

“The Poor Relation.”

ESOL in Ireland: A Holistic View from the  
Experiences of Tutors in Adult Education.

Noella Beaumont

21251466

Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the MEd in  
Adult and Community Education

Department of Adult and Community Education Maynooth  
University

2023

Supervisor: Dr Mary B. Ryan

## **Acknowledgements**

This year has been a journey like no other. There have been highs and there have been lows. But it would not have been possible without the help and support of some people.

To my darling husband Hubert, for his constant understanding and massive support. To my beautiful daughter, Isabella who inspires me every day. To my dear sister Stephanie, who was always at the other end of the phone.

To the wonderful staff in the Adult Education Department in Maynooth, who made time when asked. In particular I want to thank my supervisor Mary Ryan, for her gentle manner and her supportive and patient guidance.

I would also like to thank the 6 tutors who are at the heart of this research. Without their contribution this study would not have happened. I am grateful to have heard your stories.

## **Abstract**

Immigration into Ireland is increasing year on year and particularly since March 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine. With this, the need for English acquisition is augmenting in Ireland. English can create barriers into Irish society, a society which, for many immigrants, differs greatly from their home countries. English language classes, named ESOL, are offered to immigrants in Ireland's public Adult Education sector.

Both a critical and social constructivist theory were utilised to analyse the current literature for ESOL. The possibility of a learner-centred or liberating critical pedagogy and the conceptual presence of hegemony through accreditation were explored. The implications, for the tutor, of power in the workplace were also considered. In doing so, a rationale for a safe, learner-centred environment in the classroom and a supportive work place for the tutors could be provided.

Through a qualitative method of research, the complexities of teaching ESOL and potential issues for tutors were revealed. This method involved semi-structured interviews with 6 ESOL tutors currently working in Adult Education in Ireland.

The findings indicated that when possible, tutors strive for dialogue and learner-centredness in the group. While poor conditions in the workplace was revealed, tutors resistance to a neo-liberal agenda was also uncovered.

# Table of Contents

<b>“THE POOR RELATION,” ESOL IN IRELAND: A HOLISTIC VIEW FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF TUTORS IN ADULT EDUCATION.....</b>	<b>I</b>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	II
ABSTRACT .....	III
ABBREVIATIONS .....	VII
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
RATIONALE .....	1
MIGRATION IN IRELAND.....	2
ESOL IN IRELAND .....	3
TUTORS AND LEARNERS IN ESOL.....	4
FINDING MY RESEARCH QUESTION .....	5
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	5
METHODOLOGY .....	5
THE STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS .....	6
<i>Chapter 1.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Chapter 2.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Chapter 3.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Chapter 4.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Chapter 5.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>8</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	8
HISTORY OF PUBLIC SECTOR PROVISION OF ESOL.....	8
QUALIFICATIONS AND PEDAGOGY FOR ESOL.....	11
LANGUAGE LEVEL ASSESSMENT .....	14
THE ESOL LEARNER AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.....	14
TRAUMA IN THE ESOL CLASSROOM .....	17
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY FOR ESOL.....	19
FREIRE’S CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY .....	21
POWER AND OPPRESSION IN ESOL.....	24
POSITION OF POWER IN THE ETB .....	25
BUREAUCRACY AND PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT .....	27
CONCLUSION .....	29
<b>THE CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>30</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	30
MY ONTOLOGICAL STANCE.....	30
MY EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE.....	32

A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST POSITION.....	33
RESEARCH METHODS .....	33
SAMPLING .....	34
INTERVIEWS.....	35
DATA ANALYSIS .....	35
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	36
CONCLUSION .....	37
<b>CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>38</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	38
DIRECTING THE RESEARCH .....	38
ANNE .....	39
JANE .....	39
JOHN.....	40
LUCY.....	40
MATILDA.....	40
NORA .....	41
CARE AND THE LEARNERS.....	41
<i>Love</i> .....	41
<i>Reciprocal Learning</i> .....	42
<i>Praxis</i> .....	42
QUALIFICATIONS; THEORY AND PRACTICE.....	43
<i>Theory</i> .....	43
<i>Informal Learning</i> .....	44
<i>Learner-Centred, Democracy and Dialogue.</i> .....	45
PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	46
<i>Diversity in Cultural and Social Norms</i> .....	46
<i>Diversity in Language Levels</i> .....	46
<i>Diversity in Literacy Level and Prior Learning.</i> .....	47
<i>Contact Hours</i> .....	49
<i>Trauma</i> .....	49
ACCREDITATION AND PROGRESS.....	51
<i>Linguistic Hegemony</i> .....	51
<i>Flaws in Accreditation</i> .....	53
<i>Resistance</i> .....	54
<i>Bureaucracy</i> .....	54
CARE AND THE TUTOR.....	55
<i>Ts &amp; Cs,</i> .....	55
<i>ESOL the Poor Relation</i> .....	57
<i>Community of Practice</i> .....	58
CONCLUSION .....	58

<b>CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>60</b>
FINAL THOUGHTS AND CONSIDERATIONS .....	60
ENRICHING MY PRACTICE .....	62
LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH .....	63
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>72</b>
THE INVITATION EMAIL.....	72
THE CONSENT FORM .....	73
.....	<b>73</b>
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	77
TABLE 1 ROUNDED UP TO WHOLE FIGURE OF THE % OF NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN IRELAND .....	10
TABLE 2 THE CERF LEVELS IN ETBS IN 2015 .....	14
TABLE 3 ESOL TUTOR DEMOGRAPHIC .....	39

## Abbreviations

AE	Adult Education
ACLES	Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services
ALCE	Adult Literacy and Community Education
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
DEASP	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.
DES	Department of Education and Science
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
IILT	Integrate Ireland Language and Training
LCA	Learner-Centred Approach
RLSU	Refugee Language Support Unit
SOLAS	Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanunaigh Agus Scileanna
VEC	Vocational Education College

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## **Rationale**

On reflection of my journey so far as an English language teacher, I recognise that my natural approach towards the learners and how I instinctively teach are the antithesis to my own experience as a learner in school. The rigid behaviourist approach in secondary schools in Ireland lacked imagination and favoured recall without context or criticism (Fitzsimons, 2017, p.107). At school one subject I wasn't successful in, within the defined parameters, was languages, even my first language, English. However, after many years living and working abroad I realised this to be untrue as I quickly became fluent in a second language, Italian, and much later a third language, French. Through this life learning experience, I became aware that there are many and different ways for a learner to acquire knowledge and skills in a second or subsequent language. This contributed to my approach and willingness to adapt to the needs of the learners and shaped my practice as a teacher of English as a Foreign language, (EFL) for many years working in the private sector.

Initially to qualify as a teacher I did the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) diploma in 1991. In 2021 I returned to education to do the HDip in Adult Education in Maynooth with the hope, upon completion, of teaching English in the State funded adult education sector. This course was enriching, stimulating and insightful in many ways. I developed a deeper understanding of adult education in the social context and found a way to describe my approach to teaching from a philosophical perspective. The reflective practice element of the course taught me how to express how I am positioned in my teaching and how to improve my pedagogical practice through constant reflection and reflexion.

A further requirement of the HDip was to do 120 hours of experience in adult education. Through this experience I gained an experiential understanding of the theories presented in lectures. During this work experience I met a very different cohort of learners in the English classroom. There was a more eclectic mix of needs and



abilities. There were challenges I hadn't anticipated such as literacy issues and cultural diversity within the learning groups that really forced me to be reflexive about my methods and pedagogy in a way that I had never been before. It is these differences along with my aspiration to do my best to support the learners in their acquisition of English, which in turn might support them in finding their way in their new society, that has brought me to further enrich my knowledge by undertaking this thesis. By talking to other tutors and letting them tell their stories I hope to provide you, the reader, with an authentic portrayal of the experiences of some practitioners.

## **Migration in Ireland**

Poverty, persecution and war in other countries accounts for the displacement of millions of people worldwide. Ireland has been the recipient of refugees and asylum seekers since the 1970s. Initially this was in very small numbers, today however, the numbers are rising quickly (Sheridan, 2015, p.150). The backdrop to this thesis is an extraordinary year for immigration in Ireland. Since early 2022 we have welcomed over 74,500 Ukrainian nationals in Ireland. This number is made up of mainly women and children.

Globalisation has also brought freer movement of produce and people. Ireland has witnessed a steady rise in migrants arriving in the country since the mid 1990s, the first of those were mainly economic migrants (Gilmartin, 2012, p.1). This movement has huge implications for Irish society as it shapes its economy and structure. Globalisation creates connections as technology and transport reduce physical distance. However, it also breaks connections as immigration sees people leave their home countries and relocate to create a new life somewhere else (SOLAS, 2018, pp.29-30). The government body responsible for State funded adult education, Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanunaigh Agus Scileanna, (SOLAS) has produced policy strategy that strives for "economic development and social cohesion" in Ireland (SOLAS, 2018, p.5). The Irish migrant population today is a rich melange of economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. By 2020 there were over 870,000 residents in Ireland who were not born in the State (World Data, 2021).

Unfortunately for many of these SOLAS's aspiration is a mammoth task as they face barriers to integration which cause isolation and reduced prospect of their success in society (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, cited in Nchindia, 2020 p.48). Barriers can exist as the cultural, social and legal norms are different from their home country. From everyday actions such as going to the local shop to trying to access government services for health, housing, or education may all be difficult (Gilmartin, 2008, p.97). For most, the biggest initial barrier is the English language needed to negotiate almost every aspect of Irish society. It is vital to be able to communicate in the language of the new country as it creates agency and helps in the integration process (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.xi).

## **ESOL in Ireland**

English classes are provided, in the public's adult education sector, as a subject named English for Speakers of Other Languages, ESOL. Although there is no national strategy for ESOL delivery in Ireland, classes are delivered by local Education and Training Boards (ETB) all across Ireland. ETB courses are run on a part-time basis and are free to learners. ESOL or English as a Second Language is the term used in Ireland and the UK. The equivalent, English as a Second Language, (ESL) is the term used in the US and Canada (Cooke & Simpson, 2008 p.xi). These two terms, ESOL and ESL differ from English as a *Foreign* Language, (EFL). EFL is provided in the private education sector. There are stark differences between the two. Participants in the ESOL/ESL classroom are constrained to learn English due to the fact that they are resettling in an English speaking country (Paton & Wilkins, 2009, p.8). In the private sector learners choose to learn English and their participation is voluntary. EFL learners participate in a short course situated in either an English speaking or non-English speaking country. Most learners of EFL are not challenged socially and economically in the way that economic immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers might be. In Ireland the majority of learners in ESOL are asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants from both within and outside the EU or those coming to live with other family members already resettled here (SOLAS, 2018). All migrants (economic migrants, refugees or asylum seekers) in ESOL classes are seeking to make a better life than the one they left behind (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.21).

Since embarking on this thesis journey, Ukraine was invaded by Russia. This has changed the refugee landscape of Ireland considerably. The first Ukrainian refugees started to arrive in March 2022. People opened their homes to host Ukrainian women and mothers and their children as the government sought to accommodate all those who arrived. This brought with it an increased demand for ESOL. In response, ESOL classes were furnished in a variety of locations through private, charitable, community and State routes. However, even before our current Ukrainian refugee situation the provision of ESOL was under pressure and in need of attention with numbers climbing to over 15,500 in the 16 ETBs nationwide in 2021 (SOLAS, 2021). The State funded ETBs are where the bulk of ESOL provision is bestowed and forms a core part of my enquiry.

ESOL was first officially mentioned, as a subject, in the adult education's White Paper of 2000 (p.172). It continues to be located under the umbrella of Adult Literacy and Community Education, ALCE with no independent funding or stance in the ETB (SOLAS, 2018, p.42). SOLAS (2018) reports that ESOL learners are recruited primarily via referral from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, DEASP to the ETB, word of mouth or through employers (p.19). How ESOL provision is delivered in this setting will be explored in depth in the succeeding chapters.

## **Tutors and Learners in ESOL**

Individuals with a primary degree and a certificate to teach English to speakers of other languages, CELTA (called TEFL pre 2005) can apply to be an ESOL tutor in ETBs (SOLAS, 2018, p.42). Tutors of ESOL play an ever increasingly important role in ETBs in Ireland. In the last SOLAS (2018) report there were 22 full time ESOL Tutors and 334 part-time in the 16 ETB colleges (p.41).

The learners in ESOL classrooms are a culturally diverse group with very varied exigencies in the acquisition of English. Trauma, levels of prior education, life experiences and language are some of the differentiating factors of the group (Little, 2022, pp.9-14). Tutors are faced with a the task of teaching English in an environment where diverse learning needs exist. Some of these needs go beyond the tutor's skillset

and role. A key part of this research is to explore the experiences that tutors have in relation to responding to these needs.

### **Finding my Research Question**

As little research exists about ESOL in Ireland, this study is one of an exploratory nature. I wish to enquire about the experience of tutors working in ETBs. This thesis seeks to represent these experiences and explore what challenges tutors face in the classroom and what supports are in place for them in their role.

### **Research questions**

1 What are the experiences of ESOL tutors in adult education?

2 What challenges exist for tutors of ESOL?

### **Methodology**

The exploration of the experiences of the tutors who participated in this study can provide a rich insight to the work they do and the issues associated with ESOL. Qualitative research paradigms were implemented to probe into the research questions. In doing so the exploration of the meaning tutors attribute to their experiences could be achieved (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.4). A thematic approach was used to identify pertinent topics that emerged from the semi-structured interviews held with each participant (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pp. 203-204). The social constructivist worldview provided me with a framework to explore the literature, the interviewees' experiences and the data produced, accepting that all knowledge is subjective and based on the individuals history and social perspective (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). Further to that, given the complexities of teaching ESOL as a subject, the public sector setting and the cohort of learners; concepts of marginalisation, power and equity emerged. Although this study is not about theorists, the works and ideas of Paulo Freire lend insight to the issues associated with ESOL for tutors and create a critical framework for analysing the literature and data from the interviews.

## **The Structure of this Thesis**

### *Chapter 1*

Concerns itself with introducing the study. It is important to set the scene clearly and to give some signposting for this body of research. I describe the macro factors surrounding immigration in Ireland and the micro factor of the importance of ESOL provision for immigrants. I introduce the setting and the participants of this research. I have also provided the research questions that are at the core of the research and overview of the methodology paradigms.

### *Chapter 2*

Examines existing literature about ESOL. As I wish to gain insight into tutors experience I researched different aspects of ESOL provision in the ETB. A brief history is outlined followed by an exploration of qualifications and practice on the ground for ESOL teaching. Based on the research questions I searched for literature that pertains to the complex ESOL learner profile and barriers to language acquisition. The concept of trauma in the ESOL classroom is also given particular consideration given the experiences that so many learners face prior to arriving to Ireland.

I then outline my theoretic framework which is underpinned by the works and ideas of Paulo Freire. I draw on his theories to explore concepts of oppression, power and liberation in both the pedagogy for ESOL and the hierarchical structure of the ETB.

### *Chapter 3*

Presents the methodology paradigms of this study. This is an overview of my research journey. Initially I outline my ontological and epistemological stance. I describe my core critical theory beliefs and assumptions in the context of this thesis. Through a social constructivist stance I accept my and individual truths as subjective. Following this, how and why I chose a qualitative research method was explained. Then how I sourced and approached the 6 participants was described. Finally details about data collection, analysis and ethical considerations were described.

### *Chapter 4*

Is dedicated to the findings and analysis of those findings. I wanted the tutors voices to be represented. I found it very cathartic to listen to their stories and feel their passion for their roles as tutors of ESOL and their high regard for the learners. Intertwined with the findings, the rich data is examined with a critical theory lens while remembering

the social constructivist lens of subjectivity of knowledge. All data is explored in the context of the literature review of Chapter 2.

