



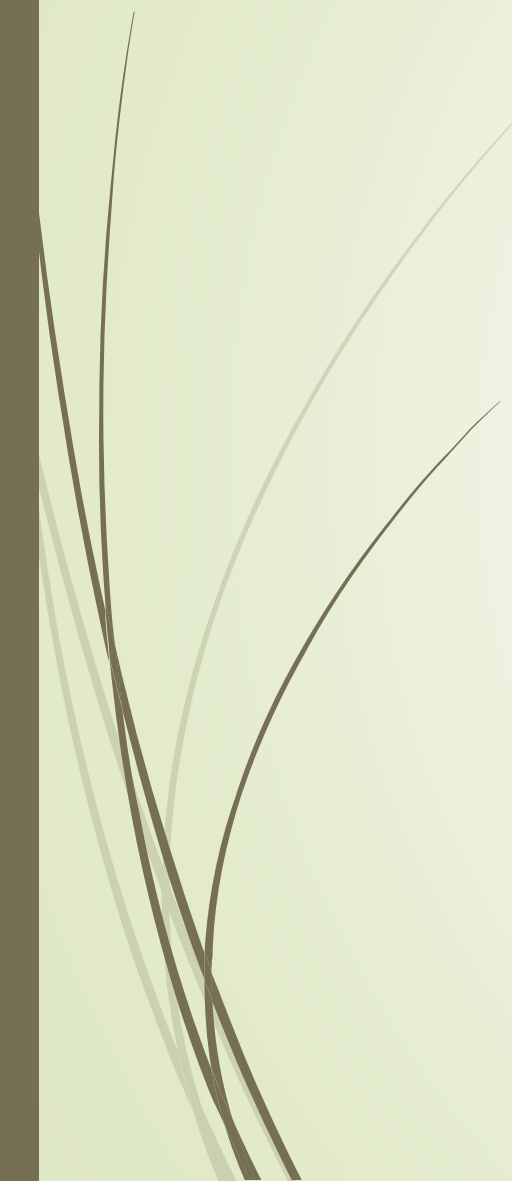
Hope and identity in ESOL: Boosting ESOL learners' language learning and integration trajectories

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Overview

- Background to doctoral research project
 - ESOL learner participants in research project
 - Findings: What is important for ESOL learners' language learning and integration trajectories?
 - Findings: The 'Catch-22' of language learning and integration
 - Findings: How ESOL learners' experiences outside and inside the classroom affect their language learning
 - Hope and identity in ESOL
 - Exploring hope and identity with ESOL teachers
 - Implications and recommendations for ESOL.
- 



PhD Study: *'Here is a long way'*. Language learning, integration and identity: a mixed methods exploration of ESOL learners' trajectories



- Arose from 15 years' experience of teaching ESOL to learners with diverse experiences, facing a range of issues, and small scale research projects
- Seek **the views of ESOL learners** on their experiences and priorities for living in Britain
- Improve understanding of the **barriers and facilitators** migrants and refugees face to both **learning English and integration**
- Explore how social context and learners' lives **outside the classroom** can **shape** their **language learning**
- Provide a counterpoint to popular and political discourse that individualises responsibility for societal 'problems' of integration and ignores disadvantage and discrimination experienced by migrants and refugees.

Identity and ESOL learners

- **Identity:** 'how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future' (Norton 2000 p5).
- ESOL learners are often represented in negative ways in media and political discussions
- How others see us can impact on our sense of self and our experiences.



Suella Braverman: "There are 100 million people around the world who could qualify for protection under our current laws. Let's be clear. They are coming here."

Independent 9 March 2023

"I've stopped speaking in Spanish on the streets after I was shouted at on a bus after Brexit"

