



Rich potential in adult literacy:
Lost in an era of deep economic recession

AN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT

Sarah Freeman

Thesis - Doctorate of Education

Department of Education

31 May 2017



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Abstract

Classes in England for students of adult literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) have been severely cut back in the past seven years. Those that remain are run on the basis that the class can only be viable through accreditation if it meets current funding targets within specified time periods, reducing many schemes to crash courses in employability. Adult education had been cut by 40% by 2015 alone. The overt purpose of literacy classes is now rooted in functional skills English syllabi, built on the assumption that students attend courses for qualifications.

There is not enough known about why the students themselves – both ESOL and native speakers – are motivated to come forward for classes. In this research, an experienced adult literacy/ESOL teacher ran 26 in-depth interviews with students and teachers in four organisations in South London and two in Birmingham to find out what they valued about the classes they were attending at the time, other than obtaining qualifications. A social practices approach is used to examine students' motives for improving their literacy, alongside discussions of learning theory, and an auto-ethnographic approach is used throughout the dissertation.

Findings include a very broad range of reasons for why students are in class and what they gain from learning that enhances their everyday lives. Insight is provided into how students use technology as part of everyday life. It was discovered that many respondents need to continue to learn as long as possible. These results are considered in the light of globalisation studies, learning theory, 'vulnerability' theory and multicultural studies of superdiversity.

Contents

Abstract.....	2
Contents.....	3
List of Figures	6
List of Abbreviations.....	8
(1) Introduction	9
1.1 Subject area, research sources and proposal	9
1.2 A place for literacy in adult learning provision in England.....	13
1.3 A persistent view of lack in those without literacy qualifications	14
1.4 Reviewing curriculum/course design for literacy	17
1.5 The research process used with literacy students	18
1.6 Cultural and economic influences on individual educational paths	19
1.7 The field.....	20
1.8 Literacy	21
1.9 Learning framework	26
1.10 Structure of the thesis.....	28
(2) Shaping of Own Positionality	29
2.1 Introduction.....	29
2.2 The ‘changing faces of adult literacy’ (Hamilton & Hillier, 2005).....	31
2.3 The merging of ESOL and literacy in this study	37
2.4 Previous research and its influence on the fieldwork/enquiry	38
2.5 Assisting learning and the moral aspect of the research process.....	40
2.6 Community of learning.....	43
2.7 Learning process.....	45
2.8 The professional path	46
2.9 Summary	54
(3) The Study: Global and Local Contexts, and Neighbourhood Settings	55
3.1 Introduction.....	55
3.2 From mixed methods to ethnographic study	58
3.3 Global perspectives to the study	59
3.4 The role of English language in areas of linguistic diversity.....	61
3.5 The concept of <i>culture</i> in the study	62
3.6 Mixed ethnic neighbourhoods.....	64
3.7 Lifelong learning and policy-making	67
3.8 Localities and respondents	71

3.9 The questionnaire interviews	80
3.10 Summary	80
(4) Literature Review	82
4.1 Introduction.....	82
4.2 Social practices view.....	84
4.3 Studies of adult literacy learners – an overview	89
4.4 Influences on study from beyond the classroom	96
4.5 Digital facilities – impact on adult literacy contexts.....	97
4.6 Superdiversity: emerging from space and mobility	100
4.7 A range of texts on identities.....	104
4.8 Discourse used in shaping identities	109
4.9 Summary	111
(5) Methodology.....	113
5.1 Introduction.....	113
5.2 Key theories	114
5.3 Discourse	115
5.4 The story of the research design	118
5.5 Qualitative approach	121
5.6 Action research.....	123
5.7 The interviews.....	123
5.8 Ethnographic study	125
5.9 Ongoing observation and auto-ethnographic approach.....	128
(6) Doing and Reporting On the Research	131
6.1 The data.....	131
6.2 Data analysis.....	132
6.3 Narrative study approach	133
6.4 Ethical considerations	135
(7) Data from Interviews with Students	140
7.1 Literacies in everyday lives	141
7.2 Literacy valued as a skill/craft.....	147
7.3 The value of literacy for employment	149
7.4 Digital practices and their impact on literacy studies	151
7.5 Multi-ethnic society and superdiversity	155
7.6 Feelings of vulnerability and being ‘left behind’	157
7.7 Support from family and friends	160
7.8 Enjoyment factors in literacy classes.....	161
7.9 The role of the teacher in classes	162

7.10 Students' wider aspirations	162
7.11 How the system impacts on adult education	166
7.12 Students' environments	169
(8) Data from Interviews with Teachers and Findings	173
8.1 Introduction	173
8.2 Findings	181
8.3 Overall findings from the data	183
(9) Conclusion	187
9.1 Overview	187
9.2 Path of the doctoral report	188
9.3 Adult education in the UK after the period of research	189
9.4 A culture of achievement	191
9.5 A culture of education	196
9.6 Superdiversity	201
9.7 The future of literacy classes	205
Bibliography	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 1 Knud Illeris's Tension Triangle	226
Appendix 2 Auto-Ethnographic Professional Timeline	226
Appendix 3 Fieldwork Timeline	228
Appendix 4 Interview Questions and Visuals	229
Appendix 5 Learning Lives Poster	234
Appendix 6 Consent Form Template	234
Appendix 7 Interview Questions for Teachers (2013)	235
Appendix 8 Master List Interviewees	236
Appendix 9 Recent Internet Users by Age Group	238
Appendix 10 Four Aspects Crucial for Linking Learning and Lives	241

List of Figures

Figures

3.1	Thornton Heath High Street, July 2015	62
3.2	Thornton High Street, with the former 'Ambassador House' classrooms in the high-rise block on the right, July 2015.....	63
3.3	The area of South London where students were living/studying, July 2015	69
3.4	Blackfriars Settlement, temporary accommodation, March/April 2013.....	72
3.5	Jade and Jasmine in the basic skills teaching room at Brass Tacks, Myrrh Education Ltd, 2013	73
3.6	Myrrh Education Ltd, Brass Tacks, Brixton Hill, April 2013	73
3.7	Lucy in Merton Home Tutoring Service office (shared corner space in The Guild, Wimbledon), December 2013.....	74
3.8	English and maths classroom in Sandwell Hospital, West Birmingham, August 2013	76
3.9	Training room used for English classes in Birmingham City Hospital, August 2013	76
7.1	Ray's alphabetically indexed, well-worn personal dictionary, August 2013	146
7.2	Jane's computer literacy class, Sutton College, Wallington Centre, 2009.....	148
7.3	Mobile phone close at hand, South London Primary School, 2014 (1).....	149
7.4	Mobile phone close at hand, South London Primary School, 2014 (2).....	149
7.5	Patrick explaining his mobile phone contract to Terry and I, June 2013	150

7.6	Timber hoardings around building developments on University of London campus with banners advertising 'state of the art' improvements, July 2015	167
9.1	Dorette's most treasured item: her healthcare studies book, Wallington Centre	193

List of Abbreviations

ALLN	Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
EAL	English as an additional language
ELF	English as a lingua franca
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FE	further education
FS	functional skills
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
ICT	information and communication technology
IT	information technology
MHTS	Merton Home Tutoring Service
NIACE	National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education
NLS	New Literacy Studies
NRDC	National Research and Development Centre
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
SCOLA	Sutton College of Learning for Adults
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
SfL	Skills for Life
TLANG	Translanguaging

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Subject area, research sources and proposal

My area of expertise lies in teaching adult literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and training adult educators. I am comparatively 'linguistically inexperienced' (Bourdieu, 1991:82) in research work, but my occupation relates directly to the research field and lends an auto-ethnographic style to my approach. My original research questions, used as the framework for this research, are as follows:

- What do some adult students in England value in particular about adult literacy learning?
- To what extent may their experience be shaped by their educators and government directives?
- Alongside the everyday interconnections between classroom and everyday life, how much do global cultural practices impact on how adult literacy students interact with their learning?

The umbrella question underlying these specific threads of enquiry is:

- What are the learning goals and experiences of South London literacy students (literacy and ESOL) in adult learning situations post-2012?

Further key questions have developed during the writing of this thesis, and are raised in the course of the story of the research itself. However, these questions do

not underpin the research plan; rather, they encapsulate some paths of thought that have opened as the research went along.

The first of these questions arose from 28 years of working with literacy and ESOL adult learners. As a teacher I had, through using social practices approaches, gained insight into the expectations and motivations that people brought from many different backgrounds. The second was a necessary complement to the first because not only did the learners bring their personal aspirations to study, they were also affected both practically and educationally by what their educators put in place for them and I wanted to study that interaction. The third was a further avenue of exploration into wider influences such as the kind of cultures thrown up by global interconnectedness. I wanted to find out whether students are influenced by social networking online, global media messages about succeeding in society and an increasing compulsion to learn worldwide.

The greater part of this work is based on 26 research interviews with mainly students, as well as a few teachers/managers, in South London – Brixton Hill, Blackfriars, Wallington, Sutton and Wimbledon – and NHS education centres in Birmingham City Hospital and Sandwell General Hospital, Birmingham. I was first trained in the 1970s, and I have never lost sight of the ‘learner centred methods’ (Hannon, 2000:74) that were prevalent in adult literacy teaching at that time; nor can I teach without continually referring to the practical and personal applications that I understand my students are seeking to enhance with new skills. Ivanič (2009:102) explained: “‘literacy’ is not conceptualized as individuals’ ability to code and decode written language, but rather as the social uses of written language’. I agree that the literacy skills specified in standardised adult literacy syllabi – such as the Adult Core

Curriculum, (DfES, 2001a) and Functional Skills Standards (Ofqual, 2011) – may mystify everyday users of texting and Facebook and make it hard for students to readily apply formal literacy to their immediate lives. Yet, a learning process is a situated experience in its own right, and one in which both the students and I willingly interact. Subsequently, because my comfort zone is within adult education settings, I am best able to base my thesis on the situations generated by or integrated into learning. The theme of learning plays an enormous part in the development of the concepts that I have nurtured in this work.

My main contribution to knowledge will be towards sustaining the formal education of adults, as this is the teaching style I am most familiar with as well as enthusiastic about. I will discuss and evaluate conclusions relating to the second research question regarding the extent to which students' experiences are shaped by their educators and government directives.

In addition to the aforementioned key research questions, and as is characteristic of a social perspective approach in social practices studies, I focus on people's needs from education in a holistic sense. This, as Rogers and Street (2012:14) say, 'has implications for policy and pedagogy'; 'many people who are labelled illiterate within the autonomous model of literacy may, from a more culturally sensitive viewpoint, be seen to make significant use of literacy practices for specific purposes in specific contexts'. So, when I explore how much agency the students have in their own learning agendas, I am seeing their education in the same situated light as social practices researchers see literacy. I have drawn in many opinions of people participating in adult literacy in teaching/learning situations at first hand.

I have endeavoured to interpret my interview data impartially; that is, to pick out the themes that respondents spoke passionately about in the research interviews, rather than imposing my own preconsidered views on how literacy students think.

However, impartiality is hard to achieve within one's own research bubble, in which the researcher is designer, interviewer and doctoral candidate. I study the effect of my narrative (auto-ethnographic) voice and its ethical implications in chapters 2 and 5. For example, the first-hand approach that my teaching role lends to the study might raise ethical questions about how professionally I conducted the interviews (see section 6.4).

In practice, adult literacy education in the UK is affected by very rapid global changes, which affect technology, the ways in which we communicate, migration issues, the governing principles of those in power and the type of work and personal identities adopted by people coming to this country to learn English. These are in part reflected in the feedback I received from my respondents, but also from researching academic, sociological and political sources emanating from the fields of adult literacy and lifelong learning (Usher and Edwards, 2007; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Blommaert, 2015; Kress, 2010; Prinsloo & Rowsell, 2012; Simpson, 2013; Simpson & Whiteside, 2015; Duckworth & Ade-Ojo, 2015).

The theory that I based this work on at the outset of the research was that adult students in basic literacy classes – whether ESOL students or those taking up literacy classes in their own language (English) – were driven by motives other than improving their work status or helping their children at school. I wasn't sure exactly

what these motives were, but I was aware of the impact of the radical global forces just mentioned, including dramatic changes in reading and writing technology as well as greater movements of people around the globe. At a time when the deficit image of individuals who haven't had a successful full-time education in their childhood was dominant, I was convinced that this was obscuring highly motivated, enthusiastic and potentially active members of society, who sought personal fulfilment and desired to positively contribute to the community. I propose that there is a new cultural practice developing within this country, one that I have observed evolve over decades; this comprises a vibrant learning community, but is barely acknowledged by policy makers and mainstream further education providers.

1.2 A place for literacy in adult learning provision in England

In the first instance in this introductory chapter, I will look at literacy as a learning area. I will suggest that literacy courses should be classed as a distinct part of the overall lifelong learning agenda: as an opportunity to choose to develop everyday reading and writing fluency, alongside learning many other adult life-related skills. I conceive of lifelong provision as fitting Usher and Edwards's (2007: 170–1) description of adult education: 'informed by a broadly post-structuralist spirit ... the meanings and significance of values', with the ability to identify some learning as being more worthwhile than others 'being an important arena for debate and discussion'.

The current drive to recruit students, in order to demonstrate to recruiting agencies the acquisition of competencies for employment through accreditation, began to gain momentum in the 1990s. This was reinforced and further resourced early in the term of the New Labour government, with the launch of *Skills for Life* (DfEE, 2001), which

included a great deal of prescription for how to learn literacy but still allowed some room for contextualising literacy and creative literacy. However, in more recent years, these schemes have become impoverished or curtailed during cutbacks – an impact of austerity measures. Courses are kept as short, vocationally fixed and skills-based as possible, with no concept of a lifelong learning umbrella offered to students.

1.3 A persistent view of lack in those without literacy qualifications

In recent decades, adults lacking academic qualifications and the schools that failed to get them through GCSE level have been persistently portrayed in derogatory terms. For example, parents considered to perpetuate the public disgrace of illiteracy were not explicitly blamed, but were certainly shamed, in a front-page *Evening Standard* article in 2011: ‘shockingly 20 per cent of London families struggle with reading’ (Davis, 2011). Hamilton (2012:104–5) traced the word ‘illiteracy’ through five years of national news headlines using Nexis (a newsdesk research tool) and reported 73 instances, often co-located with negative expressions such as ‘... is a scandal’, ‘teachers blamed for ...’, ‘fun lessons lead to ...’ and ‘beset by ...’ (Hamilton, 2012:104–5). Those who haven’t passed all the qualifications at school are humiliated in the media and in official speak, and are perceived to develop a sense of sometimes overwhelming inferiority. Politicians’ attitudes towards school failures are a little more sympathetic, but remain focused on patronage and partiality towards a deficit view. In a select committee discussion on adult literacy and numeracy, the unqualified were deemed ‘socially unacceptable’ (Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) Committee, 2014).

The interviews I undertook coincided with the BIS Committee (2014) publishing a report on 'Adult Literacy and Numeracy' to the House of Commons. This report includes a variety of evidence from managers, specialists, practitioners and learners on 'why adults have been let down, what motivates those who decide to improve their skills and what more the Government can do' (BIS Committee, 2014:5). It opens with a negative statement from an unknown individual to illustrate the downtrodden mindset perceived to be typical among those who have experienced difficulties with English and maths: "Your mindset becomes limited for everything else in your life, including jobs and relationships. You have no self-belief or self-worth" (BIS Committee, 2014:5).

At the same time, in the past two years as a literacy and ESOL tutor I have noticed a slow decline and cuts in the field of lower-level literacy provision across ESOL and basic skills colleges. Cutbacks in adult education provision in England began to take place not long after the Conservative/Liberal Democrats Coalition government took office in 2010. In a South London college where I was working, a previously popular *Skills for Life* English and maths programme shrank; it was then divided in 2013, creating a small series of Entry 3 to Level 1 classes (rising GCSE and lower-level GCSE standardisations) on the one hand, and transferring Entry 2 and Entry 1 classes (adult academic levels preceding Entry 3 and Level 1) to the learners with learning difficulties programme on the other. While the BIS Committee (2014) report noted the problem of diminishing provision, it placed the burden of responsibility for not attending classes on the individuals themselves, indicating that entry level 'are the hardest group to motivate' (9) and they are 'unable and unwilling to seek help' (10).

From my perspective as teacher and researcher, there is a much greater willingness than perceived to attend classes. The problem is that provision is not sufficiently tailored to work or home commitments. Dorette and Esther, both carers, discussed a change of class time during my interview with them:

Esther: I really don't know what to do. I really, really want to go to [class]. I don't mind even half an hour. I need that half an hour. But it's just my luck.

Dorette: It's my manager she's requested I do Wednesday.

Esther: We start two o'clock we all do handover. I have to get there by at least two or at least ten to two.

Dorette: I do a 12-hour shift.

Esther: I do longer on Friday: 7am–9pm.

Sarah: A very long day.

Esther: I'm off on Tuesday. I haven't got school on Tuesday.

(Esther and Dorette, Interview 16, June 2013)

As the first of the research questions implies (section 1.1), students have their own reasons for valuing their classes. Skills-building is high on the list for coming forward to learn. However, I suggest that adult literacy provision is inevitably – and likely always will be – in demand by those who need to improve their skills. The overwhelming responses from my students and the respondents in this study indicate this. The following is an excerpt from my journal when I was working in a men's prison:

Both L and S were explaining that working hours in the UK meant that they couldn't attend classes. L relied on his UK-born wife. Both signed up and attended ESOL classes in prison at once and were keen to come to the full time education offered.

20 August 2014

Adult literacy and numeracy are not, as they would seem, remedial exercises – they are part of what people want in terms of a lifelong learning facility.

1.4 Reviewing curriculum/course design for literacy

As society is pervaded by electronic communication devices and instant knowledge online, there is a driving need to update understanding of what adult literacy education comprises. To approach this from the shop floor, so to speak, it is logical that the curriculum and its delivery must be reviewed – in this case, the Adult Core Curriculum (DfES, 2001a). St Clair commented (2010:5), 'it is critical to view curricular knowledge and its transmittal as a contestable process'.

Conversely, there are powerful hegemonic arguments to promote literacy in its functional sense, addressing the need to prepare adults for work and to update the knowledge they need for work. At present, providing literacy instruction for those who can achieve a Level 2 English qualification is prioritised, largely through paper-based exam formats, without attention to the word processing and online skills needed at work. But in doing so, a very large section of society – for example, the jobless, the worst-paid and young school leavers – is overlooked. The society we are familiar with as adult teachers is currently in desperate straits: job markets are unpredictable, wages are falling, zero-hour contracts are widely used and the benefits system is penalty-ridden. As St Clair has pointed out, 'a focus on the attributes of unemployed people personalises joblessness just as much as neo-liberal understandings of the labour market' (2001:15).

Literacy studies, tailored to specific real-life settings rather than a one-size-fits-all functional agenda, exist on the periphery. Studies of multimodal knowledge communicated through more visual, socially networked and technologically diverse means would promote more independence in communication in society (Kress, 2010). There is also a widespread need for new insights into the delivery of literacies; for example, *Life in the UK* development studies (Stevenson, 2016), health literacies that promote self-help (Berry 2014) and collaborative literacies (Telfer 2016).

1.5 The research process used with literacy students

The South Londoners, who were Entry learners at the time of the study, were keen to keep up their studies: 'I'd love to learn better and better and better' (Gillian, Interview 13, June 2013). Najma talked about college: 'Yes, me feel very happy. You always do the housework and look after the children. Once you're there is different life. Your life is different – you're not only sitting and look after kids. Because you need a social life' (Najma, Interview 17, July 2013). But for many reasons, these Entry learners are not given time to assimilate the new knowledge. Only when they are given the opportunities to demonstrate or 'surface' the knowledge they are playing with (Evans, 2011) will they begin to progress in confidence and skills.

Some learners I interviewed, including Esther and Dorette (see above passage), desperately needed to stay on the courses; but this was ignored by their workplaces due to shift management, and by the college due to funding limitations. If these learners were in a better position to manage their own learning programmes, they would undoubtedly be better able to cope with everyday situations and job prospects.

As stated, the overarching enquiry driving this research is: 'What are the learning goals and experiences of South London literacy students (literacy and ESOL) in adult learning situations post-2012'? These goals, as demonstrated already, are enmeshed with students' frustration regarding being unable to progress in work over many years. In drawing on the voices of the students themselves, a further intention of this research is whether they can recognise that their emotional, social and cognitive needs might be addressed if they were given the chance to continue their learning.

1.6 Cultural and economic influences on individual educational paths

In my preparation for this thesis, contextualising the current literacy learning provision in the UK in broader global terms helped me to better understand the motives and movements of the students I teach. This entailed viewing, through my interviews and ongoing day-to-day contact with students, how a massive cultural shift in terms of forms of communication, transference of lifestyles and reshaping of our economic purposes has also affected ordinary citizens' sense of identity (Adami & Kress, 2010:184, 185).

Usher and Edwards (1994:7, 157) argued that global postmodernity has brought both a crisis in rationality and a pluralisation of cultures, undermining the modernist goals of nationalist education. Diversity of cultures leads to the forming of new group identities that can no longer be attributed to class groupings as clearly as before. Savage (2014) (drawing on Piketty, 2014) has suggested that there are now fewer traditional class demarcations, accompanied by a more powerful series of divisions in society according to how much wealth people have accumulated (Savage,

2014:600). In a previous study of British class, Savage and colleagues (2013) identified seven classes (229) using measures of such aspects as 'highbrow' and 'emergent' cultural capital, which provided 'more nuanced understanding of cultural boundaries in the UK' (243). In this study, I explored a phenomenon very similar to this 'emergent' cultural capital, within a specific group of students, to show that something new is also emerging in the field of adult study.

Furthermore, through understanding how individuals seek to develop their own lives (and, in the case of migrant workers and their families, forge new identities in new work and home settings), I am viewing an ever-changing patchwork of home culture and new culture, traditional pastimes and new – digitally-driven – pastimes. As Tett et al. (2012) advise, we have to begin to think in terms of a variety of literacies used in different contexts in order to make meaning: 'this is particularly significant in contexts of increased migration leading to the creation of new diversities and hybrid cultures' (3). This becomes frustrating and emotional: 'Migrant identities ... are inherently ambivalent and constantly subject to inherent and continuous change' (Krzyzanowski and Wodak; 2008:95). However, in the context of learning, the students I met who had come to the UK to work or to join their spouses had seized the opportunity to learn when their domestic situations allowed them to, aspiring to become part of the communities of learning that exist on adult courses.

1.7 The field

My chosen field of study is among students both UK-born/brought up and those from other countries. During the past 40 years, I have concentrated chiefly on teaching reading, writing and speaking skills and the various critical, listening, study and technical skills associated with a holistic, applied approach to education.

The type of literacy teaching I have provided has been quite varied. It has in part been the product of a series of literacy initiatives, starting in the 1970s with predominantly phonic approaches followed by the 'language experience' method, which I used (and still use) widely, asking non-literate students to dictate their story and then produce their own copy as reading and study materials. In the 1980s, I ran student publishing groups in North London. From the 1990s onwards, I returned to training at diploma level and taught both literacy and ESOL students; I produced an ESOL literacy training course in Croydon, South London, and my own books and a handwriting scheme for students who had not had the opportunity to learn to read and write in any language before. I studied specialist approaches to teaching learners with specific learning difficulties, and was further trained through the *Skills for Life* (DfEE, 2001) government initiative in using both the Adult Core Curriculum Literacy (DfES, 2001a) and one of its counterparts, 'Adult Core Curriculum ESOL' – all of which I welcomed, after years of having no coherent qualification structure to work with students from the lower levels upwards. I supported learners in further education (FE) colleges, adult education colleges and women's and men's prisons. At the time of writing, I am delivering accredited courses in literacy, learning support and English language in an adult training scheme, family learning settings and a men's prison.

1.8 Literacy

My research is situated in the field of literacy, and my first thought about literacy will always be in this educational sense. However, I am aware that the word performs a great many other cultural, political and sociological functions; I will be exploring these in my work to explain current thinking behind literacy in post-school education, and

how that thinking affects the lives of those who study (or would like to study) English.

Particularly significant views of literacy are:

- situated literacies
- digital literacies
- traditional literacies
- functional literacies
- multiliteracies
- adult literacy

These terms, explained shortly, constitute particular approaches to literacy or descriptions often co-located with literacy, which have in most cases become part of everyday discourse about literacies. The exception is multiliteracies, which is used in the academic work I have encountered only to refer to the 'pedagogy of multiliteracies' proposed by The New London Group (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000).

1.8.1 Situated literacies

'Situated literacies' describes the ways in which literacy is in use in everyday practice. I know that outside class, my students and the students I interviewed as part of the research are continually negotiating different forms of literacy – as employees; benefit claimants; householders; parents, church, temple or mosque goers or travellers, as well as for prison form-filling, internet shopping and so on. An integral part of the thinking of New Literacy Studies (Barton & Hamilton, 2000:12) scholars is that 'just as a text does not have autonomous meanings which are independent of its social context of use, a text also does not have a set of functions independent of the social meanings with which it is imbued'. Thus, my insights into

my respondents' everyday lives outside of the learning context gave me a rich and varied picture of the many interests, occupations and multimodal preferences of South London adult students in 2013.

1.8.2 Digital literacies

Digital literacies will be referred to in the discussion of the data, as my current students and the respondents in this research are making use of digital media, including the internet; word processing; databases; smartphone technology, texting and so on.

1.8.3 Traditional literacies

I use the term 'traditional literacies' to refer to the enduring literacies that preceded the digital literacy revolution, namely deciphering text; handwriting; reading; using punctuation marks, using writing to compose meaning and spelling.

1.8.4 Functional literacy

'Functional literacy' has been used to describe school literacy for many decades, and 'functionally' literate suggests the nature of how literate an individual might be. However, in this study, the term 'English' to describe the form of adult literacy teaching currently favoured in the UK, with its accreditation system Levels Entry 1 to level 2, is more likely to be used in the context of *Functional Skills* (Ofqual, 2011).

1.8.5 Multiliteracies

For me, the use of the term 'multiliteracies' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) represents an ideal pedagogical framework in literacy education. This theory of pedagogy will be studied in greater depth in Chapter 4. At this point, it must be pointed out that 'situated practice' and 'overt instruction' are only two of the four components proposed as key criteria by which to decide how to design a course (Cope and

Kalantzis, 2000:35). The remaining components are 'critical framing' – a system whereby students can objectify what they have learnt and what had seemed familiar and certain to them – and 'transformed practice', which follows critical framing and moves full circle back to the situated experience. This final point is to demonstrate how what learnt can be reapplied to the contexts they need to use their latest understanding and new knowledge in. This wider fulfilment of newly acquired knowledge is referred to in this thesis (25).

1.8.6 Adult literacy

The aforementioned flexible approaches are crucial to 'adult literacy' – a term used for teaching literacy to adults across most countries of the English-speaking world. Rather than confine the overall picture to literacy provision in one country, with international standards and massive movements of people across continents that adult literacy needs to be understood in its global context, which impacts strongly on the national context. I have looked for parallels between literacy learning in developing countries and more affluent countries. Although the two geographical categories are often treated as two different educational endeavours, there is an opening for them to be seen more clearly in combination as reflections of global concerns for social inclusion and improved quality of life. Rogers and Street (2012:82–3) might as well be talking about Britain or other Western European and North American countries as the developing countries when they explain that most national governments, responding to international aid agencies' call for 'literacy for development', have adopted a 'functional literacy' approach. When they enlarge on what is meant by this 'functionality', there are further striking likenesses with the role adult literacy is expected to play in England: first, 'income generating activities

(literacy for livelihoods)'; and second, 'literacy for citizenship, for social cohesion and harmony, for inclusion'.

As we witness increasing waves of migration, we also discover that the future imagined by migrants includes accessing education. These worldwide trends are bringing many students with serious intentions of learning English to English literacy classes, who are committed for as long as it takes.

On a more local scale in the UK, literacies are promoted through adult literacy classes in the community and in other real-life contexts, such as workplaces, school family learning classes and prisons, and under such headings as employability, financial capability, computer literacy and health. Tett, Hamilton & Crowther (2012:126) discuss the economic pressures placed on students in the context of a different adult literacy discourse – one promoted in the Scottish adult literacies context. There was more emphasis on community cohesion through the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland (2005), and thus greater space to discuss literacy for citizenship and democracy. Crowther has continued to indicate how adult learning differs in Scotland up until the recent Scottish referendum. Adult literacy is perceived as a component of a more open, creative and inclusive society, and is 'central to personal and community empowerment' (2014 *Adults Learning* [24:4] 26).

The above points illustrate not only how adult literacy is used to forward other international and local economic and political issues but also complex international trends shape the contents of adult literacy curricula.

1.9 Learning framework

This study is based on the idea that the literacy or ESOL literacy classroom or learning situation constitutes a social practice/literacy event in its own right (see section 3.4). I have struggled to maintain this belief throughout the research period and previously through a Master's degree in Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy. My own relationship with power and the employers who have allocated literacy classes to me is examined in Chapter 2. This clearly colours my interactions with students, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Those with a view rooted in a social practices approach may assert that official literacy classes are in danger of offering only an 'autonomous model' (Street, 1984:19), and thus drawing students into a disempowering (Crowther et al., 2001:2), predominantly technical understanding of what literacy is (Papen, 2005:49). Brian Street, a social and cultural anthropologist, has a particular interest in literacy education for adults, perceiving the teaching of literacy as subject to power relations.

He claims:

literacy is always 'ideological' – it always involves contests over meanings, definitions and boundaries and struggle for control of the literacy agenda. For this reason it becomes harder to justify teaching only one particular form of literacy ... when the learners will already have been exposed to a variety of everyday literacy practices

(Street 2012:17)

Barton has suggested that – due to the entrenched view of policy makers' that grammar, spelling, punctuation and so on constitute literacy learning – there is a lack of reflexivity in students' (and trainee teachers') minds about what they are learning; they expect to learn other people's literacy, not reflect on their own practices (Barton & Hamilton 2000:168). Sparks & Butterworth (2004:283) paint a wider picture of the

hegemonic adult learning agenda in Mexico, describing the prejudice demonstrated by teachers and the tensions that run through ethnic communities, where students experience a shared sense of having inferior status when they come to adult basic education classes.

Despite my ongoing awareness that adult literacy draws in universally contested issues of whose literacy is being taught, whose language is being overlooked and how basic skills are used in expedient ways by those in control of education funds, I remain a teacher/researcher of taught literacy, particularly driven by the potentially liberating effect I have witnessed on committed students.

In reference to the above issues, in this thesis I use ideas that form the basis of thinking about learning in Knud Illeris's 'tension triangle' (see Appendix 1) (Illeris, 2002; 2004:95). The triangle's main reference points are cognition (functionality), emotion (mental balance) within the individual (at two points), and a third point of sociality (environment), which draws the individual towards integration. I believe the tension between these three main influences on learning justifies the need for plentiful, official adult basic education; this is what motivates me to continue to promote literacy within an official framework, while always respecting each individual's varying needs. This is explored further in Chapter 5 and in relation to the findings of the research.

Overall, then, I will be looking at not only students' reactions to learning but also how they contextualise that learning in the rest of their lives, by making links between the class content and other contexts. In the process, I will hopefully identify some of the

typical discourses students use about literacy learning, and how comfortably they adapt what they learn to their everyday lives.

1.10 Structure of the thesis

The next chapter (Chapter 2) focuses on my own contact within the field of adult literacy. Chapter 3 then describes the design of the study. This is followed by an exploration of a range of late-20th- and early-21st-century educational and sociological literature pertinent to this work (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 explains the rationale for the methods employed in the thesis. Subsequently, three empirical chapters (chapters 6 to 8) explore the ethnographic materials collected; detailed thematic approaches are used to draw conclusions on how effectively the theory on the value of adult literacy classes is supported. Finally, Chapter 9 summarises the findings, offers some concluding remarks on this thesis's original contribution and argues that the continuation of literacy classes, as a socially cohesive and growth point in English society, is vitally necessary.

Chapter 2

Shaping of Own Positionality

Reflexivity should be an inherent and ubiquitous part of the research endeavour.

(Sikes & Goodson 2003:34)

2.1 Introduction

The energy that charged this research (see section 1.1 for research questions) was powered by a long and versatile career in teaching literacy skills to adults, as described in Chapter 1. It was also prompted by an urge to represent literacy students' motivations and aspirations during an age in the UK when the needs of individual learners have lost priority, apart from the 'learner file' value (SFA, 2016a:15–16) collected from students' attendance in classes and exams and their results. Classes that provide what I would term 'deep literacy instruction' to those who cannot learn quickly, and who need time and plenty of contextualised practice to assimilate the facts, have become a luxury for which adult education agencies cannot quickly find funding. In Sutton, South London, at the end of the 2013 academic year it was recognised that entry-level classes were attended by learners who achieved more slowly than those at upper levels, and their classes were then transferred to the department for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. In the same year, ESOL entry classes were also cut back (*NATECLA News*. Summer 2013. No. 101). It was during this period that the research for this study was carried out. At the time of writing I remain a practitioner, enthused by the learning frameworks I work within but deeply concerned at how reductionist policies across education are overlooking the holistic solutions to learning that adult education could afford to offer.

My position in this changing adult education scene has been at the grassroots, experiencing the effects of cuts on teachers and seeing and hearing about their effects on students. My viewpoint has been particularly immersed in classroom delivery, not programme planning by the management. This means I have been directly aware of the impact of the Coalition and Conservative governments' austerity policies on our students in terms of education, jobs, benefit cuts and poverty since 2010.

Meanwhile, in my experience, small and large reductionist vocational packages have been developing in colleges since the late 1980s. Starting with discrete employability schemes, such as the Youth Training Scheme in the 1980s, these vocationally oriented programmes gradually encompassed the rationale for running literacy and numeracy courses nationally. When the BBC and Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit introduced the Wordpower and Numberpower qualifications in 1989 (Hamilton & Hillier, 2005:130), many literacy teachers were discouraged by the distinctly skills-based approach with its accredited framework. While researching their history of adult literacy, language and numeracy, Hamilton and Hillier (2005) discussed these objections with teachers. They found some practitioners had welcomed a form of accreditation, while others felt strongly that the competence-based movement was demeaning adult literacy studies.

I welcomed the change; I wanted my learners to strive towards achievement at their own particular levels. However, I regret that in my current experience, it is very rare to find literacy teachers who are trained to embed English into a real-life interest, cause or occupation for students up to level 2. Instead, the mechanical process of

introducing the literacy skill, contextualising it in a mini project or exercise to enable the learners to practise it and then testing it is considered sufficient. There is not only a shortage of money to run courses for lower-level students but also a stripping back of what is taught to the bare essentials. I remain enthused, because I am still in a position to teach whole classes and enjoy watching their progress, but in this section I chart my own experiences through the many changes in adult literacy provision. This is to propound how my interactions with students and theirs with me have enabled me to recognise the compromises we have now brought into their situations as learners.

2.2 The 'changing faces of adult literacy' (Hamilton & Hillier, 2005)

Historical study reveals ALLN [Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy] to be a dynamic, heterogeneous field, replete with myths, flashpoints and mantras.

(Hamilton & Hillier, 2005:156)

I was fortunate to be teaching in the 1970s and early 1980s, when adult literacy classes – propelled by a flurry of emancipatory and not-so-emancipatory ideas – became widespread. Duckworth and Ade-Ojo (2015:2) describe this period as an era when policy was led by practice. In my own experience working in inner North London centres, I helped publish students' writing, run reading evenings and facilitate creative writing workshops. There was a gravitation among students towards acquiring more knowledge, which ran side by side with motivations to improve work prospects. There was also a desire among some teachers to hear what the students had to tell them about their life experiences. Teaching and learning, for me, could run two ways: on the one hand, students learnt essential reading and writing skills through relevant resources and learner-centred teaching practice; on the other, I widened my knowledge of life in the past in England, as well

as about the social traditions and everyday practices of people from diverse communities. By respecting learners' life histories, I found I also enabled them to succeed with literacy learning.

Duckworth (2014:159) wrote in detail about the transformative power of literacy, which she observed and recorded among her own learners in 2006. She attributed this in part to 'working' in a collective way, which was 'a way for the learners to begin to see themselves differently as individuals, and question their positioning in unbalanced power relationships that have marginalised them'.

I have also witnessed (and continue to witness) students recognising that they have become stronger because of having the opportunity to exchange views in class and work to shared goals. This fresh perspective on life was reflected in many of the conversations I had with individuals from literacy and ESOL classes during the research for this study. As a teacher, I have also been in a position to enable students to express wider personal goals for their individual learning plans. This is an 'egalitarian' model, which takes into consideration 'cultural, psychological and educational factors related to the learner' (Duckworth, 2014:173).

Duckworth has explained how, by 'opening up a space for critical reflection' (2014:173), learners reach a point of challenging what literacies are. This is where, in this thesis, I part ways with this more radical viewpoint. My position has always been that every individual has the potential to develop objective, well-informed views about how they are situated in society, and not merely to become vessels for official government speak. In that sense I agree with Freire's (1970) emancipatory model of

literacy, which outlined how those in power maintained a 'banking system', educating or investing education in ordinary people to enable them to comply with the status quo, or maintain the reserves of trained-up employees. I admit I also miss those days when there was time and resources to celebrate students' work and encourage them to express their own aspirations for society. But the people who come to learn literacy skills have, like any other adult learner, decided to improve their reading and writing so as to progress in society and contribute more to their family, maybe their community, their workplace and (in a few cases) societal organisations such as unions, scouts organisations or churches. As a teacher, I provide them with the skills and a forum to help them to make that step. Rather than moving lives from a place of dull thinking to a place of transformed, proactive thinking, I am privileged enough to accompany already bright thinkers and people who may have very difficult lives but are also determined to gain more qualifications.

I did not feel dismayed by the introduction of an orthodox English 'grammar' approach into literacy syllabi. It was clear that, for example, the Department for Education and Skills' Adult Literacy Core Curriculum (DfES, 2001) produced a heavily structured and target-oriented progression framework. Despite this, I welcomed the work that had accumulated through studies of literacy acquisition over recent decades, as this provided a path along which skills could develop in a logical progress. Students in my classes over the past years have included hard-working millionaires with their own small businesses in Surrey, church leaders and managers in their respective workplaces, among others. All students accepted that their tutor would apply an existing standardised syllabus to their individual literacy needs.

However, I do draw the line between planning imaginatively according to syllabi on the one hand and becoming a data production operator on the other. Teaching staff are now expected to complete multiple skills funding agency data sheets, which takes over from updating staff teaching skills. Courses become impoverished due to time restrictions: staff and students are allocated less time for courses due to limited finances, courses are minimally resourced and there is less subject specialism training. Indeed, there is a lack of rationale about the functional skills qualifications; for example, in response to the question 'What are functional skills?', the website of For Skills (a specialist consultative body) merely states: 'Functional Skills strengthen and bring consistency to learning routes for young people and adults' (For Skills, 2015).

