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FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Humanities

Adult second language learning in an English urban context: issues of identity, gender
and social context

by

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ABSTRACT
FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
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ADULT SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN AN ENGLISH URBAN CONTEXT:
ISSUES OF GENDER, IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

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Informal language learning among adults is a key aspect of wider 21st century processes of globalization and migration (Norton 2000, Pavlenko and Blackledge 2001). This thesis reports an ethnographic case study of six adult female learners of English as a second language (L2) from different linguistic backgrounds, who have been living continuously in a southern English city for two years on average. The motivation for the study is to explore how gender, identity and social context interrelate and influence the second language learning (SLL) process.

The investigation is grounded in a combination of poststructuralist theory and activity theory, with addition of two social psychological theories. Norton's (2000) concept of 'investment' is fundamental, specifically: a) for its application of some of Bourdieu's (1977) concepts to SLL; b) for its inclusion of the L2 learner's feelings and perceptions. From a methodological perspective, Engeström's (1999) 'activity systems triangle' has been used to identify investment in SLL through activity (i.e. what the learner is doing to achieve her SLL goals and using which artifacts), as well as the social networks and relationships in which the learner is involved. Social psychological theories of identity hierarchisation have been used to further explore the relationship between identity and investment (Turner and Stets 2005)

Data collection lasted nine months, and involved a) interviewing (in-depth interviews every six weeks with each of the ladies, plus an interview with their partners; b) participant observation (observations of interactions using English between each lady and others in leisure events); c) testing: Each lady took the computer-adaptive language test DIALANG (ALTE 2007) on two occasions, at the beginning and end of the data collection period.

The case study documents the intersection between two sets of interrelated elements linked to the SLL process: on the one hand, the investment the ladies made to acquire English as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986a), meaning their activity using the resources available to them. Identity was also significantly involved in such processes. On the other hand, the influence of gender in their interactions with English native speakers is also documented, including the role of the participants' partners as mediators between the ladies and the social context. The results show that all the ladies made progress but to differing degrees, and this variation is explained by the interaction between the above mentioned elements

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Luz del Alma Rodríguez-Tsuda

declare that the thesis entitled

“Adult second language learning in an English urban context: issues of identity, gender and social context”

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission, or [delete as appropriate] parts of this work have been published as: [please list references]

Signed:

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To my brother Efraín, *in memoriam*.

Definitions and abbreviations

Glossary

Commodification (commoditization). Within Marxist theory this refers to the production of commodities for exchange (via the market) as opposed to direct use by the producer. It signals the conversion of use-values into exchange-values and heralds a change in production relations. In conventional terms it can be described as the process whereby goods and services which were formerly used for subsistence purposes are bought and sold in the market. These terms are widely used in Third World studies, for example, when subsistence peasants begin to sell their produce for cash (Scott and Marshall 2009).

Commodity. An object of economic value, intended for exchange in a capitalist system, such as labour and money. Commodity chains (commodity networks) are the connections between the production, circulation, and consumption of goods; for example, the chains which bring cut flowers from Kenya to the UK (Mayhew 2009).

Gatekeeping 1. the activity of controlling, and usually limiting, general access to something: Wal-Mart's cultural gatekeeping has served to narrow the mainstream for entertainment offerings.

2. (Computing) a function or system that controls access or operations to files, computers, networks, or the like: [as modifier] a gatekeeping mechanism that allows reads under some circumstances and blocks them under others (McKean 2009).

Legitimation. For Bourdieu, cultural, social and linguistic legitimation are all part of the hegemonic practices of symbolic dominance by groups with higher rank in the social scale (Bourdieu 1992; Fowler 1997). All the external manifestations of habitus are the basis for positioning us within a hierarchy of status. It is for this reason that some cultures, cultural practices, languages and language variations are not only more valued than others, but are considered the model against which all the rest is evaluated.

Symbolic violence. It is a domination system that uses indirect, non-coercive and subtle methods of control to maintain and reproduce the social order (Bourdieu 1992; Fowler

1997). The term violence involves social punishment, which can take many forms, such as open rejection, scorn, contempt, and many other attitudes that may hurt an individual feelings and self-esteem (Bourdieu 1986b; Fowler 1997; Shusterman 1999; Fowler 2000). In its core resides the imposition of 'systems of symbolism and meaning (i.e. culture) upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate. This legitimacy obscures the power relations which permit that imposition to be successful...this is achieved through a process of misrecognition (Jenkins 2002:104 *italics in original*). For Bourdieu and others, educational systems are an example of systems of symbolic violence.

Dispositions. They designate a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination.' (Bourdieu 1977:214) They are also 'a spectrum of cognitive and affective factors, thinking and feeling...everything from classificatory categories to the sense of honour...(Jenkins 2002:76)

Doxa. It is the internalisation of the status quo or social order as something that is 'natural', taking it for granted and the identities that it produce as 'the way things are'. Bourdieu argued that we do that because, on the one hand, it would be impossible to question everything in our world, and on the other, the social order promote this 'taking-for-granted' stance (Bourdieu 1977; Fowler 1997; Jenkins 2002). In this sense, Bourdieu agrees with Althusser and other poststructuralists in that the 'assimilation' of the status quo, including our identities, as natural, is a construction. Of course, this legitimization of specific social structures is only possible with a consensual 'complicity' (see symbolic violence).

Field. It is intrinsically linked to habitus, and is defined as ...a structured system of social positions occupied either by individuals or institutions – the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants. It is also a system of forces which exist between these positions; a field is structured internally in terms of power relations. Positions stand in relationships of domination, subordination or equivalence... to each other by virtue of the access they afford to the goods or resources (capital) which are at stake at the field... (Jenkins 2002:85). Symbolic violence is a domineering system that uses indirect, non-coercive and subtle methods of control to maintain and reproduce the social order (Bourdieu 1992; Fowler

1997). In its core resides the imposition of 'systems of symbolism and meaning (i.e. culture) upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate. This legitimacy obscures the power relations which permit that imposition to be successful...this is achieved through a process of misrecognition (Jenkins 2002:104 *italics in original*). Educational systems are an example of systems of symbolic violence.

Abbreviations

SLL	Second Language Learning
L1	First language
L2	Second language
TL	Target language
AT	Activity theory
SCT	Sociocultural theory
GT	Grounded theory
CEECs	Central and Eastern European countries
C o P	Communities of practice
EU	The European Union

Chapter 1 Introduction and research context

1.1 Thesis overview and structure

This thesis reports a longitudinal ethnographic case study of six adult female learners of English as a second language (L2) from different linguistic backgrounds, focusing on informal second language learning from interactions with the social context and self-learning. For diverse reasons, all of my participants wanted to acquire capitals (Bourdieu 1986a; Norton 2000), mainly cultural (linguistic) and symbolic within an English speaking context while, at the same time, they were seeing the world. This involved several important activities that had a significant impact on their lives: firstly, all of them moved to live continuously in an English city, which coincidentally was the southern English city where I live. Secondly, in order to acquire cultural capital, specifically in learning English as a second language within an English speaking context, they made a huge investment in financial, intellectual, and emotional terms.

All of these L2 learners of English have higher education and come from middle class backgrounds but in the new context all of them made a living from low-paid, low-qualified jobs while acquiring the target language (TL). All these characteristics are similar to those of Bonny Norton's (2000) well-known case study of five adult female learners of English as a second language. I draw the inspiration for my study from Norton's, motivated by two key issues: on the one hand, I found Norton's invitation to explore further how gender, identity and social context interrelate and influence the second language learning (SLL) process, highly motivating and appealing. And on the other hand, my keen interest in the area of second language learning in general, and this topic in particular, derives from my own personal story.

Similar to my participants, I have been a learner of English as a second (actually, third) language who moved to a Southern English city to acquire cultural capital in the form of proficiency in English, so as to pursue postgraduate studies at an English university. Like my participants, I was a university graduate from a middle class background who, in the new context, ended up performing a low-paid, non-skilled job on a part-time basis at one of the Royal Mail post centres. I knew that this situation was due in part to my lack of proficiency in English. However, I did not have any other explanations for my situation and that of several other foreign men and women (mainly women) who

worked with me. Most of them had degrees, were well mannered and polite, and demonstrated a strong academic background in a holistic way: I could talk with them on many topics: history, art, politics, films or music while we were throwing postal packets into the mailbags or sorting letters into the pigeon holes. My colleagues came mainly from Spain, Italy, Russia and Poland. We communicated using our so-called 'broken' English and it was a good way to practice the language. At the same time, many of us were studying ESOL courses on a part-time basis.

My struggle learning the language while I was living in an English speaking context, plus this gap between my L1 and L2 levels of literacy led me to a great deal of reflection, to such an extent that I changed my goal of pursuing a master's degree in English contemporary literature with the aim of later undertaking a PhD on James Joyce, to the area of second language learning. It was my current supervisor who put in my hands Norton's (2000) *Identity and language learning*, thus introducing this key work to me. This was a work that answered many of my questions, personal and theoretical, and led in part to my research questions and subquestions, which are:

a) In which ways do gender, identity and the experience of migrating relate to my participants' SLL goals and processes? How do all these elements interact?
What are the more/less important identities for my participants in the new context (UK) and why?

Do my participants have identity shifts? If yes, how does this happen? Are those changes gradual, radical, unexpected, and so on? Are they related to the identity positions offered by the new context? Are they related to the participants' social roles?

How do my participants invest in cultural capital? What do they do in order to acquire this capital? What SLL investment may involve in activity terms? What SLL investment may involve in identity, emotional and social terms?

Do gender relations influence their interactions and their language learning? How?

b) How does the social context (e.g. social networks, interactions, membership of different communities) influence my participants' SLL processes and identities?

How important is the role of others (specifically English L1/proficient English L2 speakers) in my participants SLL learning?

Does identity play a role in my participants' membership and participation in different communities? If yes, in which ways?

How does identity influence my participants' decisions about who they interact with and why?

c) What do the cases have in common? What is different among them?

My study is grounded in a theoretical framework which integrates aspects of poststructuralist theory, activity theory and identity hierarchisation theory (from social psychology). Key concepts within this framework are: a) Norton's (2000) 'investment in SLL', and her notion of 'identity shifts'; b) Bourdieu's (1977; 1986; 1992) 'habitus' and 'capitals'; and c) 'activity' (Wertsch 1998; Engeström, Miettinen et al. 1999; Oers, Wardekker et al. 2008). All these theoretical concepts are explained in depth and detail in chapter 2. Additionally, in the aforementioned chapter I provide: a) a brief introduction to the context in which my research takes place; b) an explanation of the social approach to the study of second language learning (SLL), including a review of key empirical studies relevant to my project; and c) a brief explanation of my case study, which I will expand in chapter 3.

My methodological approach is mainly ethnographic. Consequently, interviewing and participant observation were my main data collection tools. I conducted in-depth interviews every six weeks with each of the participants, plus an interview with their partners. I used participant observation during two clearly differentiated stages, at the beginning and at the end of the data collection period. The observation was usually during leisure events, in which my main focus was the interactions using English between each participating woman and others.

Additionally, I used a quantitative approach to measure whether the participants made some progress with their English, thus testing was my third methodological tool. Each participant took the computer-adaptive language test DIALANG (ALTE 2007) on two occasions, at the beginning and end of the data collection period. I tackle the

methodology in detail in chapter 3, which also contains the explanation of my analytical method, mainly involving grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 2008) and complemented by Engeström's (1999) 'activity triangle'. The latter has been used to identify investment in SLL through activity, that is, what the learner is doing to achieve her SLL goals within different social contexts, as well as the social networks and relationships in which the learner is involved. I have also developed a simple chart tracing the main identity shifts that my participants experienced in the new English urban context.

I thoroughly discuss each participant's case in chapters 4 and 5. Each of these chapters contains a triad of cases, which I grouped taking the participants' level of English as a major criterion, supported by other relevant commonalities. A subsequent discussion that links and compares the six cases is included in chapter 6. The analysis presented in this chapter is based both on similarities and differences between all the cases, while it also shows each case's unique traits. Finally, chapter 7 includes my discussion of the obtained results (e.g. relevance of the findings with regard to my research questions and the implications of the findings at both theoretical and practical levels).

1.2 Research context: a 21st century world of fast global changes and the acquisition of a prestigious second language as a cultural capital

Research in SLL following a social approach is involved with the dynamics of globalisation, where the hegemony of specific languages has conferred prestige and value on them, to the detriment of others (Bourdieu 1986a;1986b; Phillipson 2006; Craith 2007; Mac Giolla Christ 2007). This has happened throughout human history; however, the economic and historical conditions nowadays make the learning of other languages a commodity to invest in. A prestigious second language has become a form of cultural capital (see 2.3.3.) (Bourdieu 1986a; Norton 2000) so that learning it is profitable, that is, SLL becomes an investment. For this reason, a huge number of individuals become second language (L2) learners. Sometimes this learning is done in a target language (TL) speaking context in which the L2 learner is also an immigrant. The interrelation between the SLL process and the TL context in turn intersects with a

number of other elements that play an important role in this phenomenon. Among them are power, ideology, identity and gender. The two latest are major elements in my study.

1.2.1 Languages in the world of the early 21st century

Globalisation is a complex phenomenon that entails a set of interconnected processes and socioeconomic relations which permeate and expand worldwide (Hardt and Negri 2000; Giddens 2002; Reifer 2004; McGrew 2005; Kiely 2007). Among them are, for instance, ‘flows (people, capital, goods), networks (information, production), institutions (UN, WTO, etc.) and challenges (environment, terrorism, poverty)...’ (Kiely 2007:78).

Globalisation is changing the social fabric of many countries through a complex interaction among different geographical-economical regions in the world, that takes the form of, for example: a) virtual intercultural communication via technological and media means (e.g. the internet or satellite television) that promotes other forms of socialisation; b) massive migration movements for work or training purposes (e.g. studying abroad, immigrant workers) which can be temporary or permanent; c) tourism as a phenomenon of commodification of symbolic resources (e.g. the access to the exoticism that involves ‘indigenous’ stereotyped characteristics, geographical resources, and so on) and also a form of capital; and d) the commodification of second language learning as a form of cultural capital (Thurlow and Jaworski 2003; Coupland 2003b; Coulmas 2005; Brumfit 2006; Gal 2006; Giddens 2006; Pujolar 2006; Cortini and Manuti 2007; Duchêne and Heller 2007).

The role of language within these phenomena is significant, specifically as a communicative tool in both real and virtual communities worldwide (though there still is an important part of the world population who lack access to such dynamics: Castells 2004b). There are some important features in the linguistic landscape of the early 21st century world. First, there is evidence of a tendency towards multilingualism in many parts of the world, especially in urban sites (Nic Craith 2006; Duchêne and Heller 2007; Mac Giolla Christ 2007). Monolingual societies are disappearing because even in societies considered monolingual there are small groups that speak other languages (Cook 2002; Brumfit 2006; Gal 2006) as a product of immigration or of the re-

definition of geographical and political boundaries that in many cases overlap sociolinguistically (Gubbins and Holt 2002; Mac Giolla Christ 2007).

Paradoxically, in many places, the perception of language as a collective identity marker still is strong (Anderson 1994; Joseph 2004). Language in this sense is seen as the property of a nation, an ethnicity, or a religious group. However, it has been argued that this is an invented, constructed concept generated by political and economic needs and interests. Language is a significant tool within the politics of identity as it is directly linked to identity and identification (Anderson 1994; Joseph 2004; Meinhof and Galasinski 2005; Brumfit 2006). The politics of identity involve both power and ideology, which materialise, for instance, as language hegemony (in which some languages have more status than others). This implies homogenization (in which standardization and monolingualism are taken as natural) and exclusion, too, for other languages and their speakers (Maurais and Morris 2003; Wright 2004; Blommaert 2005; Brumfit 2006; Gal 2006; Stevenson 2006).

Second, linguistic practices have experienced a significant change from the last quarter of the 20th century. For instance, besides individual and common collective backgrounds which are the result of historical, socio-cultural and ideological factors (Coulmas 2006), globalisation has influenced the dynamics of language use, which involve an increasing range of choices (Mar-Molinero and Stevenson 2006; Edwards and Usher 2008)

Research on language dynamics within this macrocontext is extensive. Sociolinguistic approaches to multilingualism in different contexts have produced an important amount of research in the last 25 years. Empirical studies have investigated multilingualism in a range of urban settings, for instance: schools (Rampton 1995; Miller 2004a; Garcia and Skutnabb-Kangas 2006; Heller 2006; Byram 2008), workplaces (Goldstein 2001; Yuling, Scollon et al. 2002), cities and regions (Block 2006; Mar-Molinero and Stevenson 2006; Duchêne and Heller 2007), institutions (Robinson 2002), and intercultural communication (Scollon and Scollon 2001; Kotthoff and Spencer-Oatey 2007).

Importantly, communicative globalisation also involves a paradox: while people are connected by migratory movements and media resources that enhance global linguistic

complexity (e.g. through promotion of multilingualism), the common assumption of globalisation as an agglutinant, universal and plural phenomena (Coulmas 2005) is contradicted by the hegemony of just a few languages (i.e. English, French, Spanish, German, Russian, Chinese and Arabic) over the thousands that exist in the world (Coupland 2003b; Crystal 2004; Giddens 2006; Nic Craith 2006).

English has an increasing and unquestionable predominance among even the above mentioned major languages (Crystal 2002; Phillipson 2007; Saville 2007). It is argued that economic and ideological structures sustain this constantly growing hegemony or 'Englishisation' (Phillipson 2006:68), that affects many areas, namely media, research, culture, and some educational domains (Hardt and Negri 2000; Phillipson 2006; Mac Giolla Christ 2007). It has been argued that prospectively, by the middle of this century English will be spoken far more as a second language than as a mother tongue (Saville 2007).

Among the consequences of such hegemony there are two that are specially important for my line of enquiry. First, English has become a valuable form of cultural (linguistic) capital (Bourdieu 1986a;b; Bourdieu 1992) and learning it involves a good deal of investment, which is a complex issue that may imply not only formal learning through EFL or ESOL courses, but also informal learning in daily life within an English-speaking context, as I will explain later. Second, power relations emerge between native (L1) and non-native (L2) speakers of the TL within this context. Englishisation gives an 'unfair advantage' to native speakers of English over speakers of other languages (Brumfit 2006:37). This is particularly important when SLL takes place in an English-speaking context, as relations of power emerge between native (L1) and non-native (L2) speakers (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004b). This situation is not distinctive to English language, as there is evidence that it may happen within any TL speaking context (Bremer, Roberts et al. 1996).

Several elements are involved in this situation. First, there is the assumption held by speakers whose mother tongue is considered a desirable language that they have the 'ownership' of it (Joseph 2004), versus the assumption of L2 learners/users that such a language is common property, specifically English language (Jenkins and Leung 2006). This situation involves a paradox: on the one hand, ideological stances emanating from nation-states which have their roots in the control of power and maintenance of the

status quo (Bourdieu 1992; Wright 2004; Castells 2004a) see this language sharing as a threat to their socio-historical and cultural identities (Stevenson 2006). On the other hand, proficiency in the language of the host country social context is required of migrants as a proof of social integration (ibid).

Second, inequality of power emerges within this SLL situation, as it is assimilation and not reciprocal adjustment that is taken for granted. This has two significant consequences: first, all the effort is expected to come from the L2 learner who is living in a TL speaking context on a temporary (e.g. international student) or continuous (worker, refugee) basis. Second, the L2 learner is also at risk of suffering unfair situations within the new social context, for instance, being patronised by L1 speakers or being involved in situations of ‘gatekeeping’ (see glossary) (Bremer 1996; Heller and Martin-Jones 2001; Weedon 2004; Wright 2004; Heller 2006; Stevenson 2006).

All the above is part of the rationale for research into the social side of SLL, which acknowledges the ‘socio-political dimensions of interaction –such as power, authority, identity, access...’ (Breen 2001:177) that go beyond the purely linguistic field. In turn, all these elements have an impact on the L2 learner and the SLL process. This rationale also includes the concept of language as part of a complex system consisting of interrelated non-linguistic elements at macro-level (culture, politics and economics: Saville 2007), as well as at micro-level (identity and emotions: Norton 2000; Pavlenko and Piller 2001; Lantolf and Genung 2002). The idea is to research into the impact of this complexity on the L2 learner and the SLL process with the aim of contributing to a deeper understanding of it.

This view differs from the two other major SLL theoretical perspectives: a) psycholinguistic, which focuses on innate mental procedures involved in the process (i.e. universal language acquisition faculties) and on those which may be acquired and developed (e.g. language learning strategies); and b) affective, which centres on a range of individual traits (language attitudes, motivation, language anxiety and willingness to communicate) that influence the SLL process, in order to establish and explain the different degrees of achievement in the L2 (Ellis 1985; Gass and Selinker 1994; Breen 2001; Mitchell and Myles 2004)

How does the L2 learner relate to this macrocontext? How does the micro relate to the

macro? How complex is the micro itself in specific cases? What theoretical approaches can we use to study these relationships? The next chapter intend to tackle these issues by giving an explanation of the social approach to the study of second language learning (SLL). It also addresses specifically my topic, including a review of key empirical studies relevant to my project. Besides, it contains a brief explanation of my case study, which I am going to expand further in chapter 3. The core of the chapter involves a description of the theoretical framework that informs my study; and an explanation of the fundamental concepts which my study focuses on.

Chapter 2 Research on Second Language Learning using a social approach: a view of the L2 learner as a social being within a social context

This chapter provides an overall theoretical framework for my study. It deals with the following areas: an explanation of the social approach to the study of second language learning (SLL), including a review of key empirical studies relevant to my project; a brief explanation of my case study, which I am going to expand further in chapter 3; a description of the theoretical framework that informs my study; an explanation of the fundamental concepts which my study focuses on; and an introduction and justification of my research questions.

2.1 The second language learner within a target language context

As I have previously explained, one of the phenomena of globalisation is the increasing access to the learning of a second language, especially but not exclusively, English (Brumfit 2006). There are two main ways to learn a second language: a) in a formal and systematic way which centres on linguistic features (e.g. structures); and b) in an informal, non-systematic way (e.g. socialising with L1 speakers of the target language (TL); by language exposure while living in the TL country; through internet networks, or in other situations which imply constant contact with L1 and L2 speakers of the TL) (Ellis 1985; Doughty and Long 2003; Mitchell and Myles 2004).

The formal way of second language learning (SLL) has institutional courses as a main source, either in the country of origin (foreign language curricula) or in the TL country (e.g. ESOL) (Saville 2007). The informal way is mainly dependent on the TL social context. Many people in the world (children and adults) are second language learners and users (Doughty and Long 2003; Mitchell and Myles 2004). This means that they know (in different degrees of proficiency) and use (an)other language(s) apart from their mother tongue (Heller and Martin-Jones 2001; Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005). Some of them will never use the L2 in naturally occurring events outside the classroom, while some of them will use it on a daily basis as part of their lives (Cook 2002).

As I have already explained, my line of enquiry uses an approach that focuses mainly (but not exclusively) on informal learning through exposure to the language and interaction with native (L1) and non native (L2) speakers of the target language. A number of studies have focused on adult informal SLL within a TL speaking context. Research done on this field has used mainly a qualitative approach, specifically ethnographic methods and case study research (Mitchell and Myles 2004; Mackey and Gass 2005; Swain and Deters 2007). In consonance with its social perspective, this SLL approach has drawn its theories from fields such as psychology, anthropology and sociolinguistics (Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen 2003; Mitchell and Myles 2004; Mackey and Gass 2005). This line of enquiry has also identified a range of elements that intersect with the SLL process, which in turn have become elements of study. These elements are: identity and identification and exclusion practices; social context (in the form of communities, social networks and the natural milieu in which the SLL takes place) and participation; power and agency; and gender.

There are some key studies on this topic that inform mine, which I will now explain briefly. I am going to start with a pioneer longitudinal study (six years) conducted in the 1980s by a sociolinguistic team researching in five different European countries, as part of a European Science Foundation project (Bremer, Roberts et al. 1996). The participants were adult immigrants and L2 learners of one of these TLs: Dutch, English, French, German and Swedish, and the main focus of the study was daily life interactions between these L2 learners and some TL native speakers.

The relevance of this study for my line of enquiry resides in the researchers' ethnographic methods and particularly in its findings, which shed light on power inequalities between TL native speakers and L2 learners and their impact on the latter's identities, feelings and SLL processes. Importantly, it also disclosed L2 learners as real individuals with feelings that faced challenges related to the social realm in the form of identification and exclusion practices, thus adopting a different perspective from the cognitive or affective views in SLL. It also made evident both the role and impact of the TL speaking social context for the L2 learners and their SLL processes. Because of these features, this pioneering study was a stepping stone for the further development of research with this approach.

Other research studies have been carried out that have used a social constructionist approach, which involves a number of theories, among them poststructuralist theory (Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, and so on), sociocultural theory (Vygotsky), situated learning (Lave and Wenger) and dialogism (Bhaktin) (for a complete review see Swain and Deters 2007).

Following this perspective, Bonny Norton's work (Norton 2000; Norton 2001; Norton and Toohey 2001) incorporated two additional interrelated elements as central points: identity and gender. Drawing heavily on French theory in the philosophical, social and linguistic fields, specifically feminist poststructuralism and the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Norton's research has been focused exclusively on female L2 learners of English within an urban Canadian context. Her case study of five female migrant L2 learners in the city of Toronto constitutes the corner stone of my study. Consequently, there are a series of resemblances between both studies in theoretical and methodological terms, but there are also significant differences, as I am going to explain below.

I consider Norton's work significant for the field especially for using the Bourdieu concept of 'investment' in the acquisition of cultural capitals as an explanatory element within the SLL process, and for having identified the relation of this process with identity. Norton has uncovered the fact that the SLL process included other elements apart from the set of well known affective factors previously studied by social psychologists (motivation etc). She has shown how the complex issues of learner identity and the learner's emotional realm have shaped decision making, participation in events and communities linked to SLL, and other attitudes and behaviours. All these elements have an impact on the learner's progress in L2 (or lack of it).

Norton's account of investment has been criticised as difficult to grasp (Menard-Warwick 2005). I found two reasons for this: on the one hand, it is an overarching concept that addresses the complexity of SLL within the interaction dynamics between the L2 learner (and her identity) and the TL social context, thus it is not easy to grasp in the beginning. On the other hand, it is because more research about the concept was needed in order to explore its scope and possibilities. My project was designed to undertake this, and the results are discussed in chapter 6.

The work of Pavlenko, Blackledge et al. (2001a; 2004b) has been reported in two key compilations that also focus on identity, gender and SLL processes within an English

speaking context. The majority of these studies follow an ethnographic approach and use a similar theoretical framework to that of Norton (poststructuralism plus Bourdieu's concepts). Their work on identity theory has contributed to my understanding of how identity relates to social context in situations of inequality of power, specifically when individuals (L2 learners, immigrants) interact with a TL or majority language social context. Pavlenko, Blackledge et al. have stressed the options in such situations, for instance, negotiation, rejection or adoption of identities given by the social context. These ideas are explained further in the section Concepts (2.3.5)

Especially important for my study in terms of analysis of findings is Goldstein's (2001) study of a group of Portuguese women in a workplace in Canada. Goldstein focused not only on their linguistic practices but also on their identification and exclusion practices. Goldstein identified how such practices interrelate not only within the work context, but within the construction of a collective identity that involves voluntary illiteracy in English. The relevance of these findings for my study lies in the discovery of how identification and exclusion tendencies have an impact on the L2 learners' decision making with regard to their SLL process in the form of participation, activity, investment (or the lack of it, as happened in this study).

Teutsch-Dwyer's (2001) longitudinal study of a male Polish L2 learner of English in the USA is the one and only study within this line of enquiry that I have found concerning a male participant. This is particularly important for me as it is the only contrastive study in terms of gender differences in similar circumstances and context. This study gave me crucial information about the influence of gender on the interaction dynamics and characteristics between English L1 speakers and the L2 learner. For instance, whether both interlocutors in an interaction (an English L1 speaker and the L2 learner) share the same gender (or not) makes a difference to the degree of cooperation and help provided by English L1 speakers to the L2 learner. The study also provided valuable evidence of the influence of gender on the level of help given by English L1 speakers to an L2 learner of the opposite gender, as well as the impact of gender-influenced interaction dynamics in the participant's SLL process.

Having explained the broad research context and antecedents for my study, I am going to explain my study briefly as a preamble to the presentation of my theoretical framework. A full account of the study follows in chapter 3.

2.1.1 Introduction to my multiple case study

As I have previously stated, my study is based upon Norton's (2000) study on five female immigrants in Toronto. As antecedent, I conducted a pilot study of modest scope for my Master's degree dissertation. This included 6 adult female L2 learners of English who were living in Southampton for at least eight months. Conducting that pilot was a useful experience but had many drawbacks, especially constraints of time, my lack of research experience and my limited understanding of the theoretical background.

The study of my PhD contains similarities and differences with Norton's study, which I am going to review as an introduction to my theoretical framework.

Similarities

Objects of study: The role of the L2 learner's identity and gender in the dynamics of the SLL process within a TL (English) speaking context; the interaction dynamics between the L2 learner and English L1 speakers in daily life events, with special attention to the role of power as key element in inclusive or exclusive situations; investment, how it is accomplished, what is involved and what are its consequences; gender, how it relates to the SLL process and the social context, how it may influence the participant's access to SLL resources, interactions with and help from English L1 speakers; and the L2 learner's participation in different communities of practice.

Theoretical framework: A social constructionist approach, specifically feminist poststructuralist theory (Butler 1990; Weedon 1997; Weedon 2004)

Methodology and study design: Longitudinal multiple case studies designed with an ethnographic approach.

Concepts: Identity, gender, investment, and capitals are central concepts for both studies.

Context: A cosmopolitan English speaking urban context with massive immigration.

Participants: Female L2 learners of English who have been in the country in continuous basis more than one year.

Differences

I have included a number of elements that Norton did not. They are:

Objects of study: the L2 learner's activity related to investment and the SLL process; the role of partners in the SLL process; identification and exclusion practices.

Theoretical framework: Articulated by poststructuralist theory and activity theory, with the later addition of two social psychological identity theories by Stryker and McCall and Simons (Stets and Burke 2000; Turner and Stets 2005)

Methodology and study design: Norton's main data source was the participants' diaries. Additionally, she recorded the few periodical meetings she had with all the participants. In my case, my main data source is participant interviews, but observation is also a relevant data collection tool. Another significant difference is that I am including a quantitative tool (a computer-adaptive test) to measure the participants' initial and final level of proficiency within the data collection period, in order to identify any L2 progress that may take place in that phase.

Concepts: Additional concepts, namely activity, habitus and identity hierarchy

An additional difference, though not related to the study design and method, is that unlike Norton, I am an English L2 speaker, as my participants were. This fact had an obvious impact on my relationship with them, which in turn influenced the degree of openness from the participant, and had repercussions on the richness of the collected data.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Introduction

'Language acquisition' is a misleading term... for we do not acquire something which is pre-existent and fixed 'out there', and we do not possess it once we acquire it; more accurately, we perform with it in order to make it. And we create with it not just unique sentences to express our own unique messages, but unique displays of our decorative, analytical, mimetic, melodic, symbolic and allusive capacities. [They] enable us to

exploit not just the formal properties of the code, but the properties of the referents and of the associations of the referents (Brumfit 2006:30)

I selected this quotation as introduction because it captures the socio-historical-cultural facet of language within the complex interaction between language and the individual. It also denotes their mutual influence in the evolution of language. In 1.1.2 I mentioned the different fields of study in the area of second language acquisition, namely cognitive, affective and social (Mitchell and Myles 2004). These theories follow two main tendencies, namely the psycholinguistic and cognitive, and the social (Ellis 1985; Block 2003; Doughty and Long 2003; Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen 2003; Mitchell and Myles 2004; Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005).

My line of enquiry centres on the social approach to SLL. I start by explaining the general traits of analysis of the social in research, to understand how this research is done. Siegel (2003) identifies three parameters amongst which the analysis of the social fluctuates, namely a) macro-analysis/micro-analysis; b) structural/interactional analyses; and objective/ subjective analyses. In SLL, macro-analysis focuses on issues of the hegemony of specific languages, the hierarchy between L1 and L2 'and the general domains of use of the L1 and L2' (p.183). Micro-analysis concentrates on a) the relationship between the learning and use of the L2, and the social context; b) L1 and L2 speakers' social relationships; c) positions available to L2 learners within specific social contexts and the role of power in such issues.

Regarding structural analysis, it takes as central points the socio-economic structure and historical background that shape individual identities in a fixed, given way and establish the social positions accessible to each individual. Such structure affects SLL in direct or indirect ways. Conversely, interactional analysis emphasises the changeable nature of context and individuals, created through the confluence of social factors and social interaction. Thus, an individual can have multiple social identities depending on the communities in which she/he participates. It implies negotiation, challenging, acceptance or rejection of such identities and relationships. Interactional analysis also underlines the reciprocal influence between SLL and context. Lastly, the objective analysis focuses on 'the observable aspects of the social context, while the subjective perspective concentrates on individual perceptions of these aspects' (Siegel 2003:184).

According to Siegel's analytical categorisation, my project involves situated SLL and micro-analysis, interactional analysis and both objective and subjective analysis. My analysis focuses on: a) the L2 learner's point of view and stances, as well as her reports and reflection about her own SLL and the situations she experiences within the TL context; b) the interaction between her and English L1 and L2 speakers not only to document her command of English, but also the role of others in her language use and learning; c) gender as an element of the gendered order (see below) and its possible impact on the learner's SLL.

First, it is necessary to consider the role of identity in such interactions, from two different perspectives: a) that of the English L1 speakers: how they position the English L2 speaker; how this positioning influences their willingness for interacting, cooperation in interaction and other elements such as potential help to the L2 speaker; b) that of the English L2 speaker: how she has access to these interactions and other resources; how she reacts to the fact of being positioned by English L1 speakers, as well as to the interaction per se; and the possible repercussions that such interactions may have on the L2 learner's SLL process.

Second, it is necessary to consider what the learners do to learn the L2, what kind of tools they use to mediate their learning, what kind of activities they undertake for learning; and the impact of such activity in the L2 learner progress, if there is any.

The theoretical framework that informs my study comprises two social constructionist theories, namely poststructuralist theory and sociocultural activity theory (SCTAT or AT for short) as main theories. Social constructionism is an approach generated by the work of the sociologists William Thomas and Alfred Schutz. It involves an array of theories which focus on the role of human beings as generators of the social world (Holmes 2007). This approach argues that specific world phenomena and dynamics (part of what is known as reality) for instance knowledge and societies, are constructed and created by human intervention throughout history. Still, this approach does not deny the crucial role of biology and natural forces in human life (Gergen 1985; Bruffee 1986; Demeritt 2002).

I decided to use both theories because: a) postructuralist theory has proved to be a useful framework for my key studies; b) empirical work with AT has explored an array

of social elements that have important repercussions for the individual. This provided me with a useful theoretical and analytical tool, as I will discuss later in chapters 3 and 6. I have also used some major tenets of two social psychological theories of identity, which I decided to include at the data analysis stage when I was dealing with my extremely rich data. I consider these different theories as complementary, as they focus on different sides of SLL with the same approach.

2.2.2 Poststructuralist theory

Poststructuralism is a group of theoretical positions which emerged in the second half of the 20th century in the frame of the so called postmodernist age (Lye 1997; Weedon 1997; Cole 2003; Jones 2003). Postmodernism is a complex of movements which emerged to challenge and contest modernist approaches, whose key intellectual patterns are: a) rationalism, empiricism and objectivity, plus the assumptions resulting from their application (coherence, stability, order, structure, universality); b) the continuous seeking of explanation and causality in all phenomena; and c) the concepts of progress and history (Cole 2003; Jones 2003; Klages 2003; Giddens 2006). Modernist approaches see language as rational, and its main conceptual representation is the Saussurean linguistic sign (signifier and signified) (Lye 1997; Klages 2003). Thus, language is conceived as a ‘chain of signs without a subject, produced and seen from an ‘objective’ position or from nowhere in particular...’ (Pavlenko 2002:283)

Postmodernist intellectual patterns are subjectivity, irrationality and plurality, multiplicity, and diversity (versus the modernist dichotomies, for instance, order/disorder) plus the assumptions resulting from their application (change, contradictions, incoherence, and uncertainty) (Atkinson 2002; Gauntlett 2002; Jones 2003). In language, they have centred on the power of language as a means of subjective formation through discourse (Althusser 1984; Kristeva 1986; Sarup 1993; Olssen 2003). Lately, they acknowledge the significant role of media and computing technology, as well as developing a critical analysis of their roles in modern societies (Lye 1997; Gauntlett 2002; Jones 2003; Castells 2004b).

Poststructuralist theory is strongly rooted in German thinking and philosophy (e.g. Heidegger, Nietzsche, Marx and Hegel). Saussure’s and Freud’s works are also

contributors to it. From these foundations, French theorists further developed poststructuralism (Sarup 1992; 1993; Collins, Mayblin et al. 1996; Weedon 1997; Reilly 2001). I explain their work briefly below.

Derrida's deconstruction theory challenges the fixed nature of the linguistic sign and focuses on the many possible meanings contained in a text (Sarup 1993; Weedon 1997). He also stressed the role of language in the subjective construction of reality (Collins, Mayblin et al. 1996; Lye 1997). Althusser carried out important work on the social construction of subjectivity through language as ideological instrument, thus focusing on power (Felluga 2003a). He also shed light on hegemony legitimization through ideology rather than by repression, a point taken and further developed by Foucault and Bourdieu (Althusser 1984; Assiter 1990; Weedon 1997).

In his psychoanalytic work, Lacan emphasised the role of both the socioeconomic system and language as discursive practices in ideological systems such as patriarchalism (Sarup 1992; Felluga 2003b). Lacan's work is the cornerstone of the work of the French feminist theorists Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray (Sarup 1992; 1993), who in turn influence feminist theorists such as Butler (Salih and Butler 2004) and Weedon (1997), who is one of the main influences in Norton's work.

Cixous is a writer whose work is focused mainly on textuality and sexuality, with an anti-dualistic and anti-hierarchical approach that challenges both biological naturalist approaches to gender and the patriarchal hierarchization derived from such ideology (Wilcox 1990). Later, Cixous adopted a broader approach to feminism involving politics, ethics and economics (Weedon 1997). Kristeva is a psychoanalyst and linguist, whose work focuses on gender plurality and fluidity. Kristeva argues that there are multiple gendered and sexual identities rather than a single idea of 'the feminine' (Kristeva 1986; Kristeva 2002). She also sees language as a producer of cultural elements (Kristeva 1986).

Irigaray is a feminist philosopher whose stance is opposite to those of Cixous and Kristeva, as she argues that everything is dichotomically gendered (Irigaray 1992). Irigaray advocates a female language from a non-patriarchalist subject position. This entails a clear distinction between identity and identification, pointing to women's adoption of subject positions offered by patriarchalism (Assiter 1990; Sarup 1993;

Weedon 1997).

Foucault focuses on discourse as a key element in analysing issues of power, the central topic in his work. Foucault argued that power is present everywhere in human relations, either constraining or facilitating actions, activities and the individual's agency (Blunden 2005a; Jaworski and Coupland 2006). Foucault also shifted the Marxist focus on macro-economical elements related to power to micro-levels of quotidian social interactions (Sarup 1993). Foucault offered an explanation of a reciprocal influence between discourse and daily life and its relation with power through the concept of the discursive field (Olssen 2003). A discursive field is an area occupied by an institution and its practices (Weedon 1997).

Foucault emphasised the inequality of power among the array of discourses of a discursive field, as well as the different aims of such discourses. For him, discourses can whether explain, justify, challenge or contest the appropriateness of the status quo, highlighting how this marginalises, stigmatises or dismisses those meanings and practices that do not fit in it (Weedon 1997). Foucault also uncovered the important role of discourse for controlling people, because older forms of repression and punishment were neither efficient nor useful anymore; therefore, through discourse, new more symbolic forms are used, involving subtle sanctions such as those mentioned above (Sarup 1993; Mesthrie, Swann et al. 2000).

Foucault developed further the Althusserian notion of the subject as an ideological product linked to discourse, to the point of affirming that it is constituted by the intersection of several discourses; later, he argued that the subject was actually a product of relations of power (Mesthrie, Swann et al. 2000). Foucault also highlighted the role of power in the availability of subject positions to individuals. He emphasised social construction as a key issue, even in biologically essential needs such as nutrition, sheltering, sexuality and socialisation (Blunden 2005a; Jaworski and Coupland 2006). Foucault is an important reference for feminists because of his theorisation and analysis of sexuality and the body under the light of power and discourse (Sarup 1993; Olssen 2003).

Pierre Bourdieu was a thinker and sociologist who converges with poststructuralists on some points, His work on power, identity and language has strongly influenced both

Norton's work and mine, especially his concepts of habitus, capitals and investment which I will explain in the section Concepts (2.2.4). Bourdieu's work moved the focus from discourse to the relationship between the communicative economy (communication as a part of the economy) and what he called symbolic power (Fowler 1997; Shusterman 1999; Jenkins 2002; Adkins and Skeggs 2004; Grenfell 2004). Through this approach, Bourdieu also highlighted the struggle between social classes and emphasised the role of the economic, social and historical context in power relations (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1986b; Bourdieu 1992; Mesthrie, Swann et al. 2000; Blunden 2004).

Bourdieu's theory of symbolic domination conceives language as a means of control (Bourdieu 1992). He claims that the groups who control a society's linguistic resources also control access to other kinds of resources, either material or cultural. They also establish the legitimisation of specific elements to form the social order, leaving aside others that do not fit within it. The legitimisation makes this social order and its elements appear as 'natural', a situation that, as said above, Althusser had already discovered and analysed (Bourdieu 1992; Heller and Martin-Jones 2001).

Language is thus an important element in symbolic domination because of its epistemological role, as well as being a resource that is both an indicator and a means of control and access to other resources. For Bourdieu, in this symbolic domination there is a linguistic market in which linguistic products are quoted, together with other cultural features (codes of dressing, of behaviour, of how to speak, and in general, of ways of life) (Bourdieu 1992).

2.2.2.1 SLL poststructuralism

SLL poststructuralists focus on the social facet of SLL which is usually overlooked by cognitive approaches (Pavlenko 2002; Doughty and Long 2003; Siegel 2003; Mitchell and Myles 2004). This theory centred specifically on the relationship between the L2 learner/user, the social context, and the learner's SLL process. This involves the L2 learner's access to linguistic resources (e.g. interaction with TL native speakers, exposure to language, formal learning), her identity, the communities she has membership in, issues of power between the L2 learner/user and others and so on (Bremer, Roberts et al. 1996; Norton 2000; Pavlenko 2002; Pavlenko and Blackledge

2004b; Heller 2006; Block 2007).

Consequently, the poststructuralist view of L2 learners stresses their humanity with their contradictions, ambiguities, changes and agency to control their own learning, all of which influence the SLL process. It rejects the idea of the L2 learner as a simple passive entity who receives input and produces output (Heller and Martin-Jones 2001; Lantolf and Pavlenko 2001; Lantolf and Genung 2002; Mitchell and Myles 2004; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004b; Block 2006).

This view involves acknowledging diversity, multiplicity and difference in theorising aspects of multilingualism, intercultural communication, migration and other complex situations linked to SLL. Additionally, it recognises monolingual and monocultural biases, shifting from a stress on native-like proficiency goals to an acknowledgement of the L2 speaker's own goals and communicative capabilities that may differ from this native-like target.

As I have already mentioned in 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, SLL poststructuralism has inspired an important amount of empirical research that has contributed to the explanation, analysis and further development of poststructuralist theories and approaches (Pavlenko 2002; Block 2007). Usually through ethnography and case studies, child and adult L2 processes have been analysed using poststructuralist theories, in both 'naturalistic' and formal (classroom) contexts (Block 2007).

2.2.2.2 Conclusions

Poststructuralists have a critical stance towards the Cartesian view of the human subject as rational, universal, coherent, free, and autonomous. They emphasise the role of language mainly as a discourse in the social construction of the world (Sarup 1993; Reilly 2001).

Strong points of poststructuralist theory

In addressing language as a key element in ideological, social, historical, political and economical dynamics in the world, poststructuralists have raised awareness about inequality of power at macro level (individual and status quo) and micro level (individual and context; individual and others).

Poststructuralists have also characterised language as a powerful tool in the perpetuation of the status quo through discourse and through social practices in daily life.

SLL poststructuralism has stressed the view of the L2 learner as a human being, as a complex entity that influences and is influenced by the social context within the dynamics of daily life. It rejects the study of language as an abstract system isolated from the real world, thus adding richness to the empirical and theoretical work in the field, and reducing the cognitive bias in SLL research.

Weak points

Relativism: Poststructuralist theory, as part of social constructionism, has been criticised by traditional scientists and scholars for its relativist position, where truth is a relative, unstable concept. Allegedly, relativism ignores the natural universal laws and phenomena that exist independently of human thought and actions. Constructionism also problematises epistemology in arguing the equal validity of all different types of knowledge (Boghossian 2006).

Exclusion and self-centredness: Poststructuralism has been criticised for ignoring the validity of other theories, especially structuralism and cognitive linguistics; and other approaches, especially the so-called 'essentialist' (e.g. naturalist, innatist, evolutionary), taking a radical position that excludes the possibility of complementary and collaborative research work (Fitzhugh and Leckie 2001) .

Overemphasis on discourse and discursive practices, ignoring valuable work made in the cognitive linguistic area (Fitzhugh and Leckie 2001; Blunden 2005b).

Overuse of concepts such as identity and power to address the study of language and SLL (Djite 2006).

In spite of these drawbacks, poststructuralist theory in SLL has contributed significantly to balance the field through its emphasis on the social and contextual areas, long ignored in favour of the cognitive realm. Poststructuralist theory has also highlighted the impact of elements such as power, identity, contradiction, emotions, and so on, in

SLL processes. Additionally, poststructuralist approaches acknowledge the complexity of societies nowadays, in which multilingualism, SLL, intercultural communication and migration have acquired a relevant role.

2.2.3 Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and Activity theory (AT)

In this section I am going to explain the general tenets of sociocultural theory (SCT) as a backdrop to introducing and explaining activity theory (AT).

2.2.3.1 Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory (SCT) was developed in the 1920's by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. His focus was on understanding how human beings develop higher mental forms (Wertsch, Del Río et al. 1995; Wertsch 1998). Vygotsky died prematurely and his closer collaborators (e.g. A.N. Leontiev and A.R. Luria) worked further on the theory, which reached the West in the sixties (Robbins 2003; Mitchell and Myles 2004). Since then, Vygotsky's work has had a number of different interpretations in what is known as Neovygotskyan approaches (Lantolf and Appel 1994; Wertsch, Del Río et al. 1995; Engeström, Miettinen et al. 1999; Block 2003; Mitchell and Myles 2004; Duff 2006; Swain and Deters 2007)

The theory claims that a dialectical relationship exists between: a) mind (human mental innate biological assets, e.g. memory, attention, reflexes, and the capacity for quantification); and b) social environment. This relationship is the source of human higher mental processes (e.g. attention, rational thinking, emotion, planning, learning, organising), which are not a continuation of innate biological faculties, but a new psychological formation (Wertsch, Del Río et al. 1995; Wertsch 1998; Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Kozulin, in Sica 2007). Higher mental processes allow us to control and change ourselves and our environment (Lantolf 2000; Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Swain and Deters 2007).

Vygotsky stressed the sociocultural milieu as a main human developmental source, which involves two key elements, social interaction and mediation, through the use of both physical tools, and mental tools such as language (Lantolf 2006a; Swain and Deters 2007). The concept of mediation establishes that humans do not relate to the

world directly, but through the use of tools (mediational means) and sociocultural practices. Thus, it is not the individual, but ‘the person-acting-with-mediational-means’ which is key in cognitive development, as it allows the internalisation of external interactivity.

Mediation involves the creation and use of artifacts, which are socio-cultural-historical products (physical or symbolic) of the interaction between a) individuals in specific conditions in space and time; and b) generations. Consequently, artifacts contain characteristic cultural traits that human beings adopt from previous generations, adapting and transforming them according to specific spatial-temporal (historical-cultural) circumstances. This results in new and more complex uses and activities, sometimes creating a totally different activity based on different purposes and in different spatial-temporal and sociocultural contexts (spin-off or ratchet effect) (Wertsch, Del Río et al. 1995; Lantolf 2000; Lantolf and Thorne 2006). This means that the mediational quality is not intrinsic to artifacts, but socially embedded, as artifacts acquire such qualities through repeated use in historical evolution.

Hence, artifacts mediate the relationships between: a) human beings and the world (physical, mental, emotional); b) human beings with each other; c) human beings with their inner mental worlds, enabling them to be aware of their innate mental functions and to purposely control, inhibit or use them, thus making the most of themselves and their social or material environment (Lantolf 2000; Lantolf 2006b). Such ‘intellectualization’ (Lantolf and Thorne 2006:27) is a gradual and constructive process, and in it resides the key that differentiates human beings from primates, though the latter also use tools.

Artifacts are both ideal and material at the same time, sometimes obvious (e.g. when using a material tool such as a pair of scissors) or symbolic (e.g. when we use inner speech or when we plan or imagine a diagram) (Lantolf and Appel 1994; Lantolf 2000; Lantolf 2006b). The three interacting categories of artifacts are: a) activities (e.g. play, education, work, aesthetic recreation, and legal and medical systems); b) artifacts proper (e.g. physical tools, weapons, clocks, computers [plus] symbolic tools (e.g. language, different numeric systems, music, art, literary creation, diagrams, charts); and c) concepts (community’s constructed understandings of the personal, social, physical, mental, spiritual worlds) (Lantolf 2006b:69).

SCT conceives of language with a double quality: as a symbolic mediational mean tightly linked to the sociocultural context, and as 'constitutive of thought' (Swain and Deters 2007:822). For Vygotsky, linguistic signs have two functions, namely indicative (context dependent) and symbolic (non-context dependent but categorical and representational) (Kramsch 2000). This sign's duality links thinking with communicative activity in two ways, as unit of behaviour (outwardly) and as unit of thinking (inwardly). Thus, children progressively acquire 'the capacity to subordinate their behavior to their own speech' (Lantolf and Thorne 2006:71).

In SCT, this mediating function of language has been called 'linguaging' (Swain and Deters 2007:822) i.e. 'the use of speaking and writing to mediate cognitively complex activities' (ibid), from which both cognitive and affective developments arise. This function of language is tightly linked to another important Vygotskian concept: regulation.

Regulation is a key element in mediation. Vygotsky argued that human cognitive development takes place sequentially on two planes, first on the social plane (as an inter-psychological category) and next on the psychological plane (as an intra-psychological category) (Lantolf and Appel 1994). Vygotsky highlighted that it is through engaging in and reflecting on activity that people make sense of what they are doing. Language activity (linguaging) does not constitute thinking itself, but regulates thinking through a planning function in which speaking precedes mental and physical action, creates a mental image of a specific future and also, helps to prevent any impulsive action (Lantolf and Thorne 2006).