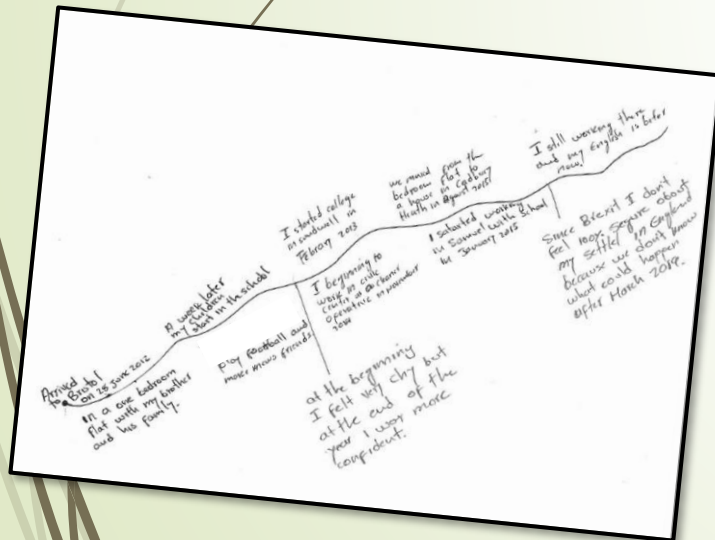
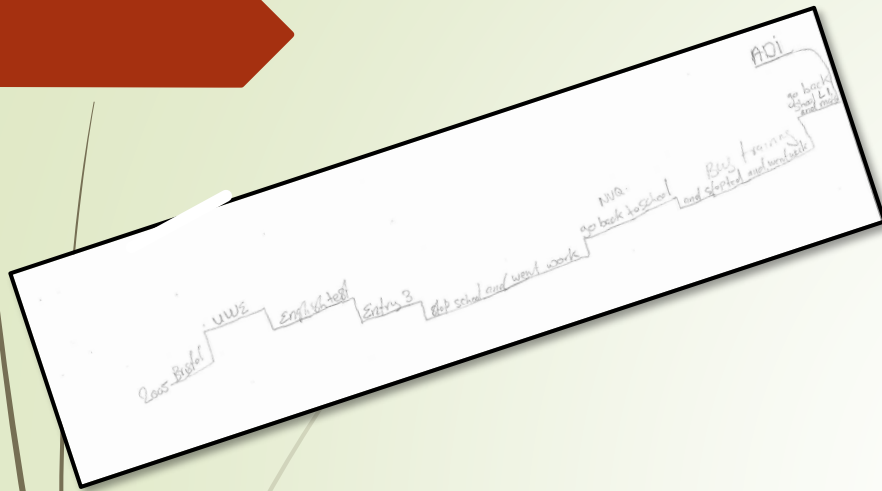
07.07.16 - London, United Kingdom - eldiario.es



Devaluing and 'othering' of multilingualism

- ▶ David Cameron: not speaking English could make people more vulnerable to 'the extremist message that comes from Daesh' (BBC News 2016)
- ▶ 'I want everybody who comes here and makes their lives here to be , and to feel, British – that's the most important thing – and to learn English. And too often there are parts of our country, parts of London and other cities as well, where English is not spoken by some people as their first language and that needs to be changed' (Johnson 2019 in Conservative leadership campaign).

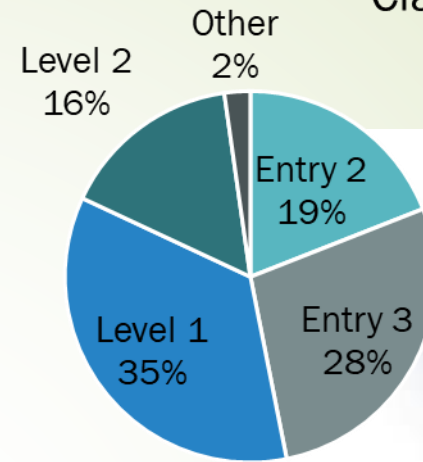
Longitudinal timeline interviews



- ▶ 14 participants in adult education setting in Bristol
- ▶ 8 women and 6 men, aged 23-46
- ▶ 13 different countries of birth: Iraq (Kurdish), Albania (x2), Ghana, Latvia, Iraq, Taiwan, Sudan, Somalia, Somaliland, Colombia, Iraqi Kurdistan, Pakistan, China.
- ▶ Time in the UK: 18 months -16 years.
- ▶ Range of family statuses, prior educational attainment and immigration backgrounds/ statuses.
- ▶ Between November 2017 and July 2018:
 - ▶ 8 participants - 3 interviews
 - ▶ 2 participants - 2 interviews
 - ▶ 4 participants - 1 interview
- ▶ Timeline started in first interview, referred to and added to in subsequent encounters, exploration of participants' language learning and integration trajectories/stories- past, present and future
- ▶ Other tools: photo elicitation, short vignettes, prompt cards

