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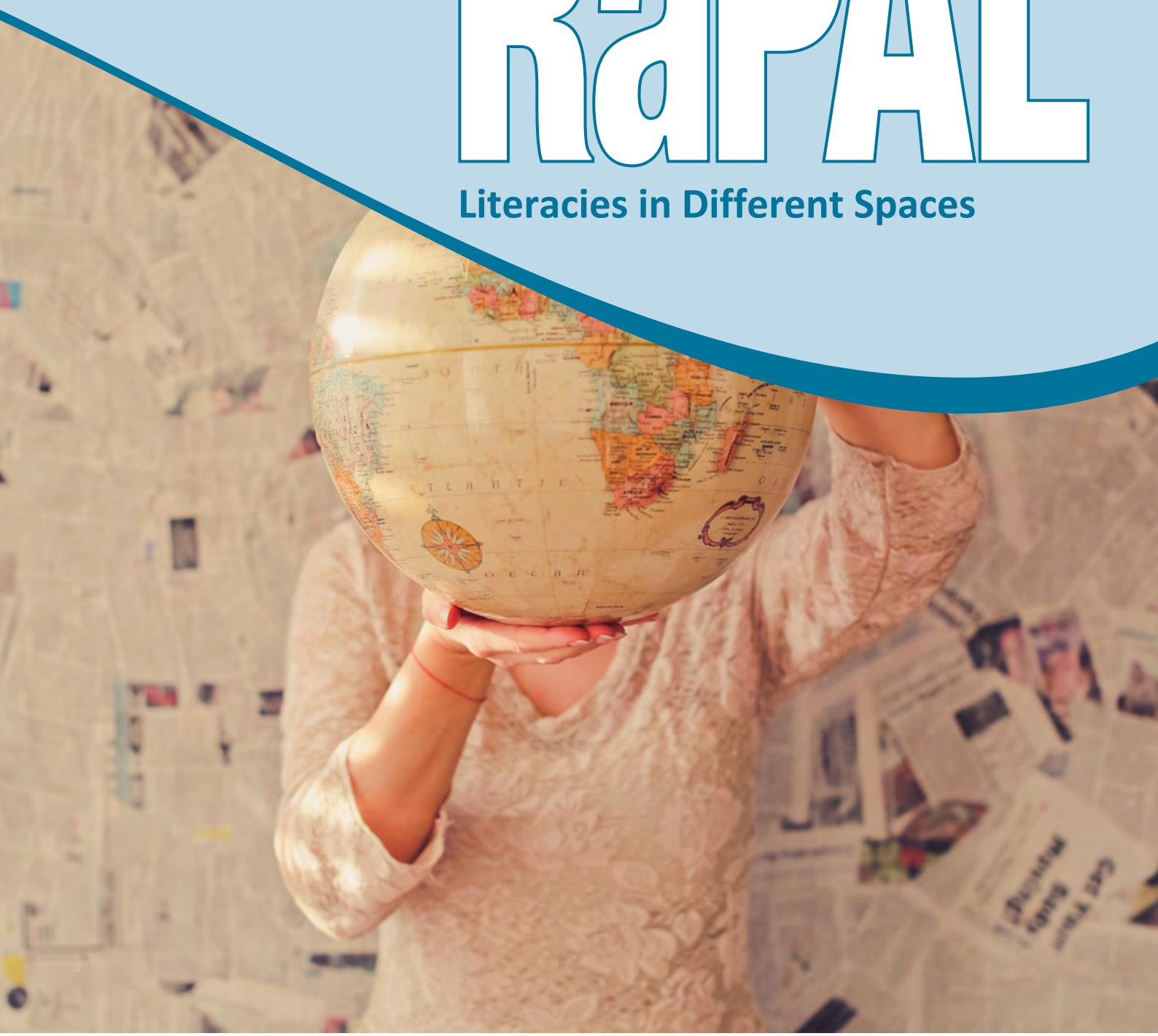
RaPAL

Literacies in Different Spaces



Journal

The Research and Practice in Adult Literacies Network

Welcome

Research and Practice in Adult Literacies (RaPAL) is the only UK-wide organisation that focusses on the role of literacies in adult life. We promote effective and innovative practices in adult literacies teaching, learning and research; and support adult literacies practitioners and researchers. We enjoy engaging in debates that touch on English language and literacy, numeracy and digital skills across homes, communities and workplaces. Through our members, digital journals, conferences and fora, policy and advocacy work, we are active in Europe and have international links.

What we do

- Encourage collaborative and reflective research
- Publish a journal three times a year
- Create networks by organising events (including an annual conference) to contribute to national debate
- Believe in democratic practices in adult literacies
- Emphasise the importance of social context in literacies
- Critique current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill
- Campaign for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives

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The editorial group for 2017-2018 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner-researchers: Gwyneth Allatt, Angela Cahill, Claire Collins, Vicky Duckworth, Sarah Freeman, Tara Furlong, Toni Lambe, Sue Lownsbrough, Jonathan Mann, Juliet McCaffery, Mary-Rose Puttick, Anne Reardon-James, Yvonne Spare and Rachel Stubley.

RaPAL members are involved in the compilation of the journal as editors, reviewers and referees.

We are a friendly group – open to new members and new ideas. Please contact us with any contributions (views, comments, reports and articles) and do not be put off if you are new to the field or if you have not written for a publication before. The journal is written by and for all learners, tutors/teachers and researchers who want to ask questions about this field of work. It does not matter if the questions have been asked before. We want to reflect the many voices within adult literacies work and to encourage debate.

Why not join us?

Further information can be found at our website: www.rapal.org.uk
The RaPAL Journal is also available from various subscription services: EBSCO, LMInfo and Prenax.
The RaPAL journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial group. The RaPAL journal was designed by Image Printing Company, Lumsdale, Matlock, Derbyshire

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Editorial

Mary-Rose Puttick, Angela Cahill & Anne Reardon-James

Welcome to Journal 95, our special summer 2018 edition, *Literacies in Different Spaces.* A central focus of this theme is the concept of spaces, the diverse interpretations of which have remained at the forefront of our planning for this edition.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a professor of indigenous education in New Zealand, in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies,* highlights the importance of spatial arrangements in everyday social practices. In Western classifications spaces include 'such notions as architectural space, physical space, psychological space, theoretical space and so forth', yet in some indigenous languages, Tuhiwai Smith notes, there is no related word for the concepts of time or space and rather these languages include an array of very precise terms for certain aspects of these concepts (2012: 50).

Contributions to this edition therefore explore how literacies are developed in diverse contexts and consider what spaces mean in the realities of different people: both inside and outside the classroom; and in both formal and non-formal educational contexts. In response to a rapidly changing political climate the area of *third* or *voluntary sector* educational provision continues to expand, playing a particularly important role in the lives of people who have English as an Additional Language who are often unable to access more formal educational provision for a variety of reasons. This context is a theme which runs strongly throughout the edition and contributions explore potentialities for creative and collaborative teaching practices across a spectrum of cultural and social literacies. The voluntary sector sits alongside more traditional, and equally important, adult and further education provision with innovative practice taking place in all.

We hope the pieces in this special edition will contribute to new perspectives on literacy practices, perhaps adding value to contexts which are currently undervalued. Moreover, we hope the pieces will provide some practical inspiration for teachers, practitioners, and students.

Structure of edition

Kirsty Morris Welsh's evocative piece opens Journal 95, which demonstrates the value of routines in the classroom to inspire learning, as well as highlighting an overall holistic perspective on teaching and learning practices. Following on from this we are delighted to include student contributor Liam Cleere's poem *Look at Me,* produced in response to a collaboration between an artist and Liam as part of a local Irish festival of music and art. Liam writes from the point of view of the chair, a decidedly different space. Pauline Murphy's unique and imaginative piece then brings forth the historical context of literacies in the age of Dickens to a modern context, focusing on the connection between somatic and textual literacies.

In the subsequent contribution Jenny Kiddie from Cardiff and Vale College talks to Anne Reardon-James about the college's Beacon award-winning Junior Apprenticeships programme. In its second

year, the scheme looks to take selected 14-16-year-olds out of the traditional classroom setting in school and offers an alternative vocational curriculum in a different space. This is followed by a contribution from Tara Kelly, Aoife McCormack and Stephen O'Brien who draw attention to the work of the Adult Literacy Organiser in promoting and managing adult literacy services under increasingly challenging and changing contexts in Ireland. The piece highlights innovative practice showcasing the authentic and inherent value of literacy work that is not always captured in hard data of the kind now being requested by funders.

Kieran Harrington's contribution reports on his ethnographic research, examining the use of English as a lingua franca by a community of 300 asylum seekers. Harrington describes the importance of finding a way to communicate, as a means to survival, when in a very different space. Using direct examples taken from his corpus analysis and conversation analysis, Harrington ultimately argues that migrants should play more of a role in their place of learning.

Both Sarah Foster's and Mary-Rose Puttick's pieces highlight the importance of ESOL and family literacy provision in informal voluntary spaces, both drawing on their pedagogical transitions from formal to informal contexts. Sarah shares a thoughtful insight into her experiences as a voluntary migrant who is now simultaneously experiencing new spaces alongside other migrants, thus blurring the traditional teaching and learning roles. Mary-Rose's article explores new potentialities for family literacy provision in the third sector by drawing on themes from related literature and her pedagogical autoethnographic reflections.

Following this, Peter Sheekey's article on *The Intercultural Storytelling Project* takes us to the kitchen of a community centre in Dublin, highlighting the use of storytelling practices as an integral contributor in the experiences of both social inclusion and cohesion for new and settled communities.

Finally, we offer a book review of the recently-published *Re-imagining Contested Communities: Connecting Rotherham Through Research*, edited by Campbell, Pahl, Pente and Rasool. Seeking to challenge negative perceptions and history of a Northern UK town, the authors assemble a plethora of ethnographic, community collaborative research from a wide variety of sources.

Note from the Journal Coordinator

Yvonne Spare

Yvonne can be contacted on journal@rapal.org.uk

Hello fellow RaPAL members

We hope you enjoy this, our Summer edition of the Journal. Looking forward to later in the year, our autumn edition will be on the subject of Collaboration and Connections which will be our conference edition. If you have any thoughts on articles that you would like to see in this edition, now is the time to let us know.

The next meeting of the editorial group will be on Saturday 1st September 2018 at UCL Institute of Education in London. During the day we make plans for next year 2018-19. This group is not just for experienced editors – we also welcome anyone who would like to gain experience by teaming up with one of our regular editors, or if you have ideas about the kind of things we could include or any other aspect of the Journals.

We feel that this face-to-face meeting is important, so we provide travel expenses and lunch for everyone. The meeting will start at 11.00 a.m. and finish around 3.00 p.m. and we hope to see as many people there as possible. If you are interested but would like to know more, please contact me on journal@rapal.org.uk for a chat at any time.

Any comments about this or other editions or ideas for future content can be sent to journal@rapal.org.uk and don't forget that most Journal editions contain articles by new writers. There are guidelines on our website on the Write for Us page and we offer as much support as you feel you need. We are also interested in hearing what you think about your Journal. There is a feedback section on the website so that you can comment on anything you have read in this or previous editions. Follow the link to our comments space at the bottom of the page, which needs the password that has been circulated with this edition. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Yvonne

Keeping the Coast Clear

Kirsty Morris Welsh

Kirsty Morris Welsh is a Functional Skills tutor in Sparkhill, Birmingham.

"Viking. North Utsire, South Utsire…"

On entering my classroom in the morning, the first thing my students hear is the shipping forecast.

It's worth stating from the outset that this broadcast – which anthropologist Kate Fox describes as an 'arcane, evocative and somehow deeply soothing meteorological mantra' – has no obvious place in the classroom. Nor is it preparation for some bizarre trivia quiz in which I ask the class to name all 31 coastal areas of the British Isles.

Although colleagues will occasionally enter the room and ask me with a bemused look if I'm going to sea, the learners themselves rarely, if ever, comment on my choice of ambient sound.

Instead, they treat it as part of a wider ritual. They recognise this as the window before the lesson begins, in which they can chat, read, discuss homework, seek me out to ask questions – or just enjoy a few moments of peace.

When the forecast ends and *News Briefing* starts, so does the lesson.

My motivation for having this ritual stems from my memories of a particular primary school classroom. As a trainee teacher returning to this setting to observe a friend's lessons, I was taken aback by the rush of nostalgia I experienced upon returning to that warm, reassuring world of bright colours, reward systems and routine. Occupying that space as a child automatically guarantees safety and comfort – regardless of what may be happening outside the classroom.

How do you recreate that atmosphere of security when you are faced not by 30 eight-year-olds, but by a room full of adult learners?

The answer is that you can still carve out that space.

When I initially moved into my classroom, it was obvious that this particular space had been a victim of neglect. The walls were mostly bare, adorned only with ancient staples and calcified Blu Tack from displays of yesteryear.

In my first few weeks, I covered the cupboard doors with images and quotations, asked for shelves to be repaired and furniture to be removed. I scrambled about on chairs and tables after everyone had gone home, violating numerous health and safety regulations as I created displays and hung posters. Invariably, these would have mysteriously disappeared the next day, removed by persons unknown – and so I would start from scratch in the morning, often aided by a student or two.

Eventually, the room lost its temporary feel. Students began to write and display reflective pieces about their lives and making it onto the wall quickly became an aspiration.

'If I write a poem over the weekend, will you put it on the wall?'

'Maybe…'

'What if it's really good? And proofread?'

'If it's really good and proofread, I'll laminate it.'

Something else I wanted to have in place at the start of term was a lending system for books and stationery. Over the summer, I scoured charity shops for reading material, and put together a box of pens and highlighters. These boxes are lifted from the cupboard and placed in the same position at the start of every lesson.