### *Chapter 5*

Concludes the thesis. This chapter holds a dual purpose. While it provides a summary of the study it also describes the learning I achieved in the process. How the participant's experiences reflect what has been my experience so far and what divergence exists. It is through these differences that I can reflect on and enrich my own practice.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The role of the literature review is to look at existing and supporting research on the topic being studied. Although there has been a lot of research undertaken in the UK about ESOL, little has been carried out in Ireland. The need for ESOL is however, a relatively new concept in Ireland as considerable immigration into the country only started during the late 1990s (Gilmartin, 2012, p.1). Given that there is now a rapidly growing demand for ESOL it is timely that research is carried out. Doras (Ćatibušić et al., 2019) produced research about ESOL in Ireland. Although this research is valid and informative, it specifically dealt with Syrian refugees. ESOL classrooms in Ireland are now such a mix of cultures that more research is needed. The focus of this study is on the ESOL tutor. Little is known about how the barriers to learning, experienced by learners in groups, impacts tutors in Ireland. Research about what challenges exist for the tutor from accreditation and working the ETB is also lacking.

In my subjective experience, as a tutor, I think there is the possibility of providing an experience to the learner that enables them to gain agency in society through their acquisition of English. However, I am also aware of the complexity of my pedagogy as it sometimes manifests as less liberating and more teacher-led. I draw on the theories of a learner-centred philosophy of Carl Rogers for ESOL. Further to this, throughout the chapter, I critically analyse the effects of issues identified drawing on the theories of a liberating pedagogy, oppression and power in the works of Paulo Freire.

### **History of Public Sector Provision of ESOL**

It is important to place ESOL into a brief historical context in Ireland. From the 1922 foundation of the State the rhetoric conveyed Ireland as a society of Gaelic speaking people of Celtic origin. The reality was another thing given that English was the language spoken by the majority. For policy makers the promotion of Irish as the first language was a way to further disassociate the State from its colonial past. However

in doing so a void was left when there was not the same consideration for the English language. Irish, as a language, was promoted heavily whereas, as the EU's Language Education Policy Profile on Ireland (2008) pointed out,

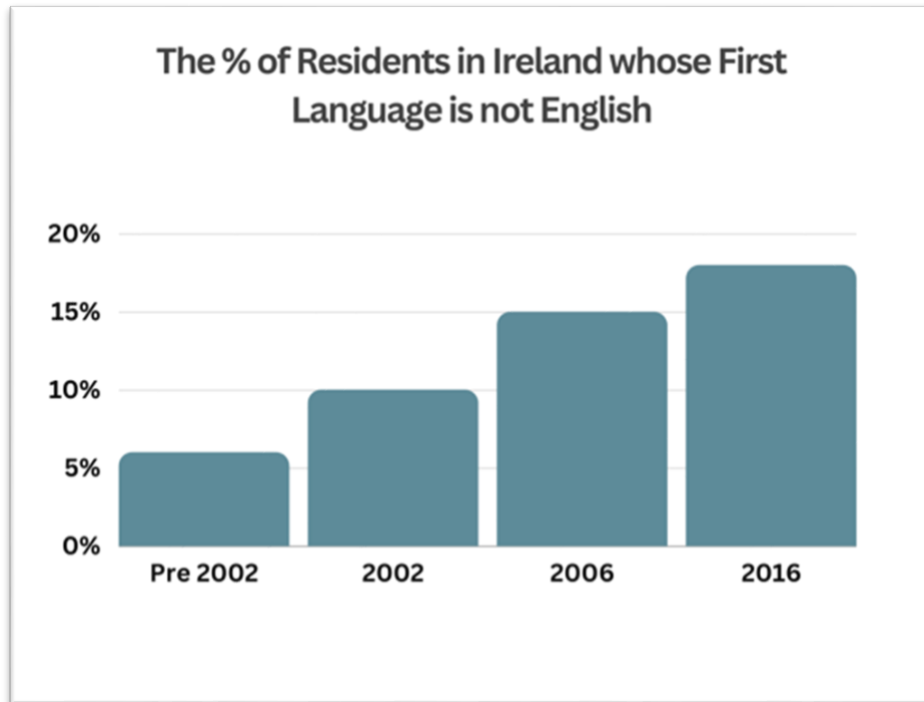
“English is everywhere and nowhere, omnipresent and unnoticed.” (p.33)

As society changed and immigration increased this lack of recognition of the place of English in our society created issues when the provision of ESOL became necessary (Sheridan, 2015, p.149).

Migration trends in Ireland started to change from 1996 on. A long history of migration out of the country started to be overtaken by migration into the State. Easy entry into the country in terms of visa and the economic upturn, in the 1990s, known as the “Celtic Tiger” made Ireland an attractive prospect for the opportunity of work and prosperity (Gilmartin, 2012, p.1). Many immigrants in this period were economic migrants. However, the first refugees, who were Vietnamese, arrived as early as 1979 and by 2000, 10,936 refugees had arrived to Ireland seeking asylum (Sheridan, 2015, p.150). Even during the post “Celtic Tiger” economic crash, which saw an exodus of Irish again, immigrants arriving into Ireland continued (Mac Einrí & White, 2008, p.157). By 2020 the total number of residents in Ireland that were not born here was 873,839 (World Data, 2023).

The percentage of Irish residents that were born outside Ireland continued a steady upward trajectory from 2002. Results from the 2006 Census showed an increase to 10% from a previous 5.6% in 2002 and to 12% by 2006 to a high of 17.3% by 2016 (Census cited in SOLAS, 2018, p. 5). By 2016 the national census reported that 612,018 people in Ireland spoke a language other than English at home (Immigration Council, 2017, p.4).





*Table 1 Rounded up to whole figure of the % of Non-English Speakers in Ireland*

Although society and the linguistic landscape was clearly changing, and rapidly so, the policies and provision for ESOL were less clear. The narrative of provision for ESOL was first, officially, seen in the White Paper in 2000 having previously been absent from the Green Paper of 1998 which is testament to the changes in the population immigration profile. Within this there was an incentive to provide English for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in a bid to get them involved in education. It was decided that the cost involved should come from the Adult literacy and Community Education, (ALCE) budget (Ward & Ayton, 2019, p.14).

How they would provide for ESOL, was at the discretion of the individual centres. A small number of centres allocated separate ESOL funding within ALCE. Tutors employed were mainly those who had qualifications and experience in Adult Literacy, (AL) and English as a Foreign Language, (EFL) in the private sector. However, this incentive, intended to be a temporary fix, assumed the role of a permanent situation. Although there was an acknowledgement of the need for ESOL, it was recognised that more attention to the sector would be required going forward. Unfortunately after the economic downturn of 2008 little more was done for ESOL. Vying for funding for ESOL from the overarching ALCE still exists today (SOLAS, 2018, Sheridan, 2015). It is

thought, by many working in the sector, that ESOL needs to be a separate strand within the sector (SOLAS, 2018, p.42).

Another separate government funded provision of ESOL for refugees was initiated with The National Development Plan of 2000-2006. This funded the Refugee Language Support Unit, (RLSU) (later renamed Integrate Ireland Language and Training, (IILT)) which created fulltime courses for refugees in Ireland with the specific goal of providing language training for employment. Admission to these courses was quite specific. This requirement along with the course's employment focused curriculum was subjected to a lot of criticism (Sheridan, 2015, p.152). Ultimately in 2008 the Office for the Minister for Integration and the Department of Education and Science, (DES) deemed all responsibility of the provision of ESOL, going forward, should come under the Vocational Education Committees, (VEC) and so IILT was shut down (Sheridan, 2015, p.152). The VECs, where the ALCE was situated, created one year fulltime courses for refugees (SOLAS, 2018, p. 3). By 2012 these fulltime courses were also ended due to a national economic crises (Sheridan, 2015, p. 150).

In 2013 the 33 VECs were dissolved and 16 ETBs around the country were created in their place. SOLAS (2018) is the governing body for the ETBs. In its recent report it commits to a "clear policy for ESOL provision"(p.3). However, as almost 60% of lower level linguist skilled ESOL learners are unemployed with 26% of those long-term unemployed (p.19), the policy seeks to facilitate learners "with priority to low-skilled and unemployed migrants", to be educated to fill the workforce (p.3). I would argue that this period of diverse options, policy and setting for ESOL attests to the lack of a comprehensive consideration of the subject at government policy level.

### **Qualifications and Pedagogy for ESOL**

At present an ESOL tutor should have a primary degree along with the certificate in teaching English to speakers of other languages, CELTA certificate or equivalent, depending on the year of study (QQIa, 2023). CELTA is an intensive short course. This course has merits as it firstly, covers a range of practical elements of teaching English as a foreign language,

“The syllabus consists of five specific topic areas:

- Topic 1 Learners and teachers, and the teaching and learning context
- Topic 2 Language analysis and awareness
- Topic 3 Language skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing
- Topic 4 Planning and resources for different teaching contexts
- Topic 5 Developing teaching skills and professionalism.” (Cambridge English, 2023, p. 2)

Secondly, it offers practical in-class experience guided by trainers (Morton et al., 2006, p.38)

Morton et al. (2006) however, explain that there are weaknesses in this curriculum for training that might have implications for the ESOL tutor’s practice. This course lacks time or space for discussion or exploration for trainee tutors. It promotes a program or teacher led curriculum. This prescriptive method can result in the tutor “struggling” or even “failing” to adjust to the ESOL classroom. Prior beliefs of the trainees are not included and there is no time to ask “why?”. An introduction into the cultural and educational diversity of the ESOL group is completely absent (p.38). Reflection, which also plays an important role in the tutor’s development, is also lacking from CELTA training (p.26).

Today ESOL tutors’ teaching methods largely derive from CELTA (Morton et al., 2006, p.37). There are three main internationally accepted teaching methods for teaching English as a second language; the grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual method, and the communicative approach method, (CA). The most widely used in Ireland and the UK is the CA method, popular since the 1970s. The CA method promotes communication and oral language production (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p. 42). Some critics would claim that the CA method used in the classrooms is satisfying a neo-liberal hegemony. Angelo (2021) clarifies that within the CA method there is the weak and strong form. The weaker version is more formulaic and structured implementing role-play and structured dialogue curtailing the learner’s input. The stronger version is more student lead and freer in its format encouraging more debate in the session. Angelo criticises the weaker version claiming that it feeds into the neo-liberal language commodity discussion and negates “culture capital” by pursuing a

more skilled language approach (pp.793-794). A contrarian view is that the experienced tutor will create hybrid syllabi based on the complex needs and sociolinguistic dynamic of the group (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.40). Some groups favour a more structured environment as it is culturally what they have more experience of and feel more comfortable with (Ćatibušić et al., 2019, p.10). To override the learners legitimate needs and inflict a more Western approach and resources can be counterproductive and result in the learner not thriving. Another concern of Angelo's claim that less scaffolding should exist in the weaker form of CA, is that learners who have less language skills, actually need more scaffolding and more direction. In providing this they can be encouraged beyond their capabilities safely which, enables them to experience more language learning than if less directed (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p. 43).

Conversely, as the learner advances, the stronger CA may also not suit all learners. While certainly less structure is needed and discussions can be more learner lead however, the needs of the learner should be considered more (Angelo, 2021, p.793). As learners progress, their situation in society may change. Learners might have gained employment or have the possibility of changing careers or gaining promotion. In these cases the language skills needed might change. There might be more need for language for specific use, writing skills, presentation skills, interview skills etc. While communication is important, a strong CA is not always in the best interest of the learner. Instead a "hybrid" method of the CA, based on the learner profile, is of more benefit (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.36). Indeed research in the UK reveals that ESOL tutors largely reject traditional materials used for EFL and in the case of ESOL create their own bank of "eclectic" resources and adopt what now might be considered the "post-method condition" (Badjadi, 2020, p.22). This term, coined by Kumaravadivelu in 1994, is the use of a method largely constructed based on the tutor's experience, expertise and reflection. Relevant pedagogy is used that is centred on the learners needs (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, pp.44-45). My personal experience in Ireland would mirror this "post-method condition" as I create recourses that are specific to each group. I have found that a lot of my development as a practitioner has resulted in learning from the ground up. Particularly as an ESOL tutor the needs of the learners inform my teaching methods.

## Language Level Assessment

In the ETBs, assessment of learners' language level is done before they start a course and progress should be monitored regularly. A variety of language level assessments are implemented in different ETBs at entry to ESOL courses (SOLAS, 2018, p.44). All results are categorised in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CERF levels which was first introduced in 1991 (COU, 2022). The lowest language level entry point is A0-A1 and C2 is proficiency level. In 2015, 62.5% of participants were reported to be at the A0-A1, beginner level while 22.5% were at B1-B2, intermediate level. At the top end of English language competency C1-C2, advanced, only 2.5% were reported to have participated. Sitting outside the traditional CEFR categories and something I had not experienced in EFL is "literacy for ESOL" which accounts for 5% (SOLAS, 2018, p.17). This is a learner who has barriers in both English language skills and literacy in their home language.

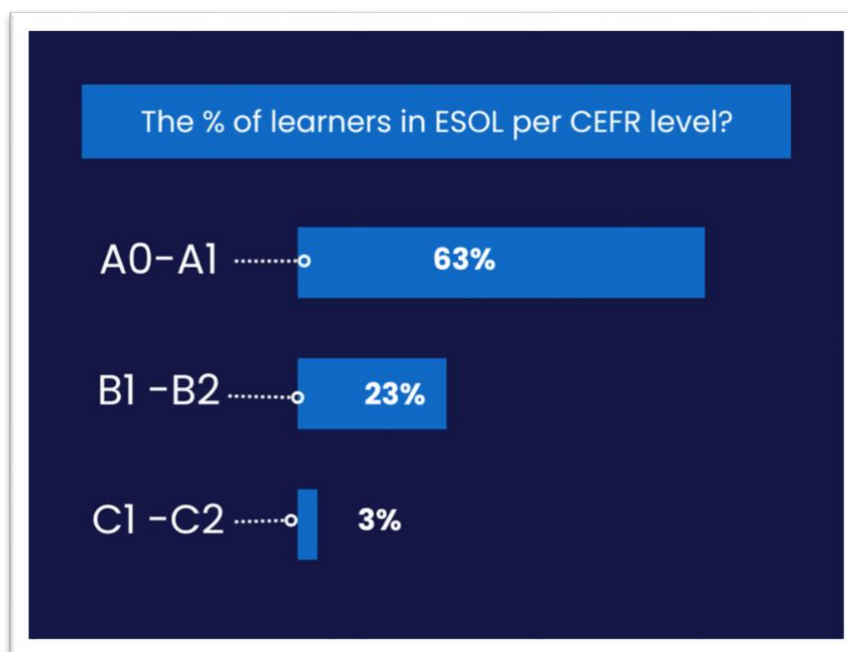


Table 2 The CERF levels in ETBs in 2015

## The ESOL Learner and Language Acquisition

It can take anything from 2 to 10 years to learn a second language depending on many different and sometimes intersectional factors (Kouritzin, 2000, p.14). In my opinion there is a marked difference in the dynamics of the ESOL classroom in comparison to

the EFL one. In the ESOL classroom there is more instance of earnestness, lack of confidence and differing life goals. I have found that are barriers pertinent to the ESOL learner that don't exist for the EFL learner. The ESOL learner in Ireland is afforded two rights in the context of language, the first is the right to retain the language of their home country as it is central to identity and the second is the right to learn English as a means to access Irish society (Little, 2022, Cooke & Simpson, 2008). Although the learner has the right to learn English, ESOL learners bring a myriad of barriers and vulnerabilities into the classroom which can hinder learning and may in turn even put the tutor in a vulnerable position.

