Language Learning Motivation as Ideological Becoming: Dialogues with Six English-Language Learners

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Abstract

The field of language learning motivation has traditionally been a ‘self’-centred one, characterising the individual learner as subject to influence by, but essentially separate from, the sociocultural environment. Models of language learning motivation have been concerned with theorising the self, but have not fully accounted for the role of the other. The recent emergence of sociocultural approaches has seen a welcome move towards addressing this gap, theorising the language learner as engaged in complex relationships with various others, all constituted by and constituting their sociocultural contexts. Within this paradigm, researchers have begun to consider ways in which language learning motivation may be part of broader motivation for learning in various life domains - intellectual, social, emotional, ethical – though this is as yet an emergent area of scholarship.

This study adopts one such sociocultural approach, namely Ushioda’s person-in-context relational view (2009, 2011). Using a theoretical framework and innovative dialogical research design based on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, I present dialogues describing the learning experience and motivation of six English-language learners, and create a definition and interpretation of language learning motivation as ideological becoming, a process of learning to be in the world. This definition and interpretation integrate the language learner and their social context in ways which understand language learning motivation as socially constructed, involving relations with many different others; which understand language learning motivation as part of motivation towards broader personal and social growth and development; and which foreground learners’ own voices and perspectives.

In accounting for the reciprocal influence between the language learner and the world as heard through learners’ own voices, this study offers an important conceptual contribution to the language learning motivation field. Furthermore, it represents a methodological contribution to both the language learning motivation field and to qualitative inquiry more broadly. Finally, it offers political and practical contributions, and makes suggestions for future research and researchers.
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Dedication

To all the teachers and learners with whom I
have learnt to be in the world

and to Jasper – the most other, the most
myself
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It is impossible to acknowledge the many others bound up in this work in a way that does justice to their contributions. However, in undertaking a PhD one learns nothing if not how to address a challenge, and so my heartfelt thanks, or at least my attempts to express it, go to:

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Introduction: Opening the dialogue

i. Genesis: My ‘botherment’

If an utterance can be said to have a defined beginning and end, then this thesis could be said to have begun and ended within the equivalent of a full time three-year working period: the standard lifespan of a PhD in the UK. However, the engagement with the research field of language learning motivation it represents began three years before that: in the Psychology of Language Learning module undertaken as part of my MA in TESOL, in 2007-8. I began my own research into language learning motivation with the module assignment, building on this in the dissertation pilot study and dissertation itself (Harvey 2008; see also Harvey 2013a), then continuing with the various assignments and dissertation for my MSc Educational Research (Harvey 2010; see also Harvey 2013b). After this, I set to work preparing a detailed doctoral research proposal to build on my MA dissertation findings regarding language learning motivation. I was anxious to take a qualitative approach to understanding motivation, which would foreground the experience of English-language learners: to quote from my proposal, I stated my ‘commitment to bringing individual voice, experience, perception and agency to the fore’, focusing ‘on the learner as a multifaceted, complex, theorising agent … simultaneously accessing and participating in the global sociocultural context they are helping to create’, and presenting ‘a co-constructed contribution’ acknowledging ‘a dialogical relationship between my own and participants’ interpretations’.

So far, so sociocultural. However, through a (dialogical) combination of my own developing perspectives through reading, writing and thinking, and through discussing and presenting my work in various contexts, I came to realise that the language I was using to describe what I wanted to do - bring ‘individual voice, experience, perception and agency to the fore’- was incongruous with the language I was actually using to describe and characterise motivation. I wanted to carry out a sociocultural study, yet the implicit understanding of motivation I was presenting was firmly within the
psychological paradigm: I was citing ‘motivational parameters’, as though motivation were a bounded phenomenon or comprised a list of characteristics, and these were ‘operating on my participants’ as though the participants themselves had little say in the matter.

Once I understood I was suffering from this ontological incoherence, I began to consider ways in which I might address it. I did this by beginning to draft the first chapter of this thesis, which meant revisiting the language learning motivation literature. Since my first introduction to the field back in 2007, I had been bothered by my reading, with a sense of things disturbing me or not quite ringing clearly, but in ways that I could not always clearly articulate or address. This botherment raised various questions for me, questions which became increasingly clear as I revisited notes in the margins of books and articles, research journal scribblings, inchoate thoughts on class handouts and scrap paper – questions which I became able to articulate as part of writing the chapter. My botherment, I began to understand, was entangled in my own ontological and epistemological positions: understanding my botherment necessitated articulation of these positions, and my understanding of these positions became clearer through articulating the questions which had arisen from my botherment. This (dialogical) process is described in Chapter 1, in which I present the questions that bothered me as they arose through my engagement with the field, tracing how they enabled me to articulate my ontological and epistemological stance, and thus to clearly state my aims for the study reported in this thesis. The thesis may therefore be read not only as a response to my botherment, but also as the process of becoming able to articulate my botherment: the articulation and the response have emerged dialogically. And I am now able to articulate my botherment as arising from the lack of ‘others’ in theorisations of language learning motivation.

ii. Theoretical background: The role of others in LL motivation

It almost goes without saying that good language learners are motivated. (Ushioda 2008: 19)
Motivation is generally considered to be a fundamental determinant of foreign or second language learning achievement, as evidenced by the substantial body of research attempting to define, capture, and understand it. Just how fundamental it is understood to be is neatly summarised in Corder’s famous statement: ‘Let us say that, given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he [sic] is exposed to the language data’ (1967: 154). However, the apparent simplicity of this statement masks a number of complexities and assumptions: the use of the terms ‘learn’ and ‘exposed to’ suggest that a person will somehow absorb the language if it occurs frequently enough in their environment; that motivation is an internal, personal characteristic which some have and others do not; that the second language is ‘data’, with its concomitant static externality to and need to be absorbed or internalised by the learner. Not the least of the complexities raised is what motivation actually is. Definitions abound in the research literature, though many can be summarised in Ushioda’s terms: as motivation derives from the Latin verb movere, ‘to move’, then ‘simply defined, we might say that motivation concerns what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, and to persist in action’ (2008: 19).

Definitions of motivation as it relates to language learners, however, are yet few and far between. This raises the question, posed by Ushioda, of ‘whether L2 learning represents a special case in the psychology of learning motivation, giving rise to distinctive motivation theories and concepts specific to this domain of learning; or whether L2 motivation can broadly be explained in terms of general theories of learning motivation’ (2012a: 58). (By way of acknowledging the problematics of the term ‘L2’ in this context, I hereafter refer to foreign/second language learning as LL). My response to this, as articulated in this thesis, is that integral to my argument, and to the definition and interpretation of LL motivation I offer, is an understanding of language as immanent to the social world. Therefore, insofar as language inheres in the social world, language learning is part of a general process of learning and development, of being in the world. This view would seem to chime with Dörnyei’s understanding of motivation research as the ‘attempt
to explain nothing less than why people behave and think as they do’ (2001: 2). However, with the exception of Ushioda’s (2009, 2011) person-in-context relational approach, and of Norton (2000) and Clarke and Hennig (2013), who characterise LL motivation as ‘investment’ and ‘eth­ical self­formation’ respectively, there are few understandings of or approaches to LL motivation which account for language learning as part of a broader process of learning to be in the world. The study here reported, then, offers a definition of LL motivation, a statement of what LL motivation is, and an interpretation of LL motivation, an explanation of how it works; a definition and interpretation which account for and understand LL motivation as part of a broader process of learning to be in the world.

Inherent to such an understanding of LL motivation is the wider social world and the people in it, people other than the learner, whether ‘significant’ others such as family and friends, less significant others like colleagues and acquaintances, or general others with whom the learner engages to a greater or lesser degree in their life, or of whom the learner may simply be aware. Corder’s statement above is notable for the absence of speakers of the second language, who presumably are subsumed into the language ‘data’. While one could argue that the statement is, entirely reasonably, a product of its time (being published less than ten years after Gardner and Lambert’s seminal introduction of a social dimension to LL motivation in 1959), it remains illustrative of much of the research within the psychological tradition, which continues to understand motivation as an individualistic and internal mental trait; and is a tradition in which, as McGroarty points out, ‘factors related to the opinions of others have been viewed as representing a distinctly secondary path of influence on learning, less consequential than concepts that relate to the individual learner’s self’ (2001: 73).

Still, despite the ongoing influence of the former view in the psychological tradition, the reciprocal relationship between individuals and their social context has been increasingly recognised in the last two decades: to further quote McGroarty, LL motivation research ‘has begun to discover the
multiple and mutually influential connections between individuals and their many social contexts, contexts that can play a facilitative, neutral, or inhibitory role with respect to further learning, including L2 learning’ (2001: 86). As Pavlenko concisely puts it:

no amount of motivation can counteract racism and discrimination, just as no amount of positive attitude can substitute for access to linguistic resources such as educational establishments, work places, or programmes and services especially designed for immigrants and other potential L2 users. The social context, thus, is directly involved in setting positive or negative conditions for L2 learning. (2002: 281)

Thus, as part of defining and interpreting LL motivation as part of a broader process of learning to be in the world, I aim to develop an understanding of LL motivation as socially constructed, in which relations with many different others are inherent. I lay the foundations for such an understanding through an exploration of the ways in which LL motivation research has accounted for learners’ relations with others, positing that although the roles of others have often been fundamentally implicit and occasionally openly acknowledged, only recently have motivation researchers begun to explicitly demonstrate the centrality of others to LL motivation. I build on this research by proposing a dialogical approach to LL motivation in which others are fundamental, using this as a framework to understand the motivation of six learners of English through their language learning experiences, and to understand LL motivation as part of a broader process of learning to be in the world.

iii. Thesis structure
This is a thesis about language learning motivation, and thus needs to demonstrate engagement with and articulation of my position regarding these three elements: language, learning, and motivation. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 therefore respectively address motivation, language and learning. I begin by tracing a route in Chapter 1 through LL motivation research, from the perspective of its understanding of the role of others. In Chapter 2 I
introduce Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism and outline the ways in which a dialogic understanding of language accounts for others. Chapter 3 then expands dialogism to illuminate the ways in which language learning can be conceptualised as part of a broader process of learning to be in the world, characterised as ideological becoming.

Chapters 4 and 5 relate the ways in which I operationalised the framework presented in Chapters 2 and 3. In Chapter 4 I outline my methodological approach and research design, followed in Chapter 5 by a detailed description of my data handling and analysis procedures.

The final three chapters bring together the three elements of the title in order to characterise language learning motivation as ideological becoming. Chapter 6 presents dialogues representing the English-language learning experience of my six research participants, and in Chapter 7 I interpret these dialogues through the Bakhtinian framework presented in Chapters 2 and 3, in order to demonstrate how language learning motivation may be characterised as ideological becoming. Chapter 8 then discusses the contributions to knowledge this study represents.
Chapter 1: Motivation and Language Learning

or, Seeking the other

1.1 Introduction

As stated in the introduction, this is a thesis about language learning motivation, and thus needs to demonstrate engagement with and articulation of my position regarding the three elements of language, learning, and motivation. This chapter presents my engagement with the motivation element of my title, specifically by tracing a path through LL motivation research as it has understood the role of others in language learning.

Beginning in the psychological paradigm, I discuss Gardner’s social psychological approach, self-determination theory, and Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System, demonstrating that although there has been increasing recognition of the role and importance of others, the individual and the social remain fundamentally separate. I then move on to the ‘identity turn’ in LL studies and poststructural and sociocultural perspectives on LL motivation, which expanded on the role of others through an understanding of learning and development as taking place through social interaction and community activities. I consider recent work which accounts for the social construction of motivation, involving learner perspectives and voices, and moving towards a more holistic, ‘person-in-context relational view of emergent motivation’ as called for by Ushioda (2009: 215). I conclude the chapter by presenting my specific aims for this thesis and my research question.

Given the scope of the LL motivation research field and the often temporally parallel developments which have taken place within it, I have had of necessity to make choices regarding the order in which I present the predominant theories. This is the case particularly after the identity turn in LL studies, with significant theoretical intersections, for example, between imagined communities and the L2 Motivational Self System, and between sociocultural and poststructuralist approaches. As my aim is to represent the
trajectory of my own thinking in the field, and in the spirit of offering an honest account of how my research aims developed, I present theories in the order in which I discovered them. Each theory or paradigm is followed by a brief discussion of what bothered me about it, framed as questions which arose.

1.2 The psychological paradigm

The psychological paradigm is the most widely-recognised home for motivation studies in general and LL motivation research in particular; the most cursory search for literature, conferences and journals listing motivation as a theme confirms and reinforces this association. Perhaps the majority of LL motivation studies in this paradigm have adopted a social psychological perspective; however, self-determination theory has had a strong presence in the field, and, along with more recent self-focused approaches, merits the grouping of this research under the wider umbrella of ‘psychological’. I now chart the development of understandings of LL motivation in this paradigm, in a roughly chronological order.

1.2.1 Gardner and the social psychological approach

Dörnyei writes:

I believe that the most important milestone in the history of L2 motivation research has been Gardner and Lambert’s discovery that success is a function of the learner’s attitude toward the linguistic-cultural community of the target language, thus adding a social dimension to the study of motivation to learn an L2. (1994b: 519)

The social psychological approach to LL motivation (Gardner and Lambert 1959), from which Gardner developed the socio-educational model (Gardner 1985, 2001), remains highly influential in the research field (see for example Gilakjani, Leong, and Sabouri 2012; Guo 2013; Igoudin 2008; Ozgur and Griffiths 2013), and is perhaps still the best-known conceptualisation of LL motivation among practitioners and researchers. Exhaustive reviews and critiques of Gardner’s work have been undertaken
by numerous scholars (Au 1988; Dörnyei 2001; Gardner 2001; MacIntyre, Mackinnon and Clément 2009). My purpose is to explore the relationship of the social to LL motivation as characterised by Gardner, and to use his work as a starting point for portraying the trajectory of the role of others in LL motivation research.

1.2.1.1 Integrative motivation

Gardner described his understanding of foreign language acquisition as an essentially social psychological phenomenon thus:

The learning of a second (or foreign) language in the school situation is often viewed as an educational phenomenon … such a perception is categorically wrong … In the acquisition of a second language, the student is faced with the task not simply of learning new information (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.) which is part of his [sic] own culture but rather of acquiring symbolic elements of a different ethnolinguistic community … Furthermore, the student is not being asked to learn about them; he is being asked to acquire them, to make them part of his own language reservoir. This involves imposing elements of another culture into one’s own lifespace. As a result, the student’s harmony with his [sic] own cultural community and his willingness or ability to identify with other cultural communities become important considerations in the process of second language acquisition.

(Gardner 1979: 193-4, my italics)

Here, then, it can be seen that the model posits other cultural groups as fundamental to language learning, acknowledging the importance of others for language learning. Integrative motivation (Gardner and Lambert 1959, 1972) became a fundamental component of the model (as contrasted with, though not dichotomous with, instrumental motivation), and implies a form of psychological and/or emotional identification with the target language community (Gardner 2001). While the concept has been challenged by researchers working in ‘foreign language learning’ contexts (such as English in Japan, or French in Hungary) and thus ‘integrativeness’ could not be said to apply in the same way (Kormos and Csizér 2008; LoCastro 2001; Mori
and Gobel 2006; Shedivy 2004), Dörnyei (1990) has characterised integrative motivation in such contexts as identification with the culture and values associated with the L2 community and/or with the language itself. Although the notion of integrative motivation has been criticised for being an imprecise and non-unitary concept (Au 1988), in general it has held strong explanatory power for many researchers and has played a dominant role in much LL motivation theory over the last 50 years (Clément 1980; Strong 1984; Schumann 1986; Dörnyei 1994a; MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels 1998; Culhane 2003; Gao, Zhao, Cheng, and Zhou 2007). Various reviews of the LL motivation literature in the latter half of the 20th century (Gardner 1985; Gardner and MacIntyre 1993; Dörnyei 1998, 2001) have indicated that an integrativeness-related factor often emerges in empirical studies of LL motivation among a wide variety of learners and learning contexts; however, Crookes and Schmidt (1991: 473-4) also point out that ‘contradictory results have emerged from studies in different contexts’, and that Gardner himself has acknowledged that ‘no link necessarily exists between integrative attitudes and language learning, because “not everyone who values another community positively will necessarily want to learn their language”’ (1991: 474, citing Gardner 1985: 77). The assumption that learners know anything about the target culture is of course highly problematic, but the point is that they can be motivated based on their perceptions of the target culture. Work in this field has therefore provided important and far-reaching insights into the reasons individuals might (choose to) study languages, and into the role of the social milieu in those reasons for learning.

1.2.1.2 Recognition of the influence of others

The recognition of the influence of others implicit in the socio-educational model marked an important development in LL motivation research, and provided an important basis for much subsequent research into the role of others in LL motivation. Kormos and Csizér (2007), for example, draw attention to the impact of intercultural contact on language learning motivation, pointing out that one of the main aims of learning languages is to communicate with members of other cultures, that these interactions
provide occasions for developing target language competence, and that intercultural encounters can have an important influence on attitudes to the L2, its speakers and its culture (242). Culhane (2003) contends that learners’ attitudes towards the target language, based on previous learning experience and knowledge of the associated culture, will influence not only their motivation for learning English *per se* but also their motivation for contact with English speakers, directly influencing their use of L1 and L2 in the target culture. In support of Schumann’s (1986) acculturation theory, Culhane suggests that the greater the positive social and psychological contact with the target language community, the greater the likelihood of successful language acquisition. These studies highlight the effects of intercultural contact on learners’ motivated behaviour, positing this as ‘both a means and an end in L2 studies’ (Dörnyei and Csizér 2005: 2). Clément’s model (1980) posits contact as a key constituent of motivation, and when the model was tested by Clément and Kruidenier (1983) the results indicated that positive contact experiences had a positive effect on L2 learners’ linguistic self-confidence, which had a positive effect on their motivation. Similar results have been documented elsewhere (Labrie and Clément 1986; Clément, Dörnyei and Noels 1994; Noels, Pon, and Clément 1996; Clément, Noels and Deneault 2001; Rubenfeld, Clément, Lussier, Lebrun, and Auger 2006), demonstrating ongoing recognition of the social nature of language learning.