At the time of writing – over 15 years since *Skills for Life* (DfEE, 2001) was introduced – the combination of an old-fashioned skills menu and current bare-necessities provision has resulted in an emphasis on a conservative approach to English, leaving adult literacy learning lagging behind real-life English usage. For example, in my experience there is little acknowledgement of the new ways in which people access and develop their knowledge through social networking. Little account is made of the influence that rapidly evolving digital literacies and multiple new literacy spaces have on readers' and writers' literacy development.

In the past three or four years, I have recognised that literacy programme managers have politely acknowledged – but not supported or encouraged – my own approach of including contextualised activities, such as reading groups; book review groups; introductions to internet literacy; library study groups; studying how to read Google

search pages; teaching how to use smartphone spelling and reference facilities, producing group magazines and anthologies and interacting with overstretched public services. Indeed, the more creative and holistic ‘conceptualisation of literacy’ that might allow us to ‘identify a range of literacy events and practices – for economic, cultural, political and relational purposes’ (Feeley, 2012:132) is no longer a distinguishing feature of any of the basic literacy schemes I have encountered.

Adult literacy and language has moved away from the productive years that Hamilton and Hillier (2005) described. Following the Leitch report of 2006, there was a progressive narrowing of strategy towards functional skills for employment (Hamilton, 2012:7). Cuts incurred following the 2008 financial crisis have overridden such inquiries, as reported by Schuller and Watson (2009:49), who asserted that the education system was not intelligent enough to respond to the demographic challenges of an ageing society and changing employment patterns. They called for widening participation and fine-tuning to the learning needs of different sections of society. David Hughes (2014:5) commented: ‘Too many people of all ages are not able to access the high quality and motivating learning and skills they need to be active citizens and successful in the labour market’. In the same publication, Schuller and Watson regretted the lack of national framework for a coherent adult education; rather, ‘responsibility for skills ricochets around ministers and policy silos are as entrenched as ever’ (Schuller & Watson, 2014:6–9). Anyone involved in skills training might comment on an outstanding contradiction: on the one hand, the government is urging business and commerce to expand and develop intelligent workforces and communities to provide a vibrant ‘big society’ (Cabinet Office, 2010);

yet on the other hand, it is withholding funding from lifelong learning, which could propel these changes with expertise.

From my own professional position, this has brought considerable employment insecurity; risk of lack of renewal of contracts; drastic cutbacks to services I have worked for, constant scrutiny of exam results and increasingly frequent managerial observation and direction. Uninterrupted service and regular updating of my professional skills holds little currency compared to the importance attributed to collecting attendance and results figures.

Provision has effectively been fashioned into discrete fast-track skills training courses, which are heavily dependent on producing quick successful results to secure funding. In 2013 and 2014, I tried to persuade two different English functional skills managers to allow me to involve my students in national reading events to encourage their reading and raise their confidence. On both occasions I was refused, not only due to the very small amount of money required to register but also because integrating these 'add-ons' into a time-pressured functional skills programme was not perceived as valuable.

These changes have affected literacy teaching profoundly, as has already been outlined in vertical accounts of the history of adult literacy provision (Atkinson, 2012:75–87), which have charted changes in teaching approaches and lesson content over the last 40 years of literacy studies in the UK and worldwide.

The present study not only aims to explain how my own position in relation to current adult literacy has been formed. It also indicates why I decided to capture how people who situated themselves in literacy studies contexts in 2012 expressed their understanding of what learning English was doing for them. As a skills emphasis has become predominant in adult education, I wanted to find out if literacy and ESOL literacy students perceive their studies in terms of vocational upskilling, or if they have expectations that cannot be met by the present system.

2.3 The merging of ESOL and literacy in this study

The advantage of my position in the field is that I have knowledge of teaching practice of both ESOL literacy and adult literacy students.

The role of English language as a learning focus plays a key role in my research and is a dominant factor in its findings. At the turn of the millennium, Cameron (2002:70–71) drew attention to the worldwide popularity of ‘communications studies’ in a chapter about globalisation. She pointed out that global markets depend on the rapid information flows made possible by information and communication technology (ICT), and that ‘communication skills training is not necessarily directed at second language learners specifically: many or most recipients are either native monolingual or proficient bilingual speakers of the language in which they are learning to “communicate”’. Cameron argues that communication is emerging as the supreme value of language teaching for both first-language users and second-language learners. She then emphasises the need to question ‘which actual languages should serve as means of communication in a globalized world’ (81). My position on how communication studies is taught is rooted in what communications training offers English first- and second-language learners alike. One of the aspects of present-day

training for employment in the UK is that all students – whether ESOL or native speakers – expect to be picking up valuable *English* literacy skills for work or to progress to higher-level vocational studies.

However, I maintain that there is an imbalance in the type of communication skills being offered. This is in a similar vein to Joseph Lo Bianco (2000), who in his contribution to *Multiliteracies* urged policy makers to accommodate multilingual forms of communication in the curriculum. Bianco calls for a design that allows integration of different cultures and ethnic groups. He maintains that effective literacy pedagogy accommodates a range of solutions for diversity and multilingualism and enhances participants' learning of communication skills in the long run (100). As an English teacher, I agree that there is a need to remain sensitive and vigilant, listening when students of different languages assimilate new information about communication that may differ considerably from their own cultural traditions.

However, as I undertook interviews with first- and second-language speakers, I found it hard to distinguish between the enthusiasm each group expressed in their desire to progress. Regardless of whether they were first- or second-language learners, all anticipated getting qualifications and changing their lives for the better.

2.4 Previous research and its influence on the fieldwork/enquiry

The interviewing approach I have taken emerged very naturally from the teaching/facilitating role I have played for four decades in learners' lives. One-to-one interaction in dyslexia assessments and learning support situations for two decades enabled me to develop an approach of asking a series of questions, attuned to the

individual's disposition, to quickly ascertain their particular difficulties and how much their external circumstances contribute to preventing their progress.

I undertook two diplomas in the 1990s: one in teaching and assessing students with specific learning difficulties, and one in teaching English language to adults. The first focused only on one-to-one teaching and assessing. As part of my diploma work at that time (1995), I found myself involved in pioneering an area of research as I supported one adult ESOL learner with specific learning difficulties. The English language course in 1999 mainly involved teaching whole classes, but one section of the syllabus required the study of discourse and stipulated the recording of one-to-one interviews with students. I then analysed a number of these recordings in depth.

The difference between these two diplomas was that the first trained me to study people who were struggling and needed concessions and support to continue learning. I thus aligned myself with the department in any college or other adult education body that nurtured and enabled students held back by dyslexia – and indeed many other perceived disadvantages, such as English as a second language, limited early education, autism and so on. I moved to studying English language teaching in greater depth exactly because I missed the very different exercise of teaching whole classes and the expertise required to understand language as a complex skill. This made me more aware of how easy it is to label an individual who does not complete the set work successfully, and to insufficiently value the contributions they make to the class group in other ways.

I continued to use semi-structured interviews in small-scale research projects from 2002–6. I interviewed colleagues in an FE college on the first leg of my Master's degree in lifelong learning. I later studied the Scottish curriculum in comparison to the English curriculum through the responses of practitioners, for which I used an email interview technique.

My Master's dissertation (Freeman, 2006) made tentative inroads into a qualitative, sociologically informed approach to research, while preserving my natural tendency to use learner-centred and locally-themed teaching approaches. It followed that, at doctorate level, I was aware that my natural communication style with students and practitioners would likely pervade the interview structure, and guide the free dialogue as it developed independently from that structure.

2.5 Assisting learning and the moral aspect of the research process

One of the reasons I have remained in adult literacy/ESOL teaching throughout my career is likely to shine through my writing and research, and may make my academic mentors wary of possible altruism on my part. This is because I work towards making all my learners feel included, and I remain hopeful that a class will reflect a democratic body of people who respect one another's rights.

In my research, *inclusion* and *equity* have been key touchstones in all my reading and considerations of the learning centres I have visited and worked in. There is no way of avoiding weaving my insights as a practitioner throughout my dissertation; I concur with Nixon & Sikes (2003, 86–7) description of a 'conceptualization of the relation between thought, action and judgement'. They explain the part meaningful 'evidence' can play: 'Research exists not only to provide policy makers and

practitioners with evidence, but to provide, as a public resource, interpretation of that evidence that speaks to the conditions pertaining at precise points and within specific public sectors’.

Taken together, these descriptions of my positionality suggest a complex outlook on teaching. While rooted in the class setting and governed by organisational policies, I am also keen to understand and hear about the working and living environments my students inhabit outside education, as well as their network of relationships with family, friends and work colleagues. Part of bringing a values approach to my work is conveying information to students about how organisations and systems work.

I join my social practices approach to other convictions about how learning can become dynamic. Thus, my process of making societal links is caught up and adapts – and is adapted by – a coexisting acquisition process. This is informed by traditional theories of structured, cognitive acquisition of learning, and also by the emotional factors that interact with learning. Explaining why I do this requires an understanding of adult learning in three ‘dimensions’, meshing between two different ‘processes’, all interactions of which can be taken into account when forming a complete picture of a learning situation or learning course. These concepts of processes and dimensions of learning (Illeris, 2004:95) are diagrammatically represented in Appendix 1 and discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.9).

In the current basic skills upgrading, pulls towards the social or psychodynamic (emotional) dimensions may cause students to delay completing qualifications. Providers cannot afford to risk this happening too often. Attendance figures,

completion of the course and passing the exam command full attention in the current adult education world that I practise in. Tensions are increasingly present, as those who are slower or require greater staff capacity in terms of support are less accommodated, or no longer catered for, in terms of eligibility.

I have to accommodate the rules, but at the same time my own values underlie the way I teach, as reflected in my research journal:

I do not see my students as vessels to fill with goods to upgrade their value in the skills market; rather I see them as people, who with access to and discussion of new meanings can make more informed choices and deepen their understanding of the many advantages of learning.

I refer to the 'aaah' of satisfaction (the word that provoked this was 'hyperlink' at Kensington Avenue class) that you get from time to time when you explain the meaning of a word; or how an adverb, for example, functions in a sentence.

Technicalities admittedly, but unlocking minds that are ready to absorb a greater understanding of how life is organised.

(Research Journal, 5 March 2014)

Fundamental to my adult education teaching (and an aspect of me that colleagues sometimes comment on) is ensuring that inclusion, equality and differentiation are respected in every class situation, as well as instilled into teacher training contexts for new trainees and staff training sessions. My way of doing this (which also contributed to how I planned this research) is to recognise threads of life experience that a group may have in common, bind them together and nurture the strands that are different and that may block individuals from learning to their full potential.

I aspire to use my practical teaching work to advocate for greater educational justice for literacy and ESOL literacy students (and would-be students), who are compelled

to exist on the fringes of lifelong learning. As Morrell (2007:251) urges, I want to become an agent of change with the potential to affect policy conversations.

Acknowledging social justice or education justice issues has been part of my professional makeup, influencing many of my decisions about my own employment and the subject matter I have chosen as context in class.

2.6 Community of learning

Throughout this study, I have consistently worked on the basis that the learners and I form a community of learning in the classroom. There are usually two aspects of literacy classes: the interrelationships between the students, and between the students and me. In ESOL/basic literacy classes, there is greater dependency on the one teacher and students grouping, because the students may not have many common communication points with one another. Outside of class, family, work and community factors play a key role in motivating and putting demands on students; in class, the desire to learn and to meet other people with similar aspirations is another real-life event. To explain the antithesis of the view that students' social practices are factored into the formal learning experience, Street (1984) developed the idea that the 'autonomous model' of literacy imposes western conceptions of literacy onto other cultures (Street, 2001a:7). From my point of view, this suggestion that the syllabi in English adult literacy classes are irrelevant to everyday life does not allow for the fact that the people who come to the classes choose to enter that world. Admittedly, fast-track and online courses make it less likely that students will have enough time to experience the class situation, but for many (and this is demonstrated in the interviews undertaken for this study) the class and its programme become positive and live events in their life courses.

Street maintains that literacy is always ideological, with contests over meanings and the likely imposition of dominant views in school literacies (Street, 2009:23). I am usually based in educational institutions, but in this work Street (2001b:18) also acknowledges that 'the site of learning, whether school-based or in adult literacy programmes, has, like other contexts, its own social beliefs and behaviours into which its particular literacy practices are inserted' is of key importance. Everyone in the classroom brings their own view of how literacy functions, and it is these diverse views that form an aggregate platform on which learning can take place. I recently taught a low-level literacy qualification through an ESOL class in a men's prison. The four men attending were from four different parts of Africa and the Middle East; they had led distinguished or charmed lives in their respective circles, and were continually processing the traumas that had brought them to a British jail. Without discussing these events overtly, their lives were present in our studies; each indicated how their educational, professional, family and political lives had influenced their understandings of literacy and the part English played in this. While they anticipated failure, none of them failed.

Such sites of adult education learning are rich in local culture whenever those who make up the class community can interact with the new learning to their own benefit. Thus, as typified by communities of practice, the students create their own group identity and demonstrate to visitors and newcomers a 'field of paradigmatic trajectories'; that is, the possibility to engage with their own futures (Wenger, 1998:156). Wenger (1998) suggests this field of possibilities is likely to be the most influential factor shaping newcomers' learning. Wenger's views on the impact of group learning on identity are considered further in the literature review (Chapter 4).

As I have remained active in teaching in the sector, I have witnessed how group identity is also fluid, depending on factors such as 'age, region, education, class, gender, profession, lifestyle' (Kress, 2010:72–3). Furthermore, as Kress suggests, as 'situations of communication become ever more diverse people recognise the need to adapt their form of communication for the people they are currently encountering' (Kress, 2010:73).

As a teacher supplied with a course syllabus and overarching curriculum, I play a dominant part in facilitating learning. But my task is also to enable individuals to continue and achieve. As such, there is also a strong moral argument for them to inhabit the class grouping and experience co-learning with other students.

2.7 Learning process

The research questions (section 1.1) indirectly called for me to define what was meant by 'literacy' in the context of this work. Furthermore, the themes contained in these questions require an understanding of what is meant by the 'adult learning process'. It is inevitable that my position as a teacher, and more recently as a teacher trainer, will influence my viewpoint. I believe it is important to continually recall that assessment of individual psychological and cognitive characteristics must be moderated by understanding, or trying to understand, the specific cultural processes going on in any one teaching situation.

In describing the learning process, reflecting on Illeris's 'tension triangle' (Illeris, 2002:16) (see Appendix 1 and section 1.9) helps me to keep a balanced view of the situated student on the one hand – but also to remember that an individual learner's

disposition will be widely varied, both cognitively and psychologically, depending on the socially situated environment from which the individual has emerged.

2.8 The professional path

The point is we cannot separate the researcher from the social and intellectual context of fieldwork. In recognising that we are constructed, shaped and challenged by fieldwork we become more attuned to what is going on in the specific cultural setting.

(Coffey, 1999:158)

Coffey's (1999) deep study of the ethnographic researcher details how intricately the product of such a study is imbued with the social life under study: 'We do not come to a setting without an identity constructed and shaped by complex social processes' (158). As this study was approached, it became clear that the perspective of a researcher studying their own professional area, after spending a very long time as practitioner therein, would likely bring a diverse and developing set of reactions to the work. References my professional history would be tempered according to my increasing age, cumulative experience, different locations and versatility within specialisms. Additionally, as already made clear, this study is rooted in the actual education setting culture; but there is a full acknowledgement that external 'complex social processes' would also impact on the setting and time period informing this thesis.

As depicted in my auto-ethnographic professional timeline (Appendix 2), I have worked through a period that started in the mid-1970s – when ground-breaking *On the Move* adult literacy classes (Hamilton & Hillier: 2005: 2) were provided nationally – to the present day, when literacy skills are still offered widely but are now confined

to particular 'targets' frameworks, which are constructed around employability and driven by national policies.

My experience as a teacher in Leeds (1974), Hackney (1977) and Islington (1979) was that many styles of teaching were being tried out, including a phonic approach, language experience and functional skills. Teaching literacy to adults was in a versatile, experimental phase.

To give examples of not only the methods used but also the environments generated, I recall my early years as a volunteer tutor onwards. I was first allocated a Ghanaian student in an old school room in central Leeds, working quietly alongside other pairs of volunteers and students. The coordinator sat at the teacher's desk at the front of the classroom. I quickly realised that John (the student with whom I was working) was not going to progress far using only the recommended phonic approach, and I started to talk to him about his childhood experiences of education. I brought a library book that was richly illustrated with photographs of Ghana, and encouraged him to learn to read some of the text. I was fascinated; it opened doors to an unknown continent for me, too. He invited me to a football match at Elland Road in Leeds because he was astonished that I had never experienced a football ground. Looking back to that first experience of adult literacy teaching. I realise it encapsulated everything about sharing cultures that I have gravitated towards in my English teaching career since the mid-1970s.

I emerged in adult literacy teaching in London in 1978: a period when provision was still on the drawing board and the need for classes was acknowledged, but the

content was left to teachers and coordinators to decide. Theories, especially those of Paulo Freire, were accommodated and applied to the principles underlying a number of adult literacy schemes in England. Fundamental to the teaching of adults, Freire promoted critical consciousness into adult classes, nurturing students' awareness of their objective situation (Freire, 1970:93) and that they, as ordinary citizens, control their society (Freire, 1970).

Many practitioners were inspired by Paulo Freire, and there was enough liberty in adult literacy education at that time for Freire's politically charged ideas to be absorbed and influential in literacy teaching in England. For example, at Centerprise Bookshop and Community Centre in Hackney in 1978, I was initiated into regular, social practice-oriented adult literacy training sessions, where volunteer teachers' good practice was valued. Here, I underwent my first use of language experience, where the words of the non-writer telling his or her life story was used to create their own reading and learning materials. The centre was a hub of community activity at the time, attracting a range of culturally alternative people and events (Radical History Network, 2015).

From Centerprise, I went on to teach literacy evening classes in Finsbury Park, North London. The classes, administered by the Inner London Education Authority, were run on a possible numbers basis only; there were no other constraints on viability. If there were not enough students, there was a threat that the class would be closed. The majority of students were from the Caribbean, both English- and French-speaking islands. There were also some white English students, a few students who

had arrived in England during or immediately after the Second World War from the continent and the Caribbean, and a few from the Indian subcontinent.

We were free to devise our own timetables, with very little supervision other than occasional in-service workshops. I encountered more situated literacy tasks and the use of everyday resources rather than purpose-made pamphlets or stylised 'learn to read and write' materials. As a group of teachers, we spent a lot of time in social gatherings discussing what we were doing in class. Large numbers of students gathered for reading evenings, where they read their own work or someone read it for them. We also went away with students for a reading and writing weekend in Kent. I was given paid responsibility for the collection of materials and editing/production of student writings in one-author or anthology paperbacks. Quite a lot of teachers ran women-only classes, and books were produced on issues pertaining to women, such as childbirth and marriage difficulties.

During this remarkable phase in adult education, there were other examples in society of the status quo changing. Modern class alignments were beginning to dissolve and, with the advent of Margaret Thatcher's government, there was increased emphasis on setting out on your own in business. Traditional employer patronage of employees was less prevalent, which led to insecurity for many people who struggled with reading and writing skills.

My next stop in literacy was in Redhill in Surrey at the end of the 1980s, where there were more white English students and a great many volunteer teachers, most of whom had retired from working in education or social services. Under Surrey County

Council, I worked in other parts of East Surrey and taught several evening classes in a school on a suburban council estate, which were aimed at workshop arrangements called 'open learning centres' (Hamilton & Hillier, 2005:101). At this point, the focus was much more on the one-to-one setup or study centre ethos. I missed the opportunity to teach groups and the vibrancy of the inner London culture. I welcomed the arrival of Wordpower and Numberpower, and was pleased to be able to teach both of these using real-life situations, or to create them as vehicles for teaching the communication or number skills needed. This was my first introduction to the portfolio method of assessment, and I was pleased at how portfolios could tell the story of what students had learnt through their finished and marked work. The National Open College Network (Hamilton & Hillier, 2005:132–3) also came into force at this time, offering a very wide range of possible literacy topics across mini accredited units.

I also taught ESOL in Croydon adult education from the early 1990s until 2000, when exams and portfolio-based work were rapidly becoming the norm. There were more opportunities in ESOL to be creative with students' life stories, to base learning on going out of the centre into real situations and to work with larger groups of students. This may have been mainly due to funding – largely from the European Social Fund – for students to undergo up to 15 hours of learning per week. The English language scheme served South Norwood, Thornton Heath and West Croydon: London suburbs with very large numbers of asylum seekers and other immigrants due to the passport office being in central Croydon. It was clear that the learning centres in South Norwood and Thornton Heath in particular were very popular social centres for the students. Newcomers were comfortable but courteous among teachers and other

students from all parts of the world. Older students, who had spent a large part of their adult life in the UK but had not accessed education before, were also typical in these classes. With funding from the European Social Fund as well as other UK funding sources, the hours offered per week were generous, and the community of learning in the Croydon centres was very settled.

Around the turn of the century, there was an explosion of opportunities for consultation over the new core curriculum for adults, and a rapid production process of curriculum documents, a new qualification framework and generous funding for literacy, numeracy and ESOL classes. Many incentives were provided for existing teachers, including rigorous training, more teaching hours and extensive teaching materials. By this time I was working as a specialist additional learning support tutor, as well as a class tutor, and it was satisfying to observe how carefully the basic skills levels were integrated into the vocational course levels.

During the period of the introduction of *Skills for Life* (2000), the Labour government's initial intentions were to provide many more opportunities for adults to catch up with basic skills. As David Blunkett wrote in the foreword to *Skills for Life* (2000): 'A prosperous and decent society is one in which everybody has the skills they need to be productive at work, active in their community, and fulfilled in their personal and family life'. This indicates that the New Labour government was ambitious for adults who had previously missed out on gaining skills and qualifications to return to education. Blunkett's words illustrate Hamilton and Tett's (2012:36) description of the *Skills for Life* discourse: 'a language of entitlement used in Skills for Life policy documents'.

Following the Moser Report of 1999, which exposed large numbers of adults with below-functional literacy skills (Schuller & Watson, 2009:126), an unusually large amount of central government money was allocated to staffing, resourcing, qualifying and funding courses for adults in (first-language) English, maths and ICT. I worked in a number of South London colleges for the first years of the Labour government, and my accumulated basic skills knowledge was called on in different capacities. I witnessed rapidly changing provision for basic skills students in FE and adult education. In Outer London and the county, it was noticeable that literacy and ESOL were moving from the fringes of post-16 provision to become large departments within colleges, adult education centres and training schemes. ESOL had already become a large presence in some inner London education centres and colleges during the 1990s.

The funding emphasis on skills for employment was a gradual but increasing trend from 2001 to the end of the Labour government's majority in 2010. The Leitch report (2006) drew attention to ongoing poor performance in skills and, in the process of introducing a more rigorous qualifications system, literacy became more strenuously identified with functional skills for employment. This was coupled with mounting demands for accountability, which have characterised all basic education since the international adult literacy survey drew attention to the low level of literacy in the UK in 1996.

This compelling need for accountability has increasingly called on my role, and those of my colleagues, to become instrumental in and answerable to college statistics.

Colleges nowadays dictate how we are expected to teach each part of the lesson to fulfil inspection criteria. Tight funding and close examination of compliancy with the rules has closed many doors to imaginative ways of promoting literacy learning. Duckworth (2014:2) wrote: 'I felt a great deal of my time and energy was beginning to be driven by a managerial system based on a close scrutiny of my paperwork rather than my practice in the classroom'.

The wide range of staff training through *Skills for Life*, such as *Access for All* (2002) – alongside The Equality Act 2010 – kept my tendencies to learner-centred learning and inclusive learning alive as both trainee and trainer. At present, I have a dyslexia specialist assessor and teacher role in Croydon Council's adult training organisation. I am paid to undertake specialist assessments as an administrator, but the organisation is forced to reduce its literacy support to this or nothing. Learning support – previously a hallmark of provision, which the Kennedy report *Learning Works* (1997) introduced – has become thinly staffed, since colleges have been forced to make severe cutbacks on accessories to class teaching.

In the prison education service, where I worked for four years, there were longer hours for education and (in theory) more learning support. Improving basic skills before starting other courses was regarded as a priority. However, Home Office cuts have led to the closure of a number of prisons, including ours in 2013. Prisoners were sent to other – often overcrowded – prisons, where education was sometimes forfeited due to a shortage of officers to escort prisoners to their activities. In our case, teachers and managers were drifting and temporarily employed elsewhere, and education providers for the prison service frequently changed their minds about which institutions they would or would not manage depending on success rates.

2.9 Summary

In this chapter, I started by describing some influences on my own outlook on adult education. I then worked these into an account of my professional history, highlighting the various approaches to adult literacy provision at each new period of my narrative, as well as some personal stories. Overall, the contemporary political situations alongside the settings, localities and literacy events build a picture of a variety of education practices during my years in the field. These components, accounting for what I bring to the mix, are influential in answering the core research questions.

Chapter 3

The Study: Global and Local Contexts, and Neighbourhood Settings

3.1 Introduction

This work, which has acquired a distinctly ethnographic character, depended upon ESOL and English first-language adult literacy participants in a range of adult education settings. It was their involvement that gave the study the potential for unique insights.

What I expected from the study, based upon the key research questions, was to find out what literacy and language learning signifies for the students. As a practising literacy teacher myself, I also bring distinct conceptions about what contemporary classes offer to students, and I will remark on these in my discussion of the findings. Likewise, I interviewed six other teachers and programme organisers to find out their views on the benefits of literacy – views that may contribute to learners' own impressions.

A further question that arose is: What kind of basic education does our society value? Could it be that a 'key role for a quality education becomes one of supporting the development of autonomy and the ability to make choices in later life, rather than simply providing individuals with the necessary resources to learn' (Tikly & Barrett, 2011: 7)? In this chapter, I present the characteristics of my study as well as the issues, concepts and localities explored.

The research was always rooted in a vertical time context (see Appendix 3 for fieldwork timeline). It represents a period of years in my life during which I was familiar, as a professional and a researcher, with the centres in which and people with whom I conducted my interviews. I take into account changes, and reactions to those changes (from myself, the individuals interviewed and the sector in general), throughout this work. The study has been extended from the actual research period to collecting observations from the field from 2012 to 2016. This means it is documented from either end of the interview period, which was March–November 2013. Material that was collected in research interviews pre-2013 is also referred back to. Conversations with students, pieces of writing by students and catch-up conversations with teachers and programme managers since the study are also used.

I have endeavoured to look at ESOL classes and functional skills English, or other first-language English classes, through the same aggregated researcher's lens. I believe that an ESOL/adult literacy model, for people to bring their literacy and language skills up to level 1 or 2 standards, is emerging in adult education provision in London. ESOL students are often found on functional skills English courses, for example, and the same transformations are occurring in other metropolises, where there are rapid increases in the numbers of migrants arriving every year. I know that a majority come to classes because they want to play a more active and productive role in the communities in which they currently live and/or work, whether as parents, supportive relatives, members of mixed-race communities or employees. All these reasons are akin to those that Torres (1998) described when arguing for a

'multicultural democratic citizenship that will take seriously the need to develop a theory of democracy that will help to ameliorate the social differences, inequality, and inequity pervasive in capitalist societies' (423). Torres (1998:439) further commented:

Cultural diversity is a major by-product of the growing process of economic, cultural, and political globalization that has no parallel in history. Globalization has produced all sorts of implications for the multicultural, multilingual, and multi-ethnic configurations of local communities in the United States and elsewhere.

I have continued to work through decades in which the citizenship test has been introduced and developed as a compulsory exam for those wanting to settle in the UK. This study will discover its own 'implications', as Torres describes.

A macro vision of the study embraces present-day thinking around learning, lifelong learning, human entitlements and the massive impact that new technologies have had on changes in communication needs. This shows how the parameters were drawn and influenced by many other factors apart from the interviews. Others arose societally as the study took place; for example, changing migration trends globally, the increased withdrawal of adult education funding and closure of related facilities such as prisons and children's centres. Thus, the involvement of the students is contextualised both globally and locally, through educational lenses.

This chapter begins by introducing some of the factors used in shaping the thesis. These include its ethnographic nature (section 3.2); the framing of the study through global issues around adult learning (section 3.3); the role of English language in linguistically diverse areas (section 3.4); the definition of *culture* adopted (section 3.5), descriptions of contemporary mixed ethnic neighbourhoods (section 3.6) and

the effects of current national and international lifelong learning policies (section 3.7). It then introduces the specific localities and groups of respondents (section 3.8) and the locations of the interviews themselves (section 3.9).

3.2 From mixed methods to ethnographic study

Ethnography ... is an investigative model rooted in anthropology that focuses on a deep understanding of the social and cultural phenomena under investigation.

(Rogers, 2007:24)

The plans for the research started using a social scientist's conventional mixed methods (but predominantly qualitative) approach. However, as I scrutinised my respondents' comments for hints of their engagement with literacies outside of classes, I imagined how the settings themselves, and my ability to quickly develop an affinity with these places, might be influencing respondents' reactions to me and my interpretation of their comments. I recognised that my social research was becoming so immersed in the networks that sustained the learning centres I visited that it had the definite hallmarks of a deep, qualitative social study. The next step was acknowledging my own nearly total subjection to the sector as a practitioner, including being at the mercy of the erratic path and rapidly changing nature of official adult literacy/ESOL literacy provision in England. This made me realise this research was conducive to an ethnographic approach. Newby's (2014:61) description of time spent in the setting indicates this: 'What makes a study ethnographic is that the researcher spends a long and intensive period in the study environment. It is this that produces the insight to make sense of the data'.

3.3 Global perspectives to the study

Kress (2010:2) describes globalisation as:

conditions that make it possible for characteristics of one place to be present and active in another – whether economic, cultural, social or technological. ... Globalization is not one 'thing'; it is differently constituted in different places, as are its effects and impacts, interacting with the vastly varied cultural, social, economic and political conditions of any one specific locality.

It is important to note that during the research period there was a foreboding sense of avenues for studying literacy closing down, including for the ESOL students who took part in my research. This reduction in provision has since gained momentum; this study, which is based in part on a synthesis of narratives, is also overshadowed by the diminishment of adult literacy provision in this country and worldwide; for example, aid to education falling since 2010 and the withdrawal of the national adult education strategy in Canada ([CLLN](#) 2014).

Another dimension to my study process that relates to background events is the significance of global commentary on lifelong learning and literacy. Specialist literacy and language work in these fields (e.g. Blommaert, 2005; Cuban, 2013; Rogers & Street, 2012) has powerfully focused on the results of rapid change in the sector, including changes in communication through the digital revolution, huge increases in people moving from continent to continent and country to country and changes in the nature of employment. Where businesses might drastically downsize, fold or merge with stronger competitors, their employees could no longer rely on keeping a job for life. One of my interviewees was employed in a specialist job in the optical industry for years, but chose to move to the Post Office because of the threat of his London-based workshop closing and lack of job security guarantee from his manager.

These changes were also observed in the late 20th century; Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997:2) described 'dynamic changes ... an increasingly fragmented and unequal, core-periphery labour market where those without skills, cultural capital, access to information or market power can usually expect only a living and working existence on the margins'.

This global phenomenon of the vulnerable lower-level worker has spread to more surprising sectors since the 1990s, including affecting those of us who are professional classroom teachers in adult education. Adult education has become a tool for the vagaries of government policy; it has become a necessary expedience for some of my employers to re-adjust job descriptions, close centres, make redundancies and keep sessional staff on what amount to zero-hours contracts. These circumstances were found to be prevalent throughout this study.

On the positive side, the development of writing and reading technology globally has transformed everyday reading and writing in a practical sense. In Kress's (2010) contribution to our knowledge of multimodality, he reveals that continually evolving methods of communication are not limited to generating new literacy techniques; rather, they are producing new culture, through diverse and novel means such as social media (Kress, 2010:13). The effects of these social actions are for the next person to 'shape and reshape' the resources available to them, 'in their social environments; responding to their times' (Kress, 2010:13). In planning my questions and visuals for students in basic literacy classes (see Appendix 4), I encouraged discussion of some of these resources, such as the type of centre they like to study

in, the means of electronic communication they favour and other literacy activities they might partake in outside the literacy class. All of these can be proactive in developing culture. Drawing attention to these was an offshoot of my study on what respondents value about the adult education they are involved in.

3.4 The role of English language in areas of linguistic diversity

This study is of English-language-centred culture. I have already explained that I want to look at the literacy class as a valid social event in its own right (see section 1.9); likewise, I wish to establish that English is an important and authentic pan-global means of communication. This is not because I consider other languages spoken in my students' homes of lesser importance to each individual's cultural experience, but because those who attend the classes do so to enhance their communication skills in the context of the society they are living in.

In 1994, a multinational group of leading literacy and language educators – The New London Group – gathered in New Hampshire to discuss what an appropriate form of literacy teaching might be. In doing so, they were raising the question in the context of both local and global worlds: 'how the language meets with cultural and linguistic diversity' (The New London Group, 2000:3). They recognised that there is a free flow of ideas and languages between 'lifeworlds': 'As lifeworlds become more divergent in the new public spaces of civic pluralism, their boundaries become more evidently complex and overlapping' (17). Cope and Kalantzis (2000) created a rich theory of multiliteracies in their designs for social futures, in which the lifeworld is 'the world of everyday lived experience; a world where transformation occurs in a less creative

and self-conscious sense; richly organised, to be sure, and laden with linguistic and cultural tradition, but serving immediate or practical ends' (2000:206).

Twenty years later, the debate over how to remove the hegemonic sway of an English curriculum over other languages is still active (Park & Wee, 2015:56).

English has emerged as the generally accepted *lingua franca*. Debates about the detail of standardisation of such a worldwide form of one language prevail among practitioners, linguists and other academics (Jenkins, 2009). Park and Wee (2015) argue that it is time to shift the focus on linguistic features to practices, so that 'ELF [English as a *lingua franca*] is understood less as a variety existing independently of social conditions, and more as what people do when they engage in communication across cultures' (69). This view converges with my understanding of the literacy or ESOL classroom as part of a network of communications for adult students, bringing its own communicative cultural characteristics that may spill over and help (or perhaps sometimes hinder) the expansion of students' horizons. The argument on which I base my study is that the literacy classes provided for people who want to enhance their language and literacy skills constitute one aspect of these lifeworlds.

3.5 The concept of *culture* in the study

This study's third research question (see section 1.1) asks to what extent global cultural practices impact on how students interact with their learning. Here, the word 'global' coupled with 'culture' is loaded with meanings about technological change, political pressure and unparalleled levels of transmigration between countries and continents. 'Culture' is referred to in a number of ways throughout this thesis, including in a general way as a set of customs and communication strategies that a

group of people (categorised by ethnic background, religious background, shared linguistic history, etc.) shares in different social groupings.

A body of people can also be referred to as a 'culture'; one of the *Oxford English Dictionary's* (*OED*) several definitions of the word is 'a society or group characterized by such customs' (customs as described above). Lo Bianco (2000) talks of how to accommodate 'different cultures and ethnic groups' in an educational programme (2000:100), indicating that cultural characteristics are not only about another nation's way of life or people's customs from different parts of the world but also regional, philosophical or economic features.

Again, from the *OED*, culture is defined as 'the philosophy, practices and attitudes of an institution, business or other organisation.' It is common nowadays to adopt the word 'culture' with a modifier, such as 'drug culture' or (of particular relevance to this thesis) a 'results-driven culture'.

In this dissertation, I make use of all these ways of referring to culture; I have also maintained (section 2.6) that culture itself is fluid, changing with the times – and nowadays changing faster due to the speed of global change. Considering the fast-moving world of literacy in its situated sense, this impacts on how people cope with frequent changes. Barton and Hamilton (1998:20) explained that 'reading and writing can be viewed as extensions of people's identities, interests and roles'. Nowadays, again considering the literacy theme, having a presence on social social media is an important part of many people's extended cultural identity. Although culture is only mentioned once in the plans for this research, the three research questions

themselves build up an impression of a range of cultures potentially influencing each other; indeed, the study focuses on what happens when this is the case.

3.6 Mixed ethnic neighbourhoods

Among the communities I work in, the difficulties of living in mixed ethnic neighbourhoods are commonly reported. While a community may appear transformed and almost vibrant to me as a commuter, it may be creating tension for local residents. The communities are grounded in suburban London life; but that life is continually rebuilt, increasingly changing and adapting existing traditions.

Adult literacy in England (and London is a clear example) encompasses literacy for recent and longstanding migrants as well as for those who speak English as a first language. London has an exceptionally high number of migrants – the number of foreign-born people relative to total population was greatest in Inner London (39%) and Outer London (33%) in 2014, for example (Migration Observatory, 2017) – and they bring with them their own languages and cultures. In classrooms, they are absorbed into the system that markets the level 1 and level 2 qualifications in basic skills for employment purposes. The basic education and everyday experiences of literacies that they bring from other countries, or from their communities in the UK, are not relevant to the current 'skills' system.

While collecting and analysing the data for this study I regularly worked in Thornton Heath, South London. This is the type of environment with which many of those I interviewed would be familiar; as such, it provided me with a more palpable and visible backdrop to my students' narratives about their lives out of college. Take, for example, Thornton Heath High Street, where probably one in every three shops

offers speedy money transfer and shisha bars, Halal butchers and grocery stores extend, African-style, onto the streets (figures 3.1 and 3.2). Shoppers often throng around a tiny mobile phone accessories booth, where reggae music sets the scene. Different languages are spoken every few yards, and different groups gather to promote Evangelical Christianity language or Islamic religious literature outside the station or Tesco.

Figure 3.1: Thornton Heath High Street, July 2015



From 1994 to 2013, Thornton High Street was the site of Croydon's main ESOL and literacy centre, Ambassador House (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Thornton High Street, with the former ‘Ambassador House’ classrooms in the high-rise block on the right, July 2015



I am somewhat critical of adult education’s adherence to basic ‘functional skills’ English and its lack of development of wider critical skills. This can become an inward, English-for-getting-by programme in the adult literacy or ESOL classroom, where there is less engagement with the reality of everyday global communication and a more traditional approach to literacy studies. Adult education in particular lacks the mobility that our global forms of communication require; that is, a ‘closer connection between sociolinguistic insights and discourse or narrative analysis’, which would pay greater attention to the ‘semiotic potential’ of mobility resources (Blommaert, 2005:129).