Providing learners with meaningful access to the tools they need to improve their literacy has been at the forefront of my mind throughout my first year of teaching. As Joshua T. Dickerson reminds us in his poem, *Cause I Ain't Got a Pencil*, having the equipment to aid learning may be the least of someone's worries; and as teachers, we can no more control what happens to our students outside of lessons than we can wind speed or visibility. Bereavement, miscarriage, divorce – these are all storms that adult learners may be weathering at any given moment. Some are recovering from illness, or being pestered for paperwork to prove their leave to remain.

Amidst the noise and confusion of day-to-day life, my goal is to cultivate a calm space in which the rules are simple: *This is the room where we learn English. There will always be books in the book box. There will always be pens in the pen box.* Unlike children, adults do not need to have these facts stated explicitly. Instead, they understand them through lived experience, and through the regularity of patterns and rituals.

In this way, a space for English is manifest and becomes a world which we inhabit for three to five hours a week. Everything is taken care of, so that ultimately all the students need to bring into the room with them is the right attitude. So many achieve this every day – and so many excel even when conditions are moderate, occasionally poor.

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LOOK AT ME

Liam Cleere

Liam has been attending the Adult Learning Scheme in Tipperary Education and Training Board for a number of years. In Summer 2017, Liam's tutor Marie Clancy informed him about the annual Clancy Brothers Festival of Music and Art in Carrick on Suir and encouraged him to write something for it. As part of the festival, local artists upcycled chairs and were paired with writers. Marie showed Liam a photo of the chair he was tasked with writing about. He started to write a story about the chair but struggled with it, as he says 'it just wasn't working out.' He was sitting in the car in the local supermarket car park when the idea for a poem came to him. He decided to write from the chair's perspective and by the time he got back home, he had the poem written. Liam has continued writing and this year he wrote a poem about a picture painted by one of the artists, which was read at the 2018 festival.

Pulling, pushing, bending, shaping me.
The craftsman's hands a blur.
A master of his trade,
With skill unmatched and father like care,
His finished piece soon stood there.

Pride of place in a room of glass,
To be warmed by the rays of the sun.
In full view of old Carrick-on-Suir
And the water ambling on,
As the weir appears as if by chance,
The heron does his sentry dance.
Morning coffee and afternoon tea,
All vie to sit on me.
Garden parties and birthday feasts,
Often a bed for the family beasts.

Centerpiece of children's games,
A princess carriage,
A mountain to climb,
A rocketship to the moon.
Maybe even a king's royal throne,
And a place to doze on a wet afternoon.

All these I was and many more,
Life for me was never a bore.

Years pass, children grow,
Styles change and people too.
House remodeled, I don't look right,
Too old fashioned for life today.
Take it out, get it away,
We don't need that silly old chair!

Given away and passed along,
No place for me to belong.
Battered and used and kicked around,
The back of a shed I was bound.
Unused, unwanted, UNLOVED,
Spiders falling from above,
Broken, dirty, covered in grime,
What a way to end my time.

A passing glance,
A further look,
A bargain made, deal is struck.
Something seen by the artist's eye.
Taken away, a good scrub,
Lots of time and hard work.
Imagination and artistic flair,
A transformation from that silly old chair.
Now I'm here for all to see,
And a heron stands sentry for me!

Literacy and its spaces

Pauline Murphy

Pauline Murphy is an adult literacy tutor with the Clare Adult Basic Education Service in Co. Clare. She has worked in adult literacy for the past 20 years and recently completed an MA in English at NUI Galway. Her master's thesis focused on literacies in the fiction of Charles Dickens.

If Charles Dickens were alive today, he would probably be an adult literacy tutor. Reading his novels recently, I was struck by the extent of literacy activity in his fiction. Gravestone inscriptions, letters, posters, wills, folk tales – these play significant roles in Dickens's novels and they are rooted in classic literacy environments – graveyards (not so classic, perhaps), offices, city streets and firesides. However, Dickens also constructs many unexpected sites of literacy activity – a forge (in Great Expectations), a London boatman's home (in Our Mutual Friend), and a circus (in Hard Times). These are diverse spaces because Dickens recognised diverse literacies. Like Dickens, adult literacy practitioners validate literacies beyond the privileged reading and writing system. In doing so, we interrogate literacy practices, 'problematizing,' as Brian Street says, 'what counts as literacy' (2003: 77). Dickens's exploration of somatic literacy and imaginative literacy is a particularly clear interrogation of what it means to be 'literate'. Moreover, reading his novels as an adult literacy tutor, I recognised that he was concerned with what Linden would call the 'mindbody unity' and what this space might look like in literacy practice (1994: 2).

Somatic education specialist, Paul Linden, defines somatic education as the 'field which examines the structure and function of the body as processes of lived experience, perception and consciousness' (1994: 1). Kristie S. Fleckenstein offers a similar definition of somatic literacy but refers specifically to the body's position in space, stating that '[s]omatic literacy concerns how we construct and participate in the world through our bodies and how we know the world as bodies positioned in specific sites' (2003: 79). This is a reminder that the body participates in all human activity, including textual literacy activity. People sit at desks, hold pens, hold books, or read text that is more distant from them in space - like calendars or posters. Fleckenstein argues that somatic literacy skills help people to 'conceptualize meanings as multi-sensual and as sited' (2003: 83). This would suggest that engaging the body in learning tasks is a valuable teaching method. In Great Expectations that mind-body integration involves Joe Gargery, a blacksmith. He acquires lyrical fluency when moving, literally or figuratively, in his forge. Despite low levels of textual literacy, Joe can 'write' well when he rings words out on a metaphorical anvil. Reciting the words he would like to engrave on his father's headstone, he says: 'Whatsume'er the failings on his part, remember reader he were that good in his hart' (1996: 47). He adds: 'I made it … my own self. I made it in a moment. It was like striking out a horseshoe complete, in a single blow' (1996: 47). Joe's comment links three types of literacy - somatic, imaginative and textual – and it suggests that when learning engages the mind and body through the senses and through movement, it is most effective.

Somatic literacy, then, is a valid literacy in itself and it can also support textual literacy. This can happen in unexpected ways as Dickens demonstrates in Our Mutual Friend. Gaffer Hexam, a

boatman in this novel, says that he cannot read or write, yet he has a preoccupation with police handbills. He gathers handbills that give details of bodies he has recovered from the River Thames (a common, if grisly, task in the 19th century). He methodically places the bills on the walls of his home. Hexam knows what they say because of his personal contact with the bodies and he knows which handbill is which, as he explains, 'I know 'em by their places on the wall' (2008: 22). Hexam applies awareness of environmental print conventions and excellent memorisation skills to his reading process but he also applies spatial awareness to his textual encounters. His own body's position in space in relation to surrounding objects gives Hexam some level of skill in his reading of the handbills. This means that competence in somatic literacy may help to evoke latent textual literacy skills.

Hard Times, a circus is the site of somatic literacy. Circus performers' art and livelihoods depend on their understanding and manipulation of their bodies and their highly attuned spatial awareness. The inflexible industrial environment of the novel fails to validate the somatic literacy skills of the circus performers. Adult literacy practitioners, however, actively seek out diverse literacies and find ways that these can help to engage learners in textual literacy as well. There is also a connection between creative movement and creative fiction in Hard Times. The only person who reads fiction, Sissy Jupe, is herself a circus girl. She reads The Arabian Nights to her father, recognising the therapeutic effect that storytelling has on his mind. This implies that there are sympathetic connections among the creative arts, connections that might be usefully exploited in adult literacy environments.

It seems that literacy teaching and learning can benefit from awareness of the relationship between text and spatial reasoning, the relationship between literacy and movement, and can benefit from encouraging an imaginative engagement with text and engagement with imaginative text. The classic image of a-person-writing is, perhaps, something like Johannes Vermeer's Lady Writing a Letter with her Maid – a painting that shows a well-to-do lady sitting at a table, bent over a page, writing. Similarly, the classic image of a-person-reading might show a man or a woman sitting, book (smart phone, iPad or Kindle) in hand, eyes fixed on the words. However, like Dickens, adult literacy practitioners push beyond these traditional images to recreate literacy and literacy environments. In adult literacy practice, for example, themed literacy classes are valued as favourable sites of learning; so cookery, football, gardening, sewing, and other mainly somatic based activities become pathways towards the acquisition of reading, writing (and numeracy) skills. Integrated literacy taps into learning abilities in ways that can make the learning experience more meaningful and successful. Adult literacy practitioners recognise that literacy (somatic, imaginative, textual or other) can happen in a kitchen or polytunnel, on a farm or on a football pitch. Under the heading, Somatic Literacy for Lifelong Wellness, Linden argues that people need competence 'in the operation of the mindbody unity' in order to achieve a sense of wellbeing in their lives (1994: 2). The benefits of facilitating this are not confined to education, training and employment but extend to all aspects of personal, interpersonal and social well-being.

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The Junior Apprenticeships project at Cardiff & Vale College, South Wales, UK

Jenny Kiddie and Anne Reardon-James

Jenny Kiddie, Achievement Coach and Essential Skills Wales Lecturer at Cardiff and Vale College, talks to colleague Anne Reardon-James, Essential Skills Project Leader, about this award-winning project.

Cardiff and Vale College Group Chief Executive Mike James knew not all young people are suited to the academic, classroom-based delivery that most schools offer and wanted to do something about it. He knew that the College could offer an alternative curriculum and so the Junior Apprenticeship Programme was born.

The first of its kind in Wales, it allows 14 to 16-year-olds the chance to attend college on a full-time basis on vocational pre-16 courses alongside Maths and English GCSEs. We have had 91 learners to date with a target of 143 for next year.

Designed to be meaningful for young people, it does not 'caretake', but aims to motivate learners to achieve and progress on to an apprenticeship and from there to a fulfilling career. For example, a large employer recently visited CAVC and interviewed Year 11 Catering students for potential traineeships. They were extremely impressed by the professionalism and passion of our junior apprentices and future prospects are extremely positive.

A junior apprentice's normal week consists of four hours of skills development in Year 10 in English and Maths – the rest of the timetable is vocational, with industry expert lecturers who deliver full apprenticeship programmes.

This year we were awarded the Beacon Award 2017-18 for Transition into Post-16 Education and Training, sponsored by the Skills and Education Group.

How long has it been running?

The provision is coming to the end of its second year and is evolving and expanding due to its popularity with schools in Cardiff and the Vale. The programme focuses on government key sector priorities of Hair & Beauty, Auto Mechanics, Construction, Public Service and Catering.

Who is involved?

A dedicated team of vocational lecturers, English and Maths skills tutors, combined with a skilled team of Learning Coaches and a Wellbeing Officer who are dedicated to meeting the challenging and behavioural needs of the students. The key to the success of the programme is teamwork - the Learning Coaches work alongside the vocational and skills tutors as a key link, communicating any and all underlying issues or concerns of the day. It is this structured approach that often provides the stability that many of the learners lack outside of the classroom which, for most of them, is a safe place in where they can engage with education for the first time.

A typical day?

There is never a dull moment! Teaching on the Junior Apprenticeship programme is not for the faint hearted; however, at the end of the year when you see the results and the smiles on their faces, the rewards are priceless!

For everyone involved, it starts with an appreciation and understanding of the learner and the journey they have taken before they have reached the college. Most lecturers in a college have a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) in Further Education and the style of teaching and classroom management is based on learners having a level of emotional intelligence that is manageable. However, coming from a school environment that is very controlled to a college where the expectation is to behave with responsibility and common sense can be a challenge. ALL the young students find this very exciting at first and need guidance on respectful behaviour. This continues to be an ongoing challenge, but it's wonderful to see the learners grow and change. Class sizes are smaller than schools and this helps with many of the issues they bring with them.

What literacies are involved?

We are unable to use the Wales Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST) for literacy skills development due to their age, but we do need some form of assessment to establish a baseline level of learning and identify any additional learning needs. We use the screener and free writing for this purpose, along with discussion. We often find support needs will often be divulged in conversation as the year progresses.

Literacy in Year 10 is founded on developing essential skills at the start through contextual learning, blended learning and the use of tools, technologies and techniques. However, there were many issues of the abuse of this strategy which resulted in poor classroom behaviour and misuse. Towards the end of the year, we encourage discussion about GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) exams to ensure we are open and honest about preparing them. I have introduced reading time. This has been challenging for some but I have been truly shocked and surprised by a few who have embraced it, even learners with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). It's not just about the reading, but also about wellbeing – quiet time in a chaotic college! With support from the Learning Coaches and small classes, although challenging, it is the way forward. Learners 'have' to be entered for their GCSEs and for most this is beyond their wants or needs.

How has it evolved? Have any changes been made?

Like any lesson, course or provision, as professionals we reflect on how we can improve to meet the needs of our students as a team. It is still early, but we have made huge strides in the way we deliver our skills and manage behaviour. We have successfully been awarded a grant in which we can research techniques and plan for the next academic year. We have introduced 'Report Cards' that have had an immediate impact on most learners' behaviours, as these are sent home at the end of every week to parents. Regarding developing their skills, we continue to try new techniques to engage them, and will continue to try and encourage responsible use of digital tools and blended learning along with TRICK (Trust, Respect, Independence, Collaboration and Kindness), adapted

from Creating classrooms that work: Esther Wojcicki at TEDxBeacon Street. Inspired by Wojcicki, recognising that these skills we intrinsically use in our teaching of Essential Skills, but more so with these young learners and will be embracing this terminology to help them improve their behaviours too.

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Adult Literacy in Ireland - Changing Contexts, Different Spaces

Tara Kelly, Aoife McCormack and Stephen O' Brien

Tara Kelly is the Adult Literacy Organiser in Carlow, for Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board. She is the current Chair of the Adult Literacy Organisers' Association.

Aoife McCormack is employed by Kerry ETB, overseeing the area of Quality Assurance in Further and Adult Education, having worked for many years as a County Adult Literacy Organiser for Kerry ETB. She is a former Chair of the Adult Literacy Organisers' Association.