ESOL learner questionnaire

Class levels



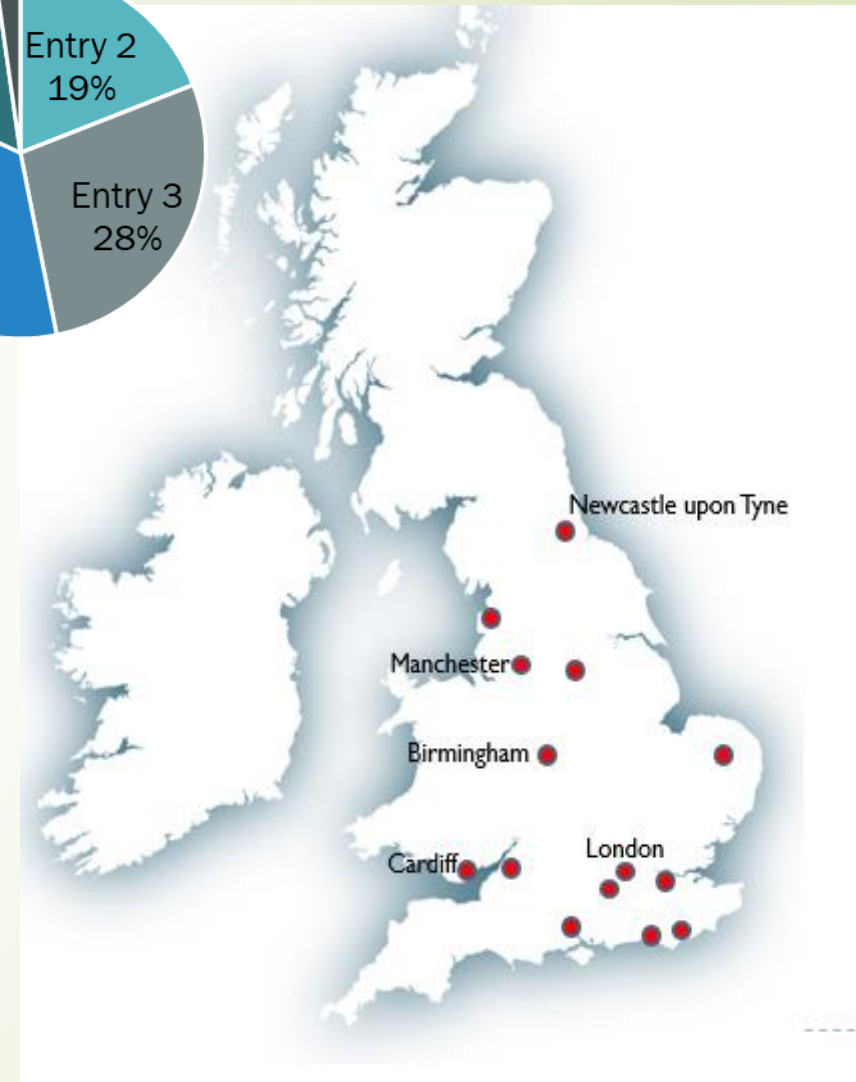
First questionnaire: 409 participants, 150 completed follow up

Female 73%, male 27%, 'other' 0.5%, aged between 19 -71, born in 71 different countries