In the UK, concerns regarding teaching English as a second language to immigrants with few qualifications or financial resources began seven years ago, when free English classes came to an end (the Guardian, 2011). Changes were intended to focus resources on those seeking employment. The irony of David Cameron insisting

that immigrants to Britain learn English after imposing cuts that withdrew affordable classes adds to a sense that language teaching provision is in chaos. However, Level 2 (ESOL) and native English speakers and their teachers were treated in exactly the same way during the interviews, unless it was necessary to word the sentences more simply for beginner ESOL students.

3.7 Lifelong learning and policy-making

Again and again, the Leitch report argues for a 'demand-led' system that could reflect and respond to what people in the workforce recognise as valuable. But the mantra is just that – a repeated set of words that do not connect with reality.

(Wolf, 2007:112)

Contemporary UK policy makers are inconsistent, if not indifferent, to the dilemma of how adults can improve their reading and writing. This leads me to making two assertions about lifelong learning.

In the first instance, my enquiry is into how people value the basic skills they are coming to learn. Do they buy the publicity – whether 'Gremlins' of the *Get On!* campaign (Hamilton, 2012:85) that haunt us in adulthood if we didn't get the grades in school; or do they bank on literacy qualifications providing a passport to employment or promotion? Either way, in my first-hand experience there is an air of condescension about these curriculum areas; they play a discrete back-of-house role in cross-college prospectuses, and students on other courses are reluctant to be earmarked as needing basic skills support.

Acquiring literacy skills and learning the English language are both important aspects of the official lifelong learning suite in England. However, there are indeed times

when they seem to be overlooked in official discourse about lifelong learning. For example, Schuller and Watson (2009) produced *Learning Through Life* based on a belief that access to learning throughout life is a human right. Yet they refer very little to learners of basic skills of literacy, numeracy and language; and where they do, they focus on the lack of these skills being a 'problem' (127) that needs to be overcome to gain employment.

The same year, still under a Labour government, the white paper *The Learning Revolution* (HM Government, 2009) presented a case for supporting adult learning initiatives and widening access to learning – but made no mention of literacy or ESOL learning until the Annex, where it brushed over the history of reading, writing and English language provision. It is as if lacking these basic skills was too alien an idea for the authors to be able to imagine adult basic skills as a real and integrated part of lifelong learning. To my mind, there has been what amounts to a hiving off of basic skills because they indicate failure and 'scandal' (Schuller & Watson, 2009:127–8).

My second assertion is that basic skills learning can provide as great an incentive to critical thought as any other form of lifelong learning. John Field (2006:142) draws a more positive picture of investment in basic skills, and cites Ferrer et al. (2004) who find that returns on investment in basic literacy are proportionately more significant than those from investment in university study. Morrell (2007) is also cited as confirming the direct wider benefits from learning, such as growing confidence and self-efficiency.

Usher and Edwards (1997:49) described an ideal adult education – one that engages with citizenship and has a ‘curricular focus within adult learning which needs to take into account a lifelong learning process which takes on multiple sites, acknowledges different identities, celebrates cultural diversity and makes room for all voices’. At the time, they believed this would involve the ‘development of a critical understanding and exploration of the extent and impact of the inequalities of economic and cultural capital on the learning process’.

However, shortly after this England produced adult curricula *Skills for Life* (DfEE, 2001) for maths, ESOL and literacy in response to discovering how many people lacked adequate basic skills to do jobs that required fluency in reading, writing and communication skills. (Other English-speaking countries produced similar schemes.) This was a comprehensive and ‘tightly organised strategy’ (Hamilton, 2012:80), packaged in a mainly utilitarian format of graduated standards and responding to what the government believed *was needed from the people* (my italics). This arose in response to findings emerging from the OECD’s International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) report (OECD: 18), which indicated that around 7 million adults in the UK had inadequate literacy skills to meet the requirements of the information age.

The results of IALS were intended to contribute to both social and economic progress, but in England we have seen a strong emphasis on the economic significance of low literacy and numeracy scores. Ball (2008:39) has remarked on the ‘increasing colonisation of education policy by economic imperatives’. In the 18 years since the results were known, the drive to procure end products on paper rather than any other goal has intensified and accelerated year on year, with funding

intricately dependent on satisfactory test results. The clear implication of this is that the turnover of consumer take-up of courses, the processing and publication of results in international performance tables and the efforts to make students and employers pay the costs of the actual education are a complicated form of marketisation carried out by the government. Hamilton (2012:81) comments:

The new corporate identity of the state, along with the promotion of ideals of consumer freedom and citizen choice is rapidly becoming naturalized. It is aided by media discourses that deride the public-service ethos of earlier eras as being patronising and unwarranted interference of government through bureaucracy.

I referred to the time period in which I have studied and worked as a literacy practitioner in Chapter 2. This career has coincided with the aforementioned shift from a straightforward marketing of figures to a much more complicated 'messiness' of policy (Hamilton and Hillier, 2005:1). It has been a time matched by extraordinary speed – 'fast capitalism' (Usher & Edwards, 2007:11) – in policy changes. Usher and Edwards (2007), who use the term 'lifelong learning' with some scepticism, suggest that it signifies a kind of game in which no-one can stop learning: 'This is why lifelong learning becomes integral to the discourses and practice of contemporary business ... management of performance, innovation and excellence come to dominate providers of learning opportunities' (Usher & Edwards, 2007:60).

One of the key questions in this research concerns how educators and government directives shape students' experiences. Interviewees' responses will have to be scrutinised in some detail to answer this question. But there is also a significant question for providers and sponsors: Has the consumption of education culture strongly affected the people who come for education classes, and do they show signs of becoming habitual customers? I suggest that this marketing of adult learning

courses might produce a consumer of English classes with a particular qualification-motivated intention. On the other hand, literacy students are, like many enquiring lifelong learners, 'biologically equipped with a capacity for learning and a desire to realise this capacity' (Illeris, 2002:203). Indeed, students may become inspired to learn because they 'become capable of more sophisticated, more flexible, more creative action' (Illeris, 2002:73).

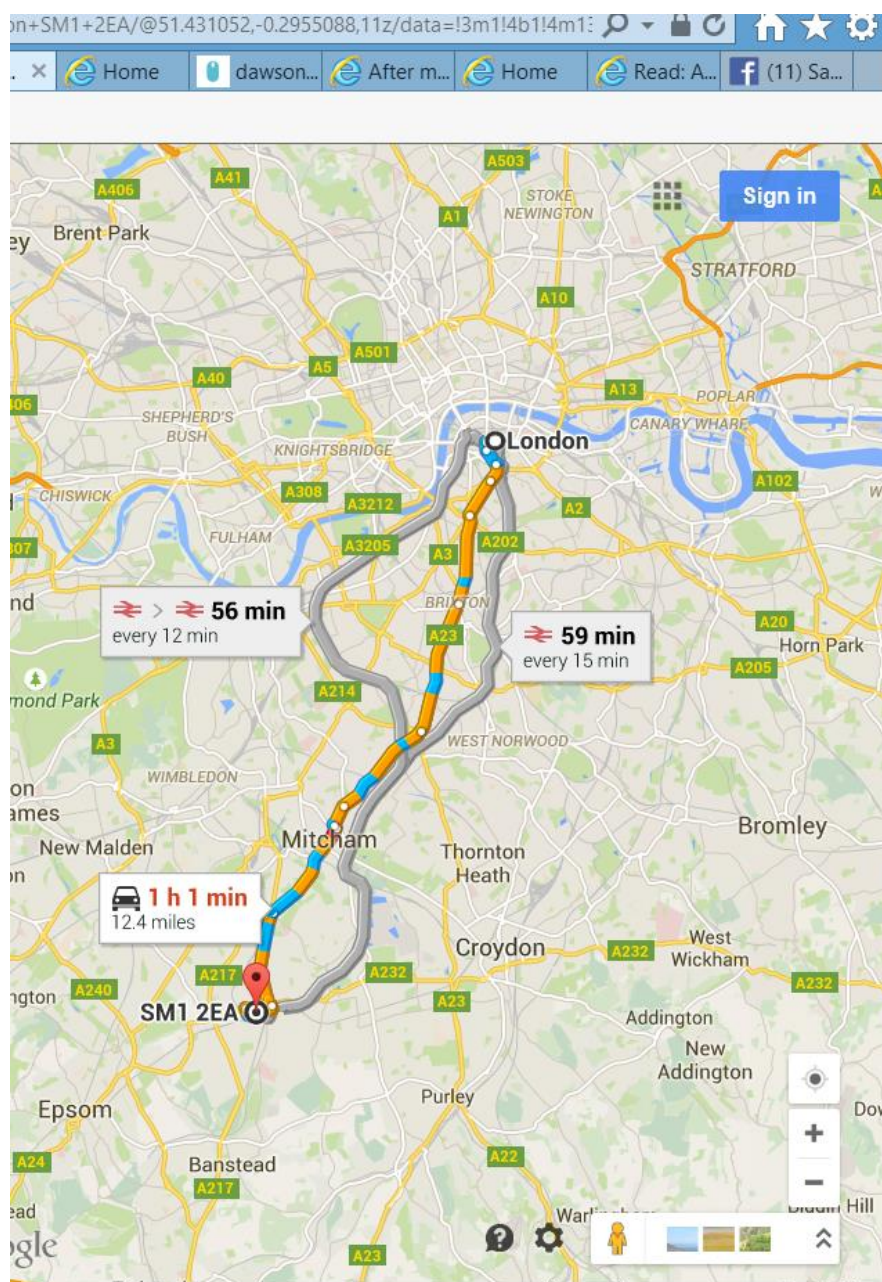
3.8 Localities and respondents

Some would argue that all ethnographic writing is 'fiction', because no facts ever exist in and of themselves, only as interpreted facts. However if ethnography claims to be only 'fiction', then it loses any claims it might have for groundedness and policy implications ... the direction for ethnography, it seems to me, is not to deny its social scientific grounding but to take this historical opportunity to explore its grounds for authority, partial and limited as they may be.

(Richardson, 1997:108)

In this section, I introduce the places in which I undertook the interviews for this research, as well as the interviewees themselves (see Appendix 8 for a full list of localities and participants). The localities are essential components in the 'partial and limited' (Richardson, 1997) grounds on which it is argued that this study has an ethnographic character. Realising that I could adopt an ethnographic approach (see section 3.2), I was acutely aware – through being a public transport user and walking commuter to many of my workplaces for many years – that the environment plays a part in situated ways of knowing, and that 'the self emerges from processes of sensory learning, being shaped through a person's engagement with the social, sensory and material environment of which she or he is a part' (Pink, 2009:40).

Figure 3.3: The area of South London where students were living/studying, July 2015



Note: Saved 3 July 2015. Googled distance between Blackfriars Settlement and Sutton College. The majority of students live in the area ringed in purple.

The localities described shortly are mainly geographically spread across an area of approximately 14 miles in length immediately south of the River Thames to the outskirts of Sutton. These places, where my student respondents lived and studied, are very significant factors in the makeup of the research picture (see also Figure 3.3). My initial reflection on these suburban areas was that they represented the

most constant factor in the period of my research and in the context of adult literacy learning. They provided familiar landmarks over the years: traditional ribbon housing settings, Victorian high-street topography and civic buildings. However, after taking it for granted that these were constants in my experience of teaching, and then questioning that presumption more systematically, I realised the geographical areas in London are continually subject to redevelopment, traffic diversions or high street shop changes of hands. The educational venues are run down, closed, demolished or refurbished, often leaving little trace of the original sites; or, in some cases, they are replaced with new learning spaces (see Figure 3.6). The homes and libraries where one-to-one teaching took place were cramped and busy with family life (in the former) and well-used public services (in the latter). More glamorous education facilities, such as central London University sites, were packaged as exciting developments to promote this more expensive education (see Figure 7.6).

The physical areas and venues themselves bring their own ambience to this study. 'Place is an imaginative space of culture', Pahl wrote about Rotherham (2015:17), which is 'full of the visual: "signage", "graffiti" and the audible – "dialect", local "sayings"'. As a practitioner, I usually approach workplaces by public transport; all of these features are very familiar to me simply as a curious person. As a researcher, I began to think more multidimensionally about the places I worked, as well as the places I visited for research in South London. For example, in Thornton Heath I grew into the habit of walking slowly down the surrounding streets to take in the street life: shoppers at kiosks, others at kerbsides waiting for or watching deliveries, dodging slow moving traffic as they cross busy roads. I visited the sports centre for leaflets to take for reading materials, and the Job Centre to catch up on how straightforward the

reception area signage, advice and new client information services are. I peered into open-front shops, where groceries sometimes looked more typically Southern Mediterranean than English, and I read signs on anonymous-looking buildings to find out what kind of workplaces were interspersed with shops along the high streets (figures 3.1 and 3.2).

The innermost London learning centre that I visited was Blackfriars Settlement (Figure 3.4), which at the time was temporarily housed in a rundown glass-fronted block in Great Suffolk Street, SE1. The site was around the corner from The Crown Court in Pocock Street and crammed between converging viaducts running overground trains into a series of local rail terminals. For a learning centre, the lifts, reception area, staircases, open-plan study and respite areas and classrooms were on a smaller scale than I had seen for a long time. Packed classes – predominantly ESOL – were scheduled on a staggered basis; as some students took breaks, others filled their places. There was a lot of pressure on pastoral services; students often brought family, personal and legal difficulties to college, which prevented them from progressing with their work.

Travelling outwards, I spent several hours interviewing students studying vocational courses (including literacy and maths) at the Myrrh Education Ltd centre at the top of Brixton Hill. Myrrh and its two vocational centres had been a thriving, exemplary independent organisation until around 2012, and had recently been acquired by Lewisham College. When I visited it was under serious threat of closure and its future depended on students' results. The building on Brixton Hill was comprised of

two large old terraced houses, roughly knocked together (Figure 3.6), and its stairs and corridors were narrow and confusing.

Figure 3.4: Blackfriars Settlement, temporary accommodation, March/April 2013



Source: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/@51.501877,-0.10068,3a,75y,198.57h,77.51t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sNzcsr32ppTpO2Tj3P4oETQ!2e0!7i13312!8i6656!6m1!1e1> (accessed 8 July 2015)

Office space was organised into small, awkward-shaped rooms, but the learning rooms (Figure 3.5) and refectory were large and welcoming. I noticed on more than one visit how catering students serving hot meals were cheerful and created a contented atmosphere among the student body.

Figure 3.5: Jade and Jasmine in the basic skills teaching room at Brass Tacks, Myrrh Education Ltd, 2013



Note: Taken and included with the students' permission

Figure 3.6: Myrrh Education Ltd, Brass Tacks, Brixton Hill, April 2013



Further west in Wimbledon and Raynes Park, Surrey, I interviewed three students who had been teamed in one-to-one volunteer English language tutor–student situations. Two of these were in their homes; they were gracious in their welcome. In one case, in an upstairs flat in Raynes Park, a small child sat watching television while we talked for nearly an hour. In the other case, in a home off the High Street in Tooting, a sister-in-law and tutor passed a baby and small child to and from the family sitting room while the mother, sometimes with the child on her lap, was happy to be engaged in conversation. There were no chairs in the room, only cushions, giving a sense of quietness, relaxation and reflection. The third student was in a public library (Donald Hope Library, Colliers Wood) with her tutor. As with all my visits, I arrived by public transport; the library was conveniently situated next to the bus stop. The area was typically inner South London, with housing estates slightly set back from the main road and small industries along the approaching route. The library was a busy, noisy place, and student and tutor customarily sat in the centre of

the room. When I asked the librarian where I might find the student and her teacher, he declared no knowledge of them, and was surprised to find out that learning was taking place on a regular basis in the library.

Figure 3.7: Lucy in Merton Home Tutoring Service office (shared corner space in The Guild, Wimbledon), December 2013



These one-to-one situations are part of an organisation set up by a philanthropist in the Borough of Merton, South London, named Merton Home Tutoring Service (MHTS). Many of the people coming forward for lessons are prevented from studying in colleges and adult education centres because of the very long waiting lists for places for beginner and elementary students. Funds are scarce and office space cramped (Figure 3.7).

The other students I interviewed were in Sutton College (SCOLA) in Sutton, South London. I had been teaching at the college for 11 years when the interviews took place. The basic skills classes were mainly held in the college's second main centre in the old Wallington Town Hall. This building had been gutted inside (bar the walls) and was refurbished in 2005, providing eight airy classrooms interspersed with smaller office spaces for the college.

In 2013, I had been teaching a level 2/3 literacy class for six months, and students happily agreed to be interviewed. The class had been amalgamated from two other classes in mid-December of an academic year, and students were keen to get on with learning after several disrupted months. They were highly committed and enthusiastic, and while students calling out sometimes created clashes, there was also a sense of vibrancy that drew others in. I interviewed seven of the 12 students, all of whom had contributed positively to the overall learning situation. Most of these were interviewed one-to-one or in pairs in the college – apart from one, whom I met in a library café.

I also met with two SCOLA students, whom I have known since 2002 and who have undertaken very long learning journeys, through the college and other classes, to address their lack of literacy skills. In these cases, I met them in their homes in Carshalton, where their respective spouses were also around at the time. Partners were such an important part of these students' learning paths that I was glad to include them in the interviews.

My interviews with teachers and organisers were mainly in the geographical areas already described. Recorded interviews took place with MHTS organisers in the Wimbledon Institute, another old-style municipal building, and in Wimbledon Library. Likewise, I met a volunteer teacher in Wimbledon Library. These were noisy buildings where it was difficult to obtain a space without interruptions from co-workers, library users, telephones, children calling out and so on.

I met with a SCOLA colleague in the main library in Sutton, an Outer London borough. We agreed to meet in what we had both anticipated would be a quiet spot, but this central library seemed noisier and busier than ever in the early afternoon, despite its size and spaciousness.

In contrast, I met two teachers in Birmingham who worked in Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS. They were on two different sites, but both had a comfortable, well-equipped room with very few interruptions in which I was able to undertake the interviews (figures 3.8 and 3.9).

Figure 3.8: English and maths classroom in Sandwell Hospital, West Birmingham, August 2013



Figure 3.9: Training room used for English classes in Birmingham City Hospital, August 2013



Birmingham is a fairly ordinary place and a gateway city, meaning it is an exceptionally successful centre for 'flows of people, cultures, commodities, and knowledges that already position the city in global networks' (McEwan et al., 2007:198). This is certainly reflected in the staff I encountered at the city hospital and all the public services in the city. I also detected, with Leanne at Sandwell Hospital in particular, that the classes on offer were – and always had been – efficiently run, despite the frequent issuing of new remits regarding which courses were to run.

3.9 The questionnaire interviews

The interviews with students were pre-arranged to take place in private, or (in the case of the Merton Home Tutoring students) in the place where they met with their one-to-one tutors. One or two of the Blackfriars Settlement interviews had to take place in the students' open-plan study space. I had two questionnaire scripts, which I used as a prop to talk to the students and teachers. These are included as appendices 4 and 7 respectively. I had formed the questions in my mind over the preceding year and a half, when I had been designing the study and starting my writing. However, I planned the interviews as semi-structured, expecting the students to sometimes guide me into other areas of their literacy learning experience that they wanted to share. Permission was sought, and the ethical procedures are discussed in Chapter 5.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has introduced the settings, alongside the approach to the study and to the predicament of the urban adult literacy student in the UK. It has indicated influences that such contributions have on adult literacy provision, drawing on global, national and local characteristics. Worldwide changes, such as increasing migration

and the ubiquity of English as a global form of communication across cultures (Park & Wee, 2015:69), impact on current adult education classes. The global and national contexts make it easier to see how different strands of adult basic skills students' educational identities jostle to shape the purposes of adult basic skills studies. Furthermore, the very localities in which they live, classrooms in which they study, colleagues they encounter and their own multiple and varying communication needs characterise the classes that are actually experienced. This chapter has anticipated the methodology, as well as illuminating the factors that influenced my subsequent plans and path in this study.

Chapter 4

Literature Review

4.1 Introduction

The literature explored in this chapter enabled me to synthesise some disparate ideas that I wanted to study in relation to my research. Firstly, the enquiries below helped me decide what to draw into the thesis as a whole. At first glance these enquiries may appear to be additional to the research questions (section 1.1) guiding this thesis. However these were sub-themes that helped me to identify several developing aspects of literacy provision over recent years. I could perceive these more clearly through the literature: characteristics of the adult education context as it has changed over time. This list of sub-themes leads straight on to a summary of the cross-discipline selection of academic writings that have helped the research.

- In what ways might a social practices view elucidate the kind of literacy that individuals want to study, their motives and their journeys through adult education?
- In planning this research, what was derived from other published studies of adult education students in the UK?
- Does the revolution in communication that has come about through digital technology impact on what students of English literacy want to learn?
- What do contemporary studies on learning and identity in a rapidly changing society tell us about a disposition to learn that is most likely to succeed in the current adult education context?

- Can relevant studies on identity lend more insight into the students' attitudes to their learning?
- In a period of massive migration that affects London, the main area of the research, is a different adult literacy learner emerging?

In this chapter I will be describing the literature I used to synthesise the ideas I refer to above. I begin with a description of a social practices view of literacy - revisiting work of NLS scholars in more detail has sharpened my understanding of how intricately they dovetail their social practices argument within contexts. This is followed by exploration of previous studies of learners of adult literacy and ESOL, indicating how these have informed the development of my thesis. A section on literature about the interconnectedness between college work and 'border literacies' (Edwards et al. 2009:487) follows. This is the first of three sections reviewing literature that has enabled me to better build my understanding of the global impacts on our students. The following on digital practices highlights literature that acknowledges the significance of digital contact to working mothers in particular, and the subsequent section on superdiversity draws out the relevance of views of writers such as Vertovec, Blommaert, Rampton and Simpson on the effects of rapid change and mass mobility on the lives of adult students in the UK. The next section reviews literature on theories of identities starting with the assertion that superdiversity causes people to be adept at adjusting their identities in a variety of social contexts. But there is also a considerable school of thought around the idea that learners are socialized into feelings of inferiority in the educational context; this is juxtaposed with learning theories describing individual compulsions to learn leading to identity that emerges from being part of a learning community; latterly I explore literature

suggesting coming forward to learn is related to consumer identity. In the final section of this chapter I refer to the studies on the effects of dominant discourse on our understanding of why people come forward to learn ESOL and literacy.

4.2 Social practices view

In this study of adult learners' motives for learning adult literacy, it has been difficult to locate exactly where the influence of social practices texts on my thinking sits in relation to the explication of my research. Social practices researchers have used research on learning in adult literacy to present ideological, socially rooted commentaries on the dominant roles that access to and everyday uses of literacy play in our lives. The NLS are characterised by studies of 'what people know and do in everyday life within a broader literacy framework, not simply looking at the texts themselves' (Tett et al., 2006:3).

The ideas I share with NLS viewpoints are very important to my thesis. However, I am strongly focused on the social practices surrounding adult students' decision-making in and attendance of adult education classes. Adults attend classes with preconceptions formed in their daily lives; they also come with extensive previous experience of literacy, based on 'literacy events' associated with 'domains of activity such as home, school, work-place' (Barton & Hamilton, 2000:11). NLS scholars acknowledge this, and concede that the technical skills acquired in class are part of a literacy event. Papen explains:

The social practice view of literacy does not deny the skills of coding and decoding letters and words, which are required for every reading and writing activity. In that sense, it does not exclude the 'technical'. Rather it argues that the technical alone is but one part of what makes up a literacy event ... but

how we read it, how we understand its meaning, how we react to it – these have to do with more than skills.

(Papen, 2005:34)

I take social practices ideas such as NLS into account, as well as the more pedagogically themed social futures text, *Multiliteracies* (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). In doing so, I have gained a strong sense of the authenticity of a significant claim underlying this study – that adults have wide-ranging reasons for attending an adult education class to improve their literacy. Proponents of NLS and *Multiliteracies* present a vibrant and dynamic view of people's application to literacies within both everyday life and the classroom. But some are also hesitant about the way formal learning may present an inflexible version of traditional literacy. Karin Tusting, writing of how 'the past and future are emergent in and constructed in the present', warns of the danger that 'practices can come to be seen in a rigid and structural way, when the events they pattern are dynamic and changing' (Tusting, 2000:39).

I agree with Papen that learning literacy is about more than technical skills, and with Tusting that there might be a danger of perpetuating a practice such as literacy teaching. However, the decision to attend class is informed by different cultural expectations from those we might expect. Students are attracted because of an expectation that becoming an adult learner will improve their lives – economically, socially, intellectually or in terms of their welfare or day-to-day survival skills. Thus, their experiences are deeply interconnected with the expectations and opportunities on offer in their current environment. I would also claim that students can try attending a class and decide for themselves if it helps them or not; whether they can use what they are being taught.

My research aimed to explore not only the extent to which local practices are accommodated and accepted in adult education but also, alongside the everyday interconnections between classroom and everyday life, how much global cultural practices impact on the point of coming to learn. Again, *Multiliteracies* authors bring a sharp sense of the vitality that situating learning of literacies brings to a 'transformed practice' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000:35). The London Group asserts: 'There is ample evidence that people do not learn anything well unless they are both motivated to learn and believe that they will be able to use and function with what they are learning in some way that is in their interest'(33). This, they explain, means that pedagogy must 'crucially consider the affective and sociocultural needs and identities of all learners' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000:33).

In the same volume, Nakata draws attention to the great mix in 'lifeworlds and experiences', this time of Torres Strait islanders, whose education might ideally take into account their local and global needs. Nakata points out that the *Multiliteracies* approach 'starts from a premise that recognises complexity, diversity, change and the reality of global connectedness' (119).

I have worked relentlessly throughout my teaching career to accommodate students' different 'lifeworlds' and to discourage them from seeing themselves as 'a flexibly rearrangeable portfolio of skills, experiences and achievements' (Gee, 2000:61). Gee is talking about the 'emerging world of the new capitalism', wherein 'security, which people once sought in fixed identities, static localities and permanent jobs, resides not in one's employment' but one's 'employability'. Since the publication of *Multiliteracies*, this description of the mindset promoted by employment and training

providers has further intensified, particularly in the world of literacy learning. Mary Hamilton (2012) has described literacy as being thought of in society as a 'thing'(24); she suggested that adult literacy has just become part of the 'thingness' of literacy, which has been engrained in society, educational and popular discourse for a long time. It has become another aspect of the social world 'to be subjected to a process of commodification'. As such, Hamilton continues, it is made to look 'reasonable and desirable to attempt to quantify adult literacy, that is, to express it through numbers'

Like other social practices researchers, I view it as necessary for the skills I teach and the literacy I share with my students in class to be connected with everyday life. Where I may differ is that I think that the very act of coming to class provides students with a vitality that improves their lives, as I hope to demonstrate in the findings of this study. When people attend classes, they are already steeped in literacy activities through their everyday lives; the cultural impact of this gives them certain optimistic expectations of what they will be able to access when they have new skills – deciding to come is an ideologically informed move. Baynham (1995:53), for example, defines literacy practice as a:

concrete human activity involving not just the objective facts of what people do with literacy, but also what they associate with what they do, how they construct its value and the ideologies that surround it. It involves the attitudes of people – what people think about what they do.

However, in most respects I agree with NLS scholars, and am aware that literacy classes only have a socially relevant meaning if the skills being learnt are tailored to students' real needs. I agree with Street (2001b) that the activity of learning in an educational context is a social practice within its own right:

The site of learning, whether school-based or in an adult literacy programme, has like other contexts, its own social beliefs and is, in this sense, also

profound in that it leads to quite new ways of understanding and defining what counts as literacy and has profound implications for how we learn and teach reading and writing.

(Street, 2001b:18)

My interviews are influenced by Street's fundamental sociocultural outlook because of the political edge required when questioning the use of this course of study, for this individual, in this particular context.

I was also inspired by various NLS ideas and *Multiliteracies* in developing my thought in my own research. For example, Ivanič (2009:103) showed how the 'literacy studies paradigm' can also 'contribute to education ... Working alongside tutors'. Ivanič demonstrated that literacy practices from home can be brought in at a micro-level (113), move beyond situated literacies (110) and, through crossing into college, can support FE students in and out of college. In my own research, I demonstrate how this happens with the smartphone as a study aid (see section 7.4). Pedagogy is a major focus of *Multiliteracies* (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000); from the outset, the volume has a deep, situated purpose relating to the design of pedagogy that governs the entire work, which I hope to be able to emulate in my account. The New London Group (2000:9) describe broadening understanding of teaching and learning to 'include the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalised societies'; further, 'no person is a member of a single community. Rather, they are members of multiple and overlapping communities – work, interest and affiliation, ethnicity, sexual identity' (17); 'Literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies' (9).

Like Ivanič, I wanted to look at the education context afresh and to speak with the students – individuals who have decided to return to learning again, and who own those plans – as objectively as possible. This approach forms the basis on which I teach. I have always considered it a privilege to teach English to adults because they bring with them many skills and a lot of knowledge about the world; knowledge that I am also keen to learn from them. Fowler and Mace (2005:103) call this ‘changing roles’: ‘When learners share their expertise, the teacher becomes the novice and the learner the expert’.

4.3 Studies of adult literacy learners – an overview

At the outset of my project, the most influential of the other studies of adult learners for me was the *Learning Lives* project (2011) undertaken by Gert Biesta and colleagues. This project was part of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme run by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), which embraced rigorous research methods with deep insight approaches gained through close work alongside practitioners, organisations and agencies from varying sectors of the educational sector. Biesta and colleagues used a biographical approach, focusing on individual adults, their learning biographies and trajectories and the interrelationships between learning, identity and agency in their lives. They combined this with life-history research, longitudinal interpretative life-course research and analysis of longitudinal panel survey data.

The overall question was: ‘What does learning mean in the lives of adults and what does it enable them to do?’ My own chief question on what learners particularly value about their literacy classes echoes Biesta’s, although my question is directed

at adult literacy students whereas the Learning Lives project covered adult learning in general.

The *Learning Lives* project made me aware of the complexity of big projects in achieving the many arms of official, politically driven enquiries (Biesta, 2008). Significantly for me, there was a strong emphasis on qualitative findings and the project took a biographical approach, focusing on learning stories and involving over 500 interviews with 117 people over three years. The key points came from both quantitative and qualitative data. Among other conclusions, it was stressed that: 'Learning is complex and multi-faceted, and can only be understood in the context of relationships between people'. It was noted that: 'Support for learning includes but goes far beyond teaching. Good support requires adaptation to personal circumstances and situations, and the building of valued relationships'. The authors established that learning is valuable because it can:

- help people with the process of routine living;
- help people adjust to changed circumstances;
- provide knowledge and skills;
- help people to develop their own identity and take greater control of their lives.

To improve learning, they concluded the following are needed:

- improved provision of education and training;
- personal support for the learner;
- improved learning opportunities in the workplace and the local community;

- provision of opportunities to reflect about our life histories.

They concluded from their research that: 'A high level of involvement in learning can lead to a strong and positive sense of identity. And for such people, participation in part-time education and training is a long term process, not a quick fix' (unpublished poster, originally from learninglives.org; see Figure A.3, Appendix 5).

The learner-centred approach characteristic of the *Learning Lives* project is also a fundamental aspect of another work that has been pertinent for me: *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Family Literacy Practices*, by Rebecca Rogers (2007). This is an inspiring examination of the conflicts that exist between home and school discourses. Discussing the sensitive attunements that the members of the family she studied had to make in and out of educational institutions, Rogers (2007:10) acknowledges that both Gee (1999) and Fairclough (1995) 'theorize the speaker as comprised of multiple voices' but with 'sets of socio-cognitive resources drawn from the various discursive contexts of which they are a part'.

Gee (1999:44) refers to these as 'cultural models' and Fairclough (1995:145) as 'member resources'. In both cases, these refer to the internalised social structures, norms and conventions that people bring into a discursive domain (Rogers, 2007:10). Rogers witnessed June Treader and her daughter Vicky, a sixth grader, come to an agreement that Vicky should remain in a basic skills setting, which neither of them had wanted before a meeting with the school staff took place. Meanwhile, with the support of home, Vicky's reading had improved considerably, which was in contradiction to the message the school was giving her about her

needs. 'Vicky was acquiring a set of ideological relationships to literacy that were shaped both by the school and by her stronger connections to her family' (140) – but it was through the eyes of the school that Vicky understood her relationship to the social world, overridden by 'ideology and domination' (141).

The meeting of discourses, and the influence of the institutional voice over the home and/or community discourse medium of communication, is a profound consideration for me in my data analysis of adult student voices – particularly bearing in mind the research question on the extent to which educators and government directives influence students. I am mindful of this in my belief that students develop their own additional cultural identity around the literacy class, and I will consider what their aspirations are by studying the discourse involved.

In studies with social approaches based around NLS, we find a similarity between Rogers's work and Vicky Duckworth's: both focus on individuals from 'working-poor' (Rogers, 2007:18) and 'disadvantaged backgrounds' (Duckworth, 2015:27). The difference is that, in Rogers's discourse analysis portrayal of June Treader, we find a woman who always had a 'resilient use of literacy in conjunction with her role as a mother' (Rogers, 2007:154) but was 'unable to resist *within* the institution'.

Duckworth's work employs participatory action research as a means to transform her students' experience of education, developing more critical outlooks, enlightening students about the dominant ideology of individualism (43) and bringing in a model of teaching that 'embraced caring between the teacher and learner'. Duckworth's conclusions are more optimistic about the future for basic skills learners, providing

that they are enabled to plan for their future and be active members of their communities.

In my view, the more intricate discourse analytical viewpoint that Rogers uses is extremely enlightening regarding the lack of purchase many learners have in the face of institutional decisions. However, I share Duckworth's optimism about the potential of a lifelong learning context. The crux of the issue, however, is how long students have to develop their ideas and integrate them into the rest of their lives. As Biesta et al. (2011) indicated above, 'participation in part time education is a long term process, not a quick fix'.

Other studies inspired by a social practices approach emerged from the officially funded National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC). These studies have not greatly influences my theoretical work as their focus was on needs and resources rather than developing holistic, theoretically informed overviews of the direction in which the sector was moving. However, taking an ethnographic approach, I cannot deny that what was happening in the adult basic skills sector deeply influenced my interactions with my work and the people in it.

Four NRDC reports that have bearing on my themes are described below.

First, Roberts et al. (2004:112) compiled case studies to illustrate learners' needs in ESOL, and drew attention to the fact that ESOL learners bring sophisticated knowledge to the classroom. At the time, more language awareness for teachers was advocated (128). This has become an urgent requirement in current basic skills

provision, in which many ESOL students not catered for elsewhere are attending English functional skills and pre-GCSE classes.

A follow-up report by Roberts et al. (2005) on embedding basic skills in vocational courses noted that longer, more full-time courses created a greater facility for group development (53). They also observed an important finding: participants perceive the vocational students' classes (literacy, in this case) as an invaluable addition to their main programme of learning (sport). They said the literacy sessions were 'less stressful and time-pressured and that the session gave them time to think'.

Barton and Papen (2005) edited a compilation of reflections on what the UK can learn from literacy and numeracy provision elsewhere in the world. The bridge between international literacy schemes and those in developed countries is perhaps more important than ever. We shared the same Millennium Development Goals to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015; retrospect, we have seen extreme poverty occurring even in the UK, with massive benefit cuts and the rise of food bank survival schemes. Mace (1998:89) commented: 'Roshan told us that the Community Literacy Project in Nepal works in 25 districts in the country with people whose main concerns were growing enough food to eat. Literacy had to be seen to be of use for them to have any interest in engaging with it'. I might echo that on a smaller scale, in Croydon, students quite frequently suffer interrupted studies or have to drop out because of the demands of the benefit system, while jobseekers' rules mean they have to continually attend the Job Centre or forfeit vital imbursements.

Finally, the Lancaster school report (Barton et al., 2006) summarises research on motivation, including a series of pertinent case studies. The learning path is illustrated simply, with a diagram (Appendix 10) indicating that every learner comes with his or her own adult history as well as an imagined future, not to mention their current identities, current unfolding life and imagined future. Indeed, the authors describe this journey as an 'interim stage' (31). This sketch coincides in part with Illeris's aforementioned 'tension triangle' of learning. I see likenesses between these because Illeris shows that the learning experience is submerged within social practices, along with all the beliefs and self-assessments therein. But Illeris also indicates the cognitive and psychological factors that impact on learning, providing additional tension to the learner's status and success in the learning role. Barton et al. (2006:13) draw attention to the baggage, so to speak, that each individual brings to learning – albeit through a chronological lens, rather than Illeris's learning lens. I welcome the conclusion reached: 'People in settings like these are not intrinsically "hard to reach". They are very willing to engage if provision reaches out to become available to them, meets their needs and responds to them as individuals' (Barton et al., 2006:38). This echoes my own experiences of teaching and providing individual care to students' wider literacy needs.

There are few suggestions in the literature that adult literacy classes have been studied to consider the development of the group entity. Where communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) are mentioned, there is a more negative presentation of adult basic education groups, members of which are often thought to be peripheralised (Harris and Shelswell, 2005:165–6). The benefits of joining a class can be read into Wenger's (1998) study of communities of practice (see section 2.6).

Wenger's description of trajectories of possibilities (1998:156) could be likened to Barton et al.'s (2006) image of the individual learning path with its imagined future. But in the case of the Lancaster report, the focus is on the individuals, and does not consider the story of the group as a whole (Barton et al., 2006:11).

4.4 Influences on study from beyond the classroom

Moving on from previous studies with adult literacy students, the most compelling literature that has informed this study is academic commentaries on the effects of globalisation on lifelong learning, communications and learner identities. This section starts in the classroom, investigating where local literacies and college literacies meet and impact upon each other; it then radiates out to global influences.

The crossover between home and studies is well documented in NLS publications (for example, Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Rogers, 2003; Mace, 1998). However, Edwards et al. (2009:487) present a particularly sensitive description of situated literacies and the educational literacies of 'purification' (a process of excluding practices not considered standard; for example, literacy practices that do not employ 'proper' grammar, spelling, genre, etc.). For my own study, this article captures the tentativeness of the impact of home on college and vice versa. Edwards et al.'s (2009) research explored the literacy demands of a number of curriculum areas, and the literacy practices of students in their everyday lives, to identify 'border literacies' (487) that may act as resources for learning and attainment within their college courses (483). They acknowledge that naturalised literacy tools such as computers and artefacts such as magazines are used to embody literacy teaching and learning (489), and it is impossible not to acknowledge the 'multiplicity' of natural and purified methods of teaching. The authors are keen to emphasise that this is not a binary

'either/or' issue but rather that 'relationships between literacy practices, learning and the curriculum are dynamic and complex, their characteristics are not symmetrical nor constant across domains, not least because different forms of work enact different (forms of) contexts' (490). This is a welcome text; it frees adult education practitioners such as myself to see our own efforts – of bringing 'school' literacies into something meaningful for those who may not readily engage with academic media – as valid.