1.2.1.3 Ontology and methodology: New developments

Gardner’s work also had far-reaching ontological and methodological implications for the LL motivation research field, which in turn had repercussions for the way in which the individual relationship with the social was understood. MacIntyre, Noels and Moore point out that Gardner’s work reflects a social science perspective, in which

> [t]he ‘social’ aspect places value on understanding people’s experience with each other as they live their lives. The ‘science’ aspect underscores the need to use reliable and valid measures to systematically observe people and test research
hypotheses. In one sense, these values were the rocks on which the [socio-educational] model, and indeed the study of motivation in SLA, rested. (2010: 2)

These values were drawn from the natural sciences, which psychology in North America was anxious to emulate in order to distinguish itself as an objective field. As a result, research into motivation took place chiefly within the cognitive dimension and developed a reliance on quantitative methods, with a tendency to identify and study individual differences based on responses to questionnaires and surveys, then subjecting responses to statistical evaluation, such as correlational and factor analysis, in order to aggregate results (Danziger 1997). Although Gardner works in the social psychological tradition, the focus in ‘social’ psychology is on the individual as social being, rather than on the more sociological focus of the social or cultural collective (Ushioda 2009: 216) – or, in other words, the others involved in language learning. Gardner’s model is therefore essentially a theory of individual motivation, in which the influence of the sociocultural environment, though implicit, is seen only through the lens of the individual’s attitudes as measured by self-report instruments (ibid.). The model is therefore based upon a dichotomy between the inner world of the individual and their external sociocultural surroundings, a ‘Cartesian dualism between mental and material worlds’ (Ushioda 2009: 217). As Ryan points out, ‘many of the criticisms of the instrumental/integrative framework of language learning motivation arise from a need to more fully account for the complexities of learners as social beings’ (2006: 35). Indeed, in psychology more broadly, as Molden and Dweck (2006) indicate, the focus on universal principles of thought and action describes only the ‘average person’, and therefore ‘risks describing no-one in particular … psychological science has (and should have) another primary goal as well: to understand how people give meaning to their experiences and to their relations with the world around them’ (192, my emphasis).

The increase in qualitative methodologies and poststructural and sociocultural approaches in the last decade or so have gone a long way
towards addressing these issues in LL motivation research. However, the psychological paradigm continues to acknowledge the importance of the social context only as a broad dimension of learners’ motivational dispositions (Dörnyei and Clément 2001), rather than fundamental to motivation itself. Such acknowledgement has nevertheless been important and has led to significant theoretical developments within the paradigm, and it is to this further work that I now turn.

1.2.2 Self-determination theory: A psychological complement
The social psychological approach was the dominant perspective in LL motivation research until the 1990s (Crookes and Schmidt 1991), and arguably beyond that. The dominance of the social psychological approach was the subject of Crookes and Schmidt’s now seminal 1991 state-of-the-art article, calling for a reopening of the research agenda along new conceptual lines, particularly the cognitive theories prevalent in mainstream motivational psychology such as goal setting, goal orientation, self-perceptions of competence, self-efficacy beliefs, and attribution theory. These cognitive theories pointed to the importance of learner motivation coming ‘from within’ (Deci and Flaste 1996) and led to a heavy prevalence of concepts of ‘self’. Of these, self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 1980, 1985, 1995; Ryan and Deci 2000) is perhaps the most widely applied in LL motivation research, extended to LL motivation chiefly by the work of Kimberly Noels and her colleagues in Canada (Noels, Clément and Pelletier 1999; Noels, Pelletier, Clément and Vallerand 2000; Noels 2001, 2009) and still widely used in LL motivation studies (see for example Abrar-ul-Hassan 2013; Al-Sharief 2013; Ardasheva, Tong and Trettter 2012; Gilakjani et al. 2012; Ozgur and Griffiths 2013). Noels (2001), rather than positing self-determination as an alternative to the socio-educational model, suggests that the self-determination framework ‘should complement those in which intergroup orientations figure prominently’ (50), thus moving further towards a recognition of the importance of others in LL motivation.

Drawing on Deci and Ryan (1985, 1995), Noels identifies learners’ inherent psychological needs as social identity, relatedness, autonomy, and competence, where relatedness refers to the ‘propensity to be securely
connected to and esteemed by others and to belong to a larger social whole’ (Ryan and Solky 1996: 251, cited in Noels 2001: 54). Thus Noels gives some consideration to whom she calls ‘relevant others’ in the target language context, including teachers, family members, employers, peers, and members of the target language community in general, stating that support from these others facilitates learners’ motivation.

Clément (1980, 1986, cited in Noels 2001) similarly maintains that type and frequency of contact with members of the target language group will influence learners’ confidence, motivation, and proficiency. Even more saliently, Noels (2001) identifies that ‘communication with the L2 community can be characterised by its autonomy-supportiveness, informative feedback and relatedness-enhancing involvement’ (57); an assertion that moves closer, particularly in the latter concept, to an explicit acknowledgement of reciprocal influence between the learner and significant others. Noels thus cites the importance of accounting for ‘the various people who affect learners’ motivation’ (62). However, even in these more cognitive-situated studies, with their situated focus on the micro-context of learning, there is a continuing reliance on students’ self-reported perceptions of their learning context, which might equally be said to be sustaining the binary distinction between the mental and the material, or internal learner traits and the external social and cultural world. Although learners react to their environment, they remain distinct from it, ‘hermetically sealed in [their] own individual and self-contained subjectivity’ (Ushioda 2009: 217, citing Harré and Gillett 1994: 22). Most telling is that the aim of such studies is to uncover generalisable rules and laws to explain how context affects motivation, rather than to explore the person as a multifaceted, self-reflective, intentional agent, socially situated, constituting and constituted by their own context in a dynamic and complex relationship (Ushioda 2009: 217; see also Lantolf and Pavlenko 2001; McGroarty 2001). Before exploring the theoretical developments in the field stemming from such critique, I summarise the role of others in the psychological paradigm, and articulate the questions that arose for me as a result of my engagement with it.
1.2.3 The role of others in the psychological paradigm
Gardner’s socio-educational model, widely held to be the foundation of LL motivation research, acknowledged the fundamental role of others in language learning. In self-determination theory, factors relating to others are theorised as inherent psychological needs. However, in both approaches, others or social context remain only one dimension of learners’ motivational dispositions, one of a constellation of dimensions in the learner’s orbit, rather than being themselves fundamental to motivation. The individual is acknowledged as a social being, but motivation is still individually, rather than socially or culturally, constituted. While the influence of the sociocultural environment is implicit, it is not theorised, and there is a dichotomous relationship between individual/inner and social-cultural/outer.

1.2.4 What bothered me about the psychological paradigm
Just as Gardner’s major contribution to the field was ontological and methodological, so were the major puzzles that arose for me.

1.2.4.1 Ontology: How does LL motivation develop?
Research in the psychological paradigm laid important foundations for exploring the relationship between the individual and the social, and the role of this relationship in LL motivation. The influence of social and intercultural contact on LL motivation is now well established and accepted: as language is learnt for some kind of communicative purpose, it follows that contact with other speakers will play a significant part in motivation for learning. The question raised for me from the research within the psychological paradigm is therefore: How? How does LL motivation develop from contact with other speakers? This is a question that subsequent research, although it has moved in this direction, has not yet answered to my satisfaction, as I demonstrate throughout this chapter.

1.2.4.2 Epistemology and methodology: How can we know?
The overwhelmingly quantitative methodology adopted by researchers in the psychological paradigm is consistent with the theoretical level of its
assertions. The statistically-evaluated, self-report questionnaire can tell us that a relationship exists between motivation and contact with other speakers, but it can shed little light on the nature or development of such a relationship. This raised further questions of How? How can I know how LL motivation develops? How can I ‘understand how people give meaning to their experiences and to their relations with the world around them’ (Molden and Dweck 2006: 192)? The increasing qualitative approaches to LL motivation, with their focus on and representation of learners’ voices, are a welcome development in this regard, as I discuss later in the chapter.

1.3 The L2 Motivational Self System
Growing dissatisfaction with the notion of integrativeness, increasing interest in the concept of possible selves in the field of psychology, and the ‘identity turn’ in LL studies, led to the development of Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System. The first two factors I now discuss; I return to the latter further below.

1.3.1 Problematising integrativeness
I now return to Gardner and the concept of integrative motivation, the problematisation of which has been the basis of the important move towards imagination and identity which, within the psychological paradigm, led to the development of Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System.

The concept of integrative motivation was devised to apply to Gardner’s French Canadian setting, where learners of French or English had contact with the other language group and may meaningfully have been said to wish to ‘integrate’. As stated above, the concept has often been challenged by scholars working in foreign language learning contexts, where a foreign language is taught without direct contact with its speakers, and thus ‘integrativeness’ could not be said to apply in the same way. As also stated, Dörnyei (1990) interprets integrativeness in such contexts as identification with the culture and values associated with the target language community and/or with the language itself. However, this interpretation is still based upon the assumption that particular languages can be readily identified with
particular social groups. Given that English is increasingly diverging from its native speakers and their cultures (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Humphreys and Spratt 2008; Seidlhofer 2005; Csizér and Dörnyei 2005b), this concept of integrativeness would seem to be growing increasingly irrelevant, and at the very least is in need of being redefined in contextually appropriate ways (Coetze Van-Rooy 2006: 447).

Ryan (2006) cites the need to connect LL motivation theory to critical approaches to English language learning which problematise the authority of native-speaker-centric models of learning and teaching (Pennycook 1999; Widdowson 1994; Canagarajah 1999, 2006), making at the same time an explicit attempt to address Pittaway’s claim that LL motivation research needs to ‘reconcile the individual with the social’ (2004: 215, cited in Ryan 2006: 24). Drawing on Norton’s (Norton 2001; Norton and Kamal 2003; see also Anderson 1991) concept of an imagined language community, Ryan proposes ‘a model of motivation that places the learner’s real identity as a member of an imagined global community, and a clear vision of an ideal language-using self at its core’ (2006: 23), citing Giddens’ argument that globalisation is a more profound and far-reaching development than economic processes that transcend national borders, expressing ‘fundamental aspects of time-space distanciation’ (Giddens 1991: 21, cited in Ryan 2006: 25). Within such an understanding, globalisation may be altering our perceptions of space and time …

transferring how we relate and interact with others.

Traditionally, social life has been closely tied to spatial proximity, but globalisation acutely undermines this bond, reducing the influence of distance on social activities, which has deep implications for our understanding of social organisation. (Ryan 2006: 25)

As a psychological response to globalisation many people may develop a bicultural identity, in which part of their identity remains rooted in local culture while another part springs from a consciousness of their relationship to the global culture; or, in the case of immigrants, a multicultural or a
complex hybrid identity blending their native culture, the culture to which they have immigrated, and the global culture. Thus local and global identities can coexist, with the local identity being retained alongside the global (Arnett 2002: 777, 787). English is likely to play a major role in these global identities; thus there is no specific ‘owner’ of English for learners to identify with, which, according to Dörnyei (2009), undermines Gardner’s theorization of integrativeness. However, this could potentially expand and create a broader understanding of integrativeness, as the position of English as a lingua franca in a globalising world has led to a high proportion of students learning the language in order to communicate with other non-native speakers in an international context (Widdowson 1994). As Ryan (2009: 131) describes it, an undefined, vague and geographically disparate L2 community may be more motivating than a fixed and readily identifiable community, as learners may more readily perceive the possibility of full, legitimate membership of that community.

As well as this growing dissatisfaction with the notion of integrativeness, the development of Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System has resulted from the ‘identity turn’ in LL studies (to which I return below), and increasing interest in the concept of possible selves in the field of psychology, to which I now turn.

1.3.2 Possible selves

In Dweck’s definition, the ‘self’ is the ‘meaning systems’ people employ to ‘organize their world and give meaning to their experiences’ (2000: xi). For Norman and Aron, the self-concept is ‘an important influence in regulating behaviour, functioning to organize an individual’s interpretation of the world, determining what stimuli are selected for attention and what inferences are drawn’ (2003: 500). Markus and Nurius (1986) defined possible selves as ‘self-knowledge [that] pertains to how individuals think about their potential and about their future ... selves that we would very much like to become ... selves we could become ... and selves we are afraid of becoming’ (954). As possible selves have not yet been realised, they are not limited by what may be realistic or plausible (although Dörnyei (2009:
12) claims that a conceived possible self cannot be ‘completely detached from reality’). Hoped-for or ideal selves are representations to be pursued, whereas feared selves are to be avoided. The ought self is ‘an image of self held by another’ (Markus and Nurius 1986: 958), or attributes and qualities that one believes one ought to possess. The mention of ‘another’ here with the ought self is striking, implying some kind of separation between others and the ideal self; a point to which I return in 1.3.3 below.

All possible selves are a direct influence on motivation and behaviour (Hoyle and Sherrill 2006; Markus and Nurius 1986; Oyserman, Terry, and Bybee, 2002; see Dörnyei 2009 for a full review). Markus and Nurius emphasise that possible selves exist in a tangible, sensual reality, their imaginary representation no less real than the here-and-now self. Thus the major advantage of this framework is that it appears to capture some aspects of what people experience when they engage in motivated behaviour – by adopting this focus we move ‘phenomenologically very close to the actual thoughts and feelings that individuals experience as they are in the process of motivated behaviour and instrumental action’ (Markus and Ruvolo 1989: 217).

1.3.2.1 Imagery and imagination

Imagery and imagination are thus central elements of possible selves theory, allowing speculation about the role and power of imagination in human behaviour (Markus 2006). Wenger (1998) describes ‘imagination’ as:

> a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves. Imagination in this sense is looking at an apple seed and seeing a tree. It is playing scales on a piano, and envisaging a concert hall. (176)

Various studies have indicated that English learners across the world may identify not with native speakers of the language, but with an imagined future English-speaking self able to access, participate in, and thereby co-create, a global sociocultural context offering diverse and wide-ranging
professional, academic, technological, entertainment, and social opportunities (Csizér and Dörnyei 2005a, 2005b; Dörnyei and Csizér 2002; Lamb 2004, 2007; LoCastro 2001; Modiano 2004; Norton and Kamal 2003; Williams and Burden 1999; Yashima 2002). In Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System (2005, 2009), it is these perceptions of their future selves which structure learners’ motivation, what he refers to as the ideal L2 self (who wants to learn the L2 and aspires towards positive goals) and the ought-to L2 self (who feels under obligation to learn the L2 and is motivated more by fear of exclusion if s/he does not learn it), combined with the L2 learning experience (which concerns situated, ‘executive’ motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience, such as the teacher, the peer group and the curriculum). Dörnyei suggests a distinction in the L2 Motivational Self System between motivation originating from aspiration towards a projected future L2-speaking self (or self-identification processes), and the motivation stemming from the L2 learning experience. The ideal L2 self, then, is ‘the essential regulatory mechanism at the heart of an individual’s interaction with an imaginary language community’ (Ryan 2006: 41).

1.3.3 The role of others in the L2 Motivational Self System

The L2 Motivational Self System has been widely adopted as a framework for understanding motivation, imagination and identity (Csizér and Lukács 2010; Lamb 2012; Papi and Abdollahzadeh 2012; Papi and Teimouri 2012), and has been expanded in recent studies to include additional perspectives such as sensory experience (Dörnyei and Chan 2013), ‘national interest’ (Islam, Lamb, and Chambers 2013), and gender (Mahdavy 2013; Henry and Cliffordson 2013). However, although in its concern with identity, imagination and imagined communities it appears to take the role of others (albeit imagined) into account more fully than previous psychological models, ‘identity’ generally collocates with ‘self’, and there remains little engagement with the ‘otherness’ also inherent in identity. The ought-to L2 self does acknowledge a role for others in motivation, but its theorisation as separate from the ideal self – that is, as not ideal - suggests that its motivational role is less powerful, or less likely to lead to success, than that
of the ideal self, with a focus on the prevention of negative outcomes rather than on the promotion of positive aspirations (Dornyei 2009: 18, citing Higgins 1998). The learner’s inner world, or vision, thus remains separate from the external social and cultural world. Although these constructs are considered complementary rather than dichotomous, I suggest that the distinction itself represents the possibility that the ought-to L2 self may even be antagonistic or interferential to the ideal self’s development; others, and the duties, responsibilities and negotiations they entail, may prevent the ideal L2 self, which holds the greatest motivational power, from full realisation.

And yet, in order to realise the ideal L2 self, others are needed, as evidenced by Gao (2007, 2010, 2013), in whose 2007 study of a Chinese English-speaking ‘club’, for example, the club participants look forward to meeting, and exhibit admiration for, the two club co-ordinators, who represent the skills, experiences and engagement with the world which would be attractive qualities in the future L2 selves that the participants wished to pursue. These two club leaders represent otherness – and, by representing the L2 selves that the participants wished to become, thus represent the otherness inherent in these L2 selves. In general, as Igoudin points out: ‘in ongoing interaction with others, humans receive feedback which they process in relation to their view of their selves’ (2013: 199); experiences with others, while they may eventually be forgotten, contribute over time to a kind of bank of experience which ‘solidify… into conclusions people have about themselves’ (ibid.). Thus the self is always dependent on the other, always created by it in a simultaneous and reciprocal relationship.

Furthermore, although the concept of an L2 self may characterise some aspects of linguistic identity, this is only part of what constitutes learners as people; the model is limited by what Martin (2004, 2007) cites as the commonly individualistic, over-simplified and unproblematic conceptions of ‘self’ cited in psychology, education and other Western cultural fields. In the L2 Motivational Self System, linguistic identity is forged chiefly by the learner, and the framework fails to consider the broader historical and
sociocultural context through which the person as a whole and complex being (as opposed to simply a language learner) is formed. Although it acknowledges a role for others as part of the ought-to L2 self and as part of the L2 learning experience, these dimensions remain separate from the ideal L2 self, which is the ‘essential regulatory mechanism’ (Ryan 2006: 41) and major motivational force. Martin (2004: 205) argues that such a politically detached self is of little educative value, if education is understood to include the forming of persons able to critically negotiate their identities within a complex world and, importantly, capable of influencing that world. Indeed, such an understanding of education is crucial to my argument: just as learners are influenced by the world, as the L2 Motivational Self System acknowledges, they also influence the world, in a reciprocal process. If others in the world are not accounted for, it is impossible to discover and understand this process. Therefore, in order to understand this process and its intersection with motivation it is necessary to recognise learners as critically engaged and situated individuals, in constant dialogue with others both physical and figurative; in other words, a theory of motivation is needed that integrates language learner and social context. As Lamb points out:

L2 self guides may prove to be valuable concepts for describing the way individuals identify with a foreign language, but their value for finding practical solutions to motivational problems will be much enhanced if we also explore their origins in, and impact on, the social settings and situated activity of language learning. (2009: 245)

These criticisms have been increasingly taken up since the ‘identity turn’ in LL studies, which I address after presenting the questions which arose from my engagement with the L2 Motivational Self System.