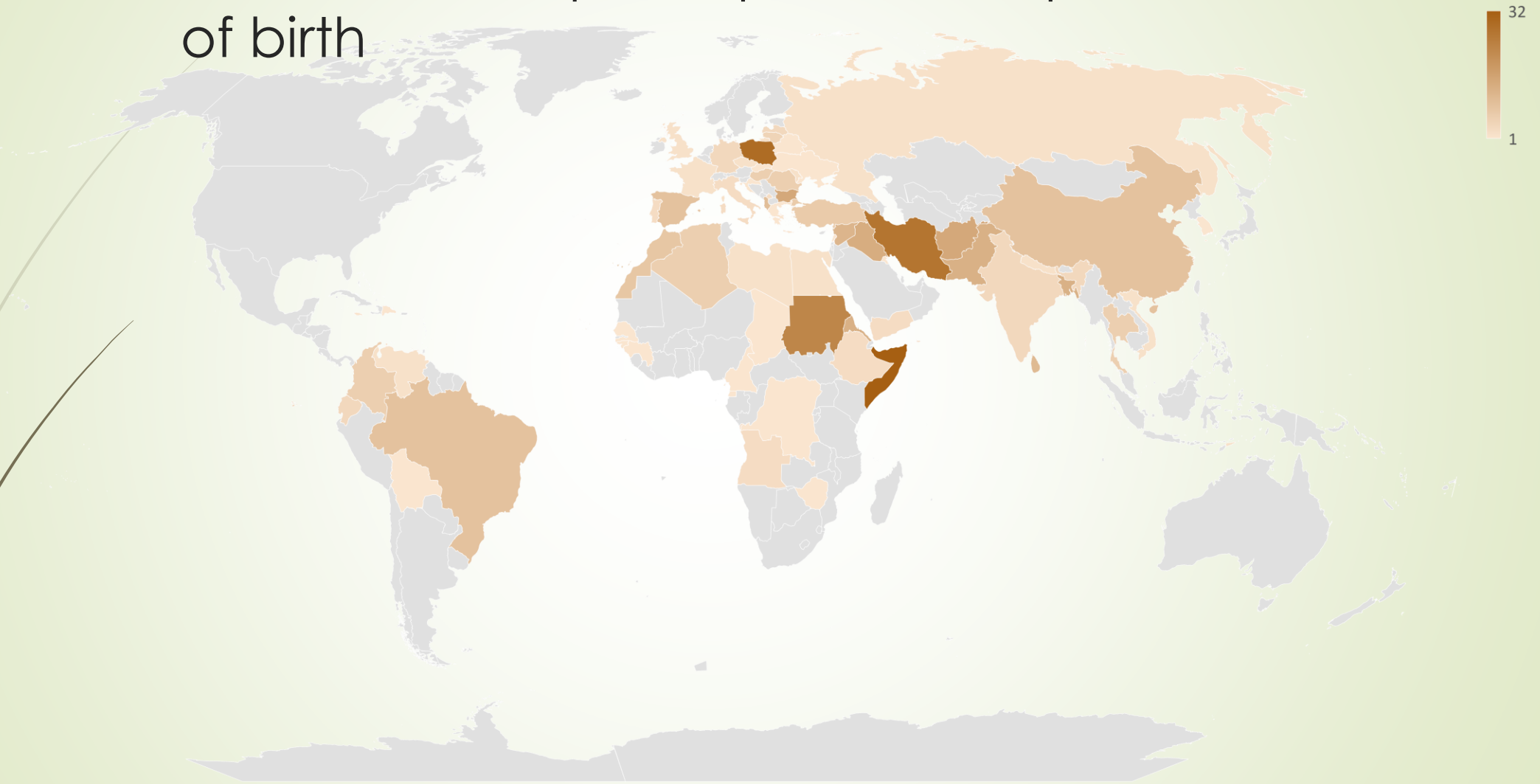
Online and paper based


Administered via ESOL teachers to 43 classes in England and Wales

Questions on: English learning and skills; important things for a good life in Britain; experiences and perceptions of various aspects of life in Britain



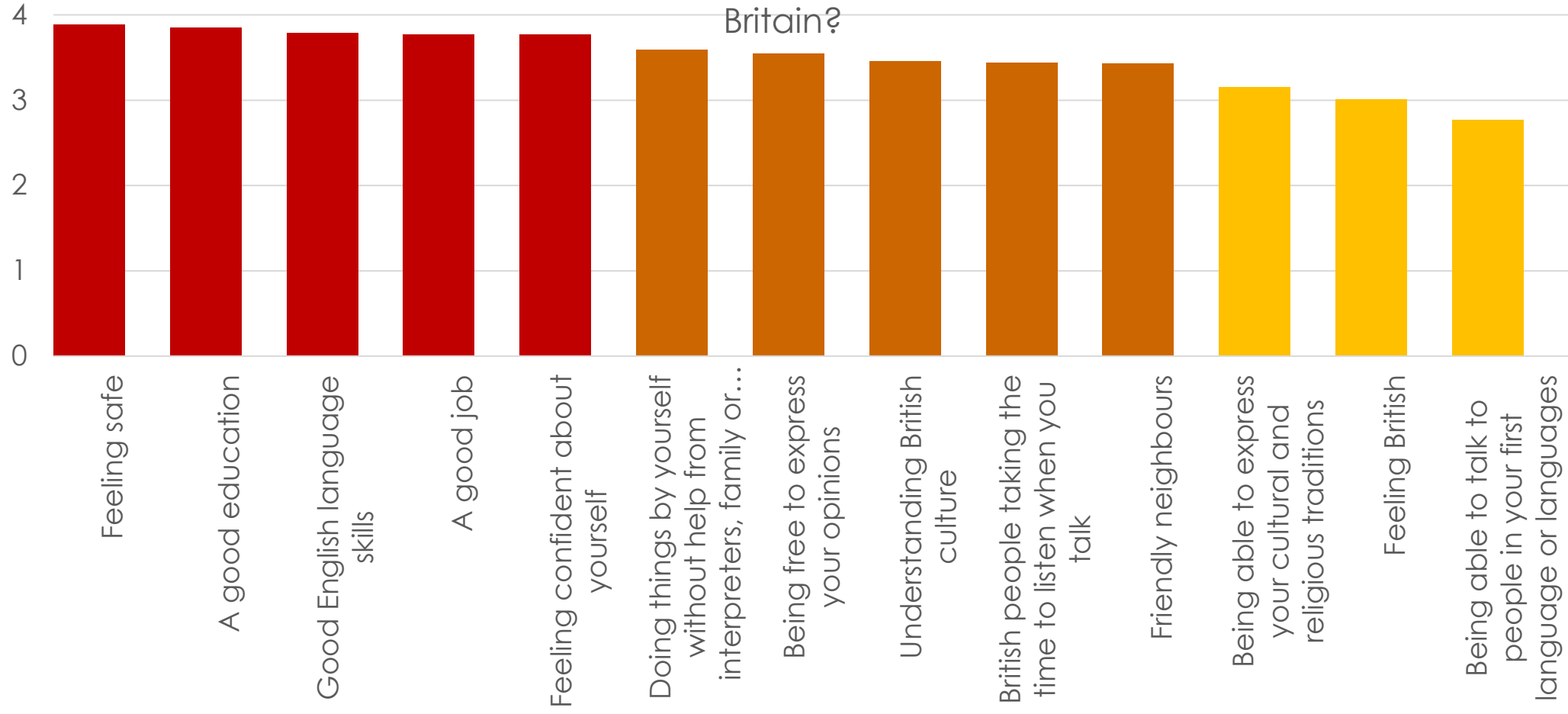
Questionnaire participants: 71 reported countries of birth





What is important for ESOL learners' language learning and integration trajectories?

Questionnaire: How important are these things for having a good life in Britain?





What is important for ESOL learners' language learning and integration trajectories?