SCT has identified three different stages in human intellectual development, in which mental processes are regulated by three distinct elements. The first stage (object-regulation) involves the child's relationship with the objects of their environment. The second stage (other-regulation) comprehends the dialogic relationship between the child and members of his/her social milieu, using language as a mediational tool, mainly in the form of speech. More experienced members (e.g. parents, teachers, friends, siblings and so on) instruct the child from birth in how to act in the world and how to acquire the skills to live in it. Inter-mental activity is involved in such a stage, giving place later to higher cognitive processes (Lantolf and Appel 1994; Lantolf 2000). The third stage is

internalisation, in which the individual shows an appropriation of knowledge resulting from the two previous stages, developing it in higher mental functions.

Other-regulation is also known as scaffolding (a metaphor coined by Jerome Bruner and further developed by Neovygotskian scholars) (Lantolf and Appel 1994; Wertsch, Del Río et al. 1995; Donato 2000; Lantolf 2000; Duff 2006). Scaffolding involves guidance from a more expert person (mentor) to a less experienced individual (novice) through dialogic shared activity in a specific spatial-temporal momentum (Block 2003; Robbins 2003; Lantolf and Thorne 2006). The mentor's role involves controlling the learning environment, monitoring the novice's needs and progress for guidance, provision of necessary tools, keeping the focus on the goal and giving feedback (Robbins 2003; Mitchell and Myles 2004; Lantolf and Thorne 2006). Power relationships and negotiation are also involved as the mentor is in charge until the novice becomes competent. Scaffolding has been recognized as a useful concept in pedagogy in the sense that it emphasises dialogic interaction but it has been criticised for focussing more on the quantitative than qualitative aspects of interaction (Donato 1994, cited in Lantolf and Thorne 2006).

Within this inter-personal activity there are stages of internalisation and intra-personal mental functioning integrated by processes and activities, which happen in what Vygotsky called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Wertsch, Del Río et al. 1995; Mitchell and Myles 2004; Lantolf and Thorne 2006). The ZPD is 'a descriptive rather than explanatory principle' (Robbins 2003:29) that comprises the symbolic developmental space between: a) the child's actual knowledge and performance (her degree of ability in doing things and in behaving independently); and b) the child's potential knowledge and performing abilities in an immediate future through interaction with more experienced people or through the use of a mediational tool (Lantolf and Appel 1994).

The ZPD involves potential mental functions, as it comprises the past, the present and the future of the process of knowledge development (Wertsch, Del Río et al. 1995; Mitchell and Myles 2004). Yet, the ZPD principle has also been criticised as a static misrepresentation of the cognitive process context in contrast with the dynamism of the individual's developmental process (Robbins 2003).

Internalisation is a process of idealisation of external sociocultural activity that results in the transformation of symbolic artifacts into psychological artifacts to mediate human mental activity (Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Lantolf 2006b). It also involves reorganising the relationship between the individual and her environment, as through internalisation, the person becomes gradually independent from specific contexts and circumstances.

SCT theory also promotes a 'genetic' approach to empirical research, involving four interrelated distinctive domains, namely: a) phylogenetic, which centres on biological processes and addresses the role of mediational means over the human evolution; b) sociocultural, which focuses on historical processes, tackles 'the evolution and impact of artifacts [and cultural practices] on mediation processes and thinking'; c) ontogenetic, which concentrates on individual cognitive development over the life span; and d) microgenetic, which focuses on the development of mental functions or processes over a short period of time (Lantolf 2000:13).

2.2.3.2 SCT and SLL

When we come in contact with the available mediational means of a new culture (e.g. its language), the impact on an individual's ontogenesis can be considerable (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). SCT agrees with cognitive linguistics in that SLL entails more than the acquisition of new signifiers for signifieds already acquired in L1. Importantly, SLL is a process that involves re-mediation of the learner's interaction with the world through the acquisition of new conceptual knowledge (language plus metalanguage), and it can lead to the modification of previous existent knowledge, thus involving more than pure linguistic acquisition (Lantolf and Thorne 2006).

In SLL, internalisation involves negotiation between our own language(s)' features and meanings and the incorporation of a new language system. It implies assimilation but also resistance to different degrees, and in both situations, the individual's agency is important (Lantolf and Thorne 2006:161). Internalising a language (as in the case of learning our mother tongue(s)) implies control of both the linguistic code and the conceptual knowledge of the L2 community, whilst SLL is related to the control of the linguistic code, at least in the initial stages. Regarding SLL, imitation is a key element inside and outside of the classroom though more research has been done in the latter context (Lantolf 2006b).

There is evidence that children and adults select features of the available linguistic models from their milieu, sometimes through eavesdropping. In both children and adults, this leads to vicarious responses externalised through private speech. Also, children engage in imitative activities in a playful way, externalising their self-talk (Lee 2005). Adults are less prone to show playful behaviour and to produce self-talk or private speech. This can be associated either to the awareness of being observed or to the inculcation of cultural values of taking seriously the tasks they are engaged in. However, some studies have found playful features in some adult participants' behaviours. Private speech analysis has shown that L2 learners use mainly their L1 when they are engaged in difficult tasks. However, there is also some evidence that they use L2 elements and show in this way that they have internalised some new meanings from L2 to their private speech (Ohta 2001; Lantolf and Thorne 2006).

Thus, L2 learners are able to mediate themselves through the L2, but there is evidence that the L1 provides a unique inner speech that continues to mediate and regulate our thinking (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). However, some studies have shown evidence that L2 learners are also able 'to internalise culturally mediated meanings and use these to mediate their thinking' (ibid, pag. 111).

2.2.3.3 Activity theory

Activity theory (AT) is tightly linked to SCT in many of its elements. The difference resides in Vygotsky's focus on labour as a central concept, drawn upon Marx's work. Vygotsky highlighted the cultural-historical evolution of practical activity and its role in cognitive processes (Davydov 1999; Roth and Lee 2007). However, Vygotsky left AT in an embryonic stage, and it was his colleagues (Leontiev, Galperin, Zinchenko, Rubinstein and Luria) who further developed the theory, in which activity was stressed as a key concept related with mediation.

Some theorists have argued that the focus of AT on the practical material world places it closer to Piaget's 'sensory motor activity-object' approach rather than to Vygotsky's concepts as a source of cognition (Lantolf and Appel 1994). I consider, though, that AT is tightly linked to Vygotsky's SCT, as for him, activity, together with mediational systems and social interaction, plays a mediational role towards higher forms of

cognition (Wertsch, Del Río et al. 1995; Wertsch 1998) and human beings change the world and themselves through the production of values and the creation and use of artifacts (namely activities, concepts and physical and symbolic tools) (Engeström, Miettinen et al. 1999). Russian activity theorists focus on two main elements: a) the activity that the individual (child or adult) undertakes within her sociocultural milieu; b) how the social experience of activity relates to the individual's mental development. AT gives relevance to 'development, social mechanisms, mastery, motives, operations and goals' (Robbins 2003:73).

AT reached Western research in the 1980's, being further developed among others by Cole, Wertsch (Wertsch 1998), Rogoff and Lave in the USA; Engeström (Engeström, Miettinen et al. 1999), Nardi and Kuutti in Finland; and Holzkamp in Germany (Roth and Lee 2007). In SLL, Lantolf and collaborators have also used AT as a theoretical framework (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000; Lantolf and Genung 2002). AT influenced the development of the concept of community of practice by Lave and Wenger (1991). AT has also been important in information systems (Engeström, Miettinen et al. 1999).

Activity theory sees human mental functions (higher mental capabilities, which in this theory are known as consciousness), behaviour and motivation as dialectically integrated within a coherent system of activity. Such a system is a) an historical-cultural product; b) collectively organised; c) mediated by artifacts; d) constituted by its own characteristics, meanings, rules, roles and values; f) integrated by three main elements, namely the individual, the object and the community (Engeström 1999; Robbins 2003; Roth and Lee 2007). Engeström's activity triangle illustrates how activity systems are integrated (Fig. 1.1)

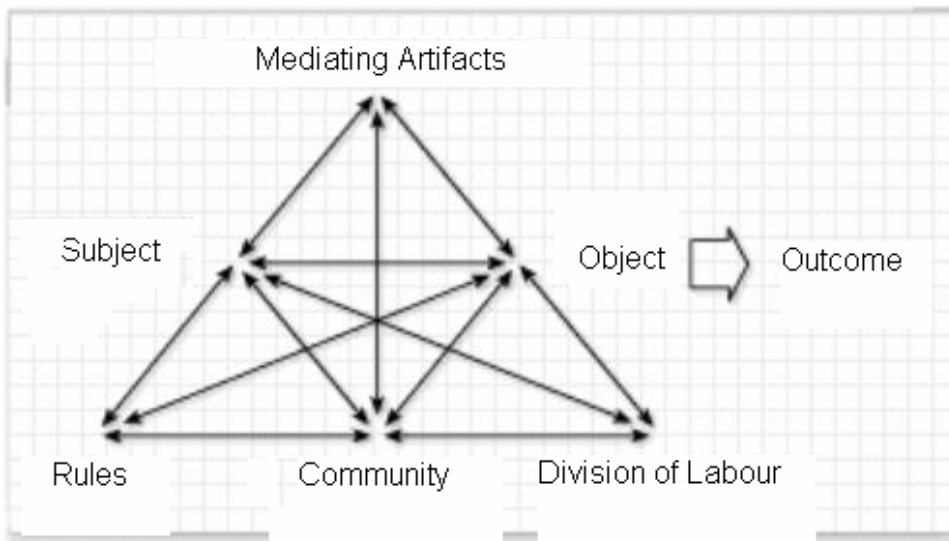


Fig.1.1 Activity triangle (Engeström, Miettinen et al. 1999; Roth and Lee 2007)

Activity in this theory is seen as ‘human doing’, a universal, conscious social factor inherent to human existence (Wertsch 1998; Roth and Lee 2007; Oers, Wardekker et al. 2008). Activity involves practices (individual and collective) that a) purposely transform the physical and social world; and b) determine the individual as a social being (Davydov 1999). For activity theory, activity is also a ‘frame or sociocultural interpretation that the participants construct of the events in their context of occurrence’ (Kramsch 2000:136).

In AT, activities are oriented to objects. An object is a complex human construction that arises from a need, and involves: a) the identification of goals that shape specific actions addressed to tackle a need; b) motivation (motives) that shapes and guides activity. The meaning of an object is constructed by its use in activities through time, thus the object is changed by people’s actions, co-construction and interpretation (Engeström and Kerosuo 2007). Object construction implies the use of mediating artifacts within a collaborative and dialogical (interactive) process, involving a variety of perspectives and voices from communities and practices (Engeström 1999). Thus, human activity uses artifacts to act on an object, which in turn becomes both a generator and recipient of activity (Davydov 1999; Engeström, Miettinen et al. 1999).

Motives are the motor of activity, the drive for tackling a need. A motive involves

setting a goal and controlling the object. Goals are ‘cognitive, executive, evaluative, and emotional aspects of activity’, which interact with individuals’ internal processes and the milieu (Robbins 2003:74). Goals change and are re-defined during the development of the activities linked to them (Kramsch 2000). Goals are the focus of actions. Actions are intentional and meaningful; they are accomplished under operations and using appropriate mediational means. Operations are the spatial-temporal context (conditions) where actions take place (Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Roth and Lee 2007).

Activities can be carried out through different actions and with different forms of mediation, and each action has the potential of becoming an activity per se. Division of labour is the result of activities. Some culturally motivated activities include work, education, accumulation of wealth and play, for example (Engeström, Miettinen et al. 1999; Lantolf and Thorne 2006).. The conception of the individual always embedded in the community(ies) also involves the relationship between community and division of labour (Lave and Wenger 1991; Engeström, Miettinen et al. 1999; Roth and Lee 2007). As in poststructuralist theory, agency is an important concept in AT. Agency means that, in spite of the important influence that context has on human beings, they have the power to act upon themselves, others, and their milieu (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000; Engeström and Kerosuo 2007; Roth and Lee 2007). Agency and artifacts are tightly linked, as action is always mediated, that is, human beings are agents-operating-with-mediational-means (see 2.3) (Wertsch, Del Río et al. 1995). Agency is thus constrained by artifacts and social practices (Swain and Deters 2007).

Using Engeström’s triangle and the explanations of Roth and Lee (2007), I have created an example to illustrate the complexity of activity: a group of people have a need, which is to improve a community social centre. This group of people includes volunteers, a social worker and a representative of the neighbourhood. The object is to generate resources (in economic and work force terms) to solve the need. They set the goals, which are: to raise awareness about the importance of the centre for the community life; to collect funds from the community and to negotiate financial help with the city council; to recruit more volunteers to help in a variety of tasks. The actions are: to distribute leaflets in the community explaining the need and the object; to organise a series of social and cultural events; to take part in a local radio programme; to meet with the proper council authorities and so on. The operations are the places and time where the actions take place (e.g. several places in the city of Manchester in September and

October of 2007). The artifacts are the informative tools (leaflets, radio talk) and events (social parties and political negotiations), as well as the physical tools such as moneyboxes, money, food, drinks, musical instruments, musical sets, donated items. Work division, voices, perspectives, emotions, and identities are also an important part of this activity.

Research on AT is centred on explaining processes. Activity is seen as a unit of diagnosis and analysis that unifies the innate biological mental functions with the role that participation in culturally organised activity plays for cognitive processes (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). Importantly, activity theory has also the potential to explain the transformation of situations and conditions into new qualitative forms, thus acknowledging the changeable and contradictory nature of the human world (ibid).

One strand of AT methodology is experimental and interventionist, and is practice oriented; This methodology has been applied mainly to organisations, information systems research and education (Engeström and Kerosuo 2007; Roth and Lee 2007). There are also a few studies that use activity theory with an ethnographic approach, for instance Lantolf and Genung (2002) Kim, (2007); Ivanic (2006) and Oers et al (2008). All of them are case studies that analyse language linked to identity, power, and complexity within communities, using the activity system model to address the complexity of the case. AT is useful in that it promotes a comprehensive analysis of different elements of an activity and how they relate with each other, as I exemplify below. From the above mentioned studies, however, only Lantolf and Genung and Kim addressed SLL.

Engeström's activity triangle has become a widely used tool for analysing activity systems, as includes significant elements not only of activity, but of our social world, and importantly, the interactions between these. It was useful to analyse my participants' activities linked to SLL investment. I have successfully used it to schematise and analyse the SLL process for each of my participants. I consider that it captures the complexity of individual identity within a social milieu and how this relates to the SLL process in terms of activity, goals and motives, and the elements linked to all these phenomena (e.g. emotions, contradictions, thoughts, perspectives, idiosyncrasy, internal-personal struggles, cognitive issues and so on).

It was also useful to identify: a) what tools (symbolic or physical) the L2 learner has used, how she used them and the results obtained; b) her goals (objects); c) the communities where she has membership and the link between them and her set of identities; d) her role in the of labour within the social context; e) the contrast between the L2 learner's sociocultural rules and the local rules (e.g. codes of interaction); f) the outcomes of participants' activity systems and their link with gender, identity and SLL processes.

2.2.3.4 Summary of AT and SCT similarities

Both SCT and AT have as a starting point Vygotsky's focus on: a) the dialectical interaction between the individual-operating-with-mediational-means and the social context; and b) its influence in the development of higher mental processes that allow human beings to control and change themselves and their environment (Lantolf 2000; Sawyer 2002; Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Swain and Deters 2007).

Both theories agree in that society pre-exists over the individual, as a conjunction of activities, artifacts (physical and symbolic tools), concepts, practices and social interaction. This pre-existence implies a sociocultural inheritance of activities, practices and artifact use that has suffered multiple transformations through time, space and generations. Individuals have continuous access to this cultural patrimony, transforming, enriching and adapting it, thus being part of a bi-directional relationship (Lantolf and Thorne 2006).

SCT and AT offer an ontological approach that is in consonance with the inseparability of the individual and the social, both seen as products of a process (e.g. social practices and action through mediation) on which analysis can focus (Sawyer 2002). This is perfectly applicable to the SLL process

For both SCT and AT main concepts are: mediation by artifacts; the dialectical correlation between internalisation and externalisation; cooperation and collaboration linked to mental and social development (Duff 2006; Lantolf and Thorne 2006). Learning processes are central to both theories.

SCT focuses more on language than AT. Language as mediational tool is a key element

in SCT, while in AT it is not more important than other elements of the activity system. However, SCT is not a theory of language per se, but a theory of cognitive development that is compatible with theories of language focused on social and/or cognitive areas (Lantolf and Thorne 2006).

Transformation is also a key element for SCT and AT. The former sees transformation as a result of the dialectical combination of individual-social context. The latter sees it as a product of the interactional dynamics within and between activity systems. AT acknowledges the heterogeneity, contradictions, and multiplicity of perspectives present in such systems. Both theories view communicative processes as cognitive, linked to agency, transformation and the social.

Finally, the research methodology associated with both theories is mainly qualitative, based on case studies, using both interventionist and ethnographic techniques.

2.2.3.4.1 Drawbacks

Because of the 'Cold war', there was a divergence between Russian and Western research and theory for the main part of the 20th century, which has made for difficulties in interpreting and understanding Russian theories and ontology. In addition, the intricacy of translating such complex works has not facilitated the situation (Lantolf and Appel 1994; Kramsch 2000; Robbins 2003). The substantial difference regarding meanings has made concepts confusing and complicated to understand. For example, the word 'activity' in Russian has more meanings than in English, thus it can mean direction, purpose... The same happens with the word 'goal' whose meaning in Russian implies orientation and directionality (Kramsch 2000; Robbins 2003). Internalisation is another problematic concept that has brought polemical interpretations, not only in nomenclature but in interpretation.

Fidelity or not to the original Vygotskian ideas is also a highly polemic issue. Russian scholars argue that their Western colleagues have understood Vygotskian concepts differently. For instance, James Lantolf or Michael Cole use the concepts in their original meaning, whilst others like Barbara Rogoff or James Wertsch suggest different conceptualisations, e.g. Wertsch's concept of 'mastery', that acknowledges contradictions and power, or Rogoff's concept of 'participatory appropriation', that does

not make a distinction between the social and the individual (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). This matter is quite confusing, especially when one is reviewing relevant literature.

SCT and AT empirical research have been criticised for relying heavily on micro-social studies (e.g. small-group case studies, classroom research, or laboratory replication of real social situations) and trying to use them to explain macro-social phenomena, which is denominated a ‘displacement of scope’ error (Sawyer 2002). However, it can be argued that SCT tries to explain the universals of cognitive development through emphasis on the social in such processes, and that AT, for example, attempts to address the macro-social through the analysis of activity system elements, and the relationship among different activity systems (Engeström, Miettinen et al. 1999; Engeström and Kerosuo 2007; Roth and Lee 2007)

SCT empirical research still does not give conclusive evidence about the relationship between cause and effect (Mitchell and Myles 2004). However, as SCT is a recent theory in the Western world, its empirical foundation is not substantial yet, but is still in progress. AT has become a theory for analysing organisations, which narrows its potential and its scope.

There is also a big difference between Russian AT and Western AT, which may lead to confusion (Robbins 2003). Russian AT is focused on cognitive development and its relationship with activity’s elements, namely motives, operations and goals. Again, the difference between the Russian and English languages makes difficult the understanding of AT concepts. Different approaches are adopted by different generations of AT scholars (Leontiev is considered to pertain to the first generation, while the 2nd and 3rd generations are constituted by Western scholars such as Engeström, Cole or Wertsch.) This issue leads to conceptual misunderstandings, as the terms used and the analytic structures are also different, for example, Leontiev categorises activity in levels, while Engeström uses a holistic interactive analytical structure to categorise activity.

2.2.3.5 Theoretical compatibility

Until recently (second part of 1980’s), the field of second language acquisition (theory and research) presented a clear imbalance favouring cognitive approaches over socio-

contextual perspectives. Nowadays, the field is slightly more equilibrated, thanks to the wide range of theoretical and empirical work that has been developed using the latter (Mitchell and Myles 2004; Swain and Deters 2007).

The two main points of convergence between poststructuralist theory, SCT and AT is their social constructionist view, which centres on the social constructed nature of learning processes and the relevance of the context in the individual's learning, identity and development. These theories also acknowledge: a) the role of an individual's agency in her learning process, where participation is a key issue; b) the role of power in the complexity of social interaction; c) the complexity of the SLL process; d) the social co-construction of knowledge and meaning through social activity and interaction; e) the key role that other people play in individual cognition and identity.

An example of the convergence of these theories is the use of the concept of community of practice, a social constructionist concept that draws from AT, as an analytical tool used by many social constructionists (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999; Swain and Deters 2007). My study has also shown the usefulness of this articulated theoretical framework through the use of the concept of activity and the activity system to further explore and explain the concept of investment. The analytic model of activity helped to identify how the investment took place through activity. I explain this issue further in chapter 6. The contribution of both theories can result in a more comprehensive account of SLL processes, AT addressing the dynamics of social context and the role of the L2 learner in such a context, while poststructuralist theory tackles social interaction from a perspective that focus on the individual's identity as a product of life experiences and power relationships.

2.2.4 Social psychological theories of identity

As I have previously mentioned, the richness and complexity of my data, specifically issues of identity, called for equally complex analytic approaches. In the middle of my data analysis process, I found two social psychological theories of identity, by Sheldon Stryker (Stryker 1968; 1980; Stryker and Serpe 1994; Stryker and Burke 2000; Stryker and Ervie 2001), George McCall and J. L. Simmons (McCall and Simmons 1978), which helped me to tackle this intricate task. Social psychologists emphasise both the role of human interaction and the role of the individual's feelings and perceptions in

identity construction processes. Social psychologist theories may seem dissonant with poststructuralist theory in general terms, as their approaches can be considered 'essentialist' –for instance they see identity as a fixed entity in which changes are considered 'disruptions' (Turner and Stets 2005). However, they have made a comprehensive study of identity in relation to feelings, self-esteem, and the impact of social context on these areas.

Social psychologists' work has contributed to the study of identity by giving deeper insights into the roles that human interaction and the individual's feelings and perceptions play in identity processes (e.g. identification and exclusion tendencies), also complementing Bourdieu's (1977) studies in this field. This allowed me to further explore the relationship between identity and the emotional realm and its influence in decision making and participation in communities. These elements affect both SLL processes and access to SLL resources (Norton 2001). I am going to explain their work briefly (for a complete, detailed explanation, see Turner and Stets 2005) and then explain the extent to which I have drawn upon it in my analysis.

Sheldon Stryker's (Stryker 1968; 1980; Stryker and Serpe 1994; Stryker and Burke 2000; Stryker and Ervie 2001) identity theory focuses on the relationship between the multiplicity of identity, the emotional realm and the social context. The theory has some points in common with my line of enquiry, especially with Hall (1996), Bourdieu (1977), Butler (1990), Norton (2000) and Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004b) which are: a) the view of identity as a multiple entity; b) the significance of the social context, specifically other's reactions and perceptions of the individual, in identity dynamics; and c) the focus on identification and exclusion practices that shape identity. This last point is also linked to Bourdieu's (1977) work on identity (habitus). The big difference is that Stryker's approach focuses on feelings, self-esteem and the significance of the social context and others, using the individual internal world as a starting point (inside-outside approach), while poststructuralists focus on the social context as a source of the individual being in terms of ideological discourses and power relationships (outside-inside). As I have previously said, I consider both approaches complementary.

One helpful distinction made by Stryker is that between identity and social role: for him, identity is an 'internalized positional designation' (Stryker 1968:559). That means that a position within a given social context involves performing specific roles, but only

becomes identity if it is internalised by the individual (Manuel Castells (2004a) also coincides in this point). I am going to explain this further in 2.3.5.1 below. Another coinciding point is the stress Stryker puts on the generative and regulative role of social context for identity. 'Identities are the meanings associated with the roles that persons enact in a network, and the structure and culture of a network delimit which identities can be deployed' (Stryker, in Stets and Burke 2000:117).

In this last point resides the importance of Stryker's theory. By identifying and describing in detail the characteristics and dynamics of the identity hierarchy and its connexion with of the multiplicity of identities, the emotional realm and the social context, Stryker discovered three important elements that determine the structure of the identity hierarchy: a) the individual's degree of commitment to each identity; b) the individual's quality of ties with specific social contexts or networks; and c) the confirmation of such identity by others (Stryker, in Turner and Stets 2005).

This complex group of intersecting elements are the basis of any hierarchy of identities, where emotions act as indicators of the viability of a specific identity within a specific social network, community, context and/or situation. Thus, identities have different values within different social networks and also within the individual scale of values. This in turn determines the degree of attachment/detachment ('commitment' in Stryker terms) to a specific identity. Stryker created a model that schematises his theory but I did not use it because of time and scope constraints.

Another theory that gave me deeper insights into identity issues is that of McCall and Simmons (1978). Their identity theory is in consonance with Stryker's theory, but their view is more flexible, as it acknowledges identity changeability, fluidity and importantly, negotiation as well as the individual's self-interpretation of her/his identities. This is important, because it involves not only who we perceive or think we are, but who we desire to be (Castells 2004a; Gewirtz and Cribb 2008). The degree of relevance of each identity is determined by the confirmation of that identity by others, the degree of commitment and investment (self-esteem) that the individual puts in that identity, and the benefits (in emotional and social terms) that such an identity provides. Importantly, the individual has the sensitivity to relate each identity to each social context.

McCall and Simmons' view also coincides with poststructuralist views of identity, as they see identity as an endless process. But I have also found in McCall and Simmons' theory concrete, detailed and specific explanations and examples for all these identity characteristics. For instance, they explain fluidity by stating that individuals have a fundamental psychological need for a) maintaining identities which are important for the person and b) having those identities legitimated by others. Fluidity involves a continuous process of 'legitimizing and maintaining identities' (McCall and Simmons 1978; Turner and Stets 2005:121). This is achieved through stable and rewarding relationships with others. Interestingly, in this process identities change, become either 'devalued' or 'prominent' due to legitimation (or not) from others (which results in a complexity of emotional responses), or because of opportunities (or lack of them) to perform such identities. Also, other identities are constructed and added to the individual's 'set' of identities.

The degree of relevance of each identity is determined by the confirmation by others, the degree of commitment and investment (self-esteem) that the individual put into that identity, and the 'benefits' (in emotional and social terms) that the identity provides. Importantly, the individual has sensitivity to equate each identity to each social context. The theory also includes the individual's self-interpretation of her/his identities, thus involving not only who we perceive or think we are, but who we desire to be (Castells 2004a; Gewirtz and Cribb 2008).

McCall and Simmons also identified a series of 'defensive strategies' (defense mechanisms) to balance expectations and outcomes and to soothe the pain arising from lack of legitimation of a relevant identity: a) to draw upon past successful experiences enacting an identity (what they call 'short-term credit'); b) to look for cues, real or imagined, that confirm the identity ('selective perception'); c) to interpret real cues favourably, in order to feel that the identity is confirmed ('selective interpretation'); d) to withdraw from interaction when the identity is not acknowledged; e) to return to an identity switch that fits the context; f) to blame others for lack of success in achieving identity legitimation; g) to disown an unsuccessful identity; and h) criticize and sanction others for not acknowledging/legitimizing the identity (Turner and Stets 2005). Norton (2001) provides examples from her study of five immigrants in Canada that contain some of the above mentioned strategies, using the non-participation concept from 'community of practice' theory as her unit of analysis.

I consider McCall and Simmons' approach useful to cover identity issues in my data that other concepts, such as C o P would not. C o P is useful for analysing the relationship between participation and identity in specific communities of practice such as classrooms (Norton 2001; Lantolf and Genung 2002), identifying resistance and agency as some main factors involved in participation (or lack of it). I use the social psychological approach because it gives more complete it explanations of why this resistance and agency take place.

I did not use these researchers' full models of identity hierarchy as my research is not only about identity and because of the scope and time of my study. However, their concept of identity hierarchy may be useful to identify a hierarchical order in my data for each participant, as well as possible identification and exclusion practices. These are all important elements that influence the individual's SLL process in terms of choices about interactions, activities to perform, and participation in social networks, and all this is also related to SLL in terms of how the participants might use or dismiss the SLL resources and opportunities available to each of them.

I consider the methodological use of mixed approaches appropriate for analysing rich and abundant data, as it is the case study's. It can help for a more complete analysis, either because they focus on different aspects of a phenomenon, or because one of them provides deeper insights into a specific aspect of the phenomenon, even if such approaches may seem opposed. In my case, I benefited from social psychologists' work in the areas of identity construction and identity self-hierarchisation.

2.3 Concepts

In this section I explain the main concepts related to my research questions, whose importance calls for a more detailed explanation than other concepts included in the glossary. Some of these key concepts, such as activity, investment and habitus have been already mentioned or implicitly explained in relation to my theoretical framework in section (2.2).

2.3.1 Identity

Identity is both ‘who we think we are and who we want to be’ (Gewirtz and Cribb 2008:40) and how others perceive us (Bourdieu 1977; Benwell and Stokoe 2006). There are many theoretical approaches to tackling the complex issue of identity, which range from views of identity as something coherent, fixed, natural and universal to those which see identity as a never-ending process, ever changing, ever fluid. (For a comprehensive survey of the term, see Ivanic 1997 quoted in Joseph (2004:10).

Among other features, identity involves a) the phenomenon of identification; and b) the emotional realm connected to a sense of security deriving from the idea that we belong to a social group with common geographical, historical, cultural and linguistic traits (Anderson 1994; Heller and Martin-Jones 2001; Meinhof and Galasinski 2005; De Fina, Schiffrrin et al. 2006). Therefore, identity can also be interpreted in terms of membership of a nation, a language, a culture, a geographical area, an ethnic group, a social class, a gender, a generation, a profession, and so on (Mesthrie and Tabouret-Keller 2001; Swann and Mesthrie 2004). This approach is linked to categorisation, used in variational sociolinguistics as units of analysis (categories) linked to linguistic varieties.

Some poststructuralist linguists object to variationist categorisations, arguing that they limit and are not in consonance with the nature of identity: ‘...labels that presuppose identity as a sociologically stable attribute of groups are usually less than reliable’ (Blommaert, 2005:205). There are arguments that indexicality and code-switching cannot capture the complex relations among languages, identities and speech events, nor the diversity of interactions, especially in multilingual settings, due to current world instability and fast changes (Coupland 2003b; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004a). My social constructionist stance is not radical, as the work from other approaches (namely the above mentioned social psychologists theories, or Bourdieu’s work) has contributed both to my understanding of identity dynamics and to my data analysis.

I assume that the meaning of an identity is co-constructed in social interaction through language. It involves several processes: a) a necessity to define ourselves and to project our self-concept to others; b) others’ perception of us, which results in how we are evaluated in social terms. The latter process entails the identities or positions available to us in our social networks, which may involve negotiation (Bourdieu 1977; 1992; Prentice 1994; Ivanic 1997; Weedon 1997; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004a; Blommaert

2005; Ochs 2005).

The poststructuralist view of identity conceptualises it as a continuous process that involves instability, contradictions, change, fluidity in time and space, and multiplicity (Butler 1990; Hall 1996; Kristeva 2002). Multiplicity because a person has several identities which intersect, interact and are ‘mutually constitutive’ of a whole ‘I’ (Lawler 2008a:3). This interaction, however, is difficult to analyse, because there are others factors involved, for instance, spatio-temporal and social contexts (Narvaez, Meyer et al. 2009). I found that the interpretation of multiple identities has led to confusion, as the terms identity, identity positions and social roles are used sometimes as synonyms, when in fact they are not. I will explain my use of each term in section 2.3.6.

Poststructuralism claims that identity is constructed or produced within socio-cultural-historical contexts, which implies a legacy and dynamics from preceding generations. Language in the form of discourse plays a key role in identity construction and has strong links with the social context. Discourse here is understood as the view of ‘...language as a form of social practice... language [as] ...a socially conditioned process, conditioned that is by other (non-linguistic) parts of society’ (Fairclough 1989:22). Additionally, discourse is language ‘used purposefully in particular instances and contexts’ (Cameron 2001). Power and legitimation are part of the ‘non-linguistic’ parts of society. To summarise, discourses contain ideological meaning, which legitimates and emphasises specific ways of being in the world, while it excludes and stigmatises others (Bourdieu 1992; Wodak 1997; Talbot, Atkinson et al. 2003; Blommaert 2005).

This complex process of social construction also implies social constraints (Salih and Butler, 2004; Ivanic 1999, quoted in Joseph 2005). Thus, ‘the ‘who and what you are’ is dependent on context, occasion, and purpose...[that] almost invariably involves a semiotic process of representation’ (Blommaert, 2005:203). Cameron (2006) highlights the reciprocal interaction between language and identity:

Whereas sociolinguistics traditionally assumes that people talk the way they do because of who they (already) are, the postmodernist approach suggests that people are who they are because of (among other things) the way they talk (p. 64).

Thus, the way an individual uses language (the form and content of speaking or writing) reflects the person's identity and leads others to the interpretation of that identity, as I am going to explain below (Joseph 2004; Salih and Butler 2004; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004a). Language is in this sense, a marker of specific identity and the corner stone of imagined affiliation (Anderson 1994).

For Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (quoted in Mesthrie and Tabouret-Keller 2001) the role of language in the co-construction of identity can be seen as a projection of the self through speech, sharing this identity with others who, in turn, give feedback and reshape the speaker's behaviour. This is a process of mutual adjustment, when the individual in question may identify herself with characteristic patterns of linguistic behaviour of a specific group, thus incorporating such patterns into her identity.

How does this discursive construction take place? As we acquire language [as a young child learning her L1 or as an L2 learner learning the TL], we learn to give voice – meaning – to our experience and to understand it according to particular ways of thinking, particular discourses, which pre-date our entry into language (Weedon 1997:32).

Poststructuralists (Althusser 1984; Kristeva 2002) and critical discourse analysts claim that we all are formed by ideological impositions from the status quo, which legitimise themselves as 'natural' (Wardekker 2008). Our sense of self, that is, who we think we are, is shaped by discursive sources that offer us a range of representations 'within networks of power and differential access to economic, social and cultural resources' (Bauman, 2004:38, quoted in Gewirtz and Cribb 2008). From birth we undergo a gradual process of identification with such representations, which eventually become integrated into our sense of self. When we are 'summoned' or 'hailed' using them we respond as if was a natural thing (Assiter 1990; Weedon 1997). Social context is the source of identity formation, as the ideology that shapes our world, and our identities, is transmitted by a wide range of institutions (i.e. family; political, social and religious organisations such as parliament, church or the educational system; and media) through language in the form of discourse and discursive practices (Hall 1996; Mole 2007).

Hegemony and power are two major elements in this phenomenon. The poststructuralist approach explains why some cultures, languages, identities, ways of life, and so on, are

considered ‘normal’ or ‘desirable’, while others are considered ‘abnormal’, ‘rare’, or ‘objectionable’ (Bourdieu 1977; Butler 1990; Weedon 1997; Wodak 2007). Consequently, the process of identity construction also involves processes of identification and exclusion (Bourdieu 1977; Butler 1990; Hall 1996; Castells 2004a). We take for granted a series of beliefs, norms and dispositions that shape not only our perception of the world, but also how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us, involving our senses of belonging to or detachment from specific social groups (Bourdieu 1977; Hall 1996; Kristeva 2002; Galasinska and Galasinski 2007). Thus, we are ideologically constituted subjects -as we are always subjected to ideological discourses, which precede us, and we take for granted both the world order and the identities we have (Althusser 1984; Hall 1996; Weedon 1997). This claim is in consonance with Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, legitimation and symbolic violence, which I am going to explain below.

However, while we are a social product, our identities also change in time and space influenced by a range of elements linked to our emotional, psychological and social realms, that is, our social context (Norton 2000; Stets and Burke 2000; Adkins and Skeggs 2004; Turner and Stets 2005).

2.3.2 Investment

Investment (Bourdieu 1986a) is a relational concept that in turn is tightly related to another relational concept, that of capitals (Reay 2004). More specifically, investment focuses on the acquisition of cultural capital, and the relevance of emotional capital in such investment (Lareau 1987; Reay 2004). Put it in the spotlight by Norton (2000) who in turn drew it from Bourdieu, the concept of investment in SLL raises awareness about the great deal of energy and resources that L2 learners invest to achieve a specific L2 goal. Norton stressed that, besides investments in effort, time, energy, and money, the investor (L2 learner) also invests her emotional realm, her self-esteem, and her identity in pursuing the acquisition of cultural (linguistic) capital. I will discuss this concept further in chapter 6.

2.3.3 Capitals

The concept of capital is tightly linked to the motives of human existence. Bourdieu

highlighted the concept of capital as an ‘organising principle’ (Blunden 2004:2), whose possession allows the exercise of domination (and resistance against it) within the hierarchical fabric of societies (Shusterman 1999; Fowler 2000; Jenkins 2002). Bourdieu identified two basic types of capital (cultural and economic) as basic generators of other kinds of capital (social and symbolic) (Bourdieu 1986a). Economic capital is understood as the accumulation of material resources, whilst cultural capital is conceived as accumulation of knowledge and culture (Bourdieu 1986a;b; Fowler 1997; Blunden 2004). Social capital involves individual’s positions and relations within social networks, while symbolic capital is the possession of prestige and/or status (Bourdieu 1986a;b; Mesthrie, Swann et al. 2000).

All these types of capital involve power relationships, which in turn give people the ability to occupy specific subject positions within hierarchical social stratification (Jenkins 2002; Adkins and Skeggs 2004). Within this complex phenomenon of capitals, Bourdieu generates the theory of symbolic domination and legitimation, in which specific cultural and linguistic practices have more value than others, which can even be ostracised and marginalised (Bourdieu 1977; 1992). This theory also emphasises a sense of ‘otherness’, a rejection of different forms that do not fit in with the standard or highly valued forms (Bourdieu 1992; Shusterman 1999). This also implies a form of punishment that Bourdieu called symbolic violence (see glossary).

For Bourdieu, language is a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1992), in which communication and a speaker’s linguistic competence within a society involve both the right to speak and to be heard by others, rather than proficiency only (capacity for both production and appreciation). He introduced the theoretical concept of ‘the legitimate language’ (Bourdieu 1992) which is tightly linked to symbolic domination and legitimation theory and the commodification of language within the linguistic market (Mesthrie, Swann et al. 2000). This is specially important within the SLL field, as the acquisition of specific hegemonic languages is an important investment (Norton 2000), as I have previously explained.

2.3.4 A comparative clarification between Identity, social role and identity position concepts

Poststructuralist theory provides a fundamental frame for analysing identity issues

related to the multiplicity of identity, identity's changeable nature, and the relationship between identity and the social context. Norton tackles these issues through her focus on how and why identity changes take place within our set of identities, and how the social context influences these changes, which can be described as 'identity shifts' (Edwards and Mackenzie 2008)

Norton's work on identity fluidity (or identity shifts) became a key analytical element, because it allowed me to trace clearly a) the relationship between identity and the spatial-temporal context; b) the changes in identities related to such context(s); c) the impact of these changes on the individual's full set of identities; d) how these changes affect the SLL process; e) whether progress results in an individual's SLL and its impact on the individual's life; and f) the degree of permanence of each identity change.

However, I found that in her explanation of the topic, Norton uses the term identity in a confusing way, and after reviewing more literature, I found a more complete explanations of such complexity in social psychological theories of identity (see 2.3.4 above) These helped to explain the differences between identity, identity positions and social roles.

Identity theories generally agree that all of us play a range of social roles in specific contexts, thus role performance involves a clear influence from the social context at any specific time (Hall 1996; Castells 2004a; Benwell and Stokoe 2006; Schwartz, Zamboanga et al. 2008; Wardekker 2008; Narvaez, Meyer et al. 2009). Each social role involves a set of traits that range from physical appearance to behaviour. However, a social role is not an identity per se.

To become an identity, a social role has to accomplish three characteristics: one, to be meaningful for the individual; two, to be internalised by her/him, a process in which identification plays a key role; and three, to transcend time and space ((Stryker 1968; McCall and Simmons 1978; Stets and Burke 2000; Castells 2004a). Consequently, an identity is a more complex entity than a social role. For example, if a person has the identity of 'a sociologist' in her country of origin and in the 'new' country she works as catering assistant (a social role in a specific context) this does not mean that she has lost that identity and she has now the identity of 'a catering assistant'. This happen for two reasons: first, 'a sociologist' is a high-profile identity in the individual identity hierarchy,

and thus it represents a great deal of commitment and attachment for her. Second, the individual does not give meaning to that role nor does she interiorise it as part of her 'set' of identities, in this case because the social role involves a potential low-profile identity. If the individual interiorises the social role as an identity, she will be a catering assistant not only in the workplace, but she will identify herself as such always.

Importantly, identity is also related to social context, but in a different way from a social role, as Stryker explains: 'Identities are the meanings associated with the roles that persons enact in a network, and the structure and culture of a network delimit which identities can be deployed' (Stryker, in Stets and Burke 2000:117). The difference resides in how valuable an identity is for an individual, and this in turn establishes the degree of attachment and commitment to it.

Regarding identity positions, Pavlenko, Blackledge et al (2004b) clearly state that an identity position is a potential identity offered to the individual by the new social context(s) (for instance, immigrant illiterate in the target language, or second class citizen due to her country of origin, race and so on). Importantly, Pavlenko et al stress the optional nature of an identity position, as the individual can often accept, reject or negotiate that position within such contexts. However, they also acknowledge that in some cases, the identity position is not negotiable or irrefutable, such for instance the one of being invisible for others. Pavlenko gives the example of Chinese immigrants in the 20th century America, who were ignored by other immigrant communities and denied even the identity position of immigrants (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004a).

2.3.5 Identity hierarchy

As I have explained in 2.3.4, Stryker (1968; 1980) argues that a person's set of identities is hierarchically organised based on both the degree of attachment to specific identities and the degree of acceptance or acknowledgement that others have of a person's different identities. Emotions and self-esteem are tightly linked to such dynamics. Thus, a person's hierarchy of identities involves how attached/detached she/he is to a specific identity, and this is in turn directly related to social contexts and social networks, where others' perception is also crucial. Stryker and McCall and Simmons (1978) also argue that identities have different values within different social networks and also within the individual scale of values.

2.3.6 Habitus

What is habitus? Considered a key concept in Bourdieu's work (Fowler 2000; Grenfell 2004; Garret 2007), habitus is defined as a 'system of durable, transposable dispositions' (Bourdieu 1977:72); 'a socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures' (ibid p.76). These 'dispositions and generative classificatory schemes are embodied in real human beings' (Jenkins 2002:74) and are learnt in social interaction and practices. Thus, habitus is produced by and through social interaction with our milieu. Habitus is stored in the brain and is expressed unconsciously in our behaviour, as 'an integral part of it' (ibid, p. 75). The ways habitus manifests itself follow no rules, but are defined by time and spatial context and the situation which dictates what is appropriate to do, to say, and how to behave (Bourdieu 1977).

The concept of habitus goes beyond the claim of the discursive construction of identity, as Bourdieu emphasised that different kinds of social practices and different kind of languages (oral, body, gestures) are involved in who we are (Bourdieu 1977). Habitus is formed by and reflects

'...distinctive ways of speaking/listening...writing/reading coupled with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing, with other people and with various objects, tools and technologies...' (Gee 2008:155).

Importantly, habitus reflects the conditions of existence characteristic of a specific social class. The habitus connects the material, objective state of a class with the subjective, symbolic realm that implies a status within the hierarchical social stratification. This habitus is internalised since birth through familiar and social practices, and involves a subtle set of attitudes, behaviours, linguistic style and use of language, preferences and tendencies. In this way, habitus denotes class membership, but not as a direct reflection of the conditions of existence (e.g. the actual possession of economic or cultural capital) but more as 'a sensibility acquired through a lifetime' (Blunden 2004:6).

Bourdieu also used case studies to analyse linguistic variation from a socio-political perspective, using the concepts of linguistic market and linguistic and cultural products,

as well as the theory of symbolic domination (Mesthrie, Swann et al. 2000). Habitus is relevant to poststructuralist theory because it is linked to the issue of subject or identity positions.

Bourdieu made culture and language key elements for analysing class struggles, power relationships and the commodification of symbolic resources in a cultural market. He also showed the link between the material conditions of life and the symbolic domain of cultural capital. He also associated linguistic resources to power issues, identifying the role of power in linguistic interactions, which in many cases surpasses a speaker's linguistic proficiency. Bourdieu's cultural capital theory also illuminated how the different kinds of capital interact and influence each other, as well as the investments that people make in acquiring one of them in order to achieve the others also. Also important to my project are his findings about the use of gender and age as elements to perpetrate symbolic domination (e.g. the stigmatisation of gendered forms of labour which is non-favourable for women).

I found Bourdieu's theoretical intent to explain how identity is constructed within 'society' appropriate to analyse identity within my data. Specifically, I use his concept of habitus as a unit of analysis to identify and explain my participants' identities, stories and backgrounds. Habitus is a difficult concept as it involves a high degree of complexity and is linked to other Bourdieu concepts such as Field, Doxa and so on (see glossary) (Jenkins 2002; Garret 2007). However, I have found that it addresses identification practices in a methodical way, while it gives a rationale for identification, how it materialises and the exclusion that it involves. Specifically, habitus covers many of the perceptible traits of identity, namely ways of bodily expression (walking, moving, doing, body language when we talk, cry or laugh); taste (aesthetic preferences in dressing, hair style, milieu, art works like films, pictures, paints, sculpture; restaurants, dancing and so on); language (accent, vocabulary, variation) and importantly, the set of attitudes beliefs, dispositions, practices and behaviours (ibid).

Thus, habitus explains how our identity materialises in all these tangible, observable traits that others can more or less read and interpret. Moreover, habitus not only involves what we project voluntarily or involuntarily, but also the others' own habitus acting as an interpretive lens. As we have seen, such interpretation positions an individual in reference to others' own set of values. Habitus also involves identification,

which is another key issue in identity. Additionally, Habitus is tightly related to social class and to the acquisition of capital, which allows us to analyse people's motives and goals from an additional point of view (Bourdieu 1977; 1986; 1992; Lawler 2008b)

Bourdieu attempted to explain theoretically the symbolic hegemonic practices between social classes, and their impact on habitus (and identity for extension)(Lawler 2008b). To me, Bourdieu is in consonance with theorists such as Vygotsky (the later taking a cognitive stance and the former, a sociological one) in emphasising not only that our constitution as an individual is produced by interaction with our social milieu, but that the latter is built up of the accumulation of historical, cultural and social macro and micro processes as a complex heritage transmitted, adapted and modified from generation to generation (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1992; Lantolf and Appel 1994; Wertsch, Del Río et al. 1995; Lantolf and Thorne 2006).

Habitus gave me a methodical explanation of how identification practices emerge in a different way from the discursive poststructuralist argument, which I think focuses on identity construction in a more abstract manner. Habitus also provided a rationale to justify practices and tendencies that emerged significantly everywhere in my data, while it allowed me to trace their origin within my participants' backgrounds. It also provided me with a specific way to explain the link between the impact of social context (past and present) on identity, as well as to trace important differences between past and present social contexts.

I thus used habitus as a complementary way to explain identity that goes beyond viewing it as a product of discursive practices. Importantly for my data analysis, habitus covers many of the perceptible traits of identity, explaining how identity materialises in all these tangible, observable traits that others can read and interpret (what Bourdieu called 'bodily hexis' (Shusterman 1999; Garret 2007).

For instance, it helped me to find an explanation of why the L2 learner is sometimes ignored or seen as different in their workplaces, not only because they were foreign, but because of their different social class background. For instance, said social class background is denoted through body manifestations and actions (e.g. the way people move, how they speak, the language variety they use, and so on, which are all involuntary markers of social class differences). This embodiment is a marker and thus, might cause identification and exclusion practices and tendencies, which I will explain

below.

Crucially, habitus not only involves what we project voluntarily or involuntarily, but also the others' own habitus acting as an interpretive lens. Importantly, habitus is tightly related to social class and acquisition of capitals (Fowler 1997; Webb, Schirato et al. 2002; Lawler 2008b), and so it allowed me to analyse people motives and goals from a different point of view. Habitus also gave me an explanation of why cultural capital is so important for middle classes and also how taste, dispositions, beliefs and knowledge are legitimated and considered the norm. Thus, it is a sociologist's view complementary to the poststructuralist explanation of hegemony discursively transmitted.

Habitus may seem quite a rigid, determinist concept, thus in opposition to poststructuralist views of identity. However, Bourdieu explained that habitus was a balanced way of analysing and conceptualising the relationship between the individual and the social, which did not embrace total subjectivism or objectivism (Garret 2007; Lawler 2008b). Bourdieu argued that habitus involved focusing on real individuals (agents) and not on pure theoretical concepts like theorists such as Althusser (Garret 2007). Bourdieu explained that habitus was a historical-social-cultural product (and in this way he converges to some extent with Vygotsky's views of an individual's formation). Bourdieu said that, though dispositions are long-lasting, they may be modified by specific factors such as education and new experiences (Garret 2007).

2.3.7 Identification and exclusion practices and stances

Identification is a process that results in the assimilation and transformation of a specific trait, either individual or collective (Cameron and Kulick 2003). Identification can be also explained by self-categorisation theory, in which behaviour is guided by 'how one categorises the self –specifically, on which people are seen as similar to self, and which is different' (Prentice 1994:38). There are two levels of self-categorisation, namely collective (emphasis on similarities among group members) and individual (emphasis on differences among group members) (ibid). In identification, the collective level of self-categorisation is the important one, because it can answer why one defines oneself as belonging to a group.

Linguistically, models of identity involve the aforementioned process of identification,

in which 'language users in some sense are intending to present themselves as the particular kinds of people who use language in those particular kinds of ways ... people do stake claims to identity by talking in particular ways' (Cameron and Kulick 2003:138). Thus, they 'build identities...by performing particular kinds of acts and displaying particular kinds of [verbal acts and/or attitudes]' (Ochs 2005:79). For Ochs, the relationship between language and identity is mediated by an individual's performance, and the interpretation of it by others. Thus, linguistic forms are used in discursive practices to perform, to interpret, and to categorise all the intersecting elements of an identity, such age, gender, social class, sexuality, and ethnicity (Benwell and Stokoe 2006).

Poststructuralist theory explains this phenomenon with reference to power and ideology. For poststructuralists 'social identification depends on publicly circulating models of identity, as these models get explicitly denoted or implicitly indexed in actual events of identification' (Wortham 2006:38). Foucault highlights 'how models of identity and institutionalised practices of identification' evolved historically in Europe up to the present period of enhancement of such phenomena (Wortham 2006:7). These practices involved and still do, the detection, classification and punishment of deviant models of identity, which implies what Butler denominates 'the violence of exclusion' (Salih and Butler 2004:12; Weedon 2004). In this sense, certain identities are seen as 'normal', therefore, our identification with them and our appropriation is seen as 'natural' (Weedon 1997; Wortham 2006). Wortham points out that

'Sociohistorically produced' practices do not emerge smoothly from 'publicly circulating models and institutional processes' but conversely, are product of 'struggles between and among people, groups and institutions' (2006: 41).

Thus, ideology, language and power are the core elements in the regulation and self-definition of individuals, constraining their agency to performativity (Joseph 2004; Salih and Butler 2004; Blommaert 2005; Lazar 2005), in ways such that they cannot 'autonomously reinvent themselves' (Salih and Butler 2004:11) .