1.3.4 What bothered me about the L2 Motivational Self System
The L2 Motivational Self System, though essentially grounded in the psychological paradigm, acknowledges the identity turn in LL studies (which I discuss in the following section). This acknowledgment is manifest
in the key term *self*, which tends to unproblematically, if not always intentionally, conflate with *identity* in research adopting this framework. However, identities are about relationships, and therefore others are inherent in them. A parent must have a child to be a parent; a teacher must have students to be a teacher. Of course, this can be framed negatively also: a British person is not British without non-British people; a Goth is not a Goth without non-Goths. Or, as a schoolmate once said to me: without fat people, there would be no thin people. My first question, then, was: How can I engage with the ‘otherness’ inherent in identity? My second question was: Is it possible to do this methodologically as well as conceptually? The poststructuralist approaches to LL motivation which emerged in the mid-1990s moved closer to addressing this issue, and it is to this work that I now turn.

1.4 A poststructural perspective

1.4.1 The identity turn in LL studies

Block (2007) points to the move, post-Firth and Wagner’s seminal 1997 article, towards conceptualisations of the links between identity, defined by Norton (2000: 5) as ‘how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future’, and learning in the LL field (apart from the native speaker/non-native speaker dichotomy), in what Block describes as an attempt to open the field up to epistemological and ontological viewpoints beyond its cognitive psychological and linguistics roots (864). The L2 Motivational Self System was a response to the identity turn within the psychological paradigm of LL motivation research; however, in the LL research field at large researchers exploring the links between identity and learning have taken a broadly poststructuralist approach to identity, framing identity as decentred and fragmented, dynamic, unstable, contested, and in a constant state of flux across time and space.

1.4.2 Social identity and investment

The geographical, sociocultural and psychological border-crossing often involved in language learning is destabilising for learners’ identities, and
may result in a struggle leading to a third space (Bhabha 1994) in which learners enter a negotiation of difference where past and present ‘encounter and transform each other’ in ‘the presence of fissures, gaps and contradictions’ (Papastergiadis 2000: 170, cited in Block 2007: 864). Of particular relevance to the LL motivation field is Norton’s (Norton Peirce 1995; Norton 1997, 2000) work with immigrant women in Canada, which led her to acknowledge the limitations of existing LL motivation theories to describe her particular situation. Norton found that when her learners spoke, more than merely exchanging information with target language speakers, they were engaging in a constant reorganization of their own identities and how they related to the social world; as she points out, ‘it is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time’ (Norton Peirce 1995: 13). Norton therefore claims that investment would be a more appropriate term than motivation to describe the complex, ‘socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it’ (Norton 2000: 10). Where instrumental motivation ‘presupposes a unitary, fixed, and ahistorical language learner who desires access to material resources that are the privilege of target language speakers’ (Norton Peirce 1995: 17), investment should be understood in relation to the varied, fluctuating, and often conflicting identities of language learners (9, 26). The concept is a means of acquiring a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which learners see as increasing the value of their ‘cultural capital’ (17, based on Bourdieu 1977); consequently, the identity options and access to communities available to learners will expand (Norton 2000; Early and Norton 2012). In Norton’s view, the concept of investment is an attempt to describe the relationship between the language learner and the changing social world (Norton Peirce 1995: 17), and prioritises the individual learner’s self-identity rather than acculturation to the target language community; it conceives of the language learner as negotiating a complex identity and multiple desires, all of which are in a constant state of flux. Thus, for a learner to invest in the target language is for them also to invest in their own, constantly changing, social identity.
1.4.3 The role of others in the poststructural perspective

The concept of investment added a new dimension to LL motivation by theorising motivation as part of ‘a comprehensive theory of social identity that integrates the language learner and the language learning context’ (Norton Peirce 1995: 9), thus engaging with the otherness in identity. An important insight from poststructuralist theory in terms of accounting for others is the role of the linguistic community, and how community practices position learners by marginalising or (to varying degrees) accepting them, and by facilitating or constraining their attempts to speak. The negotiation of identity is always contingent on the linguistic community and their practices, regardless of how motivated the individual learner may be. Similarly, the notion of the language learner’s desire for a bicultural, multicultural or global identity is problematised; the identity learners pursue is not as coherent as these terms may imply, but is dynamic, complex and multiple, a site of struggle being constantly reconstructed and renegotiated through participation in local community practices (Norton 2000; Pavlenko 2002). As Norton states:

Every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation.

(1997: 410)

Crucial to such a view, then, is an understanding of learning, motivation and identity as dynamically co-constructed processes, facilitated or constrained through social interaction.

Hence a conceptualisation of motivation which not only acknowledges the central role and importance of others, but also offers a theoretical means of integrating the individual and the social context. However, as Clarke and Hennig (2013: 79) point out, Norton’s work was conducted in an immigrant setting, where learners’ interactions and communication in English were a matter of socioeconomic survival, and thus issues of power and resistance
were central to their target-language engagement. Such a perspective may risk becoming trapped in a power/resistance binary in which learners are constantly engaged in struggle, potentially overlooking the ways in which learning may contribute to learners’ personal and social development and expression in ways not necessarily bound up with economic and sociopolitical necessity and survival. Likewise, the concept of investment is an uncomfortable one – leaving aside the issue that the terms ‘investment’ and ‘capital’ connote the very capitalist system which arguably has placed Norton’s participants in such socioeconomic need and sociopolitical subjection, the economic metaphor suggests that language learners are looking to make a return on their investment, namely acceptance into the target language-speaking community of practice, and thus the concept is only applicable to contexts where the learner is in direct contact with that community (Ellis 1997; Pittaway 2004), or a ‘non-native’ speaker in a ‘native’ speaker context. Such was Norton’s context; however, there are many contexts, even in predominantly target-language settings such as the UK, where learners may encounter at least as many other learners, or ‘non-native’ speakers, as ‘native’ speakers.

Furthermore, and importantly, not all language learners may feel themselves to be subject to the power relations implicit in poststructuralist understandings of language learning, perhaps characterising their experience differently, and/or seeing it as part of their process of learning to be in the world. Syed (2001) argues for the importance of examining motivation from the perspective of the learners involved, rather than from the perspective of pre-existing constructs; although he is citing traditional constructs from the psychological paradigm, the argument applies here too regarding poststructuralist researchers’ concerns with power and resistance. This criticism may be addressed through Ushioda’s person-in-context relational view of motivation; first, however, I discuss questions that arose from the poststructural perspective, followed by general sociocultural perspectives on LL motivation.
1.4.4 What bothered me about the poststructural perspective

The poststructural perspective adopted by Norton clearly accounts for the role of others in LL motivation in a much fuller and more theoretically developed way, understanding motivation as part of a theory of social identity in which the language learner and their learning context are integrated (Norton Peirce 1995). However, Norton’s theorising of her participants’ experiences and language learning as taking place within a framework of power and resistance was a source of discomfort for me. While conscious of the necessity of acknowledging power relations in a social identity perspective on motivation, I felt it also important to account for learners’ own theoretical perspectives on their experience, and to recognise that although such a theorisation might make sense to them, it was equally possible that they might take different views: they might not always perceive their experience as bound up in a power/resistance binary, having more sense of their own agency than such a binary might account for. The questions, then, became: How can I account for the role of others in LL motivation without becoming entangled in a power/resistance binary? How do learners develop their own agency? How can I hear learners’ own theorisations of their experience? It was my engagement with the more recent, sociocultural perspectives on LL motivation that enabled me to find ways to address these questions, as I now relate.

1.5 Sociocultural perspectives

The call for a more integrated, context-contingent view of LL motivation has also been addressed to some extent by sociocultural theory. Within a sociocultural perspective, in which motivation is understood as socially constructed and distributed through learners’ participation in social and cultural activities, a more holistic or ‘ecological’ approach is called for (Kramsch 2004; van Lier 2004), in which context is not a separate variable but is constituted by and constitutive of individual and social engagement in interaction/activity. The work of Lev Vygotsky has been fundamental to sociocultural approaches to language learning, based on his view that ‘[t]he social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and fact. The individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary’
(Vygotsky 1979: 30) – a view I examine more closely in Chapter 2 with reference to the work of his Russian contemporary Valentin Voloshinov. A holistic view of the language learner as a person, with physical, emotional and moral awareness and sensitivities, is therefore central to sociocultural theory. As Kramsch points out:

Language learners are not just communicators and problem solvers, but whole persons with hearts, bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities. Symbolic forms are not just items of vocabulary or communication strategies, but embodied experiences, emotional resonances, and moral imaginings. (2006: 251)

As with poststructural understandings, the learner is not separate from the social context; although a role for biological constraints is not denied, ‘development does not proceed as the unfolding of inborn capacities, but as the transformation of innate capacities once they intertwine with socioculturally constructed mediational means’ (Lantolf and Pavlenko 1995: 109). A learner’s agency, defined by Ahern as ‘the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act’ (2001: 112), is socially and historically constructed; learners’ personal histories and biographies are inextricably bound with their learning, and foreground the specific activities they negotiate and with which they engage (Lantolf and Pavlenko 2001). In this way, both identity and learning originate and are formed in interaction both with the learner’s social context and with each other, making the relationship between them a ‘shared, dialogical process’ (Igoudin 2013: 201, citing Ligorio 2010). From a sociocultural perspective, then, LL motivation can be viewed as emerging from social interaction, recognising the ‘dynamic interdependence between individual and sociocultural forces that coalesce in the individual learner’s motivation’ (Ushioda 2006: 155, citing van Lier 1996: 110-11) and characterising motivation ‘as an experience of belonging rather than a personal trait’ (Sade 2011: 42). This belonging has been theorised through communities of practice and participation frameworks, to which I now turn.
1.5.1 (Imagined) Communities of practice

The communities of practice framework, based upon individuals and communities as interconnected and mutually constitutive, suggests that our identities are defined by a mix of participation and non-participation which ‘reflects our power as individuals and communities to define and affect our relations to the rest of the world’ (Wenger 1998: 167). In the communities of practice framework (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), learning is situated ‘in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world… [and] is a fundamentally social phenomenon, reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing’ (Wenger 1998: 3). Learning occurs in or in relationship to ‘communities of practice’, which may be ‘as broad as a society or culture, or as narrow as a particular language classroom’ (Lantolf and Pavlenko 2001: 148). This may be a ‘real’ community in which a person has regular contact and involvement (such as a school or workplace), or an ‘imagined community … groups of people not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination’ (Kanno and Norton 2003: 241; see also Anderson 1991). Within the community of practice, learners move, through engagement and interaction with community activities and more experienced community members, from legitimate peripheral participation towards fuller participation. Consequently, identity is understood as a lived experience of belonging (or not belonging). A strong identity involves deep connections with others through shared histories and experiences, reciprocity, affection, and mutual commitments … [I]dentity … is neither unitary nor fragmented. It is an experience of multimembership, an intersection of many relationships that you hold into the experience of being a person, at once one and multiple. (Wenger 2000: 239, 241-2)

Identities therefore have the potential to be transformed as part of such participation, engagement and connection. In the implications for learners of English, whose potentially limited physical contact with English users may mean that to them the global English-speaking community is more imagined
than ‘real’, there are also overlaps with the L2 Motivational Self System. Yashima (2009) explicitly connects imagined communities, communities of practice and the L2 Motivational Self System in her work, illustrating that learners’ visions of using English are often visions of participation in an imagined English-speaking international community. Thus the English-using self in the here-and-now may be linked to a future self using English as a participant in an English-using community: to cite Yashima’s example, a learner memorising English dialogue may be memorising sentences accurately, or may be conducting a conversation as a participant of an imagined English-speaking community (148). However, learners in a foreign language learning context may not have ready access to the target-language community, and thus might need an ‘educational initiative’ (149) to create, or to make visible, an imagined community for learners. Yashima cites as an example a high school initiative in Japan, the Model United Nations (MUN), in which each student represents a country and researches an appropriate topic for discussion from that country’s perspective (usually a human rights issue, such as child labour). Through this activity, learners learn to use English ‘to mediate their participation in an “imagined international community”, and the MUN is an occasion when the imagined community becomes visible and concrete’ (ibid.; see also Yashima 2007). Such engagement in global issues enabled learners to clarify what they wanted to communicate, and their desire to communicate was enhanced. The imagined other thus contributed positively to their motivation.

1.5.1.1 Intersections with the poststructuralist perspective

There are also clear intersections here with the poststructuralist perspective, as identity in both contexts is a site of struggle; the identity to which a learner aspires may not be recognised by other community members, or may create tension with their aspirations towards membership of other communities. If learners are disengaged from the community, for example if they have prioritised the ‘exchange value’ of the outcome of learning rather than the ‘use value’ of increasing participation, learning merely to display knowledge for evaluation (as may often be the case, given the increasingly evaluative and competitive nature of the academic system), they may be
unable to envisage a ‘field of mature practice’ (Lave and Wenger 1991: 112) for the language. As language is used to socially construct an image or identity, identity, and the context of the social interaction in which it originates, cannot be separated (Goldberg and Noels 2006: 427).

Furthermore, if, ‘to the extent that we have individual voices, we fashion them out of the social voices already available to us’ (Lemke 1995: 24-5), some language learners may lack the opportunity to fashion the voices of the communities in which they wish to participate. Thus individual learners may not be granted ‘legitimate’ speaker status, and may have unequal access to social and cultural resources (Lamb 2009: 231; see also Bourdieu 1977; Norton 1997, 2000; Norton Peirce 1995); they cannot move from legitimate peripheral participation to full participation, remain disengaged from the community, and are thereby constrained in the transformation of their identities. In this way, agency is constrained externally ‘by the framework of opportunities and constraints the person finds him/herself in’, and internally by ‘an internalised framework that makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable, and a limited range acceptable’ (Reay 2004: 435). As Ushioda asserts:

> Our agency or human intentionality must always contend with the properties of social structure which act to constrain or facilitate our intentions. Motivation is thus conceptualised not as an individual difference characteristic, but as emergent from relations between human intentionality and social structure. (2009: 221)

This view of motivation as negotiated within and emergent from social relationships leads me to the work of Ema Ushioda, which relates sociocultural perspectives on language learning and identity specifically to LL motivation.

**1.5.2 A person-in-context relational view**

The view of learners as whole and complex persons, and of language learning and identity as socially negotiated and constructed, are central to Ushioda’s work. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, social
psychological and cognitive-situated approaches to motivation have considered contextual variables and accounted to some extent for (significant) others in the learner’s environment, but the aim of these has been to formulate generalisable rules to explain how context unidirectionally influences motivation, rather than ‘to explore the dynamic complexity of personal meaning-making in social context’ (Ushioda 2009: 217). While poststructural and sociocultural approaches have gone a long way towards addressing this gap, researchers have not yet offered an approach to motivation which integrates the language learner and their social context in ways that a) foreground learners’ own voices and perspectives, and b) consider LL motivation as part of motivation towards broader personal and social growth and development. These issues are addressed by Ushioda’s person-in-context relational view of motivation, a view which understands the person as ‘self-reflective intentional agent, inherently part of and shaping her [sic] own context’ (218), and advocates

a focus on real persons, rather than on learners as theoretical abstractions; a focus on the agency of the individual person as a thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background, a person with goals, motives and intentions; a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective intentional agent, and the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro- and macro-contexts in which the person is embedded, moves, and is inherently part of. (220).

1.5.2.1 The importance of learner voice
A corollary of such an understanding of learners is recognition of the importance of learners’ own voices, in both formal and informal learning contexts and in LL research. Ushioda indicates that this is of particular concern when taking an identity perspective, which ‘highlights a dimension of student motivation that is specifically concerned with self-expression, which has unique relevance, of course, when the object of learning is a language’ (2011: 22). By understanding the learner as a complex person and engaging learners’ ‘transportable identities’ (Richards 2006) which extend beyond the classroom, the worlds inside and outside the classroom may be
‘bridged’ (Ushioda 2011: 17, citing Legenhausen 1999). However, engaging in such identities may be uncomfortable for learners given the emotional, relational and moral implications (Richards 2006: 72, cited in Ushioda 2011: 17) – thus teachers need to create and encourage an environment where learners feel supported to ‘speak as themselves’, using the target language to engage and communicate their own preferred meanings, interests and identities, in order that learners ‘feel involved and motivated to communicate and thus to engage themselves in the process of learning and using the language’ (Ushioda 2011: 17). When learner voice is enabled; when learners voice values, opinions, beliefs, preferences and engage with those of others, when they discuss and negotiate, compromise and adapt, resist and challenge and contest; when all these voices are engaged in expressing and forming social relationships, learners’ identities and motivations become engaged, are given expression and are allowed to develop. How these identities then develop becomes the next important aspect of the person-in-context relational view: how to understand LL motivation as part of motivation towards broader personal and social growth and development.

