at The Intercultural Drop-in Centre, particularly Zuzana and Sharon who provided so much support during my fieldwork; the students who participated in this study who so willingly shared their stories of their life in Ireland; my family and friends who stood by me throughout.

I would also like to thank friends and colleagues at the Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College, for their support and interest in my work. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to CLCS for giving me the opportunity to take on this project.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my parents, Mathew and Elizabeth “Lily” Sheekey (nee Morrissey).
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Introduction

This study investigates the language and literacy needs of post-migratory adult learners of English in Ireland. It focuses on the importance of including learners’ stories as relevant texts for promoting language and literacy use in language learning for border-crossing students. This thesis highlights the role that situated learning can play in helping adult migrant learners of English build their language skills by sharing their migration stories through social literacy practices. It proposes an innovative praxis of problem-posing pedagogical theory and collaborative narrative inquiry methodology to foster meaning-making of lived experience and the construction of stronger English language identities for some border-crossing learners in Ireland. The participants in this study were self-selected according to their literacy needs from a larger group of learners at an intercultural drop-in centre in Dublin. In this introduction, I will present the rationale, theoretical overview, the methodological approach and context for this study.

I. Research rationale

The rationale for this project came from my experience of working as an English teacher with adult refugee language learners at Integrate Ireland Language and Training – IILT - (2003-2008), which was the official English language provider in Ireland, and from my work with migrant English learners at what became my research site: The Intercultural Drop-in Centre in Tallaght (IDC), Dublin (2011-2013). During my time working with these learners, significant differences were constantly emerging regarding their needs and challenges in contrast to ‘mainstream’ ESL learners with whom I had worked for the previous fifteen years (1988-2003). The needs of border-crossing learners were linked to language and communicative domains related to daily survival English, and the greater challenges of dealing with issues of navigating local social systems such as family health, accommodation, officialdom and employment (Little, 2000). While these many of these needs were being successfully dealt with in a prescriptive way by IILT and other providers, some socially-situated experiences which constrained access to language learning and further integration for this group, and which resulted in many instances of absence or attrition, were not being made visible. The collaborative pedagogical and investigative approaches in this study were designed to make visible and address the social and linguistic lived experiences of this group of learners with the aim of providing insights into these issues and fostering greater participation in their new environment.
II. Theoretical overview

For a long time, some views in the professional and political discourse held lack of motivation as a major contributor to the non-participation of migrants in language learning and literacy projects in receiving countries (Rockhill, 1994). Also, many traditional approaches and theories concerned with second or other language learning had long focused on the learner’s individual abilities, goals, strategies and motivations to account for their success or failure in learning a new language without considering the social contexts in which learners were situated (Kouritzin, 2000b). Although motivational, psychological, and other cognitive or behavioural factors surely play their part in how these learners construct their new language identities, this research is based on theories of learning which hold that the success of border crossers in the construction of stronger English language identities is closely related to their ability to navigate social expectations, societal norms and linguistic or social conflicts in their new homes (Baynham and De Fina, 2005, De Fina and King, 2011).

III. Socially-situated approaches

The socially-situated theories and approaches to language learning and socialisation underpinning this research, which began to emerge in the mid-1990s, focus more on how social contexts within and beyond the immediate learning environment can constrain or facilitate some learners access to language learning resources and socialisation in the target language of their receiving countries. In social theories of learning, the role of social identity is seen as a construct of great import for understanding how languages are learned, in particular among theorists who propose sociocultural and poststructuralist views of social phenomena and human behavior as “more nuanced, multileveled, and, ultimately, complicated framings of the world around us” (Block, 2007a; 864). These views of identity are of particular relevance to learners who cross borders and have to build new ways of connecting selves to unfamiliar worlds, establish who they are and want to become and develop new relationships with new people (Ushioda, 2011). Helping these learners to forge new social and linguistic identities can thus enable them to negotiate new social systems, face daily language challenges and conflicts, and build senses of becoming and belonging in their new environments (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005a, Simpson, 2011, Hull and Katz, 2006, Baynham, 2005b).

Socially-situated approaches see the learner’s social and linguistic identities as socially-constructed, and consider the relationships of these constructs to the environments where they live and learn new tongues as important considerations when it comes to evaluating or enhancing the progress of border-crossing language learners (Flegg, 2008, Tranza and Sunderland, 2009). In socially-situated research into language learning, these identities are conceived of as dynamic and constantly changing over time and space. Transition is a recurring theme in these studies as the participants in these projects are usually undergoing
major changes in their lives (Norton, 2006). Since issues of belonging and exclusion are considered to be tied
to the social and linguistic identity development, and the social, cultural and civic participation of learners
such as those involved in this study (Warriner, 2008a), socially-situated theories and practice of language
learning were chosen as a way of promoting the English language identities of these participants.

IV. Situated language learning

The idea that learning processes can be successfully isolated from social action and interaction in second
language research has been challenged by situated theorists. Mondada and Doehler (2004) identified some
problematic consequences of this notion as including views of competence as a phenomenon isolated from
socialization processes, learning which is abstracted from the business of actions, community membership,
participation frameworks, and perceptions of context which are often reduced to a constant variable
affecting cognitive episodes. From a situated viewpoint, language and knowledge are seen as “inextricably a
product of the activity and situations in which they are produced”, and that language is continually recast in
new and more densely textured forms by new situations, activities and negotiations (Brown et al. 1989; 33).
A large-scale report on adult literacy and numeracy projects by the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre (Ivanic
et al., 2006; 8) confirmed that situated approaches which treat language learning as “social practices, 
situated in people’s lives and purposes, and differing from one context to the next” can be very effective.

In contrast to the passive role assigned to the learner in the acquisition of knowledge in conventional “one-
sided notions of learning”, participation is seen as a key concept for scholars of socially-situated learning
(Rogoff, 1994; 209). This concept is based on the assumption that learning is situated in “the context of our
lived experiences of participation in the world... [and] is a fundamentally social phenomenon, reflecting our
own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing...” (Wenger, 1998; 3). Examples given by
Wenger of these communities of practice include family, work colleagues, schools, bands, and social groups
of many sorts. Participation in learning communities of practice is seen as an antithesis to the transmission
form of teaching and learning in that it models “ways of doing or knowing, provides opportunity for
emulation, offers running commentary, provides scaffolding for novices, and even provides a good context
for teaching deliberately” (Bruner, 1996; 21). Participation in problem-posing practices of language learning
and literacy which address issues of social and linguistic conflicts in lived experiences have been shown to
enable border crossers to be socialised into literate communities, to help them make meanings of language
conflicts and progress, and to forge new linguistic identities. (Minority-Rights-Group, 1998). Problem-posing
pedagogies such as these are said to also help develop border-crossing learners’ intercultural competence
and enable them to deal with diversity in their changing worlds (Yew Lie, 2010).
V. Methodological approach

The methodology employed in this study is an innovative approach which joins the problem-posing theories of situated learning to the meaning-making and reflective storytelling approaches of narrative inquiry as a method (Kim, 2005). Overall, this collaborative approach is employed as a praxis (Freire, 1970a) which provides both a means to understand the language learning experiences and to enact some transformations in the language identities for these learners (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). In practice, by writing, sharing and reflecting on their lived experiences by using narrative frames to build their stories, learners are encouraged to engage collaboratively and consciously in meaning-making interactions. The consequences of such an interaction can mean that learners not only realise the value of their storied experiences, but can also use them as a “vehicle for language acquisition as well as self-discovery” (ibid; 22). The design and the application of this narrative methodology are described in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis. The three phases of this inquiry are as follows:

1. Literacy Group 1 – January to May 2013: social literacy practices and data collection using narrative frames to build learners stories

2. Literacy Group 2 - September to December 2013: social literacy practices and data collection using narrative frames and a broader published storytelling project involving more members across the research site.

3. January-May 2014: Follow-up narrative interviews used for expanding learners’ stories and collaborative reflection with the researcher

Data from these three phases were combined to build stories of the learners lived language learning and socialisation experiences in a wide range of settings and across time. These re-storied narratives then provided comprehensive and intimate accounts of the socially-mediated influences on the language learning access and progress of these learners (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). The innovative praxis employed in this inquiry makes a particular contribution to understanding the social contexts and challenges which can impact on the identity development and socialisation processes of border-crossing learners by way of its methodological design. From a pedagogical point of view, this study will add to the body of work which situated researchers and teachers are constructing in the field of language learning for border crossers in particular. It will also contribute to the growing field of research which promotes the relevance and utility of narrative inquiry as a research method in second or other language learning in general.

VI. Research Context

Section 1.1.1 of this thesis provides a brief overview of the context of migrant integration and language learning for the territory in which this study was conducted. It has been noted that one of the greatest challenges to social cohesion in European societies at the start of the 21st century is the management of an unprecedented large-scale movement of peoples (Little and Lazemby-Simpson, 2009). This inward flow of
migrants and refugees was entirely new and, dare I say, foreign to the Irish experience. At the height of this phenomenon, Integrate Ireland and Language training (IILT), a Trinity College Campus company under the direction of David Little, were charged with the development and provision of English language provision to those in this new border-crossing cohort who were most in need. In the face of some resistance from the Irish Department of Education, IILT still managed to effect major changes and positive social, linguistic and vocational outcomes in English language provision to refugees and migrants in primary, post primary and adult educational settings (Little and Lazemby-Simpson, 2009).

I had been involved in tutoring, materials and curriculum development at IILT for five years from 2003 to 2008, when this school, along with the targeted expertise, materials and tutor experience, was closed as part of the first round of cuts in the wake of the economic crisis which had swept Ireland. During my time there, I had witnessed firsthand the social, linguistic and vocational challenges facing this learner group, and had already began to use shared storytelling activities and social practices to help them deal with life in their new homes, including blogs as forums for their narratives. After the dissolution of IILT, official language provision for this learner group was handed over to a more fragmented system of community colleges (VEC) with the umbrella title of the Adult Refugee Programme (ARP), where I subsequently started piloting this narrative inquiry.

In the summer of 2012, while taking stock of my piloted fieldwork and reviewing the literature for my theoretical framework on situated learning for this inquiry, I received news from my colleagues at the ARP that the programme was under threat of closure. When I paid a return visit to the ARP in the autumn of 2012 with the purpose of continuing my longitudinal inquiry, I was told that the VEC was planning on closing down the programme. This was bad news for my fieldwork, but this was nothing compared to the prospect facing the many hundreds of these learners around Ireland who would be left without language provision and the specialised support network that this service provided. When asked, at question time in the Irish parliament, what support alternatives for refugees and migrant workers would be put in place if the expected closure of adult refugee programmes went ahead, the Minister for Education and Skills replied,

Annual funding from my Department for the Adult Refugee Programme (ARP) was in the region of €2.5 million. This funding will cease at the end of this year so the projected saving is in the region of €2.5 million. Migrants, including workers and refugees, will continue to be able to access a range of courses that have always been provided by Vocational Education Committees (VECs) under the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme (ALCES) and the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), both of which are funded by my Department (Oireachtas, 2012)

Without the tailor-made English language and pre-vocational training provided by the ARP, many of these learners will not be in a position to access mainstream VEC courses or job opportunities and can experience
serious problems surviving in an array of host-language domains and situations. Also, it should be noted that none of the alternatives offered by the minister would appear to be suited to the specific needs of this learner group (Little, 2000, 2010).

Since the dissolution of official language provision in Ireland in 2012, the services for adult refugee and migrant learners of English (ARP) has been left to a fragmented voluntary sector with very uneven levels of quality and methods of delivery. It was in one of these providers, an intercultural drop-in centre, that the fieldwork and data collection for this narrative inquiry was conducted. In this landscape, as this inquiry reveals, there is a pertinent need for more research, pedagogical development and training for the mainly non-expert teachers and administrators of English language services to the significant number of marginalised learners in this territory.

As some finding from this study will show, the needs and challenges facing this growing cohort of marginalised learners in post-recession Ireland have not changed. Greater social and linguistic access for adult migrant learners can ease the sometimes painful cross-border journeys in a variety of ways. It would enable these people to participate and contribute more to the host community, and empower them to have more control over their lives.

VII. Thesis overview

In the course of this thesis the following topics will be covered: In Chapter One, I explore the theories of social learning informing this study and propose a model for situated language learning. In Chapter Two, I explain the characteristics of narrative inquiry and the rationale for its choice as the research method for this study. In Chapter Three, I outline how I designed the fieldwork for this narrative inquiry. Chapter Four describes the research context, sample and data collection. Chapter Five provides an explanation of how the data was analysed, and Chapter Six presents evaluations of the data analysis. Chapter Seven will summarise the findings of this inquiry, its contributions and limitations, and ends with some recommendations for further research.
Chapter 1 – Socially-situated views on language learning

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe the theories of language learning which underpin this research. I will start by providing an outline the socio-historic context for this study regarding migrant integration and language learning. This will be followed by an overview of socially-situated theories of language learning which inform this inquiry, and an outline of some of the roles the constructs of learner identity and agency play in these theories and approaches to language learning. I will next provide more detailed accounts of situated learning theories in general, and of situated language learning in particular. I will also review some studies which see second language literacy development as social practice. I will then outline the theories of learning from the communities of practice model, which serves as a social lens to examine language learning in this research. The theories and approaches I have adopted follow a paradigm shift in the way successful language learners are seen to be constructed and co-constructed in more recent second language research. Throughout this chapter, I will argue that the situated theories and approaches to language and literacy learning employed in this study are an ideal fit for promoting life-experience meaning making and the construction of new or stronger English language identities with border crossing language learners. Finally, I will synthesise the various components of situated approaches outlined in this chapter in a single theoretical model.

1.1.1 Overall context of this research

The dramatic change in European demographics, with net migration now the largest component in its population growth, and the subsequent exponential increase in linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity (Brind et al., 2008), represent both a crucial moment in European history and a unique opportunity for our education systems to “either enhance integration or deepen alienation” (Collett, 2011; 11). This new diversity is nowhere more in evidence than in present day Ireland. The map in Figure 1 (Irish Census, 2011) gives a picture of a multicultural Dublin vastly at odds with its predominantly monocultural past of just fifteen years ago.
According to the data from the 2011 census, seventy percent of the population of the north city electoral division were born outside Ireland, 218,653 or 1 in 5 people in Dublin were born abroad, and there are 6 areas of Dublin where the non-Irish born residents represent more than 50% of the population. The area where the research site for this study is located, Tallaght in south Dublin, has a population of between 30 and 40% non-Irish born residents. The Integration Centre, Dublin (Szlovak, 2012) reports that 11% of the population speaks foreign languages at home (other than English/Irish), and provides a snapshot of linguistic diversity in Ireland (see Figure 2, from (Szlovak, 2012). The startling change in the new Irish multilingual make up is brought into even sharper focus with reports of the Eastern Health Authority claiming to deal with over 130 languages and the Courts Service providing translation and interpreting services for 210 languages (Cronin, 2004).

This diversity, and the subsequent challenges of social and linguistic integration for many border crossers, require us to examine our practices when it comes to divining appropriate language support to those most in need. Consequently, it is one of the principal aims of this study to illuminate some of the crevices in our knowledge of some affordances and constraints which govern social language learning and related issues.
of integration for this group. The interrelatedness of target language competency and integration are presented in the following section.

1.1.2 Integration and language for migrants

It comes as no surprise when considerable research on language and integration reveals the strong correlation between host country language proficiency and greater possibilities for integration, both social and economic, even when individual differences in immigrant learners’ language skills and educational background are taken into account (Esser, 2006, McHugh and Challinor, 2011). Esser (2006; 7) identifies two distinct but interrelated aspects of integration: social integration, which refers to the inclusion or exclusion of actors in existing social systems such as educational or occupational facilities, and system integration, which refers to the cohesion of entire social systems and concerns cohesion on a trans-societal level between different elements of that society such as groups of ethnic minorities (ibid). Presupposing the existence of two possible bases for inclusion/exclusion in these contexts – ethnic group versus host society – Esser (ibid) goes on to describe four types of social integration which then arise:

- **Marginality** – where no inclusion happens in the host or ethnic group
- **(ethnic) segmentation** – where there is inclusion in the ethnic but not the host group
- **Assimilation** – where there is inclusion in the host but not ethnic group
- **Multiple inclusion** – where inclusion in both social systems happens

![Figure 3 Types of social integration and language proficiency](image)

How these types of social integration may map onto corresponding categories, from limited bilingualism to competent bilingualism, for the dimension of language are visualised in Figure 3 above (adapted from Esser, 2006; 8). However, for the promotion of multiple inclusion in target social systems to have any chance of success, a two-way model of integration has been proposed (Commission, 2005). Little (2010; 7, 2009) maintains that since the process of integration is not a short journey, and cannot usually be completed within a few years of arrival,
“it is thus not enough for the receiving country to provide special integration programmes which migrants must attend immediately after arrival. Rather, as is pointed out in the second edition of the European Commission’s *Handbook on Integration*, it is necessary to adapt all kinds of public services to the needs of immigrants, including housing and access to the labour market and education programmes.”

Ersanilli & Koopmans (2011; 209) report that European integration policy innovations since the beginning of the millennium have focussed on mandatory civic integration and language courses for immigrants, and on the formalisation and extension of naturalisation tests in many countries thus indicating a “growing concern with socio-cultural aspects of immigrant integration such as language skills, interethnic relations, identification with the host society”. Whereas many investigations into immigrant integration have looked at socio-economic aspects such as labour market participation and income for border crossers, Ersanilli & Koopmans examined cross-national immigration across three European countries by taking into account the above sociocultural aspects. The socially-situated approaches to language learning and social orientation employed in this study, which have been said to address how the social, historical and cultural contexts in which migrants live and learn, are aligned both with the European Commission’s sustainable two-way model and the sociocultural model of migrant integration outlined above. Since there is a direct correlation between language competency and integration, and between literacy and the empowerment of this significant swathe of our population, the road to greater integration for this group could surely be made shorter and smoother by providing language provision which can help connect marginalised border crossers to the majority community (Oxfam, 2005). The remainder of this chapter will deal with the socially-situated approaches to language learning which underpin this study.

1.2 Socially situated views on language learning

The theoretical approaches I have reviewed from the literature, and in some ways adopted to promote the language and literacy learning of the adult migrant language learners in this study, propose more socially-situated approaches, examinations and accounts of the struggles of border-crossers to establish their English language identities and connect with their new homes (1994, Lantolf and Beckett, 2009, Norton and Toohey, 2011, Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). The central research question driving this study is: *How can socially-situated practices help adult migrant language learners in Ireland make meaning of their lived experiences and forge stronger English language identities?* In order to address this question, this study employed socially-situated theories and approaches to language learning in order to look beyond traditional cognitive and behaviourist views of how successful language learners are constructed by examining how these “learners are situated in specific social, historical, and cultural contexts and how
learners resist or accept the positions those contexts offer them” (Norton and Toohey, 2001; 310). While many traditional approaches and theories regarding language learning had long focused on the learner’s abilities, goals, and motivations (Kouritzin, 2000b), the socially-situated theories and approaches to language learning and use underpinning this research, which began to emerge in the mid-1990s, are said to reveal more about how social contexts can constrain or facilitate a border crossers’ access to the dominant language, and how using social practices in language and literacy learning can help them build stronger English language personas in unfamiliar settings (Flegg, 2008, Mapes, 2011, Tranza and Sunderland, 2009, Norton, 2006, Norton and Toohey, 2001). The main tenets of the socially-situated views of language learning which inform this study, Sociocultural and, to a greater extent, Poststructural Theories, are presented in the following two sections. These sections are intended as overviews of these frameworks. The remainder of this chapter will provide more detailed explications of various constructs, features, and approaches which are associated with these theories, and which are relevant to the learners and contexts under scrutiny in this study.

1.2.1 Sociocultural views on language learning

From a Sociocultural viewpoint, Language learning is viewed as a dialogic social process where the location of knowledge moves from the social to the individual. In this framework, learners are seen as autonomous architects of their learning environments, and novice learners are guided toward fuller knowledge by participation with more expert members of a particular learning group or community (Mitchell and Myles, 2013). Sociocultural views of learning as the appropriation of language in this manner draws on Vygotsky’s argument that we learn communicative intentions through sustained participation in such settings (Vygotsky, 1978, Harley, 1996). Vygotsky claimed that higher order psychological functions, of which language is a prime example, are the “result of a mediated process that is organized by cultural artefacts, activities, and concepts, and are socially and culturally determined” (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995; 197). These higher-level tools mediate the relationship between the individual and the social–material world.

From this perspective, referred to as sociocultural theory (SCT), language use, organization, and structure are the primary means of mediation. Practically speaking, developmental processes take place through participation in cultural, linguistic, and historically formed settings such as family life and peer group interaction, and in institutional contexts like schooling, organized sports activities, and work places, to name only a few (ibid).

With regard to second language learning, it has been claimed that this perspective goes beyond mainstream cognitive and social psychological views of language learning tasks and environments as generalisable and stable (Donato and MacCormick, 1994). In the SCT framework, language work and
learning are seen as socially situated and constantly under development. In their study of a French college class, Donato and MacCormick (ibid) were able to show, by socioculturally reconfiguring their classes, how this approach to language teaching and learning promoted language competence and learning strategies through student participation in the class as a community (ibid). To sum up this brief outline of sociocultural learning theory, the process of second language learning is conceptualised by sociocultural scholars not solely as the acquisition of new grammatical rules, words or sounds, but as the “struggle of socially constituted and always situated beings” to develop their language skills as they participate in the life-worlds of the communities in which they live and learn (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000; 156).

1.2.2 Poststructural views on language learning

In common with sociocultural theories, language knowledge is seen by poststructural scholars as collaboratively and socially constructed. However, poststructural views of language learning place more emphasis on ethnographic perceptions of learners as social beings whose social identities such as gender, class and ethnicity, age, and power relations, for example, are significant to the success of language learning (Mitchell and Myles, 2013). Central to poststructuralist theories of second or other language learning are the views of language as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1977b), language socialisation in various settings (Duff et al., 2000, Duff, 2002), and the perspective of learners as agents whose various identities play a dynamic part in their success or failure to learn (Pavlenko, 2002b). The poststructuralist version of language learning and use, informed by Bordieu’s (1991) view of language as symbolic capital which may be converted into economic or social capital, implies that not all discourses are equal in the linguistic marketplace, and these discourses can develop around areas of potential conflict such as gender, class, age, ethnicity, and linguistic ability (ibid). In relation to language learning for potentially marginalised groups like migrants, these discourses may be employed to constrain or afford their access to linguistic resources (Norton, 1997), and can be used to “reproduce, maintain, or challenge existing power and knowledge structures” (Pavlenko, 2002; 283). From this viewpoint, language attitudes are seen more as language ideologies where marginalised groups may face barriers to their social, linguistic, or vocational identity growth through discrimination by those who stigmatise social identity markers such as undesirable accents or language varieties (ibid). As language is seen as fundamentally social rather than merely cognitive in this framework, language learning is viewed as a process of socialisation into certain communities (Lam, 2000). This process of language socialisation, which is also referred to as situated learning (Bredo, 1994, Gee, 2004, Sfard, 1998) is covered in some detail in section 1.3. Another process which is central to the poststructuralist vision of language learning is the role of social identity and the
implications of identity construction for assessing the success or failures of language learners (Norton, 1995a, Norton, 1997, Norton, 2000a). The work of some poststructuralist scholars who have examined the role of identity negotiation can play in second language learning is explored more extensively in 1.2.4. The next section provides a brief rationale for the use of socially-situated approaches in this study.

1.2.3 Other theories of second language learning

In order to better understand the processes my learners were undergoing in their endeavours to construct their English language identities, I reviewed a selection of the theories of second language learning which the field of second language acquisition (SLA) has produced over the last two decades. Lightbown (1985; 173) provides us with a sufficiently broad definition of SLA which can embrace the variety of theories employed in current research (Block, 2003, Mitchell and Myles, 2013): “The term ‘second language acquisition research’ refers to studies which are designed to investigate questions about learners’ use of their second language and the processes which underlie second language acquisition and use.” Such has been the interest and variety of inquiries into SLA over recent decades that some research scholars have lamented the over-proliferation of theories of how second language are learned (Block, 2003, Long, 1993). Mitchell and Myles have (2013) sought to distil this abundance of theoretical models into five general approaches:

1. **Cognitive approaches and Universal Grammar** – learning any language (first, second, etc.) uses the same cognitive mechanisms which drive all basic human learning. In this view, second language learning involves the “extraction of meaning patterns from environmental stimuli” (ibid; 98), and is seen as ‘bottom up’, where learners use the above mechanisms to extract patterns from the language input they are exposed to. Learning another language differs from first language learning in this view due to functions already established by first language and world knowledge, and social, personal, interactional and cognitive maturity.

2. **Interactionist** – engagement in interaction promotes second language learning, and the ability to master syntactic structures emerge from learning how to do conversation. The *Interaction Hypothesis* (Long, 1996) focuses on learner attention and second language processing abilities.

3. **Functional/pragmatic** – are concerned with speech acts as opposed to the learning of formal linguistic systems in naturalistic settings; learning is meaning-based and is driven by immediate pragmatic needs and long term desires for social integration.

4. **Sociocultural** – learning is viewed as a dialogic social process where the location of knowledge moves from the social to the individual. Learners are seen as autonomous architects of their learning environments; novice learners are guided by participation with more expert members toward fuller knowledge.

5. **Sociolinguistic/Poststructural** – shares ethnographic views of learners as social beings; social identities such as gender, class and ethnicity, and power relations are significant to the success of language learning. Language knowledge is seen as collaboratively socially constructed.
Some scholars have sought to construct a ‘big theory’ of SLA that can combine various approaches and deal with issues which had split the field over the previous years (Block, 2003). Recent reviews of research approaches in SLA have not, however, shown that such grand theories have gained much support (Mitchell and Myles, 2013). Prominent among these ‘big theory’ scholars is Gass (2006), who developed an overarching approach which came to be known as the Interaction Hypothesis, which is also referred to as the Input, Interaction and Output model (IIO) (Block, 2003). The basic principle of this approach to SLA is “that through input and interaction with interlocutors, language learners have opportunities to notice differences between their own formulations of the target language and the language of their conversational partners” (Gass and Mackey, 2006; 3). The way Gass’s model was able to combine findings from Interactionist, cognitive and Universal Grammar perspectives while dealing with key issues in SLA ensured that it became a big player in the broad field of SLA (Block, 2003). Though this model has been described as “powerful” (ibid; 30), Block, among others (see also Firth and Wagner, 1997, Firth and Wagner, 2007, Norton and Toohey, 2001, Norton and Toohey, 2003b, Pavlenko, 2002b), criticises the reluctance of certain IIO-oriented second-language researchers to deal with the contextual and interactional dimensions of language learning in real-world language communities, and what he saw as the dominant view in SLL that “social factors, affect and previous life experience are peripheral to the process” (Block, 2003; 138). Block was among the above cited group who responded to Firth and Wagner’s (1997) call for a redress of this theoretical imbalance in their seminal and influential article “On Discourse, Communication, and (Some) Fundamental Concepts in SLA Research”, which argued for more social and discursive approaches to SLA research. Firth and Wagner claimed that such distorted views on discourse and communication in SLA research, theories and methodologies resulted in skewed constructions of foreign language learners. In synthesis, Block argues for the benefits of a more socially constituted approach to second-language research which puts itself “at the service of the social construction of self identity, group membership, solidarity, support, trust, and so on” (ibid; 64).

Even proponents of the centrality of motivation in the development of second language identities such as Dörnyei (2003; 5), who describes this factor as the “interpersonal/affective disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact and even become similar to valued members of that community”, identify language learning as a deeply rooted in socioculturally-constructed events.

The theoretical approaches I have adopted to best reveal the language practices of the border crossing learners in this study are an answer to the call for a more sociocultural and poststructural account of this cohort’s struggle to establish their English language identities (Donato and McCormick, 1994, Lantolf and Beckett, 2009, Norton and Toohey, 2011, Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). However, this is not to say that the
theories reviewed above do not each have their place in promoting, examining or understanding the language development of the cohort in question. To sum up this section, this study does not reject out of hand these viewpoints, rather I have chosen to adopt social theories of language learning in order to reveal certain aspects of the learners’ experiences which are salient to the question in hand which is, to paraphrase the title and focus of this inquiry: What contribution to our understanding of the post-migratory social and linguistic lived experiences and identity development of border-crossing learners can a socially situated approach reveal?

1.2.4 Why socially-situated approaches?
Socially-situated models of language teaching and learning, informed by sociocultural and poststructural views, were deemed more appropriate for the learners group in this study because they have been said to address a variety of social, historical and cultural contexts such as age, gender, race, etc, which may constrain or afford target language access and socialisation germane to border-crossing learners (Norton and Toohey, 2001). Socially-situated approaches were chosen in favour of traditional cognitive, behaviourist, or what Pavlenko (2002b) calls sociopsychological models of second language learning, which have been said to focus on the individual learner’s abilities, goals and motivations (Kouritzin, 2000b, Rockhill, 1994), and present idealised and decontextualised views of how learners are constructed (Pavlenko, 2002). These models have also been criticised for positioning learners within discreet and stable communities, with attitudinal distance from the target being used to distinguish success from failure as language learners (Morgan and Clarke, 2011). In addition, these traditional models have been challenged for considering only the two possible identities of native and non-native speaker in their frameworks of language learning and use (Firth, 1997).

This research adopted situated learning approaches as they have been shown to enable learners to critically problematise these socially-mediated constraints and affordances through problem-posing language and literacy activities, and can help them make sense of their language and socialisation experiences in their new settings (Frye, 1999, McKinney and Norton, 2008). Since issues of belonging and exclusion, and language access and language ideologies can impact on the social, linguistic, and civic participation of these border-crossers (Warriner, 2008a), promoting practices of language and literacy as socially co-constructed and situated in everyday communicative practices and interactions is used in this inquiry to directly address these socially-mediated constraints or affordances (Block, 2003, Donato and MacCormick, 1994, Firth and Wagner, 2007, Ivanic et al., 2006, Rockhill, 1987). In addition, because many of the participants in this study had suffered some forms of social and linguistic isolation and conflict
during their time in Ireland (De Fina and King, 2011), the situated learning and literacy approaches employed in this study were chosen to promote socialisation and solidarity within this group and encourage participation and language identity growth within this learning community (Lam, 2000). The socially-situated teaching and learning practices in this study used these learners’ verbal and written migration stories of dislocation and migration as part of a process by which they could make meaning of these stories while negotiating their evolving English language identities (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005a, Simpson, 2011, Hull and Katz, 2006, Baynham, 2005b). Some of the learner strategies which have been said to help learners make meaning in socially-informed frameworks are presented in the following section.

1.2.5 Socially-situated learning strategies

Learning strategies in socially-situated practice may diverge from the above mentioned sociopsychological views in that they draw on sociocultural perspectives which view learner strategies and “language learning tasks and contexts as situated activities that are continually under development and that are influential upon individuals' strategic orientations to classroom learning” (Donato and MacCormick, 1994; 453). Benson identifies some socioculturally-mediated strategies as fostering learning how to learn and learner-teacher negotiation (Benson and Voller, 2014). In socially-situated strategies learner-teacher negotiations have been shown to provide opportunities for learners to externalise their reflections on previous work and use this discourse to tune their future learning strategies (Donato and MacCormick, 1994). Critical reflection is another learner strategy which sets this practice apart from other frameworks. When we want to foster meaning-making of lived experiences alongside language development, as is the case in this study, promoting critical reflective strategies for learners can enable them to correct distortions in their beliefs and errors in problem-solving (Mezirow, 1990). Elsewhere, Mezirow (1985) argues that by fostering this strategy, which equates meaning making with learning, learners are offered opportunities for what he calls “meaning transformation”. Regarding these strategies for language learners, poststructuralists make the distinction between critical thinking (CT) and critical practice (CP). In this framework CT strategies are seen as individual endeavours involving linear, objective approaches to reflection and problem solving whereas CP, in the words of Canagarajah (2006; 16), is

“more dialogical and reflexive in that it encourages students to interrogate thinking in relation to material life, one’s own biases, and one’s social and historical positioning. In fact, the student’s life experience may itself generate critical insights into issues without the student having to learn critical thinking anew”.

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Again, this view seems well suited to the study in hand which tries to encourage learners to critically reflect on their stories of their lived experiences and their evolving language identities.

These strategies, however, may not be exclusive only to socially-informed teaching and learning practices, and it may not always be an either/or scenario. What is to prevent practitioners from other viewpoints incorporating some of these strategies into their teaching and learning activities, for example in task or project-based activities? Indeed, I am convinced that there are many learning environments where this is already at work. Mezirow’s transformational meaning-making strategies can be useful tools for understanding and fostering linguistic and social identity transformation for border-crossing learners. The relationship of these evolving identities to language learning from socially situated viewpoints is outlined in the following section.

1.2.6 Identity and language learning

According to Duff (2010a), researches which attend to the influences of social and linguistic Identities are associated with a social turn in studies of language learning (Block, 2003). One result of this social turn in second language research has been the rise of theorisations of the role of social identity in the learning of languages, in particular among theorists who propose poststructuralist views of social phenomena and human behavior and social identities as “more nuanced, multileveled, and, ultimately, complicated framings of the world around us” (Block, 2007a; 864). Ushioda (2011; 202) defines the relationship and role of social identity to language learning in the following way:

When our lives change significantly as in the case of learning a new language, we need to construct new ways of linking the self to new worlds and words (i.e. forge new identities and new ways of expressing our identities); we also need to develop relationships with new people and strive to establish who we are and wish to become. Thus, while identities are ways of relating the self to the world and are in this sense personally valued constructions, they are socially forged and negotiated through our relations and interactions with other people.

Poststructuralist scholars who investigate how social, linguistic, cultural, gender and ethnic, and other identities impact on access to language learning resources see identity not as something set for life, but as unstable over time and disjointed and disputed in nature (Pavlenko, 2002b). These fragmented and contested conceptualizations of identity are said to be more evident and relevant when people cross physical, social, or psychological borders, or when individuals immerse themselves in new sociocultural settings. These border crossings can then cause identities to become destabilized and a period of struggle is experienced as the individual seeks to cope with social input from the new settings (ibid).
Norton (1995a), an innovator in the area of research into language learning and identity work, drew on poststructuralist views of social identity as multiple, a site of struggle and change, and used this framework in her study of how immigrant women in Canada created, responded to, and sometimes resisted opportunities to speak English. Norton (2000b) elsewhere claims that a lack of development of a theory of identity which integrates the learner and their social worlds has limited the ability of second language theorists to fully understand the challenges facing language learners as a whole, and marginalized language learners in particular. Norton (2000), drawing on Bourdieu’s (1977a) work on power asymmetries in communication, claims that how learners develop more powerful identities can allow them to become more accepted and participate more fully in target language communities (Block, 2003).

In her work with immigrant women learners, Norton (1995; 18) argues that any analysis of language learning in naturalistic settings “should include an awareness of the right to speak”, and warns that it should not be taken for granted that “those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen and that those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak.” Disenchantment with the lack of focus on these social factors which may affect second language learning in research over the last four decades (Block, 2003), and what some researchers saw as the limited view of successful language learners based solely on their control of a “wider variety of linguistic forms or meaning than their peers or on the basis of their speed of acquisition of linguistic forms and meanings” (Norton, 2000a:310, Norton, 2001b), has led to an increasing focus on how good learners engage in conversations and identity negotiation in host-community settings (Jackson, 2008, Norton, 2001b, Norton and Toohey, 2003b, Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004, Pavlenko and Norton, 2007, Toohey, 1996).

There are an ever-growing number of scholars and teachers who are adopting these views and adapting them to their research and teaching practices (Morita, 2004, Bucholtz, 1999, Mills, 2011, Cervatiuc, 2009, Chen, 2010, Han, 2012, Warriner, 2008a). In a research on qualitative case studies of the academic discourse socialization experiences of second language learners in a Canadian university, Morita (2004) reports how students faced with the major challenges of dealing with new competences, identities, and power relations, tried to shape their own learning and participation by negotiating new identity positions. In the conclusion to her case study with an at-risk academic female African-American student in a predominantly Euro-American university campus, Mapes (2011) calls on teachers to consider reading and writing assignments as opportunities for identity work and invitations for learners to take on meaningful roles in the learning process.
It has been argued that language learning is in many ways a process of both individual and collective identity negotiation (Morgan, 2002). In his study of a community-based English as a Second Language program in Canada, Morgan (ibid) cautions that identity should not be seen merely as an add-on aspect of language pedagogy, but instead should be an essential part of syllabus so that border crossing learners can build their identities in the classrooms in order to connect to the wider community.

Some second language scholars, informed by post-structural views of the dynamic, fragmented and contested nature of identity (Lantolf, 2000, Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000, van Lier, 2008a, Duff, 2010a, Norton, 2004), have argued that language learners are capable of exercising their agency in order to position themselves and make identity choices in communities of practice and wider sociocultural settings (Miller, 2010). As a construct which is related to identity, these scholars consider learner agency as central to the understanding of second language learning in local and larger settings (ibid). The next section will describe some socially-situated views of agency and some roles it can play in the second language learning process.

1.2.7 Agency and language learning

Often cited as the “socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001; 112), Agency has become one of the essential constituents for second language learning researchers who are concerning themselves with the relationship of learners’ cognitive, social and affective selves with their surrounding environment (Kalaja et al., 2011, Lantolf, 2000). Other scholars, however, go further and define agency not solely in terms of a human property but as a “relationship that is constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and with the society at large” (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001; 148).

Consequently, the view of learners as individuals constructing the target language in isolation has been replaced by the construct of learners as social agents employing the tools and resources available in particular historical, social, and cultural settings and in collaboration with others (Kalaja et al., 2011, Wertsch et al., 1996, Donato and McCormick, 1994, Miller, 2010, Hull and Katz, 2006).

It has been posited that by focussing on the learner as a social individual who exercises their agency in meaningful activities such as collaborative dialogic narratives of their own choosing can promote further development of this agency while also improving second language competence (Darhower, 2004, Lantolf, 2000, Hull and Katz, 2006). However, the way learners develop their agency is in constant tension with the social aspects of these settings (Hull and Katz, 2006). Beliefs which learners hold about learning, different languages and diverse accents or ways of speaking have been identified as affordances or constraints to their success in the target language (Kalaja et al., 2011, Van Lier, 2000). These beliefs, which
may also be regarded as a resource for developing their agency, may not be viewed as stable mental or characteristic states, but rather as socially situated dynamic processes (Kalaja et al., 2011, Hull and Katz, 2006). With this in mind, understanding how learners’ agency is afforded or constrained by the environment or communities in which they live and learn constitutes a vital aspect when it comes to gauging their language learning success overall (Kalaja et al., 2011, Van Lier, 2000). In their study which explores the relationship between agency and learning contexts both within and outside the classroom for Finnish students of Swedish and English Kalaja et al (2011; 55) reported that much of the learners' success depended on their “perception of and willingness to exercise their power to act, or agency”. Baynham’s (2005) study of Moroccan migrant women reveals how these women challenged authority and claimed the right to speak by demonstrating their agency through the strategic employment of multilingual and social resources. The role of agency as a co-constructed relationship which can facilitate learners’ access to language and meaning in sociocultural settings was given an extra dimension by Norton and Toohey (2003b). Norton and Toohey’s two case studies of immigrant women language learners in Canada showed how these women exercised agency in gaining access to “practices in the communities in which they were located and through their own agency/efforts to position themselves as persons worth talking/listening to” (ibid; 70). Norton and Toohey’s work sought to reveal new insights into the role of agency in the language learning process by examining the social practices of learners in social settings. It has been argued that when it comes to considering adult immigrant language learners, individuals who are frequently marginalized in the dominant society, it is vital to appreciate the mediating enablements and constraints outlined above (Miller, 2010). Situated learning theories and approaches, which problematise how these learners can share language and knowledges though socialisation, are reviewed in the following section.

1.3 Situated learning

Situated theories of learning are based on the notion that knowledge is situated contextually, and is necessarily influenced by the activities, contexts, and culture in which knowledge is employed (Brown et al., 1989a, Bredo, 1994, Collins, 1991, Donato and MacCormick, 1994, Jackson, 2010). These models of learning represent a shift away from the psychological toward the sociocultural as a framework for the theorisation and refinement of our discipline’s knowledge of teaching and learning (Damarin, 1996). This shift involves a major modification to the agreed location of knowledge, which is no longer viewed as the sole domain of the individual, but is taken to be also located in “groups or communities which share situatedness” (ibid; 78). Oakeshott (1962; 199, author’s emphasis) exemplifies the nature and location
of acquisition, learning and knowledge in this framework with the metaphor of an interactional and
intergenerational conversation:

As civilised human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an enquiry about ourselves and the
world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation, begun in the primeval
forests and extended and made more articulate in the course of centuries. It is a conversation
which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves. Each new generation enters an initiation
into the skill and partnership of this conversation. And it is this conversation which, in the end,
gives place and character to every human activity and utterance.

Situated theorists have proposed the notion of cognitive apprenticeship to describe how students are
enabled in their acquisition of situated knowledge by enculturation into authentic practices, defined as
“the ordinary practices of a culture”, and social interaction in the authentic domains of such groups or
communities (McLellan, 1996b, Brown et al., 1989a; 25). Enculturation, which Brown et al. (ibid; 34)
describe as the opportunity to “observe and practice in situ the behaviour of members of a culture”, is
viewed as central to the process of learning in this framework. Through this process, ‘apprentices’ may
acquire the appropriate jargon, imitate the behaviour, learn to use the cultural tools, and act in
accordance with the norms of the target community (Jackson, 2008, Brown et al., 1989a). In contrast to
the dominant form of school-learning, where a significant part of the staple activities are designed as
individual work such as homework, in-class exercises, tests, exams, and so on, this model is informed by
Resnick’s (1987; 13) observation that

much activity outside school is socially shared. Work, personal life, and recreation take place
within social systems, and each person’s ability to function successfully depends on what others
do and how several individuals’ mental and physical performances mesh.

Situated approaches require that learners deal with ill-defined problems which present themselves in
these social systems as opposed to the well-defined problems which issue, for example, from school
textbooks and exams (Brown et al., 1989a). In short, learners can choose to go beyond the confines of
studentship and move toward occupying the space of practitioners not solely in the learning institution,
but also in the culture of the target domain (ibid). Making the distinction between traditional craft
apprenticeship and cognitive apprenticeship in school learning, Collins et al. (1991; 3) argue that teachers
need to “identify the processes of the task and make them visible to students, situate abstract tasks in
authentic contexts, so that students understand the relevance of the work”, and “vary the diversity of
situations and articulate the common aspects so that students can transfer what they learn”.

view learning “not, as is conventional, from the pedagogical perspective, but instead from the learner’s
perspective”, and go on to state that the situated approach challenges the notion that learning is always a direct reaction to teaching. These scholars use the term *stolen knowledge* to illustrate the active nature of learning, which can be determined by many other secondary factors, events, circumstances, or interactions, and which may not be what the teacher hoped to impart or may even be aware of (ibid; 49). Hay (1996) claims, however, that any focus on the learner is dimmed by the over-problematization of the situations in which learning is supposed to occur at the expense of empowering the newcomer. Hay goes further, maintaining that this renders the learner “almost completely impotent vis-à-vis the community”, with the result these newcomers have few opportunities to change the shape of the target situation until they become old-timers (ibid; 93). Drawing on the pedagogy of Freire (1970b), which seeks to redress the master-apprentice imbalance in learning, Hay describes ways of centering the learner in a two-way dialogic relationship with the target community. To this end, Hay (1996; 96) proposes a more flexible relationship between newcomers and old-timers, and alternative routes toward the centre of a community for the learner. In order to achieve this, he claims that learners can build this dialogue in four ways: 1) create or be part of a new community, 2) become part of several communities, 3) find new and creative ways to change the practice from a peripheral position, and 4) find new and creative ways into the centre of practice from a peripheral position.

Stephen Trip (1996) instituted a heated debate by criticising Damarin’s (1996) and other situated theorists’ desire to liberate and problematise their students’ communities, thereby risking an unhinging of learners from their traditions. Trip (ibid) also claimed that, given the covert nature of knowledge in situated experience, evaluation would be necessarily problematic. He does concede, nevertheless, that despite these challenges, situated theorist McLellan (1996a), for example, has provided a formidable list of solutions to evaluative problems in situated learning. Among these solutions, McLellan identifies portfolios as an evaluative tool, claiming that their use fosters thoughtful reflective practices for learners to revise their learning path while serving as complete process records and cognitive maps of the learner’s activity in a situated domain (ibid; 104). The following sections will describe how situated approaches have been applied to the field of language learning.

### 1.3.1 Situated language learning

In the field of research on second language learning, the view that learning processes can be successfully isolated and abstracted from social action and interaction has also been challenged. Mondada and Doehler (2004; 502) identified these problematic concepts as including:

(a) the notion of competence that is treated as a phenomenon that is isolated from socialization processes; (b) a conception of learning that is abstracted from the organization of actions,
community membership, participation frameworks, and so forth; and (c) a notion of context that tends to be reduced to a stable variable affecting cognitive events.

Proceeding from an interactionist perspective (see also Firth and Wagner, 1997), where learning a language is seen as learning how to deal with “contextualized, interactionally oriented discourse activities”, Mondada and Doehler (ibid; 504) go on to describe their view of learning as rooted in learners' participation in organizing talk-in-interaction, structuring participation frameworks, configuring discourse tasks, interactionally defining identities, and becoming competent members of the community (or communities) in which they participate, whether as students, immigrants, professionals, or indeed any other locally relevant identities.

The situated consequences of stolen knowledge, and the possibility that learners can experience transformations in their social relations and identities, may result in an appropriation of the voices and language of the central participants of the target sociocultural domain by the newcomers (Jackson, 2008, Sfard, 1998). This act of ‘ventriloquation’ (Bakhtin, 1982) can shape or reform newcomers’ communicative behaviour on a variety of linguistic, paralinguistic and non verbal fronts; accents, language, pauses, utterance length, smiling, gazing, etc. (Bourhis et al., 2007) so as to fit in with other more experienced practitioners’ behaviour. Hay (1996; 93), on the other hand, alerts us to the danger that this communicative enculturation may fix the newcomers gaze, thus denying them space to co-create their own legitimate knowledge and thereby configure their own communications with other practitioners. However, drawing on Miller and Gilders (1987) conclusions about the situational nature of L1 vocabulary, Brown et al. (1989; 33) assert that language and knowledge are “inextricably a product of the activity and situations in which they are produced”, and that language is continually recast in new and more densely textured forms by new situations, activities and negotiations.

Returning to Bakhtin’s views on the identification of self in discourse, he made it clear that he did not consider people merely as faithful recorders and reproducers of discourses to which they are exposed, rather he conceived people in these situations as assuming active stances when choosing levels of depth and validity when internalising cultural genres (Bakhtin et al., 1986, Herring and Lave, 2000). Bakhtin’s vision of the relationality of self and Other has been conceptualised as ‘dialogism’ by the scholar Holquist (2002). In her inquiry into the relationship between culture and language learning, Kransch (2013; 62) outlines the differential relation of Bakhtin’s dialogism:

Part of what it means to learn someone else’s language is to perceive the world through the metaphors, the idioms and the grammatical patterns used by the Other, filtered through a subjectivity and a historicity developed in one’s mother tongue. For Bakhtin, cultural and personal identity do not precede the encounter with a foreign Other, but rather they get constructed through the obligation to respond to that Other, through dialogue.
Language is therefore not considered a neutral medium from this viewpoint, indeed it is charged with the lived histories of others. The second language self is seen as a dialogic phenomenon, with newcomer interactants ‘trying on’ aspects of phrasing and styles, acquiring various associations, including political hues, in the mutual construction of interrelated utterances which make up these dialogues (Noels and Giles, 2009).

In their study on informal language learning in tandem settings, Stickler & Emke (2011) report on how their participants benefited from situated approaches. One learner, Carola, clearly illustrates the potential of situated language learning from a collaborative cooking episode:

You keep in mind those words because they belong together in a situation. You have the situation, you remember the joint cooking and together with the words you will never forget it (ibid; 158).

The effectiveness of situated language learning practice is borne out in a large-scale report on adult literacy and numeracy projects by the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre (Ivanic et al., 2006). On the back of this report, this experienced team of practitioners propose that tutors view language learning as “social practices, situated in people’s lives and purposes, and differing from one context to the next” (ibid; 8). Firth and Wagner (2007; 808) analysed naturally occurring aspects of ‘learning-in-action’ captured in recordings of foreign, second, or other language interactions and discovered that socially-situated second language users “deploy, make available, share, adapt, manipulate, and contingently and creatively apply communicative resources in an ongoing attempt to construct meaningful and consequential social interaction.” In one example of learning in action in a transcribed dyad from this research, the L2 speaker appears to ‘steal’ the phrase “gone off” (as in “food gone bad”) from his native-speaking interlocutor (ibid). The following sections will discuss situated approaches to literacy.

1.3.2 ESOL and literacy

A recent review of Adult literacy provision in Ireland (Kett and Lynch, 2013), was unable to provide any figures for literacy levels among English as a Second Language (ESOL) learners in this country, but did place minority populations, immigrants, and speakers of other languages at the top of its list those in need of literacy provision. On foot of a key policy recommendation, the Language and Literacy Unit of London at the South Bank University was commissioned to conduct a review of literature on the acquisition and development of ESOL literacy (Tranza and Sunderland, 2009). From the findings of this review, Tranza and Sunderland recommend differentiating between first-language and ESOL literacy needs, adding that these needs should be related to the specific language and educational profiles of ESOL learners. One example this review reports of these differences is that ESOL literacy learners often need to “develop spoken
English vocabulary and patterns of syntax explicitly, which is not often an issue for native adult literacy learners” (ibid; 8). Despite a plethora of language and literacy programs for immigrants organized by the Canadian government, figures from the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey claimed that these language training efforts were inadequate, and that comparatively well-educated immigrants continued to face greater literacy challenges than their native-born counterparts.

Concerning pedagogical approaches to literacy, Tranza and Sunderland suggest employing real-world authentic tasks in ESOL literacy provision and conclude that a “process approach to writing which integrates work on spelling and handwriting with work on whole texts is beneficial for ESOL literacy learners”. Their review also reports the benefits of collaborative writing and storytelling with ESOL literacy groups in the UK from a study by Grief (2007, cited in Tranza and Sunderland, 2009). Grief’s study (ibid; 9) reported that collaborative writing for these learners “encouraged the learners to value each others’ knowledge and learn from one another”. The report also cites Gillespie’s conclusions (2001; 5, cited in Tranza and Sunderland, 2009) on recent socio-cultural and contextual understandings of the nature of writing in ESOL literacy acquisition that “writing is not best taught as a linear, sequential set of skills but as a process of gradual approximation of what skilled writers do; a cycling and recycling of learning processes”. Some sociocultural, contextual, and critical views and approaches to literacy learning will be outlined and discussed in the following sections.

1.3.3 Socially-situated literacy

If language and knowledge are inseparable from the activities and situations of which they are a product (Brown et al., 1989b), then, by extension, literacy is viewed as created and acquired in social contexts and occurs in situated interactions (Baynham, 1995). Regarding the socially constructed nature of literacy, Barton et al. (2005) maintain that any theory of literacy must involve a theory of learning and emphasise the importance of understanding both of informal and vernacular learning strategies and the characteristics of situated cognition. Focussing his gaze on immigrant bilingual adults in the multilingual settings of large industrial cities in Britain, Baynham (1995; 1) investigates literacy as a social practice involving not only what people do with literacy but also “what they make of what they do”. Drawing on educational and social theory from the fields of linguistics and anthropology, Baynham (ibid) identifies some basic premises for investigating and promoting practices in the literacy development of adults. He starts by saying literacy has grown and is formed to serve social functions in creating and exchanging meaning and is better understood in its contexts of use. From this viewpoint, literacy is perceived as ideological in that it is shaped, like all language uses, by profoundly held “ideological positions which can
be either implicit or explicit” (ibid; 6). He also maintains that, in this approach, literacy can be critical and should be grasped in terms of social power. Overall, Baynham (ibid; 2) is arguing for what he calls a “critical functional” approach to literacy which “does not accept the status of dominant institutions and discourses but calls them into question”. According to Baynham (ibid; 8), the functional aspect of literacy focuses on the “issues of social purpose in contexts of use” while the critical dimension provides “a meta-level of critical awareness, both linguistic and social”.

Baynham (ibid) goes on to say that, despite decades of research on the processes of literacy acquisition, there is much we do not know about how these processes work. However, he suggests that sociocultural approaches may provide some basis for creating grounded hypotheses for the literacy acquisition processes. In his ethnography of communication study of the acquisition of literacy with children from Latino communities in California, Trueba (1990) concluded that these learners’ participation in socioculturally appropriate contexts disclosed abilities, identities, and types of competence that would otherwise often remain invisible. Trueba (Ibid; 2) maintains that socioculturally sensitive approaches helped to circumvent across-the-board handling of cultural communities which can essentialise their members and their practices, adding that ascertaining learners’ competence necessitated mediating and examining their participation in literacy practices in a range of tasks and across diverse boundaries “in a larger social, psychological and historical context”. Informed by what has been termed as New Literacy Studies (Street, 2003), scholars who investigate literacy as a social practice do not focus solely on the acquisition of discrete literacy skills, but talk about literacies in the plural as multiple literacies which vary according to time and space (Morgan and Ramanathan, 2005, Baynham, 1995, Barton et al., 2005, Warriner, 2008b, Street, 2003). The next section will provide some examples of how literacy as a social practice can be used to socialise learners in certain communities.

1.3.4 Literacy and discourse communities

Lam (2000; 459) suggests that learning of literacy be viewed as a process by which the person is “socialized for group membership in specific literate communities and, in turn, participates in shaping the social practices of these communities”. Alongside the multiple literacies mentioned above are the multiple discourse types and identities associated with each of these communities. Gee (Gee, 2000; 2) applies the term Discourses (with a capital D) to denote the many socially particular practices of literacy in society and argues that

a Discourse is composed of distinctive ways of "being and doing" that allow people to enact and/or recognize a specific and distinctive socially situated identity (e.g., being-doing an
"appropriate" first-grader in Ms Smith's progressive classroom; an "appropriate" sort of U.S. generative linguist; or an "appropriate" sort of Los Angeles Latino teenage street gang member, etc.).

In a study of a Chinese immigrant learners’ literacy development and English language identity construction in written correspondence with a transnational group of peers on the Internet in California, Lam (2000) investigates how some learners in some way build their identities by selectively appropriating various literacy resources. Such second language literacy identity construction is not without its conflicts, as Lam points out. In these contexts, citing poststructuralist theorists’ views of discourse and identity (Fairclough, 1992b; Threadgold, 1997; Weedon, 1997 cited in Lam, 2000; 459) Lam describes identity as “inherently unstable, and social identity, although constituted and governed by prevailing practices, is capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory and competing practices”. These clashes and conflicts are commonly addressed with the use of problem-posing methodology by practitioners of critical pedagogy working with border crossing literacy learners (McKinney and Norton, 2008). Frye (Frye, 1999), for example, employs problem-posing participatory methods in an immigrant women’s only ESL class in the USA to problematize issues directly affecting these learners such as difficulties with their children’s’ schools and teachers, and the challenges these women faced of moving from the posing of inequitable problems to taking social action. The next section provides some other examples from the literature of problem-posing literacy practices.

1.3.5 Problem-posing situated literacy

Some practitioners working within the field of critical approaches to diversity in language and literacy education have argued that multilingual classrooms such as Frye’s are not by default productive venues for this work, citing, for example, cases of student resistance to problematising inequality or moving toward social action (McKinney and Norton, 2008). McKinney and Norton (ibid), on the other hand, argue that such challenges do not invalidate the work of critical pedagogy but rather offer it opportunities. They go on to present various examples of critical language and literacy practice which have successfully synthesised elements of situated practice, power asymmetries, diversity and recognition of social identities (ibid). One example of a successful synthesis in literacy education for border crossers is to be found in a publication by the Minority Rights group of the writings of young refugee and minority-group secondary school learners from London and Amsterdam (Minority-Rights-Group, 1998). Like Frye’s and Trueba’s examples above, this approach may be considered a weaker form of critical literacy, with the focus on producing in-house learner-generated texts which serve a problem-posing function rather than on tackling large-scale dominant discourses. In this project, the young learners were asked to write about
border crossing issues which directly affected them such as the difficulties in adapting to their new homes, their good and bad memories, their families, religions, and futures. These writings, which were in the form of letters sent between students of the two schools, helped these learners to forge new social, cultural, and literate identities while connecting with others who were in similar situations (ibid).

It has been argued that situated problem-posing literacy can develop border crossing learners’ intercultural competence and enable them to deal with diversity in their changing worlds (Yew Lie, 2010). This approach has been said to involve “the mediation of meanings, signs, and languages between paradoxically similar and differing life-worlds. It involves the linking of secondary life-worlds of school and work with those of the primary life-worlds of family and society” (ibid; 32). Participation in literacy as a social practice, and related problem-solving approaches, have been shown to enable border crossers to be socialised into literate communities, to help them make meanings of language conflicts and progress, and to forge new linguistic identities. While there may be some resistance to problematising social issues or action in some cases, this approach to literacy has been used successfully with both young and adult border crossing learners (Minority-Rights-Group, 1998). Central to problem-solving approaches to language learning and literacy is the notion of participation, which is discussed in the following section.

1.4 Participation as a metaphor for learning

In questioning the interpretation of the ‘A’ for acquisition in SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research, Block (2003) suggests that the conventional acquisition metaphor falls short in accounting for some aspects of second language learning and “should be complemented (but not replaced) by the participation metaphor that would account for these aspects” (ibid; 104). Participation is a key concept for Rogoff (1994; 209) in her alternative view of learning as shared endeavours in contrast to the passive role assigned to the learner in the acquisition of knowledge in conventional “one-sided notions of learning”. Bruner (1996; 21) points out that the more mutual learning community represents an antithesis to the transmission model of teaching in the way that it models “ways of doing or knowing, provides opportunity for emulation, offers running commentary, provides scaffolding for novices, and even provides a good context for teaching deliberately”. Sfard (1998), however, argues that the participation metaphor for learning should not simply be seen as a replacement for the acquisitional one, adding that any claim for mutual exclusivity is problematic. Sfard (ibid; 6) goes on to differentiate the views of learning from both metaphorical sides in the following way:

While AM (acquisition metaphor) emphasizes the inward movement of the object known as knowledge, PM (participation metaphor) gives prominence to the aspect of mutuality
characteristic of the part-whole relation. Indeed, PM makes salient the dialectic nature of the learning interaction; The whole and the parts affect and inform each other. On one hand, the very existence of the whole is fully dependent on the parts. On the other hand, whereas the AM stresses the way in which possession determines the identity of the possessor, the PM implies that the identity of an individual, like an identity of a living organ, is a function of his or her being (or becoming) a part of a greater entity.

According to Sfard (ibid), the acquisition/participation divide provides two fundamentally different answers to the basic question “What is this thing called learning?” She maintains that the individual/social division is not conflicted in regard to the definition of learning but rather resides in divergent views on the mechanism of learning.

Certain learning contexts, nevertheless, may seem anathematic to these notions of participation. How, for example, does a learner in a language lab or a closed-circuit self-access system share enterprise or endeavours? Or, for that matter, solitary activities such as mental rehearsal in which words, sounds, and phrases are spontaneously replayed in the mind? Even solitary activities such as these may be considered forms of imaginary participation where the learners transport themselves into a shared future experience or enterprise (Jones, 1995, de Guerrero, 1987). In this way, “our engagement with the world is social, even when it does not clearly involve interaction with others” (Wenger, 1998b; 57). In her long term study of the language and literacy practices of two Portuguese migrants in London, Keating (2009; 236) focussed on their learning as “dynamic and transformative participation of people, practices, texts and other elements in joint articulation in activity, social practice and discourse.”

Rogoff’s (2008; 64) views of human development as a “process of transformation of participation in sociocultural activities” has been further explored in recent years by scholars in the field of second language learning (Block, 2003, Breen, 2001, Firth and Wagner, 2007, Jackson, 2010, Mondada and Doehler, 2004). The ‘doing’ and ‘becoming’ aspects of Rogoff’s and Wenger’s views of learning are rooted in processes of participatory engagement where ‘knowing’ is viewed to be a constantly reformulating activity rather than a fixed state (Block, 2003, Sfard, 1998). From this perspective, knowing as a state has given way to knowing as an activity or, as Sfard (1998; 6) puts it, “the permanence of having gives way to the constant flux of doing”. Various social learning models view participation as a central metaphor for learning in these processes of doing, becoming, belonging and experiencing meaning in authentic sociocultural settings (Block; 2003), and theorise learning itself “as a process of becoming a member of a certain community, and acquiring the ability to communicate in the language of the community and act according to its particular norms” (Sfard, 1998; 6). Rogoff (2003; 83) focuses purposely on participation rather than membership, arguing that her several decades of participating in Mayan communities does
not constitute membership, and that by focusing on the “more dynamic concept of participation we can more easily focus on the cultural processes involved in individual development and community histories”. To conclude, from a social learning perspective, participation is viewed as the process of becoming a member of a community and is coeval with learning, and where learning itself is seen as a process of developing participation and new identities in such communities (Wenger; 1998, Block; 2003; Rogoff; 2003). The following section presents the social learning lens of communities of practice and some ways learners may develop relationships and participate in these communities.

1.4.1 Communities of practice and learning
It has been posited that the research framework of communities of practice is one of the most influential theoretical lenses to have emerged within the social sciences in recent years through which we may examine how learning may undergo transformations in community-group settings (Hughes et al., 2007). Informed by sociocultural, social and anthropological theories, Wenger (1998) describes communities of practice (COP) as bounded sites where people meet to pursue shared enterprises in their daily lives (see also Jackson, 2008, Norton, 2001b, Norton and Toohey, 2003b). This concept starts with the assumption that learning is situated in “the context of our lived experiences of participation in the world... [and] is a fundamentally social phenomenon, reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing...” (Wenger, 1998; 3). Examples given by Wenger of these communities of practice include family, work colleagues, schools, bands, and social groups of many sorts. He outlines the nature of these communities and their relationship to learning in this way:

Being alive as human beings means that we are constantly engaged in the pursuit of enterprises of all kinds, from ensuring our physical survival to the most lofty pleasures. As we define these enterprises and engage in their pursuit together, we interact with each other and with the world and we tune our relations with each other and with the world accordingly. In other words, we learn (Wenger, 1998a:45).

This concept has been valuable as a research framework and a practical organizational tool in the areas of commerce, governance, education, professional relations, development projects, and community life (Van Benthuysen, 2008). The theoretical ideas underpinning the concept of communities of practice grew from Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concerns about the ability of more traditional theories of cognitivism and behaviourism to account fully for learning in formal and informal settings, proposing instead a more ‘situated’ theorisation of learning (Van Benthuysen, 2008, Fuller, 2007). The role of participation in identity negotiation and learning in communities of practice is examined in the next subsection.
1.4.2 Participation in communities of practice

Participation in models of social learning is seen as the “process of being active participants in the practices of social communities”, and is also viewed as involving the construction of knowledge and identities in relation to these communities (Wenger, 1998b; 4, author’s italics). For Wenger and other poststructuralists, membership of a community of practice entails identity as a form of competence, which newcomers or learners constantly renegotiate and broaden through engagement with experts in these communities (Jackson, 2008, Wenger, 1998b). From this perspective, “learning and a sense of identity are inseparable” (Lave and Wenger, 1991:115), and the identity generated by learning (participation) is itself knowledge (McCormick and Murphy, 2008). Through varied and ongoing forms of engagement and participation, the negotiation of identities form trajectories or paths “both within and across communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998;154).

Participation in these communities build up a shared repertoire of collective resources including “vocabulary, ways of talking, stories, routines, beliefs and values” (Jackson, 2008; 42). Entry to these communities, access to their repertoires, and identity building can be negotiated from the position of legitimate peripheral participation, a process by which newcomers move from the periphery to fuller participation by means of mutual engagement with more experienced members in the community’s activities, artefacts and identities (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Access to these communities and subsequent personal and group identity building for potential learners, however, is not always guaranteed, automatic, or even desirable (Norton, 2000a, 2001b; Wenger, 1998, Block, 2003). Candidates for participation may not be “granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members” (Wenger, 1998; 101), may not be deemed “worthy to speak” (Norton, 1995a: 18) or may chose non-participation “acts of resistance” from a position of identity marginality as opposed to legitimized peripherality (Norton, 2001b; 160). Wenger (1998) makes the distinction that peripherality can denote some degree of non-participation it also suggests ”an opening, a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; 37), thus representing an enabling factor in participation, while marginality is a type of non-participation that can thwart full participation and identity growth (Norton, 2001b). To sum up, communities of practice are seen in this framework of social learning as fields of possible trajectories with an array of possible past, present, and future identities which the learner may witness, contemplate, and be enabled or constrained in performing in these settings (Wenger, 1998; 156). Some ways in which the lens of communities of practice has been broadened to encompass language learning and use are explored in the following subsection.
1.4.3 Language learning in communities of practice

Reflecting its nature as a broad but sometimes limited theory of learning, some scholars have attempted to expand on communities of practice so as to address its deficit in accounting for the role language plays in social life (Creese, 2005), its shortfall in revealing the role of human agency in transforming communities (Martin, 2005), and its failure to deal with issues of personal and collective identity struggles (Barton and Tusting, 2005). In the area of language use and language learning, scholars have more increasingly turned to other theoretical lenses such as sociocultural theory, critical, and poststructural approaches to add to and adapt the communities of practice framework (Eckert, 2006, Norton, 2001a, Van Benthuysen, 2008). Martin (2005) adds sociocultural activity theory to explore agentive collective and individual community learning practices for a bi-lingual co-worker in a speech therapy department. Creese (2005) developed an extra unit of analysis by using the notion of speech communities as developed by Hymes (1968, 1972, 1974, cited in Creese, 2005) to reveal cultural, linguistic and identity patterns in her study of allegations of racism in a London school. Norton (1995a, 2001b, 2003a) has employed social, critical and poststructural theories to reveal how identity and power influence the language learning trajectories of migrants in host-country communities of practice. In education, the wide appeal of communities of practice has been its value in relocating the focus of learning to settings beyond the classroom into real-world settings, its utility for identifying commonalities and diversities in these settings and its contribution to revealing differences between formal and non-formal learning (Barton and Tusting, 2005). Penelope Eckert sums up the importance of communities of practice for language learning and research:

Communities of practice emerge in response to common interest or position, and play an important role in forming their members’ participation in, and orientation to, the world around them. It provides an accountable link, therefore, between the individual, the group, and place in the broader social order, and it provides a setting in which linguistic practice emerges as a function of this link. Studies of communities of practice, therefore, have considerable explanatory power for the broader demographics of language variability (Eckert, 2006; 683).

Whereas Wenger makes it clear that language is not essential to the negotiation of meaning in practices, Tusting (2005) points out that nearly all forms of mutual engagement rely on linguistic communication to some extent. Pointing to the centrality of the role language plays within Wenger’s (1998) vignettes of communities of practice, Tusting (ibid; 41) argues that any analysis within this framework should include “not only the language but also the relationships between language and other elements in the social process”. It is primarily through participation and the use of language that newcomers internalise social
order, cultural knowledge and, in the process, the newcomer’s own evolving identity within the host community of practice (Noels and Giles, 2009).

It has been shown that community placements and volunteering in host-communities of practice can provide newcomers with “contexts for testing and applying content and procedural knowledge (such as communication and listening strategies)”, and can “facilitate cultural, socio-linguistic learning while supporting community engagement” (Andrew, 2011:220). In Andrew’s three-year study investigating and evaluating the cultural and linguistic benefits of volunteering in community placements for degree-level second language learners, he (ibid) also found that these placements “promote multiple literate understandings of the cultural practices of a chosen community, and by extension, of the local, regional, or national culture of which the community is a microcosm.”

In summary, the second language learner in the social learning and co-participation environment of communities of practice is viewed in this research framework not merely as someone who internalizes and produces approximations of the target language, but rather as a newcomer or apprentice who is has the potential to play a part in the practices of a certain community (Toohey, 1996). In the context of migrant language learners, Toohey (ibid: 550) argues that integration is more intricate in its dynamics than has been supposed, adding that further research which utilizes a community of practice perspective would be useful in “furthering our understanding of those contexts, and in helping us make decisions about the practices of intervention we may wish to implement”. In the following section, the socially situated theories and approaches to language and literacy learning, and their related constructs and features which have been covered in this chapter, are synthesised into a single model for situated language learning.

1.5 A model for situated learning in communities of practice

We have seen how situated theorists view learning as a knowledge construction process where meaning-making is viewed as the result of processes of participation in the doings, becomings, and belongings in sociocultural settings (McCormick and Murphy, 2008). In their study of narratives of participation in second language learning by border crossers, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) concluded that such participation and becoming involved not only taking part in new sociocultural settings but also involved a deep and constant struggle to rebuild identities. In this struggle, they acknowledge the central part played by agency in this identity work by these learners. This research reiterates their assertion of the role of agentic participation in the construction of new language identities and employs situated literacy
practices with adult migrant English language learning in an effort to help them forge their new language and literate identities.

The various strands of socially situated theories of language learning in communities of practice employed in this research, and reviewed in this chapter are represented visually in Figure 4.

![Figure 4 Situated Learning in Communities of Practice](image)

In this model, participation is the central cog in a series of constantly reformulating activities which can enable the transformation of language learners’ identities and knowledges in socially situated practices. This situated model of learning reflects how meaning is (co)constructed from experience as “a mutually modulating activity in which a person acts with the environment, shaping it to modify himself, in turn, to shape the environment, and so on” (Bredo, 1994:29). This process of mutual modulation also results in identities which change and are changed by dynamic subjective and evolving participation in social and cultural networks (Regan and Chasaide, 2010, Block, 2007b).

From the learners’ viewpoint, another central component of this model is human agency, which incorporates the agent’s dependence, interdependence and engagement in social worlds and immediate settings. Human agency is the sociocultural actor (Ahearn, 2001) at work in what is known as the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978), which drives the (co)construction of new identities, meanings and knowledges in this model (Bucholtz, 1999, McCormick and Murphy, 2008). ZPD is a model of learning in which all forms development are presumed as beginning with external social
activities which are then appropriated by the individual as a result of these activities. Informed in part by action theory (Vygotsky, 1978), as originally proposed by Leont’ev (1978), which argues that socially-organized and goal-directed actions play a central role in human development, knowledge is conceived here as guided by and, at the same time, guiding action (McCormick and Murphy, 2008). Viewing this active role of agency in the appropriation of or resistance to new language identities can reveal how situated language knowledge as “culturally shared resources are made to serve the specific social needs of individuals” (Bucholtz, 1999; 206). Identities in this model are assumed to be located and developed in actions rather than categories, and the community of practice model is used in this study as a lens with which to view the assortment of identity work as performed or resisted in socially situated interactions by these learners (Bucholtz, 1999). Overall, identity formation is seen as forms of new competences and knowledges in this socially situated framework which then feedback into and can extend the shape of the learner’s ZPD (McCormick and Murphy, 2008, Lave and Wenger, 1991, Bredo, 1994, Bucholtz, 1999).

In summary, the above model serves as a theoretical template to guide the situated English literacy and language learning practices proposed in this study. This framework views literacy as a process by which the participants in these practices can be socialized for group membership in specific literate communities and, in turn, may participate in shaping the social practices of such communities. This research will employ problem-posing participatory literacy practices with the goal of enabling migrant learners to make and share meanings of their lived language learning experiences, and to help them construct stronger English language identities in order to promote a more successful border-crossing experience.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have briefly described some of the main strands of theoretical approaches in the field second language learning research, and I have proposed a socially situated model of second or other language learning which I consider best suited to the border crossing needs of my learner group. I have reviewed the work of socioculturally and poststructurally-oriented scholars who propose more socially-constructed views of the language learners in the processes of building new language identities. I have also outlined the importance of the roles which identity and agency can play in socially-situated approaches to second language learning. I have argued the benefits of some social theories of learning which are framed by the communities of practice model. I have explained how this model serves as a social lens in this study to examine the language and literacy learning and English language identity work of some border crossing learners in sociocultural settings. Finally, I have offered a template of situated learning which synthesises the various theories and approaches underpinning this study, and argued the
validity of this template as a guide for promoting situated literacy and language learning practices for border-crossing participants in their community of learners. In the next chapter, I will present a review of how some scholars and researchers have interpreted narrative theories and how others have applied these to educational and language learning settings.
Chapter 2 – Narrative inquiry as research method

2.1 Introduction
This chapter will present the approaches to research methodology which have informed this study. In order to best capture the lived English language experiences of this marginalised group, the central mode of data collection and ongoing collaborative analysis deemed suitable for this study is narrative inquiry. First, this chapter will outline the characteristics of narrative inquiry as a research method, and its relationship with and uses in language learning research. This chapter then describes how this form of inquiry has been used to explore issues of displacement with particular regard to migrant learners, including socially-mediated constraints to language learning and socialisation such as gender, access to linguistic capital and identity struggles. The next section will highlight how narrative inquiry can activate the constructs of identity and agency to help foster linguistic identity negotiation and provide affordances for border-crossing language learners to challenge imposed positions and claim access to social spaces in new settings. The sections following this will review how follow-up interviews have been employed in some narrative inquiries. Towards the end of this chapter, some limitations of certain aspects of narrative inquiry will be outlined. This chapter will finish with a review of how some narrative scholars have developed and used diverse types of narrative analysis as ways of examining stories of lived experiences.

2.2 Narrative inquiry
Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research that involves collecting oral, written or visual narratives which focus on the meanings that people assign to stories of their lived experiences (Trahar, 2009). In narrative inquiries, these stories are shaped through discussions with the research subject as (co)author in a dialogue. A number of data collection methods may be employed, and the researcher and the research participants usually work together in a collaborative dialogic relationship (Moen, 2008). Data may come in the form of “field notes; journal records; interview transcripts; one’s own and other’s observations; storytelling; letter writing; autobiographical writing; documents such as school and class plans, newsletters, and other texts, such as rules and principles; and pictures” and, more recently, video recordings (ibid, 2008; 61). Narrative inquiry and the process of gathering and interpreting stories is now a point of scholarly investigation in itself, and there is a journal dedicated to this area of qualitative research called Narrative Inquiry (Riley and Hawe, 2005, Trahar, 2013, Trahar, 2006, Trahar, 2011, Young, 2012).
Because the core focus of this inquiry is with migrant English language learners’ lived experience and stories from their lives and how they are lived (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; xxii), narrative inquiry has been chosen as a central mode of data collection and analysis. The development of this method proceeds from the argument that humans lead storied lives and give form to their daily lives by “stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories” (Clandinin et al., 2006; 447). Narrative scholars define narrative inquiry as “the study of experience as story” (ibid), which is principally a way of thinking about experience. Elsewhere Connelley and Clandinin (1990; 2) made the distinction between ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ in the following manner:

To preserve this distinction we use the reasonably well-established device of calling the phenomenon "story" and the inquiry "narrative." Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience.

While it has been argued that social research has helped us to gain extensive knowledge of how people construct and explain their worlds, Bruner (1991; 4) maintains that our constructions and representations of the rich and muddled domain of human interaction are far less well realised. Bruner goes on to point out that since we “organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative-stories, excuses, myths, reasons, etc,”(ibid.), narrative is a ready-made, active, and wide-ranging cultural toolkit which can represent acceptable versions of lived experience. Hardy (1968; 5) also illustrates the importance of narrative as the means by which people give their lives meaning across time: “We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, plan, revise, criticize, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative”. Despite admitting that these versions are governed by conventions of narrative necessity rather than logical restrictions, Bruner (1991; 4) nevertheless relates the irony of how we have no compunctions about labelling these stories ‘true’ or ‘false.’

Narrative inquirers try to use the modes of construction, reasons, cultural discourses and perceived audience of these stories to account for the complexities of human experience (ibid). Narrative inquiry was first coined as a term in the field of educational research in relation to teacher studies and curriculum research in 1990 (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Clandinin and Connelly (1989; 4) view narrative ‘storying’ both as “a fundamental method of personal (and social) growth” and as a fundamental characteristic of education. As a research methodology, they go on to describe it in the following way:

Narrative method, in its simplest terms, is the description and restorying of the narrative structure of varieties of educational experience. A researcher’s narrative account of an educational event
may constitute a restorying of that event and to that extent is on a continuum with the processes of reflective storying that goes on, one way or another, in each of our educational lives (ibid).


2.2.1 Narrative inquiry and situated language learning

This study uses narrative inquiry both as a research method into lived language experiences in various communities of practice and as praxis to foster situated language and literacy learning for this cohort in the immediate learning environment itself (see 3.5.3). This learning environment is also a community of practice where group members “jointly share and develop practices, learn from their interactions with group members, and gain opportunities to develop personally, professionally, and/or intellectually” (Mills, 2011; 348).

As learners construct their stories of lived experiences in situated practice they engage in a “meaningful learning context that maximizes language and literacy development by promoting social interaction” (Kim, 2005; 21-22). By writing about and reflecting on these experiences, learners are encouraged to engage in this meaning-making interaction collaboratively, constructively, and consciously (ibid). The consequences of such an interaction can imply that learners not only realise the value of their storied experiences, but can also use them as a “vehicle for language acquisition as well as self-discovery” (ibid). Other studies have shown that this type of peer-to-peer situated learning and socialisation can be highly valuable and effectual (Nguyen and Kellogg, 2010). For instance, in his study of informal computer mediated learning, Sawchuk (2003; 57) observed that in such peer-to-peer situated learning events neither participant has individual control, and both learners contributed to the “formation of the conditions for the other’s knowledge production process”. Reconfiguring the immediate learning environment as a socially-constructed, situated learning space can foster learning by example. In his narrative inquiry into situated learning practices with students on an English as Medium of Instruction programme in the Netherlands, Haines (2012; 9) relates how two learners were using their peers as models to be copied: Simona learns
from “how the other, especially German students, do it”, while Katerina observes, “she’s doing that and that and I’m trying to do it as well because I like it”.

Haines (Ibid) concludes his narrative study by stating that by fostering situated learning in the immediate learning environment we can promote individual and collective learner participation and motivation. Alongside the implications for curriculum and environmental approaches to teaching and learning in multilingual settings, Haines (ibid; 18) maintains that the learners’ narratives “provide evidence of the transformative role of ‘research conversations’ in narrative inquiry”.

In the field of education narrative inquiry has been mostly applied to teacher education and training (Bell, 2002). Some ethnographers have employed narrative inquiry for language education in the form of life histories (Kouritzin, 2000a, Kramp, 2004), diary keeping (Bailey, 1991, Bailey and Nunan, 1996b, Boud, 2001, Norton, 1994) and autobiographical research (Andrew, 2009, Benson, 2004). Researchers in SLA and ESOL are increasingly acknowledging the value of learner narratives and autobiographies as valid sources of data which can compliment or challenge more traditional empirical research approaches (Barkhuizen, 2008b, Barkhuizen, 2011, Bell, 2002, Coffey and Street, 2008, Simpson, 2011, Pavlenko, 2002a).

Menard-Warwick (2004; 308) observes that narrative inquiry can help educators to better understand where learners come from and their “perspectives on a variety of complex social and educational issues that have touched their lives over the years”. She recounts how, during the course of her narrative inquiry with Latina ESL learners in California, her participants revealed rich seams of knowledge by telling her “multiple stories about work, love, marriage, parenting, war, politics, discrimination, poverty, shopping, reading, television, home-buying, illness, schooling, cooking, friendship”.

Bell (ibid; 209) has outlined some of the advantages of using narrative inquiry in second language literacy research (Bell, 2002). She maintains that it helps researchers understand the unpredictable “physical impact of the learning struggle”. She has also argued that it allows researchers reach information which participants may not consciously know themselves. The next section will look at various types of socially-mediated constraints and some affordances narrative inquiry can uncover.

2.3 Narrative inquiry and displacement

Narrative inquiry has been used to explore how migrants orient themselves in terms of social expectations and how they position themselves regarding societal norms, their social roles in new milieus, and their
relationships and participation in unfamiliar social worlds (Baynham and De Fina, 2005; 244, De Fina and King, 2011). Various studies focusing on border crossers’ conscious reflections on their migratory experiences reveal confrontations regarding social expectations, pre-constructed social power relations, and “contradictions and negotiations in which new self-deﬁnitions surface” (Baynham and De Fina, 2005; 12). Baynham (2005b) uses the narratives of Moroccan women in London to show how these border crossers challenge generic male stories of migration and contest social spaces in the new environment. Relaño Pastor and De Fina (2005a) employ the narratives of Mexican first generation immigrant women in California to understand how they experienced language conﬂict and forged new language identities.

In these studies the analysis and representation of social roles, norms and relationships show how the two constructs of agency and positioning can be central to understanding migrants’ social and linguistic perceptions and management of time, space, and ‘here’ and ‘there’ regarding points of departure and arrival in their stories (ibid). Narrative performance is especially revealing with ‘displaced’ narrators such as immigrants. For this group, the process of relating and reconstructing their lived experience involves them in making meaning and sense of social interactions and conﬂicts while, at the same time, “foregrounding an emerging sense of their identities” (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005b; 37). In many instances, this process also involves the contestation of conventional roles and the occupation of new social spaces (ibid). Overall, narratives present us with ‘insider’ views of dislocation, resettlement and the attending conﬂicts of displaced groups while also providing occasions for them to “enact or perform social and moral relocation” (ibid). Key to the process of relocation for border-crossing communities is their women migrant members. Some views on the central roles of women in reports and stories of resettlement are reviewed in the next part.

2.3.1 Narrative inquiry and gender
Gendered themes are well represented across a variety of narrative genres (Menard-Warwick, 2004). Within the area of narrative inquiry, this is especially the case (Baynham, 2005b, Baynham, 2006b, De Fina and King, 2011, Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, Kouritzin, 2000b). Kouritzin (2000b) uses the stories of immigrant mothers in Canada to explore how gendered power relations impact on their access to the dominant language. Narrative inquiries can offer access to linguistic ways of constructing certain kinds of identities, including gendered identities (Menard-Warwick, 2004). Menard-Warwick (2004) employs the narratives of Latin American adult ESL learners in California to understand how gender as a social construct mediates learners’ decisions and opportunities to learn English. In this way narratives can serve
as a “a crucial resource for socializing emotions, attitudes and identities, developing interpersonal relationships, and constituting membership in a community” (Ochs and Capps, 1996; 19).

The active role that female immigrants play in the settlement process has been revealed in studies on gender and migration (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005b). Scholars of settlement process in the U.S. have revealed how women are prominently functional in daily social interactions in schools, shops, hospitals, places of employment, community activities and in the practice of public and private financial maintenance (Chavira, 1988, Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Relaño Pastor and De Fina (2005b) concluded their analysis of the stories on Mexican immigrant women in California by stating that these narratives show active engagement by these women against unfair social language practices. In these ways, women play very active parts in controlling their own fortunes in the socio-economic and cultural structures of their borderland communities (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005b).

According to Rockhill (1994), professional discourse has long singled out a lack of motivation as a central factor in the non-participation of adults in literacy programs. However, in her studies with Hispanic women immigrants in Los Angeles, she found that migrant women’s English language development was tied up in gendered power dynamics and imposed, culturally-mediated gender identity positions. Access to linguistic resources and English language tuition, particularly in the case of migrant women and mothers, has been said to be a complex matter which, because it is situated in personal circumstances, is not easily resolvable (Kouritzin, 2000b). The tension between the roles and identities immigrant mothers are called to perform, on the one hand as mothers who maintain the mother culture, perpetuate the mother tongue, and drive the familial heritage, and on the other hand as linguistic brokers who must learn to function quickly in the host language in order to accomplish the multi-faceted tasks and conflicts involved in nurturing children or extended families in multiple new settings and unfamiliar social systems (ibid). In her study of the narratives of immigrant mothers, Kouritzin focuses on cultural constraints which impact on these women’s access to ESL classes. Kouritzin found that the attendance of these women depended on the prioritisation of their roles as mothers, wives, in-laws, workers, and primary carers. As such, the accessibility to language classes was subject to the welfare and health of their charges (ibid).

Menard-Warwick (2004) also found that cultural imperatives and access to ESL for her Latina learners depended on personal histories and circumstances. She reports that language and literacy development is closely connected to gender-mediated struggles for migrant women who have to overcome gender-based conflict to reach their goals in new settings. She goes on to point out that men and women from
certain cultural backgrounds or communities often have differing attitudes to second language learning, and may experience unequal access to these resources as a consequence of this (ibid).

Goldstein (1997) maintains that, while ethnographic studies have shown that literacy and language development are influenced by the practices of particular communities, it is also important to understand the role of human agency in the individual’s social interactions and goals in these endeavours. Among the pedagogical implications of her research using the life histories of her Latina participants, Menard-Warwick (ibid) advocates the use of a sociocontextual approach, where literacy and language learning uses the lived experiences of border crossers as a relevant practice for these learners. She recommends the use of the Language Experience Approach (see 4.3.4) to develop literacy with linguistically lower-level migrants. However, she includes a few notes of caution in her discussion of using this approach with this learner group. Firstly, she points out that teachers should keep in mind that relating lived narratives can be painful for some learners, and ways of opting out of story sharing should be provided. Secondly, teachers need to be mindful that some learners’ biographical work may be partial, selective or constrained by perceptions of social or personal appropriacy for group work.

Baynham describes narratives of migration and settlement as “narratives in which, almost by definition, settled and stable senses of self are unsettled and challenged” (Baynham, 2006a; 376). His study of Moroccan immigrants in London shows how Moroccan women reposition themselves in their stories to claim central roles as agents in the migration process as opposed to the pre-constructed or “generic” narratives of being appendages to enterprising males (Baynham, 2005b; 15). These women’s “personal” narratives challenge the accepted “generic” narratives which claim to represent the experience not only of the speaker but also of the group as a whole (ibid). These stories also reveal how power relations are played out and challenged in everyday micro conversations. In one of these narratives a participant draws on multilingual resources to challenge a troublesome landlady while also relating how her husband had been silenced by his lack of enough English to settle the issue in question (ibid; 23). Thus the ‘expected’ narrative about migrants is contested by stories which are “unavoidably implicated in relations of power” (Baynham and De Fina, 2005; 244). In a wider sense, this central role women play as principal agents in the processes of socialisation means their stories of language issues are of crucial consequence to how border crossers act, see themselves and socialise their children (Relaño Pastor, 2005). Immigrant women challenge traditional feminine positioning by building multiple contextualised identities which reflect their historical and social realities (Sawin, 1999, Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005b). The next section will briefly
explore how narrating lived experiences can expose how border crossers have access or not to the linguistic capital of the majority population.

### 2.3.2 Narrative inquiry and linguistic capital

Narratives have also been used as sources of analysis into how matters of dominance and access to power are enacted around language issues. Language domination is strongly bound to ‘symbolic domination’ (Bourdieu, 1977b), which is construed as command of established representations of reality and societal relations. How border crossers position themselves to gain access to linguistic capital, and the right to speak and be heard in unfamiliar settings, has been cited as key to understanding the successes and failures of these learners in building new language identities in real-world settings (Brammer, 2002, Nawyn et al., 2012, Pennycook, 2000).

Narrative inquiries into language access, therefore, can provide insights into the dominant culture and how minorities “position themselves with respect to lack of access to symbolic and material resources” (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005b). In her narrative inquiry into the lived English language experiences of immigrant women in Canada, Norton (2000b) proposes the construct of investment as a means by which learners’ social and historical relationships to language, education, identity and community are mediated and articulated. Norton goes on to explain investment in this way:

> If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital. Learners expect or hope to have a good return on that investment—a return that will give them access to hitherto unattainable resources (ibid; 10)

In their inquiry into the stories of linguistic isolation of recently arrived Burundian and Burmese refugees in Michigan in the United States, Nawyn et al. (2012; 255) demonstrate how these border crossers experienced language as a noneconomic social capital. They conclude from their study that the “linguistic resources of communities (both immigrant and receiving communities) are a key component of immigrant integration” (ibid). Narrating lived experiences of evolving language identities has been shown to be another key component for promoting access to linguistic capital and greater levels integration of border crossers. I will next review some studies of the relationship between narratives and identity work.

### 2.4 Narrative inquiry and identity work

The connection between storied experiences and identity has long been established (Benson et al., 2013). Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001; 11) argue that story-telling is vital, in particular autobiographical
narratives, “whenever it comes to matters of identity”. They go on to argue that stories “organise our senses of who we are, who others are, and how we are to be related” (ibid). In the same publication, Brockmeier and Harré (2001) claim that with narratives “we are primarily dealing not with a mode of representing but with a specific mode of constructing and constituting reality”. Commenting on this mode of reality construction around the same time, Bruner (2001) writes “we have come to reject the view that a "life" is anything in itself and to believe that it is all in the constructing, in the text, or the text making”.

Narratives have been described as a “rich source for identity work” which can challenge set or stable perspectives of identity (Baynham, 2005a; 378, De Fina, 2006). Narrative inquiries, which see identity as situated in the contexts of their telling, diverge from essentialist and fixed notions of identity and emphasise the constructed nature of identifications as constituted in discourse (ibid). A central feature of this context, and one which the narrative researcher does well to keep in mind, is the nature of transcultural communication which happens when, for example, the ethnically diverse migrant speaks to host country professional, Muslim to Christian, informal to formally educated and so on. This entails a reasonable amount of conscious reflexivity on behalf of the researcher (ibid).

Narrative inquiry has been used in language education for migrants to afford the negotiation of their identities which traditional classroom talk was likely to constrain (Simpson, 2011). It has been posited that it is through narrating lived experience that border-crossing learners can negotiate their evolving identities. As Barkhuizen (2011; 9) puts it: “In telling stories, participants are performing themselves; they are doing their identities”. Pastor and De Fina (2005b; 37) also view narrating as a discourse practice of identity construction which not only reveals selves that predate the occasion of story’s performance, but also “enacts performs and shapes and also represents identities within specific interactional contexts, while at the same time building upon, reflecting and conveying social experiences related to other social practices”. (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005b; 37)

By “bringing the outside in”, or including learners narratives of their out-of-class lived experiences, Simpson (2011; 13) sought to challenge the pigeon-holing of institutionally imposed identities of students as test takers, potential employees, and so on. Simpson views these learner-generated narratives as linguistic resources, which can be drawn upon by students to (co)construct representations of their selves, and calls one example a “migration narrative, one of dislocation and relocation. It is a telling of a history, in the distant and more recent past, of migration and its current and future implications; and as such it entails the work of identity construction” (ibid). Narrative inquiry as a method has been used extensively
to explore and, in some cases, to transform the language learning of marginalised informants and it allows us and learners to relate, and relate to, to diverse lived experiences. The construct of Agency has been said to be central in language identity work for border crossers (Hull and Katz, 2006). The role of learners’ agency in making meaning and sense of their lived language experiences in unfamiliar settings has also been reported (Norton, 1995a, Norton and Toohey, 2001). The following sub-section will outline how some narrative scholars have approached this relationship.

2.4.1 Narrative inquiry and agency

Hull and Katz (Hull and Katz, 2006; 3) point out that a great deal of studies have explored the roles narratives play in “the construction of agentive identities”. In their work on fostering literacy through digital storytelling with marginalised learners in the Bay Area of San Francisco, Hull and Katz showed that by giving the learners more control over their narratives they could define and redefine their identities and voice “agentive selves through the creation of authoritative texts” (ibid; 37). In her narrative case studies of English language confidence building by Chinese adult learners in Australia, Xu (2012; 586) reports how the students “made conscious efforts through their individual agency in order to build confidence in their language use, thus advance their English language development in Australia”.

Miller (2010) proposes a need for change in poststructuralist and sociocultural approaches to researching agency. She argues that learner’s agency should be understood as being “inherently unstable and as inevitably enabled and constrained in the ongoing co-constitution of identity and social reality” (ibid; 467). In her narrative study of how adult immigrant small business owners in the United States are constituted as agents and how they perceive their own capacity to act, Miller carries out an analyses of the learners’ subject positions and agency. She reports how these immigrants’ narrative interviews were limited by their positioning as language learners, migrants, or small business owners. She concludes by saying that the constraints and affordances of this positioning invariably occur in “ideologically informed spaces” (ibid; 484), but also reports that the participants used their stories to make sense of their worlds by, as Lee and Poynton put it (2000; 5), “the use of ordinary, habitual, or sedimented ways of speaking themselves into being”. The transformative potential for narrative inquiry to provide evidence of learning in situated sociocultural settings has not yet been widely explored in research with border-crossing language learners. The next sub-section will describe the transformative potential of narrative inquiry in language learning and identity work.
2.4.2 Transformative narrative inquiry

Knowledge in narrative forms has been said to be represented in marginalized groups, including women, border crossers and traditional oral communities (Canagarajah, 1996a, Norton and Early, 2011). This provides transformational possibilities for these groups to be more actively involved in the knowledge construction of their communities and institutions. Claiming that “narrative is the discourse mode most able to express identity as a process”, Polkinghorne (1996; 299) reports how the transformative potential of narrative inquiry through what he terms ‘self stories’ in healthcare can help clients move from victimic to agentic identity. Allied with the problem-posing functions of socially-situated language learning and literacy practices (see chapter 1), collaborative narrative inquiries can help border-crossing learners to address and find redress on issues and conflicts which impact on their access to linguistic and social contact with host communities (Frye, 1999, Trueba, 1990).

The three elements identified by Connelley and Clandinin (2006) as “temporality, sociality, and place - which specify dimensions of an inquiry space,” render this method of inquiry suited to exploring border-crossing participants evolving identities and subsequent linguistic and social transformations as narrated from their lived experiences over past, present and future time (Norton and Early, 2011, Simpson, 2011). The focus of these three dimensions of narrative inquiry – where temporality deals with people, places and events (past, present and future) in constant transition; where sociality concerns us with the lived personal, existential, social and environment contexts; and where place means “the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place” (Clandinin et al., 2006; 480), may provide powerful lenses for revealing how border-crossing learners negotiate or renegotiate social identities such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation among others in relation to the larger social world, and how they may reorganise or transform these relationships across time and space (Norton, 2010).

A key feature which can ensure that an inquiry succeeds in achieving some transformation is that of collaboration, that is to do research with rather than about people (Bray, 2000). Collaborative inquiry, which consists of cycles of action and reflection by all involved, has been said to be “a powerful approach to learning from experience and, simultaneously, a valid method of conducting inquiry into the nature of human experience” (ibid; 10). The resulting blend of research and learning, and of theory and method, which collaborative inquiry brings to research, is a central characteristic of the overall research and learning approaches in this study. The following section will outline the nature of this characteristic and its relationship to linguistic and social identity work.
2.4.3 Narratives, Identity and transgredience

A learner’s ability to deal with destabilisation and to convert lived interactional experiences into future learning and identity building contexts is said to be related to a personal quality called transgredience (Etherington and Spurling, 2007). In the conclusion of their study on the benefits of narrative writing for border-crossing second language learners Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) pose a series of pertinent questions. They ask whether the status and role of the language which the individual aspires to affects the success of these learners. While they argue for the role of narratives in helping to construct stronger language identities in the written accounts of people of letters in their own study, they call for more research with the many others who have not, or cannot write their own accounts. They surmise that writing about the lived experience of the border-crossing struggle can enable the learner to achieve the state of transgredience (ibid). According to Kramsch (2013), by achieving transgredience language learners learn to use the language correctly and appropriately, and are able to reflect on interactional events. This characteristic has been defined as “the ability to perceive interactional events from outside of the event itself and in which attention is focused on the resources and identities involved in the events” (Pavlenko & Lantolf 2000:174). This state has been said to allow them to occupy positions from which they can observe and reflect on their evolving language identities both from the inside and from the outside (Kramsch, 2013, Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). It has been argued that opportunities for reflection on language socialisation, which collaborative storytelling provides, can help language learners develop this quality (Etherington and Spurling, 2007). If the realisation of transgredience can, as Pavlenko and Lantolf (ibid) claim, facilitate the complex journeys many border crossers make toward a fuller and more legitimate membership of new communities through identity awareness, then we can assume that a failure to achieve this position can impact unfavourably on this type of language learner. One method which has been used to expand the ‘conversations’ in narrative inquiries and help learners grow their transgredience is follow-up narrative interviewing. I will describe some approaches and characteristics of this form of qualitative interviewing in the next section.

2.5 Narrative interviewing

Narrative interviewing follows the general practices and characteristics of in-depth qualitative ethnographic interviewing and views the interview process as conducting a ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1988; 2). The basic idea which drives the narrative interview, according to Bauer (1996), is to endeavour to “reconstruct social events from the perspective of informants as direct as possible”. It has been defined by Riessman (2008; 709) as a discursive accomplishment by two active participants seeking
to create meaning together. In the views of Josselson and Lieblich (2003; 269-270) the narrative interview differs from clinical or traditional research interviews in that it “procures ‘stories’, namely concrete examples, episodes or memories from the teller’s life”. They go on to say that this type of interview requires the researcher to keep their research goals and personal aims in mind while “leaving enough space for the conversation to develop into a meaningful narrative” (ibid).

Narrative interviews have been used in a broad range of narrative studies from the domain of childcare (Zeanah et al., 1994) through those of disability (Lawlor, 2000), and from the identity work of health practitioners (Polkinghorne, 1996) to the world of business studies on quality control (Greenhalgh et al., 2005). In the domain of language learning, narrative interviews have been employed in areas as diverse as cross-cultural education (Phillion, 2008b), teacher training (Norton and Early, 2011), second language socialisation (Ortaçtepe, 2013), identity work with teenage immigrant English language learners (Danzak, 2011), sociolinguistic ‘conflict’ narratives of Latina immigrants in the US (De Fina and King, 2011), and the literacy practices of elderly immigrants (Bennet, 2013). I will next outline some approaches narrative scholars have used in follow-up narrative interviews.

2.5.1 Follow-up narrative interviews

Some critical ethnographers have used interviews as a basis for follow-up investigations on their learners’ written narratives (Zhan, 2010, Hall, 2008, Norton, 1998, Cole, 1991). This way of linking written narrative to interviews, which then creates further narratives, has proved a fruitful way of accessing, expanding on, and documenting unobservable events (Zimmerman and Wieder, 1977). The application of cyclical and negotiational feedback interviews between informant and researcher in narrative inquiries can, according to Cole (1991; 191), “enable the storyteller to give more thorough impressions to initial statements, comments, impressions, comments and reflections”. Cole and Knowles (2001) report on their experience of a narrative interview where informants felt anxious beforehand and dissatisfied and disempowered after the initial interview. They claim that, by renegotiating initial impressions by having access to the initial transcript, they gained some reasonable level of authority over the text of the final narrative report. Naidoo (2008), in her work with refugees in Western Australia, used critically ethnographic, semi-structured, open-ended individual and focus group interviews to provide prospects for participants to use critical knowledge for social change (Thomas, 1993). Her semi-structured interviews “enabled interviewers to document the changes in social skills and the nature of the change in language used by refugee students, as reported by tutors and coordinating teachers” (Naidoo, 2008; 93). In his review of ethnographic interviewing in applied linguistics, Talmy (2010) reports surprisingly few cases where
interviews were fully integrated with other methods such as participant observation. He also reported ‘slippage’ in terms of how ethnography, case study, and narrative research were conceptualised, adding that only the terms used to identify these genres gave any clue to whether they were in fact “an ethnography, a case study, a narrative inquiry, life-history research, or a phenomenological study”. In contrast, the interviews in this study represent ‘social acts’ (ibid: 131) which should be integrated as fully as possible with the informants surrounding social world and their active participation in the whole of the research environment. In summary, the socially interactive narrative interview is a site of knowledge co-production (Talmy, 2010) where the informant is transformed from a “passive vessel of answers” to someone who “not only holds facts and details of experience, but, in the very process of offering them up for response, constructively adds to, takes away from, and transforms the facts and details” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997; 116). Working with learners on their narratives of lived experiences may involve exposing them to sometimes painful revelations, which can have ethical consequences for the researcher. The following section starts by outlining ethical research in ethnography before presenting some critical approaches relevant to researching with vulnerable cohorts.

2.6 Ethical research

Ethnographers in qualitative research are confronted by ethical dilemmas diverse from those encountered in quantitative or more survey-oriented research (Ryen, 2011). Ryen identifies the principal interrelated issues which arise most frequently in Western qualitative research as codes and consent, and confidentiality and trust:

Codes and consent refer to the principle of ‘informed consent’. This standard, which lies at the heart of ethical research, ensures that participants are entitled to know: a) that they are the subjects of a study, b) the nature of the inquiry, and c) have the right to withdraw at any point from the research.

Confidentiality requires that we protect the informants’ identities, and the place and location of the research (ibid). Communicating this practice of protection in advance can serve to make participants more comfortable with the research process (Richards, 2003). Where possible, informants should be made aware that the researcher may draw on mutually generated data to formulate and publish “generalised and non-attributable points without first checking” (ibid; 67). Some researchers allow informants access to this data, and the right to remove any compromising information from it (ibid). It has been argued that rigorous scientific and ethical objectivity entails the participants being able to “object to what we do to them and say about them” (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2005;161).
Generating and maintaining trust, which is seen as the “classic key to good field relations” in ethnographic studies, presents a greater and more sustained challenge than in other research genres (Ryen, 2011; 120). Trust also applies the researcher’s responsibility not to spoil the field so that subjects may be disinclined to participate in later inquiries (ibid). In summary, criticalists view trust as vital to any ethical research, and exhort researchers to develop and maintain a rapport of ease, harmony and trust with informants in the collection and analysis of data (Madison, 2005).

2.6.1 Critical ethics

The assumption that it is possible to resolve ethical issues with a set of either/or choices before beginning a project has been challenged by researchers from critical paradigms (Madison, 2005). Concerns of specificity, power, identity, situational contexts and relationships with the ‘Other’ have given rise to a more critical set of ethical values (ibid). Brinkmann and Kvale (2005; 161) place moral objectivity ahead of methodological concerns in ethics, and situate this on a larger contextualised canvas in their definition of “ethics in an everyday sense of the term”:

Being ethical means being open to other people, acting for the sake of their good, trying to see others as they are, rather than imposing one’s own ideas and biases on them. This kind of objectivity involves an understanding of the social and historical context of one’s viewpoint, for we always “see” something against a larger background of tradition, history and community.

This ‘seeing’ should also encompass the impact of social power differentials, an ethical matter central to the concerns of critical researchers, which can result in suspicion of outsider researchers’ purposes for conducting research outside their own communities (Santoro and Smyth, 2010, Nelson and Gould, 2005). In the pursuit of ‘truths’ in the social worlds of minority groups, it has been argued that we have crossed “historically-entrenched boundaries to study populations that have been historically colonized, exploited and monitored by dominant races and classes” (Nelson and Gould, 2005; 328). Informed by feminist and auto-ethnographic traditions, criticalists cultivate consciousness of the researcher’s own contextualised canvas, “our own gaze, our standpoint, the history we bring to a research moment”, and believe that reflexivity is indispensable in order to counterbalance researcher-researched power differences and produce responsible research and analysis (Nelson and Gould, 2005; 329, Santoro and Smyth, 2010). Lee (Lee, 2005; 47-48) sees the issues of ethics and identity in research as coeval, as researchers “explore what is of significance to themselves, their identities, and their positionalities”. She goes on to illustrate the role of identity in setting the broader agenda for her research:
I self-identify myself as conducting critical research, indicating that my research was interested from a particular ideological standpoint. Discussions, therefore, of my desire as a researcher indicate a false separation of identities, as it was also my desire as a visible minority language educator specifically and a human being concerned with social justice and anti-racism generally that guided my ethical decisions throughout my year of research at Pacific University (author’s italics).

Addressing the complexities of researcher/researched identities in her case study of racialisation in a Canadian ESL school, Lee (ibid) argues that the criticalist’s goals of social justice and advocacy may sometimes be at odds with doing ethical research. Nevertheless, she maintains that the conflict between these objectives may be reconciled by engaging in reflexive practices. Santoro and Smyth (2010; 496) employed this process of reflexivity with the Other in their research on multicultural education with vulnerable groups “in order to avoid the potentially exploitative effects of research into marginalised ethnic minorities”. To this end, they developed a critical, reflexive approach, and emphasised the importance of reflection on all social processes which impact on the collection and analysis of data (ibid). Misrepresentation of participants’ stories is both an ethical issue and one of the possible limitations for narrative inquirers which are explored in the following section.

2.7 Limitations of narrative inquiry

While it has been pointed out that narratives are “gaining prominence in research publications because they represent holistically the local knowledge of the communities studied” (Canagarajah, 1996a; 327), narrative inquiry is not without its obstacles and pitfalls. Phillion (2008b; 290) addresses some of the barriers he encountered during the course of his narrative inquiry with two questions that arose from his study into the experiences of immigrant learners in Hong Kong: “How does a researcher from a different cultural background and from a different country get access to participants’ narrative accounts of learning experiences? How do researchers get, translate and represent voices authentically in narrative research?” He maintains that without a translator, the narrative inquiry is compromised, and, even with a translator, the stories may be “filtered or distorted”. He also points out that due to the sensitive and personal nature of the stories, those involved in translating or interpreting events have some degree of power over the participants. Phillion goes on to explain that meaningful accounts can be lost in translation, resulting in what he calls “partial interpretations, constructed from a limited perspective” (ibid). Another basic tension which arises from using stories as a data source is that of representation (Lin, 2013). In categorizing responses as stories we may risk opening up “many complex analytical problems, and, of course, it represents only one of a number of approaches to issues of meaning” (Mishler, 1991; 67).
Trahar (2009) mentions another critique of narrative inquiry that, in favouring the representations of meanings which individuals ascribe to their stories, narrative inquirers may resist collective understanding being drawn from their studies (Trahar, 2009). Elsewhere, Trahar admits to personal resistance in making generalisable claims from her research by seeking instead to provide “rich stories of learning” (Trahar, 2011; 47). Trahar deals with this issue by citing Andrews et al (2013; 491), who maintain that by listening carefully there is much to learn from every story that one might gather. For society really is comprised of human lives, and if we can begin to understand the framework that lends meaning to these lives, then we have taken the important first step to being able to access the wider framework of meaning that is the binding agent of a culture.

Other dilemmas which inhere to narrative inquiry are of an ethical or emotional nature. In her study of literacy practices with older Jamaican women in the U.K., Bennet (2013; 175) encountered unexpected difficulties in these areas and admits to being drawn into the dramas of one the participant’s performed story. She discovered that her initial perception of her role as a ‘traditional’ objective researcher and observer of the enacted performances turned out to be somewhat simplistic in hindsight.

While it has been shown that the researcher’s position in the narrative dialogue is of central importance (Barkhuizen, 2011, Barkhuizen et al., 2013, Baynham, 2006b, Canagarajah, 1996b), there is a danger that the researcher may produce what Nelson (cited in Barkhuizen, 2011; 17) referred to as “yet another self-focussed text.” Barkhuizen (ibid) goes on to cite Nelson’s reasons for her concern in this matter:

... too much detail, too little depth; too much angst, not enough insight; too much about what happened, not enough about what it all might mean – especially for readers in other locales. Some autobiographic narratives seem strangely generic; on the bland side; sometimes the tone seems aimlessly confessional or self-consciously clever; sometimes the accompanying analysis seems sketchy, failing to come together into a focused scholarly argument.

On the other hand, Canagarajah (Canagarajah, 1996b; 324) laments the absence of some narrative researcher from their reports, observing that they are “looming behind the text as an omniscient, transcendental, all-knowing figure”. He points out that this convention “hides the manner in which the subjectivity of the researchers - with their complex values, ideologies, and experiences - shapes the research activity and findings” (ibid). In their collaborative narrative inquiry with Ugandan teachers, Norton and Early (2011) dealt squarely with this issue by investigating the co-construction and negotiation of their identity work with the teachers and by exposing the goals, values and ideological positions of the researchers in their final report.
Bell (Bell, 2002) cites time commitment as a factor which may hinder working with large numbers of informants, and the danger of a participant’s stories being lost in the larger narrative of a research. She also highlights the issue of how the participant may remain at the mercy of constant reconstructions of their stories by researchers at conferences and in articles where the data is revisited in different lights. This was the experience of Barkhuizen (2011) who, in the wake of her study of the linguistic and language identities of migrant learners in New Zealand, subsequently found herself questioning her retelling or reconstructing her participants stories. Despite these pitfalls, narrative inquiry has been said to have the transformative potential to embody knowledge ‘from the bottom up’ (Canagarajah, 1996a) and can represent the research process in a far more wide-ranging and unrestricted way than the more conventional studies (Norton and Early, 2011). In order to avoid some of the pitfalls described above, and as a way of dealing with the various formats data can appear in storytelling practices, narrative inquirers have developed various forms of data analysis. The following section will outline the most common approaches to narrative analysis.

### 2.8 Narrative Analysis

Data analysis in narrative inquiry differs from other types of qualitative research approaches in that the data come in the form of stories, but is similar to other types of qualitative studies in the some of the ways it uses a paradigmatic examination of data (Polkinghorne, 2002). Paradigmatic analysis entails an assessment and interpretation of the data in order to locate common themes or concepts in the stories which have been collected (Cortazzi, 2001, Polkinghorne, 2002). Polkinghorne (1995) identifies the two possible types of narrative analysis as analysis of narratives and narrative analysis.

**Type 1 - Analysis of narratives**

In the first type of narrative analysis, concepts which emerge in the data are identified as deriving from existing theories (Polkinghorne, 2002). In this model of narrative analysis, the data is usually gathered in storied form, and the aim is to use stories to understand a concepts or abstractions such as notions of human purpose and choice; for example consumer behavior, or experiences such as chance happenings and life events (Kramp, 2004, Polkinghorne, 1995). The data in this form of analysis is separated and inductively examined, and the subsequently identified common themes are then organized and presented for analysis. Johnson-Bailey (2003) used this type of analysis to examine group interviews in her study on the feminist perspectives of African American women. Polkinghorne (2002) claims that this form of
analysis can provide explanations of events such as how successful classrooms or groups are formed, how a company failed in a particular initiative, or how people make a certain life choices.

Very often the paradigmatic analysis of narratives involves examining a database of several narratives, but may also use single case studies or a reflective analysis of the author’s own story (ibid, Clandinin, 2006, Danzak, 2011, Liu and Xu, 2011, Trahar, 2011). Haines (2012) for example, used this form of narrative analysis to explore the value of role models and in the language learning processes of international students following an English as Medium of Instruction programme in the Netherlands. Korhonen (2014) employed this type of analysis to examine the role of agency in language learning in a case study of a Finnish secondary school student. In an instance of autoethnography, Trahar (2009) conducted a narrative analysis of her own practices as a teacher in a UK higher education context, examining her subject positions, social locations, interpretations and personal experiences.