Furthermore, these authors have carefully considered what metaphor to use to describe this in-between everyday life/college border literacies area. The authors refer to a folding in of different influences coming both ways; efforts to purify the curriculum may be counteracted by naturalised resources in many different ways, and vice versa. A border literacy may occur in one instance but not in another, thus creating a scrumpled landscape of literacies:

Literacy practices are temporary conglomerations, assembled multiples – networks – in themselves. While the current discursively strong regime of purification and naturalization is built upon the adoption of standards and the exclusion of otherness, there are possibilities for an alternative regime to be developed which creatively seeks the multiple translation and (un)folding of the micro-practices of literacy into different domains.

(Edwards et al., 2009:497)

4.5 Digital facilities – impact on adult literacy contexts

With this permutable view in mind, it is very easy to envision the massive changes with which college students and adult education learners elsewhere are familiar. Take, for example, the rapid changes in electronic communication over the past 20 years. I first noticed that mobile phones were no longer put away in class only three years ago. Students in family literacy classes were usually on alert for calls and

messages from the school or childminders regarding their younger children, but it gradually became clear that their phones were also their standby for spellchecks and dictionaries. Many students now use their mobile's voice-activated resources to find meanings of words or websites used in class. Meanwhile, they alternate freely between email and messaging services for written messages, and because of the students I have learnt to do the same.

On several occasions in the past few years, students have told me how much better they are becoming at spelling since they started messaging. Rod, an Olympian bronze-medal boxer in his late forties, informed me that his stepmother had commented on his improvement in texting in 2010. Tricia, Meg and Dawn (not their real names) from the Sutton and Croydon classes also told me about their progress with spelling as a result of using messaging.

I believe many students in employment are only able to attend classes because of the ability to quickly communicate with workplaces and childminders, which they are in the habit of juggling at the last minute, all with their mobile phones. Cuban (2014) provides an in-depth account of migrant women workers' efforts to juggle their jobs and care courses, and to run their children's school lives from halfway around the world, all via mobile phone. Cuban imagined a Filipino care worker, 'Alana', making a call (one of maybe several per day) from her car in between care jobs in the Midlands, UK to her child in the Philippines who is about to do homework. Alana will also call the school to coordinate any outstanding matters in her child's progress. Her car becomes her virtual world:

Imagine Alana, sitting in a parked car on a residential street, taking a break from working with her elderly clients. Although she looks alone, her family

members and co-workers are present too. On her work phone, her supervisor and colleagues text her to switch rounds, while her far-away family rings to chat on her personal phone.

(Cuban, 2014:738)

I agree with Warschauer's (2009) appeal (following Street, 1993) for an ideological model for digital literacies – one that sees digital means not merely as a new tool, but rather another aspect of situated literacies (128). Prinsloo and Rowsell (2012:271) endorse this; they 'reaffirm the perspective that communicative resources of all kinds in their uses and functions are shaped by context...', and researchers should pay attention to how 'electronic media offer translocal, everyday resources and practices for engagement with the world'. Such a model would enable us to examine how much significance digital literacy, and indeed mobile phone use, really holds in everyday lives, thus indicating the importance of focus on these in literacies studies in the future. I would, however, suggest that we need to look at how the use of digital technology and the delivery of current educational curricula (including literacies) fold into each other, as Edwards et al. (2009) did in their aforementioned study of college border literacies. For me, use of digital information sources was a strong focus of my interviews with learners; as stated, mobile phone use has gradually become an integral part of the classes I teach.

To contextualise the use of digital literacy within lifelong learning and the way technology has assisted learners across the age groups, I refer to Usher and Edwards's work (2007) on how knowledge has changed through cyberspace:

The logic of the screen enables an assembling of pages and sites in non-linear ways, and the interplay of image and text, giving reign to the serendipity of the library shelf but with scrolling replacing strolling ... Mirroring the rhizomatic features of cyberspace, meanings are less bounded and hierarchical, becoming more readily negotiable by users.

(Usher & Edwards, 2007:140)

The authors also point out that if people collaborate in the creation of meanings they are more likely to understand their own identity to be that of a 'learner'. Likewise, if people can produce their own literacies for personal, immediate communication purposes they will be better able to view themselves as literate. Usher and Edwards (2009) demonstrate that lifelong learning is being redefined by the power of electronic networking, and education is becoming signified by 'multi-linearity, nodes, links and networks', questioning modernist systems and its 'centre, margin, hierarchy and linearity' signifiers (140).

One may ask where this is happening, in the delivery of heavily standardised functional literacy curricula for adults and the endless monitoring and inspecting of dwindling provision in English adult education facilities. My answer is that the globalisation of communication networks, as Cuban describes above, are affecting every area of education – adult literacy being no exception – liberating students' ability to self-manage study and communication.

4.6 Superdiversity: emerging from space and mobility

One of the foremost effects of globalisation this century (and particularly in the past two years) has been the acceleration of global movements of people following environmental, political and economic upheavals in societies throughout the planet. Decades ago, immigrants arrived to work in our heavy/light industries as much as in our transport, civic and retail sectors. Nowadays, in the era of the knowledge society, they are more likely to arrive to complement our service industries – particularly those overseeing health, food and cleaning supplies – or to provide inexpensive

labour in building projects. There has always been a continuous inflow of accompanying families, in addition to those seeking work. Many are economic migrants, but others deprived of secondary and higher education often seek to make up for lack of opportunities to study. A further addition is those whose lives have been ripped apart by political conflict.

The effects of this on state-funded adult education has built up over many years. During the 1990s, I worked in very large classes of mainly refugees, whose passage to the UK and UK citizenship was sometimes more straightforward than it is now; many students had little or no previous schooling, and the provision of ESOL literacy teaching became widespread in London. Since 2000, I have witnessed a steady increase of ESOL students in first-language literacy classes in South London and the South East. At the time of writing (2015 –16), in some education areas it has become the norm for an English class to include ESOL students – always a few, but increasingly a majority.

These facts are significant in drawing attention to another strand of literature that has influenced my thought and meshes well with social practices approaches. This perceives a powerful interconnecting dimension within local cultures, characteristic of the rapid increases in migrant communities globally, along with an accompanying 'superdiversity' in language. Blommaert (2005) studied African speakers' renderings of English or French in their home countries, townships and European countries. His work pointed to the need to examine contemporary discourse in 'a broader framework, one that includes space and mobility as central analytic tools' (140). I

recognise this call for a 'wider framework' as corresponding with Cope & Kalantzis's (2000:13) earlier proposal in *Multiliteracies*:

the multiplicity of cultures, experiences, ways of making meaning, and ways of thinking... can be a basis for ... access, and creativity, for the formation of locally sensitive and globally extensive networks ... in which people feel that their different backgrounds and experiences are genuinely valued.

Vertovec (2007:1024) introduced the word 'superdiversity' to describe a 'dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade'. He indicated that this extended to reshape much of society – particularly London, the 'predominant locus of immigration' (2007:1042). My own observations are that learning communities have become much more fluid and able to quickly find common ground with each other, as Vertovec describes. However, the interplay of linguistic output among different ethnic groups first inspired these observations, which stretch back through recent decades, indicating that communication has been a powerful factor in making a superdiverse society. Later, Blommaert and Rampton (2011:4) pointed out the recent history of language diversity that has been embedded in societies dramatically transformed by globalising influences:

Historically, migration movements from the 1990s onwards have coincided with the development of the Internet and mobile phones, and these have affected the cultural life of diaspora communities of all kinds (old and new, black and white, imperial, trade, labour etc.).

They indicate that mass mobility, particularly in urban areas, makes communicative resources like languages, texts and internet texts become hybrid and 'messy' (Blommaert, 2015). Blommaert (2015) now describes superdiversity as 'a new

theoretical approach to language in society, a new key in which sociolinguistics can be played' (84).

The implication of superdiversity as a theoretical approach for this study is explored further in the conclusion (section 9.6). This theme, which was already evident to me through my work as a practitioner, helped me to form an ideological standpoint as I examined the words and ideas of students in literacy and ESOL literacy classes in South London. Diversity, in this sense, comes in the form of ideas that students import into adult education – from not only different world cultures but also different London experiences – fusing together linguistic variations and local outlooks on surviving in low-paid and benefit-dependent communities with other typical forms of suburban and urban culture. Simpson and Whiteside (2015), who address 'contentious' language education policies, refer to the momentum of 'in-migration', which presents a problem to 'fixity'; that is, the 'idea of a nation as a fixed entity. The imagined homogeneity of a nation (in linguistic terms) is maintained by national policy and political discourse but is challenged by mobility and diversity' (Simpson & Whiteside, 2015:2).

On the other hand, superdiversity is also an acknowledgement that multilinguistic societies can work well. In a recent interview, Blommaert (2015) observed that people find their own way in situations of extreme multilingualism; we can observe this emerging in practically every city. In this sense – and contrary to the aforementioned points – we see that it is possible to have social cohesion, social interaction and a sense of community in superdiverse environments.

4.7 A range of texts on identities

The theme of superdiversity impacts directly upon the currently widely debated themes of individual learner and group identities, and is an obvious contributor to the concept of identity perceived throughout this study. An individual will bring a previous, deeply rooted, cultural background; she or he will in due course assimilate their next chosen or imposed new social environment; and then, in the case of becoming part of related communities such as workplaces or education settings, will again adapt and develop more superdiverse aspects of their identity.

New students join a community of learning and undergo a transforming process – ‘an experience of identity’ (Wenger, 1998: 215). Wenger attributes identity to ‘our ability and our inability to shape the meanings that define our communities and our forms of belonging’. Thus, as I understand it, the societal influence on identity is tempered (though not opposed) by the forming of a unique identity as one negotiates one’s own role within the context of educational practice.

For me, identity is more complex than an unrehearsed, uncatalogued manifestation of belonging to a particular social group. Increasing multilingualism brings increasing acknowledgement of mobile identities and the coming together of diverse, resourceful communities: ‘rich ecological resources’ (Canagarajah, 2015:53). Rampton points out that ‘a lot of ordinary people are actually fairly adept in the navigation of what is characterised as superdiversity, bringing intelligible order to their circumstances’ (2015:162).

Besides the culture in which we are initially rooted and the community of practice, our identities are now influenced further by a fluid information/social networking society. In a world of fast-moving global communications, Blommaert (2005:131) uses a call-in radio show hosted by a young man named Ras Pakaay as a case study, illustrating 'fine-grained distinctions in identities' (138) in which we are presented with 'packages of identity features occurring in a variety of permutations'. The focus here is on codeswitching according to the community with which the speaker is communicating. Ways to extend this, so that not only language diversity but also a whole range of communication studies can be identified as denoting superdiversity, is becoming a rich area of research. For example, Canagarajah (2015) wrote that alongside communication features in superdiversity is 'the possibility of social agency and creativity that enables social groups to rise above disempowering circumstances' (53).

These features significantly contribute to the identities of individuals who choose to come forward for adult education. My argument driving this study is that while many of our identifying characteristics are assimilated naturally in our day-to-day lives, the identity we assume when we voluntarily sign up to learn is less comfortable than the day-to-day identity, particularly in the case of literacy and numeracy learners. Despite the difficulty those in need of reading and writing skills have in crossing the threshold to classes, the concept of identity, my experience of students and the interviews undertaken for this study point to strong learning identities. These are often fired by the new community of learners in which students find themselves, as well as key factors drawn upon to enable them to progress in a learning environment.

Politically and economically, learning identities in English and maths classes are not on solid ground; they are undermined by employers, funding agencies and government departments urging the achievement of results. Views on who current literacy students are disadvantage students who are unable to achieve passes. Identity is influenced by the prevailing attitudes of educational institutions and employers towards those out of employment. Worryingly, those with low-level basic skills and ESOL literacy become increasingly invisible as a section of society that needs more education. This is because college and adult education centres are obliged to cut classes at lower levels.

The literature does not describe how students of literacy have disappeared, but Hamilton (2012:23) draws attention to how our literacy students are reduced to numbers, and also how the stigma of literacy difficulties was vilified in the form of gremlins – ugly, grey spiteful figures who deliver taunts and jeers to their owners. Marlene (not her real name), a student I met in 2005, confided in me that she was haunted by the gremlins advertisements; they reminded her of her very unhappy childhood in boarding school, where teachers ignored her difficulties and failed to encourage her.

The image of basic skills students as ‘lacking’ is prevalent within policy documents, the media and many publications about adult literacy. The BIS Committee (2014) conducted an enquiry into adult literacy and numeracy, which repeatedly presented literacy difficulties within our population as the ‘problem’; those contributing evidence referred to ‘a scandalous number of the population who are not able to read’. As

Duckworth (2015:34) points out, learners taking part in her research came to perceive themselves as childlike as soon as they stepped into the college environment. However, Duckworth herself introduced the learners as having 'disadvantaged backgrounds' (2015:27).

Rogers (2002:253) said: 'As people are immersed in discourse they are socialized into attitudes, beliefs, and values without awareness', attributing these ideas to Bourdieu's (1991) theory of 'habitus'. Likewise, Rogers (2003:141) indicates the strength of the school's dominant ideology in imposing its view of Vicky's literate proficiency, which sixth-grader Vicky and her mother June accept with little protest. Yet, Rogers admits the situation is more complex than a straightforward case of entrenched views of their own illiteracy, since June and Vicky are involved in many more literate activities outside the school setting; June in particular performs a variety of literacy tasks in both domestic and public contexts. Rogers comments 'that an individual's identity is multiple and constantly re-created as the speaker adopts subject positions in various cultural discourses' (2002:253).

I share Rogers's understanding that any given individual's identity is in permanent flux as they seek to interrelate in education, the family, social circles and the neighbourhood. But at this point I return to Illeris, who compares the process of learning to a tension triangle, wherein individual learning is affected by the social world in which an individual is immersed as well as individual cognitive and emotional factors (2004:19) (see Appendix 1). This theory is also in accord with Wenger (Illeris, 2002:237).

In the tension framework, the societal medium that adult learners inhabit matters significantly in learning. However, while on the one hand it heavily influences choice in going to learn or deciding which option to take up, on the other Illeris indicates that there is also a powerful individual influence behind learning; this shapes any one person's 'accommodation' of new learning into the rest of their lives. This helps to remove the likelihood that we can generalise about what a particular group of learners needs: 'the social constructionists rightly point out the significance of the social field, but this can easily lead to the significance of the internal psychological processes in the individual being overlooked or underestimated' (Illeris, 2004:126).

The forming of identities is strongly associated with the freedom to make choices in today's society. But the combination of the ideas of making choices by coming to learn English and the forming of identities has not been suggested in the adult literacies field. My understanding of this possibility is inspired by Bauman (2000:73), who describes consumption as a key builder of identities and consumption processes as a crucial part of 'belonging' to social groups and products. Many of the English student respondents in my research felt a sense of pride and achievement that they were in college. This might be considered to be at odds with restricted choices of courses and government-designed agendas, but I would suggest that, in a rapidly changing postmodern world, they believed they had arrived in a position to make a choice about improving their own education. For me, this partially situates them as having an experience typical of every member of our society: the opportunity to be a consumer. Usher and Edwards (2007) argue that:

although it is certainly not the case that we can all consume equally, it is also the case that all in some way are affected by consumer culture and consumer discourse and images. In fast culture consuming is a principal mode of self-

expression and the experience of social participation is often contingent on consumption.

(Usher & Edwards, 2007:25)

This becomes a key notion in this discussion, where the authors emphasise 'the significance of consumption in the social order and how identities are increasingly developed through consumption'.

I consider that there are conflicting debates within current theoretical work around students of literacies. Usher and Edwards's (2007) comments on lifelong learning suggest an alternative view: that those who come to learn literacy seek what Biesta et al. (2011) describe as 'a high level of involvement in learning that can lead to a strong and positive sense of identity'. On the other hand, it is necessary to consider how other discourses portray literacy learners. The following section discusses the powerful effect that speech acts (discourse) can have upon others' identities.

4.8 Discourse used in shaping identities

While building a picture of individual identity theories that have contributed to my data analysis and arguments around respondents' attitudes and personal views, I have often been reminded of the power that others' speech has on one person's sense of identity. I needed to moderate my understanding of individually collected remarks with the theoretical lens of performativity. Butler (1993: 13) states: 'Within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names'. In *Excitable Speech*, Butler (1997:51) elaborates that the performative is generated through 'historicity of force', and only succeeds if 'that action echoes prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices'. Youdell (2006:225)

applies the performative to education, and points out the massive implications for thinking critically about 'the subjects of education and the processes through which enduring inequalities are produced'. Expressions for 'particular abilities and talents, educational orientations and aspirations and disabilities and deficits' may help to sustain enduring inequalities.

Ecclestone (2016) is currently exploring a similar school of thought around the theme of vulnerability. She has criticised the vulnerability discourse because of 'how we conceptualise humanity, regard and make judgments about people and how we treat them subsequently' (15). Like Youdell, Ecclestone brings social justice to the forefront of her argument that in

trying to confer recognition on communities and individuals that State agencies depict as marginalised, disaffected and suffering from low self-esteem ... this offers a demoralised concept of education because, however well-meaning at the outset, this eventually denies society and individuals their moral capacity.

(Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009:129)

Through such debates about terminology, it is clear that discourse plays a significant role in obstructing our understanding of the attitudes of those who come for English lessons. Ken Loach's film *I, Daniel Blake* (2016) is a recent reminder of how vulnerable images can influence our thinking and create pity in potentially misleading ways. The main character in this film has to take sick leave, but the Job Centre instructs him to continue to look for work. Blake is advised to 'apply online'; he remarks: 'I'm a carpenter, I've never been near a computer', and is then shown hopelessly trying to operate a mouse. My regret is that a highly respected film director should portray literacy in such a prejudiced way; it is digital for a very large

proportion of the population nowadays, and most people will have enough experience of how to hold a mouse not to look so hopelessly digitally illiterate.

4.9 Summary

The literature that has informed my thesis took me to some places I already knew well, such as NLS scholars' social practices framework to literacy and the discourse studies that inspired a large amount of my early work on adult education status in my doctorate studies. Understanding the social contexts for which specific students need literacy has always been a fundamental starting point for me in deciding how to teach. Revisiting the work of NLS scholars in more detail has sharpened my understanding of how intricately these scholars dovetail their social practices argument within contexts.

Explorations of how adults learn (Illeris, 2002) and why (Biesta et al., 2011), why adult learning is a contentious issue in a society dominated by shifting economic policies (Usher & Edwards, 2007) and how to deliver learning in a world of global mobilities (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) are all important in reporting and analysing voices from the adult literacy classroom. Recent studies of superdiversity are clearly relevant to this work.

I also identified learning theories that place more emphasis on the individual's own unique creativity and psychological disposition while always remembering the influence of the specific communities involved – 'their mutual constitution' (Wenger, 1998:146). Overall, I follow Ecclestone (2010:118), who rejects the therapeutic ethos and describes an approach:

rooted in a fundamental belief that people have an innate capacity and potential for agency, namely the idea that people can and should aspire to control their own life, and that striving for social and individual transformation is a natural human drive.

Shaking off the deficit or vulnerable discourse can free students to be adult students with the capacity to assert their right to education as articulately as anyone else. The remainder of this thesis is based on this premise.

Chapter 5

Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This section explains the methodology developed to address the research questions that underpin the thesis. Initially, I prioritised a system of processing the data collected, and was inclined towards a straightforward mixed methods approach. Instead, I found as I proceeded that by bringing together grassroots methods – the use of interviews and descriptions of my own work localities – I was working on creating an understanding of values from the inside, rather than compiling a more specific, scientific outsider's report. This came closer to my customary belief about education: that everyone should be given as many opportunities as possible to know how to voice their views about the society they live in.

In addition, my methodology paid considerable attention to the bigger picture of adult education and its controlling forces. It did this by referencing literature that supported arguments for greater acknowledgement of the positive effects of long-term adult education, and critiquing some longstanding stereotyping about learners of basic English. First-hand interview data and contemporary literature have come together to explore the effects of global mobility among people and their cultures.

In this chapter, I look at the beliefs and values I hold that formed the methodology, and how these ideas developed the study. In the following chapter, I look at the more practical side of my approach to the work.

5.2 Key theories

The reference point of Knud Illeris's 'tension triangle' (see Appendix 1) has been introduced as a learning theory that helps to unravel the questions raised in this research. In my view, the three aforementioned aspects of this approach to what comprises learning brings together both social practices ideas and more individual-centred studies, pulling together what otherwise might be seen as quite disparate ideas about learning. For example, in Chapter 3, I will look at how the everyday experiences of the groups I worked with are shaped by their difficulties with reading or writing tasks locally. On the other hand, I will continue to commend the intellectual development of lifelong learners where they can be promoted by adult literacy and ESOL methods used in teaching in this country.

Other techniques used to draw together the conclusions from the research and ideas about adult literacy provision include a timeframe of the past 40 years of literacy teaching and learning in the UK, and a time lens framing my own thinking and development in teaching and research. I am indebted to Mary Hamilton and Yvonne Hillier, whose 'critical history' *Changing Faces of Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy* (2005), as well as Hamilton's *Literacy and the Politics of Representation* (2012), facilitate examining how political and social forces have driven the nature of the provision itself. Hamilton and Hillier have indicated how complex the timelines are in their creation of 'a series of timelines', forming 'a back bone' that enabled them to 'flesh out' a history of ALLN (27).

In addition, a more personal timeline is built into the research: that of my involvement in the sector, looking back at 'what has come before and after the interviews that I

recorded and analysed' (Rogers 2003:34). Gee calls this 'coverage' (1999), which Rogers (2003:34) finds coverage useful because 'you are likely to see patterns of interactions that are similar to the ones presented here'. I consider this a cohesive technique that I can use to support the forming of general conclusions based on my experiences. This is where the validity of my statements requires more scope than just my own interpretations of my interviews.

Furthermore, there is a common principle behind the narrative of my own development as a teacher/learner and the experiences that my respondents relate. This is best perceived within the concept of time bringing change. The students and I have learnt through everyday experiences as well as through teaching/attending classes. During the periods we have been learning, we have always been situated in particular contexts, so that learning activity is constructed by us as learners and the culture within which we individually *move* (Rogers & Street 2012:25). The idea that the culture itself is fluid – as is the subject, moving through time from one culture to another – is intrinsic to the thinking in this work. However, at its core the research is about significance of the lifelong possibility of literacy learning for those involved at grassroots.

5.3 Discourse

Issues about social inclusion are not foregrounded; rather, the discourse associated with inclusion – whether policy-speak, education-speak or student dialogue – will be commented on as a key characteristic of the ideal of adult literacy provision. The discourse that conflicts with the notion of equity in education – that of 'pass/fail', allocation of 'guided learning hours' and rigid mark schemes – will also be referenced to ascertain the extent of power issues. Rogers describes detailed work

on discourse analysis of the Treader family's experience of mainstream literacy in America (Rogers, 2007). She suggests that literacy is a powerful regulating force in society and through education; she states early on that her respondents, June and Vicky Treader, 'have learned to see themselves through the eyes of the institution' (Rogers, 2007:4), divorcing them from the fact that they no longer recognise their successes in their everyday lives.

However, through her work on discourse, Rogers (2007:142) also acknowledges that policy was not 'forceful and omnipotent' in this 'late postmodernist period', but almost arbitrary – and often in the hands of the individual. These were key ideas in Foucault's (1981: 55) work on authority, and they correspond with an idea in this work of a society in constant flux in pertinent areas, such as education and special needs.

While I would like to emulate Rogers's detailed linguistic analytical work, searching for raw experience from respondents in lives immersed in literacy education, there is a greater focus in my research on communities of practice in education than on the literacy relationships between home, school and work. In both studies, education has many agencies for the participants involved. Rogers studied discrete home practices; I also sometimes elicit information about my students' literacies routines in their everyday lives, and find that significant others have influenced students through traditional notions of literacy handed down through generations or dominant educational provider figures in the family. Some are motivated by a school's expectations of their literacy achievements or those of their own children. Focusing

on the results of discourse analysis, Rogers could observe 'the complexity and inequity embedded in everyday interactions with language and literacy' (2007:xiv).

Some students, especially those I had known for some years, were keenly drawn into talking about their literacy teachers and the different experiences they had had. I will look at this discourse too, because it presents the question of how much a student's comment – for example, 'I think in a dyslexic class you need support teachers to help with the main one' (Ray, INTERVIEW 22, August 2013, line 65) – is a reflection of how they have been taught, and how much it is formed by other influences outside education. Is there a two-way power basis working here, or is this merely an example of how formative a teacher (or even I as the researcher) can be on students' development?

In terms of the practical side of the research, data was collected from interviews with 28 people connected with adult literacy including students, the spouses of two of the students, teachers and programme managers (Appendix 8). Data has also been contributed from stories of my own life, professional experiences and other fragments of experiences I have had, or encountered others having. The work has also been shaped by insights about situated perspectives from NLS practitioners, as well as educational, sociological, sociolinguistic and social justice ideas, discourse analysis and global communication texts.

During the research, my initial disparate qualitative methods began to work together. I adopted a less formal interview style, allowing me to recognise methodologically

how important open interviews are ‘to let new elements come up’ (Balarin, 2009:298).

In my introduction to the study (Chapter 1), I explained my underpinning beliefs about adult literacy provision and those who receive adult education. Alongside this, a developing theory also underlies my questions about the role that new, aspirational cultural norms are playing in people’s adult education choices. There is evidence of a sometimes vibrant and persistent culture of adult learning among those coming forward for ESOL and for literacy classes. This culture may sit side by side with their own ‘multiple lifeworlds’ (The New London Group, 2000:17), or with a history of long-term employment, unemployment, family commitments or disability in this country; but this adult learning culture provides grounds for hope for change for the better.

As the work proceeded, what started as qualitative research that focused on semi-structured interviews was superseded by a much more comfortable ethnographic study, better fitting the heart of the study; that is, social and local contexts within which respondents made decisions to study English. This, in turn, was complemented by auto-ethnographic input.

5.4 The story of the research design

As educational researchers all we can do is, first of all, convince others that the processes we used to collect our data and the analysis we used to convert them into evidence are reasonable ... these are the steps that our research design should specify, so it is, by implication, fundamental to the truth of our research findings.

(Newby, 2014:97)

Primary data has been drawn from:

- *An auto-ethnographic study*: my own immersion in the field, both over the time period of the research and in references to my years as a professional in this field.
- *Interview data*, including full transcripts from original interviews with 28 students/adult literacy practitioners and programme managers (see Appendix 8 for full list of interviews).
- *Observational data*, including my own blogs, research journal entries, descriptions of the settings and photographs (see Appendix 8).

The research undertaken through the literature (described in Chapter 4 and throughout the text) is drawn mainly, but not only, from education. This literature plays a vital role in providing a range of nested contexts for discussion: the lifelong learning scene, adult literacies, social justice and others. It has helped me to identify a series of themes within which to examine the primary data, as well as to explore my own conclusions.

The initial aim was to undertake qualitative research to attempt to specify the personal reasons people had for becoming adult literacy learners (or what is now generally named 'English' in adult education provision in South London). This was to obtain an insight into the ways students themselves made informed choices about coming to classes. Street has indicated the nature of any one person's perception of what becoming literate means: it is 'about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being'. (Street, 2012:29).

I increasingly realised the significance of my own views and experience within this study – not only in interviewing and recording the results but also my own role in adult education and my own insights into the ‘knowledge’ that others bring to their studies. As such, I allowed a greater focus on my experiences from over the years as an adult education practitioner to develop. The aim was to theorise why the students were coming forward to learn. This led me to providing a deep ethnographic study of first-hand impressions. I was able to enquire into what the London adult education environment within which teachers, students, programme managers and volunteer teachers exist is like, as well as to record the personal experiences of adult basic English learning for both students and myself. The provision is an area of learning mainly funded by the Skills Funding Agency UK. Descriptions of the research that took place from April 2013 to November 2013 can be found in Chapter 3.

Taking the above into account, there is no doubt that this work has grown a strong ethnographic perspective to give its purpose greater *lived* dimension. Green and Bloome (1997) have described the nature of the ethnographic study in education:

- Ethnography in education is conducted by those inside this academic field (189).
- The ethnographer of education’s task is to describe the culture of the social group being studied (190).
- The task of the ethnographer of education is to understand what counts as education to members of the group and to describe how this cultural practice

is constructed within and across the events and patterns of activity that constitute everyday life (190).

By studying my own field of work, I am most suitably equipped to address the research question: 'What do some adult students in England value in particular about adult literacy learning?' Furthermore I have proposed in the course of this study (and will explore further in the Conclusion) that a culture arises from the very gathering of students in adult education, united by a common purpose of seeking education.

The auto-ethnographic development of this study is explored later (section 5.9); briefly, my role in adopting an ethnographic approach was to integrate what I surmised from my own and students' contributions as I went along – what Carolyn Ellis calls 'creative analytic practices' (Bochner & Ellis 2016:188). This integration of ideas led me to appreciate 'cultures in their own terms from the point of view of an insider' (Hardy, 2012:152).

5.5 Qualitative approach

I initially chose a predominantly qualitative approach based on the idea that qualitative research is usually carried out in naturalistic settings where the researcher is able to share the frame of reference alongside the individual being researched (Newby, 2014:105; Cohen et al., 2000:19). My strength in research to date lay in my immersion in all the fields I had worked in. I was departing from the combined methods study I conducted in 2002, which juxtaposed semi-structured interview methods with basic quantitative results – specifically, measuring practitioners' preferred forms of contact for conveying their concerns about students (Freeman, 2002). In 2006, I used the same framework, using qualitative questions

about the Scottish and English adult curricula in the form of an email questionnaire while also extracting quantitative data to directly compare reactions from Scottish and English practitioners.

In the current inquiry, I did not intend to draw comparisons that would give results applicable to the management or curriculum development in my own field. Rather, I wanted to capture the students' insights into what education and literacy *means* for them. A quantitative collection of results would do nothing more than provide a superfluous supernarrative. With qualitative methods, the results might be described as original and the findings easily contextualised in the field of everyday life they were drawn from. A qualitative approach is generally held to be inductive, compared to the deductive nature of quantitative research. Evidence is brought together and reviewed, and patterns and processes are identified that lead to specific conclusions.

Why, then, did I become critical of a straightforward multi-method qualitative approach and move on to an ethnographic approach?

Newby describes qualitative research as 'a federation of practices [rather] than an integrated framework for conducting research' (2014:459). This was certainly how it seemed to me at the outset of my research plans, in that I sensed that my data would be worryingly disparate. I decided that, by knitting together an action research approach with an in-depth ethnographic study of the students and centres I visited, I was proving to myself that an ethnographic approach would be a vital tool in the process.

5.6 Action research

Action research, intended to 'produce practical knowledge that is useful to the people in the everyday conduct of their lives' (Reason & Bradbury, 2001:2), is also strongly linked to qualitative research. It is akin to my own intentions; that is, to clarify what branch of lifelong learning my students and I are involved in, and how that kind of learning fits into current cultural practices. Action research is also at play in this study, insofar as the research in Sutton College, Surrey (SCOLA) was carried out with my own class and built into my overall purpose. The aim was to find out from the students if they thought their learning experience could be given more depth and relevance to their everyday lives. Like Duncan, I was 'moving between the role of researcher and teacher on a weekly basis' (2012:105).

As an action researcher, I can most clearly identify myself as a teacher who aspires to speak out for social justice and to assist transformation of the services in my field of work (Somekh, 2006:12). As such, I am not value-free; my research is politically informed and personally engaged (Somekh, 2006:12).

5.7 The interviews

The interview is a more flexible form than the questionnaire and, if intelligently used, can generally be used to gather information of greater depth and can be more sensitive to contextual variations in meaning. Variation in responses can thus be attributed to respondents and not to variability in the interviewing technique.

Wording the questions in the same way for each respondent is sometimes called *standardising*. Asking the questions in the same order is called *scheduling*. Interviews, however, can be non-scheduled, though still partly standardised. This is sometimes called a semi-structured interview. Here, the interviewer works from a list of topics that need to be covered with each respondent, but the order and exact wording of questions is not important. Generally, such interviews gather qualitative data, although this can be coded into categories to be made amenable to statistical analysis.

(Seale, 2012:183; emphasis in original)

My concept of the interview, powerfully influenced by my long experience of conducting dyslexia assessments, uses Cynthia Klein's guidelines for in-depth interviews (Klein, 1993). I know the information that I need to build up a picture of the individual's literacy experiences in school, home and the workplace, and I tailor my questions around that. The result has always been revealing and helpful in a holistic sense to the assessment, even with the briefest of narrative content. Those narratives, some of which have etched themselves into my memory because of the poignancy of the remarks about literacy development within a social practices context, gave me confidence that a semi-structured interview would work well to address the research questions. Initially, I decided to produce a set of questions for use as an interview schedule (see Appendix 4), based on the model of a semi-structured interview. When I wrote these, my mind was focused on obtaining some elements of quantitative data; say, as to how many interviewees used some form of social media. By wording the questions in the same way for every student respondent, I would be 'standardising' the questions, so that variability in responses would come from interviewees rather than as a result of different interactions between me and them. The questions were to be used with everyone, but I was also aware from previous studies (Freeman, 2002, 2006) that I would likely sometimes deviate from the order to elicit fuller responses. This would allow me to stray beyond the brief if I needed to ask additional, unforeseen questions through which I could better understand the issue (Newby, 2014:356; Seale, 2012:183).

Later, interrogating my own methods as to how suitable they were for the purpose of the enquiry, I excluded any formal quantitative plans. The theories of Illeris (2002), NLS scholars, Usher and Edwards (1994) and Cope and Kalantzis (2000), all of

which included social practices thinking, led me to understand that I needed to capture the intricacies of the community of the adult literacy class to really represent students' views. Such fieldwork would be best conducted through ethnographic methods.

5.8 Ethnographic study

Once my own data – gathered in various adult literacy contexts across South London – took shape, I better understood that I had to make less disparate observations and references to theories that attracted me. I realised I should recall my findings as pivotal points around which to discuss motivating factors for joining literacy classes, and what these motivations tell us about the lives of those who come forward to learn. If there was to be disparity, it would be among the views of my respondents rather than my own way of approaching this subject.

I saw that I must undertake the research as professionally as possible, within the limitations of my academic inexperience, but as a student of literacy as a social practice (Street, 2003:77) I should also acknowledge that my data presented me with a range of 'literacies' – interviews – that expressed different outlooks on life and brought different experiences to bear on the decision to study adult literacy. Indeed, this brought me in line with:

one of the tenets of NLS that *any* piece of language, any tool, technology, or social practice can take on quite different meanings (and values) in different contexts, and that no piece of language, no tool, technology, or social practice has a meaning (or value) outside of all contexts.

(Gee, 2000:188)

Bearing in mind that both the students and I were also influenced by being part of an educational community of practice, I needed to take into account the current provision for such education. The long-term security of any basic skills setting has recently become acutely vulnerable to policy adjustments, in terms of both the fabric of the building/resources and the course content. This turns what are already fascinatingly diverse learning communities into still more complicated entities. Ethnography is when community 'needs to be understood not as a reified fact, but as something complex, contested and alive with problematics' (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012:101). Moje (2000:96) points out that 'we might consider how changing times and changing spaces shape research in communities'. Mindful of the researcher's reaction to the study as it proceeds, Pahl (2015:151) has recently brought another detailed feature of ethnography to our attention: 'Ethnography as a process can trigger the movement between the self and the outside world'.

The depths to which this wider cultural focus might venture were first glimpsed through the concurrence of the researcher's day-to-day experience of the environment with that of the researched. As Pink (2009:22) said:

ethnography ... does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced.

Pahl (2014) has enabled us to join up the dots, pointing out the connecting processes that make ethnography a deep, tangible, first-hand and cultural study. The same processes need to be expressed in concrete everyday language. She says ethnography is 'a site ... with a focus on cultural patterns and taken for granted practice' (Pahl, 2014:181). At the same time, it is 'a process that can trigger the movement between the self and the outside world' (151), and as an activity it can

'connect and unpack' (61) in detail making the 'situated and embodied visible and depending on the de-centring of academic practice and engagement with contemporary culture' (191–2).

Having acknowledged that my interviews were taking place in contexts with which I was very familiar (section 3.8), I was now drawn to the view that using ethnographic insights was not only contributory as a form of detailed data. Indeed, such a study used its settings, its bridge (achieved through a range of questions/answers) between students' everyday lives and their relationship to literacies and its observations on cultural features of the educational way of life students chose to provide a life-giving scaffolding upon which critical commentary, global contextualisation and views of how learning is effected can become synergetic.

It makes sense to see such findings as fundamental; as grassroots members of a social practice are being asked why they are engaging in such a practice, 'we are engaged in tracing the threads of literacy practice through contemporary social life' (Barton & Hamilton; 1998:72); 'I make sense of the worlds of literacy from a situated, ethnographic perspective. In doing so I hope to bring a fresh perspective to literacy, to cultural studies and to future planning for literacy and community education' (Pahl, 2014:28); 'Experience and the everyday are the bread and butter of ethnography, but they are also the grounds whereupon and the stake for how grander theories must test and justify themselves' (Willis, 2000:viii).

Another perspective that ethnographers bring is the experience of the setting. Pink (2009) describes the binding effect of this 'sensorial process':

I suggest thinking of analysis as a way of making ethnographic places. Analysis might be variously situated in the ethnographic process and not always distinguishable from other activities. It is indeed as sensorial a process as the research itself: a context where sensory memories and imaginaries are at their full force as the ethnographer draws relationships between the experiential field of the research and the scholarly practice of academia.

(Pink, 2009:3)

This constitutes another dimension to the overall findings. In the case of my research, the data binds together the voices of both students and teachers, who were all interviewed in the very environments that teaching and learning usually took place. Those environments spoke to me in the data independently of what the interviewees said; yet the same data was extracted from the recordings and diaries taken in the research, and indicated the nature of the settings. Further description of how these recordings were made can be found in the following chapter.

5.9 Ongoing observation and auto-ethnographic approach

The story of my methodology does not end there:

It's about time we wrestled more openly and collectively with these problems. Instead of hiding the pain many of us feel about the ways we are unfulfilled by the life of the mind, we need to muster the courage to speak the truth about 'the emotional fallout' of a lifetime of teaching and research.

(Tompkins, 1996:57)

We need to face up to the ways we use orthodox academic practices to discipline, control, and perpetuate ourselves and our traditions, stifling innovation, discouraging creativity, inhibiting criticism of our own institutional conventions, making it difficult to take risks, and severing academic life from emotional and spiritual life. No matter how much change may threaten us, we need to consider alternatives – different goals, different styles of research and writing, different ways of bringing the academic and the personal into conversation with each other.