Little (2022, pp.9-14) gives us some insight into the diversity that the tutor may encounter in the ESOL group. Multiple factors determine the success of the learner in the acquisition of English. As an individual learner there are factors that can impede or conversely facilitate the learning process. The pressure to resettle in another country where so much is unfamiliar creates fear and uncertainty in some while in others can motivate to learn. Some learners might be preoccupied with the longing to return to what is familiar which can be a barrier to motivation for language acquisition. For others their arrival to Ireland is perceived as a new opportunity for a better life and learning the language is a priority. Feelings of isolation and exclusion are other factors that can inhibit the learning process. Apart from the individual factors other demographics exist in the group that have a bearing on the language learning journey (Little, 2022, pp.9-14).

- AGE. While it is true that a new language can be learnt at any age many children have less responsibilities and pressures than adults which, can enable them to learn languages more easily in the right circumstances.
- FIRST LANGUAGE. The learner's first language can be a factor in that the further away your first language is from your new language in terms of phonology and mechanics the harder the learning process can be.
- ALPHABET. Many learners in the ESOL classroom in Ireland have very different alphabets to the English Latin/Roman alphabet. This can create a blurring or an overlap of the literacy and language needs that is often present in the English classroom (Roberts et al., 2007, p.21).

- **CULTURAL BACKGROUND.** English learning is centred on western culture which, for many refugees, is quite alien. Traditional text books used for learning English focus on this culture which can be exclusive to some learners in the room (Roberts and Cooke, 2009, p.624). If the learner feels isolated culturally, this may mean progress can be difficult.
- **PRIOR EDUCATION.** This can be very varied in the ESOL classroom. If a learner has had a negative educational experience, learning English might be impacted (Little, 2022, p.13). In some classes there can be a wide gap between the extent that some learners have benefited from prior education while others in the same language level class have not (SOLAS, 2018, p.18).

Cooke and Simpson (2008, p.13-20) identify other extensive and often intersectional list of diversities that exist within the same community of learners; class, ethnicity, social network, family situation, aspiration, religion, gender and class.

Drawing on Little's point on prior education, mixed literacy levels is a feature of the ESOL classroom that differs from the EFL class. It is not unusual to find learners with a university education in the same group as a learner with little prior education (Ćatibušić et al., 2019, p.10). Further to that, as mentioned above 5% of learners in ESOL have literacy issues. This might be due to exclusion from education resulting from different social norms or conflict in the home country (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p 92). ESOL for literacy which might be better served separately to ESOL language classes, is all too often the concern of the ESOL tutor in the lower level ESOL classroom (SOLAS, 2018, p.18). It is possible to have a group with the same spoken level of English but with very varying literacy levels (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.95). The tutor has the added task of making provision for this although many are not specifically trained or qualified to do so (Roberts et al., 2022, p.27). For the learner this can cause stress that effects both motivation and success in language acquisition (Little, 2022, p.6). In fact research shows a higher attrition rate amongst ESOL learners with literacy issues (SOLAS, 2018, p.17).

Differing rights and status of the learners in an ESOL classroom can create pressure in the learning environment. Not all learners have the same opportunities outside the classroom when they arrive to Ireland initially and this can affect what happens in the classroom. NALA (2022, p.17-25) summarises the various routes into the country and

the rights associated with them. Asylum seekers do not have many rights. They cannot leave the country, work or apply for citizenship. Post 2000 asylum seekers are accommodated by the State in direct provision centres. There are two categories of refugees. The first, a program refugee, is a person who has been invited to Ireland under a Government decision in response to a humanitarian request, usually from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), either for the purposes of temporary protection or resettlement. The second, a convention refugee, is a person who fulfils the requirements of the definition of a refugee under the terms of the Geneva Convention and is granted refugee status. All refugees are entitled to the same rights as Irish nationals and may apply for citizenship after three years. Green card holders can also enjoy the same entitlements as refugees but depending on the relationship they have with the Irish national they can apply for citizenship after three or five years (NALA, 2022, p.17-25). The status of the learner can give rise to a lack of confidence in learning and a lack of opportunity to access the language outside the classroom. Concentration and motivation may also be hampered for the same reason (Cooke, 2006, p.61).

### **Trauma in the ESOL Classroom**

The above issues are well documented in policy, reports and research. Trauma in the ESOL classroom, however is rarely acknowledged. Research tells us that trauma has a very real presence in this learning setting (Palanac, 2019, Cooke, 2006 and Wilson, 2022, Gordon, 2011, Stevens, 2001). However the ESOL tutor is usually not qualified to deal with issues that can arise from the presence or manifestations of trauma during the class. Some argue that trauma should be dealt with before the initiation of language acquisition (Perry cited in Iversen et al., 2014, p.64). Common practice is however, to commence language learning soon after arrival into the host country. The acquisition of the English language is prioritised as it is perceived to be the key to integration into society (SOLAS, 2022, p.3). Despite the emphasis on language acquisition and the important role of the ESOL tutor has, little research has been undertaken about the impact of trauma on language acquisition and how to facilitate learners with trauma in the ESOL class (Gordon, 2011, p.3).



As with the diversity that exists amongst learners, in the ESOL group, there are also a considerable number of ways in which the learner may have experienced trauma in their country of origin. Learners may have experienced trauma in their lives for different reasons; having lost families, homes, experiences of human trafficking, torture and more. Along with the type of trauma, the severity and longevity of the trauma experienced are factors that influence success in learning. The learner may feel isolated and excluded in their new country. One way to overcome that might be to learn the host country's language, in the case of Ireland that would be English. However, symptoms of trauma can inhibit language learning (Palanac, 2019, p.3-14).

The degree of trauma that the refugee was subjected to may have learning motivational implications. Chiswick and Miller (cited in Iverson et al., 2014, p.60) found that refugees who suffered from violence are less likely to be motivated to learn a new language than the refugee who left their country of origin by choice. The constraint to learn another language can be a trigger for the refugee causing additional stress. Iverson (2014) argues that intersectionality comes into play as prior learning, age, etc described by Little (2022, p.9-14) can influence the level of post trauma stress experienced. For example if two learners have suffered the same type of trauma but have different levels of prior learning they may feel different levels of stress during the English class (Iverson et al., 2014, p.65).

Studies reveal that between 30% and 86% of refugees suffer from trauma caused before arriving into their new country (Thompson cited in Gordon, 2011, p.2). One of the first points of contact a refugee might have in their new country will be the ESOL classroom. Learners will arrive into the classroom with trauma; it may not have been treated beforehand. While the structure and routine of an English class can be a good thing and enhance well-being, their ability to acquire their new language can be impacted by trauma (Gordon, 2011, p.2). The presence of trauma has implications for learning as Stevens (2001) describes symptoms of trauma as wide-ranging; fatigue, lack of concentration, headaches, nightmares, sleeping problems, breathing problems and more. These symptoms will directly affect learning and cognitive function (p.86). Finn also describes the presence of trauma which can impact academic achievement and language acquisition (2010, p.587)

Manifestation of trauma in the classroom can be identified in the learner's "fight-flight" mode when the reaction to everything is as if the traumatic event was ongoing (Kolk cited in Palanac, 2019, p.7). The indications of this are symptoms of stress, restlessness, fearful of risk-taking and irritability (Hoch et al. cited in Palanac, 2019, p.3). Regular absenteeism, lateness, avoidance of tasks and interaction with others are other indicators that the learner may be suffering post-traumatic stress. The tutor should also be aware that certain topics covered in the class such as "The family" may cause traumatic reactions and can even bring on flashbacks or panic attacks (Wilbur, 2016, p. 2).

As there is little training specifically for responding to trauma or other barriers to learning in the ESOL classroom this can pose a challenge for the tutor. Speaking from a point of experience, a tutor is more than a language teacher. I find although I am trained as a teacher I must also draw on the skills of councillor, interpreter and facilitator.

### **Teaching Philosophy for ESOL.**

The ETBs pedagogical philosophy is grounded in theories of learner-centred approach, (LCA) shaped by many theorists including Carl Rogers and Malcom Knowles (ETBI, 2023). However research also indicates that a learner-centred ethos is appropriate for ESOL (Palanac, 2019, Gilmartin, 2008, Little, 2022, Mendenhall et al., 2015, Badjadi, 2020). ESOL learner groups are invariably an eclectic mix of diverse cultures, different reasons for coming to this country, previous life experience and different educational needs. I contend, considering the rich melange described in a previous section it would be impossible to approach the learners as one homogenous unit. It is much more productive to help them enable their own learning and enhance their agency. Taking this into account the LCA is of huge benefit to attend to the needs of all the learners (Little, 2022, pp.9-14). But what exactly is a learner-centre approach? There are many different theorists with differing philosophical perspectives.

In the 1970s and 1980s the theories of Carl Rogers' humanistic person-centred approach became a prominent feature in the education debate (Rogers et al., 2013, p.i) . For the purpose of this thesis I refer to "person" as "learner". The learner-centred

approach, (LCA) starts with and maintains the learners needs throughout the learning process (Rogers,1983, p.167). A Rogerian LCA, in the ESOL classroom, welcomes individuality, the learner's good sense of well-being and active social interaction and relies less on rules and regulations (Broudy,1973, p.68). Rogers & Freiberg disagree with transmission based learning and instead promote a holistic approach (Rogers & Freiberg,1994, p.36). They claim learners should continually strive to be active "citizens" in the learning environment and that they should be creators of learning as self-initiators (Rogers & Freiberg,1994, pp.8-9). Here, the learning focus shifts from the outcome to the process of learning and the personal growth of the individual. In an ESOL group this assists with overcoming the many barriers to learning that exist. By shifting the focus onto the needs of the learners they can flourish and be empowered. Rogers believes that everyone has the potential for "self-understanding" and the wherewithal within themselves to change and grow. However, some critics of this humanist approach argue that this focus on the self and emotions negates the cognitive development of the learner (Hhatib, Sarem, & Hamidi, 2013, p.46). Rogers argues that in traditional learning settings the learner engages the left side of the brain. Whereas, when the learner is present both emotionally and cognitively he/she will actually engage both the left and the right side of the brain (Rogers, 1983, p. 20). This is an interesting theory in the context of ESOL. In my experience, those more vulnerable learners suffering from trauma or other barriers mentioned before, are more productive in a setting that is conducive to the learner being emotionally connected to the group.

The ESOL tutor, when viewed as a Rogerian facilitator three important attributes emerge. Firstly authenticity in tutor, enabling a real relationship with the learner and not the representation of the face of a curriculum. Secondly, the tutor should have trust in learners and their ability to find their learning path. Lastly, Rogers advocates for empathy in the tutor allowing for a deeper understanding for the learner in the process (Rogers, Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990, pp.306-310). Results from research by The National Consortium for Humanizing Education, NCHE claim that there was verbal interaction, more eye contact, physical movement, questioning, problem solving, and creativity in a learner centred environment (Rogers, 1983, p.204). Rogers also refers to the positive effect that this philosophy in teaching has on the facilitator. He speaks of how facilitators felt grateful and enriched after fully

embracing the LCA (Rogers, 1983, p.319). I have found this philosophy provides a sense of authentic connection between the tutor and learner group that doesn't exist with a top-down behaviourist philosophy (Fitzsimons, 2017, p.107).

Another criticism of a LCA stems from the concept of individualism. Grant (1999) provides his definition of individualism claiming that firstly, it prioritises the person's existence in isolation from society. Secondly, he posits that LCA promotes the rights of one person as more important than those of others (cited in Pearson & Podeschi, p.45). Shaw and Colimore (1999) claim that this philosophy leads to a "zero-sum scenario" where society will lose out if the individual needs are focused on. This may cause friction between the two spheres of the person and the society in which he/she exists (cited in Pearson & Podeschi, p.44). However, I would argue that for the ESOL learner who is already isolated in society due to the language barrier, embracing each as an individual can enhance wellbeing and confidence within the learner group. Other positive attributes of this LCA consist of an inclusive and respectful environment so that no student might feel discriminated against but instead feels included. With this the syllabus and language used for ESOL is relevant to the needs of the learners. The LCA model compensates or adjust to include a method to compensate for all barriers to learning (Mendenhall et al., 2015, pp. 98-100). It should be noted at this juncture that this is at variance with the teacher led practice promoted in the CELTA training.

Rogers' theories assist a LCA in the classroom from a humanist perspective, the further reaching theories of Paulo Freire however, can take this onto a critical level where beyond empowerment, transformation may be possible.

### **Freire's Critical Philosophy**

The Brazilian, Freire, believed in the possibility of emancipation and transformation through education. Freire's critical theories of oppression stem from the Marxist ideas of the ruling classes exerting dominance over the working classes (Mayo, 2015, p.115). Freire (1970) concerned himself with the struggles of the poor, or "oppressed", believing that they adapt and accept their situation, knowing liberation only through the achievement of becoming in turn an "oppressor" (p.46). Freire believed the oppressed could achieve "critical intervention" through consciousness (p.52). The concept of the oppressed gaining "conscientização" or consciousness of their situation in society and

the obstacles to their humanisation was key to transformation (p.115). Freire (1970) developed a philosophy of pedagogy that challenged the concept of “banking” in traditional forms of education (p, 72) and promoted the idea of “education as a practice of freedom” (p, 81). Drawing on a Freirean critical theory in the ESOL classroom the tutor seeks a transformative learning experience for the learner.

Freire describes the “banking” based learning as a form of dominance over the learner where education becomes a “gift bestowed” (p.72) by an autoreactive figure. In this type of education the teacher becomes the oppressor and the learner is accepting of their lack of knowledge and is submissive in being “filled” with information (Freire, 1970, p.72). For Freire the “empty vessel to be filled” (p.79) form of pedagogy should be eradicated and replaced with a holistic “whole person learning” approach (Freire, 1970, p.72).

It is necessary to consider that each ESOL group is different and a liberating form of education can only be achieved if the tutor is aware of this. The syllabus therefore should be “situated, experimental, creative” to achieve transformation (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.23-27). However, it is not just an opportunity for the learner as the tutor also learns. Who their learners are, where they come from, where they are placed in society. This enriching reciprocal learning is also acknowledged by Freire (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.33). I find this resembles the earlier point about the teacher in the Rogerian classroom feeling fulfilled when engaged in a LCA. The self-recognition that the tutor is not the only person in the room with knowledge is another fundamental attribute of critical pedagogy. I concur, this is essential in the ESOL group as it must not be forgotten that the learners have social and cultural capital from their home countries; they may struggle to express themselves in English but they have life experience and education prior to arriving in Ireland (Bourdieu, 1986, pp.17-26).

When we consider the group setting, to achieve a critical philosophy, it is essential to engage the ESOL learners on a level that considers the role of English in their new society. When implemented in the ESOL classroom Freire’s praxis, in which theory is embodied and enacted and “without which individuals cannot be truly human” brings with it the possibility of transformative learning (p.72). With this approach the learners’ engagement can be effected through a questioning or discovery (p.88). Democracy,

constructive discussion, conversation and challenging ideas within the group is necessary as it is conducive to learning. Freire posits dialogue in its critical form is an important element in the classroom (p.92).

Drawing on my own pedagogical challenges I am aware that it may not always be possible to maintain an either humanistic or critical approach at the lower level of linguistic ability. Insight into this dilemma can be gleaned from Malcom Knowles. Knowles acknowledges this, advocating for a behaviourist approach in cases such as that of “to protect human life” (Knowles, 1989, p.93). In ESOL when I am presented with a learner group with no English but whose needs are to speak English to navigate this new society it may be necessary to start off with the basics which learners must repeat and regurgitate in the class (Badjadi, 2020, p.22). This is sometimes done without a great level of democracy (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.44). I am reassured by the knowledge that it differs from the behaviourist philosophy in that the learners do not get rewarded as would happen in a Skinner class (Raphaeli, 2012). Rather, they are provided with essential tools to afford them basic agency beyond the classroom while a respectful, trusting, more humanistic learner-centred environment is maintained for the group at all times (Knowles, 1989, p.89).