This is significant in a world where communities are increasingly becoming more mobile and unstable. However, poststructuralist theory also claims that people can challenge, resist, transform, recognise or assume models, categories and practices of

identity as they emerge (Butler 1990; Norton 2000; Pavlenko and Piller 2001; Weedon 2004; Heller 2006; Wortham 2006). Consequently, and to some extent, people have agency, even though constrained by social norms and power relations as I have already explained. However, Cameron and Kulick (2003:139) draw attention to the contradictory and discordant nature of identification, which equally involves 'rejections, refusals and disavowals ... as affirmations'. They argue that such a contradictory nature, which also involves a big part of unconsciousness, can disrupt or contradict 'a person's claim to a particular identity' (ibid).

2.3.8 Gender

The concept of gender in linguistics has two senses: one is as a linguistic categorising concept that classifies words as masculine, feminine or neuter. The other sense is sociolinguistic and defines gender either as a social factor or as an analytical category that is part of social identity (Swann and Mesthrie 2004; Sunderland 2006). I am going to deal with gender in the latter sense.

Historically, the social concept of gender has also had two main interpretations in Western societies, both in public knowledge and in scholarship spheres. In general science (e.g. biological sciences), institutional and 'common sense' thought, the concept of gender is unquestionably linked to specific anatomic and physiological characteristics (i.e. hormones, reproductive system) (Connell 2005; Giddens 2006; Cameron 2007a).

In the humanities and social sciences these interpretations have changed progressively, attuned to two main phenomena, namely the interaction between the socio historical transformations that Western societies have experienced, and the theoretical and empirical work of postmodernist scholars, especially poststructuralist feminists (Sunderland 2006). There is a debate between these two positions, which corroborates that gender is a complex concept.

Work on language and gender can be tracked in history since the 17th century, with criticisms of women's language use reflecting the absolutism of the patriarchal

ideological system (e.g. Cambridge 1754; Lord Chesterfield 1754, both in Coates 1993). Formal studies on the relationship of gender and language began at the turn of the twentieth century and were conducted by linguistic anthropologists (Mary Haas) and linguists (Otto Jespersen). They focussed on differences in male and female talk styles (Jespersen 1998; Cameron 1998b; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). An outcome of this approach is the categorisation of gender as a social variable within the area of language variation.

In the 1950's, French poststructuralist theory has been significant for the theoretical development of the concept of gender (Weedon 1997; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Holmes and Meyerhoff 2003; Cameron 2006a). In the 1960's and 1970's (the 'second wave' of feminism), research on the relationship between gender and language was crucial, and feminist scholars raised awareness about the role of language as an instrument for maintaining and reproducing the patriarchal system's ideological patterns (Cameron 1998a,b; Romaine 1999; Bucholtz, Liang et al. 1999; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Sunderland 2006).

Feminist research uncovered issues of inequality, power and hierarchy between men and women, and the ideology behind male hegemony, sustained by arguments ranging from the determinism of biological nature that dictated the division of labour, to differences in hormonal and brain functionality (Talbot 1998; Kimmel 2004; Lazar 2005; Giddens 2006; Cameron 2007a).

This feminist theoretical and empirical activity had a big impact on social sciences and humanities, where the relationship between language and gender became an important element of analysis, contributing to the growth and evolution of the new area of gender studies (Holmes and Meyerhoff 2003; Giddens 2006; Sunderland 2006; Cameron 2006a). Sociolinguistics is the subfield in which a great deal of theoretical and empirical work on the relationship between language and gender has been developed (McElhinny and Mills 2007).

Moreover, through the analysis of language use, feminism in general and feminist scholarship in particular challenged the gender order. The gender order is:

A social arrangement...a system of allocation, based on sex-class assignment, of rights

and obligations, freedoms and constraints, limits and possibilities, power and subordination. It is supported by –and supports- structures of convention, ideology, emotion and desire (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003:32, 34, italics in original).

The gender order is also ‘patterns of power relations between masculinities and femininities that are widespread throughout society’ (Giddens 2006:463).

The gender order is integrated by labour, power and cathexis (personal and sexual relationships) (Connell 2005). Labour refers to the division of labour in the domestic and labour market domains, justified by the biological sexual nature of men and women, which in turn shapes the socioeconomic positions available to them. Power involves the subjacent ideologies that sustain the existing power structure in society, shaping socioeconomic relations and its outcomes (i.e. inequality). Cathexis addresses the dynamics of personal relationships where emotions and perceptions play an important role (Connell 2005; Giddens 2006).

Initially gender studies were focused mainly on women and femininity, with some exceptions (e.g. Connell 1987 in sociology and Seidler, 1989; Johnson and Meinhof, 1997 in linguistics). However, the evolution of the topic has resulted in a more inclusive approach (Connell 2005; CROME 2009). In the ‘third wave’ of feminism (1990-now) some important developments have taken place: a) a great deal of empirical research has been focused on men (Coates 2002; Connell 2005; Kimmel, Hearn et al. 2005; CROME 2009) and on queer issues (Salih and Butler 2004); b) there is increased awareness that the meaning of gender varies accordingly to different sociocultural patterns, over historical time, and through individuals’ life courses (Kimmel 2004; Giddens 2006; Cameron 2006a), which has also highlighted the Western bias in the topic; c) a holistic view of identity and the interconnection between all its aspects (e.g. gender or sexuality) has become relevant in research and theory (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Kimmel 2004; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004a; Benwell and Stokoe 2006); and d) there has been a rising awareness of the heterosexual hegemony and the rights and problems of the denominated queer communities (Butler 1990; Castells 2004a; Sunderland 2006; Cameron 2006a)

2.3.5.8.1 The concept of gender from the performativity perspective

Usually feminist approaches conceptualise gender as a system of patterns of behaviour

which is based on the biological sex, and defined by the socially and historically constructed concepts of male, female, masculinity and femininity, which vary according to different cultures and contexts (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Sunderland 2006; Cameron 2006a). For feminist poststructuralists, gender is ‘an inherently communicative process’ (Romaine 1999:2) constructed through discursive practices, therefore context dependent because ‘gender relations are encoded in linguistic and symbolic representations, normative concepts, social practices, institutions and social identities’ (McElhinny and Mills 2007:5).

A major change in the theorisation of gender was initiated by the poststructuralist philosopher Judith Butler (1990), who tried to go beyond the idea of binary sex roles built around biological sexual traits. To do so, she borrowed the speech-act theoretical concept of ‘performativity’ and applied it to gender (Cameron 2006a) to answer an essential question ‘how do speakers use linguistic resources to produce themselves as [gendered subjects]?’ (Cameron 2006:168).

Butler (1990:16) affirmed that we learn gender from birth through ‘regulatory practices of gender formation and division’. Therefore, we are not naturally gendered people, we do not have innate gendered attributes, but we gradually are constructing our gender through repeated actions (iteration) embedded in sociohistorical conventions, that we also are displaying and reflecting or, in other words, performing, and doing (Butler 1990; Benwell and Stokoe 2006; Cameron 2006a).

Putting it in another way, gender is a social construction. It is not an innate, fixed category of our identity, but it involves a fluid essence, ‘a continuum, [where] the polar opposites of male and female have defined the basic categories’ (Romaine 1999:8). Accordingly, gender is a never ending process (Salih and Butler 2004). Also, we produce gender through our bodies’ expressions, the things and activities we do, and through others’ perception and categorisation. Such matters are also linked to power and ideology (Talbot 1998; Giddens 2006; Cameron 2006a; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2007) .

Importantly, gender performativity challenged the status quo that sees heterosexuality as natural, and punishes everything outside these ‘natural’ gender meanings and expressions. It is important to clarify, however, that Butler does not use ‘performativity’

as a synonym of 'performance'. She explains that performance is part of performativity, but gender performativity is a more complex concept that involves social norms that have been previously established, which constitute, limit and condition a person's agency, and also sets up the meaning of gender performance (Cameron and Kulick 2003; Salih and Butler 2004).

Within this situation the gender order and linguistic conventions dictate the boundaries of individuals' thoughts, actions and behaviours (Wodak 1997; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Lazar 2005). For example, we have gendered speech as a result of continuous practice and reinforcement of the actions and styles of talking identified with a specific gender. Thus, through performing these actions we become gendered subjects, and we construct our gender through the mediation of both gendered activities and speech. So there is a clear relationship between the interpretation of the performance's meaning and context. Hence many poststructuralist studies of gender and language are ethnographic, as I have explained above.

The change in the concept of gender has also influenced the use of the term itself. In social sciences and humanities, the clear distinction between the concepts of gender (a fluid social construction on biological sex) and sex (biological reproductive differences between male and female bodies) is acknowledged and used. In sciences and in popular use, the preferred term is 'sex', and gender is used as a 'polite' synonym of sex (Cameron and Kulick 2003; Giddens 2006)

There are some objections to the poststructuralist concept of gender. Some approaches (known in poststructuralist theory as 'essentialist') (e.g. evolutionary psychology) do not acknowledge gender as a fluid social construction (Cameron 2007a). They perpetuate an emphasis not only on biological, 'natural' points of view, but on disparity (Joseph 2004; Connell 2005; Benwell and Stokoe 2006) contributing in the view of poststructuralists to sustaining the ideological system based on male supremacy, inequality of power and hierarchy (Connell 1987; Cameron 2006a).

2.3.8.1 The relationship between gender and identity

Poststructuralist accounts place gender as a complexity inside a complexity, that is, as a part of identity. Gender intersects, interacts and participates in reciprocal influence with

other complex social elements, namely social class, race, ethnicity, age, geography and sexuality (Kimmel 2004; Besnier 2007).

Sociolinguists, however, study such elements individually as variants, as I have previously said. Poststructuralists study identity and gender as complex entities, because they are conceived 'not as a social attribute but as a set of contextualised practices' (Swann and Mesthrie, 2004:44) that 'do not simply reflect pre-existing categories' (Wortham 2006:42) but are continuously shaped and reshaped in time and space. On this basis, we have gendered identity (Butler 1990, 2004; Weedon 1997; Kimmel 2004; Cameron 1998, 2006), ethnic identity (Fishman 1999; Joseph 2004; Meinhof and Galasinski 2005), national identity (Anderson 1994; Joseph 2004); social class identity (Weedon 1997; Castells 2004a; Giddens 2006). The interrelation and intersection between all the above mentioned types is always acknowledged, a complex system that integrates the individual as a whole. This is important to understand identity in a wider sense.

For example, some poststructuralists have recently argued that studying gender as a sole element had its merits in the past, but that the study of the complex nature of identity and its relation with language needs to be tackled from a wider approach that includes all the correlated parts of such a fluid and elusive whole (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004a). As identity is in turn part of an equally unstable and even more complex concept: life (Kimmel 2004; Salih and Butler 2004; Castells 2004a; Blommaert 2005; Connell 2005) there are stances that advocate a more political use of the term as a means to promote a more inclusive world (Salih and Butler 2004).

Sociolinguistics involves many theories and approaches, therefore many theoretical frameworks are used in the analysis of the relationship between identities and language. Apart from the approaches that I have mentioned in this chapter, there are also the sociopsychological approaches, based in theories of social and ethnolinguistic identities (Tajfel; Giles and Byrne; Berry, quoted in Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). However, poststructuralist linguists advocate a more integral view of identity in theoretical frameworks (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004a). They argue that sociopsychological approaches oversimplify the fluidity and contradictory nature of identity, focusing only on two elements, namely ethnicity and identification.

2.3.9 Social context

I have already talked about the importance of social context from a social constructivist point of view, which changes its role from that of simply background to the source of human formation and development. The social context is constituted by communities and social networks (real and virtual) (Siegel 2003; Castells 2004b; Ryberg and Larsen 2008; Zhao, Grasmuck et al. 2008)

Scholars acknowledge the increasing complexity of communities, the gradually more relevant role of context and its fluid nature attuned to the world's contemporary instability, and the role of media and internet in making global the local, which makes social structures and categorisations more unpredictable, with all this being linked to ideological issues (Coupland 2003a; Benwell and Stokoe 2006; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2007; Inoue 2006). They also point to the repercussions of such phenomena on identities, which are now constructed in even a more radical continuum of positions and realities in which imagined communities range from the ultranationalist appeal of geographical and linguistic cohesion to the blurred boundaries of the internet's huge communities.

I have found three important concepts of communities used in sociolinguistic research (and in other disciplines as well). They are community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991); social network (Siegel 2003; Swann and Mesthrie 2004; Stutzman 2006); and speech community (Hymes 1977).

A social network is defined as regular interactional relationships between individuals, where the units of analysis are the connections or ties between the members of the network, rather than their identities (Swann and Mesthrie 2004). The networks can be classified in two analytical categories: whole-network (description of all inter-members' relations within a group or sub-group) and ego-network (description of one member's relations regarding their number and nature) (Swann and Mesthrie 2004). Social networks have been claimed to have a big influence on language use, especially in variation, language shift and power issues such hegemony of a language, heteroglossia and so on.

A community of practice (C o P) is 'an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet

1992:490). C o Ps are locations in individuals' social networks, and they mediate the individual's relations to larger institutions (schools, churches, legal systems) and to more global imagined communities (nations, hiphop, women) (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999)

A speech community is a complex concept coined by Dell Hymes (1977) whose meaning has been elusive and controversial during decades. Its main focus is to explain the relationship between language and society (Rampton 2000). It can be defined as

...people who are in habitual contact with each other by means of language – either by a common language or by shared ways of interpreting linguistic behaviour where different languages are used in an area (Swann and Mesthrie 2004:293).

The differences between them are that a C o P requires regular and mutually defining interaction and participation. In social networks, by contrast, some ties exist even among people who have limited or infrequent contact (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999:179). The C o P involves shared norms and externally defined membership, and it is focused on practice as unit of analysis, while the speech community focuses on: speech as unit of analysis, shared practices or interests, connections between identities and groups, and how inter-categorical boundaries are constructed or maintained (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999).

In its scope, the C o P is limited and more local, and it is focused in micro-dynamics and in itself. The other two types of communities can be wider or even huge in scope; they focus on macro-dynamics and tend to the homogenisation or collectivisation of their members, while take a more integral view within a macrocontext, for instance, including interrelations between communities (Rampton 2000; Joseph 2004; Benwell and Stokoe 2006; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2007). Social networks also include more complex communities such as newly formed communities or online communities, in which membership is a complex matter (Duff 2006)

2.4 From literature review to research questions

The SLL research agenda is characterised by a wide range of theoretical approaches

distributed along a continuum whose two ends are cognitive and social, respectively. Within this panorama, cognitive approaches have been and still are, dominant in the field of SLL (Doughty and Long 2003), but social approaches have gradually won a place in the field in the last 20 years (Block 2003; Mitchell and Myles 2004)

Social approaches focus on: a) the individual as a complex being (e.g. using the concepts of identity or agency to analyse the learner SLL process); b) the relationship and relevance of the L2 learner's social and contextual milieu (e.g. analysing social interaction, knowledge co-construction); c) an emic approach to research (emphasis on the participant's perspective); d) the view of language as an instrument embedded in complex practices (e.g. a means of social co-constructed learning; a discursive practice) (Block 2003; Duff 2006). They have contributed to seeing the SLL process from a holistic point of view (Swain and Deters 2007)

Social constructionist theories do not explain in depth some important issues related to identity, as for instance its links with the emotional realm, so important for explaining and understand the L2 learner's behaviours, decision making, stances and emotions, as all these elements have an impact on the SLL process in one way or another. They also ignore relevant elements such as social class.

After reviewing the wide range of literature dealt with in this chapter, I consider I am in a position to conceptualise the research questions driving my empirical study.

First of all, I think that the research done in my line of enquiry has opened an interesting area for further exploration, namely to study the acquisition of a second language drawing on different interrelated perspectives (identity, migration, gender). Hence my first, general question:

In which ways do gender, identity and the experience of migrating relate to my participants' SLL goals and processes? How do all these elements interact?

As this is a comprehensive question, I have formulated more specific related questions:

Norton's concept of investment in SLL has potential as a unit of analysis, because it addresses the relationship between identity and the social context, but unfortunately it is a confusing concept that needs further exploration. Thus, my first series of research

questions try to tackle this issue, drawing on the concepts of cultural capital and activity theory reviewed in sections 2.3.5.3 and 2.3.3.3 above, and the more elaborated investigation of identity presented in section 2.3.5.4. They are:

How do my participants invest in cultural capital? What do they do in order to acquire this capital? What may SLL investment involve in activity terms? What may SLL investment involve in identity, emotional and social terms?

Norton's findings on identity shifting, plus insights from social psychological theories of identity (see section 2.3.5.4) have also led me to the formulation of a further group of questions:

Do my participants have identity shifts? If yes, how does this happen? Are those changes gradual, radical, unexpected, and so on? Are they related to the identity positions offered by the new context? Are they related to the participants' social roles?

With regard to gender, an important question has emerged from my literature review (sections 2.1. and 2.3.5.8):

Do gender relations influence my participants' interactions and their language learning? How?

Another general question arisen from my review is related to social context (discussed in section 2.3.5.9):

How does the social context (e.g. social networks, interactions, membership of different communities) influence my participants' SLL processes and identities?

I formulated a series of more specific questions to address the complexity of those interrelations, drawing on concepts of communities of practice (section 2.3.5.9), habitus (section 2.3.5.6) and identity hierarchy (section 2.3.5.5) :

How important is the role of others (specifically English L1/proficient English L2 speakers) in my participants' SLL learning?

Does identity play a role in my participants' membership and participation in different communities? If yes, in which ways?

How does identity influence my participants' decisions about who they interact with and why?

What are the more/less important identities for my participants in the new context (UK) and why?

The nature of the multiple case study, which is a group of individual cases, required a particular question:

What do the cases have in common? What is different among them?

In order to address the above mentioned questions, an appropriate methodology, based also in the literature review, was necessary to guide both data collection and data analysis, and this is explained in the next chapter (3)

Chapter 3 Study design, data collection and data analysis methods

The aim of this chapter is to explain my project's design, data collection and data analysis methodologies.

3.1 Research questions and choice of methodology

In the second chapter I addressed the theoretical background, concepts and key previous research that inform my study. All these elements, especially the last, together with my research questions, have had a big influence in the choice of design and data collection methodology for my own study, specifically Norton's (2000) case study. Consequently, I designed my study drawing upon this line of enquiry, but also including a quantitative tool, as I am going to explain below. My research questions are:

In which ways do gender, identity and the experience of migrating relate to my participants' SLL goals and processes? How do all these elements interact?

How do my participants invest in cultural capital? What do they do in order to acquire this capital? What may SLL investment involve in activity terms? What may SLL investment involve in identity, emotional and social terms?

Do my participants experience identity shifts? If yes, how does this happen? Are those changes gradual, radical, unexpected, and so on? Are they related to the identity positions offered by the new context? Are they related to the participants' social roles?

Do gender relations influence interactions and language learning, and if so, in what ways?

b) How does the social context (e.g. social networks, interactions, membership in different communities) influence my participants' SLL processes and identities?

How important is the role of others (specifically English L1/proficient English L2 speakers) in my participants' SLL learning?

Does identity play a role in my participants' membership and participation in different communities? If yes, in which ways?

How does identity influence my participants' decisions about who they interact with and why?

What are the more/less important identities for my participants in the new context (UK) and why?

c) What do the cases have in common? What is different among them?

3.1.1 Choice of ethnographic case study research

As I have mentioned in chapter 2, my line of enquiry uses a qualitative, specifically ethnographic approach. The suitability of this methodological approach for social constructionist research resides in: a) the potential of ethnographic methods and techniques to explore in detail, longitudinally and with flexibility how people make sense of the structures and meanings of the world, through sharing perceptions and interpretations between the researcher and other individuals (O'Reilly 2005; Berg 2007); b) the research targets of social constructionist approaches, namely individuals seen as human beings and not as depersonalised objects of study, including their participation in and reflexion on their own lives and processes (such as SLL), and their perceptions and experiences within a social context that in turn plays a relevant role in their lives.

Ethnography has different research techniques which try to cover different levels, areas or facets of whoever or whatever is being studied. Consequently, it has an implicit triangulation (O'Reilly 2005; Seidman 2006; Berg 2007). Additionally, ethnography entails: a) involvement in direct and continuous contact with individuals within their daily sociocultural contexts; b) identifying the elements that integrate such contexts and how such elements are interrelated, from the particular to the general and vice versa; and c) a fluid and flexible design that allows creativity (Saville-Troike 2003; O'Reilly 2005; Rubin and Rubin 2005; Silverman 2005). This is important for my line of enquiry, which focuses on the individual, the possible ways in which they interact with the social context, mutual influences between individual and context, and eventual outcomes.

Finally, ethnographic studies are usually centred on naturally occurring events; overall therefore I considered ethnography the ideal approach for my study design and data collection.

The main ethnographic research tools are a) observation in situ (which involves listening, watching, questioning, performing); b) interviewing (itself an interactive activity); c) analysis of documents (diaries, letters, photographs, newspapers); and d) participative involvement within a specific socio-cultural context (O'Reilly 2005; Silverman 2005; Neuman 2006). The historical progression of ethnography has resulted in a current division between 'traditional' ethnography (e.g. the work of Malinowski) which usually studies societies not familiar with the contemporary and Western worlds, and ethnography addressed to urban societies focused for instance on street life, social problems, health and educational institutions and communities (Berg 2007), which is the tradition to which my reference studies and my own study belong.

Regarding my case study approach, I have three reasons for choosing it. First, I consider that it has proved to be a successful research tool in the key studies that inform mine. Second, I found, by the definition of case study, that it was an appropriate method, as case study is 'a complex entity (my group of L2 adult female participants) located in a milieu (the complex multilingual setting of the city of Southampton) or situation (the SLL process) embedded in a number of contexts or backgrounds [e.g.] historical...social, economic, political, ethical and aesthetic' (Stake 2005:449).

Third, I found that my own work could benefit from case study from both a micro and macro perspective, as scholars argue that studying particular individuals or groups within specific settings may help us make sense of complex matters and understand broader issues (Silverman 2005; Stake 2005; Dörnyei 2007). The rationale is that a) the study of a particular individual, group or community can help to understand other situations in other contexts (Yin 2003; Silverman 2005; Stake 2005; Dörnyei 2007); and b) a case study can elicit uncommon data to compare against general variables, whether reinforcing or questioning them (Rubin and Rubin 2005). It is also a flexible method that may result in the inclusion of new cases once we identify the initial findings, and this has a positive repercussion on the generalisation of our findings (Silverman 2005).

Case studies are classified as: intrinsic (studying the case for the sake of the case itself);

instrumental (the case as supportive element for understanding a specific issue); and collective or multiple (research focus on a set of cases) (Stake 2005). My main reference study (Norton 2000) uses a collective instrumental case study, and so do I.

Some case study drawbacks are: First, the richness and complexity of the data obtained is a challenge for data analysis, especially for new researchers (Silverman 2005; Neuman 2006; Dörnyei 2007). I agree with that after my own experience, which led me to consider carefully my data analysis methodology, and investigating the options was a time consuming though worthwhile task. Second, the reduced number of cases makes difficulties for generalisation. A counter-argument to this is that generalisation of results is linked to the theory and not to the number of cases, and that generalisation also depends on case design, namely a) focus on the research questions; b) rigorous application of the methodology; c) synchronization between the chosen analytical tools and the theoretical framework; and d) high analysis standards (Gillham 2000; Yin 2003)

3.1.2 Triangulation and the inclusion of a quantitative tool in my methodology

Triangulation is said to be linked with the reliability and validity of a study. This is particularly important for qualitative approaches as corroborative findings help to diminish bias and sustain accuracy (Rubin and Rubin 2005; Silverman 2005; Stake 2005; Neuman 2006; Berg 2007). However, in acknowledging the fluidity and changeability of human nature, which cannot be captured and analysed in the same way that is done with issues and elements in exact sciences and physics, Seidman (2006) proposes changing the term ‘validity’ for others that better reflect such matters, such as ‘credibility’, ‘trustworthiness’, ‘transferability’, ‘dependability’ and ‘confirmability’. I agree with him.

Triangulation implies a multiplicity of perspectives on the research target (Berg 2007) and corroboration between different methods or sources of data, thus providing a wider view of the phenomenon as richer data is obtained (Silverman 2005; Stake 2005). However, it also has some limitations. For example, the fact of obtaining a significant amount of data does not guarantee that the research will achieve ‘an overall truth’ (Silverman 2005:122)

The degree of compatibility and complementarity between research techniques also represents a challenge for triangulation (Silverman 2005). The theoretical framework and fieldwork experiences of previous studies made available by the literature review are essential for tackling the matter successfully, as they provide key concepts and issues linked to the research questions. In turn, these elements will indicate the set of relevant categories for coding data (Silverman 2005; Dörnyei 2007).

Types of triangulation (O'Reilly 2005; Neuman 2006)

A number of triangulation types have been identified by methodologists. These include:

Triangulation of measures: A quantitative approach that involves taking several measures of the same phenomenon by different techniques, to document all possible aspects.

Triangulation of observers: This involves several researchers using the same ethnographic methods such as observation and interviewing, resulting in obtaining different points of view about the same phenomenon, both contrastive and complementary.

Triangulation of theory: This implies the use of several theoretical approaches as a basis for the project design and analysis.

Triangulation of method: This involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, which can be used either sequentially or simultaneously.

Internal triangulation: This involves the use of multiple techniques for collecting data from the same person, or phenomenon.

External triangulation: This implies comparison of obtained data about the same person, people or phenomenon by several researchers.

In practice, researchers use several types of triangulation at the same time. In my project I have used triangulation of theory and method, as well as both internal and external triangulation, as I am going to explain next.

Triangulation of theory: I expect that this approach involving poststructuralist theory, activity theory and social psychological theory will give me different, complementary or opposite views of the same issues. For example, the contrastive use of different theories may help me to explore and understand more clearly Norton's (2000) specific concepts such as investment, identity and gender.

Triangulation of method: I am using both qualitative and quantitative approaches (ethnography and language testing). I expect that the ethnographic approach will allow me to gain a deep, rich and detailed insight into the individuals' identities, their former and current social contexts, how these may relate to the SLL process, and whether gender influences the learners' SLL processes. On the other hand, measuring specific linguistic aspects will allow me to identify possible changes in my participants' level of proficiency in English, and this will give support to any observations and accounts that identify or report such changes. Importantly, as I have explained in chapter 2, the inclusion of a quantitative method is a noteworthy difference between my work and my reference studies.

External triangulation: The supervision of any doctorate is a periodical and institutional kind of peer review between an expert and an apprentice. The research experience and the scholarly background of my supervisors translated into advice and guidance, as well as the literature review, are the key elements for my projects' external triangulation.

Internal triangulation: I apply three different data collection techniques to obtain information from the same individuals under similar situations and conditions.

Additionally to triangulation, my rationale for including such different theories and approaches is that the study and analysis of complex issues such as identity, context, history, society, power, hierarchies, culture and language requires an holistic approach (Breen 2001; Block 2003; Olesen 2005)

3.1.3 Ethical issues

An ethical code of conduct is relevant in any discipline but a must in ethnography, as it involves research on people and their lives in many realms (social, psychological, emotional, private and personal). Current research ethics in general and within poststructuralist and feminist approaches in particular, advocate a research process based on respect towards the participants first and foremost, and to colleagues and society in general (Schutz 1971; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004b; O'Reilly 2005; Olesen 2005; Rubin and Rubin 2005; Berg 2007). They also place the wellbeing and integrity (physical, emotional or psychological) of participants in first place, taking into

account the researcher's more powerful position.

Social constructionist and other research approaches such as critical ethnography and action research claim that ethical principles should go further than simply meeting the requirements of getting a consent form from the participants, and involve a genuine respect for people who are sharing parts of their lives and of themselves with the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Foley and Valenzuela 2005; Fontana and Frey 2005). Especial emphasis is given to protect more vulnerable people such as children, people with health or psychological problems, refugees, and so on (Fontana and Frey 2005; Olesen 2005; Neuman 2006; Seidman 2006).

Nowadays all the academic bodies and institutions have their own ethical guidelines. For instance, the ones I am following are from the British Association for Applied Linguistics; the Lancaster University Ethical Guidelines for Social Researchers; and the Economic and Social Research Council Research Ethics Framework (BAAL 2006; ESRC 2007; Lancaster 2008). All of them address similar ethical issues that are summarised below.

Professional integrity: This focuses on integrity in conducting and reporting research. It demands from the researcher: to fit her/his own level of qualifications to the research; not to jeopardise future research for others as well as herself in any way; to conduct research without deceiving, covering up, exploiting, exercising coercion, and so on, and with sensitivity towards participants and their milieu. Also, it implies submission of the work for peer examination, always taking into account participants' rights; acknowledging other researchers' intellectual property; avoidance of making up, misrepresenting or intentionally biasing data; and reporting the study and all its stages, data, methods, procedures and outcomes in a clear, understandable form for the research, academic and student communities, as well as for sponsors and general public.

Participants' rights: These include providing full information about both the study and the researcher; participation on a voluntary basis without any kind of coercion, including the right to withdraw from the study whenever the participant feels is convenient; anonymity and confidentiality of given information in tacit or explicit form; protection against any harm (physical, emotional or psychological); the right to complain if it is believed that research has been conducted in unethical, aggressive or

coercive way; the right to read transcriptions and the study report and to give their opinion, as well as to have some data removed if considered harmful.

Researcher obligations: These include respect for participants' rights, privacy, feelings, ideology and background (cultural, ethnic, educational, religious and so on); not to exercise any kind of coercion or manipulation of participants for any reason; respect for participants' decisions about withdrawing from the study; always being clear regarding personal information, intentions, goals and use of given information; protecting participants from any kind of harm (physical, emotional, psychological, moral); and not putting her/himself or others at risk of any kind of harm; upholding as far as possible the anonymity and confidentiality of the data obtained from participants and their milieus (for some basic documents related to the study, see Appendices 2 to 6).

3.2 *My case study*

I briefly introduced my case study in chapter 2. Now I am going to explain it in detail including participant recruitment (the participant profile, how I recruited my participants, how I started to build some rapport), the study design and the data collection methods.

3.2.1 Participant profile

The participant profile included being an adult (any age) female English L2 learner/user who had been living continuously in Southampton for at least one year. I considered that such a period of time was enough to become familiar with the context, settled and having had enough experiences in the new context. Another factor was their prospective time of residence in the city (initially it was at least six months from the beginning of the data collection, but soon I extended this period to one year because of the holiday interludes and other potential setbacks).

It was not required from the participants to be learning English in a formal way, but their level of English should range from intermediate to advanced, as it was necessary from them to be able to understand and more importantly, to answer questions in as detailed and rich a way as possible. However, the level of literacy in their mother tongue was not a relevant issue. Preferably, but not exclusively, they should belong to

the main non-English communities of the city, namely Indian, Polish, Chinese, and Afro-Caribbean (Mead 2004; BBC 2006; Clothier 2007). I tried to get participants from a wide range of social networks, excluding asylum seekers, a complex group that requires a study that specifically addresses them.

3.2.2 Recruitment

The process of recruitment was a time consuming task and involved some difficulties that I will explain below. First, after considering a number of options for reaching potential participants, I decided to use advertisements. I spent some time talking with people from my social networks who teach in ESOL courses, who kindly agreed to give the ads to their students. I also stuck my ads on notice boards in different companies, social centres and institutions, namely a couple of factories and the local Royal Mail Centre, the Citizens Advice Bureau, a local Hindu temple, some Polish and Russian shops, university campuses of the two local universities, and two local colleges. Their content was condensed information about the project and the researcher, plus my contact details (see Appendix 1)

After a couple of days, people started to contact me for information. I had not many texts, calls or messages, but I made a big investment of time and effort holding meetings to explain the study with more than thirty people. Only six of those were interested enough to become participants. They were highly committed people who participated throughout all of the data collection period with no problem, despite the fact that I did not pay them a penny for it. I think that a crucial element for this was self-selection, in which interest, motivation and identification with some or all the study tenets are crucial (Seidman 2006). With two participants I negotiated an exchange: for participating, one of them got one-hour weekly English conversation sessions with a near-native English L2 speaker; the other got one-hour weekly salsa lessons from a classical ballet dancer who learnt salsa in Cuba. In both cases, the instructors were friends of mine. The exchange took place throughout the data collection period. A brief introduction to my participants is in chapter 4, while the discussion of each of their cases is in chapters 4 and 5.

3.2.3 Establishing initial rapport

Collecting data from participants involves a complex relationship based in fragility, negotiation and the continuous building of trust (Schutz 1971; Heath 1983; Gillham 2000; Fontana and Frey 2005; Olesen 2005; Rubin and Rubin 2005; Seidman 2006). Accordingly, establishing rapport with the participants is a crucial initial step. To do so, I had as a starting point an initial, informal, non-recorded interview or ‘contact visit’ (Seidman 2006:48) with each participant. I chose this technique because Seidman’s rationale made sense to me. Its key points are: a) to become familiar with the person and her milieu; b) to exchange personal information from both sides in order to build a relationship; c) to give the participant as much information as possible and to clarify her doubts and enquiries; d) to determine if the participant is suitable for the study in spite of her willingness to help; e) to know roughly the participant’s schedule in order to know when, where and how to fit in the data collection activities; f) to establish a sense of equity in the relationship, with flexibility from the researcher to a certain extent. The initial interviews went smoothly, and were an opportunity for me to establish good rapport with my participants, as well as to start building up a long lasting collaboration and a positive relationship that make me keep in touch with all of them.

3.2.4 Study design and data collection methods

As I have previously stated I used an articulated mixed approach in my data collection methodology. My main qualitative research tool was interviewing, followed by observation. The quantitative method was testing. It is important to clarify that in including a test I was contradicting the poststructuralist theoretical claim that reality is not measurable, due to its complexity and fluidity (Clapham 2000; Norton 2000; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). However, I consider that such an approach, far from being contradictory, is complementary, as I have explained when I addressed triangulation. Furthermore, the area of testing has been influenced by poststructuralist research, and issues such as ethics, fairness, validation and the social dimension of testing (e.g. ‘teaching to pass a test’; testing as a gatekeeping instrument for immigration control; tools of social exclusion) have acquired relevance (Kunan 1999; Roevers and McNamara 2006; Fulcher and Davidson 2007). Importantly, in this sense, Dialang (the computer-adaptive test I used, see below) is a quite ‘neutral’ tool, as it involves self-diagnostic and reflexion.

3.2.4.1 Interviewing design

Interviewing is a qualitative research method, which involves a conversational technique; its main purpose is to obtain information about the interviewee's experiential knowledge and their views of the world (Gubrium and Holstein 2003a; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Consequently, the interviewer-researcher has a privileged access to the interviewee's world and identity. That privileged position is part of the asymmetry involved in interviewing as a data collection technique, in which it is the interviewer who sets the interview's agenda and purposely controls the interview's dynamics (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

However, the acknowledgement of interviews as co-constructed processes, sites of production of both meaning and knowledge, and in which the interaction of both participants is fundamental, has challenged the view of interviewing as a conversation between an expert (interviewer) and a source of answers (interviewee) (Gubrium and Holstein 2003b; Fontana and Frey 2005). Interviewing involves a mutual influence between interviewer and interviewee, who also acts in relation to each other during the process (Block 2000; Gubrium and Holstein 2003b; Gillham 2005; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

Therefore, this co-construction also implies self-construction through the use of linguistic means and resources, namely conversational, discursive and narrative (Gubrium and Holstein 2003b; Gillham 2005; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

Consequently, in the interview a number of different dynamics are involved: a) the participants' subjectivities and identities (Gillham 2005); b) an interactional created context (Block 2000; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009); and c) a negotiation of the meaning of what is discussed and produced (Block 2000; Gubrium and Holstein 2003b).

Importantly, in this co-construction, the respondent is shaping the information while narrating or explaining his/her views to the interviewer. Thus, the interviewee assumes a subject position, or a series of subject positions, which is known as voice (Gubrium and Holstein 2003b). Consequently, during data analysis, the researcher should be aware that interview data is the product of the interviewee's assumed voices and neither the factual reflection of his/her memory (Block 2000) nor the 'true story... but...the story as constructed by the interviewee' (Gillham 2005:48).

These voices related to subject positions also involve a relationship between the shifting identities of the interviewer and interviewee and the topics addressed (Gubrium and Holstein 2003b). It is important to take into account, though, that both participants' contributions to the interviewing process and its results, emanate from reality –not mirroring it, but socially constructing it through 'the interpretation and negotiation of the meanings of the social world' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:52). Moreover, though the interviewee is not pouring his/her mind out for the interviewer, he/she is nonetheless offering part of his/her life experiences, but shaped by voice (Gubrium and Holstein 2003b)

The researcher's own identity and habitus (that is, his/her views, beliefs, identification and exclusion tendencies, and so on) as well as his/her presuppositions have an impact on data analysis and interpretation (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Two issues emerge from this situation: a) How the interviewer perceives the interviewee may have an impact on the interviewee's 'in progress' subjectivity as a result of 'interpersonal reflections of the interview participants' attendant historical experiences' (Gubrium and Holstein 2003b:40); and b) the possibility of an interpretive bias has to be considered in all cases (Gillham 2005). To avoid bias, the use of a theoretical framework for analysis and interpretation is important (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009), as well as the use of different perspectives and approaches (ibid).

I take this into account in my own data analysis. However, I also take into account that what my participants said is part of a socially constructed, contextually bound reality, as I have just explained.

My stance as interviewer was rooted in radical approaches such critical feminist theory, feminist poststructuralism and action research, which are concerned about what kind of data is elicited and how, instead of the interviewing techniques per se (Fontana and Frey 2005; Olesen 2005). This stance stresses the interactive essence of interviewing as I have explained above, thus emphasising its co-constructed nature. This involves recognition of the hierarchical positions, power relationships and the negotiation process implicit in the interviewing process (Schutz 1971; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004b; Foley and Valenzuela 2005; Seidman 2006), as well as the subjective nature of its results.

My interviewing design was based on two different and complementary elements, namely depth and detail (Rubin and Rubin 2005; Seidman 2006). Depth interviewing was used to identify the participant's feelings, thoughts, identity issues and perceptions. Detail interviewing was focused on obtaining details concerning events, contextualisation and descriptions (ibid). Specifically, I applied Seidman's interviewing method, drawing upon the work of Schutz (1971), in my data collection because: a) Seidman's interviewing stance is attuned with mine; b) I considered it clear, easy to apply and directed to elicit rich data, as Seidman advocates appealing to the participant's reflexivity about her own experience, as much for herself as for the study (Seidman 2006).

Seidman's in-depth interviewing system consists of a series of three semi-structured interview sessions. The first interview is focused on the participant's life history linked to context. The second interview concentrates on the participant's current experience through the prism of our research topic. The third interview is a reflective exercise in which the participant makes sense of her/his own experience. I did not follow this system in the strict order and content of the sessions, as my design included five interviews. However, I took its essential features as the basis for my own interviews as I explain below.

I have adopted the semi-structured interview because, on the one hand, I needed a well structured set of questions to elicit information about the specific topics I was looking for (gender, power, identity, negotiation, goals, activities, fluidity and changeability, all this tightly related to SLL). On the other hand, I needed a method designed to tackle complex human issues (Schutz 1971; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004b; Fontana and Frey 2005; Olesen 2005). This kind of research topics also call for flexibility to cover other issues emerging from the collected data.

While I have adopted a more dialogic style of interviewing (Foley and Valenzuela 2005), I did not fully follow the more innovative approaches to interviewing, which tend to emphasise performativity, full involvement in interaction with the participants, spontaneity, a totally symmetrical relationship with the interviewee and the use of open, non-structured interviews (Fontana and Frey 2005; Berg 2007). I consider that those approaches are for more experienced ethnographers, especially if one take into account

that the interviewer needs to have control of the process, so in some way a hierarchy is established, even though intentionally diminished as much as possible (Fontana and Frey 2005; Seidman 2006). I also agree that despite all these innovative views, what the researcher does de facto is to 'squeeze the juice (answers) out of the orange (living person/interviewee)' (Fontana and Frey 2005:696).

Regarding the interview questions, I followed to some extent Berg's (2007) model of question design and use. Berg classifies questions according to their purpose: essential questions (based on the key topics of the research questions); extra questions (used as tools for confirming information); throw-away questions (incidental questions that may help to cope with embarrassing, sensitive, uncomfortable, situations at certain points during the interview); probing questions (useful to go further in eliciting information). Badly designed questions are: affectively worded questions (usually provoking emotional responses, often negative) and the 'double-barreled' question (Berg 2007:104) (this contains two issues, making it difficult to answer it); questions with complex wording (which confuse the interviewee and lead to misunderstanding and poor responses).

I have designed essential questions that were not explicit about what I was looking for (e.g. gender, power relationships, identity) but nonetheless were able to elicit the data I was seeking. I was trying to be as natural as possible, as well as avoiding technical terms as many of the scholars cited suggest (Fontana and Frey 2005; Rubin and Rubin 2005; Seidman 2006). I have used probing questions profusely, and also throw away questions. However, due to the nature of my interviewing approach and my theoretical framework, I also formulated questions as I went along in each interview. This led me sometimes to formulate double-barrelled questions, especially when I became excited as the participant was telling me something that I considered interesting or relevant. The same applies to the sporadic complex question that I sometimes have formulated.

I was fully aware about my role as interviewer, carefully listening and trying to make the most of my participants' time and cooperation. I also tried to be sensitive to my interviewee responses and act accordingly. I always had my research questions in mind, even though I knew that I should be more open. I know that it is important to allow people to talk as profusely they want to, but I always had my research goals in mind. To see all the interviewing transcriptions, see Appendix 7.

3.2.4.1.1 My interviewing plan

Initially I planned to conduct monthly interviews with each of my participants during the period of data collection that would consist of six months. It was extended to nine months on average, because of the holiday periods (Christmas and Easter) in which my participants used to go abroad. After each holiday period, it was difficult to fix dates for interviewing, as the women asked for some time to re-adapt to their daily routines. Flexibility and time investment is definitively a fundamental issue in ethnography (Dörnyei 2007).

My interviewing plan consisted of five interviews that were designed as follows. As I am researching identity (with habitus as a central part of it), as well as investment (why and how the participant is investing in SLL), the first interview aimed to find out who the participant was, her background and her motives to come to the U.K.. I used activity as a key instrument, asking what and how the participant did, performed, achieved and so on a range of issues related to the research questions. Importantly as well, I was also focusing on the artifacts linked to their SLL backgrounds. I also tried to connect the participants' past and present regular activities such as working, socialising or learning as both starting points and sources of data. I also tried to encourage reflexivity in my participants from the first interview, not waiting until the third interview to do so, as Seidman suggests. Consequently, I used mainly probing questions and I also formulated specific questions arising from a specific moment during the interview. However, after finishing my data collection, I saw why Seidman suggests this. It is because at the beginning there is not the complicity and empathy achieved later, thus it worked only partially.

The topic of the second interview was the SLL activity during my participants' lifetime, including the current moment. My second interview followed the same pattern as my first interview. I was trying to obtain data on the participants' linguistic background regarding L1 and L2. But I also addressed their current SLL situation, their past and present goals regarding L2 learning and use, how, when, where and with whom they used their L1 and English and any additional L2s, and their interactions with English L1 speakers and with other English L2 users. I tried to find out the role of L1 speakers and also the role of other more advanced L2 users in the participant's learning processes.

With both initial interviews I was also trying to identify issues of power, discrimination linked to identity (gender), scaffolding, and so on.

The rest of the interviews were designed using grounded theory techniques of data analysis (see the data analysis in section below). In short, this involved a meticulous and exhaustive reading of the two previous interviews to identify key issues and to clarify or expand specific issues.

My third interview was designed according to a rough analysis of the data obtained from the two first interviews, corresponding with my key topics, namely gender, habitus, its relationship with identity and the fluidity of the latter linked to migration and SLL in situ (that is, how habitus influences the SLL process), power, the participants' goals and investments in SLL, and the role of the social milieu, specifically English society, in the SLL process.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) underline the first interview as a source of personalised following interviews, which I have found is true. The first set of interviews also allowed me to identify the faults in the interview guide. It was my starting point towards a more specific and detailed set of questions.

After having done the first interview with my first participant, I made the self evaluation suggested by my supervisor, taking the transcription as a starting point. Then I realised that my questions were too general, even though the focus was well defined, as I posed descriptive questions which addressed issues of time, space, people and activities (Neuman 2006). In the first interview with the next participant, I used a more complete set of questions.

One of the key features in Seidman's model of interviewing is the time given to each session. He argues that is important to give about 90 minutes to each interview. I followed this pattern in my first interview but not in the rest because the experience showed me that the time was to be dictated by a conjunction of the set of questions plus a set of highly variable elements such as the dynamics of the interview, the participant's mood, her degree of willingness to share, and the level of intimacy achieved between her and I.

3.2.4.1.2 Additional issues in interviewing

All the interviews were recorded and accurately transcribed. In the first interview transcription I included many features such as pauses, repetitions and so on. In the rest I decided not to include them, as I was not analysing pure linguistic features such as phonetics, rhythm, pitch and so on. Nonetheless, this has no impact on the transcriptions' accuracy. I transcribed elements that I considered important, such as laughs for example, as they are usually the result of embarrassment, nerves or discomfort, and I think they can provide some clues about my participants' feelings and thoughts in their accounts of SLL and L2 use experiences.

After the last set of interviews (the fifth) I decided to interview the participants' partners because the data obtained from previous interviews shed light on the partners' important role in my participants' SLL. Therefore, I conducted a single interview with each of them (four).

I have emphasised my participants' physical, emotional and psychological comfort (Rubin and Rubin 2005; Seidman 2006) when interviewing them. I always allowed them to decide when and where the interview would take place. Usually we agreed to have lunch or dinner together either at my home or at theirs. Apart from enjoying their company and giving or receiving hospitality, I was applying the suggestion of 'warming-up' with an informal conversation before the interview takes place (Rubin and Rubin 2005; Seidman 2006; Berg 2007).

After the meal I conducted the interview in a different room. If housemates were in the house, I interviewed the participants in their own bedrooms or in my own bedroom, where I have noticed they seemed most comfortable. I always asked the participant if she was ready before switching on the digital recorder to start the interview. I always based the interview on my set of questions. I tried to be clear, to listen rather than speak unless I was asked something, and to generate as much information about my topics as I could through question formulation (see above). Once the interview was over, I always thanked my participant for her invaluable contributions. Usually we had a conversation with a cup of tea before saying goodbye.

Importantly, I always tried to be myself as much as I could, but I did not allow my own mood and personal issues to interfere in my performance. I also tried to make the

interviewee as comfortable as possible; though sometimes I was too inquisitive, but in average I managed well.

3.2.4.2 Observation

The observation of daily-life events within specific contexts is the main source of naturally occurring data in ethnography, but also a complex one (Saville-Troike 2003; Foley and Valenzuela 2005; Berg 2007). It is argued that observation: a) is the most direct way to obtain data; b) results in rich and in-depth data from individuals' lives and contexts; and c) provides reflexivity as participants are contributing to the study with their own experiences, feelings, activities, thoughts, actions and points of view at the very moment that these are happening (Gillham 2000; O'Reilly 2005; Silverman 2005; Tedlock 2005).

Observation involves unavoidable researcher's mediation, whether as a physical presence or through electronic equipment such as microphones, tape recorders, cameras (no matter if they are not visible, as the participants must be fully informed about their use). This affects the natural quality of such data but it does not have an impact on its richness, depth and scope (Silverman 2005; Tedlock 2005; Berg 2007).

Critical ethnography sees this naturally occurring data as a subjective product of the interaction between researcher and participant. For this reason, such data is complex to analyse, as for instance it involves issues of power, identity and bias (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Fontana and Frey 2005). For instance, there is evidence that researcher characteristics have repercussions on the participants' responses (e.g. students and people with higher status obtain more response from participants) (Fontana and Frey 2005; Rubin and Rubin 2005). In this issue, ethnographic approaches range from the most orthodox (asymmetric relationship between researcher and participant) to the most radical that conceives fieldwork as a site of narrative construction, involving participatory research or autobiographical research (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Foley and Valenzuela 2005; Silverman 2005).

Besides theoretical considerations, ethnographic observation is a complex methodology that goes further than simply observing and taking notes. It involves a conjunction of articulated qualities and techniques, such as: a) ability to become 'invisible' to diminish

the intrusion; b) use of an observation guide; c) making notes; d) skilful observation technique with attention to detail and discretion; e) flexibility, adaptability, initiative, dynamism and improvisation; f) accurate and detailed observation reports for building a data base (Foley and Valenzuela 2005; Fontana and Frey 2005; O'Reilly 2005; Dörnyei 2007). Additionally, it is a time-consuming research tool that requires practice and discipline (Gillham 2000).

Participant versus non participant observation: degree of involvement and ethical issues
But, what kind of observation was I doing? There is a distinction between participant and non-participant observation that raises a never-ending discussion. Social scientists point out the contradiction in the term participant observation. The researcher is, above all, a systematic observer with a purpose, and this hinders a full integration within the community where the observation takes place (O'Reilly 2005). Thus, it is a difficult task to be involved to different degrees with the research context keeping objectivity and purpose in mind, but achieving balance is crucial for success (Silverman 2005; Berg 2007).

I did not find information about observation techniques in my SLL reference studies but I found excellent ethnographic sociolinguistic work that illustrates this methodology (Brice Heath 1983; Heller 2006), where the roles of observers are well defined and skilfully performed. I tried to follow this approach as much as my limited research expertise allowed me to do. However, after having collected my data, I am aware of the difficulties of observation and degree of involvement, as my identity played a role in the data collection dynamics and relationships between the participants and myself. This confirms the claims of critical ethnographers about the influence of identity, identification, others' perception of an individual, and power. I am going to explain my point briefly.

The similarities between my participants and myself blurred many boundaries and dramatically diminished any asymmetric relationship between us. Like them, I am an English L2 learner/speaker, middle class, university person who has moved to live continuously in the UK in order to invest in cultural capital acquisition. The only difference between us is that I was the one who conducted the interviews, who knew how the computer-adaptive test software worked and who basically expected help from them to fix an observation and to agree when they would take the test.

Otherwise, our relationship was almost totally symmetrical. And I say ‘almost’ because my identity of doctoral student and researcher had a certain impact on their attitude towards me, especially when I interviewed them. I was always totally committed to maintaining a symmetrical relationship between my participants and myself. My attitude towards them and my involvement were similar to those I have with my colleagues at university, my neighbours and other agreeable acquaintances. My stance was attuned to those approaches that advocate a transparent, egalitarian, reciprocal and appreciative relationship between researcher and participant (Foley and Valenzuela 2005; Fontana and Frey 2005; Olesen 2005; Tedlock 2005; Berg 2007). I conducted my study giving always information about my project general traits, my theoretical approach, and the reasons for my interest in the project. I directly asked my participants’ for collaboration. I let them know that my ethical stance involved a symmetrical relationship. I think that my identity also played a role in this matter, as I am a humble person.

There are some challenges to this approach. Fontana and Frey (2005:696) raise the issue that empathy may be ‘merely a technique to persuade the interviewee [or participant in a more general concept] to reveal more and be more honest in his or her responses’. They appeal to a cutting-edge ethical code to avoid this as much as possible. I totally agree with them in that asymmetrical relations and the exploitation of participants by intentionally appealing to their emotional realm in order to obtain better data are inexcusable. I realise that, even unintentionally, empathic relationships with participants result in richer data. Consequently, especial attention and full commitment to ethical principles are a must.