Combined findings from interviews and questionnaires

- English proficiency very important to ESOL learners, strong theme throughout interviewees' discussions
- **Wellbeing** (safety, stability, confidence and independence), **employment** and **education** may be **just as important** as English proficiency for ESOL learners
- Findings diverge somewhat from the political focus on the social and cultural practices of migrants and refugees.
- Political and public discourse on migrants and refugees is counter-productive to advancing their lives in Britain



The “Catch 22” of language learning and integration

- English proficiency is important for settling and thriving in Britain, but positive integration experiences are needed to facilitate progress in language learning (especially well-being, safe and secure standards of living, good employment, interactions with other members of society)
- This Catch-22 is influenced by ESOL learners’ identity positions i.e. how learners see themselves and the ways in which they are seen by others
- Societal discourses and attitudes affect ESOL learners’ experiences... We will now examine examples (NB I am focusing on negative experiences here!).



Ada

I was catching a bus with my kid. One old man, I think he really hate the Chinese. He was shouting at us in the bus... and I feel really embarrassed because I do not respond to what he say. I meet the old man a few times and he still keep talking... 'Chinese people out of this country' ... I don't understand why people still treat us like this.



Anna

I know people don't like listening you to speak in your language. All the time I try to, how can I say, I don't speak aloud with someone who talks my language, or with my kids ... different people, they don't like listening you, hearing you speaking different languages. I know that, we can understand the look in her face or how they, signs or... It's not difficult to understand.

Fatmira




I had problem at my son's school. There was an ice cream van there and everybody was waiting in the queue, [...] one lady come before me, and my son said 'mummy she was behind us', and she knew I can't speak English and I said 'excuse me' and she said 'go and learn English and after come and talk to me'.

Questionnaire findings: participants with lower English proficiency were more likely to have recent experiences of harassment and were less likely to perceive British people to be friendly to migrants



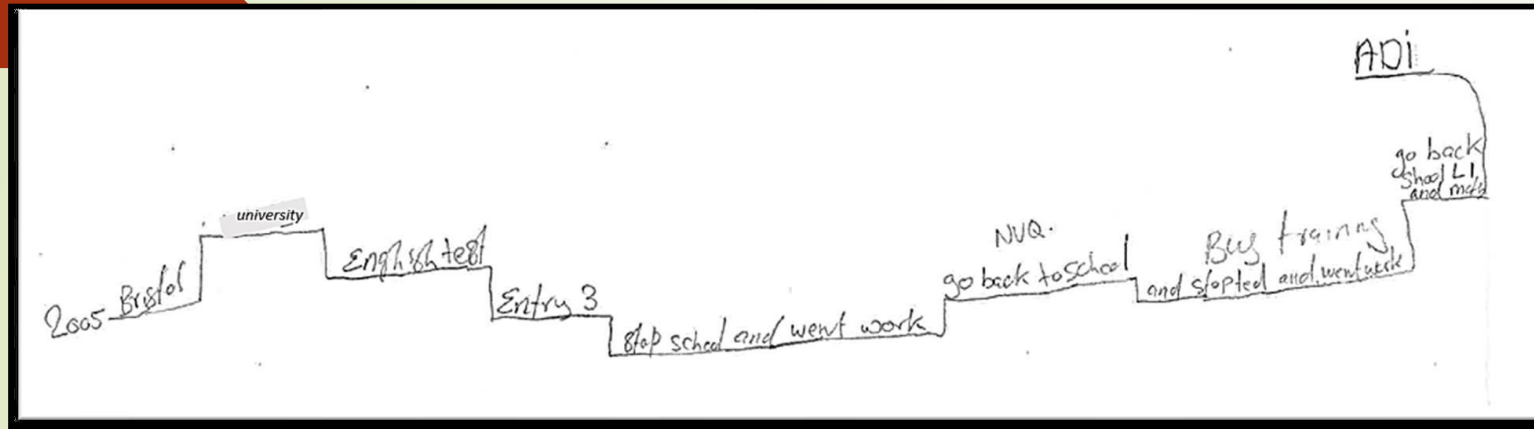
Ali

When you don't have status it's like you always, **like you [are] a second person**. I'm living here without anything. It's difficult when you don't have a paper to live in this country. [...] They stop you to work, and they not allow many thing ...I'm living here for 10 years but I couldn't do something I want to. I just live 10 years with nothing... if you don't have a paper, you can't mix with the society.



The identity positions which ESOL learners are assigned in society, and the ways in which they may internalise, or resist these identities, can impact on their ESOL learning.

Mustafa



My feeling was very high till I got those tests. And then **they send me back [to ESOL]**. So from that time, **I lost my motivation**, I was not expecting that to happen to me. I went the class with the people who just come in the country, or just come from Europe and start ... I shouldn't be same level these people, because I was higher level before when I was in Germany. **I suppose not to be [the same] level for those people who just come from Ethiopia, or just come from somewhere in the world.** I study **university 2005 in Germany. I supposed to be finished 2009**, I think. [...] I would have been qualified at that time, all the students was the same level as me had already finished long time ago.

Ranu

When I came to this country...I am illiterate person...

I know ... why someone want to learn, or why someone don't want to learn, actually. When I was Entry 2, Entry 3, many friends when coming to [the class] say 'I like to go to university' [...] I remember most of the time the teacher has told '**No, university is not possible for you**, look your age, it's very difficult'.. I know the person talk realistic but [...] it's not encourage.