In ESOL, learners are more likely to be people that have been failed by either a former society or former education experience. As a tutor of migrants learning English it is important for me to know the learners in each group and to understand their world and their experience (Cooke, 2006, p.57). Learners should be supported with learning activities in an environment that aligns with what is happening outside the classroom as this will increase the possibility of success (Shor & Freire 1987, p.26). A critical LCA, when possible to implement, can provide renewed hope and agency in the education system and/or the new society the learners and the groups have to live in. Involving the individual learner and the group in the creation of the curriculum through a democratic process and making it relevant to their experience in their new context while incorporating experiences of their old society is essential for language acquisition (Roberts & Cooke, 2009, Gilmartin, 2008).

## **Power and Oppression in ESOL**

The concepts of social justice, liberation and power underpin this study. One of the means by which migrants, refugees and asylum seekers can create change in their lives in Ireland is through the acquisition of English. However, a tutor who strives for a critical pedagogy will be aware of the larger social factors that are at play in the lives of their learners. It is not solely the learning of English that will transform the ESOL learner's life but learning why English is important to enable understanding of their positioning in society. From a critical perspective, the tutor will appreciate that English also relates to class, gender, ethnicity and political status for the learners. That is to say that it is not only English skills that influence the possibility of emancipation (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.110). I am aware for example, of learners in my groups, who are restricted in language acquisition as they are confined to the family home in the role of carer as dictated by their cultural norms. This may lessen their possibility of interacting and implementing their language skills in society thus hindering progress and agency.

As the tutor orientates their pedagogy towards a critical one they change the power dynamics in the group. Conversely, a rigid tightly scripted tutor led class can position the tutor as an oppressor; the person in the group with all the knowledge and therefore all the power. Although tutors in this case may hope to be doing good they, Freire suggests they are acting in a "humanitarian" way rather than "humanistic" (Freire, 1970, p.52). This might suggest that the tutor is filling the role of a saviour; the one with the power to liberate, creating an imbalance in their position in the group.

At this point it is necessary to examine a criticism of Freire's theories. The aforementioned is one example of a binary view that some critics claim were held by Freire; oppressed versus oppressor is another (Mayo, 2015, p. 130). I suggest a polarisation of people negates the intersectionality that exists due to class, gender etc as Allen (2002) explains;

"For instance, working-class whites are oppressed by capitalism but are privileged by white supremacy" (p.32).

The presentation of QQI or other accredited courses for ESOL may restrict the tutor's pedagogy to a banking style, thus reducing the possibility of transformative learning

(Freire, 1970, p.72). I would further argue, this actually may place the tutor in the position of being the “oppressor” and the “oppressed” at the same time. Certified courses, that are predetermined in content, can leave little space for creativity. If a tutor implements a banking style, this may position them as oppressor. However as the push for accreditation comes from management down, the ETBs assertion of its power over the tutor can simultaneously position the tutor as oppressed. To counter this, Freire recommends that the teacher must find their place in their practice (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.47). This suggests a scenario of resistance; if the tutor chooses to interpret the required elements of the course in a manner that favours the needs of the group then the tutor is exercising their agency and resistance.

With the introduction of QQI accredited courses, in 2012 came the opportunity of learners gaining recognition for their skills on a national level (QQI b, 2023). While this is welcomed by many, it is questionable as to whether it is helpful to the learner on an emancipatory level. Opportunities maybe created to improve “employability” however, this does not necessarily lead to “employment”. While learners are gaining more qualification there may be little opportunity for praxis in the ESOL group. With the implementation of praxis comes collective reflection on the complexity of education and English in the learners lives (Mayo, 2015, p. 123). Through praxis learners and tutors can work together to understand the learners’ need for liberation and to remake their history (Freire, 1970, p101). There are no unaccredited courses for ESOL past lower linguist level. I contend, unaccredited courses offer the tutor more flexibility to facilitate a critical approach with the presence of praxis or “conscientização” than QQI or other accredited courses.

### **Position of Power in the ETB**

The managerial structure of the ETB is set up to mimic the private sector (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.38). This structure is influenced by the “employment activation” agenda that seeks to get everyone into the job market and performance is a dictator of policy (Grummell & Murray, 2015, p.439). As soon as the ESOL learner’s language ability improves there is a push for “progression” from the educational managers (SOLAS, 2018, p.27). ESOL non-certified courses progress quickly onto QQI or other accredited courses. With these, assignment briefs, assessments and learner



portfolios are implemented, by the tutors, according to the requirements of “Module Descriptors” (QQI, 2022).

With accreditation the emphasis shifts to gaining a certificate or commodity which can then be used in the job market. The concept of English courses as a commodity to enhance economic or social status of individuals can create a linguistic hegemony. This identifies English as the superior and dominant language. The concept of hegemony comes from the Italian Antonio Gramsci (1971) who describes it as the result of a co-facilitation relationship between the State and civil society (p.20). The civil society, Gramsci explains is “a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks” that scaffolds the existing hegemony (Gramsci, 1971, p.447). If tutors and learners buy into this, and further support it, they may be exacerbating this linguistic hegemony.

While some material content of these certified courses can be of pedagogical value, the State’s agenda can exert power over the tutor in the creation of the ESOL syllabus. Freire maintains;

“We know that it’s not education which shapes society, but on the contrary, it is society which shapes education according to the interests of those who have power”. (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.36)

The requirements of a QQI course and the rate of presentation may lead to a “banking” scenario of teaching. On a cautionary note, it might be remembered that for many learners their ESOL class is the only time and place they get to practice and work on the language acquisition so it is essential that the resources are dictated by the learners not the State (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.68). In my experience learning time is also reduced in these courses as assignments or measuring of outcomes must all be completed to attain certification. Inspections of QQI portfolios are carried out, both internally and externally, if the tutor has not ensured the quality as per the QQI standard then the learner will fail to achieve certification (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.38). This will reflect badly on the tutor and jeopardise future work. This possible subjugation of the tutor to perform for the ETB and not to the needs of the learner is indicative of a neo-liberal agenda and contrary to a liberating pedagogy (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.35). Without resistance on the part of the tutor, the constant demand of

accountability can lead to less authenticity as compliance breeds uniformity in the workplace (Lynch, 2010, p.55).

I suggest the objective for ESOL by SOLAS, at policy level, is to satisfy a neo-liberal meritocracy sought by the State. “Upskilling” and “reskilling” are terms used all over ESOL policy for ETBs to appease the capitalist agenda of preparing learners to satisfy the labour market’s needs (SOLAS, 2018). While, for me, ESOL classes should also be about agency and liberation.

“Learning however should be more than a preparation for work” (Lynch & Baker, 2005, p134)

By promoting ESOL as a language for economic growth the possibility of further marginalisation of immigrants exists as their home language may become second rated (Bock, 2021, p.82). An ever-increasing development of strategy for outcomes and progression of the ESOL learner in ETBs also feeds into the knowledge economy agenda to make the Low Knowledge Skills people more employable while doing little to help them with their needs to gain agency in society. I also suggest this ignores the learner’s previous social and cultural capital completely; some learners have come to Ireland with different life experience, skills, trades and higher education. As mentioned before while an ESOL learner may have low linguistic skills they have other skills and education (Bourdieu, 1986, pp.17-26). I contend, courses that can be measured and weighed are favoured by the ETB as they are considered a return for any investment by the State (Gleeson et al. 2005, Hardiman 2012, cited in Grummell & Murray, 2015, p.436).

## **Bureaucracy and Precarious Employment**

Policies by SOLAS create measures of quantifying outcomes in a bid to “improve quality” in the sector for the State (SOLAS, 2018, p.41). However, another conflict arises for the ESOL tutors in ETBs as they are left to fulfil the increasing and lowly paid additional bureaucratic requirements that come particularly with the QQI courses. There is a specific amount of assignments that have to be documented and a particular way to present the outcomes in preparation for inspection particularly of a QQI course that takes time and organisation. There are no books or specific resources for QQI so tutors spend a lot of unpaid hours sourcing or creating material. However these

materials have to adhere to the strict guidelines of the Module Descriptor and can leave little space for praxis (Freire, 1970, p.72).

This bureaucracy reaches far beyond what the tutor gets paid to do and can change ESOL provision in the classroom as it detracts from the needs of the learners (Grummell & Murray, 2015, p.438). For the tutor, this also suggests a “vocational” element to the job. Cooke and Simpson argue that this level of commitment and vocational is essential if ESOL in adult education is to survive (2008, p.38). However, the compliance of tutors to fulfil their bureaucratic obligations may be serving to conserve a hegemonic agenda, held by the ETB, that seeks to justify high levels of additional unpaid work in the name of quality and accountability (Brookfield, 2005, p.100).

The concept of accreditation in ESOL reveals an ideology of education serving the State rather than the learner. Freire would suggest that education with standardisation and measurability satisfies the dominant power and perpetuates and reproduces their position. For transformation and liberation in education the tutor is tasked with the job of “denouncing” this reproduction (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.36). However, in the presentation of an accredited ESOL course there is the possibility of the tutor becoming the oppressor. As these courses favour a banking form of ESOL provision the possibility of critical pedagogy is reduced and positions the tutor as a transmitter of knowledge (Freire, 1970, p.71). The complexity of this situation is compounded by the terms and conditions of many tutor’s job situation.

For many, the job of ESOL tutor is precarious and usually only of a part-time nature. This is an accepted norm in a neo-liberal setup which sees a move away from a rights based society. This move is framed in a “flexible job” environment bringing with it a lack of job security. A lack of job security for ESOL tutors has a direct effect on their standard of living and on the level of stress they feel (Fitzsimons, 2017, p.207). The part-time status of the job offers an opportunity to ETBs to “respond to market fluctuations” (Grummell & Murray, 2015, p.439). A report produced by the University of Limerick (2015) explains that courses are “funding driven” and that ETB employers are reluctant to give full contracts to tutors but instead utilise an “if and when” hybrid style contract which promises nothing (p.83). Such terms and conditions may leave

tutors feeling undervalued and ultimately reduce a sense of agency in the workplace. Tenuous contracts with a lack of job security weighs heavy and create a sense of powerlessness (p.43). They may also have feelings of being vulnerable and marginalised (Keyes, 2004, p.74). These strains experienced in the workplace are understandably factors that can impact their role as a tutor and the choices they can make in their pedagogy.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored the literature and theories associated with ESOL in adult education. Both through the literature and my experience, the diversity of the ESOL groups and the differing needs associated with this were examined. The possibility of implementing a one size fits all for learner groups was revealed to be highly unlikely at lower levels due the complexities of the group. While at higher levels, although this is more possible the lack of choice of course that are ESOL specific, may leave little scope for a LCA or critical pedagogy. How the tutor might experience this was found to be as complex as the learner groups. In the class they can occupy multiple traits of other roles when dealing with emotions, literacy, accredited courses and more. Outside the class there is the juxtaposition of a political role of fulfilling bureaucratic requirements of the accreditation and the ETB organisation.

# The Chapter 3 Methodology

## **Introduction**

This chapter details the paradigms of my methodology for the thesis. As Chapter 1 revealed my research is borne from an interest in the experience of other ESOL tutors. Chapter 2 has highlighted the barriers to learning and the diversity that exists amongst the learners which the ESOL tutors encounter every day. The literature review has also suggested tensions emanating from accreditation and working conditions. To arrive at a deeper level of understanding and extract the pertinent issues associated with being a tutor of ESOL in the ETBs, I wanted to go directly to the tutors to give them a voice. I am interested in exploring the challenges they might face in the classrooms and those they might face in the workplace and the implications for their practice.

In Chapter 3, initially, I outline my ontological and epistemological position. My work and life experience along with my personal views form my ontological stance. In my research I found aspects of both a social constructivist world view and critical theory which resonated with me in the understanding of my epistemological position. I describe the qualitative research approach that I chose as a framework to explore what concerns tutors about their work. Following this I give an overview of my sampling and data analysis. Finally, I explain the ethical concerns and the limitations of my research.

## **My Ontological Stance**

Crotty (1998) explains “ontology is the study of being” and through this the world “becomes a world of meaning only when meaning-making beings make sense of it” (p.10). As I am the lens through which this thesis is viewed it is important that I describe that lens. Initially my own life experience of learning new languages in a non-school setting taught me about how I learn. This created an awareness that learners may have more success when they engage in the creation of the syllabus and with the process of understanding their pedagogical needs. Through my years teaching

English, I have formed opinions on its value in the world of the learners. Although English can be taught in different educational settings and for different reasons, in this study the focus is English for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland. My aspiration, as a tutor, is to not only equip learners with skills in English, but also to build a trusting relationship within the group so that the time in the classroom can be more than language lessons. If, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the ESOL classroom is the learner's first and most significant experience in Irish society then I believe it should be a learner-centred space where empathy, authenticity and positive regard for the learner is present in the tutor (Rogers, Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990, pp.306-310).

It is also my belief that when conditions allow there is possibility for creating agency and equity, for the learners, through a critical pedagogy. In the absence of a constrained syllabus, uncertified ESOL classes, provide more opportunity for social justice and inclusion for a marginalised group of people. In Chapter 2 it was explained that immigrants have two rights when it comes to language in Ireland. One is the right to retain the home language and the other the right to learn English. The concept of retaining the home language maintains the bond with the home country and preserves linguistic identity. However, with the acquisition of English new bonds and bridges can be made in Irish society where the new home is situated (Gilmartin, 2008, p.102). Offering a democratic, praxis driven ESOL experience can create possibility for agency and transformation, both in the class and beyond (Freire, 1970, p.52).

While QQI courses have a value in the national context and offer the prospect of enhancing employability and further education for some, I have doubts about QQI or other accredited courses offered for ESOL in their present form. The "banking" style offers little space for a democracy and dialogue in the group. The administration associated with them detracts from the ESOL learner's needs and some content is not relevant to the learner's experience outside the class. QQI courses could be of value for the learner but in their present format lack opportunity for creative teaching, dialogue and learner-centredness. Management's push of learners through levels and towards QQI courses conflicts with the concept of letting the learner's needs dictate the pace. This assertion of power over the tutor along with the additional work without pay devalues the work that the tutor is trying to do.

In August of 2022 two other tutors and I were employed to present a three-week intensive ESOL course to a small percentage of the hundreds of Ukrainian refugees who were living on a university's campus for the summer. I met the same two groups each day. This was a very intense situation. Usually, an ESOL classroom is a mix of nationalities and previous experiences. This, however, was a group of the same nationality with the same reason for being there. I was conscious that this was an awful situation for them, and that they were vulnerable. I was also aware of my vulnerability. I knew there could be the presence of trauma and asked myself if I was prepared. There were manifestations of trauma in those weeks, and I just did my best. I came away from the experience with questions about trauma and how I could be better prepared. The question of support for ESOL tutors for this and other pedagogical issues from our employer became a concern for me.

### **My Epistemological Stance**

When researching a paradigm that underpinned my values I recognised that a critical theory lens was akin to my ontological position (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.9). As explored in Chapter 2, a critical theory underpinned by Freire, describes inequalities, power and injustices experienced by people (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.62). How I know my truths speaks to the concept of relativism or a social constructivist position. This explains that my reality is constructed based on my contextual experience (Braun & Clarks, 2018, p.27). This research is an opportune moment for me to explore and challenge my assumptions.

The study is centred on the experiences of 6 ESOL tutors in Ireland. I wanted to uncover their views on the topics that were examined in the literary review. I was interested to know how they approach their ESOL provision and if they encounter conflicting agendas in their practice. Furthermore, I wanted to explore what other aspects of their practice might be important or of concern to them. The information they furnished was their own subjective experiences. As researcher, a social constructivist worldview privileged me to inductively investigate their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.8).