1.5.2.2 ‘An avenue for being and becoming’

Clarke and Hennig, also taking a person-in-context relational view of motivation, state:

There … appears to be a gap in terms of approaches to motivation that capture the ways in which learning is perceived as meaningful for learners’ lives, that capture the ways in which statements about motivation are used by learners to position themselves within social constraints, and that focus on how learning can support learners in their self-development and the formation of their ‘selves’, in ways not necessarily linked to necessity, struggle and survival … we seek to address this need, approaching motivation from a perspective that incorporates consideration of learners’ deliberations and decisions about who they are, who they want to become, how to live their lives, and how to act and behave towards others. (2013: 79)
In their learner-voice-centred study, Clarke and Hennig (see also Hennig 2013) characterise LL motivation as ‘ethical self-formation’, drawing on a Foucauldian framework of ethics to address the question of how one is to live (O’Leary 2002: 1, cited in Clarke and Hennig 2013: 79). Ethical self-formation ‘needs to be understood as the freedom to question the historical circumstances that have shaped our lives and how we have come to be, and to nurture a kind of curiosity in ourselves to experiment with how we could be otherwise’ (82). Most saliently to my argument, ethical self-formation ‘provides a means for learners to transform themselves in multiple domains - intellectual, emotional and spiritual … and it provides an avenue for the pursuit of an ultimate goal for being and becoming in this world’ (88, my emphasis). Engaging with learner voices, then, and facilitating the expression of their motivations and identities, can provide insights into how LL motivation fits into a broader motivational trajectory, as Ushioda suggests in her call for more holistic analyses of motivation (2012b). If we are to see the learner as a holistic person, it follows that their motivation for language learning is part of a broader motivation to learn and develop – part of their learning to be in the world:

once we begin to consider motivation from the experiential perspective of the person engaged in the business of L2 learning, it becomes evident that we need to broaden our theoretical focus beyond features of motivation distinctive to language learning … from the perspective of those engaged in L2 learning, there is obviously continuity of experience between ongoing motivational processes and developing motivational trajectories, even if interests, goals and priorities may change and evolve, as circumstances and experiences change and evolve. Moreover, when students make choices about courses of study or educational and career pathways, does it seem probable that their motivation to pursue language studies or not is somehow independent of their motivation and decision-making as a whole? Clearly, from the L2 learner’s perspective (as opposed to the narrowly defined perspective of the L2 motivation theorist), the processes of motivation associated with L2 learning are experienced alongside and in interaction with processes of
motivation associated with other learning activities and pursuits in life. (2012b: 16, 17)

My study, then, was conducted within the motivational paradigm of a person-in-context relational view, though within a different framework to that of Clarke and Hennig – one more explicitly engaged with the immanence of language, as I discuss in the next chapter.

1.5.3 The role of others in sociocultural perspectives
Similarly to the poststructural perspective, sociocultural perspectives view LL motivation as constructed through interaction with a variety of others, both real and imagined, and recognise that in individual learners’ motivation a dynamic and complex interrelation of individual and sociocultural forces is at work (van Lier 1996: 110-111, cited in Ushioda 2006: 155). Ushioda’s person-in-context, relational view of motivation understands motivation as ‘emergent from relations between real persons’ (2009: 215). Central to this relational view is an endeavour to illustrate that ‘processes of engaging, constructing and negotiating identities are central to… [the] analysis of motivation’, and that ‘it is through social participation in opportunities, negotiations and activities that people’s motivations and identities develop and emerge as dynamically co-constructed processes’ (2011: 12, 22).

Sociocultural approaches in general, and the person-in-context relational view in particular, in their recognition of relation, participation, negotiation and co-construction, bring the field closer to the others inherent in language learning. Theorising the other and its relation to the self is the subject of Chapter 2.

1.5.4 What bothered me about sociocultural perspectives
With the development of sociocultural approaches to motivation, it is clear that the field is moving closer to an ontology that more fully accounts for the role of others. These approaches understand LL motivation as socially and culturally co-constructed, with a nascent recognition that motivation for language learning may be part of broader motivation for learning in other life domains; a move towards ‘being and becoming in this world’ (Clarke
The questions raised for me, then, are *How?* questions, concerned with the *processes* of motivation: *How* is motivation co-constructed with others? *How* can I theorise LL motivation as part of a broader trajectory of learning motivation?

### 1.6 Thesis focus

Looking back over the questions that were raised for me throughout the process of engagement with the LL motivation literature, they appeared to fall into two broad groups: a) ontological/conceptual, and b) epistemological/methodological.

#### 1.6.1 Ontological stance

The ontological/conceptual group comprised the following questions:

- How does LL motivation develop from contact with other speakers?
- How can I engage with the *otherness* inherent in identity?
- How can I account for the role of others in LL motivation without becoming entangled in a power-resistance binary?
- How do learners develop agency?
- How is motivation co-constructed with others?
- How can I theorise LL motivation as part of a broader trajectory of learning motivation?

Through articulating the questions that my engagement with the literature raised for me, I have been able in turn to articulate my ontological stance regarding LL motivation, a stance represented by these questions: specifically

- that LL motivation is socially constructed, involving relations with many different others;
- that LL motivation is part of motivation towards broader personal and social growth and development.
1.6.2 Epistemological stance
The epistemological/methodological group contained the following questions:

How can I know how LL motivation develops?
How can I ‘understand how people give meaning to their experiences and to their relations with the world around them’ (Molden and Dweck 2006: 192)?
How can I hear learners’ own theorisations of their own experience?

Again, through articulating the questions raised through my engagement with the literature in the field, I have been able to more clearly formulate my epistemological stance regarding LL motivation; specifically

- that learners’ own voices and perspectives should be foregrounded in order to understand how LL motivation develops.

My ontological and epistemological stances can also be articulated as my research aims, as I now demonstrate.

1.6.3 Research aims
As stated above, the emerging field of sociocultural studies in LL motivation more fully accounts for the role of others and the relationship between the learner and their context than any previous work. Building on these existing sociocultural approaches, I theorise a definition and interpretation of LL motivation which integrates the language learner and their social context. This study, therefore, is located in the sociocultural paradigm. More specifically, I address the research gap highlighted by Ushioda (2012b) and Clarke and Hennig (2013) in their calls for more holistic analyses of LL motivation which account for the ways in which language learning is part of broader life-learning, or ‘being and becoming’ in the world (Clarke and Hennig 2013: 88). Hence, this study presents a person-in-context relational view of LL motivation. Consistent with this perspective, this study also foregrounds the voices of learners.
To summarise, then: my aim in this study is to theorise a definition and interpretation of LL motivation which integrate the language learner and their social context in ways that

- understand LL motivation as socially constructed, involving relations with many different others;
- understand LL motivation as part of motivation towards broader personal and social growth and development;
- foreground learners’ own voices and perspectives.

### 1.6.4 Research question

I have demonstrated that my broad concern is with conceptualising the nature of LL motivation, from, of course, a specific ontological position. My epistemological position, however, demanded that any research question I construct be open enough to allow such a conceptualisation to be learner-voice-centred and data-driven. The question I constructed, therefore, was broad enough to encompass both my own positions and research aims, and space for participants’ own perspectives:

*How can I characterise LL motivation for my participants?*

### 1.7 Summary

This opening chapter has charted the major developments in the LL motivation field with a focus on the ways in which the field has accounted for the role of others, and documented the ways in which my thinking has also developed alongside my engagement with this literature. I have articulated my ontological and epistemological positions, using these as a basis to formulate my research aims and research question. I now move on to Chapter 2, in which I introduce Mikhail Bakhtin’s *dialogism* as a theoretical framework through which the role of others in language may be conceptualised and understood.
Chapter 2: Language and Dialogism

or, ‘Finding another in myself’

2.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, my aim in this study is to theorise a definition and interpretation of LL motivation which integrate the language learner and their social context in ways which

- understand LL motivation as socially constructed, involving relations with many different others;
- understand LL motivation as part of motivation towards broader personal and social growth and development;
- foreground learners’ own voices and perspectives.

In order to construct such a definition and interpretation of LL motivation, language itself must first be understood as contextual and relational; therefore a theoretical foundation which accounts for such relations in language, and for the selves and others engaged in these relations, is needed. This chapter outlines the development of just such a theoretical foundation, based on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and his concept of dialogism. This chapter, then, traces the development of my position regarding the language element of my thesis title.

I begin by briefly introducing Bakhtin and the sociohistorical context of his work, delimiting how his work has been used in LL scholarship. I then present the concept of the dialogical self, which offers a conceptualisation of the language learner as engaged with many different others as part of the process of communication. I do this by first outlining the theory of the utterance, a core concept in Bakhtinian thought in its dependence on the ‘other’ and its insistence on the interdependence and mutual constitution of the individual and the social. This lays the foundation for an exploration of the self/other relationship in Bakhtin’s work, which is characterised as
similarly mutually dependent, followed by a consideration of the concepts of *voice* and *agency*, through which language learners negotiate and construct their relationships with the social world. Firstly, though, a few words to locate myself as a Bakhtin researcher, regarding both my own discovery of Bakhtin and my understanding of the broader tradition of Bakhtin scholarship.

### 2.2 Introducing Bakhtin

My own (re-)discovery of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin came about in the early stages of this thesis, particularly in my reading of narrative research, in which his name often appeared in connection with terms such as ‘voice’ and ‘dialogue’, though his thinking was rarely presented more fully. These peripheral encounters, however, were enough to prompt memories of my undergraduate English Literature days and of the encounters I had had with Bakhtin back then – hazy, but redolent of a fascination with narrative, with authorship, with the ways in which stories negotiate the space between the words used to tell them and the worlds which create them, and which are reflected and transformed by them. As an education postgraduate I had at times felt distant from my undergraduate academic interest, but here I found a point of emotional reconnection, a bridge between my past and my present. I now briefly locate Bakhtin in LL scholarship.

#### 2.2.2 Bakhtin in LL scholarship

##### 2.2.2.1 Enlarging the parameters of the field

The epistemological foundation for second and foreign language learning scholarship has traditionally been the field of linguistics and the formalist view of language it generally espouses. In the formalist view, language is a fixed and abstract system of forms which can be combined according to a set of rules and studied apart from the contexts of their use. Studies of language learning have drawn on this view to explore, among others, structural differences among language systems in order to better predict forms and patterns which might cause difficulty for learners, and to determine the most effective pedagogical means of enabling learners to absorb new knowledge into existing knowledge structures. Within an
understanding of language as a fixed and autonomous system, this was considered to be the extent of teachers’ ability to facilitate learning (Hall, Vitanova and Marchenkova 2004: 2). Over the last three decades, this view has been increasingly challenged and calls for new ways of conceptualising learning have increased, as evidenced in Firth and Wagner’s seminal 1997 Modern Language Journal article in which they called for ‘a reconceptualization’ of SLA research to ‘enlarge the ontological and empirical parameters of the field’ – in particular, towards a ‘significantly enhanced awareness of the contextual and interactional dimensions of language use’ (1997: 285). In the 1990s and 2000s, language learning, which had previously been understood as mental processes of ‘perceiving, analyzing, classifying, relating, storing, retrieving, and constructing a language output’ (Naiman et al. 1978: 3, cited in Norton and Toohey 2001: 310), began to focus on the situated experience of learners, and its concomitant concern with activities, settings, identities, and social practice. As discussed in the previous chapter, this focus was manifest in specific relation to motivation chiefly through the work of Bonny Norton in the 1990s, and that of qualitative researchers such as Martin Lamb, Tomoko Yashima and Ema Ushioda in the 2000s.

### 2.2.2.2 The Bakhtin Circle: Rejection of formalism

Much of this sociocultural research in language learning draws on the work of Lev Vygotsky and, to a lesser extent, Bakhtin. Bakhtin and his Circle developed their ideas in response to early Russian formalists, feeling that Saussure’s formalism lacked socio-ideological awareness and failed to take account of the value-laden nature of language. The central issue was Saussure’s division of language into the two roles of *langue* and *parole*, where the former refers to language as a regular system of rules upon which its users draw, and the latter refers to language as used by individuals who know the rules. Whereas Saussure’s interest was in the rules, the Bakhtin Circle understood language ‘not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated’ (Bakhtin 1986: 354). They adhered to a contrasting view of language as endlessly dynamic and generative, grounded in sociohistorical contexts,
socioculturally constitutive and constituting – a living tool through which speakers create and shape their worlds. Within such an understanding, language learning is located in social interaction, and involves appropriating signs loaded with meanings from a variety of cultural and community experience. Learning to use specific linguistic resources means also appropriating the cultural activities and histories with which they are associated; through the use of these resources, learners reflect their understanding of the social activities in which they participate and the wider cultural contexts surrounding them, and at the same time forge spaces for themselves as agents within those contexts. Language learning therefore means ‘entering into ways of communicating that are defined by specific economic, political and historical forces’ (Hall et al. 2004: 3, citing Holquist 1990). For Bakhtin, the possibility for being and living themselves are located in language: ‘To be is to communicate’ (1984b: 287). As Voloshinov states: ‘Language acquires life and historically evolves … in concrete verbal communication, and not in the abstract linguistic system of language forms, nor in the individual psyche of speakers’ (1986: 95). Given the history of the LL motivation research field and the still-prevailing individualism of the psychological paradigm, this statement has clear implications for language learner motivation. I explore this statement of Voloshinov’s below in order to illustrate the thinking behind dialogism as it is used by Bakhtin and his Circle. Hereafter, however, for the sake of economy, I refer only to Bakhtin by name, unless specifically referring to texts signed by other authors in the Circle. Bakhtin and Voloshinov (and/or their translators) were also fond of italicising for emphasis in their texts; consequently, when italics appear in my quotations, these are reproduced from the cited sources unless otherwise stated.

2.2.2.3 The Western Bakhtin tradition

Although the amount of Bakhtin scholarship is immense, it is chiefly in the fields of philology and literary theory; Bakhtin was not an education theorist, nor was he overtly interested in foreign language learning. My own reading has been guided primarily by the (mainly North American) literary theorists and philologists leading the Bakhtin ‘revival’ from circa 1980
onwards: Michael Holquist, Caryl Emerson, Gary Saul Morson, David Shepherd and Kenneth Hirschkop. Still, Bakhtin’s central concern with language and the self/other relation, voice, answerability and authorship give his work particular relevance for language learning studies. Applied linguists such as Joan Kelly Hall, Ludmila Marchenkova and Gergana Vitanova have explored specifically how Bakhtin may be applied to second and foreign language learning - their 2004 edited volume is considered to be the first to explore these links in detail (2004: vii) - but this is still a comparatively narrow research field, as although Bakhtin is often mentioned in sociocultural LL research, Bakhtinian studies of language learning are few (though see Cazden 1989, 1993; Kramsch 1995, 2000; and Marchenkova 2005 for an overview of LL studies drawing on Bakhtin). I have located only one other volume explicitly applying Bakhtin to language learning (Ball and Freedman 2004), and I have yet to encounter any research at all linking Bakhtin with LL motivation specifically.

2.3 The dialogical self
As discussed in Chapter 1, the contexts in which many language learners, and learners of English in particular, are participating, or wish to participate, comprise myriad multilingual and multicultural groups. The ultimate goal of second and foreign language learning and teaching is to facilitate communication between these groups, and it thus seems safe to assume that anyone choosing to learn a language is motivated, explicitly or implicitly, to communicate in some way. (Even someone learning a language in order to engage with the literature is still involved in a communicative event, albeit without an embodied interlocutor.) For language learners, the language classroom is both a reflection and a microcosm of their wider contexts, and language teachers prepare students for functioning in such multilingual and multicultural situations at the same time as they themselves create these situations in the classroom (Marchenkova 2004: 174). As I shall explain, Bakhtin’s concept of dialogue is particularly relevant to language learning, where the relationship between self and other may be cast into sharp relief by linguistic and cultural differences. As stated above, Bakhtin was not explicitly concerned with foreign language learning; but language was
central to his work, as ‘a living, socio-ideological concrete thing’ which ‘lies on the border between self and other’ (1981: 293). Bakhtin’s theory of language thus lends itself to an understanding of language as always communicative, always involving an other, and ultimately for an understanding of language learning motivation in which others are inherent. In order to demonstrate this, I first outline the theory of the utterance, which was developed by the Bakhtin Circle in response to the formalist view of language.

2.3.1 Theory of the utterance
The theory of the utterance was developed to describe the creative, dynamic use of language in specific social contexts, and in order to illustrate this it is necessary to pay some attention to the understandings of language prevalent during the era of the Bakhtin Circle: namely Saussurean ‘abstract objectivism’ and Romantic ‘individualistic subjectivism’.

2.3.1.1 Abstract objectivism
The theory of the utterance, as expounded by Voloshinov, was based on a critique of Saussure’s ‘abstract objectivism’, in which language was conceptualised as a fixed system of grammatical, phonological and lexical forms which formed a discrete and regular whole – in Saussure’s term, langue – as opposed to the unique, socially and contextually contingent language of individuals, or parole. Voloshinov (1986) posits that such an understanding grew out of the philological study of languages from dead or distant civilisations, in which the ‘finished’ monologic utterance was the object of study; a tradition which, for Voloshinov, reinforced and legitimated knowledge as passive understanding, as postulated by empiricist/positivist accounts. Objectivism understood that only langue, as a regular, defined, rule-bound and self-contained system, could be subjected to systematic analysis; parole was too irregular and unpredictable to be rationally accounted for. Thus langue stood apart from parole, the ‘inviolable, incontestable norm’ (53) abstracted from people’s everyday, individual speech acts. In Voloshinov’s view, language is inherently dynamic, a ‘ceaseless flow of becoming’, and thus a conceptualisation of
language as a system of ‘self-identical linguistic norms’ (66) is anathema; such a system is constructed only by theorists, and has no real sociohistorical existence itself. Individuals, Voloshinov argues, do not relate to language as something fixed which they must normatively reproduce in ‘correct’ forms; rather, language is used creatively, reflectively, reflexively and dynamically in response to particular social situations. For Voloshinov, the context of the utterance is an inherent part of it, and this context consists of three aspects:

(1) The spatial horizon common to the interlocutors (the unity of the visible: the room, the window, etc.); (2) Knowledge and understanding of the situation, also common to both; (3) Their common evaluation of the situation. (Voloshinov 1983: 7, cited in Todorov 1984: 42)

Voloshinov’s (and his translators’) italicised highlight of the common here draws attention to the shared-ness of the context, the ‘other’ inherent in the production and understanding of the utterance. Voloshinov continues to be emphatic on this point:

Only that which we, the set of interlocutors, know, see, love, and recognize – only that in which we are all united – can become the implied part of the utterance … ‘I’ can actualize itself in discourse only by relying upon ‘we’. (ibid.)

Later, Voloshinov reformulated his description of the context of enunciation to include its space and time. The utterance, therefore, in contrast to the sentence (or the linguistic unit), is always and necessarily produced in a specific social context, between social actors located in a particular time and place unique to each:

Indeed, from whichever aspect we consider it, expression-utterance is determined by the actual conditions of the given utterance – above all, by its immediate social situation. (Voloshinov 1986: 101)
Voloshinov, therefore, acknowledged the ‘living, dynamic reality of language and its social functions’ and the ‘value’ of living speech as it was ‘actually and continuously generated’ (71), which abstract objectivism lacked the theoretical tools to examine.