The more radical ethnographic approaches advocate the participants’ full participation in writing the research report (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004b; Foley and Valenzuela 2005; Olesen 2005; Silverman 2005), but I personally do not agree with this position. Though I acknowledge the participant’s undeniable right to read what is written about her on request and to ask for removal of parts of her data which she does not like to be used, I think that the researcher has the right to own her project, and the freedom of analysing, interpreting and reporting. In any way she considers, provided that it is conducted in consonance with ethical principles.

3.2.4.2.1 Observation technique

As I have previously stated, my methodology included this technique as I needed to observe common naturally occurring events of face-to-face interaction between my participants and English L1 and L2 speakers. These events usually happened within wider contexts, for instance, a party. My design included two set of observations of two to three events each, one at the beginning and other at the end of the data collection period (for my observation reports, see Appendix 8)

The specific traits I focused on were: my participants' use of English (e.g. how, when, with whom they talk, if they use exclusively English or other languages); the interaction dynamics (engagement or lack of it, degree of cooperation and even help, or lack of it, from more proficient speakers of English); identity (the role of identification and exclusion tendencies in choice of interlocutors, which also involve how the participant was perceived by others), the role of cultural differences in communication (e.g. politeness); my participants' attitudes, behaviour and actions both in interaction dynamics and in the wider context dynamics.

3.2.4.2.2 Observation guide

As I have explained in the previous section, my observation technique was adopted from ethnographic literature (Brice Heath 1983; O'Reilly 2005; Silverman 2005; Berg 2007). The observation method required an observation guide, and I chose Dell Hymes' (Hymes 1977; Saville-Troike 2003) model for analysis of communicative events (SPEAKING). Hymes is a pioneer in ethnography of communication (an area of linguistics), which focuses on language use in interaction; speaking practices in different contexts and between different people; naturally occurring speech; the relationship between speaking practices and context; and meaning. This discipline uses qualitative or mixed methodology (Hymes 1977; Mesthrie, Swann et al. 2000; Saville-Troike 2003).

I chose Hymes' model as a guide because: a) it covers all the features I wanted to observe, as it includes all the relevant factors of any speech event and their interrelations; b) it addresses the complexity of talk in a descriptive way; c) it also focuses on the speakers' resources and strategies when producing and interpreting spoken language (I saw its potential in covering other elements linked to my theoretical

framework such as activity, practices, material and symbolic tools, power and participation); and d) experts in this subfield claim that the analysis of the speech event captures the richness of the interaction as its components are tightly linked to cultural patterns of behaviour and interpretation (Hymes 1977; Mesthrie, Swann et al. 2000; Saville-Troike 2003).

The elements of Hyme's model are as follows (Hymes 1977; Saville-Troike 2003).

Scene is the contextual frame of the event, and comprises a) genre or type of event (style and form of the communicative event, e.g. story telling, presentation, speech, conversation, greeting, joke); b) topic (the theme or subject); c) purpose/function (of both the event and the individuals); d) setting (description of place and time)

Key is the emotional tone of the event e.g. friendly, serious, sarcastic, solemn, and so on. It also involves metalinguistic features and paralinguistic aspects of speech.

Participants includes each participant's portrait and the relationship between them .

Message form comprises code (language, variation) and metalinguistic features.

Message content consists of the contents of what is being communicated.

Act sequence contains the event order structure and it is linked to the participants' performance.

Rules for interaction involves participants' behavioural speech patterns that shape the event and that it is tightly linked to culture.

Norms of interpretation are the 'common knowledge, cultural behavioural patterns and shared understandings' (Saville-Troike 2003:110) among participants.

This model can be used as a dynamic structure or schema that goes beyond a simple referential structure (Saville-Troike 2003) for the analysis of communicative events, but aims to understand as much as possible the processes, backgrounds, interpretations, meanings involved in the communicative event, including the relationship with

individuals' cultural backgrounds. (To see some examples of how this framework was used in my observation records, see Appendix 8.4 Kim.)

3.2.4.2.3 Conducting my observations

In the previous section I talked about participant or non participant observation, the difficulties involved in being a systematic observer while being part of the context, and my stance about it. In my observations I was always what is known as a covert researcher (O'Reilly 2005; Neuman 2006; Berg 2007) because no one but the participant and myself knew about my role as observer. I have to make clear that in this situation my ethical principles were always present. First, I explained to my participants that I wanted to be a covert observer for other people in the observed events and why (to avoid the observer's paradox where people behave in a different way if they know that they are being observed) (Mesthrie, Swann et al. 2000; Swann and Mesthrie 2004; Dörnyei 2007).

Covert means that people in the observed setting do not know about the research purpose of the observer, while overt means the contrary. Of course, this does not necessarily involve deception, as my participants were fully aware of my quality of observer-researcher and the focus of my observation was themselves and the people with whom they interacted, and this did not leave me too much space for focusing in something else, with some exceptions, for instance Julie's party (see Appendix 8.2). Of course, I also observed the general context of the event as it is a natural thing to do even if you are not researching. All of the participants gladly agreed with my request to be a covert observer, and I let the decision of choosing the events to be observed to them.

Usually I was introduced as a friend or a fellow student –with the exception of Alisa's workplace, where I was an ordinary customer (see Appendix 8.1). I did not take with me any notebook, piece of paper or laptop, because it would be really odd to take notes while interacting within the context. Occasionally I had the opportunity of just sitting discreetly alone. In those situations I took my mobile and wrote some key words in it that helped me to remember specific issues for my observation report. This activity was perfectly natural, but I could not recur to it as often as I wanted. Most of the times I wrote those key words in the toilet as many other researchers do and have done

I always tried to be as inconspicuous as possible in order to a) observe as much as I could, though that sometimes meant not being distracted by the others' normal desire of socialising with me; b) diminish the attention that I could attract as a newcomer; c) have minimum interference in the interactions. However, it is difficult to observe while someone is talking in a friendly way to you. Often, I strove not to seem a rude person because someone was talking to me while I was observing my participant, as this made it difficult to pay attention fully to my interlocutor. Sometimes I felt distress when the person talking to me looked embarrassed, disconcerted or even annoyed because she/he was talking to me and I shared my attention between them and the participant. Eventually, through practice, I managed to 'become invisible' (Berg 2007) as the event evolved.

Another technical difficulty is hearing a conversation without being noticed, especially when I noticed that the contents denoted elements I was particularly interested in, which I have explained above. I made a big progress in the ability to take a position close enough to hear the conversation without attracting attention.

3.2.4.3 Testing

I have already given my justification for applying a test at the beginning and at the end of the data collection. Summing up, I wanted to know my participants' proficiency level of English as well as identifying possible progress made by them in that period. When asked about their level of English, my participants placed themselves at a specific level taking their last test or course results as a basis. However, the answer was speculative, and speculation is what I wanted to avoid. The application of the test at the beginning of the data collection allowed me to corroborate/challenge their conjecture.

Language testing represents the corroborative part of the SLL process (Clapham 2000; Figueras 2005). It is a way to assess the language proficiency level of L2 learners and also a means to gather data for linguistic research (Clapham 2000). In the first case, the main objective of testing is to obtain valid evidence, through technical means of reasoning, of the L2 learner's linguistic abilities. This is reflected by the test scores, which are: a) the representation of such language skills and abilities; b) the basis of

claims about validity (Weir 2005; Fulcher and Davidson 2007). Testing can go even further, as it can be used to build linguistic theory through a careful analysis of the test's elements, their interrelations and their relation with the test taker's L2 knowledge and use, as well as with the environment in which the test is taken (Clapham 2000).

Testing (formal) and assessment (less formal) have their basis in hypotheses, which are the product of the relationship between observable variables, and between constructs. Constructs are concepts that can be measured through observable variables (Clapham 2000; Weir 2005; Fulcher and Davidson 2007). In validity theory the link between theory and evidence is difficult to identify as theory is in constant evolution and the evidence collection is endless (Weir 2005; Fulcher and Davidson 2007). Reliability is 'concurrent validation' (Weir 2005:25) defined as 'consistence of test scores across facets of the test' (Fulcher and Davidson 2007:15). As I have said above, there is an influence of poststructuralist/postmodernist theories in testing, which has raised concerns about the nature of truth (Fulcher and Davidson 2007).

Language testing elements are: models and frameworks (the what); tasks (the how); and scoring (how much or how good) (Fulcher and Davidson 2007). All of them are aimed at gathering data that documents L2 learners language learning and use (Clapham 2000). Regarding the test I chose by my supervisor's suggestion, it is a computer-adaptive and diagnostic test system, Dialang (DE, FI et al. 2003) based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Zhang and Thompson 2004; Alderson and Huhta 2005; Alderson 2007; Fulcher and Davidson 2007). A computer-adaptive test adapts the test's level of difficulty to the test taker's ability taking the history of responses as a basis (Kunan 1999; Alderson 2007; Fulcher and Davidson 2007). Dialang is actually a set of tests that tackle the measurement of language skills in five areas, namely listening, writing, reading, vocabulary and knowledge of grammatical structures. Dialang has been scientifically designed by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE). The project includes 14 European languages, and its development involved 14 correspondent assessment development teams, integrated by experienced language teachers and test developers. The Dialang project was also supported by collaborative work from around 25 prestigious European institutions, mainly universities. The project was funded by the European Union. Dialang design takes as a basis the CEFR proficiency levels (see fig 3.1).

The central idea of Dialang is to help L2 learners to have control of their own learning, helping them to identify their strengths and weaknesses in the L2, to be aware of what they either can or cannot do with their level of L2, and to plan their future SLL steps and strategies (Alderson and Huhta 2005; (ALTE) 2007). Accordingly, Dialang was created as a self-assessment set of tests, therefore Dialang is easy to use. All the test taker needs is a computer and basic computer skills, as the program is easily available by internet for free. The program instructions are clear and aimed to facilitate the test taking as much as possible. Additionally, Dialang offers the test results immediately, with feedback explained in simple terms and advice on how to improve the weak areas. As the tests are computer-adaptive, they include pre-tests in order to adapt the level of difficulty to the test taker's level of proficiency. The tests include three item types, namely multiple-choice, gap-filling and short-answer questions (Zhang and Thompson 2004). To have a better idea of how the system works, see <http://www.dialang.org/altindex.htm>. Dialang does not give any formal certification about learner level, as it is a self-diagnosis tool.

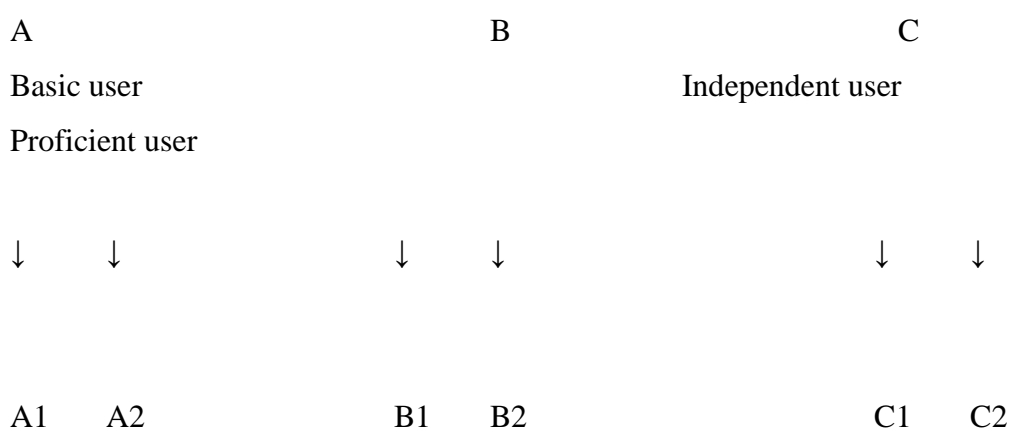


Fig. 2.1 CEFR proficiency scale (Heyworth 2006:182)

The CEFR is a guideline which aims to provide a common method of assessing and teaching applicable to all languages in Europe. The CEFR's importance was officially recognised in 2001, when a European Union Council Resolution recommended the CEFR as a basis for systems of validation of language ability. The CEFR scales of

levels are widely accepted as a convenient standard for evaluating language proficiency. The results of Dialang test piloting for English suggest that this test system has been carefully developed and that the quality of standard setting can produce ‘very reliable results’ (Alderson and Huhta 2005).

Dialang has a few shortcomings. First, the program does not offer the option of saving or printing the results. I considered it crucial to have printed evidence of the tests’ results of each participant, for validity issues and for analytical and ethical reasons. I solved the situation by copying the screen images of the results, the feedback and the advice, then pasting them in a Microsoft word document created specifically for each participant. This was a slightly complicated task as you have to copy and paste image by image every time that the participant finishes a test (for all the test results images, see Appendix 9)

Second, the test does not include speaking, and speaking is an important part of language use. However, the use of ethnographically elicited data, specifically the use of accurate transcriptions from recorded interviewing, allowed me to evaluate this area. Third, to undertake the test it is necessary to have a computer and an internet connexion. Fourth, the test has no assigned time for solving each task.

The characteristics of the test made it ideal for my research purposes nonetheless. First of all, it has been designed and tested by collaborative work among prestigious institutions. At the same time, as it is designed for self-assessment, it is easy to use, it does not look too formal, thus my participants felt comfortable solving it, it gives the results in a clear way, and it gives useful feedback and suggestions on how to improve the current level of L2. All these characteristics have proven to be particularly useful in my case, as I am not a teacher of English.

3.2.5 Analysis methodology

This section contains the explanation of my qualitative data analysis methodology and the categories arising from the analysis process. The initial stages of my data collection brought the need for a method of analysis that systematically tackled the large, rich and complex data I was obtaining. Making the most of it also called for an approach that prevented mere description, narration and oversimplification, trying to contribute to

building theory (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Silverman 2005; Neuman 2006; Berg 2007; Dörnyei 2007; Corbin and Strauss 2008). However, my choice of method of analysis involved some difficulty. I could not draw upon my key reference studies, namely Norton (2000) and Pavlenko, Blackledge et al. (2001), as they give scarce information about their methods of analysis. After reviewing some literature (Gillham 2000; Silverman 2005; Neuman 2006; Berg 2007; Davies 2007; Dörnyei 2007) I concluded that Grounded Theory might be a suitable analytic method, helpful for an inexperienced analyst like me. A key reading was Corbin and Strauss (2008), as it contains a clear and comprehensive step-by-step guide with the basics of GT analysis, taking a case study as basis. GT analysis involves making comparisons, asking questions that ‘interrogate’ the data at micro-level, brainstorming, and development of ideas through ‘memoing’ (Clarke 2005; Walker and Myric 2006; Corbin and Strauss 2008). I started applying GT procedures after the initial stage of my data collection which involved two interviews plus the initial observations and test. The method influenced my interviewing design to some extent (see below).

3.2.5.1 Grounded theory and N-vivo: two related analytical tools

Characteristically, GT does not imply working with predetermined concepts, as the method involves their inductive development from the data analysis. However, a conjoined approach GT–theoretical framework has been applied in qualitative research recently (Clarke 2005; Seaman 2008). This was an important issue in my decision about applying the method, as using predetermined relevant concepts from my theoretical framework (Identity, Gender, Activity, Investment, Communities of Practice, and Bourdieu’s concepts of Legitimation, Capitals, Habitus, and Positioning see chapter 2 and glossary) was a must, since they were the basis of my research questions and consequently, of my data collection tools. Additionally, I also defined three key interrelated elements of enquiry: SLL processes, the experience of emigration, and the role of social context in such dynamics. As an introduction to GT procedures, it is necessary to explain some basic related notions.

From this point of view, a concept is: 'A mental representation, idea, or thought corresponding to a specific entity or class of entities, or the defining or prototypical features of the entity or class, which may be either concrete or abstract' (concept:

Colman 2009). Concepts are intellectual products that a) reflect an interpretative correspondence with the real world; b) are defined by a word or a phrase; c) are units of analysis; d) present a range of levels of abstraction; and e) are part of the theoretical common language of the research community (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Data analysis may be a source of concepts, and may contribute to expand or confirm them.

A category is a condensed abstraction, a complex idea that contains the main common features of specific instances or examples (Blackburn 2008; Colman 2009). In GT terms, a category is 'an overarching explanatory' entity covering a group of specific concepts, which develops through a systematic analytical process (Corbin and Strauss 2008:55). Such a process implies a) study of all the concepts' properties and dimensions; b) comparison of them to identify commonalities; and c) gathering of concepts under a category. In practical terms, GT promotes the use of diagrams and memos to undertake such analysis. I found both tools more than useful and eventually I succeeded in grouping my concepts into categories.

A code represents a concept through the use of a word or phrase assigned by the researcher. Codes are useful for defining, identifying and/or classifying concepts or categories within the data (Soanes and Stevenson 2005). In GT the code is the basis of analysis, as it is of the program N-vivo, whose version '8' I used as a supportive tool to identify, classify, organise and compare my data. The program's design is based on GT's theoretical and methodological tenets (Gibbs 2002; QSR 2002; Lewins, Silver et al. 2007). N-vivo's design is aimed to 'interrogate' the data, code it, and create models to identify relationships between the resulting codes through diagrams, and gathering them into categories. It also has a tool for 'memoing' (see definition below).

N-vivo is a useful tool that ideally supports the intellectual work of data analysis, helping to code data in an efficient and simple way and to explain codes (nodes=codes). There are two node versions, namely 'Free' nodes and 'Tree' nodes. The latter is useful to gather concepts under categories, and is a tool for creating models. The program also was useful to organise and gather the coded excerpts by code, which is a fundamental stage in the analysis for comparisons, generalisations and identification of differences. I used N-vivo from the beginning of my data analysis and I am very satisfied with the results. The process of analysis is time-consuming and the codes emerged gradually from each case. Some codes are applicable to the most of the cases, some of them are

more specific. To see how the process works, please see appendices 10 (Lissa's case memos) and 12 (a summary of all my codes which emerged after 'interrogating' all data, case by case).

There are some issues to take into account about using N-vivo. First, previous training is needed to learn not only how to use the program but also how to make the most of it. I learned the basics in two-stage training sessions, which I felt were not enough. Consequently, I read books and manuals to further understand how to use the program. Such activities took place at the beginning of my data collection, that is, one year before starting the data analysis. I used only the main applications, namely coding, memoing and models, though there are several more. I also found that some knowledge of Grounded Theory made it easy to understand the program principles. Second, the program per se is not going to generate analysis. It should be taken only as a technical tool that supports one's thinking and one's work on the data in terms of data organisation and data analysis. It is the researcher who has to 'denote' the analytical elements and the findings on the data through the use of the program applications.

3.2.5.1.1 Grounded Theory procedures

The GT's method of analysis involves three stages, namely: 'Open coding' entails a careful, detailed reading and coding of the data with the aim of inductively generating the analysis results. Such reading involves an interrogative technique made up of simple questions such as 'What is going on here?'; 'What is this?'; 'What does she mean?'; 'How does she react to this situation?'; 'Who is involved in the event/situation and how?' and so on (Corbin and Strauss 2008:16; 69).

Additionally, I was using my predetermined theoretical concepts to generate questions and specific codes. As I mentioned above, some grounded theory approaches allow the incorporation of pre-conceptual categories in this first stage, as long as it does not interfere in the process representing the researcher's pre-conceptions (Seaman 2008).

My theoretical framework influenced my thinking during the analysis, but I managed to have a good degree of autonomy in my analytical reflexions. That is, I avoided 'fitting' the data into the concepts but I used the concepts as units of analysis to guide my enquiry. Eventually some of my pre-determined codes developed into categories, and

others became part of a category. Interestingly, my data analysis eventually did not discard any of them. To see how the process worked at this stage, see appendix 10). This stage largely contributed to the design of the three last interviews, plus the partners' interviews. As I was roughly 'interrogating' the data, I started to identify relevant issues to explore further. This in turn dictated which kind of issues I was going to address in the next interview.

This stage also involves identifying and determining the properties and dimensions of each code. A property is a defining and descriptive characteristic. A dimension specifies and ranges variation among concepts (Corbin and Strauss 2008). My open coding activity took me countless hours of systematic thinking and reflexion on the data through my questions and my additional tools, plus the writing of many useful memos. There is no 'universal standard formula' to be applied in qualitative data analysis (Corbin and Strauss 2008), but GT procedures were invaluable for an inexperienced analyst like me. It was at this stage when I saw how my thinking started materialising in interpretative attempts (codes) proposed for the data.

Gradually this coding led me to identify concepts and to set up their properties and dimensions. Next I compared coded data between cases, relating codes through their dimensions and properties. Finally, I organised the codes hierarchically to identify my main concepts then tackled the next phase. To do so, I used relational diagrams (drawn upon Clarke's 2005) mapping, but I did not follow the whole technique because of time and scope constraints). To see how this process worked, please see appendices 11 and 13.

The second stage is known as 'Axial coding'. In this phase codes evolve into categories depending on their importance and substantiality. Such a process implies a deeper analysis of the categories' properties and dimensions through inductive/deductive reflexion on ideas which emerged from the dynamics between the analysis process and the theoretical framework. These ideas and thoughts are materialised through 'memoing', the activity of writing pieces of reflexive work known as 'memos' (Clarke 2005; Corbin and Strauss 2008). The final outcome of axial coding is the identification of relationships between categories. My experience of memoing was highly positive because it was a systematic way of materialising all my thoughts (e.g. the answers I gave to each of the countless questions; ideas that suddenly came up to my mind;

reflexions on each excerpt of data; comparisons I made among all the participants' data under a code; relationships I found between codes and categories). At the end, I 'summarised' the memos about each participant into others that were the basis of my diagrams, discussions, arguments and conclusions about my analysis results. To see an example of this kind of final memo, see appendix 10, 'Lissa's integrative memos'.

'Selective coding' is the final stage that implies a process similar to the previous phase, but within a more abstract analytical level. A core category is selected using relevant criteria. The whole structure of the concepts' relationships gravitates around such categories. I consider this process as a 'natural' outcome of on the one hand, all the previous work I did in the two first stages, and on the other hand, the eventual command of the technique of continuous reflexion and writing, which played a key role in this stage. To see the outcome of the process, see appendix 13.

This GT method proved to be a useful tool of analysis. Following its procedures I learnt to systematically reflect on the data through continuous questioning. I also learned to make the most of reflective writing i.e. memoing, which contributed largely to my analysis results. I also learnt to make comparisons, organise my data and my findings. GT procedures were also useful in interviewing design to address relevant issues, exploring, clarifying and widening them further.

3.2.5.2 Additional methods of analysis

Besides GT method, the richness and complexity of my data called for additional analytical tools. I also used them for triangulation purposes. My unit of analysis were my theoretical concepts (identity, gender, habitus, and investment), Engeström's Activity system triangle, and the social psychologist individual's hierarchical system of identities main tenets. I have already explained all of these concepts in chapter 2.

3.3 Conclusions

I consider that ethnographic inquiry proved to be the appropriate data collection method for my multiple case study. Interviewing not only allowed me to elicit rich and complex data, but also to gradually construct not only rapport but a reciprocal relationship of identity sharing to some extent with all my participants. Stets' interviewing technique

was a significant starting point for me. It covered topics ranging from how to establish initial contact to advanced interviewing skills. GT technique also contributed to the ongoing interviewing design, as it promoted a good deal of analysis and reflexion on the data obtained.

My experience confirms that observation is a very difficult task that needs a conjunction of skills (see above 3.4.2). However, practice is a must (as it is in interviewing). The most difficult part is to be a covert observer, as this requires a big degree of involvement in the event's dynamics, thus making the observation a handicap in some cases. It is also crucial to create beforehand a code of words that convey a whole concept, idea or situation, in order to write about important issues in the mobile or on a piece of paper at the toilet.

The relationship with participants is a delicate issue, indeed. I think that achieving a balance between the extremes of growing too close and treating participants as 'subjects of study' is important, and I achieved this through establishing a relationship as acquaintances (see section 3.3.3 above).

The use of ethnographic multiple methods also had its drawbacks. I obtained a good deal of rich and complex data, but the fieldwork was extremely time-consuming in terms of : a) coordination between participants' schedules; b) the data collection procedure, which did not consist in arriving, making the interview or observation and leaving. Previous socialising with the participant was important, as we were asking the participant to make an exercise of recalling, self-reflexion, and openness, which would not be possible without previously building not only rapport, but a climate of confidence, comfort, mutual trust and complicity. For this reason it was important to make clear to the participant, from the beginning, that we preferred a meeting with time to spare. In this situation the participant's generosity is crucial; c) the data analysis takes a huge amount of time.

Also, the fact of making such an investment of time and effort in each participant made the possibility of attrition (dropout) a highly stressful issue for the researcher.

The amount, richness and complexity of the obtained data were a real challenge for its analysis. I used multiple theories, approaches and concepts, but it took me a good deal

of effort and intellectual skills to coordinate this articulated method of analysis, as well as to find out what was the ideal method for specific data. I would say that the time and dedication to the processes of participant recruitment, data collection and data analysis had an impact on my personal life, as I had very little time left for other activities.

However, I do not agree with critics of this approach who argue that ethnography does not provide a basis for generalisation, nor for macroanalysis, as it is focused on small groups (Rampton, Tusting et al. 2004; Berg 2007). I consider it important to build up research on specific topics using this approach as a way of supporting generalisation and relating the micro with the macro.

I think that eight/nine months, 5 interviews and two sets of observations were enough to identify and corroborate some important issues, and that an ethnographic case study indeed shed light on issues that reflect the richness and complexity of the individual human microuniverse, and that an array of cases can lead (by comparisons to establish how the cases relate to each other, identifying similarities and differences) to a better understanding of issues that are general to many of us, thus contributing to generalisation.

Testing proved to be a useful tool for identifying progress in my participants' level of English in the data collection period. The application of two tests in the initial and final points of the data collection was an obvious but good strategy.

Chapter 4 The case study, part one: Seeing the world through a ‘first class’ safe setting: the Central and Eastern European participants

This chapter and the next provide a rich and detailed account and discussion of each of the cases. I have organised them in two groups of three each, being the integrative criteria both the common traits and differences between the participants. This chapter addresses the first group, and opens with a brief informative introduction of the women and their backgrounds, followed by a concise explanation of the macrocontext linked to the three first cases, and finally explains the first group of cases.

4.1 Introduction to the six participants

My six participants are all heterosexual females, aged 20 to 33, who are learners/users of English as a second language (L2). They are from Asia (Kim –South Asian; Sophie – Chinese); Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) (Lissa and Julie –Poles; Alisa –Russian-Lithuanian); and America (Mimi –Mexican). All the women had been living continuously in the UK two years in average at the start of the data collection. All of them were studying English formally on part-time basis (2 hours per week). All the participants had tertiary education but in the UK all of them were performing low-paid, low-skilled jobs. I am going to make a more detailed explanation about what my participants have in common and what are their differences in chapter 6.

I have divided the six cases in two groups following criteria based on two elements: a) the main motive for moving to the UK; b) their level of English when they arrive to the UK. Though country of origin is not included in this criterion, coincidentally the two resulted groups were the CEECs women and the non-European background women.

4.2 The CEECs group case studies

4.2.1 Macrocontext: CEECs and EU, a newly marriage and its impact on social and demographic dynamics

When my data collection took place, a group of CEECs had already joined the European

Union, namely the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. This situation caused an interesting dichotomy: on the one hand, some of the older EU members (excluding the UK) placed a number of residence and work restrictions on citizens of these countries, on a temporary basis. On the other hand, the EU older members were optimistic about the contribution of the newcomer countries to the region's economy (Delanty and Rumford 2005). In the case of the UK, it received a considerable number of Poles (Drinkwater, Eade et al. 2006; Eurostat 2007; Winkworth, Kalinowska et al. 2007; Eurostat 2008).

Indeed, Poles represented 62% of the total work applications in the UK between 2004 and 2006, while Lithuanians and Slovaks represented 10% (Drinkwater, Eade et al. 2006). Consequently, my aim was to include representatives from such populations in my study, a goal that I achieved (see 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 above). In general terms, citizens from these countries have relatively high levels of literacy, but they usually got low paid jobs (ibid). My CEECs participants confirm such demographic findings.

In this macro-context, migration is viewed as a societal continuum that defines Poland and other CEECs countries by affinity and by cultural identity in contemporary times. Such a continuum goes from the 19th and early 20th century rural exodus, the glorified 'grand narrative [...] of penniless Poles who succeeded in the West' (Galasinska 2009:88) during the communist era, to the post communist migratory waves prompted by traumatic economic readjustments once the bloc of CEECs joined the EU.

In those countries, EU membership is seen as a means to guarantee sustained economic development and consolidation of economic bases established in the late communist/early post-communist era. Extreme reforms and readjustments were undertaken to guarantee successful candidature, which were entered into from as early as 1994.

Negative effects were widely felt as a result of the installation of a market based economic system including increased interdependence and forceful opening of local economies. Unemployment, wealth-based social distinctions and divisions, inter-ethnic and intra-societal group conflicts have occurred. Migration and formation of new identities through displacement are also essential factors in the perception of politics in both the communist and post-communist regimes.

The media play an important role in a) consolidating national identity; b) engaging populations to accept the shift from state institutions to supranational and local bodies of government, after the disintegration of communist ideology (Busch 2009). Nationalism emerges in the 1990s as a key factor in shaping local identities and providing a sense of unity partly through hate speech freely allowed by the media. Besides, since the 1980s, a gradual installation of a western model of media conglomerates has taken place, altering information and shaping public opinion by supplying global cultural products across Eastern Europe. Still, driven by profitability rather than genuine interest in providing information to the public, they failed to give an adequate space for the articulation of civil society (Busch 2009).

Consequently, a dual phenomenon occurs: on the one hand, there is the propagation of mass-produced Western cultural referents in the media of CEECs. On the other hand, there is the installation of monolingual media structures that substitute newly defined nationalistic identities for the old nationalistic ideologies. Cultural and social minorities remain oppressed, though, while former dominant languages – namely Russian, are vilified through an ideological war created to enhance a feeling of national identity under a unitary government. The Baltic states are a clear example of this phenomenon.

But, what is the ideological context in which such migration occurs, and which is its discourse? One answer would be, a production war between two economic systems (capitalism and socialism) constantly competing to outdo each other in terms of the bulk of goods generated. Beyond political divergences, the truly perceptible aspects of the Cold War for ordinary people were strictly related to the specificity of means of production, and the diversity and quality of goods available for consumption (Galasinska 2009). Here are the roots of the perception of Western life, behind the Iron Curtain, as prosperous and modern. A complex discourse of consumption emerged from this equally complex ideology and ideation. Such discourse equates the visual quality of material goods with the long-coveted freedoms of the West. Their acquisition as a cultural capital goes beyond social status: it reflects a world that blurs the realities of communism and affords the luxury of mobility to its inhabitants. Thus, we encounter a dialectic contrast between the principles of communist ideology and the virtues of a mythologized West (ibid). This explanation contains the roots of my participants eagerness to live in the West and to see the world, as I am going to explain in chapter 6)

After the gradual disintegration of the communist political structure, Poland's 1988's Round Table allowed the creation of a multi-party system and consequently, the first Western-style elections held in June 1989 (Krzyzanowsky and Galasinska 2009). However, the introduction of a liberal economic model did not facilitate life for most people, as they did not benefit from the uneven prosperity that gradually emerged in ex-communist societies (Galasinski 2009). Though travel is allowed, most people simply cannot afford to see the freedoms of the long idealised West, and can't afford to buy them at home. As I have mentioned above, work visas were restricted, making migration a still arduous and long-winded process (Galasinska 2009). As a consequence, as late as 2007, Polish people see their emigration to the West as a form of escaping their difficult social environment. Such achievement is seen as a reward in itself (ibid). However, it would be important to note how discourse shifts as conditions vary: in the period previous to the 2004 accession to the EU, the phenomenon of migration tended to focus on preparing the journey, which was still perceived as dangerous and full of impediments. Once the migratory dynamics engaged, the discourse centred in a swift arrival to the host country, which is seen as a source of opportunities to prosper (Galasinska 2009).

Another significant factor is the legitimisation of social/educational downgrading as a means to achieve economic success. One's educational or social status in the native country is irrelevant at the moment of taking unskilled forms of employment in the host country, as long as one can claim economic success after this process (Galasinska 2009). However, it is also important to highlight that this trading of identities is facilitated by the legal status of migrants as EU citizens: immigrants from CEECs to the more prosperous Western nations, establish the terms in which they can both negotiate and define their identity as migrants both in their host countries and at home, emphasizing the importance of preserving a communal cultural identity and highlighting personal achievement as a means to define themselves within the context of economic migration (Galasinska 2009).

Gender plays an important role in defining degrees of political and social activity both in the communist period and the post-communist opening to a) Western culture; and b) a global, neo-liberal economic model (Galasinski 2009). A shift from an egalitarian society in professional and gender terms has taken place, to highly unstable economic

conditions that have favoured men over women. Interestingly, though, is that the considerable degree of disappointment involves both male and female. To me, is interesting how Galasinski discussion shows perfectly how the gender order works, and how gendered practices are very conservative in CEECs. For instance, men and women deal with this disenchantment in clearly differentiated ways. Men tend to blame to the system/institutions and women, who now are relegated to homework, tend to adopt a passive stance instead to combat their unegalitarian situation.

This is only an example of the dramatic contrast between former historical dynamics (political awareness and profound social involvement during communist times) and nowadays (disorientation and both a depersonalisation and de-popularisation of the political process after the emergence of capitalism), People of all generations have grown alienated from political figures due to disappointment and mistrust about politics. . (Galasinski 2009).

These are ongoing phenomena that raise some questions regarding the future. For instance, whether most of the emigrants will stay in the UK for a significantly long period of time; whether they will really contribute to the UK economy or conversely, whether they will take their savings to their countries, enhancing their economies; whether they will progress in the work hierarchy, and if they will, who will perform the low-paid jobs that they do now (Drinkwater, Eade et al. 2006). My own questions are whether they will successfully become part of the multicultural urban fabric in the UK, making their own contributions to it, or if they will participate in it only to live here; and in which ways their experience of living abroad will have an impact in their own countries, for instance, how contact with other cultures may influence their own cultures through interaction with their families and social networks in their countries of origin. All these questions are related to my general research questions, and I believed that my case study analysis has addressed them, as I will show in the following case studies and in the general discussion in chapter 5.

4.2.2 Julie: 'With a little help from my friends'

Julie is Polish. She was a twenty year old university student when my data collection started. Julie was in her second year and she also participated in the activities organised

by the Polish Student Society in her university.

Julie is the younger of two children of an ordinary urban family who lived in a cohesive community. Her parents were a nurse and an electrician who worked for a TV channel. Julie reported that, until she decided to immigrate to the UK, she never had to worry about anything in her life besides studying, as her parents tackled all her needs, even the most simple such as shopping, cooking or doing the washing.

Julie was and still is a good student. This is an important characteristic linked to her habitus, which in turn influences Julie's identification and exclusion practices as I will explain later. Julie's SLL history started at nursery school, where she remembers having learnt some words in English. Julie was two years old when the Berlin wall fell. At that time English had already become an important type of cultural capital in the incipient post communist Poland (and the rest of the CEEC's), displacing other languages, especially Russian and German. The latter was the only foreign language that Julie studied at primary school, though she reported not having learnt a great deal of it; consequently, as she has never used it, she has forgotten it.

In secondary school the situation changed, as Julie had EFL courses. Besides, her parents considered that it was worthy to invest in private English lessons by a British teacher. The consequences of such investment, which lasted several months, were: a) Julie became the most advanced student of in her baccalaureate English class; and b) Julie kept in touch with Sue, her British teacher, who eventually returned to the UK. Both outcomes were crucial in Julie's decision to migrate to the UK in two ways: first, being the best in her English class encouraged Julie to pursue mastery of the language within an English speaking context. And second, she managed to be invited by Sue to spend a couple of weeks at her home in the UK.

Thus, as soon Julie had some holidays, she paid a visit to Sue. Once in the UK Julie realised that she was not that good in English. She reported having struggled very much to communicate even in the most elementary ways with English L1 speakers (e.g. Sue's husband, shop assistants and so on). However, the visit was decisive for Julie's decision about migrating to the UK. Yet, this was not the only factor that played a role in this matter. During that first visit to the UK Julie met Paul, a French postgraduate student who is her current partner. Later on Paul paid a couple of visits to Julie in Poland, while

he helped her to plan her move. Besides, both Sue and her husband offered Julie to stay at their home while she settled down in the UK.

Once she moved in the UK, Julie reported to have a difficult period in terms of communication using English. She stayed in Sue's home for a couple of weeks, and in that time both Sue and Paul gave her all kinds of useful tips: how to open a bank account; where to look for jobs that do not require a good level of English; information about requirements to enrol at university, and possible sources of undergraduate funding. Eventually Julie managed to get a job as a temporary worker for an agency. This fact is important because Julie wanted to be financially independent from her parents (besides, her father had just died at that time and she did not want to be a burden for her mother).

The activity of working to make a living brought the opportunity of interacting with workplace colleagues using English, as many of them were English L1 speakers. However, Julie decided to interact with them only if necessary, as she perceived them to be very different from herself. I argue that social class and habitus are fundamental elements in this situation.

1.

I can't say that it's them thinking that I am Polish and I am different from them, or it's just me thinking that, you know, I am different. And I don't want to be bothered to make the relationships better but it's not really bad... (Appendix 7.2, interview 1)

The activity of temporary work conveyed an identity position that Julie rejected and still rejects – the one of unskilled, lower-class worker.

2.

...because that job in catering, it was really annoying and that just depressing me, just because I found like I was just doing job for earning minimum wages, and I can't just enjoy my holidays, you know, that kind of things. And I just find like as part of the Polish community I was considered as a cheap labour... (Appendix 7.2, interview 1)

Julie worked as a catering assistant, ferry worker, factory worker, and charity fundraiser. Eventually she managed to get flexible work as a caregiver to disabled people, which she was performing now and again during the data collection period. From Julie's account, I was able to clearly trace her L2 improvement process, from the activity related to the post of catering assistant, where only elementary L2 is required, to that of charity fundraiser, where proficiency in English is needed to convince people of giving their money to good causes.

Thus, in spite of having been an unskilled, lower-class worker for more than one year, Julie has never acknowledged this identity as hers. This rejection has its basis in Julie's habitus, where strong middle class identification and exclusion predispositions and practices (a significant tendency that I have identified in all three CEEC's women) dictate Julie's participation in the different available communities, social networks and communities of practice. Julie's data show how these tendencies were evident since her adolescence. For instance, Julie proudly reported that her group of close friends included students gathered around a specific set of values and tastes in music, way of dressing, academic excellence and achievement, variety of Polish, etc. I identify her middle class habitus as the source of such tendencies. My data also show that Julie does not make friendships with Polish people who are not part of the university environment.

In contrast, Paul introduced Julie to an English-only-speaking university environment – for instance, he found a university student house for her to live, where all the residents were English L1 speakers. This fact had two important consequences for Julie. The first is linked to Julie's most regarded identity – university student. Her membership of the university community represented a boost in Julie's self-esteem. The second outcome is that Julie got a good deal of help in SLL terms from male student English L1 speakers.

Additionally, Paul has always been correcting Julie's spoken English, not only reformulating the phrase in the correct way, but also explaining to her what was wrong in what she had just said. Paul has also been an involuntary model for Julie with his own English language use. Both of them speak in a very similar way (including accent) as my interviewing recordings show, and Paul openly admitted. Julie's interactions in daily life within an English speaking context and the above mentioned help were the main sources of SLL for her during that initial period in the UK, as she was not

studying English formally.

3.

...mistakes that I make and my boyfriend corrects me, and corrects me, and corrects me, and sometimes it takes me months learn something... let's say a number... let's say three months, to remember that if I say, for example, 'I don't like sugar' the other person comes and says 'me too' but he [boyfriend] says 'me neither', so it's always 'me too'... (Appendix 7.2, interview 2)

Even within this highly regarded community, Julie shows strong identification and exclusion practices. The most significant local communities in which she has voluntary membership are, in order of importance: Polish university students; university student colleagues who are English L2 speakers; university student colleagues who are English L1 speakers; postgraduate students; Polish club; and Paul's communities. In Julie's perception, sociocultural duality is an important issue, as she feels and sees some important differences between Polish and English people, and this overcomes even social class.

4.

I find it much easier... just to really have fun or socialise with people that are also immigrants. They don't have to be Polish but from any country really.... And I don't think I can truly understand English people but not in a communication way. It's just their mentality and it is completely different and their values and their priorities. It's the more I am here, the more I realise about how different our countries are... (Appendix 7.2, interview 1)

As I have explained in my introduction, like the other participants, Julie adopts the identity position of immigrant with no problems, because the immigrants she relates to are all university students, and they are part of an imagined community in which English people have no place because they are 'completely different'.

With regard to Julie's SLL process in the data collection period, I take as a starting point her initial test. At that time, the results placed her as a 'proficient user', as she scored C1 in reading, grammar, listening and vocabulary, and B2 in writing. Certainly, her formal education in English played a significant role, but I consider that help from

others, especially from Paul, has been important for Julie's dramatic improvement in only two years. By affirming this I am not ignoring Julie's personal qualities or the huge investment she has made in identity, emotional and work terms. I have just highlighted some social context facts which are relevant in her SLL process. Julie's investment in SLL is paying off. I was able to get evidence of it through a comparison between both first and final tests, where she went from B2 to C1 in writing and from C1 to C2 in both reading and listening. The test shows no changes in the grammar and vocabulary areas, where she still has a C1.

Additionally, I found in one of Julie's accounts that some attrition in her L1 is taking place, especially because English is now the language of literacy and higher education. The next excerpt also illustrates the dynamics between language use (either L1 or L2) and the context.

5.

I need to speak English here and all my projects and all my education is in English, so I use it definitely especially when I talk to my housemates and so and the thing right now is that I think that it has improved... and the Polish language, well, that's personal but I have realized that now I have forgotten the meaning of many, many words, so you know, not the simple words, but the more sophisticated words if you like. (Appendix 7.2, interview 4)

Some of Julie's accounts also show a clear relationship between identity shift, activity and the choice of language to perform specific tasks. The excerpt below illustrates that new activities learnt in the new context are attached to L2 use. Interestingly, the excerpt also shows a relationship between her feelings and the language attached to them.

6.

...since I'm here it could be in either English or Polish actually, because for example, if I'm cooking and I'm thinking about cooking, then I will probably gonna do it in English. Because since I live here and I buy everything in here, for example when I do my shopping list, I write absolutely everything in English because that's my everyday life activities. But conversely, if I'm being very emotional or very angry, and I'm thinking very fast then I think that I'm gonna

need to turn to Polish because I just think that I have to express myself quickly ... (Appendix 7.2, interview 4)

The next excerpt shows the difference between the natural, the emotionally comfortable language (L1) and L2, which demands an intellectual effort, and involves a kind of artificiality. It also shows Julie's strong emotional attachment to her L1.

7.

Yes, yes, yes, but the role of this language, of Polish language still makes me happy, really, so most of the people I know here wouldn't even be able to understand that. And it's a different language which I like about myself and it's just when I'm with my Polish friends here, we're just relaxing when we speak Polish. Whereas when I speak English it's something that's a more conscious action, it's something that it's going to take me a little more time because it's something that I have to think about rather than in Polish, because I usually don't have to think what to say in it, so it's just relaxing, you know... (Appendix 7.2, interview 4)

4.2.2.1 Identity matters

In this section I am going to explain issues of identity in Julie's case. To start with, the data analysis suggests that the experience of immigrating involved many changes not only in Julie's quotidian life, but also in her identity and activities. That is, Julie has experienced identity shifts (Norton 2000) in many ways since she moved permanently to the UK. The most important are:

From	to
A local person	An immigrant
Highly dependent adolescent	An independent young adult
A person who had never worked	A working person
A single person	A partner

An ordinary Polish young woman (in Poland)	A proficient English speaker who knows her way around (in Poland)
An informal English L2 learner	A university student
An English L2 user with a basic level	A proficient English L2 user
A literate person in both Polish and English	A literate person in Polish
An ordinary Polish university student	A student contributor to the wide local immigrant Polish community

Some of these shifts of identity are permanent, while some others are subject to time and space. Therefore, I have found evidence that confirms the claims of Stryker, McCall and Simmons (in Turner and Stets 2005), see 2.2.3.6 above) about the relationship between spatial-temporal context and the ephemeral nature of some identities. As contradictory as it seems, I argue that their theories and models are more helpful in explaining the changeability of identity than those of poststructuralist approaches, which mention but do not explain in depth the complexity of such fluidity.

In all my participants' cases, I have found that highly regarded identities usually remain in the same hierarchical positions, hence my emphasis in the relationship between habitus and this individual identity hierarchy. Julie's 'stable' most regarded identities are linked to: a) middle or upper social classes; b) people with cultural capital (e.g. native-like speaker of a prestigious variety of English; well travelled people; university, academia and scholarship people; people with savoir-faire; c) fashion; d) specific Polish way of life (middle class); e) friendship. Their identity shifts show that Julie has made a progress, achieving highly regarded identities for her such as university student or proficient English L2 user.

Additionally, in Julie's case I have found an example of how the spatial-temporal context influences the identity hierarchy. It also sheds light on how complex this matter is. One of Julie's most regarded identities was related to membership in a community based on a specific kind of music and a whole set of values. Such a community materialises at both macro and micro level –as an imagined community and as a

community of close friends. That identity became obsolete once Julie moved permanently to the UK. However, she still has the same friends in Poland who were gathered around this specific set of values. In fact, they still are Julie's values, and only the musical part was obliterated. While the relationship between identity and music as a sign of identification is over once in the UK, Julie's strong identification and exclusion tendencies around such values still are relevant to her. This phenomenon also appears in a relevant way in Alisa's data, and has been thoroughly addressed by a number of studies on group identification and exclusion practices linked to identity, for instance, LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985), Eckert (2000) and Anderson (1994). The excerpt below illustrates what I have explained.

8.

Alma: Well, would you like to trace a little picture about your previous friends and then address the friends that you have now here?

Julie: Okay. So I just going to make it brief about Poland and saying in general what kind of people they are. So most of them have kind of a similar music taste like me, 'cause maybe some people say that is not important, but I can really see the difference in personalities between people... that listen the rock music as I do and people let's say that it's into dance music or something like that. And then... we were all in college, and then we all went into university... and I could say, well they were all kind of people who say their opinion on different things, their have their interests, there were like, I don't know, achieve like very good marks or something like that. It's more like their interest, like they are not ignorant or you know... I think here it is not important anymore. I mean, it was in the past. It is so different in England....it was more important in Poland really...

(Appendix 7.2, interview 1)

I have also found more evidence that supports not only the abovementioned social psychological theories, but also Norton's work. Julie's data show clearly how identity, feelings, self-esteem and the role of others are all related in complex ways. For instance, the next two excerpts illustrate the convergence of the two most antagonistic identities in Julie's identity hierarchy, in a specific way that relates to a) Julie's disregard of the

identity position of ‘unskilled, lower-class worker’; and b) others’ acknowledgement of her most regarded identity –or lack of it, causing a range of feelings and defensive strategies (McCall and Simmons, in Turner and Stets 2005), see 1.2.3.6 above. The second excerpts denotes Julie’s strategies to deal with emotional pain (withdrawing from interaction and criticising her interlocutor for not acknowledging/legitimizing Julie’s most regarded identity).

9.

...and then we have twelve hours shift. And I remember that smell last time that I went to the Isle of Wight, and I thought it smells exactly the same, smells of that work, and I hate it... (Julie’s experience of visiting a place that brought to her memories of when she worked for a ferry company) (Appendix 7.2, interview 1)

10.

...and the guy [agency staff] couldn’t even believe that I was actually going to start university ‘cause he thought I just found another job and I want to give up... and I just said: ‘my contract is finishing in two weeks and I am starting university now so I am not gonna work here anymore’... and it was like: ‘Where did you get a job?’ ‘Where are you working now?’ And I said: ‘I am not working. I am going to university’. And he: ‘Yeah, yeah. Where are you working then?’ So I was like... I can show you my card right now if you don’t believe me. And I remember he even called me once here because he thought that I was really... a fake person, I would say. And he was calling me once when I was coming out of the lecture –after that conversation, and I just said: ‘Well, sorry, I can’t really talk to you now. I am coming out of the lecture just now’. And he was like: ‘Oh, yeah, yeah, so are you a fresher now?’ And I just had the feeling that he was asking me that because he thought that if I wasn’t a fresher I wouldn’t even know what that means, so I couldn’t, you know, answer his question. Well, that it was the feeling I got so I just said: ‘Yes, bye.’ (chuckles) (Appendix 7.2, interview 1)

Norton (2000) has described a similar situation with her Peruvian participant, who withdrew from participating in a community of practice when her most regarded identity was not acknowledged. Norton explains this outcome using Lave and Wenger

concept of participation (see Norton 2001), while I use McCall and Simmons theory to explain why people use these strategies (see 2.2.3.6 above). I think that both approaches (Norton and social psychologists) can be complementary as they explain the phenomenon from different perspectives I used a complementary approach to explain wider and deeper issues of identity (see 2.2.3.6 to 2.2.4.1 above)

Another highly regarded identity for Julie is that of a person who knows her way around. Such an identity is related to Julie's social networks in Poland, where she is highly regarded by the fact of having acquired cultural capital in the form of: a) proficiency in English; b) cosmopolitanism (contact with a range of different cultures within an urban English context); c) literacy in English, of which the maxim outcome is to get a degree by a British university; d) to see the world, through regular trips with Paul, to different European places (e.g. French, British and CEEC's regions).

11.

I found it very interesting to see all these cultures. It is just like, you know, amazing for me to see all these people in the streets wearing, you know, like Indian people, etcetera. And then I found that it could be very interesting for me to study abroad... (Appendix 7.2, interview 1)

4.2.2.2 Gender

Three important interrelated issues linked to gender, identity and informal SLL emerged from Julie's data. The first involves how others perceive Julie and how they position her within her scale of values. The second implies Julie's own understanding of gender performance attached to her social-historical-cultural background. And finally, Julie's identification and exclusion practices play a role. Regarding the first issue, I found that identity plays a role, in terms of physical appearance including race and degree of attractiveness accordingly to Western models of beauty, influencing how others position the L2 learner. This is a key issue for cooperation in interaction or even for willingness to interact. In the second and third issues, gender is evident in two ways. On the one hand, both Julie's gender performance and English sociocultural gendered practices play a role in the willingness of male university students, both English L1/L2 speakers, to constantly help Julie with her English SLL. On the other hand, Julie's identification

and exclusion practices based in this case on cultural duality cause Julie's detachment from female English L1 speakers.

Julie described in detail the kind of help she received and still receives, from both Paul and those university male students not only in interaction events. I identified in her account of this help conversational tactics such as recasts, repetitions, confirmation checks, comprehension checks or clarification requests (Mitchell and Myles 2004:167), all of which she reported to be useful both for her SLL and for a successful conversation. She also received continuous random explanations about issues of English grammar and use. As I have said, Julie's identity plays an important role in this situation in two ways: internal – the ways in which Julie perceive the world and reacts in consequence (*habitus*), and external – the ways in which others perceive Julie.

12.