## **A Social Constructivist Position.**

From the moment we are born our reality or truth is shaped or moulded by our surroundings. Our history, culture and society impact on our experiences and in turn on our views of the world. Our identity and values emerge from our realities. As each of us experience things differently it must be acknowledged that our realities are subjective (Mayan, 2009, 9.25). There are many realities about this research. In this research and in the analysis of interviews with other tutors I hope I am “embracing the idea of multiple realities” (Creswell, 2007, p.17). The aim of the research is to identify what if any challenges tutors experience in the classroom and in the workplace. Through my interpretation of the conversation transcripts I wanted to portray how the participants “view their experience differently” (Moustakas, cited in Creswell, 2007, p.18). People seek to make sense of their world and construct their realities by their social and historical experience; “knowledge of how things are is a product of how we come to understand it” (Braun & Clarke, 2018, p.30). These realities are complex. It is this complexity that I wanted to uncover rather than superficial views. The meanings that people put on things are subjective therefore the research seeks to explore the subjective perspective of the participants. This signifies that there is no one truth as “truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world” (Crotty, 1998, p.8). To some degree my own ontological position and my constructed meaning will influence how I interpret the conversations, hence researcher reflexion is important throughout (Brookfield, 1995).

## **Research Methods**

My reasoning for exploring this topic is that ESOL is still relatively in its infancy here in Ireland resulting in little “Irish” specific research therefore, as Creswell and Creswell put it,

“if a concept or phenomenon needs to be explored and understood because little research has been done on it or because it involves an unstudied sample, then it merits a qualitative approach.” (2018, p.19).



While tutors in ETBs have been interviewed before, not much work has been done with ESOL tutors. My aim was to examine views and experiences of tutors. Given I am interested in exploring what tutors think about their role a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews was chosen. When implementing a qualitative approach, I, as researcher, pursue an understanding through interpretation of data collected in context. That is to say that no claims are made beyond the findings of this research. As I looked for meaning from the subjective data of the participants, the questions were open-ended to give the tutor an opportunity to furnish the information that they prioritised (questions can be found in the appendix). This gave rise to the opportunity for new information to emerge as well as information associated with the literature review (Braun & Clarke, 2018, p.4).

An important aspect of qualitative research is that the researcher reflects on their position. My ontological stance was a concern. As I journeyed through this thesis I was constantly aware of how my views on pedagogy and the possible effects of power in ETBs might shape my interpretation of the transcripts. I wanted to give an interpretation that was true to the subjective reality of the participant but I must acknowledge that my bias is also present in this work. As researcher, I should strive to position myself as a commentator of the phenomenon, which would mean putting personal assumptions aside (Braun & Clarke, 2018, p.9). To this end, a reflexive practice was maintained during the data gathering and data analysis. I questioned what and why I was doing anything at a given time and the implications of this on the research (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 5). What helped me achieve this was to check in with my supervisor and peers and to keep a journal of the research journey.

## **Sampling**

The focus of this study was ESOL provision in the ETB. On this basis I approached four ESOL tutors directly, one I had met while studying for the HDip and the other three I knew through my place of work. The final two tutors approached me by email as they had heard about the research by word of mouth. Five participants were female and one male. Due to the in-depth nature of qualitative research I chose to not interview more than 6 tutors. In doing so I might do justice to the information provided. The

tutors' pathway to ESOL and experience in ETBs vary, Chapter 4 will provide more information about each participant.

## **Interviews**

Each tutor was sent a consent form to read and sign (a copy of this can be found in the appendix). I did not send the questions before the interviews but invited the participants to contact me if they wanted more information. In January I started to arrange appointments for a one-to-one interview. Over the next six weeks I held the interviews. Two were in person and four were by Zoom. During the interviews I recorded what was said with an app on my mobile phone. The transcripts were then uploaded onto my password encrypted laptop. Only my supervisor, the participant and I might have access to the transcripts. The interview lengths averaged about 40 minutes.

I was very nervous during the first interview. The participant was late and we picked a café that turned out to be very busy. The noise level was a distraction and along with my imposter syndrome I wondered if the interview was going to work. I took my time and made a conscious effort to slow down to keep my nerves at bay. I was also conscious that I didn't want to reveal my position or throw out any closed question. It went well but I did reflect on my rigidity and decided going forward that I would be more led by the participant than the questions. For the subsequent interviews I was nervous but not to the same degree as the first one. As each interview progressed using the open-ended questions allowed the conversation to flow. The experiences were rich and while varied there were also many commonalities. I had intended to have a follow-up focus group, but it was too difficult to get a quorum together in the timeframe. I kept in touch with the tutors and offered a copy of the transcript.

## **Data Analysis**

In my analysis of the transcripts I used Gerald Holton's thematic analysis. This thematic analysis method is an approach to qualitative data analysis that involves identifying patterns or themes in the data. It is a very flexible method of analysis and can be used to answer any research question. The method involves a series of steps,

including listening, reading and re-reading the data to gain familiarity with it. I was so grateful to have the recordings as I could listen and relisten as needed. As I listened and read the transcripts, I endeavoured to actively engage with the data in a critical way. Codes or categories that capture the key concepts in the data started to emerge. In the next stage I organised these codes into overarching themes or patterns that were shared amongst the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pp.203-204). I was conscious these themes should not be found passively but should instead be outputs from the codes, I chose to colour code the different themes and then put keywords into a grid format (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.8). As researcher, I tried to maintain an open and flexible approach throughout the analysis process so that my own preconceptions and biases might not influence the interpretation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.10). I will speak more about the researcher's position in the next chapter.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The anonymity of the participants was the main ethical consideration in this research. Before each interview began I reiterated what was outlined in the signed consent form. On the consent form I outlined the fact that the participant could pull out at any time prior to the submission of the thesis. I then asked them to choose a name which would be used for the thesis. Any location or identifying information was redacted from the transcripts and the transcripts were kept on a password encrypted laptop. The name and contact number of my supervisor was also furnished in case there was an issue or complaint to be made post interview. To further protect the participants I retained all information and transcripts on my password protected laptop.

During the interviews, given the participants were tutors and peers, I felt my power as researcher was not a significant factor. After the interview one tutor became quite emotional, her empathy for the learners had affected her quite deeply. I followed up with her to inquire if she needed support in any way as a result of the process.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a description of the methodological paradigms of the thesis. A critical and social constructivist position shaped my ontology and epistemology. To assist in the exploratory nature of the research a qualitative method was chosen. I outlined how I organised the semi-structured interviews I held with 6 ESOL tutors. Then the collection and thematic analysis of the data was described. To conclude I explained the importance of reflection as researcher, ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

## Chapter 4 Findings and Analysis

### **Introduction**

In Chapter 4, after further discussion of some ethical considerations, I briefly introduce the participants. Following this I present the main themes identified from the semi-structured interviews. Woven through the findings I analyse the topics through a critical framework lens and referring to Chapter 2, while remaining conscious that the experiences of the tutors are subjective and contextualised in their history and society.

### **Directing the Research**

Although the participants for this research were my peers, at this point of the study I was once again aware of my researcher position. This part of the research was centred on the valuable subjective insight that ESOL tutors provided. It was my role to bring what was most pertinent for them to the fore. My position of power in the editing of the conversations must be named. I interacted with and interpreted their words in an effort to identify prominent themes. Just as the participants brought their subjective knowledge to the research I too had my knowledge or ontological stance (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.36). As described in Chapter 3, I took steps to be reflective in my research. I offered a copy of the recording and invited the participants to contact me if they had questions or concerns.

I provide a brief introduction for each tutor, their real names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Table 1 Tutor Demographic Data at the time of Interview

Sudo-name	Nos. of years in ESOL in ETB	Education	Prior to ETB	Position	Location
Anne	6 months	Bachelor of Arts + CELTA	Full-time in admin + part-time ESOL	Full-time CID for other job. Full-time ESOL	Urban
Jane	12 years	Masters, Bachelor of Arts + CELTA	EFL and university lecturer and teacher	Full-time + CID	Non-urban
John	18 months	Masters, 2 Bachelor of Arts + CELTA	EFL in private schools for 10 years	Part-time no CID	Urban
Lucy	17 years	2 Bachelor of Arts + CELTA	Unknown	Part-time no CID	Non-urban
Nora	5 years	HDipFE, Bachelor of Arts + CELTA	Full-time in Finance 3 month in EFL	Part-time no CID	Non-urban
Matilda	6 months	Masters, HDipFE, Bachelor of Arts + CELTA	EFL and teacher trainer for CELTA for 25 years	Full-time hours no CID	Urban

Table 3 ESOL Tutor Demographic

## Anne

While finishing a business degree, Anne took on the position of School Secretary in an ETB school. Anne hoped this might be a “gateway” to teaching. As a postgraduate option Anne was offered a place on a CELTA course and on completion in 2009 started to teach English at night to the parents of children in the school. Anne continued to work in administration and night classes in the school until 2022 when she took a paid sabbatical and embraced the opportunity to teach ESOL full time. Anne is teaching in an urban setting.

## Jane

Jane has a Masters, a degree and an English as a foreign language certificate. After teaching English abroad she returned to Ireland. On her return Jane started working in an urban setting as language lecturer at university level. After some time she moved to a more rural area. With this brought a change of educational setting as she worked

teaching languages in both post primary and adult education. In 2011 Jane became an ESOL tutor in the ETB. She works in a non-urban setting with a full-time contract.

## **John**

John has two degrees in English and Music. After completion of the CELTA certificate he moved and worked abroad teaching English in the EFL private sector. On his return to Ireland he embarked on a Masters. John explained that he happened into ESOL in the ETB where he has been since January of 2022. Having originally intended to follow another avenue, Covid caused a change of direction. For John the attraction to the ETB was a curiosity about literacy and ESOL in this sector. John has full-time hours in an urban setting.

## **Lucy**

Lucy initially started with the ETB as a literacy tutor but moved into ESOL in 2006. She found this a natural move as she was interested in the grammar of the English language. Although Lucy has two degrees her academic background is in IT and computers. Lucy has a CELTA certificate and has worked as an ESOL tutor for the last 17 years with a couple of 2 year breaks to work in the private EFL sector and for personal reasons. Lucy works in a non-urban setting on a part-time bases.

## **Matilda**

With a degree, in English and a Masters Matilda had worked exclusively in the private EFL sector, both in Ireland and abroad, for 25 years before looking for a change. During this time she also worked as a teacher trainer on the CELTA certificate courses. Her desire to change took her to do the HDip in adult education. 2022 saw her start her first official role as ESOL tutor in the ETB after a year as a student tutor there. Matilda works in an urban setting and has full-time hours.

## **Nora**

Nora's primary degree is in English and the Classics. A redundancy package in another sector took her to follow a long standing interest in Education, specifically Adult Education. After completing a postgraduate in adult education Nora did a CELTA certificate to qualify her for Teaching Council status in a subject. Initially Nora worked in a private language school but after successfully gaining a place on the ETB panel she started working as an ESOL tutor in 2018. She now works part-time in a non-urban setting.

## **Care and the Learners.**

### *Love*

“Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself.”  
(Freire, 1970, p.89)

Within minutes of starting each interview the tutors spoke of the love they had for their learners and the bond that they endeavoured to create in the group. They described the difference between the cohort of learners in an ESOL class in comparison to an EFL class and how the ESOL learners were a more eclectic and vulnerable mix. Despite the pedagogical challenges that exist, they universally expressed a positive regard for the learner supporting the literature of a learner-centred philosophy described in Chapter 2. When asked what they liked or valued about their job all of the tutors' tones were warm and genuine.

Matilda expressed it as follows;

“I like lots of things about it. I'm really enjoying this my first year. I really am enjoying my learners.[.] I love my job.”

John put it as;

“I have a special relationship with my students and it's a personal relationship but it's a professional personal relationship. [...] I think that's what I love, that kind of learning experience and meeting people.”

Jane said;

“I love the variety of nationalities.[...] I bond with my learners and I do feel I make a difference to their lives.”



While Nora claimed;

“I love the students, and that’s definitely the kind of thing that keeps you going.[...]I love seeing when a group kind of bonds together.”

### *Reciprocal Learning*

Chapter 2 spoke about respect and empathy being traits of a humanistic pedagogy but as tutors went on to describe the reciprocal learning that happened, evidence of the existence of a critical theory also emerged (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.33). Reciprocal learning of the learners lives was common to most of the tutors and appears to be a naturally integral part of the ESOL group particularly at the beginning of a course to create a safe space to enhance well-being (Palanac, 2019, p.3).

John said;

“You learn of course, you learn things about culture, you learn things about history, you learn things about, you learn different perspectives and so constantly learning.”

Matilda said,

“In the past I’ve worked with monologue groups and that’s also interesting but it’s special when you have such a disparate group and people are genuinely interested in each other’s cultures so I’m learning a lot.”

Nora explained she loved, “Learning their stories, listening to them”, while Jane expressed it as, “I learn something new every day in my job”.

### *Praxis*

Working from the ground up and changing content due to self-reflection and respect for the learner was another feature amongst some of the tutors. Freire would describe “reflection and action” as a form of praxis (Freire, 1970, p.51).

Jane talked about the adapting of her methods;

“What has worked and what has absolutely died a death in the classroom on occasion,[...]and then I have to modify my approach based on that [...] So that is something that I have learned over time and by making mistakes.”

Anne explained in her experience;

“Sometimes you go into a class and it’s, it just isn’t working. So there is no point going ahead[...] I’d always have a lot of backup material so that I can switch to something else.”

## **Qualifications; Theory and Practice**

### *Theory*

The feeling of love, as mentioned above, was innate in the tutors, it was not taught to them. Although all tutors had completed the CELTA as part of their qualifications, they were conscious of the strengths and weaknesses of the course. The technical skills it offers were perceived as useful tools to have and added value to the running of the class. However gaps were also identified. Coinciding with the literature, the findings revealed that the qualifications attained to teach EFL did not include vital training on cultural awareness or as Nora put it the, “soft skills” needed to deal with the mix of cultures and issues in the ESOL groups.

Anne described her learning of grammar in CELTA;

“I never really thought about grammar, couldn’t remember learning grammar in English and so you know, dismantling the language and breaking it into pieces and so you know to try to target it for the beginner, for the elementary students and understanding the levels.”

Nora acknowledged the learning as;

“I think from just the academic side and the knowing, you know, the skills that need to be covered, you know, the grammar side, the teaching, I suppose strategies are very good.”

On the plus side Matilda said;

“CELTA is a good initial training course [...] you’ve got some tools to work with and you’ve got some building blocks about lesson plans and a little bit about language awareness and you have some knowledge of some materials.”

However Matilda went on to suggest how the CELTA might be improved;

“A bit more on the intercultural sensitivities and how to manage an intercultural group and a multi lingual group would be helpful, although it’s probably beyond the remit of a CELTA as it exists now. I think you should also learn a little bit more on how to be flexible and how to respond to your learner’s needs and their

input. I think a CELTA creates quite a teacher driven class and maybe a program driven class rather than a learner driven class.”

Nora echoed some of these ideas;

“It doesn’t set you up in terms of the type of students you’re going to be dealing with [...] the kind of soft skills that would come with that [...] a certain emotional intelligence, a certain cultural intelligence and an empathy.”

Although Lucy had done a TEFL, after many years of teaching experience she did the CELTA as a paid CPD this summer. Her perspective was;

“You follow a set book, you teach according to the book and they (the students) go home. [...] This is a different type of teaching. I don’t feel this equipped me to teach in this area [...] I think the style of teaching is too full on for some of the students we have, especially if they don’t have confidence.”

### *Informal Learning*

What came to light was that the tutors compensated the shortfall in qualifications through personal informal learning. If they didn’t know something they asked their colleagues or google. This occurred in the context of trauma too. As little CPD was provided by the ETB tutors took it upon themselves to be informed about the topic. They also learned through a reflective practice, if something didn’t work, pedagogically, they changed it. This experiential learning form is what Freire called praxis and supports the literature;

“action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection” (Freire, 1970, p.66).

Lucy explained the development of her pedagogy;

“Most of my learning has been done on the ground [...] my approaches to what happened in the classroom are based on my life experience”

Anne also referred to issues of her practice;

“You just couldn’t have it in a prescribed way, it had to be one that was adaptable [...] it’s a constant learning curve”

When faced with other challenges such as trauma tutors used other resources.