2.3.1.2 Individualistic subjectivism
In contrast to abstract objectivism, individualistic subjectivism, linked by Voloshinov to the Romantic understanding of language as the ‘experiential medium’ through which individuals express thought and emotion, prioritises the creative individual subject, rather than what Gardiner (1992: 11) calls the ‘object-ness’ and unmediated reality of langue. In contrast to objectivism, subjectivism recognises that individual speech acts display ‘creative value’ and are thus a fundamental aspect of language (Voloshinov 1986: 48, 51); however, it locates the meaningful nature of the word, its ideological value, in this very creativity of the inner psyche. Voloshinov, on the other hand, rejects both subjectivism and objectivism on the grounds that neither school of thought accounts for the ongoing and dynamic flow of interaction in social contexts, which is the social reality of language and crucial to any understanding thereof. In other words, the dialogic interaction between utterances - utterances produced by a concrete addresser and oriented towards a concrete addressee, both of whom are located in a particular time and space within broader social relationships – is the heart of the communicative process.

2.3.1.3 A specific response to a specific moment
Consequently, Voloshinov contends that insofar as we are each located in a unique position between overlapping discursive and cultural fields, we each have a unique ‘social purview’ which determines the ideological orientation of our utterances (1986: 85). The utterance, therefore, as the specific response to a specific moment, is always spoken from a particular perspective; and it is always two-sided, created in response to what has been said before and in anticipation of what will be said in reply. There is always an addressee; either a physical listener, or the ‘inner other’ (Solomadin 2000: 33, cited in Marchenkova 2004: 183). All utterances are dialogic, part
of a meaning-making process by which the present and the historical meet and co-exist; all utterances have a history and a present, existing in a state of ‘intense and essential axiological interaction’ (Bakhtin 1990: xxvii). The dialogic word is therefore always charged with meaning, ideology, evaluation, judgment:

There are no ‘neutral’ words and forms – words and forms that can belong to ‘no-one’; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents. For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have a ‘taste’ of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. (Bakhtin 1981: 293)

Dialogism is about the relationship utterances enter into with other utterances, of the tensions between the ‘tastes’ and contexts in which the ‘socially charged’ word has been previously used. All utterances want to be heard and responded to:

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as rejoinder to it – it does not approach the object from the sidelines. (276-77)

No single utterance can be understood separately from its contexts of use; it is an individual act but not a purely individual act, as it always springs from what has gone before it. In the act of the utterance, meaning is co-constructed with the other; the utterance ‘does not passively reflect a situation that lies outside language’, but is ‘a deed, it is active, productive ...
Discourse does not reflect a situation, it is a situation’ (Holquist 1990: 63). Discourse becomes through the negotiation between speakers, mutually shaping the communication process in a dialogical and creative process of responsive understanding (Bakhtin 1986) – creative because it is a necessary response to a particular problem in a specific situation. Both speakers listen and respond, actively participating in the construction of utterances and discourses – and the listener is always an active respondent, a ‘link in the chain’:

…*word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*. Each and every word expresses the ‘one’ in relation to the ‘other’. I give myself verbal shape from another’s point of view, from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his [sic] interlocutor. (Voloshinov 1986: 86)

Thus language, in the dialogue between utterance and response, is always relational. There is always a relationship with the other, always a negotiation between speaker and listener: the self and the other play emphatically *active* roles in shaping communication:

When the listener perceives and understands the meaning of speech, he [sic] simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. He either agrees or disagrees with it, augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution and so on … The utterance is related not only to preceding, but also to subsequent links in the chain of speech communion … from the very beginning the utterance is constructed while taking into account possible responsive reactions, for whose sake in essence it is actually created. As we know, the role of the *others* … for whom my thought becomes actual thought for the first time (and thus for my own self as well) is not that of passive listeners, but of active participants in speech communication. (Bakhtin 1986: 68, 94)
The theory of the utterance, then, establishes the relational nature of language; meaning and understanding are always socially negotiated, always co-created in the active participation of speaker and listener. The speaker/listener relation manifests the crucial self/other relation, which creates the foundation for the relational approach to LL motivation I propose.

2.3.2 Self and Other

Language, for Bakhtin, is thoroughly permeated with dialogic relations, and the major relation is that between self and other. The self/other relation lies at the heart of the dialogic self, which is in a constant state of flux, in interaction with the social environment, without fixed boundaries, constantly engaging in meaning-making with other selves and other voices. In Bakhtin’s conceptualisation, the self/other relation is not one of either/or, as self and other are not absolutes. Rather, they are always related to each other and dependent on each other, coming together in the utterance through the ‘simultaneous unity of differences’ that the utterance expresses (Holquist 1990: 36). The individual self is thus inherently dependent on other selves – the I cannot exist without the other:

To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he [sic] is always and wholly on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another. … I cannot manage without another, I cannot become myself without another; I must find myself in another by finding another in myself (in mutual reflection and mutual acceptance). (Bakhtin 1984b: 287)

However, for meaningful dialogue to be possible, the distinctiveness between the interlocutors must be maintained. Each participant in the dialogue must find the other in themselves, but must also maintain their unique self and remain different from each other; they must both enter and remain outside each other. This has particular implications for the explicitly intercultural engagement that takes place as part of language learning.
2.3.2.1 Outsideness and unfinalisability

For Bakhtin, we are entirely reliant on the other’s position outside us, as only in what the other reflects back to us can we see ourselves:

…we evaluate ourselves from the standpoint of others, and through others we try to understand and take into account what is transgressed to our own consciousness. Thus, we take into account the value of our own outward appearance from the standpoint of the possible impression it may produce on the other … In short, we are constantly and intently on the watch for reflections of our own life on the plane of other peoples’ consciousness, and, moreover, not just reflections of particular moments of our life, but even reflections of the whole of it. (Bakhtin 1990: 15-16)

This ‘transgression’, more transparently characterised by Bakhtin (1986) as outsideness, is essential in order to be able to speak to and understand others, and is thus an essential element of intercultural understanding:

There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy, idea that in order to better understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one’s own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture. … Of course, a certain entry as a living being into a foreign culture, the possibility of seeing the world through its eyes, is a necessary part of the process of understanding it; but if this were the only aspect of the understanding, it would merely be duplication and would not entail anything new or enriching. Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one’s own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (1986: 6-7)
For Bakhtin, then, intercultural understanding involves simultaneously entering and remaining outside another culture. If *outsideness* is maintained, neither participant is culturally threatened; rather, perspectives are broadened, for ‘each retains its own unity and *open* totality, but they are mutually enriched’ (7). Outsideness, therefore, means inhabiting the border between self and other, where no participant has the right to finalise another, nor to articulate final meaning (Kostogriz 2004: 194). The concept of *unfinalisability* is an important one for Bakhtin: there is no point at which we are complete, at which we have seen a finite number of perspectives on ourselves – we are always incomplete, always unfinalisable – and this interdependency implies responsibility for ourselves and for others. There is no unified relation to the external world which constitutes the self; the self is a socially constituted entity, conceptualised through the ideological and discursive phenomena which shape it in an ongoing historical process, and is thus continuous, fluid, unfinalised, constantly ‘becoming’. There is no ontological certainty or closure; no-one can know for us, and ‘there is no alibi for being’ (Bakhtin 1993: 40). The self exists in a dynamic relationship with other selves and all that is ‘other’ (Clark and Holquist 1984: 65). It is never whole or finalised – it can only exist dialogically. And the self which broadens its scope, which seeks ‘provisional finalisation’ by various different authors, creates optimal conditions for language learning (Emerson 1997: 223-224), because it creates opportunities for creative understanding.

2.3.2.2 Creative understanding

As Emerson points out, Bakhtin’s dialogism has at its heart the desire for understanding, with outsideness a prerequisite ‘for creatively understanding another person or another culture, and for being creatively understood by them’ (1996: 111). *Creative understanding* describes the active and productive role of the participant in dialogue, and carries the potential for transformation for all participants: ‘In the act of understanding, a struggle occurs that results in mutual change and enrichment’ (Bakhtin 1986: 142). *Creative understanding* synthesises language, culture, the self and the other; this is reflected in the process of language learning, in the ways in which learners try to understand and orientate towards the words of others in order
to gain enhanced interpersonal and intercultural understanding. This finds echo in the words of Bakhtin:

I understand the other’s word (utterance, speech work) to mean any word of any other person that is spoken or written in his [sic] own (i.e. my own native) or in any other language, that is, any word that is not mine. In this sense, all words (utterances, speech, and literary works) except my own are the other’s words. I live in a world of others’ words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to others’ words (an infinitely diverse reaction), beginning with my assimilation of them (in the process of the initial mastery of speech) and ending with assimilation of the wealth of human culture (expressed in the word or in other semiotic materials). The other’s word sets for a person the special task of understanding this word … . (143)

In orientating to the words of others, language learners emerge and exist ‘on the boundary’ between languages and cultures – without the boundary, the self becomes monolingual and monocultural (Marchenkova 2004: 183-4). The dialogic self thus reflects the experiences of language learners, both within and outwith the language classroom. However, making those words their own, taking them from ‘other people’s mouths’, is a ‘difficult and complicated’ learning process (Bakhtin 1981: 294), which is explored more fully in Chapter 3. In order to lay the groundwork for this exploration, it is necessary to consider the development of the voice and agency through which such expropriation becomes possible.

2.3.3 Voice and agency

2.3.3.1 Shared and individual consciousness

The dialogical self is therefore a social self, thoroughly steeped in the voices of others. Within the dialogical self, otherness is manifested through utterances, through the medium of language. Using words, whether in speech or in thought, always involves using the words and utterances of others, and thus both outward speech and the inner world of thought, or ‘inner speech’, are social phenomena – ‘embodied dialogical interaction with an external other becomes metaphorical dialogical interaction with an
“internal” other as inner life imitates “outer” life’ (Pollard 2008: 144). When Voloshinov and Bakhtin characterise thought as inner speech, they are declaring that others participate in our individual thoughts, as self/other make up the sides of the two-sided act of the utterance (Morson and Emerson 1990: 201). Consequently, consciousness itself is defined socially, culturally and historically, ‘a tenant lodging in the social edifice of ideological signs’ (Voloshinov 1986: 13). Consciousness is a shared, social phenomenon, which always exists in relationship with other consciousnesses. Every aspect of consciousness is dialogically constituted, through the constant and continuous dynamics of communication. Consciousness only develops in interaction with another, and language, consciousness and communication are therefore inextricably intertwined (Vygotsky 1986).

The dialogical self is also, importantly, an embodied self - it has biological unity, and biographical unity deriving from its specific socio-historical conditions. Individuals’ experience of embodiment is both similar to others, who also have bodies and can therefore empathise; and different, as all bodies are distinct and different from each other and each individual’s experience of embodiment is unique. The embodied dialogical self recognises the constitution of the individual as a chronotopic relationship (Murphy 1991: 45), constructed and developing within specific parameters of time and space (social, political, economic, geographical, environmental, historical) (Bakhtin 1981: 85). Being is a unique event – no-one else will ever be in exactly the same place at the same time. The dialogical self is therefore an evolving process of different voices in different locations in time and space. Consciousness is both shared and social, and uniquely individual and embodied.

1 The Bakhtin Circle’s view of history is not as an inevitable teleological process, but rather is an ‘open’ realm of boundless potential, ‘capable of death and renewal, transcending itself, that is, exceeding its own boundaries’ (Bakhtin 1986: 135). History, like the self, is dynamic.
2.3.3.2 Emotional-volitional tone

Consciousness arises, then, from the continuing process of social communication, and the speaking consciousnesses engaged in this process are represented by voices (Wertsch 1991; Holquist and Emerson 1981). These speaking consciousnesses are engaged in the continuing dialogue which constitutes the social world, and encounters with these comprise our various relationships and interactions. Although voices may also be figuratively or symbolically expressed through discourses, it is the voices of sociohistorically specific, chronotopically located people that give rise to the embodied dialogical self (Tappan 1998: 393). The embodied dialogical self carries something individual, a voice with a unique and distinct emotional-volitional tone (Bakhtin 1993; Vitanova 2004) through which an individual’s unique and distinct responses are expressed. The emotional-volitional tone is what identifies a particular voice with a particular individual; it is relational and discursively constructed:

Everything that is actually experienced is experienced as something given and as something-yet-to-be-determined, is intonated, has an emotional-volitional tone, and enters into an effective relationship to me within the unity of the ongoing event encompassing us. (Bakhtin 1993: 33)

The individual voice, with its unique emotional-volitional tone, is shaped through the inherent, dynamic tension in the utterance between the past and present. When we speak, we: ‘a) create the contexts of use to which our utterances typically belong, and, at the same time, b) we create a space for our own voice’ (Hall et al. 2004: 2). Individuals actively use voices to navigate and position themselves in their social relationships and interactions; individuals can be positioned by voices, can move between them and reflect on these movements, and can accept, resist, negotiate and modify them. The Bakhtinian subject occupies a ‘nexus between one’s existence and the ability to author his/her words’ (Vitanova 2004: 153), and it is as part of the unfinalisable, constant dialogue of addressing and responding to others, in one’s own voice expressing one’s own emotional-volitional tone, that agentive potential is realised. Agency, therefore, ‘does
not liberate the self from its discursive constitution but stems from the self’s ability to create new opportunities in establishing one’s voice’ (152).

Indeed, Bakhtin identifies a link between the constant striving to establish voice and human growth and creativity:

As long as a person is alive he [sic] lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word. (Bakhtin 1984a: 59).

To be means to communicate. Absolute death (non-being) is the state of being unheard, unrecognized. (1984b: 287).

To be means having a voice, in which one can be heard, addressed and responded to (Vitanova 2004: 166). Consequently, language learners are looking to create and establish their voices in the language, in order to express and convey their own emotional-volitional tones; and this becomes an important aspect of their motivation. The emotional-volitional tone seems particularly significant here, considering the link between motivated and volitional behaviour; and volition in the Bakhtinian sense is always socially mediated, communicating learners’ own ways of being as it chimes through the words of others. In developing their voices and emotional-volitional tones, learners become authors, answerable to the voices in the world around them.

2.3.3.3 Authorship and answerability

All voices are always entwined in dialogic relationships with other voices; dialogue highlights the permeability of symbolic and physical boundaries and the interconnectedness of discourses, voices, and the world (Gardiner 2000), and is perceived as a form of answering to others’ axiological positions: ‘What the self is answerable to is the social environment; what the self is answerable for is the authorship of its responses’ (Clark and Holquist 1984: 9). Authorship is a key term here: in Bakhtin’s philosophy of the act, an act is not defined by its content or how it is carried out, but by the type and degree of personal responsibility the actor assumes for it. A life is a complicated act, and the self is a responsible human being putting their
signature to their actions. Answerability to the voices in the world around them is where the uniqueness of the self originates; individual responses carry individual accents and intonations, unique and unrepeatable, in voices with their own emotional-volitional tones, creating and communicating new meanings. Each utterance ‘always creates something new that never existed before, something absolutely new and unrepeatable’ (Bakhtin 1986: 119-120). Each response is distinctive, unique, creative, and these ‘underlie the act of life authoring as answerability’ (Vitanova 2004: 155; see also Bakhtin 1993; Morson and Emerson 1990).

This has important repercussions for agency: if the speaking self is an author, always part of a process of creative answerability, in responsive understanding of their surroundings (Bakhtin 1986), people can challenge and transcend disempowering positions through their ordinary, everyday acts. However, human agency is contingent upon awareness and understanding of the very structures that constrain it, and for Bakhtin, this is a precondition for the agentive exercise of freedom and moral responsibility: the ‘better a person understands the degree to which he [sic] is externally determined … the closer to home he comes to understanding and exercising his real freedom’ (139). There is always a tension between people using words purposefully, in their own emotional-volitional tone, and those words being ‘ideologically saturated’ (1981: 271), carrying the meanings of their previous contexts of use.

2.3.3.4 Authoring the self
Thus agency is both individual and co-constructed (Lantolf and Pavlenko 2001); the dialogical self is both unique being and social phenomenon, both agentive and socially determined. Agency is creative in the appropriation of voices to make them one’s own, in putting one’s own accent on linguistic forms which have been used many times before in various settings (Hicks 2000: 240). Bakhtin thus expresses a formulation which could go some way towards addressing a central problem in theorising the definition and location of agency, as articulated by Pennycook:
The challenge is to find a way to theorise human agency within structures of power and to theorise ways in which we think, act, and behave that on the one hand acknowledge our locations within social, cultural, economic, ideological, discursive frameworks but on the other hand allow us at least some possibility of freedom of action and change. (Pennycook 2001: 120)

As Vitanova (2004: 166-7) points out, Bakhtin’s formulation is also a hopeful one in its view of the person as a creative process, an author in constant re-creation and re-definition of their lived world. In accounting for both the determining and producing historical factors in our lives and allowing for an active response on the part of the individual to these, the dialogical self abolishes the need for the unified, monadic self of psychology, allowing instead for a model of connecting with others in an ongoing, dynamic process: through embodied engagement with individual voices, and through engagement with ideological, historical and social forces. This embodiedness is central to Bakhtin’s philosophy: not only because the conceptual systems that structure consciousness are embodied, but because it is the basis for outsideness, which describes the constraints on our perceptions of and relationships with other people owing to the limitations of the body; and because, as Pollard states, ‘our shared experience of incarnation is the basis of the moral obligations that we have towards our fellow human beings’ (2008: xv-xvi). However, presenting such an apparently optimistic framework behoves me also to sound a note of restraint: although the dialogical self allows for such active response and engagement, learning to author one’s self is a long and complicated process of development and maturation, of learning to ‘selectively assimilate the words of others’ (Bakhtin 1981: 341). This process is discussed in Chapter 3.

2.4 Summary: Dialogism for a person-in-context relational view of LL motivation

I have demonstrated in this chapter that language learning reflects the relation between self and other expressed in the dialogical self, in the way
learners imitate, mirror, and adapt for their own purposes the utterances of others and of each other. Language is a tool (a term commonly used by learners to describe English, in my experience), but a living, emergent tool, through which personal and social worlds are created and shaped. The utterances of others offer a potentially new space which learners can use as a resource and adapt for themselves; thus, entering into dialogue with many different others allows them to better understand and participate in social life, for the more they interact with others, the wider their experience with different genres. The fewer the possibilities for interaction, the fewer are our ‘tools for living in that place’ (Emerson 1997: 223). Thus language learning is dialogic, taking place on the border between self and other, and it is understanding, rather than detailed knowledge of linguistic forms, that helps to create the speaking subject, who can come to engage with and contest the voices of others in their own voice (Bakhtin 1986).