**Type 2 - Narrative analysis**

According to Polkinghorne (1995), narrative analysis proceeds from the particular data gathered to the construction of stories. This type of analysis is related to Glazer and Strauss’s notion of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and is a example of narrative analysis which involves recursive movements from similar instances in the data to categorical and conceptual definitions held by the researcher (Polkinghorne, 2002). In the light of these recursions, the proposed categorisations and definitions are adjusted until they slide into an optimum conjunction with instances derived from the data (ibid). This form of analysis is sometimes referred to as ‘storied’ analysis (Michie, 2013, Polkinghorne, 1995, Kramp, 2004) where a narrative is constructed by the researcher out of a variety of stories or other types of data gathered from participants’ lived experiences (Kramp, 2004). The final narrative, which can take various forms such as storyboards, poems, plays, films and other ‘performances’ (Wells, 2011), should then “fit the data while at the same time bringing an order and meaningfulness that is not apparent in the data themselves” (Polkinghorne, 1995; 16). This storied analysis involves the integration of the data into the constructed narrative rather than its separation from participants’ stories as happens with the analysis of narratives model (Kramp, 2004). Liu & Xu (2011), in their study of an EFL teacher’s identity struggle while adapting to a new workplace community of practice in China, used narrative analysis to build an overarching narrative over a two year period from three data sets; interviews, reflective reports, and reflective journals. Ziegler & Paulus (2006) gathered online posts from students of a graduate course in adult development. They ‘re-storied’ these posts and employed narrative analysis to examine how their
learners made meaning of their life history experiences while in dialogue with others in the online learning group.

2.8.1 Analysis of narratives and identity
The analysis of narratives model has been used to examine identity work in second language learning (Liu and Xu, 2011, Norton and Early, 2011, Ortaçtepe, 2013, Relaño Pastor, 2005). Among the methods of narrative analysis reviewed in her book on narrative inquiry, Wells (2011) poses the central question pertaining to narrative identity: What identity is being constructed in the narrative? The major concepts she outlines in narrative identity include thematic lines, ideological settings and conflicting protagonists. Ortaçtepe (2013) used a synthesis of an inductive-thematic form of narrative analysis to understand the second language identity (re)construction and language socialisation of a Turkish doctoral student in the United States. Norton and Early (Norton and Early, 2011) used a similar analytic framework to evaluate small stories of researcher identities. Their analysis revealed four identity positions which recurred most in their narrative data: “researcher as international guest, researcher as collaborative team member, researcher as teacher, and researcher as teacher educator” (ibid; 424). Coffee and Street (2008) employed the analysis of narratives in their study of the lived experiences of British adults with advanced second language proficiency in order to reveal how their different identity positions were both institutionally and culturally situated, but also dynamically and individually constructed. In the next section I will discuss some other forms of narrative analysis.

2.8.2 Other models of narrative analysis
As with other types of qualitative inquiry, narrative analysis requires that stories generated orally or written by hand have to be then digitally transcribed or ‘textualized’ in order for these data to yield to any meaningful analysis (Van Maanen, 2011). According to Riessman (1993), different researcher’s interpretations of narrative direct them to diverse methods of analysis (see also Cortazzi, 2001, Polkinghorne, 2002). Riessman (1993; 2) goes on to point out that raw narratives do not “speak for themselves or have unanalysed merit”, adding that in social research these data require close inspection and interpretation. In the same paper, Riessman identifies four models of narrative analysis which are suited to the study of stories of lived experiences: thematic, structural, interactional and performative. She explains that these different approaches are not mutually exclusive and may be combined, adding that the borderlines between these models can be blurred.
Riessman starts out with the thematic analysis model of analysis, which focuses on the ‘what’ or content of texts rather than ‘how’ it is said; “the ‘told’ rather than the ‘telling’” (ibid; 2). Riessman classifies the model as a typical representational strategy with the stories providing illustrations. Norton’s (1995a, 1995b, 1998) analysis of migrant women’s lived language learning stories and their English language identity work in communities of practice is a good example of this approach. Cain (1991) also uses this strategy to compare and contrast the personal stories and identities of Alcoholics Anonymous members with the more general patterned life stories of their audiences.

Turning to the structural analysis model, Riessman (ibid; 3 – author’s italics) notes that the analytical emphasis moves to the telling or the way in which a story is told. In this approach, how the language is used is given serious attention, though the thematic content does not slip from view. The narrative devices which the teller chooses to frame the story and strengthen its persuasive force are subjected to close scrutiny in this analytical strategy. Riessman traces the origins of the structural model of narrative analysis to the work of William Labov (Labov, 1982 in Riessman, 1993; 3) and cites Labov’s functional categories of narrative devices in this way:

- the abstract (summary and/or point of the story);
- orientation (to time, place, characters and situation);
- complicating action (the event sequence, or plot, usually with a crisis and turning point);
- evaluation (where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning and communicate emotion – the “soul” of the narrative);
- resolution (the outcome of the plot); and
- a coda (ending the story and bringing action back to the present).

In their inquiry into the stories of language conflict told by immigrant Mexican women in California, Relaño Pastor and De Fina (2005b) draw on Labov’s narrative devices to code and analyse the self-representations of these women in their story worlds. McCormick (2005) also used this method of evaluation to analyse stories of relocation told by members of the Protea community in South Africa subsequent to their forced removal from their neighbourhood.

According to Riessman (ibid), the emphasis in the interactional model of narrative analysis is on the dialogic process and is occasioned in certain settings such as courts, medical and social services. In this model the focus moves to the process of co-construction of storytelling where the teller and the questioner jointly create meaning. The contributions of all participants are transcribed with paralinguistic features being included to strengthen this approach (ibid). Riessman suggests that certain types of research question necessitate this approach and offers the work of Clark and Mishler (1992, cited in Riessman, 1993) as an example. In their study, Clark and Mishler were seeking to distinguish the
characteristics which differentiated ‘attentive’ medical interviews from other varieties. The researcher examined pauses, interruptions, topic chaining and other features of conversation in order to show how certain interviews may or may not result in more accurate diagnosis. Maryns (2005) used interactional narrative analysis to study aspects of displacement in the discourse of asylum seekers by examining data from interviews in the Belgian asylum procedure. Among other results, Maryns’s analysis revealed a considerable gap in access to contextual space and negotiation of meaning between the public official and the asylum seeker.

Performativ analysis extends the gaze of the interactional model beyond the spoken word and considers storytelling as performance, with the tellers as actors who seek to involve, persuade, and move an audience (Riessman, 1993). In this approach the ‘storying self’ engages their public through language, gesture and other paralinguistic features. This allows variation in its approach and ranges from dramaturgic action to narrative as praxis or social action (ibid). Riessman maintains that this model of analysis is suited to studies of communication practices and for close examinations of identity construction. Jacquemet (2005) employs this analytical approach to question the restrictions of some Kosovan refugee narratives by examining registration interviews in the UNCHR office in Tirana. Jacquemet claims that narrative performance allows the tellers to reframe and transform inequities in the interview process and helps them to make sense of traumatic events. Riessman’s (ibid) observation that narrative analytical models may be fused in some studies is illustrated in the research of Relaño Pastor and De Fina (2005b) into the language conflicts of Mexican migrant women in California. In their study, these researchers drew on both structural and performative models of narrative analysis to provide insights into how these migrant women made sense of social encounters and conflicts by performing or enacting social and moral relocation in their narratives and lives. Though these models have been shown to be effective ways of examining stories of lived experiences, narrative analysis is not without its limitations. The following sub-section will briefly outline some of these.

2.8.3 Limitations of narrative analysis

Cortazzi (2001) indicates the representation of voice as one reason for using narrative analysis, and adds that this approach may adopt advocatorial stances for marginalised or otherwise silenced groups. Riessman (Riessman, 1993; 6), however, cautions that the pretention of offering an ‘authentic’ voice in narrative research has lead to accusations of narrative inquirers reporting an “unalloyed subjective truth and idealise agency”. Moen (2006) poses the dilemma of interpretative differences of events between researchers and participants and questions whether informants explanations of their experiences must
always be accepted as correct. In the re-storying the experiences of the storytellers, Connelly and Clandinin (1990; 10) warn of the particular danger of researchers delivering what they term as a “Hollywood plot”, where everything works out right in the end. Researchers should be conscious that narratives do not mirror but rather refract the past, and be mindful of how the imaginative and strategic interests of tellers shape their narratives. In the final reckoning, narratives are of great use exactly because of storytellers’ propensity for interpreting rather than faithfully reproducing past lives. In this way, as Riessman (1993) points out, the interpretations of any ‘truths’ the storytellers may have intended could lie somewhere amongst the shifting connections which are made between their representations of their pasts, presents and futures.

2.9 Conclusion
In this chapter I started by describing some of the theories, characteristics and approaches to narrative inquiry, which is the research method chosen for this study. Then I outlined some of the approaches and applications of this method in the field of situated learning and second language research. In these sections I outlined how narrative inquiry can function both as a research method into lived language experiences in various communities of practice and as praxis to foster situated literacy learning for this cohort in the immediate learning environment itself. In section 2.2 I presented some socially-mediated constraints which some forms of narrative inquiry have shown can impede learners’ access to linguistic and social capital. Following this, I provided evidence from narrative researchers of how this form of inquiry can be used to reveal and foster social and linguistic identity negotiation and facilitate learners’ agentic challenges in the face of socialisation conflicts. The next section described how follow-up narrative interviews have been employed expand the storytelling conversation between researcher and participant. I then presented some of the limitations of narrative inquiry. In the subsequent section I outlined some ethical concerns which critical ethnographers should attend to with vulnerable participants. The chapter ended with a review of how narrative scholars have developed and used different forms of analysis for this type of inquiry. The following chapter will describe how I fused the socially-situated practices outlined in Chapter 1 with some of the narrative methods presented in Chapter 2 to design my fieldwork with these post-migratory border crossers.
Chapter 3 - Fieldwork Design

3.1 Introduction

I have outlined the theories which underpin the critical research methods informing this study in general and in particular the characteristics, methods, and uses of narrative inquiry with regard to border-crossing learners in Chapter 2. This chapter will describe the methods and tools, which were informed by narrative approaches, and the way in which they were adapted for use in this inquiry. It will also provide a very brief account of rationale and choice of research settings, though these will be dealt with in far more detail in Chapter 4. Also, the way narrative approaches evolved over the course of my fieldwork, and how the narrative tools and related social practices were employed in this study, are covered in Chapter 4.

3.2 Classroom-based social research

The fieldwork design here is a critical, classroom-based social research (CBSR) broadly reflecting the objectives of Norton’s CBSR model (1995a; 28), which she defined as a “collaborative research that is carried out by language learners in their local communities with the active guidance and support of the language teacher”. In this model, the language learners are asked to assume the role of ethnographers of their lived English socialisation experiences (ibid). The design of the narrative inquiry here broadly follows Norton’s cycle for investigating migrant learners’ out-of-class interactional opportunities:

- Investigative Opportunities to Interact with Target Language Speakers
- Reflect Critically on Engagement with Target Language Speakers
- Reflect on Observations in Diaries or Journals
- Pay Attention to and Record Unusual Events

This research diverges from Norton’s original design in that it also included the community of practice of the immediate learning environment as a locus of investigation. This study sought to ascertain whether the mediation of, and critical reflection on, a CBSR with these learners contributed to an improvement in support for this learner cohort’s linguistic development and integration with the host community. This study was also designed to investigate the potential of learner narratives to “create opportunities for learners to write [and talk] about issues in which they have a particular investment, and in so doing, develop their talents as writers” (emphasis in original, Norton, 1994; 27). As with Baynham’s (1995) investigation of immigrant bilingual adults in British multilingual settings, this study seeks to investigate the literacy of these migrant learners as a social practice of not only what they do with their literacy but also what meaning they are making of this practice.
The transformative goal of using critical practices with learners in this study involves “moving beyond common conceptions of communicative approaches to a more inclusive and empowering pedagogy”, which Miller (2007; 25) has called a “transformative pedagogy of voice”. To this end, the twofold purpose of the methodology in this study is designed to foster critical awareness in learners of the negotiation and (co)construction of their English language identities in sociocultural settings while at the same time promoting and mediating the literacy necessary for logging and reflecting on this process (Miller, 2007, Baynham, 1995, Lam, 2000, McKinney and Norton, 2008).

Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry, which has been said to have evolved in response to the need “to portray the shifting dynamics of experience of those caught up in, and often lost in, the global context”, is also being employed in this study “in response to the blurring lines between research and advocacy”, and emerges in answer to the call for research approaches which are more relevant to pressing concerns of social justice for marginalised groups such as these border-crossing learners (Phillion, 2008a; 285)

3.3 Research sites and participants
This study was conducted at two sites in the greater Dublin area over a period of two years from April 2012 to April 2014. The reasons for choosing the main research site, the Intercultural Drop-in Centre (henceforth IDC) in Tallaght, South County Dublin, is described in section 3.3.2. The rationale for beginning this inquiry at the Adult Refugee Programme is laid out in the following section.

3.3.1 The Adult Refugee Programme
I originally chose the Adult Refugee Programme (henceforth ARP) as the setting for this study because it was the best available site at which to conduct a classroom-based social research into the lived English language learning and attendant identity work for adult border crossers in Ireland (Norton, 1998). At the time of this inquiry, the ARP was the only official English language provider to the group who were the focus of this inquiry; adult refugee and migrant English language learners. As the ARP ran its language provision on a year-round basis, it was suited to the original longitudinal ethnographic classroom-based design for this research. The ARP class structure of four three-month terms for these learners meant I could follow their learning development as they progressed through the school and in their lived experiences over the course of a year.

The choice of sample group for this study was driven by purposive and practical considerations. Popay et al. (1998) state that randomness and representativeness can be of less concern than relevance in good
qualitative inquiries. The sampling decision for this study was thus purposively based on the participants’ abilities to provide “relevant data on the area under investigation” (ibid, 1998; 346). This group of learners at the ARP were deemed well placed to produce the type of “knowledge necessary to understand the structure and processes within which the individuals or situations are located” (ibid); that is the lived experiences of English language contact and learning in various sociocultural settings for adult border crossers. From a practical and pedagogical point of view, these learners had enough spoken language competence to engage with this collaborative inquiry and, though their written competence was in general lower, they should be able to produce some narratives and grow into the process.

In addition, as I will point out in the fieldwork description, I was familiar with the needs and challenges facing this learner group and also with the workings of this programme as it was an exact iteration of the previous official language provider for adult refugees where I had worked for five years as a teacher. The setting, nature of language provision, learner group profile, and goals of the ARP are described in greater detail in chapter 4.

3.3.2 The Intercultural Drop-in Centre
The primary reason for choosing to continue this narrative inquiry at the IDC was a practical one. After the withdrawal of funding and the dissolution of official English language provision for refugees and migrants in Ireland (described in more detail in Chapter 4), the IDC remained one of the only settings which satisfied the original criteria as a site for this longitudinal ethnographic classroom-based social research as described above. As with the ARP, the IDC also fulfilled the purposive choice of informants who could provide the relevant information concerning their lived English language contact and experiences in various communities of practice, and the practical pedagogical necessity of written literacy for these learners. The selection of participants at the IDC differed in one way from that of the ARP in that the IDC group was not bound together as a preconfigured class. This group was formed and bound by a common need and purpose (Wenger, 1998b). It should be said that this group was not formed solely with the goal of conducting this narrative inquiry, rather it was put together to fulfil the needs of IDC members who wished to grow their literacy skills. In this way, the participants self-selected to create, collaborate and share their stories for this study. A more detailed profile of the IDC and its participants is provided in Chapter 4. The following sections will describe the design and nature of the data collection instruments used in this inquiry.
3.4 Diary studies for this inquiry

This original research design for this study used learner diaries as its central data-gathering instrument. As a research tool, diary study is a form of naturalistic inquiry which has its origins in critical ethnographic approaches (Davis, 1995). It corresponds to ethnographic field notes and is used as an alternative to self-reporting and questionnaires (Pearson-Evans, 2006). In his discussion of five major studies into issues of identity in adult migrant second language learning settings, Block (2007b;109) concludes, albeit with some reservations about the lack of microanalysis of participants actual interactions with the host community, that Norton’s (Norton, 2000a) diary research into the life stories of female immigrants in Toronto is the most complete considering the “depth of the life stories that form its backbone”. This study sought to emulate this profundity in the narratives of its participants.

In the context of identity negotiation, the weekly diaries were designed as an instrument for revealing both learners contacts with Anglophone hosts and for measuring the success or failure of these learners to position themselves to claim spaces for socialisation (Norton, 1998). These diaries, and subsequent reflective in-class encounters and interviews, were designed to encourage learners to act as ethnographers in various communities of practice, with the scope of becoming aware of language socialization processes which allow them to observe, reflect and act upon their diverse forms of participation, their complex construction of identities, and their use of language learning opportunities (Norton, 1995a, Nguyen and Kellogg, 2005). Diaries as a data gathering tool in this classroom-based social research (Norton, 1995a) were employed in this study to gain further insights into the effects of the fostering and critical observation of adult programme refugee learner’s evolving social participation or exclusion in the host community. I will use the next section to describe the design, features, and methods of the diary template used as data collection tools.

3.4.1 Diary design as research instruments

I designed and printed simple weekly diaries with a text box for each day of the week in which learners could note down their daily experiences (see Diary Template, Appendix 1). The learners’ logs in this study were designed to

- make available hidden or largely inaccessible perceptions of learning and teaching experiences (Nunan, 1992)
- provide access to life stories which are told in the voice of the learner (Bailey and Nunan, 1996b)
- encourage learners to assess their own performance and self-prescribe remedial action (Howell-Richardson and Parkinson, 1988)
• promote self-analysis and action on out-of-class language behaviour and activities (ibid)
• foster learner autonomy and ownership in the learning process (Nunan, 1992)
• provide the basis for reflective encounters which promote greater learner independence and awareness (Absalom and De Saint Léger, 2011)
• make available valuable insights into both the social and psychological aspects of language development (Nunan, 1992)
• develop the participants’ writing talents by creating opportunities to write about issues in which they have a strong investment (Norton, 1994)
• gain further insights into the effects of the fostering and critical observation participant’s social participation or exclusion in the host community (Norton, 1995a)

Because the naturalistic desire for free learner accounts in their diaries had to be balanced against relevant research issues due to the research and pedagogical focus of this study (Alaszewski, 2006), some guidance regarding content and procedure was provided, albeit in a not too prescriptive manner (Norton, 1998). Content guidance in this diary study was pasted to the inside of the A5 ring binders, which learners used to collect their data, and included the following questions:

• How and when have you used English outside class?
• Who did you speak with?
• What type of things did you speak about?
• What happened when you spoke?
• How did you feel about this conversation?
• Are there any other thoughts you wish to add? (this is entered on a separate “thoughts” page)

This research favoured diaries in the target language, as translation could unnecessarily widen the culture gap, and risked creating yet another opaque layer to the participants’ stories (Kouritzin, 2000c). Despite relatively low proficiencies of some of these diarists, the pedagogical scope and the opportunity to express deeper feelings and thoughts in the target language could prove to be a strong incentive for learners to write in English (Hilleson, 1996).

The approach to correcting the content of the diaries here was broadly non-judgemental. It has been argued that the main reason for the success of learner diaries is their capacity to generate a high level of trust in the teacher/researcher-student dialogue (Spack and Sadow, 1983). On the other hand, due to the dual ethnographic-pedagogical nature of this initiative, some work was planned with the learners’ written English. The level and nature of these corrections, however, was designed to be constantly negotiated with the learners, and any grading or language work with their writing would be done in a non-threatening way in order to encourage the diarists to write freely (Hilleson, 1996).
3.4.2 Follow-up diary interviews
This research design also included cyclical follow-up diary interviews at the end of each term. This provided further opportunities for learners to clarify and enlarge on their weekly stories. One of the rationales for using multiple sources of information-gathering in research was to strengthen validity and corroborate evidence (Creswell and Miller, 2000). This interrelationship is referred to in research literature as triangulation, and is used to “search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (ibid;127). The triangulation of the data gathering process outlined in this inquiry was also considered crucial in this study in order to offset any instability in the research design and any problems arising from deficits in participants’ written proficiencies (Hilleson, 1996). The diary-interviews were devised to help solidify the triangulation process by broadening out the learners’ narratives, thus providing supplementary data. It has been shown that biographical narratives and action-based methods are more efficient in tandem with other means of data collection, and this triangulation affords greater stability in research designs (Pavlenko, 2007; 172, van Lier, 2008b). In the following section I will describe the characteristics and design of narrative frames as a data gathering tool and an instrument for building participants’ stories of their lived experiences.

3.5 Narrative frames as research instruments
As I have already pointed out, because the core focus of this inquiry is with migrant English language learners’ “lived experience - that is, in lives and how they are lived” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; xxii), narrative inquiry has been chosen as a central mode of data collection and analysis. Narrative frames, which have been used as an instrument by narrative inquirers into the language practices and identity work of border crossers (Barkhuizen, 2008b, Barkhuizen et al., 2013, Benson et al., 2013), were designed as data gathering tools for this research. The notion and practice of using of narrative frames is derived from similar concepts behind the use writing frames in literacy education (Barkhuizen and Wette, 2008). Both types of frame provide a skeleton to scaffold writing which consists typically of sentence starts, connectors and modifiers that can give literacy students a “structure within which they can concentrate on communicating what they want to say whilst scaffolding them in the use of a particular generic form” (Wray and Lewis, 1997; 122). For an example of a basic writing frame see Figure 2 below (sourced from Halkett, 2003; 53).
Even competent language users can experience difficulties such as knowing what to write about or where to start their stories, so narrative frames can provide support and guidance for the structure and content of the stories in hand (Barkhuizen and Wette, 2008). The use of narrative frames in qualitative research design for the study of language learning is not yet widespread, but they have been used in various settings by narrative scholars. Macalister (2012) used narrative frames to research and design an EFL curriculum for trainee seamen in New Zealand (see Figure 3). Taylor et al. (2005) employed this tool in their study into computer-mediated German as a second language research. Macalister (ibid; 125) claims that his use narrative frames provided “storied snapshots” which allowed the seamen to “write about their experiences in a way that traditional instruments such as questionnaires and surveys would not”.

![Figure 5 My Town Writing Frame](image)

![My English story](image)

![Figure 6 My English Story](image)
Barkhuizen, who has published widely in on narrative inquiry into language learning practices (Barkhuizen, 2008b, Barkhuizen, 2008a, Barkhuizen, 2011, Barkhuizen et al., 2013, Benson et al., 2013), used narrative frames to investigate the imagined successes and evolving identities of adult migrant and refugee English learners in New Zealand (Barkhuizen, 2008a). The use of narrative frames to research the lived learning experiences with the cohort in this study is closely informed by Barkhuizen’s work in this area and their design and application in this inquiry are outlined in the next section.

3.5.1 Narrative frames in this study
The narrative frames which I designed as data collection and socially situated literacy tools for the IDC were intended to help learners log and reflect on their post-migratory, lived learning experiences both within the immediate community of the Centre and in various ‘real-world’ communities of practice. The design of these tools are informed by socially-situated critical approaches to literacy which can mediate learners participation in socioculturally appropriate contexts and reveal otherwise hidden abilities, identities and competences (Baynham, 1995, Trueba, 1990). The themes and topics of the narrative frames (see Appendix 3, Data collection worksheets), “My Irish Experience” (see Figure 4 below), “My Year”, “People and Places in My Life” and so on, were created to help learners recount and share their evolving second language identities and participation or exclusion in the communities they frequented. These frames were also designed as problem-posing participatory devices along similar lines to those used by the Minority Rights Group (1998) with young migrant learners in Britain and Holland to problematize issues directly affecting the participants such as social isolation and separated families.

The approach in this study can be considered a weaker form of critical pedagogy (CP) than that proposed by Baynham (1995) as its focus is on mediating the production of in-house texts which pose questions of personal and localised issues rather than on problematising large scale, ready-made dominant institutional discourses. This fieldwork employs enough of CP’s transformative characteristics to realize modest local and personal reforms such as increasing learner involvement, modifying some learner strategies or realignment of certain aspects of a curriculum (Thomas, 1993, Barab et al., 2004, Pennycook, 1999, Anderson, 1989). The use of a weaker form of critical inquiry in this study is also dictated by the relatively low level of literacy of the learners involved. It may be argued that in order to tackle more dominant majority community issues of power asymmetries in receptive and productive literacy, higher competences of literacy among learners would be more favourable.
Narrative frames are not without some drawbacks as a data collection tool for examining socially situated literacy and I will outline some these pitfalls in the next section. The evolution of these frames in response to the goals of this study, the needs of the learners and the constraints and affordances of the IDC is described in more details in my fieldwork description in the following chapter.

Figure 7 My Irish Experience frame
3.5.2 Limitations of narrative frames

Some limitations in the use of narrative frames as data collection tools, however, have been reported. The confined space of the typical narrative frame can constrain the amount of writing for learners, and the sentence starters may prove too rigid or heavy-handed in their guidance (Barnard and Nguyen, 2010). Compared to more conventional modes of data collection such as questionnaires and interviews, the process of using narrative frames for reflection may be unfamiliar and so produce first attempts which may be brief, hesitant, and rather unreflective (ibid). Though there are obvious advantages to conducting a narrative inquiry in the learner’s first language (Ortaçtepe, 2013, Lawlor, 2000, Lin, 2013, Polkinghorne, 1996, Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005b), it is beyond the resources of this study to employ the type and number of professional interpreters this approach would require. While it has been shown that learners’ mother tongue narrative accounts can provide greater insights into the particular socio-contextual issues that migrant language learners face in their daily lives (Menard-Warwick, 2004), I decided that the use of a third party translator would provoke significant ethical problems given the delicate and personal nature of some of the themes explored in this inquiry.

3.5.3 Narratives and the Life Experience Approach

The problem-posing praxis of narrative inquiry allied with socially situated practices is designed to reveal how border-crossing learners’ experiences undergo constant changes and sociolinguistic conflicts which can impact on their language access and effect displacement and dislocation (Frye, 1999, McKinney and Norton, 2008, De Fina and King, 2011). This was conceived as a collaborative approach employed as a praxis (Freire, 1970a) which provides both a means to understand the language learning experiences and to enact some transformations in meaning making of linguistic experiences and language identities for these learners (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). For the purposes of this thesis, I have called this praxis of situated theory and narrative method the Life Experience Approach (see also 3.5.3). This approach is informed by the Language Experience Approach (LEA) (Hall, 1972). The characteristics and attributes of learning and teaching literacy in LEA are described as including learner-generated texts, communicative integration of all skills; reading, writing speaking and listening, and should be learner-personalised and creative. In practical terms, this approach builds literacy in five steps (Wurr, 2002; 2):

1. Teacher and student discuss the topic to be focused on in the dictation. Observations and opinions are exchanged. Oral language skills are developed and reinforced.
2. The student dictates an account or story to the teacher, who records the statements to construct the basic reading material.
3. The student reads the story several times (with the teacher helping as needed), until the story has become quite familiar. Reading comprehension is made easier by the fact that the student is reading material that is self-generated.
4. Individual story words are learned, and other reading skills are reinforced through teacher-designed activities related to the story.
5. Students move from reading their own dictation to reading other-author materials as they develop confidence and skill with the reading process.

Taylor points out that the original form of LEA used learners’ personal experience to develop relevant texts for second language literacy work, and used this approach with workplace literacy groups to help them narrate and write about shared working experiences (Taylor, 1993). As an extension of this original approach of LEA, the Life Experience Approach used in this inquiry seeks to extend the social practice and purposes of storytelling and writing beyond the experiences of the immediate environment as proposed by Taylor. In this inquiry, this approach is employed as a problem-solving pedagogy which seeks to help learners focus on and make meaning of social and educational issues that are part of their lives (Menard-Warwick, 2004). In this way, the learners migration stories of their lived experiences of social and linguistic challenges, conflicts and successes are brought in from the outside in an effort to reflect on and develop their English language identities (Simpson, 2011). This Life Experience approach in this inquiry also included publishing the learners’ narratives with the functional and social purposes of sharing experiences and socialising other learners or border crossers into communities of practice as outlined in the following section.

3.5.4 Learner-generated stories as learning materials

It has been noted that maintaining a community of learners where equal respect is given to all its members voices is especially difficult when there are significant differences in literacy competence within the group (Ignash, 1993). In his work on drop-outs and marginalised learners within the vast community college network in the US, Ignash (ibid; 79) reports that many teachers found that learner-generated stories helped to level the playing field and foster group bonds through “shared opportunities of reading, talking, and writing about personal experiences or community concerns”. Ignash (ibid; 82, see also Gaber-Katz, 1996) goes on to argue that learner-generated stories have the “ring of authenticity and the strong sense or voice that textbook stories often lack”. Gaber-Katz (1996) points out that using learner-generated stories to help low-level adult learners constitutes good critical literacy practice and is prominent in the theory and approaches of community-based literacy. It has been claimed that using critical literacy as a social practice in this manner enables the storytellers to be socialised into group membership and, in turn, contribute to the ongoing social practices of their communities (Lam, 2000).
Gaber-Katz (ibid; 50) goes on to propose the use of the language experience approach (LEA) (see Wales, 1994) and describes “sharing, producing and publishing learners stories to be an example of good, as well as critical, pedagogy”. Practitioners use this approach to elicit learners’ lived experiences by “converting the learner’s own words to written form and using these words and sentences as the student’s first reading ‘text’” (Jones, 1986). Holt (1995) stated that LEA can be successfully used to instruct low-level literacy learners, and it has been shown that the use of migrants’ life experiences allied to this approach can develop oral skills and create texts that are relevant for migrant learners (Wales, 1994, Gaber-Katz, 1996).

Ignash (1993; 82) reports on the benefits of publishing learners’ narratives and describes how The Refugee Women’s Alliance in Seattle publishes learners’ narratives which recount these women’s “remembrances of family celebrations and childhood memories, special events”. These stories are then illustrated, bound and shared among the community and can form the “basis for discussion and literacy development” as well as having the effect of helping “beginners to see that their ideas count as much as the ideas of those who are more proficient” (ibid).

Narrative frames have been used to record and publish first-hand accounts of the lived language experiences of border crossers. In 1998, Minority Rights Group International, an NGO working for minority rights as part of a European project, used narrative frames to record and narrate young migrants’ first-hand accounts of their linguistic and cultural identity evolution in their new host countries of England and Holland (M.R.G., 1998).

![Figure 8 My Good and Bad Memories frame](image-url)
These stories (see Figure 6 below from ibid; 22) and the narrative frames used to generate them (see Figure 5 above from ibid; 6) were then published with the dual aim of providing fellow border crossers with relevant materials for language and social literacy practice and for use by teachers of majority language students to generate other border crossers’ life stories and raise awareness of the lived experiences of these minority groups.

![Image of narratives from the Netherlands and Free time in London]

**Figure 9 Life in a New Country**

Some narrative inquirers advocate the use of follow-up face-to-face narrative interviews both as a way uniting the advantages of both tools and as a means for triangulating the data (Barnard and Nguyen, 2010). The next section describes the nature of this type of interview at the IDC.

### 3.5.5 Follow-up narrative interviews at the IDC

In order to represent more fully the lived experiences of these learners, the research design includes a final stage of follow-up face-to-face interviews based on the completed narratives and the learners’ experiences in writing them (Zhan, 2010, Hall, 2008, Norton, 1998, Cole, 1991). The application of cyclical and negotiational feedback interviews between informant and researcher in narrative research can, according to Cole (1991; 191), “enable the storyteller to give more thorough impressions to initial statements, impressions, comments and reflections”. These interviews also provide the opportunity to examine some of the elements Baynham (1995) deemed necessary for understanding literacy as a social practice, namely the concepts of purpose, or the author’s reason for writing, and audience, or who the intended reader is. The interviews also provide occasions to explore the subjectivity of the writer and their...
view on the writing process. The rational of following the narrative with face-to-face semi structured interviews was that I could combine the advantages of both while also expanding on experiences touched on in the written narrative (Barnard and Nguyen, 2010).

I devised a core set of follow-up interview questions which are listed below. The questions were designed to capture the effects of the narrative cycle, the English language participation and experiences of the members in various locations, in particular the Drop-in Centre, and their awareness of their English language identities both inside and outside the Centre. It should be noted that the themes and course of the interviews varied according to the narrative and experiences of the members. In keeping with best ethical practice, the interviewees were informed that they could choose to object to or not answer any question and they would have access to the final transcript for their approval.

Follow-up interview questions:

- How did you feel when you saw your story in the book?
- Who were you writing this story for (audience)?
- Has working on this story changed the way you see your life?
- What would you change about your story?
- Do you think working on stories is a good way of learning?
- What made you decide to come to the Centre?
- How would you describe the group at the Drop-in?
- How do you see the other members?
- How do you use language at the drop-in?
- When members ask who you are – what do you say?
- What do people from your community think of you coming to the centre?
- How would you describe learning at the Centre?
- How is it different from other ways of learning (languages)?
- Has coming to the Centre changed your ideas of Ireland/other countries?
- Have your ideas of your own community changed?
- Has your identity changed in any way since coming to the Centre?
- Do you have an English language Identity?
- Has your identity changed since coming to the Centre?
- Has coming to the Centre changed your life outside?
- Has coming to the Centre changed the way you speak to Irish people?
- What things would you change about the Centre?
- What are the most important things you have learned at the Centre?
- What things would you change about your English outside the Centre?
- What advice would you give to someone who wants to Learn English?

I also designed a shorter set of pre-interview questions which would help the participants reflect on their finished stories and give them insights into the main interview topics:
Our stories questions

1. Why do you want to improve your reading and writing?
2. What problems have your reading and writing caused you in Ireland?
3. How will good reading and writing help you in Ireland?
4. Who is your story written for?
5. What did you like about writing your story?
6. What have you learned from writing your story?
7. Do you think this is a good way to learn reading and writing?

These interviews seek to flesh out the story in a way that allows the informant to express orally what they may not have been able to do in written form. It also allows them to renegotiate and clarify meanings in their lived experiences (Cole and Knowles, 2001). Also, it has been said that by renegotiating initial impressions in feedback interviews participants can gain some reasonable level of “authority over the text” of the overall narrative (ibid; 38).

3.5.6 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis, which can be employed to systematically analyse participants’ interpretations of lived experiences (Cortazzi, 2001), has been chosen as the approach which this study will use to examine and evaluate the written and oral data after it has been digitally transcribed or ‘textualized’ (Van Maanen, 2011). Narrative analysis has been widely used to interpret the stories of the lived experiences of border crossers in various settings (Jacquemet, 2005, Maryns, 2005, Baynham, 2006b, De Fina, 2003, Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005b). It has been argued that narrative analysis can be located within the framework of sociocultural theory “where the challenge for the researcher is to examine and understand how human actions are related to the social context in which they occur and how and where they occur through growth” (Moen, 2006; 1). Moen (ibid) goes on to claim that as a unit of analysis narrative is perfectly suited to this purpose. Burck (2005; 237) employed this unit of analysis to examine how migrants in Britain experienced living with more than one language and found it useful “for scrutinizing how individuals whose experiences are embedded in different languages give an account of themselves; in particular, whether and how they manage their different senses of self”

Of the various models of narrative analysis available, the thematic, interactional and performative approaches, as described in the section on narrative inquiry, were deemed suitable ways of interpreting the stories of the migrant cohort in this study. The combination of thematic analysis as a representational strategy, which focuses on the “what” rather than on how the stories are told, and the attention to
processes of narrative co-construction in the interactional model of narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993) in this research is designed to capture the language learning and lived experiences and relations of this cohort in diverse communities of practice. This study will also employ a performative narrative analysis of the follow-up interviews to explore how the participants perform their past selves (Riessman, 1993). This model of analysis has been described as suitable for studies of communicative practices, and for comprehensive studies of identity construction. It can focus the gaze of the researcher on “how narrators want to be known, and precisely how they involve the audience in ‘doing’ their identities” (ibid; 5).

Overall, this narrative analysis will employ a paradigmatic approach to locate common themes and recurring concepts which occur in the stories and interviews with this participant group. The applications of narrative analysis in this study in covered in some detail in Chapter 5. The following section will present some ethical considerations which were taken into account for this research.

3.5.7 Ethics and informed consent in this narrative inquiry

In the context of some of the challenges facing researchers working on the lived experiences of vulnerable border crossers, Eastmond (2007; 261) points out that

“ethical issues are acute when dealing with individuals who are not in a position to control the fate of their stories, and demand considerably more of the researcher in terms of sensitivity to questions of power, confidentiality and accountability than in many other fields.”

Alongside these considerations is the problem of ensuring that this cohort fully understood what giving their consent to participation and exactly their involvement in this inquiry entailed as equal and autonomous citizens (Turner, 2009). A degree of caution is necessary when eliciting the informed consent of the vulnerable participants involved in this inquiry. I have to be careful to ensure that participants will be fully aware that they would be the subjects of a study, what the nature of the inquiry is, and that they have the right to withdraw at any point from the research (Ryen, 2011).

According to Crow et al. (2006; 84), Issues of informed consent are particularly significant in research involving members of groups which are “commonly characterized as ‘vulnerable’ because of their perceived openness to coercion, exploitation or harm by more powerful others.” Obtaining informed consent from this cohort was not a straightforward matter due to the relatively lower levels of autonomy in Ireland of the participants in this study. Mackenzie et al. (2007; 302), in their discussion of research ethics with marginalised border crossers, view participants’ consent as providing “protection on the assumption that participants are autonomous, understand the implications of giving consent and are in
relatively equal positions of power with researchers.” Since literacy and the nuanced comprehension of English language texts were an issue for this cohort, I took great care with the language used in the consent form and the accompanying statement so that the rationale, goals and possible future uses of this research would be clear to the participants in this research. I should add that I received close guidance in this matter from my supervisor, Dr Carson, who had conducted several ethnographic studies with vulnerable border crossers (Carson, 2006, Carson and Extra, 2010). When I had drafted this document, I submitted it for approval to the Research Ethics Committee at Trinity College Dublin School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences. The committee suggested some changes which helped clarify and simplify the language used in the research statement attached to the consent form. A final full copy of this form is available in Appendix 7 of this thesis.

Though the statement and form had been carefully drafted, and had received clearance from the Ethics Committee, I decided that its meanings would still need to be mediated with the learners in question. With this in mind, the statement and form would be used as the basis for language learning activities with these groups during the first encounters at the research sites in this inquiry. In this way, learners could question any part of ask for clarification as to lexis and meanings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I understand what is involved in this study and give my permission to be interviewed and I will share my writing. I have a copy of the information Leaflet.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student’s name __________________________________________________________ (This name will not appear in any other documents and will remain private)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s signature ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date: ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s name __________________________________________________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s signature ______________________________________________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date: ______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10 Participants’ Consent Form**

The consent form which I used, and which was attached to the information leaflet which the participants received, is presented in Figure 10. This form provided for the consent while guaranteeing the participants’ anonymity. Closely related to ethical concerns in this inquiry is the positionality and subjectivity of the researcher and their how their identity is perceived both by the researcher’s reflection
on his position and by how the participants view these relationships. I will describe my reflections on the subject of positionality at the IDC next.

3.6 Ethics and positionality

This inquiry is designed to be participative in approach and practice. In this approach, the “researcher cultivates a subject/subject relationship with participants as opposed to the subject/object relationship which is found in traditional research paradigms” (Cassano and Dunlop, 2005). The role of the researcher here is that of educator and activist and, in this way, he becomes part of the nexus that makes action possible (ibid). The participation of the ethnographer in social action, together with the unfeasibility of divorcing the self from the process of interpretive praxis, mean that the researcher inescapably shapes and is part of the research that is being produced (Tusting and Maybin, 2007).

Positionality has been said to is central to the “understanding of how meaning is problematised in such a research project” (McKinley, 2005; 141). Because many of these informants have experienced, and continue to experience, power asymmetries in their lives, the researcher must “recognise their own positions of power, privilege and biases and their relationship to any denunciation of power systems surrounding their subjects” (Madison, 2005). So, my position as a narrative inquirer is not only that of a researcher, but is also that of a concerned participant who is working “toward a more equitable environment in their research settings” (Phillion, 2008a; 285).

As a white, middle-aged, Irish male with a respectable job and apparently stable life, I can appear as an outsider to this group. To be sure, I cannot lay any serious claim to be an insider with this group, but my position as one who seeks to give voice to the insider’s story, and help with their language needs can result in a trusting relationship with the informants here. However, even though I am seeking to transform the learning and awareness of the participants and will seek to build up a considerable level of trust during my time with this group, I may still be seen as an outsider in other ways, because of “gender, social class or because of a multitude of other factors that intersect with culture and ethnicity in complex ways” (Santoro and Smyth, 2010; 496). Some of the border crossers I will be working with may be uncomfortable in critically questioning accepted practices in formal or informal learning environments or systems, and may have a vested interest in not appearing to challenge their community’s or the host-country’s status quo (Mezirow and Taylor, 2009). However, the situated and sociocultural approaches employed here to reveal how experience and learning are co-constructed and co-narrated are designed to take into account and seek to actively explore the differences in positioning between researcher and informant.
Despite the risks of exploitation and informant suspicions that can beset a research with fragile groups such as this, and the traps which can inhere in employing the methods of inquiry in this study (Turner, 2009), as a critically-oriented teacher/researcher I have an awareness of these traps (as outlined in Chapter 2) and the opportunities to build up a significant level of rapport and trust over the course of this longitudinal inquiry.

3.7 Conclusion.

I have described how this critical and transformative narrative inquiry is designed to fulfil the original goal of carrying out classroom-based social research into the lived language learning and socialisation experiences of this adult migrant group. I have argued that the rationale and importance of this narrative inquiry is its potential for promoting learners’ critical consciousness of the negotiation and (co)construction of their English language identities in various settings while also fostering and mediating the literacy necessary for logging and reflecting on this process. I have explained the design of narrative frames as a research tool which scaffolds the learners and guides their story building and sharing. I have outlines how follow-up, face-to-face narrative interviews are proposed in this inquiry to promote researcher and the learner reflection on the processes and products of the learners’ stories. Finally, I have described the important role the researcher’s reflexive awareness on his subject position regarding the ethics, social context and relationships with the participants in this inquiry. Chapter 4 will describe the application of the data collection tools as presented above and will illustrate the mediation of socially situated literacy practices in this narrative inquiry.
Chapter 4 - Fieldwork description

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 outlined the narrative approaches, method and tools adapted or designed to examine the lived experiences of this border-crossing cohort. This chapter will describe how these approaches were employed and evolved over the course of the fieldwork in this narrative inquiry into the situated literacy practices of these adult migrant English language learners. The chapter begins with an account of the pilot project for this research and then goes on to describe the fieldwork at the site which became the focus of this study. An overview of the fieldwork settings, participants and methodology involved in this study is provided below in Table 1. A much more in-depth account of these features are presented in 4.4.1, 4.5 and in Tables 2, 3 and 4 within these respective sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time/Location</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot at the ARP – April to June 2012</td>
<td>Class of 12 learners CEFR B1</td>
<td>Diary Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Group 1 at the IDC – January to June 2013</td>
<td>8 self-selected, mixed levels, A2 – B1 CEFR</td>
<td>Narrative frames/ free writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Group 2, IDC and wider group at the IDC – September to December 2013</td>
<td>10 self-selected, mixed levels, A2-B2 CEFR</td>
<td>Narrative frames and broad Narrative Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up Interviews, IDC, December 2013 – April 2014</td>
<td>13 members from Literacy groups 1 and 2</td>
<td>Semi-structured Ethnographic narrative Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Overview of the fieldwork settings, participants and phases

This chapter will give detailed outline of the goals, functions and settings of the centers where this fieldwork was conducted. A general profile of the learner populations of the fieldwork sites will be reported and a more detailed account of selection and backgrounds of the core participants in this research will be given. The rest of this chapter will explain the application of the data collection tools as described in Chapter 3, and the mediation of socially situated literacy practices in this narrative inquiry.

4.2 The Adult refugee Programme

The site I had originally chosen for conducting my inquiry was located in a classroom within the Adult Refugee Programme (henceforth ARP) in Dublin’s south city. The ARP was the official government-sponsored English language provider for adult refugees and was overseen countrywide by the community
system of colleges run by the Vocational Education Committee (VEC). However, my plans to conduct the entire study were disrupted by the VEC’s decision to close this programme shortly after I entered the field. Nevertheless, I was subsequently able to use my time in the field at the ARP as a pilot study to check the robustness of my overall research design.

The purpose of the ARP programme is outlined on its website (CDVEC, 2010) as seeking to assist its participants as much as possible “in a process of integration into Irish society] ... [in 3 ways: up-skilling English language ability, assistance in accessing the work/study place and, through social activities, an increase in the understanding of both the culture and the general characteristics of Ireland”.

I had chosen this site and its participants because, being an iteration of ILLT, the previous official language provider to refugees where I had spent five years, I was familiar with this territory and the issues which affected the learners involved. In addition, I knew all of the teachers in the centre, having worked closely with them in IILT, and was assured of their full cooperation and support. I was also interested to see how language provision was being dealt with in the ARP, and, most of all, my research was concerned with the realities and progress of this learner group in naturalistic sociocultural settings. The next section describes the setting up of my fieldwork at the ARP.

4.2.1 Diary study the ARP
In the spring of 2012, having researched and designed my fieldwork approach, I decided to start my classroom-based diary research with a class group in the ARP. The diary template (see Diary Template, Appendix 1, p. 361) was designed in a way that learners could track, log and reflect on their interactions in the target language outside the classroom. Having received permission from the school principal, I then discussed the matter with the class teacher. After informing and receiving the participants’ consent, I started working with the class for four hours every Monday. The fieldwork plan was that I would work with this group for a term, that is 3 months, and then review the outcomes of this pilot, making any necessary adjustments to the methodology and data collection strategy. The overall scope of the study involved following a single group of learners as they progressed through three terms (a total of nine months language provision) and, hopefully, three levels. The ARP, like ILLT, organised its levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (2001). The CEFR describes foreign language proficiency at six levels: A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2. The class I was working with in the spring term at the ARP was, to a greater or lesser extent, at the lower end B1 level of the CEFR. The next section will describe the process, progress and some outcomes of this pilot.
4.2.2 Diary study fieldwork at the ARP

In the first encounter with this group, I talked them through the diary template and issued them with copies at the end of this first session. I repeated this approach for several weeks and, despite some notable exceptions, noticed that many of them were struggling with keeping their diaries. It should be noted that some of these learners, specifically some Somali learners, had encountered little or no formal education before coming to the ARP. However, we did manage to explore the entries of the few who had managed to submit their entries. I made copies of these logs for the whole class and we discussed and reflected on the recorded events together. I had hoped that, alongside the fostering of collaborative critical inquiry, exploring these diaries together would encourage the more reticent learners to produce their own. Indeed some of these entries did reveal that some learners were capable of logging and reflecting on their out of class English language experiences in various communities of practice.

Figure 11 Extract from ARP Learner’s Diary

The extract from an ARP student’s diary above shows this learner logging and reflecting on lived language contact experiences in various settings. Other learners in the ARP cohort, however, seemed to be
occupying a more peripheral position in communities of practice, which can denote some degree of non-participation or ‘marginality’. Many of the ARP participants blamed their lack of social contact with host community members for their empty diaries.

Overall, the progress and outcomes of the diary study at the ARP achieved some of its objectives as discussed above, but it also revealed some limits in the data collection tools I had designed, especially when taking into account the challenges facing this type of learner. The limitations and challenges revealed in the piloting process included:

- Issues of literacy with some non-formally educated learners
- Learner resistance due to discipline/ issues or fatigue
- “nothing to report” due to isolation from host community
- Sporadic attendance at class encounters by some learners
- Lack of the necessary tools for reflection on experience
- Discomfort of the cost of reflecting on their experiences
- Lack of awareness of their English language identity construction
- My own difficulties with my positioning as teacher vs. researcher

Though the learners were initially very interested in the prospect of focusing on their writing with a new and enthusiastic teacher, the discipline of keeping diaries proved difficult for some. Indeed some learners resisted diary keeping where diary use was seen as mandatory (McDonough and McDonough, 1997;127), and may have felt there was nothing in it for them (Bailey and Nunan, 1996a, McDonough and McDonough, 1997). There was evidence that some of these learners lacked the tools for reflecting on their language learning and lived experiences in the host community (Kramsch, 2013; 62). Though learners did not explicitly vocalise it, it was clear from the comments of some participants at the start of each encounter that there was some resistance to producing accounts due to the potential pain and cost narrating self-reconstruction (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). The limited success of this pilot was not entirely due to issues affecting the learners. Upon leaving the field, I came to the realisation that my 25 years as a teacher, and the years of working with this group, had the effect of eclipsing the novice researcher that I had relatively recently become. In short, I was in some ways resisting the identity of research, and found difficulty in maintaining the dual identities of facilitator and data gatherer. I believe I had experienced a conflict between the roles of researcher and teacher. This phenomenon has been identified as involving a conflict of purpose and conflict of conduct (Baumann, 1996). Baumann describes
how this problem played out for one teacher researcher. Regarding the conflict of purpose this researcher experienced “a tension between his role as teacher and researcher.”

On one hand, as a researcher, he felt obliged to stand back, observe, and let instructional experiences unfold without the intervention of prompting and guiding students. In his teacher role, however, he felt obliged to assist students in their knowing and learning, even though that might alter the phenomenon he was investigating. My own experience also reflected this tension when it came to the conflict of conduct. This conflict is described by Baumann (ibid) as bringing into play the “moral aspects of simultaneous teaching and researching” and entailed viewing some research data-gathering tasks as “potentially compromising the role and duty as a teacher.” My subsequent experience in the field has taught me that this type of conflict is inevitably part of the teacher/researchers lot (ibid). Indeed this tension was, to some extent, to follow me throughout my fieldwork. This being said, some of the learners at the ARP took much from our brief collaborative “mutual learning community” and quickly adapted to ways of doing or knowing, mutually emulating, and engaging in running commentaries within the group. Throughout this process, they took advantage of the scaffolding it provided for these novices (Bruner, 1996; 21).

In December 2012, while visiting another ARP site, I was informed that the school principal had walked into an ARP classroom the previous day and simply announced to the learners that they would not be coming back to school in January. I went into this class and the shock was still apparent on the students’ faces. I tried to provide some comfort by telling them that there were some voluntary services available to them and gave them some contacts and indications of how to access these services. It was to one of these services that I now turned to in order to continue my research: The Intercultural Drop-in Centre in Tallaght, South County Dublin.

Following my interrupted stay in the field at the ARP, the data collection methods and materials underwent a significant evolution as the setting and population of this study shifted to its new location at the Intercultural Drop-in Centre (IDC) in Tallaght, Dublin. The following sections of this chapter will describe the purposes, setting and social literacy practices at the IDC.

4.3. The research site, location and organisation

The Intercultural Drop-in Centre (IDC) was established in 2003 by a faith-based group to address the integration needs of migrants living in the Tallaght area. The central aim of the IDC was to address the specific needs of the most vulnerable migrants living in the area. During its ten years in existence, the centre offered a safe and welcoming environment for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, especially
the most vulnerable of these groups, in the Greater Tallaght area and the surrounding district of South County Dublin. In the words of its founder Kay Mulhall, “the centre strives to reach out to people from many cultures in an inclusive way, enabling them to integrate into Irish society while retaining their own national and cultural identities” (Mulhall, 2013; 2).

Broadly, the three main groups of migrant language learners which are currently engaged in the centre are: 1) individuals who have had very limited or nonexistent formal education in their country of origin and are pre-literate or illiterate in their own language as well as in English, 2) non-English speaking migrants who came to Ireland at an older age who find it difficult to fit into mainstream education, and 3) long term migrants who may have lived and worked in Ireland in situations of minimal English language contact. The Centre’s 2012 Annual Report describes its function in this way:

The Centre is stepping stone towards wider engagement in the community. Social isolation, exclusion and poverty are major problems in the lives of individuals named above. To address these issues, we offer English language tuition which is delivered by volunteers engaged in the centre. Advocacy work and one-two-one work with individuals are also an important part of the work of the centre to progress the often complex issues of people attending. (Tesarova, 2012; 1)

The arrival of the economic downturn in Ireland in 2007/2008 impacted strongly on the lives of the migrant community in general, and the marginalised members of the IDC in particular. Many migrant families in this community were experiencing hardship. Some members of this group who had worked for many years in factories, the construction or the hospitality sector were now desperately seeking employment to substantiate meagre benefit incomes (Mulhall, 2013). In addition to the reality of successive cuts and the effective termination of official language provision by the authorities, a recent report from the Council of Europe have also highlighted the devastating effects of austerity measures on vulnerable border-crossing groups (Lusiani, 2013). The Council of Europe’s Human Rights Commission, which brings together 47 European countries and monitors human rights, released a research paper in late 2013 about the impact of the economic crisis on human rights across Europe. The report also pointed the finger at Ireland’s record in the area of human and social rights with regard to cuts to facilities for asylum seekers and migrants (ibid). It is against this backdrop that the IDC is endeavouring to reach out to the most vulnerable border-crossing communities in the area of South County Dublin. The origins and make up of this project are briefly outlined in the following section.
4.3.1 IDC origins

The Centre was originally set up by Sister Kay Mulhall and her fellow Brigidine Sisters as a meeting place for marginalised migrants from a variety of backgrounds to meet outside their homes. For a number of years the activities at the Centre revolved around crafts such as knitting and quilt making, and some social outings. Over time it emerged that many members were experiencing isolation also due to their low levels of English language competences. In 2010, the IDC approached a local community development organisation, the Dodder Valley Partnership\(^1\) to request help with the growing numbers and needs of their members. The partnership enrolled the help of an Integration officer, two administration staff and an ESOL coordinator to provide better structure and delivery of service to the IDC members. Along with a pool of approximately 20 volunteer English tutors, which was built up over several preceding years, this represented the make-up of staff at the time of writing. I will outline the setting and characteristics of the IDC in the following section.

4.3.2 The IDC premises and site location

For ten years, before its relocation to its current premises, the Intercultural Drop-in Centre was located in the draughty, century-old, one-room parish hall of St. Mualruain's Church. All of the socialisation, services, meetings and language learning take place in this open space. It is located in the old Tallaght village in South County Dublin, adjacent to which has sprung up a modern, semi-planned town of some 90,000 people. According to the 2011 census of Ireland, somewhere between 30 and 40% of this population are non-Irish born. The All-Island Digital Atlas browser (A.I.R.O., 2011), which is also informed by the same census, shows non-Irish born figures for the area of Tallaght (ringed in red in Figure 9) ranging from between 2 and 7% in some parts, and up to over 80% in others (the darker blue areas on the map).

\[\text{Figure 12 Non-Irish Born Population in Tallaght}\]

\(^1\) now the South County Dublin Partnership
It should be noted, however, that any calculation of the actual multicultural and multilingual population of this area would certainly change if the Irish born offspring of this non-Irish born group were taken into account. The open space at the IDC contained around eight large and six small folding tables, which were used for one-to-one or group language learning encounters. There was a single flipchart but no other type of boards for writing on. When I arrived at the IDC there was a limited resource centre located in a small room beside the toilet. Due to the fact that the IDC was not the sole user of this space, this Drop-in was also a “pop-up” centre as the tables, chairs, computer and any other items which were used had to be put away each day at 2pm.

In every possible way this premises was entirely unsuitable for the provision of the services outlined above, let alone for accommodating up to fifty language learners on any given day, and in various groupings, at the same time. The incompatibility of this site for the IDC was outlined in their annual report of 2012 in this way:

While we are pleased with this opportunity and its central location, this space remains an area of concern. There is an ongoing need for a separate room that can be used as a consultation room, as many migrants present to workers and volunteers with issues that are very sensitive, such as of domestic violence. The open plan environment of the Drop-in centre doesn’t give proper privacy to people to be open, heard and helped in these situations. Ideally, we would relocate to premises with more appropriate space for the services we offer (Tesarova, 2012; 9).

This recommendation for more appropriate premises was to be realised in October 2013 when the IDC moved to a new premises one kilometre across the M50 motorway to a prefabricated ex-school building. This more modern structure, with two separate open spaces, two small office spaces, a kitchen, and adequate heating, proved to be a much better fit for the services the IDC was seeking to provide. The first 18 months of my work at the IDC, and 6 months of my fieldwork, were carried out in the first premises, with the remainder of my field investigation taking place in the new building. The next section will present a profile of the backgrounds, attendance rates and a broad description of the language levels and issues of the IDC members

4.3.3 Members and learners at the IDC

The IDC caters for a broad section of the migrant population in Tallaght, as can been seen in Figure 13 below (Tesarova, 2012). The Centre tracked at least 32 nationalities attending in 2012. It should be noted that this tracking from the 2012 IDC annual report is not 100% accurate as some members do not always sign in, and some one-off attendees may not have been tracked. Despite this, this data presents a picture of a truly multicultural setting. The largest national grouping of 22% at this time was Polish, mostly
representing those who had worked or lived in Ireland for a number of years without insignificant levels of English language contact. This first group could be said to be a subset of border crossers from the Eastern European area, which also includes members from Russia, Latvia, Ukraine, and so on. Among the other groupings attending the IDC were a second cohort of Middle-eastern origins such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and a third segment of North, East, West and Sub-Saharan African origins. Levels of formal education among the population at the Centre generally ranged from second or third level among the first and second grouping to little or no formal training with some of the second and third groups outlined above. In addition to the three main groups at the IDC, there was a small faction of Asian members from China and Vietnam. The ages of members at the Centre ranged from eighteen years to a few individuals who were over sixty, and a significant majority of those attending regularly were women.

The legal and social status of the population at the IDC covered the whole gamut of border-crossing individuals, from asylum seekers and refugees to economic migrants, as described by Ward (2001). The diversity of language needs and backgrounds of those attending the IDC was also matched by a variety of social, economic, health (both mental and physical) and general welfare issues (Tesarova, 2012). The remit of the centre was such that it turned away no one who comes seeking help (ibid). In this way, the centre also provided services for a seriously marginalised border-crossing section of the community.
Longitudinal studies with migrants have long been known to suffer from participant attrition rates (Borjas, 1989) and this is certainly a significant issue at the IDC. The drop-in nature of the IDC means that individual attendance could be sporadic and attendance also fluctuated on a group level according to children’s holidays and illnesses, feasts and festivals, visits to home countries by some members, and so on. Figure 11 shows that out of the 148 individuals who registered with the centre, over 57% came to the centre less than 6 times, 28% 6 to 20 times, 10% between 20 and 40 times, 4% between 40 and 60 times and 1% over 61 times. Alongside the attrition rate, which can occur in non-compulsory educational settings, the drop-in acted as a revolving door for members who used its services as and when necessary. These fluctuations impacted on both the members’ learning paths and the research in hand.
Alongside the social and historical diversity outlined above, the population at the IDC presented an extremely wide variety of English language learning experiences and abilities, and, as a consequence, a broad spectrum of language needs and goals. An example of this diversity is presented in a policy document of the Council of Europe for the linguistic integration of migrants (Beacco, 2010) in the following way:

This diversity is reflected in the range of languages in their repertoires, the use of (one of) the language(s) of the host society (in the personal, social, working or other environments) and the use of the language(s) of origin or the languages in their repertoire. This diversity is also reflected in the requisite periods of learning for the language(s) of the host country (depending on whether the migrants have been schooled, or have already had experience of learning an unknown language, etc), and depending on the stages in the migratory process (arrival, brief, lasting or definitive settlement, etc).

In my time working and researching at the IDC, I observed the 6 literacies identified by Flegg (2008) across the member population: Pre-literate, where the learner’s native language has no writing system; Non-literate, where the learner cannot read the native language; Semi-literate, where the learner’s reading abilities are minimal; Non-alphabet literate, where the learner can read a non-alphabetic language; Non-Roman alphabet language literate, where the learner can read a language that has a non-Roman alphabet writing system, and Roman alphabet language literate. These distinctions became fuzzy when differing levels within the above categories and different languages of some individual learners were taken into account.
A key challenge at the Centre was that a significant number of members were low-level literacy learners, also referred to as low English proficiency learners. This kind of learner group is said to face challenges in dimensions which differ to those with higher abilities, such as “education, citizenship, income, women’s labour force participation, proficiency in understanding, reading, and writing English, and literacy test scores” (Batalova and Fix, 2010; 515).

In an effort to deal with these challenges, during tutor training and in my teaching practice, I sought to foster a needs-based, learner-centered approach. I also researched and trained the tutors in the theory and practice of the Language experience Approach (LEA). Holt (1995) stated that LEA can be successfully used to instruct low-level literacy learners, and it has been shown that the use of migrants’ life experiences allied to this approach can develop oral skills and create texts that are relevant for migrant learners (Wales, 1994, Gaber-Katz, 1996). I encouraged tutors to incorporate LEA into a life history approach with our members in order to create what may be called a ‘Life Experience Approach’. This approach became central to the data collection process and helped our members build narratives of their lived experiences. Since the Drop-in Centre itself was one of the communities of practice on which socially situated learning practices of these learners was focused, the following section will outline the nature of day-to-day language provision and learning at the IDC.

4.3.4 Language learning encounters at the IDC
The aims of language provision at the IDC were to alleviate social exclusion for the members. This service sought to help the members navigate the daily tasks of dealing with communicative situations such as children’s schooling, healthcare and officialdom. However, the structure of this delivery was in no way similar to any conventional language education institution. The drop-in nature of the Centre, where not only the learners but also the tutors do not adhere to conventional ideas of class space or times, means that apart from a small number of long term one-to-one arrangements, neither tutors nor learners know on any given day who they will be working with.

During 2012, the IDC offered language learning encounter services for one-to-one or groups every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9.30 to 2pm. During peak months (September to May) the IDC’s open space was often crammed beyond its capacity. The movement and noise generated by this milieu did not make for an ideal language learning environment. These factors and the broad diversity of members’ needs, both linguistic and social, along with the fluctuating attendance of tutors and learners, made this the most challenging language learning setting I have worked in over my 25 years of teaching.
Dealing with this reality entailed what I came to refer to in tutor training at the IDC as a ‘guerrilla teaching’ approach, which was also sustained by the use of a topic-negotiated portfolio, the IDC did cater for the different needs of its members, and its flexibility responded to the call by the EU Commission’s policy paper to acknowledge migrant learners’ “social, work, and family commitments” (Kluzer et al., 2011; 39). The relationships between the volunteer tutors and the service using members at the centre were of central importance to the continuing success and growing number of border crossers registering with the IDC. The IDC had a strict code of conduct for volunteers and the environment was designed to be welcoming, friendly and supportive. Since working at the IDC had a significant impact on the development and progress of this study, I will present an outline of my duties at the IDC in the next section.

4.3.5 Working at the IDC
In February 2012 I was employed by the Dodder Valley Partnership as an ESOL consultant to provide a pedagogical structure to English language provision at the IDC. This included giving tutor training for the volunteers, most of whom had no real experience of language teaching; building up a bank of ESOL materials for teaching; and, most importantly, designing a system whereby learners could enjoy the flexibility of dropping in while having their individual needs met. The central pillar of this system involved the introduction of some structure to the day-to-day delivery of language learning. Apart from the stable one-to-one lessons, I decided to assign a specific language level to each table in the open space, with the aim of resolving the overall problem of learners simply joining a group intuitively. The goal was also to resolve the issue of tutors having to juggle learners from various levels, and for learners to feel comfortable with the level and peer-group at their chosen table. The tables were organised according to 4 broad levels – A0 (literacy), A1, A2, B1-2 CEFR, so that the learners would be able to quickly find their level and settle down at the appropriate table to begin the lesson for that day.

In order to ensure learners were not frustrated by too strong a disparity in level with their peers when choosing their learning encounters, I adapted and instituted placement, literacy and progress assessments. These assessments also meant that some tracking of learner progress became a reality at the IDC. I delivered monthly workshops to train and update the volunteer tutors in the approaches and practicalities of these changes I had made, and to promote a focus at the Centre on meeting the specific needs and challenges for this learner group. While working at the Centre, I also wanted to set up and personally teach a reading and writing group for a cohort which had sufficient spoken interaction skills to fulfill their daily communicative needs, but were held back from further integration, educational or work prospects by literacy issues. This group would then become the focus for my classroom-based research.
As the relationship between learners and the volunteer tutors was of central importance to understanding their lived language learning experiences, the next section will provide a profile of the body of volunteers working at the IDC at the time of this study.

4.3.6 Volunteers at the IDC

At the time I entered the field at the IDC in early 2012, the cohort of volunteers was made up of a core group of 10 women members of the religious community; many of whom were Brigidine sisters who had been with the centre from its early inception. The remainder of the tutors were lay people, and could be loosely categorised into various (sometimes overlapping) groups; retirees, unemployed, students, trainee teachers and some people with time available to help out. The majority of the volunteer tutors were women with around 20 percent being men. Apart from one or two students and trainee teachers, some of whom I had recruited from the 2012 MPhil linguistic courses in Trinity College Dublin, very few of the volunteer cohort had any real formal ESOL teacher training, and very little specialised training to deal with the complexity and challenges of working with marginalised learners such as our member group. Because of this gap in training or experience, many volunteers, through no active fault of their own, replicated their own schooling experience by rote teaching, mechanical exercises and out-of-context word lists. A study of ESL volunteers working with refugees in the USA (Gilbertson, 2000; 3) revealed that well-intentioned volunteers who had little training or experience may provide “more of a disservice than a service” to those they are seeking to help. This study also bore out my own experience with my volunteers in that volunteers were reproducing their own outmoded educational experiences. In Gilbertson’s (ibid; 37) words, “How volunteers were taught is probably how they will teach—unless they are provided training. If they believe we learn by mimickery [sic] and grammar translation—the way they learned, then that is the way they teach”. Gilbertson highlights another potential problem which I have witnessed in the field where untrained volunteers may treat these learners like children so risking impediments to progress by belittling and insulting them (ibid).

Despite our monthly workshops on best practice for teaching in this setting (see the following section), that is through meaning-based “dialogue, sharing, and investigation, rather than transmitting knowledge” (Auerbach et al., 2013; xii), many tutors found it difficult to extricate themselves from learned behaviour and long held perspectives. Also, some tutors, again due to positioned ideas, viewed these members’ first or other languages as obstacles to language learning rather than resources (ibid). However, some new tutors who emerged from the communities of the learner population during my time at the IDC showed that those who share the language, culture and experiences of these learners can be better
positioned to help them negotiate their challenges more comfortably (ibid). This is not to say that the volunteer cohort as a whole was not doing all in their power to aid the sometimes prolonged border-crossing of the IDC members. As I mentioned above, teaching at the Centre was a challenging endeavour, and it should be noted that the excellence and sensitivity of tutor-learner relationships, and the welcoming and comfortable learning environment which made this centre so successful was, in large part, due to the commitment of its volunteers. To their credit, many of these untrained or novice tutors did aspire to the “personal qualities which contribute to... success as a classroom teacher, [and] insure understanding and respect for... students and their cultural setting” (Alatis et al., 1995; 285). The final word on the dedication of the IDC tutors comes from the IDC’s 2012 annual report: “In total, the volunteers worked 2058 hours in 2012, which represents a contribution in kind of €45,193.68 on the basis of an average industrial wage of €21.961 per hour” (Tesarova, 2012; 4). The following sections will describe how the literacy group was formed and how the research subjects became involved in this study.

4.4 Fieldwork at the IDC

Though I had been tentatively gathering biographical data at the IDC throughout 2012, I had only decided to turn to this site as my main focus of inquiry in early 2013. In January of that year, I began in earnest to work with my literacy group at the IDC. I decided to focus on guided writing activities such as the “Life Experience” and “Our Stories” handouts (see Appendix 3, Data Collection Worksheets). As outlined in my fieldwork design chapter, the theory did not only inform the methodological approach here, but also the practice of teaching and day-to-day researching with this group. This entire endeavour was informed by a critical, collaborative, and transformative narrative inquiry into lived experiences of situated learning, integration, and target language identity work in communities of practice for this cohort.

![Figure 15 Daily Attendance at IDC 2012](image)
The narrative inquiry at the IDC took place in two periods with two groups of learners. The first part of my fieldwork was carried out between January and June 2013, while the second part was conducted between October 2013 and February 2014. The summer months were not deemed suitable for this study as they were a time of very low attendance at the Centre due to childcare at school holidays and for other reasons outlined above. Indeed, the attendance of members at this time was only a fraction of the winter population at the IDC as can be clearly seen in Figure 12 (source: Tesarova, 2012). Many of the participants in the first cohort had stopped attending or had moved on, though a few remained as active members of the IDC and even continued to take part in our story telling sessions with the second literacy group. In September of 2013 I returned to the Centre to work with this second cohort. The selection process of the members of this group is presented in the following part.

4.4.1 Selection of participants at the IDC

The participants who became involved in this narrative inquiry selected themselves. In effect, the informants emerged from the population of the centre based on their own learning needs and preferences. In response to a request from the Centre’s Integration Officer, who identified a cohort of members whose spoken interaction was above the IDC’s exit threshold but who still struggled with reading and writing, I set up a literacy group. Any members that so wished could take part in this group. It must be noted that the superficial indicators of the participants’ identities provided in Table X below represent only a starting point in the exploration of their stories (Block, 2007b). A more complete, relevant and useful picture of the identities of these members should emerge in the course of the data presentation and analysis in the following chapters.

This group then became the focus of a narrative inquiry. The members of this first group who agreed to work with me on a collaborative classroom-based inquiry were mostly women. Some men dropped in and out of the group from time to time, but the regular core participants were mostly women. When we restarted the inquiry in September 2013 the membership of the core group changed dramatically and some men joined in (the members of the original group are asterisked in the Core Participants in Table 2 below). While the participants in our inquiry did not perfectly mirror the overall profile of the population of the Centre or of the non-Irish born in the surrounding area, they did represent a broad range of social, educational, and geographical groupings as can be seen in Table 1 below. It should be noted that the levels of literacy competency among all the members of the literacy groups varied considerably. The range of writing and reading abilities stretched from low A1 to upper B2 (Council of Europe, 2001) across both groups. By all accounts, managing a multi-level literacy group can prove challenging under most
circumstances. Access to the group was open to all who needed to develop their literacy skills and there was no placement test or entrance criteria other than their motivation and shared participation in the project. However, between the good will of the more advanced students, and the fostering of situated, peer-to-peer story sharing and learning strategies, the groups managed to work surprisingly well together. The characteristics, application and evolution of the data gathering tools used in this inquiry are outlined in the next section.
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<th>Origins</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Time in country</th>
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<td>10 years</td>
<td>Leaving Cert level</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uma</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Early thirties</td>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>Bosnian</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Unfinished Law studies</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majeed</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>nineteen</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Pashto, Dari</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Leaving Cert level</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nika</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Late twenties</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Ukrainian, Russian</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>Degree – Cultural Studies</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Chata</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mid Thirties</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Yoruba, English</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Junior Cert level</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Core Participants in Inquiry
4.5. Narrative inquiry at the Drop-in Centre

The data collection practice and tools used in this study underwent some changes as the research proceeded. The evolution of the data collection tools in this study was partly in response to issues arising from the piloting phase, but mostly the data collection design and practice was altered to accommodate the dynamics of the new setting at the IDC. It has been said that the hallmark of good practice in qualitative research design is its “variability, rather than its standardization” (Popay et al., 1998; 346). Narrative frames were chosen as the tools for collecting learners’ writings and were developed in answer to the various issues which were surfacing in the field at the IDC. Notable among these issues was the sporadic individual attendance by members, which made a weekly diary unworkable. The stand-alone narrative frames, which are presented in the Table 2 below, did go some way to resolving this problem, and learners were able to build their narratives over time. The way this inquiry evolved through its four phases is presented in Table 2.

The methodological framework informing the use of narrative frames has been discussed in my fieldwork design (see 3.5.1), and their application in the field is described in this section. Although the practice and tools of this inquiry evolved, the methodological theory and praxis remained true to this study’s original goal of a critical, transformative and collaborative classroom-based inquiry into the lived experiences of these learners as envisioned by Norton (1994). As can be seen in Table 3 below, in many ways the learners’ use of narrative frames as data collection tools provided broader pictures of the learners’ lived experiences and language learning identities and trajectories.

The use of these frames still satisfied the pedagogical purpose of this inquiry by mediating social critical literacy for this cohort, while at the same time fostering situated learning (Taylor et al., 2005). As well as adhering to situated literacy practices in this narrative inquiry, the use of these frames in the field added some extra dimensions to this study. The employment of narrative frames allowed these learners to log and reflect on their participation, membership and identities in various settings (Barkhuizen, 2008a, Lam, 2000).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Phase</th>
<th>Method of Inquiry</th>
<th>Data collection tools</th>
<th>Data types</th>
<th>Potential impact for learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot at the ARP – April to June 2012</td>
<td>Diary Study</td>
<td>Weekly Diary Template, reflective encounters</td>
<td>Learner logs and weekly diaries</td>
<td>Transformation in literacy, reflection and possible transformation of lived language learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Group 1 at the IDC – January to June 2013</td>
<td>Narrative Inquiry</td>
<td>Narrative frames of various themes of learners’ past, present and future lived experiences and language contact and learning in various settings</td>
<td>Multidimensional accounts of learners’ past, present and future lived experiences. Learner-generated material for wider use</td>
<td>Transformation in literacy, reflection and possible transformation of lived language learning, Wider impact of newsletter stories at IDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Group 2 and wider group at the IDC – September to December 2013</td>
<td>Narrative Inquiry</td>
<td>Narrative frames of various themes of learners’ past, present and future lived experiences and language contact and learning in various settings, and “Our Stories” frames with broader themes</td>
<td>Multidimensional accounts of a greater number of learners’ past, present and future lived experiences. Learner-generated material for wider use. Broader inquiry into other IDC members lives</td>
<td>Transformation in literacy, reflection and possible transformation of lived language learning, Wider impact of stories at IDC, and broader reach of book publication on learners outside the IDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up Interviews December 2013 – April 2014</td>
<td>Semi-structured Critical Ethnographic Interviews</td>
<td>Collaborative ‘conversation’ which produces a mutual narrative between research and storyteller</td>
<td>Renegotiation of accounts of core group learners’ past, present and future lived experiences.</td>
<td>Reflection gives participants more insights into their linguistic, literacy and social issues and is an occasion to clarify meanings, giving tellers more authority over their texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Phases and Methods of Data Collection

Also, by varying the themes of the frames used in this inquiry, using topics such as My Year, My Irish Experience, My Life Story, and so on (see Appendix 3), the scope of experiences being
studied broadened out to encompass a much wider range of lived stories across diverse settings and at different times in their lives (including possible futures).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative frame name</th>
<th>Themes/Topics</th>
<th>Settings – place and time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you know Dublin?</td>
<td>Lifestyles, habits and contact with Dubliners</td>
<td>Shops, parks, meeting places in daily/weekly life – past and present time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Irish Experience</td>
<td>Arrival, first impressions, and landmark personal events in Ireland, intercultural attitudes</td>
<td>Favourite and significant places, recreational spaces – past and present time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People and Places in my Life</td>
<td>Socialisation, daily/weekly routines, social contacts, attitudes these events, people and settings</td>
<td>Learners routine settings, school, home, street, neighbourhoods – past and present time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Year</td>
<td>Outings and trips, recreational activities, important events, helpful people, past changes and future hopes</td>
<td>Holiday/tourist places, cinemas, bars, parks and recreational spaces – past, present and future time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Hopes for 2013</td>
<td>Future hopes, needs and desires for a variety of life themes; house, children, friendship, diet, health, etc.</td>
<td>Home, social spaces, work, school – future time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Life Story</td>
<td>Origins, language and learning, family, Drop-in Centre, spare time, social life, comparing countries, past changes and future plans</td>
<td>Country of origin, places in Ireland, Drop-in Centre, family home – past, present and future time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Stories at the Drop-in Centre</td>
<td>Education, Irish life, socialising, culture, work, life lessons and emotions, changes, etc.</td>
<td>The Drop-in Centre, all the above settings – past, present and future time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Narrative Frames - Themes and Settings

The semi-structured follow-up interviews which were used to further explore this cohort’s lived experiences are described at the end of this chapter.

The practice and praxis of the fieldwork employed in this study were not born fully formed; this inquiry had to evolve out of a necessity to accommodate the unique population,
conditions and settings in which it was pursued. In this way, over the course of the three fieldwork sessions, first at the ARP and then the two subsequent sessions at the IDC, the evolution of the data collection practices and collaborative inquiry was constantly being questioned, honed and improved to fulfil its scope, be the best fit to its setting and, most of all, be of benefit to linguistic and literacy needs of the learners involved. The following sections will describe the practice and progress of the narrative inquiry in the field at the IDC.

4.5.1 Narrative inquiry with Literacy Group 1 – January to May 2013

Our literacy group started meeting every Tuesday morning in early January 2013 at the IDC for 3 hours. We began our inquiry with some intercultural activities so that the participants could get to know each other, explore their peers’ identities, and create an environment of trust and mutual comprehension. During this phase, I provided the learners with reading texts which served as models for their own narrative efforts. Instead of using dominant institutional texts to provide models of form and content input (Baynham, 1995), I provided the learners with stories produced by migrants in similar situations to their own. “Minh’s story” (sourced from NALA, 2003), shown in Figure 16 below, is an example of the type of socioculturally appropriate reading these learners were exposed to during the initial phases of this narrative fieldwork.

![Vietnam](image)

My mother is still strong. She is 95 years old. She gets up at half past four every morning. She brushes her teeth. She wakes her little nephews and nieces. Then she goes into the kitchen and cooks breakfast. After breakfast, she washes the dishes. Sometimes she does the housework: cleaning, washing, and cooking. My mother is still living in Vietnam. She didn’t come with me to Ireland.

**Figure 16 Minh’s Story**

We then started working on their lived experiences in Ireland. These narratives were drafted several times (see Handwritten Work, Appendix 1) and I used a correction code) to help the learners reflect on textual errors. Around this time, I contacted the local library in Tallaght to ask for the use of their computer room. The library was happy to accommodate us, so I
decided that members could use this facility to write up their narratives and, at the same
time, up-skill their PC literacy. I set up an email so that the members could send their
narratives to me for printing and subsequent reflection on form and content. I also helped
some members who had never emailed to set up new accounts.

I had already used writing frames as a pedagogical writing tool to aid the members’ literacy
at the Centre. For an example of writing frames see the “My Town” frame in my fieldwork
design chapter. I then designed my own narrative frames which would fulfill the goals of this
study while, at the same time, enable members to drop in and out of our encounters. As noted
above, I employed guiding writing activities in order to kick-start and scaffold the writing
process for these learners who were unused to writing in English about their lived
experiences.

These guided writing worksheets mostly took the form of writing frames or skeletal outlines,
as shown in Figure 14 below, which served as scaffolding to help our learners to develop their
critical literacy skills while at the same time logging and sharing with their peers their own
perspectives and identities of the lived experiences which were being elicited (Hyland, 2007).
Further narrative frames were added to the inquiry with titles such as “My Irish Experience”,
“My Year” and “People and Places in My Life”. These frames were designed to help the
learners log their lived experience while also improving the writing and reading skills. In
successive encounters, these written accounts were shared, discussed and redrafted with the
whole group or individually. Thus the frames fulfilled the purpose of posing questions about
local social and personal border-crossing issues (Frye, 1999). When they had worked on a
sufficient amount of frames, I encouraged the learners to draw on these experiences and
perceptions to create single narratives using all the elements and language they had so far
produced. Finally, the literacy group members typed these merged narratives as final drafts
up in the library, at the Centre or at home.
Around the same time, the Centre had started producing a newsletter (see Newsletter Excerpts, Appendix 3). As the narratives began to take form, I encouraged members to publish their stories in the IDC newsletter. This would fulfill three additional functions for this inquiry. Firstly, it would provide the writers with an audience other than the red pen-wielding teacher. Secondly, it would lay a trail for other potential narrators to emerge from the general IDC population. Thirdly, it would offer relevant texts for other learners to work with (Miller, 2007).

In this way, a publishing outlet for the members’ work opened up as a means of providing meaningful textual input and encouragement to non-literacy group members at the Centre to take up the literacy gauntlet and hopefully start producing their own narratives. I encouraged the volunteer tutors to use these learner-generated newsletter materials such as Chata’s, in Figure 18 below, as input for their own learners by adding, for example, comprehension questions and doing follow-up writing tasks (Newsletters number App).

Figure 17 Chata’s Drop-in Narrative Frame
It should be noted that the amount and quality of the data from both the written and the interview parts of this study were uneven across the participants, and the attendance rate of the participants varied considerably across both groups.

Another reason for variance in the data was the fact that the learners were positioned across a significantly broad range of spoken and literacy levels. In addition, the diverse learning backgrounds and learning styles influenced the degree of engagement and participation of this cohort. As the cycle of narrative inquiry with this group came to a close it seemed that our collaboration had had a beneficial effect at the IDC. Membership of this group was much sought after by those members who wished to move on with their lives and, on an individual level. I left the field for the summer lull at the IDC. My return to the field in September is described in the next section.

### 4.5.3 Narrative inquiry with Literacy Group 2 - September to December 2013

When I returned to the IDC after the summer break of 2013, some changes had taken place there. As I have already noted, the IDC now had a more appropriate premises in which to conduct its business. In addition, I was met with many new faces among the members as word of the good work here began to spread among the migrant communities in Tallaght and beyond. As I began to reconnect with the daily round of the centre, I also noticed that several
members of Literacy Group 1 either were no longer attending the centre or were attending on a very intermittent basis. Another source of novelty at the Centre was the forthcoming tenth anniversary of the founding of the IDC and a week of celebrations was planned for late December that year. This event provided me with an idea and a new goal for the literacy group. I decided that we would publish a book containing the stories of our members to commemorate our tenth year. The focus of this project was on learners narrating their relationship with the Centre and the other people they met there, and on their past, present and possible lived experiences beyond the learning environment. This goal of publishing learners’ narratives, which is an example of good critical and pedagogical practice (Gaber-Katz, 1996), would include gathering as many stories as possible from the Centre as a whole. So, while I formed a core of Literacy Group 2 to continue my collaborative inquiry, I encouraged as many tutors and members as I could to join in the project which I called “Our Stories at the Drop-in Centre”. The progress and final products of this project are presented in the following section.

4.5.4 Our Stories at the Drop-in Centre

Overall, the approach, methods, tools and practice of our inquiry in the second incarnation of the literacy group closely followed those used with the first group. However, the dynamic of this narrative cycle differed from the first in some respects. Firstly, this grouping contained some participants who were quite advanced compared to many others at the IDC. Among the new members, there were two very confident and able university graduates; Hanna from Latvia and Nika from Ukraine. The mentoring and assistance provided by these two women was to have a positive effect on other less competent members of the group in the way they socialised these less expert learners into literacy practices. Indeed, the identities of these confident young women had evolved so rapidly that they became volunteer tutors at the Centre in very short order. Secondly, the knowledge that their work was to be published had a powerful washback effect on the motivation and workrate of these members. Finally, there was a tangible energy generated by the “Our Stories” project which played out across the Centre as members huddled in groups working on their narratives. In order to generate narratives which helped members explore and relate their various relationships both within and outside the Centre, I had designed a more elaborate narrative framing device for the “Our Stories” project. This worksheet, a part of which is represented by the example of Ana’s
Narrative frame in Figure 20 below (see Ana’s Handwritten Work, Appendix 1), encouraged members in pairs or groups to explore their past, present and possible future experiences and perceptions on a range of narrative themes which are presented in the Our Stories frame in Figure 16 (see full frame in Appendix 1, p. 298):

![Our Stories at the Drop-in Centre](image)

**Our Stories at the Drop-in Centre**

We are going to tell our stories of our time at the Drop-in centre. We will ask other members and staff about their time here. We will ask others about their life in three parts:

1. My life before the Drop-in centre
2. My time at the Centre (my past experience)
3. My life now (in and outside the Centre)

1. Which topics in the boxes can match parts 1, 2 and 3 (put the numbers in the boxes - there may be more than one answer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coming to Ireland</th>
<th>My tutor</th>
<th>My family</th>
<th>Learning English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social events</td>
<td>Meeting new people</td>
<td>Happy occasions</td>
<td>Difficulties in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and education</td>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>Future plans</td>
<td>Dreams in the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in Ireland</td>
<td>Things I know now</td>
<td>Things I didn’t know then</td>
<td>Beginning at the Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other people taught me</td>
<td>Other cultures</td>
<td>My culture</td>
<td>My language(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Life changes</td>
<td>The journey</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Our group</td>
<td>The Drop in building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now check if others agree with your choices.

**Figure 19 Our Stories Themes**

The situated nature of both the learning and the inquiry in hand was evident almost from the beginning of this second cycle. In effect, very little teacher modelling or input was required to elicit the members’ narratives. However, some input and modelling was needed and this took the form learner generated stories such as “Minh’s Story” (see Figure 19 above) or of the
narrative frames of the more advanced members such as Hanna and Nika. By photocopying and sharing their efforts, other members were able to see what was required of them and how they could proceed with their own narrative frames.

Figure 20 Ana’s Narrative Frame

Hanna, Nika and other advanced members sat patiently and helped with the frames of the less competent members both within our group and with other IDC members who were keen to get involved and be published (Taylor et al., 2005). Alongside the fact that the more competent members were positioning themselves almost as teachers in the group and the Centre (Taylor et al., 2005), there were other dynamics which bolstered the learners in their efforts to tell their stories. Because members from different backgrounds and regions shared common languages, notably Russian and Arabic, they were able to draw on these resources to resolve issues of lexis and grammar with their peers (Baynham, 2005b). In this way, the IDC functioned as a positive multicultural sociolinguistic space (Baynham and Simpson, 2010). In
addition, there was a great deal of emotional scaffolding and support among the members as they shared their efforts, and drew on each other’s work and experiences. I also encouraged some learners to use the topics to find out about and write about the other group members’ stories (see Figure 21 below).

Almost without exception, the members of this community of practice participated in their shared purpose of building their narratives both within the immediate literacy group and across the wider group of “Our Stories” authors.

Hanna writes about Alma

In all, 38 stories were collected from the population of the IDC, including two from the tutor cohort and those of the 14 core participants in this study. All of the narratives were then collected and edited into the final product. I asked the founding member, Kay Mulhall, to write an introductory chapter and I wrote a short foreword outlining the project. The book was entitled “Our Stories at the Intercultural Drop-in Centre” and was published in time to be launched by the Lord Mayor of Tallaght at the joint commemoration of our anniversary and the official opening of the new Drop-in Centre in late November 2013. All of these stories and
the narratives collected in the previous fieldwork phases of this study were securely stored and made ready for analysis. After the milestone of the publication of the learners’ stories, I started to conduct the ethnographic semi-structured follow-up interviews which are described in the next section.

### 4.5.5 Follow-up interviews at the IDC

The follow-up face-to-face interviews at the IDC were carried out between December 2013 and April 2014 with 14 participants and a member of staff taking part. The member of staff in question was a central figure in the Centre for a number of years and was interviewed to provide third-party triangulation and “alternative interpretations” (Kouritzin, 2000a; 4) of the members lived experiences at the Centre. The interviews were held in a small private room, which was normally used as a resource centre at the IDC. The selection of interview subjects was determined by two main factors; firstly, by the extent of their membership and participation in our core literacy groups, and secondly, interview informants were chosen according to the availability and willingness of members who were juggling families, childcare, their own schooling and various other aspects of their busy lives. Though conducting these interviews at some remove from the narrative cycle entailed a risk of the paint being dry on some members’ stories and possible issues of recollection, I decided that the period of post-publication of our book would be best for exploring the washback effect on our members of having their stories in print, and for a fuller reflection on the entire narrative cycle. Another advantage of conducting the interviews at this remove was that it provided a longitudinal perspective to the inquiry as some members had moved on with their lives in the meantime.

While it has been noted elsewhere in this thesis that cyclical narrative interviews, and access to the transcripts of these, can give the participant greater opportunities to exercise control over and expand upon their written histories (see 2.5.1), the fluctuating attendance of the cohort, the layout open-plan layout of the Centre and time constraints during this inquiry made this a very difficult proposition. Also, it may be argued that more ownership of the content of this cyclical by the learners would have provided greater insights into our social practices, meaning-making and identity work. However, despite there being no direct feedback loop between the follow-up interview and the narrative tools, or explicit opportunities for learners to alter the tools we had used during our social literacy practices,
the instances of shared knowledge outlined in 4.5.4 above did show, to a certain extent, learners using our frames for their own communicative and narrative purposes.

The interviews ranged in duration from twenty minutes to almost an hour. Though it was not always possible due to attendance and availability, I provided some members with reflective pre-interview questions so they would have some idea of what the main interview topics were. I asked these members to note down some answers prior to coming to the interview. Not all of the interview questions outlined in my fieldwork design were asked to all the interviewees, and there were various levels of digression in these encounters. The process and content of the interviews also diverged according to the spoken competencies of the members. Some members, notably Lena and Jane were certainly operating at the lower end of A2 in the CEFR scale while others, such as Nika and Hanna, were both at a confident upper B2 level. I finished the interview phase of this inquiry and exited the field in April 2014. All interviews were transcribed into secure digital documents for analysis. In all, including the pilot, I had spent seventeen months in the field. I was now ready to organise, categorise, and start the analysis of my dataset.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has described the practice and evolution of the fieldwork for this narrative inquiry. The characteristics, settings and the nature of language provision of the research sites were outlined. The backgrounds and profiles of the core participants of the inquiry were described; their age, gender, education, languages, time in Ireland and their contact with the research site. The data collected at the IDC included handwritten narrative frames and final narratives from the core participants in two phases of six and four months respectively. Follow-up audio recordings from this cohort and a member of staff were also gathered over a four-month period and these were transcribed for analysis. A small amount of data was also collected in the form of learners’ weekly diaries at the ARP. Finally, the qualitative data in the form of the learners’ handwritten stories were scanned and made ready for categorization and subsequent analysis. Chapter 5, next, will outline the theories and approaches I employed to analyse the various forms of data collected during the course of this inquiry.
Chapter 5 – Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction
This chapter will describe the approaches used in coding the dataset as part of the narrative analysis in this inquiry. I will start by outlining my choice of data transcription method. Then I will present the process and rational for the coding process, and how the first coding frame was built from the various data formats collected in the field. Next, I will describe in some detail the use of the computer software analytical tool, Nvivo, in this process. Throughout this chapter, I will provide examples which illustrate my use of this software and also of my choices of the units of analysis employed to interpret my cohorts’ stories and our follow-up interviews. Overall, this chapter will present a picture of the three cycles of coding which I used to co-construct and extract meanings from the narratives of the lived learning experiences of the core participants in this inquiry. I will then provide a useful synthesis of the interrelationship of coding cycles and methods used in this analysis. The chapter will end with a description of how I used comparative analysis to identify common and core themes across the narratives of the various participants involved in this inquiry.

5.2 Transcription and coding of data
The transcription of interview data for this inquiry was not approached as a mechanically trivial task, but instead this practice was undertaken as very much part of the analytical process itself (Elliott, 2005). The act of transcribing is seen here as the start of a conversation where I could enter into a dialogue with the data and the learners’ stories more intimately (Dörnyei, 2007). While it is widely accepted that it is all but impossible to faithfully capture on paper the full meanings communicated in oral encounters (Dörnyei, 2007, Elliott, 2005), some way of conserving parts of additional meanings, which may be conveyed in intonation, hesitation, pauses, and other non-textual signals, are needed in order to interpret and present in-depth interviews to the reader (ibid). The conventions used for transcribing the narratives interviews of the learners’ lived experiences in this study included morpho-syntactical errors, vocal pauses, hesitations, non-lexical utterances (including laughter), and other in-text comments or asides which provide some extra information and context to the encounters on paper. Some of these conventions can be seen (in bold) in the excerpt from my transcription of Joasia’s interview below.
PETER: What sort of problems would you have with English speaking or writing in Ireland?
JOASIA: Eh... because I... I was shy and thinks “Oh no, If I say somethings bad!”. I always thinks “Oh no, maybe not yet”
PETER: So you kept saying “Later, later”
JOASIA: Yes
PETER: In what situations was it difficult for your English in Ireland?
JOASIA: (unsure pause) uhm...
PETER: So when you needed to use English and you had to ask your friends...
JOASIA: Oh, yeah. If I have interview or something, I studied before the, eh, interview at home

(Joasia’s transcript, 49-54)

In this way, the transcripts in this analysis were not entirely sanitized, even though I had decided not to include some of the more complex features of formal notation used by proponents of conversation analysis, for example, as a way of focusing more on the delivery of speech and social relations between actors (Elliott, 2005). Since my follow-up interviews were focused more on the narrative content than the social function of the interviews themselves (Dörnyei, 2007), which was evident from the purpose and setting of these encounters, I used transcript conventions which would not fragment the whole story while still trying to convey important non-textual signals in our talk. Throughout this process, I was alert to the fact that my transcripts represented an interpretive retelling of these stories. I was also mindful that the situated nature of this type of inquiry meant that I was actively involved in the construction of meaning when it came to the interpretation of the data (Schreier, 2012). Finally, I was aware that my choice of transcription method for this interpretation, and my approaches to coding, carried with them my own views on second language learning, and language ideology in general (Dörnyei, 2007).

As a tool for the analysis of data in qualitative research, codes have been described as a word, short phrase, or a longer passage of linguistic or visual data which can symbolically evoke “summative, salient, essence-capturing” attributes or themes that can then be labeled and analysed for interpretation (Saldaña, 2012; 3). The process of coding in qualitative data analysis has been identified as the critical link between data collection and the subsequent explanation of their meanings (Charmaz, 2001). Through the process of codification, segments of the data can be grouped into categories or ‘families’ according to shared characteristics and patterns begin to emerge within and between these groupings.
5.3 Summary of the coding cycles

In order to stay true to the dialogic framework of narrative inquiry informing this study, and to more effectively reflect the conversation between the researcher and my learners’ stories in the data, each step in this analytical process drew upon and recategorised the previous coding cycles, and is related to the others, as shown in Figure 22 below. The first cycle of coding in was eclectic in nature, and cast a broad thematic net which captured a wide distribution of analytical units across the nodes or categories. This in turn produced an initial topic-driven coding frame, see Figure 25. For the second cycle, I first collected elements from the learner’s accounts of their backgrounds and histories and used these to draw a pen portrait or abstracts as a means of providing the reader with a useful grasp of the person and events under scrutiny. These vignettes were also used to offset some types of fragmentation which can beset the type of coding used in the first cycle. I then adapted restorying approaches, incorporating my pen portraits, to provide a temporal framework, or a beginning, middle and end, within which to better examine any changes over time in the lived experiences and second language identity work of my learners.

![Figure 22 Summary of Coding Cycles](image)

The process and interrelationships of this narrative analysis as represented in Figure 19 can be briefly summarised in the following way: Themes from the 1st coding cycle were re-coded
into the pen portraits or “People” in the 2nd coding cycle. Then, the “people” categories were added to time coded events in the form of pen portraits and to complete this coding cycle. The result of this analytical phase went on to inform and produce final reconfigured narratives of my participants’ stories. The following sections will present my coding approaches for the first cycle of coding in this narrative analysis, and the remainder of this chapter will outline the interrelated coding methods and processes employed in the analysis of data collected in this inquiry.

5.4 First cycle of data coding
The following chapter sections will describe the first cycle of coding which I used to construct a preliminary coding frame for my narrative analysis. First it will explain how units of analysis, or themes, were identified in this process, Then, it will outline how I employed computer software for this analysis. Finally it will present the eclectic coding methods (Dörnyei, 2007) used to interpret meanings from the storied lives of the core participants in this inquiry.

5.4.1 Code and retrieve method
Confronted with a mass of unstructured data, and the wide range of coding methods on offer, I felt the urge, familiar to other researchers, to break these down by employing a tried and tested system of coding (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, Saldaña, 2012). I initially chose to use the code and retrieve method, which is among the most common approaches to qualitative data categorization, to conduct a broad thematic analysis of the data (ibid). This system depends on using codes to retrieve and label “analytically significant segments of data” thus affording a relatively stable starting point for coding and data analysis in this inquiry (Coffee and Atkinson, 1996; 22). I used thematic coding to retrieve and identify themes of identity work, affiliation and achievement, dislocation and conflict, and relationships and language socialisation in the stories of my participants (Haden and Hoffman, 2013).

5.4.2 Coding and units of analysis
Before proceeding with the coding process, I had to identify what constituted a unit of analysis for this research. It has been argued that deciding what represents a meaningful unit of analysis is one of the significant challenges facing qualitative researchers (Chenail, 2012). For the first coding cycle, the units of analysis for this study were identified using my research and interview questions, narrative frame themes, and themes which had emerged from my
teaching experiences with participants and from my reviews of relevant literature. For example, the questions and their answers in my follow-up interviews emerged as single units, though there were often layers of mutually exclusive codes within these units (Haden and Hoffman, 2013). In the narrative frames, the units were made up from single completed sentence responses. In the completed written narratives, the units were formed from chunks of text which dealt with salient themes in the lived experiences of the participants.

During this first coding cycle, I assigned codes to almost every phrase, sentence, utterance and micro-story across the entire dataset, which included learners’ handwritten responses, learners’ typed responses, and the transcriptions of our follow-up narrative interviews. Since all of the tasks and projects I had worked on together with the learners were in some way connected with narrating their lived experiences, I found myself casting the thematic net wide. However, according to Holloway and Jefferson (2000), the cutting and pasting methods of this approach may result in a fragmentation of the data, and what they refer to as the ‘form’, or whole picture, may be ruptured in the process. They go on to point out that this fragmentation can be a significant feature in computer-assisted qualitative data analysis programs, such as the kind I have used in the coding of my data, arguing that the human subtlety and intuitiveness required in qualitative data analysis is still some way from satisfactory computerisation. Regarding narrative coding, Bamberg (2004) is also cautious when it comes to using basic units for discreet or isolated analysis noting that “it is simply not enough to analyse narratives as units of analysis for their structure and content” but he does go on to concede that “this is a good starting point”. Coding, with its origins in the dominant quantitative tradition, has been said to reduce social complexities to single scores, has been questioned as a way of preserving meaning in biographical and social contexts (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Despite their misgivings, Holloway and Jefferson proceeded to use coding in their psychosocial study on crime anxiety in the UK, maintaining that this approach was advantageous when dealing with large and varied datasets (ibid). In the next part, I will describe how I used computerized coding software to identify units of analysis in the data and the methods I employed to build my preliminary coding frame.

### 5.4.3 Coding with Nvivo

Though hard copy coding has been said to be the best way to learn how to do qualitative analysis, I decided to use the qualitative analysis software Nvivo in order to label and
categorise the variety of data types and multiple participants in this study (Saldaña, 2012). Other factors which influenced this decision were the advice of my supervisor, and my level of computer literacy, which meant that I would not spend a disproportionate amount of time becoming familiar with the software. Also, programmes of this type are said to supercede human organisational abilities by allowing us to organize complex evolving coding systems into “at a glance” hierarchies and networks (ibid; 31).

During the first cycle of coding, I used Nvivo to assign nodes for each coded unit of analysis (see samples of nodes in Figure 20 below). The nodes in Nvivo are simply the “the place where the software stores a category” (Richards, 2005). The “Sources” column in Figure 20 refers to the number of documents which provide units of analysis for this node, and the “References” column gives the absolute amount of units of analysis ascribed to this node.

![Figure 20: Node Samples](image)

**Figure 20 Node Samples**

As the information in the columns show, already some sense of the clustering and distribution of themes emerged after the first wave of coding. Throughout this process, as themes were reoccurring and developing, related or sub-themes surfaced to which I assigned to “child nodes”. Also, in keeping with the dialogic nature of narrative interviewing, some of the participants’ or researcher’s comments generated further child nodes so that some codes became “grandparent” nodes with offspring and grandchildren. For example, Figure 21 below shows how the “Drop-in” node, by dint of further references to it in the data as a community of practice, generated the “COP” node, and, in turn, perceptions of the COP further generated the “club”, “family”, and “friends” nodes, thus creating “node trees/families”. The next
section describes a double-ended coding approach which is designed to maintain some balance of power in analysing my cohorts’ stories.

5.4.4 Eclectic Coding
In order to capture the complex and distinct social worlds of the core participants in this, and to embrace the variety of data forms collected in the field, this analysis used what Saldaña (2012; 188) calls ‘Eclectic Coding’. This method has been described as a form of “Open Coding” which combines two or more purposefully-chosen first-cycle coding methods and can guide the researcher through the exploratory first cycle stage toward a second cycle of coding. The following sections describe how I used various coding approaches in this process.

5.4.5 Top-down and bottom-up coding
In keeping with the narrative analytic framework, and in the interests of the internal validity of this research, the coding process was designed so that it reflected the dialogue between the participants and the researcher. Since handing priority to either side in this dialogue would undermine the internal validity of this study, I applied a top-down and bottom-up during the first coding cycle (Zimányi, 2010). The top-down coding, also known as hypothesis coding (Saldaña, 2012), reflected my own position as a researcher and was informed by themes, theories and approaches which I had developed during the course of my inquiry or which had emerged in teaching and researching with the learners. The bottom-up coding was generated from participant propositions and from their written and oral reflections on their lived experiences (Zimányi, 2010). Focusing on this balance during the coding process was important as top-heavy coding would eclipse any power the participants held in this dialogue.
On the other hand, bottom-heavy coding would hide the researchers’ position and similarly skew any interpretations. In her narrative inquiry on interpreter-mediated mental health care in Ireland, Zimányi (2010) employed two separate Nvivo tools to accommodate these two types of coding. I decided that these two positions were already visible in the nodes I had created and would, in any case, be further explored in the second coding cycle. In order to better examine the busy and messy social worlds present in these learners’ stories, I used a variety of approaches which are outlined in the following sections.

5.4.6 Four analytical approaches in the first coding cycle

Throughout the first cycle of analysis of my dataset, and alongside a broad thematic analysis, I also employed other narrative analytical approaches. I used *metaphoric analysis* to code participants’ use of figurative language such as metaphors, similes and analogies, (Saldaña, 2012). An example of this is the ‘oasis’ simile Nika uses to describe her experience of group work at the Centre in this interview excerpt:

PETER: Now, how would you see the Centre? How would you describe the group in the Centre?
NIKA: I see it a like a bright, a bright place where I can come and feel comfortable, feel confident. Confident, and I can just communicate with people. It’s like eh, some kind... some kind of oasis, I don’t know...
PETER: Oasis is a good way to describe it

I also applied values coding, which is used to explore cultural values, identity and the lived experiences of people in social worlds (ibid), to reflect my participants’ values, attitudes, beliefs and opinions of their lived language socialisation and their experience of our literacy projects (ibid). In the following segment from our follow-up interview, Rafal expresses unease about some political discourses which can emerge between members of the Drop-in:

PETER: So you’ve learned not just language but you’re getting information as well?
RAFAL: Yeah for me is like interesting like change information because like real people is different like funny is real life. Like website, of course, like everybody speak different information and sometime for me it’s not nice if I something listen. Of course I speak something not nice for another person. Not for person like personality like “I don’t like you!” and like politics is very bad. You understand me?

In some cases, I applied holistic coding as a preparatory approach to code larger units of data ahead of a more detailed categorization in my second cycle of coding. In the following
interview extract several themes are touched upon as Jane and I explore childcare and heritage language (Jane’s interview, 224-255):

PETER: In your story you were saying that you speak little English words to your baby. Do you try to speak English to your baby?
JANE: I only speak simple words. You know my boy can’t, don’t speak now only “Papa” “Mammy” so I always “Up down” and simple words “flower” like this
PETER: So your teaching your child simple English words
JANE: Yeah, sometime I teach him the colours but I don’t know if he un...
PETER: If he understands
JANE: Yeah maybe yes?
PETER: No, no he’s listening and it goes in. You need to help your child with English because he will go to school in English
JANE: Yeah playschool that’s ok. September he will go to school for the baby
PETER: Crèche yeah
JANE: Crèche?
PETER: Baby school
JANE: (laughs) Yeah, baby school
PETER: So he will start to learn English there. You speak in English to your baby but also you speak in Chinese
JANE: Um I speak Chinese
PETER: Do you hope you baby will also speak Chinese?
JANE: Yeah my husband speak Cantonese, Can eh Cantonese?
PETER: Cantonese
JANE: Yeah Cantonese
PETER: And you speak Mandarin?
JANE: I speak eh (not clear)
PETER: So you’ve two big languages in China. You have Cantonese and Mandarin
JANE: Yeah Mandarin Chinese?
PETER: Yeah and you speak Cantonese you husband?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: So you’ve two
JANE: (laughs) Yeah
PETER: So your baby is confused?
JANE: Um he can’t understand (laughs)

The eclectic coding (Saldaña, 2012) used in this phase of my data analysis generated 30 grandparent nodes and over 180 child and grandchild nodes. The coding frame which is under construction in this cycle was topic driven and many of the nodes were selected according to their relevance to my inquiry (Schreier, 2012). I would argue that the face validity, or ability to capture what I am seeking to measure (ibid), of my coding frame, as represented in figure 25, is strengthened by the wide distribution of analytical units across the nodes or categories
which have been inducted or deducted though the eclectic, top-down and bottom-up coding processes I employed in this analysis.

![Figure 25 Coding Frame](image)

I also used the most common narrative interview and post-publication feedback questions to thematically analyze topics which had been purposefully generated by my research questions, the central aims of my study, and the theoretical frameworks underpinning this inquiry (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008). This approach, which has been labeled “thematising” (ibid; 105), employs my planned narrative interview and feedback questions to co-construct the meanings which I was trying to explore with my participants (ibid). It has been argued that ‘themeing’ the data in this way is particularly appropriate for examining a participant’s identity development, beliefs, and emotional experiences (Saldaña, 2012). Op’t Hoog et al. (2010), for example, used this form of coding to explore how disadvantaged management working South African mines defined their identity in an environment where affirmative
action and equal opportunity policies are implemented. This type of analysis was also employed by Siebers and Dennissen (2012) to code interviews about exclusion processes migrants have to face in work settings in The Netherlands.

![Image of Interview questions]

**Figure 26 Question Nodes**

This process produced the twenty ‘question nodes’, as shown in Figure 26, and the eight parent nodes from the post-publication feedback question in Figure 27 below.

![Image of Our Stories Feedback]

**Figure 27 Parent Nodes**

In the following excerpt from my talk with Lena, we explore her interactions in settings outside the Drop-in centre. This theme was generated by one of the central questions of my
inquiry: How far is it possible for learners in this group to log, reflect and act on their social participation in host communities of practice?

Peter: In your life outside the Centre, do you speak more to Irish people or other people? Do you speak to anybody in English outside the Centre?
LENA: No... yeah, eh, in Social (welfare), in Social I went *alone*. Before I went only with husband, only. Now alone I tried, I tried to find a job in Irish Salon, but very difficult “Sorry”. Both said me “Sorry” English need to improve, need to improve. *Ok*, but it’s my experience, ok maybe later

After I had finished the first cycle of coding I experienced a “Now what?” moment; an awkward period of transition while I considered how to continue my dialogue with my transformed dataset in a second analytical cycle (Saldaña, 2012). I used this period to reflect on what my first conversation with my dataset had revealed, and to read around on how others had dealt with this analytic transition. Since themes or distinctions that may have seemed important may have to be deleted or merged with other codes, or conversely, certain groupings may have to be divided into other distinctions, I considered a second coding cycle a vital part of the iterative dialogic process for a deeper interpretation of my dataset and for the validity of the coding process (Haden and Hoffman, 2013). The following section describes the rationale, approach and processes involved in the second phase of this narrative analysis.

5.5 Second cycle of coding: Restorying the narratives

As part of the second cycle of coding and analysis, I decided to first draw together the different types of participants’ storied data using pen portraits. Pen portraits are usually brief, descriptive vignettes which depict research participants in such a way that they come alive for the reader, and may include such features as physical attributes, background, important events, relationships, attitudes and opinions (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). The pen portrait functions as a surrogate ‘whole’, and provides a meaningful grasp of the person and themes under discussion for readers who cannot access the raw data (ibid). In a way, this picture of the participant fulfils a similar purpose to Labov and Waletzky’s (1997) “abstract” as a functional category in narrative analysis which gives a summary of the narrative’s subject. To give an example, Holloway and Jefferson used pen portraits to analyse and frame their participants’ stories in their study on gender, anxiety, and crime (ibid). In education, Yates, et al. (2006) used this analytical tool to explore gender issues in undergraduate learning environments.
Due to the varying levels and duration of the learners’ participation in the literacy groups in my narrative inquiry, these portraits range from sketched outlines to more detailed pictures of core members in this narrative inquiry. The portraits are presented in order to offset the fragmentation, discussed above, which may result from the breaking down of these stories into coded units of analysis (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Overall, one of the functions is counteract the pitfalls of decontextualisation of texts which can happen with code and retrieve methods and to restore what Holloway and Jefferson (ibid; 64) refer to as the ‘form’, or whole story, and its “place in context”. These portraits were then incorporated into the process of restorying the various narrative fragments of each learner into re-represented stories which were co-constructed and interpreted by the researcher.

Since the data of the lived experiences of these learners were collected in the diverse formats of narrative frames, handwritten and typed micro stories, rough and final drafts of typed stories, published stories, and follow-up interviews, an additional cycle of analysis was needed to frame and present these disparate elements into a meaningful interpretation of my participants experiences, actions and reflections, in a storyline or plot which unfolds over time (Polkinghorne, 1995). This phase of the analysis combined elements from three narrative approaches which have been said to be appropriate for plotting whole stories for the presentation and analysis of data as final narratives (Riessman, 1993, Polkinghorne, 1995, Riessman, 2008). For a general plot outline, I employed what Polkinghorne (ibid) referred to as narrative synthesis, or narrative configuration, to interpret how events unfolded over time in the lives of my learners. I did not, however, wish to apply the “tragic” or “comedic” plot types or templates to configure my final stories, as suggested by Polkinghorne (ibid; 16), as I felt this would impose certain limitations on the interpretations of narrative trajectories and of my participants. This overall structure and function of this configuration has much in common with the second approach I drew from, which is called narrative restorying (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). Both forms of narrative analysis seek to draw together and interpret the messy and disjointed world of everyday human experience into a story which extracts a higher order of meaning from this daily flux (Polkinghorne, 2002). Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002; 332) describe the process and some reasoning behind the uses of restorying in narrative inquiry in this way:
Restorying is the process of gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewriting the story to place it within a chronological sequence. Often when individuals tell a story, this sequence may be missing or not logically developed, and by restorying, the researcher provides a causal link among ideas.

So, the function of restorying as an analytic tool in this study is to try to understand why and how my participants acted in the real social world, and to attempt to explain the outcomes of these actions (Polkinghorne, 1995). Restorying in this study, which corresponds to “Stage 2” of Barkhuizen’s narrative knowledging process whereby the researcher contributes to the construction of informants’ stories, functions as context for readers who have not had the access to the data or the people that the researcher has had. It also serves as a type of analysis in itself, and forms part of a dialogue between researcher and the data where the storied lives of the participants are co-constructed as a form of analysis (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002, Barkhuizen, 2011).