Anne explained;

“By doing research on this (trauma) myself, you know, Google, how to deal with, how to be sensitive to people’s needs”

Nora also sought to educate herself about trauma through the internet;

“I had to go myself on-line or whatever, I was trying to make sure I, you know, understood where they were coming from.”

### *Learner-Centred, Democracy and Dialogue.*

The teaching methods and philosophies practiced, particularly in the non-accredited classroom, presented common themes of learner-centredness, democracy and dialogue.

Anne approached her groups from the perspective;

“Because you are always targeting the needs of the students [...] what they are trying to achieve.”

Lucy explains her learner-centred approach;

“Okay, so we start with the student group, the first few classes, it’s getting to know them, getting to know what level they’re at, trying to tune into how they’re speaking, if they need reading and writing, what they need the language for.”

The previously mentioned concept of reciprocal learning intersects with the concept of democracy which welcomes participation of the learners in dialogue (Freire, 1970, p.92). Matilda approaches her groups in a critical way whenever possible by asking them;

“What do you need? What forms do you need to fill in? Who do you need to interact with, whether that’s healthcare professionals or banking or getting the ESB”

Jane talked about challenges of differing learning levels in the group and how she strives to make it inclusive;

“Depending on what my learner group is I just make sure that I cater for everybody and if necessary I may have to start work and make my classroom as visual as possible”

## **Pedagogical Considerations.**

Tutors talked about the idea of the ESOL learner groups never being homogenous. What is a constant is the extreme diversity that exists in the group, differing greatly from an English language learning group in the private sector. Those tutors with experience in the private sector could clearly define the contrasting elements of EFL and ESOL in the ETB confirming what came to light in the literature.

John describes how the EFL learner differs;

“Predominantly people on student visa who have paid a lot of money to travel from Asia and Middle East to study English [...] they are generally highly educated or you know coming from a reasonable financial background”

Nora described ESOL learners as coming from;

“More marginalised communities and more vulnerable learners [...] from maybe refugee backgrounds”

When asked what challenges they face in the ESOL group issues around diversity were common to most tutors.

### *Diversity in Cultural and Social Norms*

As explored in Chapter 2 the ESOL group is a “complex sociolinguistic environment” (Roberts et al., 2007, p.24). The diversity in cultural and social norms that the learner brings to the groups was acknowledged by the tutors.

Matilda describes the diversity of ESOL groups;

“They come from a wide variety of backgrounds and educational experiences and countries and languages.”

John said;

“Socially they are all coming from different backgrounds”

Nora describes the challenge of;

“Cultural differences and attitudes and maybe historical histories between cultures [...] certain students might not really like other students”

### *Diversity in Language Levels*

The difference in language skills in English was another common attribute of the ESOL classroom. The tutors indicated that the differential in knowledge and level in English

as a second or other language within the lower level groups, particularly, can be quite pronounced.

Lucy talked about the different levels within the same learner group;

“There would be gaps [...] I have one group at the moment and I have everything from people who can’t read and write in their own language to people who have done university”

And Jane talked about;

“I could have people who have never held a pen right through to people who have PhDs in the same classroom”

The challenge that this presents has resulted in some tutors resorting to a banking model of pedagogy. While this seems contrary to a learner-centred or critical pedagogy, research does explain and support this finding as a necessity in a survival situation. Hybrid curriculums to accommodate the far ranging needs of the low level ESOL group are common occurrences to assist the learning and in doing so do in fact meet the needs of the learner (Knowles, 1989, Cooke & Simpson, 2008).

Nora spoke about pedagogical approach in low level linguistic groups as;

“With ESOL you could have maybe three different levels within one group [...] strong beginner and then quite a very low beginner” Following this she explained how she had to create a hybrid syllabus with more banking to improve slow progress; “I’m trying to add a bit of structure [...] to cater to everyone at once it’s almost too difficult.”

### *Diversity in Literacy Level and Prior Learning.*

The findings brought to light a complex and challenging situation due to the presence of literacy issues at the lower linguist level. “ESOL for Literacy” exists as a subject but is only implemented in some urban settings. SOLAS (2018) has revealed that tutors of literacy for ESOL require specific skills (p.18). Despite this, the findings revealed a high instance of learners with literacy needs in classes with learners who have none. Literacy needs of the ESOL learner must not however, be confused with literacy in adult education. For both the ESOL learner and the tutor, coexisting with the literacy issue, is the language barrier when communicating in the class. John described, the task of explaining how to approach a matching exercise in a lesson presents as a

problem on two levels. Firstly, for the learner that has never experienced education, comprehending the physical task at hand is difficult and secondly, for the tutor to explain the task in a language that is new to the learner without practically assisting is problematic.

John said of one of his learners;

“has never been to any form of school, you know, the idea of a matching exercise, like on a page, it’s alien to her, like so any form of education is completely new”

Anne explained how literacy can be a challenge for the tutor;

“Literacy issues, and that presents a different problem to the ESOL teacher, because if students are already literate in their own language they adjust much quicker”

Tutors talked about the possibility of a hidden learning disability. John mentioned some having “a learning difficulty” while Nora referred to the fact that some literacy issues “could be dyslexia”. The fact that they used words such as “hidden” and “could” suggests that no formal testing at the assessment had been done. Freire tells us listening to the learners needs are vital to create true possibility for change (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.33). However, the literature revealed, although assessment tests onto courses vary from ETB to ETB, they are solely based on language level corresponding to the CEFR. In my experience initial assessment is based on writing and reading for language but not for literacy. Policy has referred to a more rigorous and professional assessment of the learner prior to placement (SOLAS, 2018, p.39). If universally implemented this might serve to insure the provision of separate and dedicated “ESOL with Literacy” groups to improve agency and confidence in the learner in all ETBs.

Further to this, is the connection between the drop-out rate at lower level and low literacy. The research indicated a high rate of attrition at lower linguist level (SOLAS, 2018, p.17) and I contend that if all learners are not cared for they may not thrive in their new society;

“A society that is not caring cannot create people who are flourishing, as ‘citizens are produced and reproduced through care” (Tronto , cited in Lynch, 2021, p.4).

### *Contact Hours*

Pre 2013, a model of provision of 20 hours a week for one year following an initial settling in period existed to help immigrants acculturate in Ireland (SOLAS, 2018, p.17). This was reduced to 4 hours per week. While learners should be getting minimum 4 hours a week, results from the findings show that some learners are only getting 2 hours. At higher levels, learners can avail of other courses while also attending ESOL but at the lower level the learner is not in a position to do the same due to language restrictions. For the tutor, this presents as a challenge because it results in a slower rate of progress.

John explained the problem as he has experienced it;

“Last week I had my students for two hours, because Monday was a bank holiday I didn’t see them at all this week [...] I guarantee I’m gonna have to be doing the same thing again and there’s zero continuity.”

Nora said;

“ESOL class you could be teaching two hours once a week, which for language acquisition is really not enough.”

For the immigrant who has just arrived or who has more need of language acquisition classes, participating for 2 or 4 hours per week was thought, by the tutors, to be too little. We can surmise from the literature, that for the ETB uncertified ESOL classes do not offer the same return of investment to the State as a quantifiable QQI course (Lynch, 2021, p.2). The findings again revealed a lack of consistency from ETB to ETB. Some provide separate provision and more hours for ESOL while others do not. This may be due to the absence of a model at national level (SOLAS, 2018, p.26). However, care would dictate that equality in resources should be available to all (Lynch & Baker, 2005, p.135).

### *Trauma*

Tutors affirmed the presence of trauma in the ESOL groups. Chapter 2 revealed that for many newly arrived immigrants the presence of post-traumatic stress syndrome affects them deeply.



Matilda explained trauma in the context of the newly arrived Ukrainians;

“very fresh trauma, having been ripped out of their country. The country’s war torn at the moment, they’ve got relatives at home with bombs dropping on them and that’s literally bombs dropping on them so they’re working under very stressful conditions [...] to be honest I’m not saying I’m doing a great job, all I can do is empathise”

From Anne’s perspective trauma in the class was dealt with;

“So you had to be extra sensitive how I presented materials, how I talked with them and support them as well, but without it sort of interfering with the class, the class wasn’t about, it wasn’t a counselling session” Later Anne goes on to suggest that trauma affects progress; “I didn’t get that progress [...] they are dealing with so much stuff out of class it was unimaginable”

Lucy described the manifestations of trauma in the learners;

“They are in tears, sometimes there are people who can’t speak, don’t want to speak”

Tutors talked about being careful of the topics they bring up to maintain a safe space in the class however, trauma can manifest without warning in the class and can be shocking for all present (Kolk cited in Palanac, 2019, p.7). They expressed they would welcome more support from the ETB on trauma. Lucy said how she would like support in dealing with this;

“I just need to know what’s the best way to deal with someone who’s possibly having a meltdown, crying, unable to speak [...] so I don’t make that person feel worse, marginalised, more upset.”

How that support is packaged would need further research and communication with the tutors to ascertain their needs.

Research in Chapter 2 indicated that concentration is negatively affected by trauma and can hinder progress in learning (Gordon, 2011, p. 2). In the first year, particularly, in their new country, the need to progress at whatever pace necessary for language acquisition should be accommodated. The tutors spoke about the push for progress and lack of opportunity to repeat as needed by the learner and that is becoming more prevalent in the ETB. As witnessed by Lucy, this lack of consideration of the learner’s needs further marginalises the weakest learners. Lucy explained how the

organisation's agenda, post the changeover to ETBs in 2013, can further marginalise weaker ESOL students;

“there's an emphasis on getting the students through the levels and into QQI that the very weakest or weak students are being left behind [...] I feel there's not enough provision, I suppose, for people who need the extra extra support some will need to be beginner for 2,3,4,5,6 times before they move on, that's not being catered for anymore.”

As the ESOL class at this level is probably the only opportunity for the learner to practice the language the pace should be dictated by the learner (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.68). However, how much a lack of progress rate can be attributed to trauma is not known. Further research is needed in the area of trauma and language acquisition to better inform pedagogy.

## **Accreditation and Progress**

The tutors explained that to certify language level there are QQI courses specifically for ESOL. Other QQI courses such as Speaking and Listening are used for ESOL but were originally intended for Adult Literacy learners. In the findings it came to light that some ETBs, in the urban setting, use different accreditation too, such as the Cambridge exams. Interesting views around accreditation and ESOL at the higher linguist level came to light.

### *Linguistic Hegemony*

Matilda expresses the need for English exams to improve employability which would indicate an acceptance of the neo-liberal agenda in society and the job market where an accredited course can be used as a commodity which;

“We're working towards the Cambridge exam so that they (learners) get a recognised result that they can put on their CV”

Matilda also gave her opinion on how the learners, themselves view these exams as motivating. A positive, in her opinion, was how accredited courses incentivised the learners to progress and for the learners, according to her they appreciated the courses as an opportunity to enhance their possibility of entering the job market;

“to help them get jobs which is highly motivating for them”

In differing words, the existence of a linguistic hegemony in the Irish job market was referred to.

Anne described the positioning of English in the workplace as having a dominant position;

“Language is a barrier, you know, they have been refused into jobs [...] they have been told “Your English is not good enough””

This was found to be the case even if the learner had experience and qualifications from their home country as Anne spoke about one learner;

“wants to work in the crèche and is qualified to do that in her own country”

Anne also observed that;

“so once you (the learner) begin to recognise that that is an absolute barrier, which it is, you start to, you know, take the lessons more seriously.”

At the outset I thought I might find similar opinions to my own assumptions on the commodification of English amongst the participants. For me the nature of bolstering the pedestal on which English language stands in the job market, increases the individualisation of learners and reduces the concept of community or critical pedagogy (Bock, 2021, p.81). I also assumed that a Freirean banking method enforced by program-driven courses, possibly placing the tutor in the role of oppressor, would prove conflicting to them if they want to meet the learners’ needs (Freire, 1970, p.46). However, for many of the tutors and learners accreditation was perceived as an opportunity.

As I reflect further on the views of the tutors I consider the idea of agency in the learner and in doing so can understand their compliance with the accredited courses. At the higher level the learner has more agency in society in general. With more agency comes the confidence to source work. As explored in Chapter 2 many immigrants bring cultural and social capital with them from their home countries, much of which is unrecognised by the ETB and Irish job market, but nonetheless affords them extra agency. For the tutor the recognition of this agency in the higher level learner affords them the possibility to critically discuss the realities of having to have accreditation to improve employability. In doing this, I now understand, they are actually creating space and possibility for “*conscientização*” as the learner becomes more aware of how their new society works (Freire, 1970, p.67).

### *Flaws in Accreditation*

It was not all good news for accreditation. Not all tutors were fans and even those that saw value in them also acknowledged weaknesses. Tutors exposed the QQI courses as not fit for purpose and in some cases mismatched for ESOL. The criticism of excessive testing supports the research in Chapter 2 which claims that there is little teaching occurring on these courses. Tutors said, ESOL can be assessed with less paperwork and more learner centred tasks. Matilda and Jane described how some courses offered to ESOL learners at higher level were patronising in their level of content while other courses were mismatched with the immigrant's life situation. This is further evidence of social and cultural capital being ignored which supports the research of Chapter 2. I believe the learning that the learner needs is not happening in these situations.

Matilda recognised that QQI was a “necessary evil” but expressed her main concern of the mismatched nature of QQI for ESOL learners in content such as effective decision making;

“They’ve had very arduous tasks to get to Ireland and here I am trying to get them to make quote unquote “effective decisions””

Jane echoed this sentiment about QQI courses and the ESOL learner;

“frustrating to work with [...] to appropriate learners to the correct level so they may not be doing a course they’re suited for.”

The banking style of the course was also criticised. Lucy explained;

“There’s too much testing, they don’t need that much testing”

Matilda referred to her presentation of the content of a QQI module;

“I feel kind of badly when I have to work with them through the required components of those three courses” and later when talking about the issue of getting through the hefty amount of content; “If I’m hammering through, it becomes less learner-centred, I’m afraid.”

Tutors talked about the need to overhaul the QQI courses for ESOL. Another option might be to outsource the accreditation of ESOL to other internationally recognised courses. As with low level ESOL provision, it was uncovered in the findings that other courses such as the Cambridge exams are being offered in some ETBs. This

inconsistent provision is not inclusive or equitable on a national level (Lynch & Baker, 2005, p.135).

### *Resistance*

It was evident in the interviews that some resistance was occurring and tutors were not totally powerless. Tutors admitted the learning that happened in accredited courses was not all learner-centred and their teaching method became a banking approach, ironically possibly positioning them as oppressors in this instance (Freire, 1970, p.46). However, some tutors took an opportunity to resist when they could. Lucy and Matilda demonstrated they were agentic in their pedagogical position as they manipulated the syllabus of the course to include learner-centred material.

Lucy talked about;

“The Communications courses however, they because there’s a lot of scope, I can actually pull in what’s happening on the news at the moment, forms that they have to fill in”

Matilda too alluded to bringing courses back to a learner perspective by not dwelling on irrelevant content;

“Tick the box, but we didn’t dwell on it” and her opinion on the Communications course; “which is kind of interesting and relevant to them [...] I do that with an ESOL focus”

### *Bureaucracy*

While an uncertified course has its own preparation and paperwork, there is no formal assessment or portfolio. Whereas the higher level courses presented problems of bureaucracy for the tutors. The extra unpaid workload that comes with the QQI and other courses was an issue brought up by all the tutors. Bureaucracy is a key element of a neo-liberal agenda. Accountability and standardisation are all components of the ETBs agenda (SOLAS, 2018, p.41). The implications of this are twofold for the tutor. Firstly, they may lose their authentic self under the burden of conformity in producing the prescribed paperwork for the administration (Lynch, 2010, p.55). While secondly, in producing pedagogical resources that fulfil the brief for the course and not the learners they are restricting the possibility of learner centred or critical pedagogy

(Freire, 1970, p.72). All of the participants who presented accredited courses talked about the additional unpaid workload and the lack of pedagogical resources.