(Bochner, 1997:418)

Despite realising that I was in a good position to undertake an ethnographic study from within the field that would look at a culture's 'relational practices, common values and beliefs' (Adams et al., 2014:50), I was still concerned that my own views,

experience and emotional ties to the field would be too obtrusive. I was uncertain what my voice would be, but aware that my sense of a postmodern era of adult education in the balance (Usher et al, 1997:50) and my view of respondents and learners as taking on the role of consumers (Usher & Edwards, 2007:30) was significant in creating a theory. I found it difficult to marry my intimate knowledge of students in the sector, limited in their ability to participate by cost and time, and my empathy with their sense of disenfranchisement, with the grander theories.

Discovering how an auto-ethnographic approach might accommodate this inclusion of my own co-experienced part in adult literacy education released me from my concerns about my own voice in the mix. Brigg et Bleiker (2010:797) emphasise characteristics of the auto-ethnographic voice:

- 1) openness and even vulnerability to the world as a way of identifying and engaging the relational dimensions of knowledge; 2) a willingness to draw upon a range of different faculties, such as sensation and intuition, to learn from hitherto excluded experiences and, 3) a process of selecting and analysing the so-collected data that partly exposes, rather than erases the traces of the author.

The auto-ethnographic task is described as 'the discomfort experienced at stepping outside your own received frame' (Denshire, 2014:834). I would add to the above that I am profoundly aware of a world in turmoil – 'deterrotolization' (Usher & Edwards, 2007:20); 'a permanent state of flux' – yet, as far as mobility goes, I am also conscious of the necessity for a continuum in the provision for studies for the people I interviewed (and most of my peers in the profession). I consider my hectic thoughtscape (my own expression) to be best coordinated by an analytical (Bochner & Ellis, 2016:63) auto-ethnographic approach, which seeks to 'produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of personal and interpersonal experience' as well as compare these to wider theoretical viewpoints (Ellis et al., 2011:277). I arrived at the understanding, clarified again by Ellis et al. (2011:276), that my

experience as a practitioner was so integral to the ideas in this work that it would be correct to define this as an auto-ethnographic approach: 'they [researchers] retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity'.

Chapter 6

Doing and Reporting On the Research

6.1 The data

The data I have collected consists of 26 interview transcripts, which were conducted from March to November 2013 (see Appendix 8 for list of interviews). The interviews were conducted using an Echo Livescribe Pen: a smartpen that combines a ballpoint pen with an embedded computer and digital audio recorder. It records what it writes for uploading later to a PC, and synchronises written notes with any audio it has recorded. Recordings can be replayed via desktop software, which displays technical details of the recordings to facilitate transcribing. I transcribed all the recordings myself using this equipment.

The interviews were mainly with students and teachers/managers of adult English classes, either in groups or one-to-one. The questions followed loose semi-structured questionnaire frameworks – one for students (Appendix 4) and one for teachers (Appendix 7) – which served to produce data that could be compared with other interviews, as well as opportunities to deviate into the learning experiences that individual respondents were encouraged to speak about. Data also consists of sensory data from those interviews – including other voices in the background, sounds from the street or immediate urban environment and from people popping in and out of rooms – which was digitally recorded (see section 7.12 for more on sensory data). There are also entries from my own journal at the time.

Excerpts from my transcripts are interspersed with descriptions of research environments, entries from my own research journal and any artefacts connected with an interview.

Table 6.1: Interview sites and interviewees

Interview site	Interviewees
Blackfriars Settlement, Central London	5 students
Myrrh Education Ltd, Brixton Hill, South London	5 students
Sutton College – 4 sites: Wallington Centre, South London; Sutton Centre, South London; 2 students' homes in the locality; teacher interview in Sutton Public Library	9 students 1 teacher
Merton Home Tutoring Service (London Borough of Merton); 2 homes in the locality; 2 public libraries in locality; The Wimbledon Guild	3 students 2 teachers 1 coordinator–teacher
Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals, Birmingham, West Midlands	2 teachers

Note: For full details see Appendix 8.

6.2 Data analysis

Data was transcribed verbatim from all the interviews, and then re-read and listened to in order to single out key themes. The identification of themes was guided by three factors. The first was to look for themes that would enlighten the original research questions. For this reason, the themes 'literacies in everyday lives', 'literacy valued as a skill/craft' and 'the wider aspirations of the students' were sought. 'The value of literacy for employment' was not a main aim, but it arose often enough to be included in this category.

The second set of themes informed the second research question about how much global practices impact on students' learning experiences. These included digital practices and awareness of the multicultural presence in groups.

Lastly were the themes that emerged from the interviews, such as ‘feelings of vulnerability and being “left behind”’, ‘support from family and friends’, ‘enjoyment factors in literacy classes’ and ‘the role of the teacher in classes’. ‘Comments on how the system impacts on adult education’ was also a spontaneous theme, which students sometimes felt very strongly about.

6.3 Narrative study approach

I believe that my approach is predominantly ‘narrative analysis’: using the data to identify themes that – synchronised with my own encounters, doctoral research and understanding of prevalent theories – generate a fresh, holistic perspective. I have surprised myself by finding that, with my own narratives and search for global contexts for my experiences and those of my students, I have been able to recognise that adult literacy in the eyes of some of its participants is currently a universal, essential integrant to human progress through education. This was a diversion from a route I might originally have taken; for example, looking for stories of hardship leading to courage in overcoming obstacles. I had remained convinced that my dissertation would be resourced considerably by narrative accounts that I would analyse, either in excerpts from my interviewees or from my own autobiographical story as a literacy teacher, which is woven through the entire thesis. Such a narrative approached can be more formal, ‘narrative-under-analysis’, wherein stories are data to be analysed for themes (Bochner & Ellis, 2016:185, citing Polkinghorne, 1995). On the other hand is ‘narrative analysis’, in which ‘we see ourselves as storytellers connecting and communicating with readers’ (Bochner & Ellis, 2016:185).

I had some doubts about adopting the narrative analysis tool; originally, I anticipated that ‘narrative’ would be a main source of information for forming my conclusions

from the study, owing to extensive experience of interviews, assessments and one-to-one support in my work. I planned that my semi-structured interviews would include elements of my interviewees' life histories, which would enable me to better perceive the cultural expectations they brought to English classes. But I hesitated, considering that by adapting a system that has often focused on students' difficulties rather than providing a neutral account of their adult education studies, I am skewing their life story towards their deficits. Ecclestone (2004:112) argues that a 'therapeutic' type of framework, with language associated with emotional fragility, can produce a diminished view of people and have a demoralising effect on those identified as needing to receive therapeutic educational services. At the time, I was ambivalent about whether or not it was valid to speak about using a narrative approach.

To counteract these concerns, I recognised that my interviews were primarily about what the students value about their studies now, with the life-story components being helpful only in a secondary, qualitative way to give more depth to their stories: 'To the sociologically oriented investigator, studying narratives is additionally useful for what they reveal about social life – culture "speaks for itself" through an individual's story' (Riessman, 1993:5). I was not working from the premise that the student had difficulties with their studies, which meant we might start from a neutral, non-patronising understanding. I selected graphics and pictures on my information sheets (see Appendix 4) for interviewees and visuals used as stimulus material, which were as mainstream (rather than therapeutic) as possible.

Having embarked upon interviews with a flexible attitude, I could afford both to elicit imaginative, sensitive and creative responses when it seemed appropriate and to hold my data in a positive light away from the deficit image discourse; as Ecclestone (2004:133) says, 'it seems crucial to reassert optimistic, humanist beliefs about the power of language, education and human reason'. Additionally, I was able to bring in first-hand experiences to the narrative; these were as authentic as those of my interviewees, because they were derived from a similar community of practice. Ellis links this to auto-ethnography, advising using 'lived experiences to formulate abstractions and generalizations' (in Bochner & Ellis, 2016:212).

6.4 Ethical considerations

To understand the individual professional/moral dispositions that drove the research and the way it slowly evolved, as well as how ethical dilemmas were considered during this procedure, it is important to emphasise that I have drawn (and will continue to draw) on past experiences, as well as commenting on people's situational positions. In respect of relational ethics, I sought the consent of all my interviewees to include their words in my thesis; this was followed up with them when the exact words were drafted. I am aware that 'ethics do not stay still' (Bochner & Ellis, 2016:154) and that my own identity as a researcher who set out to work only from the interview data has brought other situational ethical questions into the study.

The proposal for the study was taken to ethical review on a number of occasions. It initially included a proposal (passed by the governor of a women's prison) to include responses from students of English in the prison where I was working. However, the study wasn't permitted until this part of the proposal was removed. Otherwise, the

plan to interview students from across a number of adult education centres was passed.

Some ethical considerations remain: first, about the people involved in the discussion. In their study of lifelong learning students, Biesta et al. (2011) explain how their work lends itself to telling life stories: 'Life history research relies on the ways in which adults are able to reconstruct their past through the narration of their life story. Such stories are not an objective account of the facts of one's life' (Biesta et al., 2011:9). When considering the difficulties that subjectivity may incur from an ethical point of view, it is clearly necessary to return to the respondents before the text is finalised, to ensure they feel fairly represented. I have contacted interviewees (where contact details were given), as pre-arranged on consent forms (see Appendix 6), to seek their approval of the material used. I also sent messages to the teachers, asking if they wanted to view final texts and let me know if they had any reservations about the way in which their texts had been represented.

Secondly, there were occasions when it was necessary to review a situation on the spot, with a dilemma that might be unexpected at the time of the interview. For example, one interview I conducted in Blackfriars Settlement was particularly short and the interviewee had been absent at the appointment time, but spoke to me later and was worried that I might pass her information on to the Job Centre or similar public services. I drew her attention to the wording of the consent form (Appendix 6) and reassured her that this was not the case. She was willing to go ahead, but we kept the interview short. Another respondent specifically asked me not to include some information that he thought would enlighten me but did not want shared with

others. In the case of the five respondents from Blackfriars Settlement, I had discussed the interviews with them at a visit a few days in advance of the actual appointments, and asked for their consent at that time. The same applied to the students at Sutton College, and to all of the teachers interviewed. The exceptions were the five Brass Tacks interviewees, whose teacher could not arrange for me to meet them on two different occasions but had prepared them for our meetings. The volunteer teachers also prepared their students for my visit, rather than me making preliminary visits.

The time I was interviewing may well be a different phase in my interviewees' lives from the time I completed the thesis. The stories of those interviewed and my story are all subjective; they rest upon our respective, ongoing experiences of school and adult education.

Third, to retain as much reliability as possible I can draw comparisons between different interviewees' responses, between respondents in different localities and between different programmes and teaching formats, allowing students' statements to contrast or draw parallels with each other. However, where there are contemporaneous features, experienced at the same time as the study or the incident recalled, it is important for me to draw attention to the influence of the time involved on the participant and to check with them that they are happy. For the researcher in this instance, 'meaning is fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal' (Riessman, 1993:15). However, for the participant the purpose of the interview may be different from the interviewer's idea of it, and the responses chosen for inclusion may not seem to them to represent the import of what they were saying.

Consent forms were signed in every case, and interviewees indicated if they were happy for photographs to be taken. Many interviewees did not want to be photographed; as a result, few photographs were taken of interviewees. None of the respondents wanted to change their real name to a pseudonym in the report, but pseudonyms have been used throughout in the final draft. Over the period of years since the interviews were conducted, I have become more aware of the subject of anonymity. At the outset, I had considered that if I asked my respondents whether or not they wanted their identity protected and they did not, I would take this permission to use their real names as final. I now realise that I would have taken a more protective approach if I had started by saying I would use a pseudonym unless they granted permission to me to use their names (Moosa, 2013:486).

In their book *Evocative Autoethnography*, Bochner and Ellis (2016) devote a whole chapter to ethical challenges (137–161), examining every stage of the writing up of a project. They also remind researchers about care for all respondents quoted or mentioned in a research write-up: 'You have to think about the ethics of your research *at every point in the process* because relationships and the goals of the project can and do change' (147; emphasis in original). I re-approached my teacher respondents at the end of the write-up, asking them to review the text and give me permission to go ahead. I realise now, with Moosa (2013:483), that ethical procedures be thorough but also negotiable from the beginning to the end of the research process.

However, in this instance I consider that I have been privileged in being able to speak to so many adult students in literacy and language classes about their experiences of education and present goals in their studies, both as part of this research and in my professional work in general. Bochner and Ellis (2014) also indicate that ethical consideration in auto-ethnography, while focusing on both self and the voices of the others, creates a situation where the researcher has a connection with the community they are researching that involves a debt to that community. I trust that the following chapters of this thesis will demonstrate that exactly those values preside over this work.

Chapter 7

Data from Interviews with Students

As soon as I settled down to the first interview at Myrrh Education Ltd, in the Brass Tacks Centre on Brixton Hill in mid-April 2013, I felt at home. This was not surprising; one of the happiest periods in my life was working in Brixton College from 2000–1, a time when I was professionally most confident and enjoying a period of generous support to learners, as well as plenty of ESOL and literacy classes. I recalled a sense of being at ease with the amount of time we had to cover the syllabus and the small classes, which meant we could attend to individual needs. At the Brass Tacks Centre, there was a similar sense of vocational learners being given time to manage the English on their courses, such as the interviewees I met who studied carpentry and catering.

Student interviews followed the same patterns of open-ended questions across all learning centres and venues where they met for classes. The questionnaires can be found in Appendix 4.

In our discussions, interviewees talked knowledgeably about quite a wide range of matters in their everyday experiences as students. By re-reading my interview data and using a notetaking approach, I identified the following themes as emerging quite regularly:

- literacies in everyday lives;
- literacy valued as a skill/craft;

- the value of literacy for employment;
- digital practices and their impact on literacy studies;
- multi-ethnic society and superdiversity;
- feelings of vulnerability and being 'left behind';
- support from family and friends;
- enjoyment factors in literacy classes;
- the role of the teacher in classes;
- students' wider aspirations;
- how the system impacts on adult education.

In this chapter I will explore each of these themes, drawing in excerpts from the interviews and explaining my reasons for highlighting each cluster of conversations. As an example of how I have tracked the themes through the findings I draw from this section where social practices points of view are given. On the following page the first long quote indicates how Darren's choice of reading matter is dictated by his financial situation – saying what he would like to read he then says that in reality he will read online, because it is more convenient and cheaper.

7.1 Literacies in everyday lives

In the majority of my interviews, students were relaxed and forthcoming about their literacy experiences in schooling and previous college courses, but sometimes unsure about talking about literacy in their day-to-day lives. I acknowledge that this was likely to be because they were not certain why I, as a teacher, wanted to know about their lives outside education.

There were exceptions, however. Darren, studying at Brass Tacks Centre, was reflective and articulate about how being dyslexic dictated his life course and had meant many changes in career and vocational studies – he had been a bookkeeper, a bricklayer, a postman, a meter reader, a tiler and a nurse – never finding one in which he felt comfortable or did not struggle to keep up with the paperwork. He described society in literacy terms:

On the building site they're all page 3 fellas.

(Darren INTERVIEW [1], April 2013, line 83)

It's a bit like people who come and go to prison isn't it? Most of them in prison are actually dyslexic and they've got problems that's half the reason they're inside. Lucky enough I didn't go down that road but I could have done.

(lines 91–5)

I asked Darren how he gets around situations where he has to write, as in employment. He said it was:

more daunting when people are there looking over. It actually makes me in particular muck up and start not concentrating. I'm thinking are you going to take the mickey? That's where issues come in.

(lines 194-7)

However, Darren was keen to follow the news in writing, and had found ways to do so. I asked if he read the news on the way to college:

Darren: To be honest the *Metro* or *The Sun* or something basic.

Sarah: So you wouldn't be particularly bothered about the long-word ones anyway?

Darren: Yeah, I do like *The Telegraph* and *The Sunday Times* if there's a certain subject that I'm interested in. But the paper's about £1.50.... and everything's online now. I do look on the *News Shopper* – I can do that online. Because I like to know what's going on in my local area. I do like reading and learning.

(lines 173–7)

Elwin was studying carpentry, but enjoying the English classes as well. However, he didn't think studying English had had an effect on the rest of his life, and his reading habits remain the same:

Elwin: I do read but I tend to read the bible more than an ordinary book.

Sarah: Have you always read the bible?

Elwin: Yes – yes since I was young.

(Elwin, INTERVIEW [3], April 2013: 55, 64–5)

Money and the cost of classes were issues for many. Gyaana, a carer for her husband, had enjoyed learning English (in ESOL and, later, literacy classes) for many years. She was now expected to pay the full amount in Sutton: 'It's £264 I have to pay. So it's too much' (Gyaana, INTERVIEW [21], August 2013, lines 20–9).

Nadiya, who was in an ESOL class in Blackfriars Settlement, explained that the family had less money when her husband was working full time: 'I can't get the money to pay. For one term £340'. She has more money when he isn't working, 'because I get the credit tax because my husband isn't working. That's what I give in here. And I have two daughters' (Nadiya Abubaker, INTERVIEW [8], May 2013: lines 56–62).

Nadiya remembers that she used to read Arabic when she was single, fitting her reading in late at night; but now she is too tired to read anything. However, she likes to read about what is going on in London:

Nadiya: because I live in this country. I take *Metro* near my house. I like the news I see *News at Ten* – and the programme about question and answer.

Sarah: *Question Time* – the politicians?

Nadiya: This is my favourite programme. I like the man who do it ... two brothers.

(lines 213–36)

Nadiya explained that she also likes Richard Attenborough: ‘His English is very clear. Sometimes he do the animals for Africa – the elephant how dies’ (lines 213–36).

Helping children at home and being able to communicate with the teachers at school and people in shops was important for all the parents – but particularly those who did not rely on their own children, partner or extended family to undertake this everyday communication for them. Nadiya put a positive spin on this conversation about using literacy out of the home when describing her pleasure reading the names of destinations on London train-station signboards without having to ask her daughters. I recalled a long-term Carshalton student (not an interviewee) who learnt to read and write in his late seventies; he had always driven, but without using any road signs. Then, to his great pleasure, the place names began to roll out for him as he drove into central London to take recycled Dyson cleaners to sell at Covent Garden car-boot sales on Sundays.

Grace, a single mother in her early twenties, was in one-to-one tuition with the Merton Home Tutoring Volunteer scheme. Her children were still very young, and she hoped that if she could find a class to continue her basic literacy she would be able to keep up with and support them learning to read. She explained that she had told the school ‘about myself a lot and I expect them to understand but I don’t know if

they understand' (Grace, INTERVIEW [11], June 2013: lines 115–16). She said she could make a 'little sentence' now, and: 'I can even help my son a little bit these days when he brings me books if it's not a lot' (150). She planned for them to learn together through everyday activities: 'I tell my son that we have to do some lists when we're going shopping' (227). Grace had a much more challenging literacy task – a rape victim, she came from Ghana as a young teenager leaving a daughter behind, who she learnt had also been victimised. Through a scribe in the church in London, Grace had communicated with her daughter and was now embarking on the long process of bringing her to England (52–98).

Karen, in my Sutton class, had struggled with her own personal problems as well as those of her husband and one of her children; but because of her literacy classes, she found she was beginning to find the right words to explain her 'kid's behaviour' and to talk through instances of him being bullied with the school staff: 'Miss Coulson at the school gives me the time of day and says "I see you explaining so beautifully. You're not shouting anymore"' (Karen, INTERVIEW [12], June 2013: lines 93–107).

In Najma's household, using the computer to read and study together was a shared family activity:

When my kids come in I spend a lot of time with them. Because I get a lot of back up with my kids as well ... have a dictionary – my daughter read me – we download one. And sometimes my partner also come and visit – this paper and we're reading the paper altogether.

(Najma, INTERVIEW [17], July 2013: lines 65–6, 124–5)

Depending on their stage in life, others had to engage in a range of everyday literacies, some of which had brought them to classes. Gyaana, for example, was not

allowed to go to school as a child in Johannesburg; her mother needed her to stay at home, undertaking full-time chores and childcare, until she was married at 14. Her husband had taken care of the domestic paperwork, but when he had to retire early after a stroke she realised that she would have to take responsibility for this. She could now manage these tasks, and was proud of reaching this point:

In this country you have to be independent so to know what the paper comes, or junk mail comes, I have to know the banking side and everything. Once I go to college I thought don't worry I can relax now – I can do the paper and filing. Little bit of mistake but it doesn't matter.

(Gyaana)

Gyaana also made it clear that her interest in improving her literacy and computer skills was unusual in her age group – none of her friends had the same interest in studying:

I've never seen anybody going to study. They tell me off: 'Why do you want to study?' They say: 'Our women don't go to school'. I say I want to be independent, I want to learn. I like it. Because they want to go to the day centres and sitting and eating and gossiping and everything. But always I don't like that type of life. Always like to work myself. So that's why I like it.

(Gyaana, INTERVIEW [21], August 2013: lines 324–32)

Ray, who had struggled enormously with dyslexia for over 40 years, gave one of the clearest descriptions of how not being able to read inhibited his friendships; for example, with Paul, whom he had known for over 30 years:

I'd avoid any contact with people in case they brought out a piece of paper and they'd say 'read this' or 'write that'. Fifteen or twenty years ago and we hired a catamaran in Somerset, they said you've got a form to fill in with name, address, next of kin ... I said 'you do it for me'; 'yeah', he used to say, 'alright I'll do it for you', but when we went go-kart racing recently and the bloke said, and he said 'you give it here, I'll do it', and I said 'no you give it here'!

(Ray, INTERVIEW [22], August 2013: lines 17–28)

Describing situations in which literacy had previously been challenging for the students but they were now more able to participate directly responds to the first

research question: 'What do some adult students in England value in particular about adult literacy learning?'

7.2 Literacy valued as a skill/craft

One of the most significant themes that arose from many students was their expressed determination – to the point of compulsion – to be able to learn. Several referred to trying to get the information into their 'brains'. They aspired to the words to read or write flowing out – no doubt like others around them:

What I'd like to do is I'd like to get the dictionary and fill it in my head on a CD-ROM but that will never happen, because I have a problem with the memory and just putting the words together.

(Darren, lines 125–6)

I have to keep going through it all week just to remember it so it really remains in my brain every day.

(Karen, lines 53–5)

What I want to do is that reading. I want to get it in my head [*emphatic*]. But I don't.

(Grace)

Jade, from the Congo via France, believed over everything else that English was very good for her:

I want to read and I want to write very good English. Is to speak and to have very good English. My thing is two things – to speak and to write very good.

(Jade, INTERVIEW [4], April 2013: lines 38–41)

For Gillian, one of my students at the time, practising the craft of English helped to keep her mind off pain, as I inadvertently found out just before the summer break:

Sarah: What about your health because you've got health appointments to go to. Do you need a lot of reading and writing for that?

Gillian: Yes.

Sarah: You do. How does that help?

Gillian: Well it keeps my mind off it. What I'd like to do is to have something before I leave – for me to have some homework to do. Then I can think about *that* and not think about me ... pains and that.

(Gillian, INTERVIEW [13], June 2013: lines 147–54)

I was struck by how many students used the word 'properly' – defined in the Cambridge Dictionary (2017) as 'correctly', 'satisfactorily', 'morally and socially acceptable'; even, in the strict sense, 'exactly' – in their remarks about their ambitions to learn; they sought a rigour in their learning (Jasmine, INTERVIEW [5] April 2013: lines 94–105) repeated 'properly' four times in her description of needing to write for both her course and her work as a carer; for example, when she had to write about an incident.

I asked Samira at Blackfriars if she had to give up other things to study. She replied: 'I just do English. I ... English properly then I ... do any course or anything next'. Her whole life revolved around rushing to get to her English classes, getting everything else – housework, taking her children to school, serving breakfast to her mother and father in law, cooking and cleaning – out of the way quickly (Samira, INTERVIEW [6], May 2013: lines 71–82).

Samira's words reminded me of a class of Muslim parents I taught for five months in 2016 (not interviewees). The women worked extremely hard to pass their exams, but I was aware it was very difficult. I knew from my own experience as a mother what is involved in everyday schooling in England, but on top of that they explained to me that they also had to factor in Quran school runs, caring for in-laws, preparing meals

for the family, prayers for the family and endless housework, alongside getting experience or low-paid jobs in childcare or school volunteer work with the hope of becoming qualified in the future. I also recalled the joy with which one of my students from a women's prison (not an interviewee) looked forward to attending English classes when she returned home, certain at that point that she could study, manage the domestic chores and look after her young sons.

So, according to my informants, acquiring English skills raises enthusiasm, instils a sense of what is correct, provokes a desire to be accurate and disciplined and provides a fulfilling occupation and positive meaning for one's future. People also felt a great responsibility towards improving their English – perhaps even to do penance; Nadiya said: 'this is my mistake I have to do' (78).

Coming to learn English is charged with emotions, as illustrated in these and later examples. As in the previous section, students indicated the amount of value they attach to their learning, which was sometimes strongly emotionally charged.

7.3 The value of literacy for employment

Several students were hoping to enhance their opportunities in employment, whether in new employment areas they wanted to move into or to improve their chances of promotion. Three stood out, who were on a general English Entry 3 class in Sutton. Patrick from Caterham was the most focused on what he wanted to do with his new-found confidence. Learning to read and write had encouraged him to use computers, and having discovered the option of developing skills to do wage accounts he was now enrolling on a bookkeeping course (Patrick and Terry, INTERVIEW [14], June 2013: lines 27–32). Dorette, a nursing assistant from Sierra Leone, hoped to qualify

to do more advanced nursing techniques through courses at work; Esther, also from West Africa, longed for a promotion to middle-management from the careworker job she had held for many years (Dorette and Esther INTERVIEW [16], June 2013: lines 62, 84–8). What was striking, however, was that none of these students – nor those working on vocational subjects at Brass Tacks on Brixton Hill – were much focused on their future jobs; rather, they focused on the technicalities of learning English. In the mid-1970s, when I started teaching, many students would fit English into their working week, often taking extended lunch hours or sacrificing going home to bed after a shift at work. In 2004, Ray had started evening classes but was allowed time off work to attend college during the daytime for one-to-one support, at a point when he was making a dramatic breakthrough with his progress. For ten years, he kept an alphabetically indexed notebook with the words he would need to write up completion slips for maintenance tasks at the local hospital (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Ray's alphabetically indexed, well-worn personal dictionary, August 2013



Note: Taken and included with student's permission.

Almost without fail, the adults I interviewed were very serious about the future; but they were also realistic about their priorities, often knowing they would not be able to complete plan B until plan A – to improve their English – had been achieved. Abiba, from Blackfriars Centre, who was a midwife for 17 years in Afghanistan, had arrived in the UK under tragic family circumstances and had spent many of the past nine years here battling depression and missing years of learning English. But she held a future in mind:

I have a healthy problem. If I'm good I like to work because communication with the people. I want to study midwife/childminder course. It's very better for me because I understand.

(Abiba, INTERVIEW [10], May 2013: lines 93–4)

Nadiya summed up this aspiration more determinedly:

I need to pass Entry 2 ... my dream to work – I need to do something for my two daughter – because my children go to university everything will be buy money. ... I need to do more for myself and my two daughters. I never take income support or something.

(lines 106–23)

From these interviews, I concluded that students did not value literacy as a passport to jobs as much as they valued literacy as the opportunity to be in education.

7.4 Digital practices and their impact on literacy studies

To prompt comments from my respondents about the digital information age, I used a sheet with pictures of various reading and writing activities, including digital tools and social networking (Appendix 4). I was keen to establish whether our students are missing out on computing, online and literacy activities because of difficulties communicating in English. In my Monday functional skills classes in Wallington in

2013, some students wanted to make more use of the PCs or laptops to get accustomed to them at their own pace. Centres like Wallington had been well equipped with computer classrooms for *Skills for Life* purposes (Figure 7.2), as well as general adult education.

Figure 7.2: Jane's computer literacy class, Sutton College, Wallington Centre, 2009



Note: Taken and included with students' and teachers' permission.

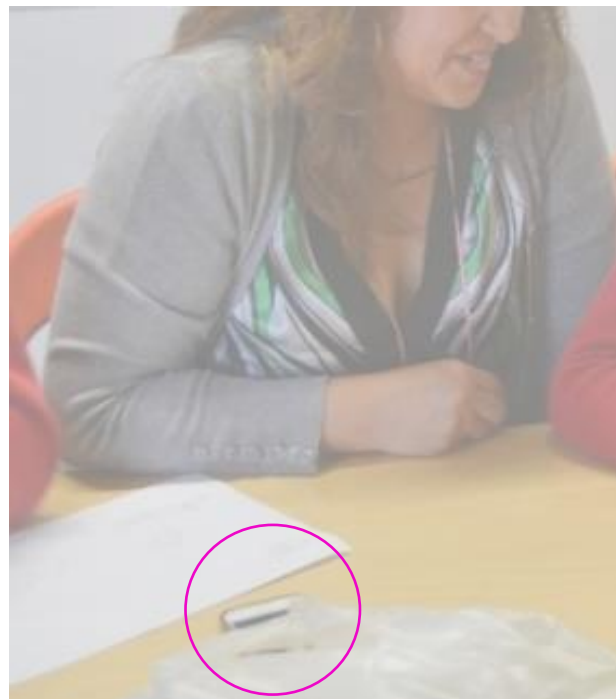
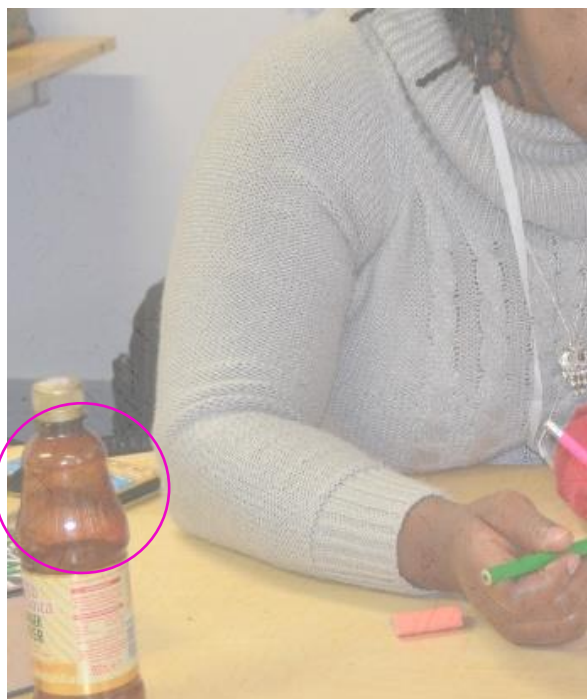
I was able to negotiate more use of a laptop bank at the time. However, a year later the same students would have become outpriced by the sharp increase in course fees. Age-related health difficulties, struggles with reading and limited budgets prevented or put them off attending classes. Yet one year later, working in a family learning class in school, I logged the following in an (unpublished) article I was writing:

At the school in Norbury, South London, the students don't often get a chance to use laptops or the computer suite as it involves quite a lot of extra input by the school on a day which is already pressurised for everyone. I have a flip chart and a plentiful supply of flip chart board markers. However all the learners have smartphones close at hand which they use as dictionaries, to share pictures and of course, in many cases, remain 'on call' through text or e mail outlets to the wider family, friends and other agencies. While adjusting the phone to silent mode is expected, parents nevertheless find it hard to switch off connections to the school office, child-minder etc.

(Freeman, November 2014)

The increase in digital communication among students (figures 7.3 and 7.4) I work with over the past three years (since the interviews were completed) has been phenomenal. In the academic year 2015–16, in a dyslexia support group in Croydon, students of all ages were using their smartphones to check spellings and send pieces of work to themselves so they could improve them in the support class. Students were showing each other how to use voice dictation during the class, both for Google and for sending texts or emails. As a tool, for some this was already equalling – if not surpassing – laptops, PCs and pen and paper.

Figures 7.3 and 7.4: Mobile phone close at hand, South London Primary School, 2014



Note: Taken and included with students' permission.

Back in 2013, in the Wednesday English class at the Wallington Centre where every student had a computer, things were much better for students in this respect. Some of them, like Patrick in his early fifties, found using the laptop cheaper than using the phone:

it used to be contract but I'd not paid the bill so they cut me off so I took out me sim card and put a pay as you go chip in it and don't use the internet on it no more. I just use it for making phone calls or receiving and sending text messages. I don't use it for anything else. Now I use my laptop for doing mostly everything I do – it's marvellous going on to Google.

Patrick & Terry, INTERVIEW [10], June 2013, line 279; see Figure 7.5)

Figure 7.5: Patrick explaining his mobile phone contract to Terry and I, June 2013



Note: Taken and included with students' permission.

Gillian, from the same class, was eager to read more and said she would love to learn more about using computers because: 'I want to do it really properly. I can look up the books and read books'.

On the other hand, Karen, who was around 30 years old, applied herself confidently to computers. She explained about internet grocery orders and the various social networking sites she used, including Facebook, YouTube and Wham, and how she kept up with family in Wales (lines 154–207). In class, she did not consider writing a letter on a computer any more challenging than writing by hand.

It was the same for Jade, studying English and catering in Brass Tacks, who used her phone for emails, texts, Facebook and spelling on Google. Encouraged by her English teacher, Erica, she usually recorded her classes on Microsoft Dictate (lines 81–123).

Her classmate Mubin, an 18-year-old recent school leaver, was used to doing his catering assignments on dedicated websites and using automatic spelling corrections on his phone. He used the laptop all the time, and had also found a digital solution to reading the Quran:

My parents went to Saudi Arabia and they helped me like do the Quran. You have a pen and you go along and it reads it out for you as well – it helps you to say it properly and pronounce.

(Mubin, INTERVIEW [2], April 2013: lines 33–47, 94–8, 140–4)

7.5 Multi-ethnic society and superdiversity

The concept of superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007:1024) was introduced in Chapter 4. I have also described the ethnic mix in classes and one-to-one volunteer scheme placements. Classes in these areas of London are not dominated by one ethnic or national group, and 1st- and 2nd-language students from very different backgrounds happily took to the multinational populating of English classes.

An Eritrean family such as Nadiya's, and Ghanaian Grace's single-parent family, had begun to absorb many secular routines into their family lives; but households like Samira's, Mubin's and Abiba's still juxtaposed traditional Bangladeshi and Afghani traditions with British lifestyles outside of the home, prioritising education for the children and the children's parents.

In Farida's living room in Tooting, where she and her sister-in-law had one-to-one English classes, extended family life was in continual motion. The room was a nexus, so to speak, in which focal points shared with both family and visitors to the house took place. In the introduction to Farida's interview, I recorded: 'Farida on floor, Geraldine and I on floor cushions. Child on Farida's knees is sleeping or feeding' (Farida, INTERVIEW [26], September 2013: lines i–ii). In my blog, written on the same day as the interview, I wrote:

All arrangements were made through the husband. My appointment was 1pm fixed by Geraldine, the volunteer English teacher and while she thought I had a window of time through to quarter past she wasn't so sure when I missed train connections. I had to make it by taxi.

The reason the Afghan family is so busy is around education. Fathers come and go but four primary school children have to be taken and fetched each day and three toddlers/babies are also being cared for. Everyone lives on the first floor of a smallish house in Tooting. Shoes off on the stairs. The upstairs living room is furnished with cushions on the floor, Middle Eastern style – all red, Persian design covers and a Smart TV. Everything was clean tidy and comfortable. There were no signs of reading matter.

After the interview we talked about the school hours and the ages of the children. Farida mentioned that when they returned from school they had to eat quickly and then all the school age children went to the Tooting madrasah to learn the Quran. They will do this 5 days a week until the age of 12 or younger. One of the children already has to fit in after school clubs as well.

(29 September 2013)

Patrick at the Wallington Centre was emphatic that the mixed ESOL and 1st-language students' class was viable and agreeable: 'Every person has got their

ability in doing something in their way and that is what I love about it all ... there's not one individual that you know, that is above anyone else'.

As a reflection of the same research question about global influences on students, I think the classes with mixed ESOL and 1st-language students demonstrate a peaceful example of how students view the multinational makeup of their classes as unremarkable, and a powerful example of a superdiverse society. The culture at home may be different to this country, but household routines revolve around education for mothers and children.

7.6 Feelings of vulnerability and being 'left behind'

In introducing the 'tension triangle' (Appendix 1), Illeris (2002) describes human learning as governed by two integrated processes: interaction and internalisation. For each student, 'how the emotional dimension functions' (Illeris, 2002:20) is of decisive importance. Most adults bring memories of previous learning experiences, but when the learning environment is different from previous circumstances they are required to engage 'accommodation' (30). In a postmodern world that is constantly changing and unconnected, 'the self is correspondingly fragmented, unstable and enquiring and always on the move, marked by the overflow of influences and apparent opportunities for choice' (112); 'So it is important to keep abreast of things and develop openness and vulnerability' (113). Illeris describes vulnerability as a way forward in society – but he also perceives this as holding risks, which can be addressed through choosing from learning opportunities in the society in which the learner is involved; hence, there is a need for participatory systems. Illeris suggests that, as we are social beings, we cannot develop and fulfil our potentials without others and we continually call upon a social perspective (225). The proliferation of

choices is typical of market societies, and as adults mature they develop greater and greater responsibility for their own learning journeys.

I have summarised Illeris's ideas to introduce the data I have chosen for a section on vulnerability. The word 'vulnerability' itself holds different connotations in my world of education theory, where it is often used to describe individuals who are educationally disadvantaged. I prefer Illeris's description of vulnerability; that is, learners' openness to adapt in order to assimilate new learning. Taking Illeris's points in turn, many students I have taught and interviewed previously had an impoverished experience of education, had been damaged by early socialisation experiences or had bad memories of earlier education. However, nearly all of them had positive experiences of returning to studies. I can attest to this from evaluation comments on my classes over the years, and I know many of my adult education colleagues have also witnessed these positive experiences.

From the interviewees specifically, I heard many negative experiences of childhood and adult education, but the majority of people reporting such experiences were now motivated and fully enjoying their studies:

Deep down inside I've always know I was never no good, not compared to other people. Like my brothers and sisters they can read perfectly ... I just didn't have it in me to learn.

(Patrick, lines 74–8)

If I went to a job and I had to fill a form out I used to get scared because I couldn't spell the words.

(Terry, line 90–1)

My life was like behind a glass – if that makes sense. I could talk to you but I'd be paranoid in case you find something out.

(Ray, line 15–17)

That's what happened to me. After elementary two, three – I didn't go back. I lost my father and mother. Poor family – no house. I was living with someone else. I managed to get a place to stay. Everybody have story but sometime you try to endure it but sometimes say to make you feel a bit better.

(Esther, line 32)

Well there was I was the first to my mum from a different father. My mum got married and got six and my father was not there to help me so I found it very difficult.

(Dorette, lines 135–7)

I never went to school in my life.

(Grace, line 12)

I did write – I did go to an evening class once. But that was bit difficult. I tried to write about the stables and how to look after a horse. They thought I couldn't do the lesson and I had to go into another backward class. And I gave up. It was too easy ... too easy.