In this second phase of coding, the two forms discussed above provide an overall framework with which to restory or co-story the lived experiences of my learners. Since this study focuses on the second language identity work of my learners, and because this inquiry argues for changes and contestations of these identities across settings and time, I wished to capture any such struggles over the course of my participants’ narratives. To this end, I decided to develop a broader form of temporal analysis by categorising the events, actions, opinions and reflections of my cohort which arose in the first cycle into four general time periods: Life before the Drop-in; Life at the drop-in; Times of change/transformation; and Futures/outcomes (Saldaña, 2012). In this way, by temporally linking events, I was able to analyse and present disruptions in equilibriums or fortunes which related to the learning processes and identity work of my learners (Elliott, 2005). This structure provided the core of my restorying of my learners’ narratives and functioned as a way of presenting them as distinctive individuals in unique situations (Polkinghorne, 1995).

In practice, I used the “collections” function of Nvivo (see Figure 28 below) to group codes from my first cycle of codes into the above categories, or clusters (Basit, 2003), according to their temporal characteristics. Basit (ibid), for example, used this method of clustering in a second coding cycle as a way of increasing the validity of his analysis in his study which sought to determine the aspirations and identities of adolescent British Muslim girls. In my cluster
“Life before Drop-in” for instance, I decided to group many of the units of analysis which related to life in Ireland, as these units were generated from stories of my participants lived experiences before their arrival, and thus would inform much of the earlier part of my restorying for each learner. In this study, the pen portraits generated in this coding cycle, were used to set the scene at the beginning of each re-storied final narrative.

The four clusters used in this cycle also map approximately onto the three time periods, i.e. life before, during, and after the Drop-in, which were used in the “Our Stories” narrative frame (see 4.5.4). Consequently, this grouping re-situates and aligns my interpretations with the learners’ original accounts of their lived experiences in the various sociocultural settings outlined in the “Our Stories” narrative frame. When this process was complete and some final narratives had been produced, I asked a colleague to peer check my code frames and analysis.

It has been stated that any reading or interpretation of data in qualitative research is filtered through the world views and motives of the researcher (Schreier, 2012, Saldaña, 2012), and I have already mentioned how my categorisation and analysis of the data in this study are influenced by my own theoretical and methodological outlooks. So, in order to strengthen the evaluative validity of my analysis, or how accurately my account assigns value judgements of the phenomena under scrutiny (Dörnyei, 2007), I enlisted the help of a colleague as a second coder to peer check both my coding scheme, my restorying and some final stories. As in Yang and Kim’s (2011) analysis of sociocultural analysis of second language learner beliefs in study abroad learners, my peer checker was a very competent researcher also working in the field of applied linguistics. My colleague was also privy to the synthesis of the analytical processes used in this inquiry as described in the final section below.
5.6 Comparative analysis

As I have already outlined, the practice of deducting or inducting meaning from the narratives in this inquiry, and with my analysis of these stories, was an iterative process which began during the transcription of the data and continued throughout the various cycles of coding. The re-storied narratives of the attempts at making meaning of the lived experiences, the varying levels of social and linguistic identity growth, and the border-crossing trajectories of these learners as described above, were interpreted by the researcher on an individual, case-by-case basis. The final stage of the interpretations of my cohort’s accounts of their lived experience involved a ‘comparative analysis’ (Gibbs, 2008; 73) of the final stories which resulted from the process shown in Figure 29 in the next section. In this description of this last analytical phase, I will show how I went beyond the results of the categories and coding units, which were used to interpret and re-story the individual narratives in this study, and used comparative analysis to reveal patterns and relations across these re-storied narratives (Schreier, 2012, Dörnyei, 2007).

Comparative analysis, which involves building positive or negative relationships or common themes between various segments of data (Thorne, 2000), was used in this inquiry to create conceptual groupings across the re-storied narratives of the participants (Riessman, 1993). This analytical process meant grouping the themes or concepts by comparing the common themes or concepts of each narrative in a circular manner until higher, more universal concepts began to surface (Thorne, 2000). This analytical method was used as a comparative tool for conceptualizing the ways in which narratives of these learners lived experiences played out in language socialization and learning processes across the group. This approach, which has its roots in grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1997), and which uses circular analytical procedures to locate relationships between concepts and themes across discreet data sets, involved reducing the data from larger clusters to increasingly more refined categories by continually comparing the emerging themes against previous categories and initial coding or analyses (Lal et al., 2012). In this way, this comparative analysis across the thirteen re-storied narratives of these participants was designed to reveal higher order categories which could be used as an explanatory framework to illustrate social processes for the cohort in this inquiry of their lived social and cultural experiences, and their histories of participation or resistance of language learning experiences in socially specific contexts.
(Saldaña, 2012, Backman et al., 2007). The last two section of this chapter will outline how these higher concepts or categories were arrived at in practice.

5.6.1 Coding into categories

When I had completed the restorying of all thirteen of my core participants’ narratives, I loaded them into Nvivo in order to conduct a comparative analysis for shared characteristics, divergences, and to ascertain what patterns would emerge across my learners’ stories of their lived language learning experiences. During the restorying process, I was adding analytical memos to the final stories. Analytical memos are private and personal musings that document and reflect upon code choices, the ongoing process of analysis, and emergent patterns, categories and concepts (Saldaña, 2012). During this final phase of analysis, I used these memos to identify clusters and build categories which would later inform my discussions on common central themes, and any conclusions that may be drawn from my analysis (Dörnyei, 2007). The insights from the analytical memos were used to recode the themes which were emerging across the stories into categories and subcategories based on their salience and interrelationships (Saldaña, 2012, Dörnyei, 2007). An example of this using this method of refining a wide variety codes into smaller categories is found in Basit’s (2003) study of teenage aspirations in Muslim girls in the UK, where she successfully categorised 23 codes into six major themes such as IDENTITY and CAREER.

The work of recoding and refining the codes which had emerged during the previous analytical cycles into more central and common themes in this study was carried out in two phases. The first phase, which I described briefly above, involved the use of analytical memos during the restorying of the learners’ narratives. It has been argued that analytical software can provide support in a variety of ways when building categories, refining themes, and looking for co-occurrences across different cases (Schreier, 2012). So, for the second phase of this comparative analysis, I imported the re-storied narratives into Nvivo and used the categories which had been generated by the first phase to look for patterns, relationships, and overarching themes across the learners’ stories. The next section will describe how these were categories were identified or emerged from the stories.
5.6.2 Analytical memos: coding from categories to concepts

Whereas the previous coding cycles and the final restorying of the narratives allowed me to analyse and present the data on an individual, case-by-case basis, by generating categories or groups across my cohorts stories, this stage of analysis will enable me to examine and discuss some results of this narrative inquiry using group-by-group criteria (Schreier, 2012). As a general guide to examining my results for patterns, I considered three questions which Schreier (ibid) suggests we ask when focussing on the relationships between and within cases. Firstly, did some of my categories occur together? Secondly, did some of my categories occur near each other? And, thirdly, were there any specific relationships, such as casual, temporal, or sequential, between cases? Also, when it came to the vital work of choosing central themes for the final interpretation in this inquiry, I was guided by the criteria suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990; 147) for identifying a core category:

- It must be central; that is, all other major categories can be related to it.
- It must appear frequently in the data. This means that within all or almost all cases, there are indicators pointing to that concept.
- The explanation that evolves by relating the categories is logical and consistent. There is no forcing of data.
- The name or phrase used to describe the central category should be sufficiently abstract that it can be used to do research in other substantive areas, leading to the development of a more general theory.
- As the concept is refined analytically through the integration with other concepts, the theory grows in depth and explanatory power.
- The concept is able to explain variation as well as the main point made by the data; that is, when conditions vary, the explanations still hold, although the way in which a phenomenon is expressed might look somewhat different. One also should be able to explain contradictory or alternative cases in terms of that central idea.

With these guidelines in mind, I revisited my analytical memos and began to build thematic trees from the categories which were emerging from my comparative analysis. To give an example of how a category or group was generated using analytical memos, I attached a note to the segment below while restorying Joasia’s final narrative which was coded in the first cycle as “Linguistic isolation”.

PETER: So you speak Polish with your friends and your family, but outside the Centre, do you speak English with other people?
JOASIA: No, with people I don’t speak English. If I was problem, I ask my friend about help cos they speak English
As this code was emerging across the narratives such as Hanna’s extract below, I refined this constraint and categorised it into the higher order concept of “socially-mediated constraints”.

During our follow-up interview she reveals that “outside I don’t speak a lot of English” (86), and only speaks English at “the shop, at school with my child teachers, that is all, and some postman when they come”. (Hanna’s extract)

As other issues of isolation and dislocation, such as access to the job market began to surface during this process I finally created other higher order concepts which further generated a top-level theme labelled called “Displacement and Resettlement” (Saldaña, 2012). The other three central themes or concepts which emerged in this final comparative analysis of the re-storied narrative of members lived experiences were “Identity Work”, “Participation in social practices”, and “Trajectories and transformations”. In this way, my comparative analysis functioned as a transitional process between analysis of the data and the interpretations and evaluations in this inquiry, which are presented in chapter 6 (Saldaña, 2012).
An analytic memos

Memo

Categories

Themes/Concepts

Socially-mediated constraints

Displacement and Resettlement

Double-isolation, heritage dislocation

Access to employment and work experiences

Identity struggle/resistance

Identity Work

Gender mediated positioning

Participation in situated practices

Participation in social practices

Reflections on situated practices

Trajectories and transformations

Language identity trajectories

Future identities

Real/Particular → General/Abstract
As the narratives were re-coded throughout this process, the categories which emerged from the my cross-narrative evaluation of my analytical memos shaped the data and moved the focus of this analysis from the real and particular lived experiences of my participants, as shown in Figure 26, to more general and abstract themes (ibid).

To sum up, these analytical reflections on the restorying process helped me to produce a core set of themes or concepts which informed further meaningful evaluations of these border crossers’ stories, potential conclusions, and any subsequent recommendations my inquiry might reveal.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the various coding methods and cycles employed to enable a meaningful interpretation of the stories collected for this study. I have also presented a summary of the coding processes applied in this analysis and how these interrelate and function as a whole. I have outlined the function and rationale behind my coding and analytical choices during the three cycles of coding used in this analysis. I have shown how the stories of these learners lived experiences have been co-constructed by the use of eclectic and iterative dialogue with the data. Throughout this chapter, I have sought to defend the validity of my analytical decisions, explain their appropriacy for this form of inquiry, and describe their potential impact on the interpretation of my dataset. Finally, I have explained how I used comparative analysis to identify and build the core themes which will inform the discussion of the outcomes, possible conclusions, and potential implications of this narrative inquiry. The next chapter will present my evaluations and interpretations of the themes and categories which surfaced during the cross-cohort analysis outlined in this chapter.
Chapter 6 – Data interpretation and evaluation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will evaluate and interpret themes which emerged from the cross-group analysis (see 5.5) of the re-storied narratives of the participants in this inquiry. Firstly, I review the approaches, aims, and central research question in this narrative inquiry. Then I present some evaluations and interpretations centred around the core themes which emerged from my cross-narrative analysis, which are: (i) Displacement and Resettlement, (ii) Identity Work, (iii) Participation in Social Practices, and (iv) Trajectories and transformations. Though other salient themes were identified during this analytic process, due to limitations of space in this document not all of these categories are explored in this chapter. In order to grasp a more complete picture of the identity work and the social, vocational, and linguistic border-crossing trajectories of these learners, the reader is encouraged to consult the full re-storied narratives in the appendix. All of the cross-comparative instances cited in this chapter are derived from the re-storied narratives available in Appendix 6 (henceforth A.6) and will be referred to as e.g. (Ana’s Story, A.6). The numbers in brackets in these re-storied sections, e.g. (231-345), refer to line numbers from the transcripts of our follow-up audio interviews (see Appendix 4).

6.2 Inquiry approaches, aims and questions

As I outlined in chapter 3, the integration of theories of situated literacy and the praxis of narrative inquiry informing the socially-situated practices in this inquiry, which enabled the members of our literacy groups to co-construct and make meanings of their stories, was underpinned by Norton’s (1995) untried model of a classroom-based social research (CBSR). Following Norton’s suggestions on the applications of CBSR, the praxis of the integrated model of inquiry used in this study was employed to investigate, using the written and spoken narratives of post-migratory, adult learners of English in Ireland, their lived experiences of interaction with target language speakers, their reflections on these socialisation events, and their situated and socially-(co)constructed reflections on their stories of engagement or conflicted social and linguistic interactions with target-language speakers in diverse host-community settings (ibid). This study also employed this praxis, using the social learning lens of communities of practice, to examine how our situated literacy practices helped the border crossers make sense of their lived experiences, and in what way this praxis helped them to
build on their English language identities. The central research question which emerged from, and synthesised, the purposes and goals of this inquiry as cited above is: How can socially-situated literacy practices help adult migrant language learners make meaning of their lived experiences and forge stronger English language identities?

In order to address the central question of this thesis, I used narrative inquiry and socially situated learning to look beyond traditional cognitive and behaviourist views of how successful language learners are constructed by also “studying how L2 learners are situated in specific social, historical, and cultural contexts and how learners resist or accept the positions those contexts offer them” (Norton and Toohey, 2001; 310). While these traditional approaches focused on the learner’s abilities, goals, and motivations (Kouritzin, 2000b; 14), the socially situated practices and collaborative acts of this narrative inquiry were designed to reveal how social contexts of learning can constrain or facilitate a learner’s access to the dominant language. An overview of the findings from this inquiry related to such experientially-lived constraints on access to English language learning resources and opportunities for socialisation with target-language speakers is provided in the following section.

6.3 Displacement and resettlement

The core themes of displacement and resettlement, which will be evaluated in the following sections, revolve around issues of the socially mediated constraints, host and heritage community linguistic and social isolation, and the lived employment experiences which surfaced in the cross-narrative analysis of my participants’ stories (see 5.5). For a long time, some actors in professional discourse singled out lack of motivation as a core factor in the non-participation of adult migrants in language learning and literacy programs (Rockhill, 1994), however, all of the learners who participated in this inquiry were motivated by real-world needs, most of them very highly so, to improve their English language skills (Norton, 1995a). Though motivational, psychological, and other cognitive or behavioural factors may play their parts in how migrant learners build their new language identities, a significant part of the success or failure of border crossers such as the cohort in this study to construct stronger English language identities can be afforded or constrained by their ability to orient themselves regarding social expectations and societal norms in their host-community, also by how they deal with linguistic and social conflicts in their new home, and by their aptitude to
negotiate new identity positions and participate in unfamiliar social worlds (Baynham and De Fina, 2005, De Fina and King, 2011). Research has shown how issues of belonging and exclusion are closely related to language learning processes and practices for border-crossing learners, and how language access and language ideologies can impact on the social, linguistic, and civic participation for these border crossers (Warriner, 2008a). As this thesis maintains the view that language and literacy are socially co-constructed in everyday communicative practices and interactions, the socially-mediated constraints or affordances of linguistic and social access reported in the stories of these learners, are therefore of considerable importance in understanding their lived language learning experiences (Block, 2003, Donato and MacCormick, 1994, Firth and Wagner, 2007, Ivanic et al., 2006, Rockhill, 1987).

6.3.1 Socially-mediated constraints on language access

This section will present and interpret the impact of socially-mediated constraints such as social and linguistic isolation on access to language socialisation for some of the learners in this group, and their consequences for these people of protracted struggles to connect with the host community. First I will present a cross-evaluation of lengthy cross-border journeys for some of this cohort, and then I will focus my interpretation of this theme on Ana, who had been in Ireland for ten years at the time of this inquiry. Despite the elevated levels of motivation among the participants in this inquiry, and the attempts of many of these narrators to reposition themselves as being worthy of access to language provision and socialisation in a range of settings (Norton, 1995a), these learners related a variety of socially-mediated constraints on their participation in language learning both in formal and real-world situations. Ana, for instance, tells of trying to use the local library to develop her language skills, and of the various courses she had attended during her ten years in Ireland. Even with her long-term, dogged attempts at building a stronger English language identity, Ana still reported remaining largely on the periphery of fuller social, linguistic, and vocational participation in host-community settings due to social factors such as the heavy load of nurturing her extended family and her age, though, as she relates in her story, she agentically tried to contest these barriers (see re-storied extract below). Despite the varying levels of participation and collaboration in our narrative inquiry, all participants in this study expressed intense desires to increase their socialisation and language interaction with English speakers.
in Ireland. Many, like Ana, who had spent years isolated from contact with host-community members, longed to meet and develop relations with Irish people. Also, some of these learners had worked hard to access language learning resources, and some still struggled, to greater and lesser extents, to maintain that access. Such was the case, for example, of Joasia who had to juggle family nurturing duties with her husband in order to attend the IDC, and build her English and future vocational identities.

It has been noted that there is a widespread belief that immigrants resist the task of learning the dominant language of the host community, and that their inability to master this language is somehow self-imposed (Rockhill, 1994, Kouritzin, 2000b). The average length of residence of these learners in Ireland was five years, with some, like Amin, Ana, and Uma having been in the country for ten years (see 4.4.2). Mastering a new language is a complex undertaking under the best circumstances, and can take from two to ten years, depending on the cultural, social, economic situations, and educational backgrounds of the learners (Kouritzin, 2000b). These factors, alongside other socially and culturally-mediated constraints outlined in this chapter, appear to have a bearing on the progress toward fuller linguistic, social, and vocational equality and integration with the host-community for some of the participants in this study. Some members of our literacy groups, such as Hanna and Nika, were evolving their social and linguistic identities at a notable rate, perhaps due to their transnational and educational backgrounds, though even Hanna reports that she is “not integrated yet”. Others such as Ana, Amin and Uma, have undergone a protracted period of social and linguistic displacement due to factors such as familial dislocation as was the case of Amin. For Ana and Uma, this lengthy period on the periphery of social and linguistic connections with the host community was exacerbated by imposed nurturing duties and identities. Ana also reported age was as a constraint in her social and linguistic progress. The following extract from Ana’s re-storied narrative (Ana’s Story, A.6) illustrates some of the social constraints and protracted language learning processes that she and other learners had to face.

Ana was far beyond the exit level of English language competence for the IDC. In fact, her questions on grammar and syntax sometimes stumped some volunteer tutors. I couldn’t imagine Ana having any difficulty interacting in host settings, so I asked her what impact this language barrier was having on her life.
ANA: For example, if I am in my country, I can go out at midnight, until midnight, but here I don’t bear to do that
PETER: So you don’t feel confident
ANA: Yeah, because the first thing is the weather, the second thing the language. So I don’t know when and where...
PETER: So you mean that when you meet people, you don’t know what they’re saying?
ANA: Yeah, and I don’t know where I go. Here I just hear somebody say “Go to the pub”, but I don’t drink, so I don’t know where I go
PETER: So you’re not interested in the pub?
ANA: Yeah, so evening I just stay at home. I can’t go outside

Despite her impressive knowledge of the workings of the English language, and her ten year residency in Ireland, Ana reports her linguistic isolation and dislocation in her new home. She did not have enough sociocultural knowledge to know where she could go, and was put off by the inclement weather and could not bear to venture out. So her evenings are spent at home when she would much rather be engaging in host-community social arenas. Ana clearly enjoyed studying the language and revelled in new morphosyntactic challenges. Also, the fact that she is also an exceptionally social person meant that she craved interaction with host-community English speakers, and, in doing so, hoped she could grow her social and linguistic identities.

Figure 30 Ana’s Story at the Drop-in

In her narrative frame “My Story at the Drop-in” shown in Figure 27 (A.1), Ana writes about two of the barriers to accessing English and growing her language identity. Again, Ana laments that being a middle-aged woman is one obstacle, while she reports that nurturing an extended family was another constraint. Nevertheless, Ana’s agency is evident in this
handwritten episode from her story. She goes on to relate how she stole away to the children’s section at the local library whenever she got the chance. Ana was not afraid to use the librarian as a linguistic resource, though she reports that she still had problems with spoken interaction. Ana had a clear awareness of where her language problems lay, and of how she needed interactional practice. In the same document, Ana identifies the main constraint on her access to English in host-community settings. Due to mother-tongue interference, and perhaps because of her age of arrival, Ana’s pronunciation was challenging for native speakers. Added to this, and probably connected to her pronunciation issues, was the fact that, after all this time, she still had problems understanding Irish speakers of English (Ana’s Story, A.1).

In spite of the fact that going to IILT (Ireland Immigrate Language Training) to learn English, my speaking and listening were still not good enough for the Irish people to understand what I said, because I had a big problem with pronunciation.

In the same story, Ana sums up her lived experience of her spoken interactions with Irish people in this way: “We absolutely didn’t understand each other (ibid)”. Despite the barriers and constraints related here, Ana’s story relates other episodes like the library story of her projecting her agency in order to claim access to host-county social and linguistic resources (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005a).

What emerges from Ana’s Story, and from some other narratives from this cohort, would appear to confirm that their social and linguistic journey across the border into greater host-community social and linguistic participation can take many years, and for many this crossing is still far from complete (Little, 2010). Ana’s accounts of her struggle contesting social spaces, and her episodes of agentically seeking access to English socialisation, show that narrative inquiry can provide insider views of the causes and effects of long-term displacement (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005a). Her full story also reveals how she is consistently projecting her agency to socially reposition herself in the face of displacement by contesting her lack of access to socialisation and language learning (ibid). In conclusion, it would appear that this lengthy struggle to access social and linguistic resources in formal and real-world settings is not solely mediated by a lack of motivation on the part of these learners, and seems to be exacerbated by socially-mediated constraints such as the examples provided above.
6.3.2 Double-isolation and dislocation

This subsection will present and interpret the themes of dislocation and the situations of doubled social and linguistic isolation with a particular focus on some women members of this cohort. These types of dislocation, which include linguistic and social isolation from the host, heritage and, in Uma’s case which this section will focus on, from the learner’s own family. First, I will present a cross-evaluation of dislocations for some cohort members, many of whom were long-term residents in Ireland. Then I will interpret the cases of double isolation in the lived experience of Uma. The way border crossers like my participants position themselves in order to claim access to target linguistic capital and social spaces in new settings is said to be essential to the their success in building language identities and more stable relocations (Brammer, 2002, Nawyn et al., 2012). All of the participants in this inquiry reported, to greater and lesser extents, various forms of social and linguistic isolation from the host-community. These occurrences of isolation from host-community contact ranged from the extreme solitary experiences of Jane, Rafal, Uma, and Lena, who recounts of her wanderings in the local mall in “comfortable shoes” (“Lena’s Story”, p 4), to the partial contact of others such as Nika, who has some social interaction with her husband’s friends. Even members with greater levels of socialisation with host community members recounted some degree of isolation. Ana, for instance, with her knitting club relates understanding little of the discourse there, and Amin, who had developed a close and lasting friendship with an Irish couple, still reported the location of his main source of social interaction in his heritage language at home.

However, access to host-community social and linguistic resources is not the only panacea for displacement for border-crossing people (Nawyn et al., 2012). Language contact and socialisation with their heritage communities is also said to be a vital part of the resettlement process for people in this situation (ibid). Surprisingly, some members of this narrative inquiry, such as Jane, Majeed, and Uma, reported little or no contact with their heritage communities in Ireland. Indeed, in Jane’s case, even after four years in Ireland, she was not aware of the existence of a high-profile Chinese New Year festival held in Dublin each year. This double-isolation was compounded by the fact that some learners, especially the women, were also isolated from English discourse within their own families. Ana, for example, reports getting no help with her English from her two adult children and, along with other mothers in
the group, perhaps due to issues of face and status, she was reluctant to ask for help. Other women learners report similar episodes of double-isolation. Alma narrates being always angry with her daughter’s inability to help her translate business words from Russian into English, ending her episode by telling her daughter “Go and learn these words!” (Alma’s trans., A.4, line 380). The following extract from Uma’s re-storied narrative illustrates a similar type of gender-mediated form of familial linguistic isolation, and provides an example of the types of double-dislocation and isolation from both heritage and host-communities some of these learners were experiencing (Uma’s Story, A.6):

There was a tension in Uma’s dual positions as the nurturer who had to struggle with diverse social systems in English on behalf of her family, and the role she played as perpetuator of the heritage language which she promoted in the home (Kouritzin, 2000b). Though her English was beyond the exit threshold for the IDC, and despite having assumed the identity of tutor at the Centre, she was still performing the role of sole nurturer: “Yes, I started teaching because I’m very busy and I have kids and I can’t to work all day, just when school hours” (Uma’s Story, A.4, p. 73). She does later remark that two parents might also be involved in this endeavour, adding, however, that her husband’s job did not allow for this.

UMA: Yes, yes, and they need a lot of time to spend with me cos it’s very important that, eh, one parent or both parents spending a lot of time with children. My husband too busy cos he’s a truck driver and I don’t know when will he be busy or free
PETER: Is he doing long-distance truck driving?
UMA: Yes, I know eh, all, all Ireland, every part of Ireland better than my country. Because every day I hear a lot of story about Ireland, about every town, every village

Uma is clearly proud of her knowledge of her new home, and we can imagine her listening enthralled by her husband’s stories of his travels over dinner. But this intercultural information is being transmitted to her in her heritage language despite the fact that her husband’s English was perfect.

Peter: And your husband’s English, how is it?
Uma: Bosnian, but he knows Perfect English
Peter: His English is good?
Uma: Yeah
Peter: He’s been working here for many years
Uma: Yeah
Peter: And so he learned it at work
Uma: Yes, yes
Peter: It’s the best way
Uma: Yes (chuckle) all family speak English just me little bit

So, all the family speak English but apparently just not to each other, or at least not, it would appear, to Uma. She accompanies the unfortunate fact that she is the linguistic outsider who speaks a little bit with a self-deprecating chuckle. Uma also reports isolation from her heritage community (223-229). Though the Bosnian community is not very large in Ireland, this would seem to represent a type of double isolation from both host and heritage interaction.

Peter: But you don’t spend time with the Bosnian community?
Uma: No
Peter: Is there a big Bosnian community here?
Uma: No, I don’t know. We haven’t Bosnian community her, I think. We just have some party maybe one, two times per year, but I don’t go...
Peter: You don’t go to the parties?
Uma: Yeah, but too late and we have not time to go there

Uma’s role as primary nurturer and the tensions of trying to meet her family’s and, to a lesser extent, her own needs, meant that attending even the major heritage-community events are ruled out (end of extract, Uma’s Story, A.6). However some participants, notably Alma, Joasia, Rafal and Chata, were accessing their heritage communities and building social networks through centres of religious worship. Rafal writes of meeting “very interesting people” after mass on Sunday, and Alma talks of weekly encounters with the Russian community at Orthodox masses in the city centre. Though these practices do not directly help these learners forge stronger English language identities, it may be argued that their contact with heritage social networks can bolster them while they attempt to access host-community social, linguistic, and vocational capital (Baynham, 2005b).

Regarding attitudes to living in Dublin and lived experiences of resettlement in the learners’ narratives, almost all reported liking Dublin as a place to live, despite the conflicts of displacement they have endured and continue to encounter in their new home. Uma talks fondly of her neighbours and is enjoying travelling all over the country with her husband. Chata reports being “very happy to be in Dublin”, and very “confident to do everything” she wants in her new country (Myself, A.6, p. 323). Both Chata and Alma use the possessive “my” Ireland, which displays how, to some extent, they have taken ownership and are building
senses of belonging in their new home. From these examples, it would seem that our social practices and collaborative inquiry facilitated these learners in making some meaning of their experiences of displacement and resettlement, and in reflecting on and exploring other positions which can aid their relocation (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005a). For most of these learners, and for Chata and Alma in particular, these practices also enabled them to share insider views of how they are agentically repositioning themselves and forging new social identities by performing acts of moral and social relocation (ibid).

6.3.3 Access to employment and work experiences

This section will present some evaluations on theme theme of problematic access to and experiences of the job market in Ireland. First, I will present some barriers to employment which have been identified in research for borders crossers. Then I will evaluate some of the members’ experiences with these types of job market conflicts. Finally, I will focus my interpretation on the storied workplace and job market experiences of Rafal. Access to dignified work and vocational identity building are important factors when considering issues of dislocation and resettlement for border crossers like the participants in this inquiry. The Integration Centre of Ireland (2012) identified three main blocks to vocational integration for immigrants in Ireland. Firstly, this report found that many highly skilled immigrants were working below their skill-set, or were unemployed. Secondly, it revealed that immigrants were less likely to be familiar with the recruitment process. Finally, it disclosed how many immigrant workers were in vulnerable positions regarding workers’ rights. Other research has shown that migrant workers are more at risk during times of recession (Kingston et al., 2013). In the Migrant Policy Index Report on indicators of integration in 38 countries, Ireland comes last in terms of labour market mobility for border crossers (Huddleston et al., 2015). Some of the group members had worked through the economic ‘boom’ in Ireland, and the subsequent recession which started in 2008. The participants who had worked in Ireland-reported varying levels workplace conflict, pay and conditions. Ana, in particular, tells of how employers took advantage of her vulnerable position to offer her a zero-hours contract with impossible conditions. Regarding recruitment processes, some of these learners, such as Amin and Ana, relate how they had relied heavily on the staff at the IDC to help them navigate these unfamiliar social systems. Many of the previously employed participants, like Amin and Ana, spoke of how they were positioned as low-wage workers in menial jobs, while others, such as
Jane and Ana, spoke of the ghettoisation of Asian migrants in low-status Chinese restaurant and takeaway positions. In spite of the fact that Lena, Uma, Alma, Hanna and Nika had university degrees, access to work which reflected their educational and work experience skill-set was problematic. Lena, for instance, who had a degree in economics and experience as a retail manager, underwent a significant drop in employment status, ending up as an operative in a warehouse. Rafal too, contrasts his low-status work in Ireland with his “very interesting” job as a building conservationist in Poland (A.6). While their perceived deficit of English language skills had already marked out these border crossers for long-term unemployment or low-status work and questionable practices and conditions, the Irish economic downturn had exacerbated this situation. Ana relates how she was pushed out of the job market because of what she calls the “down” (A.6). During our follow-up interview, Rafal seemed to be still traumatised by the treatment he encountered at the hands of management both in the workplace and during recent job-seeking experiences. In the following extract of his re-storied narrative (Rafal’s Story, A.6), Rafal touches on some of the barriers I mentioned at the start of this section.

Before his arrival in Ireland, work was a very important and not unpleasant feature in Rafal’s stories and life. Rafal clearly enjoyed his work, as he recounts in his published story:

My work in my country was very interesting and very hard. I was doing a lot of different work, but I most enjoyed working as a building conservator. I worked in Poland - Gdansk, Warszawa, Torun and in Russia in Kaliningrad, where I conserved old buildings. With my work I could see old interesting historical places.

Rafal had come to Ireland seeking work. He had very limited English on arrival in Ireland, but he is able to wryly describe his job-seeking experiences. His ability to reflect on this use of his job-seeking English in the very early stages of his learning would seem to indicate Rafal’s tentative agentic first steps in a repositioning in a new social system and a foregrounding of an emergent sense his evolving language identity.

PETER: Did you study language in school in Poland?
RAFAL: No, no I don’t have...
PETER: You didn’t do English at all?
RAFAL: No, not English
PETER: So before you came to Ireland you had no English
RAFAL: Yes, I don’t speak nothing. I have problem for like just “Hello, my name is...” and “Are you looking for job?” and (laughs) that’s it

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Rafal’s experience of the Irish workplace was starkly at odds with that of his pre-Irish jobs. In Ireland he experienced a change in work status. During our talk, Rafal provides an insider’s view of workplace conflicts, and reveals how, during eight years in an ‘Irish’ workplace, his access to local linguistic capital was denied.

PETER: How long are you in Ireland now?
RAFAL: Seven maybe now is eight yeah eight years
PETER: And you got a job when you came to Ireland?
RAFAL: Yeah I worked. Last seven years I worked and... like...
PETER: You were in construction, was it?
RAFAL: No, no I worked in eh the restaurant
PETER: Restaurant?
RAFAL: Yeah before restaurant I have few jobs and Irish people don’t really and don’t speak. Like my first boss is good if nobody speak English
PETER: Yeah
RAFAL: Because boss is clever (chuckle). After I speak a little, a little and I change job. And my next job is like, I don’t speak too much English because lots of staff is from East Europe. And like speak Russian Polish and I understand and Czech Republic is similar language...
PETER: To Polish
RAFAL: Yes, if you speak Russian, Polish like, of course like not understand everything and I know what want somebody. And just boss is Irish and manager’s Irish and that’s it. Supervisor from Poland (chuckles) and...
PETER: So you’re speaking Russian and Polish in the job all the time?
RAFAL: Yes, and a little English yeah because somebody from Pakistan don’t understand (chuckle).

In his first year of working in Ireland, his colleagues did not seem to consider him worthy of speaking to, perhaps because of perceived low-status and deficit positioning by bosses and co-workers. This lack of access to local linguistic and-material capital was compounded by the attitude of his first “clever” boss, who was “good” if his border-crossing workers were excluded from contact with the host language. (De Fina and King, 2011).

Though the focus of this inquiry and its linguistic social practices were on meaning making and identity work with this cohort, some evidence of improvements in social orientation, mobility and vocational integration did surface as a result of our classroom-based social research (CBSR). During the follow-up interview stage of this study, I learned that Nika had got a good position with Google. Also, while interviewing Alma and discovering her passion for photography, I guided her toward a local photographic society and later learned that she
had set up her own practice. During our inquiry, Lena had gone from an isolated figure shuffling around the shopping mall in “comfortable shoes” to a happily self-employed and ‘official’ hairdresser to the women at the Centre, and at her home. As illustrated in the following excerpt from Joasia’s story (see “Joasia’s Story” in Appendix 6), our longitudinal CBSR revealed tangible transformations in her linguistic and vocational identities. She had gone from a seemingly timid women unsure of her social and English identities to starting her own business.

Alongside the obvious further literacy, social systemic issues, and language learning involved, the type of world she is entering, and the course she will be doing, require the acquisition of significant amount of other skills such as business planning, networking, admin, etc. Joasia appears to anticipate further challenges and language identity work. She is aware that her English is still limited, but her tone during this interview segment was one of excitement for the future.

While some of the above did eventually undergo positive vocational transformations in Ireland, the overall picture from stories of lived working experiences for some of these learners is one of limited access to the Irish job market, significant drops in status and exploitation of vulnerable border crossers by some unscrupulous employers. Perhaps as a result of such practices, and due to other social and linguistic constraints discussed elsewhere in this chapter, all but one of these participants was unemployed at the time of this inquiry. Despite these barriers to successful relocation, through our collaborative storytelling practices, learners like Rafal and Ana were able to share and reflect on their insider’s view of these conflicted vocational experiences (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005a). Also, many of these learners showed themselves capable of making some meaning of learning from these conflicts (Bray, 2000).

6.4 Identity work

The previous section dealt with social, linguistic and vocational dislocations and affordances which dictated the border-crossing success of many of this cohort. The first sub-section will present and evaluate the identity struggles and resistance of this cohort in the face of linguistic and social conflicts. The second sub-section will deal with gendered identity and gender-mediated constraints on access to language access and socialisation practices.

The identity forging and meaning-making purpose of this inquiry is centred around the notion that, in telling these migration stories of dislocation and relocation, which constitute rich
sources of for the identity work for these border crossers, this cohort can use their human agency to make meanings of their narrated lived experiences and, in the process, negotiate their evolving social and linguistic identities (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005a, Simpson, 2011, Hull and Katz, 2006, Baynham, 2005b). However, the dynamics and negotiation of social and linguistic identities in new settings for border-crossing learners can be complex, and target language socialisation is not always guaranteed or desired, and, due to perceived power asymmetries, may be resisted (Norton, 1995a, Toohey, 1996). Since identities are ways of relating the self to the world, how these relations are socially constrained or afforded can impact on the language identity development of border crossers. The ability to develop more powerful language identities, which would allow newcomers to participate more fully in new communities, can be mediated by newcomers being positioned as being worthy of linguistic interaction (Norton, 1995a, Toohey, 1996). Gendered-mediated access to language resources for migrant learners can also be a significant factor in the success of their social and linguistic identity work in new settings (Menard-Warwick, 2004). Despite such imposed positioning, border-crossing language learners can challenge these asymmetries and claim access to social and linguistic resources, and build stronger language identities (Baynham, 2006a). The theme of identity struggle and resistance which surfaced in the analysis of learners’ stories will be evaluated in the following subsection, while the concept of cultural and gender-mediated constraints and challenges in some women learners’ cases will be interpreted in 6.4.2.

6.4.1 Identity struggles and resistance
This subsection will first cross-evaluate some of this cohort’s struggles to build their English language identities and socialise in host-community settings. Next, the focus will shift to interpreting the case of Joasia’s lengthy and somewhat successful battle to establish her English language identity and claim social spaces in new settings. Lack of confidence and fear of social engagement in English with more expert speakers in certain settings and situations is reported very frequently in these learners’ narratives (Norton, 1995a). Many participants report years of hovering on the outer periphery of any language contact or English identity work in host-community settings. Some, like Alma, talk of the terror of such encounters, wishing that their Anglophone interlocutors would just “go away” (Alma’s Story, A.6). Lena tells of having a “wall” and of being “very, very fraid” to interact with Irish people (Lena’s Story, A.6), while Uma recounts fending off would-be interlocutors with “Don’t ask me!”
Ana reports not knowing “when and where” she can socialise with target-language speakers, and how she feels trapped in her home because of this (Ana’s Story, A.6). Even at the safe haven of the IDC and the supportive community of practice of our literacy group, some learners like Jane and Rafal, resisted participation and English identity work with other members, or encountered denial of right to be heard. Rafal, for instance, opposes participating in shared practices and linguistic growth at the Centre through his indifference to the stories of others in the group. Jane tells of other members not being interested in what she had to say (Norton, 1995). Majeed and Hakim relate how they hang out at the local mall in search of social encounters with target-speakers, but their struggle to interact with English speakers and build stronger linguistic identities is not very successful, with Hakim lamenting that he “must find Irish friends” (Hakim’s Story, A.2). Some participants, Jane, Uma, and Joasia, report using their heritage social networks as a way of bypassing the dreaded social interactions with English speakers, and consequently of having to engage in the painful struggle of their English language identity construction. In this segment of her re-storied narrative (Joasia’s Story, A.6), Joasia relates how she resisted English identity work and languished for years on the periphery of host-community linguistic socialisation:

Like other members at the IDC, Joasia relied on the social network of more expert members of her heritage community for help with day-to-day interactions before coming to the IDC. Also, like other members, she confirms how this reliance went on for a considerable period of time:

PETER: How long ago did you come to Ireland?
JOASIA: Seven year
PETER: So you’d no English when you came to Ireland and you spoke a lot with Polish people?
JOASIA: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: So you speak Polish with your friends and your family, but outside the Centre, do you speak English with other people?
JOASIA: No, with people I don’t speak English. If I was problem, I ask my friend about help cos they speak English
PETER: So for many years you were asking your friends about problems and then you didn’t learn
JOASIA: Yeah

Joasia goes on to reflect on her struggle to construct an English language identity and how she would postpone participation in interactions in host community settings. Responding to
my question about what sort of problems she had had with English speaking or writing previous to the IDC, she recounts:

   JOASIA: Eh... because I... I was shy and thinks “Oh no, If I say somethings bad!” I always thinks “Oh no, maybe not yet”
   PETER: So you kept saying “Later, later”
   JOASIA: Yes

This fear of participation in out-of-school settings was common among IDC members. Some learners felt that they would never be ready to participate and so would remain outside or on the periphery of host communities of practice even after they had learned sufficient language skills to engage. At the same time, however, Joasia reports how she had clearly been making every effort to seek employment, with the help of her social network, even though these attempts were more often than not fruitless.

   PETER: So when you needed to use English and you had to ask your friends...
   JOASIA: Oh, yeah. If I have interview or something, I studied before the, eh, interview at home
   PETER: So job interviews were a problem?
   JOASIA: Yeah

At the end of four years of minimal language socialisation, when her twins finally reached school-going age, Joasia relates how she took the bold step of reaching out for help in one of the few settings where she had some contact and interaction with English speakers; her daughter’s school:

   I did not have a chance to learn English, so when my kids went to school I have free time and I decided to also go to school because I want to learn English too. To this end, I went to my daughter’s school to ask whether they can help me find a free school. After a few days they found me a school “Drop-in Centre” and I am very happy with this school.

Joasia’s agentic expression “I want to learn English too” here may be interpreted both as her struggle and desire to gain access to host linguistic and social capital, and, in the process, be more able promote her children’s education. In this way, Joasia was seeking to fulfil the active role that female immigrants play in the settlement process. In the following interview segment on interactional difficulties in host settings, Joasia reveals another aspect of transformation in her life. In her description of how she is now helping a fellow IDC member, she has clearly adopted the identity of a more expert peer in the heritage language social network on which she had earlier relied.
JOASIA: I have a few times my... eh, he coming here eh, Tobias. He ask me a few times
I help him, and I going with him to his doctor or hospital... and I help him
PETER: Before people helped you and now you help them?
JOASIA: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: A network?
JOASIA: Yes
PETER: So now you are in a position to help others?
JOASIA: Yes, how I can

Though she had struggled with, and resisted building, her English language identity for seven
years, in the end Joasia challenged her peripheral position and started working on her new
linguistic identity by exercising her agency and power to claim a place at the Drop-in Centre
(Norton, 1995a) and, when her language identity had become strong enough to agentically
adopt the position of social and linguistic mediator for other newcomers in the network of
her heritage community of practice (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005a, Kalaja et al., 2011).
Joasia’s story, along with the episodes of other learners in this section, illustrates how
narratives of migration can provide insights into resistance and non-participation in identity
work for these border crossers, and how narrative inquiry can unearth instances where some
settled ideas of self and identity for these border crossers can become unsettled and
challenged (Baynham, 2006a, Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000).

6.4.2 Gender-mediated positioning
To some extent, gender-mediated positioning played a part in Joasia’s struggle to gain access
to social and linguistic spaces in Ireland. This sub-section will first offer some evaluations of
this form of constraint for women members of this cohort. Then the remainder of this sub-
section will focus on interpreting Alma’s experiences of gender-mediated constraints. It is
worth noting that a number of the other categories and themes which deal with access to
social and linguistic resources presented in this chapter, as in the case with Joasia above, are
also influenced by issues of gender positioning and gender-mediated access to language
learning and socialisation. Some of the women participants in this inquiry report having to
shoulder the burden of language, literacy, and advocacy work for their households in various,
unfamiliar host-community social systems, while at the same time struggling to gain access
to English language learning resources or opportunities for socialisation in host communities
of practice (Menard-Warwick, 2004, Kouritzin, 2000b). Alma, for instance, relates that despite
the fact that her “language level is not enough for me to communicate with people who speak
English” (Alma’s Story, A.6), she has to cope with visits to the doctor and meetings at her children’s schools (Chavira, 1988, Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Meanwhile, other women learners in this group, Lena, Jane, and Alma, for example, lamented how their men had more host-community socialisation opportunities, particularly in workplace settings. Closely allied to the tensions generated by these situations, some women members of our literacy groups, including Lena, Jane, Ana, Alma, and Joasia, recount circumstances of imposed nurturer identity positions from within their families and varying degrees of cultural or gender-mediated constraints on their access to formal English language learning or language contact and socialisation in other settings (Kouritzin, 2000b, Menard-Warwick, 2004). Jane, for instance, reports how her husband forbade her attendance of English language schools by imposing a nurturer-only identity on her, and used a similar strategy to reluctantly allow her ‘limited’ access to the IDC. Many of these women, including Alma, Lena, Uma, and Ana, told of their frustration and even anger at not being able to engage in employment with the facility awarded to male border crossers. Uma also reports on her husband’s workplace-mediated, perfect English, adding, self-deprecatingly, how in her family it was just her who spoke “English just me a little bit” (Uma’s Story, A.6).

This part of her re-storied narrative demonstrates Alma’s frustration with her boring, family-centred days, comparing them with the more socially rewarding, work-related anecdotes her husband produces in the evenings, and her desire to enjoy the interactions and social diversity of the workplace:

When I asked Alma in our talk (Alma’s Story, A.6) what she meant by wanting to live “a full and rich life”, she paints an insider’s picture of her humdrum, gender-mediated days.

ALMA: Now (wry chuckle) I sit at home. I am driver for my kids, for my husband. I start my day cooking something for my family and after I drive my kids to school, to different classes for them. But I want go to job, too (chuckles)
PETER: You want to work as well
ALMA: Yes, I want, because my husband comes home from job and he is so... rel...
PETER: Relaxed
ALMA: Relaxing. Because I am every day the same as last day. Every day the same, the same the same. But he go to job, goes to job, something new, something speak with other people
PETER: So it’s also a social thing you want to do working. It’s social, to meet people?
ALMA: Yes
From this segment, we can picture Alma patiently, but also jealously, listening to her husband’s workday anecdotes on his return from work. There is an undertone of anger here with Alma’s the “same, the same the same” lived experience, and frustration while “he go to job” and returns home with tales of novelty and real-world social interactions. Alma’s brief response of “nothing” to the “Things that have changed” section in her “My Year” (Handwritten Work, A.6, p. 305) narrative frame seems to echo this frustration. When I ask Alma about her husband’s English ability in our interview (Alma’s Story, A.6), she repeats the refrain of feeling left out, or left behind. Alma had studied English for most of her schooling in Latvia, but her husband’s access to linguistic capital at work meant that he had, somewhat gallingly to her mind, overtaken her.

His English? His English very interesting because when he come to Ireland he didn’t know any words in English. He start work and now his English is better than me. Maybe he speak not correct, without, eh, grammar, but he speak very eh, flu, eh, fluently. I, when I speak, I think “Did I speak true, rightly?” But he speak, speak, speak and speak

Alma’s change in status appeared to be a recurring preoccupation. When I asked about this in our talk (ibid), Alma uses the strong adverbs “cardinally” and ‘absolutely” to underline the extent of these changes. The swift transition in this segment from her account of her high status in Latvia to the departure of her husband, and her “need” to follow him, might suggest a negative connotation for her between the two events.

PETER: Was it difficult then to change your life without a job? How does that feel for you?
ALMA: Yes my life changed cardinally, cardinally? Absolutely changed, yeah. Before I come to Ireland I always work, I have very good job, very good salary. But my husband go, goes?
PETER: Came
ALMA: Came here to Ireland and I need, eh, follow him (end of extract).

Other women members of our group, like Jane, Uma and Nika, related episodes which mirrored Alma’s experience of being pulled along in the wake of their partners’ migration, with subsequent changes in social, linguistic and vocational statuses. Nika echoes Alma’s “need” when she tells how it was “necessary” to come to Ireland where her husband had been living for ten years (Nika’s Story, A.6). However, Nika’s positioning as a transnational, and her lack of childcare issues and negative cultural mediation, did make her access to linguistic and social capital somewhat less constrained. Others, however, such as Jane, whose
husband’s culturally-mediated impositions blocked her access to formal English lessons, and “only... let” her have limited right to use of the more flexible Drop-in Centre (Jane’s Story, A.6), and Uma, whose studies in law in Bosnia were interrupted by her wedding and immediate migration to Ireland, were both stifled by family-generated, gender-mediated constraints on their linguistic and vocational progress. Overall, for these women participants, the prioritisation of their roles as nurturers meant that access to English language resources, host-community socialisation, and employment was often subject to the welfare of their children and charges (Kouritzin, 2000b, Rockhill, 1994).

6.5 Participation in social practices
Whereas the previous sections focused on interpreting the lived social and linguistic experiences of this cohort in various sociocultural settings, the locus and theme of evaluation in this section will shift to the immediate learning environment of the IDC and the participatory practices of these members in this community of learners. The first sub-section will interpret some learner’s accounts of their behaviour and attitudes during these situated practices. The second sub-section will present the learners’ views on the outcomes and purposes of our socially-situated project. As outlined in chapter 1, the socially-situated literacy practices employed with this cohort were designed so these learners could construct, reflect on, and share their narratives of lived experience and, in the process, participate in meaningful learning contexts where language and literacy development were promoted through social interaction. By narrating and reflecting on their lived language learning and participatory practices in the immediate learning environment of our literacy group and at the Drop-in Centre, these border crossers were encouraged to consciously and collaboratively engage in making meaning of these practices (Kim, 2005). In the socially-situated practices which I fostered with this group, literacy is seen as constructed and acquired in the immediate social contexts of the communities of practice of the literacy group itself, and at the Drop-in Centre in general (Baynham, 1995). In this study, these socially-situated practices, allied in praxis with collaborative storytelling narrative inquiry methods, combined to promote and investigate, through problem-solving, participatory processes, the successes or failure of these learners in building stronger English language identities (Lam, 2000). In order to understand how these learners engaged in meaning making and identity building in sociocultural contexts, this inquiry used the social learning lens of communities of practice
(see chapter 1) to examine how their stories of agentic participation revealed episodes of 
narrative meaning-making and English language identity construction (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 
2000). Migrant learners who are able to reflect on their evolving language identities and 
socialisation are said to have achieved transgression, which can ease their complex cross-
border journeys (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000, Kramsch, 2013).

6.5.1 Participation in situated practices

This sub-section will interpret and evaluate findings from my cross-narrative analysis which 
are grouped under the theme of participation in situated practices. First I will examine 
evidence of participation in the situated practices of the communities of practice across this 
literacy group, and then I will interpret the accounts of situated transformations in three 
exemplars: Hanna, Lena and Nika. Not all participants engaged in our socially situated 
practices to the same extent, either because of socially-mediated constraints such as was the 

case with Ana, who could only access the group for short periods due to nurturing issues, or 

through resistance to participation, as was the situation with Rafal, who considered the 
shared experiences and histories of other members of our community of practice as 
uninteresting, or, as Uma relates, because of a history and preference for working alone. Jane 
too, perhaps because of the gender-mediated constraints on access to more formal English 
learning, was unhappy with her experiences at the Drop-in Centre, and in our shared literacy 
practices. Her resistance to participation is evident in the following re-storied segment:

Jane claims that “my English improve only... only a little”, and any change in her proficiency 
was “very slow” (Jane’s Story, A.6). At the start of our follow-up interview, Jane leaves no 
room for uncertainty about her opinion of her learning experience at the IDC. Her English in 
“no better” and it seems to be “a waste of time” (ibid). Jane’s questioning here of Hanna’s 
credentials as a “student” may be interpreted as her disillusionment with the service on offer 
at the IDC (ibid). Others, such as Rafal also displayed similar attitudes. Jane does, however, 
grudgingly concede that Hanna’s English is good.

PETER: And how is you English? Getting better?
JANE: No
PETER: (laughs) No?
JANE: (laughs) No better
PETER: No better, really?
JANE: Yeah waste time (laughs)
PETER: A waste of time? No I don’t believe you
JANE:  (laughs)
PETER: You’re studying with Hanna. Is she a good teacher?
JANE:  Yeah, good teacher
PETER: Her English is very good
JANE:  (unsure) Yeah. She’s student?
PETER: A student yes but her English is good
JANE:  But good English, yes (end of extract)

Here, Jane seems to be resisting the adoption of an apprentice identity to Hanna as a more expert member of this community of practice, and her non-participation may account for what she sees as a very slow development of her community and English language identities (Rogoff, 2008, Rogoff et al., 1995).

Other members related greater levels of participation in situated practices at the Centre. Hakim, for instance, gets to the core of the identity building and meaning-making effects of participation in our situated literacy. He can clearly see the value of this approach because it allows him to “repeat” and share his lived experience with others (Hakim’s Story, A.6). So his storytelling meant he could represent his evolving identity through “my story, my life story” (ibid). Alma used these practices to assess her potential future vocational identity, adding that it helped learners look at themselves from the outside. Alma’s reflections display a notable transgredient ability to chart her own evolving identity from within and without (Kramsch, 2013). Lena related how our participatory knowledge sharing practices was “better for English” (Lena’s Story, A.6), went on to describe the effects of reflecting on her situated practices for her evolving identity:

Lena relates her epiphany during the writing of her “memory” of her lived experience. The transgredient realisation of her own educational worth “I have diploma!” and social value “I good person, clever person” clearly impacted on Lena’s sense of self image. By ‘remembering’, Lena seems to reposition her views on her sense of her place “now in Ireland” and belonging in her new home.

PETER: When you were writing the story, what do you think you learned working together?
LENA:  When, when you write, it’s memory, it’s eh fantasia, fantasy (chuckles). Need to write interesting fact. I remember “Ah, university! I have diploma!” (chuckles) “Oh, I good person” “A clever person”. Good, I don’t know, for me it was interesting. I
remember, for me eh... In Ireland. I now in Ireland it’s very... eh... design, decision, decision
PETER: So you have more opportunity, more things you can do?
LENA: Uh huh

Lena’s struggles to find a word to describe the impact of this revelation, settling here for “decision”. But, whatever she was trying to imply, she provides an insider’s view of the potential of reflection on evolving identity in situated literacy settings.

Hanna, Lena and Nika provide us with exemplars of how participation and reflection on their experiences in our literacy community of practice can be coeval with learning and social and linguistic identity building (Block, 2003, Rogoff, 2003). This segment from Hanna’s re-storied narrative (Hanna’s Story, p. 30) displays her transgredient evaluation of the benefits of our situated literacy practices:

During our follow-up interview Hanna reflected very positively on these situated encounters where learners co-constructed the stories and performed their identities, and the benefits of bringing the outside in. Without any prompting, she seems to appreciate the value of this type of group work, and again her desire for intercultural encounters and awareness comes to the fore. Here, she seems very capable of looking beyond the classical functions of literacy and value the social, cultural, and communicative purposes of this practice.

PETER: When you were working on the story, what did you like about working on the story?
HANNA: I liked that we worked in a group. And we communicate with other students, and to learn more about their personal lives and cultures and traditions. It was very interesting and enjoyable.
PETER: In a bigger way, what do you think you learned from doing this?
HANNA: I learned, I think, a lot of writing skills. How to make my story more enjoyable and interesting, and what expressions exactly do I have to use. I think it was very important for my writing skills.
PETER: So it really improved your writing skills?
HANNA: Yeah (end of extract)

The following re-storied extract (Nika’s Story, p 6) show some transgredient insider views and results from Nika’s participation at the Centre and her transgredient evaluation of her subsequent linguistic and social identity construction:
Again, in her published account, Nika reports that her English “is getting better since I came to the Drop-in Centre”. Nika was reaping the benefits of her sustained, agentic participation, and was evolving her English identity to the extent that, like Hanna, she became a volunteer tutor at the Centre. In a similar way to Hanna, teaching for the first time, a practice which challenged even our native volunteers, did not faze Nika. She reveals, somewhat characteristically, in our talk (Hanna’s Story, A.6) how she found this challenge enjoyable and “exciting”. Nika also shows her awareness of how this remarkable participation was helping her to “learn myself”, and forge a stronger English identity as a result of occupying the identity position of a more expert member of this community of practice with such ease.

NIKA: It was like something new, yeah, something exciting, yeah. Can I say exciting?
PETER: Yes
NIKA: Exciting, yeah! I like it and people listen to me and I can explain in another way. I was, eh, wondered that I can do, cos I thought that I’m not so good in English, but when I speak about some topic and I know something about it, I learn myself, too. Not only another people, another group, so it’s a good opportunity for me to improve not only my speaking skills, my English, and to help another people to learn English, yeah. It’s very good
PETER: You enjoyed that
NIKA: Yeah, very enjoy, yeah.
PETER: You are a good teacher. Do you think that coming from another country yourself, that helped you to teach here?
NIKA: (sotto voce) I’m sorry...
PETER: Because you made that journey, in a way you can understand?
NIKA: Yeah, eh it helps of course cos eh when you teaching other people, yeah? And you see yourself in that people, yeah and...
PETER: So you can understand them and their problems better?
NIKA: Yeah, of course. It’s like you in the past, but maybe sometimes in the present

In such a short time, Nika has earned full membership of the IDC community of practice, and, due to her participation levels, became quite an expert member of this group. From this expert position, she is able to use her hindsight of being a novice, and her insights from her cross-border journey to “see yourself in that people” both in the past and “sometimes in the present”. Nika also refers to this recognition of shared experience and purpose in her “Our Stories Questions” frame (A.6, p. 359): “I find other stories of others in the group interesting and in some cases it is similar with mine”.

Though not all learners participated equally or report deriving the same benefits from our situated literacy practices, they were all able to reflect on and evaluate these experiences
through their narratives. What does emerge from these learners insider views on their social development and language identity building in our situated practices seems to be that the greater their participation in our community of practice, the better their chances, as was the case for example of Hanna, Lena and Nika, of making meaning from these practices and of forging stronger English language identities (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000, Rogoff et al., 1995).

6.5.2 Learner’s reflections on situated practices

This sub-section will present and evaluate learners’ reflections on our situated narrative practices. The interpretative focus here will be on the learners’ accounts of the possible benefits of these practices for making meaning of their stories and in building stronger English language identities. First, I will cross-evaluate the cases of some learners who struggled to see the social or linguistic value of these practices due perhaps to lower levels of transgredience. Then I will present my interpretations of some learners’ positive experiences and reflections on the meaning-making and identity building outcomes of these practices. After the publication of their stories, and the dissolution of our literacy groups, the learners were encouraged to share their opinions, attitudes towards the social and linguistic purposes, audience, usefulness, and their views of personal outcomes and impacts of our situated literacy practices. While all the participants were able to provide insights into their experiences of our social practices, not all were able to recount the benefits of this experience in terms of its social purposes or of their own linguistic identity growth (Kramsch, 2013). Some learners, for instance Ana, Jane, Rafal and Uma, did not report significant meaning-making consequences, or any major boosts in their English identities, from our collaborative practices. Nevertheless, these informants did relate other benefits from participating in our knowledge-sharing literacy exercises. Majeed expressed dissatisfaction with the brevity of his story, but also talked of his desire to expand his narrative to include episodes from his home country and, though he did not always co-perform his stories, he reports enjoying the shared practices “with other people” (Majeed’s Story, A.6). Ana had a characteristically functional view of our literacy practices but, at the same time, tells how she liked meeting people and practicing English. Rafal too, placed a more functional value on our practices. However, he did show his appreciation for the agentic scaffolding afforded him by Nika and Hanna, which helped him identify more social purposes such as integration and audience in his post-publication feedback (see Rafal’s Story, A.6). Uma declared some pride in her non-
participation, adding that her storytelling experience had taught her “nothing special” (Uma’s Story, A.6). Nevertheless, she was able to identify the social purposes of our published stories for herself and other border crossers in how reflecting on the narratives helped take stock of their journeys “for now and what was before” (ibid). Jane, too, was unconvinced of either functional or social benefits from our situated literacy, displaying her non-participation, or unworthiness of attention in the group by saying that “they don’t need me” and “they don’t need my help” (Jane’s Story, A.6). She did, however, show some appreciation of the role of storytelling in forging a stronger social and linguistic identity by relating a desire to expand her published narrative to include “changes in my life” and “something happen in the Centre” (ibid, p. 56). Though the resistance and constraints on the participation of this sub-cohort in our shared practices were largely personal or individual, these learners all displayed similarly lowered levels of transgredience, which is the hallmark of learners who have the ability to reflect on language socialisation and observe on their evolving identities in sociocultural settings from the inside and the outside (Kramsch, 2013).

Other members of our group, including Chata, Joasia, Hanna, Nika, Hakim, Alma, and Lena, showed superior levels of transgredience and greater appreciation of the social and linguistic usefulness of our situated literacy practices. Almatransgrediently declares how these storytelling experiences helped members to “look at ourselves from the outside”, and enabled her to “estimate my opportunities and decide what I want and need” (Alma’s Story, A.6). Hakim also showed transgredience and awareness of the social purposes of our shared endeavours in his ability to reflect on how our storytelling practices enabled our participants to “know how one can say a story” while, at the same time, relating how co-narrating with other members meant he could “learn what was their story, and what they do”, adding that it was “very good for English” and helped them learn English (Hakim’s Story, A.6). Joasia related how her sustained participation in our storytelling practices resulted in a shift in her language identity from her previous second language identity of Russian to that of English. In a similar way to Alma, Hanna, and Lena, Nika displayed transgredience in her ability to pinpoint the social purposes and audience for her published story as “people who are maybe scared to go to the city”, and “people who came to came to Ireland and want to integrate” (Nika’s Story, A.6). Hanna shared Nika’s views of the target audience and social purposes of our published as being for “immigrants, it will be easier for them after to do something”
In the following extract from her re-storied narrative (Nika’s Story, p 106), Nika seems to describe faithfully the knowledge and identity construction processes and outcomes of our situated practices as presented in my model of situated learning (see chapter 1):

Nika relates how her knowledge-sharing participation with classmates and teacher, fuelled by her agency, enabled improvement on a linguistically functional level, while fostering transformations in her own English language identity. She appears to achieve elevated levels of transgressience in her comment: “And you improve, you write your story and you know about you, yeah?” What Nika seems to be portraying here, when she concludes that “you can improve it cos it’s interesting to share your story with another people”, is a mutually modulating practice which has resulted in identities being changed and changing in acts of dynamic subjective and growing participation in our community of practice (see 1.7).

Yeah, I think it’s a good way cos you can ask your, your classmate, yeah. And you can ask a teacher, if you don’t know something. And you improve, you write your story and you know about you, yeah? Everything and when you know some new words, you associate this with your language words. And you can improve it cos it’s interesting to share your story with another people (A.6)

Overall, Nika’s agentic participation ensured that not only was she was able to fully access the social and linguistic resources available at the Centre, but also, through her own contributions to the community of practice at the IDC, she was shaping and driving this community through shared and situated practices (Lam, 2000, Bredo, 1994).

Regarding learners’ awareness of evolving identities, which is said to be fostered in situated narrative practices such as this (Kramsch, 2013, Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000), in this extract from her Story (A.6) Lena relates an epiphany during the writing of her memory of her lived experience. The transgressient realisation of her own educational worth in her declarations of “I have diploma!”, and of social value in “I good person, clever person”, clearly impacted on Lena’s sense of self image. By remembering in this way, Lena seems to reposition her views on her sense of place “now in Ireland”, and belonging in her new home.

PETER: When you were writing the story, what do you think you learned working together?
LENA: When, when you write, it’s memory, it’s eh fantasia, fantasy (chuckles). Need to write interesting fact. I remember “Ah, university! I have diploma!” (chuckles) “Oh,
I good person” “A clever person”. Good, I don’t know, for me it was interesting. I remember, for me eh... In Ireland. I now in Ireland it’s very... eh... design, decision, decision

PETER: So you have more opportunity, more things you can do?
LENA: Uh huh

Lena’s struggles to find a word to describe the impact of this revelation, settling here for “decision”, but, whatever she was trying to imply, she is able to provide an insider’s view of the potential of reflection on her evolving identity in situated literacy settings.

The above extracts, and the episodes of the positive experiences and transgredient perceptions of our situated practices as told by the participants cited above, would seem to validate Pavlenko and Lantolf’s (2000) claim that participation and reflection in narrative practices can help these border-crossing learners to construct stronger language identities, and facilitate the complex and conflicted journeys newcomers must undertake from the periphery toward fuller membership of new communities. However, while some of these members experienced more marginal forms of participation, and consequently related less experiences of evolving English identities, their legitimised peripherality still allowed for varying degrees of involvement and awareness of the social purposes and potential linguistic identity work as recounted in their reflections on our situated literacy practices (Norton, 2001, Lave & Wenger, 1991). In one form or another, albeit with varying levels of transgredience, these reflections on the purposes and outcomes of their lived language learning and socialisation activities in our literacy community of practice reveal how all participants were able to make meaning of these storytelling practices, however they perceived their usefulness or outcomes for their English language development (Kim, 2001).

6.6 Trajectories and transformations

The preceding section dealt with these learners’ behaviours, attitudes and perceived outcomes regarding their participation in our situated learning practices. This section presents evaluations of their accounts of their lived language learning and socialisation experiences across a broader range of settings and times. The subsection below will present interpretations of some transformations in participants’ social and linguistic identities from the past to now. The second sub-section will cross-evaluate episodes of desired future identities which surfaced in their stories. The section will end with the re-storied interpretation of transformation in the life of Joasia as an exemplar for this theme.
The situated narrative practices, data collection tools, coding, and analysis in this study were designed to capture the lived experiences of these learners across diverse settings and different times in their lives (Polkinghorne, 1995). The restorying, and subsequent comparative analysis, of the lived experiences of these border crossers allowed me to examine the trajectories, disruptions in equilibrium, and any transformations in their social, linguistic and vocational identities over time (Elliott, 2005). Episodes relating to these lived trajectories of displacement and resettlement, social and linguistic constraints, affordances, language conflict and, in some cases, identity transformations, appeared in all participants’ narratives. Reflecting on these experiences helped these learners put into context these trajectories of their social and linguistic identities in a variety of settings over time (Bell, 2002). In particular, the “What has changed...?” questions I used in our follow-up interviews revealed some social and linguistic transformations across time for many participants, while “What are your plans for...?” questions elicited desired future social, linguistic, and vocational identities. This section will present evaluation and interpretations of the final two themes which are drawn from my cross-narrative analysis: Language identity trajectories and Future identities.

6.6.1 Language identity trajectories

This subsection will examine these learners’ reflections on their experiences, successes, or failures regarding the construction of their English language identities from the past until the present. First I will offer a cross-group interpretation of episodes of past to present of language identity and socialisation transformations from participants’ re-storied narratives. Then I will provide an evaluation of an episode from Lena’s narrative as exemplar of social and linguistic transformation in situated practices. Finally, I will provide assessments of some examples of transformational struggles in the stories of some learners.

In many cases, learners such as Alma, Ana, Hakim, Majeed, and Lena responded to the “What has changed...?” questions by first referring to an earlier period of severe displacement and social disorientation, and then relating contrasts and transformations in their social and linguistic development. Hakim tells of a desperate, empty period of “Oh my God!” “What I do?” before coming to the Centre, and of how the stronger identity he had constructed in the meantime made him feel confident enough to “speak a little bit”, and connect to his new home in a “very better” way (Hakim’s story, A.6). Majeed spoke of going from wandering around the local mall with Hakim, hoping to meet Irish people who “I don’t understand...”
before”, to how he confidently can “now go with people outside and speak with Irish, English, speak with Polish... yeah, with all people” (Majeed’s Story, A.6). Like Hakim, Alma accompanies her episode of early linguistic displacement with “Oh my God!” and, like Majeed, she declares her stronger English language identity by telling how “now I want to speak with everybody!” (Alma’s Story, A.6). In relation to non-participation and stasis among some fellow heritage-community border crossers, Alma tells of those who “sit at home” and declare “Oh, it’s my life! It’s my destiny!” while she now agentically seeks transformations by always looking for “something new... something useful” (ibid). Hanna confidently reported on her evolving English language identity and the growing English Hanna, and seems to confirm Pavlenko and Lantolf’s (2000) submission that narrative work and storytelling can strengthen language identities for this type of learner.

Lena also relates her transformation from the terrifying, early “What to do?” period in her microstory of her border-crossing trajectory (A.6), to the narrative-mediated realisation of her identity as one who has a “good past”, a university education, and a solid social network. She then uses this identity epiphany to urge herself forward with an agentic “need to go to state” (ibid), probably meaning to have her university qualifications officially recognised in Ireland, or approaching educational systems to further establish her vocational identity:

Maybe, yeah, maybe. Because when I came to Ireland one month, two months, three months, I didn’t remember why, eh, what to do, what I to do and “Oh, I have good eh good past!” I have university, I have friends, I have need, need to do something. Need to go to state, go to state, yeah?

On the subject of how coming to the Centre has changed her English language skills (ibid, p. 145-146), Lena reports a breakthrough in her ability to understand diverse accents.

PETER: How do you think coming to the Centre has changed your English? Has your English changed?
LENA: Change, yeah, changed. Cos before I didn’t understand not only Irish people pro, pronun
PETER: Pronunciation
LENA: Different people – from Afghanistan, form Lithuania, from Poland, and now I know is better
PETER: You understand and you know it better
LENA: Because different pronunci, pronunciation (chuckles) and I understand better
PETER: So you understand different people
LENA: Not, not the wall
PETER: The wall is gone
LENAs: If I, if I didn’t understand “Sorry, please... am sorry?” “Ok”
PETER: So you can communicate better
LENAs: Yeah
PETER: So it’s not a wall, it’s a window
LENAs: A window. I have something (laughs) but not wall, maybe window

It would seem that as a result of her participation in our situated practices and her own identity work, Lena can now share knowledge with “different people”. Now she can repair communication breakdowns by asking for repetition and receive confirmations such as “Ok”. The “wall” has been breached and a “window” has opened on the next leg of Lena’s journey (ibid).

However, not all of the participants reported such an epiphany or relate having experienced Lena’s short trajectory arc from displacement to identity reconstruction, and subsequent potential for a more stable resettlement. As outlined in 6.3.1, some learners such as Ana, Uma, Amin, Rafal and, to a certain extent, Jane had spent extended periods of time and energy trying to build stronger English language identities without, with the exception of Amin, reporting significant breakthroughs in terms of major social or linguistic transformations over their long border-crossing trajectories. After all her time and struggles trying to challenge her socially-mediated position and build social networks in her ‘new’ home, Ana appears to have been stranded on an identity plateau for some time (Ho and Liu, 2002). At the end of her published narrative, and despite her more than adequate English competence across all the skills, Ana writes of how she is still fighting to claim access to host-community social and vocational spaces (De Fina and King, 2011). Ana provides an illustration of this protracted battle at the end of her published story where she outlines her future plans “to learn English nonstop”, and to “learn something in college and maybe after that get a good job” (Ana’s Story, p 16). Like some other women in this inquiry, Uma had watched her husband’s English language identity blossom, while she too languished on her own identity plateau for many years. She does, however, recount some transformation from her days before the Drop-in Centre and her interaction-blocking “Don’t ask me!” (Uma’s Story, A.6) to her account of her current English identity position in socialisation as “we speak English. That’s normal” (ibid, p. 79). Uma is more ambitious when it comes to her future vocational identity. Though she feels she may have to settle for a training position to start with, she adamantly relates how she is not about to surrender her hard won law degree or completely
abandon “my profession” (ibid, p. 78). In response to my direct question as to whether the “English Uma” has grown, Uma reveals some transgressent awareness of changes in her English language identity by replying “Of course” (ibid, p. 79). Although Jane reported “little” change in her gender-mediated situation or English language identity, she does speak of some progress and transformation from being “fraid” to speak in host setting prior to her time at the Centre to reporting that “Now that’s ok”, adding that she has also migrated from phone translator dependency to actually asking people for help (Jane’s Story, A.6).

6.6.2 Future identities
Whereas the preceding section was concerned with evaluating this cohort’s language socialisation and identity work from the past to now, this sub-section will explore how these learners view their future prospects and examines their desired and potential future vocational identities. First I will evaluate the accounts of some learners whose linguistic and social identities seem to have plateaued, with some consequences for their desired future identities. Next I will offer a cross-evaluation of those learners who were able to envision more tangible and positive future linguistic and vocational identities. This section, and this chapter, will finish by presenting Joasia’s past, present and future linguistic, social and vocational identity work and transformations as an exemplar.

It may be no coincidence that the learners who were least able to visualise their potential future social, linguistic, and vocational identities were those who had already struggled with building stronger versions of these in their pasts. Jane, for example, relates how continuing gender-mediated constraints on her access to language learning and socialisation will impact on her future plans. In reply to my question whether she wanted to work or study in the future, she responds: “Yeah, maybe continue to study. Now my child’s too young so I no want...” (Jane’s Story, A.6). Ana is also hampered by nurturing duties, and still believes her English is not “good enough” to claim a vocational space and future identity (Ana’s Story, A.6). Rafal too inhabits a social and linguistic identity plateau, which was mediated by years of imposed linguistic isolation and vocational conflicts. Nevertheless, he is agentically struggling to access language learning resources by pestering the Centre for more and more class time; as he puts it: “If don’t give, I ask!” (Rafal’s Story, A.6). Rafal displays more uncertainty about his future vocational identity, citing the ongoing recession and prospective employers’ “You happy if I take you” exploitation of this situation (ibid, p. 47).
Other participants, such as Amin, Chata, Alma, Hanna, Joasia, and Nika, were more positive about their future prospects and were more capable of seeing tangible future identities, perhaps due to their success thus far in building stronger social and linguistic identities. Amin, who was nearing the end of his nursing studies, had no problem evaluating his options (Amin’s Story, A.6): “I have, there’s two option I like to go with. I can go with one of them, you know? I choose one. The nursing, I like to do the nursing. There’s different type of nursing. I like to go maybe for the general one or I like to do the paramedic, you know?” Chata is also aware of the obstacles between her present and future self. She had worked hard both within the IDC, the literacy group, and in wider settings to reposition herself both socially and linguistically. She has familiarised herself with all the steps this social system requires for her to assume the identities she has agentically sought to bring about; college, work placement, etc. She is ready to face the test of whether she is “worth”, or worthy (Norton, 1995), to be accepted as a member of the community she longs to join (Chata’ Story, A.6):

CHATA: Yeah I have to go to the college first for a year because after college I will go for... what do they call it? Voluntary jo...

PETER: Placement?

CHATA: Yeah to see if I’m ok, to see if I’m worth to be employed, to be a Community Social Healthcare. So I pray that God to help me, to see me through

Alma, who was passionate about photography and was about to attend a community college open day in order to explore options for studying this, confidently relates how “I have a plan for the future” (Alma’s trans., A.4, line 480)². Lena spoke of going it “alone” in social system interactions and, despite three recently unsuccessful job interviews for hairstyling positions, she saw this as “Good experience”, agentically adding “I will try. I will again, yeah!” (Lena’s Story, A.6). In the meantime, she had started doing hairstyling from home, and was also practicing as a hairstylist at the Centre. Perhaps due to their rapidly evolving social and linguistic identities it was unsurprising that Hanna and Nika should perceive clear paths and goals for their future identities ³. In our follow-up talk, we returned to the topic of teaching

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² At the time of writing this chapter I had news that Alma had successfully completed this course.

³ Knowing that Hanna and Nika were both keen to continue their education, I informed them about the Postgraduate Open-day at Trinity College Dublin, and encouraged them to go along given that both had the agency, educational background, language skills to tackle an academic setting.
but this time linked to Hanna’s future and college studies. Hanna has clearly thought about this before, and she realises that she needs both the language and a hoped-for master’s in order to fulfil this goal (Hanna’s Story, A.6).

PETER: Would you like to teach in the future, and is it something you would be interested in?
HANNA: If I will be good in English, yes, or something else. In the past I thought about it. I wanted to be a historical teacher, about middle history
PETER: And would you still like to teach history?
HANNA: Yeah, yeah, it is interesting

When Nika writes about her future in her published narrative (A.3), she avoids the lighter modal verbs such as hope and would like, opting instead for the more agentic present tense “I plan”: “My plans for the future are to make my family bigger , and study a perfect my English. Also I plan to get a good job.” The smiley is hers, and her priorities could not be clearer. In her My Story narrative frame, Nika writes how she not only wants to have her cake and eat it by going to work and college, but also how she wants to share it by continuing to participate at the IDC (Nika’s Story, A.6, p. 107):

In the future I would like to go to college and have a work at the same time. And I want to come to the Drop-in Centre at the same time, even if it will be only once a week. I like Drop-in Centre very much.

In terms of identity transformations across social, linguistic, and vocational domains, and over time, Joasia’s was perhaps the most dramatic exemplar. From spending over seven years trapped on her identity plateau, while struggling with vocational linguistic isolation, gender-mediated language access, double-dislocation, and having had to deal with the tensions between being the family advocate in unfamiliar social and linguistic systems while seeking to perpetuate the heritage culture for her children, Joasia had turned herself around and come out of this long identity tunnel. She talked of how she had “opening up” both as a person and as an English speaker (Joasia’s Story, A.6, p. 166). The following extract from Joasia’s story (ibid, p. 167), reviews these transformations and her plans for her future vocational identity:

During our follow-up narrative interview, and a little over a year since I had first met Joasia, I could see a marked transformation in how she looked at and talked about her life. She was
more positive and confident about her second language identity and socialisation, and purposeful about the next steps of her journey.

PETER: What are your plans for the future?
JOASIA: For the future? I would like eh, open my business because I am seamstress by profession and I think about sewing curtains and bedding and start selling them in the internet. See how people will, eh, interest
PETER: And you need to do a course to do that?
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah. Yesterday I was in social (welfare) and she help me she, they give me paper with course, business course
PETER: So it’s the Start your Own Business Course?
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah (takes out paperwork to show me) this here
PETER: So you have to think about all these things?
JOASIA: Yeah
PETER: It’s in Tallaght, good! A day course or an evening?
JOASIA: Day, day
PETER: You seem to be a lot happier Joasia. Life has changed

Joasia has repossessed her previous identity as a seamstress, adding the agentic “by profession” to reinforce this renaissance. She is also striving for the position of a modest start-up, though this is hardly a modest undertaking in unfamiliar social systems and in a second language. Alongside the obvious further literacy, social systemic issues, and language learning involved, the type of world she is entering, and the course she will be doing, require the acquisition of significant amount of other skills such as business planning, networking, admin, etc. Joasia appears to anticipate further challenges and language identity work. She is aware that her English is still limited, but her tone during this interview segment was one of excitement for the future. Throughout Joasia’s itinerary, from her first move at her daughter’s school to her confident new business endeavour, she has tried to shape her own learning opportunities and participation, and has dealt with major challenges of negotiating new competencies and identities in various sociocultural settings. Joasia’s storytelling and her reflection on this journey appeared to have helped her in these endeavours. In conclusion, it would seem from the trajectory of her development over the timeframe of this story that the situation of her long period of dislocation and linguistic isolation from the host community seems to have ameliorated significantly, and she appears better equipped and positioned to face the new challenges ahead.
6.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented four themes which emerged as core concepts from my comparative analysis of the learners’ re-storied narratives: (i) Displacement and Resettlement, (ii) Identity Work, (iii) Participation in Social Practices, and (iv) Trajectories and transformations. First, in order to provide a context for these interpretations I situated these evaluations within the broader frame of this study. Then I reiterated the approaches, aims and central research question of this narrative inquiry. The remainder of this chapter offered interpretations of the above themes in four sections. Section 6.3 dealt with the themes of displacement and resettlement in both host and heritage communities in the narratives of these border crossers and evaluated their narrated episodes of socially-mediated constraints to language learning and socialisation. In section 6.4, I presented evaluations of social and linguistic identity struggles and resistance, including gender-mediated issues, in the stories of this cohort. The focus and location of the comparative analysis moved to the immediate learning environment in section 6.5. This section evaluated learners’ reflections on their participations in our situated literacy project and their perceptions of the purposes and outcomes of our social practices. Finally, in section 6.6 I provided an assessment of identity work and language learning, socialisation and vocational practices and experiences in the stories of the participants across a wider range of settings, and over past, present and possible future time. The following chapter will summarise the findings discussed in this chapter and place them in the overall context of this research.
Chapter 7 – Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the various facets of this inquiry and summarises its findings. It highlights some of the limitations of this study before turning to the contributions of this research to the field of second language learning in general and English language identity work for migrants in particular. Finally, it outlines some possible directions for future research. The theoretical approaches to language teaching and learning reviewed in Chapter One point to the need for more socially-situated accounts of the struggles of post-migratory border-crossers to help establish English language identities and connect with their new homes (1994, Lantolf and Beckett, 2009, Norton and Toohey, 2011, Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). These theories, informed by sociocultural and poststructural views, were developed during a paradigm shift in research on how successful language learners are constructed or ‘co-constructed’ in second language research (Duff, 2010a, Norton, 2004, Norton and Morgan, 2011). In order to address the central question in this thesis: How can socially-situated practices help adult migrant language learners in Ireland make meaning of their lived experiences and forge stronger English language identities?, this thesis started by describing how socially-situated approaches to language learning can go beyond traditional cognitive and behaviourist views by examining how learners are “situated in specific social, historical, and cultural contexts and how learners resist or accept the positions those contexts offer them” (Norton and Toohey, 2001, 310). I have argued that active participation in social practices could enable learners to problematise socially-mediated constraints and affordances through language and literacy activities, help them make sense of their language and socialisation experiences in their new settings, and help them build stronger English language identities (Frye, 1999, McKinney and Norton, 2008). I have proposed ‘participation’ as a metaphor for learning, and suggested a model for situated language learning as participation in communities of practice (Regan and Chasaide, 2010, Block, 2007b, Bredo, 1994).

Chapter Two described the nature and characteristics of narrative inquiry, which was the research method deemed appropriate for this study. I used this chapter to outline how narrative inquiry as method can be used in a form of praxis with border-crossing learners This praxis melds the problem-posing aims and goals of situated language and literacy described
in Chapter One with the shared storytelling functions and purposes of narrative inquiry (Baynham, 2006b, Bell, 2002, Bray, 2000, De Fina, 2003). I went on to outline how learners were encouraged to construct their stories of lived experiences in situated practice as they engaged in a “meaningful learning context that maximizes language and literacy development by promoting social interaction” (Kim, 2005; 21-22). I called this praxis a ‘Life Experience Approach’. This praxis was designed to reveal how migrants orient themselves in terms of social expectations, how they position themselves regarding societal norms, their social roles in new milieus, and their relationships and participation in unfamiliar social worlds (Baynham and De Fina, 2005; 244, De Fina and King, 2011). Narrative inquiry can activate the constructs of identity and agency to help foster linguistic identity negotiation and provide affordances for border-crossing language learners to challenge imposed positions and claim access to social spaces in new settings (Baynham, 2005b, Baynham and De Fina, 2005).

This doctoral project employed critical, classroom-based social research methods (CBSR), broadly reflecting the objectives of Norton’s CBSR model (1995a; 28), which she defined as a “collaborative research that is carried out by language learners in their local communities with the active guidance and support of the language teacher”, with the focus of this inquiry on migrant English language learners’ “lived experience - that is, in lives and how they are lived” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; xxii). In practice, this method involved using learner diaries, narrative frames and follow-up narrative interviews to foster critical awareness in learners of the negotiation and (co)construction of their English language identities, while promoting and mediating the literacy necessary for logging and reflecting on this process (Miller, 2007, Baynham, 1995, Lam, 2000, McKinney and Norton, 2008). Data collected at the research site at The Intercultural Drop-in Centre in South Dublin included learner diaries, handwritten and word-processed learner stories and fragments, completed narrative frames, thirteen audio interview transcripts and a book with published versions of the learners’ migration stories.

The previous two chapters have presented the three cycles of coding used to co-construct and extract meanings from the narratives of the core participants in this inquiry, and the results of the comparative analysis. The four themes which emerged from this analysis were: (i) Displacement and Resettlement, (ii) Identity Work, (iii) Participation in Social Practices, and (iv) Trajectories and transformations. The following section will draw together these findings,
and illustrate how socially-situated approaches to language learning and collaborative narrative methods can provide insights into the lived experience of adult migrant learners, help them make meanings of their border-crossing journeys, and promote the construction of stronger English language identities in various sociocultural settings in their new home of Ireland.

7.2 Social Mediation

In some professional and political discourses, lack of motivation was long held as a major reason for the non-participation of migrants in language learning and literacy projects (Rockhill, 1994). And, although motivational, psychological and other cognitive or behavioural factors surely impact on how these learners construct their new language identities, a significant part of the success of border crossers, in particular those like this cohort who have to struggle for linguistic and social resources, in the construction of stronger English language identities may be tied to their ability to navigate social expectations, societal norms and linguistic or social conflicts in their new home (Baynham and De Fina, 2005, De Fina and King, 2011). I can report that nearly all of the learners involved in this inquiry were highly motivated and, though they surely had varying levels of cognitive ability, it emerged that they themselves reported lack of social and linguistic exposure in real-world settings as being central to their progress toward more complete English language identities.

Issues of belonging and exclusion have been shown to be closely associated with language learning processes and practices for newcomer learners (Warriner, 2008a). In addition, language access and language ideologies can impact on social, linguistic, and civic participation for these border crossers (ibid). Since this thesis adopts the view that language and literacy are socially constructed in everyday communicative practices and interactions, the socially-mediated constraints or affordances of linguistic and social access related in the stories of these adult migrant learners are of substantial importance in understanding their lived language learning experiences, and in accounting for their success or failures in forging new linguistic identities (Block, 2003, Donato and Mac Cormick, 1994, Firth and Wagner, 2007, Ivanic et al., 2006, Rockhill, 1987).

As outlined in 1.3.4, the narrative frames which drove the social literacy practice in this study were designed to problematize issues directly affecting these learners such as difficulties with
their children’s’ schools and teachers but, because this was a shared situated practice, learners self-censored out the deeper and more painful incidents at the writing stage. However, accounts of forms of socially-mediated double dislocation which can reinforce a sense of displacement did surface in the stories of Uma, Majeed and Jane, for example (see 6.3.2,) in their follow-up interviews. The more intimate setting of the interview seemed to invoke more intimacy in the stories of this cohort, though even here we are perhaps seeing only the tip of the iceberg in terms how much of the incidence and pain of dislocation these people were willing, or indeed able to reveal. Though some scholars have used narrative methods to explore the transitional pains of migrants such as Taloyan et al’s (2011) work on acculturation of Kurdish migrants in Sweden or Dossa’s (2004) stories of the displacements and dislocations of Iranian women in British Columbia, these forms of examinations were beyond the scope or wishes of this researcher. This being The form social literacy in this study was employed principally as a process by which the learners were socialized for group membership in specific literate communities where they could explore and grow their language identities. In this way it can be considered a weaker form of critical literacy and narrative method which sought to help them more to make meaning of local issues rather than the stronger varieties of critical literacy which seek more profound revelations and broader personal and societal transformations for their participants (also in 1.3.4). In the final analysis, ownership of how much this cohort wished to or could reveal of the pain and efforts in their post-migration stories was put firmly into their hands.

This narrative inquiry of migration stories with this learner group was able to indicate instances of social and linguistic contestation for them across various settings (Baynham and De Fina, 2005, De Fina and King, 2011). In many cases, the characteristics of our situated storytelling practices were able to reveal the sources and effects of the socially-mediated constraints or affordances on language access and socialisation opportunities for these learners (Menard-Warwick, 2004). Despite the desire expressed by all participants for more meaningful social contact with target speakers, long periods of social and linguistic isolation from the host community were reported by various learners. Re-storied analysis of Ana, Uma and Joasia’s stories revealed some of the possible causes such as nurturing duties, while Ana’s consistent attempts to claim social and linguistic access were also thwarted by age. Even learners who had greater access and socialisation opportunities such as Amin and Nika related
experiences of prolonged social and linguistic isolation. It has been noted that socialisation and meaningful contact with both host and heritage communities is conducive to more successful integration for border-crossing people (Nawyn et al., 2012). In this regard, this inquiry unearthed accounts of a form of double dislocation which can reinforce a sense of displacement in the stories of Uma, Majeed and Jane (see 6.3.2). Research has shown that migrant workers face more barriers to access and mobility in the job market, and can be more vulnerable regarding their rights, especially in time of recession (Kingston et al., 2013, Huddleston et al., 2015). Many of these barriers, which are significant factors in the displacement and resettlement of adult migrants, appeared in the narratives of this cohort (see 6.3.3). Amin, Jane, Ana, and Rafal related experiences of being positioned in low-wage workers, with Ana reporting exploitation of her lack of knowledge of local labour laws and practices. Rafal recounts his prolonged imposed linguistic isolation and disempowerment at the hands of an employer who used heritage-language supervisors. All of the participants reported experiencing very limited access to the labour market, with none working at the time of this inquiry.

7.3 Identity work in new settings

Our situated storytelling project produced much evidence of how participants in this inquiry’s cohort engaged or resisted social and linguistic identity construction in their new settings (Norton, 1995a, Pavlenko, 2001, Ting-Twoomey, 2005, Toohey, 2000). How these border crosser were positioned, and how some members challenged these positions by realigning their identities in the face of socially-mediated conflicts and constraints to claim social and linguistic space appeared to determine, to some extent, their success or failure in their desired access and socialisation in their new home (Baynham, 2006b). Fear of engagement or linguistic interaction, with consequences of more prolonged periods on the periphery of host-community social networks, can be a powerful barrier for border-crossing language learners (Norton, 1995). Gendered identity positioning as a culturally-mediated system has also been pinpointed as an important factor regarding access to language learning resources and target-culture socialisation for migrant women learners (Pavlenko, 2004, Menard-Warwick, 2004, Kouritzin, 2000b). Our situated practice also showed how some types of culturally-mediated attitudes contributed to instances of double linguistic isolation within the women’s own home, as was the case for Uma, Jane and Ana. Evidence from the data in this inquiry
confirmed the argument that, through practices of migration storytelling, newcomers can use human agency to make meanings and challenge such conflicts while, at the same time, build identities which can enable or hasten relocation in new settings (Relaño Pastor and De Fina, 2005b, Hull and Katz, 2006, Simpson, 2011).

7.3.1 Identity positioning, struggles and resistance
As with many of the affordances, constraints, successes and failures of the social and linguistic experiences described in chapter 6, there appears to be a continuum across the cohort as to how these factors and elements played out in participants’ individual storied experiences. This inquiry was able to show contrasting accounts of identity development between the rapid social and linguistic identity work of Lena and Nika, relative newcomers to Ireland, and the lengthy struggle that Ana and Rafal, for instance, were still enduring (see 6.3.1). By examining these border crossers lived experiences across time, our storytelling practices could confirm the protracted nature of social and linguistic identity work for participants like Ana, Joasia and Uma and Rafal, as a consequence of ongoing limited access to local linguistic, social and vocational resources (Little, 2010). Repeated agentic acts which sought to claim access and the right to speak and be heard appeared in the stories of these learners. Ana, for instance, told of her constant and continuing battle to gain access to learning and socialisation in sites like her knitting club. Hanna and Nika agentically adopted identities of tutors at the Centre, and Lena accepted a drop in work status and embraced her new vocational identity as a hairdresser (Duff, 2010b, Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). Overall, the problem-posing functions of our socially-situated practices contributed to raising participants’ consciousness of the struggles, resistance and growth in their social and linguistic identities and, in many cases, revealed movements from the periphery toward the centre of learning and host-communites of practice (Wenger, 1998b). Many of these learners related episodes of fear in their early interactional encounters with target-language speakers before going on to relate, as for Example Alma, Joasia, Uma, Majeed and, in particular in Joasia’s case (see 6.4.1), significant language identity growth and confidence in their English language socialisation in various settings.

7.3.2 Gender-mediated positioning
Issues of cultural and gender-mediated positioning arose in many of the stories told by women in this inquiry. The data here confirms that border-crossing women often have to
shoulder burdens of dealing with socially, linguistically and culturally different systems on behalf of their families, while struggling to access language resources for themselves (Kouritzin, 2000b, Menard-Warwick, 2009). Alma, for example, tells of having to deal with health and education services for her children despite the fact that her “language level is not enough to communicate with people who speak English” (see 6.4.2). In addition to these challenges, there is evidence from the narratives of Lena, Jane, Ana and Joasia of family-imposed nurturing identities constraining their access to language learning resources (Rockhill, 1994). Jane’s story contains instances of her husband blocking her access to traditional English courses and limiting her hours at the Drop-in Centre (6.4.2). Alongside these constraints, some women lamented the ease of access to employment and linguistic capital their male partners enjoyed. Alma contrasts the humdrum nature of her daily nurturing round with the novelties and socialisation her husband recalls at his workday’s end (ibid). Some women, notably Hanna and Nika, seemed to be free of such restrictions, but this may be explained by the cultural positions of their partners and their own agentic transnational identities.

7.4 Participation in social practices

From social-situated perspectives, learning is viewed as a process of developing participation and new identities in communities of practice (Wenger; 1998, Block; 2003; Rogoff; 2003). Participation and mutual engagement with more experienced members in this community is said to provide learners with access to the social and linguistic resources of this group (Jackson, 2008, Wenger, 1998b). In this framework, learners are seen not merely as someone who internalizes and produces approximations of the target language, but rather as a newcomer or apprentice who is has the potential to play a part in the practices of a certain community (Toohey, 1996).

7.4.1 Participation in situated practices

There is much evidence in these stories of how participation in our socially-situated practices became coeval with learning and, in many cases, seemed to foster social and linguistic identity awareness and building. In their reflections on sharing stories of their lived language learning experiences in our community of literacy practice, many learners showed they could draw meanings and identify outcomes for their social and linguistic identity growth and socialisation practices (see 6.5.1). Hakim, for instance, was able to identify the functional and
social value of repeating his story for others. Alma saw the benefits of our social practices for building her future vocational identity. Lena describes an identity epiphany she had during her participation in our literacy work when she exclaims “Oh, I good person” and “clever person”, and, like Alma, agentically uses this realisation to imagine a stronger future vocational identity (see 6.5.1). Other learners confirmed the role and benefits of the quality of transgression in enabling them to observe and reflect on their evolving language identities both from the inside and from the outside (Kramsch, 2013, Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). Nika is clearly conscious of how her exceptional levels of participation was helping her forge a stronger English language identity while shaping the community of learners she was working with (Lam, 2000, Bredo, 1994). Hanna uses her transgression to look beyond the functional goals of literacy learning to the social, cultural and communicative purposes of our situated practices. The learners who reported no significant impact on their English language identity as a result of our socially-situated practices appeared to be exceptions which confirmed the role participation in situated practices and reflectional transgression can play in these endeavours. Jane, Uma and Rafal, for example, admitted resisting participation in our shared storytelling practices, with Jane also reporting some denial of access to these resources by fellow learners (Norton, 1995a).

7.4.2 Learners’ reflections on situated outcomes

While the aforementioned learners’ lack of participation resulted in little narrative evidence of meaning-making and identity growth outcomes for them, all the other members of our group, including Chata, Hanna, Nika, Alma and Lena, reported high levels of appreciation for the social and linguistic benefits of our situated practices. Alma faithfully paraphrases part of Kramsch’s (2013) definition of transgression when she relates how our situated practices resulted in members being able to “look at ourselves from the outside” (see 6.5.2). Joasia reports how her participation in our social practices was a factor in English replacing Russian as her second language. In not so many words, Nika describes my model for situated language learning in communities of practice (see 1.3.4). She reports how her participation in our knowledge sharing activities helped foster her language identity growth, where “you write your story and you know about you” (A.6, p. 106). She also confirms her experience of this approach as a mutually modulating practice (Bredo, 1994) with outcomes of identities being changed and reshaping this community of practice in acts of dynamic, subjective participation.
when she talks about how “you can improve it [English] cos it’s interesting to share your story with another people” (ibid). Learners were also able to perceive social purposes for their published stories beyond their immediate learning community (Minority-Rights-Group, 1998). Nika and Hanna in particular were able to identify possible audiences for their published accounts of their lived experiences as “people who came to Ireland and want to integrate” (Nika’s Story, A.6, p. 105) and for “immigrants, it will be easier for them after to do something” (Hanna’s Story, A.6, p. 31).

**7.5 Identity trajectories and transformations**

The previous section presented findings on participation and identity work with in the immediate learning environment, while this section offers outcomes from my analysis of the participants lived language learning and socialisation experiences across a wider range of settings and times. The situated praxis and narrative analysis employed in this inquiry were able to capture the social and linguistic cross-border trajectories of these learners in a variety of real-world settings and across past, present and possible future time (Polkinghorne, 1995). There is much evidence from my cross-analysis of the data that restorying can provide insights into disruption and growth in the social and linguistic identities of these participants (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). Episodes relating to displacement, resettlement, social and linguistic constraints, language conflict and, in many cases, past, present and possible future identity transformations feature in nearly all participants’ re-storied narratives. It would appear that learners’ reflections on their trajectories did help them to make meanings of their storied experiences and, in many instances, seemed to foster participants’ transgredient awareness while also promoting stronger English language identity growth (Bell, 2002).

**7.5.1 Language identity trajectories**

Many of the learner cohort seemed to use their reflections on their storied experiences to identify and reflect on disruptions and transformations in their social and linguistic trajectories (Elliott, 2005). In many instances, participants relate transformations from early, terrifying experiences of social and linguistic isolation to being more confident and agentic in their current target-language socialisation practices. In the accounts of these learners there is evidence of these changes from the early “Oh my Gods” of Alma and Majeed and the “What to dos” (see 6.6.1) of Lena and Hakim to bolder English language identity declarations of, for instance, Alma and Majeed wanting to speak with “all people” and “everybody” (ibid). Lena
provides a solid example of this transgressed appreciation of her identity transformation from her participation in our situated practices. She relates an identity epiphany she had while writing her story of how she realised “Oh, I have good past! I have university, I have friends!” (A.4, lines 197-8). She tells of how her “wall” of early dislocation and linguistic isolation had fallen in the course of her identity transformation. (ibid, line 257).

Not all learners provided evidence of such epiphanies or reported these transformational trajectories from displacement to greater socialisation and identity growth. These learners, including Ana, Jane, Uma and Rafal, had all spent periods of around ten years trying to build stronger social and linguistic identities without reporting significant breakthroughs. However, in the case of the women here, this inquiry was able to account for their protracted cross-border journey by showing how cultural and gender-mediated constraints had, both in the past and into the present, limited their access to language learning and socialisation (Kouritzin, 2000b, Menard-Warwick, 2004). Despite her sustained and agentic attempts to overcome her host-community isolation by attending numerous courses and even joining a knitting club, Ana languished on an identity plateau, and tells of how she is still trying to learn English non-stop and gain access to employment (see 6.6.1). It may be surmised from looking across the data that non-participation in communities (Norton, 2001b), as well as the constrained access, contributed to some of these learners’ extended periods on identity plateaus. Rafal, Jane and Uma all reported preferences for working alone rather than full participation in our situated practices, with Jane also relating incidents of denial of access by other members of our storytelling group (Norton, 1995). Despite their limited access and participation, some of these learners such as Jane and Uma did recount some small measures of identity growth in their narratives, with Jane abandoning her phone translator and Uma replying “Of course” in response to my question on whether the ‘English’ Uma had grown (Uma’s Story, A.6, p. 79).

7.5.2 Future identities
Considering the struggles of learners with their past social and linguistic identity growth and their resistance or blocked access to active participation, there would appear to be a correlation with the somewhat pessimistic views of this sub-cohort regarding their desired and potential future identities (see 6.5.2). Jane envisions an extension of her gender-mediated future vocational identity, where she has limited access to learning and no
vocational prospects in sight because, as she puts it, “Now my child’s too young, so I no want…” (Jane’s Story, A.6, p. 58). For similar culturally-imposed nurturing reasons, Ana does not foresee any exit from her identity plateau (see 6.5.2) and still feels, despite her more than adequate functional knowledge across all target-language skills, that her English identity is not good enough to claim greater future access to vocational and social spaces in host-country settings (Norton, 2000b). Rafal’s bitter memories of his mistreatment and sociolinguistic isolation in his Irish employment history, plus his position as a migrant worker in a recession, seem to have made him critically unsure and pessimistic about his future job prospects (see 6.5.2). Conversely, my analysis of the possible future identity trajectories in the stories of those informants who had had more agentic and participatory pasts revealed perceptions of more positive desired and potential future identities. Many of these learners, including Amin, Chata, Alma, Joasia and Nika, were more confident of building on their evolving identities and of achieving more active social and vocational involvement in host-community settings (see 6.5.2). These participants had familiarised themselves with the steps necessary to navigate local further education and vocational systems. Alma was set for a college photography course, Lena had started as a self-employed hairstylist, and Amin was weighing up his options as to which paramedic area he would pursue at the end of his nursing studies. The cross-temporal analysis of Joasia’s story emerged as an exemplar of how the praxis of narrative inquiry and situated practices has the potential to foster meaning making of lived experiences and English language identity growth with border-crossing learners while, at the same time, providing insights for teachers and researchers into the broader social and linguistic trajectories across time and space of cohorts such as this (Riessman, 1993, Polkinghorne, 1995, Riessman, 2008).

7.6 Socially-situated approaches and findings in this study
As outlined in Chapter One, views of language learning in this study are underpinned by socially-situated approaches which are informed by sociocultural and poststructural theories which focus more on how social and historical contexts can influence learners’ successes or failures and their access to social and linguistic resources.

The central socially-situated approach informing both the learning theory and the research method employed in this study was underpinned by Norton’s (1995) as yet (at the time of writing) untried postructurally-oriented classroom-based social research model (CBSR), which
she defined as a “collaborative research that is carried out by language learners in their local communities with the active guidance and support of the language teacher” (see 3.2). By including the immediate learning community of practice as a locus of inquiry and a source of shared knowledge and activities, this study broadened the scope of Norton’s original approach to also reveal learners’ insights into their interactions, socially-mediated constraints and affordances (see 7.3.1), and their social and linguistic outcomes both within and outside the learning environment (see also 6.5.2).

The use of learner-generated stories in this study, mediated by the development of the Life Experience Approach (see 3.5.3) which used learners’ personal experience to develop relevant texts for second language literacy work with this group, did produce some learner reported evidence that it helped level the playing field among the cohort in question (see 6.5.2). However, the verb “help’ here should be read in inverted commas. Constraints such as social and gender-mediated access (see Chapter 6) and limited participation in or access to shared social practices as outlined in 6.5.1 were factors which ensured the playing was still skewed for learners such as Jane, Uma and Rafal. Other factors also impact on the integration progress of marginalised learners. For example, contact with their heritage community, particularly in the cases of Uma and Jane, can induce forms of double dislocation which warp the ‘field’ (see 6.3.2). Also, Jane had very little access to the Centre itself, in terms of time, due to gender-mediated positioning. Perhaps stronger critical varieties of socially-situated practices could address these issues directly, but without sustained access on the part of the learner to the social and linguistic environments and resources, it is difficult to see how these issues could be satisfactorily dealt with. Nevertheless, I would submit that less participatory learners like Rafal were still benefitting from the shared practices, stories and scaffolding provided by the likes of Nika and Hanna. Though these learners shared some issues of social and linguistic access, dislocation and the communal identity of their community of learning practice, their stories and identity trajectories are also those of individual journeys across this community. The narrative frames and practices employed in this inquiry did manage to some extent to generate camaraderie of shared issues and migrant identity as can be seen from the themes which emerged from this inquiry. Many times during our practices I was able to witness signs of shared recognition and solidarity when the learners were sharing fragments
of their stories, although I also tried to represent their unique identity trajectories in the restorying of their various narratives.

As already stated in Chapter One, situated theorists see learning as a knowledge construction process where meaning-making is viewed as the result of processes of participation in the doings, becomings and belongings in sociocultural settings (McCormick and Murphy, 2008). In their study of narratives of participation in second language learning by border crossers, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) concluded that such participation and becoming involved not only taking part in new sociocultural settings but also involved a deep and constant struggle to rebuild identities. They also highlighted the crucial role played by agency in this identity work by these learners in their success or failures (see also Block; 2003, Wenger, 1998, Rogoff, 1995). This research reiterates their assertion by illustrating how agentic participation in the construction of new language identities, allied to its deployment of situated literacy practices with these adult migrant English learners, did in many cases help this cohort forge new language and literate identities (see 6.6)

Sociocultural theories of language learning were also an important theoretical element informing this study. The way these frameworks highlight the role of sustained participation as a central for learning in these processes mentioned above was confirmed in this research in the way it revealed how the more participatory subjects such as Nika and Hanna experienced and reported more positive impacts on their social and linguistic identities (see 6.5.1). Others who participated less in the learning community of practice, such as Jane and Rafal, reported much lower levels of development in terms of their social and linguistic identities (see 6.5.1)

Poststructural views underpinning this study, which see learners as actors whose social identities such as gender, race, class, etc., as being significant in the levels of successful linguistic and social development did play out in the findings of this study. Many of the women involved, including Jane, Alma, Lena and Joasia reported issues of gender-mediated positioning which impacted, to greater and lesser extents, on their access to social and linguistic resources both within and outside the learning environment (see 6.4.2). Also, the way poststructuralists see identity as constantly contested over time was evident in the analysed data in this research. While many participants were able to perceive and report
significant identity development, some such as Ana and Rafal told of their extended periods on linguistic and social identity plateaus (see 6.6.1).

While this study is informed by poststructural and sociocultural positions on the role of agency (see 2.4.1) in the construction and accessing of social and linguistic resources in real-world sociocultural settings (Hull and Katz, 2006, Miller, 2010, Wertsch et al., 1996), it also has regard how the nature of agency has been long contested in the literature as either the “the interplay between lives as controlled and lives as having a semblance of autonomy or self-direction” (Hull and Katz, 2006; 44). Some postructuralists and socioculturalists interpret this quality in the learner as being a social individual who develops and exercises their agency ex nihilo (Norton and Toohey, 2003b, Lantolf, 2000), while others see agency as developing in constant tension with the social worlds which surround learners (Miller, 2010, Hull and Katz, 2006). This findings of this research would appear to give more credence to Miller’s (2010) view of agency as being socially co-constructed, unstable and enabled and constrained by the learner’s social reality. While many instances of learner agency did surface in our narratives, a good deal of these revealed its socially co-constituted nature and how it appeared in contestation with some forms of social mediation from other actors or forces. To give some examples: Ana’s eternal agentic quest for language access was mediated by her heavy nurturing load, Joasia was under similar pressures. Indeed, many of the women participants’ agentic struggles for access were constrained by gender-mediated forces resulting in forms of double dislocations (see 6.3.1, 6.3.2., 6.6.1).

In relation to the community of practice (COP) as both a lens and a model for socially-situated learning, this study adds its voice to those who wished to address its previous deficit in dealing more completely with complex personal and collective identity struggles by involving other theoretical lenses such as sociocultural theory, critical, and poststructural approaches (Eckert, 2006, Norton, 2001a, Van Benthuysen, 2008). I would argue that this study, based on the evidence of the participants own reflections in our narrative interviews (see 7.4.2) on our practices of situated learning in communities of practice (see 1.5), provides further insights into how these other lenses add depth to our understanding of social language learning and identity work with border crossers. Regarding language learning as a mutually modulating social practice in COPs, in our reflective narrative interview Nika was able to faithfully
synthesize in her own words (see 6.5.2) the characteristics and purposes of the social learning model I assembled for use with these learners and in these settings (see 1.5).

While a some sociocultural scholars have identified the value of transgredience as a quality which can help deal with destabilisation convert lived interactional experiences into future learning and identity building contexts (Etherington and Spurling, 2007, Kramsch, 2013), few have provided empirical evidence of this quality at work. The reflective narrative interviews in this study were able to expose various instances of transgredience in these learners. Alma shows heightened levels of this quality when she tells how our social narrative practices helped her to look at herself from the outside and “estimate my opportunities and decide what I need” (see 6.5.1).

Finally, perhaps one of the more significant contributions this study can make to the field of language learning for border crossers is the way in which the innovative praxis of social practices and narrative inquiry worked together to help many of these learners make more meaning of their social and linguistic journeys and reflect on and/or build on their English language identities. Lena’s reported epiphany of her own social and vocational worth when she was writing about her lived experiences (6.5.2) illustrates how powerful this praxis can be at its best. The method of narrative inquiry did prove to be, a Baynham put it, a rich source of identity work for the cohort in this study (see 2.4). While I have argued that this praxis was designed for the particular settings and cohort of this study, the next section offers some opportunities for socially-situated practices beyond this learning environment.

7.6.1 Challenges and opportunities for this socially-situated practice

It should be noted that the model of situated problem-posing literacy proposed in this study is not proposed as a unified, catch-all approach to English language development for migrant learners (see 1.2.3), and that it was primarily designed to aid the development of these border crossing learners’ intercultural competence and enable them to deal with diversity in their changing worlds, with the goal of promoting their transition to more mainstream host community education and training. As such it is designed to reveal the issues which emerged such as the above-discussed themes for newly-arrived border-crossers or those who are struggling with their English identities over a longer period (Yew Lie, 2010).

Attempting or claiming to develop a unified theory or approach to promote or maintain English language identity growth, especially for groups dealing with such issues of limited
access to resources in the midst of chaotic lives, is surely a daunting if not dangerous proposition to make (Markee, 2013, Cohen, 2014). According to Cohen (2014), a group of 24 experts working at a second language learning symposium held at Oxford University in 2004 could not even reach a consensus on a unified theory for the structures and impacts of learners’ strategies. While lauding the progress made in the field of second language acquisition and learning regarding theory construction, Markee (ibid; 335), for instance, warns of the pitfalls of asking for a single unified theory in second language research. Indeed, she claims, based on the work of various scholars in this area (Tarone et al., 2013), that this is the “wrong question to ask, now or ever”. Using the analogy that various approaches to theory in second language learning are much like “footwear” in that they all serve similar purposes while at the same time varying from sandals to climbing boots depending on the ‘terrain’, she goes on to argue that they should be adapted to local needs. This study adopts a similar position that approaches to second language learning can be more successful if they are locally targeted and constructed from the bottom up, and based on the current real-world needs, settings and issues facing the learners in question. This is why, therefore, the socially-situated model (see 1.5) used with these learners drew on various strands of social learning theories to construct the approach deemed the best fit for dealing with the settings and issues in hand in the time and place of this praxis.

All this being said, there may always be some scope for aligning socially-situated practice with content and language learning beyond this phase. Seely Brown (2008), for example, illustrates how socially-situated practices are being employed to enhance the development of university students in a variety of content areas and settings. Haines (2012) also showed how a praxis of social practices and narrative inquiry helped transform the learner identities of international students following a university course in English as Medium of Instruction in the Netherlands. These and other studies (Holmes and Moulton, 1997, Simpson, 2011, Thompson, 2010) have shown that socially situated praxis can be used to promote personal development and identity transformations in a variety of settings and across diverse stages in life.

I would argue that despite the limited range of content in the case of the learner cohort under scrutiny here, it is feasible that narrative frames or similar collaborative instruments could be built to promote situated, problem-posing inquiries into content and language beyond the immediate stories of the community in question. In the final analysis, situated
practices like this narrative inquiry may both inform approaches to instruction more broadly as in the studies cited above, or merely be included in a wider language learning curricular structure in the way that this cohort’s language learning experiences at the Drop-in Centre also included more traditional grammatical, lexical target language, and methods of instruction alongside our situated practices. The next section will outline just some possible future directions for socially-situated practices like this.

7.7 Limitations of this project and future directions for research

This doctoral research project was subject to a variety of limitations. Regarding narrative as a research method with border-crossing learners, some have questioned its ability to faithfully represent the experiences of these people in an authentic way, without “filtering or distorting” their stories (Phillion, 2008b; 290). Another limitation of this form of qualitative inquiry is that by focussing on the interpretations which these individuals ascribed to their stories, drawing generalisability and collective understanding from these stories can be problematic (Trahar, 2009). The revolving-door nature of the research site and the sporadic attendance some of the participants meant the contributions of some members of the cohort to the data set were not uniform. For similar reasons, the imposition of having to conduct the follow-up interviews at a distance from the situated literacy project surely resulted in some experiences being forgotten or lost. This also meant a loss of contributions from some core members of the literacy groups who no longer attended the Drop-in Centre. In addition, Being a sole researcher and facilitator of this storytelling project, I was unable to interview or involve the other sixteen learners who had contributed narratives to the “Our Stories” published book.