Dr. Stephen O'Brien is a college lecturer on the PME programme, MEd programme and the cohort PhD programme in U.C.C. Supervisor to PGDE student teachers each year. He is academic mentor to a number of MEd and PhD students. Stephen has given many workshops and has spoken regularly at conferences on the topics of Mathematics, Teachers' Social Inclusive Work and Critical Perspectives on neoliberal encroachments in education.

Adult Literacy Education is a crucial entry point for those who continue to experience the effects of the recession (Sugrue, 2017). The Adult Literacy Service (ALS) deals with a pressing need, evinced by the *OECD Adult Skills Survey* (2013) which revealed 1 in 6 Irish adults are at or below Level 1 literacy with just over 25% of Irish adults scoring at or below Level 1 numeracy. Consistently, these confirmations are that those with lowest skills in literacy and numeracy also experience low educational attainment, earn less, and are more likely to be unemployed, suffering poorer physical and mental health.

ALS are free, confidential and available, managed by Adult Literacy Organisers (ALOs) throughout the network of Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Programmes are open to anyone over 16 years who is no longer at school, missed out on education, or wishes to improve reading, writing, spelling, numeracy, ICT and other transversal skills. Accredited and non-accredited courses are available. ALOs are highly aware of different reasons and priorities for learner participation, prioritising responsive programmes situated in welcoming and relaxed learning environments. Students choose between one-to-one and small group tuition. Programmes may include personal development, thematic literacy learning (e.g. gardening or health), and Family Learning. Traditionally, provision has been made in Adult Literacy Centres and in outreached community settings. In recent years ALS provision has extended into new domains such as Apprenticeships.

Exemplar work in adult literacy

The following case study projects were presented as part of the ALOs' Forum in Cork (2016). Projects are indicative of the important work being managed by ALOs.

Case Study 1 - Introduction to Electrical Skills and Maths

Mayo-Sligo-Leitrim ETB developed an 'Introduction to Electrical Skills and Maths' programme arising from intra- and inter-agency discussions on emerging local needs. A key theme of

discussions with the Department of Social Protection (DSP) was the dearth of vocational courses for men who had attained lower than Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 3 qualifications (equivalent to Level 2 on the European Quality Framework, EQF). The learners were from a variety of backgrounds – many did not speak English as their first language. Their primary motivation appeared to be in obtaining employment. Additional maths learning was seen as central in order that students gain entry to and complete apprenticeship programmes. The curriculum placed a strong emphasis on ethnomathematics ('maths in everyday life'), as well as experiential learning (Dewey, 1997; Kolb, 2015). Learners engaged in electrical skills projects, where they made lemon batteries to power simple kitchen clocks and timers, as well as fixing electrical cookers etc. The programme was delivered as a part-time intensive tuition model of 84 hours over 14 weeks. By the end of the project, the participants reported that: they now knew mathematical and electrical terminology (e.g. atoms, conductors, insulators, etc.); their communications and team skills were enhanced; their confidence had generally increased, adding that they now saw maths in a more positive, interesting light; and they experienced renewed relations with educational tutors – in particular, how tutors 'treated them as adults', understanding personal contexts and supporting their learning throughout.

Case Study 2 - The Reading Challenge

Kerry ETB Adult Literacy and Basic Education Service, working with Kerry County Library Service, introduced a Reading Challenge Programme based on a similar programme organised by The Reading Agency (UK). The service in Kerry sought new ways to encourage adults to engage in reading for pleasure, and to use the county library service. Additionally, the Reading Challenge was perceived to be a simple and effective tool to build local learning partnerships. Commencing in the Killarney Adult Literacy and Basic Education Centre, the ALO led a whole centre approach to the project. Learners were encouraged to select and read six books of their choice. They recorded their reading in a diary. Many learners were referred to the service by the DSP and the Local Employment Service from a variety of backgrounds. Students followed both group and one-to-one tuition routes. By the end of the project, the participants reported: that they enjoyed, often for the first time, reading; pride in their achievements (some achieved QQI Level 2 awards (Level 1 on the EQF) in reading and/or writing; many others read independently, using the library); their communication skills improved and they can express their own opinions about a text; and they now bring their children or grandchildren to the library (a "transformational outcome", as one tutor put it).

Case Study 3 - Drogheda Counts

'Drogheda Counts' was developed as a four-week community-based numeracy project to showcase maths in a fun and innovative manner. It aimed to attract parents and pre-school, primary and secondary pupils, as well as adult learners. This project was developed, managed and implemented by the Drogheda Local Education Committee and partners: Home School Community Liaison teachers, Louth-Meath ETB representatives, Louth Leader Partnership, Drogheda Library Service, and the Drogheda Borough Council/ Rapid Programme. A project booklet was produced following the four strands of Number, Data, Measurement and Shape geared for all levels and

ages. Everyone was given a maths booklet to complete – solutions being published in a free local newspaper. 5 000 booklets were printed and a competition question was posed in the paper each week to encourage sustained participation. Classes for parents were run in all schools prior to the commencement of the project to bolster adult confidence in maths and foster support for their children's participation. By the end of the project, the following outcomes were reported: the local paper increased circulation during the 4-week period to meet demand; community discourse about maths was stimulated, alongside parental conversations on how best to support children's learning; every Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)-designated school in Drogheda held 'Maths for Parents' classes – fifty parents gained QQI accreditation at Levels 2 and 3, while other parents opted to return to full-time education via Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) routes.

Case study 4 - Supporting Apprentices with Literacy and Numeracy Study Skills

Galway-Roscommon ETB's project was established to provide a sustainable model of literacy and numeracy support appropriate to apprenticeships. From September 2015, an ALO based herself in an apprenticeship training centre, with the remit to research and develop an integrated literacy and numeracy support model for apprentices. Traditionally, there has been no integrated literacy and numeracy support built into apprenticeship centres in Ireland. Initial findings from the project suggest that approximately 25% of apprentices experience difficulty with numeracy in their training, and that approximately 20% experience difficulty with literacy. Moreover, the project indicates that there is widespread need for support with respect to Study Skills. Maths assessment and support classes were initiated, as well as one-to-one literacy. The ALO provided group study skills sessions, established study support groups, and instituted a drop-in service aimed at addressing additional needs. Integrated literacy training was also provided for training centre staff and new resources were developed on Maths and Study Skills. By the end of the project, other significant outcomes were reported: a national networked approach to supporting apprentices in Phase 1 has been rolled out, with ALOs meeting apprentices at commencement to outline support available, creating links into support in their area; greater collaboration with other ETBs and ALOs to share good practice and develop approaches and materials. A whole-centre approach is necessary for the integration of literacy and numeracy support in training centres – this requires awareness-raising with staff and participants, as well as Literacy tutor training; targeted support for Phase 1 apprentices is now identified as a key requirement and a 'Maths for Trades' class was developed (with an accompanying textbook nearly ready for apprentices in Phases 1 and 2); and, alongside increased skills levels, improved confidence and well-being is widely reported amongst Phase 2 apprentices who have availed of these supports.

Literacy – Changing Contexts, Different Spaces

Over the last five years the FET sector (including Adult Literacy) has undergone unprecedented change with the amalgamation of the Vocational Educational Committees and FÁS (the former Training and Employment Authority) to create ETBs. During this time SOLAS (the present Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland) released its inaugural *FET Strategy 2014 – 2019*. These

changes present wider opportunities of engagement for learners at all levels and settings in the FET sector.

Current reporting structures, e.g. returns to SOLAS/ statistical reporting to the Department of Education and Skills, all produce 'data'. But these do not 'measure' the work of adult literacy in the same way, as evinced in the previous section. Clear communication of one's work, a sharing of language, philosophical value systems and practices are required. Fundamental to this, in the interest of developing more qualitative, authentic forms of evidence, is the key question: What need be further 'measured'?

Central to the work of ALOs and adult learners is an empowerment process that *qualitatively* values learner-change experiences. Formative assessment, in educational parlance, promotes a 'growth' not 'fixed' mind-set (Dweck, 2000) which is best 'captured' over time; not at a fixed moment or performance 'outcome' or 'score'. ALOs see their 'evidence' as being methodologically informed and produced over time with learners. Their work, as demonstrated in the case studies presented, produces a myriad of somewhat pejoratively described 'soft outcomes', which demonstrate much wider benefits of learning. ALOs see these 'measures', derived within the learner's own context, as being sound, more authentic than narrow quantitative indicators of 'success'.

Telling the 'inside' stories of these projects is a powerful way of re-representing education and 'measuring' its more authentic value (O'Brien, 2016). In the current neoliberal climate of 'performativity', 'accountability' and data 'here, there and everywhere' (Hayler, 2017), it is essential to recognise other ways of 'measuring' adult literacy. But it is also important to question the status quo; to inquire what need be further measured in the interest of developing adult literacy provision. The term 'measured' has related meanings. It can mean 'deliberated', thus 'what need be further measured?' may translate to 'what need be further deliberated upon or considered?' Equally, 'measured' can also mean 'evaluated' - thus, it may translate to 'what need be further appraised or assessed?' in relation to adult literacy provision. By asking 'what need be further measured?' then, we set out to challenge how we can rethink adult literacy – how it is conceived and practised – how we can assess its more authentic 'value' and 'performance'. Enabling learners to transform their own life circumstances, and that of their families, throughout the settings in which they engage in literacy learning is a vital 'measure' of the adult literacy work being done. We must interrogate how this can be 'officially' acknowledged and promoted.

The dominant discourse of the 'skills-based' agenda continues to generate cultural change in adult education. The regularised (normalised) use of such terms as 'inputs' in place of tutoring, 'outputs' and 'outcomes' as the 'product' of learning and 'target setting', coupled with the use of certain 'data' and 'evidence', all present a 'new' education-economy value system. It is challenging for educators to hold on to the 'integrity of educational practice' (Hogan, 2010) in a powerful market place pulsating in postmodern surround sound. Yet 'imagination's heartwork' remains central to an educator's identity (ibid.) and there is always a will to (re-)'measure' his/her work.

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Survival Communication: Humans Cannot but Communicate

Kieran Harrington

Dr Kieran Harrington, who is currently Professor of English Applied Linguistics in the Institute of British and American Studies, Dortmund University, previously worked for the Waterford Institute of Technology as a lecturer in TESOL, and as a manager for the Education and Training Board (Ireland) in adult basic education services. He is author of The Role of Corpus Linguistics in the Ethnography of a Closed Community: Survival Communication (Routledge, 2018).

Between 2002 and 2005 I researched the use of English as a lingua franca by a community of 300 asylum seekers, none of whom spoke English as a mother tongue. They lived in a remote purpose-built facility on the site of a disused army-camp.

The plan was to record the interactions of the people, transcribe them, build what is called a corpus (a collection of texts) and put state of the art software to work on it in order to discover the characteristics of the English. It was unique in that most such studies are undertaken with either communities of students of English as a foreign language (EFL) associated with some public or commercial school, or university students attached in some way to departments of applied linguistics, all who know what is expected and all who strive for perfect native-speaker English. The asylum seekers used English to negotiate their daily survival and were not in the slightest bit concerned with the well-formedness of language.

When I began to apply the annotations such as <S1> and <S2> (Speaker 1 and Speaker 2, etc.) to the corpus, I released how unhuman applied linguistics has become, so the focus became more people-centred. Although I used corpus analysis and conversation analysis, I did so within a broad ethnographic approach, the ethnography embodying the foundations of the study. As there was no one common culture, the ethnography presents the people through their personal histories of persecution or poverty, violence or vanquish, through their accounts of the flight into the unknown, and their eventual, fortuitous, settlement in the numbing tedium and powerlessness of life in a 'total institution' (Goffman, 1961).

Apart from the influence of the residents' difficult pasts, institutionalization also lead to an eventual state of routine and lethargy which impacted on communication. The great efforts made at the beginning of the stays 'degenerated' quickly into communication by gesture, by mumbling, by gazes, and by adjacency pair second parts (see Hutchby & Woofit 1998) exploited for requestive purpose. In the Centre I noticed that those who spoke English as a second language, Nigerians for example, dispensed with formalities and used the second part of greeting pairs as an embodiment of a request, anticipating the question, in order to get business done as quickly as possible. So, 'Fine', without the first part, could mean, *Could you give me the sheet to sign in?* The interesting dynamic was that these communicative practices were eventually replicated by other residents of different nationalities and languages.

The examination of the corpus of recordings of the residents' discourse in English revealed that they chiefly interacted with little more than one hundred lexical and non-lexical items. There was limited use of the components of what McCarthy (1999: 240) classified as the frequent (in native-speaker English) 'nine broad categories of a basic spoken vocabulary' (basic adjectives, basic nouns, basic adverbs, basic verbs for actions and events, discourse markers, delexical verbs, modals, interactive words and deictic expressions). The presence of conventional verbal forms used to refer to past, present and future time in English was also limited, and there was little evidence of grammatical prepackaging in what linguists call a 'lexical chunk', for example, *I know, you mean,* and *at the end of the day.* In the requests they made at the reception desk, there was little use of forms such as *can/could/might/,* identified as frequent in such discourse by Carter and McCarthy (2006).

As the language was reduced to the bare bones, miscommunication was to be expected, but there were actually no incidences of this found in a preliminary examination of what corpus linguists call the 'concordance lines' – the contexts of the particular words or phrases that one is investigating in the larger discourse.

How did they achieve this apparent ease of interaction with such a limited linguistic repertoire? I examined three smaller data subsets to delve deeper.

Firstly, I examined the discourse recorded at the reception desk. I have already mentioned how the residents exploited adjacency pairs and uttered minimal language in order to acquire commodities and request actions. They also used gestures and utterances whose illocutionary force (pragmatic intention) was comprehended by the receptionists despite the unintelligibility of individual words. The dynamic of daily social practice learning (see Barton and Tusting, 2005: 2) was evidently at play.