Well there are some really nice people, English people that I know. One of my housemates... he was always happy to explain me something if I didn't understand, some words or some phrases, especially explained me where they come from, why they mean, what they mean, etcetera. He was very patient as well and I knew that he was very happy in participating in my learning process... the other of my friends as well he is doing like maths at the uni, PhD in maths, and he is very good in language, he is reading a lot... and he is interested in English in general so as well when I don't understand something he just explain or when I, you know, make mistakes he corrects me obviously he asks if he can do it ... (Appendix 7.2, interview 2)

Julie's identification and exclusion practices influence, again, her participation in communities. Julie does not feel any identification with English female gender performance. This means she does not have English girlfriends, no matter if they are also university students. That does not mean that Julie avoids contact with female English L1 speakers, but her interactions with them are reduced to activities linked to her course or any other matters related to her participation in the wide university community.

13.

For example, I don't like... when you have a group of girls and they speak English and I don't like their accent when they talk to each other. It all seems to be all very [she makes childish sounds] for me. If I imagined people speaking like this in Polish, it's just... I don't speak like that in my language, like you know, like, it sounds quite stupid for me. I shouldn't be saying that... (Appendix 7.2, interview 3)

4.2.2.3 Conclusions

Julie's informal learning has been significant in her L2 progress. Identity influences the SLL process in terms of opportunities of interaction, exposure to L2, and help from more proficient speakers of the TL. This happens at internal level (Julie's own perspectives, values and stances, translated in identification and exclusion practices which in turn influence her choices of interaction and participation in specific communities and social networks) and also at external level (Julie's appearance and how other's perceive her, which in turn is related to the good deal of help received from male highly proficient speakers of English).

Cultural differences (e.g. gender performativity) are important issues that generate exclusion and identification practices that condition Julie's participation and involvement in different communities and social networks.

The acquisition of cultural capital, namely the command of English (middle class native-like proficiency as the ultimate goal), obtaining a degree by a British university, and seeing the world through living in a 'first world' context and through travelling is a fundamental motive for Julie's investment.

Social class and habitus are key elements in all these matters. There is also confirming evidence of how important others' acknowledgement of her most regarded identities is for the individual. The case also shows some strategies to cope with the emotional pain that involves lack of acknowledgement of such identities. Finally, Julie's case also shows the relationship between the individual's emotional realm and language choice.

4.2.2.4 Epilogue

To date (February 2010), Julie is pursuing postgraduate studies at the same British university. She has got funding for her PhD.

4.2.3 Lissa: ‘We Poles, we women, we university people...’

Membership of imagined/symbolic communities as significant motives...

Lissa is also a Pole. She has a master’s degree from a Polish university. When I started collecting my data Lissa was twenty seven years old, and she was working in a factory on a full-time basis, in alternative cycles of 4 working days (12 hours each) per 4 days off. She reported not having had a partner or boyfriend since she moved permanently to the UK.

Lissa shares a number of similarities with Julie. She is also the younger of two children of an ordinary urban family who lived in a cohesive community. Lissa’s parents also had tertiary education (an electronics engineer and a technician specialist in building basements). Like Julie, Lissa never had to worry about anything until she finished her master's degree, as her parents tackled all her needs, including university full time studies in a different, bigger city. Once Lissa finished university, she worked for an NGO for a year before making the decision of migrating to the UK.

Lissa’s SLL history is similar to that of Julie. She learnt German FL for 11 years, both in primary and secondary school. She reported having learnt very little, and as she never used German at all she has forgotten it. Like Julie’s, Lissa’s data show English as a highly regarded form of cultural capital (e.g. it is ‘useful’ and a ‘universal language’ in nowadays world), especially linked to Lissa’s future academic projects and career development. Lissa started her EFL learning for her baccalaureate. Like Julie’s parents, Lissa’s also decided to invest in private English lessons for her at that period, an activity that lasted several months. After that, she continued EFL courses at university. Lissa achieved Cambridge First Certificate level but she did not pass the CAE (Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English) test when she finished her university studies.

4.2.3.1 Identity matters and the new social context

When Lissa resigned her job in the NGO because of personal disagreements, she became unemployed. She felt desperate because one of Lissa’s more regarded identities is that of a hard-working person. I define that as identity and not as a quality, because

for Lissa, such identity involves a set of values that surpasses a simple quality. The identity of a hard-working person implies focusing on doing useful and fruitful activities and things that result in benefit for oneself or/and others; it entails effort, sacrifice and hard work not only physical, but also mental and emotional. For instance, I observed in all the interviews that Lissa's room was immaculate and meticulously tidy, as much as her clothes and her person were. A hard working person cannot exist without activity, and the activities of studying and working have a special value for Lissa. Consequently, she could not allow herself to be unemployed.

14.

I am the kind of person who needs work, I feel bad without, I need a job. When I stay at home without work, um, I feel really bad. I don't mean my holidays or my day off, but the fact that I'm employed it's really good for me. So at this time in Poland when I was unemployed, it was really bad for me. (Appendix 7.3, interview 1)

Thus, identity is amongst a number of determining causes for migrating to an English speaking country, namely: a) Lissa's confidence about her knowledge of English, enough to manage in the UK; b) her goal of achieving native-like proficiency in that language; c) her dissatisfaction about being unemployed; d) the recent migration of Lissa's brother to Ireland; and e) encouragement from a close girlfriend who was living in the UK

Once in the UK, Lissa reported a similar situation than Julie: she had problems of communication. However, Lissa could not afford, due to her identity of a hard working person, to be unemployed, though she could have asked her parents or her brother for financial aid. She bravely tackled the activity of job hunting, as she needed to make a living in the UK. The identity of hard-working person helped her to overcome any problem of communication in L2.

15.

I think mostly because I had to manage in office and formal situations. I had to. I couldn't stay at home, I had to find a job so I couldn't be afraid 'cause I knew I had to call this number, I have to answer this advertisement to ask for job, I had

to go to agency. There are some things that I can't be afraid of... (Appendix 7.3, interview 2)

This situation is similar to one reported by Norton (2000) in which one of her participants' identity as a mother (Martina) also helped her to overcome her lack of L2 skills. Thus, Lissa managed to get a permanent full time job as a catering assistant in a café. The activity of working gave her an opportunity of learning a range of new skills. Lissa did not report if the fact of working at that place had some influence in her SLL process. However, as she explained how demanding the owner was with her, how much he made her work, plus the fact of dealing with customers, I think that this activity may influence her SLL. After some weeks, Lissa found the owner too demanding and she resigned. I once observed the interaction between the owner and Lissa and I think that a cultural conception of gender played a role in such work relationship, as the owner (who is from a Middle East country) was patronising Lissa all the time, although she was not working at the café anymore when the observation took place (see Appendix 8.3, observation 1). Next, she worked for agencies on a full-time basis for some months until she found a permanent job in a factory, where she was working when the data collection took place.

Interestingly, Lissa presents the same identification and exclusion tendencies as Julie as she was equally picky in her interactions with her work colleagues. Again, I identify social class and habitus as strong influences in such dispositions.

16.

I think I talked about this in my first interview; the fact that someone is native English it doesn't make this person someone I would like to talk with... (Appendix 7.3, interview 2)

17.

Yeah, and I think that it's a matter of character. I think that she [a Polish work colleague] is different than me, and if she finds something to talk with them about, then it's all right. I don't know. I don't find anything to talk with them about, and also I know what kind of people they are, the English people. I know that they are usually very gossip kind of people... (Appendix 7.3, interview 5)

The variety of language also plays a role in this matter, as Lissa highly regards some varieties of English (e.g. Received Pronunciation) and dislikes others.

18.

We, with my friends, we came to the conclusion that sometimes we might feel excluded as to language, because we can't understand some kind of English way of speaking... sometimes when I'm among English people I feel uncomfortably, out of place, because I can't understand what they're saying... (Appendix 7.3, interview 3)

Many interesting situations go on in Lissa's workplace. Linguistically and culturally, the staff can be classified in three big groups: a) British (English L1 speakers and bi/multilingual speakers, as there is an important contingent of Indian background); b) Polish; and c) multicultural (people from a wide range of places with many linguistic backgrounds). The management team are all English people, though.

Lissa reported that Polish people are very gregarious, even when they are working, so they help each other in many different situations (e.g. giving explanations or informal training to someone about issues related to the work activity, the place dynamics and so on). Poles usually sit down together during the breaks. Lissa explained that Polish is the only language used to talk to each other while they are working or having breaks. However, many of them try to use English while they are working with no Poles, specifically with English people. This duality in language use resulted in a strict application of the company's policy about harassment in the workplace. The management staff was continuously emphasising the use of English as only language in the workplace in order to avoid exclusion practices –which can be seen as a sort of harassment, as well as to prevent misunderstandings and mistakes while working.

Initially, Poles were not happy with such policy, including Lissa. In the second interview she raised the topic, explaining in detail what had happened, and how she and the most of her Polish work colleagues felt about it. She even gave to me the leaflet with the notification, but I did not include it in the Appendix to respect Lissa's

anonymity. To be a Pole, to belong an imagined community of Poles is another highly regarded identity for Lissa. Consequently, the company linguistic policy had a strong repercussion in her identity and emotional realm, bringing on an interesting comparison, as the excerpt shows:

19.

I have this team leader who treats us like kids at school, and I feel horrible because yes, I feel like secondary or primary school again because we are not allowed to talk, and we are not allowed to sit around together anymore... but this point about languages is nasty. I think it's just nasty. I feel like my grandma when she was telling me stories about WWII, when she lived with a German family and she couldn't have Polish friends... and she could pray but always... the woman she lived with, she always laughed at her because she was praying in the evening or something. And I feel like that because I cannot be myself. I think English people who created that policy, they don't realize how hard is not to talk in your language for the whole day. It's very stressful and very hard, especially for someone who is not fluent. I know that we not only have come to this country to work here but we need to bind in that place... (Appendix 7.3, interview 3)

However, as time passed by, a subtle 'negotiation' took place in the factory. I put the word in quotation marks because it was not an open negotiation, but the two parts had been trying their best to achieve harmony:

20.

Yes, like informal negotiating. Like we do what we want and they are trying not to see us. I mean our team leaders... I think that they accept us and they like us because we are good workers, and they accept that we are chatting and talking in our language... and there we wanted not to be very annoying with our Polish chatting and... I think there is balance that we do what we want and... yes, they accept us (Appendix 7.3, interview 4)

Activity, identification and gender also play a role in the fact of getting on in spite of

such linguistic and cultural duality. Lissa confirms my findings from Julie's data in that duality in gender performance is one of the obstacles for interaction between Polish and English women. The next excerpt conveys it all, plus a situation that I would like emphasise: the experience of emigration –which involves living in new contexts, bring some major disappointments about the idealisation of specific communities, and in this case, the 'universal' community of women.

21.

...men are...I know some guys who, especially in my workplace –maybe depends on the level of education and on the level of English, who make friendships with English guys. For example in my workplace there is one custom that they go to play football just from time to time, especially now because of the weather... a team, yes, and sometimes it's a mixed team. Sometimes it's a nationality against the other nationality, but they do this and it's very nice I think.... So yeah, Polish guys are more open and more likely to make friendship with other English guys than Polish girls of course... (Appendix 7.3, interview 5)

The activity of working has had an impact on Lissa's SLL. I consider the next excerpt illustrative of how Lissa performs higher intellectual activities using English, thus L2 has become a mediating tool between the context and Lissa's intellect.

22.

Yeah, and especially in about such simple things such as counting, because you have to count quite a lot, and when no one is around I quite often count in English because I know that in a moment, for example, my team leader, she might ask me how much we have done so far, because there's a lot to do about work in numbers.... And everything, all materials has badge numbers and in a moment we can be asked about these numbers, and especially about these numbers I'm ready to think and speak in English, yeah (Appendix 7.3, interview 4)

Catholic religious practices are also an important part in Lissa's life, and a source of SLL. Interestingly, she decided not to attend mass in Polish, but in English. I find that her account contradicts sociolinguistic claims that solemn practices are tightly linked to

one's language (Gal 1979). Mass is also related to a prestigious variety of English, and for this reason Lissa find it more enjoyable and useful.

23.

...the religion is quite an important part of my life so when I came to the UK ... the first mass I went to was English mass. Of course we've got Polish masses as well... [however] I liked this atmosphere, the style of mass... I still cannot perfectly follow the masses, to answer, to say everything... but it's of course another opportunity to learn the language, to have contact with English people. And I like it because it's different kind of English than I can hear in my workplace. It's more formal and it's more nice for me because it's the language I used to learn at school... The main priest, he's got really nice English language and I really like the way he talks, and I like the vocabulary he uses. And I just find it very useful to go to these English masses, and of course gradually I could understand more and more from these masses, and well, it's very helpful...

(Appendix 7.3, interview 5)

I mentioned above when I addressed Lissa's 'Polishness' that another important matter is her sense of membership to specific communities, some of which are imagined/symbolic. Lissa is strongly attached to three main symbolic communities, namely Poles, women and university people. The sense of belonging to such communities shapes her SLL in terms of: a) interactions with English L1 and L2 speakers; b) her choices of formal SLL means; c) her memberships to C's of P and social networks; d) her goals, activities and expectations regarding English SLL and use; e) her feelings and reflexions about her level of English and her SLL process. I have found that even in such highly regarded communities, there are differences. For instance, 'Polishness' has more value than 'womaness', and equal value than 'universitiness'. And such hierarchical values influence Lissa's participation and interactions.

Through specific activities, practices and behaviours, Lissa denotes how important these communities are for her. For instance, her membership to the Polish imagined community makes her to altruistically help any Pole that asks her for, no matter if she have just meet them. Her level of proficiency in English has proved to be useful for that help. This activity involves a new identity, as I will explain below.

24.

Lissa: I completely don't understand people who do not know English at all and they are coming. I think they are very brave. Or brave or desperate, usually I think more than brave. Yes.

Alma: Have you ever met a person like that who has come without any knowledge of English?

Lissa: Yes, lots of people, young and older who have families in Poland and they were just forced to go somewhere to find job, to provide for family, for children. And they just decided overnight to go somewhere, to go abroad

Alma: And have you seen how did they manage that situation?

Lissa: They can handle the situation because they find other people of their nationality. In case of Polish people it was not so hard even in the past because there were always quite a lot of us. And they usually find someone they stay in touch with, someone who can help in everyday life. That's how works. People usually stay together like small community, like neighbours or like friends in the same house, and they help each other to manage in everyday life...

Alma: So you Polish people help a lot each other

Lissa: Yes, I think we do. Yeah

Alma: Had you ever help or do you usually help other Poles?

Lissa: Yes, because of my knowledge of language... quite often I was asked to help to in many things: to filling applications or go to the bank to open an account, many different situations, to look for job and so on. Many situations like these.

(Appendix 7.3, interview 2)

Socio-historical and cultural elements (e.g. language) shape and are reflected by Lissa's habitus, rooted in dispositions and feelings that mediate her strong identification with all Poles of the world and her exclusion of no Poles. This focus on cultural duality is similar to Julie's. Differently that Julie's case, the lack of opportunities of interact with middle class university people constrains Lissa's choices so her interaction with non-Polish people is almost inexistent.

25.

Alma: Are all your social relations with Polish people?

Lissa: Yes, mostly. Sometimes I have contact with people from other nationalities, but ... for me it's very hard to break this barrier. When I have contact with someone Polish, I can recognize if this person can be someone who understands me as I understand this person and we can be friends. But when it comes to people from other nationalities, it's very hard for me to recognize if I can understand with this person...

Alma: Why?

Lissa: Because... I don't know! It's funny because I can be nice for someone and this person can be nice for me, but it's so hard for me to recognize how this person really is. Maybe it's some fault in me, this I can see... (Appendix 7.3, interview 1)

Identity shifts in Lissa's case are also important. She has endured a good deal of changes since she is in the UK. Here there are the most important, from my data analysis:

From	to
A local person	An immigrant
A postgraduate	A person who is making a living while acquiring cultural capital

An English L2 basic user

A person with a single cultural and monolingual background

A religious person that performed her rituals in Polish

A religious person that performs her rituals in English

An independent L2 user and a mediating person between the English speaking context and a number of non-proficient English L2 Polish speakers

A bilingual person who experiences life in a multicultural context

With regard to Lissa's hierarchy of identities, the highly regarded identities are strongly fixed. Lissa's 'stable' higher regarded identities are linked to: a) socio-historical-cultural common values, namely Polishness; b) middle or upper social classes; c) people with cultural capital, especially university people; speakers of a prestigious variety of English; university, academia and scholarship people; c) politeness, good manners and Catholic precepts d) femininity; e) friendship.

As I have explained, her most regarded identities are to be a Pole, a woman, and a university postgraduate. Then the identities linked to family (daughter, sister, granddaughter and so on). Next, the identities linked to friendship and catholic religion. As Julie, Lissa has never acknowledged the identity of 'unskilled, lower-class' worker, in spite of having work as a catering assistant and as a factory worker. Lissa see it just as an activity that allows to make a living and to save money for investing in cultural capital, namely English SLL towards native-like proficiency and PhD studies at a Polish university.

Concerning Lissa's SLL process in the data collection period, I take as a starting point her initial test. At that time, the results placed her as a 'proficient user', as she scored C1 in reading and vocabulary, and B2 in writing, grammar and listening. Lissa was having formal English SLL as she attended an ESOL course in a local college. However, she was not satisfied at all with it. Lissa takes her educational experience within the Polish educational system as a point of reference, as Alisa does with the Russian educational system. Lissa was disappointed because she expected to have a far more demanding course.

26.

Lissa: Yes... now my lessons in college. I am not very happy with these lessons. The first thing is that I am used to a very quite fast pace of learning that's what is, I think, characteristic from my country. That in school is not good, I know, but the pressure it's quite hard in Polish schools

Alma: Yes

Lissa: And I find these classes in college quite slow and more relaxing than... everything is going too slow and I think I am wasting time during the lesson. I feel that I could learn more, I feel that these lessons and the teacher could be more demanding for us, for students... (Appendix 7.3, interview 2)

Another major cause of Lissa's disappointment about the ESOL course was the teacher's methods and her patronising attitude towards her adult pupils. The excerpt below shows a similitude with the situation at Lissa's workplace –the patronising attitude of her manager.

27.

Lissa: And our teacher, she of course, she has very good English. She has the kind of English I like, very traditional and royal English. I like it.

Alma: Yes. It's called Received Pronunciation

Lissa: Yes, of course, yes. I love listening to her but she is very slow, she speaks slower than I speak now...sometimes I feel like in primary school not in the college... the fact is that she doesn't like us speak. She speaks a lot, very slowly, but during the lesson she is the one who speaks not we ... generally speaking, she doesn't encourage us to speak ... I was thinking of changing college... I know I have to find another teacher. I had English classes on this level before in Poland and these classes were far better than this. The teacher was Polish but...I was much more better motivated to learn. Now...I haven't got motivation at all to learn, and I bored.

Alma: Oh

Lissa: Yes. I was thinking changing college or classes. I was thinking as well about private classes with English teacher

(Appendix 7.3, interview 2)

Eventually Lissa invested in private lessons of English by a young English teacher who Lissa knew from her course of ESOL in the factory. Lissa liked her new teacher for two reasons: a) she was friendly and informal; and b) she was teaching ‘daily street English’ to Lissa. The lessons started in the middle of the data collection and the final test showed a slight improvement in Lissa’s grammar, from B2 to C1. Lissa continued investing time and money in those private lessons, as she was preparing her CAE test. In the beginning of 2009 she sent me an e-mail telling me that she took the test in December 2008 and she passed it.

4.2.3.2 Gender

Gender is an important area in Lissa’s case. On the one hand, she shows strong gendered practices, in which femininity is a highly regarded quality that also shapes Lissa’s identification practices. They in turn influence friendships and membership in groups and communities of practice (almost Polish-only). They are also relevant because help Lissa to break her closed circle of Polish social networks and try to make some friendships with some no Polish university/college women. Gender is also an important element of Lissa’s habitus, as she projects a strongly gendered version of feminine embodiment and performance, which overlaps with the politeness of her middle class background: soft movements and body language, sweetness, adequacy, very feminine dress style and room decoration style, and so on. She also tends to be nice and empathetic in a feminine way reported in literature (Lakoff 1975; Coates 1993).

On the other hand, the new social context involves many different issues that are gender related: a) cultural duality in the ways of socialising with the opposite gender (I use the term ‘opposite’ because I am talking about an heterosexual general context and Lissa’s gender performativity, and not because I am acknowledging hegemonic gender

practices that take heterosexuality as 'the norm' or 'the natural way'). Such dualities often provoke misunderstandings that result in offend sensibilities and even in conflicts.

28.

You know that English people they've got bigger tolerance to jokes, especially like sexual jokes. And I think that they are not so easily offended like we are. Let me think about this situation in which this English guy was talking with me. I didn't like, I hate that, but I think he didn't meant harm me or something. He just didn't realize that I didn't like it, as I didn't show. I just talked back and I just avoided him. I didn't tell him that I just don't like it. I just thought that he couldn't understand it why I didn't like it. And I think that for him it was normal and natural and perfectly right this kind of chatting, this kind of jokes. I know that.... (Appendix 7.3, interview 3)

Lissa endured several situations of bullying and harassment from men in her work place, like this account illustrates:

29.

He was talking with me but after several times I was so annoyed that I told him that: 'be careful what you are talking to me because I don't like the way in which you talk to me. I don't like your jokes'.... Oh! And he goes furious! Completely! I was scared because he started nearly shouting! ...Oh! I was scared really because I felt that if I told something more, he could even hit me or something. It was scary and I just shut up not to make him more angry, and my team leader, she noticed that something was wrong.... But I didn't tell her what was going on... he is from Jamaica. He is very dangerous and crazy. (Appendix 7.3, interview 3)

Some accounts show that male harassment takes subtle forms and could happen everywhere. In such harassment, there is also an attempt of using language as an emotional instrument that may allow access to the subject of desire, but unsuccessfully. I think that in this situation, rejection is feed by identification and exclusion practices, in which membership in imagined communities (Poles, university people), cultural differences, social class and race (as all the reported men are Indian or Jamaican) are all

relevant.

30.

Lissa: ...Indian. In the past I've had some experiences with this kind of men and they were quite nuisance for me, because they were asking for date... they are trying to learn words to talk to Polish girls ... They learned how to say hello in Polish and they say that in the street ... usually on the street, when I go with my friends, I can hear hello in Polish and we usually swear at this guy...

Alma: in Polish?

Lissa: Yes of course. And I know it's not very polite... (Appendix 7.3, interview 5)

The excerpt below denotes how within an urban multicultural macrocontext, issues of immigration that comprehend past and present, Lissa's rejection to others due to identification and exclusion practices is evident.

31.

Yes. We usually keep together and we've got the same opinion about these situations. Girls they go out with these foreign men [Indian], but it's not very popular. When you do this it's not very popular, it's not good. I know Polish girls who are in serious relationships with these guys, who married these guys, who have children with them, but it's not happening now. It used to happen in the past, when there were less Polish people. I think these relationships were right some time ago in the past. Not now. (Appendix 7.3, interview 5)

Lissa reports to have established some friendships with male work colleagues who are English L1 speakers. They are mature men, and it is interesting that Lissa had overcome her strong identification and exclusion tendencies, being able to relate to them at some extent.

32.

I only talk about my personal stuff with people I like and who I trust. And so far

I haven't found anyone to be very close, as I told you. I used to work with English guy but he was older than me, he was over fifty, and I felt that he and his friend, they were actually two guys, I could feel that they are kind of people I can tell more about me, but only these two guys, not more... (Appendix 7.3, interview 5)

In a similar way, Julie also has a mature English L1 speaker friend, who was her landlord and who she keeps in touch with. He also helped and still helps Julie with her English.

Reports about gay people befriended and even helping English L2 learners in their SLL appear in three of my participants accounts. Lissa is one of them.

33.

...for example in this Polish party there were two guys. One was from our workplace because girls, they took him because he is gay and he likes to talk with Polish girls. And girls really like him because he is very talkative and he is very funny

A: is he English?

L: Yes... and this guy, he is very open... to make friendship with foreign people, and when Polish girls invited him to this party [he said] 'Yeah, of course I'm going to come and drink vodka with you and have fun with you'... He came and he had a very good time and he was nice... And it was strange because it was typical Polish party, with our alcohol and our music and everything very Polish, but he enjoyed that... I mean he is just this kind of person who is very open... (Appendix 7.3, interview 5)

Similarly than Julie, Lissa does not have English girlfriends. However, I consider that in Lissa's case this fact is related to social class, habitus and the Pole's tendency to be gregarious, and not to cultural differences in gender performance (as in Julie's case). I think that Lissa's strong belief in femininity and womanhood might be attuned with the general female gender performance in English culture.

34.

I don't know but we I don't talk a lot with English girls in my workplace... I just didn't find them a partner to talk with...with the only English girl I talk with is... my private teacher, but in my workplace... I know that there are other girls that they talk with English girls about different matters but we don't usually spend our breaks together... (Appendix 7.3, interview 5)

Lissa's account also shows interesting gender differences and division of labour between Polish immigrants. The same excerpt also conveys her strong belief in a symbolic community of women.

35.

I know that men are different people. I always feel that women are more open to learn, to education, to going to college... than men... I think it's true. I think that... amongst my friends more women are willing to study, to educate in English. Maybe it's because men... they've got more opportunities to get better job, better paid job and they are more concentrated on work. And when there is couple, usually girl is doing something more to learn, and the guy is to make money and to earn for living. I think that girls are more open to make relationships with foreign people, to make friends with other people for example like me... (Appendix 7.3, interview 5)

Lissa's last affirmation involves two contradictions: first, she reported to have only three foreign acquaintances (me included) besides her work colleagues. Second, in previous excerpt (see above in Identity section) she says that Polish men tend more to make friendships with English people than women.

4.2.3.3 Conclusions:

Lissa presents the same tendency of identification and exclusion practices than Julie, as they have a similar habitus and sociocultural background. Lissa presents strong

tendency to highly regard some imagined/symbolic communities, and this pattern is related to the aforementioned elements. Lissa also have experienced a good deal of identity shifting in the new context. Her most regarded identities are linked to her habitus, her sociocultural background and in turn, to her imagined communities.

An important identity resulting of Lissa's identity and L2 skills in the new context is that of mediating person between Polish newcomers who are non-proficient in L2 and the English urban context. Julie has also a similar identity but dictated by a formal and institutional way. Differently, Lissa actively helps every Polish to ask her to do so, personally, in daily issues, and spontaneously. Each of them is helping their imagined community of Poles, concretised in specific local communities in that English urban context.

Gender and social context (working environment; Polish-only social networks) play a constraining role in Lissa's access to interaction with English L1 and L2 proficient speakers, so maybe missing a beneficial help from them. Bullying and harassment related to gender are also illustrated in Lissa's case, as well as the relationship between identification (feminine performance of gender among women) and exclusion (racial and cultural differences, as well as sexual objectifying of women) tendencies and practices.

Lissa's case also provides an interesting example of linguistic mixing-up and negotiations in multilingual workplaces, as well as the complexity involved in such multilingualism, for instance, the strong feelings and identification attached to people's own language, and how easily they can be threatened.

Lissa's case also gives evidence of how the activity of working has an impact on the individual's SLL.

4.2.3.4 Epilogue

To date (February 2010) Lissa still works in the same place. She passed her CAT exam and she still has plans of pursuing postgraduate studies either in the UK or in Poland

4.2.4 Alisa: ‘I just want to see the world in time to trance music’

Alisa is a Russian who acquired Lithuanian nationality few years ago. She has a degree by a Russian university. When the data collection started, Alisa was twenty four years old and she was working as a catering assistant in a café. Alisa shares many similarities with Lissa and Julie. For instance, she also grew up in a state with a cohesive neighbourhood, and her parents also have tertiary education (an engineer and a businessman). Alisa is an only child. Her data show that the brief period spent in Lithuania (2 years) had little impact on her, as almost all her relatives, close friends and social networks that mean something to her belong to her life in Russia. The only important issue linked to Alisa’s life in Lithuania is her change of nationality, which allowed her to migrate to the UK with no border constraints.

Alisa’s motives to come to the UK were two: to visit a close friend and to see the world. Alisa’s eagerness to see the world is stronger than in Julie and Lissa. Once in the UK, Alisa decided to stay permanently and started looking for a job. She reports that her low level of English and her lack of familiarity with the new context resulted in struggling to get jobs, even the lowest paid ones. Like the other two Slavs, Alisa worked for an agency for more than one year until she eventually found a permanent job in the aforementioned café. She was the only participant who I was able to observe in her workplace while she was working. The next excerpts illustrate what I have explained above.

36.

The main thing was that I needed money, and I had to work. And to work you need to speak at least a little bit. It was difficult, because I didn't speak at all and I had to communicate with people by my friends. I was saying to them and they were saying to others... because I was doing all the work from agencies, where you don't really have to speak English (Appendix 7.1, interview 2)

Alisa’s SLL story started in primary school, where she studied EFL courses which, at that period, she was not interested at all in. She acknowledges that her urge of travelling – that emerged some years after, made her to study harder the EFL courses once she

started university. Similarly than Julie and Lissa cases, she achieved a basic user level. However, she mentioned that her ‘true’ SLL started when she arrived to the UK. Comparatively, she has had more problems of communication in L2 than the other two aforementioned women. Alisa also reported to have learnt a little Lithuanian with the only purpose of fulfilling the requirements for obtaining the nationality. She never had used that language, even when she was living in Lithuania.

During the data collection period, Alisa was enrolled not in one, but in two ESOL courses –in part-time basis, one in a local college and the other in a local university. Alisa found the courses moderately satisfactory, as her point of reference is the Russian educational system, as the next excerpt shows:

37.

I don’t really like the way of English education, because when I used to study in university I was studying forty hours a week, and here my friend is studying like twelve hours a week, and I think that’s ridiculous... But maybe I’m old-fashioned or something, but I don’t think it’s right. (Appendix 7.1, interview 2)

In the area of informal learning, the activity of performing a job provided her with opportunities of SLL through interaction with English L1 speakers, both work colleagues and customers. In fact, Alisa affirms that it was the interaction of formal and informal learning what has helped her to make progress in her English skills. I totally agree with her. There was a good deal of interaction between Alisa and many English L1 speakers with different accents –her boss, her boss’s wife, the other catering assistant, and customers. I think that such activity forced Alisa to use her listening and speaking skills in a natural context. I agree with Alisa in that such interaction was relevant for her progress, as it is illustrate in the excerpts below.

38.

...well the best thing I have done is that I can at least speak, make little conversation now. And most important, I can – ‘cause in my work is only English people around me, and my manager like to do that manager conversation, and it’s no one around me who speak my language, so I have to be talking all the time. I couldn’t do that but now I can do that (Appendix 7.1,

interview 3)

39.

It wouldn't help me if I just went to this English course and home 'cause the more and more I work, and more and more courses [I take] that means the less... I speak Russian. And with all that together... The main opportunity of practicing it's my work, yes, and in one way, but where I really want to talk properly is in my informal life. I really want to speak easier than I do now. (Appendix 7.1, interview 2)

Alisa's initial test results placed her at independent user level, as she obtained B1 in writing, grammar and listening, B2 in vocabulary and A2 in reading, while her final test results show an improvement in grammar and listening (B2) and reading (B1); no improvement in writing (B1) and deterioration in vocabulary (B1). Alisa tried to avoid speaking Russian with people in her immediate context as a SLL strategy. However, she had a constant communication with her Russian friends –who are spread through the world, means the internet. I consider that this fact may play a role in Alisa's lack of progress in writing and vocabulary.

40.

Alisa: Yeah, my friends, the people I had before from my country... well they are one of the most important communities

Alma: And how do you keep in touch with them?

Alisa: By internet

Alma: By internet but which it means? Do you use writing, chatting...?

Alisa: Lately I have just discovered 'Skype'

Alma: Yeah, with all of them. And where are they? I mean in which countries?

Alisa: One lives in Finland and the other one in Russia... in America, in Lithuania of course, in all other Baltic countries, in Germany as well...
(Appendix 7.1, interview 3)

Another important source of interaction and SLL, though not as constant as the workplace, was Alisa's membership to the imagined community of trance music fans. Such community materialised in specific communities of practice gathered around trance music (TM) festivals. Alisa reported that since her adolescence, she was part of a group of close friends gathered around a specific kind of music –in this case, trance, which in turn involved specific dressing, behaviour and idiosyncratic codes. Consequently, Alisa's account confirms what I have explained in Julie's case. I deduce that such strong group identification practices are common in some CEEC's urban contexts. Interestingly, Lissa never reported such phenomenon. This is part of a worldwide phenomenon, as part of we human beings have gregarious practices. Contrastively, once in the UK Julie detached herself of such practices –and substitute them by others equally inclusive/exclusive, whilst Alisa still makes them a fundamental part of her identity and way of life:

41.

... and also music because an important part of my life is music. It's always music and nothing else (chuckles) (Appendix 7.1, interview 1)

Attending TM festivals here and there in the UK was a significant activity for Alisa. There she met people from worldwide –including her four last boyfriends, each of whom she has had an 'open' relationship with. Alisa reported that all of them (three English L1 speakers and one German L1 speaker) have helped her with her English at some extent. The excerpt below is an example of it. Besides, it also illustrates two issues: a) the impact that using technological tools have in SLL, and b) interactions may be useful for both parts in linguistic terms, as they may also learn from and may influence each other.

42.

Alma: And two last questions. You told me that you have met an English native speaker who has become a close friend of you. Do you notice any difference because of this interaction with him? Do you think that your English has improved?

Alisa: Yes, it has improved a lot even by SMS with messaging. I have learned lots of things because he can text me and I know what it means. I mean it's not like even slang, it's lots of language, English words that I didn't use before...

Alma: In which other ways does he help you with your English? Does he sometimes repeat a sentence that you've said wrong?

Alisa: Unfortunately not. He doesn't. Many times I ask him to explain something to me –what it means. And even though he does try –because once we were eating in Boots... and so I asked him every time and so he would come down like ten times and getting a dictionary. And he gave up and I think it's annoying anyway, but as I was saying to him: 'you may think it's annoying but you are thinking as well. It's good for you.' But I don't know...

(Appendix 7.1, interview 3)

Importantly, as English was the lingua franca in TM festivals, Alisa highly regards English as 'the international language', a useful tool that allows her to talk to everyone. Hence her interest in acquiring a highly proficient level – again, native-like proficiency is the ideal, ultimate goal. Membership in such imagined community and her knowledge of English are in consonance with Alisa's eagerness to see the world. This strong tendency is tightly related to the activity of travelling.

43.

Alma: Oh, OK. That's interesting. So, let's go straight into the English issue. Why did you decide to learn English?

Alisa: Most of all, because I needed to communicate with people, because I have always had lots of friends, but I wanted to make more friends. Anyway, it's an international language, of course, which isn't the case with Russian. English is the international language and you have to speak it... Unfortunately, I'm not trained in anything in English, but I'm still interested, yeah. And that's one of the reasons. Well, the main reason, of course, is that I wanted to travel, and to do that you need to speak English.

(Appendix 7.1, interview 2)

With regard to investment, Alisa's stance differs from others of my participants. Alisa does not want to invest in English to acquire cultural capital that may lead to the acquisition of other capitals. Alisa was investing in English because it was a relevant instrument of communication within both the trance music community and the places in the world that Alisa wanted to visit (e.g. Spain, Portugal or the U.S.A.). Also, some of Alisa's Russian friends live in other parts of the world, thus she expects some day to pay a visit to them. The excerpts below exemplify this relevant matter.

44.

Alma: You don't think then, that the learning of English is a good thing to put in your CV?

Alisa: No. I don't care for that. I really don't. (Appendix 7.1, interview 2)

45.

Alma: Yeah, but apart of the workplace, and your English courses, do you have any opportunities to interact or talk to English people?

Alisa: Yes, of course. When I'm traveling or if I'm going to some festivals or some venues, there I meet lots of people, fortunately, so... (Appendix 7.1, interview 2)

46.

Alma: and where are your friends from within this community that you are a part of?

Alisa: there's lots of Italian; people from Israel, from Brazil as well from Spain. Some of them are the interesting ones, not a lot, it's very mixed... for what I have found not a lot of English people are into trance music. It is interesting... They are all very emotional people and they want to share their emotions with other people, that's why they want to speak English (Appendix 7.1, interview 3)

4.2.4.1 Identity issues

Alisa defines herself as a Russian, but her acquisition of Lithuanian nationality involves the advantages of being an EU citizen. Consequently, to be a Russian-Lithuanian is one of Alisa's most regarded identities. Her data show her tendency to strongly appreciate specific imagined communities, tendency that is also significant in Lissa's case. As I have emphasised in the discussion of Lissa's case, the experience of emigration brings some major disappointments about the idealisation of such communities. In Alisa's case, migration put an end to Alisa's belief in the imagined community of Russians. Her young Russian housemates let her down when she was struggling both to fit in the new context and to find any job – due in part to her lack of proficiency in English. Alisa's felt down and she reported had no support from them. The big impact that such disappointment had in Alisa can be detected in her recorded account through changes in her voice while she is narrating the facts. Interestingly, the data conveys that the destruction of such belief resulted in a bigger emotional attachment to the trance music community, and a trespass of many of the qualities from the former imagined community to the other. With no doubt, Alisa's most regarded identity is that of trance music fan.

47.

... It was quite stressful to be here 'cause I didn't have a job and some of my friends, they let me down and I hated that... now I know that only is only myself that can help myself. That no one is gonna help me. I know that's for sure (chuckles). They let me down a couple of times... (Appendix 7.1, interview 1)

On the other hand, Alisa's less regarded identity –one that she does not assume, like Julie and Lissa, is the one of unskilled, lower-class worker. She admits that she has been at some extent 'downshifting' but her attachment to the trance music community, her youth and personality makes her to overcome the situation, taking it as temporary.

48.

...it's like waitressing. Some people ask me and I say that I hate being there serving people, and it's not because there are so many rude people... (Appendix 7.1, interview 4)

49.

Alma: So you have a degree in marketing

Alisa: Yeah. Yeah. (chuckles). And now I work in a coffee shop (chuckles)

A: Well it's fine

Alisa: Yeah

(Appendix 7.1, interview 1)

Importantly, Alisa studied her degree to please her parents and she does not feel any interest in it. Consequently she does not expect to develop a career on it. This is a relevant difference between Alisa and the rest of my participants, as well as her lack of interest in the acquisition of capitals. Again, the acquisition of English emerges as a goal that involves purely practical purposes.

Alisa –like Julie and Lissa, presents strong identification and exclusion practices that are rooted in her habitus and social class, as well as her membership in the TM community. Besides her bad experience with Russians, she feels that she has nothing in common with other Russian immigrants. As she did not know anyone from the TM community in Southampton, she did not look for meeting new people for socialising:

50.

...because usually Lithuanian and Russian people what they do it's only drinking or something like that (Appendix 7.1, interview 1)

51.

...Southampton... I don't find it interesting because what I'm interested in is, for example, in London, in some culture things and some venues. It's all in London, there's nothing in here. I can't find people that I'm interested to socialise with, that's why I'm not doing it. That's why I need to move (Appendix 7.1, interview 3)

52.

Alisa: ...because I travelled to some festivals in that summer... in they you can meet people from different countries, the most not English, sorts of different and I got some friends from other parts... but it's not it's not really friends, we see each other in parties or festivals but I communicate with them by text or e-mail

Alma: By e-mail

Alisa: They live in England but not in Southampton

(Appendix 7.1, interview 1)

As the other women, Alisa has also experienced many identity shifts in the new context:

From	To
A tourist	A permanent resident in the UK
A local person	An immigrant
Highly dependent full-time student	An independent young adult
A person who had never worked	A working person
A person who dreamt to see the world	A person who is already seeing the world while is making a linguistic, economic and identity investment to further see the world
An EFL learner	An ESOL learner and informal L2 learner through interaction
A Basic user of English	An independent user of English
A member of a close circle of lifelong Russian friends	A member of the same community, which have become a community of sojourners, now spread in a number of countries
A member of a local community followers of trance music	A member of an imagined community of trance music fans

4.2.4.2 Gender

With regard to the role of gender in informal SLL, Alisa's data also shed light on the high degree of cooperation from male English L1 speakers and highly proficient English L2 speakers (especially of mature age, e.g. Alisa's boss, Julie's landlord,

Lissa's work colleagues) but also young (Alisa's and Julie's boyfriends). Her data also confirms Lissa's, Mimi's and Sophie's reports about the lack of willingness for interaction from female English L1 speakers. Alisa's identity also plays a role in this matter –as Julie's does, as she reported that she ever has had a tendency to have more boyfriends than girlfriends. She also sees the competitiveness between women as a cause of that lack of empathy and cooperation, as well as situations of jealousy and aggressiveness.

Interestingly, Alisa made some reflexions on that 'created' female necessity about having a 'stable' relationship with a man. She mentioned that she tries to avoid this dynamic of dependence (see Appendix 7.1, interview 5). Therefore, Alisa's gendered practices and beliefs are unconventional at some extent, hence her 'in-off' emotional relationships which nonetheless have proved to be good in both SLL and emotional terms

4.2.4.3 Conclusions

Alisa's SLL is strongly influenced by two intertwined elements: her eagerness to see the world and her membership to an imagined community of trance music fans. She also has native-like proficiency in English as an ultimate, ideal goal.

Similarly than the already discussed cases, she presents strong identification and exclusion practices, also dictated by her idealised imagined community and her habitus, in which social class plays a role.

Likewise Julie and Lissa, she is also making a big investment in SLL, however her goals are different, as she does not give importance to the acquisition of capitals. However, she is actually acquiring English as a linguistic capital that will allow her to acquire social capital within her idealised community and to acquire cultural capital through travelling to see the world.

Gender plays a role materialised in help from male proficient speakers of English (L1 and L2), exactly as happens in the other two cases in this chapter.

The activity of working has been crucial for Alisa's progress in L2, as it brings interaction, exposure to L2, help from L1 speakers, need of speaking and listening customers, and so on.

4.2.4.4 Epilogue

To date (February 2010) Alisa lives in London, where she has been working as a shop assistant. She still is an active member of both the imagined and factual communities of trance music fans worldwide.

4.3 General conclusions

The data analysis denote several elements related to migration to a new country therefore a new social context: a) eagerness to see the world; b) changes in identity (especially identity shift); c) the relationship between the learner's identity and the new context in two ways, namely how others' perceive her and react in consequence, and conversely, the learner's feelings and perceptions of the new context and others. In this aspect, I have found relevant the participant's focus on differences between the L2 learner and others (e.g. cultural). This may have an influence on her decisions about SLL (e.g. interaction with more proficient speakers of the TL). The activity of immigrating also involves significant disappointments linked to some of the L2 learner beliefs and expectations, for instance: a) a level of English that the L2 learner considered good but that proved to be insufficient to manage within the new social context. This in turn brings a mismatch between the L2 learner's level of literacy in L1 and the jobs obtained in the L2 social context; b) imagined communities that result to be not so ideal or obsolete in the new context, being consequently abandoned; c) the reality of living in a new, different socio-historical-cultural context. Such experience surpasses the L2 learner idealised concept of what a first class Western country is, and requires a huge investment to be able of managing in the new society.

Investment is relevant and related to: a) activity, that is, everything the L2 learner does to progress in her SLL, in systematic and non-systematic ways; b) identity, as the learner invests not only who she is, but also who she wants to be and importantly, her self-esteem. This involves a good deal of intellectual, emotional and personal effort. The acquisition of capitals is the core of investment, as Bourdieu (1986) identified and Norton (2000) confirmed.

The cases support the social psychology theories of identity hierarchy, which claim that we all have our own set of identities hierarchical ordered. Consequently, we regard most some identities than others, and we ignore identities offered by specific contexts when such identities have a low rank in our identity hierarchy. The data also illustrates that conversely, when other does not acknowledge our most regarded identities, we experience emotional pain, which we palliate using coping strategies.

Identity shifts are tightly related to social context and the individual's experiences within it. Therefore, identity shifts are fluid in nature, though in some instances the shifting is long-lasting. However, my data suggest that such changes are never drastic. I argue that habitus influences how deep an identity changes and also, the rhythm of such changes. I have also found some evidence that places habitus as the core of an individual identification and exclusion practices, and it also confirms the tight relationship between habitus and social class (Bourdieu 1977). However, habitus allows change, as I am going to discuss in chapter 6.

The above discussed cases also suggest that gender plays a role in my participants' SLL. It does it through heterosexual gendered practices product of a conservative gender order. The data contains consistent reports of a high degree of help and cooperation from highly proficient male speakers of the TL (L1 and L2) to my participants (all female). Conversely, the discussed cases also denote an evident lack of cooperation from highly proficient female speakers of the TL –my participants' reports focused specifically on L1 speakers of English. Exceptionally, in Julie's specific case, her identification and exclusion tendencies in gender performance are the main reason for not interact with female L1 speakers of English. The other two cases clearly report a lack of cooperation which surpasses social class. There are two exceptions: Sue, Julie's former teacher of English, and Alisa's boss's wife, who is from Africa.

As I said above, all three participants' reports indicate strong identification and exclusion tendencies that shape their choices of people to interact with, no matter if they are English L1 speakers. I argue that their social class parameters are by far more relevant than the fact of accessing possible sources of SLL through interaction. Idealisation of and membership of imagined/symbolic communities –especially strong in Lissa and Alisa cases, is another consequence of such tendencies. The data also imply the important role of L1 in such practices and predispositions, as well as in the participant's emotional realm.

Chapter 5 The case study, part two: Seeing the world through others' plans: the women from non-European backgrounds

This chapter contains the explanation in detail of the second group of cases, namely the women from non-European backgrounds. As I have explained in the general introduction in chapter 4, this group of women shared some characteristics: a) their migration to the UK involved family commitments and others' plans; b) initially, these three participants were not interested in learning English, though all of them eventually made a big investment in their SLL, with uneven results; c) consequently, these three women had a very low level of proficiency in English L2 on arrival, a situation that made a big difference between them and the European group. This also influenced the identity positions available to them in the new context.

5.1 *Macrocontext*

This section explains briefly the general socioeconomic traits of each of the women countries, in order to contextualise their cases and give general information about each of the participants' socioeconomic background. Explaining the socioeconomic conditions of these so-called developing countries might allow understand the importance for middle classes to invest in studying (that is a common trait related to the six women cases). Especially for citizens of these countries, investment in training in a country of the so-called West represents an advantage over a huge number of co-nationals in terms of access to better career development opportunities. Also, this training may contribute to the countries' development once the 'sojourners' (people living abroad for training purposes, Weaver 1994) get back. Moreover, I consider that the information below also denotes that there is an important contingent of citizens from those countries who live in extreme poverty and have no opportunities for acquiring cultural capital studying abroad. Consequently, this fact support my analysis results that indicate my participants' middle class background, putting in context the big investment they are doing to afford living in the UK.

5.1.1 China

China is a country that has had an exceptional economic development in the last two decades, which in turn is having an impact on the global economy (Breslin 2007; Prasad 2007; Santiso 2007; Winters and Yusul 2007; Morrison 2008). Among the causes of such dramatic change are the neoliberal approach implemented by the socialist government, which resulted in market friendly policies, important economic reforms, a restructuring of production and promotion of both privatisation and entrepreneurship (Santiso 2007; Winters and Yusul 2007; Painter 2008)

China's economic strengths are its size and population number, which provides plentiful low-cost labour, its swiftly expanding physical structure and skills, and its ability to innovate, in short, 'productive potential' (Winters and Yusul 2007:1; Morrison 2008) and 'massive ratios of investment and savings' (Santiso 2007:9). For instance, there is a huge investment in high technology (Winters and Yusul 2007).

However, there are also weaknesses, such as lack of development of the financial sector and the banking system; heavy dependence on exporting; zero environmental conservation policies; social instability due a) to a dramatically growing social inequality (see below); and b) to institutional corruption (Chaudhuri and Ravallion 2007; Prasad 2007; Morrison 2008; Painter 2008). China is still considered a country of middle income (Breslin 2007). There are also economic analyses that point to the transnational companies as the ones to benefit the most from the Chinese boom (ibid)

The local consequences of China's economic growth are: a) a dramatic change in lifestyle, towards a Western-like way of life in many senses; b) modernisation; c) cities are growing and their infrastructures have improved; d) reduction of poverty in both urban and rural areas, as well as an improvement in areas such as health, education and infrastructures; f) class reformulation and social polarisation (poor people in the countryside have to move to the cities and the state promotes this; three clearly definite classes have resulted, namely middle, rich and poor. The poor classes have benefited little from such economic prosperity, and the gap between both excessively wealthy and poor is huge; g) high levels of pollution (Breslin 2007; Chaudhuri and Ravallion 2007; Winters and Yusul 2007; Morrison 2008)

The global consequences are: a) reconstruction of the East Asian regional economy; b)

impact on other countries, both rich and poor, e.g. many transnational companies shifted their sites of production from rich or middle income countries to China (Breslin 2007; Winters and Yusul 2007; Morrison 2008); China is a competitor for export oriented manufacturing developing countries, for instance Mexico and other Latin American countries (Santiso 2007); c) paradoxically, its high needs of raw materials both for industry production and for local consumption, makes China a good client for the aforementioned countries (Santiso 2007; Morrison 2008). Therefore, Chinese companies are already settled in Latin America (Santiso 2007).

5.1.2 South-Asian region

The end of the Vietnamese war left several South Asian countries of the region in situation of difficult socioeconomic conditions (Logan 2001; Boudarel 2002). Vietnam's government applied a communist infrastructure of division of labour implementing a collectivisation of the means of production. In 1979, China invaded Vietnam from 17 February to 5 March (Bakshi 2000). Vietnam also suffered from the postwar USA and European trade embargo. In 1986, the government policies changed to a free market economy controlled by the government, promoting foreign investments to develop Vietnam's exports. Such policies worked successfully allowing the country's economy to grow (Neu 2000; BBC 2008; Vu, Gangnes et al. 2008). Since then, the country's economy has been gradually abolishing the state's economic monopoly, with a tendency to privatisation and development of entrepreneurship (Nguyen and Xing 2008). Consequently, Vietnam's economy has experienced a sustainable growth and development, which has its basis in manufacturing exports (Nguyen and Xing 2008; Vu, Gangnes et al. 2008). Similarly to China, such exports are one of the main economic sources for the country, and they are based in cheap labour, promotion of foreign investments and exploitation of its rich natural resources. Consequently, many transnational companies have shifted their centres of production from rich or middle income countries to its territory. The main investors in Vietnam are Japan, Singapore and Korea (Nguyen and Xing 2008).

Among the consequences of such economic growth are: a) employment creation; b) poverty reduction, though Vietnam still is a poor country; according to the World Bank, in 2005 45% of rural population lived below the poverty line (Vu, Gangnes et al. 2008); c) emergence of a new generation of entrepreneurs, with a mixed ideology that

embraces both money-making and national identity (Marr 2000); d) development of the educational sector; education is a growing and important area in Vietnam nowadays. The rates of school enrolment and attendance are among the highest in the world. The number of universities and colleges is also increasingly high. The area of information technology and computing sciences has also experienced a fast growth (BBC 2008; Vu, Gangnes et al. 2008). South Asian people see knowledge as a powerful developing tool for individuals, which minimises failure and enhances strengths (Marr 2000). Among Vietnam's handicaps are the high levels of institutional corruption, similar than in China (Marr 2000; Painter 2008; Vu, Gangnes et al. 2008) and the high levels of poverty.