Regarding our follow-up interviews, as outlined in 3.5.2, the costs of employing the variety of interpreters needed to deal with the diverse languages of this cohort was prohibitive. This factor inevitably impacted on how much learners such as Jane, Lena and Rafal were able to reveal of their lived experiences and reflections on our practices. The transcripts of the encounters with these participants reveal the limitations of our conversations when it came to co-constructing their narratives and revealing their identity trajectories. Among these limitations was the impact that the sole use of English as the medium for co-constructing these stories on how much of the meaning making and identities of these participants were intact at the end of our inquiry.
Narrative scholars with an interest in exploring how people position themselves through discourse in L1 and L2 have tried to wrestle with this conundrum in diverse ways, and with varying results (Pavlenko, 2007). Among the more recent approaches reviewed by Pavlenko (ibid) is that of text analysis, which typically examines how bilinguals construct selves in their respective languages. The use of bilingual data from participants may help to resolve some of the issues concerning more faithful measurement of identity gains, loses and more reliable subject positioning in language identity research with border crossers. Vitanova (2004), for example, in her work on narratives of Eastern European immigrants in Canada on how they construct selves in a new language, allowed her respondents to drift freely between L1 and L2, and employed Bakhtin’s notion of emotional-volitional tone to reveal more intimate and nuanced reports of her participants perceptions and constructions of their shifting identities.

While there are obvious advantages to conducting interviews in the participant’s mother tongue, particularly when one is relying on their stories for data, I attempted to offset this imbalance in this study by using shared storytelling practices and various data formats such as learners’ handwriting, notes, shared stories, published accounts, oral histories allied to a variety of analytical approaches, such as restorying (see 5.5). I would add that the longitudinal nature of this inquiry also gave some participants the reflective timeframe and space, if not the exact words, to convey more nuanced aspects of their identity trajectories as was the case, for example, with Joasia Alma and Lena. Certainly, extra layers of lived experience and reflective outcomes would be revealed by fusing structural and performative models of narrative approaches and analysis such as those employed in the research of Relaño Pastor and De Fina (2005b) into the language conflicts of Mexican migrant women in California (see 5.5).

While this study showed how narrative inquiry both as a research method into lived language experiences can foster situated language and literacy learning for border crossers and did encourage them to “jointly share and develop practices, learn from their interactions with group members, and gain opportunities to develop personally, professionally, and/or intellectually” (Mills, 2011; 348), and to engage in this meaning-making interaction collaboratively, constructively, and consciously, some collaborative considerations should be noted. Though learners were sometimes collaboratively adapting the tools, as when they were building questions for their peers from the narrative frames, there would be more scope
for learner-initiated tools in this form of social practice. Overall, this study would have benefited more from greater learner control over the entire inquiry, even though their fluctuating presence did mediate this. Some level of control, however, was in their hands. When it came to writing up their published narratives, they were able to construct and adapt these from a variety of texts they had worked on over the course of our literacy practices. They were also offered access to their final interview transcripts, but few availed of this and, in any case, time restrictions and learner availability in the study also limited this option. Certainly a more fully collaborative version of this kind of narrative inquiry would be a very exciting and productive enterprise which would reveal even more learner-relevant aspects of their lived experiences. In the final analysis, collaborative narrative studies such as this rely on close and cyclical encounters where the participant has a greater part in the restorying of their narratives, but this was not possible due to limits on the researcher’s time and some learners’ socially-mediated access to the project.

7.7.1 Possible future directions

Some ideas for future applications of the social practices used in this study may include more regular publication and diffusion through other media of learner-generated stories such as these into the future would have social, intercultural and linguistic benefits both for the border-crossing and receiving segments of the population of Ireland. A more structured and widespread employment of socially-situated praxis across other learning environments could have empowering and transformational potential for the social and linguistic development of marginalised language learners.

By highlighting the challenges facing border-crossing learners, problem-posing praxes such as the one performed in this study could be used to inform curricula while helping to address these issues in settings beyond the immediate learning environment. It is to be hoped that the practice of collecting and sharing migration stories, which is already an established activity in the realm of mainstream migrant studies in Ireland and beyond, will be included more in the curricula and research of language provision practitioners.

In order to better promote the sociocultural, two-way model of integration outlined in Chapter One, the social learning model employed in this study would need to be allied with more community building practices where the local population are invited to socially and
physically interact with the immediate learning environment, and the learners are brought into direct contact with realities outside Centres such as this. Though this form of CBSR was able to help these learners make meaning of their social, linguistic and vocational lived experiences, and to reveal some transformations in their identity trajectories (see 6.6.3), it would be difficult to quantify or qualify how much this approach was able to contribute directly to such transformations. The experience of language provision with refugees and migrants in Ireland such as the IILT project, where the school was hardwired into the official further training, educational and vocational providers and sectors, while at the same time employing socially-situated approaches similar to those used in this inquiry, showed how social and vocational scaffolding can produce remarkable results in the socio-vocational mobility and integration of adult migrant learners. This project was able to report a 70% success rate in mainstreaming their learner cohort into further education, training or employment (IILT, 2007). The reinstitution of an official language provider with this scope and approaches would certainly benefit the social, linguistic and vocational integration of marginalised migrant learners as a whole. Even though these groups were strongly heterogeneous regarding their literacy needs and levels (see 4.4.1), and placement or assessment were not a priority in this inquiry, an argument can certainly be made for introducing a more structured version of this socially-situated literacy practice. Dendrinos (2006) for example, links social literacy to the CEFR in official, high-stakes language testing in Greece. Experienced practitioners who are familiar with the CEFR and language portfolios would be able to devise and mediate descriptors of situated and learners-generated tasks which could map comfortably onto this framework. This work would have many advantages such as positive washback, learner orientation and collaborative tracking of the learners progress and outcomes.

From a methodological point of view, the nature and characteristics of the praxis employed in this inquiry are relatively new this type and field of study and, as such, there is much work to be done to strengthen and add to this way of teaching, learning and researching. Ideas such as the development of a narrative portfolio and the designing of more targeted and varied narrative frames could enhance learning experiences and provide further insights into the nature of and reasons for the challenges and successes of these border-crossing learners. A wider sample than that used in this study would increase our understanding of under-
researched but seemingly significant factors in language identity construction which emerged in this study such as transgredience, participation and the constraints which lead to protracted social and linguistic identity plateaus. An investment of more human and financial capital in socially-oriented teacher training and material development would seem beneficial for progressing the potential for migrant language learners to build their social and linguistic identities so they can participate in host-community settings in Ireland on a more equal footing. The praxis proposed and enacted in this inquiry is not methodologically overly complex so the resources needed to introduce such practices in other formal or informal educational setting are not great. Finally, given the fractured and uneven standards of English language services to marginalised adult migrants and refugees in the wake of the dissolution of official language provision as described in this study, it would seem prudent and beneficial for all communities involved to reinstate some form of official provision which would be staffed with experienced practitioners, and which could provide a more relevant and targeted service for the groups concerned.

7.8 Conclusion
Having access to language learning and socialisation opportunities is vital for the considerable amount of post-migratory border-crossers who remain on the periphery of host-community participation. They face a daily battle trying to navigate the unfamiliar and sometimes non-comprehending social systems of education, housing, health, employment and other basic elements of social need and survival. Studies such as this can reveal that these newcomers do not suffer from a lack of motivation or ability when it comes to learning the language of the host-community, but rather they are often impeded by culturally and socially-mediated constraints from various quarters.

Access to language learning for these people means being able to take greater control of their lives, participate and contribute more civically to their new home and join their voice to the multicultural discourse that makes up twenty-first century Ireland. Greater social and linguistic access for border-crossing people can benefit both the arriving and receiving communities in a variety of ways. The newcomers are far less likely to languish in welfare traps and are empowered to donate their cultural capital, skills and energies to the host country, while the host community could benefit further from the cultural riches, know-how and economic value of more fully participatory newcomers.
The socially-situated and oriented praxis employed in this study is innovative in its design and scope, and its potential for revealing and addressing linguistic and social conflict for marginalised language learners could be considerable. From the evaluation of the limited data available from this research, it would seem that this form of inquiry is of particular use in investigating issues of gender-mediated access to language learning and socialisation. It also seemed to fulfil its purpose of revealing other form of socially-mediated constraints to the social, linguistic and vocational development of this type of language learner. Many of these learners reported satisfaction in terms of their linguistic and social identity growth with this form of situated practice, while those who expressed less satisfaction still recounted experiences of raised awareness of their social and language identity issues. Another important aspect of this inquiry was the significance of the under-researched quality of transgredience and the role it can play in helping border-crossing learners reflect on past social and linguistic interactions, with positive benefits for their English language identity development. Some measure of the relevance and efficacy of this praxis for promoting transgredience and stronger identities for this group can be gauged by the fact that those learners with greater levels of transgredience, agency and participation in our situated practices were able to recognise and eloquently define the purposes and benefits this praxis sought to promote (see 6.5.2). Overall, I would argue that the socially-situated praxis employed in this inquiry was beneficial in helping these learners make meaning of their lived language learning experiences and, for many learners, contributed to strengthening the English language identities.
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How can socially-situated practices help adult migrant language learners in Ireland make meaning of their lived experiences and forge stronger English language identities? A narrative inquiry.

(Volume 2 of 2 - Appendices)

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Appendix 1 - Data Collection Worksheets
My Irish Experience

Tell about your experiences in Ireland. Use the ideas to help you.

When I first arrived in Ireland ______________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

The first person I talked to was _________________________________________________

The first difference I saw was __________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

My first day/week in Ireland ___________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

A good time I had in Ireland was _______________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Some Irish people I know _____________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

A place I like visiting _________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

My favourite thing in Ireland __________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

I do not understand why the Irish _____________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Three important events for me in Ireland:

1. ________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________
People and Places in My Life

Write the people, places and things you do in the boxes:

Places I go:

People I meet:

Things I do (activities):

What we talked about:
Adjectives to describe people and places:

**Places:** I (very) feel **happy** there. – unhappy, (un)comfortable, at home, nervous, confident, out of place.

**Activities:** I feel (very) **happy** shopping. - unhappy, (un)comfortable, at home, nervous, confident, out of place.

**People:** S/He was (very) **(un)helpful**. – (un)sociable, (un)caring, open, warm, cold, talkative.

**Talking:** We talked about our children/the weather/housing.

Now write about the people, activities and places:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
My Year
What have you done this year? Describe your activities this year:

1. Places I have been

2. People I have met

3. Nice things that have happened

4. People who have helped me

5. People I have helped

6. Films or books I have seen or read

7. Days I have celebrated (or parties)

8. Things that have changed

9. Things I have learned

10. Things I have bought

11. Nice food or drink I have tried

12. Things I want to do next year
My Life Story
We are going to write about our life. Below are 21 things we can write about. Put your name and the date at the top right of a WORD document. Save your document at the start of your writing (so you do not lose it) and at the end.

Name and date

1. I am originally from
2. My studies/work in my country
3. Studying and work in Ireland
4. I speak
5. With my family and friends we speak
6. I have been in Ireland for
7. I have been coming to the Drop-in Centre for
8. I come to the drop-in because
9. I live in a __________ with _________
10. My social life in Dublin
11. My social life in my country
12. Friends I have made in Dublin
13. Irish people I speak to
14. I want to improve my English because
15. Things I like about living in Dublin
16. Things I don’t like about living in Dublin
17. I have some free time/no free time because
18. Things I can do in Dublin that I could not do in my country
19. Things I could do in my country that I cannot do in Dublin
20. My life has changed because
21. My plans for the future are
My hopes, dreams and needs for 2013

What are your hopes for 2013?

Example: I want to meet more Irish people.

Ideas: my house my work my English my family my friends my diet my health

my free time shopping travel my hobby my social life Irish people

I hope to ______________________________________________________

I want to _____________________________________________________________

I would like to ___________________________________________________________

I am going to ____________________________________________________________

I will be happy if _________________________________________________________

I want my family/friends to ________________________________________________

I need to _______________________________________________________________

What will you change from last year?

Example: I want to do more walking. I want to eat less sugars.

I want to ______ more/less ______________________________________________

I hope to ______ more/less _____________________________________________

I would like to ______ more/less _________________________________________

I will be happy if ______ more/less ________________________________________

Write about your plans for 2013:

Example: I am going to study more.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Our Stories at the Drop-in Centre

We are going to tell our stories of our time at the Drop-in centre. We will ask other
members and staff about their time here. We will ask others about their life in three parts:

1. My life before the Drop-in centre
2. My time at the Centre (my past experience)
3. My life now (in and outside the Centre)

1. Which topics in the boxes can match parts 1, 2 and 3 (put the numbers in the boxes
   - there may be more than one answer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coming to Ireland</th>
<th>My tutor</th>
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<td>Social events</td>
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<tr>
<td>School and education</td>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>Future plans</td>
<td>Dreams in the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in Ireland</td>
<td>Things I know now</td>
<td>Things I didn't know then</td>
<td>Beginning at the Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other people taught me</td>
<td>Other cultures</td>
<td>My culture</td>
<td>My language(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Life changes</td>
<td>the journey</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Our group</td>
<td>The Drop-in building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now check if others agree with your choices.

2. My life before the Drop-in centre -
   Make some questions about the topics you have decided for number 1:

   Example: How long have you been in Ireland?

   1. _________________________________________
   2. _________________________________________
   3. _________________________________________
   4. _________________________________________
   5. _________________________________________
   6. _________________________________________
   7. _________________________________________
   8. _________________________________________
   9. _________________________________________
   10. _________________________________________
Ask someone your questions and write their answers here. Name _____________________

1. ______________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________
5. ______________________________________________________
6. ______________________________________________________
7. ______________________________________________________
8. ______________________________________________________
9. ______________________________________________________
10. _____________________________________________________

3. My time at the Drop-in centre -
   Make some questions about the topics you have decided for number 2:

Example: What important English have you learned here?

1. ______________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________
5. ______________________________________________________
6. ______________________________________________________
7. ______________________________________________________
8. ______________________________________________________
9. ______________________________________________________
10. _____________________________________________________
Ask someone your questions and write their answers here: Name _______________

1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
3. __________________________________________
4. __________________________________________
5. __________________________________________
6. __________________________________________
7. __________________________________________
8. __________________________________________
9. __________________________________________
10. __________________________________________

4. My life now -
Make some questions about the topics you have decided for number 3:

Example: How is your English now?

1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
3. __________________________________________
4. __________________________________________
5. __________________________________________
6. __________________________________________
7. __________________________________________
8. __________________________________________
9. __________________________________________
10. __________________________________________

Ask someone your questions and write their answers here: Name _______________

1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
3. __________________________________________
5. Check the answers with your partner and then write out their story using their answers.

6. Check the story your partner has written about and change it if you like - work together!

7. What have you learned from doing this activity? Discuss and make notes:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
8. Why do you want to improve your reading and writing?
9. What problems have your reading and writing caused you in Ireland?
10. How will good reading and writing help you in Ireland?
11. Who is your story written for?
12. What did you like about writing your story?
13. What have you learned from writing your story?
14. Do you think this is a good way to learn reading and writing?
Appendix 2 – Examples of handwritten work

Alma’s handwritten work
My Year

What have you done this year? Describe your activities this year:

1. Places I have been
   This year I have been in Canada, Latvia, and some beautiful places in Ireland.

2. People I have met
   In Latvia I have met my best friend from my childhood.

3. Nice things that have happened
   I found good English courses.

4. People who have helped me
   My friend gave me advice about the drop-in center English courses.

5. People I have helped
   I helped my friends to prepare their wedding.

6. Films or books I have seen or read
   I saw many interesting movies and read many books, but one of them I still read. It is about how to teach children.

7. Days I have celebrated (or parties)
   We had many parties in the year, and out of them we celebrated.

8. Things that have changed
   Nothing?

9. Things I have learned
   I learned many new words in English, and now I try to speak in English.

10. Things I have bought
    We bought a labrador dog.

11. Nice food or drink I have tried
    I like Asian food and I tried it very often.

12. Things I want to do next year
    I want to try a motorbike and go to art classes.
My original country is Latvia. Riga is the capital city of the country.

My work in my country was very interesting but hard. I worked as an economist in a great firm.

At present I am not working in Ireland, but I am studying Irish courses now.

Sincerely, I speak Russian language, but sometimes I speak Irish and Latvian languages.

With my family at home we speak in Russian. With some of our friends we speak in English and Russian languages.

We have been in Ireland for three and half years. We have been coming to the Drop in Centre for a few months. I came to the Drop in Centre because I wish to improve my Irish. I like to communicate with other people, and because here I can to know something interesting.

I live in a Dublin in a Tallaght area, in a big house with a husband and three kids.

My social life in Dublin is not very rich by events.

My social life in Latvia was very busy and interesting. I am often met with my friends, we went to the cinema, restaurant, theatre or stayed at home and played any games.

In Dublin I have not made any true friends. All my true friends stayed in Latvia or moved to another countries.

Sincerely, I speak with Irish people in the shops, when I ask him help to find something. When I visit our doctor or in the hospital, as in my kids schools and in Drop-in centres I very often speak with Irish people in English language.

I want to improve my English because now my language is not enough for me to communicate with people to speak English, and now I can't have full and

sensible conversations.

I like about living in Ireland are beautiful nature,
Since I arrived in Ireland, I feel much happier and calmer. I don't have to worry about living in Ireland. The streets are often rainy, but the weather is generally better. I don't like some people's appearance. I have some free time because all my kids are going to school and now I am not working.

While I am living in Ireland, I don't have to work, and I have a lot of freedom to go on a walk with my dog. In winter, I don't need warm winter shoes and coats. There are many things I could do in my country that I can't do in Ireland: pick berries and mushrooms, skiing and sledding, swimming in the warm sea, visit my parents every day.

My life has changed after I arrived to the Ireland because here I started all my life from zero. Here my life is absolutely different than it was in Latvia.

My plans for the future are to improve my English level, to go to the courses and find a job.
How long have you been in summer?

Have you been

How long have you been learning English?
What will you do when you have learned enough English?

Name
Irena

Country
Lithuania

Temba

TIBET

Alcoa

Likes: play football, and

listens to music.

When Temba has free time he goes
to drink coffee and meet friends.

b) He has big family. He has parents,
and grandparents and brother.

He has two big dogs, breed Tibetan mastiff.

He came to Ireland in 2010 year.

He is not married, but he has girl friend.

From Nigeria.

She likes: food (rice, meet, chicken).

She came to Ireland 3 y. ago.

She reads a books.

She speaks English very good.

She has big family, 3 kids (9, 5, 15).

She wants to learn Irish and want to be a care about people.

To volunteer.

[Handwritten notes]
He is from Afghanistan, from Kabul city.
He likes volleyball, football.
He came to Ireland 2011 year.
He speaks English not fluently, but he tries
to speak English better.
He likes to watching TV, meeting with his
friends, shopping, running, swimming, going to the
Gym.
He has not a big family; mother, father,
grandmother and himself. He is not married,
he doesn't was yet.

Hamid
He is from Afghanistan from Kabul city.
He likes food, watching TV, spend free time in
Internet.
He came to Ireland only 5 months ago.
He has only started to learn English.
He learns English not long time and he
tries to speak English better.
He likes watching TV, shopping, meeting with
friends. He has a big family: one brother,
and two sisters. Brother lives in Ireland too,
but sisters live in Afghanistan.
In future he wishes to receive Engineer's degree.
My life has changed since I came to the Drogheda. In Drogheda, I was only interested in the foreign countries. I met many wonderful people. I decided to come to Drogheda. In Drogheda, my husband and I met. I was very satisfied with the people. My wife and I lived together. We worked and house for one year. It was terrible. Once I spoke with my friend. I left home and had to move to Ireland. I became older and had a family. I went to Drogheda. And when I became older, I went to Drogheda. And when I became older, we went to Drogheda. And when I became older, we went to Drogheda.
Ana’s handwritten work
Our Stories at the Drop-in Centre

We are going to tell our stories of our time at the Drop-in centre. We will ask other members and staff about their time here. We will ask others about their life in three parts:

1. My life before the Drop-in centre
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1. Which topics in the boxes can match parts 1, 2 and 3 (put the numbers in the boxes – there may be more than one answer)

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<td>Life changes</td>
<td>the journey</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Our group</td>
<td>The Drop-in building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now check if others agree with your choices.

2. My life before the Drop-in centre - Make some questions about the topics you have decided for number 1:

Example: How long have you been in Ireland?

1. Could you speak English well?
2. Could you go to Clondalkin library yourself?
3. Could you make your CV yourself?
4. Did you meet any Irish people?
5. Did you know any Irish culture?
6. Could you cook any Irish food?
7. Was there somebody help you correct your English?
8. Did you know any famous places in Ireland?
9. Could you understand what the bus-driver said?
10. If you lost your way, what would you do?
Ask someone your questions and write their answers here: Name: Mandy

1. NO, I couldn't. I just could speak a little English.
2. No, I couldn't.
3. NO, I couldn't if somebody would help.
4. No, I had no chance to meet people except for meeting people in the shop.
5. NO, I couldn't know any Irish culture.
6. No, I couldn't cook Irish food even their names.
7. Yes, I went to ITT in City Centre.
8. NO, I didn't know any famous places in Ireland.
9. No, I didn't understand what the bus-driver said, neither did I.
10. If I lost my way, I would show my address to someone for help.

3. My time at the Drop-in centre -
   Make some questions about the topics you have decided for number 2:

Example: What important English have you learned here?

1. How did you know about the Drop-in-centre?
2. What skill of English do you think the most important?
3. Are you happy to meet people?
4. Are you happy with your English lesson at Drop-in-centre?
5. Who are your tutors at Drop-in-centre?
6. How do they help you with your English?
7. Where did you go with the group of Drop-in-centre for holiday?
8. What thing do you like best at Drop-in-centre?
9. The tutors taught me many things I didn't know?
10. What is your feelings?
Ask someone your questions and write their answers here: Name

1. An Fauling took me to drop-in centre, as my English isn’t good.
2. In my opinion, the most important things of English are: speaking and listening.
3. Yes, I am very happy to come to DROP-IN centre and meet people there.
4. Yes, I am really happy with English lessons at DROP-IN centre as they are practical English.
5. At drop-in I have many tutors: Clare, Teresa, Kay, Mary, Patsy etc.
6. They help me to correct my pronunciation most of the time.
7. For holiday, they took me to a museum, Japanese Garden, the Zoo, Keny beach, etc...
8. The thing I like best is the break time. Tutors and students gather.
9. The tutors taught me many things that I didn’t know.
10. I feel very freely, confident while I was studying here.

4. My life now -
Make some questions about the topics you have decided for number 3:

Example: How is your English now?

1. Is your English better now?
2. What would you do if you had difficulties in life?
3. Has your life change?
4. Do you have a job?
5. How do you improve your English?
6. What do you think about DROP-IN building?
7. Do the tutors become your references?
8. Telling me about your happiness, please?
9. How many friends have you got now?
10. How did you join with your group?

Ask someone your questions and write their answers here: Name

1. My English is better now.
2. If I have difficulties life, I would ask one of personal at DROP-IN centre for help. They are willing to help me.
3. My life has changed - Many things get better. The more I come to DROP-IN, the better my life get.

2013 Intercultural Drop-in Centre Story Project
4. I can find a job with my English level now.

5. In order to improve my English, it is to come here and speaking English frequently.

6. The drop-in centre is very good, break time is free coffee with free chocolate.

7. The tutors became my references in my CV at volunteering, language, care, woman etc.

8. My happiness is coming and meeting and talking to people at drop-in.

9. I have got many friends at drop-in centre.

10. When I join with the group, I felt very happy, freely, confidently, while I was talking in English.

5. Check the answers with your partner and then write out their story using their answers.

6. Check the story your partner has written about and change it if you like – work together!

7. What have you learned from doing this activity? Discuss and make notes:

   - I have learned lots of cultures from doing this activity.
   - Learn vocabularies
   - Grammar
   - Idioms
   - Practical English
   - Formal, informal English
   - Funny words / laughing a lot.

2013 Intercultural Drop-in Centre Story Project
MY STORY AT THE DROP-IN CENTRE

I am Vietnamese. I am from Vietnam. I have been living in Ireland since 2003. I have been joining the Drop-in centre for four years. Now, I am going to tell you about my life before I joined the Centre, my time at the Centre and my life now in more details in these following paragraphs.

As you know, English is not my first language, so I could not speak it well. Although I learned it at high school when I was young, I had a big problem with speaking and listening to the Irish people. We absolutely didn’t understand each other. In spite of the fact that going to ITT (Ireland Immigate Language Training) to learn English, my speaking and listening were still not good enough for the Irish people to understand what I said. Because I had a big problem with pronunciation.

Unfortunately, I did not have any Irish friend, so I couldn’t practise speaking English everyday. I was a middle-aged woman. I spent my time to do my housework and look after my family. I just went to Clondalkin library when I had free time. Imaginingly, I borrow a children picture book and read it in the library. I asked the librarian whenever I did not understand somewhere in the book. The more she explained it to me, the less I understood about it as the language barrier is very difficult for me to improve my English if I did not speaking it everyday.

Hence, I tried my best to find English course at Crumlin College. Although my English is improving everyday, I still have a big problem with pronunciation. Until one day, Mrs Paulin, who works in school at Tallaght, took me to the Drop-in Centre. From now on, I know a place where I can meet the Irish people who can help me with English and anything else.
Fortunately, there are a lot of volunteers at the Centre who taught me English. Most of the women here are NORMS. They were dedicated English teachers. They corrected me at any time when I made mistakes. For example, when writing, when speaking specially at break time (coffee time) while I was speaking to them. I liked this time as I learned practical English that I can use them during talking. In addition, they taught me English in four skills: speaking, listening, writing, reading. They concentrated on solving my pronunciation. For instance, I as soon as pronounced incorrectly a word than they corrected me. Furthermore, they concerned about my family by taking us on our family trip.

Normally, I went out with my family members (sister, nephew, niece and my grandson) on their day trips. I lived in Clondalkin and I drove a car as well, but I just drove to wherever I needed. I have ever driven to any famous places in Dublin. Thanks to their trips, I knew some interesting places, such as: Japanese garden, the Zoo, the national museum, garden... etc. We were taken some beautiful photographs by them for souvenir. Then, I could keep some of them which I liked best. I knew the Centre about more than four years and my English is improving quickly.

No wonder, now my English is better than before a lot. I would like to say thanks to: Clair, Criona, Kay, Mary, Mick, Paddy, Cahal, etc. They were working hard about my English. It is not my mother tongue, so it is too difficult for me to change my tone. In my opinion, learning a language is not easy except for you learned it when you were a child. In this case, the language that you learned can consider as your first language. Hence, you don’t have a language barrier. If you were in my shoes, I bet you would have a language barrier. On the contrary, If I had not wanted this language barrier become a big problem, I would have met Irish people as frequently as possible.
Therefore, I keep in touch with the Irish people by going to the Centre whenever I can and whenever I need help.

Sometimes, I really need their help... i.e.: When I needed them to explain a letter from the Government that I could not understand exactly what the letter wanted me to do. Moreover, I needed them to correct a formal letter that I wanted to apply to the office. i.e.: A replied letter that applied to the Government while I was waiting for becoming an Irish Citizenship.

Or a formal letter that applied for a job. I really needed them to correct it before sending it to the manager. In addition, some of them became my reference in my CV. i.e.: Claire, Corina, Kay... Thanks you for all the helps from them.

In sum, I like this Centre very much. I would like to show my appreciation to them by writing this story. All of them are friendly, helpful. I really enjoyed my time at the Centre because I felt very freely to talk to them in English during coffee time. For me, this place is a very good Centre to come in order to learn English. Because it has a perfect parking car just outside the door. If I had been able to sum in one sentence, I would have written to them: "I should have met Madame Kay in 2013". As this centre had been opened by her when I arrived at Dublin. Once again, it is very grateful if they could know how appreciate I gave to them and thanks again one more time before I stopped writing."
Our Story Questions

1. Why do you want to improve your reading writing?
2. What problems has your reading and writing caused you in Ireland?
3. How will reading and writing English help you in Ireland?
4. Who is your story written for?
5. What did you like about writing your story?
6. What have you learned from writing your story?
7. Do you think this is a good way to learn writing and reading?

Notes:

1) I want to improve my reading and writing because I want to understand the letter from government and fill the form from government.
2) Reading and writing in Ireland with many new vocabularies. That caused my problem misunderstand.
3) Reading and writing in Ireland helps me a lot in communicating. i.e. if the Irish people don’t understand me, I will write the word again. So they understand me easily. The writing is very helpful if you are in college.
4) My story is written for friends, class mates, specially for...
5) I liked meeting people, practising speaking English.
6) From writing my story, I have learned how to write a paragraph.
7) Yes, in my opinion, writing a story is a good way to learn writing and reading, as I have to think, write a lot vocabularies, and read again and again before finishing my story.
Monday, 21st October 2013

My Story at The Drop-in

My name is Thi and I come from VIETNAM.

About me: I like learning English.

Before I came to Ireland, I used to be a manicurist in Vietnam.

I came to Dublin in 2003.

I live in Clondalkin with my husband, my son, and my mother-in-law.

I first came to the Drop-in in 2009 because my speaking English was not good enough for Irish people to understand.

I like the Drop-in because I can come here for practising my speaking English when I have a free time.

Some people I know at the Centre are Sister Ray, Sister Corina, Sister Helen, Sharon, Mr. Peter, Sister Eithne, Sister Eithne, Cathal, Padraig, Kira, Nick, Noctlar, and more...

My tutor is: Sister Clare, Sister Corina, Padraig, Cathal, Peter, Kira, Noctlar.

In the future, I would like to improve my English everyday.

I want to learn English because it is very important for me. I live in Ireland, where Irish people speak English.

Our Stories at the Drop-in Project – P. Sheekev 2013
Chata’s handwritten work
My Story at The Drop-in

My name is __________ and I come from Nigeria.

About me: I am a good lady and have 3 kids, and have a boyfriend and have sisters, and...

Before I came to Ireland, it has been very interesting, cheerful and kind and a good person. Nigeria is a good country and I like peoples who live in my country and I miss my friends.

I came to Dublin in 3 years ago.

I live in ________ with my friend.

I first came to the Drop-in in January because I want to learn my skills and want to be good person.

I like the Drop-in because I see the people in the centre, they are good people and they are care and helpful people I have never seen before.

Some people I know at the Centre are the people I know is Olga Kuna, Alina Staroguzova and others and Zhanna and Olya and I like...

My tutor is Pete. He is a good tutor. I have never seen person like Pete before. He is a good person. He will teach you the way you will understand, he will make you what.

In the future, I want to be a reasonable person in society in future and I want my children to be responsible future and community health services social care.

Our Stories at the Drop-in Project – P. Sheekey 2013
Hello my name is Oluwummi Michael. I was born in 1992 and I attended primary and secondary school in Nigeria. I finished in 2000. I did a Hairdresser Course in Nigeria for 3 years. I started working at Mama Kay Kay in Lagos. I have a husband and three children. I am light in complexion and tall. I can read and write. I am intelligent and loyal girl.

I like to chat with people especially children. And also I like to go to the kitchen everytime. My favourite food is rice and meat. My best subject in school is English and Mathematics. I also attend Intercultural drop in center in Dublin. I am studying English and Computer. My children go to school in Dublin. I liked to play football and handball when I was in school.
17/11/2013

I was happy to be in Dublin and have the confidence to talk to people in Dublin and comfortable in my house. I had the confidence to do everything I want to do and very happy about it. I go to talk to see my friends and I sociable to people and I very happy to my friend I feel very happy went to talk to confident my my house and so happy to my dear friends and so happy to shopping in Navan and to talk to my children and so happy to see my children and comfortable in my in Ireland.
1. I decided to come to Ireland because I want to be a better person in life. I decided to come because I want my future to be useful and I want my children to have a better life and want them to go to a good school. I want my children to have future "life in Ireland."

2. I decided to come to the drop-in center because I want to improve my reading and I want to improve my spelling.

3. My reading has changed since I came to the drop-in center. I am so happy I came to the drop-in center. Make me to improve my reading and I improve reading and I have confidence in my things."
I am originally from Nigeria. I studies in my Country and I work as a hairdresser in my Country. I am studying in Ireland and I want to be a Community Service Social Care in Ireland. And I speak English. I speak language with my family and English is the only language I have been using in Ireland for the past 2 years. I have been coming to the drop-in center for 11 months. I live in Dublin, I have my friend. My social life in Dublin is good than my Country. I have made good friends in Dublin and drop-in center. And I speak with Irish people in Dublin and beside my house and in Sophie. I want to improve my reading. The things I like about Dublin is the people and the English. I have some free time in my house with my friend. I can do things in Dublin. I can make things to school in my Country. I can do things to school in Dublin. I want to do community service in my country. I will like to help the people in my Country. The things I cannot do in my Country work and I cannot do that in Dublin. My life has changed in Ireland. My plans for my future is to become a Community Service Care and I want to be a better person.
Hakim’s handwritten Work
Our Story Questions

1. Why do you want to improve your reading writing?
2. What problems has your reading and writing caused you in Ireland?
3. How will reading and writing English help you in Ireland?
4. Who is your story written for?
5. What did you like about writing your story?
6. What have you learned from writing your story?
7. Do you think this is a good way to learn writing and reading?

Notes:

1. I want to improve my reading and writing because I want to get a good job in the future and I have problems with talking and speaking.
2. My problem is my social and hospital I can't fill in a form and can't speak.
3. Reading and writing help me a lot because the language in Ireland is English.
4. I want to write my story for my teacher and my friends. I wrote my story for my
5. I enjoyed writing my story because it was with my friends and we're happy with my friends. I am happy.
6. I learned new words and I knew how to introduce myself.

Yes it is a good way because end of this way. I will go to (in the) paradise.

Ed this is the mean to happiness.
1. I am originally from Afghanistan.
2. I studied 11 classes in my country and I didn't work in my country.
3. I am studying in Ireland.
4. I speak Persian.
5. I speak Persian with my family and English with my friends.
6. Roughly 5 months is I have been in Ireland.
7. 4 months is I have been coming to the Drop-in Centre.
8. I came to the Drop-in Centre because I have problem to talking and speaking and writing.
10. My social life in Dublin is I visit my different friends in Drop-in Centre.
11. My social life in my country was I made my friends.
12. I have made friends when I go to shapin centre.
13. I speak with Irish people when I go to soccer.
14. I want to improve my English because I have a great ambition.
15. Things I like about living in Dublin because have friendly people and I find good friends in Drop-in centre.

16. Things I don’t like living in Dublin. I like to bad I don’t know about things another people.

17. I have some free time after school or course.

18. Things I can do in Dublin that I could not do in my country.

19. Things I could do in my country that I cannot do in Dublin.

20. My life has changed because I can improve my English and in Dublin I have hope for future.

21. My plans for the future is I want to bee a good in the future.
Alina likes reading books, listening to music, watching TV, going to the cinema, theater, and spending time with her daughter. She lived in Ireland for 3 years and she would like to continue her education to get a Master's degree and get a good job. She has a daughter, her name is Evita, and she is 4 years old. She and Alina have a small family. Alina with her husband and her daughter, and her first language is Russian. She speaks Russian, Latvian, English, and a little bit Hebrew. She has started learning English at school. If she learns enough English, she will be very happy.
My Year

What have you done this year? Describe your activities this year:

1. Places I have been: I have been six months in Island and one five months in the Afghanistan.
2. People I have met: This year I had met in the Afghanistan and I am not happy because I don’t met all my sister.
3. Nice things that have happened: My nice things was see my brother saw you come cam in Island nine month.
4. People who have helped me: I was sick I went to CIP, and he give me medicine.
5. People I have helped: I have helped my brother to change satellite dish.
6. Films or books I have seen or read: I have seen romantic comedy and action movies.
7. Days I have celebrated (or parties): I have read religious book. I have a Bingo party at English school.
8. Things that have changed: My life has changed when I came to Island.
9. Things I have learned: I have improved my English.
10. Things I have bought: I have bought clothes, shoes.
11. Nice food or drink I have tried: I have eaten sheep meat, non-alcoholic beer.
12. Things I want to do next year: I want to open my own shop.
Hanna’s handwritten Work
My Story at The Drop-in

My name is and I come from Latvia.

About me: I like

Before I came to Ireland I used to live in the street city Riga in Latvia. I finished secondary school and after that studied at the University of Latvia and got a bachelor's degree as an orientalist.

I came to Dublin in 2009.

I live in Tallaght with my husband and daughter.

I first came to the Drop-in this year because I want to meet new friends, to learn English, and to integrate.

I like the Drop-in because I like to spend time here, to learn English, to communicate with people.

Some people I know at the Centre are very friendly, kind, and interesting. I like to spend time with them.

My tutor is Martin, because he is a good person, also he is kind and friendly.

In the future I would like to continue my education and get a good job.
My Year

What have you done this year? Describe your activities this year:

1. Places I have been: Latvia and Spain (mentioned)

2. People I have met: have been very interesting, cheerful and kind.

3. Nice things that have happened: I visited my family in Latvia and a journey to Spain.

4. People who have helped me: next my friends and my family.

5. People I have helped: was everyone who asked for help.

6. Films or books I have seen or read: was "A girl in the mirror" and I have seen a lot of films.

7. Days I have celebrated (or parties): Christmas and New Year.

8. Things that have changed: it was my attitude to Ireland.

9. Things I have learned: that I haven’t to be very trusting or careful.

10. Things I have bought: were presents for my daughter.

11. Nice food or drink I have tried: was soup "CASPACHO" and wine "Sangria".

12. Things I want to do next year: I want to go study to the college or university.
Story about

This is from Lithuania. She used to live in Kaunas. She came to Ireland 9 years ago. She has a big family, a daughter, a son, granddaughters, and a grand-son. Her family also live in Ireland. Irena lives in Tallaght, her son also live in Dublin, but daughter in America. Irena is a very interesting person. She likes swimming, cycling, cooking, meeting people, reading books, going to gym, dancing, singing and playing with her grandchildren. She has a positive attitude to English. Her first language is Lithuanian. In the future she would like to be a volunteer in the nursery home.
Story about Olga

Olga is from Latvia. She used to live in the capital of Latvia, Riga. Olga came to Sweden with her family 3 years ago. She has a big family. Her family consists of her husband and three kids (two daughters and son). The oldest daughter is 14 years old, her son is 6 years old, and the smallest daughter is 3 years old. They all go to school. Olga is very interesting and educated person. (she has a university degree) She likes reading books, listening to music and walking with her dog. She has a positive attitude to English. In the future she would like to be a volunteer in the care centre. Her mother tongue is Russian, she also knows Latvian as well.

Story about Omowunmi

Omowunmi is from Nigeria. She came to Sweden 3 years ago. She has a big family. She is married and has three children: two sons and a daughter. (They are 9, 5 and 15 years old.) She has a positive attitude to English. English is her mother tongue. In the future she would like to be a volunteer.
Story about Klaudius.

Klaudius is from Poland. He comes from the resort city Sopot. Sopot is situated in the North of Poland and surrounded by the Baltic Sea. He has a positive attitude to English. His mother tongue is Polish, he reads Russian a little bit too. He got married one year ago. He doesn't have children yet. He is 40 years old. He likes reading books, watching interesting movies and talking with his wife. In the future he would like get a good job.

Story about Zena.

Zena is from Lithuania. She used to live in Kaunas. She came to Ireland 9 years ago. She has a big family: a daughter, a son, a granddaughter and a grandson. Her family also live in Ireland. Zena lives in Tallaght, her son also live in Dublin, but daughter in Vimarc. Zena is a very interesting person. She likes swimming, cycling, cooking, meeting people, reading books, going to gym, dancing, singing and playing with her grandchildren. She has a positive attitude to English. Her first language is Lithuanian. In the future she would like to be a volunteer in the nursery home.
Our Story Questions

1. Why do you want to improve your reading writing?
2. What problems has your reading and writing caused you in Ireland?
3. How will reading and writing English help you in Ireland?
4. Who is your story written for?
5. What did you like about writing your story?
6. What have you learned from writing your story?
7. Do you think this is a good way to learn writing and reading?

Notes:
1. I want to improve my reading and writing because I think it's necessary for my future. I want to get a good job without that skill, it's impossible to reach this goal.
2. I like reading newspapers and I want to read English books, newspapers, magazines, but sometimes it's very difficult to understand what is the story about and it's not very enjoyable for me. The reason is that my English reading skills are not good enough.
3. As I said before, it'll help me to achieve my purpose.
4. My story is written for everyone who is interested in integration, English language, and who wants to know more about Irish people.
5. I liked working in a group, it was very interesting and enjoyable. I liked to communicate with other students and to know more about their life, culture, and traditions.
6. I have known how to make my story more interesting. What kind of expressions I have to use for. I have learned writing skills.
7. Yes, I do. I think it's a very good way to learn writing and reading.
Joasia’s handwritten Work
Our Story Questions

1. Why do you want to improve your reading writing?
2. What problems has your reading and writing caused you in Ireland?
3. How will reading and writing English help you in Ireland?
4. Who is your story written for?
5. What did you like about writing your story?
6. What have you learned from writing your story?
7. Do you think this is a good way to learn writing and reading?

Notes:
Because I want stay here and this is very important for me. I would like know writing, reading and speaking of English. I can not remember verbs and I was thinking only about Polish thinks. I can find the job if I can writing and reading well. My story wrote is Maria She is my friend and I talked about her story of her live. Maria told me about her live what she like, drink, hobby and when she is. Maria is 19 years old and she is from Roma. She is helpful and friendly girl. She like drink coffee and she looking job. Yes, I do.
MY LIFE BEFORE THE DROP-IN CENTRE

My name is... and I am from Poland. I left Poland in 2007 and came to Ireland, before coming to Ireland, I had no plans to stay in this country because in Poland I have family and friends. Before I came to Ireland I worked in the store who has my property. Unfortunately, I had to close the shop because do not bring profits. Myself and my husband decided to come to Ireland for three months order to earn money and we had to return to Poland - we had work here on the leaflets. However, after three months I found work at petrol station so he stayed longer. The work was very good for me and life was much better than in Poland. Therefore, my kids went to school here and we stay with them for so long, how long will study. In 2008 I gave birth to twins and I had give up work I did go to school in Poland but I did not learn English in the school, so when I came to Ireland I did not speak English. At a petrol station where I worked did not have to speak English very well because I worked with Polish people and they helped me. I did not have a chance to learn English, so when my kids went to school I have free time and I decided to also go to school because I want learn English too. To this end, I went to my daughter's school to ask whether they can help me find a free school. After a few days they found me a school "DROP-IN CENTRE" and I am very happy with this school. Even though I do not go very long there I noticed a big improvement in my English and thanks to this school, I opened up to people, because the teachers in this school do not teach only the English language but also integrate with other people, which help me in everyday life.
PEOPLE AND PLACES IN MY LIFE

Write the people, places and things you do in the boxes:

Places I go:
- Shops
- Friends’ House
- Park
- Cinema
- Pub
- Swimming pool

People I meet:
- With sister
- With friends
- With people from school
- With parents

Things I do (activities):
- Shopping
- Watching TV
- Walk
- Cooking
- Swimming
- Cleaning house
- Play football

What we talked about:
- About life
- About sport
- About children
- About shopping
- About news from your country
Adjectives to describe people and places:

Places: I (very) feel happy there. - unhappy, (un)comfortable, at home, nervous, confident, out of place.

Activities: I feel (very) happy shopping. - unhappy, (un)comfortable, at home, nervous, confident, out of place.

People: S/He was (very) (un)helpful. - (un)sociable, (un)caring, open, warm, cold, talkative.

Talking: We talked about our children/the weather/housing.

Now write about the people, activities and places:

Usually every Saturday I go to the shops and do shopping. Then I go to my friends or they come to my home. Every Sunday I go with my family to the park. Sometimes we go to the cinema. Also we go to church on Sunday. When I meet with my friends or my sister, we talked about life, childrens, shopping or news from our country. He spend activities time playing with my childrens in the ball or riding a bike. He go to the pool to swim and we go to the park to feed the ducks and swans.

I feel very happy when I spend time with my family. I feel unhappy as it is raining and we have to sit at home. In this weather we watch TV and I feel nervous as hear bad news. I like to talk with my husband because he is very caring and open. Sometimes I feel unhappy when I am tired, but my little daughter always makes me laugh, because she is talkative.
My name is Joanna. I am from Poland. I live in Dublin 24. I have been living since 2007. I am married. I met my husband when I finished High School in 1998. I lived with him before wedding three years. We have four children. All of our children go to school in Ireland. My older daughter is interested painting and I think that she has talent for painting after me. When I was young, I loved to paint pictures with my dad. My dad taught me to paint and now I teach my daughter. I know that I will not a painter, but maybe one day she will. I have dreams, but my dreams is not big. I just want my children to a good school, end and have a good work in the future.
Majeed’s handwritten work
Our Story Questions

1. Why do you want to improve your reading writing?
2. What problems has your reading and writing caused you in Ireland?
3. How will reading and writing English help you in Ireland?
4. Who is your story written for?
5. What did you like about writing your story?
6. What have you learned from writing your story?
7. Do you think this is a good way to learn writing and reading?

Notes:

1. I have to reading a lot of books to improve reading and I insist to writing a lot.
2. I will go to the hospital and get some work. It will help.
3. When I learn reading and writing and improve writing.
4. I want to read my story anyone. For example teachers, friends, and family.
5. I really enjoyed that when I was writing my story with my friends and teacher but I don't like my story because it's short.
6. I learned how to make sentences.
7. Yes of course I think this is very good to learn writing and reading English.
My Year

What have you done this year? Describe your activities this year:

1. Places I have been: This year in Ireland it’s beautiful place. I’m trying to improve my English.

2. People I have met: my friends and my family.

3. Nice things that have happened: visited my friends in Dublin. It was very happy.

4. People who have helped me: are they teachers of the Drop-in Center and Alina.

5. People I have helped: was my grandmother. I have helped her with English language.

6. Films or books I have seen or read: I have seen a lot of films for example Fast and Furious, Batman and have read Koran.

7. Days I have celebrated (or parties): I have celebrated was the another one was a new year.

8. Things that have changed: was my Apartment I have moved from Killkiper to Knocklyon.

9. Things I have learned: a lot of English words.

10. Things I have bought: shoes, clothes, T-shirt and grooming products.

11. Nice food or drink I have tried: 

12. Things I want to do next year: I would like to get a driving license and I hope my English is bitter an bitter next year.
My Year

What have you done this year? Describe your activities this year:

1. Places I have been this year in Ireland it's beautiful place. I'm trying to improve my English.

2. People I have met my friends and my family.

3. Nice things that have happened I visited my friends in Dublin. It was very happy.

4. People who have helped me are they teachers of the Drop-in center and Alina.

5. People I have helped was my grandmother. I have helped her with English language.

6. Films or books I have seen or read I have seen a lot of films for example Fast and Furious, Batman and have read Koran.

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8. Things that have changed was my apartment I have moved from Kilkipper to Knocklyon.

9. Things I have learned a lot of English words.

10. Things I have bought shoes, clothes, T-shirt and grooming products.

11. Nice food or drink I have tried

12. Things I want to do next year I would like to get a driving license and I hope my English is better an better next year.
My life Story

1. I'm originally from Afghanistan.
2. My studies not finished. I went to school in my country.
3. I didn't work in Ireland because my studying to learning English in Ireland then looking for job.
4. I speak Farsi and little bit English.
5. I speak Farsi with my family and with my friends speaks English, Farsi.
6. I have been in Ireland for 2 years.
7. I have been in Drop-in Center for one year but I'm not single.
8. I come to the Drop-in-Center because to learning English.
9. I live in Knocklyon with my father's friend because to speak to speaking and improve my English. My create address is Killiper Geat Tallaght Dublin 24.
10. My social life in Dublin visit to my family, friends play Football, walking, watching T.V., and taking about something.
11. My social life in my country, lived with my family and always met my friends play Volleyball, cards, etc.
12. I have met many friends in Dublin for example Brendan, Pual, Hamid, Teamba, Framoz, Olga, Alina, Zhanina, Luiza, Anastasia.
13. Irish people speaking English when I want to shopping I need to speak English and also I speaking with my friends.
15. I like in Dublin because very green, clean friendly people and also there is a place.
16. I don't like the weather because the weather is cold and a lot of raining actually this summer is Puir Feat.
17. I have some free time in the afternoon but I haven't a free time in the morning because I'm going to English Classes.

18. I can do in Dublin speaking, reading, writing a little bit English. I couldn't do that in my Country.

19. I can do driving in my Country but I couldn't do driving in Dublin because I haven't a driving license.

20. My life has changed. I'm very happy because I speaking, reading, writing a little bit English and I have see a lot of different people, I have made friends different people.

21. My plans the future are to learning English and looking for job and some time looking for a girlfriend hahaha.
Nika’s handwritten work
Our Story Questions

1. Why do you want to improve your reading writing?
2. What problems has your reading and writing caused you in Ireland?
3. How will reading and writing English help you in Ireland?
4. Who is your story written for?
5. What did you like about writing your story?
6. What have you learned from writing your story?
7. Do you think this is a good way to learn writing and reading?

Notes:

I would like my reading, writing and speaking skills to improve.

When I read a book I meet some new words which I don’t know and it’s a bit uncomfortable. As I want to get a good job and go to study I need to improve my speaking and reading skills and also I need to do it for my confidence.

It helps me when I seaching a job, writing CV, reading books, communicate by e-mail with English-speaking people.

I think the audience of my story is people like me, people who came to Ireland and want to integrate.

I liked to be in a group and write our stories at the same time. To know something new from other about their lives before coming to Ireland.

I find stories of others in the group interesting and in some cases it is similar with mine.
My Story at The Drop-in

My name is _______________________________ and I come from Ukraine.

About me: I like meeting new people, communication, travelling, be with my family, shopping.

Before I came to Ireland I used to live in Kiev, and work at the pharmacy call center. I have many friends in Ukraine, in Kiev and Crimea, because I was born in Crimea, it is a very beautiful piece of the world.

I came to Dublin in June 2013.

I live in Tallaght with my husband.

I first came to the Drop-in several months ago because I want to integrate with people and know another culture, meet

I like the Drop-in because I met interesting people. I have learned about another culture and countries, I can understand and speak English better than I did it earlier.

Some people I know at the Centre are very good persons and I like to communicate with them. We have meetings outside the Drop-In Center.

My tutor is Mokhtar because he is kind, clever and clear-speaking. He is a good person.

In the future I would like to go to college and have a work at the same time. And I want to come to Drop-In Center at the same time, even if it will be only once a week. I like Drop-In Center very much.

Our Stories at the Drop-in Project – P. Sheekey 2013
Rafal’s handwritten work
My Story at The Drop-in

My name is and I come from Poland.

About me: I like football, rugby, beer, travel, history and my wife.

Before I came to Ireland, I had a good life - say more.

I came to Dublin in 2006 April.

I live in Tallaght with my wife.

I first came to the Drop-in September 2013 because my English is very bad.

I like the Drop-in because here is nice atmosphere and my English is better.

Some people I know at the Centre are friendly to me.

My tutor is Mick Mokhtar Letna because they are good teachers.

In the future, I would like to improve English and have a job.

Our Stories at the Drop-in Project – P. Sheekev 2013
Our Story Questions

1. Why do you want to improve your reading writing?
2. What problems has your reading and writing caused you in Ireland?
3. How will reading and writing English help you in Ireland?
4. Who is your story written for?
5. What did you like about writing your story?
6. What have you learned from writing your story?
7. Do you think this is a good way to learn writing and reading?

Notes:
1. I want speak and write good English because I live in Ireland.
2. I don't write and read. I couldn't write and read because I don't know English very well.
3. It is helpful to integrate to the Irish community.
4. For people as time far
1) I want to speak and write because I live in Ireland.
   2) I don't want and reading because I don't have English.
   3) Yes I have more Egyptians.

5) I like my life.

6) I don't have learned yet. I want to write my story.

I think this is a good program with helping.

Alina/ Hanna's help.

Yes, I think it's a good way. It was very enjoyable and interesting.
Examples of handwritten Diaries at the ARP
<p>| <strong>Tuesday</strong> | When I took a bus and sat in I said to the bus driver &quot;Hi&quot;, when I went out I said &quot;Thank you.&quot; |
| <strong>Wednesday</strong> | I went out of my house and met a lovely old lady. She is my neighbour and she is always very friendly. She said: &quot;It's a lovely day, isn't it?&quot; I said: &quot;Beautiful day!&quot; I am still not sure, can I use the word beautiful to describe a day. |
| <strong>Thursday</strong> | When I was doing shopping I said to a cashier &quot;Hi&quot; and thank you. The cashier was a beautiful girl. |
| <strong>Friday</strong> | On Friday evening I went to a local Italian restaurant. The waiter was very friendly and helpful. He gave us two menus. I ask him &quot;What is the difference?&quot; He said: &quot;That one is a special offer. It is cheaper and I recommend it to you.&quot; It was very nice. |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday</strong></td>
<td>I went to a local pub to see my friend David and have a chat with him. A man who I did not know also introduced himself to David. Then David said to his friend: &quot;I knew Milosay over 5 terrible years.&quot; I was really confused. Later on I realised that terrible does not mean bad, it could be meant terrific as well.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday</strong></td>
<td>I met my colleague, who I used to work together for the same company, and we were happy to meet each other. I asked him about the others colleagues. He said: Kevin has stomach back and Seamus has stomach back. I thought that stomach back is just a part of the body back, but actually he talked about stomach bug, which means dysentery. The lesson for me is check out spelling and meaning.</td>
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<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td>I was on the bus and heard a man get a phone call. He took his mobile and said: &quot;Hi! Bad signal, call me back.&quot; A few minutes later someone gave him a phone call. He said the same phrase to the other caller. I suddenly realised how helpful could be some expressions!</td>
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<td>Day</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>I went to the leisure centre on Saturday. After doing some exercises in the gym, I was sitting in the sauna and listening to a chat between two men. They were talking about recession time and how to save money and avoid tax. Suddenly, they stopped talking and looked at me. I said: &quot;No worries. I am not a tax man.&quot; That was a really bad joke. They kept silent and went out shortly. The lesson is make a joke carefully.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>I went out with my bike and met my neighbour Allan. He asked me: &quot;How is your cycling?&quot; I said: &quot;It is quicker than running.&quot; We said each other &quot;See you and bye.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>I went into the lift and met a lovely girl there. She pushed the bottom number 3. I asked her: &quot;Is it nice to live on a top?&quot; She said: &quot;No faces!&quot; I asked &quot;What?&quot; She clarified: &quot;No body lives there except me.&quot; I got it then. We said each other &quot;See you and bye.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td>Tunno is my friend who always came with relationship problems expecting to get some advice from me. This time I asked him if we can talk other stuff with him relationship matters, he agreed. He asked when am I travelling to Africa and why I am not telling him about it? He complained and said maybe I am not his friend. I tried to explain, but Tunno couldn't believe me anymore.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td>Today my landlord came to check up on me. He said last week, I wasn't seen at all in my place. He was worried when I was and I didn't even notice him that I will be going to Limerick. He said, next time if I am going somewhere and I'm not going to be home for awhile, I better to notice him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday</strong></td>
<td>Almost this day I spend it with Congolese friends. I didn't speak English.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
<td>My Neighbor a student from England, the camp back for holiday. They had party &quot;House party&quot;, I met Issa she's also a Briton, she was in my country in 1994 when the Genocide started in Rwanda, her family flew to raise &quot;Congo&quot;. The conversation was nice but because of noise, we promised to meet next time. She knows my neighborhood very well, but impressed me.</td>
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Awat – Week 1
**Week 7th April – 13th April**

| **Saturday** | I met a deaf person in park. We were chatting in signs and I couldn't pick up anything he was trying to explain. Basically, he was telling me that he spent all his money in casino and he had won €3,000 once. The thing which surprised me is he knows how to count and write numbers and his name is *Trip*, but he doesn't know how to read someone's name. |
| **Sunday** | Sunday on my way back to Dublin I met a new American guy in the bar. He was sitting beside me. He was very curious, he asked more about me. He told me that there is an international airport in Limerick *Shannon*, and there is a regular flight from Limerick to the USA. |
| **Monday** | In Limerick I met a guy who looks alike with someone I know (*Babara*). I started to talk to him in my own language. I thought I am talking to *Babara*. He ended up getting upset, he asked me "How are you talking to? You're making noise!" I couldn't believe if he wasn't *Babara*. I apologized and I told him that I made a mistake and he looks like my friend. He said, his name is *Aboul*, not *Babara*. |
| Tuesday | In England, I went to see my landlord. He lives in the same building as me on the ground floor. I said: Good evening. How are you? He said: I am great. My daughter was here. Did you see that the Winter came back? I said: My father was good. I ate a lot of chocolates, and you are right, the Winter came back. See you then! Good night. Bye, bye. |
| Wednesday | Today I just talked in English with my husband. When I arrived at home there was a match on the TV. I said: Who is playing? He said: Barcelona against Chelsea. I said: How is it going? He said: It’s OK, no too bad. I said: OK. Enjoy it. |
| Thursday | I was going to school when I decided to buy a water in a store. I took the water and I went to the till to pay it. I asked the deli assistant: Do you have sugar-free gum? He didn’t understand me. I repeated twice and he still didn’t understand me, so I changed the question: Do you have gum without sugar? He said: Yes. So I got it, paid and left. |
| Friday | Today, I just talked in English with my husband. |

Leyla – Week 1
**Saturday**

I went to Tesco with my husband. I wanted to buy coconut milk, but I couldn’t find it, so I saw a staff close to me and I said: Sorry, I was trying to find the coconut milk, but I couldn’t find it. Could you please help me? He said: follow me! He found it quickly and I said: thanks.

**Sunday**

I went to church and I met a lot of friends there. I talked with a girl from Korea. She arrived four months ago. I asked: Do you like Dublin? She said: Yes, I like Dublin, I don’t like too much the weather. I said: Me neither.

**Monday**

Today I went to a bakery close to my house to buy a cake. When I arrived there, I realised there were a lot of different cakes, so I asked the bakery staff. I said: Could you please help me to choose a good cake? And she said: Sure. This one is chocolate with strawberries, this one is fruit, this one vanilla etc... I said: In your opinion which cake is the best? And she said: the chocolate cake. So, I bought it.
Appendix 3 - Newsletter Excerpts
Hello Everybody – we are a group of learners (The Literacy group) who can speak quite well, but need to work on our reading and writing. We meet every Tuesday and practice our reading and writing together.

The Literacy group
The literacy group meets every Tuesday from 10.30 until 1pm. You can come only on Tuesday’s or you can join our English language tuition on Monday and Thursday and Literacy group on Tuesday. We would also like to have a literacy group in the afternoon from 1pm until 2.30pm so if you are interested please speak to Peter or Zuzana.

To give you more opportunity to read and practice speaking we would like to start a Book club where people can experience the joy of reading English written books and discuss what they liked or not and what they understood or not. Please talk to Zuzana if you want to join.

My Irish Experience – by Amin
My name is Ashref Safi. When I arrived in Ireland I really didn’t know anyone and I didn’t know what to do. It was hard for me. The first person I talked to was a taxi driver I think. The first difference I saw was the weather. My first week in Ireland was not good, because I did not know anyone and I felt lonely. A good time I had in Ireland was the summer of 2006, the weather was sunny and warm for about few months and I had good time. Some Irish people I know are very friendly and they are very good to me. A place I would like to visit is Mayo. I heard Mayo is a very beautiful county of Ireland. My favourite thing in Ireland is the green land. I love to go to the countryside and see the scenery. I don’t understand why Irish people drink too much. I heard that Irish people were the heaviest drinkers in Europe in 2005. Three important events for me in Ireland are:

(1) When I got my status.
(2) When my family joined me.
(3) When I get my passport I will be grateful in the future.

My Irish Experience – by Marie Katambay
My name is Marie Katambay and I am from the Democratic Republic of Congo. I first arrived in Ireland on 19th October 1999. The first person I met was the Immigration officer. The first difference I saw the weather, it was very cold! My first week in Ireland, I went shopping in Dunnes Stores in the city centre. An important time for me in Ireland was when my first child was born in the Coombe hospital. Some Irish people I know are my GP, Dr McMorrow and my neighbours. I like visiting the Dublin Zoo and the city centre museums. My favourite thing in Ireland is celebrating Christmas. I do not understand why the Irish celebrate Halloween. Some important events for me in Ireland have been celebrating Christmas, my son’s first communion, and my cousin’s graduation.
My Story - Chata

I am from Nigeria I studied English in my Country. I spoke English in my Country. I speak English with my family and my friends. I have been in Ireland for two year. I have coming to the Drop in Centre for five months. I come to the Drop in Centre because of my reading. I live with my friend in Navan.

My social life in Dublin is a very good life I sometimes go to parties My social life in my county is good I worked there also. My friend always makes me happy in Dublin, she is a good friend. I meet the Irish people in city Centre they are very nice to people.

I want to improve my English Because I want to learn more English.

The things I like in Dublin is the summer and the people living in Dublin. The things I do not like about Dublin is the cold. I have some fee time because I am not working at the moment. The things I can do in Dublin is health care and I can not do it in my county.

My life has changed since I have been in Ireland.

My plans for the future are community health services social care.

The History and Culture of Joasia

Her name is Joasia. She is 33 years old. She comes from Poland. She is married and she has 4 children. Their names are Wictoria, she's 11 years old, Olivia she's 8 years old, Jakob and Katrin are twins are 4 years old. They came to Ireland 4 years ago. Her favourite food is chicken wings, and she likes to drink
coffee. She hates cats, but she has fish, a dog and a rabbit at home. She does not work at the moment, but she has worked in Malahide Service station.

1. Where are you from? She from in Poland.

2. Where is it? It is Poland in Central Europe.

3. How many people live there? There live 38.5 million people.

4. Do you live in a city? Yes, she lived in city called is Katowice.

5. What languages do people speak in your country? In her country peoples speak just Polish.

6. What is the name of your money? The money is called zloty.

7. Do you have a president in your country? Yes, they have a president.

8. What is the weather like in your country now? The weather is hot in the summer, and cold in the winter.

9. Is the food different to the food in Ireland? Yes, Ireland has a different bread, potatoes and chips are topped with vinegar.

10. What is her husband’s name? His name is Mark.

11. How old are his? His is 36 years old.

12. What is her favourite drink? His likes to drink coke.

13. Do you like Ireland? Why? Yes, She likes Ireland because here is better for big families.

People:
Are people friendly and polite? Yes, they are friendly and polite.
Do most people live in cities or the country? Most people live in a cities.
Do most people live in houses or apartments? Most people live in apartments.

Food:
What are the typical dishes in your country? Typical dishes are dumplings, noodles, cabbage, and pork breaded cutlet.
Is there a national drink? Beer and Vodka are the national drinks.

Work and study:
What time do people start and finish work? People start 6 a.m and finish at 2 p.m.
How many hours a day are children in school? 8 hours.
Do they have a lot of homework? Yes, if their go to school, they work hard in school and at home, even at the weekends.
When do people start university? They start the university at 21 years old.

**Free time:**

What do people do at the weekend? They go to the park.

How long are holidays for students and for workers? For students 2 month and for workers 2 weeks.

What clothes do people wear when they aren't working? Normal, casual.

**Holidays and festivals:**


Do you have any religious festivals? No, they don't have any.

Why do you celebrate these days? Because on this day Jesus was born.

What happens on these days? They go to church.

Thank you! Maria

**The history and culture of Maria by Joanna**

Maria is 22 years old. She is from Romania. She lives in a city called Gheorgheni. She came to Ireland in 2012 and is here one month. She is not married and does not have a boyfriend. She is single and she does not have any children. She lives in Ireland with her mom. She has two brothers who live in Romania. Their names are Imre and Karoly and they are 30 and 26 years old. Maria does not work but she is looking for work. Sometimes she works as a babysitter. She goes to English school, because she wants to learn the English language well and this will help her find a job. Her favorite food is steak and she likes tea. Maria loves dolphins and other animals but she does not have any animals at home. She likes Ireland because here she can learn English better here, and she hopes to find a job here.

**Maria’s Culture and her Country**

Romania is in Central and South-eastern Europe and has a population of 22 million people. In this country most people live in cities and most people live in apartments. Their languages are Romanian and Hungarian. The name of their money is Lei. Their country is ruled by a President called Traian Basescu. Now in their country it is cold but in summer it is very hot. People are friendly. People start work at 8am and finish at 5pm. Children go to school every day for 7 hours, and they have a lot of homework. Workers have 2 weeks holidays but students have 2 months. Their clothes are normal, jeans, casual and formal. In their free time they go to the woods. They like to eat chicken and pork, and the most popular drink is beer. Most people in Romania are Catholic. They celebrate their annual Spring Festival in March - Martisor, whose symbol is the coloured wool. They have Christmas Eve, Easter, New Years and many more holidays to celebrate.
Appendix 4 - Our Stories at the Drop-in Centre:
Published Version
The Intercultural Drop-in Centre
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Mountain Park,
Off Old Wenvoe road,
Tallaght
Dublin 24
Tel: 0872485392
Email: dropin@sdcpartnership.ie
Web: www.interculturaldropintallaght.weebly.com

The Intercultural Drop-in Centre is funded by the Department of Justice and Equality via South Dublin County Council. It is managed by South Dublin County Partnership.

our stories
the intercultural drop-in centre
10 YEARS
Editor’s Introduction

“My life has changed because I came to a new country, a new home, a new language, new friends.”

Viki

The stories contained in this book are both ordinary and extraordinary at the same time. Ordinary in that there is much of the everyday in our members stories, shopping, school, raising families and so on. Extraordinary in the sense that behind and within these stories lie journeys which many of us have not had to make. The members at the Intercultural Drop-in Centre have journeyed across countries, time and languages to bring us their truths. Anyone who has endeavoured to learn another language will have some idea of the effort required to communicate our world and lives through another tongue – especially in written form. Many of the members who have contributed to this little book arrived at our centre with a lot of stories but not much language with which to deliver them. That they have managed to write their stories for us is no small achievement. As one of their tutors, I was witness to the effort, courage and enthusiasm these members brought to this task. So I take this opportunity to salute and thank each and every one of them for their hard work and generosity in sharing their lives with us.

Peter Sheekey MPhil

Our stories at the Intercultural Drop-in centre was published in November 2013 on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of founding in October 2003
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The Intercultural Drop-In Centre (formerly TIA – Tallaght Intercultural Action) has been operating at St Maeruain’s Church of Ireland parish hall, since October 2003. We are very appreciative of the hospitality of the Church of Ireland Community and especially of the Rector, Reverend William Deverell, for providing us with this facility for a modest annual rent.

The Brigantine Congregation in Ireland funded the project from the beginning until April 2011. Funding then was procured from the Department of Justice and Equality via South Dublin County Council. It was initially managed by West Tallaght Resource Centre. Since April 2010, it has been managed by South Dublin County Partnership (formerly Dodder Valley Partnership).

Since the beginning of 2007, the downturn in the Irish economy has proved very difficult for the Migrant community. Much hardship is experienced by families, particularly in the area of seeking employment to substantiate a meager income in the form of benefits. Many who previously were working in the construction or catering industries have lost jobs and now find themselves in critical circumstances.

Participants to the Intercultural Drop-in centre have often suffered greatly in their various journeys to and in Ireland and the project has tried to reach out to the most critical where and whenever possible.

The main objective of the Intercultural Drop-in centre has been to offer a welcoming and safe space to Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants, especially the most vulnerable of these groups, in the Tallaght area of Dublin and beyond. The Centre strives to reach out to people from many cultures in an inclusive way, enabling them to integrate into Irish society while retaining their own national and cultural identities.

At one of the first workshops some important statements were registered from the participants:

- Integration is a two-way process.
- Inclusion is key to Integration.
- When Migrants are respected and understood, they will integrate.
- Society in the 'host' country must be open to newcomers.
- Newcomers to the country need to see opportunities and possibilities into the future.
- When a new group feels affirmed, gradually it will integrate.

There is a friendly atmosphere in the Intercultural Drop-in centre and everyone is given a warm welcome when they arrive at the door! Learning is a two-way process. Those of us who 'teach' at the Centre are appreciative of what we have learned in terms of customs, cultures, traditions, foods and religious practices, from the many people who have availed of the services. They have not only enriched our lives but also added to the enrichment of the country as a whole.

In the sentiment of the Irish proverb "Ar scóth a chéile a mhairéan na ndaoine" (We live in the shelter of one another), the 'shelter' also includes a wider world.

As I look back over ten years, my memories are not only happy, but also treasured memories of the lives and struggles of so many people whom I have met along that ten-year journey. It has been both enriching and enjoyable for me. I feel blessed to have known and befriended so many people from different lands who are now residing in Ireland, some of whom are making this country their permanent home.

Without the dedication of so many who volunteer their services at the Intercultural Drop-in centre, the project would not be the success that it has become over ten years. I would like to say a special thanks to all of them for the invaluable work they have done and continue to do. The photos show only part of the life and work of the story of the last ten years!
In The Intercultural Drop-In Centre

Over the years the Intercultural Drop-in Centre has had many names and has been managed by different organisations, but always with a focus on providing a safe and welcoming space for people from all backgrounds to come together. Today, the Centre continues to be an important hub for the local community, offering a range of services and activities designed to support cultural understanding and social inclusion.

English Language Classes: These classes continue to be a popular feature of the Centre, offering opportunities for people to improve their language skills in a supportive and friendly environment.

Volunteer Opportunities: The Centre relies on the support of volunteers to deliver its services. Opportunities for volunteering are available for people of all ages and backgrounds.

For more information about the Centre and its services, please contact us: [Contact Information]

For two months the groups worked with artists to produce an issue-based drama. All the organisations involved had time to engage and collaborate together in a measurable event.
A ‘patch-work’ quilt, was stitched together by the women’s group and completed over a period of two months. Each different national group depicted their own national emblem onto the quilt.

Weekly Women’s Group The women’s group continues to be a source of companionship and inspiration for those who attend the group sessions. Women are represented from countries like Albania, Algeria, Cameroon, China, Egypt, Lithuania, Mauritius, Nigeria, Poland, Russia, Tunisia and Ukraine to name just a few.

Support for families threatened with deportation was given when this was an issue. Temporary reprieves on their deportation orders were followed by judicial review proceedings.

The Intercultural Drop-in centre liaises with local organisations and operates a referrals system to the appropriate statutory bodies.

Training workshops have been given to members of the target groups in the areas of Legal Rights, Responsibilities and Social Welfare information. These training workshops have taken place for volunteers also, particularly teaching English as a second language.

Many volunteer teachers have had previous experience of teaching overseas or in Ireland in schools and colleges. Others have taken ESOL training in order to teach overseas students. All volunteers continue to become au fait with new methods of teaching so as to engage with the many participants who come from a variety of cultures for whom English language learning is a real challenge.

Kay Mulhall, CSB
October 2013
**Amin’s Story**

When I arrived in Ireland I really didn't know anyone and I didn’t know what to do. It was hard for me. The first person I talked to was a taxi driver I think. The first difference I saw was the weather. My first day/week in Ireland was not good, because I did not know anyone and I felt lonely. A good time I had in Ireland was the summer of 2006. The weather was sunny and warm for about few months and I had good time. Some Irish people I know are very friendly and they are very good to me. A place I like visiting is Mayo. I heard Mayo is a very beautiful county of Ireland. My favourite thing in Ireland is the green land. I love to go to the countryside and see the scenery. I don’t understand why Irish people drink too much. I heard that Irish people were the heaviest drinkers in Europe in 2005.

Three important events for me in Ireland:
1. When I got my status.
2. When my family joined me.
3. When I get my passport I will be grateful in the future.

---

**Nil’s Story**

I was originally from Latvia. My studies were at Tukuma secondary school and Riga 19 Vocational school Latvia. This was technical school in Latvia. I worked in "SIA AMATIEKS", a building company, and with Faick security as a security guard.

I have studied in Ireland at the Tallaght adult education service from 2008 to 2009. I got an E.S.O.L certificate on this course. I worked in Ireland with RB building service, as a window fitter and builder.

I speak Latvian, Russian and English. With my family and friends we speak in Latvian, Russian and English. I have been in Ireland from 2005 year. I have been coming to the drop-in centre for 3 weeks. I came to the drop-in because I want to learn English and met new people.

I live in a house with my wife, son, daughter, a cat and two rabbits. My social life in Dublin is spending time with my family, and meeting my friends. I like to do many sports activities. My social life in my country was meeting my family and friends.

Friends I have made in Dublin are from many countries. Irish people I speak to are Eduard, Anja and Kasia. I want to improve my English because everybody should know the language and I need it for myself.

Things I like about living in Dublin are the people, the mountains. I have no free time because I keep myself busy. My plans for the future are to get a good job, learn English spelling and writing.

---

**Agnieszka’s Story**

My name is Agnieszka. I am from Poland. I finished my studies when I was 19 years old. After I finished my studies I worked in my country. I came to Ireland in 2006. I speak Polish with my family and friends. I have been in Ireland for seven years.

When I came to Ireland, I worked for two years in a hospital. The language was difficult and I did not speak too much English. I have been coming to the Drop-in Centre for four months because I need more experience in speaking and writing English.

I live in an apartment in Tallaght with my family. I like living in Dublin because it is close to shops and schools. Looking after my child is one of the most important things in my life. When I have some free time I meet with my friends and also like use the computer.

In my country I didn’t speak English. I can do this now in Dublin and I am very happy. I like living in Dublin because I meet Irish people and speak English to improve my English. My life has changed because I am living in Ireland where people speak English.

I want to study at second level for the future.

---

*Agnieska (on the right) working in the computer room in Tallaght Library*
Agne's Story

Hi everyone, I come to work at the Drop-in Centre early March 2007. I had worked with migrants in Cork for two and a half years and enjoyed it. When I moved to Dublin I wanted to continue with the same kind of work. I went to many places in the city, most places said they would get back to me and they never did. I went to the Dublin Catholic Directory and saw this place in Tallaght run by Sister Kay and as there were all the details I decided to make a call. Since I had been disappointed so much I asked one of my colleagues to talk while I stood nearby. Kay answered and as soon as she gave a positive response I came on the line and she was so welcoming.

Kay asked me to come and talk to her and see what I would be interested in doing. When I came and found the atmosphere was so good, I did not care much what I would be doing as long as I had somewhere to volunteer. I talked with Kay and she introduced me to the project worker Aoife who also gave me a very good impression. I met them on a Monday and on Wednesday I started working until now. When I started I was going for two days until I started my counselling course the same year September 2007.

That time we were not teaching English language my main work was hospitality and welcoming the clients sitting down with them. If we found that they needed what we could not offer we referred them to Kay or Aoife. We all helped in getting the room ready before the clients came in and cleared and swept the room before we left.

What I enjoyed most was the Women’s group which was always on Wednesday. Some days we had some people giving some input. Other times we talked about the things the women were interested in and tried some of the things they wanted to learn. I particularly enjoyed teaching them how to knit as I have a great interest in that area but, it proved very difficult as most of them never held needles before and they were not consistent in coming. We also had different trainings on Wednesday and most women would attend that up to the end especially if they knew there was a certificate at the end of it. All the volunteers would help them with English if they did not understand.

When English became a great need for most people I decided to come only on Wednesday because we just talked and helped where necessary but I could not consider myself an English teacher. I have worked in the Drop-in for over 6 years it is only in the last two years, when I finished my Counselling course, that I thought I could help in a simple way with English.

One Wednesday a lady came who did not know even one word in English and being and African may she thought we would understand each other but we did not. She sat next to me every Wednesday and, each time somebody talked to her, she looked at me and I could not help her. None of us knew what language she spoke she could not tell us either. I felt so moved to help her, each Wednesday I decided to explain with gestures and slowly drew funny pictures and once she saw the picture she nodded showing she knew what I was telling her.

Our English lessons became fun as we learnt a lot with my funny drawings. Even without the language we laughed and learnt a lot especially when I tried to draw an elephant or a cow to explain the sound of letters ‘e’, ‘c’.

As a Montessori teacher myself, I started her where I started the little children. After two years that same lady is able to read and write and express herself in English, though there is still a lot she needs to improve on, like all of us whose English is not our first or second language. Today I can say she is one of the best of the four/five that I teach. Naturally she is very intelligent and really interested in learning she never misses any day.

Looking back I can say that it is very important for someone like that to have one to one teaching. She is able to spell most words as she remembers the sound of every letter, while those who joined us later find it hard to differentiate some letters. Today, even if I stop teaching in the Drop-in, I won’t worry about her because I know she can fit into any group. For a long time I resisted having a group because I felt I would not know the levels they are at, I still do, as we all know it changes the group dynamic. The new ones feel they don’t know much, and old ones feel pulled back which I see each time a new person joins us.


fatuamata’s story

I came from Mali. I am going to share with you about Mali national dresses. Every woman in Mali wears national dress known as babus. It is long cotton colourful dress. It is usually decorated with rich best quality of Mali designs. Babus is usually in three pieces, that is a skirt, a top and a scarf. Babus are made of cotton or silk fabrics and are only worn on special occasions. Cotton is preferred by most people as it is best for hot climate. The national dresses are only worn by adults and they can have them in any styles they like. However the bride wears a white cotton dress for wedding and after that puts it away. Aunties and mothers give silver and gold jewellery that goes with those national dresses.

Men gowns are loose short sleeves gown worn over the shirt and trousers to match them. They are also decorated in silver rich basin and Mali national designs. Like women’s gowns they are worn on occasions, like weddings, national days or meetings. Men wear a small hat as a sign of African tradition for elders. Young men don’t wear it, if they like they wear cap.
Majeed's Story

I am originally from Afghanistan. My studies were not finished when I went to school in my country. I cannot work in Ireland because I need to study English in Ireland and then look for job. I speak Farsi and little bit of English. I speak Farsi with my family and with my friends I speak English and Farsi.

I have been in Ireland for 2 years. I have been in the Drop-in Centre for about one year. I came to the Drop-in Centre to learn English. I live in Knocklyon with my father's friend so as to practice speaking and improve my English.

My social life in Dublin is visiting my family, playing football with friends, walking, watching T.V. and taking about something. My social life in my country was I lived with my family and always met my friends to play volleyball, Cards etc. Actually, I have a lot of friends in my country.

I have made many friends in Dublin for example Brenae, Paul, Hemil, Teamba, Framoz, Oiga, Alina, Zharma, Luidia, Anastasia, Jiyia and John. Irish people speak English with me. When I go shopping I need to speak English and also I speak with my English-speaking friends. I want to improve my English because I live here I need to learn English.

I like in Dublin because it is very green, clean, with friendly people, and also there is peace. I don't like the weather because the weather is cold and a lot of rain, but actually this summer was perfect.

I have some free time in the afternoon but I haven't any free time in the morning because I'm going to English classes. Things I can do in Dublin are speaking, reading and writing a little bit of English. I couldn't do that in my country. I could drive in my country but I can't drive in Dublin because I haven't a driving license.

My life has changed and I'm very happy because I'm speaking, reading, and writing a little bit of English, and I have seen a lot of different people. My plans for the future are to learn English and look for job and some time looking for girlfriend - hahaha!

Awa't's story

I am from Kurdistan it is in the north of Iraq, and my first language is Kurdish. I speak Kurdish with my family, and we have Kurdish friends.

I have friends who are different nationalities and we speak English. I have lived in Firhouse for about 7 years with my son, daughter and husband. We live in a house, and we have been in Ireland for 7 years. I am not working at the moment, but I am studying at the drop-in centre for 5 months to learn English.

The social life is different between my country and here because the culture is different. I speak English with Irish people like my neighbours. I want to improve my English because I am living in Ireland and maybe my English will become very good in case I need to speak well.

The office systems in Ireland are very quick and efficient but in my country there is too much bureaucracy. The people here drink and smoke a lot, I do not like the first because it is bad for the health, and the second because they spend money which is not useful. I spend my time watching documentary films on the TV, reading news or reading general things on the internet.

When I came to Ireland my life is changed. First my children they have become adults, and also in general my life is changed when I came here.

My plans are I would like my English to become very good, I hope go back to see my family in my country because I have not seen them since 2007.
Cathal’s story

My name is Cathal Griffin from Dublin and I’m a volunteer in the Tallaght Intercultural Drop-In Centre. I have been volunteering with them for over two years. I came to the drop-in centre because I have always been interested in volunteering. I saw an ad one day as I was looking at the South Dublin Volunteering website for volunteering opportunities. Intercultural Action who were looking for volunteer tutors. I thought this was a wonderful way for me to meet so many different nationalities in one place as I have always been interested in other nationalities.

As time went on I started to notice that it was actually more than just a place for me to meet people of other nationalities but that it was also simply a place anyone whoever they are could unite for a common purpose and just simply treat people as people.

I enjoy coming in and listening to students (and also the volunteers and staff) tell me stories from their home countries and feeling quite fortunate to be able to hear so many different experiences. I’ve always felt that there was a tremendous feeling of equality in the centre how everybody helps everybody. Now I have started to see people who came as students now teaching. The centre is helping me in so many ways from giving me invaluable life experience, a relaxed environment for me to explore myself and my own abilities. It is a truly unique and very special place that I feel very privileged to be a part of this wonderful feeling of unity.

Othter’s story

Hausa proverb: Ba shan zuma sai an sahar bi – Success comes after tears.

I am originally from Nigeria. I studied in my country. I went to primary school for four years. I am studying in Ireland because I want to improve in my English and writing. Me and my family speak Hausa language and my friends and I speak English. I have been in Ireland for ten years.

I have been coming to the drop-in centre since January 2013. I like to come to the drop-in because I want to improve my writing. I live in Tallaght with my husband and children. My social life in Dublin has been very good. In my country my social life was not good. I have made good friends in Dublin.

The Irish people I have spoken to are very friendly. I want to improve my English because I want to speak Good English. The thing I like about living in Dublin is that most of my friends live in Dublin. The thing I don’t like about living in Dublin is that it is too expensive.

I have some free time because my husband helps me with the kids. The things I can do in Dublin that I could not do in my country is going to school easily. Things I could do in my country that I cannot do in Dublin is that I could own a TV without paying a license in my country. My life has changed because God has blessed me with many things.

My plans for the future are to further my education. I came to Ireland because I wanted a better life for myself. I decided to come to the Drop-in because I cannot read and write. Since I have come to the Drop-in my English has improved.
Hanna’s Story

Before we moved to Ireland, I had lived in the resort city of Latvia, Jurmala. Jurmala is a place where I grew up with my family and friends. Jurmala is called “The city on the wave”, because of its location. Jurmala is situated along the Baltic Sea coast and surrounded by pine forest. The location of the place is perfect, because it’s not so far from the capital of Latvia, Riga. It takes about 40 minutes by bus.

When I was 16 years old I went to study in Israel as a part of program “na’aile”. I lived there without my parents. There were a lot of students from all over the world. My classmates were from Russia, Ukraine and Moldova. My school was located in the North of Israel between the cities Tiberias and Afula. The name of my school was Cadanie.

After one year of studying I came back to Latvia, finished secondary school and joined the University of Latvia in the faculty of modern languages, Oriental module. I learned the Arabic language, but I still don’t know it, it’s too hard for me, culture, history and also the same for Japanese and Chinese except languages. I got a Bachelor’s degree as an Orientalist. I finished University, got married and became a mother in the same year.

When my daughter was one year old we (me, my husband and our daughter) came to Ireland. We have been in Ireland for 3 years. We live in semi-detached house in Tallaght, Springfield. I like to live in Tallaght, because there are a lot of public amenities such as parks, schools, community centres and library. Also there is a lot of entertainment for example, the cinema, the theatre and the shopping centre. There is a good Public service. The location of Tallaght is very convenient; it takes about 40-50 minutes to get to the city centre by bus or Luas.

With my family and my friends we speak Russian that is why I spend every work day in the drop-in centre, because my English is not enough for integration. I come to the drop-in centre two months ago. I like to spend time there, because I meet a lot of people from all over the world and it is very interesting, because you get to know about their traditions, culture, some historical facts and the way how they live and of course it’s helps to improve my English as well. My life has become more interesting since I joined the drop-in centre. The centre gives me more opportunities for the future.

I had met many new friends since I came to Ireland. Some of them are my neighbours; most of them are mothers like me, because I met them in playgrounds and also from centres such as Bryan Ryan and the drop-in centre. I like to spend time with them; we go to the cinema, parks, shops, playgrounds exhibitions and library.

The difference between my social life in Dublin and Latvia is that I’m not integrated yet, because of English. I think it is very important to know the language of the country you are living in. When you know the language you are free to do whatever you want. I can’t say that my social life is very bad here, but I definitely can say that it is a little bit limited.

In the future I would like to be part of the Irish society. I want to continue my education, to get a Master’s degree and to find a good job.
Hakim’s Story

I am originally from Afghanistan. I studied 11 classes in my country and I didn’t work in my country. I am studying English in Ireland. I speak Persian with my family and I speak English with my friends. I have been in Ireland for 5 months.

I have been coming to the Drop-in centre for 4 months. I come to the drop-in centre because I have a problem talking and speaking and writing. I am living in Tallaght with my brother. My social life in Dublin is that I visit my friends in the drop-in centre.

My social life in my country was that I had made different friends. I have made friends in Dublin when I go to the shopping centre. I speak with Irish people when I go shopping. I want to improve my English because I have a great ambition.

Things like about living in Dublin are it has friendly people and I have found friends in the Drop-in centre. Things I don’t like about living in Dublin, well I like it here but I don’t know many things about other people. I have some free time in the afternoon to visit my friends.

Some things I can do in Dublin are I can improve my English and I can live well in Dublin but I could not in my country. My life has changed because I believe I can attain my hopes. My plans for the future are I want to be a good engineer or a good businessman.

John’s Story

Nani aling’i a wiyé nga bilengi ya Ingrid!
Nani aling’i azapper nga bilengi ya Simplice!
Wana bozo luka kina nga na bela ehi
Wana bozo luka kina nga na kufa ehi
Who wants to sully my love of Ingrid?
Who wants to zap my simple enjoyment?
Where you want me to suffer,
There you are looking for my death.’

Mon Amour
Nigerian Singer, Fally Ipupa

I am from Kinshasa the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. I studied primary and secondary school until I was 18 years old. I studied only in French, I speak French, Lingala Swahili, and a little English. I came to Ireland to study English and to work. I need to learn how to read, write and speak English.

I live in Tallaght with my parents, sisters and brothers. My sisters and brothers are studying in school in Tallaght. I have some friends from Congo here in Tallaght. I don’t have the qualifications to work in Ireland. I need to do the courses to prepare for work.

Dublin is a friendly place. Dublin is a place which has many activities about jobs and courses. Life in Dublin is very expensive. I have free time so I can study English courses and computer. In the Congo I worked as a motorbike taxi driver. I came to Europe because there is no war here. My future plans are to study and get a good job.
Iwona's story

My name is Iwona Kaminiska. I am originally from Poland. I speak my national language Polish, conversational Russian, Czech, Slovak, some German and English. In Poland, I have a large family, friends and acquaintances who I often visited. We are going on trips, to the cinema, to the theater.

I am married for twenty-five years. We fell in love still in elementary school. We walked together to the same class. My husband's name is Jacek and he is a professional driver. We have three children: two sons and a daughter. The older son's name is Adrian. He is twenty-four years. This year he graduated BA from Economic University in Poland in the department of tourism on the management, and he came to us in Ireland. At the moment he is looking for a job related to his profession. He speaks English. The younger son's name is Jakub. He is twenty-three years. He studied in Poland and, like me and my parents, he is a teacher. Our daughter's name is Agata. She is sixteen years old and goes to school in Dublin.

In my country I was a teacher for twenty-five years. I finished Master's degree at the University of Wroclaw (Primary Teacher Training) Postgraduate courses and a lot of different qualification courses: "Organization and management in education", "A disabled person at home - tuition", "How to work with children who have had a difficult upbringing", "Information technology for teachers", "Work with children chronically ill and physically disabled", "Tour guide", "Economics and Business Organization". In Poland I worked in The team of Primary School and Junior High School in the Hotel Spa Teplice in Jelenia Gora, Position: Primary teacher education and computer science. In Dublin, I worked only two months in NeoNet Cafe, Position: shop assistant. I loved my job in Poland and I liked teaching and I liked my students.

We are a family linked to tourism. When we were in Poland, we had a coach and organized tours. Seven years ago, our bus broke down and we had a problem with the repayment of the loan. Therefore my husband came to Ireland and began working in Dublin as a bus driver. He also is hasa taxi licence and now works as a taxi driver. The decision to leave the Poland was very difficult, because we do not like to live separate. We longed for him, because three years ago we decided together with our daughter to come to Dublin to my husband.

In Ireland we like it very much. It is a beautiful country. A truly green island. The people who live here offer friendship and are friendly, helpful and nice people. Our daughter is happy here. She likes to go to school. She has many friends and acquaintances. She has no problems with communicating. She possesses a very good knowledge of English.

In Dublin, I met a lot of friends. I am going with them to the pool, to the Drop-in Centre. I am visiting places of interest in Ireland. In Ireland I have studied in Deansrath Community College - Course: FETAC level 3 English and Computers, Subjects included: English, Computer Literacy. In Dublin, I met a lot of friends. I am going with them to the pool, to the Drop-in Centre. I am visiting places of interest in Ireland. I do not like that so many young people in Ireland smoke cigarettes and behave too freely.

My husband works hard all nights of the week as a taxi driver. I also would like to work, but I do not speak English well. I hope to improve in my English to find a job that will give me satisfaction and money.

Our family likes to travel, explore new places, countries, walking in the mountains. We visited almost all Ireland and most European countries. The realization of all our dreams is hard because we do not have enough money, because only the husband works.

I have been coming to the Drop-in Centre for three months. I met there a lot of interesting people. I have studied there with good and kind teachers. I love the classes in the computer lab run by Mr. Peter Sheekey. I wish I had known about the Drop-in Centre before. I also try to teach myself English and I signed up for an English course for school.

I have to improve my English because I am ashamed that I do not speak English well. I would like to do all the same things. I would like to work in Ireland. I would like to freely talk with all the people. I would like to be able to read the original of my favorite books, such as Sparks, Jodi Picoult, and Erich Segal. I would like to communicate with everyone.
Lena's Story

My name is Lena. I am from Ukraine. In Ukraine I studied Economics and Management. My first job was as a shop assistant of ladies underwear. After that I worked as a manager in a leather shop. Then I got married and came to Ireland. In Ireland I worked in Debenhams. I know Russian and Ukrainian languages and I am learning English. With my friends and family I speak Russian.

I went to an English course and had private lessons before the Drop-in Centre. I have been in Ireland for three and a half years. I have been coming to the Drop-in Centre for 3 weeks. I came in Drop-in Centre because I want to learn and to speak English better than I know it now.

I live in a flat with husband and daughter. My social life in Dublin is spent with my daughter. In Ireland I celebrated all public holidays with my friends and family. It was very interesting and joyful. I do not have a lot of friends in Ireland.

I go to go to the shops and the social centre and I need to speak English language. The main reason I want to improve my English is because I live in Ireland. I want to learn English and to find good job. Things I like about living in Ireland are there are nice people here, and there is a good attitude of Irish Government to people and to immigrants.

Rafal's Story


Poland has not yet perished. So long as we still live. What the alien force has taken from us, we shall retrieve with a sabre.

National anthem of Poland

Dabrowski Mazurka

Nie wszystko zło co sie swieta
All that glitters is not gold.

Tony czczyty sie chwyta
If the shoe fits, wear it.

Polish Proverbs

I am originally from Poland. My work in my country was very interesting and very hard. I was doing a lot of different work, but I most enjoyed working as a building conservator. I worked in Poland - Gdansk, Warszawa, Torun and in Russia in Kaliningrad, where I conserved old buildings. With my work I could see old interesting historical places.

I have been in Ireland for seven years. Now I am a student and I do not have much time, because I started to go to school. I speak Polish along with my family speak and my friends speak Russian, Polish and English. I have been coming to the Drop-in Centre for two months. I want to improve my English, because I want to feel confident.

Klaudiusz's home town

I live in Tallaght with my wife. My social life in Dublin is interesting and busy. I have few friends from Dublin. I meet my friends and we go to the pub, drink beer and speak about different ideas.

Every Sunday my wife and I go to church, where we meet very interesting people. After mass we get something to eat and drink tea, maybe wine and talk with the people we meet.

In Poland when I was with my friends I went to many football games, because I am a football supporter. I support Lechia Gdansk. Also I like rugby and support Ogniwo Sopot, hockey - Stoczniowiec Gdansk, speedway - Widzewels Gdansk.

Now I cannot meet with my colleagues from the city in Poland and travel with them to watch our football team because I am here in Ireland. But now I allow myself to travel, I couldn't do it in my country.

I like Dublin because it is near the sea, like my town Sopot in Poland. However I do not like the dirty streets, neglected houses, drug addicts and drunks.

My life has changed since I left Poland and got married. I think that I’ll stay in Ireland. I want to be a father, buy an apartment and have dignity to live with my family.
Jane's Story

My name is Lisa, I am originally from China, and I speak Chinese.

In China, I was an office worker. In my free time I like to eat different delicious foods and do some shopping with my friends. Sometimes, I also go to library to read books. I really liked my work and my workmates. But in order to stay with my family, I resigned in 2008.

Ireland is a warm and beautiful country, it is not too hot. I like Ireland, and I have been here for 4 years since I came to Ireland in 2009.

Now, I live in a house with my family in Tallaght. At home I speak Chinese with my family and my Chinese friends. Sometimes, I also speak little simple English words to my baby and my friends.

Usually, I have no free time because I have to take care of my lovely baby day and night, and I have to cook for my family.

I came to the Drop-in centre in October 2013, almost 1 month ago. In the Drop-in, I want to improve my English and make more friends, because my English is not good, especially my oral English and Listening. I would like stay in Ireland and learn to understand English better.

For the future, I want to learn English well enough, and I would like to be a teacher.
Malgorzata's Story

My name is Malgorzata and I am from Poland. In Poland I studied Slovak and Bulgarian languages and I have done a Masters. In Poland I went to school and after that I studied in University. When I finished my studies I worked as a secretary in a school.

When I came to Ireland I found job in a coffee shop in Tallaght. I worked there for 6 years, first as a counter assistant and the last 3 years I was a shop manager.

I speak Polish, Slovak and English languages. With my family and friends I speak Polish. I have been in Ireland since 2006. I am coming for the first time to the Drop in Centre. I come here because I want to improve my English. I live in an apartment in Tallaght with my husband and children. At this time I am not working, I am a housewife. On free time I'm going to the cinema with my daughter and I meet with friends. My friends live in Tallaght and they are from Poland.

With Irish people I speak in the shops, in Rua Red, in my daughter's school with other parents and teachers. I want to improve my English because I want to speak better and find better job. I like living in Dublin because I like this Town, I feel good here. I have friends and my children were born here. I miss my family and friends from Poland.

I'm busy all the time but when I find time I like watching movies, playing with my children and meeting with my friends.

In Dublin and in my country I can do the same things. Life in those 2 countries is similar. My life has changed because now I'm a mum. I want to improve my English and find a job. I think about beauty course and maybe I will open my own beauty salon.

My Year

Places I have been in Dublin, Paris, Roma, Mallorca and Poland. People I have met from different countries were in my job, in my daughter's school.

Nice things that have happened: holiday in Poland, my children's birthday parties, and a beautiful summer in Ireland. People who have helped me are my family, husband and friends. People I have helped are my family, husband, and friends.

Films or books I have seen or read: I read biography of Danuta Walesa, children's book etc. last films I watched were Elysium, Illusion.

Days I have celebrated: my children's birthday parties, my cousin's wedding.

Things that have changed: I lost a few kilos.

Things I have learned: English.

Things I have bought: a house.

Nice food or drink I have tried: my friend's hot apple cake.

Things I want to do next year: I want to go on holiday in a hot part of Europe.

Grace's Story

Ghanaian song: Oh, hey, menya itaban
Menya itaban, a 先手 make ado nyekyn
If I had feathers I would fly to my love

My name is grace of 42 Allen Hall Tallaght
Dublin 24. I originally come from Ghana. I
moved to Ireland in 2004. I first settled
in Cork and later moved to Dublin. I left
school at the age of ten in Ghana.

I speak about four language including
English and Twi. I can speak better than I
can write and read. I started work at the
age of sixteen doing cleaning at a local
factory near our house. Now in Ireland I
work as a kitchen assistant.

I have been coming to the drop in centre
for the past three years. At the Drop in
centre I have an opportunity to study
English and improve my writing and
reading. I live in a house with my family.
We go to church every Sunday and after
church service visit friends sometime some
friends with their families visit us after the
service.

My social life in Ghana is almost the same
like here. I made lots friends in my church
and at the Drop in centre. I am happy to
have those people. In Ireland it rains too
much and I sometimes miss the weather in
my country.

Over here I can spend time in a pub, which
I will not do in my country as a woman. My
life has changed for the better because of
my family, job and the friends I met here.
My favourite colour is orange. Thank you to
the entire Drop in centre teachers.
Joasia’s Story

Her name is Joanna. She is 33 years old. She comes from Poland. She is married and she has 4 children. Their names are Victoria, she’s 11 years old, Olivia she’s 8 years old, Jakob and Katrin are twins and are 4 years old. They came to Ireland 4 years ago. Her favourite food is chicken wings, and she likes to drink coffee. She hates cats, but she has a fish, a dog and a rabbit at home. She does not work at the moment, but she has worked in Malahide Service station.

Where are you from? She is from Poland. Where is it? It is Poland in Central Europe. How many people live there? There live 38.5 million people.

Do you live in a city? Yes, she lived in city called is Katowice.

What languages do people speak in your country? In her country peoples speak just Polish.

What is the name of your money? The money is called złoty.

Do you have a president in your country? Yes, they have a president.

What is the weather like in your country now? The weather is hot in the summer, and cold in the winter.

Is the food different to the food in Ireland? Yes, Ireland has a different bread, potatoes and chips are topped with vinegar.

What is her husband’s name? His name is Mark.

How old is he? His is 36 years old.

What is her favourite drink? His likes to drink coke.

Do you like Ireland? Why? Yes, She likes Ireland because here is better for big families.

People:

Are people friendly and polite? Yes, they are friendly and polite.

Do most people live in cities or the country? Most people live in cities.

Do most people live in houses or apartments? Most people live in apartments.

Food:

What are the typical dishes in your country? Typical dishes are dumplings, noodles, cabbage, and pork breaded cutlet.

Is there a national drink? Beer and Wodka are the national drinks.

Work and study:

What time do people start and finish work? People start 6am and finish at 2pm

How many hours a day are children in school? 8 hours.

Do they have a lot of homework? Yes, if they go to school, they work hard in school and at home, even at the weekends.

When do people start university? They start the university at 21 years old.

Free time:

What do people do at the weekend? They go to the park.

How long are holidays for students and for workers? For students 2 months and for workers 2 weeks.

What clothes do people wear when they aren’t working? Normal, casual.

Holidays and festivals:


Do you have any religious festivals? No.

Why do you celebrate these days? Because on this day Jesus was born.

What happens on these days? They go to church.
Luzia's Story

Yurtana a degi lojzru du. (Кожкина а дорогу к удивлению) - "That which concerns the entire village is a festival. Company in distress makes trouble less". Chechen proverb.

My name is Luzia Labazanova and I come from Chechnya. I first arrived in Ireland in 2005. For the first week I felt little bit lonely. The first people I met were my family.

The first difference I saw was how busy everybody was. My first week in Ireland was so exciting because I saw my mother and my brother.

A good time I had in Ireland was at my friend's wedding in Roscommon. Some Irish people I know are the two families who are friends of my family.

A place I like to visit, I like to go to Turkey because the weather is nice and also I have friends there. My favourite thing is shopping. I do not understand why the Irish have tattoos and rings in their noses.

Three important events for me in Ireland are:
• I learned to speak English.
• I learned how to use the computer.
• I just got my passport and I am a delighted.

Valeriu's Story

Ne Imei 100 Rublei A Imei 100 Druzei - I don't have 100 Euro, but I have 100 friends. Moldovan proverb.

My name is Valeriu Chirtoaca and I am from originally from Moldova. I studied in my country for 10 years and then I went to university, then I started working as a taxi man. I have studied before at Tallaght Adult Education centre. I have worked for big company building Stresslite Tanks as a general operative. I speak Romanian, Moldovan, Russian, Polish and a LITTLE English.

In my family we speak in Moldovan language, with my friends we speak Russian. I have been coming to the Drop-in centre for 2 months. I have been in Ireland for 12 years. I came to the Drop-in centre because I want learn English and practice it. I live in Blessington with my family.

My social life in Dublin is active; I go to the gym cinema and go to the pub sometimes. My social life in my country was also active, I played football and did running. We went to the night clubs with my friends.

I have many friends in Dublin. The Irish people I speak to are my neighbours. I want to improve my English because I want to find a good job. The things I like about living in Dublin are nice people, beautiful country - always green. I like Irish dancing and Guinness beer. Things I don't like in Dublin are it often rains, litter on the streets, and very expensive road tax and in insurance for car.

I have some free time because all my kids are going to the school and preschool. In my country there is not enough to live on with one salary, it is very small.

In my country I can visit my parents and speak in my mother tongue. My life has changed after I arrived to the Ireland because here my life is absolutely different than it was in my country. My plans for the future are to improve my English, and find a job. I wish to buy a house and I wish stay in Ireland.
I am originally from Ukraine. I studied at the University in the Faculty of Philosophy, doing Cultural studies. I worked in the many places in Ukraine from the age of seventeen. And my last job was at a pharmaceutical call center.

I haven't yet worked in Ireland, because I need to improve my English. And it is getting better since I came to the Drop In Center. My mother tongue is Russian, but I can speak Ukrainian also. In my family I speak Russian, the same as with my friends, but some of them are English speaking, thus I speak English as well. Sometimes I speak Ukrainian for the same reason.

I have been living in Ireland for 5 months. I have been coming to the Drop In Center for 3 months. I like it very much, because it is a good opportunity to meet new friends, improve English skills, communicate with people, integrate and feel more confident and comfortable in a country where I haven't lived before.

I live in Tallaght, with my husband. Once a month we gather with our friends and go to various places such as: bowling, pool, some games like mafia.

There are many friends of mine in Dublin, and two close friends in my country. The difference between Ireland and Ukraine in that I can't speak English well enough for full communication and the Irish accent is a little bit difficult to me to understand.

I have met new people who became friends of mine. But still I don't have a close friend as I have only been living here a short period of time. Irish people whom I know are from the Drop In Center, and some are friends of my husband.

I want to improve my English because I want to feel comfortable and more confident in Ireland, and for my future study and work.

I like people in Dublin. Most of them are friendly and easy-going. Another thing that I like about Ireland, and specifically in Dublin, is the weather. Yes, it sounds strange, but it’s true. I like the sun and cold at the same time. And I like rain. I like when weather is changes fast. It means if it rains, so it could be not too long. I like Dublin’s streets with so many buses and old houses, Dublin Castle, city center, Trinity College, St. Patrick Cathedral. There are no things yet I don’t like about living in Ireland.

I have some free time, because I don't work at the present. I have a hobby, so I have a little free time. I like to knit, sew, and make handmade toys. I like reading. One of my favorite writers is Cecilia Ahern. I have read many books time ago. And now I will read some of her book in original language. Can’t wait.

In Ireland many lands are private, and when you go out with friends for barbeque, it is not so easy to find a nice place. In Ukraine you can stay almost wherever you want to make a fire for a barbeque.

My life has changed because I have moved to a country where I have never been before, even as a tourist. Another culture, language has made changes inside me. It means that I'm looking more widely at the world and know much more about life. I'm developing through the information which I get in English, which is not my native, this promotes my development.

My plans for the future are to make my family bigger, and study and perfect my English. Also I plan to get a good job.
Alma's Story

Fish look for deeper places, but humans look for better places...

My original country is Latvia. Riga is the capital city of the country. My work in my country was very interesting but hard. I worked as an economist in a great company. This company owned a chain of cafes and restaurants of eastern cuisine. I liked my job very much.

All my life I wanted to move to another country. And when I became older and my own family got bigger, my husband decided to move to Ireland. He went to Ireland first. He looked a work and a house for us. And after one year we started to live together in Ireland. It was terrible year. I have been in Ireland for three and half years. I live in Dublin in the Tallaght area, in a big house with my husband and our three kids.

Once I spoke with my friend and she gave me advice about Drop-in Centre. And I decided to come to the Drop-in Centre. I have been coming to the Drop-in Centre for a few months. I came to the Drop-in Centre firstly because I wish to improve my English, and secondly I would like to communicate with other people and, thirdly, I can discover something interesting here. My life has changed since I came to the Drop-in Centre on the better side. Here it is very comfortable, friendly people, good teachers. All days in Drop-in Centre are different here it is always interesting and educational.

In the Drop-in Centre I met many people from different countries, here I can speak with them, to know something new about their countries, traditions and cultures. Some traditions in other countries are unusual and foreign for me, for example those from oriental countries. At present I am not working in Ireland, but I am studying English in courses now.

Usually I speak Russian language, but sometimes I speak English and Latvian. With my family at home we speak in Russian. With some of our friends we speak in English and Russian.

My social life in Dublin is not very rich with events. I do not have many friends here. And all my time I spend with our kids and my husband. But we try more to go to different cafes, cinema, shopping, theatre, and classes for kids and adults and exhibitions.

My social life in Latvia was very busy and interesting. I often met with my friends, we celebrated all the holidays together, we went to the cinema, restaurants, theatres or sometimes we stayed at home and played any games. It was always been a fun and exciting. I love my friends and miss them. In Dublin I have not made any true friends. All my true friends stayed in Latvia or moved to other countries.

Usually I speak with Irish people in the shops when I ask for help to me find something. When I visit our doctor or in the hospital, in my kids' school and in Drop-in Centre I very often speak with Irish people in English. I want to improve my English because now my language level is not enough for me to communicate with people who speak English and now I cannot have a full and rich social life.

Things I like about living in Ireland are the beautiful nature, sea, ocean, shops and prices, style of driving cars (it is calm and peaceful), polite people, pubs, Guinness beer, Irish dancing, windy weather and Halloween. Things I do not like about living in Ireland are it often rains, litter on the streets, very expensive tax and insurance for a car, sometimes I do not like some people's appearance. I have some free time because all my kids are going to the school and now I am not working.

While I am living in Ireland I do not have to work, here I have a lot of freedom to go on a walk with my dog, for the winter time I do not need warm winter (snow) boots or a heavy coat. Things I could do in my country that I cannot do in Ireland are picking berries and mushrooms, skiing and sledding, swimming in the warm sea, and visiting my parents every day. My life has changed after I arrived to the Ireland because here I started all my life from zero. Here my life is absolutely different than it was in Latvia. My plans for the future are to improve my English level, to go to the courses and find a job.
Chata’s Story

I am originally from Nigeria. I studied in my country and I worked as a hairdresser in my Nigeria. I want to study in Ireland and I want to be a community social carer. I speak my language with my family and speak English with my friends. I have been in Ireland for three years. I have been coming to the Drop-in Centre for 11 months. I live in Tallaght with my friend.

My social life in Dublin is better than my country. I have made good friends in Dublin and in the Drop-in Centre. I speak with Irish people in Dublin, beside my house and in the shop.

I want to improve my reading. The things I like about Dublin are the people and the English language. I have some free time in my house with my friend and my children.

Yoruba proverb: Aguntan to ba ajar in ayee ibe - Birds of a feather fly together

I cannot do all the things I want to in Ireland because I did not go to school. In my country I could work without going to school. Things I could do in my country were work, and I cannot in Dublin if I don’t go to school. My life has changed in Ireland. My plans for my future are I want to become a community social carer. I want to be a better person in life.

I decided to come to Ireland because I wanted to be a better person in life. I decided to come because I want my future to be useful to me. And I want my children to have a better life. I want them to go to a better school in life. I want my children to have future in life in Ireland.

I decided to come to Drop-in Centre because I want to improve my reading and I want to improve my spelling. My reading has changed since I came to the Drop-in Centre. I am so happy I came to the Drop-in Centre because it helped me improve reading and now I have confidence in many things.
I am originally from Tibet. I studied in my country for 9 years.

I am studying English in the Drop-in Centre. I have been working in Ireland in a Chinese restaurant as a kitchen chef for 2 years.

I speak Tibetan, English and Mandarin. With my family I speak Tibetan, and with some friends I speak Tibetan, English and Mandarin, I use them all.

I have come to Ireland for to change my life.


My social life in Dublin is I like drinking coffee, meeting friends, and playing football. In Tibet I did horse riding, dancing, singing Tibetan songs and meeting friends.

I have a very nice friend in Dublin, he is from Ireland and his name is Nick. We met in 2010 when he was studying Tibetan. With Irish people I speak English, because I live in Dublin and English is international language.

I like living in Dublin, here I can see the Dalai Lama and live a free life.

I think the Dublin city shopping centre closes too early - 6pm.

I have some free time, and like to go to the market looking, drink coffee, reading the newspaper, and watch TV. Things I can do in Dublin are I can say "free Tibet! Tibet is one country, Tibet is not China. I can drive in my country.

Tibet song by Lobsang Sangay – translated by Temba

Like a snow touches the sky, a new person of our golden age
has taken on the fate of tough duty, held this fearlessly on his shoulder

here is champion lobsang sangay, chosen and empowered by the majority

like the son of the heaven, enthroned on the golden throne

has stepped up on the footsteps of our forefathers

of the prime minister, this suppression here must not be poisoned by the cunning motive

for the unity of three provinces, the prime minister not doing like many others

and not falling in deception the direction of Tibetans in and outside

to transform and to lead to our freedom

*My sorrow is your burden.
My tears are your sorrow.
My life is your tears.
Lets share all our sorrow and joy together*.

- Lobsang Sangay, scholar

(Translation from photo above)
Uma’s Story

Bosnia and Herzegovina is my original country. There I studied law at my university.

I don’t work in Ireland, but I learn English language. I speak Bosnian language at home and English language with friends. I have been in Ireland since 2003.

I have been coming to Drop-in Centre for 2-3 years. I come to the Drop-in because I need to learn English and I want to meet new people and friends. I live in Tallaght with my family.

My social life in Dublin is very similar as my social life before, that means everything what I like in my country I can find here. I like to go to the cinema, visit many interesting place in different cities in Ireland, and go to concerts.

I have a lot friends in Dublin and they very friendly, helpful, and interesting people. I meet Irish people every day in the Drop-in. I also meet neighbours. I want to improve my English because language is very important for everything, for a million things.

Things I like and things I don’t like about living in Dublin are similar to my original country. I like friendly people, parks, mountains, and shopping. I don’t like impolite people, and criminals.