The second data subset was of the interaction in the staff offices where people went to request funding for sporting activities. The interactions were much longer than those at the reception desk and constituted a negotiation process rather than a simple transaction. Samples of longer turns uttered by the residents provided evidence of linguistic limitations. The following is an example:

> I I it's my room I think so er er every time yeah note is here I forget <unintelligible word> er. er niversity but too much er … house for play and every time another and time and . se er start is seven eight nine o'clock.

Significantly, this substandard English was only noticed when analyzing and *reading* the interaction. In real time the limitations occasioned no sense of disfluency or miscommunication. How was this possible? It was found that the use of *yeah* and *okay,* which constituted over 10% of the total linguistic output of the residents, helped to maintain the flow of the dialogue between staff members and residents. The residents exploited *yeah* and *okay* to the full, both semantically and discoursally, combining them with pauses and silences and prosodic features such as loudness, softness, pitch and prominence and different intonational contours. These minimal items, *yeah* and *okay*, not only camouflaged the linguistic limitations and dysfluencies of the residents, but, simultaneously gave the impression of engaged and submissive listenership which, ironically, helped them to control the general trajectory of the interaction; or perhaps, it could be said, helped

to camouflage *their* control of the talk - which eventually came around to the discussion of personal and peripheral issues. It is not, of course, that the residents manipulated the minimal responses in a purposeful or premeditated way. They issued forth unconsciously.

The third data subset was the analysis of the interaction of a meeting of the residents on the subject of the preparations of a forthcoming barbecue. Interaction in English among the residents was not only short but also very rare. Such meetings were normally chaired by the manager of the Centre, but on this occasion, there was no native-English-speaking chairperson. This group of eight people was composed of some residents who had been recorded and mentioned in the ethnography for blatant racism. One of them, (I will omit his nationality here), had said that he would not do pair-work in class with a monkey or a woman (referring to a Nigerian female resident). The two of them were in the group.

I was particularly interested in the maintenance of order in the general sense, but also in the specific sense of the maintenance of the orderliness of spoken interaction as described by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) in conversation analysis studies. The consideration of many researchers such as Schegloff (1982) of the management of talk by speakers who *share* a common language and culture, as a significant interactional achievement, would seem to augur, *a priori*, difficulties for a group of asylum seekers who *did not share* a common language or culture, in the context of life in a 'total institution', and in the context of clear racial tension. Surprisingly, not only was general order maintained, but there was also a definite orderliness in the turn-taking. The one-speaker-at a time-rule, common in native speaker interaction, was observed. Topics were followed and managed and everyone had a voice, both physical and metaphorical. The negotiation of meaning was co-constructed by the residents, three of whom regularly made efforts to gatekeep the interaction.

Despite the inhibitions, the linguistic limitations, and the previously noted surface racial antipathy between some of these people in the particular group, the residents not only exploited their English to the maximum, availing of minimal responses, intonation, pauses and silences, but supported one another through *A* turn-taking system. Moreover, the use of the adjacency pairs surfaced again in their talk with one another. It was not that one said one thing and the other responded with what is known in conversation analysis as the *preferred* (see Hutchby and Woofit 1998) response: it was simply that one asked and the other answered. It was the exploitation of what could be called the natural couplets of the to and fro of conversation: a sort of primeval *now you speak, now I speak*. They also completed for each other, repeated when someone did not understand, and they overlapped just like native speakers do at what are called possible 'transition relevance places' (ibid), just like native speakers do, but with the significant circumstance that they did it almost always to rescue a faltering fellow resident.

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In general. I found that no matter what the linguistic limitations, no matter what the context, no matter what the surface racial antipathy, the residents communicated. Even though the community used a core English vocabulary of only 100 words, I found that they fully exploited those lexical

items and whatever other linguistic or paralinguistic resources were at their disposition, even just a simple dynamic of *first you speak and now I speak.* All of that is linguistically noteworthy and it is important for the concept of communicative competence, for the concept of the speech community and even for the concept of the universalism of language.

Apart from the linguistic significance, what does the study tell us about these disenfranchised people that might be useful for researchers, educators, sociologists, NGOists and policy-makers, and most importantly useful for the immigrants themselves?

Most importantly, it tells us that immigrants who are in such vulnerable contexts, prioritize their immediate survival, not grammatical subtleties, not the acquisition of a stack of words they may never use; not the English examination at the end of term, nor the intercultural competence course that gives them a myriad of trivial superficial stereotypes such as how in the UK and Ireland we queue in the bank and the supermarket and say 'please' and 'thanks' *ad infinitum*.

I am not saying that immigrants will not eventually want to move up the pyramid and realise their full potentials in the foreign land when they will then need to learn more sophisticated language and gain a deeper knowledge of the cultural context within which they live. That will come, but let us not panic them with all that. Let us take a step back and let *them* set the pace. Let us get our faith back in humanity and cast aside binary stereotypes which researchers and educators and policy makers proliferate by too much talk. Let us learn from the example of people who had engaged in superficial and constructed stereotypical racial antipathy, but who when the moment came to sit in a room and talk, they did just that, and cooperated and supported one another in a language foreign to all of them. The point is: humans cannot but communicate.

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Moving - to new places and spaces for learning

Sarah Foster

Sarah Foster is semi-retired after a long career in adult and community education in London. Now living in Wales, she works very part-time as an ESOL tutor. She is active in the local Town of Sanctuary group and also hosts short breaks for refugees and asylum seekers. Sarah returned to learning a few years ago, completing an MSc in Education Power and Social Change. She is interested in how community learning practices can facilitate encounters across social groupings, build solidarity and create change.

This piece is my own reflection - other group members may have different experiences and viewpoints.

After a long career as an ESOL and Family Learning practitioner in London, I retired from full-time work and moved to a small town in Wales about eighteen months ago. Keen to continue a connection with migrant communities and with ESOL practice, I am pleased to have been able to do this in a variety of new ways.

One of the most significant has been joining the Abergavenny Town of Sanctuary (AToS) group. After many years of working in a public sector setting, within the rigid scaffolding of an organisation, I moved into the world of a small voluntary group with minimal structure and very few constraints.

The AToS group has a healthy, questioning approach to its role in welcoming sanctuary seekers locally and promoting a positive discourse in relation to all migrants. A key feature is reciprocity and a recognition that, rather than including new migrants in 'our' community, we are together making a new community.

As an active Trade Unionist, and with ESOL campaign groups, I have consistently fought for well-funded ESOL, taught by trained, properly paid tutors on secure contracts, so there has been some soul searching about volunteering. I have however, discovered relationships, learning practices and literacies that thrive outside the structures that currently obstruct or constrict public sector work.

In this informal learning context, the boundaries between teacher, learner, volunteer, group member and friend are blurred. The sense of time is different as learning is more open-ended and less linear. The 'living' spaces where it happens bring new possibilities.

As a recent, small-time, voluntary migrant here, I am learning the 'literacies' of this small Welsh town – how it works, how to read its groupings, its histories, its networks. For those whose migration has been traumatic, forced by circumstance and across great geographical and cultural distances, what must this process of 'reading' a new cultural and linguistic landscape be like? Importantly, there should be no assumption that this 'reading' means assimilation, which indicates powerlessness; they are also 'writing' the community in new ways.

Having worked for so long in a super-diverse city, I'm interested in the differences for new migrants living here in a small town. For my MSc research project, I studied the significance of everyday encounters between diasporic communities in knowledge-building and learning. In this much more monocultural setting, interaction inevitably consists mainly of exchanges with the dominant majority culture. Could this be an asset to growing knowledge and power, or do the more horizontal relationships *between* migrant groups build solidarity and generate more agency within society?

The weekly Conversation Café in the community centre is run by a rota of volunteers. People come to practise their English and socialise informally. There has been discussion about the appropriate level of formality for learning in this social context – some volunteers favour the introduction of topic and grammar themes, some prefer sessions based around shared practical activities - making, cooking, gardening. I favour *not* trying to reproduce an ESOL class. The reality is that ~~a~~ny planned ideas are blended with, or overtaken by, themes brought to the sessions by the new families. These may be cultural comparisons and personal histories, which often involve looking back at life and identity before their refugee experience. They may bring issues about the here and now; the struggles and achievements of settling and looking forward. This connects with what I have read about the push and pull of diaspora experience, of looking both backward and forward; a space where ideas of home and belonging have complex connections to geographies and histories. I feel our role is to respond to this as best we can and allow language learning practices to reflect this experience. I think, in our mixed roles and within our loose structure, we are well placed to do this.

We have tried to avoid labelling activities we organise as 'refugee' events. The new migrant families have been invited to participate in, and contribute to, activities already taking place. They have also been supported in running events; catering for several large community meals and for food stalls at the Fair-Trade Market and Open Gardens for example. Through the planning, shopping, cooking, hosting, working alongside volunteers and professional staff, these events have all involved 'live' language learning. Hopefully this can help on the path to employment too.

There have been walks, which can be very conducive to language interaction. One was advertised as a 'multilingual walk', to celebrate all the languages spoken, and being learned here (including Welsh of course). We have a photo of everyone at the top, in high winds, holding up 'welcome' signs in the languages represented, a small gesture to acknowledge the value of languages and literacies in enriching our communities. Some people are experimenting with learning Arabic, or already do speak some – rural places can be surprising.

Driving has been another important strand of activity here in this car-dependent area. As well as support with ESOL for driving, volunteers have given extra driving practice to supplement professional lessons, so the language practice enters the real world of working towards passing the test.

We, as ToS members, are learning through the varied literacies involved in group development. We are writing the narrative of our group together as we generate ideas, find roles, play with the formality and looseness of structures. There are representatives from the new refugee community

on the committee and we are learning to use inclusive language and literacy practices without compromising the complexity of content in meetings and communications. We experiment with communication channels - email, WhatsApp, Google groups, as we report on and plan what we do.

Going forward as a group is not always easy. Too much structure can be limiting but lack of it is not always the most equitable option either for ensuring all voices are heard. There are differences in emphasis and approach. It is not always comfortable.

All involved so far are already 'warm' to the idea of welcoming and celebrating the contribution of new migrants locally and further afield, and the refugee community here is tiny. The next step might be to find ways to include members of the wider community and to connect with refugee communities beyond our town, to promote a sense of belonging in the UK beyond the urban centres. I think this can be done by facilitating everyday encounters between those who may not otherwise meet, through inclusive, welcoming activities that facilitate border crossings between economic, cultural, class and age groupings. My experience, as reflected on here, has been to see the value and significance of informal learning in general, and language and literacy practices in particular, in doing this.

We have planned a Banner Making workshop, through which we hope to attract family groups from the wider community. Based on exploring themes of 'welcome' and 'home', ideas will be expressed through text and pictures. We have chosen to link it with Adult Learners Week because, whoever we are or wherever we have come from, we are *all* adult learners and I believe adult learning is a great way to bring people together and find common ground.

I think the practices embedded in the activities I've reflected on have an important life of their own outside the structures of formal organisations and can take shape, change shape, and develop in ways that are not possible within the current rigid constraints of our education systems. However, I believe just as strongly that paid ESOL work is essential! We must never let volunteering replace what should be provided by paid professionals.

With thanks to all those involved in AToS for making me welcome in Abergavenny

Family literacy: third spaces in the third sector

Mary-Rose Puttick

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Abstract

Migrant mothers arrive in the UK from diverse backgrounds; many have experienced traumatic upheavals, dispersals of family members, and complex trajectories. As women seek refuge they are faced with new demands as they establish themselves in a new society. As mothers, they also respond to new obligations with regards to their children. The third sector is currently free from government funding restrictions. The sector's position, distinct from formalized contexts, creates new potentialities, as well as challenges, providing educational and welfare support to diverse migrants from the outset of their arrival. With a social and humanistic learning approach at its roots, Family Literacy (FL) is a growing area of migrant educational provision in the sector, with venues starting to offer classes distinct from English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Accompanying this emerging educational provision is a growing tension, and a vulnerability caused by the potential politicisation of family literacy in the third sector. This pedagogical ethnographic research is currently in progress in two community spaces in the West Midlands, UK. The research draws on the New Literacy Studies approach, combined with challenges identified from personal experiences of teaching ESOL and FL in an adult education (AE) context. This paper begins to explore FL in the third sector as a distinct space for collaborative language and literacy pedagogies which can offer alternative approaches to FL in more formalised learning contexts.

Introduction

Fifteen years ago, I started teaching ESOL at an AE centre in a ramshackle Victorian former school in a city in the North-West of England. This was a period which coincided with significant shifts across the UK's political landscape which now, on reflection, I can see had significant impacts on my pedagogical practice in AE.

Those first few years of ESOL teaching were a unique time in my experience of AE, with more freedom in terms of curriculum content. However, following the college's first 'unsatisfactory' official inspection from the then Adult Learning Inspectorate, considerable institutional changes inevitably ensued. Whilst directly influencing the nature of teaching and learning, these changes also accompanied the transition of the overall ethos of the institutional provision from a community focus, to one characterised by formalization and politicisation. Educational provision became subject to increasingly stringent government

funding regulations and reflected both the economic state of recession at national level and pressures on council budgets at local level.

As my career transitioned into FL, I began teaching parents who had English as an Additional Language (EAL), although still in an AE context. I taught in community outreach settings across economically-deprived areas of the city. Again, at the outset, I was excited to discover an abundance of learning resources with additional money from the department to spend on creative projects with families classed as isolated. This coincided also with a time of thriving Sure Start Children's Centres under the New Labour Government, money invested into crèches within the AE centres, as well as childcare staff to support the FL community classes.

Although FL in many ways offered a more open, flexible, and creative teaching and learning environment to that I had experienced in ESOL, some aspects soon started to parallel the standardized aspects of ESOL, such as an intensive focus on the recording of progress and achievement to meet institutional targets. Exclusion of specific groups of migrants, most notably asylum seekers, parents on international student visas, and those who had been in the country less than six months, became a constant feature in a landscape increasingly configured by funding restrictions. Further funding cuts to childcare provision had most impact on migrant mothers as they tended to be the primary caregivers. High demand for ESOL and FL classes for individuals at a pre-entry level meant restricted access for such groups in practice. Moreover, as most FL classes were delivered in school settings they reflected school hierarchies, with schools having their own agendas, mostly centred on the assessment targets they had to meet with the children in terms of literacy achievement. These shaped both the content of the classes and the parents who accessed them. With regards to the latter, schools themselves often identified the parents they wanted to target, based on either limited prior education or related to their parenting skills if their child was deemed to have a 'problem'.