5.1.3 Mexico

Mexico had an important period of economic development and growth (1970-2003). However, the eighties and nineties also involved a difficult economic period where Mexico experienced several financial crises (Williams 2005; Diaz-Bautista 2008; Estevez 2008; Gonzalez-Martinez and Schandl 2008). The reasons for such change were: a) a huge external debt contracted taking oil production as a guarantee, and the increase of interest rates; b) shift of financial investment's focus from a growing diversified industry to the sole oil extraction industry, as the abundance of oil was –and still is, Mexico's main economical source; c) global economical recession that started in the 1980s; d) the oil crisis at the end of 1970s (Williams 2005; Gonzalez-Martinez and Schandl 2008)

Mexican debt led both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to put pressure on Mexico to adopt a neo-liberal economic system, which involves a series of measures such as facilitating foreign investment; privatisation of some of the major state companies; development of exports infrastructure and focus on exports as a major economical source; and local currency devaluation (Williams 2005; Cahn 2008; Estevez 2008; Gonzalez-Martinez and Schandl 2008; Wilson 2008). From the middle 1980s onwards, Mexico has been joining a series of trade agreements, the most important being the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which also involves the USA and Canada (Diaz-Bautista 2008; Gonzalez-Martinez and Schandl 2008)

A positive outcome of Mexico's neo-liberal approach is the remarkable development of the country's exports industry, resulting in an alternative financial source to oil-

exporting. The tourism industry has also become the third most important financial source. Both industries are based on a huge contingent of cheap labour (Diaz-Bautista 2008; Estevez 2008; Gonzalez-Martinez and Schandl 2008).

On the other hand, neo-liberalism has not stopped new significant crises nor mitigated the major problems in Mexico such as: a) high levels of corruption; b) lack of employment; c) heavy reliance on natural resources to feed export industry and population growth; d) lack of conservationist environmental policy; e) a dramatically contrasted socio-economic inequality between urban and rural areas, between wealthy people and poor people (about 50 millions lived in poverty in 2000), and between the different regions; this inequality also includes the downshifting of Mexican middle class; f) social tension and instability resulting from uneven distribution of capital and resources, and government repression and coercion of its dissenting citizens (Williams 2005; Cahn 2008; Diaz-Bautista 2008; Estevez 2008; Gonzalez-Martinez and Schandl 2008; Wilson 2008)

An additional problem is Mexico's unbalanced dependence on USA's economy, as this country is Mexico's main trade partner, though China is becoming an important alternative (Santiso 2007; Diaz-Bautista 2008; Estevez 2008; Gonzalez-Martinez and Schandl 2008)

The next sections contain the discussion of each of the three case studies. It starts with Kim, the South Asian lady, followed by Mimi, the Mexican, and finally, I will address Sophie's (the Chinese lady) case.

5.2 Kim: Surmounting 'dumbness' and 'deafness' in English L2

The title of this case study conveys a complex experience related both to SLL and migrating to an English speaking context. Kim is from a South Asian country and she lived in the UK for two and a half years. She is the only one of my participants that has returned to her country of origin and expects to stay there permanently. Kim has a master's degree in mathematics from a South Asian university and she worked as a baccalaureate teacher for several years until she moved to the UK. She did so to join her husband John, who is also South Asian and was pursuing postgraduate studies. When

the data collection took place, Kim was 33 years old, she had been in the UK for 18 months, she was working as a part time baby sitter and she was pregnant with her second child.

Kim was born and grew up in a densely populated city. She is the younger of two children. Her parents are both baccalaureate teachers who instilled in both Kim and her sister a high regard for both tertiary education and teaching.

1.

Kim: Yeah... in my country... people study a lot. A lot, yeah... no ever go to picnic. In my country all we study, study, study

Alma: You study a lot

Kim: Yeah, study a lot because if you want to become a student and you want to go to university, you must studies (sic) a lot. My mother... my parents want to me become a student. And my mother want to me become teacher like them...
(Appendix 7.4, interview 1)

Kim grew up in an urban neighbourhood where her family still live. Differently than the CEECs women, she did not mention anything about her neighbours or the social dynamics of such a place. Instead, she emphasised her strong intergenerational family ties – especially between the female members of her family. In addition, Kim highly regards her membership in a group of nine close girlfriends, who all have university postgraduate degrees. Some of them are also teachers.

Kim was never interested in learning English as a form of acquiring cultural/linguistic capital. Such investment was irrelevant for her as the knowledge of English is not necessary for performing the most important activity for her – teaching mathematics in her country, using her L1. Also, to be a teacher is one of Kim's most regarded identities. Consequently, it is not surprising that Kim arrived in the UK with no knowledge of English, besides a few basic words. Differently than the rest of my participants, she did not even take EFL courses in the past. Kim's SLL story involves mainly primary school FL courses, where she learnt basic Russian – a language that she has forgotten. While in university, she also took two courses of French, with a similar result. Kim also reported

having attended a few lessons of English at that period, only for following her girlfriends. Hence she knew basic words such ‘yes’ and ‘no’, and little else.

Once in the UK, Kim found herself unable to perform even the most elemental activities of daily life that involved participation in communicative events using English. She became ‘deaf’ and ‘mute’ concerning the main language of the new context. Hence she reported having had no other option than trying to learn English as quickly as she could in order to acquire certain degree of autonomy. Kim made a big investment in her SLL. As in the past, the acquisition of capital was not among her motives but simply being able to manage in the new context, and combating the feelings of isolation, desperation and lack of independence.

A priori, my data report that all my participants had a difficult initial period in the UK. However, each situation was different, and linked not only to the level of English, but to race, as I will discuss in chapter 6. Differently than the CEEC’s women, Kim had not previously built up any knowledge of English to resort to, for articulating even the most elementary utterance. This situation was also applicable to her listening – she basically did not understand a word. As a result, Kim was initially unable to communicate with anyone besides John and a few South Asian university students.

Kim’s investment in SLL had as a starting point John’s appeal for help on her behalf to English L1 speakers. He talked to some members of a Christian church, which was one of the main communities of practice which John had membership of. Two specific people responded and helped Kim significantly, each in a different way. The first person, a mature woman, taught her one-hour per week, thus Kim had formal learning for free during seven months. Kim reported that the contents consisted of vocabulary and common phrases in English.

2.

Kim: Ah, there was one lady English

Alma: English lady

Kim: English lady who before come my home once a week... and she teaches me English and chat with me, speak with me, yeah, talk with me. And she teach

me maybe one hours a week, one hour

Alma: Wow!

Kim: Yeah! And I think my English is better ‘vocalury’ (sic)

Alma: vocabulary?

(Appendix 7.4, interview 2)

The second was informal SLL through conversation, as a close friend of John –a mature male college teacher, used to visit them often and talked to Kim. Kim’s accounts reveal his high degree of cooperation – almost teacher like, in such interactions.

3.

Kim: He is [John]’s friend. He usually come here, play with [Kim’s son] and he talk with me. He chat with me and he speak slow. If I don’t understand maybe he explain and I understand

Alma: Is he from the university?

Kim: No, I think he is from church

(Appendix 7.4, interview 2)

5.2.1 Identity matters

As I have said above, Kim experienced an important shift in her stance towards learning English: after some weeks in the UK and with help of the above mentioned people, Kim became an active English L2 learner. She totally assumed this identity, offered by the new context. I consider that this assumption is tightly related to Kim’s other two significant identity shifts in the new context: a) from an independent professional to a totally dependent housewife, a low-profile identity in Kim’s identity hierarchy. In turn, this identity had an additional version (John’s wife) within the communities where John had membership:

4.

...the last year, when I come here, I stayed at home all the time with [her son] but I don't like that (chuckles) Yeah, I don't like that (chuckles) (Appendix 7.4, interview 1)

b) from a literate a South Asian language L1 speaker to a 'mute' and 'deaf' person in English, who was not aware of what was going on in her milieu, as the excerpt below vividly illustrates. It contains a very personal and dramatic account, and I initially hesitated to include it in the thesis for ethical reasons. However, I eventually decided that its upsetting content perfectly conveys all the suffering arising from not being able to relate linguistically to the social context, thus missing crucial information that became a shock once it was translated.

5.

Kim: Yeah, miscarriage and when the doctor said that to [John] I think I don't understand because I don't know then what's 'miscarriage' [the English word]... they told me...but I don't understand so I don't worry...[then] when [John] translates for me... Oh, I'm very, very sad, you know, I cry! And after that, I always go to the hospital with [John]...you know...

Alma: Yes, because you didn't understand initially

Kim: Yeah. Sometimes [there are] some things... Important! Important! Important! Yeah...I don't understand very well, so from the miscarriage last time, since then I always go with [John]... yeah I'm very afraid (Appendix 7.4, interview 4)

As this extract has illustrated, the key of all these identity shifts resides in two tightly related issues: the above mentioned Kim's lack of language skills in L2; and a comparative loss of Kim's independence to a substantial dependence on John.

6.

Kim: Yeah (chuckle) I go always with [John] (chuckle) I go to the hospital and I go to the bank... then [John] translate. This is a reason... why I don't like live to here...a reason why I don't like to live here

Alma: Because you have to...

Kim: Because I always go [to] places but with [John]. I can't go to myself

Alma: On your own

Kim: Yeah, alone. In my country I can go there and there... I can go everywhere (chuckles) Yeah. But here... I can't go (chuckles) alone... so I don't like live here (Appendix 7.4, interview 1)

My data suggest two significant issues: a) Kim's position did not allow her negotiate any of such identities, thus she had to acknowledge them; b) this assumption involved a lot of emotional pain.

Additionally, there were two intersecting elements that contributed to Kim's isolation: first, differently than Lissa, she did not show attachment to an imagined community of co-nationals to belong to; and second, her lack of identification with and her exclusion tendencies towards the small community of South Asian university students – all her neighbours were from this community. In spite of her reserve, I consider that habitus and social class might play a role, as she always proudly emphasised her urbanite and teaching family background.

7.

A: And what about [South Asian]? Do you meet your [South Asian] girlfriends often?

K: ...in the upstairs there is one [South Asian] lady, and sometimes everyday I took [my son] to play with her son and then I speak with her (Appendix 7.4, interview 3)

Therefore, it is not surprising that Kim's most regarded identities are college teacher, mathematician, daughter, sister, mother, and friend, in that order. Kim was strongly attached to two imagined communities linked to the above mentioned identities – baccalaureate teachers committed to the activity of teaching, and mathematicians who

loved the subject. Conversely, Kim's low profile identities – linked to all the experience of migrating, the new context and her lack of skills in L2, are: a housewife; a child-like, highly dependent person; a person totally estranged from her social context. As I have already explained, Kim painfully acknowledged those low profile identities.

The convergence of all the above mentioned elements resulted in Kim's unwanted psychological and emotional isolation. Kim's data reveal her despair for not being able both to properly express herself using English and to understand what was going on at her milieu. My observations show how she overcame the pain either from others' lack of acknowledgement of her most regarded identities or from others positioning her in a low-profile identity. In one of my observations on Kim at the playgroup, she endured a humiliating situation in which a midwife treated her like a toddler or a mentally retarded person due to Kim's lack of English skills (see Appendix 8.4, observation report on Kim 4).

However, Kim engaged in all sorts of activities to combat the isolation and recover some of her identities that were eclipsed by those others offered by the new context. For instance, Kim talked to her mother every day through Skype, and this was a significant activity for her. Importantly, whenever the opportunity arose, Kim actively tried to engage in conversation with English L1 or L2 speakers. My data suggest that Kim's investment in SLL was huge, especially in emotional terms, as she had to overcome shyness and fear of being ignored or treated like a child by proficient speakers of English. Two specific activities became a source of interaction for Kim: attending a playgroup and working as a babysitter, which I will explain later in detail. The next excerpt exemplifies what I have explained above.

8.

Kim went close to the Russian young couple smiling to them, but he gave her a glacial look and his wife just ignored her, so she walked away and came to sit with me, as the Chinese lady had left, and we conversed for about 15 more minutes. (Appendix 8.4, observation report on Kim 2)

Like all my participants, Kim experienced a number of identity shifts linked to the new context. The list below sums them up. All of them were temporary except for the last

one, which I consider illustrative of poststructuralist claims about identity fluidity.

From	to
A local person	An immigrant
A professional with good communication skills (a teacher) in L1	A ‘mute’ and ‘deaf’ person in L2, unable to communicate using English even in the most elementary ways (in this sense, a child-like person). Additionally and consequently, an illiterate person in L2
An independent person in charge of her own life (‘Kim’)	A husband-dependent person (‘John’s wife’)
A person with a prestige in specific social networks	A low-profile person – non-proficient in English, a housewife with a constrained world
An outgoing person	An isolated person in social, emotional and intellectual terms
A person with a range of highly regarded identities linked to professional and personal achievements	A person with three dominant identities offered by the new context: mother, wife and immigrant
An ordinary person (in Vietnam)	A person with certain prestige due to a) her experience of living abroad in the ‘first world’; and b) her knowledge of English, even if elementary (in Vietnam)

5.2.2 SLL, gender, partnership and agency: a complex intersecting quartet

To start with, I would like to stress that the informal lessons of English imparted by the church community woman made a significant contribution in Kim’s daily life. In fact

such lessons were the indispensable tool for Kim being able to manage at work and importantly for her social life, at the playgroup.

9.

Kim: No. When I came here I can't speak any word of English. One time when I go to the barbeque with [John], and I meet [John]'s friend and they ask me: 'if you like learning English'. And I say 'yes but I cannot go to English class because I must look after the baby' [her son]. And he said that maybe his friend come to my house for teach me, for me, and he introduce the English lady with me

Alma: Do you think that lady helped you very much? Because if you did not speak any English and now you do, maybe she had something to do with that, or maybe it was [John's friend] who helped you. What do you think?

Kim: Yeah, the English lady helps me speak a little bit, and then I could go to the toddler group, and shopping, and I can speak a lot more, yeah. And I can hear some people and understand, and I think my English is better (Appendix 7.4, interview 3)

As in Julie's case, help obtained from English L1 speakers was crucial for Kim's progress in English L2, which resulted in limited but significant independence. However, such help had not been possible without John's intercession, as his membership of specific communities was crucial for Kim's access to SLL resources. Thus, partnership was crucial for both formal and informal SLL.

I argue that in Kim's case, such partnership is also linked to gendered practices within the gendered order (Connell 2005), as it was John who took the initiative to procure help for his wife, an action expected by the family head. That does not mean that the opposite cannot happen, but in this specific case, Kim was a passive subject in both communities (church and university). In addition, identification and exclusion practices both from some new context people and from John played a role in the complex matter of immigration and SLL, as it is denoted in the account below:

10.

My English friends, they are Christian, and they are very helpful. Unlike English people, most of them are concerned about our lives here and my wife's loneliness in Southampton, and then they tried to help her not financially but psychologically (Appendix 7.8, John single interview)

Differently than in Julie's case, partnership did not involve John's direct help in Kim's SLL, despite the fact that he is a teacher of English. He helped Kim translating words only when was really necessary. What John did instead, due to the circumstances, was to mediate between Kim and the English social context as an interpreter. Still, he regulated this activity wisely in order to help Kim's SLL, trying not to mediate when she was socialising.

11.

John: I didn't actually teach her but answer some of the questions concerning vocabulary and some grammatical structure. But I didn't actively help her. Just answer her question when she didn't understand something (Appendix 7.8, John single interview)

12.

John: In this aspect I think that Kim was a little bit dependent on me. I think she lacked confidence when communicating with English people.... Sometimes when I brought her with me to a party where there were some English people, I acted as an interpreter but normally I let her on her own so that she can gain her confidence

Alma: And how did you act? For example did you help her as an interpreter when you saw that she needed it? Did she request your help? Did she interact?

John: She would look at me but only when she couldn't understand what the other person was talking. But normally I didn't interfere with her conversation with other English person because normally my English friends were very, you know, considerate towards this problem....And you know, sometimes she couldn't understand everything and I would help her in those circumstances...

A very different situation happened in the playgroup, where Kim played a more than active role in socialising. Through motherhood, gender gave Kim access to SLL opportunities in the form of interaction with more proficient speakers of English by participating in the playgroup dynamics. This was the only community of practice which she had direct membership of (that is, not because of being John's wife, as in the case of the church or the university communities). Importantly, Kim is the only participant who interacted successfully with female English L1 speakers, and I consider that the identity of mother may be partially a key element in such difference, as my data suggest that it was a common place that led to identity sharing. The data analysis also suggest that a shared habitus (middle class) also played a significant role in facilitating successful interactions with English L1 and L2 female speakers.

The activity of working as a baby-sitter was also important for Kim in SLL terms, as it involved a good deal of communication between Kim and her employer – the baby's mother, who was an English L1 speaker. This job also came thanks to John's membership of the university community. Through regular conversations with the baby's mother, Kim was building L2 knowledge. The baby whom Kim looked after was the main topic of conversation, but as both women achieved a certain degree of empathy they shared stories about their respective backgrounds. Through this interaction Kim was able to build vocabulary and to practice her L2 speaking and listening skills, which in turn would result in SLL progress.

Besides the baby's mother concern about how her child is being look after, which plays a relevant role in her willingness to talk to Kim, I consider that motherhood might be an intersecting point for a more or less successful interaction. I summarise the situation as follows: the lady was interested in knowing how her baby's day was; consequently, she needed to make an effort to communicate with the baby-sitter. Being mothers conferred a common identity on both of the women to help in this asymmetrical relationship.

I identify this situation as an example of identity sharing, whatever the cause is – a term that has been used in studies of internet social networks (Stutzman 2006). In my study I use the term to describe a situation in which two or more people have an identity in common or common identification traits that create a convergent space, which in turn

promotes both communication and empathy. Somehow, both women benefit from this situation. This is all illustrated by the account below.

13.

Kim: ...Usually the baby's mother she come back at five o'clock, and I usually leave the house at five thirty, and I usually talk with her

Alma: About what? Tell me about what? Well, you already told me that the both of you talk about your families, about your country, but what else, what other things do you speak about with her?

Kim: I usually talk about the baby, maybe today the baby sleep, how many hours he sleep and things about the baby I look after

Alma: Do you have to make a bit effort in order to communicate to her? Does she help you in that?

Kim: Yeah. Oh, yeah!

Alma: How?

Kim: I think she talk with me a lot. Maybe I can't understand anything but I can understand a little bit. And she usually if I don't understand, she try explain for me and sometimes she do... (Kim points toward an object)

Alma: She points...

Kim: Yeah. Before I understand a little bit but as she talk I can understand a lot, yeah (Appendix 7.4, interview 3)

Motherhood was not the only common place for identity sharing in Kim's case. My data analysis identified teaching –and the identity of teacher, so esteemed by Kim, was another shared space between Kim and the above mentioned friend of John. I think that, besides this man's friendly and cooperative attitude, identity sharing was a decisive

factor for Kim's engagement in interaction with him, as she did not report feeling threatened or overwhelmed by this male English L1 speaker. This interaction also constituted an important source of SLL.

14

Kim: He talk sometimes about his family, his mother, his father, and I talk to him about my family and something about [her son], or sometimes I talk with him about my job. He is teacher too, he teaches music

Alma: Ah music. Wow!

Kim: Yeah. I think in secondary

Alma: Secondary school?

Kim: Yeah, secondary school. And I am teacher too and sometimes I talk to him about teaching in [my country]

A: And what he does if he doesn't understand you?

K: (chuckles) Sometimes, if I don't understand anything, maybe he talk a lot, and maybe he show you in body language (Appendix 7.4, interview 3)

With regard to Kim's SLL process in the data collection period, she indeed made some progress, as the test results show. In the initial test Kim obtained the lowest scores of all the six women: B1 in vocabulary and A1 in writing, reading, grammar and listening. However, her test results at the end of the data collection attest an improvement –the A1 became an A2 in the correspondent areas, though the area of vocabulary did not change. I consider that interaction with English L1 speakers played an important part in such progress, as Kim had stopped the 'formal' learning with the church lady one year before.

My data denote that in the playgroup, Kim played an active role in socialising. Her solitude, her need of recovering some lost identities, and the access conferred by motherhood and a shared middle class habitus contributed greatly to this activity. The

playgroup was very close to Kim's home. I am going to describe briefly its dynamics of socialisation and other traits. I observed that there were two main groups, namely a) English L1 speakers; and b) foreign speakers of other languages, some of them English L2 speakers, some of them not. In turn, both groups were subdivided into smaller groups.

The English L1 group had three groups: a) the group of volunteers who socialised with and helped everyone; b) the middle class group; and c) the lower class group. Therefore, my data indicate that social class played a significant role in such a group split. For a complete and detailed account of Kim interactions and the playgroup social dynamics, in which social class, identity, and identification and exclusion practices are denoted, see Appendix 8.4, especially observation reports 1 and 2 on Kim.

Kim was able to interact with a number of women from some groups as much as her L2 skills allowed her to do (e.g. middle class English L1 and L2 speakers). She never interacted with some other groups (e.g. English lower class; Muslim women). I observed that all of the women from the English middle class group whom Kim talked to were cooperative and patient with her without patronising. I have already explained the elements that I consider crucial for such successful interaction.

Most of the conversation topics were centred on children, motherhood and housekeeping. Kim also learned to use 'small talk' skilfully, specifically with English L1 women as a way to start any conversation, which usually was brief. Sometimes so brief that it was difficult for me to identify it from the small talk. The fact that the lower class English women were also mothers, but they never socialised with someone outside their group, support my argument about the relevant role of habitus in socialising (see 8.4, observation on Kim 1)

Consequently, as I have mentioned above, Kim also actively interacted with members of the middle class English L2 group, many of them able to speak English though to different degrees of proficiency. Communication with them was more difficult for Kim than with those of the English L1 group, as sometimes Kim's interlocutor had a similar level of English to her. Consequently, the lack of vocabulary between both interlocutors constrained the variety of topics, hindered fluidity and deterred the conversation dynamics. Nonetheless, in different degrees, Kim's lack of L2 proficiency constrained

not only the range of topics of conversation with both groups, but also the kind of spoken English, which was very elementary (e.g. use of formulaic language, use of short sentences that sometimes were reduced to a single word accompanied by gestures or pointing, and so on).

15.

Alma: Why do you like it? [the playgroup]. Explain it to me, please

Kim: Because in the toddler group [my son] can play with toys, with other children. I like that for [him]. And I can speak with some women in the toddler group, and they usually ask me about when I am into labour and about the new baby and we speak about some...

Alma: But do you always talk about babies, about children? Do you never talk about your country or any other topic?

Kim: No, because I can't understand, sometimes we talk about the children and about the new baby, yeah

Alma: But you don't talk about anything else apart of that? Do you talk about your job with them?

K: No, because sometimes the lady from Korea, I speak no good and she speak no good (laughs). So sometimes we speak together and it is 'What?' 'What?' when I don't understand and she speak English no good, like me, and I can't explain for me (laughs) (Appendix 7.4, interview 3)

My observations on Kim at the playgroup show that she and her South Asian neighbour went together to the place, but once there each of them did her own thing, and they never went back home together. It is obvious to me that in that specific context, Kim did not want to be with other South Asian people. I attribute this attitude to: a) her exclusion practices, which I have already explained above; and b) her need to practise her English. However, I also observed that once Kim's second baby was born, she grew more dependent on her South Asian neighbour as an interpreter that mediate between the

playgroup volunteers (specifically, midwives) and Kim.

Gender also appears in Kim's data in the form of conservative gendered practices. I have identified that Kim's agency in her decision of coming to the UK was considerably constrained by her family ties, specifically by her marriage commitments. My data analysis in this and the two next cases support this argument, as such a decision did not emerge from the participant's own plans and motives. In such cases the participant obtained benefits indirectly, by both following other's agendas and by partnership.

In Kim's and Mimi's (see 5.3) cases, the participant played a secondary supportive role (e.g. housewife). This is a major cause that explains why Kim decided to move to the UK, in spite of knowing her absolute lack of English L2 skills to manage in the new context. In this complex situation, I consider gender as a relevant element in the form of gendered practices within the gendered order (Connell 2005), for instance, wife's subordination, as Kim had to sacrifice her identities and her own world acceding to her husband decisions.

16.

Alma: Excellent, thank you. And regarding Kim, Why did Kim come to Southampton?

John: The only reason is I want her to be with me, to come here and meet me. I couldn't stay away from them for such a long time, and it was also good for my baby, my first born son I meet him sometime ago. And I urged her to bring my son here to stay with me... I think that I brought her here as a dependent so the most important reason is for her to join me, and for me to see my son, for us to stay together (Appendix 7.8, John single interview)

I have found some support about gendered differences in this matter comparing Kim and John's case with another South Asian couple's case, which I took from my master's dissertation study (Rodriguez-Tsuda 2006), which was a pilot study for my PhD study. One of my participants, Mary, was a female South Asian student that lived in the UK for four years while she was studying her PhD.

This participant was also married and had a little daughter, who remained in South Asia and was looked after by her grandmother. In all those years, Mary did not see her daughter, and this was not only because of financial constraints. In her data, Mary reported missing her daughter very much. A question that emerges by comparing both cases is: Why she did not ask her South Asian husband to come to live here with their little daughter, like John asked Kim to do? I consider that gender inequality is a significant issue in both cases.

To see the world was an additional motive for Kim to come to the UK. Again, the activity and experience of seeing the world appears as a form of acquiring a type of symbolic capital (prestige).

17.

John: And apart from that, Kim did like to visit England because it was the first time she has ever visited another country apart from [the country] where she was born. And of course during her stay in England we could have made several visits to some other countries in Europe like France, Italy and the Czech Republic. (Appendix 7.8, John single interview)

Paradoxically, the intersection of motherhood and social class, which helped Kim in her SLL through interactions, also constrained her options in the new context. Nurseries are expensive in the UK therefore Kim could not afford this service. EFL courses are also expensive for an overseas student. Consequently, Kim spent a good deal of time taking care of her son, and she could make plans neither for formal learning nor for working on a full-time job or some other activity. Babysitting was the only work option she could have, as well as informal SLL through interaction. Thus, motherhood contributed to a gendered division of labour in Kim's case. Partnership and gendered practices also constrained Kim's options in the same terms, as she had to adopt a totally supportive role for John, while he was developing further his career options and Kim did not.

At the end, she made the drastic decision of going back to Vietnam in spite of her husband's initial disagreement. She did so shortly after having her second baby. The data show that her decision was not a down-and-out attitude, but a carefully considered move. Eventually, my data analysis led me to consider that in Kim's case, the exercise

of agency exceeded gendered practices.

18.

Kim: ... I think [John] maybe... find a job here, buy a house here, but I think that I and my two children won't come here

Alma: Why? May I ask you why?

Kim: Because in my country I go to work [speaks in her South Asian language] ...because in here I find very difficult... for me to find a job and I think I can't find a job here

Alma: But if you study and improve your English you can, because you have a Master's degree in mathematics!

Kim: Yeah

A: So...

Kim: I always like Mathematics. In my country no problem I can go to work, I can take time to do what I feel but in here I think very difficult, because I speak English not good. And if I go to English class for study for foreign in English but I think a long time

Alma: Yes, but you have to study and go through the several stages

Kim: Yeah but I think I must maybe ten years? Five years? Ten years maybe, I will speak English good enough (Appendix 7.4, interview 4)

19.

Alma: For example... who made the decision that she goes back?

John: It was her own decision. I wanted her and my two small children to stay here with me until the end of my course but, you know, her parents urged her to come back. And then, you know, because of the requirements of her job in [my

country] she wanted to go back, which made me a bit angry. But, you know, her job is very important for her, and I don't want her to blame me in case I ever had to go back to [our country] to get her because she didn't have a job there. So her parents and she would blame me for her not having a good job, so that's why I had to leave her and my children in [our country]. (Appendix 7.8, John single interview)

My last interview with Kim was through Skype. I noticed several issues from that conversation. First, the data show a dramatic decrease in her so hardly acquired L2 skills, to the extent that she was barely able to speak and to understand. John had to act as an interpreter for the both of us. Second, she looked radiant, while she was telling me how happy and busy she was in her country, as she recovered her former job in the same college.

Moreover, Kim was living close to her parents and sister, and she was happy because her children were seeing them daily. Kim reported that she was socialising as much as she could. Especially, she made emphasis on her happiness and relief for being able to communicate with everyone. She also acquired a new high profile identity linked to a kind of symbolic capital, as a person who has lived abroad in a first world country and is able to speak some English.

20.

John: There are not many opportunities in [our country] for her to show her English abilities apart from a natural expectation, for example we had a party with her friends when we came back to Vietnam and everybody said that 'oh Kim I thought that you could speak English as well as an English person' and...

Alma: And what did she say?

John: She said of course I can't speak English quite well but I think that my English is now much better than my English before I came to England
(Appendix 7.8, John single interview)

5.2.3 Conclusions

Change of social context and importantly, lack of English skills, resulted in Kim's factual 'dumbness' and 'deafness' in English, as she was unable to speak and understand what was going in her milieu. This led to isolation and to three main dramatic identity shifts, namely from an independent adult to a child-like dependent person, from a normal person to a 'mute' and 'deaf' person in English, and from an independent woman to a dependent housewife. As a result, Kim experienced an urgent need for learning such language; formal and informal SLL helped to progressively building enough English L2 skills to be able to manage in daily life.

In this complex situation, help from more proficient speakers of English (mainly L1 speakers) was crucial for Kim's L2 progress. Kim benefited from such help through partnership, due to her identity of John's wife. In turn, John obtained support for Kim thanks to his membership in two specific communities: a church community of practice and the university community. Thus, Kim's membership in such communities was indirect and involved the identity position of John's wife. Gender appears in this situation as conservative gendered practices, in which the man is who cares and provides for his wife and children. At the end, a social context shift from the English context to her familiar South Asian social context was necessary for recovering both a more egalitarian position regarding gender and Kim's high profile identities.

Kim made a big investment in her SLL, overcoming feelings of isolation, inadequacy, shyness, fear, desperation, and all those feelings associated to the low profile identities acquired in the new context (e.g. feelings of humiliation, down-shifting, strangeness, and so on). She engaged actively in the activity of socialising, looking for any opportunity for interacting using English as a source of SLL.

Three important elements contributed to Kim's informal SLL, namely partnership, gender (motherhood) and the activity of working to make a living. They provided Kim with a good deal of interaction with highly cooperative English L1 speakers (her boss, John's church friends and the playgroup attendants). Motherhood gave Kim membership of an important community of practice in which she had alternative identities ('mother', 'English L2 speaker' and 'colleague mother L2 speaker') to that of 'John's wife' and to her low-profile identities. The playgroup was also an important

source of interactions using English. Identity sharing also played a role in successful interactions not only with female English L1 speakers but also with John's friend. All the mentioned elements contributed to Kim's SLL progress and also, to combat her isolation feelings and to recover, though momentarily, one of her most regarded identities (teacher), giving a boost to her self-esteem.

The identity of mother was an element of identification as it made Kim to have successful interactions with female English L1 speakers, differently from all the rest of my participants.

Participation –both direct and indirect, in all the above mentioned communities of practice played a key role in Kim's progress in her English skills, through formal SLL (lessons) and informal SLL (interaction with more proficient L1 or L2 speakers).

As an example of how complex these matters are, I identified another facet of gender and social class: as elements that constrained Kim's options of jobs and formal SLL in the new context. The paradox is that, on the one hand, motherhood and partnership led to a gendered division of labour, conservative gendered practices and gender inequality, but on the other hand, they also facilitated interaction with English L1 and L2 speakers.

The change of social context (from England to Southern Asia) also involved a dramatic English L2 attrition in a short period of time (few weeks).

5.2.4 Epilogue

To date (February 2010) Kim teaches mathematics at a college in her city. She does not study or use English anymore and she has no plans to do so. John still is in the UK but he goes to his country to see his family as often as he can.

5.3 *Mimi: Overcoming an initial blow*

Mimi is Mexican and she was thirty years old when I started my data collection. During that period she was working as a cleaner for one of the universities in Southampton

while she was also attending a course of English on a part-time basis, plus weekly one-hour free private lessons of English that she obtained by joining my study. Mimi has a degree in business and management from a Mexican university. Like Kim, she moved to the UK to support her husband (Goody, who is also Mexican). He was going to study a master's degree at a British university. Unlike Kim and John, Mimi and Goody arrived together to the new context.

Mimi's story in the UK has two periods separated by a hiatus of six months spent in Mexico. The first period involves two years in which Mimi had a crisis, overcame it and became an English L2 learner. Then the couple went back to Mexico for six months to do the paperwork for Goody, as he decided to study for a doctorate at the same British university. The second period involves the data collection. When Mimi joined my study the couple were back in the UK for two months to stay continuously in the UK until Goody finished his PhD. Mimi had just started her job as a cleaner.

5.3.1 First period in the UK

Mimi is the second of three daughters of a very traditional Mexican family. Mimi's accounts made clear that her family belongs to the middle class in a country of big socioeconomic inequalities. Her parents have no tertiary education, but his father owns his business (a grocery store). Her mother is a housewife. Mimi and her sisters all have tertiary education. Mimi worked as an executive for an important company for five years, and during that period of time, she and Goody saved enough money to fund his postgraduate studies abroad.

Mimi reported that she gladly agreed to participate in Goody's plans for studying abroad. However, as I have already mentioned in Kim's case, I consider that the exercise of individual agency was constrained by family (partnership) commitments, and that gender also played a role in the form of gendered practices within the gendered order (Connell 2005), like wife's subordination. The clear parallelism between Kim's and Mimi's cases supports my assertion.

Consequently, the activity of migrating became highly problematic for both of the women, as it was not linked to their own interests, plans or expectations. Accordingly, neither of these women had previously focussed on progressively building up English

L2 skills (like the CEECs women did) an indispensable tool to manage independently in an English speaking context, and this was the main handicap that both of them had to face.

Mimi is the only participant who has reported having suffered a significant crisis once she moved to the new context. In this matter, besides the two elements explained above, I have identified a series of causal factors, which Kim's case also presented: a) big sociocultural differences between the participant's previous, familiar context and the new context; b) separation from her family, especially from her mother and sister(s); c) low-profile identity positions offered by the new context; d) others' lack of acknowledgement of the participant's most regarded identities.

Mimi's lack of English skills can be explained by her SLL story, which started at secondary school with EFL courses of three hours per week. She reported that as those courses were very poor, she learnt almost nothing. Then, Mimi's parents invested in a one-year private English course for her with a Mexican teacher. The results of such investment were different than those of the CEECs women, as Mimi reported having learnt nothing from it. Once in the UK, in a similar way to Kim, her lack of language skills became a significant handicap that resulted in isolation, emotional distress and a strong dependence on Goody in everything. Like Kim, Mimi was 'mute' and 'deaf' in English, and suffered an identity downshifting, from an independent adult to a child-like dependent person from Goody. The account below is about her first period in the UK.

21.

Alma: ...then how was your first week here?

Mimi: Horrible! (She makes a gesture that conveys 'I prefer don't think about it')

Alma: Could you explain why?

Mimi: Yes. Because I don't speak any English and I can't understand. And also I have very nervous for go outside and shopping. I stay at the flat all the time. I have very... (she looks at the table for a while)

Alma: Say it in Spanish and I translate

Mimi: *Miedo*

Alma: Ah, you were scared

Mimi: Scared, yes, and when I went out I always go with my husband. I never alone (Appendix 7.5, interview 1)

22.

Mimi: Well, the first time I arrive here I don't have a good memories because I very scared about my English. And also I know nothing in England and I think... I really don't enjoy stay here. I really miss my job, my family and I think I am feel bad

A: Did you feel bad?

M: Bad! Uh-huh. It was very difficult for me. I always want my husband stay with me and I didn't go out alone. And I think the first time was difficult. Now I think the situation change because my English is a little more better... (Appendix 7.5, interview 2)

Differently than Kim, Mimi first reaction was a kind of rebellion though not against her husband, but against the new social context. I see this rebellion as a consequence of being in a situation that she was not prepared for, as a result of from following other's plan and not her own. Goody's account of Mimi's difficulties in their first period in England illustrates this.

23.

Goody: ... so I feel that English was like... something to hate for her, like 'We are here, I don't like the city, I don't want to be here so I don't want to learn English. I don't want to mix with the English. I don't want to have anything to do with English.' So I tried to help her but the situation for her was very difficult... because she didn't want to go, she didn't want to do anything, and she couldn't say nothing... (Appendix 7.9, Goody single interview)

Interestingly, Mimi was gradually overcoming her crisis through activity –as Kim also did, but in a different manner. Differently than Kim, Mimi avoided socialising with English L1/L2 speakers. Instead, she focused on formal learning to get enough English skills for managing in the new context. Mimi only socialised with the university Mexican students’ community of practice, which is linked to one of Mimi’s most regarded identities, as I will explain below.

Thus, Mimi was socially constrained by her identification and exclusion tendencies and this had a repercussion on her SLL, as she spoke exclusively Spanish at that period. Mimi’s membership of the university Mexican community has some interesting features: a) it shows some of Mimi’s important identification and exclusion practices, in which social class has a relevant role; b) it is part of Mimi’s imagined community of middle-upper class Mexicans; c) it mitigated her feeling of strangeness in the new context through giving her a familiar context of people of similar habitus to socialise with (middle class Mexican in a similar situation) and importantly, protect her from isolation.

This belief in an imagined community is an issue that confers a subtle but significant difference between Mimi’s and Kim’s cases, which are otherwise similar. Differently than Lissa’s case with lower class Poles, in the UK Mimi had no contact with lower-class Mexicans, as they are too poor to afford any kind of travelling, even in Mexico. Poor Mexican people usually migrate to the USA to work as a cheap or illegal labour (Diaz McConnell 2008; Geis, Uebelmesser et al. 2008), though nowadays the number of highly qualified-middle class Mexican that immigrate to the USA to work as cheap labour is also increasing (Mattoo, Neagu et al. 2008). Nonetheless, Mimi’s imagined Mexican community was clearly embodied by the Mexican university community.

Importantly, Mimi needed to work for personal and financial reasons and this is a convergent point with Lissa’s case. Neither of these two women could afford to be afraid and give up, neither Lissa for her lack of confidence in her English skills nor Mimi because of her crisis. Yet, Mimi was still ‘mute’ and ‘mute’ in English, so she needed to acquire the basics of the language as quickly as possible to get any job.

24.

Mimi: Yes, and England is very expensive and I save money in Mexico for five

years. And here in one year we spend all the money and then I need really the job (Appendix 7.5, interview 2)

The couple made the decision of investing in a full-time course of English for her at a private school, in spite of constraints due to their financial situation and citizenship rules (for instance, tuition fees are more expensive for overseas students than for EU students). A significant difference is that Mimi did not have Kim's handicap of having children to look after and support.

25.

Mimi: Basically before the job I take three months English lesson in private school in the town. But I think it was a short time for me because I only learn the basic English

Alma: And then why did you stop?

Mimi: I start in October *de* two years ago and finish in February. And then in March I started the job

Alma: So then you stopped because you found that job

Mimi: Yes, because I worked from eight to one o'clock

A: And what about taking lessons in the afternoon or in the evening?

Mimi: It's very expensive for the Mexican people. I need pay for one year about two thousand pounds. It's a lot of money for me... (Appendix 7.5, interview 2)

The couple thought that this course potentially would pay off in two interrelated areas: on the one hand, through formal learning Mimi would acquire enough English

knowledge for getting a job, no matter which one, as Mimi was aware of her illiteracy in English. On the other hand, they believed that the activity of working would enhance Mimi's SLL through 'practice' (en-vivo quote) involving interaction with English L1 speakers and exposure to the language.

After three months, Mimi left the course, as she got a job as a hotel cleaner. Interestingly, as I have said in chapter 4, all my participants –even the ones with more advanced L2 level, faced the same situation of getting low paid-low profile jobs.

26.

M: Yes and because my English... I don't speak English... I couldn't find a job

A: Tell me about that. How did you deal with that?

M: Well, I fill application forms in hotels and in ASDA (a chain supermarket)

A: Yes

M: Some in the temp bank in the university

A: Yes

M: But they didn't call me. Later I found a job in *hotel* for cleaner

A: In a hotel

M: In a hotel, yeah, but I think it was not the best for me because all the staff was foreign people, and especially Poland people

A: Polish people

M: Yes, Polish people. But they the same me, don't speak English, and I never practice my English, only a little phrases for the job 'good morning' or I don't know 'I found this object in the room the guest left' or something *o sea no* really practise (Appendix 7.5, interview 2)

Mimi reported that her English gradually improved thanks to the course, the activity of working and socialising with non-Mexican postgraduate students who were also English L2 speakers. She still was dependent on Goody but to a lesser extent. After having been two years in the UK, Mimi and Goody temporarily went back to Mexico for six months once he finished his master's degree.

5.3.2 Second period in the UK

Working to make a living, studying and use of media resources, were all influential activities on Mimi's SLL during the data collection period. Once back in the UK for the second time, Goody started his PhD and Mimi got a job as a cleaner for the university. Goody's membership in the university community facilitated life for Mimi, as they heard about that job from other postgraduate students, and the workplace and the couple's home was within the campus. Mimi's English had improved after having been two years in the UK, as I explained in the previous section. She reported that her brief period in Mexico had little repercussion on her level of proficiency. For this reason Mimi felt confident enough to apply for that job as soon as they were back and she got it.

27.

Mimi: I think it's no fine because the job is hard... it's very tired but I think I need the money, is good, but also I need meeting other people for practice my English and affirm my listening

Alma: Yes

Mimi: I think is the principal reason for I am work now (Appendix 7.5, interview 1)

Mimi made progress in her SLL during the data collection period. Her initial test results were A2 in the areas of vocabulary, writing, grammar and listening, while she obtained a B1 in reading. Contrastively, her final test showed improvement in all the areas –the results were B2 in reading and vocabulary, and B1 in writing, grammar and listening.

The explanation for such progress lies in three main factors that worked simultaneously: a) both exposure to L2 and help from English L1 and proficient English L2 speakers through interaction; b) formal SLL; and c) L2 self-learning through specific activities: reading magazines and webpage contents and watching TV with English subtitles.

The first factor involves the activity of working to make a living, which gave Mimi access to interaction with English L2 speakers of different proficiency levels (work colleagues and students). She also had limited interaction with English L1 speakers (with management staff and students on a regular basis, though very little with her work colleagues). The last situation suggests a common element that emerged from all my participant data: the lack of interaction with female English L1 speakers. Mimi reported that though a number of them were cleaning staff they ignored non-British work colleagues. The only exception was Mimi's boss, who was kind but also interacted with her only for working purposes.

Comparing the two periods in Mimi's data, I identified a contrasting change in her attitude. She became an active English L2 learner who was making a huge investment in SLL with two goals in mind: first, to regain total independence and second, to achieve her dream of pursuing postgraduate studies in the UK. I have identified in these goals a clear attempt at recovering her most regarded identities lost in the new context, and also a clear identity shift. I will address this matter later.

Mimi's investment in SLL also involved a shift in her socialising stance dictated by her identification and exclusion tendencies. This time, she tried to interact as much as she could with more proficient speakers of English, no matter their social background. She was not as active as Kim was in this activity and I attribute this difference to Mimi's access to other sources of SLL, like formal learning or interacting with work colleagues and management staff. Another crucial element in this matter was that Mimi's belief in a Mexican imagined community protected her from the isolation that Kim suffered. As in the first period, Goody's membership of the university community brought friendships with people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Those friendships provided Mimi with continuous interaction in English. Thus, like Kim, Mimi benefited from such community through partnership.

Alma: So have you made friends here?

Mimi: English people no, but for example the Latin American people, yes, Indian people, Chinese one *o* two people (Appendix 7.5, interview 1)

29.

Well. I still hang around with Mexican people but now I have more foreign people. We usually met...especially in Wednesday when is my day off. [There] is one Chinese girl and two Malaysian girls and we usually meet on Wednesday, once a month or something like that, to speak and show the different foods, for the traditional Mexican foods... (Appendix 7.5, interview 3)

a) Working to make a living

Mimi's workplace was also a source of interactions in English through friendships and acquaintances. Interestingly, most of the cleaners were women, and many of them postgraduate students' wives. The data does not suggest that the latter fact influenced Mimi's identification with them, but it point to the fact of being all immigrants and English L2 speakers. Those women integrated a cohesive group, socialising in their breaks and walking home together, as all of them used to live next to the university campuses.

Again, membership of the university community has the advantage of creating a common space for all those people, who otherwise may be isolated outside their own communities, as happened to Kim. Mimi talked actively to them on daily basis, looking relaxed and confident. However, her attitude changed dramatically when she talked to English L1 speakers. As I have said, identification and exclusion practices did not shape Mimi's choice of interlocutors to speak to, but she did not feel points in common with English people in socio-cultural terms, and this constrained her interactions dramatically.

30.

Mimi: ...is more easy for me communication with the people like me, like [from] other country. I think the English... people is difficult

Alma: Why?

Mimi: I think is because... the people is very... (she adopts a stand offish attitude)

Alma: Ah, they are very serious

Mimi: Yeah. Yeah

Alma: May we say cold?

Mimi: Yes and also when you ask some question is very concrete and you can't explain a lot with English people...

Alma: Could you give me some examples about that?

Mimi: ...when you, I don't know, in the street you ask for address or something I think is very concrete...straight and specific... but *no* for example in Mexico [we] give more information *o* I don't know maybe because in Mexico [we have] other character more funny... but I think the people is different [here] (Appendix 7.5, interview 1)

Interestingly, Mimi's workplace provided her with the most useful SLL support embodied by Matt, a work colleague. He is a mature gay male English L1 speaker who has played a fundamental role in Mimi's progress in L2. Matt's case coincides with other participants' accounts (see Lissa and Sophie cases) that report a high degree of openness, cooperation and help from some gay English L1 speakers towards female English L2 speakers. Those cases contrast with all the accounts about female English L1 speakers' lack of interest and cooperation with female English L2 speakers. Consequently, I consider that gender might be an issue here, therefore a starting point for further research to explore this perspective.

b) Formal learning

The second factor in Mimi's SLL progress was formal learning, through attendance at ESOL courses, which Mimi criticised –as Lissa and Alisa did. However, while the latter compared English didactical methods to those of their countries of origin or criticised the teacher's attitude towards adult L2 students, Mimi seemed to want a tailored course

for her individual needs. It came to her in the form of weekly private lessons of English, which she reported to be useful as she learnt grammar and vocabulary, and she was encouraged to speak. Therefore, formal SLL has given Mimi fundamental L2 resources to employ to when she is using English.

c) Use of media resources

The third factor, L2 self-learning, involved Mimi's engagement in some activities like watching TV with English subtitles and seeking information on the internet to plan short trips around Europe. Similarly to the rest of my participants, Mimi's case also presented 'to see the world' as an important activity related to the acquisition of cultural and symbolic capital. However, she had not acquired enough confidence for using English in such trips, being totally dependent on Goody in that matter.

31.

Mimi: ...for the Easter Holiday we are going with my husband to Brussels for four days and we are planning to be there in Brussels and *Brujas*?

Alma: Bruges.

Mimi: Bruges and maybe other town, I don't remember the name... I mean it is between Brussels and Bruges...

Alma: And are you going to use your English? Because this isn't the first time that you've travelled abroad of England so tell me about your experience using English

Mimi: A little, because my husband he make all the arrangement... but usually I prepare before the travel I don't know the place we are visiting and so. We have the maps and the routes of the bus the train and also usually we didn't need ask for information. Bbut when we arrived at the hotel sometimes my husband is who speak (Appendix 7.5, interview 3)

Additionally, the use of the internet provided Mimi with a key means to exercise and nurturing her identities, as I will explain below.

5.3.2.1 Identity matters

In both periods, the new context and her lack of English skills offered Mimi similar identity positions to those available to Kim: a) a ‘mute’ and ‘deaf’ person in English L2, unable to communicate, manage and be aware about what was going on in her milieu; b) an illiterate person in English L2; and c) a child-like dependent person. I argue that those identity positions, which also involve identity shifting, were the source of Mimi’s initial crisis.

32.

Goody: ...in my country, and the same for Mimi, we were proud of our orthography or the good way we write Spanish... but now when we write we’re ‘Oh, oh, oh! Which word goes here? And which letter is this?’ (Appendix 7.9, Goody single interview)

33.

Alma: But it’s what I mean: you were earning your own money; you were working so, what was the problem?

Mimi: Yes but I didn’t enjoy the job, really... sometimes I felt sad because in Mexico I had other kind of job (Appendix 7.5, interview 2)

However, in the second period, Mimi had accepted those low-profile identity positions. What helped Mimi to put up with this identity downshifting was her belief in the temporary and unavoidable nature of them due to her lack of language skills and her financial constraints. Importantly, she accepted them as part of the process towards her English L2 improvement.

34.

Mimi: Ok. I still working in the same place and...today I have an interview for other job and I hope also that I get the job... I will continue working in the same place for long time and...

Alma: And then me about the new job that you are applying for

Mimi: Well the title is ‘catering assistant’ and is in the same hall that I am working. And she (sic) give the food for the students and it is only three hours in the afternoon for dinner. And basically is they put a big table with the all dishes and the students come and say what they need and they like, and you serve uh huh?

Alma: And then?

Mimi: And then when they finish I don’t know they arrange the tables and put in the washing machine and clean the tables (Appendix 7.5, interview 3)

Mimi’s most regarded identities are daughter; sister; friend; executive of a prestigious company; university graduate; and Mexican. As I mentioned above, through the use of Skype I identified that Mimi was actually nurturing the first three mentioned identities. SLL was a key to recovering her identities of executive and university graduate within the new context. I have already discussed the issues about 'Mexican' identity above.

The table below shows Mimi’s identity shifts in the UK divided in the two different periods. The shifts are similar to Kim to some extent but a big difference between both participants is that Kim made the decision of halting her investment in SLL as she believed it was a lost cause, whereas Mimi increased such investment. Interestingly, the table also shows that not all is downshifting, as some of Mimi’s new identities have higher profiles (e.g. a more independent person who makes a living for herself and an independent user of English). This in turn has also helped her to cope with her low-profile identity (cleaner) with the conviction that proficiency in language will give her access to better positions.

First period

From

A local person

to

An immigrant

A professional person with good communication skills (an executive) in L1	An illiterate person in L2, unable to communicate using English even in the most elementary ways
An independent person in charge of her own life	A husband-dependent person
A person with a prestige in specific social networks	A downshifting person who became a cleaner
A 'stable' person in Mexico	A person that has experienced strong crisis and changes in the UK
Second period	
A non-flexible person in terms of responding to new experiences and contexts	A more flexible person, able to function more or less successfully when facing them
A less than basic user of English	An independent user of English
A person who rarely travelled	A person keen to see the world
A person able to relate only with her co-nationals	A person keen to new experiences of multiculturalism and multilingualism
A person who came as an accompany	A more or less independent person who makes a living for herself
A person who did not want to make any effort in the new context	A person who is investing in cultural capital (English SLL) for socially improvement

5.3.2.2 Gender

I have addressed some issues related to gender in the discussion above, namely the reports about female English L1 speakers' oblivious attitude; help with SLL and high degree of cooperation in interactions from some gay English L1 speakers.

35.

Matt spoke slowly, very clearly and every time that he used a term that he suspected Mimi did not know, he explained it thoroughly. (Appendix 8.5, observation report on Mimi 4)

I would like to further discuss a significant issue. Both Mimi and Kim moved to the UK playing a supportive role within their husbands' plans of career development. A combination of this situation and the new context brought the identities of 'housewife' and 'His wife', which were low-regarded in these participants' hierarchy of identities. The reason is that such identities were restrictive and substituted high-regarded identities.