I have some free time for me and then I like to watch TV or I like to go shopping my favourite place. My life has changed because I came to a new country, a new home, a new language, and new friends. My plans for the future are to speak very good English, to find a job in my profession, and to meet more friends.
Appendix 5 - Transcripts of Audio Interviews

Transcription Conventions

... – short mid-sentence pause/unfinished sentence

(pause) – Longer pause

*Italics* – strong emphasis

Eh/um – vocal pause

Mid sentence comma – repairing, rephrasing, and rethinking on the go (e.g. Yeah she’s, she’s a lot)

Uh huh – non-verbal agreement/yes
Transcript of audio interview: Hanna

Present: Hanna, Peter
Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre
Date: January 14th 2014
Interviewer: Peter Sheekey
Duration: 20 minutes
PETER: You use another name in your email
HANNA: Yes, I like this. it is like nickname
PETER: Is that from when you were a child or
HANNA: No, my mother and my friends just say this
5 PETER: In Ireland, you have family in Ireland...a husband
HANNA: And mother-in-law and father-in-law
PETER: And one child, two children?
HANNA: One child
PETER: How old is she?
10 HANNA: She is four years old
PETER: Four years old, so you’ve quite a big family here. Do you have any brothers and sisters?
HANNA: No
PETER: Only child, we say. I am one of nine children; a crazy childhood
HANNA: But you know how to share
15 PETER: Yes, and I can understand others. Why do you want to improve your reading and writing?
HANNA: I want to improve my reading and writing because I want to continue my education and after that to get a good job
PETER: So studies and work is the main reason for it?
HANNA: Yeah.
20 PETER: Is it only for that or are there other problems in your daily life where this is important?
HANNA: Yeah, because I like reading very much. I read a lot of books, and I want to read English books too, and newspapers and magazines. And sometimes it’s difficult for me to understand the meanings or words
PETER: So it’s also for enjoyment
HANNA: Yeah
25 PETER: Does it cause any other problems in terms of living in Ireland where there are other situations where reading and writing are used?
HANNA: I didn’t think about that, but the main reason is that, for my immigration and to understand people...
30 PETER: To integrate better as well?
HANNA: Yeah, to integrate better
PETER: How will things change in the future if you improve your reading and writing. What will change for you?
HANNA: You speak only about reading and writing or about speaking too because it depends...
35 PETER: Well, we can include speaking too, your English
HANNA: I think it will be good for my integration and I can live a normal life. And communicate with other people without problems. And to help my daughter in their school
PETER: She hasn’t started school, has she?
HANNA: She goes to preschool
40 PETER: How’s her English?
HANNA: She says that she doesn’t speak (laughs)
PETER: It’s normal that children have a silent period
HANNA: But she tries to say something: “Bye, yes, no”. At home she all the time now says “no” (laughs)
45 PETER: (Laughs) She has learned this magic word! When you were writing this story, who were you writing for?
HANNA: I have written for people who is interested in it. For immigrants, it will be easier for them after to do something
PETER: So other immigrants who read your story will understand?

HANNA: Yeah
PETER: When you were working on the story, what did you like about working on the story?
HANNA: I liked that we worked in a group. And we communicate with other students, and to learn more about their personal lives and cultures and traditions. It was very interesting and enjoyable.

PETER: In a bigger way, what do you think you learned from doing this?
HANNA: I learned, I think, a lot of writing skills. How to make my story more enjoyable and interesting, and what expressions exactly do I have to use. I think it was very important for my writing skills.

PETER: So it really improved your writing skills?
HANNA: Yeah

PETER: Do you think this is a good way to learn reading and writing?
HANNA: Yes, I think it is a good way to learn.

PETER: Is it different from other ways that you would have learned in the past? You have done a lot of education, so is it different from other things you have done?
HANNA: If you mean English language?

PETER: Or language education in general.
HANNA: Yes, it was different, it was more useful because we learned just from books and without communication with others – rules and things
PETER: Grammar, rules, but no communication?
HANNA: It wasn't so enjoyable

PETER: And there was no real communication, and in this situation there was?
HANNA: Yes, we learned more.

PETER: I was watching and you all worked very well together. It was fantastic. Why did you decide to come to the Drop-in Centre?
HANNA: Because I want to improve my English and communicate with other in English

PETER: And is that happening?
HANNA: I think yes because I speak more English
PETER: How would you describe the group here in the Drop-in Centre?
HANNA: I think that we are very friendly and persons here are kind and interesting, and I really like to work with them, and spend time with them.

PETER: How do you use language in the Centre? How do you use it when you are communicating?
HANNA: I really don’t understand what do you mean. I use it as a normal way.

PETER: Is it different from what you do outside the Centre?
HANNA: But outside I don’t speak a lot of English.

PETER: What situations would you use English in outside the Centre?
HANNA: In the shop, at school with my child teachers. That is all, and some postman when they come.

PETER: Irish postmen are very friendly, aren’t they?
HANNA: Yeah (laughs)

PETER: Do you talk to your neighbours, at all?
HANNA: Sometimes, not always

PETER: Are they friendly?
HANNA: Yeah, they are very friendly. We get from them every Christmas presents, and we give them back. It’s like a tradition.

95 PETER: So you've created a little tradition with the neighbours.
HANNA: Yeah, and in Easter too
PETER: You say you meet some mothers in the playground, do you speak to some Irish mothers?
HANNA: No, most of them are Russian speakers
PETER: So where are the Irish women?
HANNA: I don’t know. There are a lot of Polish and Russians.

100 PETER: Yeah, Tallaght has a large Polish population. If somebody in the Centre were to say “Who are you?” what would you answer?
HANNA: I’m a mother, I’m a wife, I’m a student, (laughs) I’m a good person
PETER: Has coming to the centre changed anything about your life in Ireland, I mean outside the Centre?
HANNA: My life became more interesting, and I have more experience and I have more future plans
PETER: So you would say you have more ambitions?
HANNA: Yeah, but I am always ambitious (laughs)

105 PETER: Have your ideas of your own community changed since you came here, your relationships with your own people?
HANNA: I don’t think so
PETER: And what do they think when you talk about the Centre?
HANNA: I tell them that I like to come here and spend time with people and it is very interesting
PETER: And what do they say? How do they see the place?
HANNA: I don’t know. I think that they are (laughs) jealous that I spend time here, and that I like it and am more interested in
PETER: And do you tell them “Come on, come!”
HANNA: No! (laughs)

110 PETER: So you keep it for yourself? Would you say you have an English language identity? You know the way we have a different identity in different languages. When I speak Italian, I have my Italian identity. When I speak English, I have my English identity. Would you say there is an ‘English’ Hanna?
HANNA: (pauses) I don’t know. Maybe not yet, but I think it will be
PETER: Do you think that it’s happening?
HANNA: Yeah
PETER: Do you think that your experience here would have helped that?
HANNA: I think yes, I hope yes
PETER: Did writing the story in any way change that?
HANNA: Maybe yes, because it is my personal style how to write and how to use English, yeah
PETER: So the ‘English’ Hanna is growing?
HANNA: Yeah!
PETER: Well it’s different from your personality, you build your identity in another language as well
HANNA: Yeah
PETER: Do you think being at the Centre has changed the way you speak to Irish people?
HANNA: I think yes, it has changed. I become more, more...talkative, I think, yeah
PETER: So you’re more confident communicating with Irish people
HANNA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: But I think you’re a confident person anyway, but even confident people have problems when it comes to speaking another language.
HANNA: Yes, because it is very important to speak fluently before you’re comfortable.
PETER: What things would you change about the Centre?
HANNA: I think nothing because I like everything what happen here.
PETER: In general, what would you say are the most important things you’ve learned at the Centre?
HANNA: In general... (thinking pauses) I learned to speak English more easier.
PETER: More fluently?
HANNA: More fluently, yes.

PETER: You said that in future you want to be part of Irish society. What do you mean?
HANNA: I mean that I will not have problem with communication and understanding, and I can go wherever I want and do whatever I want.
PETER: And what would you see yourself doing in the future, let us say after your studies?
HANNA: I don’t know, maybe in the same societies, social work or something to help people.
PETER: So you’re interested in this area?
HANNA: Yeah.
PETER: And you do some teaching here at the Centre. What is that like? Was it the first time teaching?
HANNA: Yeah, of course. Yeah, it is very interesting for me and it helps me to learn English by this way. I learn English more deeper.
PETER: Yeah, we say that teaching is a good way of learning in English. And how did it change you, the teaching, in terms of what you are? What effect did it have on you?
HANNA: I think that I am more useful, and ... I can help people and it is important.
PETER: Would you like to teach in the future, and is it something you would be interested in?
HANNA: If I will be good in English, yes, or something else. In the past I thought about it. I wanted to be a historical teacher, about middle history.
PETER: And would you still like to teach history?
HANNA: Yeah, yeah, it is interesting.
PETER: You wrote a fantastic story. If it was in your language would it be different?
HANNA: I don’t think so, no. I think it is quite normal and understandable. I like it in English (chuckles).
PETER: When you saw the finished story, what did you think?
HANNA: I was exciting, and I like it. I had, I was, impress...impressed.
Transcript of audio interview: AMIN

Present: Amin, Peter
Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre
Date: April 8\text{th} 2014
Interviewer: Peter Sheekey
Duration: 34 minutes
PETER: When you came here first in 2004, you came alone
AMIN: Yes I did
PETER: And you completed the asylum process within six months. Then you stayed in a centre, did you?
AMIN: Yeah, I stayed in a centre in Dublin for two weeks. Then they transfer me to Limerick and I stay for six months in Limerick. I was waiting for my, after a few weeks they sent me an interview and they give me another month, four weeks to go for an interview, and then I went for an interview. Then I was waiting for another three months for a result and I got my result after three months
PETER: It was quiet quick
AMIN: Yes
PETER: You were happy about that
AMIN: Yes I was very happy
PETER: Cos people wait a long time. When you came to Ireland did you speak any English?
AMIN: Eh not really, you know I could read, you know, a little bit. I could speak few words because I study in my country. Before it was not the second language English in school but now it’s the second language
PETER: So when you were going to school English wasn’t the second language?
AMIN: Well there was but not you know for everybody. So for that reason I couldn’t really speak English in that time. I need more English even now (laughs) to improve my English
PETER: But you didn’t study at school?
AMIN: Not really, no
PETER: So you learned a little bit yourself by reading or
AMIN: Yeah I did, I did. You know like we have some English words in my language, you know? Yeah we have but maybe a little bit different pronunciation
PETER: How many languages did you speak in your country?
AMIN: Yeah there’s about five, six different languages but two languages are the main language. Yeah I do speak Pashto and Dari, which is the same as Farsi
PETER: They’re very similar
AMIN: Yeah like you know like Ireland and England
PETER: It’s just the accent
AMIN: Yeah like when I was doing my course like you know the health and safety and safety and health, you know? They change it like my tutor she told me it’s because you know they don’t want to be the same as UK you know it’s just a little bit change. Like my language and Farsi is the same but just a different name. In my country they call it Dari but in Iran they call it Farsi but they are the same language, yeah
PETER: When you came to Ireland with very little English, did you study here? Did you do any courses?
AMIN: Yes eh while eh while I was in Limerick I was attending English classes, also computer classes you know just the basic one. And when I came to Dublin after six months also I went to the Ballsbridge College, you know?
PETER: IILT?
AMIN: Yes I think you were my teacher for about two weeks I think
PETER: There were hundreds of students
AMIN: Yeah you don’t remember but I remember yeah. I think for about three months I went to IILT. And I went after that I went to the Ballsbridge College for further education, you know? I’ve done one course which is called Business English. Yeah I have that certificate as well, yeah
PETER: So you completed that course? Level 5 that was good
AMIN: Yeah I completed and some subjects were 4 but most of them were level 5 yeah. So I learned English there as well, we used to do English there as well

PETER: After that then your English was ok. What did you do after that? What happened next?

AMIN: Well after that like you know I’m still learning. The problem is you know if you speak always, we speak always my language at home with my family, you know, my mother and my son. But I meet friends and that helped me a lot, you know? Like I have my few Irish friends. They are a very nice family, you know? And I visit them regularly you know they visit me and I learn a lot from them, yeah

PETER: So you need to have contact with Irish people really?

AMIN: Yes, yes which is good I think, very good

PETER: It’s number one

AMIN: Yes (chuckles) number one to improve

PETER: So you need to have contact with Irish people really?

AMIN: Yeah when I met my, this friends Irish friends, they are originally from Cork. They are very nice people and they you know I couldn’t understand them properly

PETER: The Cork accent!

AMIN: Yeah and also they were talking very fast but now I’m very confident I know.

PETER: Your ear has adapted

AMIN: Yeah I can understand them easily now, yeah

PETER: How did you meet them? How did you make friends with them?

AMIN: Well (chuckles) one day I was out you know and I was kind of lonely and they, that guy with his wife they were out too the same bar, you know? And we were sitting beside each other they ask me and it was very interesting when I told them I was from Afghanistan, you know?

PETER: They were very interested in it and they were quiet eh it was interesting for them to ask me and they wanted to ask me. And they asked about my experience, about my country, you know and we took about five, ten minutes and immediately you know they were very friendly. They asked me if I can meet them of if they can meet me and I was very happy as well. I was looking for someone (chuckles), you know?

PETER: So just by chance?

AMIN: Yeah and one day they call me and I went to their home you know I met them. And we became very good friends. Yeah, now they are my best friends. Yeah, we meet regulary.

PETER: Great story

AMIN: Yeah like all their family they know me (chuckles), you know? They took me to most of the families, you know? I was with their families even in Cork, Wexford

PETER: So you’ve travelled with them?

AMIN: Yeah it’s very nice, yeah

PETER: Are they a big family?

AMIN: They are, they are a big family, yeah

PETER: Typical big Irish family

AMIN: Yeah (laughs) they were very very nice to me

PETER: So they were interested in your story?

AMIN: They were yeah

PETER: This is what we are trying to do with the learners here. It’s important to tell you story, is it? Would you say that’s true, to be able to tell your story in English?
AMIN: Yeah (chuckles) well yes of course it’s important. Yeah it’s important to can explain your story. It’s of course important to me, yeah

PETER: How is it different telling your story to another Afghani in your language? How is it different telling your story in English to Irish people?

AMIN: Well it’s, I don’t know if it’s me. In my opinion it’s always, always even if you speak another language one hundred percent but I think it’s more tasty (chuckles) if you speak in your own language. That’s my taste I don’t know. Maybe I’m not right but this is me. There’s another taste if you talk in your own language, you know?

PETER: So it’s a different taste, a different feel

AMIN: Yeah it’s a different taste, the feeling is different. I feel more free you know and you can say it in any way you like to, you know? In English I’m not able to you know... give the details. You know, I can explain it to you but not how I can in my own language

PETER: But do you think it’s important to be able to tell your story in English to Irish people?

AMIN: Yes it is important, yeah. It’s good you know to tell in another language your story

PETER: We talk about identity in a language, so I speak my first language is English but my second language is Italian. So when I speak in English and when I speak in Italian, I’m a little bit different

AMIN: (chuckles)

PETER: Would you agree that that happens?

AMIN: Yes, yeah even me sometimes you know I don’t feel very confident because maybe I you know sometime I careful more you know to don’t say the wrong words. You know, but I still do, you know? This is you know when it comes to the confidence. Not very confident, you know? But if I know someone, it would be easier for me to talk to, you know? If I don’t know someone I think maybe I’m saying something wrong or (slight chuckle)

PETER: It’s about confidence. So when you’re relaxed

AMIN: Yeah, yeah when I relax it’s fine

PETER: When did you come to the Centre first? When was that?

AMIN: Oh I say it was eh before last year. I think it was 2012

PETER: So when I started working you had just arrived?

AMIN: Yeah

PETER: And were you regularly attending or just dropping in and out?

AMIN: No I think I was just dropping my mother

PETER: So you weren’t really attending then

AMIN: No cos I was working at that time

PETER: What were you doing?

AMIN: Well, I was working in a shop

PETER: It doesn’t sound like you enjoyed it

AMIN: Not really, no but I needed to work, you know? We all need to work. Yeah I worked and eh it was not a good pay, you know?

PETER: What sort of shop was it?

AMIN: It was a food shop, you know?

PETER: Like a coffee shop?

AMIN: Yeah pizza

PETER: SO you were working in the kitchen

AMIN: Yeah, I was kind of doing everything, you know?

PETER: They’re hard places to work in and they don’t pay well

AMIN: Yeah

PETER: Long hours little pay, you were happy to finish that
AMIN: Yeah kind of you know cos it’s not easy
PETER: Is that the only work you’ve done in Ireland? Did you do other jobs?
AMIN: I worked few other places mostly with food cos you know I had no other experience
PETER: No qualifications or experience?
AMIN: No qualifications, yeah. You know they don’t even accept my, I think they won’t accept, or maybe they do, if I have my qualification from my country but I don’t have it. I just finished my, I finished secondary school in my country even I didn’t get the result because of the Taliban arrived, you know. I complete my exams you know but I didn’t get the results
PETER: So that was like the Leaving Cert here? And then you had to leave?
AMIN: Yeah
PETER: But now your life is changing?
AMIN: Well yeah hopefully (chuckles). Hopefully I can achieve something here, you know. To get a job you know a good job
PETER: Your experience of the Drop-in Centre you know you’ve had some connection with it. What do you think of the place? What are your experiences of it?
AMIN: Well I think it’s the best place for people to learn English, you know? I can see people in Drop-in Centre are very friendly, you know? They are very nice to people. Eh I think it’s the best place especially I think about my mother. Like she’s, she’s kind of feeling lonely, you know? She comes here, she learn English you know and also she made a lot of friends. You know, she make her day and she’s happy by the end of the day
PETER: I can see her today she is smiling and happy. Before I think she was sad probably and lonely
AMIN: She was, yeah and she’s also, she was not well. She’s still not in good health but compared to last year she’s a lot better this year
PETER: So in some ways the Centre has even helped her health a little?
AMIN: Yes, yeah you know because we all need to communicate. We need... to have friends, you know?
PETER: And she’s made friends here
AMIN: Made friends yeah
PETER: It’s not just English the Centre provides, is it?
AMIN: Yeah, yes a lot more yeah I can see that yeah
PETER: If you were to describe the Centre, would you say that it’s like a family, like a club, like a friendship? How would you see this place?
AMIN: Well... this place is, I can say this is more like... a family because I think they help you in any way they can. Like you know if you have a, I mean if you have any problem, I mean if you tell them, if they can help, they help you, you know. If they can’t, they show you the way to do it you know to solve your problem
PETER: So it’s like a family in the way they will try everything
AMIN: Yeah try everything
PETER: Actually, talking about your mother, she’s become an expert in the IPad.
AMIN: (laughs)
PETER: I noticed she’s teaching, I’ve seen her teaching other learners with the IPad. She’s showing them how to use it
AMIN: Yeah she’s, she’s a lot better, yeah. She’s able now to say “Hello. How are you?” you know? Which is a lot and good, yeah. She understands some words, you know? Last year she was like she couldn’t talk at all but this year she’s fine, yeah. She can understand
PETER: She’s beginning to make the change into English
AMIN: Yeah

PETER: It’s very difficult at that age

AMIN: Very difficult yeah and also because how can I say she’s illiterate, you know? She didn’t study in my country, you know?

PETER: Yeah so she has low literacy

AMIN: Low literacy, yeah and that’s why it’s more difficult for her

PETER: And there’s no schools here for people like that. This is the only place

AMIN: Eh yeah, I say so, yeah

PETER: Do you think that the Centre has changed anything about your life in Ireland?

AMIN: Yeah, I can say yes they... you know first of all if you learn English you know it helps you to make your life easy. This is the first step which is very important. And second yes... see like as today they help me with my assignments. And they helped me in other ways too you know I ask them and they show me the address. Even I, they show me, they sent me somewhere with some people they help me to apply for a job, you know? And I went somewhere they prepare me for an interview. I went to another place, I went from here

PETER: So to do interview practice?

AMIN: Yeah practice, yeah. This is all positive

PETER: They have changed your life

AMIN: Yeah

PETER: You drop in and out of the Centre, and that’s what it is a Drop-in Centre.

AMIN: Yeah (chuckles)

PETER: That’s why it works because people like you or others who have young children or people who cannot go to a normal school for many reasons. Would you say you’ve learned anything from the Centre? Not only language but in general including language.

AMIN: Yeah you know in general even if I didn’t attend regularly but I know they’re... they’re talking about eh... different cultures. Maybe I think I understand about different cultures here because I meet different people when I am here. And also... oh what can I say? I think it helps a lot people you know in any ways, in many different ways

PETER: So intercultural learning is a big thing?

AMIN: Intercultural learning, yeah I’ve seen the book that were on the table they’re talking about the racism, you know? Which is very important, you know? Ah they’re all good things. You know?

PETER: Would you change anything about this Centre?

AMIN: Change? What type of change?

PETER: Any change you want. If you were the manager here, what would you do different?

AMIN: Ok I think that if I am the manager, maybe I think that there is a little bit crowd, you know? That’s what I think (chuckles) bit crowd, yeah. Yeah I mean it’s crowded now in my opinion, I don’t know

PETER: Before there were less people here

AMIN: Yeah before there was less people but now there is more. Sometimes I can’t see the place. Very full of people

PETER: And not enough teachers yeah I can see that, yeah

AMIN: Not enough teachers

PETER: Yeah we’re trying to change that but otherwise it operates very well

AMIN: Yeah it does, it does yeah. It’s a very nice and friendly place
PETER: Another question I’m interested in about the Drop-in and the members. Do you think that having a common language with some of the other members helps? You know, some of them speak Arabic and use Arabic to help each other

AMIN: Yeah

PETER: Or, you know, some people maybe speak Farsi or, do you think that helps when they come here?

AMIN: Yeah, yes it can. It can help a lot, yeah. Like... some people they are you know more educated, some people are not, you know? And they are not able to understand when an English speaker talk to them, you know? But you know they can ask who is speaking the same language of their language. They can ask them and I think they can understand it more easily, you know? That’s what I think in my opinion, I don’t know like. Well like if you’re talking to me and I don’t understand and there’s someone else who is beside me and they are from my country, and they have good English, I can ask them. They explain me easily and I understand it easily

PETER: Have you seen that happening in the Centre?

AMIN: A lot I think, yes (chuckles). Yeah it does happen, yeah

PETER: So having more than one language is good as well

AMIN: Yes very good, yeah

PETER: Do you think there are inequalities in the Centre? Would you say everybody is equal?

AMIN: To be honest, I don’t know this really you know I’m not attending most of the time now

PETER: So you haven’t seen?

AMIN: No I haven’t seen, yeah

PETER: But it is a struggle for the members who come here to get the English

AMIN: Yeah

PETER: Everybody’s trying to get the teacher

AMIN: Yes (chuckles)

PETER: That happens

AMIN: Yeah it happens

PETER: So everybody in here is trying to get one thing

AMIN: Yeah

PETER: And sometimes they

AMIN: Yeah (chuckles)

PETER: You only attended for a little while and you wrote that story. You wrote a very simple story. I’d say your writing is a lot better now. Would you say over the last year your writing has improved?

AMIN: Yeah (chuckles) yes I’m everyday learning, I knew that

PETER: Where are you doing your nursing studies?

AMIN: Eh it’s called the Open College in Leopardstown

PETER: What’s it like studying out there?

AMIN: Yeah, very good yeah they were very nice and I almost finished my course, yeah. It was a very good experience for me, yeah

PETER: What do you see as your future in Ireland? What things would you like to do?

AMIN: Well I’m a very friendly guy (chuckles), you know? I like to work as a team, you know? And I always like to help people, you know? I’m very good at that. I like to help. Hopefully I can achieve something you know to work in a better place, you know? To have a good life (chuckles)

PETER: Do you see nursing as your future?
AMIN: I think so, yes. I like to do. I have, I have, there’s two option I like to go with. I can go with one of them, you know? I choose one. The nursing, I like to do the nursing. There’s different type of nursing. I like to go maybe for the general one or I like to do the paramedic, you know?
PETER: So working with ambulances?
AMIN: Yeah
PETER: Tough job

285 AMIN: Yeah not easy but I like it
PETER: Have you done any work on an ambulance?
AMIN: Well I didn’t work yet but the good thing is I have the license. Not the van but I have the bus license, you know. Which is very easy for me to drive the ambulance
PETER: So do paramedic driver

290 AMIN: But now is change. Before you could do one of the job, you know? You could be a driver or you know a paramedic. But now you have to be both. You should be able to drive the ambulance and have the paramedic, yeah. Now you have to be able for both, yeah. Yeah and I think the course is coming out this year, which is new course. I like to do that
PETER: Did you say you have a son?
AMIN: Yeah
PETER: How old is he?
AMIN: He’s eh nineteen. I was very young when I got married, yeah.
PETER: And he’s in Ireland?
AMIN: He’s in Ireland yes. I was eighteen when I got married, (chuckles), you know?
PETER: Very young. Is your wife here?
AMIN: No my wife unfortunately she passed away
PETER: I’m sorry
AMIN: A very long time ago
PETER: And what is your son doing?
AMIN: He’s studying English in this Centre
PETER: How’s he doing?
AMIN: I think he’s doing great, yeah. He improved his English a lot
PETER: And he’s happy?
AMIN: He’s happy. Yeah. Like I know he can manage himself now. You know, if he goes somewhere he can talk. He can solve his own problem
PETER: That’s great. That’s what you wanted
AMIN: Yeah
PETER: And he can start having a future
AMIN: Yeah he’s young he can do it, yeah. Hopefully yeah
PETER: His young and he’s smart. He’s got his father’s brain
AMIN: (laughs, sotto voce) Thank you
PETER: Any other wishes, apart from your job, for the future?
AMIN: You know (chuckles) we are human. We all have dreams. I don’t know
PETER: You like travelling. I like to see, even I, you know, maybe I’ve seen more places than some other people, you know? But I like to see more
PETER: In your story you talked about the west of Ireland
AMIN: Yes I never been no. I never been in, to Mayo, no
PETER: I go to Mayo very often. It is beautiful
AMIN: Yeah I heard that is very nice
PETER: So you want to travel more? And travel in Europe, would you like to see places in Europe?
AMIN: Well, yes. I never been in Germany. I like to see Germany, yeah. Eh... yeah because Germany is not too far, you know? Yeah hopefully I can go this summer
PETER: So you want to have a little holiday after you finish all your studies?
AMIN: Yes, hopefully, yeah

330 PETER: When will you get your assessment for that?
AMIN: The result of my course? Well I have for some subjects. I have for four or five subjects
PETER: And they’re good?
AMIN: They’re quite good, yeah. I have merits. I have one distinction and four merits
Transcript of audio interview: Hakim

Present: Hakim, Peter
Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre
Date: January 14\textsuperscript{th} 2014
Interviewer: Peter Sheekey
Duration: 20 minutes
PETER: So, are you learning a lot today?
HAKIM: Yeah, I am learning a lot
PETER: How many years of school did you do in your country?
HAKIM: Eleven years
PETER: Eleven years. And did you finish school?
HAKIM: No
PETER: Did you do any exams or tests?
HAKIM: No, I don’t
PETER: At school the language was Farsi?
HAKIM: Yeah, Farsi and Persian
PETER: Persian or Pashto? And how long did you study this?
HAKIM: When...I studied level six. I started Pashto to level 11 and I don’t study level twelve because level twelve is finished school...
PETER: So you missed one year...
HAKIM: Yeah...
PETER: The last year?
HAKIM: Yes, because I come here...
PETER: So you speak Farsi and do you speak Pashto very well?
HAKIM: eh...little bit, not perfect
PETER: But you can understand and have a conversation?
HAKIM: Yes, when people speaking with me I know what he say, and little bit I can speak with him
PETER: In Ireland you have your family here?
HAKIM: All my family is not in Ireland
PETER: Ok, so who is in Ireland with you?
HAKIM: Eh, my brother and his wife and two kids...
PETER: Two children?
HAKIM: Yeah, two children...this is...and I have two sister. They are in Afghanistan
PETER: Ok, the rest of your family is in Afghanistan
HAKIM: Yeah
PETER: So you are here with your brother...
HAKIM: Yeah, I am here...
PETER: And do you live with your brother?
HAKIM: Yeah, I live with my brother
PETER: So in the house you speak Farsi?
HAKIM: Yeah, because our language is Farsi
PETER: Do they speak English, your brother and his wife?
HAKIM: My brother can speak English but his wife can’t. He come in the course, the Drop-in Centre
PETER: He comes to the Centre. Oh, so your brother comes here too?
HAKIM: No, he don’t come...
PETER: Ah, so his wife comes here
HAKIM: Yeah
PETER: And your brother is working?
HAKIM: Eh, yeah
PETER: Like you will be in the future?
HAKIM: (laughs)
PETER: The questions I asked about your story is “Why do you want to improve your reading and writing?”

HAKIM: Because, because...unemploy is very bad for, eh, eh, for people because when i was unemployer I was, was very sad because what I do during they day. I want to improve my English because I want to get a very good job in the future. In the future I don’t want unemployer because I hate unemployer..

PETER: You don’t like not working?

HAKIM: Yeah, because unemployer make crazy

PETER: Yeah, it’s not good for the head. So reading and writing is good for work, but what other problems does reading and writing cause in Ireland?

HAKIM: I don’t have other problems, but, eh...my...I don’t have big problem, but my big problem is reading and writing. And now I try in the Drop-in Centre, it will be good when I come in the Drop-in Centre, it’s good now

PETER: It’s good now – It’s getting better

HAKIM: Yeah, it’s getting better

PETER: How long have you been at the Centre now?

HAKIM: Eh, maybe six months, ah, a little more

PETER: And your English has got better?

HAKIM: Yeah, a little bit

PETER: When you were writing your story, who were you writing your story for? Who did you want to read your story?

HAKIM: Mmm, my teacher and friends

PETER: And, what did you like about writing the story? What did you enjoy when you were writing the story?

HAKIM: Eh, because...ahm because I was with my friends, and I was in the school – I was with all my friends and they help, helped me. And...this is

PETER: So it was good to write with other people?

HAKIM: Yeah

PETER: Around you, and you helped each other?

HAKIM: Yeah

PETER: What did you learn from writing your story? What things did you learn?

HAKIM: I learn how can I...how can I .......... I forgot what is that name (long pause)

PETER: Is it making sentences?

HAKIM: ...yeah, it’s repeat, it’s repeat my life. How can I say for other people “This is my story, my life(s) story

PETER: So it helps you...

HAKIM: Yeah

PETER: ...when you are talking to other people, too...

HAKIM: Yeah

PETER: ...to explain your story?

PETER: Do you think this is a good way to learn reading and writing?

HAKIM: Yeah, it’s very good because people can know how one can say a story for other people: our story and another story. It’s very good for speaking, and it’s very good for other people, they enjoy it for a story. A story is very good. Some people like the story and it’s good, they enjoy it for a story, and they learn English and

PETER: Did you learn from other people in the group?

HAKIM: Other language, or no?
PETER: Not other languages, from their stories
HAKIM: Yeah, I learned
PETER: What did you learn?
HAKIM: I learned because, maybe, all my friends, I learned what was their story, and what they do. This
PETER: Were some of the stories the same as your story?
HAKIM: No, they are different but just improving English is the same with other my friends
PETER: So you were all improving your English together?
HAKIM: I think the Drop-in Centre is different people and different life. It’s very good and they learn the English together in the peace. They don’t say you is Chinese, you is Afghan, you is Poland – it’s very good
PETER: Everybody is the same
HAKIM: Yeah, everybody is same, and it’s good
PETER: Is it like a family, or a club? What do you see?
HAKIM: It’s like family
PETER: It’s like a big family?
HAKIM: Yeah, it’s like big family
PETER: When you are speaking English in the Centre, how do you feel?
HAKIM: I feeling good. When I don’t come in the Drop-in Centre some day, I was...I will be very sad...at the home. Or sometimes when I have work I can’t come in the Drop-in Centre, I’m very sad I miss one day in the Drop-in Centre. When I come in the Drop-in Centre, I enjoy it because all my friends is in the Drop-in Centre and I visited they, and it’s good. I enjoy it (smiles)
PETER: Are you doing some work here in Ireland?
HAKIM: No, but eh, I want to try I find a job
PETER: You are looking for a job?
HAKIM: Yeah, first I improve my English...
PETER: And then you’ll find a job?
HAKIM: Yeah
PETER: Of course, you need English for your job. Outside the Centre, who do you speak to outside the Centre?
HAKIM: Just Majeed. He is my friend. And sometime we speak English and sometime we speak Persian
PETER: So you practice English together a little?
HAKIM: Yeah
PETER: And other people? Do you speak to other people outside?
HAKIM: No, because we don’t have friends, and I don’t know what (we should – intention) do
PETER: Do you meet or speak to any Irish people?
HAKIM: Sometime we go in the square. And sometime we go in for buying something, for eating and maybe, like, clothes, shoes, other things. We speak with other Irish people...and...I don’t know
PETER: Learning at the Drop-in Centre, is it different from the learning you did at school?
HAKIM: Ah...no, I think no...because every refugee people he come in the Drop-in Centre he know that maybe the Drop-in Centre he have different teacher and I’m Afghan, and the Drop-in Centre he have Afghan teacher and he help me
PETER: And they help you to translate?
HAKIM: Yeah
PETER: How long are you in Ireland?
HAKIM:  Maybe nine months
PETER:  So you came to the Centre very soon after you arrived?
HAKIM:  Yeah
PETER:  How has your life changed after coming to the Centre
HAKIM:  Yeah, because when I come in Ireland, I was at home. I don’t go in the course, other course. I was very unhappy at home. When I come in the Drop-in Centre I feeling very good, and everyday my English is better. And I find different friends in the Drop-in Centre, and...it’s good, I like
PETER:  When we learn a language there, there are two Hakims. There is the Farsi Hakim and the English speaking Hakim. Do you think the English speaking Hakim is different from the Farsi Hakim?
HAKIM:  Letter not different, because eh English say my name different (refers to English pronunciation of name)
PETER:  But do you think when you speak in English, are you different from Farsi? You as a person, do you feel different?
HAKIM:  No, I don’t feel different
PETER:  Do you think, when you learn English very well, you will be a different person?
HAKIM:  Different person?
PETER:  Not completely different, but a little different maybe? Do you think you will change?
HAKIM:  Maybe, maybe
PETER:  What do you do in Ireland? (H:What?) What would you like to do in the future?
HAKIM:  I want to...first I want to improve my English, and I want to go to college and I want to study engineering. This is my hope, and, and I’m not sure I can get or not
PETER:  How old are you now Hakim?
HAKIM:  And, next year, this year twenty five
PETER:  twenty five? You can still study. You have to learn English very well for engineering. Are there many in the Afghan community in Ireland?
HAKIM:  ...Just I know Majeeb, and one teacher in the Drop-in Centre I know him. I don’t know...
PETER:  So you haven’t met anybody else? If people ask you outside “What is the Drop-in Centre?”, what do you say?
HAKIM:  I say, ah...Drop-in Centre is a course, is a course for, eh, any people who wanna speak and improve writing
PETER:  Do you say any other things?
HAKIM:  Yeah, I say in the Drop-in Centre is different people, and...and when you go in the Drop-in Centre, I’m sure, I’m sure you enjoy it and you fast learn it
PETER:  Has coming to the Drop-in Centre changed the way you see Ireland?
HAKIM:  Eh, yeah, because when I come in the Ireland maybe two months I miss the Drop-in Centre, and, eh, and I was very much miss, missing, miss. And, eh, and when I was at home, eh, I did think “What I do?” And when I come in the Drop-in Centre, I think my life had change – I love Irland (pronunc). And that time I don’t come in the Drop-in Centre, I think (nervous laugh) “Oh my god!”
PETER:  Where is this terrible place?
HAKIM:  (Laughs) Yeah!
PETER:  So you like Ireland better after...
HAKIM:  Yeah, very better
PETER:  ...and you understand more
HAKIM:  Yeah, because when I come in the Drop-in Centre, some people speak with me, I don’t understand what he say. And now I can speak little bit and I know little bit what he say for me
PETER:  Now you say your story is short. If you were putting more into this story, what would you say?
HAKIM: I’m not sure what I write more in my story. It need for thinking, and ...(pause)

PETER: If you were going to write more about Hakim’s story, what other things would you say?

HAKIM: Hakim’s story, ... I don’t know what I write more...

PETER: Other stories that you would like to tell?

HAKIM: Yeah, I like because, eh, sometimes when I in the home, I write the story. And I thinking sometimes when I was in the Afghanistan, I write too a story, what is that? I think in the... but I write in the English, and it’s good for improving English

PETER: If you were writing this story in Farsi, you would write more. What would you say... about Hakim?

HAKIM: I say in the Persian? I write all my eh story... what I do in Afghanistan and eh, I don’t say for my mother and father in the story...

PETER: About your family?

HAKIM: Yeah, I (would) write it more about my father and mother, and in the future, now...

PETER: You would write more about your future?

HAKIM: Yeah

PETER: And about Ireland, what other things would you write about your experience, your life, in Ireland?

HAKIM: My eh, life in Ireland... first I think I must find Irish friends. And it’s good for my improving English and speaking... and I don’t know, eh, I want to go to hospital for foot, eh... it will be good or no – this

PETER: How is it going with your foot, is the hospital helping you?

HAKIM: Yeah, it’s helping me but, eh, not very. I say my foot have problem, and she say I send you a form, and eh, address is in the form. You can go, and you must give appointment. It’s two months, but not coming eh, form.

PETER: Talk to our Centre manager and she will help you with the hospital, ok?

HAKIM: Yeah, ok

PETER: In general, when you were writing the story, you were working with other people. Did that help you? Did you learn from that, and did you enjoy working with other people?

HAKIM: Yeah, because all my friends we was together. All friends, and when I, eh, I don’t know some words, I asked from my friend, and some words he don’t know, he asked me. And I enjoy it.

PETER: And is it a good way to learn?

HAKIM: Yeah, it’s really good

PETER: You were happy to work like that?

HAKIM: Yeah

PETER: Ok, thank you very much

HAKIM: Thank you for it
Transcript of audio interview: Joasia

Present: Joasia, Peter
Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre
Date: February 4th 2014
Interviewer: Peter Sheekey
Duration: 20 minutes
PETER: First of all, how long have you been coming to the Centre, Joasia?
JOASIA: I think two years.

PETER: How would you describe the Centre?
JOASIA: Eh, in the school my daughter... eh, teacher asked me about what I do and I say “I am unemployed, and I don’t speak English”, and when I am coming to the meeting I say “Sorry bout my English is not good. And she ask me about English school...and eh, course free, and she ask me and she (teacher) coming here. Remember the lady coming with me here?

PETER: Oh yeah
JOASIA: And, eh, this was my start

PETER: So you learned about it at your daughter’s school?
JOASIA: Yeah, she is the Irish girl who came with me.

PETER: When you’re telling people about the Centre, what do you say to them?
JOASIA: I tell them this is a very good school. Few my friends is coming here because I told him... I told them about the school. And few my friends came here few months ago. Always I am happy, and I was happy because I coming here... I came here, and ... my friends they are happy.

PETER: So you brought some people to the Centre and they are happy too
JOASIA: Yeah.

PETER: Has coming to the Centre changed your life in any way?
JOASIA: First, my English is better. Not very good, but is better like before. And, now... I more opened for other people because before was ... very bad. I was shy, now my English is better so I am better.

PETER: So you are more confident in your English and it’s changed?
JOASIA: Yes.

PETER: So Polish is your first language?
JOASIA: Yes.

PETER: Is English your second language or do you speak Russian as well?
JOASIA: I learn Russian, but now is English.

PETER: So, English has become your second language?
JOASIA: Yes.

PETER: Better than your Russian?
JOASIA: Yes!! (chuckles)

PETER: Did you study English in school in Poland?
JOASIA: No, never before. Only Russian.

PETER: So when you came to Ireland, no English?
JOASIA: No English, no.

PETER: How long ago did you come to Ireland?
JOASIA: Seven year.

PETER: So you’d no English when you came to Ireland and you spoke a lot with Polish people?
JOASIA: Yeah (chuckles)

PETER: So you speak Polish with your friends and your family, but outside the Centre, do you speak English with other people?
JOASIA: No, with people I don’t speak English. If I was problem, I ask my friend about help cos they speak English.

PETER: So for many years you were asking your friends about problem and then you didn’t learn.
JOASIA: Yeah.

PETER: What sort of problems would you have with English speaking or writing in Ireland?
JOASIA: Eh... because I... I was shy and thinks “Oh no, If I say somethings bad!”. I always thinks “Oh no, maybe not yet”
PETER: So you kept saying “Later, later”

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JOASIA: Yes
PETER: In what situations was it difficult for your English in Ireland?
JOASIA: (unsure pause) mmm
PETER: So when you needed to use English and you had to ask your friends...
JOASIA: Oh, yeah. If I have interview or something, I studied before the, eh, interview at home
PETER: So job interviews were a problem?
JOASIA: Yeah

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PETER: Were there other situations in everyday life where it was difficult?
JOASIA: No, eh, I have at shop. When I am going at shop and I must say something
PETER: Well, you can go to some shops and not speak, supermarkets
JOASIA: I have a few times my... eh, he coming here eh, Tobias. He ask me a few times I help him, and I going with him to his doctor or hospital... and I help him
PETER: before people helped you and now you help them?
JOASIA: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: A network?

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JOASIA: Yes
PETER: So now you are in a position to help others?
JOASIA: Yes, how I can
PETER: So when you were writing here in the Centre, how would you describe the situation of working in a group? What did you learn from that?

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JOASIA: Eh, what we learn, yeah? About eh, other people. We learn new verbs...eh (unsure pause, nervous laugh) Oh my God
PETER: Ok, you learned language and English, but did you learn other things from the group, from the people?
JOASIA: Yes, how was, eh, learn how we can reading, writing and spoken, eh, yeah few things

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PETER: What about the cultures and the people did you learn...
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah, we learned about cultures, about eh, country, eh ... (sighs)
PETER: Yeah, that’s ok. Did you learn anything about the people themselves, their stories?
JOASIA: Yes, how they... what they like, eat, eh, what is their favourite food. What is typical food
PETER: Yeah, all about their culture and their countries

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JOASIA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: Did you learn anything about the people themselves who you were with? Cos you worked with Maya a lot...
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: Did you learn about her?

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JOASIA: I know before she before she looks a job, and now she works
PETER: That’s fantastic
JOASIA: Yeah, and now she works a hotel and she, she’s good
PETER: Do you talk to her? Do you see her?
JOASIA: Yes, yes we still friends

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PETER: Oh good, she’s doing well
JOASIA: Yes, she is very happy
PETER: Cos it was difficult for her she was very young and...
JOASIA: Yes, yes
PETER: Do you think that writing in this way is a good way to learn?
JOASIA: Yes, cos if we live here we must writing and reading and speaking. So I will stay here and this is very important for me the writing, reading and excellent speak English
PETER: Are you watching any Irish television?
JOASIA: Eh, Cos I have children, we have Polish but I listen radio Irish
PETER: Irish radio?
JOASIA: Yeah, Irish radio
PETER: And it’s difficult to listen to. Do you understand much?
JOASIA: Yes, yeah, I understand
PETER: Probably your listening is good. Better than your speaking, you understand a lot
JOASIA: Yeah, I ...
PETER: But it’s more difficult to write and speak
JOASIA: Yes, yes
PETER: Do you think your ideas of Ireland have changed since you started the Centre? The way you look at Ireland, the way you see Ireland?
JOASIA: (pause) The way I see?
PETER: Yeah, what you think of Ireland
JOASIA: What I think of Ireland?
PETER: Has it changed a little?
JOASIA: Eh, it’s changed. For me it’s very good. I love Ireland; people are very nice. Eh (nervous chuckle) ...
PETER: I mean, do you speak with your neighbours?
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah with my neighbours they are older than me, but they are very nice people, very, very nice. And always they smile, and very good people. I move eh, ...
PETER: House?
JOASIA: House, and I am very, very happy from this place cos it’s quiet. People are nice, very good
PETER: So the neighbours are good
JOASIA: Yeah, neighbours are ... before I live eh my neighbours was travel
PETER: Travellers?
JOASIA: Yeah, they always do something my children. And my children they sit at home and ...
PETER: Didn’t go out because they were afraid
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah, but now I am happy, my children are happy
PETER: Do you speak to your neighbours or anybody at the school or outside?
JOASIA: EH, with my neighbours, with people from English class because they are from Latvia, eh, one person from China, I think. And we speak English and is few people from Poland, but we can’t speak Polish
PETER: Well that’s good. It means you have to speak English
JOASIA: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: If you think about the Drop-in Centre, would you it’s a family, a club, a friendship?
PETER: For me? This is family, yeah, family like big family (chuckles). Everybody help like family, everybody like ... other people. And is like, like family
JOASIA: Yeah
PETER: Would you say that there is an English Joasia?
JOASIA: An English Joasia?
PETER: You have a Polish Joasia and it’s you identity. You are Polish and you speak Polish
JOASIA: Eh, (says real name) is English (says Polish name) is Polish
PETER: But would you say it’s different when you’re speaking English?
JOASIA: No, no it’s fine
PETER: Do you feel that the English Joasia is growing?
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah. Maybe first time when I came here, if people tell me (English name), I don’t
know my name for English. But now is normal
PETER: It’s normal for you
JOASIA: Yeah
PETER: About your learning, do you think you are changing in English?
JOASIA: (sotto voce) Changing... it’s better I think (than) before but it’s ... still no(t) good
PETER: You still have more language to learn. Ehm, Has coming to the Centre changed your life
outside the Centre?
JOASIA: Outside?
PETER: Before you were very shy, you didn’t speak
JOASIA: Yes, I’m opened, more opened (pause) I can speak with people, and I think with mistake,
people know what I mean eh, when I speak English. Before this was very hard for me, but now ... it’s
better
PETER: Yeah, before you were afraid to make a mistake
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: You were afraid to speak in case you made a mistake
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: But now you know people understand that you are not Irish, and they understand
JOASIA: What I mean
PETER: Do you think the work we did, writing and speaking together in a group, do you think
that helped you to understand your own problems?
JOASIA: Yes, it’s very help me because you, you learn eh, when you speak, you speak very slow I
understand. Normal, outside, people very quick, speak very quick and sometimes I nothing
understand what they say to me, but here is very good because everybody speak slowly, and if I
don’t know, understand something, you tell me again and it’s very good
PETER: So you’ve a place to practice slowly and then get better?
JOASIA: Yeah
PETER: What would you change about the Centre? Would you change anything here?
JOASIA: Change here?
PETER: Yeah, about our practice, about what we do?
JOASIA: Nothing. Everything is ok
PETER: You’re happy with it
JOASIA: Yeah, I’m very happy
PETER: Do you think that telling our stories is a good way to learn English?
JOASIA: Yeah, is very good because we must eh, writing and eh, we know new words
PETER: Yeah, it’s very good for the English, but do you think that these stories can help...people
JOASIA: Other people eh, my story, no?
PETER: Your story, and everybody’s story
JOASIA: Yes, yes because they know, it’s very easy, they must know how, how can, if somebody
ask him “Where are you from?”, they need know how answer, yeah? And how eh, this is good
(chuckles) because it’s eh, about myself. If somebody ask me, the story very help me cas I read this
and next time I know what I can, I can say
PETER: So it helps you to explain to other people
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah

PETER: Who you are, where you’re from, what you do
JOASIA: Yes, yes
PETER: So it’s like a practice
JOASIA: Yeah
PETER: If somebody comes to you and they don’t know any English, what advice would you give?

If you were going to help people to learn a language, what should they do?
JOASIA: Eh, ... of course I ... tell this people about this school, and if I can help, I help this people, but I say about this school because this school is very good for other people because very help everybody, everyone
PETER: What other things should they do if they want to become good at English?
JOASIA: (pause) The people, the person, yeah?
PETER: Yeah, to new
JOASIA: New person, yeah?
PETER: Yeah, new to Ireland. If I am new in Ireland, what should I do?
JOASIA: (pause) If don’t speak English, yeah? They need eh, they should be found, founded (?) eh school like this
PETER: First, yeah
JOASIA: Mm, (pause)
PETER: Outside the school, what should they do?
JOASIA: (pause) Outside ... eh, talking with people because this is very important for language and they must talking and must opened to other people
PETER: Yes, to be open is very important and to be friendly
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: Do your children speak good English?
JOASIA: Yes, very good
PETER: How old are they now?
JOASIA: (Girl’s name) is twelve, (Girl’s name) is nine and twins they are five
PETER: So they’re all going to school now?
JOASIA: Yes
PETER: You’ve more free time, finally

JOASIA: (Laughs)
PETER: You can think about your business. Do they help you with your English?
JOASIA: If eh, I don’t know, I sometimes don’t know, I ask but eh, I self... never ask him about help
PETER: Do they sometimes laugh at your English?
JOASIA: Oh, before yes (chuckles). And talking eh, together something because they know I don’t understand but now is different because I understand what they say
PETER: It’s changed a bit
JOASIA: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: Now you can understand

JOASIA: (chuckles) Yeah!
PETER: Your husband speaks English?
JOASIA: No!
PETER: But he’s working?
JOASIA: Eh, no
PETER: He’s not coming to the Centre, is he?
JOASIA: No because now I studied and he must stay at home to look after the children
PETER: So he’s giving you the time to come here? He’s a good man
JOASIA: (laughs) Yes, and later he will study
PETER: What are your plans for the future?
JOASIA: For the future? I would like eh, open my business because I am seamstress be profession and I think about sewing curtains and bedding and start selling them in the internet. See how people will eh interest
PETER: And you need to do a course to do that?
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah. Yesterday I was in social and she help me she, they give me paper with course, business course
PETER: So it’s the Start your own Business Course?
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah (takes out paperwork to show me) this here
PETER: So you have to think about all these things?
JOASIA: Yeah
PETER: It’s in Tallaght, good! A day course or an evening?
JOASIA: Day, day
PETER: You seem to be a lot happier Joasia. Life has changed
JOASIA: Yes very, better, better like before but I’m still not happy with my English
PETER: Well, keep practicing, you will get better
Transcript of audio interview: LENA

Present: Lena, Peter

Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre

Date: April 9th 2014

Interviewer: Peter Sheekey

Duration: 30 minutes
PETER: (Warm up about her daughter) So how old is she now
LENA: Three years
PETER: Three years? Little princess
LENA: Little princess
5
PETER: And she was born in Ireland?
LENA: Yeah, Irish person (chuckles)
PETER: What’s her name?
LENA: Emily
PETER: Is she going to preschool
LENA: Yeah, yeah in September
PETER: Next September?
LENA: ...yeah, next year? This year?
PETER: This September, this, next, it can confuse
LENA: Next September
10
PETER: Is she speaking English?
LENA: She, no, now no. Some word eh “bye”, “hi”, “dog”, some words
PETER: Some words she speaking but she’s speaking your first language
LENA: Russian, but I’m from Ukraine
PETER: Ukraine, so you have a second language?
LENA: I, my is two, Ukraine and Russian
PETER: Which is stronger?
LENA: Eh Russian because I lived in Ukraine near Russia, ten kilometres
PETER: Ten kilometres? So there were a lot of Russian speakers
LENA: Yeah
15
PETER: And your school was in
LENA: Russian, university Russian
PETER: But did you do Ukrainian at school, too?
LENA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: And did you do English at school?
LENA: I studied but every years, every years changed teacher, it’s very bad. I have very good eh, very good eh... (repeats Russian word looking for translation) eh I pass, I pass good exams, but when I come, when I came to Ireland, I didn’t know English. It’s very bad, it’s stress for me, Oh!
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LENA: Grammar, yes! Noun
PETER: Topics?
LENA: Only “Study please, study please twenty words” “Ok” I study five words
PETER: But you didn’t speak?
LENA: Yeah, yeah, this is big, I don’t know, only twice per week. Only two lessons
PETER: Two lessons
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PETER: Two lessons
65
LEN: No, no, Lithuania
PET: He’s from Lithuania, but you speak in Russian together

LEN: Yeah
PET: And your child speaks Russian?
LEN: Yeah, yeah
LEN: He is from Lithuania but is native Russian
PET: Does he speak English?
LEN: He, yeah
PET: Is his English good?
LEN: Good, yeah
PET: Is he working in Ireland?
LEN: Yeah

PET: What does he do?
LEN: EH general operative in warehouse
PET: In a warehouse in Tallaght?
LEN: No, no, a little, ten kilometres. No, maybe five, seven kilometres
PET: Not to far
LEN: No, not to far
PET: And is he happy?
LEN: Yeah
PET: So you got married in Ukraine and then you came to Ireland to work?
LEN: Yeah I worked, I worked in Ireland two months. Small time because I, I was pregnant after two months (nervous chuckle) was very, very good job in (name of company), same warehouse, too. Very good staff, very friendly, friendly
PET: Friendly job
LEN: Friendly job, good job. Very sick was every day
PET: So you couldn’t work?
LEN: Couldn’t work
PET: And you
LEN: Sorry, I want eh after born, after born I wanted to come, eh “sorry” (no job)
PET: Go back?
LEN: And “sorry”
PET: So there were no jobs? The people that worked with were they Irish or different people?
LEN: Eh Irish people with...
PET: When you worked in your job, were the people Irish?
LEN: I, eh... I spoke only eh on the work, on the work. In other places I didn’t speak cos I didn’t have English. I very fraid (chuckle), Irish people I very fraid cos my weak point is not English. But very, very kind is “No, no, I understand. I help you”. “I help you, no, no!”
PET: So you have a good experience with Irish people?
LEN: But I was, my husband spoke, not me (chuckles) not me. Now, now I a little bit more know English and not very big, not big stress
PET: Before
LEN: Before I have, I eh wall, wall, yeah? I had wall
PET: Yeah, the wall
LEN: I was very, very fraid
PET: And before your husband would speak?
LEN: Yeah
LENA: Yeah, only he, and all documents, all... anything, anything! All husband. After, I want, I live in Ireland. I live in Ireland. Respect, need to know English, understand? Not because, it’s not my country. I think, I think I need to understand Irish people.

PETER: How long are you in the Centre? When did you come to the Drop-in Centre?

LENA: Drop-in eh (counts months sotto voce) five months, but I studied English from first, first days. I studied in (name of private Language school), I went to (name)

PETER: Where?

LENA: Eh city centre language course. City centre was next (name), eh private teacher, and Drop-in Centre and eh Fetac four now

PETER: So you’re going to classes? Who’s your teacher?

LENA: (Teacher’s name), super teacher, super!

PETER: So before you did private lessons and you went to school? Is the Drop-in Centre better for you, do you think, than the other?

LENA: It’s different. I cannot, I cannot say Drop-in Centre better or, or opposite

PETER: Worse

LENA: Worse, a lot of, but, with Drop-in Centre I found a lot of friend, friends. A lot of, I’m happy. Before I known, I know only husband, some friend – husband friend, nothing

PETER: All Russian speakers?

LENA: Only Russian speakers, and only store, only shop with baby, and anything!

PETER: No social life?

LENA: No, no social. I didn’t know Ireland. City centre I was maybe twice eh twice eh in three months. No eh small baby eh, but, if I come in Drop-in Centre, I don’t know, I want, I want to wear some interesting dress (chuckles), some beautiful see clothes. But always I had training and comfortable shoes

PETER: So you feel good in the Drop-in Centre?

LENA: Feel good, yeah, yeah!

PETER: You made friends here

LENA: Friends, a lot of friends

PETER: Would you say the Drop-in Centre is like a family, like a club or like friendship? What would you say the Drop-in Centre is?

LENA: Now, now in Ireland for me it’s a big family

PETER: So the Drop-in Centre is like a big family for you?

LENA: Yeah

PETER: When you were writing your story, you worked in a group

LENA: Uh huh

PETER: How was that for you, working in this group?

LENA: Very... was very interesting. After this story, I found a lot of friends (chuckles). After I... I... (thinks out loud in Russian) found close friends

PETER: Close friends

LENA: Now, now our families very friendly. Have friendship

PETER: Friendship

LENA: Yeah, friendship

PETER: With the people that you met during the story?

LENA: Yeah, yeah

PETER: When you were writing the story, what do you think you learned working together?
LENA: When, when you write, it’s memory, it’s eh fantasia, fantasy (chuckles). Need to write interesting fact. I remember “Ah, university! I have diploma!” (chuckles) “Oh, I good person” “A clever person” Good, I don’t know, for me it was interesting. I remember, for me eh... In Ireland, I now, in Ireland it’s very... eh... design, decision, decision

145 PETER: So you have more opportunity, more things you can do?
LENA: Uh huh
PETER: You’ve made a decision, a choice? Decision, what do you mean by decision? You’ve decided to stay
LENA: Yeah
PETER: Before, did you think about going back to Ukraine?
LENA: Now in Ukraine have a very big problem. I don’t want eh, don’t want eh take my baby and leave. But I know, but I know my language, my parents and friends I left in Ukraine. But I want for my baby only bet...

150 PETER: A good future?
LENA: Yeah, in Ireland I think Ireland gift my baby more than Ukraine. Sorry Ukraine but I think it’s true
PETER: When you were writing the story with your friends here, did you learn something about the other people? When you were working in the group, did you get something from the others?
LENA: Yeah, yeah, because eh work together it’s eh other words, if I know, if I didn’t know, I remember. If eh... no, together it’s better for English

155 PETER: It’s better
LENA: Pronoun, pronounce, yeah?
PETER: Pronunciation?
LENA: Pronunciation, very diff, difficult. From Ukraine, from Latvia pronun... nunciation (laughs)
PETER: Yeah, from Afghanistan, from China
LENA: Yeah, yeah, it’s very, sometimes (chuckles) “You have mistake!”
PETER: When you wrote the story, who were you writing the story for?
LENA: Who?
PETER: Who do you want to read this story? Who should read it? Which people is this story for?

160 LENA: Ah, I think I want, I want (pause) people like me
PETER: Yeah
LENA: People like me
PETER: New people to Ireland
LENA: Yeah, yeah, new people to Ireland
PETER: Did you read the other stories? Did you look at the others?
LENA: Some, some stories, yeah
PETER: Did you like them?
LENA: Yeah
PETER: Are they the same as your story or are they different?

165 LENA: Same, no different. Same one because now these people all in Ireland it’s (chuckles) one side. But different, very different, from Afghanistan, from eh it’s very bad because was war. It’s very bad because now Ukraine has problem. Maybe, maybe will be war. It’s very... terrible, terrible. I respect people from Afghanistan, from Chechnya, from...
PETER: War zones

170 LENA: (sotto voce) My god
PETER: Because they’ve had many years of problems. Well we hope it’ll be ok in Ukraine
LENA: Without war, I am very rich, very rich

175
PETER: Do you think that writing the story has helped you to understand your situation in Ireland?
LENA: Maybe, yeah, maybe. Because when I came to Ireland one month, two months, three months, I didn’t remember why to do, what to do and “Oh, I have good good past!” I have university, I have friends, I have need, need to do something. Need to go to state, go to state, yeah?
PETER: Go further
LENA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: And what did you study in university Lena?
LENA: EH management, management and marketing. I have degree in marketing
PETER: And you want to do something in Ireland
LENA: Yeah, when I eh after two years, I finished course of hairdressers. Because of my English, marketing is now close, I know. Here eh I want to do another “Ok, I like hairdresser”
PETER: Hair and beauty?
LENA: Beauty, yeah, I finish, now I have in the house some place. Mirror, place it’s eh something. It’s one work
PETER: So you work at hairdressing at home?
LENA: At home now, yeah. Because not eh not experience in Ireland, I want eh I want eh need experience
PETER: You know you can do hairdressing at college here?
LENA: Yes, but eh need Fetac four, Fetac five. Now I eh go to Fetac four
PETER: And then you will do Fetac five?
LENA: Fetac five and hairdressing college, yeah
PETER: You know there are different colleges for that?
LENA: City centre I know one college
PETER: Yes, there is one in Crumlin, too. Has coming to the Centre changed you life? Has your life changed in Ireland?
LENA: Ireland changed?
PETER: After coming to the Centre, you’re life in Ireland. Has it changed, cos you said about friends here
LENA: Change, yeah, yeah, because eh... for me very, very difficult all this bad side. I have bad side and good side. Because I only, in Ireland I have eh very good family eh my baby, my husband. I have house, not my own house, but my house
PETER: It’s your house. You pay rent
LENA: My house. Not parents but eh Ireland give me eh give me eh... some (pause)
PETER: Hope
LENA: Not hope, I feel in Ireland very eh on two (points to her legs and stamps feet on ground)
PETER: On the ground
LENA: Yeah
PETER: On your own two feet?
LENA: Yeah, yeah, difficult without parents but I know my baby eh will not stay without eh food
PETER: So you know there is a future
LENA: Future, yeah, I think maybe in Ukraine better but I have baby. I like Ireland, I like. When I, when I visited eh my friends in Ukraine, I missed Ireland
PETER: You missed Ireland?
LENA: Yeah! I miss because my bed, I have my bed
PETER: Your home
LENA: Yeah! I miss for park, I miss for Square (laughs)

PETER: So now it’s your new home?

LENA: New home, yeah, it’s my home

PETER: How do you think coming to the Centre has changed your English? Has your English changed?

LENA: Change, yeah, changed. Cos before I didn’t understand not only Irish people pro, pronun

PETER: Pronunciation

LENA: Different people – from Afghanistan, form Lithuania, from Poland, and now I know is better

PETER: You understand and you know it better

LENA: Because different pronunci, pronunciation (chuckles) and I understand better

PETER: So you understand different people

LENA: Not, not the wall

PETER: The wall is gone

LENA: If I, If I didn’t understand “Sorry, please... am sorry?” “Ok”

PETER: So you can communicate better

LENA: Yeah

PETER: So it’s not a wall, it’s a window

LENA: A window. I have something (laughs) but not wall, maybe window

PETER: In your life outside the Centre, do you speak more to Irish people or other people? Do you speak to anybody in English outside the Centre?

LENA: No... yeah eh in Social (welfare), in Social I went alone. Before I went only with husband, only. Now alone I tried, I tried to find a job in Irish Salon, but very difficult “Sorry”. Both said me “Sorry” English need to improve, need to improve. Ok, but it’s my experience, ok maybe later

PETER: So you are going now to look for a job and to the Social

LENA: Yeah, yeah, I had three interview last time on one month

PETER: Wow

LENA: Yeah, three interview. No speak English but I have experience, three interview for me. I tried

PETER: Good experience

LENA: Good experience for me, yeah. I will try. I will again, yeah!

PETER: Yeah, don’t stop!

LENA: No, no

PETER: Do you practice before you go for an interview?

LENA: Yeah, practice on Fetac four, and Drop-in Centre, yeah. Teacher helped me, yeah

PETER: What things would you change about the Centre? Would you change anything about the Drop-in Centre?

LENA: Change? Eh change maybe, maybe – all good, but maybe level, student’s level. Not all students eh different levels, first level, not same level as... easy like not stress for students have less eh

PETER: Less English

LENA: Less English, is stressful. Because I remember me (mock confused face) “My god!” (chuckles)

PETER: “What did they say!?”

LENA: “Where, where is my wall!” (laughs)
PETER: Do you think that being a Russian speaker and learning English with other Russian speakers, because you worked with other Russian speakers, when you were working together, is it good to have other Russian speakers, too?
LENA: Yeah, yeah because its’ very easy when “Do you know this word? Translate!” Ok, I don’t know “Experience it’s opyt”, understand?

PETER: So it does help you with learning? Sometimes it’s faster, quicker
LENA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: Cos you have a translation and you go “Ah”
LENA: Yeah, help, help each other
PETER: And did that happen when you were writing the story?
LENA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: What advice would you give to a new person coming to Ireland?
LENA: New person?
PETER: Yeah, if they’re coming to Ireland what should they do?
LENA: Advice? I don’t know, need to come (Centre), need to come because if you want, if you want eh to find, if you want to find a lot of friends, have eh second family, please come
PETER: To the Drop-in Centre?
LENA: Yeah, I love
PETER: You love the Drop-in Centre?
LENA: Yeah, without the Drop-in Centre, my life is changed. I don’t know why, I don’t know who changed but change, I, I fly in the Drop-in Centre, not walk (chuckles). I don’t know, I tired, or don’t tired I go
PETER: You come anyway?
LENA: Yeah, I want
PETER: Lena, thank you very much
LENA: Thank you very much, Peter
Transcript of audio interview: JANE

Present: Jane, Peter

Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre

Date: March 27th 2014

Interviewer: Peter Sheekey

Duration: 43 minutes
PETER: How’s life?
JANE: (sotto voce) how is life?
PETER: How are you? How’s it going?
JANE: Fine

PETER: And how is you English? Getting better?
JANE: No
PETER: (laughs) No?
JANE: (laughs) No better
PETER: No better, really?
JANE: Yeah waste time (laughs)

PETER: A waste of time? No I don’t believe you
JANE: (laughs)
PETER: You’re studying with Hanna. Is she a good teacher?
JANE: Yeah, good teacher

PETER: Her English is very good
JANE: (unsure) Yeah. She’s student?
PETER: A student yes but her English is good
JANE: But good English, yes
PETER: She learned English at school. Did you do English at school?

PETER: What language did you learn at school?
JANE: Chinese, in my country?
PETER: Yeah
JANE: In my country I learn English and Chinese

PETER: So you studied English in your country? How many years?
JANE: Eh six years
PETER: What age did you finish school?
JANE: I finish high school
PETER: How old were you?

PETER: Thirteen
JANE: No college
PETER: So you finished studying at thirteen?
JANE: Yeah

PETER: Did you go to work then?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: At what age did you start work?
JANE: I work in garments (government, I think but P did not get it!)
PETER: Garments, clothes?

JANE: Eh yeah
PETER: Making garments
JANE: No (chuckles) working garments. Not make
PETER: Did you work in the office?
JANE: Yeah office

PETER: So you were working in the office. And did you study at university or college?
JANE: No, yeah
PETER: You went directly to work. What age did you start working?
JANE: Hmm maybe twenty two
PETER: And before that you were studying?

50 JANE: Eh studying?
PETER: Studying at school?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: But you finished school at thirteen?
JANE: Oh two years, two years I no work no study
PETER: How long are you in Ireland?
JANE: I have be here maybe for five years. 2009 I came here
PETER: Did you come alone, on your own?
JANE: (unsure) uh huh
PETER: Did you come with family or friends to Ireland or alone?

60 JANE: (pause) All my family here
PETER: Your family are here?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: You came with your family or your family were here first?
JANE: Eh... (sotto voce) came here first (pause)

PETER: You came here first?
JANE: Oh no... yeah... my family here first
PETER: Your family came here first and then you came
JANE: Yeah I came
PETER: To be with your family?

70 JANE: Yeah
PETER: So who is here from your family? Who is in Ireland from your family?
JANE: My husband, my sister...
PETER: That’s all?
JANE: Yeah that’s all
PETER: And your sister is she working?
JANE: She working
PETER: What does she do?
JANE: Eh... work in Chinese
PETER: Chinese restaurant?

80 JANE: Take away
PETER: A lot of Chinese people work in the take away
JANE: (chuckles) because their English not good
PETER: Because their English is not good, yeah. But if their English is better, you can get a different job?

85 JANE: Eh yeah
PETER: What do you want to do? Do you want to study, work in the future?
JANE: This year I want to study English. Then eh maybe I work (chuckles)
PETER: Or maybe continue studying?
JANE: Yeah maybe continue study. Now my child’s too young so I no want...

90 PETER: Yeah you can’t go to work
PETER: How old is your child now?
JANE: Eh nineteen, nineteen months
PETER: Very little
JANE: Yeah little (chuckles) little boy
PETER: Is your husband working?
JANE: Yeah he working
PETER: What’s he doing here in Ireland?
JANE: Um he you know he um fix this, fix building
PETER: Fixes houses?
JANE: Yeah fixes buildings
PETER: Is his English good?
JANE: Eh better than me. He can eh he can eh c c...
PETER: Converse?
JANE: Converse, yeah
PETER: So he can have a conversation with people?
JANE: Yeah, yeah
PETER: But you’re having problems
JANE: (chuckles) Yeah he, he came here long, very long time and he study English in school
PETER: So his English was good when he came to Ireland? Was better than yours
JANE: Only bad me
PETER: Does he work with Irish people?
JANE: Eh Irish people um he, he em, employ himself
PETER: He’s self employed?
JANE: Yeah yeah
PETER: DO you speak to anybody outside the Centre in English? Do you talk to people in English outside?
JANE: No
PETER: Do you meet any Irish people outside?
JANE: I don’t know how to say. I don’t know how to talk to them
PETER: Do you meet people at the shop or...
JANE: No
PETER: Are your neighbours Irish? The people who live next door to you? The next house
JANE: Oh yeah
PETER: Are they Irish?
JANE: Yeah they are Irish
PETER: And do you speak to them
JANE: No (chuckles) I say in English they don’t understand me
PETER: They don’t understand you?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: DO they try to understand you?
JANE: umm... (chuckles)
PETER: Is that no?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: But do you say “Hi”?
JANE: Only say “Hello” and “Good morning” (chuckles)
PETER: When you go to the doctor or the social welfare...?
JANE: My friend um go with me, yeah
PETER: And you friend is Chinese?
JANE: Yeah Chinese
PETER: And they help you?
JANE: Yeah they help me (slight chuckle)
PETER: So when you bring your baby to the doctor you call your friend
JANE: (laughs) Sometime my husband go
PETER: Sometimes your husband goes?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: If he’s free
JANE: Yeah sometime but eh if I want to hospital he don’t want to go there so my friend...
PETER: You go to the hospital and your husband doesn’t want to go
JANE: No
PETER: He doesn’t like it
JANE: No she, he don’t like (laughs)
PETER: Do you think in the future you will speak to more Irish people?
JANE: (sotto voce) Future?
PETER: In the future would you like to speak to Irish people?
JANE: (pause) Don’t know (chuckles)
PETER: How long are you in the Centre?
JANE: Eh last year October I came here
PETER: Do you like it?
JANE: Yeah ok (chuckles) the teacher very good
PETER: Have you made friends with people in the Centre?
JANE: Yeah my sister-in-law
PETER: Your sister-in-law?
JANE: Yeah is here, M, Ma, Mandy
PETER: Mandy? Yes, she’s your sister-in-law?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: Mandy has been coming many years
JANE: Oh many years
PETER: She’s doing well. Her English is good now
JANE: Yeah um maybe a little
PETER: It’s difficult for Mandy though
JANE: She can’t to school in China
PETER: She didn’t go to school in China?
JANE: Yeah, no school
PETER: But here she’s happy
JANE: Yeah very happy (laughs). She don’t want to go back to China
PETER: How about you? Are you happy in Ireland?
JANE: Umm ok (chuckles)
PETER: It’s ok
JANE: Yeah but I, sometime I want to go back to China. Maybe I old I back
PETER: When you’re older
JANE: (laughs)
PETER: Maybe when your baby grows
JANE: Grow up
PETER: You’ll bring him?
JANE: I’ll leave him, I’ll leave him here
PETER: And you’ll go back to China?
JANE: I and my husband um back... maybe (chuckles)
PETER: What part of China are you from Jane?
JANE: You know (name of city)

PETER: Is it a big city?

JANE: Middle, middle city

PETER: Do you have some family there?

JANE: Yeah my mother, my sister in China but my husband, my husband’s family in here

PETER: Here in Ireland?

JANE: Yeah all in Ireland

PETER: So he has all his family here

JANE: Yeah

PETER: His mother his father?

JANE: brother and sisters

PETER: So you have a mother-in-law in Ireland?

JANE: Yes (laughs)

PETER: Does his family speak English?

JANE: No, just Chinese but his brother speak English um a little. He has four brothers and one sister

PETER: A lot!

JANE: Yeah (chuckles) big family

PETER: Do you like the way we learn here in the Centre? Is learning here and learning at your school different?

JANE: Different um in school teacher um teacher I don’t know how to say

PETER: The teacher told you what to do?

JANE: No this eh the teacher eh I’m sorry I don’t know how to say

PETER: But it is different here?

JANE: Eh yeah different

PETER: It’s very different

PETER: Do you like it?

JANE: In school here? Eh sometime I don’t know eh here what I eh...

PETER: What you’re learning?

JANE: Yeah

PETER: You cannot see what you’re learning?

JANE: Yeah

PETER: So it’s difficult to see if you are getting more English? You would like to see exactly?

JANE: Yeah (16.09)

PETER: In your story you were saying that you speak little English words to your baby. Do you try to speak English to your baby?

JANE: I only speak simple words. You know my bay can’t, don’t speak now only “Papa” “Mammy” so I always “Up down” and simple words “flower” like this

PETER: So your teaching your child simple English words

JANE: Yeah sometime I teach him the colours but I don’t know if he un...

PETER: If he understands

JANE: Yeah maybe yes?

PETER: No no he’s listening and it goes in. You need to help your child with English because he will go to school in English

JANE: Yeah playschool that’s ok. September he will go to school for the baby

PETER: Crèche yeah
JANE: Crèche?
PETER: Baby school
JANE: (laughs) yeah baby school
PETER: So he will start to learn English there. You speak in English to your baby but also you speak in Chinese
JANE: Um I speak Chinese
PETER: Do you hope you baby will also speak Chinese?
JANE: Yeah my husband speak Cantonese, Can eh Cantonese?
PETER: Cantonese
JANE: Yeah Cantonese
PETER: And you speak Mandarin?
JANE: I speak eh (not clear)
PETER: So you’ve two big languages in China. You have Cantonese and Mandarin
JANE: Yeah Mandarin Chinese?
PETER: Yeah and he speak Cantonese you husband?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: So you’ve two
JANE: (laughs) Yeah
PETER: So your baby is confused?
JANE: Um he can’t understand (laughs)
PETER: When you were writing the story you were working in a group. Did you enjoy working together in the group?
JANE: (sotto voce) like?
PETER: You were sitting in a group at the table working together
JANE: Yeah
PETER: At a table with other people and you were working together
JANE: Ah ye
PETER: Writing the story was that good? Did you like working together?
JANE: (uncertain) Yeah
PETER: Did you learn from the other people? Any words or did they help you
JANE: (unconvinced) A little
PETER: A little
JANE: Yeah a little. Their pronounce somehow their pronounce not good
PETER: So it was difficult to understand what they were saying?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: And maybe it was difficult for them to understand what you were saying?
JANE: (chuckles) Yeah
PETER: So the pronunciation was the difficult part
JANE: Um my pronounce not good. Sometimes I say something they don’t answer me
PETER: They don’t understand you?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: And sometimes they say something that you don’t understand?
JANE: Yeah I don’t understand, yeah
PETER: So there was a problem with the pronunciation?
JANE: Uh huh
PETER: But they helped you a little?
JANE: Yeah a little
PETER: Did you help them?

285 JANE: They eh eh don’t need
PETER: They don’t need help?
JANE: They don’t need my help (chuckles)
PETER: Were they better? Was their English better than your sometimes?
JANE: Who?

290 PETER: Their English was better than your English?
JANE: Their English better than me?
PETER: Yeah
JANE: I think
PETER: You think so?

295 JANE: Yeah I think so
PETER: When you saw the story finished, what did you feel? How did you feel?
JANE: Um (unclear sotto voce) I think is no good
PETER: Yeah?
JANE: (pause) Um... I don’t know (sotto voce)

300 PETER: It’s not good?
JANE: Yes it’s not good
PETER: Why?
JANE: (pause) eh... (sotto voce) why... don’t know (chuckle)
PETER: If you were writing in your language, if you write the story in your language, what would you put? What would you write?

JANE: In my language... maybe I write good this
PETER: Better
JANE: Yeah better
PETER: And what would you say? What would you talk about?

310 JANE: Maybe only this but eh... different
PETER: Different?
JANE: Yeah different
PETER: When you see the story, when you finished the story, did this help you to think about your life in Ireland?

315 JANE: Um yeah um (sotto voce) what?
PETER: Your life in Ireland. Your life here in Ireland
JANE: My life in Ireland?
PETER: Yeah did this help you to think about your life?
JANE: Hmm yeah

320 PETER: Yeah?
JANE: Eh this no my life, my life?
PETER: Yeah this is your life in Ireland
JANE: Oh eh...
PETER: (reads story) Do you go to the library?

325 JANE: Yeah um... last month I went to library
PETER: To read
JANE: Um to borrow some books
PETER: And are you learning English books?
JANE: Yeah learning (sotto voce) English books but eh (pause) (unclear) sales book, sales book for me

PETER: Sales book?
JANE: Sales book eh... sil sil sil
PETER: Children’s books?
JANE: Not children’s book eh this pronounce eh this how to pronounce

PETER: How to pronounce?
JANE: Yeah

PETER: You’re getting some books from the library to help you with your English?
JANE: Yes only, only pronounce simple word
PETER: Yeah you know you can get a book and a CD, a book and a disc together

JANE: Yeah pronounce the way CD but others books no CD
PETER: Yeah so you need a book with a CD
JANE: Yeah
PETER: So you’re interested in pronunciation? You want to help, you want to learn
JANE: Yeah

PETER: pronunciation. This is very important
JANE: (makes joke) Very important person (chuckles)
PETER: Do you have internet at home?
JANE: Yeah have, I have
PETER: Ok before you go I will show you some websites

JANE: Websites
PETER: Some websites where you can learn pronunciation
JANE: Pronunciation oh ok
PETER: Do you use the internet for learning?
JANE: Hmm before I learn from websites but now I no time

PETER: Yeah
JANE: My baby, if I turn on the computer my baby turn off (chuckles) or play computer. So I don’t really... (chuckle)
PETER: So your baby doesn’t give you time?
JANE: Yeah

PETER: And he wants attention. Do you understand attention?
JANE: (sotto voce) tention?
PETER: Attention
JANE: No
PETER: It’s when someone wants you to look at them. They want to take your time

JANE: Eh...
PETER: That’s your attention
JANE: Tention
PETER: Your attention is and the child wants the mammy all the time
JANE: Yeah (chuckles) yeah

PETER: And this is a problem for your studying at home?
JANE: Ummm
PETER: It’s a problem to study because your child needs a lot of time
JANE: Sometime, sometimes I listen the eh the radi. Radio
PETER: Oh ok. In English?

JANE: In English
PETER: Very good
JANE: Yeah
PETER: That’s good cos it helps you to understand Irish people
JANE: Yeah (chuckles) but I don’t understand what they’re say
380 PETER: It doesn’t matter. You just listen. DVDs, films
JANE: Hmm?
PETER: Do you watch films? Do you watch
JANE: Hmm
PETER: movies?
385 JANE: Oh movies, yeah I yeah...
PETER: You watch
JANE: Umm...
PETER: You should watch English films with the titles, subtitles, yeah?
JANE: Yeah but the eh film... no the eh
390 PETER: Titles, subtitles
PETER: You should get DVDs with subtitles from the library. The library has many DVDs in English,
many.
JANE: Oh...
PETER: Free, free DVDs
395 JANE: (sotto voce) Yeah I know..
PETER: So you get you can see the words and see “Ah!” pronunciation. You can stop the DVD
and say “Ah!”
JANE: (laughs) Very tired!
400 PETER: Has coming to the Centre, has it changed you life outside?
JANE: Êh yeah (pause)
PETER: In what way? How?
JANE: (sotto voce) Eh...
PETER: How has your life changed?
405 JANE: (pause) I... I... (laughs)
PETER: (laughs) So what is different?
JANE: I, when I shopping em if I don’t know something where, I can ask them
PETER: So that’s changed?
JANE: Yeah that’s changed
410 PETER: Before you didn’t ask
JANE: Before I check in my phone now I can... (chuckles)
PETER: Now you ask
JANE: Yeah I ask
PETER: So things are changing a little bit
415 JANE: Yeah is changing yeah (sotto voce) a little bit
PETER: So before you were afraid. Were you afraid to speak?
JANE: (sotto voce) Fraid
PETER: Afraid
JANE: Fear?
420 PETER: Fear, yeah
JANE: Yeah, yeah oh yeah
PETER: You had fear
JANE: Yeah
PETER: And now?

JANE: Now that’s ok (laughs)
PETER: A little bit better
JANE: Yeah a little better
PETER: Less fear?
JANE: Uh huh

PETER: But there’s still a little fear?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: But before big fear?
JANE: Yeah big fear
PETER: If I ask you, the Centre, yeah? Is it like a family, a club or a friendship for you?
JANE: Hmm
PETER: A family, a club or a friendship?
JANE: Hmm club
PETER: More like a club for you?
JANE: Yeah

PETER: How often do you come to the Centre Jane? Do you come every day?
JANE: I come here Monday, Tuesday, Thursday
PETER: Good
JANE: Somehow my baby no, nobody mind
PETER: Nobody minds your baby?
JANE: Yeah I don’t come here
PETER: When you come to the Centre, who minds your baby? Who is minding your baby now?
JANE: Sometimes his grandmother minds him. Sometimes my husband minds (chuckles)
PETER: And so you’re trying to learn English and to have time for you
JANE: Yeah I have, I have time only here, here
PETER: At home no time
JANE: At home no time yeah
PETER: Your social life in Dublin, do you go out to the cinema or to...
JANE: Umm I like shopping (chuckles)
PETER: You like shopping

JANE: Yeah I don’t understand the film
PETER: Of course it’s difficult
JANE: Yeah difficult so I don’t like (chuckle)
PETER: Where do you go shopping?
JANE: Eh city centre and Square

PETER: Where do you go in the city centre? What’s your favourite shop?
JANE: Uh?
PETER: Your favourite shop. The shop you like best
JANE: Oh just only look (chuckles) Um (pause) eh take my baby eh
PETER: With you

JANE: With me eh...
PETER: You have a nice afternoon. You walk around
JANE: Yeah, yeah all a look
PETER: So you have a day out with your baby. You take the LUAS
JANE: Uh huh take LUAS, yeah
The LUAS is nice
LUAS sometimes bus. My baby like the LUAS because is long (chuckles)
Is there a big Chinese community in Tallaght?
(sotto voce) big?
A lot of Chinese in Tallaght?
Umm I don’t know but my sister, my husband’s brother’s family in Tallaght
So you meet them and visit them and have dinner with the family
Yeah every week
Do you meet other Chinese people outside the family?
Chinese people... umm I don’t know
You don’t really meet other
Yeah I don’t meet
But in Dublin 14 some Chinese people
You meet sometimes in the city centre
Yeah in city centre a lot of Chinese people
Yeah Parnell street is Chinatown
Yeah, yes
There is a Chinatown in Dublin
Chinese town (laughs)
But you don’t speak to other Chinese people around Tallaght?
Yeah, yeah
Do you meet at celebrations like New Year celebration?
Yeah celebration Chinese New Year sometimes January, the first of January yeah
So do you meet and then you meet other Chinese people, too?
Yeah family, family dinner
So you have the big dinner for the family?
Yeah, yeah... eh also Christmas celebrate
Do you celebrate Christmas?
Yeah big than Chinese New Year
Do you like it?
Yeah I like (laughs) because everywhere beautiful
Yeah lights and beautiful lights
Chinese festive only Chinese so no good
They have a big festival in the city centre for the Chinese New Year. Do you know?
Yeah?
Every year
I don’t know
They have a Chinese festival music and they have the dragon
Oh I don’t know
If you want to change the Centre, what would you change?
Yeah would you change anything about the Centre? Change the English or change anything?
(sotto voce) Change/
Yeah the learning, the teaching, the English?
(sotto voce) I don’t know
Are you happy about the Centre? Are you happy coming here?
JANE: Yeah I am happy

PETER: And you feel that it’s important for you to come here?

JANE: Yeah but I want to study English in school, my husband he don’t, don’t like

PETER: He doesn’t like?

JANE: I, I like to study English in school but don’t like. He say mm... “Every day, every day my baby...”

PETER: “…needs you”?

JANE: Yeah

PETER: So you can’t go to school?

JANE: Yeah so he only... let me come here

PETER: He lets you come here?

JANE: Yeah (nervous chuckles)

PETER: So it’s ok to come here?

JANE: Eh my English improve only... only a little

PETER: Only a little

JANE: Yeah very slow

PETER: But it’s, it’s six months, ok. You need more time... and more practice

JANE: Yeah I know

PETER: Well now you have some time for you so you can you know relax and study

JANE: Yeah I know

PETER: No baby, no husband just you here

JANE: Yeah

PETER: If I said write this story again

JANE: (laughs)

PETER: Not again! But if you want to make this story bigger, what would you write?

JANE: Maybe I say umm... I say something happen in the Centre

PETER: You would talk about the Centre

JANE: Umm changes... in my life

PETER: Yeah the changes in your life

JANE: Yeah

PETER: Is it important to talk about your life? Is it good?

JANE: Good? Uh huh yeah

PETER: Is it good to speak about your life in English?

JANE: Uh huh yeah

PETER: Because you speak about your life with your family in Chinese, no?

JANE: Yeah

PETER: But you don’t speak about your life in English with anybody

JANE: Yeah

PETER: But here you started to speak about your life. Would you like to do more?

JANE: (chuckles)

PETER: You’re not sure?

JANE: No, I don’t know

PETER: Well today you told me about your life, no? Is that important? Is that good?

JANE: (chuckles)

PETER: Writing is very important. Speaking is very important, too

JANE: Yeah I know. I, I, I only want to speak lis...

PETER: Listen
JANE: Yeah listen um write um write is...

PETER: Is not so important

JANE: Yeah

PETER: It’s listening and speaking is most important because you want to speak to Irish people and other people

JANE: Yeah then I can make different friends

PETER: You can make friends and meet people

JANE: Uh huh

PETER: And that’s what you want to do, you want to make more friends in Ireland

JANE: Uh huh, yeah (chuckles)

PETER: Well you’ve made some friends here

JANE: Yeah (not entirely convinced) um well they don’t like make friends with me (laughs)

PETER: They don’t like making friends with you?

JANE: No (laughs) maybe...

PETER: Maybe because you and (other Chinese member’s name) are the only Chinese people here?

JANE: Yeah

PETER: There are no other Chinese people?

JANE: Eh there have another one (says name)

PETER: Ah yes, and do you speak with her?

JANE: Eh yeah

PETER: In English or in Chinese?

JANE: In Chinese

PETER: And do you help each other?

JANE: Hmm?

PETER: Do you help (name) and does she help you?

JANE: No she lives far away me. I met she, her only here

PETER: And you speak together here?

JANE: Her English not good

PETER: Is your English better than (name)?

JANE: Yeah (laughs) maybe better than

PETER: So you’re better than some people. You are changing

JANE: Change

PETER: Little, little, little, you know?

JANE: Yeah

PETER: Thank you so much for talking to me today

JANE: Oh thank you
Transcript of audio interview: ALMA

Present: ALMA, Peter

Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre

Date: March 11th 2014

Interviewer: Peter Sheekey

Duration: 55 minutes
ALMA: (Discussing her religion) There is Christian church near O’Connell Bridge
PETER: So you go there?
5
ALMA: Sometimes
PETER: Are all the people Russian there, or where do they come from?
ALMA: Many people go to church
PETER: From many nationalities?
ALMA: Russian, Polish, some Polish Christian, too, and Ukraine, Ukraine, no?
10
PETER: And the language that’s spoken there?
ALMA: Russian (laughs)
PETER: And the ceremonies are in Russian, are they?
ALMA: Yes, in Russian
PETER: So you don’t practice your English there?
15
ALMA: (laughs)
PETER: Thanks for writing about your story, and you say that you want “to live a full and rich life”
ALMA: Yes
PETER: What do you want to change about your life here?
ALMA: In my life?
20
PETER: Yeah
ALMA: Now (wry chuckle) I sit at home. I am driver for my kids, for my husband. I start my day cooking something for my family and after I drive my kids to school, to different classes for them. But I want go to job, too (chuckles)
PETER: You want to work as well
ALMA: You want to work as well
PETER: Yes, I want, because my husband comes home from job and he is so... rel...
25
ALMA: Relaxing. Because I am every day the same as last day. Every day the same, the same the same. But he go to job, goes to job, something new, something speak with other people
PETER: So it’s also a social thing you want to do working. It’s social, to meet people?
30
ALMA: Yes
PETER: What job does your husband do?
ALMA: He works in city centre in small cafe
PETER: What job did he do before?
ALMA: He is sailor, sailor. Be when we meet, have kids, he stopped go to sea. He stay, he stay at home with family, and he start, he nothing can...
35
PETER: Yeah, he has no skills to...
ALMA: Yes, he doesn’t have any skills, and he goes to one firm and work as driver, and eh stock, stock
PETER: Warehouse
40
ALMA: Yes, yes, storehouse with food, and here he work in cafe. He make coffee, he clean, wash and make but I want that he go and make something else
PETER: And how’s his English?
ALMA: His English? His English very interesting because when he come to Ireland he didn’t know any words in English. He start work and now his English is better than me. Maybe he speak not correct, without eh grammar, but he speak very eh flu eh fluently. I, when I speak, I think “Did I speak true, rightly?” But he speak, speak, speak and speak
45
PETER: So he has a different way of learning
ALMA: Yes
PETER: So he must have worked with a lot of Irish people to learn his English
ALMA: He learned his English in work
PETER: So he was spending time with Irish people?
ALMA: Every day, every day
PETER: Well, if you could join a club you could meet more Irish people
ALMA: Do you know the adult education? There is cake decoration and I wanted to go, but I don’t know why but I didn’t go to this course
PETER: Well you could learn quicker
ALMA: Well, about this question, about people from my community. Some people very shy go to some courses where is only Irish people, but me, now, not shy. I can go, but not shy
PETER: You went to school before you came here and you finished school?
ALMA: U huh, and university
PETER: Did you study languages at school?
ALMA: From five eh fifth class
PETER: And what languages did you study?
ALMA: English, Latvian and Russian
PETER: And you speak Russian very well?
ALMA: Russian is my mother’s, mother language
PETER: And Latvian is your second language?
ALMA: Latvian second and English (chuckles) is third
PETER: How long did you study English for? How many years?
ALMA: Oh, fifth, eh six, seven years, and in university five years. But in university was special economics term eh...
PETER: Business English
ALMA: Business English, yeah
PETER: So altogether seven years
ALMA: Seven plus five (chuckles)
PETER: So twelve years, but you studied grammar?
ALMA: And grammar and words and many, many, many..
PETER: Yeah, but speaking?
ALMA: Not so much, and for me it easy to understand when words is eh written words. When speaking is harder
PETER: You would say that your reading and writing is better than you speaking?
ALMA: Uh huh, yes
PETER: So you can understand reading but it’s harder speaking? Do you think your English has improved since you came to the Centre?
ALMA: Yes, uh huh, really, yes. I start... I can’t eh, no... I’m not afraid to speak with other people. When I come to Ireland, I’m always... somebody ask me something, but I’m “Oh my God, I don’t understand (chuckles) nothing, go away!”
PETER: You were afraid?
ALMA: Yes, and “Go away!” But now I want to speak with everybody (chuckles)
PETER: So you have confidence now?
ALMA: Yes, before I was not confident, it was problem
PETER: How long have you been at the Centre now?
ALMA: In this Centre? From September. It was old, the old building

158
PETER: So you moved over here when it moved? How would you describe the people you meet in the Centre?

ALMA: About this Centre?

PETER: Yeah the people here

ALMA: Eh I think that people like, like spend time here. Because if they don’t like come to here, they wouldn’t, would not come, understand?

PETER: Yeah, so they come here because they want to. And you, why do you come here?

ALMA: Because I want to communicate with other people. I want to speak, I want to speak English. I want live in Ireland, and I want to eh... to start new eh, new (Russian term, unclear) ... knowledges, knowledge?

PETER: Yeah, to learn new things. You said that your story was written for you, and written for people like you who emigrated to Ireland. How do you think the story might help them?

PETER: Them? (laughs) I don’t know, maybe they eh will know about this Centre. Maybe they will know eh that they can’t stop, stop in this eh point... I can’t say, I don’t know (embarrassed chuckle) how to explain it, and the must go, go always eh...

PETER: Further? Keep going!

ALMA: Yes, further, going, going, don’t stopping. Go and go and go always.

PETER: Would you know some people who have stopped? Maybe in your community, some people who don’t go forward

ALMA: Eh, (pause) there are many people who stopped, and eh dont’ want doing something else. The sit at home and “Oh, it’s my life! It’s my...destiny!” They sit at home and nothing doing

PETER: And you are not one of those people

ALMA: I know, I know!

PETER: Yeah

ALMA: There are many people from our community who speak Russian. They sit and nothing. But there are many people who keep going, who keep going, going, going

PETER: Who go outside and do things

ALMA: Yeah something new, always find, find something useful, yeah?

PETER: Something useful to do. And about the group of people here, how would you describe the group? Would you say it’s a family, a friendship, a club? What sort of felling do you get from the Centre?

ALMA: (sotto voce) Oh... there are a lot of different people come this Centre. There is eh a family, husband and wife come to Centre, there is only, only eh single people

PETER: Yeah, but as a group, would the Centre be like a family, like a club, a friendship?

ALMA: I think as a big family because I find here many friends, and all people are very friendly, if you have some problem you can speak with other people

PETER: So you’ve no problem speaking to people at all, and they speak to you?

ALMA: No, no

PETER: How do you find your language use in the Centre?

ALMA: Oh (chuckles) In the Centre are many people who speak Russian, and really I speak Russian with them, too. But it’s eh help me to understand something. If I can’t understand in English, I can ask them “What he say, what he say?!”

PETER: So actually your mother tongue can help you in this situation?

ALMA: Yes

PETER: I’ve seen it when you’re working in the group

ALMA: Uh huh

PETER: Working together people translate
ALMA: Yes, translate. If something I don’t understand, they help me translate
PETER: So it can be useful as well
ALMA: Uh huh, but sometimes it’s eh only me who speak Russian (chuckles) and it’s interesting too, because I’m speak only English with other people

145 PETER: The group you are in at the moment, are there many Russian speakers?
ALMA: Everybody speak Russian
PETER: So it’s a Russian group?
ALMA: Now everybody. From Lithuania, from Estonia, and from Latvia, but everybody speak Russian

150 PETER: When people at the Centre ask you “Who are you?”, what do you say?
ALMA: (chuckles) I don’t know how eh answer this question... I am a (chuckles)... I am a (chuckles) I don’t know! I’m mother, I am wife, I am people (chuckles) I don’t know what else
PETER: And you’re a student
ALMA: Student? (laughs) yes?

155 PETER: You’re studying language
ALMA: I am student here
PETER: Do you enjoy being a student?
ALMA: Yes, I like it
PETER: What do the people from your community think of the Centre, when you tell them about it? What do they say?
ALMA: They ask me eh different question, interesting cos they say “Interesting this place”, and some my friends come to here, too, by my advice
PETER: Ah so you brought some people to the Centre because you told them about it?
ALMA: Yes

160 PETER: So they became interested in it when you told them, what did you tell them?
ALMA: Eh, that eh there is this Drop-in Centre, it works every day from ten to twelve, and here it’s very interesting, English it’s absolutely free. There are many people from different countries, you can come eh you know eh traditional from other countries. It’s interesting here! (chuckles)
PETER: When you wrote your story, is there anything, if you were writing this story again, what would you add, what would you put in?
ALMA: I don’t know, maybe eh ... no, I think that it’s full, full story
PETER: Yeah, in fact you wrote a lot
ALMA: I tried to write a full story
PETER: In your story you said that it wasn’t easy at the beginning in Ireland, when you came to

175 Ireland first
ALMA: Uh huh
PETER: What difficulties did you have, what was difficult about it?
ALMA: Eh it was difficult to speak in English, to know something new. I don’t, I didn’t know about school, about education. I have eh three kids and I must to know everything about Irish system, education system and medical system – about everything, and I always ask somebody to help me. But it was in eh past, but now I can do it myself always
PETER: So you’ve learned how to understand and use the system
ALMA: Yes
PETER: It is difficult with doctors and schools. Is it very different from your own country?
ALMA: Eh a little bit eh school system in Ireland, there is primary school and after people go to another school – secondary school. But in Latvia there is one school. You become, start learning from first class till twelve class.
PETER: In the same school
ALMA: In the same school. Yes

190  PETER: You said in your story that your social life in Dublin was not very rich
ALMA: Well that was some months ago, but I found in the Drop-in Centre many, many friends, and now I start to go to parties, many different parties, different events and eh my life become more interesting than...
PETER: So it’s changed even in these months?

195  ALMA: In the best side, yeah!
PETER: And the people you socialise with now, are they Russian speakers, or do they speak other languages, too?
ALMA: Only Russian speaker
PETER: Outside the Centre, do you use English at all? Do you speak to anybody?

200  ALMA: Yes, I speak with neighbours. Our neighbours they are very good family, only he and she, no is couple, couple, yeah?
PETER: Couple, yeah
ALMA: Couple, and they invited us to celebrate Christmas party. And it was interesting and we speak only English
PETER: And do you see them most days?
ALMA: Every day I see them, every day. They are neighbours
PETER: You are lucky to have good neighbours
ALMA: Yes, and eh (laughs) on other side we very good neighbours. There is mother and her daughter, and they are too very friendly
PETER: When you meet them, what do you talk about?
ALMA: (chuckles) usually about the weather, usually, and about how you spend your day
PETER: So you have a chat with them?
ALMA: Chat? Ah yes, little chat
PETER: So you are practicing a little. Do you speak to anybody else?

210  ALMA: In school, in school in meeting with teacher, with principal, sometimes with doctor because my son is sick, he has epilepsy. And sometimes he goes to hospital and I speak English in hospital, too
PETER: Is it a severe, hard epilepsy or soft
ALMA: No it’s soft, it happen a few times, maybe four, three times per year
PETER: How old is your son now?
ALMA: He is six, six and half
PETER: And his English?
ALMA: Ehm, he is problem with speaking. He doesn’t good speak Russian and in English, he tries, he tries in school, he tries, but not very good
PETER: So does he get help in school for his English?
ALMA: Yes, he has lessons with speech therapist, and in Russian he has lessons, too
PETER: So you’re sending him to Russian lessons?
ALMA: Uh huh
PETER: Are there Russian schools here?
ALMA: Russian schools? Only Sunday
PETER: I know that the Polish people do this on weekends, too
ALMA: Saturday, yes, it’s not as usual schools as Irish. It’s only an add lesson
PETER: So you want him to speak both languages?
ALMA: I hope, I hope, I don’t know what will be with him, but I hope
PETER: How would you describe the learning that happens in the Centre? What happens here?

ALMA: Different things (chuckles), different things and grammar, and sometimes we have just conversation. I like conversation.

PETER: Cos you need to practice.

ALMA: Yeah, I like speak, speak, speak (laughs).

PETER: But they have conversation on Friday here.

ALMA: On Friday, but sometimes we sit with our tutor and speak about something.

PETER: When you were writing the story, what was it like to work in the group you were working in?

ALMA: Uh huh.

PETER: What was that like? What did you learn from working in the group?

ALMA: (pause) I don’t know.

PETER: Cos you were working with others.

ALMA: Yes, yes, I have questions; I have the short story about different people. It was good practice for eh give questions.

PETER: It was good for practicing your questions.

ALMA: For questions, uh huh, and understand because other people have different pronunciation, and it was good practice to understand what they say.

PETER: And is this way of learning different from other ways of learning that you’ve had? Is the story a different way?

ALMA: Uh huh.

PETER: Cos you were writing and talking and writing and talking, so it was a kind of project.

ALMA: Uh huh, yes I think that it’s a good way, but it’s only one way to learn eh English. There are many ways to learn English also, watch TV, go to cinema, reading books, newspapers, conversation with other people.

PETER: So there are many different ways?

ALMA: Many.

PETER: Did you like working in the group?

ALMA: Yes, I like (laughs).

PETER: What did you learn from the group? Did you learn anything from the others?

ALMA: From other people? Sometimes new words eh, sometimes to understand pronunciation cos very difficult understand people from China, one woman is from Bangladesh. It’s very hard to understand her (chuckles), but sometimes I (chuckles) understand.

PETER: Yeah, so working in a group is important?

ALMA: Yes.

PETER: And also so you can practice conversation, which you want to do a lot.

ALMA: Uh huh.

PETER: Has coming to the Centre changed your ideas about Ireland?

ALMA: About Ireland? No because I love Ireland, I think about Ireland very good and eh.

PETER: So your experience of Ireland is very positive now, is it?

ALMA: Uh huh, yeah positive, I like Ireland very much.

PETER: Has coming to the Centre changed you ideas about the community you come from?

ALMA: (pause) I don’t know how answer this eh question.

PETER: How long are you in Ireland now?

ALMA: Eh three and half years.

PETER: So the longer you live in Ireland does your image of your community change?

ALMA: (pause) I...
PETER: Do you have much contact with the people from your country?
ALMA: Yes, I have contact but eh I don’t know (pause)
PETER: Yeah, so probably your ideas have not changed is this why it is difficult to answer?
ALMA: Uh huh
PETER: I speak English and Italian and Italian is my second language. When I’m speaking in Italian, there is an Italian Peter.
ALMA: Uh huh
PETER: When I speak in English, there is an English speaking Peter. We call this a language identity.
ALMA: Uh huh
PETER: Would you say that there is an English Alma? An English speaking Alma? Do you feel different speaking in English?
ALMA: Different than in Russian
PETER: In Russian, yeah
ALMA: Exactly different, uh huh
PETER: Would you be able to describe how?
ALMA: Because not enough knowledge in English and I don’t know enough words in English. In Russian I can speak very...
PETER: Fluently?
ALMA: Fluently, full, full, but in English I speak very simple and short
PETER: You had a good job in your own country. Before you came here you had a job
ALMA: Yeah, a good job
PETER: Was it difficult then to change your life without a job? How does that feel for you?
ALMA: Yes my life changed cardinally, cardinally? Absolutely changed, yeah. Before I come to Ireland I always work, I have very good job, very good salary. But my husband go, goes?
PETER: Came
ALMA: Came here to Ireland and I need eh follow him
PETER: He came, and you said you always wanted to travel
ALMA: Yes
PETER: So you were happy to come to Ireland?
ALMA: Very happy and I hope that in the future I will find myself, and I will go to job, I will communicate with other people in full
PETER: What would you like to do in the future in Ireland?
ALMA: Oh, in the future! It’s very difficult question (nervous chuckles)
PETER: What is your dream for the future?
ALMA: My dream... I want to go to some college. Next year I will go to college eh Stilorgan College for photography course. Maybe in the future my job will be connect, not connect, connected with photography knowledge. Maybe after next year I will go more one college and I continue my job as in Latvia, because I was economist accounting and it was my job
PETER: So you were an accountant? It’s a very good job
ALMA: Yes it’s a very good job but if you want to work in Ireland, I must to, to learn. I need to learn from, not start but I need many, many, many knowledges about
PETER: Is your qualification recognised in Ireland?
ALMA: I must do it but I didn’t do it
PETER: You have to get it translated
ALMA: Yes, translated and certificate

PETER: But you can do this?

ALMA: I want do it

PETER: So you would like to practice accounting here in Ireland? That would be part of your dream

ALMA: Uh huh, yes, because I like it. I like numbers and (chuckles)

PETER: That’s your talent. What things would you change, if you were going to change anything about the Centre?

ALMA: The Centre? I think that nothing, maybe only one thing about volunteers. If eh, I don’t know how to say it, if volunteers come and come every day or if one volunteer come on Monday and I know that I will come on Monday, and I will learn with them. But not I come and not know who will teach me today, understand?

PETER: I understand yes

ALMA: Only this

PETER: Well we need more volunteers, this is true. So you like Ireland and everything about Ireland?

ALMA: Yes, I like Ireland. I like weather, and always when I go away and I come to airport, I say “Oh my lovely Ireland!” I so like Ireland, if I come from Spain where is very hot, if I come from Latvia where is cold snow, and I come to Ireland and here is every time the same weather

PETER: So this weather suits you, you like this type of weather?

ALMA: Yes, yeah (laughs). It’s my country, yeah

PETER: You say that you’ve learned to use, to understand the Irish system, and to understand the education and health system

ALMA: Uh huh

PETER: Well, would you still have difficulties reading or speaking in some situations?

ALMA: (pause) It’s much better, but sometimes, sometimes (pause) no, I think that no. I don’t have, not problems, but difficult

PETER: So you don’t have difficulties, not anymore?

ALMA: Not anymore

PETER: So since coming the Centre you have probably solved more problems, would that be true?

ALMA: But now more easy for me

PETER: And you’re developing a little bit of a Dublin accent. Do you know that?

ALMA: Dublin? No!

PETER: Yes, you said “couple” (p. “cuple”) when you talked about your neighbours

ALMA: (laughs) I got that from, it’s words that I know in Ireland, when I speak to Irish people. In our school in Latvia the United States, you know our English was as in the United Kingdom

PETER: British English

ALMA: British English, yes, soft and beautiful English. But Irish people speak a little more hard

PETER: A little harder, yeah. It depends on what part of Britain. For example Liverpool would be more similar to Dublin. London would be very different, so you probably learned this English

ALMA: Uh huh, and when I listen how to speak my daughter, she is fourteen years old, and when I listen I always “Anna! What do you say? What do you say?” I can’t understand cos “bus”, “Thank you much” (laughs). Is Irish, uh huh

PETER: Yeah “bus” “money”

ALMA: (chuckles) Yeah this, “money”. It’s eh terrible to listen

PETER: So your daughter is fourteen and her English is good?
ALMA: Her English good, yes, cos she learn in school, and she has practice and she has Irish friends. She every day speak English. But sometimes I ask her to translate me and she can’t. Maybe because she is small and she can’t know difficult words
PETER: Ideas and words
ALMA: Special, special words and business words. But I always angry, angry with her and “Go and learn! Go and learn this words”
PETER: And is she bilingual in Russian and English?
ALMA: Russian and English, Latvian she has... forgot
PETER: Well, it’s normal. When you learn another language, you tend to lose a little of the old language. She is probably not practicing the Latvian so much
ALMA: Yes. Latvian, she learned Latvian only four years
PETER: Does she help you with your English? Or does she laugh at you sometimes?
ALMA: (chuckles) Sometimes she helps me. She help me with eh, with eh (sotto voce) my god, I forgot. No how to write, how to... correct write the sentence. Which words follow eh...
PETER: So the word order?
ALMA: Yes, because sometimes many words, and how to...
PETER: Put them in order? And it’s most important
ALMA: And sometimes grammar, grammar. But I ask her “Can you explain me? This word’s write with ing, or ed, or some thing?” “I don’t know. I don’t know!” So “How you, you speak good without mistakes?” “I don’t know, it’s from my, from my mind. It goes from my mind. I can’t explain you”
PETER: Well children can learn from just listening
ALMA: Yes, because she every day listen, listen, listen
PETER: That’s the way children learn and they can learn without grammar. Also, some Irish schools do not teach much grammar
ALMA: (surprise) Oh, In Russia there is many many rules. There are many grammar, very difficult grammar.
PETER: And you studied a lot of grammar at school?
ALMA: Every day, every day, it’s very difficult
PETER: Here they learn more grammar in Irish or in a foreign language. They can speak but they don’t know why do I use –ed, why do I use-ing? You say that you forget some words from when you studied in school, but you did learn a lot of words at school?
ALMA: At school? When I learned at school we learned topics. Do you know topics?
PETER: Yes
ALMA: About weather, my family eh transport, you know. Different, different topics. And there are many words from this topics, but now I all words forgot, and I start eh and I find my topic from school time, and I start read, read, read and eh...
PETER: Memorise?
ALMA: Memorise, yeah, this words
PETER: How would you say your life has changed? You said your life has changed since you came to the Centre
ALMA: (pause) At first, I’m not afraid to speak in English. I find eh friends and every day I know that eh I will go to Drop-in Centre and I will speak, I will communicate with other people. And I know that in future all will be ok
PETER: So you have a good feeling about the future?
ALMA: Yes
PETER: Whereas before you were not certain
ALMA: Before I sit at home every day and I didn’t know what I do, what I will do
PETER: And it’s very hard, isn’t it? You get depressed sitting at home. Have you applied for a course in college? Did you go to the open day?

ALMA: Eh open day will be this Wednesday

PETER: Great, so things are changing

ALMA: Yes, I hope that I can apply

PETER: And photography is a good thing, something useful

ALMA: Yes, now it’s only my hobby, but maybe after this course it become my job

PETER: Anyway, it will be very good for you to go to college, and it will be good for you English

ALMA: yes, I hope that it will be good practice for English, and maybe after this year I will go to continue to learn

PETER: Yeah, cos you can get a certificate for one year and a diploma for two year

ALMA: Yes, it’s Fetac four

PETER: Perhaps you can go on to do Fetac five. Is that what you hope to do?

ALMA: Uh huh, but my high education in Latvia it’s Fetac five, or higher?

PETER: University is Fetac seven

ALMA: Seven!?

PETER: Yes, you are Fetac seven, Fetac eight

ALMA: I need translate it and apply to some university

PETER: Yeah, you need to translate it and improve you English so that you can go further

ALMA: Ok, maybe after one year. I have plan, plan, plan for the future?

PETER: Plans for the future, yeah. What advice would you give to someone who wants to learn English?

ALMA: Don’t afraid anything, understand? To be friendly, to be eh simple, simple person, not eh “I am king!” (chuckles) “Don’t speak with me. Don’t touch me!”

PETER: Normal

ALMA: Be normal, simple person and help each other... eh people will communicate with you

PETER: Well, Irish people like to talk

ALMA: Yes, I know. If Irish people see someone who is sad they will come to you and ask “What happen?”

PETER: Yeah, there are helpful people

ALMA: Yeah, it’s good, great I think

PETER: Well I don’t think I have many more questions. Your life is changing, changing for the better. It’s good to see. I’m happy

ALMA: And I’m happy too (laughs)

PETER: Do you watch TV in English?

ALMA: (chuckles) No

PETER: You watch satellite TV

ALMA: No, I like go to cinema. No television

PETER: And you watch films in English?

ALMA: I watch eh Gravity, yeah. Gravity was last in English. And I watch, watched Stalingrad, do you know it?

PETER: Yeah

ALMA: But it’s eh movie in Russian, in Russian language

PETER: A good film?

ALMA: Eh I think that it’s not so great film because eh... eh... I don’t know (chuckles). In Russian I can explain, but not in English

PETER: But Gravity you did enjoy
Gravity it’s interesting, it’s beautiful, very beautiful. It’s saw from space to our Earth. It’s a very beautiful view.

She’s a very strong woman.

Strong woman, but sometimes it’s very funny, very laughs.
Transcript of audio interview: ANA

Present: Ana, Peter

Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre

Date: February 27th 2014

Interviewer: Peter Sheekey

Duration: 45 minutes
PETER: (story feedback) So you “need reading and writing to understand letters from the government”
ANA: Yeah, some letters really hard to understand, yeah/
PETER: Because of the formal English?
ANA: Yeah, yeah, some form like that, they send the form back to home. Very hard to understand
PETER: Yeah, they don’t make it easy, do they?
ANA: Yeah
PETER: So if Irish people don’t understand you, you can write the word. So writing is helpful for you if you have a pronunciation problem?
ANA: Yeah
PETER: “The story was written for friends and classmates, and especially for teachers”
ANA: Yeah
PETER: Your story is very good, not too many mistakes in it. Very small mistakes, little ones.
ANA: When we were working in a group, sometimes around the table, what was that like for you? Did you enjoy that?
ANA: Yes
PETER: And did you learn from other people in the group?
ANA: Yeah, we learn a lot
PETER: Yeah? What did you learn from them?
ANA: Sometime vocabulary, we learn lots of vocabulary, new.
PETER: From the teachers?
ANA: Yeah
PETER: Did you learn anything from the others in the group?
ANA: Yes, yes
PETER: And do you think this is a good way to learn writing and reading?
ANA: Yes
PETER: Why?
ANA: Because when we reading, a lot of vocabulary, new vocabulary, and we have to think about the meaning
PETER: Is writing your story different from writing a grammar exercise? Is it a different way to learn?
ANA: The story, we had to think, but the exercise we just do grammar and don’t think
PETER: So the story makes you think more
ANA: Yeah
PETER: And you have to find the correct words, and the correct sentences?
ANA: Yes, and sometime we had to find a synonym, not write the same words many time in same story
PETER: So you don’t have to repeat the words? That’s why you had to think more about your story
ANA: Yes
PETER: I was reading your story again this morning and it’s the biggest story we have. It’s the longest story in the Centre, too. You say that there are many things you cannot do in Ireland because of the language barrier. What is this barrier stopping you from doing?
ANA: For example, if I am in my country, I can go out at midnight, until midnight, but here I don’t bear to do that
PETER: So you don’t feel confident
ANA: Yeah, because the first thing is the weather, the second thing the language. So I don’t know when and where...