As discussed in Chapter 1, the language being learnt and the groups, cultures, nations with which it may be associated may often be only ‘imagined’ – this may apply particularly to English, for which the power of the ‘native speaker’, the associated nations, and the perception of social and cultural capital accruing to English speakers, may hold a powerful cultural and imaginative sway. Language learners may engage substantially in creating images of their associations with the language they are learning – of the countries in which it is spoken, the people who speak it, and the possibilities that would open up to them if they could speak it. Having put in this work, the risk involved in an encounter with the real other in the language becomes greater, and the learner may need assurance that their energy has been well spent, that further interaction will be worthwhile; in short, they need to be motivated. The motivation towards this risk with an other is a fundamental element of ‘becoming’ in as healthy and full a way as possible: seeking encounters with as many different people as possible facilitates the orientation of the other towards the I, which offers the I tools for living – for imitating, adapting, using as resources, evaluating. If no-one orients towards us, there will be no ‘tools for living’. The ‘I’ that engages with a wide and diverse array of ‘authors’ (and with the potential for
‘finalisation’ that such authors may confer upon the I) is creating the conditions for optimal becoming, towards flexibility, openness, variety, multi-languagedness, and unfinalisability. Furthermore, when the other and their context become ‘real’, a ‘bridge of reciprocal influence’ becomes possible: a bridge that ‘can lead to a broadening of vocabularies on both sides and eventually to genuine learning and change’ (Emerson 1997: 223).

The dialogic development of the language learner, then, is a story not only of individual emergence, but of emergence through relations with others, with the social contexts with whom the learner is in constant dialogue: it is a story of finding the other in oneself. ‘Selfhood’, for Bakhtin, is not ‘a particular voice within’, but ‘a particular way of combining many voices within’ (Morson and Emerson 1990: 221). The learner’s speech is concerned with the (re)representation and reaccentuation of the speech of others; as Bakhtin states, ‘I live in a world of others’ words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to others’ words’ (Bakhtin 1986: 143). How learners assess and evaluate these words for themselves, and respond to them, is a pivotal task of development, leading to awareness of themselves and others, to a sense of responsibility and answerability (Bakhtin 1990) for their thoughts, utterances, and actions. Dialogism therefore offers a broad theoretical foundation for a person-in-context relational view of motivation.

However, individual development involves the selective assimilation of the words of others, and in order to understand the process of development, it is necessary to understand how individuals come to make the words of others their own, reaccented in their own emotional-volitional tone; the process through which, I suggest, learning takes place. This process of assimilating or ‘objectifying’ the words of others is fundamental to the development of the critical, autonomous thought and action which lead to the sense of responsibility and answerability through which learning develops. In the following chapter, therefore, I explore this process, demonstrating how, in a dialogical framework, learning is socially constructed through interaction and engagement with others.
Chapter 3: Learning and Ideological Becoming

or, ‘Selectively assimilating the words of others’

3.1 Introduction

Building on the theoretical foundation of dialogism constructed in Chapter 2, this chapter aims to develop an interpretive framework for understanding learning from a person-in-context relational perspective. This framework will enable me to theorise a definition and interpretation of LL motivation which integrate the language learner and their social context in ways that

- understand LL motivation as socially constructed, involving relations with many different others; and
- understand LL motivation as part of motivation towards broader personal and social growth and development.

Chapter 2 posits that learners are able to develop their own voices, with individual emotional-volitional tones, in order to agentively engage and interact with the voices of others. This chapter illustrates how such individual voices develop, and how this development takes place as part of a broader process of learning to be in the world, characterised by Bakhtin as ideological becoming. This chapter, therefore, addresses the learning element of my title.

First, I offer an overview of the concept of ‘assimilating the words of others’, followed by a definition of ideology as it is conceived by the Bakhtin Circle. I then set the individual assimilation of the words of others within a broader social context in a discussion of Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia, which describes the ongoing engagement, tension and conflict between social languages. Following this, I discuss the two major categories of social language as postulated by Bakhtin, authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse, and describe how the dialogic interaction between such discourses facilitates the ideological development, or ideological becoming, of the language learner. Finally, I present the concept
of ideological becoming as a fruitful interpretive framework through which language learning may be viewed and understood, and through which a person-in-context relational view of motivation may be developed.

3.2 Assimilating the words of others

As outlined in Chapter 2, according to Bakhtin, all living discourse, as expressed through individual utterances, is constantly assessing, evaluating, arguing with the words of others, and citing words from some indefinite, general source in our own utterances (1981). Our constant engagement with the words of others in everyday social interaction – our interpretation of and response to those words – means that ‘no less than half (on the average) of all the words uttered by [an individual] will be someone else’s words … transmitted with varying degrees of precision and impartiality (or more precisely, partiality)’ (339). Individual consciousnesses, as expressed through voices, are constantly dynamically engaged in understanding social life as mediated through language: ‘responsive understanding is a fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse, and it is moreover an active understanding’ (280-1). As reflective and social beings, we develop competence in the production and understanding of signs, and effective communication is dependent upon this competence, often defined in language learning as communicative competence. As each participant in dialogue brings their own frames of reference, expectations, experiences – their own sociohistorical baggage – to their comprehension of the utterances of others, assimilating the word of the other into one’s own conceptual framework is crucial to such an ‘active and engaged understanding’ (282). Through this assimilation, the word becomes permeated with a new range of nuances, shades of meaning, inflections and evaluations, and this new range of meanings is introduced into the language.

As the ‘living language’ lies on the ‘borderline’ between self and other – as the word in language is always ‘half someone else’s’ – authorship too is always shared between self and other. Development and maturation, then, is a shared rather than an individual story; it is a story of persons-in-relation. However, as part of this process, individuals must come to a sense of
responsibility, or ‘accountability’, for their utterances and actions. For
Bakhtin, this incorporation of another’s perspective to one’s own, and the
dialogic interaction between self and other taking place within it, is a crucial
stage in the development of an individual’s self-consciousness and their
personal and social maturation:

The ideological becoming of a human being … is the process
of selectively assimilating the words of others. (1981: 341)

In order to understand the development of the individual, their ideological
becoming, it is necessary to understand the process by which learners
assimilate the words of others and make those words their own. How
language learners reach this point of assimilation, where the word becomes
their own and they can populate it with their own intentions (294) - how
they engage in ideological becoming - is therefore the focus of this chapter.
Before expanding more fully on this notion, however, it is necessary first to
consider the way Bakhtin and Voloshinov conceptualise ‘ideology’.

3.2.1 Definition of ideology

Emerson states that the meaning or connotations of ‘ideology’ in English are
not particularly helpful for understanding the term as Bakhtin uses it,
suggesting in English ‘something inflexible and propagandistic, something
word ideologija does not necessarily carry strong political connotations;
rather, it refers ‘in a more general sense to the way in which members of a
given social group view the world’. For Bakhtin, ‘any utterance is shot
through with “ideologija”, any speaker is automatically an “ideolog”’
(ibid.). Somewhat problematically, there is no fully developed definition of
ideology in the Bakhtin Circle’s writings, although ‘it can be argued that an
ethically-informed analysis of ideological discourses is implicit in
[Bakhtin’s] critical project’ (Gardiner 1992: 4). The conceptualisation I
offer here is constructed with reference to the work of Michael Gardiner,
who has developed a definition of ideology in the Bakhtin Circle based
chiefly on Voloshinov’s texts. I therefore refer readers to Gardiner’s 1992 volume for a fuller discussion.

The term ‘ideology’ [ideologija] is, according to Gardiner, rather loosely applied by Bakhtin and Voloshinov to refer to any signifying or meaning-endowing practice or activity, which are central to human endeavour. Importantly, ideology does not represent or reflect an external reality; rather, it is an effective material force in its own right, capable of influencing sociohistorical and sociopolitical processes (1992: 71). For Gardiner, Voloshinov’s Marxism and the Philosophy of Language is innovative in theorising ideology as it reconceptualises it in terms of semiotic and linguistic processes, rather than the often sinisterly vague and distorting notions of ‘worldview’ or ‘belief system’ (9). Here, ideology denotes the process of conferring meaning or value on the social world. ‘Everything ideological possesses meaning: it represents, depicts or stands for something lying outside itself. In other words, it is a sign. Without signs there is no ideology’ (Voloshinov 1986: 9). Ideology is therefore material, visible, external; all human action and communication is embodied in signs (a word, a gesture, a facial expression) which produce real social effects, making language the central site of ideological phenomena. According to Medvedev:

[Ideology is] not in the soul, in the inner world … but in the world, in sound, in gesture, in the combination of masses, lines, colours, living bodies … Whatever a word might mean, it is first of all materially present, as a thing uttered, written, printed, whispered, or thought. That is, it is always an objective present part of man’s [sic] social environment. … It is not within us, but between us. … Each individual act in the creation of ideology is an inseparable part of social intercourse, and therefore cannot be studied apart from the whole social process that gives it meaning. (1978: 8, 126)

Ideology is therefore ‘an objective fact and a tremendous social force’ (Voloshinov 1986: 90), and a social process; for ‘only that which has acquired social value can enter the world of ideology, take shape, and
establish itself there’ (22). Ideology is a semiotic phenomenon and a product of textuality, making it imbricated with language, specifically with its material instantiation in (oral or written) discourse: it is therefore constitutive of social relations, which, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, are indissolubly bound to human activity and to selfhood (Gardiner 1992: 66-67). Ideology in the Bakhtinian sense, then, symbolically constitutes all social relations, and language, being inherently social and relational, is always a ‘site of ideological contestation’ (7). Every utterance ‘enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments, and accents’, in which it ‘weaves in and out of complex interrelationships’ (Bakhtin 1981: 276).

As language is always ‘a particular way of viewing the world, one that strives for social significance’ (Bakhtin 1981: 333), the speaking individual is always an ideologue (Morris 1994; Tappan 2005). Understanding the formation of an individual’s own ideology, and indeed their ‘self’, necessitates exploration of the process through which they appropriate the words of others in construction of their own ‘ideologically mediated perspective on the world’ (Tappan 2005: 54). This is the process of ‘ideological becoming’, which is central to the understanding of LL motivation I wish to set forth; a process which takes place through the ongoing struggle among voices and discourses with differing levels of authority and individual or internal persuasiveness. I now offer further exploration of the struggle of voices in ‘social reality’ (Bakhtin 1981: 348), characterised by Bakhtin as heteroglossia, by way of setting a social context for the corresponding struggle in the individual.

3.2.2 Heteroglossia

3.2.2.1 Centripetal and centrifugal forces

For Bakhtin, the living language is in a constant state of tension between centripetal forces, which normalise, standardise, centralise, unify and fix; and centrifugal forces, which allow for the constant innovation and expansion of language, the creation of new meanings and genres, and which have a desystematising power. These forces are working in constant,
uninterrupted tension (Bakhtin 1981: 272), and their locus is characterised by Bakhtin as heteroglossia. In a condition of heteroglossia, there is constant interaction, engagement, tension, and ongoing and reciprocal influence, among meanings:

Thus at any given moment in its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom; it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These ‘languages’ of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying ‘languages’. (291)

It is within such (highly unstable) conditions that the speakers in a language community create and are created by myriad sociocultural and sociohistorical forces, as well as by each other through their own social participation; it is because of the instability of these conditions that no two utterances are ever the same. Each utterance is never fixed, always expresses a unique evaluative stance, and varies according to the contexts of its use: ‘Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear’ (272). Likewise, all ‘languages’ of heteroglossia express such uniqueness and specificity at a social level; they ‘are specific points of view on the world … interrelated dialogically’, co-existing ‘in the consciousness of real people’ and living ‘a real life’ (291-292).

3.2.2.2 Competing social languages

In a condition of heteroglossia, the utterance is multivoiced and infused with ‘shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents’ (Bakhtin 1981: 276). These social languages, in which we all participate and which are entrenched in both individual and group consciousness, consist of social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargon, generic languages, languages of generations and age
groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and passing fashions, languages that serve the specific socio-political purposes of the day … this internal stratification present in every language at every moment of its historical existence. (262-263)

Every social group, every generation, every institution has its own language; these are ‘stratifying factors’ which differentiate languages, often setting them in conflict. Any given individual will have differing degrees of fluency in multiple languages, compelling them to choose among them at every given moment (Landay 2004: 109). The individual is thus a locus of multiple competing languages, which may often be in conflict; the authoring self ‘inhabits the real world where contentious voices compete within a single body’ (Sperling 2004: 250). In order to acquire value among a given social group, an utterance must enter the ‘value-horizon [krugozor]’ of the group, a process contingent on ‘aggregate sociohistorical conditions’ (Voloshinov 1986: 22). As Bakhtin writes:

When we seek to understand a word, what matters is not the direct meaning the word gives to objects and emotions – this is the false front of the word: what matters is rather the actual and always self-interested use to which this meaning is put and the way it is expressed by the speaker, a use determined by the speaker’s position (profession, social class, etc.) and by the concrete situation. Who speaks and under what conditions he [sic] speaks; this is what determines the word’s actual meaning. All direct meanings and direct expressions are false … . (Bakhtin 1981: 401)

The social and the linguistic (or, we might say, linguistic-ideological) domains are therefore hierarchically stratified, and thus the linguistic-ideological domain is always heteroglot, always devolving into the competing social-ideological languages of heteroglossia.

3.2.2.3 ‘Some voices are louder than others’
Such conditions are in part why Bakhtin and the Circle emphasise the role of the ‘concrete addressee’, whose social and cultural affiliations and
identities differ from those of the addresser. From the various speech genres and their concomitant range of linguistic forms, the addresser may choose the form most appropriate for or most coincident with the addressee’s social position (Gardiner 1992: 84). According to Bakhtin, popular and non-standard linguistic forms are marginalised, and speakers of such forms (generally from subordinate social groups) learn to adapt their utterances to the particular social situation and defer to the authoritative language in conditions of social inequality. In other words, in dialogue, not ‘all contributions carry equal weight. Some voices are louder than others, even if they are not the ones articulating the most elegantly convincing arguments’ (Shepherd 1989: 146). The relations between centripetal and centrifugal forces will vary over different historical periods in their forms and effects; under certain historical conditions, centripetal forces may posit a particular form of discourse as the unified, authoritative form, and yet at another point in time centrifugal forces will render such unity impossible. It is in this process that language becomes dialogised, as its forms are created by the specific historical organisation of opposed centripetal and centrifugal forces at any particular time (Crowley 1989: 182-183). Heteroglossia, then, reinforces the understanding of an utterance as embedded in specific historical and social circumstances, shaped by and shaping the context in which it arises; and, importantly, is best understood by those who most closely share the speaker’s understanding of those circumstances and contexts – those closest to the speaker’s ‘social purview’.

3.2.2.4 Critical interanimation

The implications for language learners are clear: although a learner may feel they have acquired understanding of linguistic forms, this is not sufficient for understanding the ‘living language’, with all its social, cultural and historical accents and intonations. Wertsch’s (1998) terms of ‘mastery’ and ‘ownership’ are brought to mind here, where mastery is ‘knowing how’ to use a cultural tool with a relatively high level of skill, but ownership is the taking of a given cultural tool which ‘belongs to others’, and ‘[making] it one’s own’ (50, 53). Coming to a sense of ownership is a difficult process, and while ‘owners’ are often ‘masters’, the reverse is less often true.
Learners cannot appropriate a discourse on demand; it cannot be transmitted or transferred from one person to another, because the utterance always ‘exists in other people’s mouths’ (Bakhtin 1981: 294), and is most readily understood by those who most closely share the speaker’s understanding of the context. Learners often begin learning the language in their home contexts, with people close to their social purview, and are likely to find themselves best understood in the language in those contexts. Rather, the appropriation takes place when discourses come into dialogic relationship with each other, in a process of ‘critical interanimation’:

As soon as a critical interanimation of languages [begins] to occur in the consciousness … then the inviolability and predetermined quality of these languages [comes] to an end, and the necessity of actively choosing one’s orientation among them begins … Consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language. With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness must actively orient itself amid heteroglossia, it must move in and occupy a position for itself within it, it chooses, in other words, a ‘language’. (Bakhtin 1981: 296, 295)

In a process of ‘critical interanimation’, there is continuous interaction between meanings, and all meanings shape and influence other meanings. The particular conditions of which meaning(s) will affect which, how, and to what extent, are determined when the speaker chooses a language - at the moment of the utterance (Voloshinov 1986: 40-1). This relativisation and decentring of the word, utterance, discourse, is the process of dialogisation; when it becomes ‘aware of competing definitions for the same things’ (Holquist and Emerson 1981: 427). This process takes place through our own speech, as we constantly interpret the words of others, imbuing them with our own emotional-volitional tones, taking evaluative stances towards them, transmitting them ‘with varying degrees of precision … and partiality’ (Bakhtin 1981: 339). We choose the utterances we want to appropriate and reaccent them in our emotional-volitional tone and with our own evaluative stance, and construct and perform our identities within those choices; we
begin ‘selectively assimilating the words of others’ in a process of struggle and liberation:

The importance of struggling with another’s discourse, its influence in the history of an individual’s coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous. One’s own discourse and one’s own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other’s discourse. This problem is made more complex by the fact that a variety of alien voices enter into the struggle for influence within an individual’s consciousness (just as they struggle with one another in surrounding social reality). (348)

All languages are not equal; ‘not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation’ (293-294). Social language, for Bakhtin, falls into the two major categories of authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse (Landay 2004: 109), and it is in the individual’s struggle with these discourses, reflecting the struggle among languages in ‘surrounding social reality’ (Bakhtin 1981: 348), that ideological becoming takes place.