[...] when I came to this college, I [was] like a child because I haven't any information about education or about the language ... or something, **but I had hope** which is not cost for anybody. **when they told me**, when I was lower Entry, **that [university] is not for you [it] quite make you disappointed.**

Identity and ESOL

- Being in **ESOL class** can potentially **reinforce negative “migrant” identities** e.g. not belonging, devalued skills and language
- The environment of **ESOL classes** may be at **odds with how learners see themselves**, or how they **wish to be seen**. It may not speak to their goals or **aspirations for the future**.
- They may have a strong desire to learn English, but they **may not feel invested** in that **particular class** or their learning at a **particular time**.
- **Mustafa**: wants to learn English, but ESOL reinforces identities at odds with his desired identity as a university educated person: “low-level ESOL learner”, or someone who *‘has just come into this country’* i.e. a migrant?
- **Ranu**: ESOL class reinforces his *‘illiterate’* identity, shuts down hope of attending university and becoming an “educated person”.





Ranu

'He show a video recording some person who come to this country and cannot speak English, **illiterate person, exactly like me. But they starting to learn English and finished Level 2 and have other degrees and [have] a good job...** When I sitting there, when I was very disappointed to learn, I told myself I have to do same like that. **I am one of the person who is not speak English,** and I have to continue and finish it. And **I think he same as me, why they can do it and I not learn?** I tell many people that video changed my mind and changed my life to continue until now.

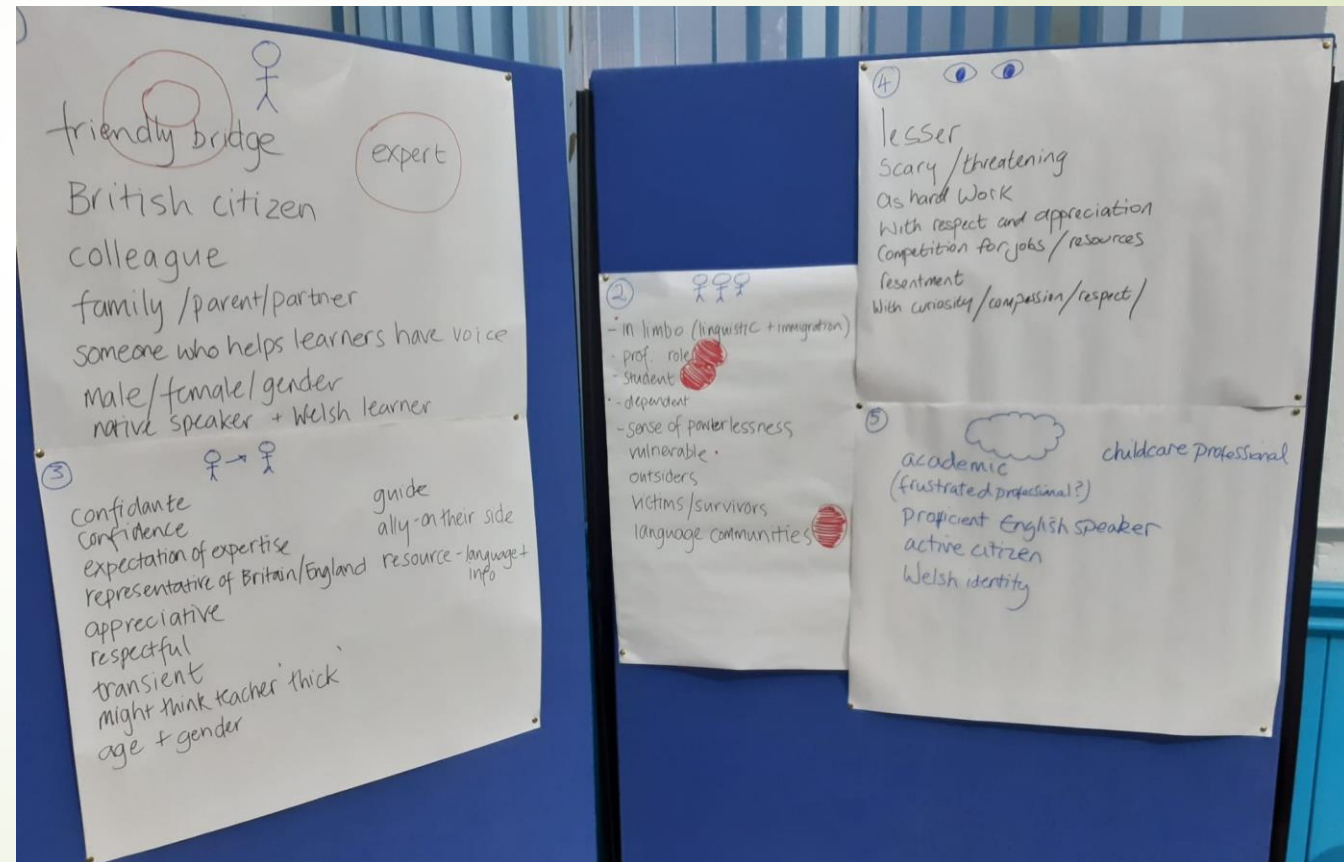
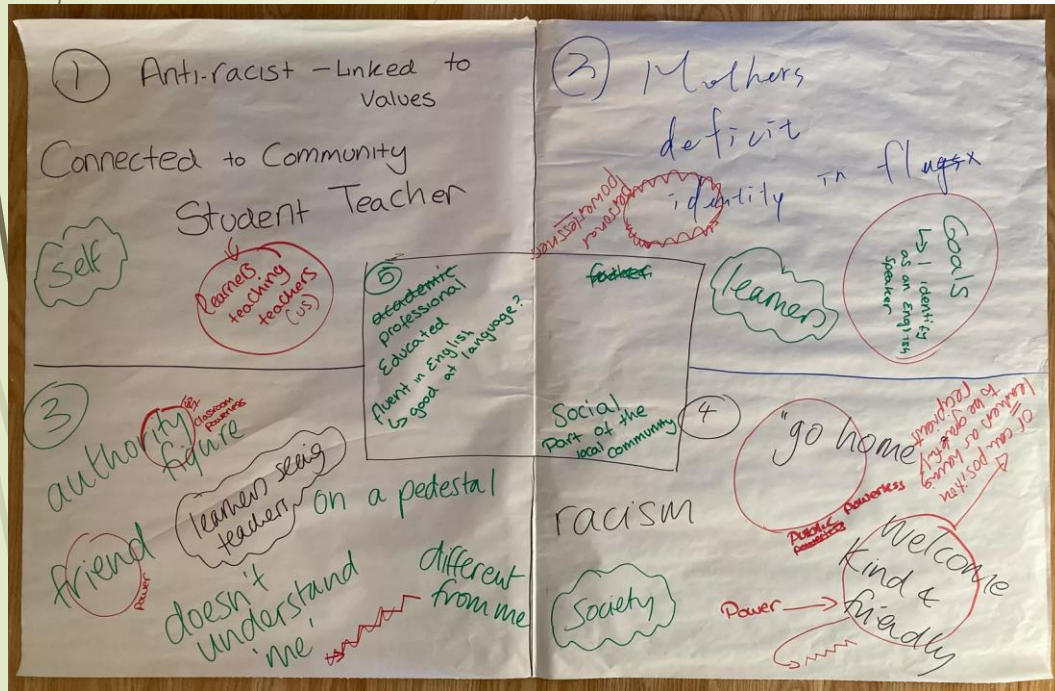
Now I'm Level 2 **and I think I'm one of the person who nearly finish ESOL course.** I speak to you at the moment, my language is not fluent but I proper understand what people say. **I am one of the person like them they show in the video.'**