50 PETER: So you mean that when you meet people, you don’t know what they’re saying?

ANA: Yeah, and I don’t know where I go. Here I just hear somebody say “Go to the pub”, but I don’t drink, so I don’t know where I go

PETER: So you’re not interested in the pub?

ANA: Yeah, so evening I just stay at home. I can’t go outside

55 PETER: So that’s why this place (CENTRE) is very good? You meet people, talk to people?

ANA: Yes

PETER: You say you try your best to make friends with Irish people, have you made some Irish friends? I mean outside the Centre?

ANA: Yeah, yes, I joined a knitting group in Clondalkin library

PETER: When did you start that?

ANA: Once a week, on Saturday morning

PETER: And when did you start your knitting? When did you start the club?

ANA: Eh last year

PETER: Could you knit before that?

ANA: A little, but I cannot read the pattern in English. The book in English

70 PETER: Ok, so there’s a problem with the patterns

ANA: Yeah, and the writing in English. I try to understand and I ask some Irish people and they help me

PETER: They’re helping you?

ANA: Yeah

PETER: In the knitting club there are many Irish people, too

ANA: Only Irish people, except for me (laughs)

PETER: Fantastic! So you’ve a lot of friends there?

ANA: A lot of listening! The knit and speak and they laugh “Ha ha ha!” And when they laugh, I just follow them to laugh but I don’t know what the meaning

PETER: You don’t always understand it

ANA: yeah

PETER: But do they explain? Do they help sometimes or

ANA: No, sometimes I ask and some they explain. But if I don’t ask, they don’t explain. It’s some joking or something, but I don’t really understand, no

75 PETER: So at the beginning of the knitting group, it would have been very difficult to understand everything?

ANA: Not, now as well, yeah. A little better, but I just guess the meanings, and not really understand, no

PETER: But you’re happy there? You like it?

80 ANA: Yes

PETER: And your knitting has improved?

ANA: Yes

PETER: And you’ve made some friends?

ANA: Yes

PETER: Do you talk to people from your country, Vietnam? Do you talk to them about coming to the Centre here?

ANA: Yeah

PETER: What do they think about it?
ANA: They think here very good but he man he work, and the woman he have children. So they cannot come.
PETER: But they would like to come.
ANA: They would but normally the man they work in Chinese takeaway so they work until midnight.
PETER: Oh yeah, bad hours.
ANA: So they wake up very late, yeah, in the morning.
PETER: They sleep in the morning and they work at night.
ANA: Yeah, but the woman they have baby so they cannot come, and normally the lady they cannot drive a car, most of them.
PETER: The people you know from Vietnam, do some of them not speak English?
ANA: Yeah, some of them don’t speak.
PETER: Do you know people who speak English very well from Vietnam?
ANA: Eh the young Vietnamese are very good at English, but the old people like me, not really sure.
PETER: The people you know from Vietnam, do some of them not speak English?
ANA: Yeah, some of them don’t speak.
PETER: Because they never had the opportunity to learn.
ANA: Yeah.
PETER: So the young people went to school.
ANA: Yeah, they’re ok. The old, not really.
PETER: That’s why centres like this are good cos they help older people.
ANA: Yeah, the young people are ok don’t worry.
PETER: If I asked you to describe this Centre, what would you tell me?
ANA: Eh the Centre here very friendly, and very open, and very freely. You can come if you have free time. And you can come maybe half hour and you can go, and you can stay maybe one hour, and you can stay two hour that depend on you. They don’t, how can I say? They don’t tie you?
PETER: Yeah, they don’t put you under pressure.
ANA: Yeah, they don’t put you under pressure.
PETER: Does that make it easier to come for you?
ANA: Yeah, yeah, but another English course you have to present regularly. If you miss three time, the last maybe three or four time they...
PETER: Take you off the course.
ANA: Yeah, they take the name of the course, but here ok, yeah.
PETER: If you were going to describe the Centre here, would you describe it as a friendship, a family, a club? How would you describe it as a group?
ANA: Hmm a friendship.
PETER: A friendship?
ANA: Yeah.
PETER: So like a group of friends?
ANA: Yeah.
PETER: If the members here ask you to describe yourself, if they ask “Who are you?” What would you tell them?
ANA: I say maybe I am... I am... a English learner. I come here for learning English, and practicing my English. If I have free time.
PETER: And if they say “What else are you?” “You are an English learner...” If the say what other things are you in your life, as a person, “Who are you?”
PETER: Do you talk about your life outside the Centre? Do you tell them about your life outside?
ANA: No, not really

145 PETER: Not too much. So it’s kind of private?
ANA: Yeah

PETER: So you have the Ana who is in the Centre, and the Ana outside and you don’t really mix them up?
ANA: Yeah

150 PETER: So you don’t talk about your family?
ANA: No, not really. Just a little, not too much

PETER: How would you describe language learning here in the Centre?
ANA: Mmm (pause) here very good. They help you, depend on your knowledge, depend on your level. They help you what you need. If you don’t know how to write, they just help you slowly with writing. If you need grammar, they help you with grammar.

155 PETER: So they give you what you need?
ANA: Yeah, something like that. Practical English

PETER: You’ve started teaching at the Centre
ANA: Yeah, that’s (Centre coordinators name) (laughs)

160 PETER: Yes, she’s terrible. She pushes you into everything. Do you enjoy it?
ANA: Yes, yes, but really hard do that, yeah

PETER: It’s hard. Is it helping you with your English by teaching?
ANA: Yeah, a little

PETER: How long have you been teaching now at the Centre?
ANA: Maybe just two months

165 PETER: Do you have a special group you work with?
ANA: Yeah, but I’m not come here regularly, just sometime, yeah

PETER: But like all the volunteers, they come when they have time
ANA: Yeah, when I have free time

170 PETER: Yeah, and do you think you could become a teacher, study teaching?
ANA: But teaching here not easy, I know

PETER: Yeah, it’s not easy but you’re doing a very good job. Do you think learning at the Centre is different from other ways of learning?
ANA: A little. A little different because here they don’t force you to do your exercise. If they give you, if they give me exercise, I say “Ok” but go home and maybe I don’t do. So next time I come here, nothing happen to me. But in school no, we have to, that’s the difference, yeah

PETER: You’ve done other courses before coming to the Centre?
ANA: Yes

175 PETER: What did you do? You did Fetac?
ANA: I do, I did Fetac level 5 in Crumlin College

PETER: And was that good? Good teachers, good school?
ANA: Yeah

PETER: Very different from here?
ANA: Yeah, a lot of grammar and vocabulary and writing and reading and listening, as well

180 PETER: So a lot of practice?
ANA: Yeah

PETER: And that’s good
ANA: Yeah, very good
Peter: It has helped you. Your writing has improved. Since you started here, do you think your own idea of the Vietnamese community has changed?

Ana: No, I don’t think so because they have their own way.

Peter: Have your ideas changed?

Ana: I changed my ideas, yeah.

Peter: What way would you say they have changed?

Ana: Sorry?

Peter: What has changed for you? Your ideas, your thinking?

Ana: I think I have to go outside the house. I don’t stay in the house because most of Vietnamese lady have to stay in the home. Do the housework, but I’m not...

Peter: You want to change. Is that important for you?

Ana: Yes, this is good for me because, if I have to go to see doctor, I have to speak English. And sometime they ask me I have to fill the form, I have to. So I have to go out to study English. And I have to go out to learn how to drive a car well.

Peter: So you do it to survive?

Ana: Yeah, I have to.

Peter: Do you want to become part of the Irish community? Is there another reason, not just for filling in forms?

Ana: Yeah, and I, last year I join with the CIA.

Peter: CIA?

Ana: Yeah, Irish Association communication women group of Ireland.

Peter: It’s a women’s group, is it?

Ana: Of Ireland, yeah.

Peter: CIA, never heard of. It’s not the Country Women’s Association, is it? What do they do?

Ana: Like Women group of Ireland, Irish people but they start fro eight evening to ten evening so too late for me.

Peter: Too late, so what do they do this group?

Ana: They do some knitting embroidery, everything. And tell story, everything and join that but too late for me. But the thing is my English is not so good but I’m more listen than speak.

Peter: Well listening is good.

Ana: Yes but I’m not really understand, I just guess. But when I ask one sentence and they ask me to repeat maybe two or three times so after that they understand, really hard for me.

Peter: So it’s hard work for you, you have to keep repeating.

Ana: Yeah, really hard, yeah.

Peter: Let’s say there is a Vietnamese Ana. DO you think there is an English or an English speaking Ana as well? We say that when we learn a language we build a new part of ourselves, there’s another part that grows.

Ana: Yeah.

Peter: Do you think that there is an English speaking Ana?

Ana: I am, no eh I think I am a little bit...

Peter: Well, do you feel different when you speak English?

Ana: Before?

Peter: No, now. Do you feel?

Ana: Different than before? Yeah, different, a little better.

Peter: But in what ways would you be different?

Ana: Maybe I learn some new word. Practical word like gorgeous. So everything just one word gorgeous.
PETER: (laughs) Irish people use it all the time. It’s a famous word in Ireland
ANA: Another one like beautiful, wonderful, fantastic. But one word gorgeous, everything, so I have to learn that
PETER: So do you want to speak like the Irish?
ANA: Irish?
PETER: Do you want to learn the way Irish speak English?
ANA: I don’t think I can do that
PETER: But would you like to?
ANA: No, no, maybe they speak very fast and (make fast noise) no, I don’t think so
PETER: So what type of English would you like to learn?
ANA: I’m not sure, I just try, I just try to improve my pronunciation for them to easy to understand me
PETER: And that’s a big issue
ANA: Yeah (20.45)
PETER: Cos reading and writing are not big problems for you and even grammar you can study
ANA: Yeah
PETER: But pronunciation is hard for you
ANA: Yeah, it’s hard
PETER: Has coming to the Centre changed your life outside the Centre?
ANA: Yeah...
PETER: It has, in what way?
ANA: Yeah, because when I come here my English is better, so I go out and I speak, they understand me easier. Better than before
PETER: So it has changed your life
ANA: Yeah
PETER: You work
ANA: I work, yeah
PETER: What do you do Ana?
ANA: Before I were a Deli assistant in eh City West, company Topa, Topa, Topaz? (struggle with z here)
PETER: Yes, that’s the oil, the petrol people. You worked there for Topaz?
ANA: Yeah, there I were assistant. I make sandwiches and I worked at weekend on Saturday and Sunday
PETER: And you were working with Irish people or different people?
ANA: Yeah, I worked with Masy, my daughter. She is my supervisor (chuckles)
PETER: Your daughter is your supervisor? Oh god!
ANA: Yeah, and someday I work with another girl
PETER: Who is Irish?
ANA: No, Polish but they are very good at English
PETER: The Polish are good at learning English
ANA: Yeah, and the manager of the shop is Polish girl, yeah
PETER: How do you get on with the people at work? Are you still working there?
ANA: Not now, no

PETER: How did it go with the other people at work? How did you find working there?
ANA: Was ok, yeah
PETER: And language wise?
ANA: Ok, yeah. No problem
PETER: Well you can understand when Irish people come into a deli – they want cheese, they
want this
ANA: No, not they order on the computer. And after order I bring the receipt and take the
receipt and make the sandwich. And after that I wrap them and put the receipt like that (gestures)
in here. And they go to pay in the counter
PETER: At the cash register?
ANA: And not speak too much (chuckles)
PETER: You didn’t have to speak too much
ANA: Yeah, not speak too much, yeah. They order the computer and the receipt come out
PETER: So you weren’t really speaking to people, but you were speaking to the workers?
ANA: Yeah, sometime but not too much. But when I work there I learned on thing that they
call three words. Like this one (shows napkin) they call serviette and...

PETER: Napkin
ANA: And napkin and one thing eh handkerchief?
PETER: Handkerchief
ANA: Yeah, three words for one thing. And one day another one say another word, and I say...

PETER: How many words!
ANA: I don’t know, and I just say “Wait a second” and I run to the counter and I ask “That, what
is that?” and they say this one and so I learn new word
PETER: Why did you stop working there?
ANA: I stop working there because the economic down, so they say the need me, so before I
work eight hour every day. Eight hour on Saturday, eight hour on Sunday, and after that they say
they need me to work two hour on Saturday, two hour on Sunday. I said “No, I cannot work like
that”. “If you need me on Saturday four hour, I can work for you on Saturday four hour, or on Sunday
four hour”, ok
PETER: But not two hours
ANA: Two hour! I have to go here and I work two hour and I go back!? And next day I go like
that so I earn nothing cos I have to pay for petrol
PETER: And time coming and going
ANA: Yeah, so I stopped work there
PETER: So now you want to do a course
ANA: And after that I did the course Care Assistant
PETER: You did the course?
ANA: Care Assistant one year. And after that I found a job in nursing home (name of home) in
City West
PETER: And how was that?
ANA: I worked there but the thing I learned English like “full time job” and “part time job” and
“relief”
ANA: Ne, ne, never learn about that but when I have interview I say “at home I stay with my
mother-in-law, she’s nearly ninety year old so I have to help her at home as well. So now I can work
on Saturday and Sunday Only. Just two day. If you can give me like that I can work.” And after
interview they call me go to work, and they give me some contract and sign the contract “relief.” I
don’t know “relief”. What does it mean? And they say “Relief just very little work” and I say “Ok.”
But some Saturday I’m not work, some Sunday I’m not work. But another day they call me at 7 o’clock
“Can you work at eight o’clock?” I say “Yes”, and after that I have to drive into work
PETER: Yeah, relief work is when somebody cannot come in to work and you go and take their
place.
ANA: But I don’t understand
PETER: Now you do
ANA: I signed a contract where I don’t understand, but now I do. And some week I don’t work,
but I declare to the government that I work on Saturday and Sunday and they cut me money
PETER: Oh my god!
ANA: They cut me money. Before some weeks pass and they cut me money, and after that
some Saturday and Sunday I don’t work and they cut me like that. And I come back to the manager
and I say “If you can give me the same work, but some day I don’t work, some week I don’t work so
they cut me money. But I have problem with English so I come there, how can I explain? Very hard
for me
PETER: This is the social welfare that are cutting you?
ANA: Yeah
PETER: There is a thing called casual labour, casual work, which is similar to what you’re doing.
You can tell them “Look, I worked this week. I didn’t work that week”
ANA: Yeah
PETER: You can organise this with your social welfare officer. Talk to them. Go in and explain.
Are they still cutting you now?
ANA: No, I stopped working there
PETER: Because you were losing money?
ANA: Yeah, that not good, yeah
PETER: Did you learn to drive in Ireland or did you
ANA: I learn driving here, but in Vietnam I drove a motorcycle
PETER: A Honda?
ANA: A Honda!
PETER: A Honda 50 or 70
ANA: 150, I rode a super eh... I rode a Vespa. Yeah 150 centimetre
PETER: Italian, good bike
ANA: Italian, and the gear on the hand
PETER: Was it difficult to learn how to drive here
ANA: Yeah because here on the left hand side, in my country on the right hand side. That very
confuse me
PETER: That changed your life driving in Ireland, did it?
ANA: Yeah
PETER: And your husband is working, is he?
ANA: Before he worked but not now
PETER: The economy is a problem for him too
ANA: Yeah
PETER: What work was he doing?
ANA: He work in Chinese. Chinese restaurant
PETER: And now people are not spending money in restaurants
ANA: Yeah
PETER: What are the most important things you’ve learned in Ireland?

ANA: (sotto voce) Most important things?

PETER: The lessons you’ve learned

ANA: Culture, the culture. I never forgot one time before I on the bus. I was on the bus and one woman she sits next to me with the baby on her hand. Maybe a girl with the pink but at that time I did not know the girl have to wear pink, but the baby you cannot recognise a girl or boy. I say (slight chuckle) “He’s very handsome”. She “(gasp) She, how can I say, she looked at me like that ‘You think a baby boy can wear pink?” That make me very surprised I said “I’m sorry”

PETER: So all of those little things you learn about Irish culture

ANA: Yeah that’s really hard. That I never forgot

PETER: Because in Vietnam babies can wear

ANA: Yeah we can wear anything

PETER: Were there other times in Ireland, other things similar to that where you said “Oh my god! It’s different. The culture in Ireland is different”

ANA: Eh, I was shocked when I was on the bus and I saw some young teenager smoke on the bus in the back of the bus. That very shocked me. And here some girl in the high street and outside the school they smoke like that. That’s very different

PETER: Young women don’t smoke in Vietnam?

ANA: Not very often, but the girl, schoolgirl never, no. If I saw that girl smoke and maybe I talk to her parent “I saw your daughter smoke”. Something like that and maybe they talk to her, but here we cannot. That’s very different, yeah

PETER: What would you say are the most important things you’ve learned at the Centre? Not just language, in general

ANA: In general it’s culture, different culture. Learn a lot, yeah

PETER: So you’ve learned about the other cultures. And was that good, positive?

ANA: Yeah, that’s very good, yeah. So we know, yeah

PETER: You understand different parts of the world

ANA: Yeah

PETER: What would you change about this Centre? If you were going to change anything, what would you change?

ANA: What do you mean change?

PETER: If you were the boss here, would you do anything different?

ANA: Eh, (pause) maybe we do different group like here a lot of Polish and Chinese. Maybe we put them in one group and they speak English in one group. This group maybe few people some little English, some better English so they can help the other

PETER: Help each other

ANA: Yeah

PETER: So like bilingual education and they speak the same language and help by translating

ANA: Yeah

PETER: What things would you change about your English outside the Centre?

ANA: Vietnamese language?

PETER: No, with your English

ANA: Outside the Centre? (pause) (sotto voce) I don’t know

PETER: What would you like to do in the future?

ANA: In the future I want to learn more English

PETER: So you want to keep improving your English?
ANA: Yeah I want some maybe part time course in the evening because during the day I’m very busy

PETER: What advice would you give, if somebody is coming from Vietnam, is coming to Ireland. What advice would you give to them about learning English?

ANA: Ehm (pause) about learning English?

PETER: About learning English and living in Ireland

ANA: So the first thing you have to find some course to learn English. (pause) The first thing you have to learn English first. Learn English and after that learn drive a car, and after that find job

PETER: So English first, drive a car and then find work?

ANA: Yeah

PETER: It’s easier for young people to do this

ANA: Yeah, for the old very hard

PETER: Well you’ve done very well. You’ve learned to drive

ANA: I tried my best

PETER: You’ve learned English. You’ve learned to drive a car. We first met ten years ago. Was it ten years?

ANA: Yeah, ten years

PETER: You’ve done very well. A lot of people don’t learn English, you know. They stop.

ANA: Yeah, they don’t learn, and they stop. But the young they are ok, but the old they don’t want to learn

PETER: It’s harder, but for young people it’s better

ANA: But, I think learn to drive a car very difficult for me

PETER: The theory is difficult

ANA: Yeah but the theory ok for me. I got forty from forty. But the, the practical really hard for me

PETER: Did you have to try different times?

ANA: Yeah but I just try, only me nobody help me

PETER: On your own?

ANA: Nobody help me

PETER: Nobody?

ANA: I learn with the instructor, only one hour take me one way and after that only me

PETER: You learned alone?

ANA: Only me because at home my son can drive a car but my husband cannot but I always practice from about five o’clock in the morning to about seven. Very early in the morning so no car outside

PETER: So nice and quiet

ANA: Yeah but a night time we have lots of taxi and the truck and the police. And one day the police follow me and I don’t know.

PETER: Did they stop you?

ANA: Yeah they stop me but I don’t know. I drive outside my own house just to the roundabout and the police behind me, and they always behind me. But I don’t know they want to stop me. I just think “Why they always want to follow me?” But I think I don’t do any wrong. I just learn how to drive so I drive slowly slowly, and later they drive and I don’t stop and they took over me. And they stop and they asked me something and just look in the window, and they check everything and they check me license, driver’s license and I show them. And they asked me if I if I drink last night and I said “No”. They said “You are (laughs) very bad driver”. I said “I know because I just learn how to drive” and they say “You need a full license beside you because very dangerous” and I say “I’m really
sorry. I have one full license in my house. He is my son”. But at that time, at this time he is still in the bed because later he had go to work. “So now I can't ask him to help me. So I have to learn myself”, and they said “You have to go home now” (laughs) “You are very dangerous. You have to go home now and next time somebody stay with you”. I said “No, I can’t. If you don’t let me how can I next time drive only me?”

PETER: “How can I learn?”
ANA: “How can I drive?”, yeah
PETER: You have a son here?
ANA: Yeah, and my daughter here as well
PETER: A son and daughter and two grandchildren?
ANA: Yeah
PETER: How old are the grandchildren?
ANA: One is eight year old, one is five
PETER: Are they speaking good English?
ANA: Very good (chuckles) they are in school
PETER: Do your son and daughter speak good English, too?
ANA: Yeah their English better than me
PETER: Do they help you with your English?
ANA: No, not really. When I came here I learned English the same class with my daughter Masy, and now she become accountant
PETER: She is intelligent like her mother
ANA: Yeah (chuckles) she learned four year in ITT and after that she learned two year more in Independent College, and now she finished all the subjects. And she got job, but she need three year work experience so after that she got fully qualify
PETER: So she’s working
ANA: She work one and half year already, but no money just work experience
PETER: But she will get good money when she is finished the work experience
ANA: Yeah when full qualify but very stressful job
PETER: And they didn’t help with your English, but did they sometimes laugh at your English?
ANA: Yeah (laughs) The first year because my son come here before me and I speak English with him and he say “Your English is very terrible!” (chuckles)
PETER: They make fun but they don’t help. Did you ask?
ANA: No, at that time I don’t, no
PETER: Anyway they have their own lives to lead
ANA: Yeah because they work so they speak English all the time, but their young as well so very good English
PETER: They speak Vietnamese as well
ANA: Yeah
PETER: How is their Vietnamese, is it good?
ANA: Their Vietnamese is good cos when they came here they old, after first year university so nearly twenty years old. But grandchildren not really, but my daughter teach them how to write Vietnamese, how to read Vietnamese
PETER: So she’s keeping the culture
ANA: Yeah, but a little better
PETER: Very good. That’s a great story, you’re story is the longest and it’s good. Thank you.
Transcript of audio interview: UMA

Present: UMA, Peter
Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre
Date: April 7th 2014
Interviewer: Peter Sheekey
Duration: 30 minutes
PETER: Uma you are doing some work at the Centre now, are you?
UMA: Yes, I started teaching because I’m very busy and I have kids and I can’t to work all day, just when school hours
PETER: How old are your children?
UMA: Eight and nine, two girls
PETER: How are they? Are they doing well?
UMA: Yes, like pre-teenagers (chuckles)
PETER: Beginning to change
UMA: Yes, yes, and they need a lot of time to spend with me cos it’s very important that eh one parent or both parents spending a lot of time with children. My husband too busy cos he’s a truck driver and I don’t know when will he be busy or free
PETER: Is he doing long-distance truck driving?
UMA: Yes, I know eh all, all Ireland, every part of Ireland better than my country. Because every day I hear a lot of story about Ireland, about every town, every village
PETER: So he’s driving all around Ireland?
UMA: Yes
PETER: And he’s telling you all the stories?
UMA: Yes, interesting
PETER: So you’re here ten years and you got married here in Ireland?
UMA: Eh yes, in my country we finished ceremonial about wedding, and we came
PETER: So you got married and then moved to Ireland?
UMA: Yes
PETER: You worked in Ireland before?
UMA: No, never, because when I came in Ireland I didn’t finished my, my university. I did just one exam, last exam and I moved eh and teach, learn that back in Ireland and finished everything (finished studies in Ireland and returned to Bosnia to finish exams), and all my diploma
PETER: Qualifications
UMA: Qualifications are with me here
PETER: And what are you qualifications, Uma? What did you do?
UMA: Eh I finished faculty of law eh... at university
PETER: So you studied law at university
UMA: Yes
PETER: And the languages you studied at school in your country? What is your first language?
UMA: Bosnian
PETER: Do you have a second language?
UMA: Eh on, in university I had just second Latin
PETER: Latin, so you studied Latin as well because of law, you needed it
UMA: Yes
PETER: Did you study any other languages?
UMA: Yes, in my high school I studied Germany. Germany and little bit English but eh my high school was eh after war and eh during war in my country and at school not, not normal school. For example when we start to teach (learn) something we heard eh...
PETER: Bombs
UMA: Bombs, and something we had to go (gestures down)...
PETER: You had to go underground, under the school?
UMA: Yes
PETER: So your education was disrupted? And you studied English for how many years?
UMA: Four years, but during the war
PETER: Four years, so it wasn’t normal study and you didn’t get a chance to learn very well. So when you came to Ireland, could you speak English?
UMA: I started to speak English in Drop-in Centre because first years I must to teach my exams from my country, and after that I got children. And all the I got educated how I need to be mam and cos I have two Kids like twins
PETER: Very close
UMA: Yeah, very close, and now, maybe two or three years ago, I find time for me
PETER: So you started coming to the centre two or three years ago?
UMA: Yes but with Ann (one to one teacher) every Thursday, not every day
PETER: So once a week?
UMA: Yes, once a week and that’s maybe too little. And now I came every day
PETER: And how is the teaching going? Are you enjoying it?
UMA: Yes, yes, but one or two days I’m teaching, but I need... when I’m teaching I, I don’t improve my English. Because with beginners that not, not eh enough for me and two days I have good teacher. I learn more
PETER: But you still have to be there in the afternoons for your children, so you can’t spend too much time.
UMA: Yeah, too much time. I have a lot of exams, a lot of subjects
PETER: But you’re not going to the classes
UMA: I went to one class at level five but she say that maybe I need repeat level four and I need that
Peter: For you, with English, what are the big problems? I mean, speaking you’re ok, understanding - you understand quite well
UMA: I think I need more conversation. A lot of people told me that my reading and writing very good, and I think so. But I need more conversation with people who speak just English
PETER: So, native speakers. Irish or English people?
UMA: Yeah, yeah, because I didn’t work in Ireland and I think I need to practice
PETER: You need contact with Irish people
UMA: Yes
PETER: But you’re coming on Friday for the conversation?
UMA: Yes
PETER: Is that good?
UMA: Yeah, good. Good, but (chuckles) I want more, more, more hours
PETER: When you were writing the story, who were you writing the story for? Who is going to read this story, did you think?
UMA: I write it about me few, few months ago
PETER: Who did you want to read this story?
UMA: I wrote about my life. That’s me. I didn’t help eh...
PETER: No, you did it on your own
UMA: Yeah
PETER: So who would you like to read this story?
UMA: Eh, um, my family read my story
PETER: And they read it?
UMA: Yes
PETER: And how did it feel when you finished the story?
UMA: They, em eh, what do you call that? Not surprised. They find it very...
Peter: Excited?
Uma: Excited, yes
Peter: How did you feel?
Uma: Good because I never eh writing story on book, but I have a lot of time in my country when I write to my school, primary and secondary. My teacher said that I have talent.
Peter: In your language? In another language it’s a bit more difficult
Uma: Yes, but I think it’s very important that you have idea about something. Not about your life. You can write about something or somebody and, and story
Peter: What do you think you learned from your story? Or do you think it helped you in any way?
Uma: (pause) Em, (pause) nothing special. Because that is very real question about life, about what’s happened in a past
Peter: But when you were finished the story, did you feel you had learned something from doing it?
Uma: Em (pause) nothing special. Because that is very real question about life, about what’s happened in a past
Peter: Do you think it’s good to write about this?
Uma: Yes, like in the real life. We put our country and Ireland and make...
Peter: Comparison?
Uma: Comparison
Peter: Did this help you to understand your position in Ireland?
Uma: Ah, yeah. Yeah, because I need to eh ref...
Peter: Reflect?
Uma: Reflect, yeah, what happened and compare two countries and...
Peter: And did it help you to think or reflect about your life in Ireland?
Uma: Yes, yes! But that book is very good and can help people for now and what was before.
Peter: Do you think these stories can help other people, others who come to the centre?
Uma: I don’t know. I didn’t ask those people
Peter: So you don’t know what effect this has on other people?
Uma: No
Peter: You worked alone a lot of the time, you worked with one teacher. You didn’t work in the groups in the Centre, did you?
Uma: One person or two, but...
Peter: Small groups
Uma: Yeah, small groups because my English is not very good for bigger group. I have a lot of mistake
Peter: Before you came to the Centre, did you speak with people outside?
Uma: Just at shopping. When you don’t know the speaking you don’t know, have the confidence. You want to speaking but you think “What people thinking about you”. People maybe don’t have patience for your bad English, but you want to met a lot of friends and speak English about your life, about your education, about everything. But you can’t explain.
Peter: Do you think the story helped you to explain a little bit about that?
Uma: Yes, of course I think
Peter: Do you think it would be a good way to learn English?
Uma: Yes, of course. I’m sure that
Peter: Before you came to the centre, you didn’t talk to your neighbours?
Uma: Yes, but not enough. Just a few polite sentences about the weather, about shopping (chuckles) not about a lot of... I don’t know...
Peter: Different things
Uma: Yeah, but Angela, Angela is first person who helped me. She have a lot of patience to speak with me and she’s very good. And she first person who friends...

145 Peter: So you became friends as well?
Uma: Yeah, very good and eh brilliant
Peter: If I was going to ask you about the Centre, would you say that the centre is a family, friendship or a club, how would you see the Centre?
Uma: Like not school, club maybe

150 Peter: Like a club?
Uma: Yeah, between school and club. School is a lot of formal
Peter: It’s very formal, yeah
Uma: In school you have exactly time, time eh...
Peter: You have a timetable and limits

155 Peter: So it’s between formal and informal
Uma: Yeah
Peter: Your life after coming to the centre, how has it changed?
Uma: English eh my English is improved, and everyday improving with the Drop-in centre. I learned more. A lot of people needs to met people and speak, speak eh English. I’m understand Russian, I’m understand different languages because Balkan languages quite similar
Peter: Slavic languages, yeah
Uma: Slavic, but I speak just English

160 Peter: Do you think that being in the Centre, you’re talking about other languages like Russian, and you understand Russian. Has that helped you in the Centre because people can translate for you or you can translate for them? Do you think having another language or using another language can help?
Uma: Em, yeah, yes a lot of people speaking Russian, and I have to tell them “Sorry could you stop I need to speak English”, but I understand them speaking
Peter: But sometimes when they’re working together, they translate for each other. If there’s a difficult word in English they don’t understand, but that’s ok
Uma: Yeah
Peter: Now outside the Centre, do you speak to more people outside the Centre than before?
Uma: Yes, when I met somebody who speak English, we speak English. That’s normal, or when you speak English you can to met all people and more confident. Confidence is very important, but you haven’t confidence if you don’t speak English
Peter: Yeah, confidence is very important. Do you feel that you have grown, your English eh the English Uma? There’s a Bosnian Uma and an English Uma. Do you think your English has grown in the last...

Uma: Of course, of course. When I, when I first time on plane, I don’t understand people who speak English, and people, Irish people. Just I understand say (chuckles) “Hello, Bye, Thank you, Sorry”, just polite magic words. But now I want to speak with them. I want to met people because I want to speak English

180 Peter: And you want to connect and communicate
Uma: Yeah
Peter: And you want to understand Irish
Uma: Yes, of course. I have, now I have a lot of strange words, but people explain. Example, when I don’t understand, you gave me different explain

Peter: Explanations
Uma: Explanation, yeah. It’s very, very good
Peter: So you feel better about talking to people now?
Uma: Of course
Peter: Do you communicate with the schools or with the doctors in English?
Uma: Yeah
Peter: How is that?
Uma: Good, every day I can talk to teach (learn?) new words and then I listen the radio and TV and teach new words. I want to teach
Peter: Your children go to school, do you talk to the people at school? Do you have English conversations there?
Uma: Yeah
Peter: And how is that, at the school?
Uma: Good, very good. No, no more better than first year
Peter: It was difficult at first, very difficult?
Uma: Yeah
Uma: On first year, I don’t want that someone ask me “What’s the time?” Just because (chuckles) I don’t know how I said it. If that’s correct or not
Peter: So you were afraid?
Uma: Yes
Peter: You didn’t want to talk to people?
Uma: Yes, just “Don’t ask me!”
Peter: It was a bad feeling
Uma: Yes, I feel alone. Then you go to shopping and you want to ask somebody something, you stop it, you stop...
Peter: You’re blocked
Uma: Yeah
Peter: Now, for Russian speakers it’s easy because there are a lot of Russian speakers, both here and in Tallaght and in Dublin. Are there many Bosnian speakers? Do you have a community of Bosnian speakers?
Uma: No, I like that because when a lot of people speak one language then you haven’t the chance to speak English because I want to speak just English. But at home or with Bosnian community, you can speak Bosnian
Peter: But you don’t spend time with the Bosnian community?
Uma: No
Peter: Is there a big Bosnian community here?
Uma: No, I don’t know. We haven’t Bosnian community her, I think. We just have some party maybe one, two times per year, but I don’t go...
Peter: You don’t go to the parties?
Uma: Yeah, but too late and we have not time to go there
Peter: Your children speak goo English?
Uma: Yes, very
Peter: Do they help you?
Uma: Yes, of course, and I said them that they correct me if I speak with Irish people. “You can correct me”, but they very polite, they said me “Later, later”. But I want to, I want that somebody correct me

Peter: You want them to help you, you want them to correct you

Uma: Yes

Peter: Other mothers have told me that other children laugh at their mothers. Now this happens, it’s normal make fun of the English. Do your children do this sometimes?

Uma: Once they laugh me, but I said I correct them Bosnian language, I can to laughing too. And they, they...

Peter: They stopped

Uma: (chuckles) They stopped and eh, eh respect

Peter: They have some respect, yeah

Uma: Yes, of course, But I think that’s very important, but correct Bosnian. A lot of people speak incorrect Bosnian because a lot of people came here in primary half, and secondary half and they miss...

Peter: Years of Bosnian

Uma: Yes

Peter: So do you sit down and read with them and you teach them the language?

Uma: If we have time

Peter: And when you’re speaking to them, the language of the house is Bosnian, is it?

Uma: Yeah

Peter: Both you and your husband are speaking Bosnian?

Uma: Yes

Peter: So the children, when they’re communicating, they use both languages, do they?

Uma: Both language, yes

Peter: And your husband’s English, how is it?

Uma: Bosnian, but he knows Perfect English

Peter: His English is good?

Uma: Yeah

Peter: He’s been working here for many years

Uma: Yeah

Peter: And so he learned it at work

Uma: Yes, yes

Peter: It’s the best way

Uma: Yes (chuckle) all family speak English just me little bit

Peter: But you’re getting better

Uma: I hope, I hope. I want to speak and improve

Peter: One final question, if you were going to change something about the Drop-in centre, what would you change?

Uma: Hmm, I don’t know exactly. But I like this new place because more bigger and a lot of people wants to came, to come here because this place magic place. This place help a lot of people, but I don’t know what to be change. I think this is good now

Peter: It doesn’t need

Uma: I don’t know exactly, but maybe not need change

Peter: It’s good

Uma: Great
Peter: And now we’ll have a crèche, it’ll be fantastic
Uma: Yes, that’s very good. Very good place, very new, very clear, and very good people
Peter: And you’re now a volunteer, what would you like to do for the future? Have you plans for the future? Would you like to go and study or work?
Uma: Yes, I want to work because all my life in my country I was a student, and my last year was too hard. Not...
Peter: Law is very difficult
Uma: Yeah, and I have a lot of books from my university I bring from my country here, and I want to work, Just, just eh learn English, but as a job maybe training something from my profession
Peter: So you’d like to work somewhere in your profession, something to do with law or social law?
Uma: Eh I don’t mind, I want to all...
Peter: Any area?
Uma: Yes, except family law. I wrote criminal law, too, but family law
Peter: You want to work in Family law, or not?
Uma: Yes, I want
Peter: You’re very interested in that area
Uma: Yes, very interested. Law is interesting
Peter: Very interesting. Do you watch CSI?
Uma: (chuckles) Yes, when I have time. Jud, Judge...
Peter: Judge Judy?
Uma: Yes, she’s fantastic
Peter: So, you’re listening to a lot of television and a lot of radio?
Uma: Yes, when I have time. Especial Judge Judy because her English is...
Peter: Easy to understand
Uma: Yes, very, but same word like my profession
Peter: So you can learn a lot of good law language from that
Uma: Yes
Peter: Good idea, terminology. Uma, thank you very much and thanks for your story
Uma: Thank you
Transcript of audio interview: Majeed

Present: Majeed, Peter

Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre

Date: January 14th 2014

Interviewer: Peter Sheekey

Duration: 22 minutes
MAJEED: (Laughs, looking at his written feedback)
PETER: Ok, so you’re looking at your writing there
MAJEED: (Laughs) Yeah
PETER: What school did you do in your country? How much school did you do?

5
MAJEED: Eleven years
PETER: Did you get a certificate or a qualification?
MAJEED: No, I didn’t. When not finished, you can’t be...
PETER: Ah, yeah, you didn’t finish school – I was reading that there
MAJEED: Yeah

10
PETER: What did you study at school?
MAJEED: Mmm, at school?
PETER: Yes, Maths, Geography... at school. Did you learn any other language at school?
MAJEED: Mmm, no, little bit my second language
PETER: What’s your second language?

15
MAJEED: Pashto
PETER: Pashto, so Farsi is your first language and Pashto is ...
MAJEED: Second language
PETER: How many years of Pashto did you do?
MAJEED: Think is... (pause), two or one... two years!

20
PETER: Two years, yeah. And you speak Farsi in your family?
MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: Does your family speak any other languages?
MAJEED: Eh, no... yeah, second language speak Pashto
PETER: And your father is here, and...

25
MAJEED: Grandmother, yeah
PETER: Yeah, she is also in the Centre, and any others?
MAJEED: No, that is all
PETER: And any family back in your country?
MAJEED: Yeah

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PETER: Do you go back?
MAJEED: Yeah, maybe for holiday
PETER: Have you been back this year, last year?
MAJEED: No
PETER: Do you want to go this year?

35
MAJEED: No, I want to first improve my English
PETER: You want to study?
MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: And what do you want to do in the future?
MAJEED: I want in the future to learn something new, to learn English

40
PETER: And do you want to then go to Irish school or college?
MAJEED: Yeah, I hope so
PETER: Do you have any idea what job you would like to do in Ireland?
MAJEED: I’d like to, I’d like to be a nurse
PETER: Have you looked at the jobs in Ireland?

45
MAJEED: Yeah, and another jobs in shops
PETER: So you have looked for jobs? It’s a good idea, even working in a shop you can learn more English
MAJEED: Yeah, in working with Irish people, you speak English, improve your English

PETER: You said in your story you are staying with a friend in Tallaght, is it?

MAJEED: Yeah, yeah, he’s my father’s friend

PETER: Where is he from?

MAJEED: He’s Irish

PETER: Do you practice English with him?

MAJEED: Yeah, yeah, he is speak a lot (chuckles) everyday. He really help to learn something. When I’m not understand something, he told me, explain a lot

PETER: He doesn’t speak your language, does he?

MAJEED: No, no, English and little bit Irish

PETER: Did you learn any Irish?

MAJEED: Yeah, only “Conas a ta tu?” and “Ta me go maith”

PETER: Very nice, so you are learning two languages!

MAJEED: (chuckles) Yeah

PETER: So what did you learn from writing your story?

MAJEED: Eh, I learned how to make sentence and, um, how to speak

PETER: So it helped your speaking as well?

MAJEED: Yeah, writing, reading...

PETER: When you were writing your story, who were you writing for?

MAJEED: My story? My friends, my family, and... everyone

PETER: So you are writing for everyone, and for yourself?

MAJEED: Yes

PETER: What did you like about writing the story? What was good about this?

MAJEED: (Pause) em, can you say that again please?

PETER: What did you enjoy about writing the story?

MAJEED: Eh, I like to make the correct sentences. To read correct, writing correct

PETER: What about the other people who were writing with you?

MAJEED: Other people is very good. I enjoy with other people. Is very nice

PETER: Did you learn anything from the other people?

MAJEED: Yeah, yeah! I learned ... some new words

PETER: About their cultures, about their countries?

MAJEED: Little bit (chuckles)

PETER: You were reading their stories; you were looking at each other’s stories. And you were learning about them.

MAJEED: Yeah

PETER: Do you think this is a good way to learn English?

MAJEED: Yeah, yes of course. It’s very good way to learn English. I had some nice people to help me. Nice teacher, everything

PETER: You talk about your social life in Dublin in your story. Who do you meet outside the Centre?

MAJEED: Outside the Centre, some Irish people and my friends, outside

PETER: Where do you meet them?

MAJEED: In the Square, in the shops, in the ... sometimes, in the pub (chuckles)

PETER: But you don’t drink?

MAJEED: No

PETER: But you go to the pub and meet people. It’s the best place to learn English ‘cos Irish people talk a lot in the pub. Are the people you meet all Irish people or different
MAJEED: Different, yeah. Irish peoples, Afghani peoples, Polish ... Latvia, every! (chuckles)
PETER: And you speak English with these people?
MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: What do you like about Dublin?
MAJEED: I like in Dublin is very friendly people. And clean country. And also is very green country.

But the weather is no (laughs), the weather is cold ... and raining
PETER: Cold and rainy!
MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: How do you see the Centre? What do you think about the Centre?
MAJEED: I think the Centre is very good to learn ... for people who not understand very well

English. Teachers help how to speak, how to write English, reading
PETER: And the people in the Centre?
MAJEED: Very friendly, very nice people
PETER: Would you describe the Centre as a kind of family or a club?
MAJEED: Yeah, yeah sometimes

PETER: Which? A family or a club?
MAJEED: Club sometimes
PETER: Is learning at the Centre here different from learning in your country?
MAJEED: Yeah, it’s very different.
PETER: How?

MAJEED: Because in my country we have different choices. For example science, geography, English

PETER: And the way you learn here, is it different?
MAJEED: Yeah, because there’s ... when you don’t understand, explain more for me. When not understand, explain a lot. He makes sure we understand

PETER: So it is more time?
MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: When you talk to Afghani people about the Centre, what do they think?
MAJEED: When I talk to Afghani people is always good things. Yeah, a lot of good memory here. Nice place...

PETER: So do they think it’s a good place?
MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: Has you life changed after coming to the Centre?
MAJEED: My life is because in my country I don’t understand English. Only two word: “Yes, No”...”thank” (laughs)

PETER: Yes, no, thank you!
MAJEED: (laughs) Only three word when I came to Ireland. Now I speak not bad
PETER: Not bad? You’ve done very well in a year. It’s only one year really.
MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: What has changed in your life after coming to the Centre?

MAJEED: In my country is not peace. There is at peace country. Everything is good for me

PETER: How long are you in Dublin now?
MAJEED: Eh, two years
PETER: So you came to Dublin and then you came to the Centre after maybe eight or nine months?

MAJEED: Maybe eight
PETER: So your life before coming to the Centre and you life after the Centre, what is different?
MAJEED: The difference is I came to the Centre, I can speak ... a little bit (laughs)

PETER: How has that changed your life outside the Centre?

MAJEED: Eh, small changes, before people cannot understand my language. Now I go with people outside and speak with Irish, English, speak with Polish people ...yeah with ... all people

PETER: So now you can speak to everybody?

MAJEED: Yeah

PETER: Do you think there is an Afghani Majeed and an English speaking Majeed?

MAJEED: Yeah, English speaking Majeed

PETER: Is he different from the Afghani speaking Majeed, do you think?

MAJEED: Hmmm (confused) sorry??

PETER: Well you have the Farsi Majeed and the English speaking Majeed. Are they different?

MAJEED: Yeah, there is different

PETER: How is it different?

MAJEED: Because I speak in English, some words are different from my language. One word has four, five meanings in my language. It's a bit confused

PETER: Do you think you have changed because of English?

MAJEED: Yeah, yeah! I changed.

PETER: In what way?

MAJEED: (long pause) don’t understand (nervous laugh)

PETER: How? What is changed? So by speaking English you have changed?

MAJEED: Yeah

PETER: What is changed?

MAJEED: (pause) I understand... but don’t know how to... explain

PETER: But you have changed?

MAJEED: Yeah

PETER: So the Majeed two years ago and the Majeed now, what has changed from two years ago?

MAJEED: yeah, before when I got outside and somebody asked me: only say “hi”, just say “Hi, where are you from” – I don’t understand what he say. He’s talking words, (M thinks:) “No way!” I always say: “No way, go!” No is talking my friend, I always make friend. It’s very nice!

PETER: So you can make friends more easily?

MAJEED: Yeah!

PETER: And you’ve changed?

MAJEED: Yeah!

PETER: Do you see Irish people different now from before?

MAJEED: Eh, yeah. Before I’m not understand How is he’s god, he’s bad. Now I understand he’s talking, understand he is a good man or bad man

PETER: Has you opinion, or how you think about Irish people changed?

MAJEED: Yeah...

PETER: Do you know how?

MAJEED: (pause)... he is very polite, talking is very gentlemen

PETER: So you understand now more...

MAJEED: Yeah, I understand

PETER: Is there anything you would change in the Centre?

MAJEED: For me?
PETER: Yeah
MAJEED: No, that’s fine, everything is fine
PETER: You wouldn’t change anything?
MAJEED: No, it’s very good
PETER: When you’re speaking in the Centre, and you’re speaking outside, is it different?
MAJEED: No, its same
PETER: What’s the most important thing you’ve learned
MAJEED: The most important thing to learn: correct. How to speak correct. How to writing, how to spelling
PETER: Is there anything else you’ve learned at the Centre?
MAJEED: Eh
PETER: Did you learn other things?
MAJEED: Yeah, about the cultures, how is people’s life
PETER: And you’ve learned from the other cultures here
MAJEED: Yeah, little
PETER: What have you learned about other cultures?
MAJEED: eh, for example. I don’t understand before, Irish people or another people that celebrate Christmas, now understand celebrate Christmas, Halloween, Easter...
PETER: So you’ve learned all about the cultures
MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: You said to me your story was short. You’re not happy with your story.
MAJEED: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: What would you put, what other stories would you tell if you were writing more?
MAJEED: I have a lot of memory in my country, but I can’t more writing correct
PETER: So memories from your country for a start?
MAJEED: Yeah, and here
PETER: So what things would you write about from your country?
MAJEED: Eh... about my friends, my family ... some people
PETER: And about Ireland, what would you write?
MAJEED: About Ireland there’s... good things!
PETER: For example?
MAJEED: Eh... (long pause) eh, example... there’s so friendly people I write here. More about Irish people I want to write
PETER: And things that have happened to you in Ireland?
MAJEED: In Ireland to this way, life is easy... when you not working and you don’t have money, government help you ... in Afghanistan nobody helps you, only yourself. If you’re working you get money. Not working...
PETER: You have a problem!
MAJEED: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: Who has helped you most in Ireland?
MAJEED: EH, help me most in Ireland...example the teachers help. Before I don’t understand
PETER: This is the man you’re living with?
MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: What’s his name?
MAJEED: Brian
PETER: Good Irish name! So you’re sharing a house
MAJEED: Yeah, house with Patrick. Brian has a house. Me and Paul...
PETER: Paul is Irish, too?

240 MAJEED: Yes
PETER: And they help you?
MAJEED: Yeah, he learn me speak Irish
PETER: He’s teaching you Irish
MAJEED: Yeah (laughs)

245 PETER: You have to learn English first!
MAJEED: Yeah (laughs) have to learn English first, but he learn me Irish
PETER: Well, it’s good for you to learn Irish
MAJEED: He understand Irish very good
PETER: Are there many Afghani people in Tallaght?

250 MAJEED: Yeah, there’s more, many people
PETER: Before you came to the Centre, in the Afghani community, have your ideas changed about the Afghani community in Ireland?
MAJEED: I don’t see where is the community in Afghani people
PETER: So you don’t see the community?

255 MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: So they are in different places. You don’t have a meeting?
MAJEED: No, only some friends
PETER: So this (The Centre) is your community?
MAJEED: Yeah, this is different people

260 PETER: Majeed, thank you very much!
MAJEED: Thank you very much
Transcript of audio interview: NIKA

Present: Nika, Peter

Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre

Date: January 21st 2014

Interviewer: Peter Sheekey

Duration: 20.30 minutes
PETER: Why do you want to improve your reading and writing?
NIKA: I want to improve my reading and writing skills because I want to get a good job and to go to the college and university, and for my usual life to be more confident. Cos I need to know how to write some words and when I need to, to watch in translator, I need to know how to write it.

PETER: So you need it in your everyday life?
NIKA: Yeah

PETER: How long are you in Ireland now, and what problems has it caused in your life?
NIKA: Eh six months

PETER: Six months, and what problems has reading and writing caused you in this time?
NIKA: Yeah, I think at first. Yeah, maybe I had a problem and then I came here. Because my English is not perfect, and when, when I needed in the past? (needed). When I needed to fill some forms or read some documents at first some things I didn’t understand, yeah

PETER: So the situations that it’s a problem in are official forms?
NIKA: Yeah, official forms, yeah. But eh then I did it many times and I know new words and I know how to do it so...

PETER: So practicing you became better at it
NIKA: Yeah practicing

PETER: Are there other situations it’s been a problem in your everyday life?
NIKA: I think another situation is reading books. When I read books and I don’t know some words, not everything just some words and eh I can’t enjoy fully

PETER: Because you like reading
NIKA: Yeah, I like

PETER: How will improving your reading and writing help you in your future in Ireland?
NIKA: I think it helps me to go to college, to pass the tests, IELTS test, yeah, I hope so. That’s why I need to read and write, to be more confident in my English

PETER: It’s for work and study you need it mostly
NIKA: Yeah, yeah

PETER: The story that you wrote, when you were writing it, who were you writing it for?
NIKA: I wrote it for people like me who came to Ireland and who want to integrate, who want to be a part of this country. And I think that’s eh ... a good example. I think so (chuckles), maybe not. I think it’s a good example how to make eh steps to new life, to new life in new country where you have never, have never been

PETER: So you were thinking of other people who were making the same journey as you?
NIKA: Yeah, and who maybe scared to go to the city and maybe to communicate with Irish people, to communicate with another immigrants, yeah

PETER: A good answer. What did you like about writing this story? What was good about it?
NIKA: I think the most what I liked was working with people in group, and ask them some question about their stories, yeah, and share my story. It was the best part, I think so. And eh when I saw the story finished, it was like amazing feelings, yeah

PETER: So you felt good when you saw the story on paper?
NIKA: Yeah

PETER: When you finish college you will write many stories
NIKA: I hope so (laughs)

PETER: What have you learned from the experience of writing the story?
NIKA: Eh, I think I learned new English words – I learned how to write it, and I knew how to
read it, yeah. Cos sometimes I met some English words, even in usual life, in conversational language, which I don’t know. It helps me, I learned a lot, yeah
PETER: So it has helped your English?
NIKA: Yeah
PETER: Do you think this is a good way to learn reading and writing, this way?
NIKA: Yeah, I think it’s a good way cos you can ask your, your classmate, yeah. And you can ask a teacher, if you don’t know something. And you improve, you write your story and you know about you, yeah? Everything and when you know some new words, you associate this with your language words. And you can improve it cos it’s interesting to share your story with another people
PETER: Eh, we’re gonna talk about your story and some general questions about living in Ireland. Why did you decide to come to Ireland?
NIKA: eh, actually it was not really only mine decision cos my husband lives here, and it was like necessary to live in Ireland together because he was here for ten years and eh...
PETER: So he was here before you?
NIKA: Yeah, he was here yeah
PETER: And did you, you met, where did you meet him first?
NIKA: Eh, I meet him in the..., we meet in the internet (chuckles)
PETER: You met on the internet and became friends on the internet?
NIKA: Yeah, and he came to the Ukraine, and after that he came again and again, and after that I came to Ireland
PETER: That’s very romantic
NIKA: Yeah, it is
PETER: So he was working here, living here for ten years?
NIKA: Yeah
PETER: So did you know about his origins
NIKA: Yeah, his original town is Riga, is Latvia
PETER: So he’s a different nationality from you?
NIKA: Yeah, he’s Russian, He lived in Latvia, he was born in Latvia but he’s Russian?
PETER: So you moved to a different country with a man from a different country?
NIKA: Yeah (laughs), it’s not so different, cos I can speak Russian, actually I always speak, spoke Russian. So we have eh ... we have more...
PETER: Similarities?
NIKA: Yeah, similarities, but you know Latvia is a little bit another...
PETER: Slightly different
NIKA: Yeah, slightly different
PETER: Now, how would you see the Centre? How would you describe the group in the Centre?
NIKA: I see it a like a bright, a bright place where I can come and feel comfortable, feel confident. Confident, and I can just communicate with people. It’s like eh, some kind... some kind of oasis, I don’t know...
PETER: Oasis is a good way to describe it
NIKA: Yeah, when you... when you come to another country and you don’t know nothing and nobody. And you need to do something, to go to the city centre, to go to ... streets, yeah. And you don’t know, you scared to speak to somebody. And when you come here, yeah, you can, you don’t shy and...
PETER: Feel confident?
NIKA: Yeah, confident, but when you come here, you feel confident cos you see so many people like you. And eh teachers who is, who are very eh ... kind to students, yeah, and helpful, helpful, yeah
PETER: When people ask you in the Centre who you are, what do you say?

NIKA: About people in the Drop-in Centre?
PETER: When people say “Who are you?”
NIKA: Ah! Who I am?
PETER: Yeah, what do you say?
NIKA: I’m a ... (laughs), yeah that is so difficult question, actually. It’s like eh I’m a friend...

PETER: Yeah, and if they ask about your identity, what do you tell them?
NIKA: You mean I am Ukrainian or...
PETER: Yeah, or social...
NIKA: Ah! Yeah. I think that I’m cosmopolitan?
PETER: Cosmopolitan?

NIKA: Yeah, a citizen of the world
PETER: So you don’t belong in one place?
NIKA: A citizen eh, because I like in other countries where I’ve been
PETER: So you’ve travelled?
NIKA: Yeah, a little bit, yeah. I was in Moscow, I was in Paris, in Germany, in Bulgaria

PETER: What do people of your community think of your going to the Centre?
NIKA: Eh, they happy for me cos it’s a good opportunity to integrate eh so new to Ireland. And it’s a good opportunity to find new friends. Actually, I founded (names four friends she met in the Centre). Yeah, I’m very happy that I’m here and they happy for me. Too, yeah
PETER: So there’s no negative reaction about it?
NIKA: No, no, of course. They are very happy that I can improve my English and that I can meet new people, new friends, yeah
PETER: How is learning here different from other situations where you did learning before?
NIKA: Maybe it’s a bit different because eh we have more ... comfortable, I don’t know how to say. Like a strict... you can ask, you can your assignment or something, and it’s not like you will be...

PETER: Yeah, it’s not strict
NIKA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: So you can learn the way you want to learn?
NIKA: Yeah

PETER: And working in groups, how was that for you? Do you enjoy that?
NIKA: Yeah, I really enjoy that cos I met Russian speaking, and not only Russian speaking people from other countries, and it’s interesting when you meet when you speak English and nobody talk, nobody knows how to say right, yeah? In the proper way.

PETER: So has that made it easier that other people spoke your language and you could talk about it?
NIKA: I, I ... it depends, sometimes better that people speak not my language cos I know that when somebody speaks my language, I can ask in my language, yeah? But when I don’t know, when somebody doesn’t know my language, we speak only English.

PETER: You get more practice

NIKA: Yeah, practice and new words, and maybe explain another way
PETER: So it can be good and bad people having your language?
NIKA: Yeah
PETER: Has coming to the Centre changed the way you think about Ireland?
NIKA: Eh, I think maybe a little bit in a good side. Some time ago I didn’t know anything about Ireland. I mean, Dublin is capital and it’s neighbours of UK, but I have never think that I could live
here, yeah. That’s why everything is new for me. It’s like a new world, and I like it, I enjoy it. People which I met is, are very good. Maybe I have not met so much, not many people but ... I think that I really lucky that I live here

NIKA: Would you say that you have an English language identity?

NIKA: What do you mean?

NIKA: Language identity

NIKA: How you feel in that language

NIKA: Ah, I see, I understand, yeah

NIKA: Yeah, well there is Nika’s English. Do you think that might have changed in your time at the Centre?

NIKA: Eh, you mean my personality?

NIKA: Not really, but your language. The way you are in English

NIKA: I think so cos when I speak English I feel I am the same person, but I feel I am more wider or... more open, yeah, more open. I don’t know maybe cos I’m not scared to say something not so perfect in English, it’s not so big problem when I say something wrong, yeah. But when I say something wrong in Russian, it’s like eh...

NIKA: I think so cos when I speak English I feel I am the same person, but I feel I am more wider or... more open, yeah, more open. I don’t know maybe cos I’m not scared to say something not so perfect in English, it’s not so big problem when I say something wrong, yeah. But when I say something wrong in Russian, it’s like eh...

NIKA: So you’re less afraid in English than...

NIKA: Yeah, exactly, yeah

NIKA: Has coming to the Centre changed anything in your life outside?

NIKA: Yeah, it eh, it improved it cos eh... I became more confident, and I can speak. I’m not scared to speak to Irish people and somebody on the street. Actually, Drop-in Centre helped me to find, helped me to find a job, like, to have good references, yeah. And when I tell that I visit, I attend this Intercultural Centre... they ask, they say “Oh, that’s very good”, like an advantage

NIKA: It was like something new, yeah, something exciting, yeah. Can I say exciting?

NIKA: Exciting, yeah! I like it and people listen to me and I can explain in another way. I was eh wondered that I can do cos I thought that I’m not so good in English, but when I speak about some topic and I know something about it, I learn myself, too. Not only another people, another group, so it’s a good opportunity for me to improve not only my speaking skills, my English, and to help another people to learn English, yeah. It’s very good

NIKA: Yeah, very enjoy, yeah.

NIKA: You enjoyed that

NIKA: (sotto voce) I’m sorry...

NIKA: Because you made that journey, in a way you can understand?

NIKA: Yeah, eh it helps of course cos eh when you teaching other people, yeah? And you see yourself in that people, yeah and...

NIKA: So you can understand them and their problems better?

NIKA: Yeah, of course. It’s like you in the past, but maybe sometimes in the present
PETER: You were saying in your story that you were developing through the information which you get in English.

NIKA: Yeah, yeah.

PETER: What way do you think you are developing?

NIKA: Eh, I think that I am developing through teaching, through studying, through reading books eh, watch movies in English in the cinema. Cos when you want to eh, when you interested in something, yeah? You need to understand it, and that’s why you can improve it through the things what you like.

PETER: The Centre is like a community.

NIKA: Yeah.

PETER: How do you feel about this community?

NIKA: Eh, I... actually I very like this community cos it’s so bright and intercultural, and many people, I didn’t know that I could meet that people in my life. So many nationalities from eh Africa to eh...

PETER: Asia...

NIKA: Asia, yeah, Europe eh it’s amazing, it’s amazing feeling when you can eh meet these people in your life. It’s a good opportunity to...

PETER: You speak other languages?

NIKA: Russian and Ukrainian, that’s all. English is not eh, I can speak English. I can speak a little bit my mind in English.

PETER: And you’ve done formal education up to degree level?

NIKA: Yeah.

PETER: And you want to continue? If it’s a choice between the job and the studies, which would you take?

NIKA: (laughs) I don’t know, it’s hard choice. I think that I can eh do it in the same time, like. Meaning I can study and...

PETER: Do a part time masters for example?

NIKA: Yeah, it will be, it will be great.
Transcript of audio interview: RAFAL

Present: Rafal, Peter
Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre
Date: February 13th 2014
Interviewer: Peter Sheekey
Duration: 32 minutes
PETER: So you wrote that you want to speak and write English because you live in Ireland?
RAFAL: Yes
PETER: What problems does writing and reading cause you in your daily life?
RAFAL: Well because I don’t have experience for writing. Ok, now I have school and school help me, yeah?
PETER: Ok, yeah
RAFAL: And school is more speaking and like drama, yeah...
PETER: You’re doing the drama here as well?
RAFAL: Yeah, yeah yeah
PETER: How is that?
RAFAL: (laughs) It’s not good, it’s not good. I don’t, I don’t remember everything, yeah
PETER: Yeah your lines
RAFAL: Yeah I speak something and after few seconds... I know one time I make mistake and nobody listen me second time, you know? Like one time, this time for speaking and that’s it. And after I think “Ah Rafal this time you make mistakes”
PETER: But in your everyday life in Ireland, what problems does not reading and writing cause you?
RAFAL: Yeah sometimes problem if I will go to office and writing something, just as I writing something, a little. If I, if somebody give me like application, is good if I, if I bring to home and like my wife help me and like internet, the Google translator. And Google translator is not good for everytime
PETER: It’s not perfect
RAFAL: Yeah it’s not good because every sentence is different and Polish language and English language we don’t translate everything for...
PETER: Yeah they’re very different languages
RAFAL: Yeah English people different think, you know? Sometimes it’s a little similar and for life it’s different and Google if you don’t write every sentence don’t translate good. Half half
PETER: So it’s a problem in your everyday life reading and writing?
RAFAL: Yeah of course I, reading is good. I don’t have any problem. Of course like easy question like ok I understand, yeah. Like “Where you live” ok like I remember my address like “Name, birthday date” like “Blah, blah, blah” like something like this yes. Like you give me like this is easy question, yeah?
PETER: But answering is difficult?
RAFAL: Yes but for writing is (sharp intake of breath)
PETER: Yeah but you can speak much better than your writing?
RAFAL: Yes
PETER: Did you study language in school in Poland?
RAFAL: No, no I don’t have...
PETER: You didn’t do English at all?
RAFAL: No, not English
PETER: So before you came to Ireland you had no English
RAFAL: Yes, I don’t speak nothing. I have problem for like just “Hello, my name is...” and “Are you looking for job?” and (laughs) that’s it
PETER: How long are you in Ireland now?
RAFAL: Seven maybe now is eight yeah eight years
PETER: And you got a job when you came to Ireland?
RAFAL: Yeah I worked. Last seven years I worked and... like...
PETER: You were in construction, was it?
RAFAL: No, no I worked in eh the restaurant

PETER: Restaurant?
RAFAL: Yeah before restaurant I have few jobs and Irish people don’t really and don’t speak. Like my first boss is good if nobody speak English
PETER: Yeah
RAFAL: Because boss is clever (chuckle). After I speak a little, a little and I change job. And my next job is like, I don’t speak too much English because lots of staff is from East Europe. And like speak Russian Polish and I understand and Czech Republic is similar language...

PETER: To Polish
RAFAL: Yes, if you speak Russian, Polish like, of course like not understand everything and I know what want somebody. And just boss is Irish and manager’s Irish and that’s it. Supervisor from Poland (chuckles) and...

PETER: So you’re speaking Russian and Polish in the job all the time?
RAFAL: Yes and a little English yeah because somebody from Pakistan don’t understand (chuckle). Yeah and this is my school and I make many, many mistake but nobody eh... cor...

PETER: Corrects you

RAFAL: Corrects me yeah and now I have big problem because I don’t think I, cos if you ask me about something... now I a little think like “AH now Rafal that’s wrong”. And now I change something and first I speak, you understand?

PETER: Does your wife speak good English? Is her English good?
RAFAL: My wife... for other moments my wife has better English. Ok, my wife is well very nice writing

PETER: Her writing’s very good
RAFAL: Yes, well for me it’s very good
PETER: But she studied at school, did she?
RAFAL: Yes, yes, yes and my wife has, before come here, has English school. And my wife she want speak very good and eh think too much, you know?

PETER: Yeah, yeah
RAFAL: Yeah because don’t, she don’t want speak wrong. And for me, I don’t care I speak
PETER: Yeah well everybody is different. We learn differently. How would you describe the Drop-in Centre? If I asked you “Tell me about the Drop-in Centre?”, what do you say to people?

RAFAL: No, I have here good time. Yeah... like I lost, I lost job and I think about my future yeah because... before I, ok I don’t think I worked for one place seven years. Well, for me is very long time. And I don’t think about I lost job for one week, and I lost job for one week. And after I looking for any place for English language and I lost job in eh... August. Is not good time for place, for looking for school

PETER: How long are you coming to the Centre?
RAFAL: Em two months, few, three months
PETER: You started September maybe?
RAFAL: Yes September or maybe like last August like at old place where is church. Yes I walk with my wife around everything like “Oh, what this? What here!”

PETER: What do you think of the Drop-in Centre?
RAFAL: It’s... good, yeah you know it’s of course like every teacher here is different, yeah? Because here is like voluntary, volunteer. Yeah of course like it’s the same like students different teacher. Like sometimes you know like eh for students is one teacher is better, one teacher’s not
PETER: Yeah because they’re volunteers. They’re not professionals
RAFAL: Yeah and professional teachers the same you know like I remember one teacher for few months before like is very good. Like, like show you if you don’t understand something. Like show you everything and sometimes... I don’t want to speak like teacher is bad and...

PETER: They’re different

RAFAL: Is different

PETER: When you were writing, remember we did our story?

RAFAL: Yeah

PETER: What was it like writing the story and working together with the other people (names others)? What was it like to work in a group like that?

RAFAL: Yeah it was good for me because girls help me. Like few minutes before I see Hanna and I say “Hanna could you please help me something?” because if you better ask me, I speak. I write and I speak, sometimes bad sometimes good

PETER: So when you were working in the group with Hanna and Nika it was good?

RAFAL: Yes

PETER: Did their Russian speaking help you?

RAFAL: Yeah, yes, yes exact yeah

PETER: You were working with people from other countries too, what was it like? What did you learn from working in this group?

RAFAL: What is learn?

PETER: What did you learn working together like that in the group?

RAFAL: It’s like more experience for English. Ok I know I speak too much Russian and Polish and eh I forgot... could you please say again these two guys from eh Afghanistan?

PETER: Hakim and Majeed

RAFAL: Yeah of course don’t understand Russian and Polish and I... try speak English (chuckle)

PETER: SO you were speaking the two languages while you were working?

RAFAL: Yeah

PETER: How would you describe the people in the Drop-in Centre?

RAFAL: Well... I... everybody has different history. Yeah is like not my business why somebody coming here, yeah? And everybody has different problem and different life, you know?

PETER: And different stories

RAFAL: Exactly

PETER: Everybody was working on the stories together, did you learn something about other people’s stories when you were working together?

RAFAL: Mmm yes, yeah (doubtful)

PETER: And you learned a little about their experience?

RAFAL: Yes

PETER: Did this help you with your writing? Doing the story?

RAFAL: Yeah

PETER: What did you learn from doing this?

RAFAL: My learn?

PETER: What did you learn?

RAFAL: Ah I think a little, little but it’s eh my problem because I too much, sometimes I don’t listen (chuckle). I don’t, I speak too much

PETER: And you need to listen more?

RAFAL: Yes, yes

PETER: Has coming to the Centre changed your life in any way?
PETER: So you made some friends?
RAFAL: Yeah and sometimes I eh meeting and like...

PETER: You meet people outside?

RAFAL: Yeah, yeah

PETER: In your everyday life do you talk to people or meet people outside the Centre?

RAFAL: (chuckle) Eh not every day. You know like I have few time on week school. Of course and language English and I try speak English. And if I ... eh... want speak Polish and Russian it’s no problem because in school the same many, many students understand Russian, somebody understand Polish

PETER: But outside the school? Do you speak to anybody in English outside?

RAFAL: Eh every day is different like today I speak more English because I here

PETER: And outside the Centre, outside the school?

RAFAL: No at home eh at home I speak with my wife Polish language yeah

PETER: But neighbours or..? Do you speak to anybody in your area?

RAFAL: Yeah but nervous to speak English here and if I see yeah, cos sometimes I don’t see for one day, it’s just Polish and Russian, yeah

PETER: Do you know your neighbours? DO you know their names?

RAFAL: Oh yeah like few neighbours from Spain. Yeah well... this is Pablo and girl is... (chuckle) I don’t remember...

PETER: And you speak sometimes with them?

RAFAL: Yes

PETER: Are they friendly?

RAFAL: Yes (doubtful) and yeah like you know everybody like somebody don’t have time like free time for speaking.

PETER: Everyone’s busy

RAFAL: Yeah like job and course and I sometimes think about myself I may be stupid because I come in late and I talk and maybe too much talk and after “Oh my god, I’m late!”

PETER: You have to run then?

RAFAL: Yeah I, every time I have for few minutes... talking (chuckles), you know?

PETER: Do you think that, when we were writing the story, do you think it helped you to understand your experience in Ireland more?

RAFAL: Yes because I listen (chuckles) sometime I listen. Yeah it was good yeah

PETER: Coming to the Centre, has it helped you in your life outside the Centre?

RAFAL: Yeah like experience of English language

PETER: The language has helped you

RAFAL: Yeah yeah

PETER: Are you more confident now in your language?

RAFAL: I hope (chuckle) and I’m not sure like you check my English

PETER: Well you’re speaking better and you grammar is better

RAFAL: Thanks

PETER: What do you think are the most important things you’ve learned here at the Centre?

RAFAL: Land?

PETER: Learned, you’ve learned

RAFAL: Learned? What is important here?

PETER: Yes that you’ve learned from coming here
RAFAL: (pause) Hmm... I’m not sure but important... like another people like you see another people you, you speak, you listened. Yeah is like, like many many people is coming and change information and like you like open brain

PETER: You open your mind more
RAFAL: You open your mind
PETER: So you’ve learned not just language but you’re getting information as well?
RAFAL: Yeah for me is like interesting like change information because like real people is different like funny is real life. Like website, of course, like everybody speak different information and sometime for me it’s not nice if I something listen. Of course I speak something not nice for another person. Not for person like personality like “I don’t like you!” and like politics is very bad. You understand me?
PETER: Yeah, yeah
RAFAL: If you know like, if you speak about Russian and first question about Putin, you understand me?
PETER: Yeah
RAFAL: And Russian people is different the same as Polish people is different, and Polish politics and Russian politics on top. The same is like sometimes I think only name Polish politics and Polish politics don’t think about myself and don’t think about Polish people

PETER: You understand me?
RAFAL: Yeah politicians don’t think about the people
PETER: Yeah
RAFAL: Like here is, here is, of course is not very good and a little better because of course politics take money for pocket and give, give, of course not take every for self and give something for people

PETER: Something back to the people
RAFAL: Yeah and in Poland, no no. Everything for my pocket
PETER: When you were writing your story, who do you think you were writing for?
RAFAL: (pause)
PETER: Who do you think was going to read your story?
RAFAL: My friends... my friends from Poland, yeah
PETER: Were they surprised when they saw your story?
RAFAL: My friends don’t know because now I don’t have contact. Cos is the same like somebody is... go for another country, like somebody is busy at home like...
PETER: So you lose contact with your friends because life, life is changing?

RAFAL: Yeah, yeah
PETER: Do you think writing the story is a good way to learn?
RAFAL: Yeah, I think yes
PETER: Do you think it helped your writing?
RAFAL: Yeah because I have experience, of course today again I ask my friend “Hello, could you please help me?” Yeah because yeah I have big problem with writing (He had asked Hanna to help him with his story feedback)
PETER: Are you working on that in your English now? Are you working on writing?
RAFAL: Yes and... now is like very important now is like grammar and, and speak. Of course and writing something and now like last week this teacher like give more exercise for writing. Yeah and before like eh just speak speak speak speak, yeah? And for writing is eh very very difficult

PETER: It’s a difficult language to write and very different from your language
RAFAL: The same like speak like grammar like everything is change like 180 per cent, you know?
PETER: Yeah
RAFAL: And in Poland if you speak something like grammar like where in Poland is something like "One two" like in English language this is last, yeah?
PETER: Yeah the order of the words
RAFAL: Yeah, yes change orders, yes
PETER: When you are giving advice, you understand the word advice?
RAFAL: No I’m not...
PETER: When you are helping someone like if they have a headache and you say “you should go to the doctor”. That’s advice.
RAFAL: Yeah ok
PETER: So if you are giving advice to someone starting to learn English, what would you say?
RAFAL: Well... nice if somebody ask me (chuckles). My English is not, not very good
PETER: But if you, you speak English now, yeah?
RAFAL: Yes (chuckle) a little
PETER: But if I’m starting to learn English, and you want to help me, what would you tell me to do?
RAFAL: Well, first I recommendation if somebody ask me “Oh my English is not good! What should I doing?” and I recommend every place where English like the Drop-in Centre and like Liberty in Tallaght. Not like the Drop-in Centre, like school something
PETER: Like classes
RAFAL: Yeah like somebody coming, somebody not coming, you know? Like first day yes everybody write “Yes I coming, and I need coming” and after one month in class only few people
PETER: Yeah they stop coming to class
RAFAL: Yes
PETER: When you learn a language, ok, like you speak Polish
RAFAL: Uh huh
PETER: When you speak English, is there a Polish Rafal and an English Rafal?
RAFAL: Yeah is like, ok yes of course because like eh... if I change language I can’t speak everything because my language, my English language is not very good. Yeah like expression and stuff is like “Ah, ah ah” I want speak, and sometime I have problem because if I speak something and another person maybe don’t understand my language and like he don’t understand my eh sometimes like...
PETER: What you mean
RAFAL: Yeah people is like angry because don’t understand what I want...
PETER: Yeah what you want to say
RAFAL: Yes, yes I think that I good speak, and after I see face and is “Ahhhh...”
PETER: Yeah they don’t understand. What do you want to do in your future Rafal? What do you see in your future?
RAFAL: Well eh I think if, if of course (chuckle) if ok, ok I now has school and after that school I think about next, next level for education, education, oh my god I forgot, education...
PETER: Adult education
RAFAL: Yeah exactly yes, and I think if eh... this school give me another level, I take
PETER: Yeah
RAFAL: If don’t give me, I ask (chuckle)
PETER: Yeah, ok
RAFAL: Cos sometime if you don’t ask...
PETER: So do you want the next level of English or do you want to study something different?
RAFAL: Eh I think eh for next level and after I think about course
PETER: Do you have an idea what type of course?
RAFAL: Oh I have, I have two or three idea. Maybe, I not sure for 100 per cent, yeah? I think about yeah cooker course because for course like I lost job and I was in FAS and I ask what FAS help me maybe give me something like course and school. And eh woman say “Mmm your English is not very good” and “If you, you will go to school and after, if you have better English FAS give you a course”

PETER: So you’re thinking about doing cooking perhaps?
RAFAL: Yeah cooker and I think about like you know garden like work...

PETER: Working in gardening

RAFAL: And garden yeah

PETER: Nice job

RAFAL: Yeah, and what... I, I have few idea and I don’t want speak cos I not sure...

PETER: You’re not sure but you need to work on the English first and

RAFAL: Yes, yes

PETER: And then you will decide what you want to do next?

RAFAL: Yeah, yes I think the situation in Ireland is don’t change too much

PETER: No it’s getting a little better, slowly

RAFAL: Yeah and I don’t want speak about politics and everything, ok? And like for every country somebody make like recession. Every time for eh boss if you looking for job, for every boss there is a recession, you understand me?

PETER: Yeah

RAFAL: If you looking and you ask about money you know “How many money you give me?” yeah? Just less, less very little and you say “What’s happen?” and you know “It’s a recession, you know?” and “You happy if I take you” You understand me?

PETER: Yeah, yeah they have more power

RAFAL: Yeah, yeah like...

PETER: Is your wife working?

RAFAL: No now my wife is not working and like eh like my wife has VTOS school. Every day she ahs like four five six hours. It’s not, eh my wife don’t have English eh language and eh my wife has more experience because in class, ok in school there’s many many Irish people.

PETER: That’s good. And what is she studying? What is she doing with VTOS?

RAFAL: Oh this is skills something... I can’t...

PETER: Skills for work, is it?

RAFAL: Yes, yes for work and is like my wife has like mathematic and eh like...

PETER: So she’s learning different skills at the VTOS course

RAFAL: Yes, yes it’s like eh for artist something like... for information like something with computer

PETER: Is she happy on the course?

RAFAL: Yes and it’s very good for my wife if my wife has English language. You know like one lesson more like for only English language. This is very good because yeah and now is ok because my wife has experience like in class like fourteen students and eleven, well my wife is from Russian and two students from Pakistan and Poland and one student’s from Lithuania, yeah. And eleven students from Ireland

PETER: So it’s good for her and she’s happy

RAFAL: Yes, yes like because my wife listen like real Irish English language

PETER: This is what you need to do

RAFAL: Yeah
PETER: Do you have any hobbies Rafal?
RAFAL: Yeah, yeah

PETER: I know you like sport
RAFAL: Yeah
PETER: Poland beaten by Scotland last night, not good
RAFAL: Yeah and Poland has the same group as Ireland
PETER: Yeah and Germany. I think Germany will win the World Cup this year
RAFAL: (chuckles) This is not good
PETER: Rafal, thank you very much for coming today
RAFAL: Ok
Transcript of audio interview: Chata

Present: Chata, Peter
Location: Library room, Drop-in Centre
Date: September 10th 2013
Interviewer: Peter Sheekey
Duration: 20 minutes
PETER: You’re from Nigeria?
CHATA: Yeah
PETER: How long have you been in Ireland?
CHATA: Three years now
PETER: Have you always lived in Dublin?
CHATA: Yeah
PETER: Was it Navan or Dublin?
CHATA: Navan
PETER: Always in Navan?
CHATA: Yeah
PETER: And you studied English in your country?
CHATA: Yes
PETER: Did you finish school?
CHATA: I finished my college, my secondary school. We call it college my secondary school
PETER: So you finished secondary school but you didn’t do college?
CHATA: No
PETER: Did you work in your country?
CHATA: Yeah I got to hairdressing school
PETER: You went to hairdressing school, and you worked in a hairdressers?
CHATA: I work in a hairdressers, it’s a school, right? After I finish the school, if you are good, just
like they do in Ireland here. Maybe I went for care, for my community, social carer... they asked to
go for... what they call it? Work experience. So it depends how you do very well to the owner,
whether you are good enough to work for her
PETER: Ok, did you get the job?
CHATA: Yeah I get the job. You work but it’s not the money you want, you know? Just for you to
have good work
PETER: So just like work experience money?
CHATA: Yeah
PETER: Why did you come to Ireland, Chata? What made you decide to come to Ireland?
CHATA: Yeah, I just came to Ireland to change my life, you know? To live in a better way, to make
my family proud, to make them ok
PETER: Before you came to Ireland, did you know much about Ireland?
CHATA: No no, just from me friend, you know? Ask me to come, that is good blah blah blah
PETER: So your friend told you about Ireland?
CHATA: Yeah they assist me
PETER: And what did she say about Ireland when she was telling you?
CHATA: She said if I came to Ireland, I’m going to be wed ok. I’m going to be go for free education,
especially the education. I’m going to have a good life, good, I’m going to help my family. I’m going
to be wed ok
PETER: Yeah, to get married
CHATA: Yeah (hearty laughs)
PETER: And you got married in Ireland, did you?
CHATA: No, I got married, first I have, I have the kid. This is my son (searches in bag for photo of
her son). You don’t know him
PETER: No, you have a picture?
CHATA: I just have the passport with me
PETER: How old?
CHATA: He’s eleven months now.

PETER: But you have more than one child or just one?

CHATA: I have three.

PETER: In Ireland?

CHATA: No two in Nigeria, one in Ireland here.

PETER: Do you go back to Nigeria sometimes?

CHATA: Not yet. I have to make money. My family need money.

PETER: Number one is money.

CHATA: Money (laughs) and good health.

PETER: Where did I put the... (finds Irish passport of son) there is my little baby.

PETER: Oh beautiful, beautiful boy. What’s his name?

CHATA: Michael.

PETER: Michael, and he’s Irish.

CHATA: (chuckles and proudly) Black Irish.

PETER: So he can play football for Ireland.

CHATA: I pray so! That is my dream.

PETER: Your dream, he can play in the World Cup for Ireland?

CHATA: I pray so.

PETER: Now you’ve been coming to the Drop-in Centre for five months?

CHATA: Going six months on the 15th.

PETER: Six months?

CHATA: That should be on the 15th. I’m proud of Drop-in Centre.

PETER: You’re proud?

CHATA: Yeah because they make me learn what I don’t know. Before, before I didn’t know how... I can read but not that proper, but now, if I see anything, I can read it and I can pronounce it very well. I’m proud of this school.

PETER: Yeah and so you can see the difference in your English?

CHATA: My English, they way I was speaking before is different. If I want to speak, I can change to any language I want. But my English is very good now and my reading, most especially my reading is very, very ok. So I want to learn more!

PETER: Oh yes, you’re not finished. Your journey is starting. How do you see the Centre? Do you see it as family, as friends or as a club?

CHATA: Here they are lovely. They are just like my family. You know some school you go, if you want to go to some school, you’d be thinking “Oh, I don’t know what I face this teacher today”. “I don’t know they way he’s going to behave to me, maybe because I’m black”, you know what I mean?

PETER: Yes.

CHATA: In job centre they don’t think, they don’t, they treat everybody the same. You know like they are Irish? I told you, I told you in my story. I told you love the Irish people.

PETER: Yes.

CHATA: Because when you like today when I was coming to school, it was raining. And I met this girl on this bus stop and she told me to come under the umbrella! That is raining and do I need socks because she has extra socks on her bag. Do I need? I said “No”. And she helped me so that’s the way life’s supposed to be. Don’t think because she’s black and white I won’t treat her very well. No, everybody’s nice, especially the teachers they are very, very ok. And I love to be here today.

PETER: When you came to the Centre, and now six months later, what has changed for you? How do you feel your position in the Centre has changed?
CHATA: Wow! My position I feel very, very ok. One I said my reading is, I can browse, I can go on the computer. I know what is different than, I know the difference between going to school or you shouldn’t go to school. I’m very proud to be in Drop-in Centre and I’m very, very happy. The difference is that I can read very well
PETER: And your relations with people in the Centre, because when you come to the Centre first you don’t know anybody
CHATA: Yeah you so shy
PETER: How did that change?
CHATA: Yeah, it depends on the teachers. You know when you came to school, you meet these, this is your friend. It depends how the teacher brought you to the class. Yeah “This is a new class member. Meet her, her name is this, her name is that”. That is how you became friend, you became love to each other
PETER: Yeah and your relationship with the other members of the Centre, has that changed?
CHATA: Yeah it’s changed. We are very ok. What you don’t know, Lizzy, I forgot her name. I don’t know how to pronounce their name
PETER: Here this morning?
CHATA: No. I’m just saying you know in class you normally said “If you don’t know, ask from each other”
PETER: Yes
CHATA: That’s where we became friend. We became used to each other
PETER: Working together?
CHATA: Working together
PETER: And that way you become friends?
CHATA: Yeah
PETER: Have you made friends in the Centre?
CHATA: Yeah
PETER: And do you see them outside the Centre?
CHATA: I see a lot of them yesterday and say “Hi Chata we didn’t see you in class yesterday”. I say “Yes I’m not feeling fine” so I meet about three people, four people yesterday
PETER: At the women’s group?
CHATA: The women and the boys. You don’t the guy. The guy normally come on the Friday. He used to come on Tuesday but she didn’t, he didn’t stay in our class. I saw him yesterday “Chata I didn’t see you in class.” I say “Yes, I’m not feeling fine”
PETER: Who is this?
CHATA: I don’t know his name, sorry. He is, they are from Poland
PETER: Ok, yes he came to our group, yes. You attend the Women’s Group here, as well. What’s that like?
CHATA: Oh, I learned a lot. How to take care of the children, how to manage the house, how to be useful to your children and how your children should be useful to you. Especially Amy, she gave us good knowledge, how to take care of the family, how to give your child a good education. And it’s very good, I don’t miss it. Friday and Wednesday (chuckles)
PETER: Yeah, you’re always here. You’re learning a lot from it
CHATA: Yeah, thanks to Amy
PETER: Yeah, she’s great, she’s fantastic. Now your social life in Dublin and your social life in your country, are they different?
CHATA: Is different. Ireland, Ireland changed my life. It changed my life, it changed everything about my country. Because the free education I have here, I don’t have it in my country. So I’m very proud of Ireland.

PETER: And do you meet, do you have any Irish friends outside the Centre?

CHATA: Yeah, I have, I have... her name, she has two children. I have, she’s living in, what’s the name... it’s outside Dublin in my area. I just met her but she’s nice to me.

PETER: What’s her name?

CHATA: Her name is (chuckle), I can’t pronounce Irish name (tries out name and chuckles) I don’t know

PETER: Laoise?

CHATA: No, Lisa

PETER: And where did you meet Lisa?

CHATA: I met her in the shopping mall in Navan

PETER: Yeah, and you just got talking?

CHATA: No because you know you normally tell us in the class to talk to everybody you meet, just chat for you to learn more English. So that is where I met her. I just saw her, I said “Hi” and she said “Hi” and we became friends from there

PETER: Very good, and you meet sometimes?

CHATA: Yeah I meet different people but I chat with people I meet in the bus stop. Anywhere I meet with people I chat with them just to improve my English

PETER: And you’ve no problem talking to people outside

CHATA: Not shy (chuckles)

PETER: Not shy. Well that’s good for your English. You write that you don’t like the cold in Ireland

CHATA: Yeah but I’m getting used to it

PETER: In your free time, do you have any free time?

CHATA: I have free time because I’m not working yet

PETER: So what do you like to do in your free time?

CHATA: Watching movies, typing on the computer. I love going on the computer because if I am going home I am just going on the computer just to practice my writing. I told you that’s the reason why I want to buy a Blackberry just for my writing

PETER: To improve you writing, yeah

CHATA: To improve my spelling

PETER: And you can check it on the Blackberry, as well

CHATA: Yeah

PETER: Coming to the Drop-in Centre, how has it changed your hopes for the future?

CHATA: Like?

PETER: Being in the Centre, how has it changed the way you think about the future now?

CHATA: Yeah it’s changed because I want my future to be bright and I see that in the Drop-in Centre that my future is going to bright. Because Amy keeps telling me that “Don’t worry you are going to be there”. Because I’m worried, I want to be, I want to be useful to this social. I want to be useful. I don’t want to be just... ordinary. I want to become a person. I want to be proud of my family. Like I told you about the letter...

PETER: The Newsletter?

CHATA: The Newsletter, my family was very proud of me so I want, so that is the reason I came to drop-in Centre because I people say about the Drop-in Centre even though you don’t know how to write, when you get to the Drop-in Centre you have write. You have to improve yourself. They are going to make you proud of yourself. So I am proud of me. I know my future is going to bright and I
know it has begun because the staff of the college and I’m just waiting for my test. If my test is they will let me know that I’m somebody. So I’m proud of that

PETER: So doing the test is good practice for you?

CHATA: Yeah I’m proud of myself

PETER: Is there a difference between the Nigerian Chata and the Irish Chata?

CHATA: Ah (laughs) there is difference because I said no college, no free education. Because the free education I have here today, I can’t have it in my country. The social health care I’m going for I can’t have it in my country, but in Ireland it is free for me

PETER: But are you different?

CHATA: I’m different! Because I’m not the Chata of yesterday

PETER: What was the Chata like yesterday? How different? How is it different?

CHATA: Oh, I’m stressful. I was thinking “How am I going to live?” How am I going to become a person? But since I get to Ireland, I know I’m a person. I know the difference black and white

PETER: You can see there is a big difference?

CHATA: Yeah

PETER: And what’s the Irish Chata like? How is she different from the Nigerian Chata?

CHATA: Yeah, the Irish Chata now is read, can read very well. He can speak. He can talk to people. Am bold to talk to people and I’m very proud that Chata is in Ireland

PETER: Your plans for the future now you want to do this course

CHATA: Community Health Care

PETER: Community Health Care

CHATA: Yeah, that’s my future plan

PETER: How are you going to do that? What are you going to do?

CHATA: Yeah I have to go to the college first for a year because after college I will go for... what do they call it? Voluntary jo...

PETER: Placement?

CHATA: Yeah to see if I’m ok, to see if I’m worth to be employed, to be a Community Social Healthcare. So I pray that God to help me, to see me through

PETER: Yeah, we will try to help you with the English

CHATA: English is not my problem, it’s the read, reading and writing that is the most important

PETER: When you are going around Dublin or in Navan and you listen to people speaking, do you copy them?

CHATA: Yeah, sometimes if I want to talk to my baby, I speak because children because

PETER: Because children speak

CHATA: Yeah I speak different because maybe I’m talking to white people or the Irish people because maybe I can just lower my voice. I can just change my...

PETER: You lower your voice when you’re talking to the child or when you’re talking to Irish people?

CHATA: To my children or to anybody I meet. I don’t, I speak as if I’ve been in Ireland for ages

(chuckles)

PETER: Well three years is not bad. It’s not too long, you know?

CHATA: Is not long

PETER: Things that you can do in Dublin, or in Navan, or in Ireland that you could not do in Nigeria

CHATA: Like, as I was saying before, I can work in Nigeria but in Ireland I can’t work because I don’t have the qualification

PETER: Well you can’t work yet
CHATA: Yeah after my education I know I can work here in Ireland. But in Nigeria you go to school and if you can speak and write your name down, no problem

PETER: You get a job

CHATA: You get the job. It depends on the job. Not it the bank, just in the shop. But in Nigeria don’t pay you good money so that is the reason why most people don’t work.
Appendix 6 - Re-storied Narratives
Hanna’s Story

Hanna is a Latvian woman in her late twenties who came to Ireland in 2009. She is married with a young daughter and lives in Tallaght with her husband, not far from the IDC. Hanna is a confident, out-going, and well educated woman. She writes how she “finished secondary school and after that studied at the University of Latvia and got a bachelor’s degree as a Orientalist” (Hanna, My Story at the Drop-in). Hanna learned scholastic English at school and university, and her speaking, understanding and writing at this time were certainly good enough for her to participate more fully in Irish society. Also, she was no stranger to being immersed in new settings and communities, as she recounts in her published story:

When I was 16 years old I went to study in Israel as a part of the Naale program. I lived there without my parents. There were a lot of students from all over the world. My classmates were from Russia, Ukraine and Moldova. My school was located in the North of Israel between the cities Tiberius and Afula. The name of my school was Cadoorie. (Hanna, Our Stories at the Drop-in)

In her published account, Hanna displays her ease in her new home and her appreciation of the positives of her life in Ireland, and the area where she lives.

I like to live in Tallaght, because there are a lot of public amenities such as parks, schools, community centres and library. Also there is a lot of entertainment for example, the cinema, the theatre and the shopping centre. There is a good Public service. The location of Tallaght is very convenient; it’s takes about 40-50 minutes to get to the city centre by bus or Luas.

In the same story, on the subject of socialisation, Hanna tells us that she has settled in well and “met many new friends since I came to Ireland”. She goes on to mention some contact with her Irish neighbours, but explains that most of her social network outside the IDC is composed of “mothers like me, because I met them in playgrounds and also from centres such as Bryan Ryan (another local English learning centre) and the drop-in centre. I like to spend time with them; we go to the cinema, parks, shops, playgrounds, exhibitions and library” (my brackets). However, in spite of her apparent social comfort and confidence, and her high level of spoken and written English (B2+), very little of her socialisation in naturalistic settings is reported as being conducted in English. During our follow-up interview she reveals that “outside I don’t speak a lot of English” (86), and only speaks English at “the shop, at school with my child teachers, that is all, and some postman when they come” (88). When we explore this further, it becomes clear that nearly all of her social interactions, apart from
more formal social systems such as her child’s school and at the IDC, have been happening in Russian:

PETER: Do you talk to your neighbours, at all?
HANNA: Sometimes, not always
PETER: Are they friendly?
HANNA: Yeah, they are very friendly. We get from them every Christmas presents, and we give them back. It’s like a tradition.
PETER: So you’ve created a little tradition with the neighbours.
HANNA: Yeah, and in Easter too
PETER: You say you meet some mothers in the playground; do you speak to some Irish mothers?
HANNA: No, most of them are Russian speakers
PETER: So, where are the Irish women?
HANNA: I don’t know. There are a lot of Polish and Russians

(ibid, 92-102)

In her accounts of her life before and outside the IDC, Hanna does not report experiencing any major dislocation or isolation in her life. She appeared to be able to satisfy her social needs in her heritage language communities, while being sufficiently competent in English not to suffer any significant linguistic isolation in her limited day-to-day interactions, and the necessities of dealing with officialdom or local social systems. Notwithstanding her satisfaction with her new environment, in comparing her Latvian past and Irish present social lives in this excerpt from her published story, Hanna hints that there is some tension in having her feet in both camps. She feels “limited”, and “not free to do whatever” she wants due to her perceived lack of the necessary English language skills.

The difference between my social life in Dublin and Latvia is that I’m not integrated yet, because of English. I think it is very important to know the language of the country you are living in. When you know the language you are free to do whatever you want. I can’t say that my social life is very bad here, but I definitely can say that it is a little bit limited.

Hanna at the Drop-in Centre

Integration is a word that appears various times in Hanna’s written and spoken accounts of her lived experiences and hopes for the future. Hanna expresses an agentic reason for coming to the IDC in her narrative frame “My Story at the Drop-in” in this way: “I first came to the Drop-in this year because I want to meet new friends, to learn English and to integrate faster”. Similar to others at the IDC, Hanna had come to the Centre looking for greater access to, and understanding of, the
social, linguistic, and systemic worlds of the host community, and was ready, willing, and already in the process of strengthening her English language identity.

In the following piece from her published story, we can see how Hanna has uses her agency and her positive beliefs about social language learning and intercultural knowledge sharing to access the affordances offered by the IDC community of practice, and, through extensive participation, to position herself as a person worth speaking and listening to.

With my family and my friends we speak Russian that is why I spend every work day in the drop-in centre, because my English is not enough for integration. I come to the drop-in centre two months ago. I like to spend time there, because I meet a lot of people from all over the world and it is very interesting, because you get to know about their traditions, culture, some historical facts and the way how they live and of course it’s helps to improve my English as well. My life has become more interesting since I joined the drop-in centre. The centre gives me more opportunities for the future.

When the second literacy group was being assembled in September 2013, Hanna exercised the same agency in signing up immediately. Though she had been at the IDC for only few months, her participation in and membership of this community of practice was already noteworthy. Even though her language was considered above the upper threshold level for moving on from the IDC, she wanted to stay on and had agreed to volunteer as a language tutor, while still learning with a tutor who was himself a former newcomer. In one of her narrative frames (“My Story at the Drop-in”), Hanna describes this more expert member of the IDC community of practice: “My tutor is Moheb because he is a educated and communicative person, also he is kind and friendly.”

Though she had misgivings about her English abilities outside the IDC, and despite the fact she had never taught before, the evolution of her second language identity was such that she embraced the role of guiding novices, and the identity of language tutor, within this community of practice with grace, enthusiasm, and ease. Observing her during her volunteer teaching encounters, it was clear that she was relaxed and her less expert members were engaged by her lessons. On this topic, Hanna talks about her greater participation at the Centre in terms of growing her English language knowledge, and her agentic capacity to act in this community of practice would also appear to be strengthening her second language identity:

PETER: And you do some teaching here at the Centre. What is that like? Was it the first time teaching?
HANNA: Yeah, of course. Yeah, it is very interesting for me and it helps me to learn English by this way. I learn English more deeper
PETER: Yeah, we say that teaching is a good way of learning in English. And how did it change you, the teaching, in terms of what you are? What effect did it have on you?
HANNA: I think that I am more useful, and ... I can help people and it is important

(Interview, 159-165)

Her positive effect on our literacy community, along with Nika, was very impressive. Both were acting as more expert mentors in our literacy community, while also participating as storytellers themselves. In this segment from an interview with another member of the group, Rafal, one of the least expert members, shows his appreciation for the agency and participation of these women. Rafal is also referring here to how Hanna helped him to complete a similar question in “Our Story Questions” feedback frame. Hanna’s collaboration with Rafal’s writing here evidently helped to prepare him for our follow-up interview, about which he was nervous. His comment “I write and I speak” seems to indicate how this situated literacy episode here had scaffolded his subsequent verbal presentation of his lived experience during our talk:

PETER: What was it like writing the story and working together with the other people (names others)? What was it like to work in a group like that?
RAFAL: Yeah it was good for me because girls help me. Like few minutes before I see Hanna and I say “Hanna could you please help me something?” because if you better ask me, I speak. I write and I speak, sometimes bad sometimes good
PETER: So when you were working in the group with Hanna and Nika it was good?
RAFAL: Yes

Hanna’s impact as a more expert member of this community of practice was especially powerful when it came to sharing stories. In these situated learning encounters, members would build and write pen portraits of each other through questions about their lived experiences, and, in the process co-perform their identities. Here is an example product of this collaborative narrative inquiry from Hanna’s portrait of Rafal:

Rafal is from Poland, from the city Sopot. Sopot is situated in the north of Poland and surrounded by the Baltic sea. He has a positive attitude to English. His mother tongue is Polish, he knows Russian a little bit too. He got married on year ago. He doesn’t have children yet. He is 40 years old. He likes reading books, watching interesting movies and talking with his wife. In the future he would like to get a good job.

(Hanna, Rafal’s Story)

During our follow-up interview Hanna reflected very positively on these situated encounters where learners co-constructed the stories and performed their identities, and the benefits of bringing the
outside in. Without any prompting, she seems to appreciate the value of this type of group work, and again her desire for intercultural encounters and awareness comes to the fore. Here, she seems very capable of looking beyond the classical functions of literacy and value the social, cultural, and communicative purposes of this practice.

PETER: When you were working on the story, what did you like about working on the story? HANNA: I liked that we worked in a group. And we communicate with other students, and to learn more about their personal lives and cultures and traditions. It was very interesting and enjoyable.

PETER: In a bigger way, what do you think you learned from doing this? HANNA: I learned, I think, a lot of writing skills. How to make my story more enjoyable and interesting, and what expressions exactly do I have to use. I think it was very important for my writing skills.

PETER: So it really improved your writing skills? HANNA: Yeah

PETER: Do you think this is a good way to learn reading and writing? HANNA: Yes, I think it is a good way to learn.

PETER: Is it different from other ways that you would have learned in the past? You have done a lot of education, so is it different from other things you have done? HANNA: If you mean English language? PETER: Or language education in general. HANNA: Yes, it was different, it was more useful because we learned just from books and without communication with others – rules and things

PETER: Grammar, rules, but no communication? HANNA: It wasn’t so enjoyable

PETER: And there was no real communication, and in this situation there was? HANNA: Yes, we learned more.

(Interview, 52-73)

Hanna was also able to grasp the possible wider impacts of having her story published. In this segment from our talk (48-51), she is very capable of reflecting on some of the social purposes and possible outcomes of her storytelling outside her immediate community of practice.

HANNA: I have written for people who is interested in it. For immigrants, it will be easier for them after to do something

PETER: So other immigrants who read your story will understand? HANNA: Yeah

In her post-publication, pre-interview feedback question (Hanna, “Our Story Questions”), Hanna writes about her belief that her published story can help raise awareness of the lived experiences of her cohort and other border-crossers beyond the walls of the IDC: “My story is written for everyone who is interested in integration, English language and who wants to know more about immigrants.”
As she recounted above, Hanna had obviously enjoyed her story writing experience, and learned more about both functional and social benefits of this practice. In response to my question on her feelings on seeing her story published (ibid, 175), she seemed very pleased with the end product: “I was exciting, and I like it. I had, I was, impress...impressed.” In response to a prompt in “Our Story Questions” as to whether she thought our storytelling project was a good way to learn reading and writing, Hanna wrote: “Yes, I do. I think it’s a very good way to learn reading and writing.”

With the confidence, agency, language, and people skills that Hanna clearly possessed, I was curious to know why she had wanted to, or felt the need to, participate in our literacy group. In this interview excerpt (17-31), she provides three reasons:

HANNA: I want to improve my reading and writing because I want to continue my education and after that to get a good job
PETER: So studies and work is the main reason for it?
HANNA: Yeah.
PETER: Is it only for that or are there other problems in your daily life where this is important?
HANNA: Yeah, because I like reading very much. I read a lot of books, and I want to read English books too, and newspapers and magazines. And sometimes it’s difficult for me to understand the meanings or words
PETER: So it’s also for enjoyment
HANNA: Yeah
PETER: Does it cause any other problems in terms of living in Ireland where there are other situations where reading and writing are used?
HANNA: I didn’t think about that, but the main reason is that for my immigration and to understand people...
PETER: To integrate better as well?
HANNA: Yeah, to integrate better

Hanna’s priorities at this stage of her life and identity development seem clear. Hanna’s desire to integrate, a leitmotif in her story, and understand people, is a strong drive in her struggle for access to the social and linguistic capital of the host community. And, though she is apparently satisfied, as we saw above, with her current situation, at the same time she is agentically pushing at the boundaries of her current identity as a stay-at-home mother. Her daughter, aged four, will soon be going to school on a daily basis, and a window of opportunity will open for Hanna to pursue her studies. Hanna is using her agency in this holding period to read and reinforce her literacy, even though she has vocabulary issues. All round, while attending to her first priority, she is also busy constructing her desired future identity as a master’s student, and looking toward the work opportunities beyond.
Transformation, belonging and identity for Hanna

The social practices of our literacy community also impacted on the experience of its members beyond the IDC. Like others in our group, Hanna had formed friendships and got together with others to socialise outside the IDC. Other members such as, Nika, Rafal, Alma, and Lena mentioned that they would meet outside the IDC for social evenings in pubs, at their houses, or for other occasions. When describing the people they studied with at the Centre, many of our group, as Hanna does in the excerpt from our talk below (79-81), used words like “friendly”, “friendship”, and “friends”. This was a not-unexpected, but very welcome, washback for people who shared a common purpose, and had come to create, reshape, take ownership of, and find belonging in the community of practice of which they were members. Hanna’s use of “we” in her response here is noteworthy, and seems to highlight her sense of belonging to, and her ownership of, this community of practice.

PETER: How would you describe the group here in the Drop-in Centre?
HANNA: I think that we are very friendly and persons here are kind and interesting, and I really like to work with them, and spend time with them.

In her “My Year” narrative frame, which is a tool which learners were using to reflect on their lived experiences over a year long period, Hanna reveals how her beliefs about her new home have shifted. It would appear that Hanna’s positive beliefs about learning and knowledge sharing at IDC, which I mentioned earlier in this story, were having a positive impact outside the Centre, too: “Things that have changed it was my attitude to Ireland”.

Like the cross-cultural autobiographers in Pavlenko’s studies, In the segment below from our talk (138-141), and throughout her stories, Hanna would seem to have achieved transgredience in that she has learned not only to use the language better and more appropriately, but she is clearly able to reflect on interactional events outside the IDC, and occupy a position from where she is able to observe and report on her evolving language identity both from the inside and from the outside.

PETER: Do you think being at the Centre has changed the way you speak to Irish people?
HANNA: I think yes, it has changed. I become more, more...talkative, I think, yeah
PETER: So you’re more confident communicating with Irish people?
HANNA: Yeah, yeah
Responding to my interview question (105) of how others at the Centre might see her, Hanna provides an amusing summary of her identity in this manner: “I’m a mother, I’m a wife, I’m a student, (laughs) I’m a good person.” Later on in our talk (124-134), when I pressed further on the topic of her language identity, Hanna shows once again that she has firmly occupied a position from which she can confidently report on her evolving English language identity and the growing “English” Hanna, and seems to confirm Pavlenko and Lantolf’s (2000) submission that narrative work and storytelling can strengthen language identities for this type of learner.

PETER: Would you say there is an ‘English’ Hanna?
HANNA: (pauses) I don’t know. Maybe not yet, but I think it will be
PETER: Do you think that it’s happening?
HANNA: Yeah
PETER: Do you think that your experience here would have helped that?
HANNA: I think yes, I hope yes
PETER: So the ‘English’ Hanna is growing?
HANNA: Yeah!

Hanna’s future

As we have seen, Hanna was hard at work intensively and extensively participating, collaborating, and growing her social and English language identities at the IDC and beyond. Future and plans are other words that reappear across Hanna’s stories, much more so that in those of the other members. In her “Our Stories Questions” feedback frame she shows how the present evolving Hanna identity already has a clear image of her possible future identity and the means by which she agentically “wants” to achieve this “goal”.

I want to improve my reading and writing, because I think that it’s necessary for my future life. I want to continue my education and get a good job, without these skills it’s impossible to reach this goal.

Again, in our talk (106-111), Hanna shows her awareness of the fruits of her participation in other sociocultural settings as an increase in her experience and future plans. She also displays here, with some self-deprecating amusement, a self-awareness of her agency and drive toward her ambitions.

PETER: Has coming to the centre changed anything about your life in Ireland, I mean outside the Centre?
HANNA: My life became more interesting, and I have more experience and I have more future plans.
PETER: So you would say you have more ambitions.
HANNA: Yeah, but I am always ambitious (laughs).

Knowing that Hanna and Nika were both keen to continue their education, I informed them about the Postgraduate Open-day at Trinity College Dublin, and encouraged them both to go along. On the evidence of their participation in our project and at the IDC, both women had the agency, educational background, and language skills to tackle the academic world in another language. In our follow-up talk (166-170), we returned to the topic of teaching but this time linked to Hanna’s future and college studies. Hanna has clearly thought about this before, but she realises that she needs both the language and a hoped-for master’s in order to fulfil this goal.

PETER: Would you like to teach in the future, and is it something you would be interested in?
HANNA: If I will be good in English, yes, or something else. In the past I thought about it. I wanted to be a historical teacher, about middle history.
PETER: And would you still like to teach history?
HANNA: Yeah, yeah, it is interesting.

However, at the time of my leaving the field, not very long after our follow-up talk, neither Hanna nor Nika had applied for a postgraduate course. In Hanna’s case, there may be economic issues, these courses are not cheap, or possible childcare problems. Also, despite her many abilities and agency, Hanna may have a flipside to her ambitiousness in a fearful perfectionism that her second language identity is not complete enough to carry out her plans. Towards the end of our talk (152-158), she returns to her perceived English language constraints and reiterates the “whatever I want” refrain from her published story.

PETER: You said that in future you want to be part of Irish society. What do you mean?
HANNA: I mean that I will not have problem with communication and understanding, and I can go wherever I want and do whatever I want.
PETER: And what would you see yourself doing in the future, let us say after your studies?
HANNA: I don’t know, maybe in the same societies, social work or something to help people.
PETER: So you’re interested in this area?
HANNA: Yeah.

In the meantime, Hanna was carrying on the “social work” in the “same societies” at the IDC. She was “helping” others whose peripheral positions both in the IDC and the host communities of practice she understands and feels compassion for. She has undergone and shown the agency and transgredience to be able to log, reflect on, and shape her evolving social and English language
identities, and have an impact on the community of practice at the IDC through hard work and participation. I have a feeling, sometime in the not-too-distant future, I may yet bump into Hanna around the corridors of Trinity College Dublin.
Rafal’s Story

Rafal is a Polish man in his mid thirties, and he has been in Ireland since 2006. He writes and talks fondly of his life before migrating. In one narrative frame (“My Story at the Drop-in”), Rafal puts it in simple terms: “Before I came to Ireland I had good life.” In an excerpt from his published story, Rafal is clearly missing his social network in Poland.

In Poland when I was with my friends I went to many football games, because I am a football supporter, I support Lechia Gdansk. Also I like rugby and support Ogniwo Sopot, hockey - Stoczniowiec Gdansk, speedway - Wybrzeze Gdansk. Now I can not meet with my colleagues from the city in Poland and travel with them to watch our football team because I am here in Ireland.

Here, the apparently obvious statement that it is not possible to meet his friends seems to convey some of the bitterness of his dislocation. Rafal is having to adjust to his displacement but, despite his limited English, he is able to provide an insider view of this aspect of his resettlement conflicts. However, for many migrant learners at the IDC, it is not usually a cut-and-dried case of being either dislocated or being settled. In the following segment from the same story, Rafal displays some desire to occupy new social spaces in his newfound freedom to move around, and in his likening of Dublin to his beloved home town, while at the same showing some contestations to his new environment:

But now I allow myself to travel, I couldn’t do it in my country. I like Dublin because it is near the sea, like my town Sopot in Poland. However I do not like the dirty street, neglected houses, drug addicts and drunks.

In the following part of his story (ibid) Rafal paints a picture of his social network and socialisation outside the IDC. On the surface, this is a picture of a person at ease in their “busy” and “interesting” social milieu and surroundings, and Rafal seems to display a modicum of reconstruction and resettlement in his new home.

I live in Tallaght with my wife. My social life in Dublin is interesting and busy. I have few friends from Dublin. I meet my friends and we go to the pub, drink beer and speak about different ideas. Every Sunday my wife and I go to church, where we meet very interesting people. After mass we get something to eat and drink tea, maybe wine and talk with the people we meet.

However, in response to my question in our follow-up talk as to whether he spoke English to anyone outside the IDC, Rafal provides a glimpse below the surface. It turns out that in this vignette above, his social interactions are being conducted almost entirely in his heritage or second language (Russian):
PETER: And outside the Centre, outside the school?
RAFAL: No at home eh at home I speak with my wife Polish language yeah
PETER: But neighbours or..? Do you speak to anybody in your area?
RAFAL: Yeah but nervous to speak English here and if I see yeah, cos sometimes I don’t see for one day, it’s just Polish and Russian, yeah
PETER: Do you know your neighbours? DO you know their names?
RAFAL: Oh yeah like few neighbours from Spain. Yeah well... this is Pablo and girl is... (chuckle) I don’t remember...
PETER: And you speak sometimes with them?
RAFAL: Yes
PETER: Are they friendly?
RAFAL: Yes (doubtful) and yeah like you know everybody, like somebody don’t have time like free time for speaking.
PETER: Everyone’s busy

Rafal’s nervousness about participating or engaging in English interactions would appear to be not the only factor holding him back. Here, he is relating how his access to local social spaces and linguistic capital are limited, and might be improved if he met more people, “If I see”, or if “somebody” gave him more “time for speaking”.

Before the Drop-in; language and work

Before his arrival in Ireland, work was a very important and not unpleasant feature in Rafal’s stories and life. Rafal clearly enjoyed his work, as he recounts in his published story:

My work in my country was very interesting and very hard. I was doing a lot of different work, but I most enjoyed working as a building conservator. I worked in Poland - Gdansk, Warszawa, Torun and in Russia in Kaliningrad, where I conserved old buildings. With my work I could see old interesting historical places.

Like Joasia, Rafal had come to Ireland seeking work. Again, like Joasia, Rafal had very limited English on arrival in Ireland, but in this piece from our talk, he is able to wryly describe his job-seeking one-liner. His ability to reflect on this use of his job-seeking English in the very early stages of his learning would seem to indicate Rafal’s tentative agentic first steps in a repositioning viz-a-viz new social systems, and a foregrounding of his emergent sense his identity.