I consider this supportive role as part of a common situation that uncovers traditional gendered practices within the gendered order (Connell 2005). Mimi's data clearly show further cases of this practice in her workplace. As I have mentioned above, many of her work colleagues were also postgraduate students' wives who worked as cleaners. The situation of supporting actors offered them low-profile identities within the new context.

Conversely, their husbands were all in high-profile identities and focused on their own goals. I have identified that situations like those show little changes in the gendered order (Connell 1987; Connell 2005) as there is not an egalitarian investment in emotional, self-esteem and identity terms. I consider important the huge investment that those women make in emotional and self-esteem terms.

Not all cases are the same, though. Partnership has also played an important role in Mimi's case in the form of Goody's support. For instance, Mimi has plans of pursuing a master's degree in the UK and this prospect is an important motive for SLL investment. Though, Goody reports that he has been supportive of Mimi's SLL encouraging both her independence and her attendance at the EFL course:

36.

I encourage her now to learn or read books or magazines or whatever because for me was very useful... to read magazines, so I encourage her to read. And also I try to encourage her to go through the English courses because sometimes

she say 'no, because it's late'... so normally I try to encourage her to go to her course and I go with her so I try to encourage her in that way... (Appendix 7.9, Goody single interview)

37.

...for example, in the stores... she would say 'Oh, I need this but I don't know [how to ask for it] so could you please go and ask so?' But nowadays I say 'No, no, no, no, you can go and ask if you want [it]' Sometimes is [a] very rude [thing to do] but...(ibid)

Finally, I include a significant example that conveys Mimi's identity as L2 learner/user of English, and an important identity shift, from a 'mute' and 'deaf' person in English to a person able to use English in situations of negotiation.

38.

Mimi: Yeah, make an effort for talking

Alma: Yes and how have you done that?

Mimi: Yeah, when I go alone for the shopping and so I need to go to customer service and try to solve this problem. For example, today I went shopping and I try to buy three bottle the wine and it say 'three bottle the wine for 10 pounds' and when...

Alma: Three bottles of wine?

Mimi: Of wine, yeah. And when I pay the cash they don't make the...(she thinks for a while)

Alma: The discount

Mimi: And then I go to customer services and I say 'I want my money back because this is no the offer' and I try! Before I never... I prefer pay the

difference

Alma: Really?

Mimi: Yes but now I try to resolve the problem

Alma: To find a solution? Excellent! So you have improved in confidence...

Mimi: So when I have to talk to people and I can't understand, I say 'please can you speak slowly? Can you speak clearly because I have trouble with my English?' And before [I] never... could make this (Appendix 7.5, interview 3)

5.3.3 Conclusions

Gender is a significant element in Mimi's case, as it conveys inequality in division of labour and career development. Mimi performs a low profile job and she does not pursue postgraduate studies, but her husband does. The role of Mimi and her work colleagues is merely supportive of their husbands' career development plans. In such cases agency is constrained for both gendered practices (for instance, wife's subordination) and family (marrying) commitments. Consequently, in the dramatic change of context that migrating implies, these women undergo an additional degree of distress, in emotional, psychological, self-esteem and identity terms.

I say additional because there is evidence that migrating itself is stressful (Silventoinen, Hammar et al. 2007; Maffia 2008; Weishaar 2008; Stillman, McKenzie et al. 2009). Mimi and Kim invested a good deal of emotional capital not only in their SLL process, but also in living within a new social context. Nonetheless, they also receive benefits from their marriages, for instance, in the form of access to SLL resources and to specific communities in the new context through their partners.

Additionally, Mimi's lack of proficiency in English has been a crucial factor in her crisis and has also influenced some of her identity shifts. These clearly convey two different periods divided by her crisis, which is included in the first period. Mimi has assumed all shifts in spite that some of them resulted in low-profile identities. Therefore, investment in SLL has involved a good deal of emotional, psychological, identity and

self-esteem deals.

Mimi is one of the participants that showed more progress in her SLL during the data collection period, and I consider that this progress is linked to: a) the activity of working, as it is a source of interactions with English L1 and L2 speakers; importantly, it involved continuous SLL help from Matt, an English L1 speaker; b) formal learning; c) Mimi's activity of looking for any opportunity for interacting using English; d) Mimi's activity of L2 self-learning; d) Goody's support.

Goody's membership of the university community provided Mimi, through partnership, with: a) an emotional safe space when meeting English L2 speakers, and this fact encouraged her to try to learn and use English through interaction; b) reliable information about practical matters (e.g. where to find a suitable job for her level of English); c) a 'safe' job within the community.

To be independent, to rescue their high-profile identities, to pursue postgraduate studies and to see the world were all important motives for Mimi's SLL investment. Both are related to the acquisition of capitals, cultural and symbolic.

5.3.4 Epilogue

To date (February 2010) Mimi still works as a cleaner in the same place. She is not studying English at the moment but she passed her two-semester ESOL course obtaining an intermediate level. She has been attending different training courses at her workplace, such as 'Fire safety', 'Safe life' and so on. She and Matt have grown closer.

5.4 Sophie: Making the most of a second choice: from sojourner to long-term resident

Sophie is Chinese and has a master's degree in management and organisations analysis by a British university. She was 26 years old when I started my data collection. Sophie is married to Richard, a young Chinese academic whom she met in the UK. When she joined my study, they had recently moved from a Midland city to Southampton, due to Richard's professional commitments. At that time, Sophie had been in the UK for two and a half years and had lived in three different British cities as a student. Southampton was her fourth home in the UK.

Sophie moved to the UK because she failed the entrance examination to a Chinese university several times, in spite of her high marks. She reported that her failure resulted from the extreme level of competition for accessing Chinese universities. As a result, her mother decided that Sophie should pursue a master's degree abroad. Sophie agreed as she wanted to study further – though in China. The account below also suggests that agency is sometimes constrained by others' plans and decisions, as happened in the two cases discussed above. It also conveys the considerable financial investment made to acquire cultural capital.

39.

I actually chose to do the Master degree in China for first place, but... it's very competitive... and I tried twice, then I failed again and I think that probably I have to face it...and to choose another option, so my mom sent me out abroad ... it costs a lot for a Chinese family...but, I think it's better than I mean, finding a job at the moment, because I think that I need more education. So I went abroad... (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

Accordingly, Sophie's migration to the UK was initially planned to be temporary. The fact of marrying changed this, as the couple expected to remain in the UK for several years due to Richard's career development. Sophie decided to make the most of this situation and she planned to study a PhD. In this sense, Sophie's case is similar to that of Mimi. They adapted their own goals to her husbands' plans in an attempt to make the most of being in the UK.

Sophie is the only child of a cohesive urban family that involves several generations. Her family is not big due to China demographic restrictions over five decades. Sophie's mother is an entrepreneur who owned a restaurant; now she is retired because she is looking after her elder parents. Sophie's father works for the Chinese government. Like all my participants but Kim, Sophie grew up in a cohesive neighbourhood.

Sophie's data denote that she has a strong intellectual drive. Her main interest was to learn about both Western thinking and culture in order to be able to: a) manage while living in the UK and travelling around Europe (like the rest of my participants, she wanted to see the world); b) know how to deal with Western people's idiosyncrasy as a way of access for combating prejudices and misunderstandings about China; c) fully understand her master's course curricula. Consequently, learning English was a must for Sophie, not only for practical purposes, but also as cultural capital for supporting her long-term goals, namely her career development and to contribute to her country's development. This tendency of contributing to prepare the new generations also appears in Kim, so I think that may be a product of either the communist ideology or oriental idiosyncrasy, or both.

40.

I just want to do to make comparisons (sic) between the Western people and the Chinese because it's my subject, 'cause I want to do the PhD for once but...actually I don't want to do the research in Britain or in other European country because I think that my interest is in Chinese behaviour... because I come here because they have the research methodology skill, and so I had to learnt he methodology right here but then I want to apply this method to do the Chinese part... (Appendix 7.6, interview 2)

As Sophie has moved to four different sites in the UK and most of those changes are related to her SLL, the amount of information in this area is greater than in the other participants. Consequently, I have divided her story as I did with Mimi: the first part involves her life in the UK (2 1/2 years) before the data collection, and the second part, the data collection period.

5.4.1 First period

Sophie moved to the UK with a conditional offer by a British university (which I am going to call BU1 for anonymity purposes). The condition was that she had to improve her English. Sophie accepted thinking that it would be easy to acquire the required level, as she passed all her EFL courses exams in secondary school, baccalaureate and university respectively, with a good mark. She also passed the examinations required by BU1. Once in the UK Sophie found SLL a very different matter, as she constantly struggled both to understand and to speak English on a daily basis, like the rest of my participants. In this sense her position and beliefs were similar to Julie's and Lissa's.

41.

I mean it's quite different from the examination... this time you have to use it for the conversation and you have to express yourself and you have to communicate with the British people. So I think that it's quite difficult for me in that moment because I never formally spoke English with anyone. I mean, just for the examination, probably for IELTS and I did just for I took the exam not for daily use (Appendix 7.6, interview 2)

However, Sophie had an advantage that none of my participants had: since her arrival in the UK, she was being fully supported by a university system for international students. Membership in this community of practice provided Sophie with: a) a foundation course, in which SLL was a central part; b) accommodation in the campus halls, where she was able to interact with students both English L1 and L2 speakers, many of them newcomers like her; and c) tutorial support from academic staff. In spite of it all, she reported initial isolation. I consider that her identities as Chinese and as a person familiar only with the Chinese context played an important role in this situation. Later on, Sophie was to surrender these identities temporarily for investing in SLL, as I will explain later.

42.

... I feel so lonely and I really...scared. I mean feel very frightened, I mean just myself... I don't know anything about this place and I am living here all by myself and I need some friends... and I need some Chinese (Appendix 7.6,

After several months, Sophie still struggled to achieve the required level of English. Her accounts clearly stated that among the main causes of this situation was her ‘involuntary’ membership of the Chinese student community. The quotation marks convey her stance of temporary non-membership of that community as a crucial part of her investment. In this paradoxical way, exclusion practices appear in Sophie’s data as she was excluding part of her Chinese imagined community (her most regarded community, as I will explain later). The excerpts below illustrate this clear case of identity investment to acquire L2.

43.

...and then I spent two months studying language in [BU1]... but because most of my classmates are Chinese, so I don’t have a lot of time to speak English, just like the same in China: just writing, just reading... (Appendix 7.6, interview 2)

44.

I met a lot of Chinese students in the language course but, I mean, I just get along with the girl we shared the same flat, and I didn’t get involved in the Chinese community very much at that moment, because I think that I need more to speak English and learn the language. I don’t think that I should live in England and speak Chinese every day... (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

At that time, Sophie met Richard, now her husband, who after being awarded a PhD by a British university obtained a teaching fellowship at BU1, where Sophie was struggling / studying. As Sophie realised that the course was not what she expected, she asked Richard for advice, which resulted in changing the BU1 foundation course for an English course in Oxford. In Sophie’s decision making I have identified converging gendered and identification practices denoted by her deference to Richard and a certain degree of dependence on him. Identity sharing is an important issue, as Richard, like Sophie, is Chinese, young and focussed on success. His identity as a man resulted in a more powerful position than Sophie because of the traditional Chinese gendered order

(Connell 1987; Sen 2001; Connell 2005; Tang, Meng et al. 2008; Hannum, Kong et al. 2009; Peng, Han-Yue et al. 2009)

45.

...and then he gave me some suggestion. He said: 'If you don't like this university you can go to other place if you have to study language... you can spend one year to study language, so you can get seven and if you get seven [in IELTS], you can go to any university in England' and I thought 'this is perfect. It's so perfect' ...So I gave up, and then I went to Oxford just to have a gap year... (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

5.4.1.1 The activity of working to make a living and her impact on SLL

Sophie came to the UK with fully economic support from her family, but once in Oxford, she worked occasionally as a part time catering assistant in a café. The activity of performing a job was important for Sophie's SLL, as it has been for all my participants. In the café she interacted with both work colleagues and customers who were all English L1 speakers. She reported a high degree of cooperation in interaction from male work colleagues (as the rest of my participants did) and from gay work colleagues (see Lissa's and Mimi's cases), who were all English L1 speakers and contributed to Sophie's SLL (e.g. explaining issues of grammar, meaning and vocabulary to her).

46.

...besides study in the language school I also did some part-time job in Oxford for half a year in a sandwich bar. And since there was no Chinese staff in the sandwich bar so I had to speak British (sic) every day... ...it's really hard work for me from the beginning 'cause... when I started work there I just have a... few English words but after a month... I worked very well, you know, my language improved a lot, and especially my friends, my workmates they say 'Oh, you're amazing! At first you came here and you only said a few English words, and now you can speak very good English.' And I think I learned a lot from my workmates, yeah (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

The most helping hand in Sophie's informal SLL at that period was a gay female work

colleague. Sophie, Mimi and Lissa have all reported this high degree of help and importantly, initiative for interaction, from gay English L1 speakers in their SLL. Friendliness, a high degree of cooperation in English L1-L2 conversations, explanations about grammar, vocabulary, meaning and specific cultural issues are the qualities reported by my participants regarding those gay people. Contrastively, as all my participants did, Sophie reported zero collaboration from female English L1 speakers. Gender appears as a relevant issue in SLL, influencing interactions with and help from more proficient speakers of English. Again, I consider this an interesting trait to further exploration.

47.

Alma: And who helped you the most, guy or girls?

Sophie: It's interesting. We have a really... good assistant manager and he is a British. He is nice, funny, very... kind, and he helped me a lot. Every time I asked him, you know, for the language problem, he told me and always very patient, you know...and another mate, she's British lady. I think she's nearly forty years old, but she is a lesbian

Alma: A lesbian?

Sophie: Yes, she's a lesbian. And we were really... close and I invited her to come to my place for dinner, Chinese dinner, and then she invite us, my husband and I, to go to her place, to meet his, I mean, her partner... and so she told me she's a lesbian. And sometimes I feel she treat me very nice and her behaviour it's quite different from British women. I know it's her, I mean, sexual direction, you know, different or something. I mean... I just feel she was very... different from other British women, yeah (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

48.

...and I asked my workmates 'tell me, what's the name?'. And he... he gave me the spelling as well... (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

5.4.1.2 Formal learning context

Sophie's membership in the language school community of practice involved the identity positions of foreign student and L2 learner, which she positively assumed. The language school gave her both formal and informal learning, through lessons and socialising activities. As I have previously explained, Sophie sacrificed temporarily her identity as a Chinese as part of her SLL investment, establishing friendships exclusively with European students. Identification tendencies are exemplified by Sophie's sense of membership to the community of foreign students in a similar way to Julie. However, these practices were solely part of Sophie's investment in SLL, as her close friends in the UK are all Chinese.

49.

In Oxford... I had some... European friends and we always discussed some things, like the life in Oxford, constantly, all of us foreigners for that year. And we discussed on weekends, so I came to understand the life in Europe... and in England especially. I think I quite got used to it, but I think it's sometimes I feel very confused when I met some, you know, foreigners, all those European people, especially the British. (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

Therefore, the combination of both formal (ESOL course) and informal (performing a job and socialising) SLL resulted in progress, as Sophie obtained an IELTS score enough to enrol in a master's course in a different British university (BU2). Once Sophie successfully completed her studies, she and Richard went to China briefly to get married. Back in the UK, Richard obtained a new academic position at one of the universities in Southampton.

5.4.2 Second period: data collection

When my data collection started, Sophie had been six months in Southampton. Her main activities at that time were housekeeping, reading as a basis for her PhD project proposal, doing some voluntary work on weekly basis, and job hunting. Additionally,

she worked briefly for the Royal Mail for three weeks in the Christmas period. Importantly, in spite of having been in the UK for two and a half years studying English formally in tertiary institutions, Sophie had not achieved a proficient level.

Her initial test results were B2 in all the areas, namely vocabulary, writing, reading, grammar and listening. Thus, she still had a long way from her ultimate goal of being a proficient L2 speaker. Like all my participants but Kim, Sophie acknowledges that native-like proficiency is an ideal goal but that she does not want to achieve it (differently than Lissa and Julie) because she thinks that for her professional and personal purposes, it is enough to have a good level of English. During the data collection period, Sophie did not formally study English or anything else. However, she wanted to progress as she was aware of her need to improve her English.

50.

I want to improve my listening 'cause I can watch TV program and I probably can understand nearly 80% if I'm lucky. But sometimes they have very local word that I cannot understand. But I find that it is difficult for me to make communicate conversation with some people like a phone call. I always receive a ring from some people, probably from the bank, and some job interview, and I don't know what they are talking about properly they really... speak very fast. And sometimes they say that the title of their work and probably organisation's name, and I can't capture it...so I think that it is very important for me to improve my listening to you know make the interaction with people very smoothly... (Appendix 7.6, interview 2)

Sophie made the decision of participating in my study because she felt isolated, like Kim, and for similar reasons. Though Sophie's believes in a Chinese imagined community, paradoxically her strong identification/exclusion tendencies influenced her relationships with people from such a community. Additionally, I have identified in Sophie's data two other interrelated tendencies from her urban-middle class habitus: a) to associate the areas of art and humanities with taste, mind-openness and refinement; b) to consider education (not only the academic side, but other elements such as politeness, good manners, and so on) as an important cultural capital.

All my participants presented such beliefs in different degrees. I have already mentioned those elements as part of middle-class habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1986a;b). Moreover, those identification tendencies shaped Sophie's imagined community of humanistic-kind of people, who are caring, sympathetic and open-minded. Interestingly, that imagined community has a higher rank than the Chinese imagined community for Sophie's identification and exclusion tendencies.

51.

I think that Southampton University is quite different from BU2. I mean, the Chinese...people is quite different 'cause, I mean, in BU2 the Chinese people very open, probably because we study something like management, like art, like you know, it's not science related, so I think... that people are very open and very like to work together. But here I've met some Chinese students and they seem... very conservative...So we don't haven't met network social network in the university. And I've met some Chinese girls in the Royal Mail, I used to work for the Christmas casual work, and they seem... I don't know why, I feel I can't get along with them 'cause we have very different interests and they seem that they don't like me sometimes. I don't know because I think in BU2 I have a lot of very good friends, and we have just like a family, and we celebrate birthdays together, and we celebrate Chinese New Year together, and we're very close (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

52.

Yeah, sometimes I think that sometimes it's relevant to personality. And another point is the education background. I mean, when I was in BU2 sometimes I feel... actually some of my friends, they talk about something in English and they just make it quite easy to understand. And especially my supervisor 'cause I have two, as you know, and he always use very easy language not a lot of language, to you know, describe it (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

Additional influencing elements in those tendencies are marital status and residence status in the UK. For instance, Sophie reported differences in behaviour between sojourners (students living abroad) –as she was in the past, or long-term residents (e.g. a worker with a permanent contract) as she was after having got married to Richard.

53.

... and we all have a similar background... and we can share a lot of information and experience. So I think probably that's why I didn't get along very well with some Chinese student here. Because some Chinese student they just come here for one year of study and then when go back to China or they try to find a job in Britain, but it's quite hard. And they are single and I'm married... (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

5.4.2.1 The activity of performing a job: some differences with the first period

Sophie worked briefly in the Royal Mail local centre. She reported having had a good deal of interaction with male English L1 speakers who were cooperative and kind to her (see gender section below). After that, she started working on voluntary basis as a receptionist for a council art gallery with these purposes: a) becoming familiar with the new city social context; b) interacting with English L1 speakers from a range of backgrounds; and c) doing something else than housekeeping and reading, both activities that involve isolation.

Housekeeper is a low-profile identity in Sophie's identity hierarchy. The social dynamics of this workplace was different than those of her two previous jobs. In spite of being a receptionist, she had little opportunity of interaction as few people visited the gallery and her few work colleagues were allocated in different areas. Thus, Sophie was mostly alone.

54.

I use the language, I mean, English... just a few times... but most times I speak in Chinese. And I don't think that my experience as a volunteer has a great influence in my daily interaction with the people here, probably because I don't have a lot of opportunities (Appendix 7.6, interview 3)

Almost at the end of the data collection period, Sophie got a high-profile, well paid job as business analyst. She became increasingly busy at the end of the data collection but she still was highly cooperative. However, she was unable to take the last test. I take

instead her last e-mail –written at my request on 22/Jan/2010, as a as a proof of her progress in English, as in her message Sophie explained that she still keeps her job.

5.4.2.2 Identity matters

Additionally, Sophie's case confirms claims about the impact that living abroad for a certain period of time (months, years) has on L2 learner identities. The experiences abroad have an impact on her perception of the world, in her self-perception, and in her identities. This is especially evident when the L2 learner goes back home (Weaver 1994; Lackland Sam 2001; Takeuchi, Imahori et al. 2001; Wong 2009), as the excerpt below shows.

55.

I have been in here for nearly two years and so I guess that I just got used to the way life is. So when I came back to China it felt a little bit different but anyway it's my home just find a little bit strange 'cause it's still a bit of new develop there and something new happened there, but you wasn't there. And you find still little bit strange and you're feeling just like is home and not very familiar sometimes (Appendix 7.6, interview 4)

The new social context had a significant impact on Sophie's identity and feelings although she was living within a supportive environment. Literature about students living abroad (sojourners) documents the impact that the new sociocultural context has on the student's feelings, perceptions and identity (Weaver 1994; Lackland Sam 2001; Takeuchi, Imahori et al. 2001; Wong 2009)

56.

I can't feel integrated into this society because I'm sometimes I'm not sure of what people's words want to say ... So I think that with this I'm not sure of what people want to say sometimes although I can understand the meaning of their words their sentence so that's why I feel not very comfortable sometimes when I have a conversation with some local people (Appendix 7.6, interview 3)

57.

...in China when... I go out with some friends I always very sensitive to human being behaviour and feelings but here I'm just like losing all feeling all the sensitivity so I feel like I can't feel the people but this sense is very important for me so I feel not very comfortable so I feel that's why I cannot integrate into the society here (Appendix 7.6, interview 3)

Sophie's most regarded identities during the data collection period were: to be a Chinese (middle class, urban, with a humanistic approach to life); an intellectual and open-minded person; a wife; a career woman; a daughter, granddaughter and niece; a good friend; a person who applied her knowledge to improving Chinese people lives; a hard-working person; a successful person; a success-focused person. Sophie less regarded identities are: an unsuccessful person; a housewife; a prejudiced person.

Regarding identity shifts, I have organised Sophie's table placing the shifts more or less accordingly the above explained differentiated periods. As in Mimi's case, this division is at some extent inexact, as the fluidity of the phenomenon makes some shifts difficult to place, e.g. because they are in progress, or their scope includes both periods.

First period

From

to

A local person

An immigrant

A dependent daughter

A semi-independent wife

A Chinese-only-views person

A person who is experiencing and learning new situations, contexts, people and cultures

A single person

A wife

An unsuccessful wannabe postgraduate student both in China and in the UK

A person with a MA by an English University

A literate person in L1

A bilingual literate person

A temporary student immigrant	A resident in Britain for an indefinite –but long, period of time
A member of the Chinese imagined community	A member of the non-Chinese foreign students community
Second period	
From	to
A postgraduate student	A housewife
A person with an active social life	An isolated person
A wannabe PhD student and a job seeker	A professional with a high-profile job in a small but solid British company

5.4.2.3 Gender

I have already explained above, some situations indicate a link between gender and SLL, namely exercising of agency and help from male/gay English L1 speakers and L2 speakers (husband included). Sophie's case suggests the influence of gender in the participant's decision making and agency. First, gender constrains and influences participants by positioning the learner in a subordinate role in the gender order (Connell 1987; Connell 2005); second, this subordination is linked to dependence (partners, parents). Besides the research literature, I have some data that may support such claims about Chinese traditional gendered practices. It comes from my above mentioned master's degree study (Rodriguez-Tsuda 2006). Michelle was my Chinese participant and her case has several coincident points with Sophie's case. It was Michelle's parents who made the decision of sending her to study abroad, despite her wishes of studying in China. Michelle reported that Chinese women are educated to have a subordinate position to their parents and later, to their husbands. Chinese society also put a lot of pressure on Chinese women to get married at a young age. Literature about gendered practices in China confirms those affirmations (Sen 2001; Hannum, Kong et al. 2009; Peng, Han-Yue et al. 2009). Thus, Sophie and Michelle agreed with their parents'

decision of sending them to study abroad, which is a very different matter than making the decision themselves. Their participation in decision making would be completely different if both participants were men, as their parents would be in agreement with any decision made by her son (Sen 2001; Silventoinen, Hammar et al. 2007; Peng, Han-Yue et al. 2009).

58.

Yes, it's thanks to my parents, especially my mum that I am here.

(Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

As I have explained above, Sophie's data suggest dependence transference from her family to her husband to some extent. In spite of that, the data denote an egalitarian relationship with Richard in terms of mutual support and healthy competitiveness in succeeding. Sophie reported making her own decisions, but if the decision is important, she previously consulted Richard. I consider the next excerpt as illustrative of who has the last word in such negotiations, thus confirming how traditional gendered practices took place between the couple.

59.

Alma: And why did you come to Southampton?

Sophie: 'Cause my husband is a post-doctor in the university...

Alma: But, who took the decision to come to Southampton?

Sophie: Yeah, it's my, it's my husband. (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

Like Julie, Kim and Mimi, Sophie has also benefited greatly from partnership, obtaining from Richard a good deal of help in SLL and support in other issues, as the accounts below convey. Like Julie and Paul, Richard and Sophie's SLL processes were to some extent co-constructed through mutual influence and cooperation.

60.

...for example in day to day life I think that if I could help to correct her with a few particular words, I can, you know, to tell her from my experience the most correct English words to use and maybe grammar. Not always like that, but always trying to communicate with her about the good thing to do so. And also, you know, it's mutual teaching. She is also teaching me a little or maybe more than I helped her (Appendix 7.10, Richard single interview)

61.

Yes, because I had some experience because when I first met her I had been here for 4 years, so I knew where to go for the super market, where to apply for to get some tickets, and to do something. You know, is a new society... the people who come here, you know, for them it's a whole new experience, so it's a bit difficult but I don't think it's much more based on the language it's more based in your experience. I think that if you learn a little English and you've lived here for a few years then you have enough experience so from my point of view I think that I helped her in terms of the living experience more than the English things [SLL] (Appendix 7.10, Richard single interview)

62.

Alma: And then he helped you a lot in everything he took care of you a lot

Sophie: Yeah. He helped me a lot. I mean he gave me encouragement, you know, he encouraged me to study hard and to communicate with the local people a lot.

And encourage me to find a part-time job yeah (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

Concerning gender as an element linked to interactions with English L1 speakers in this second period, Sophie had help from male English L1 speakers in the form of a high degree of cooperation and willingness to interact with her. Her accounts refer to both work-colleagues and her current boss.

63.

I think when I was working for Royal Mail I had some very good friends who are not Chinese. They are British, some British guys. They really liked me. I remember a guy... he has a baby... And he always talk about that baby and

about his career, you know, he is a dancer coach or something.And he was a really... nice guy and he gave me a lot of information and suggestions about my career, because he know that I study Organizational Studies, yeah... (Appendix 7.6, interview 1)

64.

...my boss is British ... I find him, you know, he is a very kind people and very smart and very open minded...my boss is very open minded and he want to know something about you as a person a human being, and not something like a product or something. And is like, yeah, is a really good experience (ibid)

5.4.3 Conclusions

Sophie's agency and decision making was constrained by gendered and cultural practices influenced by Chinese traditional gendered order.

Sophie progressed slowly in her English SLL in spite of a) formal SLL in the form of: her EFL background (which comprises several years); university and ESOL courses in the UK; and a postgraduate course in a British university; b) her temporary detachment from the Chinese community; c) help from male/gay English L1 speakers and some L2 speakers like Richard; d) the activity of working that provided her with opportunities of interaction. Eventually she progressed enough to get – and keep - a high-profile job.

Investment in SLL was painful for Sophie as involved her temporary withdrawing her Chinese identity. Similar attitudes have been reported as part of SLL strategies (or investment, in Norton's words): (Pavlenko 2001b).

Support and help from Richard have been crucial for Sophie not only in SLL terms. All my participants with partners have benefited from such partnership in SLL terms, but paradoxically have played a supportive role for their husbands' career development. Thus, gendered practices such male protection and guidance and wife's submission are evident in each of those cases.

Like the rest of my participants, Sophie has undergone many identity shifts, some temporary and some permanent.

Help from male and gay English L1 speakers took place through interaction and informal explanations about grammar, vocabulary, meaning and cultural issues. Like the rest of my participants, Sophie reported absolute lack of interest and cooperation from female English L1 speakers.

5.4.4 Epilogue

To date (February 2010) Sophie still works as a business analyst in the same place. She reports improving her English on daily basis by the activity of working, as her post involves a good deal of reading and writing reports, as well as giving presentations. She also reports using English in some leisure activities such as watching TV or reading.

5.5 *General conclusions*

The women from non-European background cases shed light on the subtle constraints on the exercise of agency, related to gender and identity. Traditional gendered practices offer a subordinate and submissive role to women, which intersects with identities such as daughter and wife.

Lack of English L2 skills was, for Mimi and Kim, a significant hindrance for managing in the new context, and involved low-profile identity positions such child-like dependent person, a ‘mute’ and ‘deaf’ person in English. The identity of English L2 learner also emerged from such lack of L2 skills.

Gender also involved partnership, which played a supportive role in several areas, namely SLL, managing in the new context, and overcoming difficulties. Partnership also involved indirect membership in the partner’s communities and social networks in the new context, which were a source of help and support for the participant’s SLL from more proficient speakers of English (L1/L2). Paradoxically, partnership also offered a merely supportive role for the partner’s career development, offering the identity position of ‘His wife’, which obscured other important identities and conveyed a secondary social role.

Gender is also an issue in obtaining cooperation in interaction and informal help in SLL from English L1 speakers. The overseas women' data confirm that men are keen about interacting and purposively helping the participant with explanations about language use and some features such as vocabulary, grammar and explanations about cultural issues. Conversely, women seem to be indifferent, uncooperative and/or disobliging, with one exception: when motherhood established a common identity between the L2 learner (Kim) and English L1 speakers.

The new social context offered many opportunities for SLL through: a) both direct and indirect (through partners) membership of different communities and social networks; b) activity, in the form of: working, using media, socialising, and travelling around the UK and Europe; c) formal learning through ESOL and other courses. Conversely, it also offered low-profile identity positions, and triggered feelings of strangeness, isolation, homesickness and sadness, which in Mimi's case led to a crisis.

Investment involved not only energy and resources, but also: a) sacrifices of identity (e.g. Sophie); b) accepting identity downshifting (Mimi and Kim); c) overcoming feelings of humiliation, inadequacy, fear, strangeness, sadness, homesickness and pain. The identity shifts that all the women undergone (not only the ones from this group) confirms Norton's (2000) assertion that investment involves, among other issues, a good deal of changes that have a direct impact on the learner's identity.

Investment also involved prospective identities, such as postgraduate (Sophie and Mimi), a proficient L2 speaker (all the women), and a returnee: a) with a certain degree of social prestige within her social networks (Kim) or b) contributor to enhancing her country's educative level (Sophie). The acquisition of cultural capital in the form of L2 and postgraduate studies was also a major motive of investment for Mimi and Sophie, but not for Kim.

Chapter 6 Discussion

In this chapter I discuss the overall implications of the results, which involves bringing together the findings from individual case studies so as to develop overall answers to my research questions. The theoretical and practical implications of the findings are also discussed.

6.1 The intersection of identity, the experience of migrating and investment

One of my initial findings in answering the question: In which ways do gender, identity and the experience of migrating relate to my participants' SLL goals and processes? How do all these elements interact? is that such ambitious question may have as many answers as research approaches to tackle it. However, I consider that I have made my bits when I have found that, in further exploring investment in SLL (Norton 2000) I answered such question, as I will explain below. Consequently, as I previously said at the end of my theoretical chapter (2), I will answer the more general questions answering the more specific questions.

6.2 Investment

As I have explained in 2.3.5.2, chapter 2, investment is a relational concept that in turn is tightly related to another relational concept, that of capitals (Reay 2004). More specifically, investment focuses on the acquisition of cultural capital, and highlights the relevance of emotional capital in such investment (Lareau 1987; Reay 2004). One of my findings confirms Bourdieu's claims that investment is also tightly linked to habitus, and consequently, to social class. It is habitus that dictates what it is worthwhile investing in, or in other words, what accounts as cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986a).

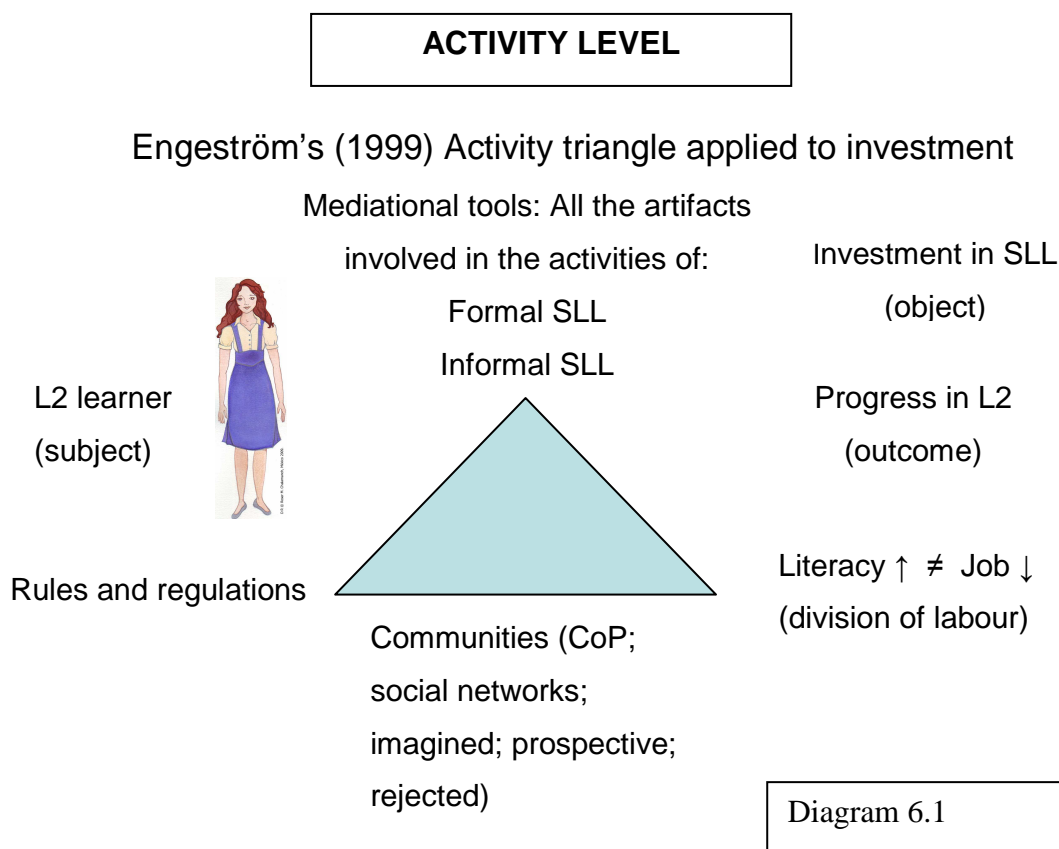
My research questions with regard to investment are: How do my participants invest in cultural capital? What do they do in order to acquire this capital? What may SLL investment involve in activity terms? What may SLL investment involve in identity, emotional and social terms?

In order to answer these questions, I have examined my data using different units of

analysis: a) activity, for what I used the Engeström triangle; b) the concepts of identity, habitus, and capitals (including emotional capital); c) social class. As a result, I identified three different but interrelated levels in the concept of investment in SLL, namely activity, identity and the social context.

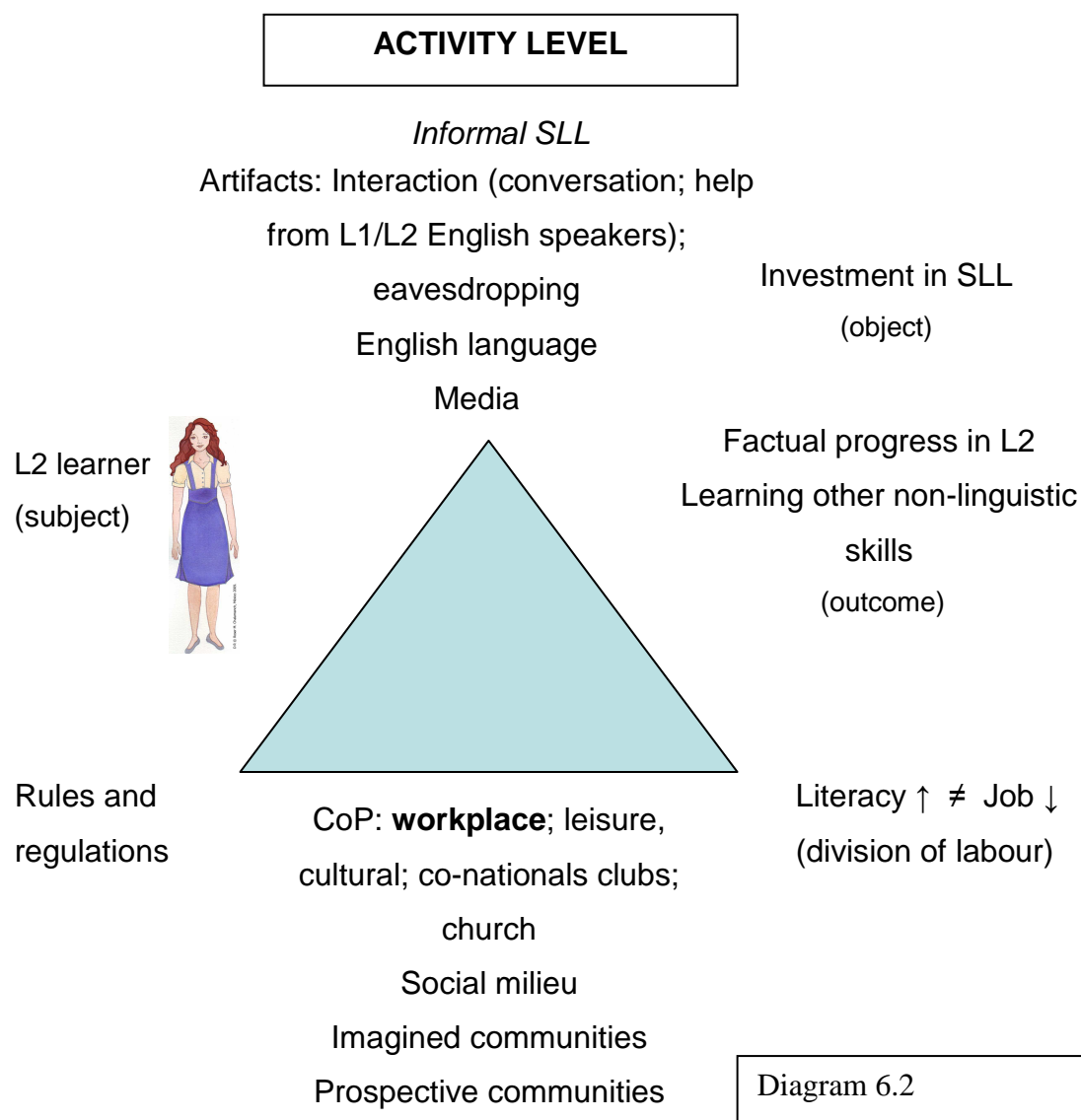
6.2.1 The activity level of investment

The activity level involves both informal and formal SLL activities related to the subject, that is, the L2 learner (see diagram 6.1). This level also implies a wide range of artifacts that mediate SLL, from didactical methods to a television set. The main object is progress in the L2 learner's proficiency as the ultimate outcome. The social milieu is embodied in the communities related to the subject within the new context, as well as in the rules and regulations that apply both to different contexts (workplace, institutions) and to interactions with people from a wide range of backgrounds (linguistic, cultural). The division of labour illustrates the huge gap between the cultural capital that the learner possesses and the low-paid jobs she had access to.



The activity of informal learning (see diagram 6.2) has both interaction and English (TL) language as main artifacts that mediate learning. Interaction, in turn, involves the

activities of listening and speaking with an interlocutor and observing their body language and his/her use of space.



Working for making a living is also a fundamental activity for informal SLL, as it constitutes the main source of interaction. Interestingly, the activity of working confers on English not only the status of lingua franca at the workplace, but also the position of factual mediating tool for learning non-linguistic skills. All my participants learnt skills non-related to their degrees, as I have described earlier. My data suggest that sometimes they learnt only by eavesdropping.

Consequently, though SLL and progress in the TL still is the main goal, the outcome in this case is richer, as it not only involved progress in SLL but also learning additional

non-linguistic, life-long skills. Working in the sense of performing a job and its related tasks involves: a) the use of English not only for speaking but also for thinking about work-related tasks; b) acquiring practical knowledge using English; c) using English L2 in working situations where stress and pressure are involved; and importantly d) potential and actual interaction with work colleagues and management staff who are mostly proficient speakers of English (both L1 and L2) for instance, receiving instructions, explanations and clarifications related with work, or also, social talk. Thus, socialising and engaging in conversations are both also important activities emerging from the activity of working, and they have repercussions for the participants' SLL.

6.2.2 The identity level of investment

My data analysis confirms claims about the complexity of the identity phenomena. As diagram 6.3 illustrates, I have identified habitus as a 'core' or 'centre' that shapes both our set of identities and our hierarchy of identities, plus our identification/exclusion stances, dispositions, and so on (see Bourdieu 1977;1986). Habitus is tightly linked to social class. In my study, all the participants belong to the middle class, as I will discuss later.

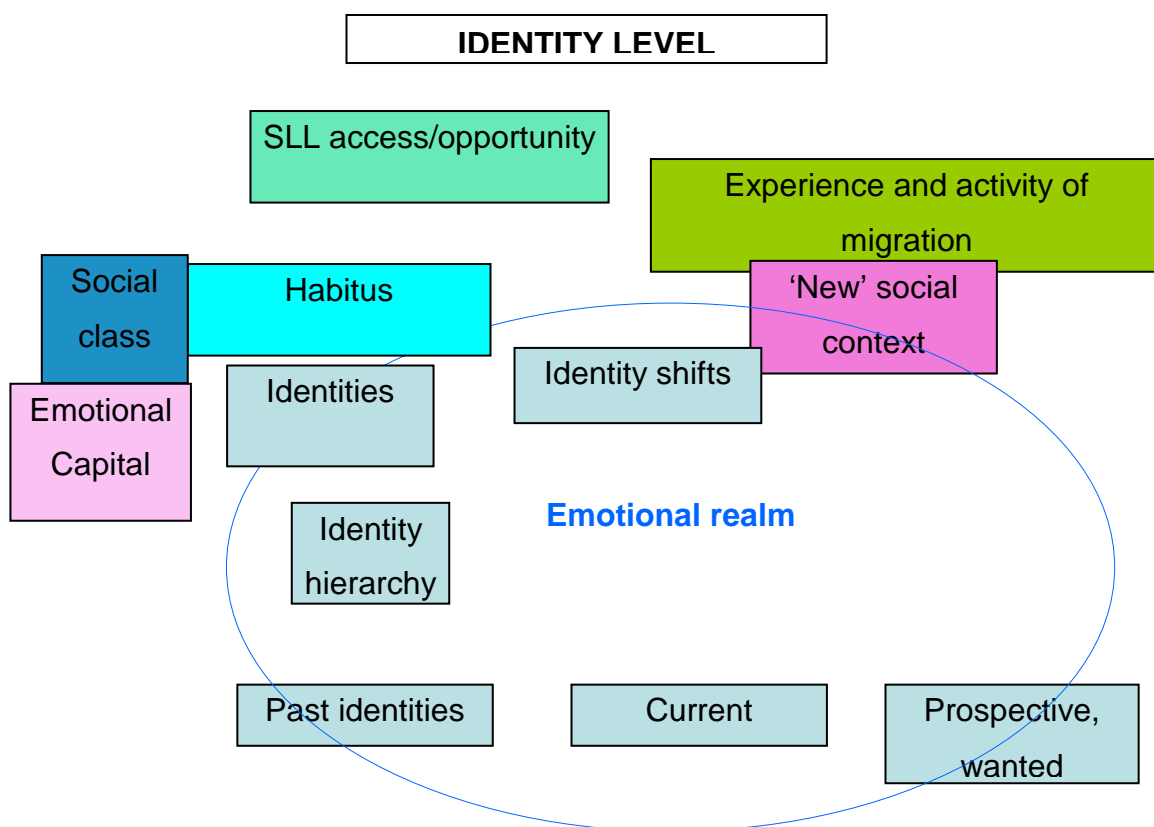


Diagram 6.3

Regarding investment, social class is reflected in a) access to favourable conditions for acquiring cultural capital (SLL) and the opportunity to move to a TL country (e.g. financial support from their families, savings, and so on); and b) the acquisition of cultural capital as a relevant and desired activity (Lareau 1987). My analysis not only confirms Norton's (2000) emphasis on the significant role that the learner's emotional realm has in investment, but I also adopted the concept of 'emotional capital' (Reay 2004). Emotional capital is '...the stock of emotional resources [e.g. support, patience and commitment] built up over time within families and which children could draw upon' (Reay 2004:61). We invest a good deal of emotional capital in the acquisition of cultural capital. All these concepts are tightly linked.

Diagram 6.3 also illustrates the intersection of all the above mentioned investment elements with the new social context, resulting in identity shifts. However, identity shifts are not the only example of identity fluidity. Another example is the relationship between time-space and the emotional realm, which results in strong commitment and a

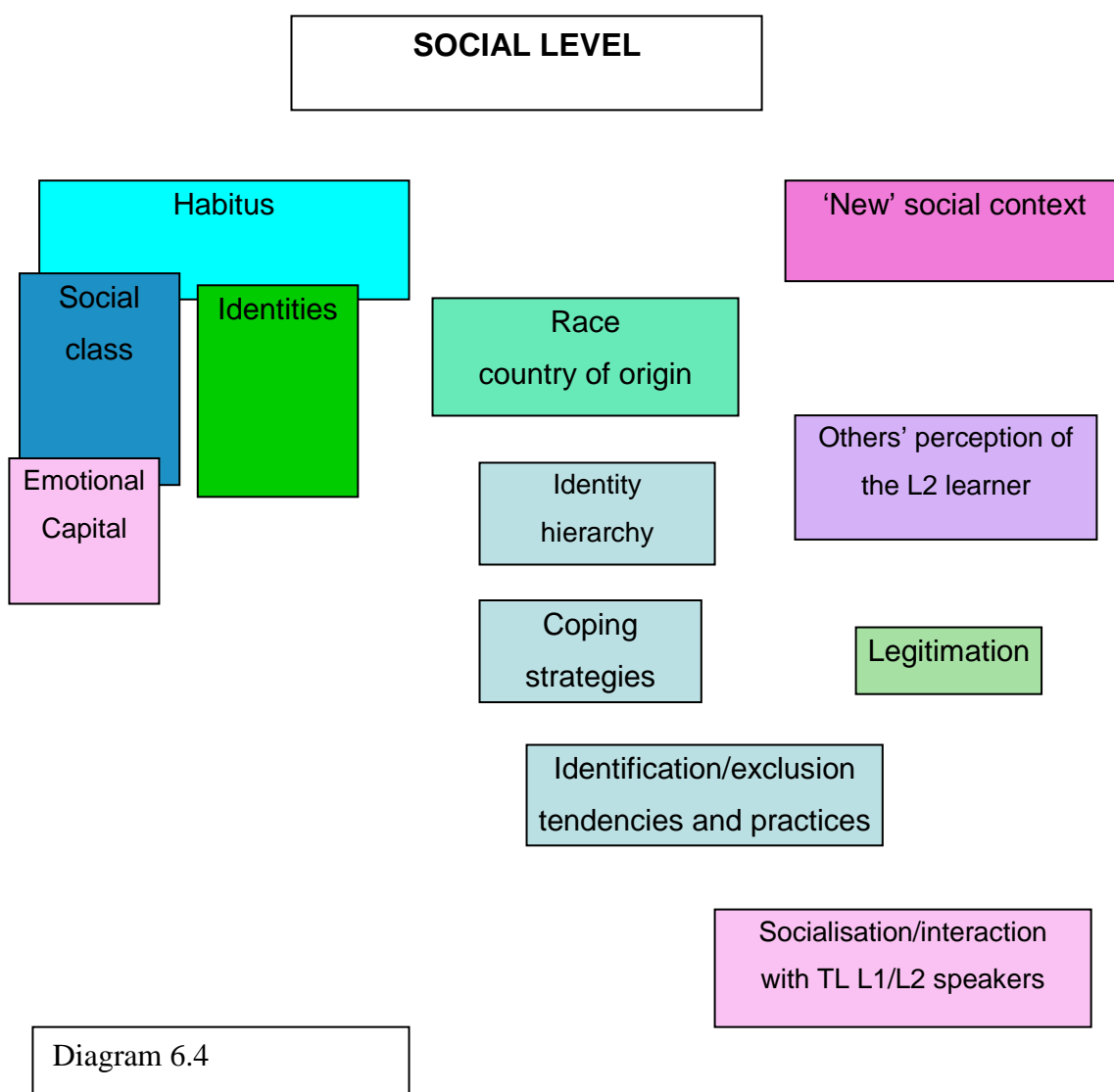
high degree of attachment to specific identities, either past, present or prospective. Here I use the term prospective in the same sense as before, not only including what we imagine or desire, but also what we are investing in to achieve.

For example, the identity of university graduate has its genesis in a habitus developed since childhood. The prospective identity implies an in-progress stage that involves investment (tightly linked to the acquisition of cultural capital). Despite dramatic changes of geographical or social space, for instance a reversal of fortune or even retirement, such a highly-regarded identity will transcend time and space. The degree of attachment and the investment made are the key elements for such long-lasting commitment.

6.2.3 The social level of investment

In this level (see diagram 6.4) the new social context becomes more relevant in the form of the role of others. Social context intertwines with identity, especially with habitus, in terms of embodiment, variety of language (e.g. accent), and also race and gender: that is, in an externalisation of identity. An important mediating element related to habitus is the individual's set of dispositions, among which are their identification/exclusion tendencies and practices.

This involves not only the L2 learner's perspective, but importantly, others' perspective. Legitimation results from all these dynamics, which in turn influences interactions and have an impact on informal SLL. How others see the L2 learner is tightly related to the legitimation or acknowledgement of the L2 learner's more regarded identities. Lack of acknowledgement of these has a strong impact on the individual's emotional realm, and he/she displays a range of coping strategies to deal with such emotional pain (McCall and Simmons 1978). My data analysis confirms that this situation has a direct impact on the SLL process in terms of activity and participation in our own learning. Withdrawal is an example of a coping strategy which Norton (2000) reports in her study. I have also found it in mine, for instance, when Mimi decided to do absolutely nothing for a period of time or when Kim decided to leave the UK without John to get back her former job. To withdraw from interaction is another coping strategy which I have consistently found in Lissa's, Julie's and Alissa's reports.