(Gillian, lines 68 –9)

Before I make myself very down, oh my god I'm a very uneducated person. How me going to work with people think me very useless person.

(Najma, 108–9)

I've been in hospital 10 years. I didn't finish school so that's why I went to college for City & Guilds ... but then I fell sick and I'm just getting better now. I've come out. I decided to further my education. I was still in hospital when I was furthering on. I'm out now. [*Upbeat*]

(Sandra, INTERVIEW [15], June 2013: lines 9–29)

The majority of students described a sense of low self-esteem, but in the same interviews they were mostly pleased with their progress in literacy or ESOL classes, with one exception: Abiba (the midwife) was possibly having great difficulty in benefiting from a new learning situation. For someone who had studied at a high level in Afghanistan, and who could take quite detailed notes in her own script on her

worksheet, it seemed that her ability to learn must have stood still for a long time after the traumatic events that drove her out of her country:

I learning one year. After then I have lot of depression and I taking the medicine three years because I didn't sleep. I always crying. When I studied I cried. I can't understand ... miss the study, miss the study. Because I forgot a lot of words.

(lines 32–45)

Out of 22 students, many of them at entry level, Abiba was the only one whose ability to assimilate learning seemed blocked or stalled.

7.7 Support from family and friends

Another important finding from the interviews, and an important one to bear in mind when considering how students rate their learning in literacy classes, is that the majority had significant others who could support them. Ray, Gyaana, Patrick, Terry, Esther and Farida were evidently fully supported by spouses or partners. Najma and Abiba both indicated that the whole family would support them when needed. Elwin was in regular contact with his parents in Jamaica and his brother in London. Karen had a strong network of supporters in her family, the school and social workers. Gillian relied on friends, and Jade had best friends who were in communication with her via email through the day. Sandra had a key worker to advise her. Nadiya and Komala (Komala INTERVIEW [7]: lines 40–8, 103–5, 133) mentioned the support their children gave them in detail.

Nadiya (line 54) and Terry (lines 36–46) cited commitments to family and marriage as stopping them from studying for a long period. Family also had a strong bearing on interviewees' interests, such as Gillian's love of cricket from past years:

I might read the Indian newspaper. [*Exclamation of surprise on my part, as Gillian doesn't have Indian family connections.*] The India Sunday one in English. It's about cricket. My aunt loved to watch the Kent cricket team.

(lines 179–89)

7.8 Enjoyment factors in literacy classes

Recalling Illeris's (2002) description of the necessity of participating in a social dimension of learning, I wanted to evaluate my interviewees' experiences of the classes in which they had learnt literacy. Without exception, they were positive and mostly excited about what they were learning:

I like the class because a lot of people speaking different. I get from my teacher a lot of information. I don't know how to read this one and I ask her and I do it and I do it... everyone is helpful here.

(Nadiya in Blackfriars, lines 85–92, 144)

I like studying with this class – it's very good. I like this class ... I want to read together.

(Abiba in Blackfriars, line 170)

For Gyaana (line 72), it took time to settle down: 'After five years, I didn't feel I'm the oldest one and I'm just like them and we're working as a team. And then I started enjoying myself.'

At Brass Tacks, Elwin enjoyed support of the teacher and other students (line 47), and school leaver Mubin (lines 69–70) found the adult education class good: 'They're friendly, they're easy to get along with'. Regarding previous classes attended, Najma (line 55) said:

The Merton (referring to the adult education provision) are very difficult to get to places. However I got on with the second class. Communicating with other people is like little bit like fun as well.

7.9 The role of the teacher in classes

For students of ESOL and literacy, teachers played a very important part in enabling learning:

Teachers who stay patient help so much.

(Karen, lines 60–6)

They are important because they always correct you.

(Jade, line 57)

For adults, factors such as unresponsive teachers are significant and may result in the class becoming defensive and turned in upon itself. Ray recalled a teacher who:

weren't listening or taking any prisoners if that makes sense to you. She had this set agenda and she was moving through it as if you were there or you weren't there ... I was going 'Hang on a minute, there's this guy here...' I understood because I'd been going a few years. And this young Jamaican kid kept saying 'What did she say Ray?' and I said 'Can you say that again?' and she said 'He should have been listening'. 'He's severely dyslexic' I said ... [We were missing] support, understanding and caring.

(Ray, lines 42–56)

This theme is about the interaction among members of the class. A valuable literacy class is one where members work well together. The idea of an adult education class as a valid community of practice is one where all members respect one another.

7.10 Students' wider aspirations

My main research question is: 'What do adult students in England value in particular about adult literacy learning?' The themes I have looked at so far reveal that students in ESOL and literacy (including mixed 1st- and 2nd-language-English groups) particularly value learning English as a craft, with reading and spelling being strong favourites. Many enjoy the learning community and wanted to be able to participate more fully in society; for example, supporting their children, as in the

cases of Grace, Jasmine, Samira, Komala, Farida and Nadiya. Those asked said they were keen to continue to advance their studies where possible.

As I formed the framework for my questions (see Appendix 4), I deliberately started out with some broad questions about why people were studying literacy; but I also included a very general question near the end – ‘What do you hope to do with your literacy skills in the future?’ – to try again to clearly ascertain why my respondents were studying English. The responses were sometimes profound and mostly seemed sincere. I often found that students had not only a specific reason but also a vaguer, more whole-life-embracing reason.

For several interviewees, literacy and ESOL studies had become a way of life. For example, Terry mentioned starting evening classes soon after he left school, leaving when he got married and succeeding in getting a certificate in plastering, and now – years later – making the time to return, although he was convinced it was a slow process:

Don't think I'm confident enough to get qualifications. I don't think I could get it all in my head to get qualifications. Take bloody years wouldn't it?

(Terry, lines 245–6)

He more vaguely planned to get back to work and be able to ‘write estimates out’. He thought he would get a smartphone to help with spelling (‘eventually’). Very sadly, Terry died suddenly just a few months later.

Gyaana had been going to college for 23 years transitioning from ESOL to literacy after 15 years, filling the gap that her skilled lab work in the optical industry had occupied until she had to become her husband's carer.

Ray had learnt to read and write, and passed level-2 bus driver certificates, within eight years. However, he continued to study for five years to bring his literacy up to the standard required to follow a full-time plumbing course, which he found much more satisfying than bus driving.

Karen was registered disabled, as were most of her family. She had been to English classes since she left school to help her weak memory, and said:

it's nice to have the qualifications so I can help my kids in their education do their homework and read their reports from school on a daily basis.

(Karen, lines 68–75)

Darren also focused intensely on learning spelling and grammar correctly; he made it clear that he wanted to improve this more than he cared about his catering course, as he was not sure what he wanted to aim for in the future (line 112).

Work was the specific reason for a few interviewees – Patrick, Dorette and Esther – to come to class, but all three expressed strong emotions about learning English as a more general motivation:

Since I started I feel happy about it. I was happy when you told me about my handwriting ... happy that I can express myself more now.

(Dorette, lines 90, 108, 117)

I want to achieve something I haven't achieved all my life. When you meet who this is ... you say this is the person. She attend all of us. I tell you now

and I am unhappy for me losing her is affecting me in my stomach. [*Close to tears*]

(Esther, on hearing she is losing a teacher and the class time is changing, lines 42–4)

Students with health difficulties including Sandra, Najma, Karen and Abiba – not to mention others who were not explicit about their health needs in interviews – all suggested a greater sense of wellbeing while they were learning, which they were eager to retain. Ray and Farida wanted to be able to communicate more confidently with others, such as friends and people in the locality.

Many of the parents, such as Samira, Grace, Najma, Komala, Nadiya and Parmita (Parmita 02.05.2013, INTERVIEW [9], June 2013: lines 22–5), had a work goal in mind – typically childcare, which would undoubtedly make an important contribution to their family income. However, in every case they seem reconciled to several years of studying English. At the time, some were not too concerned that they might not be able to get onto, or afford, further courses.

It appeared that the majority of students in literacy classes are not there only to gain qualifications. There have always been situated purposes, such as those of a student I shall call Aleysha, who told me in 2015:

I'm just here to help my kids, write a letter and do all that sort of stuff. It's just for now and later I will do a bit of dressmaking and later retire, or go for a long time relaxing to be in the fresh air and a little sunshine.

(Research journal, 15 June 2015)

There is emotional repair:

Coming here I've noticed in a lot of things you said we remember the past, future and present – coming out with good words and ways to phrase it right

... instead of so bad it was like 'is she going to hit me? Why is she just shouting at me like that'? And now I'm so calm.

(Karen, lines 104–9)

There is also growing conviction they can achieve more in their lives, like Sandra, who said what she most valued was:

That I'm learning. Absorbing in my brain. I'm glad. To me it's a miracle. I didn't think I'd pick up so easily.

(Sandra, lines 171–2)

This and the previous theme suggest to me that the students I interviewed were satisfied in the notion of being learners, rather than perceiving learning as merely an obligation to obtain better work. They took pride in their progress, and their comments portray a sense of wellbeing.

7.11 How the system impacts on adult education

I was alert to comments from my interviewees about how cuts made by the Coalition government were affecting adult education classes. Personally, as an adult education worker, I have contained frustration and anger at times at new restrictions in the numbers of classes on offer and deteriorating pay conditions for classroom teachers. I have usually not been paid enough to afford to belong to unions, and have been more concerned with updating my professional skills. I had a Post Office worker student several years ago (not an interviewee in this study), who was a leading trade unionist in his local branch. He was the only student to vocally express an opinion that colleges were not sufficiently equipping learners to work with information technology, or providing assistive technology for those who needed it. As such, it should not really surprise me that I have not encountered more objective views about the rapid withdrawal of literacy and ESOL provision; as a rule, I did not

hear students articulate worries that classes would be cut, unless this would affect them directly.

Najma and Grace, both in temporary one-to-one teaching arrangements with volunteer teachers of English, told me they had applied for places in classes in local colleges only to find they were in very long waiting lists. Najma described the wait:

Every time I ask them you know I am waiting for I want to do – they tell me ‘yes’ they’ll send an email for me ... you need to wait because about 600 people in the waiting. You need to wait your time ... I been waiting. For an interview. Very long time to wait, nearly one years I waiting for the appointment ... the moment I more quickly learning I can get better ... It’s so hard to get to college now.

(Najma, lines 176–221)

Grace found provision was closing down:

Sarah: Have you tried to go to another college in this area?

Grace: Oh yes! I did. It was the adult college where I live but now the government have closed it down. That time that lady was helpful but then they closed it down.

(Grace, lines 161–3)

In Blackfriars Centre and Streatham, there was awareness that staying on English courses hinged on also being available for Job Centre work placements:

Sarah: And do you want to use your English for work in the future?

Komala: Yes.

Sarah: What do you want to do?

Komala: I want to do childcare but I can’t because I don’t have any certificate skill.

Sarah: For the English or the childcare? Which one do you need – do you think?

Komala: That time the Job Centre really push me for work.

Sarah: Oh I see, OK. So you tell the Job Centre you are studying?

Komala: Yeah I tell all the time, but they said 'you find the job'.

(Komala, lines 72–85)

The urgent need to learn English has become a hallmark of the classes I teach. Darren moved from job to job, often returning to study linked to training for another job. These and other examples reflect my experience over the past 20 years of people coming to learn English while working, or to avoid working. It was usual for people to juggle their work situations with opportunities to get back into classes.

The most striking examples in my experience were in women and men's prisons, where I heard from students (both 1st- and 2nd-language English) about how pleased they were to be able to study in the prison education centres. One student expressed her resolution when she arrived in prison that she now had to learn. Another was not only working as a cleaner in the prison education centre but also attending as many classes as she could fit in. Her case had been sensitive; studying and catching up on education she had not been able to do before was her main compensation. Two men with limited English were still able to express satisfaction that they could go to English classes every morning in prison. When at home, they worked long shift hours and helped their wives to look after the family.

Many of the interviewees, as well as students I have encountered in my work elsewhere, echoed regrets regarding insufficient time to learn and courses being too short. This highlights a widespread frustration among those wanting to improve their communication skills, which I hope is strongly conveyed through this thesis.

7.12 Students' environments

This final section of data on students from the visits is included because of the noise and atmosphere picked up through both recordings and journal accounts. Pink (2009:2) has urged:

contemporary ethnographers of the senses to be more explicit about ways the ways of experiencing and knowing that become central to their ethnographies, to share with others the senses of place they felt as they sought to occupy similar places to those of their research participants.

My descriptions of the education centres and their surrounding environments attempt to convey busy, sometimes cramped spaces; public libraries, colleges and local high streets all buzzed with activity. The London sites were a range of different venues, all equally industrious. I recorded and transcribed the interruptions of colleagues and librarians, noises outside the buildings heard through windows and (in the cases of libraries and family homes) young children playing, crying and being supervised by adults. The sound of sirens through open or closed windows occurs again and again as background audio, conjuring a sense of a world in a constant state of crisis. Nevertheless, all respondents showed little concern at the level of noise, and were mainly intrigued and keen to continue the interviews.

Brigg & Bleiker (2010:797) assertion that an auto-ethnographic approach can be enhanced by 'different faculties, such as sensation and intuition' inspired me to include a sensory ethnographic section. I consider that the hubbub of activity in libraries, colleges and other public buildings, which is recorded and commented on in the data analysis, contributes to the overall conclusion that adult education in London and in a range of literacy classes has developed a culture of its own – one that attracts people from diverse cultures all over the world.

Teachers were asked about their teaching environment ('Is the environment you teach in conducive to learning?'), but did not consider the question especially interesting. Neither did students; they were asked: 'Do you prefer to study English on your own at home/at library or in a learning centre?', but this did not elicit many comments on the physical space. Komala and Samira at Blackfriars admitted they preferred this very cramped accommodation to the previous prefabs on stilts: 'this building the kitchen is big, other very small kitchen. Before not lift. And security is more here. More security' (Samira, line 235).

The description of sensory data is relevant because it indicates that students will come to class for as long as they possibly can, and education was close to the top of the list of interviewees' life goals. All students gave the impression that the most important thing was that the learning opportunity took place. Indeed, interviewees expressed their urge to learn in a particularly sensory way; their air of enthusiasm and industry came across to me in Blackfriars, the Brass Tacks Centre and Sutton College. This confirmed that students were motivated by something other than a need to obtain qualifications.

At a time when higher and secondary education institutions are building more extensions and marketing their facilities as much as their courses, it is marked that the adult education centres – whatever state they are in – are still drawing in people to study. Figure 7.6 shows a series of timber hoardings around a new build for London University; this is in stark contrast to the unadorned front of Brass Tacks

Centre (see Figure 3.6). Learning may not be as well-equipped or housed in adult education, but it is still powerfully attractive to those participating.

Figure 7.6: Timber hoardings around building developments on University of London campus with banners advertising 'state of the art' improvements, July 2015



As a teacher, I have a similar belief that where I teach does not matter. The venue could be a purpose-built college lecture room; a makeshift adult education centre from shops or housing; a hospital café area; a converted town hall; an empty school classroom; a children's centre playroom; a church hall, mosque or locked classroom in a prison education centre – all of these are typical adult education environments. As long as the group feels comfortable has a shared sense of interest, progress and achievement, there is little complaint about the venue.

My suggestion is that adult learners choose a mode of learning – through a college, centre or voluntary service – which signifies entering a 'learning market' (Usher and Edwards, 2007:46). This market is governed by the whims of policy makers; fees are

often high, assessment is rigorous and the choice of qualifications is limited by educators. Nevertheless, students continue to make choices from what is available for as long as they can, in many cases because the opportunity to have education is highly rated. Globally, with pressures on results in adult education worldwide, people of many nationalities are ambitious to get an education – often starting from scratch. Najma is very typical of this group; when asked if the certificates would help, she replied: ‘Yes they help in my future to get a job. Because I want to learn English as well to communicate as well to reading with my children you know. Because I never been to school’ (Najma, lines 16, 25).

Finally, the effect of gathering sensory data for this research has further endorsed my auto-ethnographic input and the contributions of that input to the findings. Thus, recalling Pink’s (2009:40) words, ‘the self emerges from processes of sensory learning, being shaped through a person’s engagement with the social, sensory and material environment of which she or he is a part’.

Chapter 8

Data from Interviews with Teachers and Findings

They were just hungry for learning – hungry for learning. And that was just brilliant. And also I could journey with them.

(Paula, *Skills for Life* trainer, August 2013)

8.1 Introduction

The interviews with teachers and coordinators were originally planned to obtain a different viewpoint on what literacy classes in 2013 signified to those involved. I believed at the outset of the fieldwork design that to offset my view and those views of the students I interviewed, I needed another dataset to validate the conclusions, which might be too student biased or – even more likely – too steeped in my own subjective standpoint. Inevitably, the questionnaire (Appendix 7) contained different questions from those put to students, which made the six interviews carried out very distinctive from the student sessions. As the project proceeded, it became clear that it would also be helpful to obtain other professional insights to complement the ethnographic account from my own teacher point of view, and also potentially elicit data that would enrich my understanding of literacy students' learning experiences. The staff interviewed and I were all teaching English as ESOL or literacy using the *Skills for Life* framework. They included:

- Jane, from Sutton College, Sutton, South London;
- Fiona, teaching a family learning class for MHTS, South London;
- Julia, teacher/coordinator for classes for MHTS, South London;
- Lucy, teacher/coordinator for MHTS, South London;
- Paula, *Skills for Life* trainer, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust;

- Leanne, key skills trainer/assessor, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust.

The questions I composed (Appendix 7) were designed to discover how great an impact the teachers considered they were making on students' lives. I knew the interviews would enhance my own input by widening the view of the specialist teaching area. They would also test my assumptions, which might well be driven by own longstanding liberal influences. I asked colleagues questions such as:

- Do you consider you have as much control in your promotion of literacy skills as you would like to have?
- [If 'yes'] What enables this? [If 'no'] What prevents this?
- Do you consider that anything important is missing from the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum or from the Function Skills (FS) English standards?
- Do you consider that your learners achieve informal learning in your classes? If so, what do you think they take away from the class, apart from learning for the FS exams?

In the teachers' responses, I recognised similarities between their commitment to teaching and my own; for example, 'I think that when people are nurtured by a conversation or regular contact they can be empowered to do all kinds of things' (Lucy, int.25: line 454). Three of the teacher interviewees were already known to me, but I was meeting the other three for the first time. Jane, a long-term colleague at Sutton College, was teaching literacy and computer literacy at all levels, as well as providing specialist classes for people with long-term mental health difficulties.

Fiona, Julia and Lucy, experienced English language teachers, were all (and still are)

working for MHTS, an independent volunteer scheme in Merton. This has grown rapidly, and initiated 'stepping stones' classes to meet an overwhelming ESOL need, for which the colleges could no longer raise much funding. Paula and Leanne worked for a very large NHS trust, which has large vocational training centres on different sites. Their interviews in Birmingham were away from the main geographical area of the studies in South London, which was another considered departure, intended to enable comparison of provision and teacher attitudes between the two cities.

I met Jane in the middle of a study/exhibition space in Sutton's main library; I met Fiona and Julia, on separate occasions, in Wimbledon Library among the bookshelves – another very busy space in the daytime. Lucy was interviewed in a tiny office space in the Wimbledon Guild (see Figure 3.7), Leanne in the classroom of the hospital learning centre in West Birmingham and Paula in her office space on another hospital site in Birmingham.

The majority of the questions were deliberately quite personal, regarding the respondents' literacy teaching careers, the kind of teaching they favoured, their views on teaching priorities for students' needs and changes they had witnessed in adult education. There were two reasons for the personal nature of these questions: to reflect my own auto-ethnographic style in contributing my first-hand experiences from adult literacy, and to provide a discussion area that they would be confident in talking about.

Aspects of teaching that particularly stood out from the interviews were:

- teachers' awareness of the importance of networking;
- the increase in students' motivation;
- the enjoyment of both students and teachers;
- teaching in what was perceived to be a period of extreme change;
- a belief that literacy is not prioritised enough;
- a belief that the restrictions in place are detrimental to progress.

Overall, there was a clear awareness among all the teachers I interviewed that the literacy adult education classes had wider benefits for students' lives apart from gaining a certificate. Such benefits were a result of the subject dovetailing into every other skill, basic skills or vocational skills that students practised, and included enhancement of the other everyday services and daily routines that students were involved in. For example, in linking literacy to other studies and skills, Jane said:

I think I have a much more joined up view. I think I came to teaching purely as an 'adult literacy' tutor ... but now I think there is much more interaction between literacy and ICT. And of course we need to embed numeracy as well.

(Jane INTERVIEW [20] August 2013: lines 53–7)

Providing classes for adults who need to improve their English language skills forms an important part of a network of people services. Based on her knowledge as coordinator, Lucy indicated that MHTS (established in 2010) is linked to several organisations in the area, including Merton Refugee Network; local care organisations; Merton Education Department; children's centres, mental health charities and many other colleges. The service, in action in 2013, therefore not only fitted into a jigsaw of support services but also played a significant part in the progress of any individual's adult learning journey:

We can find out by getting to know and teaching someone for six months where the best place is for them.

(Lucy INTERVIEW [25] 05.12.2013: lines 51–3)

Teachers in Birmingham were also aware of ways in which the classes created dynamic parts of overall working lives and experiences:

I think you get a little bit out of just networking as well from a vocational point of view.

(Leanne Jones INTERVIEW [18] 01.08.2013, lines 197–9)

Leanne also described a change in the disposition of students attending the learning centre due to what she perceived as better training providers:

We used to have all sorts of disaffected people who didn't really want to be there – it's not like that now – they just knuckle under and get on with it... I'm quite thankful for that.

Jane echoed this in South London:

they're much more willing to talk about what they will get out of the course and what they need to put into the course.

(Jane, 108–9)

Remarking on how much more familiar students might become with people and services in wider networks through their literacy classes, teachers were also acutely aware of how new confidence in their ability would heighten students' expectations of managing the rest of their lives. Most of the teachers commented, often with some pride, on students achievements that weren't strictly syllabus-relate:

Being able to say 'here's how you join the library' ... is important. You are giving people the literacy skills so they can go off and make their choice. I feel that I have to stand back and let people make their choice.

(Jane, lines 288–90)

Fiona, running a family ESOL class in a Mitcham primary school, was doubtful about how quickly students could learn but still encouraged them to do extra practice that was relevant to their own lives:

I've been encouraging them to write a diary and to my great joy one of them did last week and produced it.

(Fiona INTERVIEW [19], lines 231–2)

The process of community learning was important to Paula, whose responses focused closely on the development of the whole group. She had been able to run literacy and ESOL classes across the levels, until very recently when she had been re-scheduled to run fast-track functional skills classes:

I could journey with them. So they started with me and then they went on to vocation – I was working predominantly with people who were mature. They were coming on courses because they want to come on courses ... We do life together, not just literacy.

(Paula, lines 94–6, 99–100, 200)

Confidence-building was a clear theme in most teachers' accounts of their input into classes. This is perhaps unsurprising, as all were longstanding teachers who had taught either English or other vocational or life skills subjects over two or more decades. Both ESOL and literacy teachers, though inadequately paid, often extend their loyalty to the service over many years. This indicates that successfully helping people to move onto something they dreamed of is a pull that keeps us going. However, the call for teachers with integrity who can share a vision for their students is no longer as significant. Until recently, professional standards for teachers in lifelong learning were detailed, and exhorted 'recognising, valuing and responding to individual motivation, experience and aspirations' (Lifelong Learning UK, 2007). In contrast, the Education and Training Foundation's (2014) Professional Standards for

England are much brisker, paying greater attention to effective teaching and management.

Admiring and sensitive remarks were made about achievement against the odds; for example:

Students said there's no way I could complete a portfolio etc. When they actually did it they found out they *could* do something they thought they would never be able to do and the satisfaction of having a nationally recognised certificate and being able to say 'I did that' was immensely uplifting. That was a bonus. Very often it was for the first time in their lives. It was huge.

(Jane, lines 152–6)

I consistently raised the question of what kind of digital tools and programs the students were using, but none of the teachers considered these to be a particularly big player for the students. Both Jane and Leanne had work experience in technology: Jane had an IT background, and Leanne had been an IT teacher for a considerable part of her career. Jane seemed to suggest that enough had been done here, and it was time to look at numeracy instead:

Now I think IT reinforces literacy skills but now I think there is much more interaction between literacy and ICT. And of course we need to embed numeracy as well.

(Jane, lines 64–5)

Leanne, who worked with NHS employees, said: 'generally because all the people are employed here they do have a certain level of [IT] skills' (Leanne, lines 250–1) – although she also explained she was encouraging students to use YouTube as a resource for maths when they couldn't grasp a particular concept (line 246).

Yet the use of a PC or mobile phone was not considered important. With Lucy, Julia and Fiona, the questions about digital activities were not discussed for long; I got the

sense that they considered computers useful tools but too expensive for the majority of students to have at home, and not a vital part of teaching or one-to-one home tutoring.

It is hard for anyone who has lived through the past 25 years to be able to look objectively at the revolution that digital technology has brought, as it has become ubiquitous in our everyday lives; for that reason, I am not surprised that literacy teachers are neither actively engaged in nor enthusiastic about it. But as I described earlier (section 7.4), in one of my classes in 2014, the importance of handheld technology in particular hit home to me. I noticed how key the phone was in mapping out students' lives:

Above all the women consider how to manage their time. Employed or unemployed there are numerous weekly appointments and arrangements to follow up. And there is also an element of independence which younger women expect to have. I can only marvel at the multi-tasking of women and the ability they have in the age of many options to select and jigsaw together the ones that will work for them. These are no longer years of dependence on parents and spouses – independence, once the confidence has arrived, has become the more likely default position.

(Research Journal, 2014)

Students with vocational goals and organising capacity were bringing changes into the literacy classroom.

Lastly, from the point of view of broadening students' understanding of British culture and making them more critical in their encounters with literacies, I met disappointment and resignation to the accreditation-driven and fast-track nature of the programmes still running. Those I spoke to had been aware of changes happening in ESOL and basic skills provision for several years. Jane and the Birmingham teachers were apprehensive about how much longer they would be able

to provide added extras that contextualised learning within students' lives. Julia and Fiona had withdrawn from roles in local colleges due to managerial pressure:

It really got to me in the end. I don't blame the organisers but they were much more interested in you having the right pieces of paper and passing the exams of course than if your students were really developing. That's frustrating because you're in a straitjacket.

(Fiona, lines 6–63)

Teachers also shared a view that they were teaching a subject considered unimportant in the bigger scheme of things, as if literacy was dispensable:

If you can't do it I do work with them to get them through but I don't know how long I will be allowed to do that. I think at some point they might say 'right three tests and you're out', which is a shame really but unfortunately anybody higher than me isn't anything to do with education. And it's all about number crunching and it's all about money.

(Leanne, lines 306–20)

8.2 Findings

In this ethnographic study, which has been so finely tuned to my own accounts of working in adult and FE settings, it might be argued that my teachers' questionnaire was designed to draw out views from colleagues that had an affinity with my own. The teachers' accounts suggest that those of us who have been working in the ESOL and adult literacy field for some time develop a powerful commitment to their work, and – like me – were anxious about the cutbacks and accreditation-results-only funding schemes that meant teaching was to lose many of its extra-curricular qualities.

As such, and on the basis that my respondents were speaking from their own genuine professional experience, I would point to the following findings:

- A potentially distinct culture of adult learning among basic skills and ESOL students, already suggested in the findings from the students' responses, was also hinted at by the teachers.
- Professionals were aware of the erosion on classes and prohibitive costs for students due to the cutbacks that are affecting adult education, but were unable to resist the changes in their own areas.
- Teachers were distinctly aware and appreciative of the role that learning basic skills plays in the overall context of a person's domestic and civic life, enhancing their understanding of the networks of support available to them as well as providing stepping stones to other courses and jobs.
- While IT has traditionally been taught on basic skills programmes, digital technology has played a subtle background part outside the centres in enabling and inspiring adults to come forward and progress their education. This was not remarked on by the teachers interviewed.
- There was little sense of difference between what was happening to provision in South London compared to Birmingham. The teachers in both parts of the country seemed equally committed and ready to adapt what they taught to keep classes open and productive for their students. The interview venues in Birmingham were much quieter than those in London; however, this was also helped by the interviews taking place in late afternoon.

The teachers and organisers I spoke to were all experienced and dedicated in the fields of literacy and ESOL. Jane, Leanne and Paula in particular described stimulating, confidence-building and positive education experiences in their literacy classes, which they recognised were coming to an end because of the restrictions on who comes to class due to funding cuts. Teachers recalled a has-been culture of adult education that provided not only preparation for work, promotions in work and qualifications but also a place of fulfilment; of becoming an adequately educated member of society.

8.3 Overall findings from the data

Due to my auto-ethnographic approach it is inevitable that, when talking about findings, I will refer to not only the data collected but also my own experiences. I have gone through six years of unexpected and constant change in my professional life, driven by the endless impacts of austerity in public services, cutbacks and reshaping of adult education provision. I cannot emphasise enough how threatened our departments already felt in 2013, when I was doing the interviews – and when the erosion of adult education provision was gaining speed. By 2015, *The Guardian* was reporting that 190,000 places were to be lost from adult education in the coming year – a further reduction to the adult skills budget, which had already suffered a 40% cut (Okolosie, 2015). In the same year Alison Wolf, in her report *Heading for the Precipice* (2015), drew attention to the destruction caused by the withdrawal of funds from FE and adult education:

It is hard to find a single central government budget, and impossible to find another part of the education budget, that has been subject, in this period, to as much deliberate reordering and as many centrally directed changes in exactly how money is spent.

(Wolf, 2015:18)

It is not my intention to pick apart the political reasons for that drastic change in adult basic skills provision, nor to analyse the consequences for what is provided based on the sole 'outcomes-based funding' imposed, '(i.e. payment by results), with payments from government being made largely and increasingly on the basis of each individual qualification that someone achieved' (Wolf, 2015:19). However, the insecurity injected into tutors' and students' educational opportunities and its effects on students' lives were already significant when I was interviewing. As Hamilton and Hillier (2005) said, this area of education had already reflected 'deep shifts' in policy. The period leading up to, during and following the interviews was a time of energy and enthusiasm that students of English were bringing to their studies, alongside the anxiety felt about the cuts.

While the aforementioned tight and reductionist strategies instigated a period of deep and rapid change, in 2013 (as my results show) a body of literacy and ESOL students continued to meet the challenge of improving their communication skills whenever they could. Those students, like my interviewees, were accustomed to adapting to new circumstances and exploring new cultures, such as those offered by adult education. New work opportunities and the chance to develop a new national identity in England and do well by their children had become priorities.

The themes through which I organised my data seemed the best way to encapsulate interviewees' comments, and to contribute to a new and different way of seeing provision of English studies. The feedback on learning from students from different age groups and work, family and ethnic backgrounds suggested that their college life was important to them because it enriched their present life circumstances, giving

them a sense of belonging and progressing. Despite very different home cultures, they jointly subscribed to another aspect of English.

I would suggest that it is the existence of lifelong learning, the force of circumstances in UK society in crisis and the amount of effort put into conforming to what society has to offer, that makes belonging to and thriving in an adult education class currently hold great potential for members of contemporary society.

Furthermore, educational experiences were naturally integrated into students' everyday lives, whether supporting their children and/or partners or being supported by them. Students were applying everyday interactions with others through communicating via (for example) Facebook, email, their phones and computers.

The majority also saw a period of missing out on education in their lives, or struggling and not getting help when they were younger. For that reason, I would suggest that the data presented in this study indicates that social interaction and everyday experiences play a key role in consolidating students' learning experiences, as well as their strong sense of motivation, emotional readiness to learn and awareness of their past learning paths. This confirms the logic of the Illeris tension triangle (Appendix 1); that is, when the social, cognitive and psychodynamic factors are in balance, the student is able to apply themselves.

The superdiversity emerging from mixed cultural groups and a period of exceptional global mobility finds a positive growth point in the literacy class:

Every person has got their ability in doing something in their way ... Because there's not one individual that you know, that is above anyone else.

(Patrick [14]: lines 329–31)

What has been most significant for me in collecting and analysing the findings from students has been confirmation that they value their adult education experience as more than just a stepping stone to a qualification. This covers both those learning English as a second language and native speakers improving their English skills; and it covers both their time in class (as Patrick testified above) and their overall experience of studying. Nadiya enthused:

Everything is good. The service in here. Everyone understands you [students in general] and the manager. I like them all.

(Nadiya [8]: lines 87–8)

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Overview

This chapter will suggest how my interpretation of my dataset has drawn out a fresh view to add to current understandings of the purposes of adult literacy provision. This concluding view has been facilitated by methodological uses of the self to open up new perspectives (Brigg and Bleiker, 2010:779), drawing on my own experiences as a practitioner to further inform the sociological viewpoint. I call this auto-ethnographic content, and have used it as a cohesive technique for enabling the fieldwork.

To draw conclusions from the findings, auto-ethnographic input, fundamental knowledge about lifelong learning from the literature and emerging ideas about global cultures, it is first necessary to embed the events of the period covering the research into the final commentary. Thus, in the process of rounding off the thesis, I will draw in the contemporary education context and relevant observations informed by my understanding of the literature on social practices and learning theory. In a very few places in the conclusion, further dataset is used to accentuate the message conveyed through the interviews.

The three research questions themselves – ‘What do some adult students in England value in particular about adult literacy learning?’; ‘To what extent may their experience be shaped by their educators and government directives?’; ‘Alongside the everyday interconnections between classroom and everyday life, how much do global cultural practices impact on how adult literacy students interact with their

learning?’ – will be linked to some significant areas of findings. The research questions have served the research well in moving from students’ specific and personal viewpoints, through the dominant (yet vague) policy paths of provision for adult literacy, to the global communication revolution. However, in reporting the findings (sections 9.3–9.6), I merge the responses to these research questions with new areas of exploration. I have identified the following areas as powerful influences in contemporary students’ learning journeys:

- a culture of achievement;
- a culture of education;
- superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007:1024).

First, though, the following section briefly reflects on the adaptation and development of the overall message of the research during the course of this doctoral report.

9.2 Path of the doctoral report

Before I started work on this thesis, I considered exploring whether the curriculum is fit for purpose. This became an anachronism. The remaining questions were designed to draw out narratives of personal experiences and reactions to English classes in the interviews. These, in turn, became embedded into an ethnographic account that enabled my accounts of changes in literacy classes since 2010 to also feature. When I considered ensuring that life histories were incorporated in the interview materials, I thought snapshots of life stories would be the best framework for my findings. However, I came to realise that finding out about the busy lives people currently lead would be sufficient for understanding their views on literacy. It would be more appropriate to describe the feedback I obtained on classes as ‘life-

course history'; this is a method Biesta et al. (2011:10) favoured because 'it is the way in which people understand and articulate their present situation'. I noticed, for example, changes in how adults talked about their learning experiences. These will be discussed in section 9.5.

An objection that might be made about my choice of places in which to conduct the research is that it was geographically too wide (see Figure 3.3). However, I did not hesitate when choosing several different education facilities, as I knew that all the students I interviewed – with different cultural origins, ages and educational and employment backgrounds – were unified by their desire to learn English.

In this conclusion, as already mentioned (section 9.1), I will frame results within the three very significant issues – a culture of achievement, a culture of education and superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007:1024) – all of which I identified as powerful influences in students' learning journeys. I will consider the future of the literacy class as a community of practice, in its sense of a group of people with common aims. These will be discussed in the context of concurrent policy, and bearing in mind views on the philosophy of education. Finally, I will propose findings that bring something new to our understanding of adult students at this point in the history of English adult education, and suggest how these could improve adult literacy provision.

9.3 Adult education in the UK after the period of research

This section relates to the second research question: 'To what extent may their [students'] experience be shaped by their educators and government directives?'

In the past six years, government-sponsored adult education provision in England has been methodically drained of resources. This has been a corollary of austerity measures; characteristically, it has not been articulated, and its consequences have therefore shocked students and professionals. Some of the students in this study, and most of the teachers, expressed concern and sadness about what was happening in 2013 – let alone at the time of writing (the end of 2016).

As in other public services, the NHS being the most notable example, the process has been disguised by the imposition of target-driven funding. In the case of adult literacy and numeracy in particular, the funding derived from accreditation has, in short timescales, significantly constrained administration of English and maths programmes. I have described how colleges and centres I worked in were all cutting back on entry-level classes. Likewise, ESOL provision has entered a period of deep crisis; funding has been cut by 55% over 7 years (Refugee Action, 2016).

My findings have provoked me to draw attention to an obvious encroachment on individuals' right to elementary education (United Nations General Assembly, 1948:26). As McNiff and Whitehead (2002:16) comment: 'Educational research ... involves issues of politics, because it is always socially embedded; it is done by real people with the intent of illuminating, explaining and improving human interaction in education settings'. This critical message has emerged from my role as correspondent on the ground.

This rapidly changing scene in the context of English adult basic skills has been highly influential in processing the research. I initially set out in 2011 to question

whether the *Skills for Life* curriculum for adult literacy was a relevant and adequate tool for adult learners, but it turned out that the open questions and responses were actually skewed much more towards the lack of classes or new conditions set on provision in 2013. In the 2001 *National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills* (DfES, 2001b), David Blunkett commented on the large number of adults with inadequate basic skills: 'This is a silent scandal and a huge waste of talent and potential. It is a national disgrace' (4). The very well-resourced programme *Skills for Life* was then put in place to try to address this situation. A dismantling followed this construction of extensive provision for adults; this dismantling has accelerated since this research was undertaken in 2013.

Within 15 years, the resources now depleted, David Cameron was calling for a new English language scheme that targeted specific communities where 'tens of thousands of Muslim women speak little or no English'. In an article in *The Guardian*(2016) entitled 'Muslim women to be taught English in £20m plan to beat "backward" attitudes' he outlined what he regarded to be a threat from an ethnic group that prevented women from learning due to 'prejudice and bigotry'. I have mentioned this in the study; I repeat it here because I have been teaching in areas in South London and Surrey where Muslim women, alongside women of other ethnic backgrounds, are eager to continue to learn. The obstacles that remain are the cuts to classes and community provision.

9.4 A culture of achievement

This section relates to the first research question: 'What do some adult students in England value in particular about adult literacy learning?'

Students in the study were excited, pleased and proud of what they had gained from their studies. However, this was rarely because they had a string of awards.

Reasons for a sense of achievement included being able to manage their domestic paperwork; cope with personal health problems, such as pain or mental health difficulties; fill in a form while with a group of friends; support their children, participate in family computer games and undertake many other everyday activities.

Terry said: 'I never read a book before I came to your college', and Patrick: 'I'm over the moon with what I've learnt over the past 2 years and I've got better with it'. Those in both classes and one-to-one supported situations, whatever their pace of progress, expressed satisfaction.