3.2.3 Authoritative and internally persuasive discourse
Bakhtin describes authoritative and internally persuasive discourse with reference to a school analogy which has particular resonance for language learning:

When verbal disciplines are taught in school, two basic modes are recognised for the appropriation and transmission – simultaneously – of another’s words (a text, a rule, a model): ‘reciting by heart’ and ‘retelling in one’s own words’. … It is this second mode used in schools for transmitting another’s discourse, ‘retelling in one’s own words’, that includes within it an entire series of forms for the appropriation while transmitting of another’s words, depending upon the character of the text being appropriated and the pedagogical environment in which it is understood and evaluated. (1981: 341-2)
The concept of ‘reciting by heart’ is recognisable in many language classrooms, in such activities as repetition of models, recitation of rules, drilling of pronunciation, and reading aloud. Likewise, ‘retelling in one’s own words’ can be seen in more learner-autonomous activities involving description and discussion, and the more advanced productive skills such as summarising and paraphrasing. Beyond the classroom, however, in the wider linguistic and social realm,

[t]he tendency to assimilate others’ discourse takes on an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual’s ideological becoming, in the most fundamental sense. Another’s discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth – but strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behaviour; it performs here as authoritative discourse, and internally persuasive discourse. (342)

3.2.3.1 Authoritative discourse

Authoritative discourse is a closed discourse, offering no space for discussion, questions, or contradictions. It demands our acknowledgement and ‘unconditional allegiance’; it allows for no ‘free appropriation and assimilation’, no manipulation of context, no play or creativity, no reassembly or reconstitution of its parts – it must be either totally affirmed, or totally rejected, and cannot be divided from the authority to which it is inextricably bound (Bakhtin 1981: 342, 343). Authoritative discourse speaks ‘the one point of view that must be attended to’, its power lying in its status as the voice that everyone hears (Morson 2004: 320). Authoritative discourses permeate all aspects of social life, every moment in time and every social circle, always ‘setting the tone’ for the social worlds in which ‘a human being grows and lives’ (Bakhtin 1986: 88). The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt
to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past. It is a prior discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it from among other possible discourses that are its equal. … It is akin to taboo, i.e., a name that must not be taken in vain … for example, the authority of religious dogma, or of acknowledged scientific truth or of a currently fashionable book. (Bakhtin 1981: 342-343)

Authoritative discourses are discourses of tradition, officialdom, doctrine, and there are many of them, working centripetally toward ‘a concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralisation’ (271). They may claim authority and neutrality, to offer an ‘alibi for being’ (1993: 40); they say ‘we speak the truth, and you need not question, only obey, for your conscience to be at rest’ (Morson 2004: 318). However, their claims to neutrality are just that; these discourses too ‘are specific points of view on the world’, and are not fixed or real but are ‘always in essence posited’ (Bakhtin 1981: 291-292). Authoritative discourses may not be open to change; but change, nevertheless, may seep in.

3.2.3.2 Internally persuasive discourse

In contrast, internally persuasive discourses are discourses of personal beliefs, personal narrative and self-definition. Internally persuasive discourse is continually open and creative and, importantly, carries no weight of external authority; it is ‘contingent, unexpected, particular, local, and idiosyncratic’ (Morson 2004: 318). It is authentic, which Morson defines as ‘thought generated by specific lived conditions’ (325). Unlike authoritative discourse, internally persuasive discourse is always open to change and is constantly interacting with other discourses:

Internally persuasive discourse – as opposed to one that is externally authoritative – is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with “one’s own word”. In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else’s. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it
organises masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. It is not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions; it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts. More than that, it enters into an intense interaction, a struggle with other internally persuasive discourses. (Bakhtin 1981: 345-6)

Internally persuasive discourses are always open to change, to assimilation and appropriation, creative, productive, generative, relational. Internally persuasive discourse represents the dialogic struggle among other discourses and our capacity for ambivalence, for holding contradictory opinions and perspectives, and for these contradictions to continually produce new contradictions; it is always challenging, questioning, unsettling, disturbing. Internally persuasive discourse ‘is the antithesis of dogma and received wisdom’ (Pollard 2008: 4).

3.2.3.3 Implications for (language) learning

While it is possible that ‘both the authority of the discourse and its internal persuasiveness may be united in a single word’ (Bakhtin 1981: 342), there is more commonly a ‘sharp gap’ between the two categories: authoritative discourse is rarely in itself also internally persuasive. Rather, they dialogically interrelate as part of an individual’s growth and maturation, their coming to ideological consciousness: ‘when thought begins to work in an independent, experimenting, and discriminating way’ (345). As part of development and maturation, one gradually comes to create one’s own internally persuasive discourses, making them one’s own through the words they have acknowledged and assimilated (342, 345, n. 31); as maturation progresses, the boundaries between authoritative words and one’s own words become clearer and more defined. Thus the appropriation of the words of others into internally persuasive discourse, the dialogic interaction between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, and the dialogic interaction between different internally persuasive discourses, facilitate the ideological development of the individual. It is therefore through the dialogic interaction between these kinds of discourse that the individual
develops, that critical and autonomous thought and action become possible, and learning takes place.

I now discuss how discourse becomes internally persuasive, and thus how ideological becoming takes place.

3.3 Ideological becoming
3.3.1 Understanding and response
As Tappan indicates, the terms ‘appropriation’ and ‘assimilation’ should not lead to the process being viewed as internalisation, where something static is transferred from the external to the internal; rather, it draws attention to the active participation through which the individual develops their own understanding and/or competence (Tappan 2005: 53, citing Rogoff 1995: 151). Understanding is fundamental to a discourse becoming internally persuasive. The dialogic interaction between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses takes place through social interaction and participation, and the concomitant need, even struggle, to understand others. Crucially, this understanding occurs at the point of utterance; it is at the point of response that language is appropriated and reaccented:

In the actual life of speech, every concrete act of understanding is active; it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system … and is indissolubly merged with the response, with a motivated agreement or disagreement. To some extent, primacy belongs to the response, as an activating principle: it creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other. (Bakhtin 1981: 282)

Understanding is therefore manifest in the responsive utterance, which is itself conditioned by understanding. Both understanding and response are always active and engaged, and it is thus at the point of utterance that discourse becomes internally persuasive, as internally persuasive discourse
is itself active and engaged. The response is also crucial for the development of voice; through active, engaged, responsive understanding with the other, the self’s worldview, perspectives, and conceptual horizons are communicated, accenting their voice with their own emotional-volitional tones. The (linguistically mediated) self/other relation is thus constitutive of individual and social identity; but a corollary of this is that this other also has the capacity to wield authoritative discourses which constrain the self’s linguistic possibilities and exercise power over the self. Dialogic relations, if they are to facilitate communication, must have mutual, active, creative understanding as their aim, and look to be enriched and deepened by the viewpoint of the other (Gardiner 1992: 97). An active understanding is one that *strives* to understand, one that introduces the word to a new ‘conceptual system’, interrelating and enriching it with one’s own word, rejecting some elements and adding others. Through orientation towards the listener’s world, the listener’s ‘conceptual horizon’, social languages interact with one another and new elements are introduced into one’s discourse. In this way, voices enter into dialogue, and the words of others are assimilated: but *selectively* assimilated, in dialogic relation with one’s own and other words (Bakhtin 1981: 282).

### 3.3.2 ‘Selectively assimilating the words of others’

It is thus through ‘selectively assimilating the words of others’ that the process of coming to awareness of ourselves and others, of becoming responsible, socially and culturally competent members of our society, takes place. This is *ideological becoming*, a gradual process of claiming such authority for one’s own voice through appropriating others’ words, language, and forms of discourse, making them one’s own by populating them with one’s own intentions and accents, adapting them to one’s own semantic and expressive intention (Bakhtin 1981: 293), while the word in one’s own voice remains in constant dialogue with other voices. The individual consciousness, which has previously been unable to separate itself from the various ‘alien discourses surrounding it’, comes to the process of ‘distinguishing between one’s own and another’s discourse … rather late in development’ (348), as part of the psychosocial maturity that
arises through reflection and social interaction. Internally persuasive discourse, as other voices that have been assimilated to become ‘half ours and half someone else’s’ (345), is not entirely our own, because nothing ever is; but what is our own is the way in which we orchestrate our own music, compose our own tune, author our own self, by coordinating the voices of others and forging our own particular inner speech; the way we wring our own discourse from others’ words (Morson and Emerson 1990: 221). Ideological becoming, as it takes place through the dialogic interaction among authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, is reminiscent of Morson and Emerson’s statement that ‘selfhood is not a particular voice within, but a particular way of combining many voices within’ (ibid.).

3.3.2 1 ‘Ever newer ways to mean’

Ideological becoming is the evolving ‘collection of meanings’ that we have constructed and absorbed as part of the ways in which we participate in dialogue; as part of our dialogic relationships we negotiate the ideological positioning of others, and by thinking about the ideas, language and intentions within these ideologies we develop new understandings for ourselves which become our own ideologies – our own ‘ways to mean’ (Delp 2004: 203). Bakhtin writes:

> Our ideological development is just such an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values. The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not finite, it is open; in each of the new contexts that dialogise it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean. (1981: 345-6)

The transformations of meaning – the ‘ever newer ways to mean’ – that occur in the tensions between the authoritative and the internally persuasive word, is where learning takes place. The greater the choice of words we have to assimilate – the more we surround ourselves with a variety of others – the more opportunity to learn. And it is those social interactions where
tension and conflict are most apparent, where understanding is the greatest struggle, which are most effective at stimulating learning and growth.

3.3.2.2 Learning to be in the world

‘Ideological’ becoming is so called because it takes place within what Medvedev calls ‘the ideological environment’ (1978: 14), an environment characterised by diverse voices through which communication and understanding are mediated, in a convergence which is fundamental to growth and development. Ideological becoming is the development of an ideological self; of the way we view the world and our system of ideas. This does not necessarily preclude the sense of ideology as a political system of ideas; and nor should it, as all learning and teaching, perhaps especially language learning and teaching, involve myriad political choices, decisions and judgments. Ideological becoming involves genuine learning and growth; identity develops and changes, rather than being ‘revealed’ as something inherent to the individual. Ideological becoming entails forging a new position in the social world, a position gained through the growth and development attained through learning. This growth and development takes place sociohistorically, in a process of historical becoming, with the process of growth shaped both by social forces and in response to them, involving both continuity and creativity (Morson and Emerson 1990: 222). Such ideological becoming is part of authoring the self; and the ethically responsible self must be in constant problematisation and reassessment of ‘one’s own word’, of authoritative and internally persuasive words, for which latter they must always take responsibility (ibid.). After all, responsibility is an inescapable corollary of freedom: ‘There is no alibi for being’ (Bakhtin 1993: 40), and ‘an independent, responsible and active discourse is the fundamental indication of an ethical, legal and political human being’ (Bakhtin 1981: 349-350). Ideological becoming, like language learning, is never finished – it can be seen as an impulse towards the future, a creative and generative process of growth. Like learners and the learning process, it is unfinalised and unfinalisable. Ideological becoming, then, is an ongoing process of learning to be in the world.
3.4 Summary: Ideological becoming for a person-in-context relational view of LL motivation

I have outlined in this chapter that in conditions of heteroglossia, the utterances and discourse of a given social language cannot simply be adopted, because they are ‘populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others’ (Bakhtin 1981: 294). For Bakhtin, it is itself the indelibly social nature of language that enables people to assert agency through the rearrangement of linguistic forms and meanings, which takes place through authoring themselves in their own voice; it positions people at the same time as it enables them to recreate those positions. In this way, the social and cultural worlds which determine and constrain perspectives become the very spaces in which individuals are able to author themselves (see Holland et al. 1998). This authorship is made possible through ideological becoming, a process of claiming authority for one’s own voice through appropriating and reaccenting the words of others in various authoritative and internally persuasive discourses – and then either rejecting those words or making them part of one’s own internally persuasive discourse. Fundamental to this process is responsive understanding, dialogically constructed with the utterance at the point of the utterance, which is simultaneously facilitated by and constitutive of individual voice. The process of ideological becoming enables us to constantly (re)construct an interpretive framework through which we hear, evaluate, understand and respond to the words of others; and through the act of responsive understanding, ideological becoming continues. Hence the vital importance of ‘selective assimilation’ of the alien word for personal and social maturation, for the development of critical, reflective and autonomous thought and action – for learning.

The concepts of understanding and voice are vital to demonstrating the fruitfulness of ideological becoming to an interpretation of LL motivation. Language learners, when they are able to learn actively and to participate in the language socially, negotiate the dialogic interaction between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses through their social interaction and participation, struggling to reach active, responsive understanding. Responsive understanding is manifest in the responsive
utterance, through which learners develop voice in the language; as they participate in an ongoing process of understanding and response, they appropriate the words of others, allowing their own perspectives, viewpoints, beliefs, and emotional-volitional tones to dialogically develop, and allowing their own voices to be increasingly heard. Ideological becoming takes place through the development of learners’ voices; and through their ideological becoming, learners’ voices develop, in an iterative and mutually dependent cycle. Language learning is therefore an ongoing, perpetual process, an activity in which selves are formed and develop, an ethically progressive move towards a more polyphonic and socioculturally engaged self (see Clark and Hennig 2013; Hennig 2013), and thus part of broader life-learning and development. Ideological becoming, therefore, offers a lens for exploring language learning as part of a broader process of learning, namely learning to be in the world.

The process of ideological becoming is the process my participants have undergone; their stories of their language learning motivation are stories of their process of ideological becoming. Before relating these stories, however, and by way of building a bridge between them and these theoretical chapters, I now describe and exemplify my methodology and research design.
Chapter 4: Methodology and Research Design

_or, Relating to others dialogically_

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the rationale behind my choice of methodology for this study and charts the development of my research design. As stated in the Introduction, the voices of learners are still heard comparatively rarely in LL motivation research (though see Ushioda’s 2013 edited volume). This chapter addresses my aim of theorising a definition and interpretation of LL motivation which integrate the language learner and their social context in ways which

- foreground learners’ own voices and perspectives.

This aim stems from my understanding, articulated in Chapter 1, that only by studying the person in context can insight be gained into the ways in which their motivation has been socially constructed, involving myriad different others. This has a Bakhtinian corollary in that self and other are relations, simultaneous and interdependent, and therefore in order to account for the role of others in motivation, it is necessary to look at the selves – that is, the individual learners. Consequently, my Bakhtinian theoretical framework informs not only my interpretive approach but also my methodological perspective, and the implications of this, and the decisions it led to, are discussed throughout this chapter.

The chapter first situates this study in a methodological tradition, outlining how I initially, and certainly in the early stages of the study, drew on narrative inquiry to inform my methodology. I offer a brief background to the narrative tradition in psychology and cultural theory, an overview of the narrative tradition in LL research and LL motivation research, and a description of how a narrative methodological approach maps on to Bakhtin’s theory and my central theoretical concept of ideological
becoming. I then demonstrate how I operationalised Bakhtin’s perspectives in my research design.

4.2 Locating this study in a methodological tradition
My concern with learner voice led me first and foremost to situate this study in the tradition of qualitative LL motivation research, which I accessed chiefly through the work of Martin Lamb and Ema Ushioda (Lamb 2004, 2007; Ushioda 2006, 2008, 2009). These studies have generally used interviews to gain insights into learners’ own perceptions of their motivation, and have related learners’ stories with the help of the learners’ own voices. Such studies are still less visible in the LL motivation research field than quantitative studies, and so this study makes a contribution to this burgeoning tradition. In addition, as my study is explicitly concerned with social interaction, specifically by how language learning motivation is constructed within social interaction, I needed a methodology that represented this domain. To address this need, I drew on the narrative inquiry tradition, and while I would not describe this study as a narrative study per se, this has been a major methodological influence throughout its creation. Although I was unable to settle on a satisfactory research design until I engaged with Bakhtin, the influence of my encounters with narrative inquiry on my methodological and analytical approach has been significant. It is therefore to narrative that I now briefly turn, in order to communicate my thinking in the early stages of the study and to unearth its methodological foundations.

4.2.1 ‘Two modes of thought’
The narrative turn in psychology could be said to have paralleled the sociocultural turn in language learning, with narrative now becoming increasingly influential in LL studies (Benson and Nunan 2004; Early and Norton 2012; Kalaja, Menezes, and Barcelos 2008; Pavlenko 2001, 2008; Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000). Arguably one of the best-known and most influential narrative theorists, Jerome Bruner (1986, 1990), laid out his vision for a narrative cultural psychology by stating that psychology must shift its focus from a concern with ‘behaviour’ to one of ‘how we come to
endow experience with meaning’ (1986: 12) as socially-situated and culturally-located agents. As Bruner explains:

There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another. Efforts to reduce one mode to the other or to ignore one at the expense of another inevitably fail to capture the rich diversity of thought. (1986: 11).

One of these two modes is the logico-scientific or paradigmatic, which is systematic, descriptive, generalisable, observable, consistent and non-contradictory. It is ‘driven by principled hypotheses’ (13), concerned with creating and demonstrating theory, analysis, proof, sound argument and empirical discovery, through a lens of logic, validity and replicability. This is recognisable as the mode in which the majority of LL motivation studies have taken place, and for this research field, as in general, it has been enormously productive and important in terms of its contributions to knowledge. In contrast, however, the narrative mode

leads instead to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily ‘true’) historical accounts. It deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place. (1986: 13)

It is such ‘particulars of experience’ that qualitative LL motivation researchers have aimed to capture, as do I myself in this study. And by way of a further link to this study, Bruner’s account here is notably redolent of Bakhtin’s philosophy (which ought not to be surprising, given the latter’s lifelong interest in the novel), most notably in the focus on history, intention and action, and time and place. According to Bruner, narrative ‘operates as an instrument of mind on the construction of reality’ (1991:6), and people use their understanding of events to give ‘narrative meaning’ to the conditions of their lives. Through this process of narrative meaning-making,
individuals ‘make’ the history by which their present decisions are guided. Though there may be an assumption among adherents of the logico-scientific paradigm that narrative accounts may depart from objective reality, may be ‘untruthful’, the narrative mode understands that the sharing of narratives makes history by contributing to the tellers’ histories; narratives ‘constitute the psychological and cultural reality in which the participants in history actually live’ (1986: 43). In other words, people author themselves through the narratives through which they make sense of their worlds, narratives which are produced in and constitute specific historical circumstances. Narrative methods have therefore been increasingly adopted amongst researchers in language learning’s emerging sociocultural and identity paradigm, informing their understanding of learners as socially, culturally and historically situated individuals, as I now briefly relate.

4.2.2 Narrative in LL and LL motivation research

The sociocultural and identity turns in LL research have led to an increased interest in learner narratives (Block 2007: 867). Block (2003, 2007) claims that the narrative approach has arisen from a perceived need to conceptualise language learning as a social as well as a cognitive process, and from the broader turn towards more socially informed approaches to language learning (2007: 867). As well as the LL narrative studies cited above, there are a few studies specifically linking LL motivation with narrative or learners’ stories (Gao 2013; Murray 2008; Sade 2011), also characterised as language learning histories (Chik and Breidbach 2011) or English language learning histories (Paiva 2011). In general, however, whether explicitly ‘narrative’ studies or not, I would argue that the body of qualitative research in the field generally springs from a narrative impulse – an impulse to record the chronotopically-located ‘particulars of experience’ through eliciting learners’ stories. The value of a narrative approach is explicitly recognised by Ushioda, who suggests that using learners’ language learning stories or histories in class can both engage students in communication and facilitate reflection on language learning processes, as well as function as ‘investigative tools for the teacher to enable better
understanding of individual students’ experiences and motivation’ (2013: 238).