Whilst recognising the positive aspects and necessity of ESOL and FL in AE, there were institutional aspects that I felt actively excluded and discriminated against certain individuals. The standardized assessment targets, for example, were completely unsuitable for some learners, particularly considering the relatively short time-frame in which they were expected to achieve them. This was especially the case for short-term intensive FL courses. Individuals who failed lost their place in the class. This not only affected the overall mind-set of individuals participating in the classes, it also limited their opportunities to progress within the system.

Furthermore, it put ever-increasing pressures on teachers to achieve targets which then influenced who they selected to join classes from the waiting list, thus adding to the selective nature of the process. These experiences and observations have led to my PhD research, which engages directly with the politicisation of language and literacy education for migrants.

(Extract 1)

Rationale for study

The autoethnographic extract above sets the context for this paper, which aims to reconsider meanings of FL in the UK's third sector, also commonly referred to as the community or voluntary sector (McCabe et al., 2010). Since 2015 the numbers of people fleeing countries due to war, conflict and persecution have reached unprecedented levels across the world, with recent figures estimated at over 65 million (Refugee Council, 2018). This mass forced-displacement has brought unique challenges to migrant education. The reliance of the UK's post-compulsory AE and FE sectors on government investment in language and literacy education for migrants, in an ongoing age of austerity, creates a volatile situation whereby demand far outweighs provision. Whilst EAL provision exists in the profit-based business sector, it is inaccessible to many migrants, particularly forced migrants, due to the costs of attending such courses. This therefore creates a gap in education which is not filled by either the private or public sectors.

Despite ongoing funding cuts, the UK government clearly sees the importance of this area of education. From former UK Conservative Prime Minister (PM) David Cameron's notion of the 'Big Society' to the current Conservative PM Theresa May's 'Shared Society', political rhetoric has long associated increased social integration with English language learning, community cohesion, and marginalised groups of people. In the most recent UK Government Green Paper *Integrated Communities Strategy* (2018), currently in its consultation phase, the entire fourth chapter is dedicated to 'Boosting English language'. The strategy sets out 'ambitious goals to tackle the root causes of a lack of integration – including a lack of social mixing in some of our neighbourhoods and schools, unemployment and poor English language skills'. It follows Dame Louise Casey's most recent government-funded research which aimed to investigate integration and opportunities in economically-deprived and isolated communities of the UK, with the outcomes once more directly linking English language learning and integration (The Casey Review, 2016).

It is this local, neighbourhood context in which a diverse array of language, literacy, and social activities are taking place in spaces across the UK which often go unrecognised. Whilst a lack of recognition can be a unique benefit of the sector, for example in locally-informed curriculum planning, dominant political narratives of community and language learning raise queries as to where education for migrant families fits into this. This paper also raises questions about what community means in terms of geography, relationships between people, or the role of virtual border-crossing networks, and how family language and literacy education fits into these relationships and spaces.

Theoretical approach

This paper is underpinned by an analysis of the discourses of FL. Gee's (1998: 5) definition, derived from a post-structuralist Foucauldian perspective, referring to discourses as being 'socially and culturally formed, but historically changing ways of talking and writing about, as well as acting with and toward people and things', an outcome of which is that 'certain perspectives and states of

affairs come to be taken as 'normal' or 'natural' and others come to be taken as 'deviant' or 'marginal'.'

These ideas of labelling discourse and the existence of hierarchies of discourses will be considered particularly in relation to FL literature. Language and literacy as educational provision will be considered as an ideological tool, reflecting power structures within society (Street, 2005). In particular, Gee's (2015) distinction between 'Big D' and 'little d' discourses, which refer respectively to the larger discursive context (such as institutional and political discourses) and to the practice/praxis of language in use (the being, saying and doing of EAL families), informs the theoretical approach taken in this research.

The analysis of language use in this way is a central premise of the New Literacy Studies (NLS) movement, which has moved away from traditional psychological approaches to literacy acquisition towards an approach which incorporated the diverse social, cultural, historical, and institutional contexts of literacy practices; thus 'literacy' becomes 'literacies' (Gee, 2015). Additionally, the analysis of language at a localised community level is particularly relevant, which aims to give an insight of everyday literacies which may not be explicitly acknowledged in dominant discourses (Street, 2005; Barton & Hamilton, 1998).

As at present there appears to be a gap in academic literature specifically related to FL in the UK's third sector, this paper therefore attempts to start a mapping of FL provision in this sector by drawing on alternative themes deemed relevant. The sociocultural contexts of FL in this sector address alternative and non-dominant meanings of FL which sit distinct from dominant definitions of FL in the national political context. Moreover, consideration is given to the discourses of integration which spans both paradigms in terms of their association with English language learning. Consequently, the literature review forms an initial exploration into the following research question:

> What does FL look like in third sector educational provision?

Methodological approach

This paper forms a small part of a larger qualitative study based on three data sources: interviews of staff members at two community venues; a collection of visual/textual FL artefacts from migrant mothers; and a pedagogical autoethnography of myself as the FL teacher/researcher, which this paper focuses on.

The lexical origins of 'autoethnography' assist in defining this as a method, based on a combination of personal experience ('auto'), the sociocultural context ('ethno') and the process and application of writing ('graphy') (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Ellis, 2004). As a data collection tool autoethnography has its critics, some of which are highlighted by Wall (2008; 2016) who refers to the polarized responses she has confronted in using this approach. Such responses are based around issues of representation, ethics, and data quality.

Whilst I acknowledge such criticisms, I hope to highlight the value of this reflective tool in the field of pedagogical practice. Denzin (2006: 333) refers to the pedagogical as always 'moral and political' which 'challenges, contests or endorses the official, hegemonic ways of seeing and representing the other', ideas which are later supported by Warren (2011: 139) who encourages teachers to use reflexive processes of pedagogical practice to enable 'more critically informed pedagogical philosophies that translate importantly to actual classroom choices'.

From a personal perspective, I feel that drawing on a combination of my teaching experiences from both AE (Extract 1) and the third sector (Extract 2) now enables me to focus on the professional environment of FL education for migrant mothers in a more focused way, with intimations starting to emerge of where politics and theory both interact and contradict. I wanted to be immersed as a practitioner in the FL research environment, rather than detaching myself and looking at it from the 'outside-in', thus re-addressing the representation of the 'other' which Denzin (2006) refers to. I am researching my own familiar practice (teaching FL) in an unfamiliar environment (the third sector), and co-collaborating in a new way which will shape my own practice in the future, and ideally make useful contributions to pedagogical practice in this field.

Family Literacy: 'the Big Discourses'

1. **Government funded FL**

There is a long-established literature based on FL from a government-funded perspective, and I can provide here only a brief overview. FL research can be traced back to the formation of the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) in the 1990s, which accompanied an era of increased concern about literacy standards (Brooks et al., 2012). Hannon et al. (2007) highlight the pioneering work of the BSA in FL, starting with the piloting of four programmes in 1994 based on improving the language, literacy and numeracy skills of parents and children. Results from these initial FL programmes showed success in terms of development of both parents' and children's literacy as well as the ability of the parent to support their children in language and literacy. This success subsequently led to the expansion of FL as an educational initiative, with further programmes established by the BSA such as *Keeping Up with the Children*, *Early Start,* and *Skills for Families* as well as the BSA's ongoing commissioning of programme evaluations (Hannon et al., 2007).

In 2001, family literacy, language and numeracy formed a strand of the national 'Skills for Life' strategy in England, led by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (DfES, 2004). Today FL is an umbrella term under which, in government-funded provision, lie the strands of Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) and Wider Family Learning (WFL), now funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA, 2018). The government's FLLN programmes have three central aims: firstly, to raise the skills of parents in language, literacy and numeracy; secondly, to develop the ability of parents to support their children; and thirdly, to improve the acquisition of these three skills in children (DfES, 2004).

Extensive critiques of FL literature have been carried out, such as that by Auerbach (1995), which have identified a common assumption of a 'parenting deficit'. In such cases, FL programmes deem that certain parents lack 'good' parenting skills, and FL programmes have an over-emphasis on

school-based literacies as opposed to schools drawing on the literacies which already take place in families. Regarding this inter-connection between FL and school-based agendas, the European Parents Association (2015) suggests a risk in devaluing home language and literacies (Brooks & Hannon, 2012). This potential devaluing is further alluded to by Brooks and Hannon (2012: 196) who address the deficit approach as one of several research issues in FL, and usefully relate this to FL pedagogical practice:

> The challenge for FL educators is to value what families bring to programmes, but not to the extent of simply reflecting back families' existing literacy practices…somehow they must offer families access to some different or additional literacy practices.

Whilst school-based agendas will always be a part of FL practices, access to these different or additional literacy practices could potentially be addressed through exploring FL in alternative, non-school based contexts, such as through diverse third sector FL provision.

2. Non-government funded FL

A substantial body of research on the UK's third sector which is relevant to this study is that carried out by the Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC). The TSRC highlight some key themes for exploration, much of which is based on the diverse terminology associated with this sector. McCabe et al. (2010) usefully distinguish between different terms for the smaller, more localised, organisations in this sector including: 'Below the Radar' (BTR); 'voluntary sector'; 'grassroots organisations'; 'Black Minority Ethnic' (BME); 'Refugee Community Organisations' (RCO); and 'Faith Based Organisations' (FBO), amongst others. The multiplicity of terms, often used inter-changeably, gives a small indication of the complexity and lack of detailed information and understanding about the extent of activities in the field. McCabe et al. (2010) call for more research into the roles of smaller organisations in this sector in the lives of disadvantaged groups, neighbourhoods or communities; their histories and trajectories in political and economic contexts; and the practitioners involved in these organisations. This diverse terminology also provides a useful starting point from which to explore FL practices in different spaces.

Phillimore et al. (2010: 2) define BTR as: 'a shorthand term for small voluntary organisations, community groups and semi-formal and informal activities'. McCabe and Phillimore (2009) elaborate that BTR is a term used to reflect those organisations which operate outside official arenas yet question what the radar is, pointing to the need to consider the activities and purpose of the organisations and to acknowledge that they can be operating *under* one radar, yet *within* another. This can result in contradictory agendas or priorities, with funding for some coming from both government and non-government sources, and it is likely that power within such organisations is dominated by the more formalised, political funding streams.

In her micro-mapping street-level analysis of two English urban neighbourhoods, Soteri-Proctor's (2011: 10) research distinguished six types of BTR groups, with two of particular relevance to this paper: 'multicultural, multiple-faith and ethnic-identities' and the 'single-identity cultural, faith and ethnic activities'. In both categories, several groups were a mix of established migrant communities and new arrivals, including asylum seekers. One women's group initially formed as they did not

meet the criteria for formal ESOL provision; this group afforded educational opportunities that were otherwise impossible. 'Single-identity' groups, in addition to English language, commonly included provision for children in their parents' mother-tongue.

Literature on Somali community organisations reflects the importance of 'single-identity cultural, faith' provision, referring to the localised nature of Somali civil society organisations, often linked to mosques and offering community-based welfare support services (The Change Institute, 2009). Community-led activities are characteristic amongst Somalis in the UK, and include homework clubs, religious education, and after-school provision for children (Harris, 2004; Sporton et al., 2006; Valentine et al., 2008). The literature highlights the significance of such spaces for culturally-based transnational family literacies, although others fear this localised structure results in isolation and a lack of integration from wider national partnerships, which weakens the national collective voice for Somali communities (The Change Institute, 2009).

With regards to this national collective voice, RCOs play a key role in foregrounding challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers in the political realm. As Griffiths et al. (2005) highlight, RCOs play a rather distinct role in comparison to other third sector organisations due to their close links with dispersal procedures for asylum seekers and their provision of support. For newly arrived migrant families who access the services provided by RCOs whilst simultaneously experiencing a space in flux, literacies are likely to be survival-related as they navigate the immigration system as well as diverse societal institutions. For asylum seekers unable to access formal FL and ESOL education in the first six months, RCOS are integral spaces in exposure to the new language and literacies of the UK. Furthermore, many asylum-seeking families have problems finding school places for their children, making FL a vital source of education for both parent and child.

Bhabha's (1994) 'third-space theory' has been used also to reconceptualise FL practices, albeit in the formal education sector. Pahl and Kelly (2005) refer to a 'threshold space' in which the 'Big Discourses' of both school and the FL classroom are recognised and validated in the text-making discourses of parents and children, with the outcome of producing a shared curriculum. In this way a third space can be viewed as a neutral or safe space in which power is balanced and collaboration aimed for. Similarly Cook proposes that third spaces can be conceptual, linguistic or physical, and can be used to overcome the traditional power-laden pedagogical discourse typical of schools and their interactions with parents; they can provide a space in which oral and textual discourses promote an 'unscripted dialogue in which there is equality of participation' (2005: 23). The rebalancing of power hierarchies is thus addressed through both physical spaces and the practices of literacies.

This brief insight into the literature relevant to third sector FL activities indicates the importance of exploring a more diverse range of literature including grey literature to build up a richer picture of what is happening across society in grassroots activities. This is particularly the case with large grassroots movements, such as *The City of Sanctuary* in which individuals, organizations, community groups and faith communities publicly commit to welcoming and including people seeking sanctuary (Barnett, 2008). The City of Sanctuary movement also includes schools, universities and cities as a whole; the latter requiring enhancement by a city council. In this case the

link between them is based on their shared vision as 'places of belonging'. Whilst undoubtedly a vital recognition for new migrants, of interest to this paper is the potentially conflicting agendas/visions between politically-based city councils, religious organisations, and refugee organisations, important points for consideration when exploring FL in different contexts.