PETER: Did you study language in school in Poland?
RAFAL: No, no I don’t have...
PETER: You didn’t do English at all?
RAFAL: No, not English
PETER: So before you came to Ireland you had no English
RAFAL: Yes, I don’t speak nothing. I have problem for like just “Hello, my name is...” and “Are you looking for job?” and (laughs) that’s it

Rafal’s experience of the Irish workplace was starkly at odds with that of his pre-Irish jobs. During our talk, Rafal provides an insider’s view of workplace conflicts, and reveals how, during eight years in an ‘Irish’ workplace, his access to local linguistic capital was denied.

PETER: How long are you in Ireland now?
RAFAL: Seven maybe now is eight yeah eight years
PETER: And you got a job when you came to Ireland?
RAFAL: Yeah I worked. Last seven years I worked and... like...
PETER: You were in construction, was it?
RAFAL: No, no I worked in eh the restaurant
PETER: Restaurant?
RAFAL: Yeah before restaurant I have few jobs and Irish people don’t really and don’t speak. Like my first boss is good if nobody speak English
PETER: Yeah
RAFAL: Because boss is clever (chuckle). After I speak a little, a little and I change job. And my next job is like, I don’t speak too much English because lots of staff is from East Europe. And like speak Russian Polish and I understand and Czech Republic is similar language...
PETER: To Polish
RAFA: Yes, if you speak Russian, Polish like, of course like not understand everything and I know what want somebody. And just boss is Irish and manager’s Irish and that’s it. Supervisor from Poland (chuckles) and...
PETER: So you’re speaking Russian and Polish in the job all the time?
RAFAL: Yes, and a little English yeah because somebody from Pakistan don’t understand (chuckle).

In the “few job” in his first year of working in Ireland, his colleagues did not seem to consider him worthy of speaking to, perhaps because his level of spoken English was so low. This lack of access to local linguistic and, as a consequence material, capital was compounded by the attitude of his first boss, who was “good” if his border-crossing workers were excluded from contact with the host language. This “clever” boss was not acting in isolation. I can report that, around the same time Rafal is referring to here, IILT approached IBEC, which is the main business and employer association for organisations based in Ireland, with a scheme to provide on-the-job English language training for newcomer employees. IBEC turned this offer down, maintaining that at the height of Ireland’s economic boom they could not afford to lose working hours.

The sociolinguistic space which Rafal describes here, where Russian is probably the lingua franca, suits the hierarchy of the workplace. The Polish supervisor, identified with an ironic chuckle here,
serves as a bilingual interface for the Irish bosses, meaning that Rafal’s seven years in an ‘Irish’ workplace provided him with very limited access to local linguistic and cultural capital.

**Rafal at the Drop-in; non-participation on the periphery**

Rafal had only been a short time at the IDC when he joined the second literacy group. As he put it: “I first came to the Drop-in September 2013 because my English is very bad” (“My Story at the Drop-in”). His long period of linguistic dislocation, his need to upskill in a more competitive, post-boom job market, and the pressure from the social welfare offices that required border crossers to access English language training, despite a total cut in funding in this area, were all part of a package that seemed to traumatise Rafal. In the following segment from our talk, instead of answering my question on what he thinks of the Drop-in, Rafal returns to the topic of work, and how he is still shocked about losing his “one place seven years”, and clearly anxious about his access to language training and future prospects.

No, I have here good time. Yeah... like I lost, I lost job and I think about my future yeah because... before I, ok I don’t think I worked for one place seven years. Well, for me is very long time. And I don’t think about I lost job for one week, and I lost job for one week. And after I looking for any place for English language and I lost job in eh... August. Is not good time for place, for looking for school

Throughout his stories and our talk, Rafal displays his fear about his lack of ability to communicate. In the next excerpt from our talk (3-15), Rafal conveys a slight annoyance that he has to do Drama at the Centre, when his inexperience in writing is really a problem for him, and while in his current IDC experience “school is more speaking”. The drama encounters are “not good”, he feels guilty about his errors and unworthy of the attention of the other members.

PETER: What problems does writing and reading cause you in your daily life?
RAFAL: Well because I don’t have experience for writing. Ok, now I have school and school help me, yeah?
PETER: Ok, yeah
RAFAL: And school is more speaking and like drama, yeah...
PETER: You’re doing the drama here as well?
RAFAL: Yeah, yeah yeah
PETER: How is that?
RAFAL: (laughs) It’s not good, it’s not good. I don’t, I don’t remember everything, yeah
PETER: Yeah your lines
RAFAL: Yeah I speak something and after few seconds... I know one time I make mistake and nobody listen me second time, you know? Like one time, this time for speaking and that’s it. And after I think “Ah Rafal this time you make mistakes”
From the above segment, we can see that Rafal is occupying a peripheral position in the various micro communities of practice at the IDC, and struggling to participate and develop a more powerful identity. In the following part of our talk (121-139), he again shows his indifference and non-participation in the “history” or reasons for the participation of others at the Centre. However, he shows some insight by admitting that he learned little because of his inability to listen. Indeed, I noticed this one-sided tendency during our talk. While he was struggling for the right to be heard, he was also not participating and gaining a fuller membership by not affording this right to others. In this way, his struggle to build a social and linguistic identity at the IDC, and beyond, was being stymied.

PETER: How would you describe the people in the Drop-in Centre?
RAFAL: Well… I… everybody has different history. Yeah is like not my business why somebody coming here, yeah? And everybody has different problem and different life, you know?
PETER: And different stories
RAFAL: Exactly
PETER: Everybody was working on the stories together, did you learn something about other people’s stories when you were working together?
RAFAL: Mmm yes, yeah (doubtful)
PETER: And you learned a little about their experience?
RAFAL: Yes
PETER: Did this help you with your writing? Doing the story?
RAFAL: Yeah
PETER: What did you learn from doing this?
RAFAL: My learn?
PETER: What did you learn?
RAFAL: Ah I think a little, little but it’s eh my problem because I too much, sometimes I don’t listen (chuckle). I don’t, I speak too much
PETER: And you need to listen more?
RAFAL: Yes, yes

However, it was not all about non-participation for Rafal. In the next section of our interview (183-204), he shows he has participated, listened, and exchanged some ideas with other members. His use of “information” and metaphor of website for this setting, however, appears strange. For him, real life is funny, and perhaps a little difficult to negotiate from his peripheral position. He thinks that sometimes this cross-cultural exchange “it’s not nice”, and it would seem that some of the more political discourses, which are inevitable in an intercultural centre, upset him.

PETER: What do you think are the most important things you’ve learned here at the Centre?
RAFAL: Land?
PETER: Learned, you’ve learned
RAFAL: Learned? What is important here?
PETER: Yes that you’ve learned from coming here
RAFAL: (pause) Hmm... I’m not sure but important... like another people like you see another people you, you speak, you listened. Yeah is like, like many many people is coming and change information and like you like open brain
PETER: You open your mind more
RAFAL: You open your mind
PETER: So you’ve learned not just language but you’re getting information as well?
RAFAL: Yeah for me is like interesting like change information because like real people is different like funny is real life. Like website, of course, like everybody speak different information and sometime for me it’s not nice if I something listen. Of course I speak something not nice for another person. Not for person like personality like “I don’t like you!” and like politics is very bad. You understand me?
PETER: Yeah, yeah
RAFAL: If you know like, if you speak about Russian and first question about Putin, you understand me?
PETER: Yeah
RAFAL: And Russian people is different the same as Polish people is different, and Polish politics and Russian politics on top.

Despite his problems in relating and participating, Rafal did make some friends at the IDC. His membership of our literacy group included him in the same sociolinguistic ‘Russian’-speaking group of friends as recounted in Hanna’s story. So Rafal, who is not as agentic, socially adept, or linguistically skilled as more expert group members, is showing some signs of a desire to move from the periphery and, as he reveals in the following segment (140-146), find out more about “who is who”.

PETER: Has coming to the Centre changed your life in any way?
RAFAL: (pause) Well I... I have now like few friends like more. Yeah because before I don’t see never these people and I come here and I know who is who, yeah?
PETER: So you made some friends?
RAFAL: Yeah and sometimes I eh meeting and like...
PETER: You meet people outside?
RAFAL: Yeah, yeah

Rafal’s reflection on his experience of storytelling and writing in the next section form our interview (102-120) shows a more functional appreciation of our literacy practices than other members. He perceives the benefits of this situated practice more from the perspective of “more experience for English”.

PETER: What was it like writing the story and working together with the other people (names others)? What was it like to work in a group like that?
RAFAL: Yeah it was good for me because girls help me. Like few minutes before I see Hanna and I say “Hanna could you please help me something?” because if you better ask me, I speak. I write and I speak, sometimes bad sometimes good
PETER: So when you were working in the group with Hanna and Nika it was good?
RAFAL: Yes
PETER: Did their Russian speaking help you?
RAFAL: Yeah, yes, yes exact yeah
PETER: You were working with people from other countries too, what was it like? What did you learn from working in this group?
RAFAL: What is learn?
PETER: What did you learn working together like that in the group?
RAFAL: It’s like more experience for English. Ok I know I speak too much Russian and Polish and eh I forgot... could you please say again these two guys from eh Afghanistan?
PETER: Hakim and Majeed
RAFAL: Yeah of course don’t understand Russian and Polish and I... try speak English (chuckle)
PETER: So you were speaking the two languages while you were working?
RAFAL: Yeah

Again, Rafal shows some guilt about his ability to communicate in English, but does see advantages to working in group which also functions as a sociolinguistic space, and where his heritage languages can be used to scaffold his learning, help him participate more, and aid the construction of his English language identity.

We saw in Hanna’s story how he appreciated the agency and participation of the Russian speaking Hanna and Nika. The following two handwritten fragments, which are for Rafal’s pre-interview feedback on the Our Stories project, provide a further insight into how knowledge was being shared in our group. The first example is Rafal’s attempt at a written reflection on his experience of and the possible impacts from his storytelling experience. From both a functional and a social point of view, the resulting document clearly shows how difficult it was for him to reflect on and present his experiences in text form. In spite of these challenges, Rafal manages to communicate something of his feelings, perceptions, and experiences here. Rafal seems to be sending mixed signals in his responses to the feedback questions. In his answer to question 3: “How will good reading and writing help you in Ireland?”, he reflects positively on the experience, and is happy to have found a school where he can learn. On the other hand, in response to question 6: “What have you learned from writing your story?”, he replies that he has learned nothing from the story writing project. Yet, when asked in question 7 if this was a good way to learn reading and writing, his reaction is once again positive. It is interesting to notice that Rafal did not manage to answer question 4: “Who is
your story written for?”, perhaps due to his more functional views of our project. Also evident in this fragment are Hanna’s grammar and spelling corrections.

Rafal’s “Our Stories” feedback

The next document shows Hanna’s reworking of Rafal’s feedback. I knew Rafal was nervous about our follow-up interview, and I also knew that he had asked Hanna for help in formulating his feedback just before our encounter (see Hanna’s Story). Hanna not only occupied a role here of more expert member of our community of practice, but she was also unwittingly using the LEA approach to teaching (see 4.3.4).
Hanna interpreted Rafal’s verbal responses and wrote them down. Then Rafal rewrote them in preparation for our talk (see next fragment below). In this socially constructed space, situated peer-to-peer learning appears to be fostering learning by example for Rafal, and more solid English language and social identity building for Hanna.

**Rafal’s Feedback Final Draft**

If we look at Rafal’s two drafts, we can see that some new language appears in the final copy. It seems that Hanna was not just imparting functional knowledge, but the appearance of “integrate” and “for people as me” indicate the transmission of her knowledge and perceptions as to the social functions of our storytelling endeavours. Also, as we saw in Hanna’s Story, this collaborative interaction and co-authoring encounter helped a visibly nervous Rafal reflect on and textualise his experience, which in turn prepared him for the verbalisation of this experience. As he puts it in this talk extract (104-106):
Yeah it was good for me because girls help me. Like few minutes before I see Hanna and I say “Hanna could you please help me something?” because if you better ask me, I speak. I write and I speak, sometimes bad sometimes good.

In many ways, Rafal is at the early stages of forging his English language identity. When I try to explore this in the following section of our talk, his focus instead is on his fear and frustration at his attempts at social interaction in other settings. For the moment, Rafal is still experiencing linguistic dislocation, and remains on the periphery in host community settings. But, as we have seen above, he is agentically not afraid to seek help. At the IDC, this help is at hand.

PETER: When you speak English, is there a Polish Rafal and an English Rafal?
RAFAL: Yeah is like, ok yes of course because like eh... if I change language I can’t speak everything because my language, my English language is not very good. Yeah like expression and stuff is like “Ah, ah ah” I want speak, and sometime I have problem because if I speak something and another person maybe don’t understand my language, and like he don’t understand my..., eh sometimes like...
PETER: What you mean
RAFAL: Yeah, people is like angry because don’t understand what I want...
PETER: Yeah, what you want to say
RAFAL: Yes, yes I think that I good speak, and after I see face and is “Ahhhh...”

Rafal’s Future

Despite his experiences of social and linguistic conflicts in his employment and lived history in Ireland, Rafal has plans and ambitions. In the next extract from his published story, Rafal writes of his hopes for a more stable and less chaotic future. The notable use of the word “dignity” may indicate his reaction to perceived injustices in his lived experience in Ireland so far, and this part of his reflection on events to date may be interpreted as his agentic resistance to pre-constructed power relations, and presage a desired future settled identity and new self-definition.

My life has changed since I left Poland and got married. I think that I’ll stay in Ireland. I want to be a father, buy an apartment and have dignity to live with my family.

In the following part of our talk (271-296), Rafal is showing how he is positioning himself regarding his lack of access to language access and local symbolic and material resources. He is willing and ready to invest all that he can in learning English, in fact the coordinator of the IDC complained to me of being constantly pestered by Rafal about access to the more structured classes that the IDC had just set up. He is not sitting back and waiting for the IDC to give him a place at the next level, and shows his agency at work by adding “If don’t give, I ask”.

What do you want to do in your future Rafal? What do you see in your future?
RAFAL: Well eh I think if, if of course (chuckle) if ok, ok I now has school and after that school I think about next, next level for education, education, oh my god I forgot, education...
PETER: Adult education
RAFAL: Yeah exactly yes, and I think if eh... this school give me another level, I take
PETER: Yeah
RAFAL: If don’t give me, I ask (chuckle)
PETER: Yeah, ok
RAFAL: Cos sometime if you don’t ask...
PETER: So do you want the next level of English or do you want to study something different?
RAFAL: Eh I think eh for next level and after I think about course
PETER: Do you have an idea what type of course?
RAFAL: Oh I have, I have two or three idea. Maybe, I not sure for 100 per cent, yeah? I think about yeah cooker course. Because for course like, I lost job and I was in FAS and I ask what FAS help me, maybe give me something like course and school. And eh woman say “Mmm your English is not very good” and “If you, you will go to school and after, if you have better English FAS give you a course”
PETER: So you’re thinking about doing cooking perhaps?
RAFAL: Yeah cooker and I think about like you know garden like work...
PETER: Working in gardening
RAFAL: And garden yeah
PETER: Nice job
RAFAL: Yeah, and what... I, I have few idea and I don’t want speak cos I not sure...
PETER: You’re not sure but you need to work on the English first and
RAFAL: Yes, yes

Border crossers like Rafal are being threatened with welfare cuts by The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if they do not upskill their English to access employment in a fiercely competitive jobs market. Many border crosses like Rafal do not have access to the “range of courses” mentioned by the Minister for Education and Skills (see 4.2.2), and are struggling to find access to further training and education as Rafal relates in the above segment. At the time of this interview, FAS was the official provider of vocational training in the Republic of Ireland. Community building groups like the IDC are finding it hard to deal with the sheer numbers of border crosses, many, like Rafal, who have worked a number of years in Ireland and now find themselves stranded in a social, material, and cultural limbo.

It is hard not to share Rafal’s pessimism, expressed in the following exchange toward the end of our talk (297-308), about the Irish economic climate and his future job prospects. Rafal has clearly been actively seeking employment but there is a race to the bottom in this market in terms of pay and conditions. As he puts it, “for every boss there is a recession”, and there are so many unemployed in this market who should be “happy” to accept these conditions. This power asymmetry is accentuated for border crosses like him with limited linguistic means.
PETER: And then you will decide what you want to do next?
RAFAL: Yeah, yes I think the situation in Ireland is don’t change too much
PETER: No it’s getting a little better, slowly
RAFAL: Yeah and I don’t want speak about politics and everything, ok? And like for every country somebody make like recession. Every time for eh boss if you looking for job, for every boss there is a recession, you understand me?
PETER: Yeah
RAFAL: If you looking and you ask about money you know “How many money you give me?” yeah? Just less, less very little and you say “What’s happen?” and you know “It’s a recession, you know?” and “You happy if I take you” You understand me?
PETER: Yeah, yeah they have more power
RAFAL: Yeah, yeah like...

Rafal has been through a very difficult time in his lived experience in Ireland, but he is showing an agentic resistance to the barriers he has encountered, and he has used his story to try and make meaning of these conflicts and his sense of dislocation. Though he is only at the beginning of reconstructing his lived experience and his social and linguistic identities, he is not letting the grass grow beneath his feet; a very short time after losing his job he had located the IDC, and was hard at work accessing as many linguistic resources as the Centre could offer him. While his story has revealed elements of resistance and non-participation in the community of practice at the IDC, he has shown that he is learning from his interactions with some other members. I would say that his narrative has provided some evidence of identity transformation and socio-economic and linguistic reconstruction, and some hope in that he is equipping himself for the challenges that lie ahead.
Jane’s Story

Jane is a Chinese woman in her late twenties who came to Ireland in 2009 with her sister. She met a Chinese man in Dublin and married. The couple live in Tallaght with a young baby boy. Jane is a very forthright person with a dry sense of humour; she chuckles and giggles at her own remarks frequently during our talk. Before coming to Ireland, Jane had a good job with the Chinese government, but something went amiss. In her published account of her lived experiences, she hints at relocation issues which forced her to make an unwelcome decision: “In China, I was an office worker. I really liked my work and my workmates. But in order to stay with my family, I resigned in 2008.”

In the following segment of our follow-up talk (193-206), Jane discusses her two families. Like other migrant women, and some border-crossing men, she has exchanged her own family for another, but is still able to share the age-old mother-in-law joke.

JANE: Yeah my mother, my sister in China but my husband, my husband’s family in here
PETER: Here in Ireland?
JANE: Yeah all in Ireland
PETER: So he has all his family here
JANE: Yeah
PETER: His mother his father?
JANE: brother and sisters
PETER: So you have a mother-in-law in Ireland?
JANE: Yes (laughs)
PETER: Does his family speak English?
JANE: No, just Chinese but his brother speak English um a little. He has four brothers and one sister
PETER: A lot!
JANE: Yeah (chuckles) big family

When I ask about Jane’s knowledge of or social connection to her heritage community in the locality (475-481), she reveals the type of double dislocation which also appears in the narratives of other members of this learner group.

JANE: Um, I don’t know but my sister, my husband’s brother’s family in Tallaght
PETER: So you meet them and visit them and have dinner with the family
JANE: Yeah, every week
PETER: Do you meet other Chinese people outside the family?
JANE: Chinese people... umm I don’t know
PETER: You don’t really meet other
JANE: Yeah, I don’t meet
What emerges from both of these segments, and in the following parts, is that while the men have some access to social, cultural and linguistic capital in the host community, the women, as is the case of other IDC members, have little or no social contact. Jane’s husband is a self-employed builder and, as she relates in the next talk extract (101-114), has no problems socialising in host community settings. She also conveys what might be seen as feelings of frustration and inferiority at the linguistic asymmetry in the family. Instead of replying directly to my first question, she makes the comparison “better than me”, and at the end she poignantly reiterates with “Only bad me”. In line with other women members of our group, childcare, gendered roles, and family pressures were impacting unfavourably on Jane’s desire to grow her English language identity, thus impacting unfavourably on her advancement in further education and host-community socialisation.

PETER: Is his English good?
JANE: Eh better than me. He can eh he can eh c c...
PETER: Converse?
JANE: Converse, yeah
PETER: So he can have a conversation with people?
JANE: Yeah, yeah
PETER: But you’re having problems
JANE: (chuckles) Yeah he, he came here long, very long time and he study English in school
PETER: So his English was good when he came to Ireland? Was better than yours
JANE: Only bad me

In this exchange (76-82), while discussing her sister’s job, Jane provides a glimpse of the fate of many of her linguistically isolated compatriots. This is accompanied by a wry comment on the reason for their line of work, with Jane finishing my sentence here. Her correction of “take away” for my “restaurant” may also be interpreted as denoting a more menial type of employment.

JANE: She working
PETER: What does she do?
JANE: Eh... work in Chinese
PETER: Chinese restaurant?
JANE: Take away
PETER: A lot of Chinese people work in the take away
JANE: (chuckles) because their English not good

The sense that Jane and her extended family are doubly isolated is reinforced in the next part of our interview (503-508). She is surprised at her own lack of awareness of the major Chinese New Year Festival that the city of Dublin has been hosting for over a decade.
PETER: They have a big festival in the city centre for the Chinese New Year. Do you know?
JANE: Yeah?
PETER: Every year
JANE: I don’t know
PETER: They have a Chinese festival music and they have the dragon
JANE: Oh, I don’t know

Despite her linguistic, social, and apparently gendered isolation, she writes in the following extracts in her published story of contentment with her new home. In her talk she painted a picture of almost total isolation, but here she presents a carefree image of eating, shopping, and strolling around with her friends. This may serve as a reminder that narratives such as these cannot be taken as factual and should be taken as constructed representations of lived experiences.

Ireland is a warm and beautiful country, it is not too hot. I like Ireland, and I have been in here for 4 years since I came to Ireland in 2009. Now, I live in a house with my family in Tallaght.] [In my free time I like to eat different delicious foods and do some shopping with my friends. Sometimes, I also go to library to read books.

Like Ana, Jane was agentically using the library to access linguistic resources and build her English identity. Also, like Ana, Jane has serious problems with English pronunciation. But unlike Ana, she did not pester the librarian when she came across a new word; she worked quietly away on her own at home. In the following part of our talk (324-246), we can see how much of a struggle it was for Jane to be understood and listened too. It takes seven turns to find out what kind of books she is reading. This aside, she is working hard at this challenge, and is patiently constructing her new language starting with “only pronounce simple word”. Jane shows how undaunted she is by the many challenges she is facing by rounding off this painful topic and surprising herself with a fun lexical connection.

PETER: Do you go to the library?
JANE: Yeah um... last month I went to library
PETER: To read
JANE: Um to borrow some books
PETER: And are you learning English books?
JANE: Yeah learning (sotto voce) English books but eh (pause) (unclear) sales book, sales book for me
PETER: Sales book?
JANE: Sales book eh... sil sil sil
PETER: Children’s books?
JANE: Not children’s book eh this pronounce eh this how to pronounce
PETER: How to pronounce?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: You’re getting some books from the library to help you with your English?
JANE: Yes only, only pronounce simple word
PETER: Yeah you know you can get a book and a CD, a book and a disc together
JANE: Yeah pronounce the way CD but others books no CD
PETER: Yeah so you need a book with a CD
JANE: Yeah
PETER: So you’re interested in pronunciation? You want to help, you want to learn
JANE: Yeah
PETER: Pronunciation. This is very important
JANE: Very important person (chuckles)

Pronunciation is clearly hampering Jane’s social interactions. When I ask if she spoke with her Irish neighbours (26), she shows that she is trying hard but having little success: “I say in English they don’t understand me”. Jane’s access to language education had taken her four years to realise, but the struggle to reposition herself as a learner with full access to resources had not been resolved.

In the next segment of our talk (519-526), Jane relates how gendered constraints imposed by her husband have limited her educational options. She could not, as she certainly wished, “study English in school”, and the IDC was conceded as a compromise as her husband “let” her go there.

JANE: Yeah but I want to study English in school, my husband he don’t, don’t like
PETER: He doesn’t like?
JANE: I, I like to study English in school but don’t like. He say mm... “Every day, every day my baby...”
PETER: “…needs you”?  
JANE: Yeah
PETER: So you can’t go to school?
JANE: Yeah so he only... let me come here  
PETER: He lets you come here?
JANE: Yeah (nervous chuckles)

So, Jane’s immediate community and family attitudes to her desire to engage in English language learning would appear to be a significant constraint on her access to resources in the host community. These attitudes are not, unfortunately, restricted to language access. Jane account of her dealing with officialdom in the next section (142-152), shows how she has to rely on her heritage social network in order to access to health services, while her husband, who has the language skills to help, doesn’t always accompany her to hospital.

PETER: So when you bring your baby to the doctor you call your friend
JANE: (laughs) Sometime my husband go
PETER: Sometimes your husband goes?
JANE: Yeah
Here, and throughout our talk, Jane often chuckles at the times when she is talking about her husband, and often when she is relating moments of conflict and struggle. The proximity of nervous laughter to these utterances may be interpreted as Jane’s way of dealing with and trying to make sense of these gendered tensions.

**Jane at the Drop-in**

As we have seen, the IDC was not Jane’s first choice as a place to learn English. She is not happy with her progress over the six months she had been attending at the time of our talk. She claims that “my English improve only... only a little”, and any change in her proficiency was “very slow” (530/531). At the start of our follow-up interview (5-18), Jane leaves no room for uncertainty about her opinion of her learning experience at the IDC. Her English in “no better” and it seems to be “a waste of time”. Jane’s questioning here of Hanna’s credentials as a “student” may be interpreted as her disillusionment with the service on offer at the IDC. Others, such as Rafal also displayed similar attitudes. Jane does, however, grudgingly concede that Hanna’s English is good.

The gendered-mediated struggle which had influenced Jane’s choice of attending the IDC in the first place was also being played out during her time there. The topic of ease of access to the resources at the IDC surfaced in the next part of our talk (443-451). Not only is Jane not receiving the tutor-
centred, classical classroom learning she must have imagined, also her access to the IDC appears to be at the whim of contested childcare issues and imposed subject positions by close family members. She has no time at home to focus on learning or other self-realising activities, but cannot attend the IDC unless other family members step in. Her laughter at the prospect of her husband having to mind the baby would appear to underlie her attitude to the injustice of her situation.

JANE: Somehow my baby no, nobody mind
PETER: Nobody minds your baby?
JANE: Yeah I don’t come here
PETER: When you come to the Centre, who minds your baby? Who is minding your baby now?
JANE: Sometimes his grandmother minds him. Sometimes my husband minds (chuckles)
PETER: And so you’re trying to learn English and to have time for you
JANE: Yeah I have, I have time only here, here
PETER: At home no time
JANE: At home no time yeah

Perhaps because of her background learning styles, and also maybe due to her perceived poor learning experience and opinion of the IDC, Jane did not participate much at the Centre or in the literacy group. In response to my question about which friends she had made at the Centre, she said “My sister-in-law” (162), this despite her stated reason in her published story for attending the IDC as “to improve my English and make more friends”. Jane’s choice of metaphor for the IDC was “club” (357), a more socially detached option than the other ones of “family” or “friendship” offered by me. Near the end of our talk (575), Jane underlines her dislocation from other members at the IDC by saying: “well they don’t like make friends with me”.

Jane’s reflection on our group work and collaborative practice (256-287) reveals her to be unconvinced of the functional or social language benefits of these practices, underlining this perception by repeating the outcome “little” throughout this piece. Again, Jane’s pronunciation was blocking her participation. When she did try to engage with others in the group she found that “they don’t answer me”. In the end, Jane often worked alone on her story after deciding she was not at the same level of the other members and concluding that “they don’t need my help”.

PETER: When you were writing the story you were working in a group. Did you enjoy working together in the group?
JANE: (sotto voce) like?
PETER: You were sitting in a group at the table working together
JANE: Yeah
PETER: At a table with other people and you were working together
JANE: Ah yeah
PETER: Writing the story was that good? Did you like working together?
JANE: (uncertain) Yeah
PETER: Did you learn from the other people? Any words or did they help you
JANE: (unconvinced) A little
PETER: A little
JANE: Yeah a little. Their pronounce somehow their pronounce not good
PETER: So it was difficult to understand what they were saying?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: And maybe it was difficult for them to understand what you were saying?
JANE: (chuckles) Yeah
PETER: So the pronunciation was the difficult part
JANE: Um, my pronounce not good. Sometimes I say something they don’t answer me
(chuckles)
PETER: They don’t understand you?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: And sometimes they say something that you don’t understand?
JANE: Yeah I don’t understand, yeah
PETER: So there was a problem with the pronunciation?
JANE: Uh huh
PETER: But they helped you a little?
JANE: Yeah a little
PETER: Did you help them?
JANE: They eh, eh, don’t need
PETER: They don’t need help?
JANE: They don’t need my help (chuckles)

Jane did not like the published version of her story. Reflecting on this in our talk (296-308), she repeats that “it’s not good”, but is unable to provide any insight as to why. It must be said that Jane was only at the Centre one month when she joined the literacy group. She had fought hard to get here, and was still struggling for access to resources both within and without the IDC.

PETER: When you saw the story finished, what did you feel? How did you feel?
JANE: Um (unclear sotto voce) I think is no good
PETER: Yeah?
JANE: ... Um... I don’t know (sotto voce)
PETER: It’s not good?
JANE: Yes it’s not good
PETER: Why?
JANE: ... eh... (sotto voce) why... don’t know (chuckle)

However, in the next part of our interview (539-558), Jane is able to add to her narrative by saying she would have written more about “something happen in the Centre”, and about the changes in her life. In this piece, she is showing some awareness and appreciation of the role of English
storytelling in logging and constructing her changing identity. Overall though, Jane is not entirely convinced that the storytelling project helped her forge her English language identity to a significant degree, and is not sure she would like to repeat the process.

PETER: If I said write this story again
JANE: (laughs)
PETER: Not again! But if you want to make this story bigger, what would you write?
JANE: Maybe I say umm... I say something happen in the Centre
PETER: You would talk about the Centre
JANE: Umm changes... in my life
PETER: Yeah the changes in your life
JANE: Yeah
PETER: Is it important to talk about your life? Is it good?
JANE: Good? Uh huh yeah
PETER: Is it good to speak about your life in English?
JANE: Uh huh yeah
PETER: Because you speak about your life with your family in Chinese, no?
JANE: Yeah
PETER: But you don’t speak about your life in English with anybody
JANE: Yeah
PETER: But here you started to speak about your life. Would you like to do more?
JANE: (chuckles)
PETER: You’re not sure?
JANE: No, I don’t know

The reality is that Jane joined the literacy group in an effort to gain access to more resources at the IDC besides her lessons with Hanna. However, as she related above, Jane was not able to fully participate in situated practices of knowledge sharing in the literacy group. More importantly, as she relates in the following part of our interview (561-574), Jane’s primary English language needs were not being met in the stories project. Whereas other members joined the group to specifically deal with their literacy needs, for Jane, writing is secondary to spoken interaction, she “only want to speak and lis[t]en”.

PETER: Writing is very important. Speaking is very important, too
JANE: Yeah I know. I, I, I only want to speak lis...
PETER: Listen
JANE: Yeah listen um write um write is...
PETER: Is not so important
JANE: Yeah
PETER: It’s listening and speaking is most important because you want to speak to Irish people and other people
JANE: Yeah then I can make different friends
PETER: You can make friends and meet people
JANE: Uh huh
PETER: And that’s what you want to do, you want to make more friends in Ireland
JANE: Uh huh, yeah (chuckles)

Jane is clearly unhappy with her social and linguistic isolation in host-community settings. She has come to the centre to acquire the spoken interaction skills which would enable her to “make different friends”. She has had, and continues to have, a real struggle to occupy contested position of language learner, and against the gendered constraints of those close to her who are resisting this change. Despite all of this, Jane is agentically looking for ways to connect with the host culture, and still hopes to find ways to meet “different” people in her future in Ireland.

Jane’s Future

Though Jane has reported very little awareness of any changes in her English language identity, she is able to identify some progress in her social interactions outside the IDC. In this section of our interview (404-430), she tells how she has loosened her dependency on her phone’s translator, and is beginning to engage with others instead. Little is a word Jane uses throughout our talk, and the English language Jane is still in her infancy. It must be remembered that she has undergone many years of double dislocation, which must have had a powerful impact on her confidence and ability in social interactions. She is, nevertheless, learning to conquer her “fear”, a somewhat stronger cognate she brought up for my “afraid”. Things appear to be changing in Jane’s English language socialisation and English identity, small changes. She is overcoming her fear of English interaction and “now that’s ok”.

PETER: How has your life changed?
JANE: ... I... I... (laughs)
PETER: (laughs) So, what is different?
JANE: I, when I shopping em if I don’t know something where, I can ask them
PETER: So that’s changed?
JANE: Yeah that’s changed
PETER: Before you didn’t ask
JANE: Before I check in my phone now I can... (chuckles)
PETER: Now you ask
JANE: Yeah I ask
PETER: So things are changing a little bit
JANE: Yeah is changing yeah (sotto voce) a little bit
PETER: So before you were afraid. Were you afraid to speak?
JANE: (sotto voce) Fraid
PETER: Afraid
JANE: Fear?
PETER: Fear, yeah
JANE: Yeah, yeah oh yeah
PETER: You had fear
JANE: Yeah
PETER: And now?
JANE: Now that’s ok (laughs)

Jane is not unambitious about her future possible self in her new home. In her published story, she writes how she “would like stay in Ireland and learn to understand English better. For the future, I want to learn English well enough, and I would like to be a teacher”. She is strongly agentic, and clearly not allowing her linguistic or the gendered social constraints to stop her laying claim to brighter and more connected future. But, Jane is not out of the woods yet. In this part of our talk (86–89), she appears to be unsure about the possibility of further education, and the family pressure of childcare seems to impinge on her plans for the future. Like other mothers in this inquiry, Hanna and Joasia for example, she may have to wait until her child is four years old before she can confidently consider what her next steps may be.

PETER: What do you want to do? Do you want to study, work in the future?
JANE: This year I want to study English. Then, eh, maybe I work (chuckles)
PETER: Or maybe continue studying?
JANE: Yeah maybe continue study. Now my child’s too young so I no want...

Jane’s story illustrates how wider social issues such as her double dislocation and gender-mediated conflicts are closely connected to her struggle to achieve her personal goals in her new home in the sphere of language access and socialisation. Jane would appear to have nothing of real substance to report on changes to her English language identity as a result of participating in our storytelling practices, but, as I have already noted, she may have resisted a fuller participation due to a perceived needs mismatch. Jane has some way to go from the periphery, both in host-community settings and at the IDC, but she is determined to continue contesting the restrictions to her development and make “different friends” in local, host-community settings.
Amin’s Story

When I arrived in Ireland I really didn’t know anyone and I didn’t know what to do. It was hard for me. The first person I talked to was a taxi driver I think. The first difference I saw was the weather. My first day/week in Ireland was not good, because I did not know anyone and I felt lonely. A good time I had in Ireland was the summer of 2006. The weather was sunny and warm for about few months and I had good time.

In this introduction to his “My Story” narrative frame, Amin gives an insider’s view of arriving alone in a new place. As if to illustrate his sense of dislocation, the only memory he writes about of early contact was with a taxi driver. Amin, who is in his early forties and lives in Tallaght with his wife and child, came to Ireland from Afghanistan to seek asylum. In our follow-up talk, he told me how his first wife had passed away a “very long time ago” in Afghanistan (302). He did not give many more details of this event, or why he had to seek asylum, though he does mention the arrival of the Taliban as a reason for leaving Afghanistan (149). At the start of our talk, Amin relates some details of his asylum seeking experience (1-12):

PETER: When you came here first in 2004, you came alone
AMIN: Yes I did
PETER: And you completed the asylum process within six months. Then you stayed in a centre, did you?
AMIN: Yeah, I stayed in a centre in Dublin for two weeks. Then they transfer me to Limerick and I stay for six months in Limerick. I was waiting for my, after a few weeks the sent me an interview and they give me another month, four weeks to go for an interview, and then I went for an interview. Then I was waiting for another three months for a result and I got my result after three months
PETER: It was quiet quick
AMIN: Yes
PETER: You were happy about that
AMIN: Yes I was very happy

Amin was fortunate in his asylum application in that it was processed very quickly. Some cases can take up to ten years to go through the outmoded Irish asylum process, which deals with applications on a case-by-case basis. In his “My Story” frame, Amin lists the three most important events during his time in Ireland:

(1) When I got my status.
(2) When my family joined me.
(3) When I get my passport I will be grateful in the future.

Subsequent to this written account, Amin did joyfully tell me of his successful citizenship application and the arrival of his Irish passport. Amin was not, strictly speaking, an active member of either the
IDC or of our literacy group, but he did take part in the “Our Stories at the Drop-in Centre” project, albeit peripherally. During the two years I spent at the Centre Amin would drive his mother, who was a member, to the Centre, and to see how his son, another member, was getting on. These were the family he had fought for, and waited eight years to be united with, through the Refugee Family Reunification scheme. His son is Mahjeed, who he had brought to the Centre, and placed in an Irish home with friends, in order to speed up his English learning (see Mahjeed’s Story). In response to my inquiry as to his son’s progress, Amin reports how his deep-ending approach to his son’s integration appeared to be paying off (308-317):

AMIN: I think he’s doing great, yeah. He improved his English a lot
PETER: And he’s happy?
AMIN: He’s happy, Yeah. Like, I know he can manage himself now. You know, if he goes somewhere he can talk. He can solve his own problem
PETER: That’s great. That’s what you wanted
AMIN: Yeah
PETER: And he can start having a future
AMIN: Yeah he’s young he can do it, yeah. Hopefully yeah
PETER: He’s young and he’s smart. He’s got his father’s brain
AMIN: (laughs, sotto voce) Thank you

In some ways, Amin seems to be trying to replicate his own border-crossing journey to independence in his son, and proudly appears to have few doubts as to the outcome. Amin is agentically using the sociocultural knowledge he has accumulated from his own lived experience to nurture his family and help them navigate the conflicts and challenges of their new home. Also, Amin does not see why his aging mother, with her poor health, should languish at home alone. As he tells it, she too needs to communicate and make friends (159-171):

Amin: Eh I think it’s the best place especially I think about my mother. Like she’s, she’s kind of feeling lonely, you know? She comes here, she learn English you know and also she made a lot of friends. You know, she make her day and she’s happy by the end of the day
PETER: I can see her today she is smiling and happy. Before I think she was sad probably and lonely
AMIN: She was, yeah and she’s also, she was not well. She’s still not in good health but compared to last year she’s a lot better this year
PETER: So in some ways the Centre has even helped her health a little?
AMIN: Yes, yeah you know because we all need to communicate. We need... to have friends, you know?
PETER: And she’s made friends here
AMIN: Made friends yeah

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Amin, perhaps due to his own border-crossing experience, appears to be well aware of the social and linguistic, and even health, benefits of membership of a community of practice such as the IDC, and he is actively fostering access to its resources for his family. Amin is drawing on his considerable agency to act as a sociocultural broker for his clan despite his own busy existence as a nursing student, husband, and father. As Amin recounts, his mother was part of a group at the IDC who had little or no experience of formal learning. Since the notions and practice of English alphabet, script and spelling were mostly beyond this cohort, I had been using IPads as a way of familiarising them with basic literacy. It is a measure of some success that his mother was, despite her own challenges, agentically instructing other low-literacy level members of her community of practice in the use of the device for learning (182-193).

PETER: Actually, talking about your mother, she’s become an expert in the IPad
AMIN: (laughs)
PETER: I noticed she’s teaching, I’ve seen her teaching other learners with the IPad She’s showing them how to use it
AMIN: Yeah she’s, she’s a lot better, yeah. She’s able now to say “Hello. How are you?” you know? Which is a lot and good, yeah. She understands some words, you know? Last year she was like she couldn’t talk at all but this year she’s fine, yeah. She can understand
PETER: She’s beginning to make the change into English
AMIN: Yeah
PETER: It’s very difficult at that age
AMIN: Very difficult yeah and also because how can I say she’s illiterate, you know? She didn’t study in my country, you know?
PETER: Yeah so she has low literacy
AMIN: Low literacy, yeah and that’s why it’s more difficult for her
PETER: And there’s no schools here for people like that. This is the only place
AMIN: Eh yeah, I say so, yeah

Amin’s travels across the broad border of identity and integration

Amin’s tells how his own linguistic border-crossing journey started practically with very little capacity for spoken interaction (13-21). He had picked up what he could from reading, but, as he puts it, English at school in Afghanistan was “not for everybody”.

AMIN: Eh not really, you know I could read, you know, a little bit. I could speak few words because I study in my country. Before it was not the second language English in school but now it’s the second language
PETER: So when you were going to school English wasn’t the second language?
AMIN: Well there was but not you know for everybody. So for that reason I couldn’t really speak English in that time. I need more English even now (laughs) to improve my English
PETER: But you didn’t study at school?
AMIN: Not really, no

Even after ten years, and various schools and courses, Amin relates how his linguistic journey is still, "even now", an ongoing consideration. Amin finishes his summary of his experience of formal English learning with the declaration that he is “still learning” (36-53):

PETER: When you came to Ireland with very little English, did you study here? Did you do any courses?
AMIN: Yes eh while eh while I was in Limerick I was attending English classes, also computer classes you know just the basic one. And when I came to Dublin after six months also I went to the Ballsbridge College, you know?
PETER: IILT?
AMIN: Yes I think you were my teacher for about two weeks I think
PETER: There were hundreds of students
AMIN: Yeah you don’t remember but I remember yeah. I think for about three months I went to IILT. And I went after that I went to the Ballsbridge College for further education, you know? I’ve done one course which is called Business English. Yeah I have that certificate as well, yeah
PETER: So you completed that course? Level 5 that was good
AMIN: Yeah I completed and some subjects were 4 but most of them were level 5 yeah. So I learned English there as well, we used to do English there as well
PETER: After that then your English was ok. What did you do after that? What happened next?
AMIN: Well after that, like you know, I’m still learning. The problem is, you know, if you speak always, we speak always my language at home with my family, you know, my mother and my son.

Amin’s achievement of a Fetac level 5 award should have placed further education, vocational training, or employment within his reach, but other structures which might have ensured his passage to these next milestones were either not in place, or not accessible to him. As he says, it had been ten years since we had met at IILT and, even though he was currently studying hard on his nursing course, he was still struggling to claim fuller and more useful membership in his ‘new’ home. Over the years, I had bumped into many other ex-IILT learners on the streets of Dublin who also told of how they had slipped back into the invisible borderlands of endless, non-targeted courses, menial jobs, or lives where they struggled for meaning and membership in their new home. Though Amin has and gives support in his heritage social network, he does so at the sacrifice of a certain amount social and linguistic contact with host-community settings, and has the “problem” of speaking “always” his own language.

Amin’s insights into his experiences of working in Ireland paint a familiar picture of employment for many border crossers (129-152). Exploitation of migrants by unscrupulous employers was not
unfortunately uncommon, and Amin’s lack of experience, qualifications, or knowledge of labour law, made him vulnerable to such abuses.

PETER: What were you doing?
AMIN: Well, I was working in a shop
PETER: It doesn’t sound like you enjoyed it
AMIN: Not really, no but I needed to work, you know? We all need to work. Yeah I worked and, eh, it was not a good pay, you know?
PETER: What sort of shop was it?
AMIN: It was a food shop, you know?
PETER: Like a coffee shop?
AMIN: Yeah pizza
PETER: So you were working in the kitchen
AMIN: Yeah, I was kind of doing everything, you know?
PETER: They’re hard places to work in and they don’t pay well
AMIN: Yeah
PETER: Long hours little pay, you were happy to finish that
AMIN: Yeah, kind of, you know cos it’s not easy
PETER: Is that the only work you’ve done in Ireland? Did you do other jobs?
AMIN: I worked few other places mostly with food cos you know I had no other experience
PETER: No qualifications or experience?
AMIN: No qualifications, yeah. You know they don’t even accept my, I think they won’t accept, or maybe they do, if I have my qualification from my country but I don’t have it. I just finished my, I finished secondary school in my country even I didn’t get the result because of the Taliban arrived, you know. I complete my exams you know but I didn’t get the results
PETER: So that was like the Leaving Cert here? And then you had to leave?
AMIN: Yeah

Amin is also unsure whether his Leaving Cert equivalent qualification or education would be accepted here in Ireland. It seems strange that the schools and social systems Amin had come into contact with did not help him explore this matter. It would seem that this lack of ongoing aftercare for vulnerable border crossers was a contributing factor in their ongoing social, vocational, and occupational dislocation, and in the prolonging of their journeys across their sociocultural frontiers.

But, Amin’s journey through the borderlands before his family reunion was not all one of solitude and conflict. He tells how he met and befriended an Irish couple in a bar (68-79). In a way, it was Amin’s story that drew the couple to him, and he, in his own words “was looking for someone”.

AMIN: Well (chuckles) one day I was out you know and I was kind of lonely and they, that guy with his wife they were out too the same bar, you know? And we were sitting beside each other they ask me and it was very interesting when I told them I was from Afghanistan, you know?
PETER: They were very interested in this
AMIN: Yeah, they were very interested in it and they were quiet, eh, it was interesting for them to ask me and they wanted to ask me. And they asked about my experience, about my country, you know and we took about five, ten minutes and immediately you know they were very friendly. They asked me if I can meet them if they can meet me and I was very happy as well. I was looking for someone (chuckles), you know?
PETER: So just by chance?
AMIN: Yeah and one day they call me and I went to their home you know I met them. And we became very good friends. Yeah, now they are my best friends. Yeah, we meet regularly.

At first, their strong Cork accent was a struggle, but Amin persisted and “can understand them easily now” (66). Though he did not report this as a major even in his written narrative, this seems to be an important milestone in Amin’s journey and English development, and, as he recounts, their friendship is an ongoing source of host-community linguistic and social growth for him: “And I visit them regularly you know they visit me and I learn a lot from them, yeah” (54).

Amin at the Drop-in; linguistic capital in a multilingual space

When I point out that English is not the only service the IDC provides, Amin agrees: “a lot more yeah I can see that yeah” (173). At the time of our talk, Amin was busy with his end of course assignments for his nursing course, and he was getting help with the language of these from a tutor at the Centre. In response to choice of “family”, “club”, or “friendship” metaphors for defining how he views the Centre, Amin shows his appreciation for the support and advocacy he himself has accessed over the years at the IDC (176-179).

Well... this place is, I can say this is more like... a family because I think they help you in any way they can. Like you know if you have a, I mean, if you have any problem, I mean if you tell them, if they can help, they help you, you know. If they can’t, they show you the way to do it you know to solve your problem

Though Amin was a peripheral participant at the Centre, his own experience, added to the reports he was surely receiving from his son and mother, would have given him good insights into its practices and ethos. Informed by this, he shows his awareness of the intercultural values being promoted at the IDC (214-221):

AMIN: Yeah you know in general even if I didn’t attend regularly but I know they’re.. they’re talking about eh... different cultures. Maybe I think I understand about different cultures here because I meet different people when I am here. And also... oh what can I say? I think it helps a lot people you know in any ways, in many different ways
PETER: So intercultural learning is a big thing?
AMIN: Intercultural learning, yeah I’ve seen the book that were on the table they’re talking about the racism, you know? Which is very important, you know? Ah they’re all good things. You know?

When I suggest that sharing a first language with other members can be a positive when it comes to accessing the target language, Amin agrees (241-247). He does not see the use of shared or heritage languages as a hindrance, but would gladly avail of such a resource to access English is such a setting:

Yeah, yes it can. It can help a lot, yeah. Like... some people they are you know more educated, some people are not, you know? And they are not able to understand when an English speaker talk to them, you know? But you know they can ask who is speaking the same language of their language. They can ask them and I think they can understand it more easily, you know? That’s what I think in my opinion, I don’t know like. Well like if you’re talking to me and I don’t understand and there’s someone else who is beside me and they are from my country, and they have good English, I can ask them. They explain me easily and I understand it easily.

In answer to my question about what he might change in the Centre, Amin highlights the overcrowding he has noticed at the IDC (225-232). At the time of our talk, membership at the IDC was booming, and the Centre did not have the teachers or resources to cope with this. Amin would have seen the numbers grow over his years of contact with the IDC, and reports that now he “can’t see the place”.

PETER: Any change you want. If you were the manager here, what would you do different?
AMIN: Ok I think that if I am the manager, maybe I think that there is a little bit crowd, you know? That’s what I think (chuckles) bit crowd, yeah. Yeah I mean it’s crowded now in my opinion, I don’t know
PETER: Before there were less people here
AMIN: Yeah before there was less people but now there is more. Sometimes I can’t see the place. Very full of people
PETER: And not enough teachers yeah I can see that, yeah
AMIN: Not enough teachers

This lack of tutors and space resulted in a struggle for many members, both old and new, to claim access to social and linguistic resources at the IDC. Though Amin admits that, as a peripheral member, he is not best positioned to comment on this, he does agree, with what may be interpreted as a wry chuckle of recognition, that members are finding it a challenge to access tutors and subsequently linguistic capital on a daily basis (255-261):

PETER: But it is a struggle for the members who come here to get the English
AMIN: Yeah
PETER: Everybody's trying to get the teacher
AMIN: Yes (chuckles)
PETER: That happens
AMIN: Yeah it happens

Though, on the surface of it, Amin may be a peripheral actor at the IDC, his mother and son are fully participatory members, so his views of the state of play at the Centre have a certain validity. The day of our talk he was going over his written assignment for college, a far cry from his basic published story of one year ago. However, his reflection on this development of his literate identity that he is still learning and building that identity again provides an insider’s view of the lengthy nature of his journey across the border (266-269):

PETER: You only attended for a little while and you wrote that story. You wrote a very simple story. I’d say your writing is a lot better now. Would you say over the last year your writing has improved?
AMIN: Yeah (chuckles), yes I’m everyday learning, I knew that

While Amin displays his acute awareness of the importance of storytelling for his English identity work and being able to “explain” this in sociocultural settings, he is more vague about his literate identity and ability to “give the details” in English (93-106):

PETER: This is what we are trying to do with the learners here. It’s important to tell you story, is it? Would you say that’s true, to be able to tell your story in English?
AMIN: Yeah (chuckles) well yes of course it’s important. Yeah it’s important to can explain your story. It’s of course important to me, yeah
PETER: How is it different telling your story to another Afghani in your language? How is it different telling your story in English to Irish people?
AMIN: Well it’s, I don’t know if it’s me. In my opinion it’s always, always even if you speak another language one hundred percent but I think it’s more tasty (chuckles) if you speak in your own language. That’s my taste I don’t know. Maybe I’m not right but this is me. There’s another taste if you talk in your own language, you know?
PETER: So it’s a different taste, a different feel
AMIN: Yeah it’s a different taste, the feeling is different. I feel more free you know and you can say it in any way you like to, you know? In English I’m not able to you know... give the details. You know, I can explain it to you but not how I can in my own language

Despite his proximity to his Irish friends through telling his stories, albeit verbally, in English, he still feels a difference in “taste”. Amin may be displaying a partial transgression in the sense that he is aware that “it’s good” to have the capacity to convey his lived experience in English, but still feels limited when it comes to this identity work (107-120):
PETER: But do you think it’s important to be able to tell your story in English to Irish people?
AMIN: Yes it is important, yeah. It’s good you know to tell in another language your story.
PETER: We talk about identity in a language, so I speak my first language is English but my second language is Italian. So when I speak in English and when I speak in Italian, I’m a little bit different.
AMIN: (chuckles)
PETER: Would you agree that that happens?
AMIN: Yes, yeah even me sometimes you know I don’t feel very confident because maybe I know sometime I careful more you know to don’t say the wrong words. You know, but I still do, you know? This is you know when it comes to the confidence. Not very confident, you know? But if I know someone, it would be easier for me to talk to, you know? If I don’t know someone I think maybe I’m saying something wrong or (slight chuckle)
PETER: It’s about confidence. So when you’re relaxed.
AMIN: Yeah, yeah when I relax, it’s fine

Amin, like other members of our literacy group, indicates confidence as a factor when interacting in host-community settings. His account of the fear of making mistakes, of not being taken seriously is a familiar motif in our stories. But, if he knows someone, of if that someone affords him the right to be heard, then he can relax. In fact, during our talk, Amin proves himself a and thoughtful interlocutor, which may be due to this factor of having a sympathetic listener. He has, and still is, equipping himself for the next stage of his long journey, while bearing the extra burden of helping two families navigate their own border-crossing experiences.

Amin’s Future

Toward the end of our talk, I asked Amin how things were going with his nursing studies. He seems happy to be out of the menial cycle of jobs, and has enjoyed a much more meaningful experience in his new identity as a mainstream student: “Yeah, very good yeah they were very nice and I almost finished my course, yeah. It was a very good experience for me, yeah” (273-274). He goes on to say how he wants to contribute socially, and have the equal opportunity of meaningful, dignified work (275-278).

PETER: What do you see as your future in Ireland? What things would you like to do?
AMIN: Well I’m a very friendly guy (chuckles), you know? I like to work as a team, you know? And I always like to help people, you know? I’m very good at that. I like to help. Hopefully I can achieve something, you know, to work in a better place, you know? To have a good life (chuckles)

Amin is not being immodest here, as we have seen with his investment in the struggles of his extended family, he is good at being a helpful guy. When we explore his future vocational identity,
he has a clear idea of the choices available to him (279-294). He has agentically evaluated the situation and matched his skills to the various possibilities

PETER: Do you see nursing as your future?
AMIN: I think so, yes. I like to do. I have, I have, there’s two option I like to go with. I can go with one of them, you know? I choose one. The nursing, I like to do the nursing. There’s different type of nursing. I like to go maybe for the general one or I like to do the paramedic, you know?
PETER: So working with ambulances?
AMIN: Yeah
PETER: Tough job
AMIN: Yeah not easy but I like it
PETER: Have you done any work on an ambulance?
AMIN: Well I didn’t work yet but the good thing is I have the license. Not the van but I have the bus license, you know. Which is very easy for me to drive the ambulance
PETER: So do paramedic driver
AMIN: But now is change. Before you could do one of the job, you know? You could be a driver or you know a paramedic. But now you have to be both. You should be able to drive the ambulance and have the paramedic, yeah. Now you have to be able for both, yeah. Yeah and I think the course is coming out this year, which is new course. I like to do that

The world of paramedics is a challenging one, but for someone with Amin’s past social, linguistic, and vocational struggles and agency, it is “not easy” but he is more than ready to step up to the plate and assume this identity, even taking into account the new work practices. He is already looking down the line at the new course which will equip him for this new role. Amin has, over the course of his long cross-border journey so far, overcome personal tragedies, familial dislocation and the ensuing struggle for reunion, and various social and linguistic conflicts of his own since he arrived in Ireland. But, his irrepresible agency and ability to survive and overcome all this, surely marks him out as someone who will continue to build on the strengths he has shown he possesses.
Uma’s Story

Uma is a Bosnian woman in her early thirties who had been in Ireland ten years at the time of our inquiry. She has two young daughters and they live with her husband in South County Dublin. Uma presents as a shy, quietly intelligent woman with a reserved, precise manner. “Bosnia and Herzegovina is my original country. There I studied law at my university.” Uma does not mention in this introduction to her published story that her studies in law were interrupted by her marriage and almost immediate migration to Ireland. In our follow-up talk, Uma tells how she and her husband made their move to Ireland: “Eh yes, in my country we finished ceremonial about wedding, and we came” (20). Uma goes on to explain how she finished her law studies in Ireland and returned to Bosnia to take her finals (25-32).

UMA: No, never, because when I came in Ireland I didn’t finished my, my university. I did just one exam, last exam and I moved eh and teach, learn that back in Ireland and finished everything (finished studies in Ireland and returned to Bosnia to finish exams), and all my diploma

PETER: Qualifications

UMA: Qualifications are with me here

PETER: And what are you qualifications, Uma? What did you do?

UMA: Eh I finished faculty of law eh... at university

PETER: So you studied law at university

UMA: Yes

It must not have been easy for Uma to have walked away from her studies after having been so close to finishing and receiving her qualifications. However, she was determined to finish and seemed satisfied that her qualifications are now “with me here”. Uma relates how her high school studies, including foreign languages, were also disrupted by the war (50-55). She goes on to explain how, after her hard fought battle to finish her law degree, with the closely successive arrivals of her “twins”, she then had to get “educated how I need to be mam”. So, for her first seven years in Ireland, until she arrived at the IDC, Uma had no real English interaction or socialisation, partially, at least, because of her role as nurturer to her daughters.

PETER: Did you study any other languages?

UMA: Yes, in my high school I studied Germany. Germany and little bit English but, eh, my high school was, eh, after war and eh during war in my country and at school not, not normal school. For example when we start to teach (learn) something we heard eh...

PETER: Bombs

UMA: Bombs, and something we had to go (gestures down)...

PETER: You had to go underground, under the school?

UMA: Yes
PETER: So your education was disrupted? And you studied English for how many years?
UMA: Four years, but during the war
PETER: Four years, so it wasn’t normal study and you didn’t get a chance to learn very well. So when you came to Ireland, could you speak English?
UMA: I started to speak English in Drop-in Centre because first years I must to teach my exams from my country, and after that I got children. And all then I got educated how I need to be mam and cos I have two Kids like twins
PETER: Very close
UMA: Yeah, very close, and now, maybe two or three years ago, I find time for me

When, “two or three years ago”, Uma’s children started attending school, she finally had time to attend to her own needs and started coming to the IDC. Uma talks further about her lack of host-county language interaction and her fear of not being allotted the right to be heard (130-134). Here she tells of the frustration of linguistic isolation and the desire to relate her background and social identity.

Uma gives more insights into the isolation she felt in her early years in Dublin later in our talk (206-216). She reiterates her fear of social and linguistic interaction and provides a stark picture of a woman shopping alone.

Uma: On first year, I don’t want that someone ask me “What’s the time?” Just because (chuckles) I don’t know how I said it. If that’s correct or not
Peter: So you were afraid?
Uma: Yes
Peter: You didn’t want to talk to people?
Uma: Yes, just “Don’t ask me!”
Peter: It was a bad feeling
Uma: Yes, I feel alone. Then you go to shopping and you want to ask somebody something, you stop it, you stop...
Peter: You’re blocked
Uma: Yeah

Uma was not only experiencing isolation outside the home, she was also disconnected from the host language within the family At home, the family speaks only Bosnian (253). Uma’s request that her eight and nine year-old children correct her English in host-community settings is politely refused (230-244). It may be unrealistic to expect ones so young to interfere in adult interactions in this way.
However, she does nip in the bud any disrespect by her offspring for her English errors by threatening a similar fate when it comes to their heritage language.

Peter: Your children speak good English?
Uma: Yes, very
Peter: Do they help you?
Uma: Yes, of course, and I said them that they correct me if I speak with Irish people. “You can correct me”, but they very polite, they said me “Later, later”. But I want to, I want that somebody correct me
Peter: You want them to help you. You want them to correct you
Uma: Yes
Peter: Other mothers have told me that other children laugh at their mothers. Now this happens, it’s normal to make fun of the English. Do your children do this sometimes?
Uma: Once they laugh me, but I said I correct them Bosnian language, I can to laughing too. And they, they...
Peter: They stopped
Uma: (chuckles) They stopped and eh, eh, respect

There was, therefore, a tension in Uma’s dual positions as the nurturer who had to struggle with diverse social systems in English on behalf of her family, and the role she played as perpetuator of the heritage language which she promoted in the home. Though her English was beyond the exit threshold for the IDC, and despite having assumed the identity of tutor at the Centre, she was still performing the role of sole nurturer: “Yes, I started teaching because I’m very busy and I have kids and I can’t to work all day, just when school hours” (2-3). She does later remark that two parents might also be involved in this endeavour, adding, however, that her husband’s job did not allow for this (9-14).

UMA: Yes, yes, and they need a lot of time to spend with me cos it’s very important that, eh, one parent or both parents spending a lot of time with children. My husband too busy cos he’s a truck driver and I don’t know when will he be busy or free
PETER: Is he doing long-distance truck driving?
UMA: Yes, I know eh, all, all Ireland, every part of Ireland better than my country. Because every day I hear a lot of story about Ireland, about every town, every village

Uma is clearly proud of her knowledge of her new home, and we can imagine her listening enthralled by her husband’s stories of his travels over dinner. But this intercultural information is being transmitted to her in her heritage language despite the fact, as she later related, that her husband’s English was “perfect” (259-269).

Peter: And your husband’s English, how is it?
Uma: Bosnian, but he knows Perfect English
Peter: His English is good?
Uma: Yeah
Peter: He’s been working here for many years
Uma: Yeah
Peter: And so he learned it at work
Uma: Yes, yes
Peter: It’s the best way
Uma: Yes (chuckle) all family speak English just me little bit

So, all the family speak English, but just not, apparently, to each other, or at least not, it would appear, to Uma. She accompanies the unfortunate fact that she is the linguistic outsider who speaks “little bit” with a self-deprecating chuckle. Uma also reports isolation from her heritage community (223-229). Though the Bosnian community is not very large in Ireland, this represents a sense of double isolation from both host and heritage interaction.

Peter: But you don’t spend time with the Bosnian community?
Uma: No
Peter: Is there a big Bosnian community here?
Uma: No, I don’t know. We haven’t Bosnian community her, I think. We just have some party maybe one, two times per year, but I don’t go...
Peter: You don’t go to the parties?
Uma: Yeah, but too late and we have not time to go there

Uma’s role as primary nurturer, and the tensions of trying to meet her family’s and her own needs, mean that even the major community events are ruled out. Despite the tensions and conflicts of isolation and dislocation which Uma faced, she managed to establish some kind of equilibrium in her new life. In her published account, she writes how she is able to engage in activities which are similar enough to what she enjoyed in her old country. Perhaps due to her husband’s job, she clearly enjoys travelling widely in her new home.

My social life in Dublin is very similar as my social life before, that means everything what I like in my country I can find here. I like to go to the cinema, visit many interesting place in different cities in Ireland, and go to concerts. I have a lot friends in Dublin and they very friendly, helpful, and interesting people. I meet Irish people every day in the Drop-in. I also meet neighbours.

In our talk, I asked Uma how much language contact she was having with her neighbours before coming to the IDC. As she reports, her English socialisation was limited: “Yes, but not enough. Just a few polite sentences about the weather, about shopping (chuckles) not about a lot of... I don’t know...” (140-141). So, we may assume that the “lot friends” she writes about having in Dublin are
the members, and more specifically the tutors, at the Drop-in Centre, where she was able to “meet Irish people every day”.

**Uma at the Drop-in; peripheral participation**

Once Uma had “found time for me” and crossed the threshold of the IDC, she still had limited access to the resources there. She was still struggling to claim her own space and build her English language identity, and reports being able to attend sporadically (55-59).

PETER: So you started coming to the centre two or three years ago?
UMA: Yes, but with Ann every Thursday, not every day
PETER: So once a week?
UMA: Yes, once a week and that’s maybe too little. And now I came every day

In this way, Uma’s progress was slow and painstaking. Also, Uma was not participating fully in the shared practices of other members of the IDC. For over two years she had one-to-one encounters with Ann, whose own practices were limited by her inexperience as a tutor and her purely functional approach to language learning and literacy. But, as Uma told me, despite these limitations, Ann clearly played an important role in helping build Uma’s language identity, and in eventually socialising her into the community of practice at the IDC (143-146):

Uma: Yeah, but Ann, Ann is first person who helped me. She have a lot of patience to speak with me and she’s very good. And she first person who friends...
Peter: So you became friends as well?
Uma: Yeah, very good and, eh, brilliant!

Uma’s use of the Dublinism “brilliant” to describe her relationship with her tutor shows language identity growth was happening for her. But she still chose a peripheral position regarding other social and linguistic resources at the centre. Over those two years she had only partially participated as she relates here (124-129):

Peter: You worked alone a lot of the time, you worked with one teacher. You didn’t work in the groups in the Centre, did you?
Uma: One person or two, but...
Peter: Small groups
Uma: Yeah, small groups because my English is not very good for bigger group. I have a lot of mistake

Unlike other literacy members who became volunteer tutors, Uma did not feel this level of participation was beneficial to her English identity work or language development. She reveals her view here that these developments can only take place under the close guidance of a “good teacher”
(61-63). Nevertheless, Uma adopted this identity and surrendered precious time which she could have spent learning in her own way.

PETER: And how is the teaching going? Are you enjoying it?
UMA: Yes, yes, but one or two days I’m teaching, but I need... when I’m teaching I, I don’t improve my English. Because with beginners that not, not, eh, enough for me and two days I have good teacher. I learn more

Uma also reveals her reluctance to avail fully of other resources at the Centre. Here, Uma is quite dogmatic about an English only approach to learning at the Centre (161-173). While others among the many Russian speakers at the IDC were taking advantage of the shared resources in their groups, she refuses to participate in this way of accessing the target language, and reprimands those who do:

Uma: A lot of people needs to met people and speak, speak eh English. I’m understand Russian, I’m understand different languages because Balkan languages quite similar
Peter: Slavic languages, yeah
Uma: Slavic, but I speak just English
Peter: Do you think that being in the Centre, you’re talking about other languages like Russian, and you understand Russian. Has that helped you in the Centre because people can translate for you or you can translate for them? Do you think having another language or using another language can help?
Uma: Em, yeah, yes a lot of people speaking Russian, and I have to tell them “Sorry could you stop I need to speak English”, but I understand them speaking
Peter: But sometimes when they’re working together, they translate for each other. If there’s a difficult word in English they don’t understand, but that’s ok
Uma: Yeah

In the end, Uma does recapitulate somewhat by reluctantly admitting that using a second or third language may have some validity. With regard to the purpose and audience for her published story, Uma seems to be confusing my questions (82-88). What is clear is that Uma seems proud of her non-participation and independence in not receiving any “help”.

Peter: When you were writing the story, who were you writing the story for? Who is going to read this story, did you think?
Uma: I write it about me few, few months ago
Peter: Who did you want to read this story?
Uma: I wrote about my life. That’s me. I didn’t help eh...
Peter: No, you did it on your own
Uma: Yeah
Perhaps her years of working one-to-one were not easy to put aside, and her preference for a mother tongue teacher, overrode her desire or ability to participate in our shared literacy practices. Uma goes on to make it clear that she feels that narrating her lived experiences had taught her “nothing special” (101-119). Maybe because of her lack of participation, Uma saw our storytelling practices as a way of functionally responding to questions in the narrative frames, or as a simple exercise in intercultural comparisons between her old and new homes.

Uma: Yes, but I think it’s very important that you have idea about something. Not about your life. You can write about something or somebody and, and story
Peter: What do you think you learned from your story? Or do you think it helped you in any way?
Uma: (pause) em, I got a question and I just give answer
Peter: But when you were finished the story, did you feel you had learned something from doing it?
Uma: Em (pause) nothing special. Because that is very real question about life, about what’s happened in a past
Peter: Do you think it’s good to write about this?
Uma: Yes, like in the real life. We put our country and Ireland and make...
Peter: Comparison?
Uma: Comparison
Peter: Did this help you to understand your position in Ireland?
Uma: Ah, yeah. Yeah, because I need to eh ref...
Peter: Reflect?
Uma: Reflect, yeah, what happened and compare two countries and...
Peter: And did it help you to think or reflect about your life in Ireland?
Uma: Yes, yes! But that book is very good and can help people for now and what was before.

However, towards the end of this segment, Uma does show an appreciation for the reflective aspects of our narrative inquiry. She seems to see the sum of our published stories, or “that book”, as fulfilling a social purpose in the way it can, through reflecting on these narratives of lived experience, help border-crossers take stock of their journeys “for now and what was before”. But, when I press for further insights on the possible social and linguistic backwash for newcomers or other IDC members, Uma refuses to gainsay what these may be (120-124).

Peter: Do you think these stories can help other people, others who come to the centre?
Uma: I don’t know. I didn’t ask those people
Peter: So you don’t know what effect this has on other people?
Uma: No
Overall, Uma accessed the resources at the Centre on her own terms. In part this may be due to gender-mediated positions which constrained any sustained participation, and in part perhaps because of her own views of learning and her background learning styles. Her involvement and approach to our narrative inquiry broadly followed the same lines. Her peripheral position may also be explained by the fact that Uma desired social and linguistic contact primarily with Irish people, or with more expert English speaking members of the IDC. In any case, due perhaps to the long period of social and linguistic isolation she had experienced, as she writes in her published account, Uma craved access to socialisation with “new people”: “I come to the Drop-in because I need to learn English and I want to meet new people and friends.”

**Uma’s Future**

In her “My Year” narrative frame, Uma lists the things she wants to do next year as: “I want to learn to speak English more better and I want to meet new friends, find a job.” The reoccurrence of her desire to meet and make “new” or “more friends” in Uma’s narratives would seem to indicate an abiding sense of isolation in her lived experience in Ireland. Uma repeats this mantra in her published story, and provides a picture of how protracted the border-crossing can be, especially for migrant mothers:

> My life has changed because I came to a new country, a new home, a new language, and new friends. My plans for the future are to speak very good English, to find a job in my profession, and to meet more friends.

For Uma, even after ten years, Ireland is still a “new country”, with all the other novelties she has to accommodate and navigate. When we expand the narrative on her wish to work in her profession, Uma shows that she does not want to waste her hard won degree, but is under no illusion that she may have to settle for “maybe training”: “Yeah, and I have a lot of books form my university I bring from my country here, and I want to work. Just, just, eh, learn English, but as a job, maybe training, something from my profession” (287-288).

In the meantime, Uma reports how she is arming herself for the challenges of entering such a challenging vocational and linguistic environment by using legal genre TV shows to build her professional linguistic identity (289-305):
Peter: So you’d like to work somewhere in your profession, something to do with law or social law?
Uma: Eh I don’t mind, I want to all...
Peter: Any area?
Uma: Yes, except family law. I wrote criminal law, too, but family law
Peter: You want to work in Family law, or not?
Uma: Yes, I want
Peter: You’re very interested in that area
Uma: Yes, very interested. Law is interesting
Peter: Very interesting. Do you watch CSI?
Uma: (chuckles) Yes, when I have time. Jud, Judge...
Peter: Judge Judy?
Uma: Yes, she’s fantastic
Peter: So, you’re listening to a lot of television and a lot of radio?
Uma: Yes, when I have time. Especial Judge Judy because her English is...
Peter: Easy to understand
Uma: Yes, very, but same word like my profession

Reflecting on changes to her ability to socialise in host-community settings, Uma relates how speaking English is now “normal” (174-193). In her reply to my direct question on her English identity development, she replies that “of course” the ‘English Uma” has grown.

Peter: Now outside the Centre, do you speak to more people outside the Centre than before?
Uma: Yes, when I met somebody who speak English, we speak English. That’s normal, or when you speak English you can to met all people and more confident. Confidence is very important, but you haven’t confidence if you don’t speak English
Peter: Yeah, confidence is very important. Do you feel that you have grown, your English, eh, the English Uma? There’s a Bosnian Uma and an English Uma. Do you think your English has grown in the last...
Uma: Of course, of course. When I, when I first time on plane, I don’t understand people who speak English, and people, Irish people. Just I understand say (chuckles) “Hello, Bye, Thank you, Sorry”, just polite magic words. But now I want to speak with them. I want to met people because I want to speak English
Peter: And you want to connect and communicate
Uma: Yeah
Peter: And you want to understand Irish
Uma: Yes, of course. I have, now I have a lot of strange words, but people explain. Example, when I don’t understand, you gave me different explain
Peter: Explanations
Uma: Explanation, yeah. It’s very, very good
Peter: So you feel better about talking to people now?
Uma: Of course
Uma’s hunger for linguistic interaction and socialisation with host-community members has not been diminished in any way by the long struggle to reach this stage in her language identity development. Uma may not have been as agentic as some other literacy group members when it came to participating in the shared literacy practices of our group, or in accessing the wider social and linguistic capital at the IDC in general, but she was just as willing and anxious to access linguistic capital in host-community settings. Across her narratives, when it came to discussing her English identity development, “more” is a word she uses to express her own agentic desire to claim a place at the target language table: “I think I need more conversation. A lot of people told me that my reading and writing very good, and I think so. But I need more conversation with people who speak just English” (72-73). Having seen how her husband’s language identity blossomed through workplace interaction, she goes on to pinpoint her own lack of job socialisation as a key constraint in her protracted journey across the linguistic border, and an important element in the future development of her English language identity (74-77):

Peter: So, native speakers. Irish or English people?
Uma: Yeah, yeah, because I didn’t work in Ireland and I think I need to practice
Peter: You need contact with Irish people
Uma: Yes
Ana’s Story

Hello everybody, Now I am going to tell you about my story: I am originally Vietnam. I am Vietnamese. I am a middle-age woman. I am married and I have two children: one boy and one girl. Both of them are married and had one son from each. So I have two grandsons.

Ana is a bubbly, witty, hardworking, and very intelligent woman in her late fifties sixties. She has an incredible energy and joy de vivre which comes out in her full and entertaining engagement with all around her. In what was the longest published narrative of all the group members by far, she writes about her life before coming to Ireland ten years ago:

I finished leaving certificate in 1975. This year is the last year of the war in Vietnam. The war finished in April 1975. I took my exam in June 1975. Fortunately, I passed my Exam, and got the leaving certificate with high grade (A+). Unfortunately, although I passed the entrance exam into university with a high mark, I could not continue my studies.

After few years I worked with my father for his own business, I got married and worked for a living with some different jobs.

In her “My Story” narrative frame, Ana writes about one of these jobs: “Before I came to Ireland I used to a manicurist in Vietnam”. It is unfortunate that Ana left it until so late in her life before she decided to come to Ireland. Her performance at school, and her curious, insightful, and hardworking nature would have normally singled her out for better things. She does not report why she could not further her education, but we can imagine that the parlous state of social systems in Vietnam at that time may have had some influence. When we talk about her contact with her heritage community in our interview, Ana highlights the age factor as a barrier for “old people like me” (107-118).

PETER: Do you know people who speak English very well from Vietnam?
ANA: Eh the young Vietnamese are very good at English, but the old people like me, not really sure
PETER: Because they never had the opportunity to learn
ANA: Yeah
PETER: So the young people went to school
ANA: Yeah, they’re ok. The old, not really

Later in our talk (484-488), I inquired whether Ana had had any help with her English from her children. Her answer in the negative is similar to other women members. So, while Ana was out fighting for the family in various new social system settings, including educational settings for her grandchildren, her own children are not supporting Ana’s linguistic development. In this way, Ana is linguistically doubly isolated from both the host-community and from within her own clan. The
way the negative answer is coupled with a comment on how her and her daughter had the same starting point on their learning journey may be interpreted and a sense of disillusion for Ana about her isolation.

PETER: Do your son and daughter speak good English, too?
ANA: Yeah their English better than me
PETER: Do they help you with your English?
ANA: No, not really. When I came here I learned English the same class with my daughter Masy, and now she become accountant

Near the end of our talk (497-501), we returned to the topic of filial indifference. Ana’s son had obviously emigrated some years before her arrival in Ireland. Despite Ana’s agentic attempts to speak English with her son, no mean feat when we consider their heritage connection, his response is reported as being quite dismissive. Ana did not ask for help, perhaps because of the perceived fragile nature of her status, or maybe due to her role as nurturer and defender of the family. So, her linguistic double-isolation was already set in place at the start of her border-crossing journey.

PETER: And they didn’t help with your English, but did they sometimes laugh at your English?
ANA: Yeah (laughs). The first year because my son come here before me and I speak English with him and he say “Your English is very terrible!” (chuckles)
PETER: They make fun but they don’t help. Did you ask?
ANA: No, at that time I don’t, no

Perhaps because of her age, Ana does not leave many gaps in her very busy life between nurturing her extended family, part-time jobs, hobbies, and English studies. When Ana tells of not wasting her time in the next segment of her published story, she is not talking about a lot of time.

I live in a house with my husband, my son and my mother-in-law. I did not want to waste my free time, So I went to Crumlin College to learn English when I have time. After few years studying hard, I got FETAC level 5 in English. Just one thing I really enjoy when I have free time: studying English because it is very important for me and very helpful as I live in Ireland the country where most people speak English. Not because I cannot do many things in Ireland, but because of the language barrier, so I cannot do as many things as I want to do.

Ana is in many ways a model learner. She took every opportunity, in her limited schedule, to study English. Often, when I would arrive at the IDC in the morning, she was first there. She could not stay for more than an hour because of her chaotic life, but she always greeted me with a question about English. Ana was way beyond the exit level for the IDC; in fact her questions on grammar and syntax sometimes stumped some volunteer tutors. I couldn’t imagine Ana having any difficulty interacting in host settings, so I asked her what impact this “language barrier” was having on her life (45-59).
ANA: For example, if I am in my country, I can go out at midnight, until midnight, but here I don’t bear to do that
PETER: So you don’t feel confident
ANA: Yeah, because the first thing is the weather, the second thing the language. So I don’t know when and where...
PETER: So you mean that when you meet people, you don’t know what they’re saying?
ANA: Yeah, and I don’t know where I go. Here I just hear somebody say “Go to the pub”, but I don’t drink, so I don’t know where I go
PETER: So you’re not interested in the pub?
ANA: Yeah, so evening I just stay at home. I can’t go outside

Despite her impressive knowledge of the workings of the English language, Ana reports her linguistic isolation and dislocation in her new home. She did not have enough sociocultural knowledge to “know where I go”, and was put off by the inclement weather and could not “bear” to venture out. So her evenings are spent at home when she would much rather be engaging in host-community social arenas. Ana clearly enjoyed studying the language and revelled in new morphosyntactic challenges. Also, the fact that she is also an incredibly social person meant that she craved interaction with host-community English speakers so she could learn more. In the next part of her published narrative, Ana fondly writes of her social life in Vietnam, which was “unlike here” in Ireland.

Unlike here, when I lived in Vietnam I did many different things when I had free time, such as : chatted with friends, went out for a walk, went for a picnic, had many lovely parties with friends, etc........... I could do many things in my free time in Vietnam as I live in Vietnam, I did not have any problem with the language. Language is the most important thing in communicating, so I try my best to make friends with Irish people.

Ana is almost obsessed with learning English. She longs to meet and chat with new Irish friends as she did in Vietnam, and sees the English language as the “most important thing” to achieve her goal. In the following piece of her published story, Ana writes of how she agentically seizes every opportunity to practice her English “when I have a chance”. Like others in our group, Ana used the IDC to offset her sense of social and linguistic dislocation, even if her friends there “unfortunately” were not native speakers.

Frequently, I made friends in English class. Unfortunately, most of them are not native speaker in English, but at least I can practise my English speaking with them in class. Normally, they came to Dublin and have to learn English. That is the best way I made Friends in Dublin. Besides them, I speak English to some Irish people when I have a chance. For example: when I have a parents’ meeting in school, I speak English to Irish parents, I speak English to Irish teachers, and to a volunteer English teacher, etc...
Ana has had little success in interacting with Irish people on level terms. As she writes, most of her linguistic encounters are within social systems such as education. Ana seems to be the main nurturer in the family. As she writes in her published story, she has a chaotically busy daily round. In spite of this, Ana agentically managed to squeeze in a few English language lessons a week at her local community college.

I am very busy every day. Ordinarily, I work hard everyday with my family and I take care of my mother-in-law as well. That is why I just have a little free time, so I went to College in the evening, and I took one course at College, just a part time course, only two morning per week.

Alongside all the other roles Ana plays, she is also filling in for her children by attending meetings at her grandchildren’s’ schools. Ana is a charming interlocutor and a first-rate storyteller. In the following anecdote (57-90), she tells how, frustrated by her lack of contact and friendship with Irish people, she threw herself in at linguistic deep end and joined an all-Irish knitting club. While this bold and agentic move did provide Ana with the host-community contact she so longed for, it was not at all plain linguistic sailing. When I make the supposition here that she must have made a lot of friends, she corrects me with the amusing quip “a lot of listening!”

PETER: You say you try your best to make friends with Irish people, have you made some Irish friends? I mean outside the Centre?
ANA: Yeah, yes, I joined a knitting group in Clondalkin library
PETER: When did you start that?
ANA: Once a week, on Saturday morning
PETER: And when did you start your knitting? When did you start the club?
ANA: Eh, last year
PETER: Could you knit before that?
ANA: A little, but I cannot read the pattern in English. The book in English
PETER: Ok, so there’s a problem with the patterns
ANA: Yeah, and the writing in English. I try to understand and I ask some Irish people and they help me
PETER: They’re helping you?
ANA: Yeah
PETER: In the knitting club there are many Irish people, too
ANA: Only Irish people, except for me (laughs)
PETER: Fantastic! So you’ve a lot of friends there?
ANA: A lot of listening! They knit and speak and they laugh “Ha ha ha!” And when they laugh, I just follow them to laugh, but I don’t know what the meaning
PETER: You don’t always understand it
ANA: yeah
PETER: But do they explain? Do they help sometimes or
ANA: No, sometimes I ask and some they explain. But if I don’t ask, they don’t explain. It’s some joking or something, but I don’t really understand, no
PETER: So at the beginning of the knitting group, it would have been very difficult to understand everything?
ANA: Not, now as well, yeah. A little better, but I just guess the meanings, and not really understand, no
PETER: But you’re happy there? You like it?
ANA: Yes
PETER: And your knitting has improved?
ANA: Yes
PETER: And you’ve made some friends?
ANA: Yes

It is a tribute to Ana’s agency and determination that she has continued to attend this club despite not being able to share in their jokes. She reports that, even after a year at the club, she is having problems “now as well” when I imply that it may have been difficult only at the beginning. However, Ana has found the host-community companionship she had longed for and, even though she is still guessing the meanings, she is growing her English identity by getting help with reading the knitting patterns, and immersing herself in a challenging sociocultural environment.

In her narrative frame “My Story at the Drop-in”, Ana writes about two of the barriers to accessing English and growing her language identity. Again, Ana laments that being a “middle-age woman” is one obstacle, while she reports that nurturing an extended family was another constraint.

Ana’s agency is again evident in this handwritten episode from her story. She goes on to relate how she stole away to the children’s section at the local library whenever she got the chance. Ana was
not afraid to use the librarian as a linguistic resource, though she reports that she still had problems with spoken interaction. Ana had clear, transgressient awareness of where her language problems lay, and of how she needed interactional practice. In the same document, Ana identifies the main constraint on her access to English in host-community settings. Due to mother-tongue interference, and perhaps because of her age, Ana’s pronunciation was challenging for native speakers. Added to this, and probably connected to her pronunciation issues, was the fact that she still had problems understanding Irish speakers of English.

In spite of the fact that going to IILT (Ireland Immigrate Language Training) to learn English, my speaking and listening were still not good enough for the Irish people to understand what I said, because I had a big problem with pronunciation.

In the same story, Ana sums up her lived experience of her spoken interactions with Irish people in this way: “We absolutely didn’t understand each other.” Though she was not in my class, I remember Ana presenting for language training at the official English language provider to refugees, IILT. She had wasted no time in seeking access to the host language almost immediately after arriving in 2003.

When I asked Ana about her contact with her heritage community, and whether other Vietnamese would be interested in attending the IDC (94-106), she reveals how the men are constrained by long anti-social hours, and the women’s access would appear to be gender-culturally mediated.

ANA: They think here very good but the man he work, and the woman he have children. So they cannot come
PETER: But they would like to come
ANA: They would but normally the man they work in Chinese takeaway so they work until midnight
PETER: Oh yeah, bad hours
ANA: So they wake up very late, yeah, in the morning
PETER: they sleep in the morning and they work at night
ANA: Yeah, but the woman they have baby so they cannot come, and normally the lady they cannot drive a car, most of them
PETER: The people you know from Vietnam, do some of them not speak English?
ANA: Yeah, some of them don’t speak

Like some of her compatriots, Ana had a very limited access to the jobs market. Here (284-298) she talks about her job as a deli assistant in a West-Dublin petrol station. Despite her already heavy workload and nurturing duties, Ana spent the only time available, her weekends, working there. The
manager of the shop was Polish, but as she recounts, with some amusement, “I worked with Masy, my daughter. She is my supervisor”. At first, she reports no issues with linguistic interaction in the workplace. But, when I inquire about her understanding of the language of this domain, and her interaction with Irish people, it becomes clear that such interactions were mediated through the cash register so she did not get the opportunity to “speak too much”.

PETER: How did it go with the other people at work? How did you find working there?
ANA: Was ok, yeah
PETER: And language wise?
ANA: Ok, yeah. No problem
PETER: Well you can understand when Irish people come into a deli – they want cheese, they want this
ANA: No, not they order on the computer. And after order I bring the receipt and take the receipt and make the sandwich. And after that I wrap them and put the receipt like that (gestures) in here. And they go to pay in the counter
PETER: At the cash register?
ANA: And not speak too much (chuckles)
PETER: You didn’t have to speak too much
ANA: Yeah, not speak too much, yeah. They order the computer and the receipt come out
PETER: So you weren’t really speaking to people, but you were speaking to the workers?
ANA: Yeah, sometime but not too much.

It would seem that Ana has been given the job which requires the least possibilities of English interaction, and which carries the lowest status. Similarly, Ana reports limited linguistic interactions with her colleagues. This type of linguistic isolation in a host-community setting must have been hard on someone like Ana who yearned for, and thrived on, English socialisation, and who had fought hard to build her English language identity for many years. Ana problems did not end there. In reply to my question as to why she stopped working there, she relates how the recession-fuelled race to the bottom by her employer led to her being offered impossible conditions (308-312):

I stop working there because the economic down, so they say they need me, so before I work eight hour every day. Eight hour on Saturday, eight hour on Sunday, and after that they say they need me to work two hour on Saturday, two hour on Sunday. I said “No, I cannot work like that”. “If you need me on Saturday four hour, I can work for you on Saturday four hour, or on Sunday four hour”, ok

This was the last straw for Ana. She goes on to indignantly explain the consequences of these conditions (314-315): “Two hour! I have to go here and I work two hour and I go back!? And next day I go like that so I earn nothing cos I have to pay for petrol”. The indefatigable Ana did not take long to bounce back from this setback. Almost immediately after this episode, she signed up for a
year-long course to become a care assistant. But, once again, she ran into trouble. After the course, Ana recounts how she got a job in a nursing home, but learned a painful lesson in the process. Though she had mastered some of the vocabulary needed to operate in the unfamiliar social system of working in Ireland, she did not, as she tells me, understand some vital nuances: “I worked there but the thing I learned English like “full time job” and “part time job” and “relief”” (324-325). Ana goes on to relate how her misunderstanding of the term “relief” got her into trouble (326-332). The employer had clearly not explained to her the precarious nature of this type of work before having her sign the contract. So, despite devoting what remained of her free time in her chaotic schedule of nurturing, she found herself sitting at home waiting, often fruitlessly, for work.

Ne, ne, never learn about that but when I have interview I say “at home I stay with my mother-in-law, she’s nearly ninety year old so I have to help her at home as well. So now I can work on Saturday and Sunday Only. Just two day. If you can give me like that I can work.” And after interview they call me go to work, and they give me some contract and sign the contract “relief.” I don’t know “relief”. What does it mean? And they say “Relief just very little work” and I say “Ok.” But some Saturday I’m not work, some Sunday I’m not work. But another day they call me at 7 o’clock “Can you work at eight o’clock?” I say “Yes”, and after that I have to drive into work.

In addition, Ana ran into trouble with the social welfare. As she explains it (337-338): “I signed a contract where I don’t understand, but now I do. And some week I don’t work, but I declare to the government that I work on Saturday and Sunday and they cut me money”.

During her ten years in Ireland, Ana had tirelessly sought to access English language resources at every turn, and in an agentic variety of ways. Despite, as she said earlier in this story, not knowing where to go or what to do to achieve her aim of constructing an English identity which would fulfil her host-community socialisation and vocational needs and desires, she managed to find diverse settings where she could work on her English skills. In the following extract from her “My Story at the Drop-in” narrative, Ana tells how she came to be at the IDC. After many years of doing English language courses wherever she could find them such as at IILT and Crumlin College, and her various attempts to find gainful and dignified employment, plus her agentic forays into a variety of host-community settings, she had “from now on” found a place where she can interact and learn from Irish people.
Ana writes about her contact with the Centre in the next extract of her published narrative. She does not attend on a daily basis, or for whole sessions at the IDC, but she drops in and out whenever she can find time in her busy week.

I have been living in Ireland for ten years. Luckily, I knew the Drop-in-Centre, so I go there when I have free time. I have been coming to the Drop-in-Centre for about four years. It is very important for me to speak English in Ireland. Therefore, I like coming to this centre to practice my English speaking skill. Of course, I can learn other skills of English at this centre as well. I like this place very much as the Irish people who are working there are very helpful. If I have some difficult problem, they will help me immediately. The teachers who work there are very friendly. They always help when I need help.

Besides accessing the linguistic resources at the Centre, Ana also benefits from the advocacy services when she has a “difficult problem”. These problems included dealing with officialdom and red tape in unfamiliar social settings. She gives an insider’s view in the next part of her published narrative of the multifaceted challenges that beset the border crossing learner.

Therefore, I keep in touch with the Irish people and by going to the Centre whenever I can and whenever I need help. Sometimes, I really need their helps i.e. when I needed them to explain a letter from the government that I could not understand exactly what the letter wanted me to do. Moreover, I needed them to correct a formal letter that I wanted to apply to the office i.e. a replied letter that applied to the government while I was waiting to become Irish citizenship. Or a formal letter that applied for a job. I really needed them to correct it before sending it to the manager. In addition, some of them became my reference in my CV (gives two volunteer names) Thanks you for all the help from them.
Ana wrote a prodigious amount of narratives and used these outlets to show her appreciation for the IDC and its volunteers. In the next extract from her handwritten account, she identifies her participation at the informal gatherings at the coffee breaks as one of the highlights at the IDC.

In sum, I like this centre very much. I would like to show my appreciation to them by writing this story. All of them are friendly, helpful. I really enjoyed my time at the Centre because I felt very freely to talk to them in English during coffee times. For me this place is a very good centre to come in order to learn English, because it has perfect parking car just outside the door. If I had been able to sum in one sentence, I would have written to them: I should have met Kay Mulhall in 2003, as this centre had been opened by her when I arrived in Dublin. Once again, it is very grateful if they could know how appreciate I gave to them and thanks again one more time before I stopped writing.

In the same story, Ana again repeats her preference for “break time” learning. She is also transgressively able to identify and reflect on the various skills needed to build her English language identity.

They corrected me at any time when I made mistakes. For example, when writing, when speaking, specially at break time (coffee time) while I was speaking to them. I liked this time as I learned practical English in four skills, speaking, listening, writing, reading.

Ana’s one regret in this affectionate reflection on the IDC is that she had not found this resource earlier. With this one lament, perhaps Ana is thinking of the painful setbacks she suffered, and social and educational blind alleys she had gone down. In the same story, however, Ana is upbeat about her progress, and appreciative of the work the tutors did with her: “I know the Centre about more than four years and my English is improving quickly”. She goes on to return to the issue of age and language learning, reinforcing the idea that this agentic and intelligent woman might have achieved more of what she wished for had she arrived earlier in Ireland:

They were working hard about my English. It’s not my mother tongue so it’s too difficult for me to change my tone. In my opinion, learning a language is not easy except for you learned it when you were a child. In this case, the language that you learned can be consider as your first language. Hence, you don’t have a language barrier. If you were in my shoes, I bet you would have a language barrier become a big problem, I would have met Irish people frequently as possible.

Ana addresses the reader with a direct second-person pronoun in this section. This shift in audience could mean that she is writing also for Irish or native English speakers, who she bets would have similar problems in her shoes. She finishes this segment by repeating the refrain of regret at not having been able to socialise and engage more with Irish people.
Transformations; participation on the periphery

In her published narrative, Ana says she has used her story to give something back to the tutors who she feels have looked after her so well: “The story was written for friends and classmates, and especially for teachers”. She also hints at more socially situated values for her classmates as an audience that can profit from her sharing her lived experiences. In her reflection on our situated practices in the next part of our interview (18-41), she talks more about the functional benefits of our collaborative inquiry. Ana is somewhat of a grammar fiend. In her post-publishing feedback Ana sums up her learning outcomes from our inquiry in this way: “From writing my story I have learned how to write a paragraph”.

As we saw earlier in her story, she loves to challenge herself with new forms of English morphology and syntax. Nevertheless, apart from the lexical learning she outlines here, she seems to be reflecting on how the process of writing her story in a situated way helped her to look beyond the learning of grammar to thinking more deeply about what is being written. She may be implying that she was employing a higher order of meaning making and reflection in her storytelling practice.

PETER: And did you learn from other people in the group?
ANA: Yeah, we learn a lot
PETER: Yeah? What did you learn from them?
ANA: Sometime vocabulary, we learn lots of vocabulary, new
PETER: From the teachers?
ANA: Yeah
PETER: Did you learn anything from the others in the group?
ANA: Yes, yes
PETER: And do you think this is a good way to learn writing and reading?
ANA: Yes
PETER: Why?
ANA: Because when we reading, a lot of vocabulary, new vocabulary, and we have to think about the meaning
PETER: Is writing your story different from writing a grammar exercise? Is it a different way to learn?
ANA: The story, we had to think, but the exercise we just do grammar and don’t think
PETER: So the story makes you think more
ANA: Yeah
PETER: And you have to find the correct words, and the correct sentences?
ANA: Yes, and sometime we had to find a synonym, not write the same words many time in same story
PETER: So you don’t have to repeat the words? That’s why you had to think more about your story
ANA: Yes
Ana did not say very much in her various narratives about the social value of our situated practices, or report directly on the benefits of our storytelling for strengthening her English language identity. This reason Ana gives for practicing her reading and writing skills in her post-publishing feedback frame may give us one clue as to why Ana was participating peripherally: “I want to improve my reading and writing because I want to understand the letter from the government and fill in the form from the government”. In the same frame, she provides another rationale for working more on her literacy skills: “Reading and writing in Ireland helps me a lot in communicating i.e. if the Irish people don’t understand me I will write the word out so they understand me”. So, for Ana, it would appear that it was not apparent how her two principal needs in terms of her literacy were being directly addressed in our storytelling practices. Despite her high level of structural knowledge of the English language, Ana still felt she needed language work in the domains of officialdom; hardly surprising considering her “relief” contract episode. Also, she was clearly still experiencing pronunciation issues in her spoken interactions and needed to use writing to repair communication breakdowns with other speakers of English.

Nevertheless, Ana did report some appreciation of the social and knowledge-sharing of our collaborative storytelling practices. In her feedback frame she writes: I liked meeting people practicing speaking English. In the same frame, Ana reflects on her learning outcomes from our inquiry by writing: “I have learned alots from doing this activity”. Beneath this statement she lists in bullet points some examples of what she has learned: “learn vocabularies, grammar, idioms, practical English, formal, informal English, funny words, laughing a lots”. Again, Ana’s focus is largely on the functional aspects of literacy, but the inclusion of the last two items would suggest that she also saw the interactional and socialisational outcomes as worthy of note.

When I asked Ana about how much of her identities she shared with other members of the IDC (140-151), she displayed some ambivalence. She sees the Centre in clear-cut terms as a learning resource. So, Ana is participating and not participating according to the needs of her chaotic life.

PETER: Do you talk to about your life outside the Centre? Do you tell them about your life outside?
ANA: No, not really
PETER: Not too much. So it’s kind of private?
ANA: Yeah
PETER: So you have the Ana who is in the Centre, and the Ana outside and you don’t really mix them up
In reply to the hypothetical question from another IDC member “Who are you/” (136-137), she underlines the singularity of the identity she wants to perform, and her reason for attending in this straightforward utterance: “I say maybe I am... I am... a English learner. I come here for learning English, and practicing my English, if I have free time”.

Because of her busy schedule of caring and nurturing, Ana popped in and out of the literacy group for short amounts of time, and could not fully participate in our community of practice. She often worked alone, producing an inordinate amount of writing in short, diligent bursts; she is one of the few members to fully complete the extensive “Our Stories at the Drop-in” narrative frame. When she did join, however, she did participate and share her much more expert knowledge with less able members of the group. However, Ana did participate more fully in other ways. Like other members of our literacy group, Ana had been encouraged by the Centre manager to share her learning by tutoring at the IDC. I asked her what this experience was like for her (158-171). Ana was clearly finding this new identity hard going, and found the time constrained nature of ‘guerrilla teaching’ challenging.

In some ways, the Centre has no more to offer Ana in terms of English language learning; she reports that her new status as a teacher is only pushing her English identity “a little”. While Ana’s case seems to be one of alternating patterns of participation and peripheral positioning both at the IDC as a whole and in our narrative inquiry in particular, she displays no such ambivalence when it comes to
her contribution to our storytelling project in terms of written input. As I said earlier, Ana completed the full narrative frame “Our Stories at the Drop-in Centre”, and, using the question and answer format in this document, co-compiled it with her sister, who was also an IDC member. In the following section of her frame, the questions Ana is forming may say more about her own lived experience and language identity than those of her interlocutor.

Elsewhere in her stories, Ana has talked about how she has used the Drop-in for advocacy (question 2), and she has also received work and citizenship references from tutors at the IDC (question 7). So, Ana seems to be actively using this frame both to document and share her lived experiences, and to reflect on and make more meaning and sense of her border-crossing journey. Towards the end of our talk (398-403), I asked Ana what were the most important things she had learned at the Centre.

ANA: In general it’s culture, different culture. Learn a lot, yeah
PETER: So you’ve learned about the other cultures. And was that good, positive?
ANA: Yeah, that’s very good, yeah. So we know, yeah
PETER: You understand different parts of the world
ANA: Yeah

Ana’s intercultural response would seem to indicate that she has been focussing on and appreciating aspects other than the functional learning of English language structures and features at the IDC. Her participation at the ICD and in our literacy group, though restricted by what appear to be gender-mediated constraints which result in sporadic attendance, has meant she has been able and willing to access the social and linguistic resources at the Centre to the best of her limited capacity.
Ana’s Future

The next extract from the the end of her published story, Ana again prioritises growing her English language skills “nonstop”. She places this at the start of a causal chain which will eventually lead to her being able to finally visit her old country. I would submit that Ana’s struggle to gain access to dignified and gainful employment is not directly linked to her language ability. I have seen many learners with far less language ability find work, even in the prevailing distressed job market. Though she need to work on her pronunciation, the episodes about work and gender-mediated restricted access to language learning which she has recounted seem to indicate that issues of imposed positioning and exploitation, rather than her inability to interact in host-community settings. Ana signs off on her story with a simple but significant declaration of narrative ownership.

Last but not least, I am going to plan for my future. My plans for my future are: I have to learn English nonstop and have to improve my English everyday. As you know, the more I learn English, the better I get. I would like to learn something in College and maybe after that I can get a good job. When I have I got job I can save some money for holiday to Vietnam due to I have been living in Dublin for ten years, but I did not have one holiday back to my country to visit all my relatives and all good friends who have been waiting for me for ten years as well. This is my story.

I would also argue that, in Ana’s case, gender and culturally-mediated constraints have impacted in the long term on her access to social and linguistic resources in the variety of settings, both formal and naturalistic, which she has agentically attempted to engage with. When we discuss what has changed in her life outside the IDC as a result of attending the Centre (256-266), she reports progress, but the settings are either not specified or the example she provides is of short little shopping chats of “maybe five minutes”.

ANA: Yeah, because when I come here my English is better, so I go out and I speak, they understand me easier. Better than before
PETER: So it has changed your life
ANA: Yeah
PETER: In what ways has this changed your daily life outside the Centre and outside your home?
ANA: Maybe I go to the shops and see you people and say hello, and stop and maybe speak to them maybe five minutes, ten minutes and after that stop and say “Bye, bye” and go. It’s a lot better than before
PETER: So it has changed?
ANA: Yeah
As she reports in our talk (196-204), some things have not changed for Ana. Though she says that she is not as culturally constrained as other Vietnamese women she knows, she is still struggling with official English on a regular basis, and, as she has told us, she deals with this conflict on behalf of other family members. She is also experiencing the tension of trying to balance her own needs with those of the relatives she is nurturing and helping.

PETER; What has changed for you? Your ideas, your thinking?
ANA: I think I have to go outside the house. I don’t stay in the house because most of Vietnamese lady have to stay in the home. Do the housework, but I’m not...
PETER: You want to change. Is that important for you?
ANA: Yes, this is good for me because, if I have to go to see doctor, I have to speak English. And sometime they ask me I have to fill the form, I have to. So I have to go out to study English. And I have to go out to learn how to drive a car well
PETER: So you do it to survive?
ANA: Yeah, I have to

Ana told me how she had to learn to drive unaided either by family members or lessons. She recounted how she had to do her driving test several times and added: “Yeah but I just try, only me nobody help me” (448). Now that she can drive, she writes elsewhere of driving members of her extended family to various appointments and on outings.

In this part of her story, near the end of her published narrative, Ana lists just some of the challenges and milestones on her border-crossing journey. As we know from her various stories so far, there is quite a lot she has left out.

Hence, my life has changed because I have to spend my time learning English, to learn how to drive a car, learn how to cook frozen food and I have to speak English all the time when meeting Irish people even though my English is not good enough.

What Ana has not included here is the endless struggle she is experiencing trying to balance the needs of her extended family with her own desire to progress in that which she has stated over and over again as her own number one priority; her English language development. She continues to sacrifice this for the needs of others, while at the same time dealing with conflicts in challenging settings such as officialdom. I would say that Ana is being modest about here English language not being “good enough” here. Even with the time and energy constraints to her access and participation in our literacy practices imposed by her nurturing role, Ana was a formidable contributor to our storytelling inquiry. It may be, as she seems to think, a little too late for Ana to gain the access to the social, educational, and vocational capital she so badly needs and desires, but
the formidable force that she has shown in the face of the many conflicts and barriers she has encountered is undiminished; we may be sure that she will continue to fight her corner.
Nika’s Story

Nika is a Ukrainian national in her late twenties who came to Ireland in mid 2013. Nika comes across as an easy-going, bright, communicative person with a ready smile and positive outlook on life. As she writes in her introduction to her published story, she has been busy in her home country, and is educated to degree level:

I am originally from Ukraine. I studied at the University in the Faculty of Philosophy, doing Cultural studies. I worked in the many places in Ukraine from the age of seventeen. And my last job was at a pharmaceutical call centre.

Nika lives in Tallaght with her husband, who has been in Ireland for quite some time. Like Jane, this was initially a cyber courtship. When I asked her in our talk why she had decided to come to Ireland (58-79), and how she had met her husband, Nika hesitates and laughs, perhaps at a perceived unconventional mode of their first encounter.

NIKA: eh, actually it was not really only mine decision cos my husband lives here, and it was like necessary to live in Ireland together because he was here for ten years and eh...
PETER: So he was here before you?
NIKA: Yeah, he was here yeah
PETER: And did you, you met, where did you meet him first?
NIKA: Eh, I meet him in the..., we meet in the internet (chuckles)
PETER: You met on the internet and became friends on the internet?
NIKA: Yeah, and he came to the Ukraine, and after that he came again and again, and after that I came to Ireland
PETER: That’s very romantic
NIKA: Yeah, it is
PETER: So he was working here, living here for ten years?
NIKA: Yeah
PETER: So did you know about his origins
NIKA: Yeah, his original town is Riga, is Latvia
PETER: So he’s a different nationality from you?
NIKA: Yeah, he’s Russian, He lived in Latvia, he was born in Latvia, but he’s Russian
PETER: So you moved to a different country with a man from a different country?
NIKA: Yeah (laughs), it’s not so different, cos I can speak Russian, actually I always speak, spoke Russian. So we have eh ... we have more...
PETER: Similarities?
NIKA: Yeah, similarities

Again, Like Jane, Nika felt that it was “necessary” for her to leave home and start afresh because the man was settled and probably comfortably integrated after ten years in Ireland. When I jokingly refer to the two borders that Nika had to cross here, relational (new man, husband), and national, she prioritises the relationship with her husband, their shared language, and their similarities
without referring to the other crossing. Unlike Jane, however, crossings were not new to Nika. She provides a strong illustration of her attitude and ability to cross borders in our interview. In response to a question about her identity (101-110), she provides a transnational answer:

PETER: Yeah, and if they ask about your identity, what do you tell them?
NIKA: You mean I am Ukrainian or...
PETER: Yeah, or social...
NIKA: Ah! Yeah. I think that I’m cosmopolit...
PETER: Cosmopolitan?
NIKA: Yeah, a citizen of the world
PETER: So you don’t belong in one place?
NIKA: A citizen eh, because I like in other countries where I’ve been
PETER: So you’ve travelled?
NIKA: Yeah, a little bit, yeah. I was in Moscow, I was in Paris, in Germany, in Bulgaria

So, Nika is a world citizen who self-identifies as “cosmopolitan”. She “like in other countries”, and has embraced the changes and the differences she has encountered on her travels. In her narrative frame “My story at the Drop-in”, she completes the “About me” section in this way: “I like meet new people, communication, travelling, be with my family, shopping”. Because she was born in the Crimea, Nika’s first language is Russian, but she writes in her published account of how she seems to be able to slip between languages without too much effort, and as the situation requires:

My mother tongue is Russian, but I can speak Ukrainian also. In my family I speak Russian, the same as with my friends, but some of them are English speaking, thus I speak English as well. Sometimes I speak Ukrainian for the same reason.

In the same story, Nika seems at home in Ireland. She is among the few newcomers I have met who have wholly taken to the changeable Irish climate. Even at this early stage of her crossing, one gets the impression that Nika is agentically equipped to connect further with her new home.

I like people in Dublin. Most of them are friendly and easy-going. Another thing that I like about Ireland and specifically in Dublin, is the weather. Yes it sounds strange, but it’s true. I like the sun and cold at the same time. And I like rain. I like when weather is changes fast. It means if it rains, so it could be not too long. I like Dublin’s streets with so many buses and old houses, Dublin Castle, city center, Trinity College, St. Patrick Cathedral. There are no things yet I don’t like about living in Ireland.

In the following extract from her published story, Nika again reveals her agentic capacity for future action by not identifying as unemployed, but instead seeing this as a transient situation “at present”; she can see a future Nika already working. Her choice of the Irish writer Ahearn as her preferred read, and her palpable anticipation at the prospect of reading in the original (the smiley is Nika’s),
seems to indicate that Nika’s English language identity, and her transgredient awareness of this, is already in transformation.

I have some free time, because I don’t work at the present. I have a hobby, so I have a little free time. I like to knit, sew, and make handmade toys. I like reading. One of my favorite writers is Cecilia Ahern. I have read many books time ago. And now I will read some of her book in original language. Can’t wait 😊

Nika reiterates her positive attitude and experience of living in Ireland in our talk (139-144). Attending the Centre appears to have improved both her intercultural knowledge and awareness of the host culture. Though she did not foresee staying in Ireland, she feels “really lucky” to be exploring this “new world”.

PETER: Has coming to the Centre changed the way you think about Ireland?
NIKA: Eh, I think maybe a little bit in a good side. Some time ago I didn’t know anything about Ireland. I mean, Dublin is capital and it’s neighbours of UK, but I have never think that I could live here, yeah. That’s why everything is new for me. It’s like a new world, and I like it, I enjoy it. People which I met is, are very good. Maybe I have not met so much, not many people but ... I think that I really lucky that I live here.

For the moment, Jane’s writes in her published story how her social network is mostly limited to friends she has made at the Centre, and the ones she inherited from her husband. But again she implies transience in this scenario by indicating that “living here for a short period of time” is the sole reason for her lack of socialisation and social networks in host settings.

I have met new people who became friends of mine. But still I don’t have a close friend as I have only been living here a short period of time. Irish people whom I know are from the Drop In Center, and some are friends of my husband.

Nika is clearly one of life’s participators. She seems to revel in the new, and even though she is aware that her experience of people outside the Centre is limited, she is agentic in her approach to the people she has met, and is positioned to access, to the fullest extent, the social and linguistic resources the IDC has to offer.

**Nika at the Drop-in**

Nika wasted little time in locating, attending, and accessing the resources at the IDC. In the next piece from her published account, Nika writes of how she is not coming to the Centre only for linguistically functional reasons, but, like Hanna, she identifies the whole social package of resources
at the IDC as a means of gaining access to resources in wider sociocultural settings in the host community.

I have been living in Ireland for 5 months. I have been coming to the Drop-in Centre for 3 months. I like it very much, because it is a good opportunity to meet new friends, improve English skills, communicate with people, integrate and feel more confident and comfortable in a country where I haven’t lived before.

In the next section from our talk (82-94), Nika paints a stark picture of what the very early stages of border crossing is like for people like her. She relates how it is not just about being “scared to speak”, but it is also about sociocultural knowledge where newcomers “know nothing and nobody”. In contrast, she relates how she believes that the shared purposes and positions of “people like you” in the community of practice of the IDC can help build language more “confident” language identities, and foster these members’ participation and orientation in settings beyond the walls of the Centre. Nika’s choice of the metaphor “oasis” shows how far into this community of practice she has travelled, but it is also apt in that an oasis does not only represent a safe haven, it is also a stopping off space for these border crossers; exactly the intra-community bridging function IDC was set up to carry out.

PETER: Now, how would you see the Centre? How would you describe the group in the Centre?
NIKA: I see it a like a bright, a bright place where I can come and feel comfortable, feel confident. Confident, and I can just communicate with people. It’s like eh, some kind... some kind of oasis, I don’t know...
PETER: Oasis is a good way to describe it
NIKA: Yeah, when you... when you come to another country and you don’t know nothing and nobody. And you need to do something, to go to the city centre, to go to ... streets, yeah. And you don’t know, you scared to speak to somebody. And when you come here, yeah, you can, you don’t shy and...
PETER: Feel confident?
NIKA: Yeah, confident, but when you come here, you feel confident cos you see so many people like you. And eh teachers who is, who are very eh ... kind to students, yeah, and helpful, helpful, yeah

As with other participants in this study, I was interesting in finding out what Nika’s heritage group thought of her membership at the Centre. Nika is characteristically upbeat and positive about her IDC experience. Among the new friends she has made, she mentions Rafal and Hanna. This grouping,
with their socialisation outside the IDC, served as a bridge between the Centre and a fuller participation in host community settings.

PETER: What do people of your community think of your going to the Centre?
NIKA: Eh, they happy for me cos it’s a good opportunity to integrate, eh, so new to Ireland. And it’s a good opportunity to find new friends. Actually, I founded (names four friends she met in the Centre). Yeah, I’m very happy that I’m here and they happy for me. Too, yeah

Nika’s Transformations; identity building in her community of practice

Members of our storytelling group had different reasons for wishing to improve their literacy skills. Like Hanna, Nika speaks (1-5) about her ambitions to progress to further education in Ireland.

NIKA: I want to improve my reading and writing skills because I want to get a good job and to go to the college and, eh, university, and, eh, for my usual life to be more confident. Cos I need to ... to know how to write some words and when I need to, to watch in translator, I need to know how to write it

Also similar to Hanna, and she wanted to enjoy reading for leisure: “I think another situation is reading books. “When I read books, and I don’t know some words, not everything just some words, and, eh, I can’t enjoy fully” (20-21). But Nika also shared a literacy problem with other group members. Here (11-18), she talks about her problems with form filling in an unfamiliar social systems, but reflects on how she used her agency to take ownership of this problem by practicing and learning the new jargon of officialdom.