Nurturing an achieving lifelong learning society was a repeated theme among educationists in the 1990s, with the belief that 'drawing a much larger section of society into education will create a "self-perpetuating learning society" which is required to sustain economic success and social cohesion through a period of unprecedented change' (Ranson & Stewart, 1998:124). Helena Kennedy (1997) advocated the 'self-perpetuating learning society' in the report *Learning Works*, which had a positive effect on changes in FE. Kennedy indicated the growing gulf in society between the very rich and those who had no job security: 'Those who are disadvantaged educationally are also disadvantaged economically and socially... national leadership is required to place learning at the heart of our national common purpose' (Ranson & Stewart, 1998:163).

With the *Skills for Life Core Curriculum* (DfEE, 2001) in place, this appeared likely to happen. What was not predicted was that learner enrolments, attendances, exam

entries and results would become currency with which the government would ultimately bargain with learning providers over how much funding would be allowed in the following academic year. Jarvis wrote in 2007:

The market has not only generated consumers and new products; it has transformed traditional institutions into marketable products, with education and health care and welfare being amongst the most significant ... In this we can see how the substructure of global society is commodifying cultural phenomena and thereby generating a culture which people learn to treat as objective reality.

(Jarvis, 2007: 58–9)

What is significant in this time of change, and can be tracked with just a little attention, is the discourse employed in discussions about those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Ranson and Stewart (1998:255) suggested that without widening participation in education, sections of the population would be condemned to leading 'chronically vulnerable, risk-taking lives unless society learns ways of overcoming that vulnerability'. The authors invoked a view of a world where 'many people were experiencing a heightened sense of personal failure, believing themselves to be useless, peripheral or over the hill at an early age'. Their view was typical of the liberal outlook given full expression in education in the early years of the New Labour government. The same view was, however, accompanied by a call for accountability; Kennedy, for example, called for 'comprehensive reports on participation and achievement' (Ranson & Stewart, 1998:166).

As so often in policy-making, government's interest in the capitalist principles of the productive society, and such production being monitored, accounted for and audited, all overarched early New Labour's aspirations of drawing in wider sections of society.

Meanwhile, the deficit view of those who are undereducated and those who failed to produce the important results in maths and English prevailed. Their failure provokes more vilifying 'deficit literacy discourses that fixate on dysfunctional individuals, families, schools, social groups and communities' (Feely, 2012:133)

As discussed earlier (section 4.8) with reference to Ecclestone (2004, 2009) and Ecclestone and Goodley (2016), there has been a series of academic papers about the negative effect of the label 'vulnerable' on general thinking about people who have not achieved at higher levels. Ecclestone discussed participation rates and the potential that might exist if there weren't misleading calls for 'back to basics' and formal qualifications:

targets for higher levels of formal achievement for more people conceal increasingly low expectations about the purposes of learning. Instead of transformation, social change and critical intelligence, education makes people cope and adjust while a vocational, credentialist curriculum encourages extrinsic motivation and self-interest.

(Ecclestone,1999:344)

Hamilton and Tett (2012: 33) summarise these obstacles to developing and extending a lifelong learning society into all sections of society very clearly: 'The assumption made is that people with literacies difficulties have a deficit that needs to be rectified – primarily because of the needs of the economy'. They go on to point out the tendency to blanket the whole situation by emphasising:

the huge scale of the 'problem' rather than a fine appreciation of its many dimensions in terms of diverse cultural groups and more nuanced understandings of literacies. The overall impact is a homogenising one that projects an inadequate mass in need of help.

(Crowther et al., 2001:33)

My own auto-ethnographic and sensory ethnographic reflections embrace various memories of students who were in learning situations that they hugely valued for a whole range of reasons. Courses were charged with the urgency students felt to study, among both my respondents and my colleagues' students, whom I encountered in our learning centres. I particularly relate to a family learning class and a prison class I taught during the last few years:

Parents and children were learning together in multiple ways through sharing books and activities together. A description may suffice – there was a sense of satisfaction and pride in these parents that shone out to me – they were getting on with parenting and educating themselves and this was very important to them. Their weeks were extremely busy with work, studies and home life, but they embodied a sense of achievement in class.

(Research Journal, 20 May 2015)

My practitioner reflection on teaching in a prison on a sunny Friday morning was another moving experience:

There is always an underlying sense that the women, some of whom had admitted they are pleased to be able to get on with their education, were in the main happy enough with their classes at all levels and many varied subjects. There is an opportunity to use the library on the way back to the blocks from the education centre and some drop in to collect a book for the weekend. There are friendly greetings, laughs and calls as they then move through security gates to lunch.

(Research Journal, 8 August 2014)

Prison classes and family learning classes have all diminished due to cuts over the past three years, resulting in fewer opportunities for this involvement in education.

Achieving the right qualifications may be a distant or possibly non-existent dream, but being included in a society that embraces a culture of achievement is an enabling experience in itself, and being in a society that thrives on improving your learning makes participating in learning an achievement in itself. A key point for the government departments that decide the fate of subsidised literacy classes, in

whatever venue, is that it would be in society's great interest to continue to provide community literacy classes under the themes of wellbeing, mental health, childcare, creative writing, reading groups or whatever is perceived to be a need for localities.

9.5 A culture of education

This section relates to the first research question: 'What do some adult students in England value in particular about adult literacy learning?'

An incident in my own experience helps me to define the desire I have noticed among many adult education students to become more critical and have a greater width of knowledge. In the early spring of 2013, I completed a group reading of an abridged version of *A Christmas Carol* with a group of older women students at Sutton College. It proved quite an emotional experience for some of them, who found the text very effective and the story vivid. I was aware of some fear and wariness of the descriptions of Marley's ghost and the three spirits of past, present and future, so we talked a great deal about the underlying meanings. However, one student expressed only enjoyment of the book. I asked her if she had found the reading and other thought-provoking aspects of the lessons that year satisfying. Her response surprised me, but also made me very excited; she liked the studies, but felt she wasn't learning enough and that there was so much more to stretch her mind. Looking back, I think her reply encapsulated the impression I got from so many of the people I interviewed.

On the surface, other reasons may have been given. On the one hand is the idea that students might be reaching their comfort zone, which they missed out on for so long when they were younger. For example:

Not (working) at the moment. I've been doing on and off bits and pieces. What happens is whenever I do something new I fall back on the English. It happens each time you keep falling back.

(Darren, line 76)

I want to continue. If I stop, what I have already achieved will go out. If I leave it now it's all gone. What I have already done will go out.

(Esther, on the prospect of the class no longer being available, Int. 13, line 183)

Najma, who was also unable to obtain a place in classes near her home, had positive memories of the progress she had made when classes were a little more plentiful:

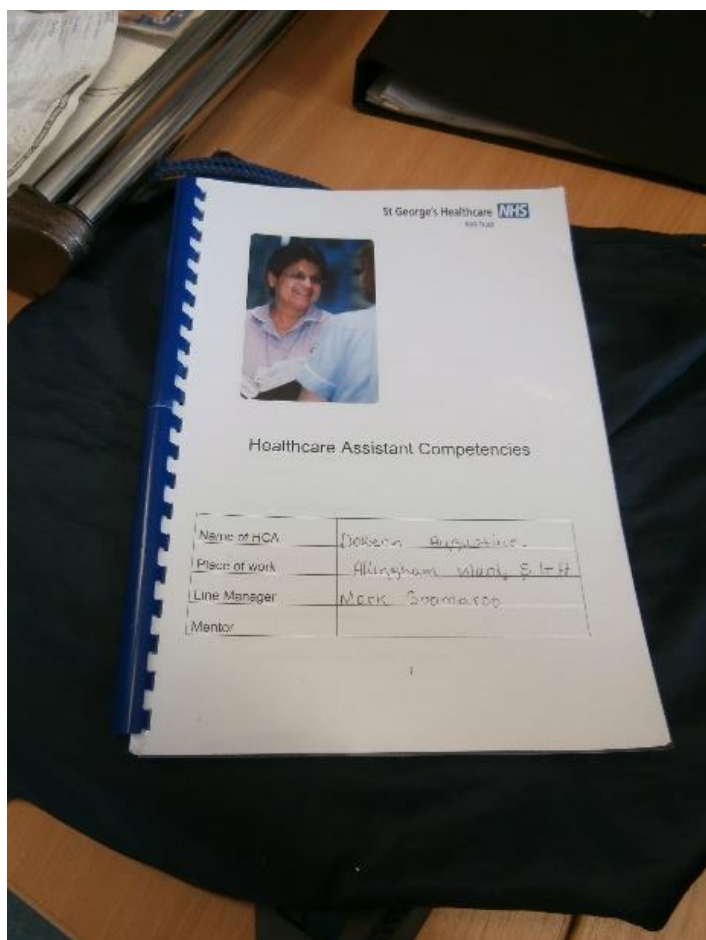
The college understands what you need. Because the teacher explains to me. You come in the middle of the year. You can't just change. However I manage. After that me do last year four weeks course with the family learning one as well.

(Najma, lines 170–3)

Many ESOL students believe that accessing education in their country of choice is of extreme importance for them to be able to work and contribute constructively to their family's lives, and potentially to address their lack of education in their home countries.

But this is not exclusive to ESOL students. Students like Esther and Dorette, for whom English was the medium of education in Nigeria and Sierra Leone respectively, wished to address the fact that they had minimal education as children. This was alongside their wish to be promoted and have more responsibility at work (see Figure 9.1). Darren from Myrrh Education Ltd and Ray, Patrick and Terry from Sutton College were all aiming to improve their employment prospects by working to overcome the drawbacks of severe dyslexia.

Figure 9.1: Dorette's most treasured item: her healthcare studies book, Wallington Centre



Note: Taken and included with student's permission.

Darren was reconsidering his own potential; he wanted to improve on manual work and move into the care sector, eventually by doing a nursing degree. Patrick, disabled by a chronic back condition, hoped to become a bookkeeper; he made a long and complicated public transport journey from an outlying suburb to Sutton twice a week. Now that he had mastered software programs on his laptop and become a much more confident reader, he considered that this would be a career to progress to. There was no question in these men's minds that they had been coming

to evening classes (Ray for more than ten years, and Terry for most of his adult lifetime) for too long; they took adult education for granted.

Adult education was also a form of occupational support for Gillian, who lived alone with a range of disabilities; a sign of a new life after a long time in residential mental health care for Sandra; and a crucial confidence builder for Karen, who had a long history of depression and managed a family, including a husband and son with learning difficulties.

Originally, it was perhaps the dawning of the era of lifelong learning that swept a number of people to newly formed adult literacy classes – like my Ghanaian student, John, who began classes in Leeds in 1974. But as lifelong learning became a less stable phenomenon in the advent of adult education as an accountability tool, there remained powerful motivations for students to come forward, other than just for qualifications. This is the culture of education (Illeris, 2004: 207; Rogers & Street, 2012:25) that I have identified as a global influence – not just something that pops into people’s heads when they arrive in London or Birmingham.

Another offshoot of the burgeoning global aspiration to become educated has been a decrease in the trauma people joining classes felt due to a sense of inadequacy. Struggling with reading and writing is still a hidden characteristic for many, but arriving in class and finding yourself among others with a similar problem provides many with clear determination. Najma referred to this:

Najma: Not only me that situation – some people maybe born in British and maybe can’t read. [*Voice rises in amazement*]

Sarah: It's true, very true.

Najma: Before I make myself very down, oh my god I'm a very uneducated person. How me going to work with people thinking me very useless person? After that my friend talking with me and say some time people born in here and also in the country can't write. Not only you – why you think that?

(INTERVIEW 16 – June 2013, lines 106–10)

I noted earlier that there was a change in how people talked about literacy. Some people were coming to the UK expecting to learn; others heard about the opportunities when they arrived, or lived in the UK and became more aware that they could return to basic education than they were when it was less publicised. People were aware at that time that they had an entitlement to basic education:

I decided to further my education. I come for qualifications so it will help me in the future to further on – to better myself.

(Sandra, lines 141–2)

Adversely, the international rallying cry for more adult learning (e.g. Milana et al., 2016) has gone unheard by the UK government. In 2013, there was dismay at the cutting back of classes; at that time, my colleagues and I were shocked at the economies made on basic skills classes. The cuts that have continued to fall have destroyed centres like Brass Tacks and its mother company Myrrh Education Ltd, and prevented many students from attending low-level basic skills classes in local adult education centres. The worrying possibility is that, at a time when many adults are expressing a natural human need and seeking to improve their English skills, they are prevented from doing so. Cutbacks stand in the way of those who want to improve their skills at work, because they are deemed to have too low academic ability in the first place; cutbacks stand in the way of those who want to recover their mental health and become contributing members of society; cutbacks stand in the

way of parents who want to learn to help their children have a better start than they did.

A second outcome that could emanate from this research is the necessity to celebrate adult education for everyone. Instead of singling out the few to receive awards once a year, we need large regional or civic learning fairs, where adult literacy is feted alongside other learning (such as art, history and cooking) and where teachers and providers can mix with old and new potential students in a festive atmosphere. The culture of adult learning is of massive importance to our constantly changing society; it is unnecessary to keep subjects like adult literacy under wraps when new forms of communication are rapidly developing.

9.6 Superdiversity

This section relates to the third research question: 'Alongside the everyday interconnections between classroom and everyday life, how much do global cultural practices impact on how adult literacy students interact with their learning?'

Due to the diffuse nature of migration since the early 1990s, the multiculturalism of an earlier era (captured, mostly, in an 'ethnic minorities' paradigm) has been gradually replaced by what Vertovec (2007) calls 'super-diversity'. Super-diversity is characterized by a tremendous increase in the categories of migrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion, but also in terms of motives, patterns and itineraries of migration, processes of insertion into the labour and housing markets of the host societies, and so on. The predictability of the category of 'migrant' and of his/her sociocultural features has disappeared.

(Blommaert and Rampton, 2011:1042)

In 2015, I first encountered the concept of superdiversity (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011); a notion I explored in Chapter 4.

The global connectedness of migrant populations and their home countries is evidently driven by mobile phone use, among other electronic devices (Cuban, 2014). The mobile phone also has the effect of creating a shared world and a new shared culture among people from different ethnic groups and disparate backgrounds. Six months ago, I enjoyed watching a group of students in Thornton Heath – men and women, ESOL and native speakers, aged from twenties to fifties – share knowledge about how the mobile phone could provide spellings and useful information from ‘dictation’ apps on their smartphones.

Use of the internet is increasingly a literacy that the population takes for granted. 2016 figures from the Office of National statistics (Appendix 9) show that nearly 100% of people aged up to 44 use the internet regularly, and there has been a dramatic increase over the past five years among users between 45 and 70. It seems likely that this is linked with many students’ confidence that they were (or would be) able to access a way to improve their skills, with the help of online tools.

Blommaert and Rampton’s description of superdiversity from Vertovec (2007) helped crystallise an awareness in me that evolved through my student and teacher voices research in 2013 and the follow-up studies I conducted in the following two years. In fact, increasing numbers of linguistics scholars are working with the idea of superdiversity in studies of multilingualism and global communications (Kress, 2010; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Blommaert, 2015; Cuban 2014; Prinsloo & Rowsell, 2012). This includes a focus on the role language, with the advent of this extremely high level of injection of ethnic diversity in communication. My background and experience as a literacy teacher, witnessing and sharing this period of change with

literacy students since the 1980s, has given me an insight into what might be called a niche pocket of superdiversity, triggered by a mutual propulsion of peoples from many different nationalities, ethnicities and levels of experience of English into the adult education culture.

I identify three main outcomes of this superdiversity on adult learning:

- Use of the internet, whether on a smartphone or other computer, is providing people with increasing confidence in learning to read and write. The mobile phone is a common literacy tool among literacy students, as with the rest of the population. It challenges the format of many syllabi used for functional skills by bringing in a real-life tool that is a backbone of communication and information in, for example, citizens', parents' and employees' lives. In doing so, it straddles the everyday lives of superdiverse communities inside and outside their homes.
- As if a filter was at work, allowing all the differences people bring with them into a shared space or 'community of practice' (Wenger; 1998:7) to be set aside and the similarities captured through shared commitments, so a class of literacy students discovers something they can enjoy together and that will enhance their lives in their new London environments.
- Classes are so diverse that those for whom English is a first language will be working alongside those for whom English is an additional language (EAL) to the language(s) they already have; motives of the native and EAL speakers, as described in this research, are in many ways the same.

The literature that this work has hinged upon now swings full circle; superdiversity is driven both by developments in global information channels, which are rapidly increasing 'complex mobilities' (Urry, 2010:358) of the world's citizens, and by the social practices that those of us affected by a time of extreme itinerancy (that is, most of us) observe others adhering to. We are motivated to learn more to keep up with change and also to network through electronic media, as it is the cheapest and most reliable means on offer. Different ethnic and social cultures blend with each other and produce enthusiastic and optimistic new communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in the field of adult education. In the class groups in centres I visited in 2013, there was a predominance of native language speakers in Sutton College, a mixed group in the Brass Tacks Centre and an ESOL-only group in Blackfriars Settlement (see Appendix 8). In only three years, the makeup of my literacy classes has changed to being mixed, with a predominance of ESOL student – or even, as at present (Autumn 2016) in a Guildford class I am teaching, only ESOL students.

The TLang project in Birmingham, described the term 'superdiversity' as having been coined to refer to 'the meshing and interweaving of diversities, in which not only "ethnicity", but other variables intersect and influence the ... trajectories of various immigrant and post-immigration groups in the twenty-first century' (TLang Team, 2016:196). This meshing has become everyday in a literacy teacher's experience, complicating course content but nevertheless viable with a certain amount of flexibility in approach.

A third outcome that springs from this work is the clear importance of digital tools to students in adult literacy classes. There is a need to start blending the traditional

literacies that are still the main concern of functional skills courses with the many learning possibilities provided by mobile phones. Teaching materials need to be updated, and the potential of attracting students from all ethnic groups into our adult education classrooms explored, on the basis of using world-class communication equipment.

9.7 The future of literacy classes

The challenge is to make space available so that different lifeworlds can flourish: to create spaces for community life where local and specific meanings can be made.

(Cope and Kalantzis, 2000:16)

When I spoke to respondents – ESOL or native language speakers – who were members of literacy classes (or had been members, in the cases of Gyaana, Ray, Grace and Najma), they did not speak passionately about being part of a group, but they mentioned it in positive and fond ways:

Communicating with other people is a little bit like fun as well.

(Najma, line 56)

Many of the students valued their teacher; Jade, for example, swiftly passed over the question about the class to mention the importance of the teacher:

Now with my teacher she always correct me. If I don't speak she always teach me how to speak very good.

(Jade, line 55)

Teachers tended to speak more about individuals than the whole group experience, although they demonstrated attentiveness when talking about their students' progress:

I think that when people are nurtured by a conversation or regular contact they can be empowered to do all kinds of things and they can remember that person and that teacher helping them.

(Lucy, line 454)

Illeris has suggested that this individualisation is important to preserve the learning environment 'collectivity'. While my respondents did not identify that the collective is crucial, it could be put in Illeris's words:

The collectivity at class level is not only important for the learning environments as such. It is also today for many adults of great importance at a more general level to be part of a committing and loyal collectivity as a counter-weight to the general individualisation trend and the fact that more and more adults live alone or in steadily diminishing family units.

(Illeris, 2004:207)

The value of facilitating 'development processes' (Wenger 1998:263) in literacy classes for this reason, as well as for their transformative powers, can also be understood through Cope and Kalantzis's (2000) prompting for a space where local and specific meanings can be made. Many students and teachers I interviewed expressed a sense of greater fulfilment than just acquiring new literacy skills. Wenger (1998) distinguishes between training and education, arguing that the latter should strive to open new dimensions for the negotiation of the self (263). Wenger also suggests a great deal of the success of learning lies in 'participation', which suggests both 'action and connection' and is both 'personal and social' (55).

The discussion that has evolved from this study has returned to communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in learning on a number of occasions, such as describing the satisfaction I have witnessed students experiencing in various venues.

It became clear that learning brought a sense of optimism and good will to the students, both in classes and in one-to-one teaching situations. This contrasts considerably with the fact that their classes were being rapidly reduced by the services that instituted them because of government cuts. There seems to be a gulf; on one side is what the UK government considers adult skills learning to be about - 'lifelong learning is discourses into being a necessary adaptive strategy through which to respond to change and through which a knowledge economy can be brought into being', Usher and Edwards, (2007:11); on the other side, the students in my dataset view such learning to offer opportunities to improve themselves, their life prospects and those of their families, and to become more confident and articulate in society.

As Wolf (2015:19) explains, the skills-based approach taken was derived 'from a fairly simple view of human capital theory. This approach emphasises first that the skills of workers are as important to productivity and levels of output as are investments in capital'. As access to learning is increasingly withdrawn from adults who need to learn basic English – including newcomers to the country, who can only begin to integrate into UK society when they have adequate language skills – this also squeezes out many of the retired, the unemployed, the traumatised, the physically or mentally impaired, even parents and low-level employees who need more gently-paced, less accreditation-heavy, basic provision.

It was striking that while respondents were frustrated about class cutbacks, none were defeated. The vulnerability discourse no longer seems to be a relevant feature in their attitude:

I myself accepted that this is my life and I have the challenge to go ahead. And I just carried on ... I want to carry on as long as I can. That gets me out of the house and from my husband. I like homework to do in the evening.

(Gyaana, Int.20: lines 77–8, 126–7)

It seems likely to me that students' reports of their experiences of learning are more affected by their educators than by government directives. But in respect of the third research question – 'Alongside the everyday interconnections between classroom and everyday life, how much do global cultural practices impact on how adult literacy students interact with their learning?' – I found they were influenced in the sense of classroom in everyday life, by the presence of mixed ethnic and social groups, students with varying needs and the global reach of internet technology. At the beginning of this study (section 1.6), I suggested that I was going to explain another 'emergent' cultural capital, such as that described by Savage et al. (2013:243), which was emerging from a world in flux. Those drawn to adult literacy classes are exactly that new group, propelled by a culture of education.

Ingrid de St Georges (2013:60) refers to the resources that groups members in an era of 'mobilities' choose as 'repertoires'; that is, the language and modes they adopt according to the situation they are in – such as the English literacy or language classroom. In my opinion, a key future step should be studying the repertoires people use to get along with each other in newly forming and always changing learning situations. These opportunities to integrate, alongside points of learning, are of great value to our communities. We can learn from the way that the mixed languages, ethnicities and ranges of ability people bring to English classes become a way of working. The same members of that group will be able to adapt their communication with others when they are in another group. As Blommaert and

Backus (2013:21) comment, this creates 'complex and layered repertoires'. Finally, it should be argued that instead of the input/test/result process that the Conservative government has seen the literacy class as being, it is a very different community of practice; one that derives as much from each individual's new processing of their own way of communicating as from the action of learning together.

The original contribution that I believe stands out from this research is that from my data, adult literacy students and their classes are *key* to developing constructive communities in which wellbeing, family support, mental health, digital dexterity, confidence in the workplace and well-integrated citizenship are promoted through educational channels. The strength of the ethnically mixed communities in literacy classes in London and Birmingham, as attested by the students and the teachers, indicates that classes had not only become a social success but also were attended by positive, optimistic individuals, who hoped to overcome any literacy difficulties and make valuable contributions to their families, friendship groups and communities.

I consider that a combination of methods has been successful in creating this thesis. In arriving at the end of this venture, I am compelled to consider how useful the auto-ethnographic approach has been. At times, I have had difficulty believing that my mundane working life can really produce powerful evidence to make a case for the vibrancy and remarkable potential of the gathering of people to study literacy. Coffey (1999:7) argues that more critical engagement is needed in ethnographic work than documenting the 'choice of fieldsite, gaining consent and minimizing harm or exploitation during fieldwork and publishing'; rather, it is about 'the ways in which

fieldwork relies upon the interactions, relations and situatedness of the researcher and the researched’.

I have arrived at a point where I can say that my conclusion has been guided by exactly that interconnectedness between myself and those I interviewed, in terms of the specialist teaching and learning field we share; but this still makes me wonder whether I have imbued my respondents’ comments with my own imagination, and produced meanings coloured by my own aspirations. I can counteract these reservations with the realisation that I have moved on from being the fieldworker, making objective observations of my subjects, to a point of being ‘deeply immersed in others’ worlds’ (Emerson et al., 1995:3):

The ethnographer cannot take in everything; rather, he will, in conjunction with those in the setting develop certain perspectives by engaging in some activities and relationships rather than others ... the task of the ethnographer is not to determine the truth but reveal the multiple truths in others’ lives.

(Emerson et al., 2011:4)

I am further consoled in the validity of my own endeavours by the following from Bochner and Ellis (2016:239–40):

Evocative autoethnography is a narrative practice aligned with a pragmatist orientation to inquiry that replaces the concept of ‘truth’ with the concept of ‘usefulness’ ... an autoethnographic text directs attention to meanings rather than facts, readings rather than observations, and interpretations rather than findings ... all attempts to speak for, write about, or represent human lives are partial, situated and mediated.

While adult education can transform lives, in the immediate future I suggest that keeping the programmes going will mainly depend on the actions of teachers, who are the key drivers of classes as a valid, multipurpose vehicle of social integration and source of wellbeing.

In the case of teaching English in FE and to adults, policy-making forces appear to be converting the delivery of English as a humanities subject into a production line for efficiently processing qualifications. At the present time, from my own view, we are in the middle of this transition. In my experience and that of colleagues, it is tough to keep encouraging a passion for English in learners, because we have to exert so much pressure on examination candidates and complete so much paperwork throughout the course.

Contrastingly, however, I have described the determination I have encountered in learners alongside the sympathy and insight of their teachers. Biesta (2008) discovered that some 'adults develop a high level of involvement in which being a learner or student becomes an important part of their life and identity'. I infer from this that the enthusiasm shared by many students to continue to improve their education is indicative of an aspect of culture, shared worldwide, to seek opportunities for education. Blommaert and Rampton (2011:3) might attribute this to the 'diffuse' nature of migration – its 'superdiversity' – including categories of migrants who are motivated to improve their learning. Usher and Edwards (2007:170–1) have posited a slightly different theory, which focuses on students deciding what is valuable to learn. They plausibly suggest that people worldwide are all 'in some way affected by consumer culture and consumer discourse and images' (Usher and Edwards, 2007:25) – the implication being that popular culture can be stretched to consumption of education, which has been offered more plentifully in western countries.

In the UK, however, the association between vulnerability (Ecclestone, 2010:112) and those who come forward for English – whether 1st- or 2nd-language speakers – creates a situation where they are misrepresented in the institution. Rogers's study of the 'subjectivities' of mother and daughter, June and Vicky Treader, is an additional example of this argument (Rogers, 2007:154) (see sections 4.3 and 5.3). Adult literacy students, in my experience in 2017, are channelled into short-term, qualifications-dedicated courses.

To compare, look back at the social practices in which those who seek literacy, ESOL or indeed numeracy are immersed – exemplified in this research in their use of technology for everyday purposes, organising their weeks around studying and ensuring their children are also benefiting from education as much as possible. You will find orderly worlds, which the same potential students have emerged from; but these are worlds that, in today's society, can only progress and fulfil lives by having access to community, college, parents' classes in schools, workplace or other institutional bodies. It is imperative that we maintain and expand these openings, developing their potential to attract more groups, create more community cohesion and celebrate adult education at every level of ability.

Bibliography

Accredited Qualifications. (2012). *Accredited qualifications*. Accessed 22 April 2015, from <http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/>.

Adami, E. & Kress, G. (2010). The social semiotics of convergent mobile devices. In G. Kress (Ed.), *Multimodality* (pp.184-195). Oxon: Routledge.

Adams, C., Holman-Jones, S. & Ellis, C. (2014). *Autoethnography*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Atkinson, T. (2012). Beyond disempowering counts: mapping a fruitful future for adult literacies. In L. Tett, M. Hamilton & J. Crowther (Eds.), *More powerful literacies* (pp. 31–53). Leicester: NIACE.

Back, L. (2007). *The art of listening*. Oxford: Berg.

Balarin, M. (2009). Using theory in social research: reflections on a doctoral study. In H. Daniels, H. Lauder & J. Porter (Eds.) with S. Hartshorn, *Knowledge, values and educational policy: a critical perspective* (pp. 295–300). Abingdon: Routledge.

Ball, S. (2008). *The education debate*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Barton, D. & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local literacies*. London: Routledge.

Barton, D. & Hamilton, M. (Eds.). (2000) *Situated literacies*. Oxon: Routledge.

Barton, D. & Papen, U. (Eds.). (2005). *Linking numeracy programmes in developing countries and the UK*. London: NRDC.

Barton, D., Appleby, Y., Hodge, R., Tusting, K. & Ivanič, R. (2006). *Relating adults' lives and learning: participation and engagement in different settings*. London, NRDC

Baynham, M. (1995). *Investigating literacy practices in social contexts*. Harlow: Longman.

Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

Berry, J. (2014). An overview of health literacy for adult literacy practitioners. *RaPAL*, 83(Summer),.

Biesta, G. (2008). *Learning Lives: Learning, Identity and Agency in the Life-Course: Full Research Report ESRC End of Award Report (RES-139-25-0111)*. Swindon: ESRC.

Biesta, G., Field, J, Hodkinson, P., MacLeod, F. & Goodson, I. (2011). *Improving learning through the lifecourse*. Oxon: Routledge.

Blommaert, J. (2005) In and out of class, codes and control. In M. Baynham & A. De Fina (Eds.), *Dislocations/relocations: narratives of displacement* (pp.127-143). Manchester: St Jerome Publishing.

Blommaert, J. & Rampton, B. (2011). *Language and Superdiversity: A Position Paper* (Working Papers in Urban Language & Literacies Paper 63). Accessed 19 November 2017, from www.kcl.ac.uk/ldc.

Blommaert, J. & Backus, A. (2013). Superdiverse repertoires and the individual. In I. Saint-George & J. Weber (Eds.), *Multilingualism and multimodality: current challenges for educational studies*. Amsterdam: Sense Publishers.

Blommaert, J. (2015). Commentary: superdiversity old and new. *Language & Communication*, 44(2015), 82–88.

Bochner, A. P. (1997). It's about time: narrative and the divided self. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3(4), 418–438.

Bochner, A. P & Ellis, C. (2014). Autoethnography in qualitative inquiry. *YouTube*. Accessed 18 November 2017, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKZ-wuJ_vnQ.

Bochner, A. P & Ellis, C. (2016). *Evocative autoethnography*. Oxon: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brigg, M. & Bleiker, R. (2010). Autoethnographic international relations: exploring the self as a source of knowledge. *Review of International Studies*, 36(3), 779–798.

Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) Committee (2014). *Adult Literacy and Numeracy* (HC 557). London: House of Commons.

Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of 'sex'*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1997) *Excitable speech*. New York: Routledge.

Cabinet Office, HM Government 2010. Building the Big Society. 18 May 2010.

Cambridge Dictionary (2017). *Properly*. Accessed 18 November 2017, from <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/properly>.

Cameron, D. (2002). Globalization and the teaching of communication skills. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and language skills*. London: Routledge.

Canagarajah, S. (2015). Negotiating mobile codes and literacies at the contact zone: another perspective on South African schools. In C. Stroud & M. Prinsloo (Eds.), *Language, literacy and diversity* (pp. 34–54). Oxon: Routledge.

Clarke, M. (2014). The sublime objects of education policy: quality, equity and ideology. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35(4), 584–598.

Clip, C. (2013). *Interview with Jan Blommaert*. Accessed 6 April 2016, from <http://termcoord.eu/termania/why-is-terminology-your-passion/interview-with-jan-blommaert/>.

CLLN (Canadian Literacy and Learning Network). (2014, September 29). Federal government quietly collapses literacy and essential skills network. *Canadian Literacy and Learning Network News*.
<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/6715575/Public%20Statement%20from%20CLLN.pdf> accessed 27.05.2014.

Coffey, A. (1999). *The ethnographic self: fieldwork and the representation of identity*. London: Sage.

Cohen et al (2000). *Research Methods in Education*, 5th edition. London, RoutledgeFalmer.

Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. (Eds.). (2000). *Multiliteracies: literacy learning and the design of social futures*. Oxon: Routledge.

Crowther, J. Hamilton, M. & Tett, L. (2001). Powerful literacies: an introduction. In J. Crowther, M. Hamilton & L. Tett (Eds.), *Powerful literacies*. Leicester: NIACE.

Cuban, S. (2013). *Deskilling migrant women in the global care industry*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Cuban, S. (2014). 'Transnational families', ICTs and mobile learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 33(6), 737–754.

Czarniawska, B. (2004). *Narratives in social science research*. London: Sage.

Davis, A. (2011, June 9). One in five parents cannot read aloud. *Evening Standard*, p. 1.

Denshire, S. (2014). On auto-ethnography. *Current Sociology Review*, 62(6), 831–850.

DfEE (Department for Education and Employment). (2001). *Skills for Life Strategy*. Nottingham: DfEE.

DfES (Department for Education and Skills). (2001a). *Adult Core Curriculum*. Nottingham: DfES.

DfES. (2001b). *The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills*. Accessed 19 November 2017, from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/4159308.pdf>.

Dheebea, M. (2013). Challenges to anonymity and representation in educational qualitative research in a small community: a reflection on my research journey. *Compare*, 43(4), 483–495.

Downing, L. (2008). *The Cambridge introduction to Michael Foucault*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duckworth, V. (2014). *Learning trajectories, violence and empowerment amongst adult basic skills learners*. Oxon: Routledge.

Duckworth, V. & Ade-Ojo, G. (Eds.). (2015) *Landscapes of specific literacies in contemporary society*. Oxon: Routledge.

Ecclestone, K. (1999). Care or control? Defining learners' needs for lifelong learning. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 47(4), 332–347.

Ecclestone, K. & Hayes, D. (2009). *The dangerous rise of therapeutic education*. Oxon, Routledge.

Ecclestone, K. (2010). Learning or therapy? The demoralisation of education. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 52(2), 112–137.

Ecclestone, K. & Goodley, D. (2016). Political and educational springboard or straitjacket?: theorising post/human subjects in an age of vulnerability. *Discourse Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 37(2), 175–188.

Education and Training Foundation. (2014). *Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training – England*. Accessed 19 November 2017, from http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/4991-Prof-standards-A4_4-2.pdf.

Education For All Global Monitoring Report. (2014). *Aid Reductions Threaten Education Goals* (Policy Paper 13). Accessed 19 November 2017, from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002280/228057E.pdf>.

Edwards, R. Ivanič, I. & Mannion, G. (2009). The scrumpled geography of literacies for learning. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 30(4), 483–499.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. & Bochner, A. (2011). Autoethnography: an overview. *Qualitative Research*, 12(1),.

Emerson, R., Fretz, R. & Shaw, L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd edition). Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Evans, K. (2011). *Rethinking Work-Based Learning*. Keynote speech delivered to Asme Conference. Accessed 19 November 2017, from <http://vimeo.com/32671175>.

Evans, K., Schoon, I. & Weale, M. (2010). *Life Chances, Learning and the Dynamics of Risk throughout the Life Course*. : Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language*. New York: Longman.

Faubion, J. (Ed.). (1998). *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1988, vol. 2, aesthetics: method and epistemology* (trans. R. Hurley). New York: New York Press.

Feeley, M. (2012). Affective power. In L. Tett, M. Hamilton & J. Crowther (Eds.), *More powerful literacies* (pp. 131-147). Leicester: NIACE.

Ferrer, A., Green David A. and Craig Riddell, W. (2004). *The Effect of Literacy on Immigrant Earnings*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Human Resources & Skills Development Canada.

Field, J. (2006). *Lifelong learning and the new educational order*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Field, J. (2009). *Researching transitions in lifelong learning*. Oxon: Routledge.

For Skills. (2015). *What are Functional Skills?* Accessed 8 April 2015, from <http://www.forskills.co.uk/index.php?page=what-are-fs>.

Foucault, M. (1981) *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings*. New York, Pantheon.

Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality, vol. 1: an introduction*. London: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*. London: Penguin.

Fowler, E. & Mace, J. (2005). *Outside the classroom: researching literacy with adults*. Leicester: NIACE.

Freeman, S. (2002). Language support in further education: is additional learning support only a remedying service? *Language Issues*,.

Freeman, S. (2006) *What might be the benefits of a 'social practices' approach in the planning of a learning programme for students of adult literacies?* Master's dissertation. London: University of London.

Freeman, S. (2014). *Not too scrumpled*. Unpublished article.

Freire, P. (1970 [1968]). *The pedagogy of the oppressed* (trans. M. B. Ramos). New York: Continuum.

Gee, J. P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis: theory and method*. New York: Routledge.

Gee, J. P. (2000). NLS: from 'socially situated' to social. In D. Barton & M. Hamilton (Eds.), *Situated literacies* (pp. 180–196). Oxon: Routledge.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Green, A. (originally published 1997). Education, globalization, and the nation state. In H. Lauder, Brown, P, Dillabough, J, Halsey, A H (Eds.) (2006), *A selection of papers, Education, globalization and social change* (pp. 192-198). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Green, J. L. & Bloome, D. (1997). Ethnography and ethnographers of and in education: a situated perspective. In J. Flood, S. Brice Heath & D. Lapp (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching literacy through the communicative and visual arts* (pp. 181–202). New York: International Reading Association & MacMillan.

The Guardian (2016) Muslim women to be taught English in £20m plan to beat 'backward' attitudes. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jan/18/muslim-women-to-be-taught-english-in-20m-plan-to-beat-backward-attitudes>. Accessed 16 March 2016

Hall, S. (2005). Cultural identity and diaspora. In B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin (Eds.), *Postcolonial studies reader* (2nd ed.) (pp. 435–438). Oxford: Routledge.

Hamilton, M. & Hillier, Y. (2005). *Changing faces of adult literacy, language and numeracy: a critical history*. Stoke on Trent, Trentham Books.

Hamilton, M. (2012). *Literacy and the politics of representation*. Oxon: Routledge.

Hamilton, M. & Tett, L. (2012). More powerful literacies: the policy context. In L. Tett, M. Hamilton & J. Crowther (Eds.), *More powerful literacies* (pp. 31–53). Leicester: NIACE.

Hannon, Peter (2000) *Reflecting on Literacy in Education*; London, Routledge Falmer

Hardy, C. (2012). New literacy studies and Bourdieu. In M. Grenfell, Bloome, D, Hardy, C, Pahl, K, Rowsell, J and Street, B (Eds.), *Language, ethnography, and education*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Harris, S. & Shelswell, N. (2005). Moving beyond communities of practice in adult basic education. In D. Barton & K. Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice* (pp.158-180). New York: Cambridge.

HM Government (2009). *The Learning Revolution* (white paper). London, DIUS, HMSO.