Family Literacy: 'the little discourses'

1. **Discussion: a FL voluntary teacher's perspective**

'Eighteen months ago, I started voluntary teaching with migrant mothers in two third sector venues in the West Midlands; an entirely new area of migrant education I was not previously familiar with. One venue comprises Afghani and Kurdish women, accompanied by their children under 5. The other class is based in a mosque with a group of Somali women, all of whom have teenage or adult children.

My initial feelings were of a very different space for learning and teaching, which was unique and distinct, given its informal nature. It appeared to mirror the exact nature of the AE I had started in thirteen years ago. Initial observations raised new questions and possible challenges, particularly as the two venues at which I was volunteering appeared to be at either end of the extremes in terms of their formality, with one requiring the traditional requirements of references and criminal record checks, and the other requiring no paperwork whatsoever.

Yet a similarity in both venues is that I have been given free-rein in terms of the FL content. With limited resources both in monetary and teacher terms, run almost entirely on the availability of volunteer teachers, the lack of resources has encouraged a back-to-basics and creative approach to my pedagogical practice.

When I first started teaching the voluntary classes, I wanted to get a sense of how different people at the venues viewed FL. One manager responded that she saw FL as about trying to facilitate people with children to learn, with a by-product of this resulting in the children socialising and learning together. A community worker at the other venue spoke of the fact that mothers could not get places on ESOL courses either due to funding criteria or waiting lists. She referred to the government's plea for migrant women to learn English as a priority for integration, yet contended that there was insufficient funding for provision.

In both venues my teaching approach has changed. I have encouraged the women to lead the class content, and in 3-week blocks we have focused on different aspects according to different group members' requests. At one venue, the women requested that they lead part of the class each week, teaching me Somali and sharing their cultural/religious values. Most notable have been issues raised in class discussions, as well as observations from the learning space and context, which have made me interrogate my own position as a white formally-educated woman and the privileges which I had not fully appreciated previously.

(Extract 2)

Extracts 1 and 2 give an insight, albeit individualized, into how one teacher's pedagogical practice has become increasingly critical, experimental, and in many respects privileged in gaining a more

authentic understanding into what FL practices mean in reality for migrant families, and particularly migrant mothers. In stepping back and reflecting in this way, allowing the class content to happen more organically and holistically, I have deepened my understanding of FL in a way I had never considered in AE, although I recognise how the two contexts are inextricably linked. Most notably my attention has been drawn to the daily trans-space literacies which are taking place, particularly in the cases of the Somali women, in which their husbands and at least one of their children live in other European countries. These literacies are not yet captured in FL literature as valuable assets.

2. Discussion: interpreting themes from the literature

The literature review highlights the situated practices taking place amongst single-identity groups based on cultural background, in the case of Somali organisations, as well as faith-based backgrounds. These include literacies based on raising the attainment of children through homework clubs or deepening the understanding of religious practices for both parents and children. In the Somali case studies, a different approach to FL is evident, with them drawing on the skills of an individual from outside the FL class, but still from within their own community, who leads FL practices. The literature also draws attention to their use of multiple languages for specific purposes, displaying linguistic choices and competencies according to the interlocutors and spatial contexts.

Examples such as these demonstrate Gee's (2015) little discourses of people using language and literacies in these BTR spaces for purposes of aspiration, belonging and identification. This brief insight indicates that third sector spaces are utilised as safe places, in which power dynamics have more freedom to be re-addressed as they are not explicitly tied to school-based agendas or government eligibility restrictions. In this way they can be viewed as more genuine and neutral third spaces, in Bhabha's (1990) terms, than perhaps those in FL formal contexts could ever be, despite the best intentions. In these third spaces the labelling dichotomies of the good/bad parent become less visible, as does the labelling of the 'deserving' or 'undeserving' migrant, thus disrupting traditional power hierarchies (Sales, 2002).

Conclusion

Both the literature and my own reflections highlight the little discourses of how the teacher, the 'excluded' migrant, and the third sector practitioner are using literacies in diverse ways under the radar of the Big Discourses of FL. In both government and non-government contexts, FL is inter-linked with the discourses of ESOL, the family, integration and community cohesion. However, it appears that in third sector contexts the latter two discourses take on new meanings and represent more genuine values for those who are the targets of such political narratives.

This paper set out to start a mapping of FL practices in its emerging context of the third sector. This mapping is essential and reveals as a first step a need to expand research in third sector FL provision. Research in this area needs to consider the opportunities that the sector represents for growth, integration and personal and societal freedoms. These opportunities can be built on and

need to be protected from the heavily politicised process of formalisation that has characterised other sectors in the last 20 years.

Early recommendations from the literature review and pedagogical reflections (in this study specifically related to migrant mothers) include:

Third sector educational providers

FL provision for migrant mothers is most effective when third sector organisations ensure that:

- Female-only third spaces are provided.
- Culturally-based community gatekeepers are utilised to start provision but are not over-relied upon. Rather, the women themselves become decision-makers for programme planning.
- Flexibility/choice is present with regards to assessment processes.
- Drop-in style provision is maintained where possible to allow for parenting/caring and welfare-based commitments.
- Links are made with other third sector providers in local spaces to encourage multi-agency support.
- Women are given opportunities to volunteer/develop expertise in their skills.

Priorities for FL voluntary teacher development

FL provision for migrant mothers works best when teachers:

- utilise the long-term nature of education in this context, with programmes which incorporate:
  - elements of choice in terms of teacher-led class input
  - the allowance of time for women to lead the class in an area of their expertise (e.g. home language/religious values/art-based skill) thus disrupting traditional teacher/student roles
  - a flexible learning programme which can be adapted throughout
  - the utilising of home and additional languages for teaching key vocabulary/sounds as well as in emphasising the linguistic expertise of the women
  - collaboration in programme planning at the end of each term
  - maintain a community/local focus throughout which encourage migrant mothers to engage with local spaces and to build confidence by building knowledge of local environment/family support provision.

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The Intercultural Storytelling Project

Peter Sheekey

For the past fifteen years, Peter has been a researcher and practitioner in the field of second language learning for refugees and migrants in Ireland. His doctoral research (2015) focussed on the lived experiences and social barriers facing border-crossers in a drop-in centre in Tallaght, south Dublin. On foot of these studies, he has set up a socially-oriented English language school in Dublin 3, the Intercultural Language Service (ILS) to meet the challenges and barriers facing border-crossing English learners which emerged from his PhD study. Also, based on his PhD inquiry, he has developed the Intercultural Storytelling Project (ISP) in this north inner-city community which brings together members of local and these new communities to share, co-author and publish their lived experiences in order to build bridges and social cohesion between them and foster greater social inclusion and English literacy for 'New Irish' citizens.

Introduction

In this article I will present a collaborative intercultural storytelling project which grew out of my PhD research into the lived experiences and language contact of first generation adult migrant English language learners in Dublin, Ireland. Firstly, I will outline the social and geographical context of these storytelling practices. Next, I will briefly describe the two frameworks of socially-situated literacy and narrative inquiry which form a Freirian praxis to promote meaningful literacy practices for migrant learners and help build social cohesion in communities where they are settled. After this, I will present how storytelling was used in my PhD study and some finding from my research which led to the storytelling practices outlined below. Finally, I will report on the practices and outcomes of our first intercultural/community-based storytelling in the kitchen of a small community centre in Dublin's inner city.

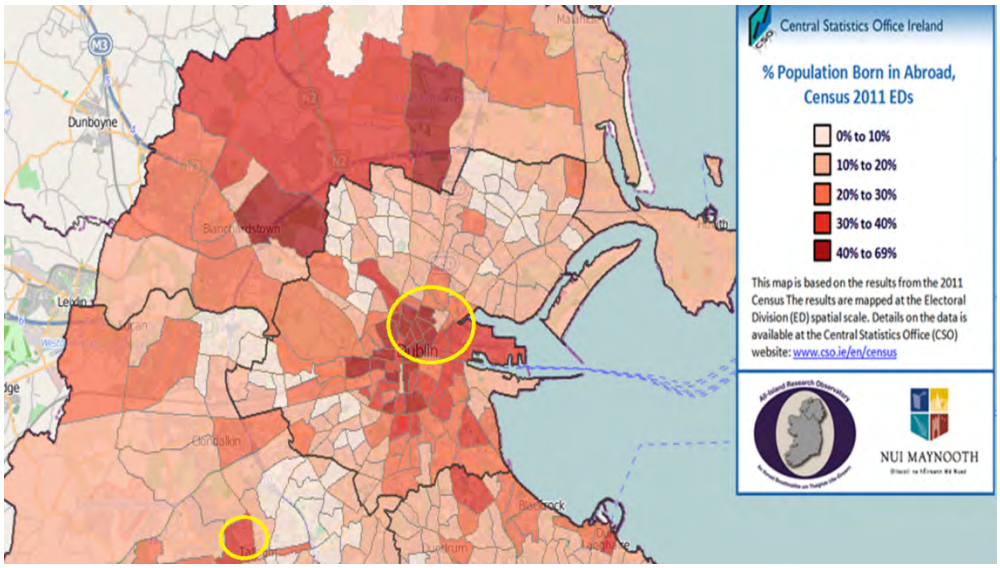
The social context of the project

For the New-Irish in question here, adult first-generation migrants, who have reached a level of spoken English where they can survive, the journey to successful resettlement is often not over. Many still struggle with access to educational, vocational and social networks due to limited literacy and social contact (Sheekey, 2015). At the same time, there are pockets of urban areas where more settled community members may have ambivalent attitudes to New-Irish, who can make up more than fifty percent of the local population (McGinnity et al., 2018). The Intercultural Storytelling Project was developed to meet the challenges to social cohesion in these areas where both new and settled community members can face forms of social exclusion. The challenges facing newer community members are outlined below, while those facing settled members include exclusion from job markets and institutional socio-economic neglect.

The map below from the 2011 Irish census shows the multicultural nature of Dublin today, with pockets of up to nearly 70% New-Irish in some areas of the city. It was in these areas where I chose to situate the storytelling projects discussed in this article. The smaller yellow ring is Tallaght, where

I did my initial PhD research, and the larger ring is Ballybough, where, based on that research, I established the first intercultural storytelling project.

Tallaght is a district of Dublin in the south of the city with a population of over 76,000 of which around fifty percent are New-Irish. As an area, it is in the lowest socio-economic percentile and was included among the ten most difficult places to live in Ireland (Standfirst, 2018).



Ballybough, an area in Dublin's tough inner city, is socially and demographically similar to Tallaght, and is also in the above list of bad places to live. It has long been a socially and economically neglected district though there are now in train official and local initiatives to address its may problems.

Socially situated literacy

In the 1980s, traditional cognitive approaches to literacy were challenged by a group of scholars whose work became known as New Literacy Studies. The New Literacy Studies group viewed literacy as

> something people did in the world and in society, not just inside their heads, and should be studied as such. Literacy was a social and cultural achievement centered in social and cultural practices. It was about distinctive ways of participating in social and cultural groups (Gee 2015: 35).

Similarly, in the field of second language learning, the view that learning processes can be isolated from social action and interaction has als o been challenged (Tranza and Sunderland, 2009). Mondada and Doehler (2004: 502) for example, critique the separation of learning from real-world settings.

Just as language is viewed as inseparable from the activities and situations of which it is a product (Brown et al., 1989), so literacy can also be viewed as created and acquired in social contexts and occurring in situated interactions, in other words, all literacy is to some degree socially situated (Baynham, 1995).

Concerning pedagogical approaches to situated literacy, Tranza and Sunderland (2009) suggest employing real-world, authentic tasks. Their review also reports the benefits of collaborative writing and storytelling with ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) literacy groups in the UK from a study by Grief (2007, cited in Tranza and Sunderland, 2009; 212). Grief's study reported that collaborative writing for these learners 'encouraged the learners to value each other's knowledge and learn from one another'.

The effectiveness of situated language learning is borne out in a large-scale report on adult literacy and numeracy projects by the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre, where researcher collaborated with practitioners in the field (Ivanič et al, 2006). The overall aim of the project was to develop understanding of the relationships between learners' lives and the language, literacy and numeracy learning. This report concluded that literacy and language learning should be viewed as 'social practices, situated in people's lives and purposes, and differing from one context to the next' (ibid; 8).

Narrative inquiry

In order to best capture the lived English language experiences and promote literacy of the marginalised New-Irish cohort in my PhD study, I used narrative inquiry as the central mode of data collection and collaborative analysis. Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research involving collecting oral, written or visual narratives which focus on the meanings that people assign to stories of their lived experiences (Trahar, 2009). Narrative inquiry has been used to explore how migrants orient themselves in terms of social expectations and how they position themselves regarding societal norms, their social roles in new milieus, and their relationships and participation in unfamiliar social worlds (Baynham and De Fina, 2005, De Fina and King, 2011). Baynham (2005) uses the narratives of Moroccan women in London to challenge how male voices predominate in migration stories. Relaño Pastor and De Fina (2005) employ the narratives of Mexican, first-generation immigrant women in California to understand how they experienced language conflict and forged new language identities. Kouritzin (2000) uses the stories of immigrant mothers in Canada to explore how gendered power relations impact on their access to the dominant language. Allied with the problem-posing functions of socially-situated language learning and literacy practices, collaborative narrative inquiries can help migrant learners address and find redress on issues and conflicts which impact on their access to linguistic and social contact with host communities (Frye, 1999, Trueba, 1990).

Narrative inquiry and situated literacy as praxis

The noted Brazilian advocate of critical pedagogy, Paolo Freire defines praxis as 'reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed'. In our storytelling, narrative inquiry is used as a praxis of applying theories in a practical way, together with situated language learning to socially transform literacy for our New-Irish cohort. As learners construct their stories of lived experiences they engage in a 'meaningful learning context that maximizes language and literacy development by promoting social interaction' (Kim, 2005: 21). By writing about and reflecting on these experiences, learners are encouraged to engage in this meaning-making interaction collaboratively,

constructively and consciously. The consequences of such an interaction can imply that learners not only realise the value of their storied experiences but can also use them as a 'vehicle for language acquisition as well as self-discovery' (ibid; 23).