Nora explained the QQI courses came with;

“they can be pretty hefty the assignments and the amount of assessments as you get higher up the levels [...] you spend most of your time online cobbling together resources [...] there’s no remuneration”

Anne described the QQI course admin as an accountability exercise;

“It’s very paper orientated. Maybe it has to be, probable it has to be for QQI for us to be able to make proper assessment of it and to ensure that the right quality is being delivered.”

Jane also talked about the newest form of QQI, the E-Portfolio;

“you’re talking hundreds of hours of extra unpaid work, which nobody is taking into consideration or certainly not senior management.”

## **Care and the Tutor.**

Although I may have assumed that all tutors might criticise the ETBs provision of ESOL, some tutors complimented the ETBs. Lucy said; “they provide good courses in general and they do provide a good service” while Anne expressed; “I do think ETBs are doing a good job of rolling out ESOL in the community.” It might be worth noting that these views were held by tutors working in the urban setting. It would appear that provision differs from ETB to ETB and region to region. However all tutors spoke in a less complimentary manner about their Terms and Conditions and some used emotive language.

### *Ts & Cs,*

While it was exclusive to ESOL the broader theme of poor terms and conditions in the workplace was one that almost all the tutors experienced in the same way. The lack of contracts, irregular work and unpaid work and no holiday pay left the tutors feeling undervalued. Feelings of vulnerability were also expressed which supports the research in Chapter 2. As can be seen from *table 3* only one of the tutors had a Contract of Indefinite Duration, CID. The lack of a proper contract was an issue for the other tutors. Nora explained that not having a contract;

“You’re kind of constantly in quite a vulnerable position”

Nora went on to describe her feelings on having to get the dole in the holidays as;

“It makes you feel like you’re not important as a teacher, you have less value and that can be depressing [...] the organisation itself can make you feel pretty undervalued.”

Matilda describes the pitfalls of her Zero Hour Contract as;

“It doesn’t tell me how many hours I’m contracted to work, it doesn’t tell me what I’m going to be paid, doesn’t tell me exactly when my contract begins and ends. It tell me nothing [...] and I feel that as a professional teacher I should be treated better.”

Lucy explains the ETB could improve or provide the tutors with;

“A contract, more work, proper pension, being paid properly [...] I have to say as employers they are not good employers.”

Ironically even though Jane had a CID it was not like those a teacher in other sectors of education might expect. She still had to sign on in the summer and her pension is not clear;

“I don’t get paid for my holidays, I sign on. My pension entitlements are an absolute mess at the moment and my employer more or less says take it or leave it.”

Through the voices of the tutors, the themes of bureaucracy and Ts & Cs brought with them the concept of vocation. While it would indeed appear vocation would account for tutors staying in the job despite poor working conditions Brookfield, however, would caution us that;

“Vocation becomes hegemonic when it is used to justify workers taking on responsibilities and duties that far exceed their energies and capacities and will destroy their health and personal relationships.” (2005, p.100)

If tutors continue to take on more and more in the belief that they are doing good for the learners, unfortunately they are only serving to strengthen the existing hegemony.

Another aspect of vocation is that of gender. While this was not explored in the literary review it became an evident theme in the findings. All but one participant was male. If teaching is predominately positioned by society as a female role and women are

identified as nurturers with more of a sense of vocation who tend to do more, for less, the sector can take advantage of this. More work is put on them and pay and conditions are less favourable. Finally, on vocation Brookfield describes the extent to which the belief that, if all you can do when you come home from work is shove a ready meal into the microwave is indicative of having done a good job, then hegemony is winning (Brookfield, 2005, pp.100-102).

### *ESOL the Poor Relation*

“individuals cannot flourish without love as it is fundamental to their ‘subjective and objective well-being’” (Gheaus, cited in Lynch, 2021, p. 4)

This concept of ESOL as the poor relation in adult education came up towards the end of the interviews and as another failing of the organisation. Nora talked about the retraining that happened this summer. Tutors who had CIDs but taught other subjects unrelated to ESOL were offered paid places on CELTA courses. This was a move by the organisation to use existing staff to deal with the influx of refugees from Ukraine. Nora’s feeling on the ETBs positioning in the matter was;

“They’re a bit like anybody can train as an ESOL teacher [...] I do feel we’re a little bit looked down on as a subject from the organisation.”

And in terms of the ETBs consideration of ESOL she said;

“I don’t think there’s a real proper plan when it comes to the provision of ESOL in general [...] it does seem a little bit like we are kind of the poor sister.”

Jane expressed similar views about the ETBs consideration of ESOL;

“I suppose what is the direction for our service going forward? And what needs to be done to take into consideration the changing profile of the people we look after? I think there needs to be a lot of consideration on the ground, as opposed to fitting the square peg into the round hole, I don’t think that the funders are consulting with those who deliver the service on the ground.”

The lack of adequate provision for learners, the mismatch of courses and retraining of non-ESOL tutors to the subject was perceived as degrading to the learners and the tutors.



### *Community of Practice*

Finally, in terms of support, most participants voiced the fact that they had little support from their employer. They did however speak warmly about their community of practice and how they valued their ESOL colleagues.

Jane described the relationship she has with her colleagues;

“I bounce off my colleagues. We do simple things like have lunch together [...] we chat informally about our, you know, our experiences and ask for advice from each other.”

Nora explained that even though she was not always good about asking for help;

“Tutors can be very generous and help, with helping and you know, sharing suggestions or resources.”

Matilda described the ESOL setup in her workplace as;

“It was a very good one. There’s a couple of key people, the overall ESOL supervisor, extremely capable, very helpful, open door, “How can I help you?””

Although tutors spoke about a very positive community of practice, I suggest, this might serve better being more formalised on a national level. There are the beginnings of this as ETB tutors recently staged protests around the county against unfair terms and conditions of employment, however the numbers were small (RTE, 2023). Although this may not resolve the issue of ESOL being a poor relation a more caring workplace may make way for further improvements (O’Neill and Fitzsimons, 2018, p. viii).

### **Conclusion**

From the findings it was evident that all participants were caring and dedicated ESOL tutors. Despite challenges both pedagogically and in the workplace the tutors’ passion for what they do and their high regard for the learners kept them motivated. Although it is not as clear cut as the headings might suggest, from the conversations there emerged considerations that differed according to the language levels of the learners in the ESOL groups. At lower levels there were issues about the amount of provision and literacy concerns. At higher levels there was evidence of a neo-liberal agenda and a push for accreditation.

Challenges in my own practice shaped my opinions of ESOL as it sits in adult education. A prominent one, given the recent arrival of so many refugees from a Ukrainian war zone, was trauma. I expected trauma to feature more prominently in the findings. It exists in the minds of all the tutor and in most classrooms but the level and types of challenges resulting from trauma were not universally experienced. This still conflicts me as I am inclined to think that we might not actually know enough about the implications of trauma on language acquisition.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

### Final Thoughts and Considerations

I embarked on this research for two reasons. Firstly, because I believe there is a lack of research about ESOL in Ireland. Secondly, on a personal level, I wanted a more profound understanding of what other ESOL tutors experienced. My experience as an English language teacher coming from the private to the public sector informed my knowledge on concepts of social justice and equity for a vulnerable group of people who seek to resettle in Ireland. My objective in this research was to acquire knowledge of other tutors' perspectives. Drawing on a range of existing literature and engaging in one-to-one interviews with 6 tutors I gained insight into the role as it exists for the participants and a deeper understanding of the provision of ESOL in ETBs. After analysing the conversations of the participants I am more aware of their dedication to the learners and of the challenges they experience.

Tutors spoke of a love for the learners that influenced their pedagogy and kept them motivated. They also all spoke of experiencing reciprocal learning, Freire says;

“liberatory education is fundamentally a situation where the teacher and the student both have to be learning” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.33).

When possible, a learner-centred, democratic pedagogy was practiced by the tutors as they actively involved the learners. However, both the literature and the findings articulated a “complex sociolinguistic environment” in the groups, where trauma, prior learning differentiation and literacy difficulties and more can reside (Roberts et al., 2007, p.24). What came to light in the uncertified lower linguistic groups was evidence of a practical “hybrid” pedagogy, introduced in Chapter 2, being implemented. Although this may, on first encounter, resemble a “banking” method which conflicts with a critical pedagogy I consider this learner-centred as the tutors ultimately intend to facilitate the learners in the group and not the neo-liberal outcomes driven agenda (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, pp.44-45).

Challenges to a critical pedagogical approach were also exposed in the accredited courses offered to ESOL learners. In contrast to my views that a neo-liberal agenda

diminishes the possibility of a liberating pedagogy and restricts the tutor, some tutors revealed an acceptance of the status quo and viewed the certification as a means of enhancing employability. Even if tutors did concede that the presentation in QQL courses was akin to a more banking style, Matilda expressed it as an opportunity for something “to put on their CVs”. My new understanding in this instance is that the learners view certification as a necessity for progression. In this case if the learner is fully aware of the societal norms that dictate certification as a necessity, then there is a level of what Freire would have called “*conscientização*” happening in the groups (Freire, 1970, p.67).

Notwithstanding the challenges the participants experienced in the prescribed format of the QQL courses, there were instances of resistance. Through a critical theory lens I explored the concepts of power and oppression in the process of accreditation whereby the tutor might become “oppressed” by the “banking” approach the courses dictate (Freire, 1970, p, 71). The findings, contrarily, revealed evidence of agency in the tutors as they adapted the syllabus to be more learner-centred when feasible. Lucy mentioned one course where; “there's a lot of scope, I can actually pull in what's happening in the news”.

Amongst the barriers to learning and teaching that exist, is the possible presence of trauma in the learner groups. While all tutors were aware of it and spoke of measures they implemented to avoid “flashbacks” and other manifestations of trauma, they were not universally aware of the pedagogical trauma informed responses and one tutor went as far as to express “they are over that”. However, despite the lack of training on the effects of trauma and language acquisition, the tutors strove to inform themselves as much as possible to enhance their practice.

Working conditions in the ETBs were exposed as precarious in the literature (Fitzsimons, 2017, p.207). It emerged that tutors views on their poor working conditions were less than favourable as they iterated feelings of being “vulnerable” and “undervalued”. Qualified competent tutors are key to ESOL provision. “Teacher expertise and vision were the most important resources for effective ESOL practice” (SOLAS, 2018, p.40). From the interviews I discovered that many tutors’ approach to ESOL teaching is akin to a vocation and they seek to put the learners needs

centremost (Cooke & Simpson, 2008, p.40). Nora attested to the amount of extra unpaid work as; “you just have to find the time in your own in your own life to do it and you know, there's not it's not built into your working time”. While the learner may benefit from this devotion, concerns arise when the tutors vocation perpetuates a hegemony of tutors continuing to take on more unpaid while justifying it as necessary paperwork (Brookfield, 2005, p.100). The concept of “gender” organically emerged from the findings. Although not addressed in this research, the prevalence of women tutors and precarious employment would merit further research.

Another finding that emerged through the interviews was that a disparity exists in the provision of ESOL from one ETB to another. This raises concerns about equality. I have been working in a non-urban setting and was unaware of the fact that there was a difference in what was offered from one ETB to another. This is very troubling as I believe that immigrants who have settled in different locations around Ireland have the same pedagogical needs and should not be marginalised due to location (Sheridan, 2015, p.154). I contend, this subject is crucial to the successful process of inclusion of its learners into Irish society.

Finally on a macro level, the literature reveals that since its first appearance, in the White Paper in 2000, ESOL has been quite neglected and a stagnation exists at policy making level (Sheridan cited in SOLAS, 2018, p.6). It also appears to sit on the periphery of AE, rather akin to a poor relation in a family, in many ETBs across the nation. However, given the present expanding immigration landscape there is a growing need for ESOL provision within all ETBs. This research advocates the need for a transparent, separate policy and separate funding. A recent policy paper argues that ESOL might fare better in a stand-alone section in adult education (SOLAS, 2018, p.42), a position which my study supports.

## **Enriching my Practice**

As I started this study I had developed beliefs and assumptions based on my experiences. I have a personal and professional aversion to inequality and an absence of equity for those arriving into Ireland as vulnerable immigrants. In my role as ESOL

tutor I endeavour to be of value to my learners in their journey to integrate into Irish society and gain agency.

After the meeting and speaking with other tutors about our work I have enriched my knowledge on many aspects of ESOL; the need for training on trauma informed pedagogy, how separate funding and a dedicated nation ESOL policy would enhance its provision, that more ESOL focused courses with rigorous assessment on entry might improve both pedagogical dilemmas for tutors and the learners experience and how working conditions are negatively experienced by all tutors. Going forward as part of my practice I will aim to nurture existing and future working relationships, however the concept of communities of practice merits further research as all of the participants cited the need for peer and professional support.

Finally, I have learnt that things are not always as binary or polarised as right and wrong and I, as tutor, have agency, and can occupy a middle ground. Although I believe accreditation is not aimed at integration on a social level, I accept that it is perceived as advantageous to some learners. The key, for me, is to listen to the learners and work in a democratic way to find the path through a course, accredited or not, that will satisfy the needs of the learning group while adding a critical element when possible.

### **Limitations of the Research**

As there were six participants I will acknowledge that this research does not speak for all tutors of ESOL in ETBs, but rather it gives a sample of ESOL tutors' perspectives on their experiences and challenges they face. The intention of this study is to add to research in the field of ESOL in adult education in Ireland and to highlight its core role in the inclusion of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers into Irish society.

## Bibliography

Allen, R.L., (2002), *“Pedagogy of the Oppressor”* What Was Freire’s Theory for Transforming the Privileged and Powerful.

Angelo, R., (2021), *“Neoliberal Ideology, Discursive Paradox and Communicative Language Teaching”*. Policy Futures in Education, 19(7), pp.792-808.

Badjadi, N.E.I., (2020), *“Learner-Centered English Language Teaching: Premises, Practices, and Prospects”*. IAFOR Journal of Education, 8(1), pp.7-27.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V., (2018), *“Thematic Analysis, A Practical Guide”*. Sage Publications.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V., (2013), *“Successful Qualitative Research”*. Sage Publications

Bock Thiessen, C., (2021), *“Confronting the Past, Challenging the Future: Linguistic Hegemony, Capitalism, and Neoliberalism in TESOL.”*

Bourdieu, P., (1986), *“The Forms of Capital”*. In: Richardson J (ed.) Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education. New York: Greenwood.

Brookfield, S. D., (2005). *“The Power of Critical Theory for Adult Learning and Teaching”*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Brookfield, S., (1995), *“Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher.”* San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Broudy, H. S., (1973), *“Humanism in Education.”* Journal of Aesthetic Education, vol. 7, no. 2, University of Illinois Press, pp. 67–77.

Ćatibušić, B., Gallagher, F. & Karazi, S., (2019), *“An Investigation of ESOL Provision for Adult Syrian Refugees in Ireland: Voices of Support Providers”*. In: Mishan, Freda, (ed.) ESOL Provision in the UK and Ireland: Challenges and Opportunities.

Language, Migration and Identity, 2 . Peter Lang Ltd, Oxford, UK. ISBN 978-1-78874-373-0

Cambridge English, (2023), “*CELTA Syllabus*”, [Online], Available at; <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/21816-celta-syllabus.pdf> (21/02/23)

Cooke, M., (2006), “*When I Wake up I Dream of Electricity*”: *The Lives, Aspirations and ‘Needs’ of Adult ESOL Learners*. *Linguistics and Education*, 17(1), pp.56-73.

Cooke, M. & Roberts, C., (2007), “*Practitioner Guides*.” *ESOL: Developing Adult Teaching and Learning*, 1-16 [Online], Available at; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27785047> (26/03/23)

Cooke, M. & Simpson, J., (2008), “*ESOL: A Critical Guide*”. Oxford University Press.