Hughes, D. (2014). Shaping the sector's future. *Adults Learning*, 26(1): 4–5.

Hyland, T. (2006). Reductionist trends in education and training for work: skills, competences and work-based learning. *University of Bolton UBIR: University of Bolton Institutional Repository*

I Daniel Blake (2017) [DVD]. Ken Loach. UK, Sixteen Tyne Ltd.

Illeris, K. (2002). *The three dimensions of learning*. Roskilde: Roskilde University Press.

Illeris, K. (2003). *Three Dimensions of Learning: Contemporary learning theory in the tension field between the cognitive, the emotional and the social*. Malabar,: Krieger.

Illeris, K. (2004). *Adult education and adult learning* (trans. K. Illeris & M. Malone). Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company.

Ivanič, R. (2009). 'Bringing literacy studies into research on learning across the curriculum' in M. Baynham & M. Prinsloo (Eds.), *The future of literacy studies* (pp. 100-123). Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Jarvis, P. (2007) *Globalisation, Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society*.Oxon, Routledge.

Jenkins, J. (2009). English as a lingua franca: interpretations and attitudes. *World Englishes*, 28(2): 200–207.

Kalantzis, M., Cope, B. & Harvey, A. (2003). Assessing basic literacies and new basics. *Assessment in Education*, 10(1), 15–26.

Kennedy, H.(1997) *Learning Works: Widening Participation in Further Education* (Coventry, Further Education Funding Council)

Kennedy, H. (1998). A self-perpetuating learning society. In S. Ranson (Ed.), *Inside the Learning Society* (pp. 163-170). London: Cassell.

Klein, C. (1993). *Diagnosing dyslexia*. London: Basic Skills Agency.

Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality*. Oxon: Routledge.

Krzyzanowski, M. & Wodak, R. (2008). *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social sciences*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Leitch, Lord S. (2006). *The Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for All in the Global Economy – World Class Skills* (Final Report). London: The Stationery Office.

Lifelong Learning UK. (2007). *New Overarching Professional Standards for Teachers, Tutors and Trainers in the Lifelong Learning Sector*. London: Lifelong Learning UK.

Mace, J. (1998, reprinted 2003). *Playing with time: mothers and the meaning of literacy*. London, Routledge.

McEwan, C., Pollard, J., & Henry, N. (2007). The non-'global city' of Birmingham, UK: a gateway through time. In L. Benton-Short & M. Price (Eds.), *Migrants to the metropolis: the rise of immigrant gateway cities* (pp. 191–224). Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

McNiff, J. & Whitehead, J. (2002). *Action research, principles and practice*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Migration Observatory. (2017). *Migrants in the UK: An Overview*. Accessed 19 November 2017, from <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migrants-in-the-uk-an-overview/>.

Milana, M., Rasmussen, D. J. & Holford, J. (2016). The role of adult education and learning policy in fostering societal sustainability. *International Review of Education*, 62, 523–540.

Moje, E. B. (2000). Circles of kinship, friendship, position, and power: Examining the community in community-based literacy research. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 32, 77-112.

Moosa, D. (2013) Challenges to anonymity and representation in educational qualitative research in a small community: a reflection on my research journey, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 43:4, 483-495,

Morrell, E. (2007). Critical literacy and popular culture in urban education: toward a pedagogy of access and dissent. In M. Blackburn & C. Clark (Eds.), *Literacy research for political action* (pp. 235-255). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

NATECLA. NATECLA NEWS. 2013, Summer. Issue 101.

The New London Group. (2000). A pedagogy of multiliteracies. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies*. Oxon: Routledge.

Newby, P. (2014). *Research methods for education*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Nixon, J. & Sikes, P. (2003). Introduction. In P. Sikes, J. Nixon & W. Carr (Eds.), *The moral foundations of educational research: knowledge, inquiry and values* (pp. 1-6). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Ofqual. (2011). *Functional Skills Criteria for English: Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2* (Ofqual/11/4950). Accessed 19 November 2017, from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371150/11-10-07-functional-skills-criteria-for-english.pdf.

The Guardian (2015) Adult education is being slashed and burned: this is too important to ignore. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/26/adult-education-funding-cuts> (Accessed 1 June 2015)

Pahl, K and Rowsell (2012). *Literacy and Education*. London, Sage Publications.

Pahl, K (2015). *Matreializing Literacies in Communities*. London, Bloomsbury.

Papen, U. (2005). *Adult literacy as social practice*. Oxon: Routledge.

Park, J.S. & Wee, L (2015) *Markets of English: Linguistic Capital and Language Policy in a Globalizing World*. Oxon, Routledge.

Piketty, T. (2014). *Capitalism in the twenty first century* (trans. A. Goldhammer). Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University.

Pink, S. (2009). *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London, Sage Publications.

Pole, C. & Morrison, M. (2003). *Ethnography for education*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Polkinghorne, D. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. Hatch & R. Wiesniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 5-25). Washington DC: Falmer.

Prinsloo, M. & Rowsell, J. (2012). Digital literacies as placed resources in the globalised periphery. *Language and Education*, 26(4), 271–277.

Radical History Network. (2015, January 20). *Oral History Project: Memories of Centerprise*. Retrieved 19 November 2017, from <http://radicalhistorynetwork.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/oral-history-project-memories-of.html>.

Rampton, B. (2015). Superdiversity and social class: an international perspective. In C. Stroud & M. Prinsloo (Eds.), *Language, literacy and diversity* (pp. 149–165). Oxon: Routledge.

Reason & Bradbury. (2001) *Handbook of Action Research*. London, Sage Publications.

Ranson, S. & Stewart, J. (1998). The learning democracy. In, *Inside the learning society* (pp. 253-271). London: Cassell.

Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers.

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Roberts, C., Baynham, M, Shrubshall, P., Barton, D., Chopra, P., Cooke, M., Hodge, R., Pitt, K., Schellekens, P., Wallace, C. & Whitfield, S. (2004). *English for speakers of other languages (ESOL): case studies of provision, learners' needs and resources*. London: NRDC.

Roberts, C., Gidley, N., Eldred, J., Brittan, J., Grief, S., Cooper, B., Baynham, M., Shrubshall, P., Windsor, V., Castellino, C. & Walsh, M. (2005). *Embedded teaching and learning of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL: seven case studies*. London: NRDC.

Rogers, A. & Street, B. (2012). *Adult literacy and development: stories from the field*. Leicester: NIACE.

Rogers, R. (2002). Between contexts: a critical discourse analysis of family literacy, discursive practices, and literate subjectivities. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37(3), 248–277.

Rogers, R. (2007). *A critical discourse analysis of family literacy practices*. New York: Routledge.

Saint-Georges, I. (2013). Multilingualism, multimodality and the future of education research. In I. Saint-George & J. Weber (Eds.), *Multilingualism and multimodality: current challenges for educational studies*. Amsterdam: Sense Publishers.

Savage, M., Devine, F., Cunningham, N., Taylor, N., Li, Y., Le Roux, B., Friedman, S, Hjellbrekke J. and Miles A.(2013). A new model of social class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey experiment. *Sociology*, 47(2), 219–250.

Savage, M. (2014). Piketty's challenge for sociology. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 65(4), 591–606.

Schuller, T. & Watson, D. (2009). *Learning through life: inquiry into the future of lifelong learning*. Leicester: NIACE.

Schuller, T. & Watson, D. (2014). Learning through life: how far have we come? *Adults Learning*, 26(1), 6–9.

Scottish Executive (2005), *An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland*. Learning Connections, Communities Scotland

Seale, C. (1999). Quality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Enquiry*, 4(5). Accessed 5 March 2016, from www.sagepub.com/upm-data/47370_Seale_Chapter_11.pdfInterviews.

Seale, C. (2012). *Researching society and culture* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

SFA (Skills Funding Agency). (2016a). *Common and Performance-Management Funding Rules* (Doc Ref. A). London: BIS.

SFA. (2016b). *Adult Education Budget Funding and Performance-Management Rules* (Doc Ref. E). London: BIS.

Sikes, P. & Goodson, I. (2003). Living research: thoughts on educational research as moral practice. In P. Sikes, J. Nixon & W. Carr (Eds.), *The moral foundations of educational research: knowledge, inquiry and values* (pp. 32-52). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Simpson, J. (2013). Identity alignment on an ESOL class blog. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 23(2), 184–201.

Simpson, J. & Whiteside, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Adult language education and migration*. Oxon: Routledge.

Somekh, B. (2006). *Action research: a methodology for change and development*. Milton Keynes: OUP.

St Clair, R. (2010). *Why literacy matters*. Leicester: NIACE.

Stevenson, A. (2016). Towards a citizens' curriculum. *RaPAL*, 88(Spring):.

Street, B. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Street, B. (2001a). Introduction. In B. Street (Ed.), *Literacy and development: ethnographic perspectives* (pp. 1-19). London: Routledge.

Street, B. (2001b). Contexts for literacy work: New Literacy Studies, multimodality and the 'local and the global'. In L. Tett, M. Hamilton & J. Crowther (Eds.), *More powerful literacies* (pp. 15–30). Leicester: NIACE.

Street, B. (2003). What's 'new' in New Literacy Studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 5(2): 77–91.

Street, B. (2009). The future of social literacies. In M. Baynham & M. Prinsloo (Eds.), *The future of literacy studies* (pp. 21-38). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Street, B. (2012a). New Literacy Studies. In M. Grenfell, Bloome, D, Hardy, C, Pahl, K, Rowsell, J and Street, B (Eds.), *Language, ethnography, and education*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Street, B. (2013). Notes from Ethnography Workshop. London, Kings College, London University.

Tangaard, L. (2014). Ethnographic fieldwork in psychology: lost and found? *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(2), 167–174.

Telfer, S. (2015). Using creative writing activities in the literacy classroom. *RaPAL*, 86 (Summer 2015): pages 30-34

Tett, L. & Hamilton, M. (2012). More powerful literacies: the policy context. In L. Tett, M. Hamilton & P. Crowther (Eds.), *More powerful literacies* (pp31-59) Leicester: NIACE.

Tett, L., Hamilton, M. & Hillier, M. (2006). *Adult literacy numeracy and language*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Tikly, L. & Barrett, M. (2011). Social justice, capabilities and the quality of education in low income countries. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31(1), 3–14.

- TLang Team. (2016). The TLang project. *Language Issues*, 27(1)
- Tompkins, J. (1996) *A Life in School*. Reading, Massachusetts, Perseus Books.
- Torres, A. C. (1998). Democracy, education, and multiculturalism: dilemmas of citizenship in a global world. *Comparative Education Review*, 42(4), 421–447.
- Tusting, K. (2000). New Literacies Studies and time. In D. Barton & M. Hamilton (Eds.), *Situated literacies*. Oxon: Routledge.
- United Nations General Assembly. (1948). *Declaration of Human Rights* (General Assembly Resolution 217). Geneva: United Nations.
- Urry, J. (2010). Mobile sociology 1. *British Journal of Sociology*, 61, 347–366.
- Usher, R. & Edwards, R. (1994). *Postmodernism and education*. London: Routledge.
- Usher, R., Bryant, I. & Johnston, R. (1997). *Adult education and the postmodern challenge*. London: Routledge.
- Usher, R. & Edwards, R. (2007). *Lifelong learning: signs, discourses, practices*. The Amsterdam: Springer.
- Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(6), 1024–1054.
- Vertovec, S. (2015). Introduction: migration, cities, diversities ‘old’ and ‘new’. In Vertovec, S. (Ed.), *Diversities old and new: migration and socio-spatial patterns in New York, Singapore and Johannesburg* (pp.1-23). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Warschauer, M. (2009). Digital Literacy Studies: Progress and Prospects. In M. Baynham & M. Prinsloo (Eds.), *The future of literacy studies* (pp. 123-141). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: learning, meaning and identity*. New York: Cambridge.
- Willis, P. (2000). *The ethnographic imagination*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Wolcott, H. (2009). *Writing up qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Wolf, A. (2007). Round and round the houses: the Leitch Review of Skills. *Local Economy*, 22(2).
- Wolf, A. (2009). *An adult approach to further education*. London: The Institute of Economic Affairs.

Wolf, A. (2015). *Issues and ideas: heading for the precipice: can further and higher education funding policies be sustained?* London: The Policy Institute at King's College London.

Wortham, S. (2001). *Narratives in action: a strategy for research and analysis*. New York: Teachers College Press.

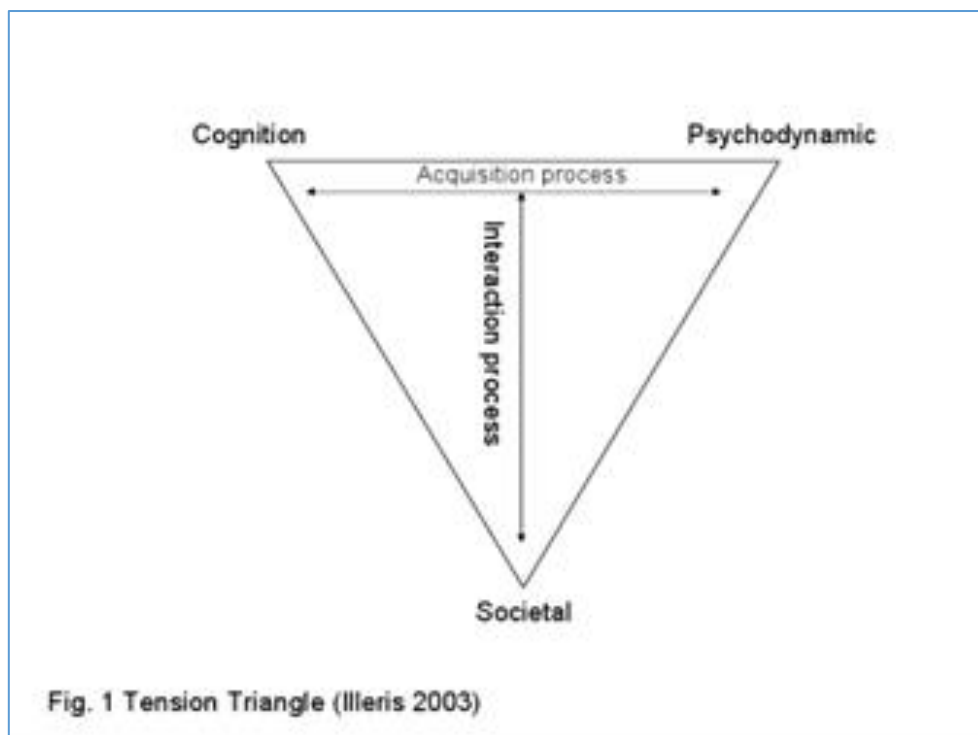
Youdell, D. (2006). Diversity, inequality, and a post-structural politics for education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 27(1), 33–42.

Zulfiker, T. (2014). Researching my own backyard: inquiries into an ethnographic study. *Ethnography and Education*, 9(3), 373–386.

Appendix 1

Knud Illeris's Tension Triangle

Figure A.1: Knud Illeris's tension triangle



Source: Knud Illeris (2003:399–400). Retrieved 6 April 2012, from http://bejlt.brookes.ac.uk/vol1/volume1issue4/academic/newell_jones.html.

Notes

- 'Psychodynamic' can also be described using the term 'emotive'.
- This version of the Illeris 'tension triangle' was selected as the best one to illustrate the three-point relationship between the societal, at the base of all learning situations, dynamically interacting with the cognitive and psychodynamic characteristics of the learner.
- See also Illeris, 2002:19, 231–37; Illeris, 2004:95.

Appendix 2

Auto-Ethnographic Professional Timeline

Table A.1: Auto-ethnographic professional timeline

Dates	Place	Role	Types of work experience	New insights I gained (brief notes)
1974–6	Leeds Adult Literacy service	Volunteer tutor	Teaching to read 1:1	Learnt about Ghana from my student and phonics approach.
1976–7	Goldsmiths College, London University	Trainee PG teacher	TP in primary schools	Experienced range of state schools in SE London and N. Kent – 8 communities.
1978–80	Centerprise, Hackney	Volunteer tutor	Working with one-to-one and small groups in centre	Regular training and support from dedicated team.
1980–5	Islington Adult Ed.	Paid tutor	Teaching	Various venues; women's literacy; many unable to read much; no syllabus.
1989–98	Surrey Adult Ed.	Ditto	Ditto	4 venues including Redhill town centre, day centre, Horley housing estate and Leatherhead library – period of change with portfolio-based work introduced and learning centres/workshop approaches.
1991–2000	Croydon Education Training Services	Ditto	Ditto	Large groups of asylum seekers. ESOL including those who had no education in own languages.
1997–2006	Further ed. colleges – Carshalton and Brixton (Lambeth)	Lecturer and dyslexia assessor/ESOL lit. teacher	Ditto	Insight into how students cope with coursework when challenged by literacy skills. Advent of the period of supported students. Vocational subjects more important to students than English/maths input.
2002–13	Sutton College of Learning for Adults	Additional learning support coordinator; dyslexia specialist teacher & assessor	1:1; assessing of students for learning support needs; ESOL and functional skills work oriented syllabi; teacher training through levels; family learning in range of primary and pre-school venues	Encountering very wide range of literacy needs in many different situations in the college – basic lit., dyslexia support, teacher training and ESOL teaching. Observing the motivation or lack of among parents.
2011–15	Downview and Send HMP for women. Coldingley and Highdown Prison HMP for men	Lecturer ESOL, functional skills	Teaching functional skills English, progression awards and ESOL <i>Skills for Life</i>	Insight into motivation shown by students who attended the education centre in the women's prisons. Insight into duty shown by students who attended education centre in men's prisons. Appreciation shown by students who hadn't been able to enter education for a long time or never, to have educational opportunity.
2013–now	Croydon	Teacher/assessor	Supporting and assessing students with dyslexic type difficulties; family learning classes in primary school and children's centres	Almost exclusively black and immigrant community where college is based. Students becoming increasingly conditioned and motivated by the centre ethos, but teachers are increasingly disillusioned as heavy cuts and drastic shortage of resources.
2013–now	Surrey Adult Learning	Pre-GCSE English teacher	English evening classes and family learning in primary school and pre-school venue	Students are willing to travel for up to 25 miles to attend Surrey classes. Majority have strong sense of motivation.
2015–now	East Surrey College, Redhill	Dyslexia assessor	1:1 assessments and support	Acquainted with culture of the GCSE 'failures' who are being exposed to GCSE English/maths again, in equal importance if not more so to their main vocational subjects.

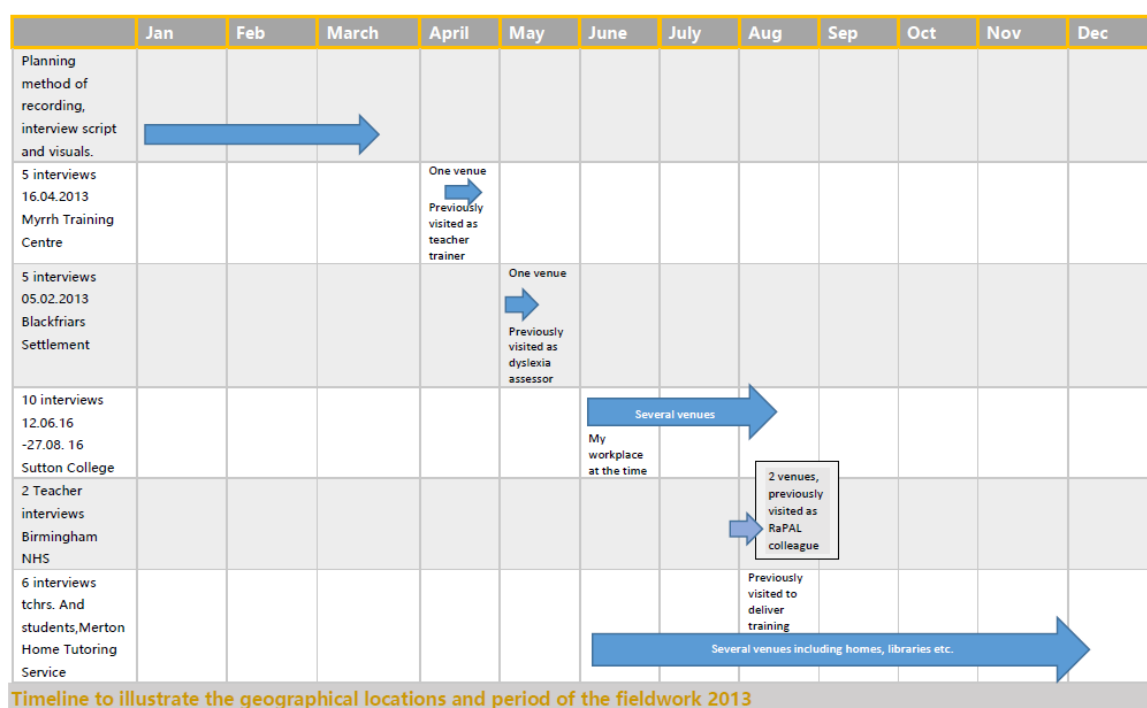
Note: Grey shading indicates the periods from which I extract ethnographic accounts for this thesis, both in the interviews and in my day-to-day contact with students.

Appendix 3

Fieldwork Timeline

In addition to the diagram below, there is an ongoing process of observation by myself as a teacher that extends to the present time.

Table A.2: Fieldwork timeline



Appendix 4

Interview Questions and Visuals

4th edition: 5 June 2013

(a) Interview questions

Section 1

1. When did you come to England?
2. Do you have children (or grandchildren, brothers/sisters?)
3. How long have been learning English?
4. Did you study English in your home country?
5. How does English help you in your everyday life? Do you find it easier to shop, take children to school?
6. What do you like most about the English classes – social, content, effect on rest of your life, improvements in your writing, reading, speaking and following others?
7. What do you remember that you enjoy in class?
8. What is the problem with not learning English?
9. Do you notice changes in what you do and think outside your English class because you are more aware of your own abilities? Do you find you are more confident in other parts of your life?
10. Are you sorry that you didn't learn more before?
11. Do you prefer to study English on your own at home/at library or in a learning centre?
12. What do you learn that is important to you?

Section 2

- 1) Do you like being a student?
- 2) Why do you think that is so? Will you continue to be student for a long time?
- 3) How long do you think you will be learning for?
- 4) Do you look forward to meeting other learners?

Section 3

- 1) Look at visuals [SF: item (a)] and identify which are important in your life.
- 2) What kind of literacy is important to you? Texting or formal work skilled literacy?
Any family traditions where literacy is important? [SF: items (b)].
- 3) Do you have any books or special family pictures or papers at home which you would like to understand better through the education you are involved in at the moment?
- 4) Is reading something you like doing and are you able to do more at the moment?
- 5) Do you think you understand the process of writing, any words or letters, better?
Or does it still seem a mystery to you? If so why and if not, why not?
- 6) Is there any kind of writing that you enjoy – such as expressing yourself or writing about your own experiences?
- 7) Is there something you would like to do more of in class?
- 8) What do you hope to do with your literacy skills in the future?

Section 4

- 1) Is there any item in the library, home that is particularly important to you when you learn?
- 2) Are there any books, exercises, websites which you enjoy especially?
- 3) Is there anyone who uses books and computers who is a role model for you?

Section 5

I would like you to read what I include in my research about you. Do you mind giving me your home address? Or e mail address?

Thank you for agreeing to do this research.

(b) Visual prompts used in questions about everyday literacies





YH3-1318363 [RM] © www.visualphotos.com





www.shutterstock.com · 41914783



© Chud Tsankov
Acclaim Images.com
0521-1012-0921-2200

Appendix 5

Original Learning Lives Poster

Figure A.2: Original Learning Lives poster

Life stories and life long learning

Why policy should be broader

Project: Learning Lives: Learning, Identity and Agency in the Life Course
Director: Carl Beavis

Background

People learn throughout their lives in a variety of contexts and in many ways. Learning helps them to make sense of themselves as individuals and of their circumstances. They frequently express this understanding through a narrative that interprets their life.

Positive learning experiences can transform people's lives, helping them to cope with new circumstances, develop new skills and understandings and enhance their careers. But bad experiences can undermine their sense of worth and convince them that learning is not for them.

Government policy has increasingly restricted adult learning to employment requirements but research shows that this does not meet everyone's needs.

This project asked: what does learning mean in the lives of adults and what does it enable them to do?

Findings

Learning is ubiquitous in all stages of life and varies in significance and value.

Learning is complex and multi-faceted, and can only be understood in the context of relationships between people.

People can learn from their lives through the stories they tell about them. This is important for their sense of identity and ability to act independently.

Implications

Broad and varied opportunities for learning should be available throughout the life course, and should be underpinned by accessible information, advice and guidance.

Support for learning includes but goes far beyond teaching. Good support requires adaptation to personal circumstances and situations, and the building of valued relationships.

There is no ready-made curriculum for narrative learning. Prescriptive modes do not help people to construct their own identity in narrative form.

Key points

Learning is valuable because it can

- Help people with the process of routine living.
- Help people adjust to changed circumstances.
- Provide knowledge and skills.
- Help people to develop their own identity and take greater control of their lives.

To improve learning the following are needed:

- Improved provision of education and training.
- Personal support for the learner.
- Improved learning opportunities in the workplace and the local community.
- Provision of opportunities to reflect about our life histories.

Understanding our lives

Our sense of identity develops throughout our life as we experience changing circumstances and events, such as a new job, children leaving home or retirement. We understand ourselves and our situation through self-reflection, from which we construct a meaningful narrative explaining the trajectory of our life.

Because stories and story-telling are important vehicles for learning from one's life, such narratives help us to build our sense of identity. This in turn influences the degree to which we feel we can take control and direct our lives. Learning, therefore, has a value and significance beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

The capacity to learn from one's life is not fixed but can be developed. Social opportunities for telling one's life story are important for practising and improving our understanding of ourselves. Support for this process goes beyond good teaching – it must adapt to personal circumstances and situations and build valued relationships.

Identity and participation

Our sense of identity influences our willingness to participate in lifelong learning. This depends on our own disposition, our circumstances and the relationships we have with people in the family, the community and at work.

Participation in learning is influenced by prior learning, employment, gender, age, place and social class. We also learn from other people's experience. For example, social status at age 14 and mothers' and fathers' education and work histories affect participation.

Successful learning increases people's self-confidence, but when things are too difficult or they cannot cope, their self-confidence is damaged. Moreover, individuals differ in their judgements of what counts as good or worthwhile learning.

They are more likely to participate if they have come to see learning as a useful and constructive part of their lives and if they see the opportunities presented as valuable to them as individuals.

Supporting participation

A high level of involvement in learning can lead to a strong and positive sense of identity. And for such people, participation in part-time education and training is a long term process, not a quick fix.

Developing such a level of participation requires support which is both formal (e.g. career guidance, workplace mentoring, tutoring) and informal (e.g. friends, colleagues, family, local community). It also requires varied learning opportunities throughout people's lives, both in the workplace and in the local community.

Lifelong involvement is not achieved solely by short courses for employability. Nor are people always ready to progress further up the qualifications ladder. Participation is therefore likely to be hindered by policies which focus on short course content acquisition while removing public funding from equivalent or lower qualifications.

Policies for lifelong learning should take account of the broad range of ways and circumstances in which people learn and provide access to information, advice and guidance throughout their lives.


The research

The Learning Lives project took a biographical approach, focusing on individual adults and their learning biographies.


Over 500 interviews with 117 people aged between 25 and 84 were carried out over three years, resulting in detailed individual case studies.

In addition, data from 15 waves of the annual British Household Panel Survey of 5,500 representative households was used to examine participation in relation to nation, class, place, gender, age and disability.


More information from: www.learninglives.org



“Life stories play a crucial role in the articulation of a sense of self”



www.tlrp.org



Source: learninglives.org (website now defunct)

Appendix 6

Consent Form Template

Consent Form

To: Sarah Freeman
Subject: Research Interview

Read the consent boxes below and tick if you are happy to participate. Thank you!	
I am happy to be involved in the Study on Literacy Practices and be interviewed by Sarah Freeman and that the interview be recorded on tape. I have read the information sheet provided about the project and I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am aware that photographs may be taken during the interview or as a result of some of the discussions we have during the interview. I am happy that these photographs may be used but only after I have seen them and agreed that the photos chosen may be used.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name _____ Please give one or more contact details below: Contact phone no. _____ Signed..... Date..... (participant)	
Name _____ (Representative of researcher) date _____ <i>(person taking consent if different from lead researcher – To be signed and dated in presence of the participant)</i>	
signed..... date..... (Sarah Freeman, Researcher)	

Appendix 7

Interview Questions for Teachers (2013)

Section 1: Your role as an English teacher

1. How long have you been a FS teacher and before that English/AL teacher?
2. What type of English are you teaching at present? Are your learners working towards vocational qualifications?
3. How has your role changed over the years you have been teaching?
4. Do your learners come to your class voluntarily or is part of an overall package which means they have to do English qualifications/courses?
5. What do you find you have been able to achieve within the remit you are set?
6. What is your current conception of yourself as a teacher? Do you find that you achieve satisfaction from teaching literacy or any other subject to adults? Why is this?
7. Could you describe how your role as a teacher sits in your overall view of your life – practically, philosophically or metaphorically?
8. What are your own criteria at the present time for judging your own achievements?
9. Do you consider you have as much control in your promotion of literacy skills as you would like to have?
10. Yes – what enables this?/No – what prevents this?
11. Has your training enabled you to develop this control? (Initial Teacher Training and in-service training)

Section 2: The curriculum

1. Did you welcome the SfL curriculum for Literacy (Maths & ESOL)?
2. Do you consider that anything important is missing from the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum?
3. Do you consider that anything important is missing from the FS English standards?
4. Will the literacy you teach help your learners to gain more confidence in their everyday interaction with literacy practices? Or are they limited in some way?

Section 3: The learners

1. Do learners feed back to you with genuine comments about what they are learning?
2. Is the environment you teach in conducive to learning? If so describe the setting. If not how would you like to improve the setting if you could?
3. If you were a learner in your own class what do you think you would value the most about your course? What would you enjoy most about your course? What (give one or two examples only) would you know was going to be helpful to you in your everyday life?

Section 4: Literacies in 2013

1. These are the visuals I have been asking learners about. Do you think they are relevant to the teaching we do?
2. Which specific literacy skills do your learners need?
3. The Skills for Life curriculum has very little reference to use of computer other than in Access for All – do computers play a minor role in your classroom?
4. Do you believe that social networking skills such as use of Facebook, Twitter, online forums, e-mailing could be paid more attention in Adult Literacy contexts?

Section 5: Additional questions (9 August 2013)

1. How do you deal with constant change?
2. Do you consider that your learners achieve informal learning in your classes. If so what do you think they take away from the class apart from learning for the FS exams?

Section 6: Further comments

Thank you for answering the questions I have brought.

Is there anything further you would like to add about your years of teaching literacy students, or about their experience of learning?

Appendix 8

Master List Interviewees

Table A.3: Master list interviewees

No.	Student (not real names)	Length	Date/time	Training centre based in
(1)	Darren	35'24"	16/04/2013 09:35	Myrrh Education Ltd Training Centre, Brass Tacks Centre, 298–300 Brixton Hill, London SW2 1HT (multi-ethnic intake from immediate South London area). Students from embedded literacy course. Computer use is available
(2)	Mubin	13'14"	16/04/2013 10:25	Ditto
(3)	Elwin	24'09"	16/04/2013 10:45	Ditto
(4)	Jade	14'38"	16/04/2013 11:19	Ditto
(5)	Jasmine	18'03"	16/04/2013 11:36	Ditto
(6)	Samira	20'56"	02/05/2013 11:40	Blackfriars Settlement, 1 Rushworth St, London SE1 0RB
(7)	Komala	16'58"	02/05/2013 12:03	(Students live locally and represent a wide range of different ethnic groups)
(8)	Nadiya	29'44"	02/05/2013 13:01	Computer courses are also on offer to these students
(9)	Parmita	08'50"	02/05/2013 14:22	Ditto
(10)	Abiba	32'43"	02/05/2013 15:53	Ditto
(11)	Grace	28'48"	06/06/2013 10:50	MHTS, 1:1 libraries and homes
(12)	Karen	22'51"	12/06/2013 12:09	Entry 2/3 class, Sutton Adult Education College. Students
(13)	Gillian	38'23"	12/06/2013 12:58	drawn from wide catchment area; mostly unemployed. Computers used in classes
(14)	Patrick and Terry	61'22"	17/06/2013 14:46	Functional Skills English
(15)	Sandra	40'38"	25/06/2013 12:58	Ditto
(16)	Dorette and Esther	33'30"	26/06/2013 11:55	Ditto
(17)	Najma	24'44"	02/07/2013 10:04	MHTS – see above; serves Tooting, Mitcham etc.
(18)	Leanne TEACHER	31'59"	01/08/2013 15:31	Birmingham NHS – key skills/essential skills trainer/assessor, staff training
(19)	Paula TEACHER	36'35"	01/08/2013 17:13	Birmingham NHS – <i>Skills for Life</i> trainer, staff training

(20)	Jane TEACHER	55'42"	09/08/2013 13:34	Sutton Adult Education College; literacy teacher
(21)	Gyaana	47'31"	23/08/2013 14:49	Sutton College, ESOL student 1990–2013, language, computers and literacy
(22)	Ray	50'23"	27/08/2013 18:55	Sutton College, English 1st language student, 2003–13 (various courses)
(23)	Fiona TEACHER	42'20"	16/10/2013 11:52	MHVTS – see above; English language teaching background
(24)	Julia ORGANISER	47'04"	04/10/2013 14:33	Ditto
(25)	Lucy ORGANISER	54'48"	05/12/2013 12:17	Ditto
(26)	Farida	21'00"	26/09/2013 13:25	Ditto; young Afghan mother

26 interviews;
28 interviewees

Notes:

1. All interviewees were learners, unless otherwise indicated.
2. Interviewees conducted by Sarah Freeman from April–September 2013.
3. Colour-coding key:

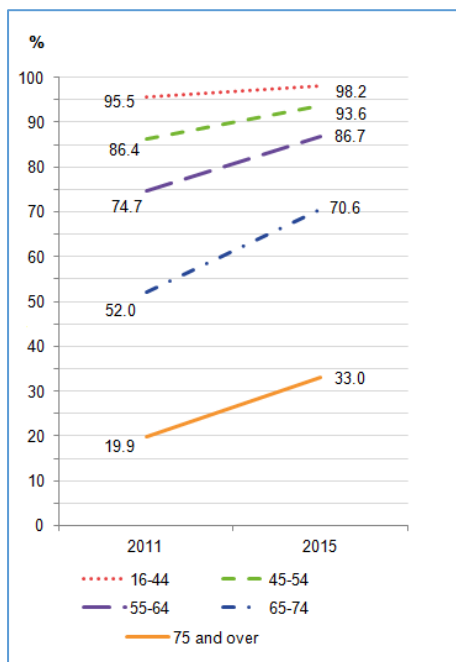


Appendix 9

Recent Internet Users by Age Group

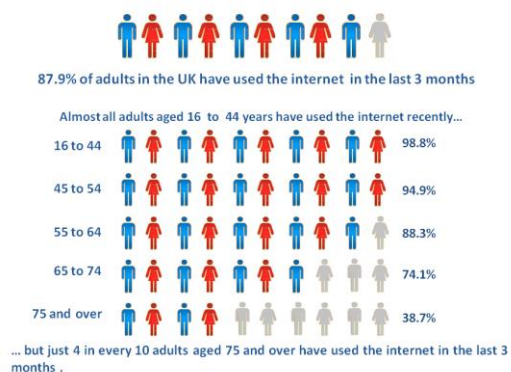
In 2016, almost all adults aged 16 to 24 and 25 to 34 years were recent internet users (99.2% and 98.9% respectively).

Figure A.3: Recent internet users by age group, UK, 2016 (graph)



Source: Office for National Statistics, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2016>.

Figure A.4: Recent internet users by age group, UK, 2016 (infographic)



Appendix 10

Four Aspects Crucial for Linking Learning and Lives

Figure A.5: Four aspects crucial for linking learning and lives

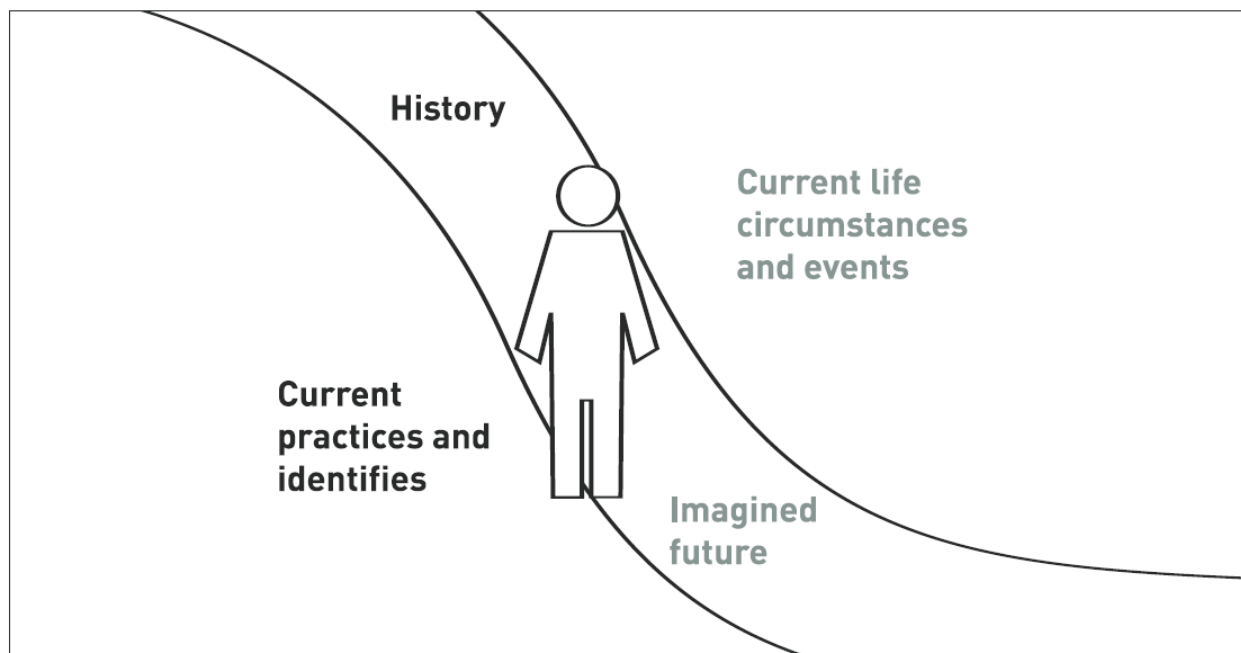


Figure 1. Four aspects crucial for linking learning and lives.

Source: Barton et al. (2006:3).