The methodology underpinning our intercultural storytelling project is an approach which combines the problem-posing theories of situated learning to the meaning-making and reflective storytelling approaches of narrative inquiry (Kim, 2005). This collaborative approach provides both a means to understand the language learning experiences and to facilitate transformations in the English language and literacy skills of the learners involved in our project (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006).

Storytelling in Tallaght

Over a period of two years from 2011 to 2013, as part of my doctoral research, I collected the stories of the lived experiences of members of English literacy groups at the Intercultural Drop-in Centre in Tallaght, Dublin, using the narrative/situated praxis outlined above in collaborative, problem-posing, practices. This involved learners in sharing and writing about the nature of their daily lives and lived experiences. Follow-up interviews I carried out with these learners explored the challenges they faced of resettlements, and access to social systems and networks in Ireland such as education, healthcare, job market. The second phase of this study brought in other learners of the drop-in centre in our storytelling practices, resulting in a published book called Our Stories (Mulhall, 2013), bringing the total number of storytellers to thirty. Finally, reflective, follow-up narrative interviews were carried out with thirteen core members of the groups (see table 1) to expand their stories and reflect on their experiences of the whole project.

Name	Sex	Age range	Origins	Languages	Time in country	Education	Contact with Centre
Hanna	F	Early 30s	Latvian	Latvian, Russian	3 years	Degree – Oriental Studies	6 months
* Amin	M	Early 40s	Afghanistan	Pashto, Dari	10 years	Leaving Cert level	2 years
Hakim	M	Mid twenties	Afghanistan	Pashto, Dari	1 year	I year short of Leaving Cert	1 year
*Joasia	F	Late thirties	Poland	Polish, Russian	7 years	Leaving Cert level	2 years
Lena	F	Late twenties	Ukraine	Ukrainian, Russian	1 year	Degree - Economics	6 months
Rafal	M	Mid thirties	Poland	Polish, Russian	7 years	Leaving Cert level	6 months
Jane	F	Late twenties	China	Mandarin	5 years	Second level college	6 months
Alma	F	Mid thirties	Latvia	Latvian, Russian	Over 3 years	Degree - Economics	6 months
*Ana	F	Early sixties	Vietnam	Vietnamese	10 years	Leaving Cert level	4 years
Uma	F	Early thirties	Bosnia	Bosnian	10 years	Unfinished Law studies	3 years
Majeed	M	nineteen	Afghanistan	Pashto, Dari	1 year	Leaving Cert level	1 year
Nika	F	Late twenties	Ukraine	Ukrainian, Russian	9 months	Degree – Cultural Studies	6 months
*Chata	F	Mid Thirties	Nigeria	Yoruba, English	4 years	Junior Cert level	2 years

Table 1 - Core Participants in my Tallaght study1

Summary findings of Tallaght narrative inquiry

1 Our Junior Cert is at level 3 and our Leaving Cert is level 4 or level 5 (honours) in the European Qualifications Framework. Both are mainly mandatory state exams across all our national schools.

Overall, the challenges and social access issues which emerged for my PhD collaborative inquiry with this group included:

- Lack of knowledge about or access to Irish social systems (healthcare, education, etc)
- Lack of access to host community social networks
- Isolated from the host and heritage communities (double dislocation)
- Limited or no mobility in the local labour market
- Women's reduced access to education and training
- Long-term residents with very low levels of English
- Lack of social orientation knowledge/training
- Lack of knowledge, time, resources and means to access mainstream providers.

Some of these learners had worked long and hard to access English language learning resources and Irish social networks, and some still struggled to maintain that access. For example, Joasia and her husband, who had to juggle family nurturing duties to attend classes; her husband was waiting for her to complete her studies in order to start English courses. Also, Ana was the primary carer for an entire extended family including her ninety-year old mother-in-law and her grandchildren.

Surprisingly, some members of this narrative inquiry, such as Jane, Majeed and Uma, reported little or no contact with their heritage communities in Ireland. This double-dislocation had a strong negative impact on both their heritage and their local social networks. Indeed, in Jane's case, even after four years in Ireland, she was not aware of the existence of a high-profile, Chinese New Year festival held in Dublin each year, and her only social contact was with close family members.

In the Migrant Policy Index Report on integration in 38 countries, Ireland comes last in terms of labour market mobility for migrants (Huddleston et al., 2015). This reality is also reflected in the findings of my PhD inquiry. Many of the previously employed participants, like Amin and Ana, spoke of how they were positioned by employers and the service providers in the job market as low-wage workers in menial jobs, while others, such as Jane and Ana, spoke of the ghettoisation of Asian migrants in low-status Chinese restaurant and takeaway positions.

Lack of confidence and fear of social engagement in English with more expert speakers is reported very frequently in these learners' narratives. Many participants report years on the outer periphery of any English language access or social contact. Lena, for example, tells of having a 'wall' and of being 'very, very fraid' to interact with Irish people, while Uma recounts fending off would-be interlocutors with 'Don't ask me!' Ana reports not knowing 'when and where' she can socialise with target-language speakers, and how she felt trapped in her home because of this. The next section will report on the learners' experiences of our socially-situated literacy practices.

Tallaght learner views of our storytelling project

In the follow-up interviews, after the publication of their stories, the learners shared their opinions and reflections on how our storytelling impacted on their literacy and language confidence.

Hakim, for example, showed awareness of the social purposes of our storytelling, and was able to reflect on how our storytelling helped him 'know how one can say a story' while relating how co-narrating with other members meant he could 'learn what was their story, and what they do', adding that it was 'very good for English'. Joasia related how her participation in our storytelling practices resulted in a shift in her language identity from her previous second language identity of Russian to that of English. Nika was able to pinpoint the social purposes and audience for her published story as 'people who are maybe scared to go to the city', and 'people who came to Ireland and want to integrate'.

Here, Nika answers the question 'Was this a good way to learn English?', and describes the process and effects of our situated practices very succinctly:

> Yeah, I think it's a good way cos you can ask your, your classmate, yeah. And you can ask a teacher, if you don't know something. And you improve, you write your story and you know about you, yeah? Everything and when you know some new words, you associate this with your language words. And you can improve it cos it's interesting to share your story with another people (Sheekey, 2015; 180).

After my PhD and the success of the story-telling project, I decided to try go further by including Irish people in an intercultural storytelling practice together a New-Irish cohort from my school in Dublin 3. The remaining sections will report on the practice and some outcomes of this.

Storytelling at Ballybough

The situation with a large group of learners at our community-based adult English language and social orientation school, the Intercultural Language Service in Ballybough, in Dublin 3, was like those in Tallaght. Many were at B1 or B2 CEFR levels (intermediate and upper-intermediate Cambridge levels) but lacked the literacy and confidence to access fully the necessary Irish social networks and systems.

During the winter of 2017, I recruited a group of volunteers from our school and other community networks in Dublin to do intercultural storytelling with a cohort of learners recruited at our school. In March 2017 we were ready to begin our Intercultural Storytelling Project.

Every Friday morning for twelve weeks, fourteen learners and local volunteers paired up for two hours in the Barbara Ward Community Centre. The way we set up our sessions was quite simple; participants were paired up after an initial meet and greet session which involved getting-to-know-you ice-breakers, and once the pairs were established, they would take turns in asking about the other's experiences while taking notes on the worksheets or narrative frames.

Each week, the storytelling pairs were given themes to work on in the form of narrative frames. Narrative frames are like the writing frames in used in literacy education (Barkhuizen and Wette, 2008), and are usually an A4 page with unfinished sentences or question prompts used by our tellers to draw out the life experiences of their fellow teller. Both types of frame can be used to provide a scaffold for writing, helping the storytellers to co-write their stories around the themes. The weekly themes we used were designed to explore and share the universals and differences in

the life stories and cultures of our storytellers, and included the following topics as examples. All our frames, along with a PDF of our published book, guides and literature, are available on the storytelling page of our website (Intercultural Language Service, 2018):

- The Old Town – writing about how familiar a town or city has changed
- Arrivals – writing about first impressions of a country
- My Year – about experiences and notable events of the past year
- My hopes for Next Year – about future plans and dreams
- My Identity Star – a mind map exploring participants many identities
- Biopoem – a short biographical snapshot poem.

The biopoem frame was probably our participants' favourite. Here is the narrative frame we used, with instructions about how to create a partner's biopoem:

How to make a Biopoem:

(Line 1) First name

(Line 2) Three or four adjectives that describe the person

(Line 3) Important relationship

(Line 4) Two or three things, people, or ideas that this person loves

(Line 5) Three recent/current feelings this person has experienced

(Line 6) Three fears this person has

(Line 7) Accomplishments

(Line 8) Two or three things this person wants to see happen or wants to experience

(Line 9) The residence of the person

(Line 10) Last name

Here is Nasouh's biopoem (a Syrian refugee) written by his storytelling partner, Sylwia (they are both pictured at the back of the photograph below):

Nasouh

Whose name means "advisor"

Who is peaceful and wise

Father of Murhaf, husband of Falak

Who loves learning English – stubbornly

And loves learning about cultures around the world

Who is always worried about Syria and its people

But feels happy to be a survivor

Who is scared of losing those he loves

Who is proud of his son

And of himself for learning English

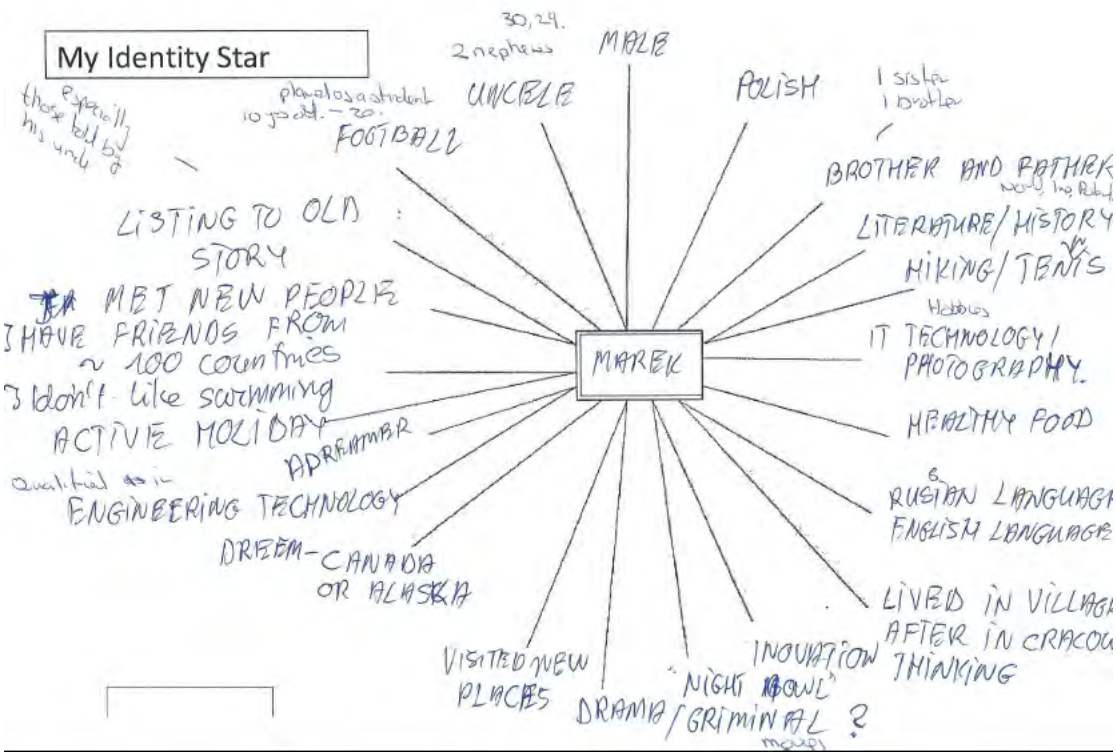
Who hopes to see peace in his country and no hunger anywhere in the world

Who lives in Marino

Hossari

Storytelling in the kitchen at Dublin 3

Another example of our narrative frames is the identity star, which is a mind map populated with the lived identities of our storytellers. In this case, each teller fills in the frame themselves, and then their partner asks them to explain their identities while taking notes. Here is Marek's completed frame. It is followed below by part of his partner Marie's published interpretation of this.



Marek's Identity Star

> Marek's Identity Star
>
> Marek is a Polish man who has one sister and one brother. He is a daddy and likes historical literature including Irish, Polish and world history. He enjoys hiking and playing tennis. His hobbies are I.T. technology and photography. He eats healthy food and speaks Russian and English. Marek lived in a small village in Poland before moving to Cracow. He likes thinking and is an innovator, he is *a night owl*. Marek likes visiting new places and drama; he dreams of living in Canada or Alaska and is qualified in engineering technology (Marie, cited in Sheekey, ed, 2017).

The notes from these weekly themes would then be written up by our storytellers at home into a short narrative and be re-read/re-written with their partners at the start of the next session. This was an important way of fact checking their partners' stories about them, while the local volunteers could check our learners' work for major errors or any literacy issues which blocked communication, making it basically an informal one-to-one literacy lesson.

As the stories grew, participants typed up each other's stories which I then collected and edited. Importantly, I would start each session by explain how to use the worksheets to make sure we all understood what was involved. I was very careful in these introductions to emphasise that the storytellers avoid generalisations and personalise or put as much of their life experiences and perceptions into the stories as possible.