NIKA: Yeah, I think at first. Yeah, maybe I had a problem and then I came here. Because my English is not perfect, and when, when I ... need in the past? When I needed to fill some forms or read some documents at first some things I didn’t understand, yeah
PETER: So the situation’s that it’s a problem in are official forms?
NIKA: Yeah, official forms, yeah. But, eh, then I did it many times and I know new words and I know how to do it so...
PETER: So practicing you became better at it
NIKA: Yeah practicing

Nika is shows an ability here to log and reflect on her growing English language identity. Lso, in her narrative frame “My Story at the Drop-in Centre”, she completes the sentence “I like the Drop-in Centre because...” with: “I can understand and speak English better than I did it earlier”. Again in her published account she reports that her English “is getting better since I came to the Drop-in Centre”. Nika was reaping the benefits of her sustained, agentic participation, and was evolving her English identity to the extent that, like Hanna, she became a volunteer tutor at the Centre. In a
similar way to Hanna, teaching for the first time, a practice which challenged even our native volunteers, did not faze Nika. She reveals, somewhat characteristically, in our talk (172-188) how she found this challenge enjoyable and “exciting”. Nika also shows her awareness of how this remarkable participation was helping her to “learn myself”, and forge a stronger English identity as a result of occupying the identity position of teacher with such ease.

NIKA: It was like something new, yeah, something exciting, yeah. Can I say exciting?
PETER: Yes
NIKA: Exciting, yeah! I like it and people listen to me and I can explain in another way. I was, eh, wondered that I can do, cos I thought that I’m not so good in English, but when I speak about some topic and I know something about it, I learn myself, too. Not only another people, another group, so it’s a good opportunity for me to improve not only my speaking skills, my English, and to help another people to learn English, yeah. It’s very good
PETER: You enjoyed that
NIKA: Yeah, very enjoy, yeah.
PETER: You are a good teacher. Do you think that coming from another country yourself, that helped you to teach here?
NIKA: (sotto voce) I’m sorry...
PETER: Because you made that journey, in a way you can understand?
NIKA: Yeah, eh it helps of course cos eh when you teaching other people, yeah? And you see yourself in that people, yeah and...
PETER: So you can understand them and their problems better?
NIKA: Yeah, of course. It’s like you in the past, but maybe sometimes in the present

In such a short time, Nika has earned full membership of the IDC community of practice, and, due to her participation levels, became quite an expert member of this group. From this expert position, she is able to use her hindsight of being a novice, and her insights from her cross border journey to “see yourself in that people” both in the “past” and “sometimes in the present”. Nika also refers to this recognition of shared experience and purpose in her “Our Stories” frame: “I find other stories of others in the group interesting and in some cases it is similar with mine.”

In her pre-interview feedback frame on who she thinks the readers of her story would be (Nika, “Our Story Questions’), Nika identifies the social target and function of our published inquiry: “I think the audience of my story is people like me, people who came to Ireland and want to integrate.” Nika’s reflections on the purposes and audience for her published story during our talk (30-36) show how alive she is to the possible social impact of her storytelling both within our community of practice and in the wider border-crossing group. She clearly sees how this literacy practice has the potential to socialise members of the border crossing to “communicate with Irish people” and “with another migrants”. Nika’s is relating how her participation in the common interests of her immediate
community of practice can orient other members to their new worlds by making “steps to new life” “in a new country”. In this way, Nika would appear to be using her own identity transformation to help inform, shape, and change the lived experience of local and wider border-crosser’s communities of practice.

NIKA: I wrote it for people like me who came to Ireland and who want to integrate, who want to be a part of this country. And I think that’s eh ... a good example. I think so (chuckles), maybe not. I think it’s a good example how to make, eh, steps to new life, to new life in new country where you have never, have never been

PETER: So you were thinking of other people who were making the same journey as you?
NIKA: Yeah, and who maybe scared to go to the city and maybe to communicate with Irish people, to communicate with another immigrants, yeah

During our interview (37-42), Nika reflects on the benefits of collaborative storytelling. In response to my question “What did you like about writing this story?”, she shows her awareness and appreciation of how her participation in our situated literacy practices fostered her engagement in meaningful learning through social interaction with her peers. This was, in her opinion, “the best part”.

NIKA: I think the most what I liked was working with people in group, and ask them some question about their stories, yeah, and share my story. It was the best part, I think so. And, eh, when I saw the story finished, it was like amazing feelings, yeah

PETER: So you felt good when you saw the story on paper?
NIKA: Yeah

Nika’s unprompted segue from her reflections on the shared endeavours in our group to her impressions of publication may be interpreted as a reinforcement of her positive perception of the link between our collaborative practices and the published outcome. In response to my question: “Do you think this is a good way to learn reading and writing, this way?”, Nika provides an insight into how she was participating in the shared practices of our group (51-55). Nika’s relates how her knowledge-sharing participation with classmates and teacher, fuelled by her agency, enabled improvement on a linguistically functional level, while fostering transformations in her English language identity. She appears to achieve elevated levels of transgression in her comment: “And you improve, you write your story and you know about you, yeah?” What Nika seems to be portraying here, when she concludes that “you can improve it cos it’s interesting to share your story with another people”, is a mutually modulating practice which has resulted in identities being changed and changing in acts of dynamic subjective and growing participation in our community of practice.
NIKA: Yeah, I think it’s a good way cos you can ask your, your classmate, yeah. And you can ask a teacher, if you don’t know something. And you improve, you write your story and you know about you, yeah? Everything and when you know some new words, you associate this with your language words. And you can improve it cos it’s interesting to share your story with another people

Overall, Nika’s agentic participation ensured that not only was she was able to fully access the social and linguistic resources available at the Centre, but also, through her own contributions to the community of practice at the IDC, she was shaping and driving this community through shared and situated practices. Nika used the force of her own evolving language identity to engage with and help others in her group to transform theirs. Nika’s social and linguistic identities were certainly in transformation prior to her joining the IDC or participating in our narrative practices. After the publication of our stories, the Centre’s manager confided that she feared losing Nika as a volunteer as she was busy looking for paid employment. This was a woman who was not standing still and more transformations were guaranteed for her into the future.

Nika’s Future

Towards the end of her published story, Nika sums up where she is at in terms of her personal development. Here she paints a vivid picture of her identity evolution as it is mediated through English. She is acutely aware of how “another culture, language has made changes inside me”, and is conscious of her development as a work in progress.

My life has changed because I have moved to a country where I have never been before, even as a tourist. Another culture, language has made changes inside me. It means that I’m looking more widely at the world and know much more about life. I’m developing through the information which I get in English, which is not my native, this promotes my development.

When Nika writes about her future in her published narrative, she avoids the lighter modal verbs such as hope and would like, opting instead for the more agentic “I plan”: “My plans for the future are to make my family bigger 😊, and study 😊d perfect my English. Also I plan to get a good job.” Again, the smiley is hers, and her priorities could not be clearer. In her “My Story” narrative frame, Nika writes how she not only wants to have her cake and eat it by going to work and college, but also how she wants to share it by continuing to participate at the IDC.
In the future I would like to go to college and have a work at the same time. And I want to come to the Drop-in Centre at the same time, even if it will be only once a week. I like Drop-in Centre very much.

Nika’s priorities surfaced again during our talk (24-28). When I asked her how improving her literacy skills would help her in her future in Ireland, once more she has a clear vision of her possible future, and the path she needs to assume this identity

PETER: How will improving your reading and writing help you in your future in Ireland?
NIKA: I think it helps me to go to college, to pass the tests, IELTS test, yeah, I hope so. That’s why I need to read and write, to be more confident in my English
PETER: It’s for work and study you need it mostly
NIKA: Yeah, yeah

In reply to my inquiry as to how attending the Centre had affected on her life outside (162-166), Nika was able to identify the impact of her identity transformation and social participation in other settings. Nika is no longer “scared”, a word she used several times during our talk, and clearly feels more worthy of being listened to. Also, the Centre manager’s fears were not unfounded. Nika had found a good and well-paid job at Google. That Nika was able to claim this competitive position, which required strong interpersonal and communication skills, is another endorsement of her agency and rapidly evolving social and linguistic identities.

PETER: Has coming to the Centre changed anything in your life outside?
NIKA: Yeah, it eh, it improved it cos eh... I became more confident, and I can speak. I’m not scared to speak to Irish people and somebody on the street. Actually, Drop-in Centre helped me to find, helped me to find a job, like, to have good references, yeah. And when I tell that I visit, I attend this Intercultural Centre... they ask, they say “Oh, that’s very good”, like an advantage

I would finish Nika’s story by maintaining that her’s is a textbook case of the power of participation in various communities of practice. I cannot claim that our social practices at the IDC were the root cause of any social or linguistic transformations which Nika was obviously undergoing; these transformations were in progress some time before this part of Nika’s story began. However, through these practices and her reflection on our collaborative storytelling, I would say that Nika was able to give valuable insights into the cross border journey of an agentic woman in the process of a rapid identity evolution and, through an elevated mode of transgression, share an insider’s view of this brief stage of her border-crossing experience.
**Majeed’s Story**

Majeed is a nineteen year-old Afghani man who had been in Ireland for two years at the time of this inquiry. He came to Ireland as part of a family reunification process along with his father’s mother. His father Amin, who is also a participant in this study, came to Ireland and was granted asylum in 2004 and, after seven years he was finally reunited with his son and mother in Ireland. Majeed is an easy-going and earnest young man with a ready smile who makes friends easily. In the first part of his published narrative, Majeed relates how his education was interrupted and, as a result, he left school without any qualifications.

I am originally from Afghanistan. My studies were not finished when I went to school in my country. I can not work in Ireland because I need to study English in Ireland and then look for job. I speak Farsi and little bit of English. I speak Farsi with my family and with my friends I speak English and Farsi. I have been in Ireland for 2 years. I have been in the Drop-in Centre for about one year. I came to the Drop-in Centre to learn English. I live in Knocklyon with my father’s friend so as to practice speaking and improve my English.

Majeed’s Father arranged for him to live with an Irish friend in order for him to be socioculturally orientated more quickly in the host community. During my talk with Amin, he told me how he lost his wife many years before. I asked how he thought his son was getting on in Ireland (Amin, 307-313). Amin sacrificed proximity with his son so that Majeed “can solve his own problem”, and is bravely fulfilling a bridging role in helping his son along his border-crossing journey.

PETER: How’s he doing?

AMIN: I think he’s doing great, yeah. He improved his English a lot

PETER: And he’s happy?

AMIN: He’s happy. Yeah. Like I know he can manage himself now. You know, if he goes somewhere he can talk. He can solve his own problem

PETER: That’s great. That’s what you wanted

AMIN: Yeah

This linguistic fostering of his son seems to have borne fruit for Majeed. Amin is happy in the knowledge of his son’s independence and ability to interact in English in host community settings. As he recounts in our talk (49-61), Majeed is very happy with his live-in teacher. In his narrative frame “My Life Story”, Majeed explains the reason for his Irish ‘fostering’: “I live in Tallaght with my father’s friend because to practice speaking and improve my English.” Majeed had arrived in Ireland with little or no English and this arrangement where his father’s friend “speak a lot” appeared to be speeding up the process of his English identity work. Majeed is also pleased with the few Irish phrases he has picked up, and which he pronounces correctly.
PETER: You said in your story you are staying with a friend in Tallaght, is it?
MAJEED: Yeah, yeah, he’s my father’s friend
PETER: Where is he from?
MAJEED: He’s Irish
PETER: Do you practice English with him?
MAJEED: Yeah, yeah, he is speak a lot (chuckles) everyday. He really help to learn something. When I’m not understand something, he told me, explain a lot
PETER: He doesn’t speak your language, does he?
MAJEED: No, no, English and little bit Irish
PETER: Did you learn any Irish?
MAJEED: Yeah, only “Conas a ta tu?” and “Ta me go maith”
PETER: Very nice, so you are learning two languages!
MAJEED: (chuckles) Yeah

Majeed does not report any major experience of dislocation in his stories. In his published narrative, Majeed describes his contentment in his new home. His comment on the peace he has found in Ireland may intimate a contrast with the chaos he has left behind in his old country. “I like in Dublin because it is very green, clean, with friendly people, and also there is peace.” However, in his published story he talks about how he “always” met his many Afghani friends. This adverb of frequency and his use of the present tense “have” at the end of this segment would seem to indicate some sense of separation and longing in his lived experience.

My social life in Dublin is visiting my family, playing football with friends, walking, watching T.V. and taking about something. My social life in my Country was I lived with my family and always met my friends to play volleyball, Cards etc. Actually, I have a lot of friends in my country.

Majeed has been hard at work building up his social network at the IDC. When he writes in his published story about his friendships in Ireland, nearly all the people he name checks are from the Centre, among them many from his literacy group: “I have made many friends in Dublin for example Hakim, Taai, Framoz, Alma, Hanna, Nika, Lena. In his reflection during our talk on the extract about his socialisation above (86-97), he seems happy with the “every” of his multicultural social network. But like his friend Hakim (see Hakim’s story), his network is limited to a large extent to his fellow IDC members. He hangs out in the Square shopping centre with his best friend trying to make contact with Irish people, but, unlike Hakim, he ventures into a social domain which can be frowned upon in his heritage culture: the Irish pub. In fact he hesitates before mentioning this location, and prefaces this comment with a hedged “sometimes”, before finishing with what could be a
Majeed talks and writes a lot about the importance of his English language development in all his narratives, with words like read, speak, and write appearing more than in the stories of other group members. He is agentically grasping the opportunity to access linguistic resources with both hands both at the IDC and outside. The following two extracts from his published account illustrate how he is revelling in his second chance.

I have some free time in the afternoon but I haven’t any free time in the morning because I’m going to English classes. Things I can do in Dublin speaking, reading and writing a little bit of English - I couldn’t do that in my country. My life has changed and I’m very happy because I’m speaking, reading, writing a little bit English and I have seen a lot of different people.

With his friend Hakim, he comes to the IDC every morning and has no “free time” for anything else. He is able to recognise some evolution in his English language identity. The positive changes in his lived experience, and his social interactions with a “lot of different people”, has clearly has made him “very happy”.

**Majeed at the Drop-in**

Near the end of our talk (253-261) I asked Majeed about his contact with the Afghani community in Dublin. His reply indicates a dislocation from his heritage group in Ireland, but he appears to see his immersion in his culturally “different” social network at the IDC as a counterbalance to this isolation.

MAJEED: I don’t see where is the community in Afghani people
Majeed is fixed on his coursed and fiercely determined to build his English language skill base. When I ask him about visiting Afghanistan in the future during our talk (35-37), Majeed displays an agentic resoluteness in his desire to succeed in his studies.

PETER: Do you want to go this year?
MAJEED: No, I want to first improve my English
PETER: You want to study?
MAJEED: Yeah

Majeed is not looking back at his heritage community both in Ireland and in his homeland, but looking forward to building a new life here in Ireland. In a similar determined vein, the reasons Majeed supplies for wanting to grow his literacy skills are delivered with the agentically urgent modal verbs “must” and “have to” in his pre-interview feedback “Our Stories Questions” frame: “I have to read a lot of books to improve reading and I must write a lot to improve writing.” Majeed knows he “must write a lot” to develop his language skills thus showing his awareness of the application needed to build his English literacy identity.

My Life Story extract - Majeed

Again, in the above extract from Majeed’s “My Life Story” narrative frame, he uses the strong modals “want” and “need” to display his focus and desire to succeed in this endeavour.

Majeed reflects positively on the collaborative social practice of shared storytelling in his post-publishing feedback frame “Our Questions”, but he is not fully satisfied with the results. : “I really enjoyed that when I was writed my story with my friends and teachers but I don’t like my story because it is very short.” I imagined that many of my participants did not include lived experiences
of their countries of origin in their stories because it might be painful to do so. But in our talk, when I tried to expand Majeed’s story by asking what he had left out, he laments not being able to tell about his family and friends in Afghanistan. For low-level literacy learners like Majeed (209-221), the effort of putting years of lived experience of “memories in my country” was hampered by his lack of the literacy wherewithal to do this. Majeed was also frustrated that he could not write more about the “good things” in Ireland.

PETER: You said to me your story was short. You’re not happy with your story.
MAJEED: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: What would you put, what other stories would you tell if you were writing more?
MAJEED: I have a lot of memory in my country, but I can’t more writing correct
PETER: So memories from your country for a start?
MAJEED: Yeah, and here
PETER: So what things would you write about from your country?
MAJEED: Eh... about my friends, my family ... some people
PETER: And about Ireland, what would you write?
MAJEED: About Ireland there’s... good things!
PETER: For example?
MAJEED: Eh... (long pause) eh, example... there’s so friendly people I write here. More about Irish people I want to write

Majeed had worked as hard as anyone in the group on his story, and had to do numerous redrafts due to his low level of literacy. As he writes in his “My Year” frame, help was at hand in the familiar form of a more expert member of the group, Hanna. “People who have helped me – are the teachers of the Drop-in Center and Hanna”. Majeed was so busy honing his own story that he did not share or co-perform his lived experience as much as other members. However, in our talk (72-85), he expresses his appreciation of group-centred social practice and “enjoy with other people”, and the “nice people to help me”. Majeed’s lesser participation in the knowledge-sharing aspects of our project, and the “little bit” he picked up from other cultures, was perhaps due to his perfectionist approach to his own literacy work, which he reveals in his desire for making “correct sentences. To read correct, writing correct”.

PETER: What did you enjoy about writing the story?
MAJEED: Eh, I like to make the correct sentences. To read correct, writing correct
PETER: What about the other people who were writing with you?
MAJEED: Other people is very good. I enjoy with other people. Is very nice
PETER: Did you learn anything from the other people?
MAJEED: Yeah, yeah! I learned ... some new words
PETER: About their cultures, about their countries?
MAJEED: Little bit (chuckles)
PETER: You were reading their stories; you were looking at each other’s stories. And you were learning about them.

MAJEED: Yeah

PETER: Do you think this is a good way to learn English?

MAJEED: Yeah, yes of course. It’s very good way to learn English. I had some nice people to help me. Nice teacher, everything

Transformations; Majeed’s “little bits”

Majeed’s perfectionism and desire “to learn correct” surfaced again later in our talk (195-208). This time, however, he is able to reflect more on the cross-cultural benefits of situated practices and the knowledge he gained of the lived experiences of the other “people’s life” and cultures. This may indicate that Majeed was participating and co-performing identities to some extent in our collaborative narrative practices.

PETER: What’s the most important thing you’ve learned

MAJEED: The most important thing to learn correct. How to speak correct. How to writing, how to spelling

PETER: Is there anything else you’ve learned at the Centre?

MAJEED: Eh...

PETER: Did you learn other things?

MAJEED: Yeah, about the cultures, how is people’s life

PETER: And you’ve learned from the other cultures here

MAJEED: Yeah, little

PETER: What have you learned about other cultures?

MAJEED: eh, for example... I don’t understand before, Irish people or another people that celebrate Christmas, now understand celebrate Christmas, Halloween, Easter...

PETER: So you’ve learned all about the cultures

MAJEED: Yeah

In Majeed’s stories, the term “little”, often accompanied by “bit”, appears again and again. In his “My Story” narrative, Majeed completes the frame “Things I can do in Dublin” with: “speaking, reading, writing a little bit English”. Majeed see his transformations as little steps or, as he puts it, “small changes”. During our exploration of changes to his English language identity in our talk (141-147), he says he can now “speak... a little bit”, perhaps laughing at his own modesty. Majeed then goes on to underplay his growing ability to interact with “all people”, Irish, English, and Polish people in various host country settings.

PETER: So your life before coming to the Centre and you life after the Centre, what is different?

MAJEED: The difference is I came to the Centre, I can speak ... a little bit (laughs)
PETER: How has that changed your life outside the Centre?
MAJEED: Eh, small changes, before people cannot understand my language. Now I go with people outside and speak with Irish, English, speak with Polish people...yeah with...all people
PETER: So now you can speak to everybody?
MAJEED: Yeah

When Majeed reflected on his English language identity and his experiences of social interactions over a longer time period later in our talk (169-186), the changes are no longer perceived as little. Majeed gives us an insider’s view of the fear of participation with people who are “talking words” by a border crosser in unfamiliar settings. This inability to differentiate between “How is he’s good, he’s bad” in interactions with host-community interlocutors was clearly a stifling experience, and one which caused Majeed to resist participation in any form of social interaction.

PETER: So the Majeed two years ago and the Majeed now, what has changed from two years ago?
MAJEED: Yeah, before when I got outside and somebody asked me, only say “hi”, just say “Hi, where are you from”. I don’t understand what he say. He’s talking words “No way!” I always say: “No way, go!” Now I’m talking, I always make friend. It’s very nice!
PETER: So you can make friends more easily?
MAJEED: Yeah!

PETER: And you’ve changed?
MAJEED: Yeah!
PETER: Do you see Irish people different now from before?
MAJEED: Eh, yeah. Before I’m not understand How is he’s good, he’s bad. Now I understand he’s talking, understand he is a good man or bad man
PETER: Has you opinion, or how you think about Irish people changed?
MAJEED: Yeah...
PETER: Do you know how?
MAJEED: ... he is very polite, talking is very gentlemen
PETER: So you understand now more...
MAJEED: Yeah, I understand

The sharp transition in Majeed’s account from the fear and rejection of socialisation in host settings of “No way go!” to the easy socialisation of “is talking my friend” is no “little” or “small” transformation. The extent of Majeed’s English language identity transformation, and his awareness of this change in his ability and willingness to interact in a variety of settings, means that he can identify and engage with people who consider him worthy of listening to and speaking with. He “understands” the cultural signals more clearly and is no longer afraid to participate on unfamiliar ground with unknown interlocutors.
Majeed’s Future

By the end of our narrative inquiry, Majeed is able to reflect on the bigger picture in our follow-up interview (127-135). In this reflection on his cross-border journey so far, Majeed has moved on from the “little” changes in his English language identity to the more positively weighted “not bad”, and appears capable of making meaning and sense of his progress.

PETER: Has your life changed after coming to the Centre?
MAJEED: My life is because in my country I don’t understand English. Only two words: “Yes, No”...”thank” (laughs)
PETER: “Yes, no, thank you!”
MAJEED: (laughs) Only three words when I came to Ireland. Now I speak not bad
PETER: Not bad? You’ve done very well in a year. It’s only one year really.
MAJEED: Yeah
PETER: What has changed in your life after coming to the Centre?
MAJEED: In my country is not peace. There is at peace country. Everything is good for me

When I repeat the question about changes in his lived experience, Majeed expands the narrative to take in more significant and personally meaningful parts of his lived experience. Majeed’s contrasting of his experience of living in a peaceful environment with the situation he left behind in Afghanistan would seem to show a willingness and ability to use our inquiry, and the processes he went through to bring his voice into being, to make more of his story known and thereby try to make sense of his lived narrative in a broader context.

The last line in Majeed’s published story is: “My plans the future are to learn English and look for job and some time looking for girlfriend – hahaha!” By including a self-deprecating, candid joke in his list of priorities for his future, Majeed appears to be relaxed about sharing more intimate portions of his lived experience. In his “My Year” narrative frame, Majeed adds driving to his wish list of future identities. “Things I want to do next year – I would like to get a driving licence and I hope my English is better and better next year.” In Afghanistan Majeed was able to drive freely without a licence, and clearly misses the freedom of being behind the wheel. It is no surprise that improving his English comes up again and again in all Majeed’s narratives. But Majeed highlights this need and desire to expand his English language identity more than most other participants. From the start of our talk (39-48), he lays out his intentions of doggedly pursuing this future identity.

MAJEED: I want in the future to learn something new, to learn English
PETER: And do you want to then go to Irish school or college?
MAJEED: Yeah, I hope so
PETER: Do you have any idea what job you would like to do in Ireland?
MAJEED: I'd like to, I'd like to be a nurse
PETER: Have you looked at the jobs in Ireland?
MAJEED: Yeah, and another jobs in shops
PETER: So you have looked for jobs? It’s a good idea, even working in a shop you can learn more English
MAJEED: Yeah, in working with Irish people, you speak English, improve your English

Majeed clearly has ambitions even though he has some way to go before being able to attend college or apply for a meaningful job. It is interesting to note he has chosen his father Amin’s career choice as a possible future job, though this may be merely an aspiration borne out of familiarity. His job-seeking experience has not been fruitful due to his limited language skills and an extremely competitive market, where even native graduates are struggling to gain employment. Majeed has shown a dogged application to his studies and a good degree of participation in our inquiry. He has also displayed the ability to reflect on and make sense of his lived experience and evolving English language identity. During what may be a long wait and extended period of fraught border crossing for Majeed, he is agentically equipping himself as best he can by accessing as many of the social and linguistic resources at the IDC, with his live-in tutor, and in host-community settings.
Alma’s Story

Alma had been at the Drop-in Centre for six months at the time of our follow-up Interview. In her published narrative, she provides a succinct summary of her life in her old country and the transition to life in Ireland:

My original country is Latvia. Riga is the capital city of the country. My work in my country was very interesting but hard. I worked as an economist in a great company. This company owned a chain of cafes and Restaurants of eastern cuisine. I liked my job very much. All my life I wanted to move to another country. And when I became older and had my own family me and my husband decided to move to Ireland. He went to Ireland first. He looked a work and a house for us. And after one year we started to live together in Ireland. It was terrible year. I have been in Ireland for three and half years. I live in Dublin in the Tallaght area, in a big house with my husband and our three kids.

On the surface, Alma’s story does challenge generic migrant stories of the male pioneer striking out for new horizons, with the women and children later following suit. But Alma had always wanted to move to another country so the location of the pioneering spirit is shifted to the woman in this case. When we explored the episode of the “terrible year” in our follow-up talk (173-182), Alma reveals that it was all about unfamiliar social systems. Alma had to navigate the complexities of various bureaucracies and fight for the well being of her entire family.

PETER: In your story you said that it wasn’t easy at the beginning in Ireland, when you came to Ireland first
ALMA: Uh huh
PETER: What difficulties did you have, what was difficult about it?
ALMA: Eh it was difficult to speak in English, to know something new. I don’t, I didn’t know about school, about education. I have, eh, three kids and I must to know everything about Irish system, education system and medical system – about everything, and I always ask somebody to help me. But it was in, eh, past, but now I can do it myself always
PETER: So you’ve learned how to understand and use the system
ALMA: Yes

At the start, Alma relied on her heritage social network to overcome these hurdles, but she has learned how to do this herself “always”. Writing about her social life in this extract from her published story, Alma makes it clear that she was dissatisfied with how things stood. She relates how her social world revolved around the immediate family, but, even so, she was pushing at these limits by diversifying the host-community settings of their lived experiences:

My social life in Dublin is not very rich with events. I do not have many friends here. And all my time I spend with our kids and my husband. But we try more to go to different cafes, cinema, shopping, theatre, classes for kids and adults and exhibitions.
Now the she had familiarised herself with and mastered, to a large extent, the social systems necessary for the survival of her family, Alma recounts how she wanted to engage with the broader social arena in the host community. In the next extract from her published narrative, she relates how she wanted to move beyond these functional struggles into “a full and rich social life”.

Usually I speak with Irish people in the shops when I ask for help to me find something. When I visit our doctor or in the hospital, in my kids’ school and in Drop-in Centre I very often speak with Irish people in English. I want to improve my English because now my language level is not enough for me to communicate with people who speak English and now I cannot have a full and rich social life.

Alma shows that she was aware that there is a linguistic gulf between the formulaic interactions with social systems, and being able “to communicate with people who speak English” in the somewhat messier domains of diverse host-community, sociocultural settings. When I asked Alma in our talk (19-29) what she meant by wanting to live “a full and rich life”, she paints an insider’s picture of her humdrum, gender-mediated days.

ALMA: Now (wry chuckle) I sit at home. I am driver for my kids, for my husband. I start my day cooking something for my family and after I drive my kids to school, to different classes for them. But I want go to job, too (chuckles)
PETER: You want to work as well
ALMA: Yes, I want, because my husband comes home from job and he is so... rel...
PETER: Relaxed
ALMA: Relaxing. Because I am every day the same as last day. Every day the same, the same the same. But he go to job, goes to job, something new, something speak with other people
PETER: So it’s also a social thing you want to do working. It’s social, to meet people?
ALMA: Yes

From this segment, we can picture Alma patiently, but also jealously, listening to her husband’s workday anecdotes on his return from work. She also wants the righteous relaxation of one who has discharged their duty, while having had the side benefit of social enrichment which can accompany gainful employment. There is an undertone of anger here with Alma’s the “same, the same the same” lived experience, and frustration while “he go to job” and returns home with tales of novelty and real-world social interactions. Alma’s brief response of “nothing” to the “Things that have changed” section in her “My Year” narrative frame seems to echo this frustration. When I ask Alma about her husband’s English ability in our interview (42-45), she repeats the refrain of feeling left
out, or left behind. Alma had studied English for most of her schooling in Latvia, but her husband’s access to linguistic capital at work meant that he had, somewhat gallingly, overtaken her.

His English? His English very interesting because when he come to Ireland he didn’t know any words in English. He start work and now his English is better than me. Maybe he speak not correct, without, eh, grammar, but he speak very’ eh, flu, eh, fluently. I, when I speak, I think “Did I speak true, rightly?” But he speak, speak, speak and speak

Alma’s change in status appeared to be a recurring preoccupation for her. When I asked about this in our talk (303-309), Alma uses the strong adverbs “cardinally” and ‘absolutely” to underline the extent of these changes. The swift transition in this segment from her account of her high status in Latvia to the departure of her husband, and her “need” to follow him, might suggest a negative connotation for her between the two events. In the end, however, she has to concede that their border crossing adventure was also her idea.

PETER: Was it difficult then to change your life without a job? How does that feel for you?
ALMA: Yes my life changed cardinally, cardinally? Absolutely changed, yeah. Before I come to Ireland I always work, I have very good job, very good salary. But my husband go, goes?
PETER: Came
ALMA: Came here to Ireland and I need, eh, follow him
PETER: He came, and you said you always wanted to travel
ALMA: Yes

In her publication, Alma narrates nostalgically of her life before migrating. Clearly, she is experiencing some form of dislocation from her friends and the “busy and interesting” life she had back home with them which “was always been fun”. On the other hand, she relates of her isolation in Ireland where she has not “made any true friends”.

My social life in Latvia was very busy and interesting. I often met with my friends, we celebrated all the holidays together, we went to the cinema, restaurants, theatres, or sometimes we stayed at home and played any games. It was always been a fun and exciting.

In the following part of our talk (386-392), I asked Alma whether she was getting any help from her fourteen year-old daughter. She gives what appears to be a chuckle of recognition at my suggestion of filial ridicule about her English, and goes on to tell of her frustration at her daughter’s inability to provide explanations for the morpho-syntactical intricacies of the language she so wants to learn.

PETER: Does she help you with your English? Or does she laugh at you sometimes?
ALMA: (chuckles) Sometimes she helps me. She help me with, eh, with eh, (sotto voce) my god! I forgot. No how to write, how to... correct write the sentence. Which words follow eh...

PETER: So the word order?
ALMA: Yes, because sometimes many words, and how to...
PETER: Put them in order? And it’s most important
ALMA: And sometimes grammar, grammar. But I ask her “Can you explain me? This word’s write with ing, or ed, or something?” “I don’t know. I don’t know!” So “How you, you speak good without mistakes?” “I don’t know, it’s from my, from my mind. It goes from my mind. I can’t explain you”
PETER: Well children can learn from just listening
ALMA: Yes, because she every day listen, listen, listen

Alma’s frustration with her daughter’s failure to help her with certain aspects of English surface again later in our talk (375-380). With her background and her degree in economics, Alma is interested in “business words”, and is “always” irritated by her daughters incapacity to translate.

ALMA: Her English good, yes, cos she learn in school, and she has practice and she has Irish friends. She every day speak English. But sometimes I ask her to translate me and she can’t.
Maybe because she is small and she can’t know difficult words
PETER: Ideas and words
ALMA: Special, special words and business words. But I always angry, angry with her and “Go and learn! Go and learn this words”

So, before coming to the Drop-in, Alma seemed to be suffering a type of double-dislocation. She had limited English social interaction in the host community, and she was not getting enough help with this in her Russian-speaking household. On another front, Alma relates in our talk how she is kept busy engaging with various social systems on behalf of her son (213-227). Here, Alma shows how she has to deal with complex educational and healthcare linguistic interactions. In her published story, Alma writes of the language she needs to help her family: “I want to be able to know many new things in different subjects, my kids are going to Irish schools and I want to be able to help them”. She is playing the dual role of perpetuating her heritage culture by sending her children to Russian classes, while having to perform a nurturing role for her family efficiently in a variety of difficult host-community settings.

PETER: So you are practicing a little. Do you speak to anybody else?
ALMA: In school, in school in meeting with teacher, with principal, sometimes with doctor because my son is sick, he has epilepsy. And sometimes he goes to hospital and I speak English in hospital, too
PETER: Is it a severe, hard epilepsy or soft
ALMA: No it’s soft, it happen a few times, maybe four, three times per year
Peter: How old is your son now?
ALMA: He is six, six and half
PETER: And his English?
ALMA: Em, he is problem with speaking. He doesn’t good speak Russian and in English, he tries, he tries in school, he tries, but not very good
PETER: So does he get help in school for his English?
ALMA: Yes, he has lessons with speech therapist, and in Russian he has lessons, too
PETER: So you’re sending him to Russian lessons?
ALMA: Uh huh

Toward the end of her published narrative, Alma gives a powerful insight into what she felt at the start of her border-crossing journey: “My life has changed after I arrived to the Ireland because here I started all my life from zero.” When I asked Alma about her linguistic socialisation outside the IDC (195-203), she reveals the limits of her English interaction.

PETER: And the people you socialise with now, are they Russian speakers, or do they speak other languages, too?
ALMA: Only Russian speaker
PETER: Outside the Centre, do you use English at all? Do you speak to anybody?
ALMA: Yes, I speak with neighbours. Our neighbours they are very good family, only he and she, no is couple, couple, yeah?
PETER: Couple, yeah
ALMA: Couple, and they invited us to celebrate Christmas party. And it was interesting and we speak only English

Alma has a curious and adventurous nature. “Interesting” is a word that surface many times in her stories. In her published story, Alma writes about how she is finally free of full time childcare: “I have some free time because all my kids are going to the school and now I am not working.” Now that her youngest child had reached school-going age, she was ready and eager to take the next step and immerse herself in the community at the IDC

**Alma at the Drop-in**

Alma writes about how she came to the IDC in this extract from her published story, and is very clear about her reasons for attending. She avoids using the verb learn with regard to her English, and she displays what may be interpreted as an intent to participate by using the co-constructionist term communicate.

Once I spoke with my friend and she gave me advice about Drop-in Centre. And I decided to come to the Drop-in Centre. I have been coming to the Drop-in Centre for a few months. I came to the Drop-in Centre firstly because I wish to improve my English, and secondly I
would like to communicate with other people and, thirdly, I can discover something interesting here.

In her “My Year” narrative frame, Alma underlines the importance of this event by putting it alongside a very significant life experience: “Nice things that have happened – I visited my friends wedding and I found good English courses”. Alma seems at home at the IDC. She chooses the “big family” as a metaphor, and recounts how she is not afraid to share issues and engage mutually with the other members of this community of practice.

PETER: Yeah, but as a group, would the Centre be like a family, like a club, a friendship?
ALMA: I think as a big family because I find here many friends, and all people are very friendly, if you have some problem you can speak with other people
PETER: So you’ve no problem speaking to people at all, and they speak to you?
ALMA: No, no

Alma reports on her language issues in her “Our Stories” feedback frame. Her years of linguistic isolation in Ireland, and the intervening time span, appear to have had an impact on the on her ability to remember much of what she had learned during her extensive studies of English in Latvia.

My problems are: small English vocabulary, my English is very simple and pure, I have a little practice in conversation and I forgot a lot of words from the school time when I taught English language.

Alma describes her membership of a Russian-speaking discourse community at the IDC and within the learner group she was working with (131-148). Because there are “many people who speak Russian” at the IDC, it is only natural that they will congregate into these communities. She relates how she and other drew on their heritage language in their shared endeavours as a resource and a tool to gain access to English capital. She offsets the deficit position this might imply with a chuckle, and goes on to justify and explain how and why she uses this resource.

PETER: How do you find your language use in the Centre?
ALMA: Oh (chuckles) In the Centre are many people who speak Russian, and really I speak Russian with them, too. But it’s, eh, help me to understand something. If I can’t understand in English, I can ask them “What he say, what he say!?”
PETER: So actually your mother tongue can help you in this situation?
ALMA: Yes
PETER: I’ve seen it when you’re working in the group
ALMA: Uh huh
PETER: Working together people translate
ALMA: Yes, translate. If something I don’t understand, they help me translate
PETER: So it can be useful as well
ALMA: Uh huh, but sometimes it’s eh only me who speak Russian (chuckles) and it’s interesting too, because I’m speak only English with other people
Peter: The group you are in at the moment, are there many Russian speakers?
ALMA: Everybody speak Russian
PETER: So it’s a Russian group?
ALMA: Now everybody. From Lithuania, from Estonia, and from Latvia, but everybody speak Russian

These learners are using the biliteracy to co-build bridges between their mother tongue and the target language in ways that their native speaking tutors cannot. Alma does, however, frequent other groupings where it is “only me who speak Russian”, and she seems to find an “interesting” diversity in this experience. As she tells me in her description of the Centre in our talk (165-167), Alma also finds the intercultural dimension of the IDC “interesting”.

Eh, that eh there is this Drop-in Centre, it works every day from ten to twelve, and here it’s very interesting, English it’s absolutely free. There are many people from different countries, you can come eh you know eh traditional from other countries. It’s interesting here! (chuckles)

Though she participated fully in our literacy group, and even helped more novice learners to realise their stories, here (234-240) Alma repeats her primary need several times, as she does often in her stories.

PETER: How would you describe the learning that happens in the Centre? What happens here?
ALMA: Different things (chuckles), different things and grammar, and sometimes we have just conversation. I like conversation
PETER: Cos you need to practice
ALMA: Yeah, I like speak, speak, speak (laughs)

Again, in the next extract (100-103), where Alma animatedly expresses her longing to grow her English identity, she reiterates her desire to speak and be heard.

Because I want to communicate with other people. I want to speak, I want to speak English. I want live in Ireland, and I want to eh... to start new eh, new (Russian term, unclear) ... knowledges, knowledge?

When Alma talks about wanting to “live in Ireland” of course we cannot take this literally; she has been here for some time now. What might be taken from this urgent proposition is she wants to participate more fully in the social, linguistic, and cultural life of her new home. It is interesting, to use an Alma term, that this segment was in response to my question about why she was coming to the IDC. She wants access to the new “knowledges” that she knows are available at the Centre,
which she feels will be her bridge into the host community. She is determined to get and use the sociolinguistic resources from which she has so far been constrained.

Transformations; agency and “destiny”

The Drop-in Centre was expanding its activities around the time of our literacy project. There were a variety of projects running such as photography lessons and drama. Alma was agentically involved in many of these “interesting” projects, and, as she writes in her published account, she enjoyed the “different” days. Things had certainly taken a turn for the better since the pre-IDC “same, same, same” days she had talked about.

My life has changed since I came to the Drop-in Centre on the better side. Here it is very comfortable, friendly people, good teachers. All days in Drop-in Centre are different here it is always interesting and educational. In the Drop-in Centre I met many people from different countries, here I can speak with them, to know something new about their countries, traditions and cultures. Some traditions in other countries are unusual and foreign for me, for example those from oriental countries.

Alma clearly appreciated and actively participated in the sharing of intercultural knowledges in this community of practice, and revelled in the diversity there. Alma reflects on how the knowledge-sharing activities in our situated practices had functional linguistic outcomes for her (244-248). The cultural information gap pushed her to work on questions forms about the stories of others, which also satisfied her main need of improving her spoken production skills.

PETER: What was that like? What did you learn from working in the group?
ALMA: (pause) I don’t know
PETER: Cos you were working with others
ALMA: Yes, yes, I have questions; I have the short story about different people. It was good practice for, eh, give questions
PETER: It was good for practicing your questions?
ALMA: For questions, uh huh, and understand because other people have different pronunciation, and it was good practice to understand what they say

This practice also seemed to be beneficial for Alma’s spoken interaction when she says that it was “good practice” to work with diverse accents and “understand what they can say”. In her response to the section on audience in pre-interview feedback frame (“Our Stories”), Alma writes succinctly about how the storytelling process enabled her to reflectively look at herself from the outside and take stock of where she was in her development. This reflection also seems to indicate that Alma was using this moment to assess and make meaning and sense of her evolving identity. In doing this
identity work, Alma appears to be using her agency and a certain amount of transgression to decide what her next steps might be.

Firstly, my story was written for me, it is very interesting to look at ourselves from the side, estimate my opportunities and decide what I want and need. Secondly, for the same people as me, who emigrated to Ireland, and maybe, my story can help them understand that their life are only in their hands.

Alma’s second point here illustrates that she sees the social value and purpose of sharing her lived experience with her fellow border crossers. She also appears to be arguing that her story may inform other border crossers on the transformative benefits of agentic action over the passive non-participatory acceptance of their peripheral positions in the host community as their destiny. When we explored this theme further in our talk (103-120), Alma urges her fellow border crossers to “go always”. She again argues for the use of human agency as an antidote to the acceptance of the isolated subject positions of those she knows who say “Oh, it’s my life! It’s my...destiny!”

PETER: Yeah, to learn new things. You said that your story was written for you, and written for people like you who emigrated to Ireland. How do you think the story might help them? PETER: Them? (laughs) I don’t know, maybe they eh will know about this Centre. Maybe they will know eh that they can’t stop, stop in this eh point... I can’t say, I don’t know (embarrassed chuckle) how to explain it, and the must go, go always eh...
PETER: Further? Keep going!
ALMA: Yes, further, going, going, don’t stopping. Go and go and go always.
Peter: Would you know some people who have stopped? Maybe in your community, some people who don’t go forward
ALMA: Eh... there are many people who stopped, and, eh, don’t want doing something else. The sit at home and “Oh, it’s my life! It’s my...destiny!” They sit at home and nothing doing
PETER: And you are not one of those people
ALMA: I know, I know!
PETER: Yeah
ALMA: There are many people from our community who speak Russian. They sit and nothing. But there are many people who keep going, who keep going, going, going
PETER: Who go outside and do things
ALMA: Yeah something new, always find, find something useful, yeah?

Alma confirms that she is not “one of those people”, and her agency in her participation both at the IDC and in our literacy practices has ensured that she has found both “something new” and “something useful”, which helps her develop socially, culturally, and linguistically. She has been hard
at work growing her linguistic identity towards that “full and rich life” which she has been yearning for.

Alma has made conscious efforts to use her agency to reposition herself as someone worth listening. In our follow-up talk (82-90), she illustrates the ensuing transformation from fear of participation to being a confident agent who feels that she is worthy of being listened to, and now happily wants “to speak with everybody”.

PETER: So you can understand reading but it’s harder speaking? Do you think your English has improved since you came to the Centre?
ALMA: Yes, uh huh, really, yes. I start... I can’t eh, no... I’m not afraid to speak with other people. When I come to Ireland, I’m always... somebody ask me something, but I’m “Oh my God, I don’t understand (chuckles) nothing, go away!”
PETER: You were afraid?
ALMA: Yes, and “Go away!” But now I want to speak with everybody (chuckles)
PETER: So you have confidence now?
ALMA: Yes, before I was not confident, it was problem

Alma’s Future

I asked Alma to expand on her published observation that her life had changed since she came to the Centre (416-423). In her reply she relates how she sees and equates the practices, knowledges, and social participation at the IDC with a more secure future. She is fully aware of the degree of transformation she has undergone in a relatively short period of time. The dislocation and isolation she suffered before coming to the IDC are now a distant, if still unpleasant, memory.

ALMA: ... at first, I’m not afraid to speak in English. I find eh friends and every day I know that, eh, I will go to Drop-in Centre and I will speak, I will communicate with other people. And I know that in future all will be ok
PETER: So you have a good feeling about the future?
ALMA: Yes
PETER: Whereas before you were not certain
ALMA: Before I sit at home every day and I didn’t know what I do, what I will do

On the day of our follow-up talk, Alma was helping her husband with a photo shoot they were doing at the IDC. She was managing and preparing an excited group of members who were having their portraits done. She looked happy and relaxed organising and reshaping the community of practice of which she was now fully signed up to. She tells how she wants to transform her passion for photography into a career (424-442). She is hard at work looking for openings in further education and trying to build this as a possible future work identity.
Peter: Have you applied for a course in college? Did you go to the open day?
ALMA: Eh, open day will be this Wednesday
PETER: Great, so things are changing
ALMA: Yes, I hope that I can apply
PETER: And photography is a good thing, something useful
ALMA: Yes, now it’s only my hobby, but maybe after this course it become my job
PETER: Anyway, it will be very good for you to go to college, and it will be good for you English
ALMA: yes, I hope that it will be good practice for English, and maybe after this year I will go to continue to learn
PETER: Yeah, cos you can get a certificate for one year and a diploma for two year
ALMA: Yes, it’s Fetac four
PETER: Perhaps you can go on to do Fetac five. Is that what you hope to do?
ALMA: Uh huh, but my high education in Latvia it’s Fetac five, or higher?
PETER: University is Fetac seven
ALMA: Seven!?  
PETER: Yes, you are Fetac seven, Fetac eight
ALMA: I need translate it and apply to some university
PETER: Yeah, you need to translate it and improve you English so that you can go further
ALMA: Ok, maybe after one year. I have plan, plan, plan for the future?

Alma has been so busy during her time in Ireland mastering the social systems she needed to nurture her family to the detriment of knowing those systems that may further her own agendas. Many of the members at the IDC have aspirations of completing English at level four. So Alma is surprised that her degree is at least a level seven qualification in Ireland. This revelation causes a shift in Alma’s vision of her near future. She knows that her degree can be translated and that, after she reaches an acceptable level of English, she can now aim higher. In a flash of agentic realisation and reaction, she now has a plan for the future.
Hakim’s Story

Hakim is an Afghani man in his mid twenties, and has been attending the Drop-in Centre for around seven months at the time of our talk. Hakim is a very courteous and earnest person who was experiencing health problems. Sometimes Hakim would appear at the Centre on crutches. During the following part of our follow-up interview (204-212) he explained that he was trying to get some specialist medical help with this, but is not sure if “it will be good or no”. It seemed that the response from the health provider was “not very” helpful or urgent, but Hakim is too polite to complain about this in a direct manner.

PETER: And about Ireland, what other things would you write about your experience, your life, in Ireland?
HAKIM: My, eh, life in Ireland... first I think I must find Irish friends. And it’s good for my improving English and speaking... and I don’t know, eh, I want to go to hospital for foot, eh... it will be good or no – this
PETER: How is it going with your foot, is the hospital helping you?
HAKIM: Yeah, it’s helping me but, eh, not very. I say my foot have problem, and she say I send you a form, and eh, address is in the form. You can go, and you must give appointment. It’s two months, but not coming eh, form.

When I try to fill out the narrative of his lived experience in Ireland here, his answer shows a degree of isolation. He is aware that he needs more contact and social interaction with “Irish friends” to enrich the narrative of his life in Ireland. Though he is still at the start of his social reconstruction in his new home, Hakim is transgressive enough to realise what he must do to navigate his complex journey across the border and gain fuller membership of this new community. When we were exploring his social interactions outside the Centre (126-134), Hakim replies for both himself and his friend, Majeed, who is also a member of our second literacy group. Both are obviously finding it difficult to make friends outside the Centre, and Hakim is at a loss as to “what (he can) do” to remedy this situation. The two men social life includes spend some of their time hanging out in the Square, a local shopping centre, where they do speak to some Irish people, but Hakim does not elaborate on this.

HAKIM: Just Majeed. He is my friend. And sometime we speak English and sometime we speak Persian
PETER: So you practice English together a little?
HAKIM: Yeah
PETER: And other people? Do you speak to other people outside?
HAKIM: No, because we don’t have friends, and I don’t know what do
PETER: Do you meet or speak to any Irish people?
HAKIM: Sometime we go in the Square. And sometime we go in for buying something, for eating and maybe, like, clothes, shoes, other things. We speak with other Irish people...and...I don’t know

It takes a certain amount of agency for these two young Afghans to speak English together. They are also agentically seeking contact in settings outside the IDC, and trying hard to position themselves as people worth speaking and listening to. Hakim also reveals some level of social dislocation in the following piece from his published story, when he writes of his social network residing within the confines of the Centre.

I have been coming to the Drop-in centre for 4 months. I come to the drop-in centre because I have a problem talking and speaking and writing. I am living in Tallaght with my brother. My social life in Dublin is this I visit my friends in the drop-in centre.

Hakim is also dislocated from some of his immediate family. In reply to a question about his family in Ireland (24-39), Hakim speaks about his family in Afghanistan and in Ireland. My question about language in their home is met with the blindingly obvious “because our language is Farsi”, and could be interpreted as a reaction and contestation of a deficiency position imposed from my side. The “He” who comes to the IDC here turns out to be his brother’s wife. It is likely that, like Joasia and other IDC mothers, the children are now school age and she can now access the resources at the Centre.

HAKIM: All my family is not in Ireland
PETER: Ok, so who is in Ireland with you?
HAKIM: Em, my brother and his wife and two kids...
PETER: Two children?
HAKIM: Yeah, two children...this is...and I have two sister. They are in Afghanistan
PETER: Ok, the rest of your family is in Afghanistan
HAKIM: Yeah
PETER So you are here with your brother...
HAKIM: Yeah, I am here...
PETER: And do you live with your brother?
HAKIM: Yeah, I live with my brother
PETER: So in the house you speak Farsi?
HAKIM: Yeah, because our language is Farsi
PETER: Do they speak English, your brother and his wife?
HAKIM: My brother can speak English but his wife can’t. He come in the course, the Drop-in Centre

When I queried Hakim about the numbers of the Afghan community in Dublin (167), he has no answer, and replies: “Just I know Majeed, and one teacher in the Drop-in Centre I know him”. So there would appear to be a double dislocation happening for this family, especially for Hakim’s
sister-in-law; they seem to have limited social access to both the host community and their own heritage community. Hakim writes in a narrative frame (Hamid Life Story) of his unease with this isolation: “Things I don’t like living in Dublin. I like but I don’t know about things about another people”.

**Hakim at the Drop-in**

Hakim had settled in very well at the IDC. Even though he spent a lot of time there with his friend Majeed, he connected very well with his “different friends” in this community of practice and worked hard at building his social network there, chatting freely at coffee breaks with anyone he met. In this fragment from his writing in his narrative frame “Hakim Life Story” about his lived experience, he reflects on why he came to the centre and, as we saw earlier, identifies the IDC as the centre of his “social life in Dublin”.

![Handwritten text]

**Hakim Life Story**

Like Rafal, Hakim made as much use of the Centre’s resources as he could. But unlike Rafal, Hakim was participating more and learning socially as well as functionally. His hard work shows in this handwritten story and, despite his interrupted education, he was making real progress. Hakim attended the IDC every day he could and, as he relates in the next piece from our talk (104-118), he felt “very sad I miss one day”.

**HAKIM:** I think the Drop-in Centre is different people and different life. It’s very good and they learn the English together in the peace. They don’t say you is Chinese, you is Afghan, you is Poland – it’s very good

**PETER:** Everybody is the same

**HAKIM:** Yeah, everybody is same, and it’s good
PETER: Is it like a family, friends, or a club? What do you see?
HAKIM: It’s like family
PETER: It’s like a big family?
HAKIM: Yeah, it’s like big family
PETER: When you are speaking English in the Centre, how do you feel?
HAKIM: I feeling good. When I don’t come in the Drop-in Centre some day, I was...I will be very sad...at the home. Or sometimes when I have work I can’t come in the Drop-in Centre, I’m very sad I miss one day in the Drop-in Centre. When I come in the Drop-in Centre, I enjoy it because all my friends is in the Drop-in Centre and I visited they, and it’s good. I enjoy it (smiles)

Hakim is also displaying good intercultural awareness here in his embracing and appreciation of the tolerance and cross-cultural comprehension which is central to the IDC’s ethos, where “different people and different life” “learn together in peace”. Hakim choice of the family metaphor for the community at IDC may be interpreted as a counterbalance to the familial dislocation he is experiencing, but, in any case, it is clear that he felt very much at home there.

**Transformations; Hakim’s evolving identity**

In the following two part of our talk, Hakim speaks for the other members of the literacy group when I ask what other problems reading and writing is causing him in Ireland. He is appreciative of our situated literacy practices at the IDC, and is also reflecting on and making sense of his progress in this community of practice.

HAKIM: I don’t have other problems, but, eh...my...I don’t have big problem, but my big problem is reading and writing. And now I try in the Drop-in Centre, it will be good when I come in the Drop-in Centre, it’s good now
PETER: It’s good now – it’s getting better
HAKIM: Yeah, it’s getting better

In the next fragment from his “Our Stories” feedback frame, Hakim gives a particularly pertinent example of a literacy problem from his lived experience in Ireland. Hakim is providing an insider view into the conflict and linguistic dislocation he faces in the unfamiliar social system of the host-community health service: “My problem caused is this; when I go to social and hospital I can’t fill in a form and can’t speak”.

Hakim is very capable of reflecting on and identifying some of the core elements and benefits of our situated storytelling project in the next unit of our interview (70-86). He relates how participation with his “friends” in group work of this type “helped” him and scaffolded his efforts. After a prolonged effort to remember what he learned from our project, and a misguided interjection on
my part on functional literacy learning, Hakim gets to the core of the identity building and negotiation purpose of situated literacy. Hakim can clearly see the value of this approach because it allows him to “repeat” and share his lived experience with others. So his storytelling meant he could represent his evolving identity as “my story, my life story”. Hakim is again showing transgression in the way his reflection on this collaborative inquiry allows him to occupy a position of viewing this process from inside and out.

PETER: And, what did you like about writing the story? What did you enjoy when you were writing the story?
HAKIM: Eh, because...em, because I was with my friends, and I was in the school – I was with all my friends and they help, helped me. And... this is
PETER: So it was good to write with other people?
HAKIM: Yeah
PETER: Around you, and you helped each other?
HAKIM: Yeah
PETER: What did you learn from writing your story? What things did you learn?
HAKIM: I learn how can, I...how can I ... I forgot what is that name (long pause)
PETER: Is it making sentences?
HAKIM: ...yeah, it’s repeat, it’s repeat my life. How can I say for other people “This is my story, my life story”
PETER: So it helps you...
HAKIM: Yeah
PETER: ...when you are talking to other people, too
HAKIM: Yeah

Not all the learners participated in sharing their knowledge and stories to the same extent or in the same way. In the situated activities where the learners had to mutually tell and co-dictate their stories, it was easier to speak for some than to write down their partners’ narrative. In the next example from our collaborative inquiry, Hakim shows resolute agency, despite his low-level, in getting down Hanna’s story. As we have seen in other stories, Hanna was front and centre when it came to participation and knowledge sharing.
Hakim on Hanna

Hakim’s “Story about Hanna” gives us an insiders’ picture of the Life Experience Approach at work. Hakim has been able to garner and textualise a good deal of Hanna’s lived experience in this short narrative. Though Hakim did not refer to any benefits of the publication of his story beyond the immediate environment in our talk (69), his target audience of “my teacher and friends” may be interpreted as his desire contribute to and shape his community of practice.

Throughout his stories, Hakim has displayed his awareness and appreciation for the meaning-making value of our collaborative storytelling. His full participation in the project, and an illustration of how he has used his agency to access the social and linguistic resources of the group in order to build new knowledges and evolve his English language identity, are summed up in this part of our talk (88-99).

PETER: Do you think this is a good way to learn reading and writing?
HAKIM: Yeah, it’s very good because people can know how one can say a story for other people: our story and another story. It’s very good for speaking, and it's very good for other people, they enjoy it for a story. A story is very good. Some people like the story and it’s good, they enjoy it for a story, and they learn English and...
PETER: Did you learn from other people in the group?
HAKIM: Other language, or no?
PETER: Not other languages, from their stories
HAKIM: Yeah, I learned
PETER: What did you learn?
HAKIM: I learned because, maybe, all my friends, I learned what was their story, and what they do.

In his reflection here, Hakim shows that he can not only enunciate the social value of being able to “know one can say a story”, and, with the other members “learn what was their story, and what they do”, but also identify some of the functional benefits such as “it’s very good for speaking”.

**Hakim’s future**

Overall, Hakim responded admirably to the challenge of reflecting on, logging, and sharing his lived experiences in Ireland. In this segment of our talk (193-204), Hakim expands his narrative in different directions. Though our project was aimed mostly at these border crossers lived experiences at the IDC and in other local sociocultural settings, Hakim appears to have reflected on and considered writing about his experiences in Afghanistan. Also, for reasons that are perfectly understandable, he did not share his feelings of familial dislocation in his shared storytelling, but would like to “write it more about my father and mother”, and about his future. I would also venture that a lack of the subtle literacy necessary for relating such delicate matters may have restricted the scope of Hakim’s narrative.

PETER: Other stories that you would like to tell?
HAKIM: Yeah, I like because, eh, sometimes when I in the home, I write the story. And I thinking sometimes when I was in the Afghanistan, I write too a story, what is that? I think in the... but I write in the English, and it’s good for improving English
PETER: If you were writing this story in Farsi, you would write more. What would you say... about Hakim?
HAKIM: I say in the Persian? I write all my, eh story... what I do in Afghanistan and eh, I don’t say for my mother and father in the story...
PETER: About your family?
HAKIM: Yeah, I write it more about my father and mother, and in the future, now...
PETER: You would write more about your future?
HAKIM: Yeah

Despite the many challenges Hakim faces, of dislocation, health, and isolation from heritage and local communities, he is optimistic. He ends his published story in this extract on a hopeful note and is able to see and relate positive change.
Some things I can do in Dublin are I can improve my English and I can live well in Dublin but I could not in my country. My life has changed because I believe I can attain my hopes. My plans for the future is I want to be a good engineer or a good businessman.

Hakim reiterates this significant change in his fortunes towards the end of our follow-up talk (175-186). It would appear that the IDC was doing its job of acting as a bridge for marginalised border crossers. The Centre, and its practices, had transformed Hakim’s first two months in Ireland of “What I do?” and “Oh my God!” into a sense of belonging and purpose for this learner. And his experience of sharing English language knowledge and performing and building identities in this community of practice would appear to be giving Hakim hope and the worth of being spoken and listened to in his new home.

PETER: Has coming to the Drop-in Centre changed the way you see Ireland?
HAKIM: Eh, yeah, because when I come in the Ireland maybe two months I miss the Drop-in Centre, and, eh, and I was very much miss, missing, miss. And, eh, and when I was at home, eh, I did think “What I do?” And when I come in the Drop-in Centre, I think my life had change – I love Ireland. And that time I don’t come in the Drop-in Centre, I think (nervous laugh) “Oh my God!”
PETER: Where is this terrible place?
HAKIM: (Laughs) Yeah!
PETER: So you like Ireland better after...
HAKIM: Yeah, very better
PETER: ...and you understand more
HAKIM: Yeah, because when I come in the Drop-in Centre, some people speak with me, I don’t understand what he say. And now I can speak little bit and I know little bit what he say for me

Across his narratives, Hakim offers various versions of his future self. At the end of our talk (160-163) he wants to “first I want to improve my English” and wants to “go to college and I want to study engineering. This is my hope, and, and I’m not sure I can get or not”. Elsewhere, “Hakim Life Story”, he expresses his vision for the future in more vague terms: “My plans for the future is I want to be good in the future”. In his “My Year” narrative frame he produced yet another possible version of his future: “Things I want to do next year – I want to open my own shop”. The process of integration for many members at the IDC can be long. It can involve many years of navigating the perilous crossing from chaotic worlds to more stable existences. However, Hakim’s hopes are not unfounded. He is just at the beginning of this crossing, but he is agentically accessing all the social and linguistic resources available him to prepare him for the next steps of his journey.
Lena’s Story

Lena is a Ukrainian woman who came to Ireland almost four years before she wrote her story. She is married to a Lithuanian man, has two young children under the age of four, and lives in Tallaght. She comes across as a gentle-natured shy woman who smiles and makes friends easily. She introduces herself at the start of her published narrative in this way:

My name is Lena. I am from Ukraine. In Ukraine I finished University where I studied Economics and Management. My first job was as a shop assistant of ladies underwear. After, I worked as a manager in a leather shop.

So, before coming to Ireland, Lena had completed her degree and progressed to a managerial position in retail. In her published story, Lena is synthetic in her description of her first border crossing: “Then I got married and came to Ireland.” In our follow-up talk (43-48), I tried to expand this part of her life story:

PETER: Why did you come to Ireland?
LENA: Because I got married
PETER: Did you get married in Ireland?
LENA: No, in Ukraine
PETER: And your husband is from Ukraine?
LENA: No, no, Lithuania

Lena’s response to my question is at first puzzling. But on reflection it would seem that, like other border-crossing women, she had simply followed the male prerogative, and come to Ireland because her nuptial loyalty to her husband’s wishes required this. Despite being in Ireland for four years, Lena’s English is very basic. As Lena relates in her published story, there is a strong contrast between her social lives in her home and new countries:

I live in a flat with husband and daughter. My social life in Dublin is spent with my daughter. In Ukraine I celebrated all public holidays with my friends and family. It was very interesting and joyful. I do not have a lot of friends in Ireland.

She describes her social life as being limited to childcare in Ireland, whereas she has left behind a “very interesting and joyful” social network in Ukraine. Her conclusion to this extract indicates just how socially dislocated she is and how limited her interactions are in Ireland. On the other hand, in our follow-up talk (53-67), she gives an account of a husband who appears to have no issues of social or linguistic isolation. He is happily working, and appears able to function fully in host-community settings.
LENA: He is from Lithuania but is native Russian
PETER: Does he speak English?
LENA: He, yeah
PETER: Is his English good?
LENA: Good, yeah
PETER: Is he working in Ireland?
LENA: Yeah
PETER: What does he do?
LENA: Eh, general operative in warehouse
PETER: In a warehouse in Tallaght?
LENA: No, no, a little, ten kilometres. No, maybe five, seven kilometres
PETER: Not to far
LENA: No, not to far
PETER: And is he happy?
LENA: Yeah

In contrast, Lena’s account of her own Irish work experience in our talk (69-79) was not quite as pleasant. Two months after finding a job she really enjoyed, with possibilities of building a convivial social network, she had to quit because of morning sickness with her second child.

LENA: Yeah I worked, I worked in Ireland two months. Small time because I, I was pregnant after two months (nervous chuckle) was very, very good job in Debenhams, same warehouse, too. Very good staff, very friendly, friendly
PETER: Friendly job
LENA: Friendly job, good job. Very sick was every day
PETER: So you couldn’t work?
LENA: Couldn’t work
PETER: And you
LENA: “Sorry”, I want eh after born, after born I wanted to come, eh “sorry”
PETER: Go back?
LENA: And “sorry”

When she tried to take up the same position after the birth of her baby, the reply from the workplace was “sorry”; the work was no longer there. The recession had tightened its grip and she had missed her window of opportunity. For Lena, from a linguistic development point of view, it is unfortunate that she lost this position. In our talk (82-98), she goes on to relate how her workmates had been patiently willing to listen and grant her the right to speak and be heard. Since she “spoke only on the work”, her one avenue of access to host-community social and linguistic resources had been closed.

PETER: When you worked in your job, were the people Irish?
LENA: I, eh... I spoke only eh on the work, on the work. In other places I didn’t speak cos I
didn’t have English. I very fraid (chuckle), Irish people I very fraid cos my weak point is not
English. But very, very kind is “No, no, I understand. I help you”. “I help you, no, no!”
PETER: So you have a good experience with Irish people?
LENA: But I was, my husband spoke, not me (chuckles) not me. Now, now I a little bit more
know English and not very big, not big stress
PETER: Before
LENA: Before I have, I eh wall, wall, yeah? I had wall
PETER: Yeah, the wall
LENA: I was very, very fraid
PETER: And before your husband would speak?
LENA: Yeah
PETER: And you would have the wall?
LENA: Yeah, only he, and all documents, all... anything, anything! All husband. After, I want,
I live in Ireland. I live in Ireland. Respect, need to know English, understand? Not because, it’s
not my country. I think, I think I need to understand Irish people

Lena had travelled from being a fully bi-lingual, well educated women, with strong work experience,
to a silent observer of her own silenced life. Instead of replying directly to my question about her
experience with Irish people, she relates instead how her husband dominated such interactions,
repeating with a reflective laugh “not me”. Her use of this powerful metaphor “wall” for her fear of
participation in host-country settings could also be read as something her husband was involved in
constructing, either through blindness to her plight, or by culturally-constructed gender positioning.
Julia goes on to show she has “after” reclaimed the right to be heard, not “only he” or “all husband”.
She wants to be able to deal directly with “documents” and officials, excitedly adding with strong
emphasis “anything, anything!” Lena was very animated during this particular section of our talk.
She wants me, and everyone else including her husband, to “understand” and “respect” her right to
“know English” and to “understand Irish people”. She vehemently wants this wall to tumble and has
reclaimed a position from which she “a little bit more know English”, and is agentically finally dealing
with the “stress” of this situation in her participation at the IDC and outside.

Lena at the Drop-in

During our interview (111-123), Lena tells me about her experience of linguistic and social
dislocation from the host and other communities before discovering the Drop-in. She had been
evidently unhappy with her limited round of “only shop with baby” and “only husband friend”. Her
exclamative use of “nothing” and “anything” in two consecutive turns here seem to underline her
exasperation with this situation.
LENA: [...] with Drop-in Centre I found a lot of friend, friends. A lot of, I’m happy. Before I known, I know only husband, some friend – husband friend, nothing!
PETER: All Russian speakers?
LENA: Only Russian speakers, and only store, only shop with baby, and anything!
PETER: No social life?
LENA: No, no social. I didn’t know Ireland. City centre I was maybe twice eh twice eh in three months. No, eh, small baby eh, but, if I come in Drop-in Centre, I don’t know, I want, I want to wear some interesting dress (chuckles), some beautiful see clothes. But always I had training and comfortable shoes
PETER: So you feel good in the Drop-in Centre?
LENA: Feel good, yeah, yeah!
PETER: You made friends here
LENA: Friends, a lot of friend

Lena relates how she wanted a diverse social life, “didn’t know Ireland”, and had restricted access to the cultural and social life of Dublin city because of childcare and her gender-mediated position. But, simply by attending the Drop-in for a few months, Lena had already made friends and undergone a significant change in the trajectory of her journey across the border. She had left behind the identity of a mother who had to spend her days wandering around the local malls, alone in “comfortable shoes”. Now she can dress up in “some beautiful clothes” and claim her own identity, social network, and place in the community of practice of the IDC.

Transformations: literacy, identity and belonging

Lena had taken agentic action against the imposed gender identity and was starting to build her English language identity out of the ashes of a culturally-mediated male dominated past. Lena gives us an insight into the extent of this transformation in our talk (298-302). The italics here indicate emotive and emphatic propositions in her perception and experience of the IDC. Because she is at the beginning of this new phase and revelation on her border-crossing journey, she can not quite explain “why” or “how” this change has come about, but she no longer has to “walk” the local shops alone, instead she can “fly” in the exciting new social network of the IDC.

LENA: Yeah, I love
PETER: You love the Drop-in Centre?
LENA: Yeah, without the Drop-in Centre, my life is changed. I don’t know why, I don’t know who changed but change. I, I fly in the Drop-in Centre, not walk (chuckles). I don’t know, I tired, or don’t tired I go

When I asked Lena to chose between the three metaphors for the IDC of family, club or friendship in our talk she replied: “Now, now in Ireland for me it’s a big family” (126). Lena’s response here
would seem to indicate that her experience of this community has effected a renaissance in her lived experience of the country as a whole. Relating her experience and perceptions of our situated literacy practice in our talk (131-139), Lena shows how her participation in this community of practice caused a transformation in her own social practices outside the IDC. For her, the direct and most significant impact of Lena’s participation in this socially situated practice was that she “found close” friends. With Hanna, Rafal, and others, she had found belonging in the mutual purposes and practices of the group, was shaping and expanding this community.

PETER: How was that for you, working in this group?
LENA: Very... was very interesting. After this story, I found a lot of friends (chuckles). After I... I... (thinks out loud in Russian) found close friends
PETER: Close friends
LENA: Now, now our families very friendly. Have friendship
PETER: Friendship
LENA: Yeah, friendship
PETER: With the people that you met during the story?
LENA: Yeah, yeah

Now Lena had her own social network, which was in stark contrast to the apparently monochrome nature of the one she had previous to the IDC. Her struggle to reposition herself regarding the gender-mediated nature of pre-IDC socialisation was fully in progress. It would seem from the next part of our talk (140-147) that other aspects of Lena’s identity were also undergoing transformation. It would seem that a central learning outcome of our narrative inquiry for Lena was the effects of reflecting on her own identity. Lena relates her epiphany during the writing of her “memory” of her lived experience. The transgressive realisation of her own educational worth “I have diploma!” and social value “I good person, clever person” clearly impacted on Lena’s sense of self image. By ‘remembering’, Lena seems to reposition her views on her sense of her place “now in Ireland” and belonging in her new home.

PETER: When you were writing the story, what do you think you learned working together?
LENA: When, when you write, it’s memory, it’s eh fantasía, fantasy (chuckles). Need to write interesting fact. I remember “Ah, university! I have diploma!” (chuckles) “Oh, I good person” “A clever person”. Good, I don’t know, for me it was interesting. I remember, for me eh... In Ireland. I now in Ireland it’s very... eh... design, decision, decision
PETER: So you have more opportunity, more things you can do?
LENA: Uh huh

Lena’s struggles to find a word to describe the impact of this revelation, settling here for “decision”. But, whatever she was trying to imply, she provides an insider’s view of the potential of reflection
on evolving identity in situated literacy settings. Later on in our talk (191-194), in reply to my question: “Do you think that writing the story has helped you to understand your situation in Ireland?”, Lena returns to her identity epiphany, her growing sense of self-worth, and tells of the agentic desire to act this awoke within her, “the need to do something”.

Maybe, yeah, maybe. Because when I came to Ireland one month, two months, three months, I didn’t remember why, eh, what to do, what I to do and “Oh, I have good eh good past!” I have university, I have friends, I have need, need to do something. Need to go to state, go to state, yeah?

Despite her very recent membership of the IDC community of practice (three weeks), and of our literacy group, Lena was already participating fully in knowledge-sharing practices. When I asked about what she had gotten from others while working in her group (160-168), Lena shows an awareness and appreciation of the functional benefits of “work together” and seemed to find that her participation in the knowledge-sharing in our community of practice was “better for English”.

LENA: Yeah, yeah, because eh work together it’s eh other words, if I know, if I didn’t know, I remember. If eh... no, together it’s better for English
PETER: It’s better
LENA: Pronoun, pronounce, yeah?
PETER: Pronunciation?
LENA: Pronunciation, very diff, difficult. From Ukraine, from Latvia pronun... nunciation (laughs)
PETER: Yeah, from Afghanistan, from China
LENA: Yeah, yeah, it’s very, sometimes (chuckles) “You have mistake!”

The different accents that Lena had encountered during our storytelling activities had evidently caused some problems. However, she confirms that peer correction was happening in the group, but she seems to see the value of this and did not take it to heart.

Reflecting on the audience and purpose of her published story in our interview (171-175), Lena identifies her fellow border crossers as the main target. She can see the social value of her endeavours and how her account of her lived experiences may help others “like me”.

LENA: Ah, I think I want, I want (pause) people like me
PETER: Yeah
LENA: People like me
PETER: New people to Ireland
LENA: Yeah, yeah, new people to Ireland
Lena had to fight to gain access to the linguistic and resources at the IDC, but she was agentially making good use of her short time there in terms of participation. Her story so far reveals a woman in the process of social and linguistic transformation, and her transgressed ability to reflect on these events. On the subject of how coming to the Centre has changed her English language skills (239-254), Lena reports a breakthrough in her ability to understand diverse accents.

PETER: How do you think coming to the Centre has changed your English? Has your English changed?
LENA: Change, yeah, changed. Cos before I didn’t understand not only Irish people pro, pronun
PETER: Pronunciation
LENA: Different people – from Afghanistan, form Lithuania, from Poland, and now I know is better
PETER: You understand and you know it better
LENA: Because different pronunci, pronunciation (chuckles) and I understand better
PETER: So you understand different people
LENA: Not, not the wall
PETER: The wall is gone
LENA: If I, If I didn’t understand “Sorry, please... am sorry?” “Ok”
PETER: So you can communicate better
LENA: Yeah
PETER: So it’s not a wall, it’s a window
LENA: A window. I have something (laughs) but not wall, maybe window

After her time in a monocultural shell, Lena can now share knowledge with “different people”. Now she can repair communication breakdowns by asking for repetition and receive confirmations such as “Ok”. The “wall” has been breached and a “window” has opened on the next leg of Lena’s journey.

Lena’s Future

Lena had only been three weeks at the Centre when she completed her narrative. In this extract, she outlines her reasons why she needs to grow her language skills, and the host-country domains where she has to engage these skills.

I go to go to the shops and the social centre and I need to speak English language. The main reason I want to improve my English is because I live in Ireland. I want to learn English and to find good job.

Good English will give Lena ease of access to the everyday primary carer domains of providing for her family and dealing with the officialdom of, for example, the social welfare. But Lena’s needs are far more wide ranging than this. Because migrant learners have to cross the linguistic borders at
many locations, she needs a whole package of skills simply because, as she puts it, “I live in Ireland”. In answer to my question on how her life in Ireland has changed after coming to the Centre (218-238), Lena gives an insider’s view of the contradictions and dichotomies which appertain at this stage of her cross-border journey. She does not specify what “all this bad side” is, but she intimates that it has been a “very difficult” uphill struggle to get this far. She does report the “good side” as having reached a kind of stability between her identity as a wife and mother to her “very good family” and the independence of having “my house” (Lena’s emphasis), and standing on her own two feet.

LENA: Change, yeah, yeah, because eh... for me very, very difficult all this bad side. I have bad side and good side. Because I only, in Ireland I have eh very good family, eh, my baby, my husband. I have house, not my own house, but my house

PETER: It’s your house. You pay rent

LENA: My house. Not parents but, eh, Ireland give me, eh, give me, eh... some...

PETER: Hope

LENA: Not hope, I feel in Ireland very eh on two (points to her legs and stamps feet on ground)

PETER: On the ground

LENA: Yeah

PETER: On your own two feet?

LENA: Yeah, yeah, difficult without parents but I know my baby, eh, will not stay without eh food

PETER: So you know there is a future

LENA: Future, yeah, I think maybe in Ukraine better but I have baby. I like Ireland, I like. When I, when I visited, eh, my friends in Ukraine, I missed Ireland

LENA: Yeah! I miss because my bed, I have my bed

PETER: Your home

LENA: Yeah! I miss for park, I miss for Square (laughs)

PETER: So now it’s your new home?

LENA: New home, yeah, it’s my home

While Lena admits missing the support and social network of her parents, she will tolerate this dislocation for the future prospects of her children. She concludes this segment with an insight into how she has reached a significant border-crossing milestone. Ireland has usurped Ukraine as Lena’s home as represented by “my bed” and the parks. Even the stark, post-modern shopping mall of The Square, which she had previously trawled alone in her “training” shoes, is comically evoked as a site of nostalgic belonging.

On the day of our follow-up interview, five months after the publication of our stories, Lena is at the centre of various endeavours in the Drop-in. She is taking part in a photo shoot organised by the
husband of another storyteller, Alma. She is attending a full time English language course. She is clearly flourishing and in a buoyant mood. In the meantime, she has commandeered the library room, where most of these interviews were held, and turned it into a pop-up hairdressing salon. In our talk (199-213), she tells how she is reconciled to the fact that a career in marketing is “closed”. Though she had completed a hairdressing course two years before coming to the IDC, it would seem that she had to wait for the catalytic participation and ensuing social network that the Centre triggered for an agentic realignment of her career path.

PETER: And you want to do something in Ireland
LENA: Yeah, when I, eh, after two years, I finished course of hairdressers. Because of my English, marketing is now close, I know. Here, eh, I want to do another “Ok, I like hairdresser”
PETER: Hair and beauty?
LENA: Beauty, yeah, I finish, now I have in the house some place. Mirror, place it’s, eh, something. It’s one work
PETER: So you work at hairdressing at home?
LENA: At home now, yeah. Because not eh not experience in Ireland, I want, eh, I want, eh, need experience
PETER: You know you can do hairdressing at college here?
LENA: Yes, but, eh, need Fetac four, Fetac five. Now I, eh, go to Fetac four
PETER: And then you will do Fetac five?
LENA: Fetac five and hairdressing college, yeah
PETER: You know there are different colleges for that?
LENA: City centre I know one college

Lena is growing her identities on various fronts. She is building up her work experience by practicing her hairdressing at home while, at the same time, attending the FETAC level four English language course which the IDC has recently started providing. In a relatively short time, Lena has found a way around the various constraints which impinged on her participation and socialisation in the settings of language learning and work. She is now looking down the line and can see her possible future identities of college and work. Toward the end of our interview (255-266), Lena recounts her job-seeking adventures. Though she has not met with any success, she has taken ownership of this process by going it “alone”.

PETER: In your life outside the Centre, do you speak more to Irish people or other people? Do you speak to anybody in English outside the Centre?
LENA: No... yeah eh in Social (welfare), in Social I went alone. Before I went only with husband, only. Now alone I tried, I tried to find a job in Irish Salon, but very difficult “Sorry”. Both said me “Sorry” English need to improve, need to improve. Ok, but it’s my experience, ok maybe later
PETER: So you are going now to look for a job and to the Social
LENA: Yeah, yeah, I had three interview last time on one month
PETER: Wow
LENA: Yeah, three interview. No speak English but I have experience, three interview for me. I tried
PETER: Good experience
LENA: Good experience for me, yeah. I will try. I will again, yeah!

Job interviews are daunting experiences even for native speakers, so it is a measure of how far Lena has come that she can accept employers’ rejections as her “experience”. Despite these setbacks, Lena is not about to give up; she is back in the game and emphatically relates how she “will try” again. As I leave the Drop-in after our interview, Lena is setting up her improvised salon amid some excitement among other women members of the IDC. The days of shopping alone and gender-mediated isolation are behind her; no longer a helpless, silent observer of her own life, she is fully participating in and shaping this community of practice and creating her future identities in her new home.
Chata’s Story

Hello my name is Chata. I was born in 1982 and I attended primary and secondary school in Nigeria. I finished in 2000. I did a hairdresser course in Nigeria for 3 years. I started working at Mama Kay Kay in Lagos. I have a husband and three children. I am light in complexion and tall. I can read and write. I am intelligent and loyal girl.

Chata was one of the earliest members of our first literacy group. She is a very social woman who is very forthright, and is never afraid to offer her opinions. Chata had been in Ireland for almost four years when I met her. In this extract from her story “Chata Myself”, in which she represents her identity, she proudly declares her literacy. Throughout her narratives, and in our talk, Chat never mentions her husband again, using instead the gender neutral friend in the rest of her stories. Also, she told me that one of her children was still in Nigeria. From this, we can imagine she has experienced, and is still experiencing a certain amount of familial dislocation. In her “Chata Myself” narrative, she writes of her reasons for taking the bold step of coming to Ireland. In Ireland, Chat feels she can fulfil the dual aims of progressing both her own social and vocational needs and those of her children. She wants a future identity where she can be “useful”.

I decided to come to Ireland because I want to be a better person in life. I decided to come to Ireland because I want my future to be useful and I want my children to have a better life and want them to go to a good school. I want my children to have a future life in Ireland.

Discussing her decision to come to Ireland during our talk (30-44), Chata creates further ambiguities around her familial situation. In answer to my question about getting married, Chata manages to give two opposite propositions in the same sentence.

CHATA: Yeah, I just came to Ireland to change my life, you know? To live in a better way, to make my family proud, to make them ok
PETER: Before you came to Ireland, did you know much about Ireland?
CHATA: No, no, just from me friend, you know? Ask me to come, that is good blah blah blah
PETER: So your friend told you about Ireland?
CHATA: Yeah they assist me
PETER: And what did she say about Ireland when she was telling you?
CHATA: She said if I came to Ireland, I’m going to be wed ok. I’m going to be go for free education, especially the education. I’m going to have a good life, good. I’m going to help my family. I’m going to be wed ok
PETER: Yeah, to get married
CHATA: Yeah (hearty laughs)
PETER: And you got married in Ireland, did you?
CHATA: No, I got married, first I have, I have the kid. This is my son
At the end of this segment, Chata fished out a photo of her son, which was in his Irish passport. She then beamed and chuckled with pride as she announced the words “Black Irish” (58-61).

   PETER: Oh beautiful, beautiful boy. What’s his name?
   CHATA: Michael
   PETER: Michael, and he’s Irish
   CHATA: (chuckles) Black Irish

In her “My Story at the Drop-in” narrative frame, Chata sums up her family relations like this: “About me I am a good lady and have 3 kids and have boyfriend and have sister”. All we can surmise from this is that Chata came to Ireland alone, and had a relationship here, resulting in the birth of an Irish born child. Chata’s highlighting of “especially” free education as a reason for migrating shows that she wants to progress in her life, with the further goal of helping her family back home, possibly through remittances and, eventually, perhaps some form of family reunification. Also, from her stories, some inconsistencies emerge as to the location of Chata’s abode. In her story which was published in the IDC newsletter, “I live with my friend in Navan”. But in another narrative, Chata writes: “I live in Tallaght with my friend”. In her “People and Places” narrative frame, Chata writes: “I went to church. I went to Tallaght to visit my friend and church member”. In fact, during our literacy encounters Chata would sometimes alternate her point of departure that morning. These discrepancies may be put down to narrative misrepresentations, or perhaps Chata had moved house during the course of our narrative inquiry. However, the leader of the women’s group at the Centre confided to me that Chata had experienced some domestic violence, which might explain better her switches in accommodation.

Throughout her stories, Chata does not directly report a sense of social or linguistic dislocation or isolation in her new home. In her “My Story” narrative, she compares her social lives in Dublin favourably with that of her old country, adding, however, the caveat that she could find employment in Nigeria.

   My social life in Dublin is a very good life I sometimes go to parties. My social life in my county is good I worked there also. My friend always makes me happy in Dublin, she is a good friend. I meet the Irish people in city Centre they are very nice to people.

Despite the lack of official job opportunities at this stage of her border-crossing journey, Chat has not been idle. In a narrative frame, Chata describes how her busy daily round includes agentically employing the hairdressing skills she learned in Nigeria: “I used to cooked and make hair for people.
And read my book and care of my children and I went for shopping in Navan” (“People and Places in my Life”).

But, Chata also reports encountering some unpleasantness in her dealings with Irish officialdom (84-85). Unfortunately, this type of institutional racism and lack of intercultural sensitivity from social welfare officials was a common complaint among the migrants and refugees I have worked with over the years. She recounts with dismay the inequality she has experienced at the hands of her beloved Irish people: “In job centre they don’t think, they don’t, they treat everybody the same. You know like they are Irish? I told you, I told you in my story. I told you love the Irish people”.

**Chat at the Drop-in**

Despite her domestic chaos, Chata presented quite regularly at the IDC and participated fully in the social practices of our literacy group when she was there. Chata’s decision to join our literacy group, like other members, was very much literacy needs driven. She explains her original reasons for attending the Centre in her “Chata Myself” narrative: “I decided to come to the Drop-in Centre because I want to improve my reading and I want to improve my spelling”. Also in her “My Story at the Drop-in” frame she writes “I first came to the Drop-in January because I want to learning my reads and want be good person”. Here, Chata would appear to be linking good literacy skills with morality, but a “good person” for Chata is one who, as she said earlier, can be “useful” and participate more fully in the host community. Chata reiterates her need to grow her literacy skills in our talk (215-216). While we were talking about her vocational prospects, Chata announced that “English is not my problem, it’s the read, reading and writing that is the most important”. Chata’s spoken interaction skills means that she is able to seek work, but she wants to go to community college and knows the literacy challenges this will pose. Also, Due to childcare costs in Ireland, she cannot yet consider a full time job, even if the job market were not so squeezed.

When I offer Chata the choice of three metaphors for the IDC of “club”, “friends”, or “family”, she opts for the latter: “Here they are lovely. They are just like my family” (80). When I asked Chata how her relationship had changed with other IDC members (107-117), she quotes my advice to ask her fellow learners when trying to foster situated practice and knowledge sharing. She goes on to give her view that our social practices forged and cemented relationships in our community so that they “became used to each other”.

CHATA: Yeah it’s changed. We are very ok. What you don’t know, Lizzy, I forgot her name. I don’t know how to pronounce their name
PETER: Here this morning?
CHATA: No. I’m just saying you know in class you normally said “If you don’t know, ask from each other”
PETER: Yes
CHATA: That’s where we became friend. We became used to each other
PETER: Working together?
CHATA: Working together
PETER: And that way you become friends?
CHATA: Yeah

So, in Chata’s opinion, by working on their shared purposes and exchanging knowledges, she and Lizzy had the possibility to strengthen and shape their community of practice. During the course of our literacy project, Chata had developed a significant friendship with an Irish woman. She again reminded me of my advice to participate as much as possible in socialisation practices in host community settings (142-155). Chata had taken me at my word and had agentically been seeking contact in various settings outside the IDC.

PETER: And do you meet, do you have any Irish friends outside the Centre?
CHATA: Yeah, I have, I have... her name, she has two children. I have, she’s living in, what’s the name... it’s outside Dublin in my area. I just met her, but she’s nice to me.
PETER: What’s her name?
CHATA: Her name is (chuckle), I can’t pronounce Irish name (chuckles) I don’t know
PETER: Laoise?
CHATA: No, Lisa
PETER: And where did you meet Lisa?
CHATA: I met her in the shopping mall in Navan
PETER: Yeah, and you just got talking?
CHATA: No because you know you normally tell us in the class to talk to everybody you meet, just chat for you to learn more English. So that is where I met her. I just saw her, I said “Hi” and she said “Hi” and we became friends from there

Chata has searched for and found some sense of belonging both within the community of practice of our literacy group at the IDC and outside the Centre in naturalistic settings. She was willing to use her agency to claim the right to speak and be heard, and to strengthen her English language identity.

Transformations; literacy identity and belonging

In our talk, Chata relates how pleased she is with her progress, which she seems well able to track (70-77). She can see a real shift in her English language and literacy identity. She now feels able to read “anything” she sees, and reports a greater facility to switch between her heritage and the target language.

PETER: You’re proud?
CHATA: Yeah because they make me learn what I don’t know. Before, before I didn’t know how... I can read but not that proper, but now, if I see anything, I can read it and I can pronounce it very well. I’m proud of this school
PETER: Yeah and so you can see the difference in your English?
CHATA: My English, they way I was speaking before is different. If I want to speak, I can change to any language I want. But my English is very good now and my reading, most especially my reading is very, very ok. *So I want to learn more!*

Pleased as she is with these developments, Chata is agentic enough to want to push for further language and literacy identity growth; she wants “more!” Chata had already written about these transformations in her “Chata Myself” story. In the next part of that narrative, she lists various settings where she now feels “confident” and “comfortable” to socially interact with host-community members. She seems to have claimed and earned the right to speak and be heard securely, and now feels more of a sense of belonging in what she calls “my Ireland”.

I am very happy to be in Dublin and have the confidence to talk to people in Dublin and comfortable in my house. I confident to do everything I want to do and very happy. I want I go to Tallaght and I sociable to people and I very happy to my friend confident in my house and so happy to see my friends. And so happy shopping in Navan and talk to my children and comfortable in my Ireland.

Chata also talks about her repositioning in terms of social identity (191-204). Because she sought and has been able to access social and linguistic resources at the IDC, and, by extension, in other host country settings, she sees a path through further education to a possible future identity as a care worker.

PETER: Is there a difference between the Nigerian Chata and the Irish Chata?
CHATA: Ah (laughs) there is difference because I said no college, no free education. Because the free education I have here today, I can’t have it in my country. The social health care I’m going for I can’t have it in my country, but in Ireland it is free for me
PETER: But are you different?
CHATA: I’m different! Because I’m not the Chata of yesterday
PETER: What was the Chata like yesterday? How different? How is it different?
CHATA: Oh, I’m stressful. I was thinking “How am I going to live?” How am I going to become a person? But since I get to Ireland, I know I’m a person. I know the difference black and white
PETER: You can see there is a big difference?
CHATA: Yeah
PETER: And what’s the Irish Chata like? How is she different from the Nigerian Chata?
CHATA: Yeah, the Irish Chata now is read, can read very well. He can speak. He can talk to people. Am bold to talk to people and I’m very proud that Chata is in Ireland.
Chata has had to struggle for a number of difficult years to arrive at this tipping point in her evolving identities. She shows just how much she is aware of her identity growth from the “Chata of yesterday”, who was a stressed and dislocated woman, by using the identity-laden phrase “becoming a person”. Now she knows who she is, she has arrived at an important milestone. The Irish Chata has developed and embraced an English literacy identity, and “can read very well”. The Irish Chata has won the right to boldly, and agentically, be heard in any host-community setting. She is at home, proud, and feels that she now she “is someone” who belongs more in her Ireland.

**Chata’s Future**

A motif which runs through Chata’s stories is the struggle of becoming “someone”. Chata seems to use this phrase in our talk to denote a fuller membership and participation in the “social”, or society, of the host community (179-180): “Because I’m worried, I want to be, I want to be useful to this social. I want to be useful. I don’t want to be just... ordinary. I want to become a person”. It would seem that, for her, becoming “a person” is coeval to contributing in a dignified manner and claiming a greater sense of belonging to her new home. When we were discussing her future in our talk (181-188), she again comes back to this refrain. Chata had recently done an English test to gain access to the care assistant course she had been chasing in a community college. When she says the test will let her “know that I’m somebody”, we could interpret that Chata was seeing this as another rite of border-crossing passage, and another milestone in the development of her social and English language identities.

Chata: Like I told you about the letter...
PETER: The Newsletter?
CHATA: The Newsletter, my family was very proud of me so I want, so that is the reason I came to drop-in Centre because I people say about the Drop-in Centre even though you don’t know how to write, when you get to the Drop-in Centre you have write. You have to improve yourself. They are going to make you proud of yourself. So I am proud of me. I know my future is going to bright and I know it has begun because the staff of the college and I’m just waiting for my test. If my test is they will let me know that I’m somebody. So I’m proud of that.

“Proud” is another term which Chata peppered her narratives with. Chata had every right to be proud as she worked hard on forging her literacy identity. Her input into our narrative inquiry was significant. She was agentic in her application to her narratives, and was among the few who came to class with finished stories. In fact, one her early stories “My Story – Chata” was the first to be published in the IDC newsletter. Chata feels sure her “future is going to be bright”, confidently
predicting further social and linguistic development. She is ready to reposition her identity as that of a college student, with a view to the next step of becoming a care assistant.

Like many migrants from developing countries, Chata had to learn how to navigate the unfamiliar social systems in Ireland. Back in Nigeria, Chata told me how she only had to present herself at a given workplace and the job application would happen there and then. As she tells us in the next part of our talk, if you could “speak and write your name down”, you got the job (230-236).

CHATA: Like, as I was saying before, I can work in Nigeria but in Ireland I can’t work because I don’t have the qualification
PETER: Well you can’t work yet
CHATA: Yeah after my education I know I can work here in Ireland. But in Nigeria you go to school and if you can speak and write your name down, no problem
PETER: You get a job

Chata is clearly set on her claiming her place as a “recognise person” at the table in Irish society. She mentions her goal of becoming a community care assistant several times in her narrative. In her “My Story at the Drop-in” frame, she writes: “In the future I want to be a recognise person in society in future and I want my children to be responsible. Future community health care social care”. In her published story, Chata reiterates her desired future identity and social position in her new home. My plans for my future are I want to become a community social carer. I want to be a better person in life. When I asked for more details on her planned college course (205-214), Chata is emphatic about the next part of her border-crossing journey.

PETER: Your plans for the future now you want to do this course
CHATA: Community Health Care
PETER: Community Health Care
CHATA: Yeah, that’s my future plan
PETER: How are you going to do that? What are you going to do?
CHATA: Yeah I have to go to the college first for a year because after college I will go for... what do they call it? Voluntary jo...
PETER: Placement?
CHATA: Yeah to see if I’m ok, to see if I’m worth to be employed, to be a Community Social Healthcare. So I pray that God to help me, to see me through

Chata is clearly aware of the obstacles between her and her future self. She has worked hard both within the IDC, the literacy group, and in wider settings to reposition herself both socially and linguistically. She has familiarised herself with all the steps this social system requires for her to assume the identities she has agentically sought to bring about; college, work placement, etc. She
is ready to face the test of whether she is “worth”, or worthy, to be accepted as a member of the community she longs to join. Already she feels she is becoming “someone” worthy of attention and respect in her new home “my Ireland”.

Joasia’s story

Joasia, a married mother of four in her mid thirties, came to Ireland from Poland in 2007 with her husband to seek temporary work. She had managed her own shop in Poland but it ran into financial difficulties and she had to close. Their plan was to work in Ireland for three months and return to Poland with enough savings to make another go of it. However, this plan changed. As Joasia tells it in a handwritten account, a still prosperous Ireland held them within its orbit, and childcare and the children’s education sealed the deal on their plans.

Myself and my husband decided to come to Ireland for three months order to earn money and we had to return to Poland. He had work here on the leaflets. After three months I found work at petrol station so we stayed longer. The work was very good for me and life was much better than in Poland. Therefore my kids went to school here and we stay with them for so long, how long will study. In 2008 I gave birth to twins and I had to give up work.

“Life before the Drop-in” - Joasia

In the same microstory, Joasia reiterated her attitude to this journey before life-changing circumstances intervened. “Before coming to Ireland I had no plans to stay in this country because in Poland I had family and friends.”

Joasia finished secondary school in Poland but did not study English there, and she could not speak it when she arrived in Ireland. Like many of her counterparts in Ireland, Joasia landed a job where this was not a problem as her workmates all spoke Polish. Also, all her family and friends conducted their communications in Polish. In addition, giving up work limited not only socialisation and heritage language contact with her workmates, but also reduced the possibility of interactions with the host community as she began an extended period as a stay-at-home mother. Before coming to the Drop-in Centre, Joasia’s life revolved around her family and close friends in the south Dublin suburb of Tallaght, where she lived. In her early narrative frames, she does not talk about any meaningful contact with English-speakers. She lists her activities as “shopping, watching TV, walk, cooking, swimming, cleaning house, play football” (“People and Places in My Life”), and always mentions her family in this regard: “Usually every Saturday I go to the shops and I do shopping. Then I go to my friends or they come to my home. Every Sunday I go with my family to the park. Sometimes we go to the cinema. Also we go to church on Sunday.” (ibid)
Before the Drop-in

Like other members at the IDC, Joasia relied on the social network of more expert members of her heritage community of practice for help with day-to-day interactions before coming to the IDC. Also, like other members, she confirms how this reliance went on for a considerable period of time (36-45):

PETER: How long ago did you come to Ireland?
JOASIA: Seven year
PETER: So you’d no English when you came to Ireland and you spoke a lot with Polish people?
JOASIA: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: So you speak Polish with your friends and your family, but outside the Centre, do you speak English with other people?
JOASIA: No, with people I don’t speak English. If I was problem, I ask my friend about help cos they speak English
PETER: So for many years you were asking your friends about problems and then you didn’t learn
JOASIA: Yeah

Joasia goes on to reflect on her struggle to construct an English language identity and how she would postpone participation in interactions in host community settings (46-49). Responding to my question about what sort of problems she had had with English speaking or writing previous to the IDC, she recounts:

JOASIA: Eh... because I... I was shy and thinks “Oh no, If I say somethings bad!” I always thinks “Oh no, maybe not yet”
PETER: So you kept saying “Later, later”
JOASIA: Yes

This fear of participation in out-of-school settings was common among IDC members. Some learners felt that they would never be ready to participate and so would remain outside or on the periphery of host communities of practice even after they had learned sufficient language skills to engage. At the same time, however, Joasia had clearly been making every effort to seek employment, with the help of her social network, even though these attempts were more often than not fruitless (53-56).

PETER: So when you needed to use English and you had to ask your friends...
JOASIA: Oh, yeah. If I have interview or something, I studied before the, eh, interview at home
PETER: So job interviews were a problem?
JOASIA: Yeah
At the end of four years of minimal language socialisation, when her twins finally reached school-going age, Joasia took the bold step of reaching out for help in one of the few settings where she had some contact and interaction with English speakers; her daughter’s school:

I did not have a chance to learn English, so when my kids went to school I have free time and I decided to also go to school because I want to learn English too. To this end, I went to my daughter’s school to ask whether they can help me find a free school. After a few days they found me a school “Drop-in Centre” and I am very happy with this school.

(Joasia, “Life before the Drop-in”)

Joasia’s agentic expression “I want to learn English too” here may be interpreted both as her struggle and desire to gain access to host linguistic and social capital, and as her position as a bridging agent involved in and promote her children’s education, thus seeking to fulfil the active role that female immigrants play in the settlement process. In another handwritten account, Joasia narrates her bridging role as an agent in the socialisation of her children and the poignant sacrifice of her dreams for those of her daughter’s.

All our children go to school in Ireland. My older daughter is interested in painting and I think that she has talent for painting after me. When I was young I loved to paint pictures with my dad. My dad taught me to paint and now I teach my daughter. I know that I will not be a painter, but maybe one day she will. I have dreams, but my dreams is not big. I just want my children to a good school ended and have a good work in the future.

(Joasia, “My Story”)

Despite the sacrifices Joasia was willing to make, and the linguistic dislocation she had undergone for years, like Norton’s and Baynham’s migrant women, she exercised agency in gaining access to a desired community and positioned herself as someone worth talking and listening to. Here she tells how she moved out of her position of isolated housewife and began to assume her student identity (232-239). Her restrained laughter could be read here as a reaction to the reversal of roles here, and the new freedoms which she had obviously negotiated with her husband.

PETER: Your husband speaks English?
JOASIA: No!
PETER: But he’s working?
JOASIA: Eh, no
PETER: He’s not coming to the Centre, is he?
JOASIA: No because now I studied and he must stay at home to look after the children
PETER: So he’s giving you the time to come here? He’s a good man
JOASIA: (laughs) Yes, and later he will study
This balancing act for couples with young children was also a fact of the chaotic lives of other IDC members. Host-country socialisation, language or further learning, and employment could be put on hold for long periods while the couples juggled their positions as primary carers, jobseekers, precarious employees, and candidacy for further education and training, among other roles. I would argue that the flexible learning setup of the IDC, and the looser affiliation of our literacy community and storytelling project, provided our members with at least some access to social and linguistic capital which more rigid scholastic systems precluded for this type of learner.

**Joasia’s story at the IDC**

Joasia arrived at the Drop-in at the start of 2013 and joined the IDC members who were assembling as part of the first Literacy group in this study. Like many migrant mothers, Joasia had problems communicating at their children’s school meetings. However, Joasia was agentic enough to use this problematic situation to seek a solution. Here she describes how she came to be at the Drop-in (4-7).

> Eh, in the school my daughter... eh, teacher asked me about what I do and I say “I am unemployed, and I don’t speak English”, and when I am coming to the meeting I say “Sorry bout my English is not good”. And she ask me about English school...and eh, course free, and she ask me and she (teacher) coming here.

My first impression was of a woman who was very nervous (her daughter’s teacher came with her the first time). Despite this, she tried to engage with the group, took her learning very seriously, and was very diligent in delivering her writing tasks. However, Joasia did not engage immediately with the group as a whole, and in the beginning she focussed on producing various handwritten versions of her own story. As the group began to gel, and were encouraged to share their stories, Joasia began to open up more. As with other members, ties began to form, and she formed a strong friendship with a young Romanian woman, Maya. Joasia and Maya worked often together and their friendship helped them both enter more fully into our story-sharing community of practice. Here, she talks about how this went beyond the space and time of the literacy group (83-91).

> PETER: Did you learn anything about the people themselves who you were with?
> Cos you worked with Maya a lot...
> JOASIA: Yeah, yeah
> PETER: Did you learn about her?
> JOASIA: I know before she before she looks a job, and now she works
> PETER: That’s fantastic
JOASIA: Yeah, and now she works a hotel and she, she’s good
PETER: Do you talk to her? Do you see her?
JOASIA: Yes, yes we still friends
PETER: Oh good, she’s doing well
JOASIA: Yes, she is very happy

Thanks to her friendship with Maya, and our practice of story sharing, Joasia began to move from the periphery towards the centre of our literacy community of practice. However, reflecting on this process and on the effects of situated approaches we were using was not always straightforward or easy for Joasia. In this segment on literacy group work, Joasia becomes a little exasperated at two points. Her nervous pause and laugh, followed by an anxious “Oh my God”, would appear to indicate difficulties for her on diverse fronts. It may be that she is simply having problems formulating her reflection in English. More probably, she is struggling with the not so simple task of painting the picture of a quite complex situation, as it is not within the grasp or normal experience of many learners to complete this task. Another possibility is that, because of our teacher-learner rapport, she is striving to second guess the answer which will satisfy her teacher and help him with his inquiry. Later on in this unit (68-80), her sighs seem to indicate similar possibilities, and I seek to assure her with a “that’s ok”. In any case, whether her unease is one or a combination of the above, it is worth reflecting on how this segment illustrates some constraints which may be due to the power asymmetries which can beset interviewing in this mode of inquiry.

PETER: So when you were writing here in the Centre, how would you describe the situation of working in a group? What did you learn from that?
JOASIA: Eh, what we learn, yeah? About eh, other people. We learn new verbs...eh (unsure pause, nervous laugh) Oh my God
PETER: Ok, you learned language and English, but did you learn other things from the group, from the people?
JOASIA: Yes, how was, eh, learn how we can reading, writing and spoken, eh, yeah few things
PETER: What about the cultures and the people did you learn...
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah, we learned about cultures, about eh, country, eh ... (sighs)
PETER: Yeah, that’s ok. Did you learn anything about the people themselves, their stories?
JOASIA: Yes, how they... what they like, eat, eh, what is their favourite food. What is typical food
PETER: Yeah, all about their culture and their countries
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah

As with other participants in my inquiry, I asked her to choose between the metaphors of “club”, “friends” or “family” to describe the IDC and her fellow literacy group members: “For me? This is family, yeah, family like big family (chuckles). Everybody help like family, everybody like ... other people. And is like, like family”.

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Joasia and transformation

Joasia’s participation in terms of drafting and redrafting her stories, her growing confidence as a learner, and her sense comfort as a full member of the literacy group were to have some impact on her English language identity. In the following segment (27-31), she reflects, with perhaps a few chuckles of pleasure and pride, on the shift from Russian to English as her perceived second language identity.

PETER: Is English your second language or do you speak Russian as well?
JOASIA: I learn Russian, but now is English
PETER: So, English has become your second language?
JOASIA: Yes
PETER: Better than your Russian?
JOASIA: Yes!! (chuckles)

In her response as to my question on the usefulness of our story telling and literacy practices (180-192), Joasia has no difficulty in logging the positive washback these processes have had on her ability to talk about her identity in host community linguistic settings.

PETER: Do you think that telling our stories is a good way to learn English?
JOASIA: Yeah, is very good because we must eh, writing and eh, we know new words
PETER: Yeah, it’s very good for the English, but do you think that these stories can help...people
JOASIA: Other people eh, my story, no?
PETER: Your story, and everybody’s story
JOASIA: Yes, yes because they know, it’s very easy, they must know how, how can, if somebody ask him “Where are you from?” They need know how answer, yeah? And how eh, this is good (chuckles) because it’s eh, about myself. If somebody ask me, the story very help me cos I read this and next time I know what I can, I can say
PETER: So it helps you to explain to other people
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: Who you are, where you’re from, what you do
JOASIA: Yes, yes

Like Hanna and others in the group, Joasia was able to grasp the social functions and consequences of solidarity and awareness-raising about the lived experiences of border crossers as consequences of publishing this project. In answer to the post-publishing feedback question “Who is this story for?”, she responded: “For people as me”

For Joasia, there was a more general transformation in her interactions in settings outside the IDC. She talked about the process of ‘opening up’ at various moments in our follow-up interview and in some of her handwritten stories. Here she tells of how she has overcome the fear of perceived
deficiency in her spoken interactions, and is agentically working on embracing the identity struggle involved in her change from the silent, fearful Joasia to one who is more comfortable with her interactions with other English speakers (156-165).

PETER: Before you were very shy, you didn’t speak
JOASIA: Yes, I’m opened, more opened (pause) I can speak with people, and I think with mistake, people know what I mean eh, when I speak English. Before this was very hard for me, but now ... it’s better
PETER: Yeah, before you were afraid to make a mistake
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: You were afraid to speak in case you made a mistake
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah
PETER: But now you know people understand that you are not Irish, and they understand...
JOASIA: What I mean

In the following interview segment on interactional difficulties in host settings, Joasia reveals another aspect of transformation in her life (60-67). In her description of how she is now helping a fellow IDC member, she has clearly adopted the identity of a more expert peer in the heritage language social network on which she had earlier relied.

JOASIA: I have a few times my... eh, he coming here eh, Tobias. He ask me a few times I help him, and I going with him to his doctor or hospital... and I help him
PETER: Before people helped you and now you help them?
JOASIA: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: A network?
JOASIA: Yes
PETER: So now you are in a position to help others?
JOASIA: Yes, how I can

Another setting where women, especially mothers of growing children, may experience gendered/linguistic isolation is within their own homes. Joasia too, experienced the awkwardness that can occur between newcomer children who are approaching native like competence and their struggling parents. In the following segment, Joasia was able to report, again with some humorous satisfaction, a significant transformation in familial interactional behaviour (214-231).

PETER: Do your children speak good English?
JOASIA: Yes, very good
PETER: How old are they now?
JOASIA: (Girl’s name) is twelve, (Girl’s name) is nine and twins they are five
PETER: So they’re all going to school now?
JOASIA: Yes
PETER: You’ve more free time, finally
JOASIA: (Laughs)
PETER: You can think about your business. Do they help you with your English?
JOASIA: If eh, I don’t know, I sometimes don’t know, I ask but eh, I self... never ask him about help
PETER: Do they sometimes laugh at your English?
JOASIA: Oh, before yes (chuckles). And talking eh, together something because they know I don’t understand but now is different because I understand what they say
PETER: It’s changed a bit
JOASIA: Yeah (chuckles)
PETER: Now you can understand
JOASIA: (chuckles) Yeah!

In one of her handwritten accounts, Joasia sums up her experience at the Drop-in Centre and explains how writing, sharing and reflecting on her lived learning empowered her personally and helped her connect to those around her and the host community at large:

Even though I did not go for very long there I noticed a big improvement in my English and thanks to this school I opened up to people. The teachers in this school do not only teach the English language but also integrate with other people which help me in everyday life.

(Joasia – “Life before the Drop-in”)

**Joasia’s future**

During our follow-up narrative interview, and a little over a year since I had first met Joasia, I could see a marked transformation in how she looked and talked about her life. She was more positive and confident about her second language identity and socialisation and purposeful about the next steps of her journey (240-255).

PETER: What are your plans for the future?
JOASIA: For the future? I would like eh, open my business because I am seamstress by profession and I think about sewing curtains and bedding and start selling them in the internet. See how people will eh interest
PETER: And you need to do a course to do that?
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah. Yesterday I was in social and she help me she, they give me paper with course, business course
PETER: So it’s the Start your own Business Course?
JOASIA: Yeah, yeah (takes out paperwork to show me) this here
PETER: So you have to think about all these things?
JOASIA: Yeah
PETER: It’s in Tallaght, good! A day course or an evening?
JOASIA: Day, day
PETER: You seem to be a lot happier Joasia. Life has changed
JOASIA: Yes very, better, better like before but I’m still not happy with my English
PETER: Well, keep practicing, you will get better
Joasia has repossessed her previous identity as a seamstress, adding the agentic “by profession” to reinforce this renaissance. She is also striving for the position of a modest start-up, though this is hardly a modest undertaking in unfamiliar social systems and in a second language. Alongside the obvious further literacy, social systemic issues, and language learning involved, the type of world she is entering, and the course she will be doing, require the acquisition of significant amount of other skills such as business planning, networking, admin, etc. Joasia appears to anticipate further challenges and language identity work. She is aware that her English is still limited, but her tone during this interview segment was one of excitement for the future. Throughout Joasia’s itinerary, from her first move at her daughter’s school to her confident new business endeavour, she has tried to shape her own learning opportunities and participation, and has dealt with major challenges of negotiating new competencies and identities in various sociocultural settings. I would argue that her life storytelling and her reflection on this journey have helped her in these endeavours. I would also submit, from the trajectory of her development over the timeframe of this story, that the situation of her long period of dislocation and linguistic isolation from the host community seems at best to have ameliorated, or at least made her better equipped and positioned to face the new challenges ahead.
Appendix 7 – Informed Consent Statement and Form
ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

I would like to understand how when and where you speak English outside class for my Doctoral research at Trinity College Dublin. I am asking you to keep a diary about these English-speaking moments. I am also asking you to share these diaries in a weekly writing class and in interviews with me.

I understand what is involved in this study and give my permission to be interviewed and I will share my diaries. I have a copy of the information Leaflet.

Interviewee’s name ____________________________________________ (This name will not appear in any other documents and will remain private)
Why is Peter doing this research?

I am doing this research to understand more about how you use English outside school. I am very interested in how and when you use English and meet English speakers outside the class. I hope this research will help to understand how ARP and non-Irish students can learn to speak English outside class. I also hope this research will help improve our teaching, courses and integration in Ireland for these students. I have decided to use diaries in this research to see how you meet and use English outside class. This research will use diaries to help your English writing and help increase your English use outside class. I hope that sharing our diaries may also be a chance for you to improve your English language experience in Ireland. I hope to publish this study as a doctoral thesis at Trinity College, Dublin. Any information or results from this research may be used at meetings, conferences, training and in other future academic publications.

How can you help?

You can help me in three ways:

1. I am asking you to keep a short diary in English and write in it as often as you can (every day if possible). I am asking you to keep this diary for 3 months (a term). You can write about people you spoke English with and what you talked about.
2. I would like to have a diary writing class with you every week where we can discuss our diaries and writing.

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4 Revised sections highlighted in yellow
3. I would also like to interview you about your diaries and how you use English outside school. If you decide not to help, you will continue with a normal writing class.

**These are some of the things you may write about in your diaries:**

- How and when have you used English outside class?
- Who did you speak with?
- What type of things did you speak about?
- What happened when you spoke?
- How did you feel about this conversation?
- Are there any other thoughts you wish to add?

**Privacy and protection**

Your privacy during this research will be protected in the following ways:

- Your real name will not be used in any documents
- Your real name and identity will be protected at all times
- You can stop writing the diary, or sharing your diary at any time
- Recordings and documents will be kept in a locked room on a secure computer at Trinity College
- You are free to contact my supervisor Dr. Carson at Trinity College, Dublin.

Thank you for your time and attention

Researcher: Peter Sheekey – sheekeyp@tcd.ie

Supervisor: Dr. Carson – carsonle@tcd.ie