COU, Council of Europe, (2022), “*The CERF Levels*”. [Online], Available at; <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions> (01/11/22)

Creswell, J.W., (2007), “*Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*”, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D., (2018), “*Research Design*”, 5<sup>th</sup> edn., Sage Publications.

Crotty, M., (1998), “*The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*”, Sage Publication.

ETBI, (2023), “*Community Education Position*”. [Online] Available at; <https://www.etbi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ETBI-Community-Education-Position-A4.pdf?x13376> (1/04/23)

European Commission, (1999), “*Immigration: A Two Way Process*”. [Online], Available at; [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/integration-two-way-process-1\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/integration-two-way-process-1_en) (01/11/22)



Finn, H. B., (2010), "*Overcoming Barriers: Adult Refugee Trauma Survivors in a Learning Community*". TESOL Quarterly, 44(3), 586–596.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27896747>

Freire, P., (1970), "*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*". London: Penguin.

Fitzsimons, C., (2017), "*Community education and neoliberalism: Philosophies, practices and policies in Ireland*". Springer.

Gilmartin, E., (2008), "*Language Training for Adult Refugees: The Integrate Ireland Experience*". Adult Learner: The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education, 97-110.

Gilmartin, M., (2012), "*The Changing Landscape of Irish Migration, 2000-2012*."

[Online]. Available at;

[https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/WP69\\_The\\_changing\\_face\\_of\\_Irish\\_migration\\_2000\\_2012\\_0.pdf](https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/WP69_The_changing_face_of_Irish_migration_2000_2012_0.pdf) (20/10/2022)

Gordon, D., (2011), "*Trauma and Second Language Learning among Laotian Refugees*," *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 1, Article 13. DOI: 10.7771/2153-8999.1029

Grummell, B. & Murray, M., (2015), "*A contested Profession: Employability, Performativity and Professionalism in Irish Further Education*." *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 47:4, pages 432-450.

Hhatib, M., Sarem, S.N. & Hamidi, H., (2013), "*Humanistic Education: Concerns, Implications and Applications*", *Journal of language Teaching and Research*, Vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 45.

Immigration council of Ireland, (2017), "*Language and Migration in Ireland*". [Online].

Available at;

<https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/files/Language%20and%20Migration%20in%20Ireland.pdf> (25/10/22)

Iversen, V., Sveaass, N. & Morken, G., (2014), "*The Role of Trauma and Psychological Distress on Motivation for Foreign Language Acquisition among Refugees*". International Journal of Culture and Mental Health, 7:1, 59-67, DOI: 10.1080/17542863.2012.695384

Keyes, D., (2004), "*Accreditation within Adult Education: Reflections and Views of Local Tutors*". Adult Learner: The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education, 68, p.77.

Kouritzin, S., (2000), "*Immigrant Mothers Redefine Access to ESL classes: Contradiction and Ambivalence*", Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 21:1, 14-32, DOI: 10.1080/01434630008666391

Knowles, M. S., (1989), "*The Making of an Adult Educator: An Autobiographical Journey*." 1st ed. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass.

Language Education Policy Profile, (2008), "*Ireland 2005-2007*" Strasbourg: Language Policy Division, DES

Lennon, N., (1999), "*Towards An Integrated Accreditation Framework*", Dublin: Community and Voluntary Accreditation Forum.

Little, D., (2022), "*Meeting the Language Needs of Refugees in Ireland*". [Online] Available at: <https://www.iilt.ie/publications/RLSU%20OP1.pdf> (30/09/22)

Lynch, K., (2010), "*Carelessness: A hidden Doxa of Higher Education*". Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 9(1), pp.54-67.

Lynch, K. & Baker, J., (2005), "*Equality in Education: An Equality of Condition Perspective*". Theory and research in education, 3(2), pp.131-164.

Lynch, K., (2021), "*Care and Capitalism*". John Wiley & Sons.

Mac Éinrí, P. & White, A., (2008), "*Immigration into the Republic of Ireland: A Bibliography of Recent Research, Irish Geography*", 41:2, 151-179, DOI: [10.1080/00750770802076943](https://doi.org/10.1080/00750770802076943)

Mayo, P., (2015), *"Hegemony and Education under Neo-Liberalism"*. Routledge, London.

Mayan, M.J., (2009), *"Essentials of Qualitative Inquiry"* (1st ed.). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315429250>

Mendenhall, M. et al., (2015), *"Quality Education for Refugees in Kenya: Pedagogy in urban Nairobi and Kakuma Refugee Camp Settings."*, Journal on Education in Emergencies, vol. 1, no. 1.

Morton, T., McGuire, T. & Baynham, M., (2006), *"A literature Review of Tesearch on Teacher Education in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL"*.

Nala.ie, (2022), *"Paving the Way: Materials and Resources for ESOL Tutors"*.  
[Online] Available at; <https://www.nala.ie/publications/esol-resource-book/> (02/10/22)

Nchindia, C., (2020), *"An Exploration of the Effects of 'ESOL for Citizenship' Course on the Sociocultural Integration of Adult Learners into British Society"*. International Journal of Society, Culture and Language, 8(2) 35-54.

Palanac, A., (2019), *"Towards a Trauma- Informed ELT Pedagogy for Refugees"*. Language Issues, 30(2), pp. 3-14

Paton, A.& Wilkins, M., (2009), *"Teaching Adult ESOL: Principles and Practice"*. Open University Press, Maidenhead, England

Pearson, E.M. & Podeschi, R.L., (1999), *"Humanism and Individualism: Maslow and his Critics"*, Adult education quarterly (American Association for Adult and Continuing Education), Vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 41-55

QQI, (2022), *"Module Descriptors."* [Online] Available at:  
<https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=programmes> (10/11/22)

QQI a, (2023), *"ACLES"* [Online] Available at; <https://www.acels.ie/> (10/04/2023)

QQI b, (2023), "Who We Are", [Online]. Available at;  
<https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/Who%20We%20Are-Booklet-August%2017.pdf> (20/03/2023)

Raphaeli, A., (2012), "*B. F. Skinner on Education*". Interview. [Online]. Available at;  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXHmFZyKEVY> (04/12/2022)

Roberts, C., Cooke, M., Baynham, M. & Simpson, J., (2007), "*Adult ESOL in the United Kingdom: Policy and Research*". [Online] Available at;  
[file:///Users/noellabeaumont/Documents/Classes%2020:21/Accounts/Masters/ESOL%20readings/Publisher%20version%20\(open%20access\).pdf](file:///Users/noellabeaumont/Documents/Classes%2020:21/Accounts/Masters/ESOL%20readings/Publisher%20version%20(open%20access).pdf) (3/10/2022)

Roberts, C. & Cooke, M., (2009), "*Authenticity in the Adult ESOL Classroom and Beyond*". *Tesol Quarterly*, 43(4), pp.620-642.

Rogers, C. & Freiberg, H. J. (1994), "*Freedom to Learn*". 3rd ed. New York: Merrill.

Rogers, C.R., Kirschenbaum, H. & Henderson, V.L., (1990), "*The Carl Rogers Reader*", Constable, London.

Rogers, C.R., (1977), "*Carl Rogers on Person Power*". Delacourte

Rogers, C.R., (1983) "*Freedom to Learn for the 80's*". Columbus, Ohio: C.E. Merrill Pub. Co.

Rogers, C., Lyon, H. & Tausch, R., (2013), "*On Becoming an Effective Teacher: Person-centered Teaching, Psychology, Philosophy, and Dialogues with Carl R. Rogers and Harold Lyon*". Routledge.

RTE, (2023), "*Report on Adult Education Tutors Protest*". [Online] Available at;  
<https://www.independent.ie/regionals/louth/drogheda-news/louth-td-joins-lmetb-tutors-protest-over-lack-of-contracts/42446321.html> (06/05/2023)

Shor, I. & Freire, P., (1987), "*A pedagogy for Liberation*". New York: Bergin and Garvey.

SOLAS.ie, (2018), "*English Language Provision and Language Assessment for Low-Skilled and Unemployed Migrants*". [Online] Available at; [https://www.google.com/search?q=english-language-provision-and-language-assessment.pdf&rlz=1C5CHFA\\_enIE815IE822&oq=english-language-provision-and-language-assessment.pdf&aqs=chrome..69i57j69i60.726j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=english-language-provision-and-language-assessment.pdf&rlz=1C5CHFA_enIE815IE822&oq=english-language-provision-and-language-assessment.pdf&aqs=chrome..69i57j69i60.726j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8) (25/09/22)

SOLAS.ie, (2021), "*FET Provision Summer 2021*". [Online] Available at; <https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/1d2b601cba/fet-provision-summary-2021.pdf> (20/12/22)

Solas.ie (2023), "*The FET Strategy: Transforming Learning*". [Online] Available at; [https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas\\_fet\\_strategy\\_web.pdf](https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/64d0718c9e/solas_fet_strategy_web.pdf) (12/02/2023)

Sheridan, V., (2015), "*English, Everywhere and Nowhere; ESOL Policies in Ireland*". In *Adult Language Education and Migration*, eds. J. Simpson, A. Whiteside, 1<sup>st</sup> edn, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 149-161

Stevens, C. A., (2001), "*Perspectives on the Meanings of Symptoms among Cambodian Refugees*". *Journal of Psychology*, 37(1), 81-98.

University of Limerick, (2015), "*A Study on the Prevalence of Zero Hours Contracts among Irish Employers and their Impact on Employees*". [Online] Available at; <file:///Users/noellabeaumont/Documents/Classes%2020:21/Accounts/Masters/neo-liberlism:power:hegemony%20ESOL/AStudyofthePrevalenceofZourHoursContracts3rdNov2015.pdf> (28/12/2022)

Ward, F. & Aton, P., (2019), "*A Short History of the Adult Literacy Service*". [Online] Available at; <http://www.aloa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/A-Short-History-of-the-Adult-Literacy-Service-and-ALOA-4.pdf> (01/02/2023)

Wilbur, A., (2016), "*Creating Inclusive EAL classrooms: How Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Instructors Understand and Mitigate Barriers for Students who have Experienced Trauma*". TESL Canada Journal, pp.1-19.

White Paper, Department of Education and Science, (2000), "*Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*". Dublin: Stationary Office.

Worlddata.com, (2023), "*Asylum applications and Refugees in Ireland*" [Online] Available at; <https://www.worlddata.info/europe/ireland/asylum.php> (21/02/202)

## Appendices

### The invitation Email

Noella Beaumont BA(Hons), HDipFE  
Master's Student  
Department of Adult and Community Education,  
National University of Ireland Maynooth

Dear Colleague,

You are reading this because I have worked with you, or you are working with someone I know. I am currently writing a thesis centred on the ESOL tutor's experience working in ETBs in Ireland. My supervisor is Dr Mary Ryan, whose details can be found in the attachments below.

I am a passionate ESOL tutor and feel privileged to be doing what I am doing. The ESOL landscape is changing rapidly and unfortunately there is little literature available on ESOL that is specific to Ireland. I am keen to gain insight into other tutors' experience of teaching ESOL in ETBs. The aspiration is to give a voice to tutors in the hope of informing policy makers or those interested in the sector on what is important to consider going forward. I believe the perspective of the tutor is a vital consideration.

I will be holding one-to-one voice recorded, anonymous interviews either in person or on Zoom. I would be thrilled if you could find the time to help me in this research. The interview will be no longer than 1 hour at the very most. All ethical details and other considerations are outlined in the forms attached. If you are happy to participate, please fill out the forms and return them to [noellabeaumont@gmail.com](mailto:noellabeaumont@gmail.com) If you have any questions whatsoever, please give me a call on 087-7414971.

Looking forwards to hearing from you,  
Noella

## The Consent Form



## INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

### Information Sheet

**Purpose of the Study.** I am Noella Beaumont, a Master's student, in the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University.

As part of the requirements for the masters, I am undertaking a research study under the supervision of Dr Mary B. Ryan.

The study is concerned with taking an in-depth look at provision for ESOL in the ETB is, from the Tutor's perspective.

**What will the study involve?** The study will involve a one-to-one chat/interview either in person or online. This will take no more than one hour at the most. If at the end of the interviews there is a need, I may organise a focus group to delve into some common themes.

**Who has approved this study?** This study has been reviewed and received ethical approval from Maynooth University Department of Adult and Community Education. You may have a copy of this approval if you request it.

**Why have you been asked to take part?** You have been asked to participate because you have taught or are teaching ESOL in an ETB.

#### **Do you have to take part?**

No, you are under no obligation whatsoever to take part in this research. However, we hope that you will agree to take part and give us some of your time to participate in a one-to-one interview. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be asked to sign a consent form and given a copy and the information sheet for your own records. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and/or to withdraw your information up until such time as the research findings are published.



**What information will be collected?** Your answers to a selection of questions. The interview will be voice recorded.

**Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?** Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be identified at any time. Names will either be changed or tutors will be numbered. All hard copy information will be held in a locked cabinet at the researchers' home office, electronic information will be encrypted and held securely on MU PC or servers and will be accessed only by; Noella Beaumont and Dr Mary Ryan.

No information will be distributed to any other unauthorised individual or third party. If you so wish, the data that you provide can also be made available to you at your own discretion.

*'It must be recognised that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.'*

**What will happen to the information which you give?** All the information you provide will be kept on a password protected laptop in such a way that it will not be possible to identify you. On completion of the research, the data will be destroyed.

**What will happen to the results?** The information you provide will be presented in a thesis in such a way as it will not be possible to identify you, unless you give explicit consent to do so. The research will be written up and presented as a thesis. A copy of the research findings will be made available to you upon request.

**What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?** I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part.

**What if there is a problem?** At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. You may contact my Dr Mary Ryan if you feel the research has not been carried out as described above.

**Any further queries?** If you need any further information, you can contact me: Noella Beaumont 087-7414971

If you agree to take part in the study, please complete and sign the consent form overleaf.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this.**

## **Consent Form**

I.....agree to participate in Noella Beaumont’s research study titled “Humanism against Hegemony”.

Please tick each statement below:

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me verbally & in writing. I’ve been able to ask questions, which were answered satisfactorily.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give Noella Beaumont permission for my interview to be audio-recorded

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether that is before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data up to the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2023

It has been explained to me how my data will be managed and that I may access it on request.

I understand the limits of confidentiality as described in the information sheet

I understand that my data, in an anonymous format, may be used in further research projects and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

[Select below as appropriate]

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

I agree for my data to be used for further research projects

I do not agree for my data to be used for further research projects

I agree for my data, once anonymised, to be retained indefinitely in the IQDA archive



Signed.....

Date.....

Participant Name in block capitals .....

---

*I the undersigned have taken the time to fully explain to the above participant the nature and purpose of this study in a manner that they could understand. I have explained the risks involved as well as the possible benefits. I have invited them to ask questions on any aspect of the study that concerned them.*

Signed.....*Noella Beaumont*.....

Date.....*24/06/2023*.....

Researcher Name in block capitals .....*Noella Beaumont*.....

*If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact Michael Murray ([michael.j.murray@mu.ie](mailto:michael.j.murray@mu.ie)) or Angela McGinn ([angela.mcginn@mu.ie](mailto:angela.mcginn@mu.ie)) Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.*

## Interview Questions

1 How and when did you come to be a tutor of ESOL in the ETB?

2 What do you like and value in your work?

3 What teaching approach and methods do you use for ESOL? What is your philosophy of teaching?

- How did your qualifications help prepare you for the position?
- What do you think of the CELTA qualification ?

4 What are the challenges you have faced or face regularly in the ESOL group?

- What CPD do you get offered through the ETB?
- What changes are you seeing in the provision of ESOL since the recent influx of Ukrainian refugees?

5 How valuable do you think QQI accredited courses are in ESOL?

- What challenges exist with accredited courses?

6 How does the ETB support you as a tutor?

- What are the challenges you face in working in Adult and Further Education?
- What supports are in place or have you put in place for peers support, community of practice?
- How do you nurture your practice and mind yourself?
- How long will you stay in the sector?

Any question or topic you think I should have asked about?