Impacts of intercultural storytelling in Ballybough

All in all, our intercultural storytelling project has been a remarkable success. So far, we have run three storytelling cycles of three months each, and another two cycles have taken place at Dublin City University (see below). Such is the power of storytelling that our tellers bonded very quickly, and had great fun sharing their stories. Our New-Irish learners had found a new social network, someone who listened attentively to their experiences, hopes and dreams, and some of the locals came back for subsequent storytelling cycles. Aside from the very positive impacts on the English literacy for our learners, the process of telling, writing and publication of these stories has produced very beneficial washback into both the local communities, in terms of social cohesion, and into the heritage communities of the learners. There was much excitement among the students at seeing their work in print, with some Skyping home to show their work. A further benefit of publishing these stories is that they are now available as authentic and deeply relevant reading material which can encourage other learners to 'have a go', and also tempt other local community members to join in, too.

Built into our storytelling was a feedback unit which provided some insights into how the process impacted on the tellers. Kitman from Iraq reported the following, and it is notable her use of the term 'socialised':

> It really helped my English language and skills, has given me a lot of experiences how to be socialized in a friendly way and how get involved and learn from friends stories.

One 'local', Marie from Cabra in Dublin, penned a piece about her experience in the journal Around Europe (2017):

> Being part of this project has given me an insight into some of the lives of the new Irish. While many stories are told with humour, like one Polish student warning his visiting friends to get used to eating chips with vinegar, or that Irish people don't understand the clock. Behind this there are also stories of great loneliness and isolation for those so far from home who can't speak the language. Alleviating such loneliness and isolation is a major aim of Dr. Sheekey's project.

Intercultural storytelling has been adopted by Dr Veronica Crosbie at Dublin City University (DCU) as part of a University of Sanctuary initiative which brings refugees from an Irish direct provision centre (where asylum seekers await processing) at Mosney, just north of Dublin, to DCU t o practise storytelling and find social inclusion with students and staff there. This shows how situated storytelling practices are transferable to different settings. All of this led to an important international colloquium in September 2017 at DCU called Asylum Narratives, which included very inspiring reports on the DCU storytelling project.

Conclusion

Having looked at the two phases of storytelling in this article and its importance for both new and settled communities, we may conclude that there are significant benefits on the fronts of social inclusion/cohesion for both, and real impacts for language and especially literacy progression for

migrant learners most in need. Situating literacy practices in the lives of learners and sharing them by using narrative methods in the praxis outlined here can build stronger literacy through meaningful biographical texts, and by sharing these texts with more settled community members, we can construct greater social cohesion in communities under pressure. I would argue that the praxis presented here offers us a very useful toolkit for facing the challenges facing many migrant language learners and the changing demographics in certain communities. In conclusion, inter-community, socially-situated practices like this are both feasible and necessary to promote personal and inter-community development and cohesion. For a verbal accompaniment to this article, see my Tedx talk at: https://youtu.be/RVV2Zsd-knU

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Re-imagining Contested Communities: Connecting Rotherham through Research

Edited by Elizabeth Campbell, Kate Pahl, Elizabeth Pente and Zanib Rasool

Cost: £23.99 (discounted)

Publisher: Policy Press, 2018

ISBN: 978-1-4473-3332-6

Pages: 236

Reviewed by: Anne Reardon-James

Anne Reardon-James has been involved with essential skills in various settings across SE Wales for well over a decade. Starting out at the WEA (Workers Educational Association), Anne now works as a Project Leader for Cardiff and Vale College. She is currently undertaking a Doctorate in Education at Cardiff University, using qualitative employer case studies to examine communication, number and computer skills in the workplace.

Hot off the press, this experimental book describes ethnographic, community collaborative research carried out in the South Yorkshire town of Rotherham in northern England. It largely seeks to challenge negative stereotypes and perceptions of the area. The white elephant in the room of the major child sexual exploitation scandal running from the late 1980s until the 2010s, largely ignored for many years by legal authorities and the local council, is not mentioned. Instead the editors have put together an eclectic mix of contributions from local artists, academics, students, parents, community development workers and community workers.

This interdisciplinary conversational approach uses various approaches such as literacy theory, social anthropology, social theory and town and regional planning to address key themes. Using material gathered from oral history, ethnographic and art projects from the last three years, such as 'Connecting Histories' and 'Imagine', ideas of 'British values', identities and communities are explored through poems, songs, prose, art and photography. The book attempts to explain some of the causes of community fragmentation by describing the immense population growth from the early 20th century and later decline from the 1980s onwards, as the coal and steel industries of the area went in deep decline.

The book is written by people from the town and looks to represent communities differently in the current age of austerity and economic uncertainty. Creativity and art is used as a means of hope and to help redress the community divisions, racism, sexism and lack of black and minority ethnic experiences in the official records of Rotherham.

The editors ask readers to question their beliefs and ideas of what valid and valuable knowledge in history is and identify four key themes learnt through producing the book:

1. Thinking across difference
2. The arts as a mode of inquiring and agent of change
3. Rethinking knowledge production practices
4. Hope and importance of transformational change.

The book does exactly ‘what it says on the tin’; looking to re-imagine and connect the contested and divided community of Rotherham through collaborative research, community participation in art and writing groups, along with civic engagement. An accessible read, this book would likely be of great interest to those looking to undertake community collaborative research. Suggesting powerful implications for future policy research, the editors strongly advocate the use of an alternative approach which brings academics and policy makers closer to those who are the objects of policy “rebalancing and challenging the implied hierarchy between ‘expert’ and ‘lay’ knowledge, and engendering ways of treating communities and community knowledge, as an asset” (p. 202).

News from the sector

Tara Furlong

Tara is the Chair of RaPAL and can be contacted on webweaver@rapal.org.uk

Since our Easter Journal, the DfE have released data evidencing continued decline in adult education, particularly in English and maths; while OFQUAL have updated us on the criteria which will be trickling down via Functional Skills over the next few years. The big news is that adult, further and community education is finally formally included in the DfE's planning, and a review of post-18 education is underway. As you've made it to the end of the Journal now, there is some additional reading for you, if you have time over the summer. Finally, we welcome three new members to RaPAL's management group and are looking forward to planning our annual joint autumn conference. Wishing everyone a healthy summer break!

DfE Continuing decline in participation

The latest DfE data release evidences continued decline in participation across government funded adult education (non-tertiary) below level 4, and a welcome slight increase above. English and maths show a 10% decline, with ESOL showing a slight increase. The figures are worst for apprenticeships. More here https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693581/SFR23_2018_Further_Education_and_Skills_SFR_main_text.pdf In the meantime, a 'Review of Post-18 Education and Funding' is currently being written up; a call for evidence has been launched on 'Improving further education workforce data'; and the DfE has a single departmental plan, i.e. adult, further and community education is now included! More here https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-education-single-departmental-plan/may-2018-department-for-education-single-departmental-plan There is still no explicit focus on English, maths and digital learning, however. Maybe they've got lost in the 'integrated learning'.

Implementing Functional Skills Reform

OFQUAL have finalised reporting on Functional Skills Reform, due for launch September '19. The reforms have led to increased weighting being given to Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar, and slight amendments to Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessment. These will trickle down to qualification providers, and teaching and learning. More here https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/implementing-functional-skills-reform

ALCS

The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society campaigns on behalf of writers and distributes

collective agreement takings. They have recently consulted on changes to copyright in education, and on author's earnings. This latter consultation demonstrates a severe decline in authors' median earnings, full or part-time, to well below the minimum wage.

> Given the enormous contribution that the work of UK writers makes to the success of our world-leading creative industries, the ALCS research calls starkly into question the extent to which we value that work. Without writers, our country and our culture would be poorer in every imaginable way and so we must ensure that we give writers as favourable an environment in which to make a living as possible.
>
> Tony Bradman, ALCS Chair, 2018

More here https://www.alcs.co.uk

English and maths supplements by SET

SET (Society for Education and Training) have been working with ETF (Education and Training Foundation) to release publicly two supplements on English and maths, 'Learning to Fall in Love with English' (https://set.et-foundation.co.uk/publications/in-tuition/intuition-32-summer-2018/intuition-english-supplement/)and 'Making maths bear fruit for learners' (https://set.et-foundation.co.uk/publications/in-tuition/intuition-32-summer-2018/intuition-maths-supplement/) to add to your summer reading list.

Reading For Pleasure: supporting reader engagement

We don't usually get offered quality texts for free but this special issue by Teresa Cremin and Gemma Moss, which focuses on youths, has many pertinen t messages for adult learning https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/lit.12156

AGM

We held our AGM in June and were happy to welcome a number of new management group members:

- Toni Lambe as Secretary
- Julie Collins as Website Manager, and
- Jo Dixon as Digital Media Lead

The team is looking very healthy! We have a small number of roles standing open, namely a Regional Advocates Co-ordinator and a Reviews Editor. We also have a number of Ordinary Member positions for those not ready to take on a full role but interested in participating informally and helping out here and there. Our Membership Secretary is considering stepping down at some point if anyone thinks they might like to take this on.

If you have any time to spare and would like to take advantage of the development opportunities RaPAL provides in the adult literacies sector, please do consider volunteering with us. Participation develops traditional officer roles but also experience in forms of digital interaction, teaching and learning; editing, reviews and publishing; event planning; project management; networking… and of course, adult literacies! We are a very friendly, hard-working group.

English, maths and digital learning conference with the Learning and Work Institute, UCU, UCL IoE Post-14 Centre, and NATECLA

RaPAL's annual joint autumn conference is pencilled in for November in London. We'll be issuing a call for papers early autumn and confirming date and venue but please do put your thinking caps on in the meantime – what do you most want responded to at the moment, and what are you finding most helpful? Please do get in touch with any of the management group.

WRITING GUIDELINES

Why not write something for the RaPAL Journal?

We invite contributions from anyone involved in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL education to write and share ideas, practice and research with RaPAL readers. This can be writing from learners, ideas linking research and practice, comments about teaching, training or observations about policy. Our journal is now produced online and so we welcome articles, reviews, reports, commentaries, images or video that will stimulate interest and discussion.

The journal is published three times a year and represents an independent space, which allows critical reflection and comment linking research with practice in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL nationally and internationally.

The RaPAL network includes learners, managers, practitioners, researchers, tutors, teacher trainers, and librarians in adult, further and higher education in the UK. It also has an international membership that covers Ireland. Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia, South America, Europe and Africa.

Guidelines for contributors
All contributions should be written in an accessible way for a wide and international readership.

- Writing should be readable, avoiding jargon. Where acronyms are used these should be clearly explained.
- Ethical guidelines should be followed particularly when writing about individuals or groups. Permission must be gained from those being represented and they should be represented fairly.
- We are interested in linking research and practice; you may have something you wish to contribute but are not sure it will fit. If this is the case, please contact the editors to discuss this.
- Writing should encourage debate and reflection, challenging dominant and taken for granted assumption about literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

We want to encourage new writers as well as those with experience and to cover a range of topics. We aim to have three different kinds of articles in the journal plus a reviews section; these are slightly different in length and focus. We welcome illustration and graphics for any of the sections and now have the facility to embed audio and video files into the journal. The journal has a different theme for each edition but we welcome general contributions too.

Below you will see more details about the different themes and topics:

1. **Ideas for teaching**
This section is for descriptive and reflective pieces on teaching and learning. It is a good place to have a first go at writing for publication and can be based on experiences of learners and teachers in a range of settings. Pieces can be up to 1,000 words long.

2. **Developing Research and Practice**
This section covers a range of contributions from research and practice. In terms of research this could be experience of practitioner research, of taking part in research projects, commenting on research findings or of trying out ideas from research in practice. In terms of practice this could be about trying out new ideas and pushing back boundaries. Contributions should include reflection and critique. Pieces for this section should be between 1,000 - 2,000 words long including references.

3. **Research and Practice: multi-disciplinary perspectives**
This section is for more sustained analytical pieces about research, practice or policy. The pieces will be up to 4,000 words long including references and will have refereed journal status. Although articles in this section are more theoretically and analytically developed they should nevertheless be clearly written for a general readership. Both empirical work and theoretical perspectives should be accessible and clearly explained. Writing for this section should:

- Relate to the practices of learning and teaching adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL
- Link to research by describing and analysing new research findings relating this and any critical discussion to existing research studies
- Provide critical informed analysis of the topic including reference to theoretical underpinning
- Write coherently and accessibly avoiding impenetrable language and assumed meanings. The piece should have a clear structure and layout using the Harvard referencing system and notes where applicable. All terminology should be explained, particularly for an international readership.

Reviews
Reviews and reports of books, articles and materials (including online materials) should be between 50 to 800 words long. They should clearly state the name of the piece being reviewed, the author, year of publication, name and location of publisher and cost. You should also include your name, a short 2 to 3 line biography and your contact details. You can write the review based on your experience of using the book, article or materials in your role as practitioner, teacher trainer, and researcher or as a student.

Submitting your work

1. If you are responding to a call for articles via the RaPAL email list or directly by an editor you will have been given the email address of the editor(s) for submitting your work, together with a deadline date and the theme of the journal.
2. If you are submitting a piece of work that you would like RaPAL to consider for publication that has not been written as a result of a call for articles, please send it to journal@rapal.org.uk in the first instance. The journal coordinator will then let you know what the next steps will be.
3. All contributions should have the name of the author(s), a title and contact email address and telephone number. You should also include a short 2 to 3 line biography. Sections, sub-sections and any images should be clearly indicated or labelled (further guidance on image size is on the website www.rapal.org.uk.
4. All referencing should follow the Harvard system.
5. Articles should be word processed in a sans serif font, double-spaced with clearly numbered pages.
6. The article should be sent to journal@rapal.org.uk

What happens next?

1. Editors are appointed for each edition of the journal. They review all contributions and will offer feedback, constructive comment and suggestions for developing the piece as appropriate.
2. Articles submitted for the third category 'Research and Practice: multi-disciplinary perspectives' will be peer-reviewed by an experienced academic, research or practitioner in the field in addition to being edited.
3. The editor(s) will let you know whether your article has been accepted and will send you a final copy before publication.

If you have any questions, please contact the journal coordinator by emailing journal@rapal.org.uk