The role of hope in ESOL

- Many ESOL learners face a **long and arduous journey** to improving their English and achieving their goals
- If **ESOL classes speak to their identities and desires**, this can help them feel **invested** in their learning.
- **Hope** enables us to **imagine the future and direct our actions towards** imagined futures and identities
- For ESOL learners, **hope** of achieving their goals and imagined identities **can help them sustain investment in learning for a long period.**



Exploring hope and identity in ESOL with teachers (ESOL teacher workshops, with Charly Ramuz)



Imagined community + positioning

- feeling shame that he is not at his hoped level in the eyes of his peers in Germany
- regrets he's not in his HE community.

Identity + Investment

- Prior positive experiences of learning enables him to continually access learning

ESOL class at odds with his identity

Power

- English test prevents him accessing university
- IELTS test (macro)
- family/work pressures/low skilled work.

Hope

I want to focus to get what I was friend has achieved/role model

Mustafa

- interactive positioning:
'I was not expecting that..'
- reflective:
'I shouldn't be the same level'
+ shame/getting behind

- desire to reclaim his identity as someone successful in education

Investment

family-work-study ⇒ stretched

power

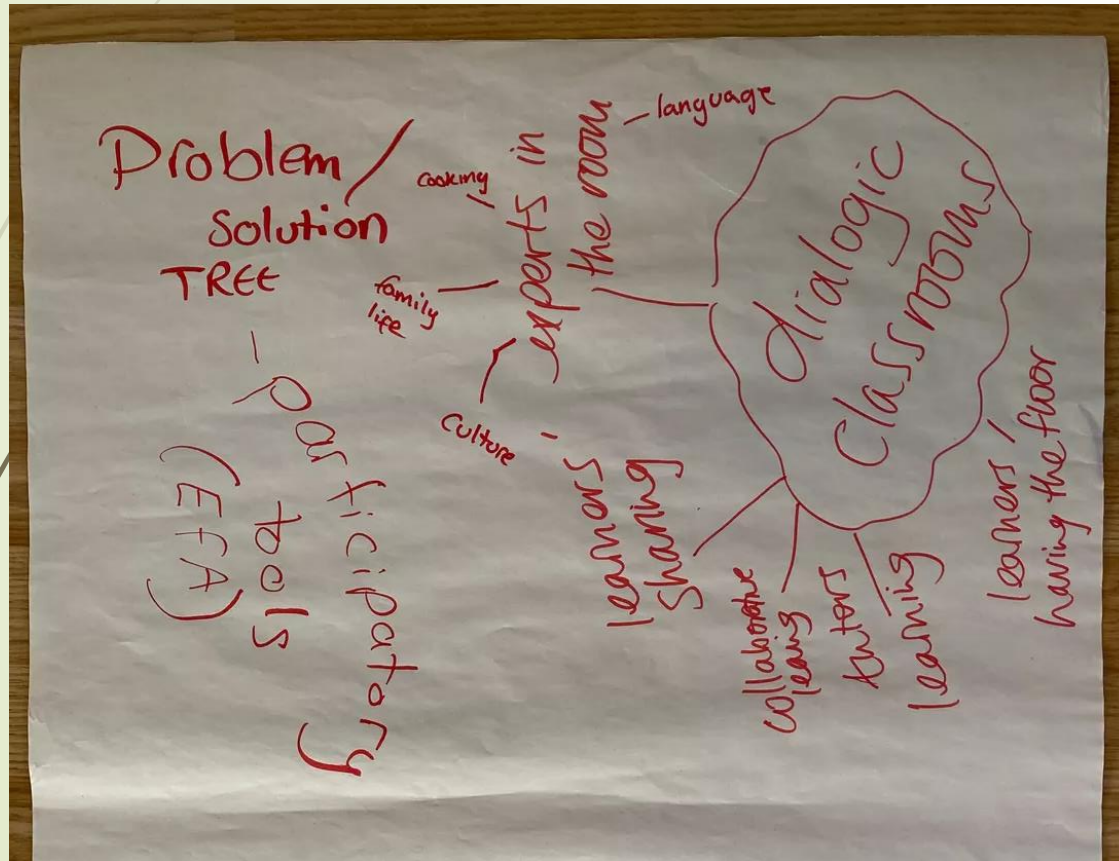
- gatekeepers to university
- * IELTS has the power to label you linguistically...

- work patterns vs. ESOL classes → shifts? daytime? → daytime...

identity

interactional positioning ⇒ ES

Implications and strategies for ESOL



- success stories from wide areas
- Success in its different forms
- review goals
- understanding different progression routes → IAG
- CPD/TT relating to IAG
- consider a participatory approach
- managers taking the lead on some of these areas eg.
~~teacher~~
- making wider ^{groups of} people more aware of ESOL → advocacy

- Workshops about hopes & aspirations among L^s

↓
tailoring learning to L^s goals (+)
support & provision

- building activities on what L^s already know / can do [hope!]
(+) expand on it

- Strategies to support independent learning (eg. "homework"?)

- creating appropriate resources?
(pre-entry Level aimed at adult L^s)

Actions / Strategies

1. Know your learners' motivations
2. Continual positive reinforcement
3. Use of mentors / 1:1 / XS / examples of inspiration
extra support
4. Increased vocational opportunities
5. Stepping stones to higher qualifications
6. Valid & relevant literacy tasks
engaging
7. Focussed IT support
8. Real world application
9. Networking / awareness of what's out there

Other ideas and actions for ESOL practice and provision

- ▶ Ls draw timelines, ask Ls about their lived experience
- ▶ Multilingual mapping – individual or class – to challenge ‘deficit model’
- ▶ Use info about Ls to inform lesson materials
- ▶ Seek out aspirational lesson content – materials, guest speakers, trips
- ▶ Assessments could incorporate aspects of learners’ existing skills
- ▶ Encourage Ls to identify the skills they have, promoting ‘competent’ identities
- ▶ Resist labelling learners
- ▶ Training activity to consider unconscious bias
- ▶ CPD on wider pedagogical approaches & how could be integrated into practice
- ▶ Interrogate the way IAG is approached – aspirational?
- ▶ IAG – visual source of how different exams/levels of English correspond so Ls can see where they are currently & how far need to go
- ▶ Use visual tools to show progress, with aspirational end-point
- ▶ Additional courses, as stepping stones with genuine progression

Implications for ESOL

- Classes should acknowledge learners' multiple identities and build on existing skills and multilingual repertoires for learning
- **ESOL should support learners' desired identities, goals and future aspirations**
- Reflect on our behaviour/ attitudes as practitioners: do we position learners in particular ways? (Unconsciously?)
- CPD/teacher training, awareness raising, challenging stereotyping, unconscious bias etc
- Consider the social context of language
- **Encourage hope**

Examples of ESOL approaches which can build on learner strength and address their needs:

- Multilingual pedagogy, translanguaging e.g. Our Languages Project
- Participatory ESOL e.g. English for Action, Reflect for ESOL
- Multimodal, digital and creative practices
- Cooke, M. and Peutrell, R. (eds), (2019) *Brokering Britain, educating citizens. Exploring ESOL and citizenship*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters
- Winstanley, B. & Cooke, M. (2016) *Emerging worlds: The participatory ESOL planning project*.
- *Etc...*



Diolch!