My data analysis suggests race is an important issue related to others' perception, and a significant influence for interaction in terms of legitimation and agency. Scholars from my line of enquiry have discussed thoroughly the importance of interaction with target language L1 speakers and the power relationships involved in such interactions, in which legitimation plays a key role, as I have explained in chapter 2 (Bremer, Roberts et al. 1996; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004b). Such literature is rich in examples of negotiation, resistance or withdrawing from interactions when the L2 learner is positioned with disadvantage by native speakers, who have the power to give legitimacy to the L2 speaker as an interlocutor (Norton 2000; Pavlenko, Blackledge et al. 2001a). Interaction also involves cooperation and sometimes it also involves help from more proficient speakers of the language for less skilful speakers.

In my data I also found that interactions are shaped by identification and exclusion tendencies not only on the part of the native speaker, but also of the L2 speaker. The key element here is *habitus*/social class, which shapes on the one hand, varieties of spoken English, and on the other hand, prejudices about specific varieties of spoken English. Surprisingly, I found that some of my participants decided to speak only with proficient speakers of specific varieties of English, those closer to what is known as Received Pronunciation. Due to this criterion, sometimes interaction with English L2 speakers was preferred.

I found that only three of my participants did this continuously, namely Lissa, Julie and Alisa. They were able to do so because they had little problems of legitimation, in spite of their strong accents. However, Mimi, Kim and Sophie never had the opportunity of doing so because they continuously had problems of legitimation. This situation constrained dramatically their choices of interlocutors who were proficient in English.

I argue that a combination of race and middle class manners was the cause of such rejection, sometimes open, sometimes subtle. I observed in the playgroup that if the English L2 interlocutor was Caucasian, the English native speakers were more relaxed and natural, no matter if her English was really bad. However, if the English L2 interlocutor had oriental features (e.g. Kim), the English native speakers immediately adopted a position of expectation, like awaiting failure to understand!

The participants from non-European background themselves also showed strong identification and exclusion tendencies. I argue that these were shaped by their *habitus*, social class or immediate goals. Interestingly, they excluded their own co-nationals: Sophie because she wanted to improve her L2 by speaking in English only; Kim because she did not feel attuned to the South Asiatic community, and Mimi did it symbolically, as she felt identified with a community of middle-class Mexicans able to bear the financial investment of studying in a first world country, but excluding all those poor Mexicans unable to travel or who travel to the USA as cheap labour, sometimes putting their lives in risk.

6.3 Identity

Through my analysis I have found that identity is one of the most complex and rich elements in terms of multiplicity, fluidity, and its relationship with both the immediate context and the social world.

6.3.1 Identity hierarchy

In answering the question: What are the more/less important identities for my participants in the new context (UK) and why? I used identity hierarchy theory (McCall and Simmons 1978; Stryker 1980) to identify and explain the structure of each of my participants' personal identity hierarchy.

In doing so, I found that in time and space terms, the set of identities relate strongly to the past, the present and the future, no matter what the current context in which the learner is living in. All my participants have highly regarded identities that transcend time and space. I argue that habitus is their main source. Though some of these highly regarded identities exist in the present, they have originated in the past and they have been gradually constructed. I give as an example the identity of a professional university person. This identity has been constructed as an ideal within a person's habitus, and in this way it is related to the past.

However, as an ideal, it still prevails in the present and it is projected towards the future. All my participants have developed and acquired such an identity, which all of them have temporarily 'lost' in the new context. Though, in all cases, the attachment to this identity is so strong that it is even projected into the future, as part of plans for both career and personal development. The same applies to the low-regarded or even rejected identities. Among my participants, the identity of a low-skilled worker is undoubtedly the most unpopular. That rejection transcended time and space. None of the participants wanted such an identity, therefore this lack of acknowledgement impeded it from being a real identity, and meant it remained a temporary social role.

Therefore, a common set of identity hierarchies with their highly regarded identities and low regarded/rejected identities is one of the shared identified traits between my participants. I consider this coincidence as a proof of a shared middle-class social habitus and it also denotes the strong link between identity and imagined/symbolic

communities.

Common highly regarded identities

Socio-historical-cultural identity (Pole, Chinese, Mexican, Russian, South Asiatic)

Member of their families (daughter, sister, cousin, niece, granddaughter, mother)

Friend

Professional

University student

Postgraduate

Intellectual

Polite and educated person

Member of specific symbolic/imagined communities (e.g. co-nationals). However, in some cases social class is also a strong determinant in this issue, as for the most of my participants, except Lissa, belonging to the same (middle) class was more important than sharing a nationality.

Person who possesses other cultural capital, for instance, someone who has got experience in seeing the world or interestingly, a native-like L2 speaker of English. (However, the latter profile is linked to other high profile identities for instance, a middle class, professional native-like speaker has a far higher profile than a native speaker of English from a lower class who speaks a 'low' variety of English (see legitimization, glossary).

Common unfavourably regarded identities

Illiterate person

Impolite, non-educated person

Bully

6.3.2 Prospective identities

Another of my findings linked to the questions: What are the more/less important identities for my participants in the new context (UK) and why? includes a confirmation of the projection of identity into the future, which in turn is linked to investment to acquire specific identities. Again, I found that social psychological theories of identity hierarchy offered a useful analytical tool, as they include the individual's self-interpretation of her/his identities, thus involving not only who we perceive or think we

are, but who we desire to be (Castells 2004a; Gewirtz and Cribb 2008).

I call such identities prospective identities, because they are not only desired or imagined, but they are also factual, target identities, whose ‘acquisition’ or ‘achievement’ involves the investment of emotional capital ‘...the stock of emotional resources [e.g. support, patience and commitment] built up over time within families and which children could draw upon’ (Reay 2004:61) and other resources with the aim of ‘becoming’ such identity. I have found in my data that these future projections of identity strongly drive my participants to invest in order to materialise them or recovering them. For instance, the four of my participants who are not yet postgraduate, are fondly attached to this future identity (doctors or master’s degree awarded). In turn, participants’ prospective identity is tightly linked to investment and the acquisition of cultural capital (English language, postgraduate studies).

6.3.3 Coping strategies

Now I am going to address the questions: Does identity play a role in my participants’ membership and participation in different communities? If yes, in which ways? McCall and Simmons (DATE) identified a series of ‘defensive strategies’ (defensive mechanisms) to balance expectations and outcomes and to soothe the pain arising from lack of legitimation of a relevant identity: a) to draw upon past successful experiences enacting an identity (what they call ‘short-term credit’); b) to look for cues, real or imagined, that confirm the identity (‘selective perception’); c) to interpret real cues favourably, in order to feel that the identity is confirmed (‘selective interpretation’); d) to withdraw from interaction when the identity is not acknowledged; e) to return to an identity switch that fits the context; f) to blame others for the lack of success in achieving identity legitimation; g) to disown an unsuccessful identity; and h) criticize and sanction others for not acknowledging/legitimizing the identity (Turner and Stets 2005).

Norton (2001) provides examples from her study of five immigrants in Canada that contain some of the above mentioned strategies, using the non-participation concept from ‘community of practice’ theory as her unit of analysis.

My participants’ reports suggest the use of such strategies, which ranged from Mimi’s

total detachment and lack of participation in the new social context to Julie's showing off her identity as a university 'fresher' to her former employer, who was not willing to acknowledge such an identity.

6.3.4 Habitus, identity and social class

A further finding that I consider relevant with regard to the question of what the most/less important identities were for my participants is the relevance of social class and habitus as key elements not only in identity hierarchy, but also for other important issues such as identification and exclusion practices, and the sense of belonging. Social class has almost disappeared as a unit of analysis in social research in Anglo-Saxon countries (Crompton and Scott 2000; Edwards 2000; Devine and Savage 2005; Shaw, Galobardes et al. 2007). Some causes of such downshifting are: a) the shifts of industrial sites from West to East caused by neoliberal policies has contributed to the disappearance of the working-class as Marxist analysis conceives it; b) the boundaries among classes are too fluid, because of the world crisis, and the dichotomy between working-middle class is blurred (Crompton 1998; Reay, David et al. 2005).

However, as social class is an important element of sociological approaches in many disciplines, there are claims for a re-emergence of such element (Lovell 2004; Reay, David et al. 2005; Collins 2006) (see 2.3.5.6, in chapter 2) My data analysis led me to agree with such claims. I found that habitus can be used as an overarching explanatory element for the intersection of social class, identity, gender, ethnicity, which results in exclusion, inclusion, belonging, identification (or lack of it) within social contexts, groups and individuals. I used it in that sense, though my study was not specifically about identity.

I found that my participants' set of identities had a core that was not flexible and played a key role in shaping the wider set. The basis that sustained this core were the identification and exclusion tendencies and practices of each participant. My data suggest that indeed some identity changes took place under the influence of a combination of social context and living experiences, namely the identity shifts explained in chapters 4 and 5.

However, such shifts were variable in each of the cases and importantly, they were

never radical but very subtle. My participants' attitudes and behaviours, their identifications and exclusion practices, and their responses to different situations all point to habitus as a basis of identity, which also shapes my participants' view of the world (I would say a middle-class view of the world). In turn, all these elements have an impact on their decisions and choices about their SLL and access to SLL resources.

Bourdieu's habitus gave me a sociological explanation of how identification practices emerge in a different way from the discursive poststructuralist argument, which I think focuses on identity construction in a more abstract manner. Habitus gave me a rationale for practices and tendencies that emerged significantly everywhere in my data, while it allowed me to trace their origin within my participants' backgrounds. It also provided me with a specific way to explain the link between the impact of social context (past and present) on identity, as well as to trace important differences between past and present social contexts.

I thus used habitus as a complementary way to explain identity that goes beyond viewing it as a product of discursive practices. To me, the most significant trait of habitus for my data analysis was its focus on how social practices were made evident in the form of external body manifestations attuned to specific social contexts, tastes, and in general, a whole way of life that has emerged since the individual was born. Importantly for my data, habitus covers many of the perceptible traits of identity, explaining how identity materialises in all these tangible, observable traits that others can read and interpret (what Bourdieu called 'bodily hexis' (Shusterman 1999; Garret 2007)).

For instance, it helped me to find an explanation of why Lissa and Julie were sometimes ignored or seen as different in their workplaces, not only because they were foreign. In addition, they denoted through body manifestations and actions their middle-class background, which provoked feelings of resentment from some lower-class people. For example, the way they moved, how they spoke, and the 'school learned' English they used (rich in vocabulary) were all involuntary markers of social class differences. This is because habitus not only involves what we project voluntarily or involuntarily, but also the others' own habitus acting as an interpretive lens. And last but not least, habitus is tightly related to social class and acquisition of capitals (Fowler 1997; Webb, Schirato et al. 2002; Lawler 2008b), and so it allowed me to analyse people's motives

and goals from a different point of view.

6.3.5 Identity shifts

Norton's (2000) study gave evidence of identity fluidity and multiplicity, both traits claimed by poststructuralists. She did so by her analysis of her participants' identity shifts. Identity shifts were an important part of my research, as my research questions reflect: Do my participants have identity shifts? If yes, how does this happen? Are those changes gradual, radical, unexpected, and so on? Are they related to the identity positions offered by the new context? Are they related to the participants' social roles?

My data suggest that identity shifting is the result of a radical change in sociocultural and spatial terms, namely migrating to a different country. Thus, identity shifts are tightly related to social context. As I have made clear in chapter 2, the new context offers a range of identity positions which the L2 learner can assume or reject as identities. Rejected identity positions are ignored or may become social roles. For instance, the identity position of an illiterate, non-proficient person in L2 can be rejected by the adoption of an alternative, in-progress identity: L2 learner. This identity also involves the imagined belonging to an imagined community of L2 learners/speakers that is opposite to that of TL native speakers. In that case, the lack of language skills is an element of identification. The identity of L2 learner also involves the prospective, ideal identity of a proficient speaker of the TL.

All my participants experienced identity shifts, as the tables in chapters 4 and 5 show. Some of these shifts are unexpected and radical: for instance, the shift from a highly literate person in L1 to a 'deaf' and 'mute' person in L2; the shift from university graduate to low-skilled worker. The last is a clear example of an identity position offered by the new context, which never became an identity but stayed as a social role. A key element in such complex situation is the fact that this identity had one of the lowest places within my participants' identity hierarchy. This example is also useful to illustrate that indeed, some identity positions are related to social roles, and that the latent change from social role to identity is a complex subjective issue, as I have already explained in chapter 2 and above in this chapter.

Identity shifts are also related to specific communities in the new context. One of the

most interesting communities is the workplace, as it involved an ambivalent, complex relationship with the L2 learner. On the one hand, membership in the workplace community was seen as purely circumstantial by all my participants, thus they never felt a sense of belonging to such community due to its relationship with the lowest regarded identity for all my participants. On the other hand, all of them benefited from interactions within such community, and not only in linguistic terms: all of my participants learnt other skills related to the work they performed (e.g. cooking; counting and organising huge amounts of things using the TL; professional ways of cleaning; customer service). I consider that all of them benefited doubly from such learning, as they learnt both skills and TL. An additional benefit was the friendships – some of them long-term, that some of my participants built up with English L1 speakers.

With regard to the duration of such shifts, I argue that most of them were temporary, contextual related and that they did not have a strong impact in the overall set of the individual's identities. I reached the conclusion that habitus is a nuclear element of identity, and that it is difficult to modify, though Bourdieu stated that it can be modified indeed by education and experiences (Garret 2007). Some identity shifts are permanent. The identity as a person who lives (or has lived) abroad, a person who has seen the world and therefore knows her way around is deployed within former contexts such as social networks and communities in the country of origin, or even in communities in the new context. For instance, Julie's enrolment in the university conferred to her an identity as a university student, someone who has gone upwards in the social scale, within her former work communities and work agency staff. Unless something really shocking happens, Julie will retain the university student identity, which in turn will shift to a graduate or postgraduate identity (as eventually happened).

Some identities denote more complexity in such terms. For instance, in Lissa's case, the new context offered to her the position of a mediating person between the English speaking context and less L2 skilful Poles. This in turn helped her to progress in her own SLL and to overcome her own fear and lack of confidence. It also gave her a positive identity within the local Polish community. However, we will not know if Lissa will retain this identity in the near future. She might be too busy to help, or maybe the Polish community will be more organised and therefore her help will not be needed as before. This example illustrates that the permanence of an identity is something very complex and individual.

Additionally, there are more elements in play. For instance, for all the participants with partners, the identities attached to partnership involved other potential identities within the partner's communities, sometimes not so favourable like in Kim's case.

6.4 Gender

My main research question regarding gender is Do gender relations influence my participants' interactions and their language learning? How?

I would like to start my discussion with a note of caution: my findings are based mainly on my participants' reports and on my observations. Subjectivity and potential bias may be involved, as happens in any other qualitative research analysis and interpretation, for we are not studying exact sciences but human matters. I make this clear because my data analysis suggest a tendency related to gender which may cause controversy. I acknowledge that such findings are only a starting point for more research, for which I am also glad, as I consider them worthy of further exploration.

Gender appears in my data as a variable that influences success or lack of it in interactions between English L1 and L2 speakers. This happens in these ways: a) interaction takes place and is highly successful when the interlocutors are a female English L2 speaker and a male English L1/proficient L2 speaker; b) interaction does not take place, or takes place unsatisfactorily when the interlocutors are a female English L2 speaker and a female English L1 speaker; c) interaction takes place and is highly successful when the interlocutors are a female English L2 speaker and a gay (man or woman) English L1 speaker.

However, I have detected two exceptions to the above mentioned tendencies: one centres on motherhood. Motherhood appears in the data as an element of identification. This led to willingness to interact and different degrees of cooperation from female English L1 speakers with female English L2 speakers. However, the issue is not that simple, as I have also found in my analysis of playgroup dynamics (see chapter 5, Kim) that social class is a key element that determines interaction, surpassing motherhood.

I consider that conservative practices of the gender order (Connell 1987; 2005) infuse

motherhood with a 'special' status linked to biological traits. This idealised 'sisterhood' creates a favourable climate for interaction only to a certain point, because my data analysis suggests that social class is the main determinant of interaction. This explains why, in the playgroup (see 5.2.1 above) lower class English women did not interact with other mothers out of their own group.

The other exception is friendship. My data contain reports of two participants who got purposeful non-paid help and support in SLL terms from two female English L1 speakers, namely Julie's and Kim's teachers of English. Friendship was the key explanatory element in Julie's case, and partnership in Kim's through John's membership in the church community of practice.

Gender also appears in my data as an element that influenced two situations for some of my participants: a) migration to the UK; and b) access to SLL resources. I have identified that the intervention of partners (what I call partnership) has played a key role in both situations. Gendered practices conditioned the decision to move to the UK in Kim's, Mimi's and Sophie's cases. The two first participants came to the UK in a purely supportive role, as housewives who cater for all their husband's needs, so that they could be totally dedicated to their full-time postgraduate studies. Besides, Kim and Mimi also worked in low-paid, low-skilled jobs in order to contribute to the family income.

Sophie's case is slightly different, as Sophie was literally sent to the UK to pursue postgraduate studies. It was her mother who made the decision, and Sophie obeyed. Once in the UK, Sophie remained still strongly attached to the identity of daughter until she acquired the identity of wife. However, gendered practices also benefited not only the three aforementioned participants, but also Julie and Alisa thanks to their partners. As I have explained in each case in chapters 4 and 5, partners' help was crucial for all of them regarding their SLL processes and their emotional realm.

Some proficient speakers of English as both L1 and L2 purposely helped my participants in their SLL. Again, all of them were male or gay English L1 speakers (work-colleagues, housemates, and friends) and male English L2 speaking (partners). I have identified some forms of this help: a) in interactions, using some of these elements: recasts, repetitions, confirmation checks, comprehension checks or clarification requests

(Wardhaugh 1985; Long, in Mitchell and Myles 2004) as well as speaking slowly with clear articulation; b) giving explanations about grammar, language use and specific cultural issues related to the utterances or phrases in question, whether the L2 learner requested them or not.

Finally, my research on gender issues leaves two questions for further exploration: a) gender as a variable that influences significantly solidarity and cooperation in interaction between English L1 and L2 speakers; b) the dynamics of the playgroup, an almost all female site, and the impact of such dynamics (e.g. the use of English as a lingua franca) on the L2 learner SLL process and progress.

6.5 Social context

One of my research goals was to explore ways in which the social context intersected with the SLL process and the L2 learner's identity. Another of such goals was to explore some outcomes of those intersections. I consider significant the fact that, in answering other research questions related to identity, gender or investment, I have already dealt with many of my research questions related to social context, for instance, do my participants have identity shifts? Are they related to the identity positions offered by the new context? What may investment involve in identity, emotional and social terms? Especially, my identification of the social level of investment addressed thoroughly the social context. To me, this shows precisely the tight relationship between all these elements. However, I am going to further discuss each of the questions related to social context.

A major question was how important is others' role (specifically English L1/proficient English L2 speakers) in my participants SLL learning. I have already answered this question in the gender section, where I not only mentioned the role of others, but also the strong relationship between the perceptible part of an individual's identity and others' identification and exclusion dispositions, beliefs, attitudes and practices. I have already discussed the impact that such perceptions have not only on the L2 learner's SLL process in terms of interaction with more proficient speakers of English and help from them, but also in her emotional realm.

This matter leads to another question, which addresses a possible relationship between

the L2 learner's identity (not only the perceptible, embodied one) and her participation and membership in different communities. Again, habitus appears as a strong element that influences identification/exclusion tendencies and practices, which are significant elements in the sense of belonging or wish to belong, to specific communities. My data suggests that in all the cases, there is a sense of belonging to one's specific community of co-nationals.

But this matter is not crystal clear, as I have two extreme cases: on the one hand, Lissa has engaged in the activity of helping to any Polish person who asks for it, regardless of their social class, gender or condition. And this is because she strongly believes in an imagined community of Poles. On the other hand, Kim opted for loneliness as she felt no connection to the most of her co-nationals in Southampton. Her exclusion tendencies led her to isolation, which she and John reported as a situation hard to bear.

Habitus led all my participants towards the 'golden', imagined community of university graduates. They looked for membership in such community in their own ways. Kim tried to reach it through her friendship with John's friend, who is a teacher and has a degree. Lissa tried to access it by participating in my study. Julie worked really hard to achieve the level of English needed to be accepted for a degree course, as Sophie did for her postgraduate course. Mimi was working hard to save money for hers, while informally learning as much English as she could. Alisa talked every day with her friends, who are former university colleagues.

Additionally, each of the participants had membership in communities that were special for them. For instance, Lissa and the Catholic church community; Alisa and the trance music community; Kim and the playgroup; Mimi and the university Mexican community; Julie and the Polish university community; and Sophie and a community of postgraduates from the British university where she got her masters' degree.

Another community which none of them wished to join, was the lower class English community. As I have explained above, social class also influenced choices about the kind of people to interact with, and this is related to my last research question about social context (How does identity influence my participants' decisions about who they interact with and why?). Some of my participants chose not to interact with work colleagues unless necessary (e.g. Julie and Lissa); some of them looked forward eagerly

to such interaction (Mimi; Sophie; Kim) for the reasons already explained in the identity section. Alissa took things as they came.

Julie and Lissa avoided interaction with low-class English L1 speakers in spite of the hypothetical advantages that interaction with native speakers may involve. Interaction with low-class English L2 speakers was mentioned by Lissa with obvious disdain (brief interactions with Indian men) however, I consider that in this specific case, exclusion was related not only to social class, but also to race and cultural differences. The rest of my participants did not mention interaction with low-class English L2 speakers.

Another finding is that the concept of C o P is useful for analysing the relationship between participation and identity in specific communities of practice such as classrooms (Norton 2001; Lantolf and Genung 2002), identifying resistance and agency as some main factors involved in participation (or lack of it). However, it does not offer explanations of why this resistance and agency take place. Also, in my data I found other big communities for instance, the university, the Polish community, the Chinese community and so on, that the concept of C o P does not cover. I consider that the social psychological theories of identity cover such gaps.

6.6 *Similarities and differences*

In this section I revisit the commonalities and differences between cases, thus addressing my two last research questions: What do the cases have in common? What is different among them?

6.6.1 Commonalities

6.6.1.1 Social class background and habitus

I have already discussed this topic in 6.3.4. In this section I explain the criteria that I used to locate my participants in a specific social class.

In sociology, the concept of social class has three main meanings: a) status, lifestyle; b) structured element with the criteria of possession of economic and power resources (socioeconomic position); and c) factual or potential social and political factor (Crompton 1998; Crompton and Scott 2000; Devine and Savage 2000; Devine and

Savage 2005; Shaw, Galobardes et al. 2007). For my purposes, I used the second and third meanings.

The measurement criteria for social class involve a wide range of elements. I adopted the concept of stratification based on skills, occupations, competencies, property and knowledge (Devine and Savage 2005). This takes into account an individual's income, education and social networks (Clark 2001; Shaw, Galobardes et al. 2007). Importantly, these criteria also acknowledge social mobility, that is, that social class may vary at different periods of an individual's lifetime (Shaw, Galobardes et al. 2007).

Classification of classes involves the process of comparing different strata and decisions about 'the right type and amount of cultural capital to be seen as having worth' (Devine and Savage 2005:48).

Following the above mentioned criteria, my data analysis suggests that all the participants came from a middle class background. My participants' middle class status is denoted by some traits of their economic status and habitus (Bourdieu 1977, see chapter 2): a) parents own their housing; b) parents have all tertiary education (with exception of Mimi's parents); c) a behaviour code, in which politeness and well-manners are relevant, as well as a similar dress code in spite of cultural differences. This set of characteristics indicates a middle class habitus.

I acknowledge that all these criteria also involve an emphasis on difference, hierarchisation and inequality, as there is always a comparison against other groups within the strata (Anthias 2005). However, this also supports the explanation of identification/exclusion tendencies and practices that emerge continuously in my participants' data.

A common trait in my participants' set of values is the relevance of acquiring cultural capital in the form of education and academic qualifications. The acquisition of cultural capital is a highly regarded quality and a life-long activity. This can be considered a typical (though not exclusive) middle class trait (Lareau 1987). Two examples of this stance are a) excellence in L1 language learning and use, which was related to their ideal of 'native-like' proficiency in L2 (middle class native-like); and b) importance in acquisition of knowledge about and access to cultural products (art, history, philosophy, media, films, museums and so on) and to other cultures by

travelling.

Besides, all my participants considered the acquisition of tertiary education a must, as the majority of their parents had a degree: Kim, Sophie and Lissa had a master's degree while Mimi and Alisa had a degree. Julie was studying for her degree during the data collection period –which she successfully completed. An interesting common feature is that, by contrast, since they arrived in the UK, none of my participants got work appropriate to their level of literacy.

A common feature linked to investing in cultural capital was that pursuing postgraduate studies in a high-status country was, for all the participants, more regarded than pursuing such studies in the country of origin. To me, this is clear evidence of how hegemony works on a global scale: high-status countries, their cultures and languages are seen as models of reference and sources of well-being, status and progress through the acquisition of the cultural capital linked to their cultures and their languages. The question can be: Why is it more important to study in an English speaking country university than in an equally ranked university in the country of origin? Is it only the proficiency in English which is an issue here, or is it the value attached to study (and equally important, living continuously) in a high-status country? All my participants agree in that matter.

None of my participants were economic immigrants in a strict sense, though all of them worked to be financially independent from their parents or partners. This is an additional element that supports their middle class background.

Concerning their family background and social networks, the data indicates that all my participants came from 'traditional' and cohesive families, growing up in neighbourhoods with tight social relations. All of them maintained regular contact with their families to different degrees. With the exception of Kim (see chapter 5, Kim), all of them usually travelled to their countries as much as they could. To see the world for acquiring a solid and comprehensive cultural background is also part of the acquisition of cultural capital.

6.6.1.2 Identification, exclusion, and communities

Another important shared characteristic is that all my participants had assumed the identity of immigrants with no problem. I argue that they did so because they were actually assuming a high profile immigrant identity, namely people: a) with a high level of literacy in their L1; b) who have moved to an English speaking country looking for the acquisition of cultural capital in situ, with the clear goal of acquiring the highest possible level of proficiency (even native-like) in English (Kim is an exception in this matter); c) who wanted to know different cultures – not in depth, but within a safe multicultural cosmopolitan social frame, which was provided by the English urban context in which they live. This high profile identity involves total detachment from the stigmatisation often conferred on the identity position of immigrant.

The data suggest that my participants conceived a symbolic middle class community of immigrants, which does not relate to the contingent of ‘other’ immigrant people –e.g. economic migrants, asylum seekers and so on. In addition, I have found evidence of a social class bias in the rejection of the identity position of low-skilled/low-paid worker, an attitude that might also apply to the identity position of low profile immigrant. This can be an explanation for my participants’ stance regarding the immigrant identity.

Accordingly, my participants perceive themselves as a part of an imagined community of ‘foreign people’ or ‘immigrants’. Language, culture and ethnicity have also a significant role in this ideation of the above mentioned imagined community, as the data illustrate the clear distinction made between what all my participants refer as ‘the English’ (more specifically, working class or underclass English people) and ‘we, the immigrants’, who are middle class, mainly university English L2 speakers who are easier to speak English with.

Paradoxically, my participants reported feelings of being excluded, patronised, or ignored. However, as I have explained in the example above, my data suggest that all of them had strong identification and exclusion tendencies, which shaped their choices for interaction, membership of groups and so on, as well as their stances with regard to others from their milieu.

All my participants had a tendency to believe in imagined communities in which they

had or wanted to have membership. Besides their actual middle class background, which all of them were fully aware of, my participants shared three imagined communities: a) the community of people with tertiary education or university people community. This is an idealised community that is tightly linked to their habitus; b) the immigrant middle class community (see above); and c) the community of people that have seen the world, thus know their way around.

6.6.1.3 Investment and capitals

I have already discussed the issue of investment of emotional capital. This is a major trait shared by all my participants. My data suggest a huge investment of emotional capital in the pursuit of English, with different goals. All my participants have reported having faced situations of humiliation, embarrassment, rejection, being ignored, patronised, feeling excluded or out of place. However, their emotional capital helped them to overcome all the situations and eventually achieve their goals. Hence I consider emotional capital a powerful element of investment in cultural capital.

In such investment, all the participants performed three main activities that involved exposure to L2, interaction and systematic learning. These activities were: working to make a living, formal learning through attendance at courses on a part-time basis, and participation in specific multilingual communities, where English is the lingua franca. The data show that in such informal learning, interaction (including help from more proficient speakers of the target language) exposure to L2 and specific activities such as watching TV have all played a role in terms of L2 progress in the six cases. As I have already discussed, the activity of working has provided all my participants with a good deal of both L2 exposure and interaction with English L1 and L2 speakers, though this interaction was different in each case (see chapters 4 and 5).

In all the cases, help from English L1 speakers and highly proficient English L2 speakers had a positive impact on my participants' SLL processes. Also, in all cases but one (Kim) investment in formal SLL was crucial for my participants as English is cultural capital, and, as I have explained above, the acquisition of such capital is part of their set of beliefs and practices. All believed that investing time, hard work and even sacrifices is inherent in the activity of learning; and native-like proficiency in L2 is an ultimate and desirable goal. What they did not realise, but the data analysis show, is that

they were actually investing in who they are and their expectations of who they want to be – identity, in other words (see section 6.1).

To see the world is also a relevant activity that acts as a powerful incentive to move to a high-status country as the UK is. The main motivation is an idealised view of Western/First world culture. My participants wanted to see the world but with different degrees of motivation, which ranged from the more active eagerness of the CEECs participants, to an attitude of making the most of a circumstantial opportunity for travelling, like that of the participants from non European backgrounds.

To see the world becomes a form of cultural and symbolic capital, as it involves the prestige of having been in first class cosmopolitan cities that provide the opportunity of seeing other exotic cultures. To see the world also involves learning the universal language, the travellers' lingua franca. Thus, the acquisition of both capitals intersects at this point. I affirm that to see the world is an important additional motive to that of learning English as cultural capital for career development.

Importantly, the activity and experience of seeing the world involved, for all my participants, the identity of a person who knows their way around. This identity was deployed in time and space in these ways: a) in the participant's 'former' social networks and communities in her country of origin; and b) in the participants' current social networks and communities in the UK, with newcomers or new acquaintances.

Another common trait was the communication challenges and problems that all of them faced when they moved to an English speaking context. Of course, their level of English played a crucial role, which I am going to discuss in the differences section.

6.6.2 Differences

Generational and cultural differences

The data suggest that the three participants from non-European backgrounds might have had more emotional dependence on their mothers. Each of them reported a need to talk to their mothers on a daily basis, and if this was not possible, at least several times per week. I argue that this is a cultural issue, which in turn has repercussions on how those participants understood and performed gender. Generational issues may also play a role

in this matter, as Kim, Mimi and Sophie were in their late twenties-early thirties.

The three participants from CEECs showed more independence from their families. This does not mean that they were emotionally unattached to their parents, as they made reports of missing them, but their data does not allude to a constant need of being in touch with their mothers. As I have already suggested, cultural background and age may play a role, as Julie, Alisa and Lissa were all in their twenties.

Generational and cultural differences may also make for differences in some gendered practices. My data suggest that my participants from non-European backgrounds tended to integrate others' needs with their own needs, while the CEECs were more individualistic. These tendencies can be traced in the motives for coming to the UK. Kim, Mimi and Sophie moved to the UK following others' agendas, not their own: Mimi's and Kim's husbands decided to pursue postgraduate studies in the UK; Sophie's mother decided that she should pursue postgraduate studies abroad.

Therefore, I conclude that they were under 'symbolic' pressure to come to the UK, in spite of their reports of having made the decision of moving to the UK as a personal choice. Their data suggest that their agency was subjected to others' needs and decisions, and that gender played an important role in this. Contrastively, Julie, Lissa and Alisa's motives for moving to the UK were their own, and therefore, they designed their own plans for moving to the UK. All these have a repercussion in their attitudes and responses to the situations, challenges and problems that all of them faced once they moved to the UK. I am not going to repeat what I have explained in chapters 4 and 5, thus I am only going to mention that the CEECs ladies faced the situation differently.

Another difference that also groups the cases in the same way (CEECs and non-European) is the English SLL background. The CEECs participants made a bigger investment in English SLL before coming to England, taking additional English lessons on private basis. Consequently, when they moved to the UK they had an English L2 background as a basis to communication and progress. The non-European participants invested less at different degrees. Sophie's data suggest that she indeed invested in learning English but her lack of interest had a repercussion on her final level of English when she left university. Kim's and Mimi's cases are more dramatic, as neither of them had studied English besides a few hours during secondary school. As I have already

explained in each individual case, this lack of English skills had a strong repercussion in the lives and identities of the three non-European participants.

Marital status is another element of difference. Four participants had partners: Sophie, Mimi and Kim were married, while Julie had a long-term boyfriend. Two participants had no stable relationships: Lissa reported nil love relationships since being in the UK, while Alisa reported a few sporadic, brief love relationships in the UK. The participants with partners benefited from such partnerships, as I have already explained in the investment section.

Kim is the participant who differed the most from the rest in terms of goals. To start with, she was not interested in learning English until she moved to the UK and was aware of her linguistic/communicative isolation. For Kim acquiring English was a practical need, not building up cultural capital. This had an eventual repercussion on her decision making, as she left the UK to re-start her life in her country. The linguistic capital that Kim acquired is now fading, but nonetheless it conferred the identity of a person who has lived in the West and therefore knows her way around.

Motherhood is also another element that made a difference between Kim and the other participants. As I have already explained in the gender section above, motherhood gave Kim the opportunity of successful interaction with female English L1 speakers, which did not happen with the other participants.

6.7 Conclusions

Investment can be used as an overarching unit of analysis, as I have found that it involves three comprehensive levels, namely activity, identity and social context. Particularly useful to understand each level were; Activity theory and Engeströms activity triangle; social psychological identity hierarchy theory; Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capitals, legitimation; the concept of emotional capital; and the poststructuralist concept of identity.

Investment includes an important element, emotional capital. This element is tightly linked to habitus/social class, therefore to identity. It allows a deeper understanding of the participant's goals, motives and resources to acquire cultural capital.

Habitus is a major element in my data analysis, as it offers an account of the intersection of identity and social class, and more specifically, the shaping of dispositions, beliefs and identification/exclusion tendencies and practices that influence our lives. It offers an explanation of the L2 learner's attitudes, actions, and stances, which in turn influence SLL in terms of decision making; participation (or lack of it); responses to challenges; choices; and action.

This also involves the attachment to or rejection of specific identities, the L2 learner's emotional capital, her emotional realm and her self-esteem. Therefore, we should not take for granted that the L2 learner will eagerly look for interaction with L1 speakers to enhance her SLL. Identity, through identification and exclusion tendencies, plays a significant role in willingness to interact. This may shape team participation in classrooms and socialisation between classmates in ESOL courses, for example.

Norton's (2000) uncovering of the phenomenon of identity shifts is an important contribution to SLL theory, as it illustrates both the fluidity and multiplicity of identity as a process linked to the social context and SLL investment. However, my data suggest that the phenomenon of identity shifting is complex as each shift is different in terms of duration, scope, and impact on both the overall life and set of identities; some of them are long-lasting or even life-lasting (e.g. university person), but many are temporary and context dependent (e.g. literate in one speaking context/illiterate in a different speaking context). Identity shifting also makes evident the difficulty of identifying and defining some concepts such as identity position, social role and identity.

I have also shown that many changes in identity are subtle, and importantly, there is a core in an individual's set of identities that does not change at all, and I argue that this core is tightly linked to habitus. Further study on this topic is needed, taking into account my study's constraints of scope and time.

Legitimation from others is tightly linked to external features of the L2 learner identity, thus related to race, gender, and habitus in terms of embodiment. The macrocontext also influences legitimation in the form of the status of the country of origin within the world order. Legitimation from others is also applicable to an individual's hierarchy of identities. The lack of acknowledgement from others of the L2 learner's highly-regarded identity activates emotional mechanisms of defence, which in turn may influence the

SLL process in terms of participation, decision making and stances.

The macrocontext also involves two important intersecting elements that motivate and set the goals of SLL investment: First, the hegemony of English that places it in a hyper-valorised position, (Phillipson 2006; Barnhurst 2007) and makes it the most desirable form of cultural capital to invest in (Norton 2000) in relation to career/job opportunities and development. All of my participants apart from Kim fully agree with that. Second, ideological discourses have constructed a hegemonic view of Western culture over the rest of the world, which in turn shapes how the rest of the world view themselves (Reifer 2004; Craith 2007; Tzanelli 2007; Gee 2008; Jaworski and Thurlow 2009).

Additionally, my study suggests that investment in SLL by living in a target language country has a compulsory side dictated by the social context. The non-European participants had to learn English for merely practical purposes. For them, learning English did not involve purposely building up cultural capital (though they were factually doing so) but English SLL was a must for being able to manage in the new social context. This situation does not exclude the CEECs participants, though, as they had also to manage in daily life situations in urban English-speaking sites. The difference resides in the goals: for the CEECs learning English was a clear investment in capitals, whereas for the overseas participants, learning English was a matter of surviving in the new context.

Importantly, for the overseas participants, the acquisition of cultural capitals as a cause for migration is substituted by gender. Gendered practices within the gender order (Connell 1987; Sen 2001; Connell 2005), specifically female submission to the partner or to parents, was the main cause of migration for them, as they submitted their own desires and plans to others' plans.

Chapter 7 Conclusions and future research

7.1 Conclusions

Exploring the concept of investment called for a multi-theoretical and multidisciplinary approach –which I used in my study, due to its complexity. One of the outcomes of my research on the concept is the identification of three different but interrelated levels in investment, namely activity, identity and social context. The activity level involves all the artifacts (see 2.3.3.1 and 2.3.3.3) that mediate formal and informal learning, which are the main activities involved. However, within the dynamics of the informal learning activity, I identified two significant interrelated activities, namely performing a job and spoken interaction with people from the social context (communities). The activity of performing a job appears as a key element for all my participants' SLL processes and progress, as it involved a good deal of interaction with more proficient speakers of English (usually native speakers). However, those interactions had a complex background, in which identification/exclusion practices (on the part of both English L1 speakers and my participants) played a significant role (see chapter 6).

Thus, the result was factual L2 progress, as all my participants' tests and recording interviews suggest. An important element related to the division of labour is the asymmetrical relationship between my participants' level of literacy in their mother tongues and the kind of low-paid, unskilled jobs that they performed. This finding from my data analysis confirms one of Norton's (2000) more significant sightings: In specific circumstances that involve: a) migrating to a TL speaking context; b) the SLL is in progress but the L2 learner has not acquired (in many cases, from native speakers' point of view) enough proficiency; c) the L2 learner has to make a living; the L2 learner's cultural capital (e.g. tertiary education in L1) is not relevant in the new context. Therefore, job hunting results in obtaining low-paid, low-skilled jobs.

Another of my conclusions (that agrees with Norton's findings) is that the above described situations demand the investment of a huge amount of emotional capital (Reay 2004). Emotional capital is one of the elements involve in investment's identity level, which also involves: habitus; identity shifts; identity hierarchy; past, present and

what I call prospective identities (see 6.2.2); and identification/exclusion practices. In spite of its apparent determinism the concept of habitus is useful for explaining identity and identification/exclusion practices using social practices as basis for analysis.

In analysing why my participants have a strong attachment to: a) their socio-historical-cultural backgrounds; b) to the identities related to them; and c) to the identification/exclusion practices that emerged from it all, habitus gave me an alternative explanation from, for instance, Anderson's imagined communities concept or poststructuralist views of discursive construction. Bourdieu explained that habitus was a historical-social-cultural product and can explain how it changes both diachronically (through development and evolution through time) and synchronically (at one point in time). Importantly, Bourdieu acknowledged that habitus is not a fixed entity, but is able to change through education and experiences (Bourdieu 1977; 1986; Garret 2007). Thus, this is attuned to poststructuralist and SCT claims about the fluidity of identity and the impact of the social context on it.

Talking about social context, this level in the concept of investment implies many of the identity level elements, plus the visible part of an individual's identity, which includes race and the embodied habitus that denote their social class background. The social level also involves an array of elements linked to the social context, such as: a) others' perspectives, others' perceptions' and others' identification/exclusion practices; b) legitimation; and c) socialisation and interaction dynamics between the L2 learner and the TL native/non native speakers.

My data analysis agrees with Norton's findings about the relationship between identity and the new social context. For instance, The new social context offered to my participants: a) a range of new identity positions, many of them related to L2; some of these positions were low-profile (e.g. blue-collar worker; His wife; mute and deaf in L2, but others were high-profile (e.g. university student; English L2 speaker; mediator between her co-nationals and the new social context); b) the conditions for identity shifts, many of them transitory or positive; c) access to L2 resources through participation in different communities, both in informal SLL (interaction, help in their SLL from native speakers, exposure to language, use of media, participation in activities using English as a mediating tool) and formal SLL (ESOL courses, university courses, training courses in the workplace) .

Accordingly, I conclude that investment in SLL (Norton 2000) is an overarching and relational concept that addresses the intersection and interrelation of a range of significant and complex concepts, namely capitals (especially cultural capital), identity, social context and gender. Accordingly, it could be a useful unit of analysis of the SLL process with a sociolinguistic approach. Importantly, exploring investment and its possibilities allowed me both to identify and to study a range of important elements of identity which are related to SLL but have also a wider scope, such as identity shifts, identity hierarchy, the impact and influence of past, present and prospective identities, and the role of habitus in all these phenomena.

I also reached the conclusion that investment in cultural capital in general and in SLL in particular has two original sources: a) the participants' middle class habitus, which believes and dispositions –not exclusively but strongly, emphasise the relevance of acquiring cultural capital; b) ideology and discourse, which shape the beliefs on which is worth as cultural capital. For instance, hegemonic ideology and discourses from Western to Eastern/Developing countries (Mole 2007; Tzanelli 2007; Gee 2008; Busch 2009; Jaworski and Thurlow 2009) promote an idealised stereotype of Western society as the source of cultural capital in the form of language (English), culture (Western), and contact with exotic cultures within cosmopolitan Western urban contexts. Everyone feels attracted by desirable forms of identities, forms that are shaped by discourse.

The activity of seeing the world is a highly regarded form of cultural capital, and it is linked to what I have exposed above. To see the world is a relevant element in all my participants cases, as the data suggest that it influenced the decision of learning English in an English speaking country in order to experience contact with other cultures and ethnic groups within a 'safe' but 'first world' environment (e.g. an English city). Consequently, to see the world and proficiency in English L2 become a form of symbolic capital in the form of prestige within the L2 learner's communities linked both to her past and to her country of origin. This symbolic capital result in a new identity: a person who knows her way around.

Another of my findings is that, besides the fact that exclusion practices influence if an interaction between TL native speakers and the L2 learner takes place or not, exclusion practices do not come exclusively from native speakers, but also from the L2 learner.

This is a complex matter that involves: a) the L2 learner's habitus; b) the L2 learner's level of proficiency; and c) the L2 learner race and appearance, including her embodied habitus (the way she moves, her manners, her dress style and so on).

Some of my participants presented strong exclusive tendencies that prevailed over the commonly desired interaction with native speakers. Such tendencies were based on my participants' habitus and social class. Additionally, I have found that level of proficiency was also related to such practices. The more proficient the L2 learner, the more selective she was with her choice of English L1 speakers to interact with. The less proficient, the more eager to interact with more proficient speakers of English she was (not necessarily English L1 speakers, as feelings of fear, inadequacy and inferiority are involved), no matter what their social class. Though, the last group also showed strong exclusion tendencies with their own co-nationals. Social class and progress in English are the main reasons for this exclusion.

With regard to English L1 speakers' exclusion practices, the data analysis suggests that the L2 learner's race, appearance and gender may influence such practices. However, as I have said in the paragraph above, the matter is complex and other elements are involved in such matters, such is level of proficiency. Kim, Sophie and Mimi were the ones who had more problems with their interactions. They are visibly different from European people. Still, race is not the only factor that may play a role in their cases, as the three women had a low level of proficiency in English.

With regard to gender, my conclusion is that the influence of gender in interactions between native speakers and the L2 learner emerged as an important issue in my data therefore is worth of further research. My data analysis suggests that gender may influence the degree of success in interactions between English L1 speakers and the L2 learner. All my participants reported that female English L1 speakers ignored them, avoided interacting with them or were uncooperative with them when interacting, except with Kim. I think that motherhood is an element that made the difference but in this specific group, because I have evidence that social class is more important than motherhood in interaction dynamics. On the other hand, one of my participants, Julie, excluded female English L1 speakers from interaction as much as she could due to lack of identification with their way of performing gender.

The use of a multi-theoretical approach, that in the specific case of identity hierarchy theory also involved a multidisciplinary approach, is important as in my case resulted in a more complete analysis. For instance, the use of a social psychological approach to identity was relevant to explain some of my participants' behaviours and decision making related to SLL and to their lives in general. It covered the emotional realm, which is a significant part of identity. Stryker's and McCall and Simmons theories of identity hierarchisation covered a theoretical gap with relation to either rejection or attachment to specific identities. In turn, I found out that the most regarded identities of my participants were those linked to their middle-class habitus. Also, sociological approaches of identity (Castells 2004), together with the above mentioned approaches, helped me to clarify the common confusion I detected in the use of the terms 'identity' and 'social role'.

Partnership is a significant element for many of my participants. Partners acted as mediators between the women and the new context: a) facilitating access to specific communities of practice and social networks which the partners had membership in, which in turn involved opportunities for formal and informal SLL; b) promoting the women' SLL by encouraging them to speak correctly, to attend lessons of English, and to make the right decisions linked to SLL, promoting socialisation between the women and English L1 speakers members of the communities of practice and social networks the partners belonged to, and last but not least, acting as informal teachers for their partners (some of them); c) acting as interpreters between the partner and people from the new social context; d) giving emotional support to their partner.

7.2 Contributions, limitations and future research

My contribution to the field is: a) I illustrate the strong links between identity, gender, social context and the SLL process by providing a deeper insight into the dynamics of these relationships; b) my use of a mixed methodological approach, which contributes to a more comprehensive analysis and contributes to the study's validity and scope; c) in further exploring Norton's investment in SLL, I identified different levels of analysis (activity, identity and social context) that involve a range of intersecting elements useful for the explanation of the social side of SLL, specially focused on the L2 learner

emotional realm; d) I identified what I call prospective identities and prospective communities, which involve activity and investment; e) consequently, after having successfully finished my study, I did my bit for the development and consolidation of my line of enquiry within the field of SLL.

I consider the identification of three levels in investment in SLL (Norton 2000) as a contribution to the analysis of SLL following a sociolinguistic approach. An additional contribution within this issue is the identification of what I call a prospective identity and a prospective community, as such concepts not only involve imagination, desire and a discursive basis, as other scholars have theorised (e.g. Anderson 1994; Norton 2000) but also activity and investment, that is, what people do and invest in order to achieve the desired identities and the wanted memberships of specific communities.

The strengths of my work rely on the use of an articulated theoretical framework that broadens my scope and provides me with three different, albeit compatible, approaches (see chapter 2). This has allowed me to explore and explain the elements of my research questions, using concepts from both theories in a complementary way. I will give an example of this: I use the activity system to explain the SLL process from a perspective totally different than poststructuralism. However, there were also common elements that both approaches focus on (e.g. the individual, her goals and motivations and the role of social context). In turn, I explained these elements and their relationships in depth using Norton's concept of investment in SLL.

This process and its results led me to narrow the focus on identity, for a deeper analysis that included the complex ways in which both investment and the emotional realm are related. To do so, I used two additional social psychology theories that provided a deeper insight into these issues, contributing with their approach on identity, the emotional realm and their relation with the social context. These theories also include issues such as the impact of the above mentioned phenomena on decision-making, socialisation, stances and attitudes, and so on. This is an example of how my multi-theoretical approach works, giving a richer and more complete account of these issues. The same happened with the social constructionist approach of gender, which helped me to approach it as a socio-historical-cultural product, and this allowed me to explain related issues in my data. Connell's work on gender order gave me a useful tool for understanding what gendered practices were and their relation with the gender order,

thus widening the scope of gender in my work.

My multiple methodological approach for my data collection benefit from the inclusion of two ethnographic techniques and also from the inclusion of the quantitative tool. All this resulted in richer, complex data of difficult analysis. The role of the quantitative test was to identify if progress had taken place, and to corroborate if some elements such as activity focused directly in SLL (e.g. some attempts at self-learning) or those which randomly offered opportunities of learning through interaction (e.g. performing a job), plus others, have had an impact on such progress.

I am satisfied with my work in data collection, but in the future I will try to dedicate more time to analyse as comprehensively as possible the interviewing contents as soon as I make the transcription, in order to identify important issues to be addressed during the next interview. I will use the GT approach again to do so. Thus, my analysis methodology was also appropriate for my highly complex and rich data and it was also compatible with the software used for supporting analysis. All this widened the scope and added depth to my study in general and my analysis in particular.

My limitations are proper of any case study. That is, the scope is limited and the case is unique. I can make generalisations between my participants but extending said generalisations to other groups is difficult, as my own identity and middle class habitus have had a strong incidence in the context in which my research has been conducted, which is also reflected in the type of participants I got. Thus, it was impossible, due to ethical principles, to join different communities such as factories or temporary workplaces with the purposes of either establishing relationships and getting participants from other social classes or observing Lissa in her workplace (in her case, I could not go as a covert researcher passing as a factory worker, as it is not ethical and it is also risky because, the companies where the research would have been conducted, might not have agreed to my making research on their employees within their premises; also for protecting their private affairs).

Also, my just acquired experience in data analysis makes me fully aware of the interpretive nature of this kind of complex, rich and naturally occurred data. I am also fully aware of the limitations of ethnographic methods, in which subjectivity and co-construction between researcher and participants/informants play an important role.

However, it is important to take into account that all this is part of ethnographic research, and that social studies have to be analysed differently than sciences studies. This is an argument that radical research approaches (e.g. poststructuralism) stress when advocate the 'freedom' in data analysis and in reporting the results.

As I am not so radical, I prefer to avoid extreme subjectivity as I consider that research on people is a complex matter that requires to be systematic for not become lost. However, peer review, on the one hand, and the use of a range of analytical tools, for instance, models or techniques can help to the analysis, as well as a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, or an articulated theoretical framework.

I propose to establish different case studies of characteristics similar to mine, and then make comparisons between them. A team of SLL ethnographers would be necessary, but there are antecedents of relevant ethnographic team research in SLL in different sites and on different people (Bremer, Roberts et al. 1996). This can work for generalisation and validity, but also for identify distinctive, especial traits in unique situations, that is also a contribution for knowledge about the topic. It might also contribute to confirm or refute claims about specific issues.

Consequently, future research can be done in the topic despite that there are claims of saturation of research on identity. However, due to its complexity and scope, I consider identity as a major element that still has a lot of potential for research.

I agree with Norton and others (Gewirtz and Cribb 2008) in that the results of research of this line of enquiry are valuable information for educational institutions regarding SLL. I also advocate for a multidisciplinary and/or multi-approach research to make the most of a topic.

Thus, my interest in ethnographic research in SLL is still considerable, and my next step is to reflect on my study and share my findings with the research community. As I have many projects in mind, conducting a postdoctoral study on similar topics is my next goal, possibly in collaboration with a fellow researcher to make the study more complete.

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