I am therefore locating this study in an emerging qualitative paradigm in the LL motivation field, and specifically building on a fledgling narrative body of research in this field. Having thus methodologically located myself in the LL motivation field, I now explicate the connections between narrative and a Bakhtinian theoretical framework, specifically regarding my central concept of ideological becoming.

4.2.3 Narrative and ideological becoming

The previous two chapters established the centrality of the dialogic self/other relation in Bakhtin’s theory, as exemplified in his statement ‘to be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself’ (1984b: 287). The dialogic development of the language learner is a process of emergence through relations with the others with whom the learner is in constant dialogue, and therefore ‘selfhood is not a particular voice within, but a particular way of combining many voices within’ (Morson and Emerson 1990: 221). The learner's speech is concerned with the (re)representation and reaccentuation of the speech of others; and how they assess and evaluate these words for themselves, and respond to them, is a pivotal task of development, leading to awareness of themselves and others, to a sense of responsibility and ‘answerability’ (Bakhtin 1990) for their thoughts, utterances, and actions. This answerability is made possible through, and is part of, ideological becoming, the process of claiming authority for one’s own voice through appropriating the words of others, and then either rejecting those words or making them part of one’s own internally persuasive discourse, reaccenting them in one’s own voice with one’s own emotional-volitional tone. And through speaking in one’s own voice, one creates; speaking is an act, and through the act of speaking, the speaker authors their own voice: ‘a speaker is to his [sic] utterance what an author is to his text’ (Holquist 1986: 67). The speaker/author speaks from their socio-historically and chronotopically specific position, narrating the particulars of their experience and locating it in time and space, entering into active
dialogue with the specific others of whom and with whom they speak, or with a generalised other who may not be physically present but exists in the narrator’s emotional-volitional tone (see Bakhtin 1993). Thus the creation of narrative is a multi-voiced act; a ‘polyphonic meaning-making process’ (Vitanova 2004: 155). As any and all utterances stand in relation to other utterances, narratives are intertextual spaces through which the utterances of others may be given new accents and imbued with new meaning. When a speaker/narrator repeats a story, endowing words with their own evaluations, it becomes re-accented with the speaker’s own emotional-volitional tone and orients the information in a new and unique way. Narratives allow other voices to be challenged or reiterated, and provide ground for the re-interpretation of the self through others. This endows personal narratives with a transformative power: through evaluating and naming worlds and challenging the discursive practices of others, narratives may offer individuals space for agentive potential and self-knowledge. In the words of Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998: 7): ‘We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, through the stories we tell’. This knowledge, discovery and revelation can be understood as part of the process of ideological becoming; stories, as Daiute (2011: 330) describes them, are a means of making sense of the world and how we fit into it.

Later in the chapter, I outline the specific ways in which Bakhtinian theory informed my design. First, I present my basic research design, and detail the events, decisions and thought processes that contributed to its refinement.

4.3 Research design
My basic research design is a series of four qualitative interviews with six learners of English now living in the UK. I carried out the four interviews over the course of approximately fifteen months, in order to engage as deeply with the participants as possible within a study of this size and scope, and as appropriate to my research question and aims. Interviews took place in four rounds, with each participant being interviewed once in each round, making a total of twenty-four interviews. My rationale for interviewing in
rounds was that following each interview I would analyse the data from that interview, and from this construct the questions for the next round. The interview schedule was as follows:

| First interviews | May/June 2011  
|                 | (followed by Analysis 1) |
| Second interviews | November/December 2011  
|                  | (followed by Analysis 2) |
| Third interviews | March 2012  
|                  | (followed by Analysis 3) |
| Fourth interviews | September 2012  
|                   | (followed by Analysis 4) |

Interviews were audio-recorded, with participants’ consent, and lasted for between one and two hours. All my analytical procedures and decisions are detailed in Chapter 5.

Below, I present an explanation of how Bakhtinian theory led to the development of my specific design. However, in the interests of transparency and in order to best chart this development, I first return to my thinking as it was in the very early stages of the study.

**4.3.1. Early methodological musings**

In order to fully set the methodological scene, it is necessary to revisit the research I carried out for my MA and MSc dissertations, respectively a study of adult ESOL learners’ motivation and a study of EAP teachers’ perspectives on their learners’ motivation. For both studies, I had designed semi-structured interviews (preceded by semi-structured focus groups for the MSc), which I felt had struck a balance between eliciting adequate and appropriate data for my research agenda, and allowing space for participants’ own perspectives, agendas, directions - their stories - to emerge. Although I had not drawn directly on narrative theory, it was in essence a narrative approach. This had ‘worked’, insofar as it generated data which was plentiful, complex and pertinent enough for me to gain insight into participants’ experiences and to conceptualise these in such a way that
readers of my work would also be able to gain insight into them – to know something about my participants’ lives and to hear their voices - and also enabling me to satisfy the research requirements of rigour, robustness, and contribution to the field. In these very early stages of my research career, and in response to the prevailing quantitative paradigm in the LL motivation research field, this was my major concern – what I felt to be allowing participants’ voices to be heard. This same approach, then, was the one I planned to take in this thesis – I saw no particular reason to do it differently.

4.3.1.1 Member checking

Before my data generation process could begin, I was required in my first year of PhD study to submit a research proposal detailing my planned research design to a School of Education panel. As a measure of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Cresswell and Miller 2000), I had stated in my research proposal that I would member-check transcripts and my final interpretation with the participants. Member-checking is the process of ‘taking ideas back to research participants for their confirmation … [and/or] to gather material to elaborate your categories’ (Charmaz 2006: 111). It is also known as member validation, described by Richards as aiming to ‘seek views of members [participants] on accuracy of data gathered, descriptions, or even interpretations’ (2003: 287), and is cited by Lincoln and Guba as ‘the most crucial technique for establishing credibility’ (1985: 314). Such checks might take place through the return of transcripts or interpretative summaries to individual participants for verification and confirmation of their accuracy, or through participant focus groups (Doyle 2007); however, concrete descriptions and examples of procedures and processes for member-checking are sparse in the research literature (Carlson 2010; Doyle 2007). My experience of member-checking from my two Masters dissertations had always been that participants would respond to any texts I sent them, if they responded at all, with broad agreement with everything I had said. One or two very conscientious ones might make a few corrections, perhaps if they had made some kind of performance slip in the interview, but it was never a process that generated any deeper opinion or reflection; this lack of impact on the development of the study or the data is
corroborated by Doyle (2007). Furthermore, descriptions and accounts of member-checking seemed only to extend to the checking of data (through transcripts, for example) or of final interpretations or summaries (Cresswell and Miller 2000; Doyle 2007). This was also unsatisfactory, as it would be well over a year after the first interview that I would have anything approximating a ‘final’ interpretation; as well as excluding participants from the interpretive stages that would lead to the final interpretation, it would be a very long time for them to remain engaged with what they had said in previous interviews, and with the study as a whole. Therefore, although member-checking was part of my ‘formal’ research plan, I was sceptical of its usefulness for my particular study, of the value it would actually add; I felt obliged to include it chiefly as a concession to ‘trustworthiness’. However, my scepticism only extended to its usefulness; I had not yet begun to think about its ethics.

4.3.1.2 Developing ethical consciousness

It was around the time of this first-year panel that I rediscovered Bakhtin, through a quote from Voloshinov followed by a Bakhtin citation in a text on narrative inquiry. The ideas were only briefly touched on, in support of a wider point; but the references resonated with me and I followed them up. My subsequent reading led to the thinking now documented in the two previous chapters.

By this time, I was about to face the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). This became something of a critical incident in the development of my ethical consciousness regarding this study: while there was ostensible concern for the welfare of myself and my participants, the overarching (and unspoken) discourse was one of liability and procedural accountability. I understood, of course, that such was the way of the institution; however, it made me consider my own understanding of research ethics, and how, from my own point of view as a researcher, the greatest ethical concern was that of my relationship with my participants, and the way in which that relationship would be represented in the study. These ponderings around UREC resonated more generally with my experience of research methods
training, with its focus on skills and outcomes rather than processes involving epistemological, ontological and political decisions (Frankham et al. 2014, citing Frankham and Smears 2012), and above all, involving people: the implicit assumption seemed to be that the researcher would remain aloof, objective, unbiased, ‘distinct and distant’ (Mercieca and Mercieca 2013: 230).

My methodological thinking at this time, then, was beginning to coalesce around my thoughts regarding member-checking, my reading of Bakhtin, and my experiences with UREC. I came to understand that I had been framing member-checking as an ‘ethical’ activity in terms of my relationship with my participants, allowing them a right of reply to what I would write about them – indeed, the use of the verb ‘allowing’, with its connotations of permission, is very telling here. However, I had not yet managed to apply these new directions in my thinking to my methodology. And by this time, I was ready to start recruiting participants and get my first round of interviews underway, as I now relate.

4.3.2 Participant recruitment
Once my UREC approval had been granted, I wrote a recruitment advertisement (see Appendix 1) and sent it via email to all the contacts I had involving learners of English, asking them to disseminate it. I sent my advertisement to the language centres of all the Manchester universities, FE institutions and private language schools, to fellow teachers and former colleagues, and to the University of Manchester’s Research Volunteering page. I also sent it via private Facebook messages to friends and student colleagues working in Manchester, for their own interest if they had been learners of English, and/or for them to disseminate among their own friends and contacts. As I had most recently been teaching EAP at the University of Manchester, I expected that most of my respondents would come from this area, owing to these teachers being more familiar with me and on that basis being more likely to disseminate my advertisement. I was aiming to recruit at least eight participants, which would still allow for a substantial study if there were one or two withdrawals (which, in the event, there were). In
addition, a former teaching colleague put me in touch with a student of hers, Eli, who wanted to take part. Dmitry, whom I had known through a choir we used to sing in together, also contacted me through Facebook, as did Federica, who had been a student colleague of mine on the MSc Educational Research. Three participants contacted me through the University’s Research Volunteering Page: Raluca, Raj, and Weijian. I asked each participant whether they would like to use their real name in the study or whether they would prefer to be anonymised, and all elected to use their own names. Only Eli was formally studying English at the time of the interviews; the others were not engaged in formal English learning. Details of the participants’ lives are discussed in Chapter 6, but for now, by way of offering an initial overview, some of their basic information is presented in the table below (in alphabetical name order).

### 4.3.2.1 Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name &amp; Sex</th>
<th>Age (at 1st i’view)</th>
<th>Home country</th>
<th>Status (at 1st i’view)</th>
<th>Came to UK</th>
<th>Age started learning English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dmitry (M)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Postdoctoral researcher Mathematics</td>
<td>2006, for PhD</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli (F)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>EFL student at FE college</td>
<td>2008, to learn English</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federica (F)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>PhD student Linguistics</td>
<td>2009, for PhD</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raj (M)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>1st year undergrad. Economics</td>
<td>2008, for A-levels</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raluca (F)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>1st year undergrad. Computer Science</td>
<td>2010, for undergrad. study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weijian (M)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>PhD student Biological Physics</td>
<td>2009, for PhD</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2.2 Developing trust

I first met the participants in late April/early May 2011. Although I anticipated that the trust in our relationships would develop over the four interviews, I was concerned to try to create conditions which would facilitate their comfort with me. Wong (1998, cited in Rinke and Mawhinney 2014: 5) highlights the power of the researcher in even apparently close and less formal researcher-participant interactions, and in particular the power of the researcher to elicit stories of participants’ lives without having to reciprocate. Being aware of my powerful position as the researcher, sharing such stories was part of my rapport-building effort. I met Eli, Raj, Raluca and Weijian in a café before arranging any interviews in order to introduce myself, to describe something of my own life, my teaching and research experiences, the reasons for my interest in my research topic and my dissatisfaction with the prevailing paradigm, and explaining my motivations for this study. I outlined my findings from my previous research projects (Harvey 2013a, 2013b), explaining that I wished to build on these in this study; and above all, I attempted to communicate my interest in their experience. All participants were also given a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 2) and Consent Form (Appendix 3) to read, and to sign if they wished to take part. For Dmitry and Federica, as I did not need to introduce myself, our first meeting as researcher/participant was at the first interview; however, I went through the same process of explaining the study’s hinterland before the first interviews, the procedure for which I now relate.

4.3.3 First interviews: Eliciting stories

The participants and I arranged our first interviews for late May/early June 2011, in a location of their choice. For everyone except Raluca, these were the cafés in which we had had our initial meeting; Raluca suggested I come to her home. These remained our venues for subsequent meetings, with the exception of Weijian, who invited me to his home for the second and subsequent interviews. These interviews lasted one hour, on average.
The first interview was a series of open questions with the purpose of eliciting participants’ language learning stories in an order roughly chronological to their lives and in as non-leading a way as possible. I began with an introductory question designed to let the participants begin with an experience important to them, activate their schemata, and offer them space to set the tone or agenda for the interview:

*Can you tell me about a memorable experience you have had connected with learning English?*

The questions were roughly chronological and indicative of subjects I wished to cover; the interviews themselves were more flexible and sometimes followed a different order, but the same subjects were covered in each:

*Why did you start learning English?*

*Can you tell me about your experiences speaking English in your country?*

*Why did you choose to come to the UK?*

*Can you tell me about your experiences speaking English in the UK?*

*Can you describe your future goals/hopes/ambitions?*

Each interview was transcribed and I began inductive analysis; these procedures are detailed in the next chapter.

**4.3.4 Second interviews**

**4.3.4.1 Design concerns**

At this point, my main concern was how to design the second interview. Regarding what I would actually ask my participants in the second and subsequent interviews, I had no clear idea. My expectation was that as I transcribed and analysed the data, additional questions would arise for each participant for me to ask in the next interview; I would then transcribe and
analyse again, and ask further questions in the third interview according to what arose from the second for each individual participant, and so on. As I became more deeply immersed in this process, though, I realised the data was so rich, and the stories so plentiful, that I began to feel it would be inappropriate and unhelpful for me to simply construct further questions of my own – inappropriate because I would have been imposing my own interests on the data to what I felt was an unacceptable extent, and unhelpful because this would have been likely to narrow the focus of the next interview rather than open it out and generate further data. I was aware that in doing this, I would have been looking for what I wanted to know, rather than what participants wanted to tell me. This, I realised, conflicted with what I was now coming to understand to be my foremost methodological concern: more than simply ‘allowing’ participants voices to be heard, I wanted my participants to recognise and feel ownership of the stories they would see presented in my thesis. I wanted a methodology that would facilitate active co-theorising, rather than participants telling, researcher theorising. And yet it was impossible for me not to take an authorial, and thus authoritative, position – this was not, after all, a participatory action research project. This was my doctoral study, conceived, conceptualised and written by me. These reflections on authorship and authority led me to a crucial realisation which substantially shaped the direction of the study, namely that Bakhtin’s theory could help me tie several disparate strands of thought into a coherent knot: my dissatisfaction with member-checking, my reflections on research ethics as prompted by the UREC experience, and my concern to facilitate co-theorising. By way of setting the context for the second interview, then, it is necessary to briefly return to Bakhtin.

4.3.4.2 Talking with participants (1): In theory
The awareness that it was impossible for me not to take an authorial position prompted reflection on what was possible within such a position. To theorise this, I drew on Bakhtin’s concept of the polyphonic novel, in which the author creates ‘freedom for others’ points of view to reveal themselves’ while maintaining a ‘positive and active quality’ (1984a: 67), in which the creator’s consciousness
is constantly and everywhere present … and is active in it to the highest degree. But the function of this consciousness and the forms of its activity are different than in the monologic novel: the author’s consciousness does not transform others’ consciousnesses (that is, the consciousnesses of the characters) into objects, and does not give them secondhand and finalizing definitions. Alongside and in front of itself it senses others’ equally valid consciousnesses, just as infinite and open-ended as itself. It reflects and re-creates not a world of objects, but precisely these other consciousnesses with their worlds, re-creates them in their authentic unfinalizability (which is, after all, their essence). The consciousnesses of other people cannot be perceived, analysed, defined as objects or things – one can only relate to them dialogically.

To think about them means to talk with them; otherwise they immediately turn to us their objectivized side: they fall silent, close up, and congeal into finished, objectivized images. (68)

The concept of talking with resonated with me: here was a positive opportunity for me, in my authorial role, to relate dialogically to my participants; to talk with as well as to them, to involve them in the process of the research; to affirm their ‘independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy’ (63) while myself remaining ‘constantly and everywhere present’ and ‘active’. The concept of talking with chimed particularly with the notion of co-theorisation: if I wanted to ask participants to co-theorise their experience, I did not need to return to them with specific questions or a completed interpretation. I could simply share my initial ideas and ask them to give their thoughts and comments, to help me build an interpretation; I could interpret with them, acknowledging them as people who hear me and are capable of answering me (63), and recognising their ‘authentic unfinalizability’.

In order to do this, I constructed my analytical notes and categories into preliminary themes, individual to each participant, that would be coherent and accessible to them, and which reflected what I felt had been significant in shaping their motivation based on what they had said in the first interview (the construction process is detailed in the next chapter). I sent these individual themes to the participants, asking them to respond for the second
interview; I also took the data from which I had constructed the themes to
the interviews, so that we had it available for reference. All the participants
stated that they had enjoyed reading their themes, and had much to say
about them, with the second interviews lasting for closer to two hours. On
the whole, participants said that they found the themes meaningful and
relevant, and although there were some clarifications and changes, only one
theme for one participant was discarded based on disagreement in
interpretation. The themes prompted significant reflective engagement
among all the participants, leading to further theorisation of their experience
and further, more specific stories, on which I elaborate in Chapter 5.

Thus the interpretations and interviews were explicit co-constructions
between me and each participant; we were both active participants, co-
creating meaning through each utterance in the immediate conversation, and
through our responses to the larger utterances of the research texts – the first
interview and the themes I had generated from it.

4.3.5 Third interviews: Weaving dialogic threads
My next stage was to transcribe the second interviews and to inductively
analyse the data across the six participants, in order to create synthesised
themes that could represent the experience of some or all of them. The third
interview followed a similar format to the second, but instead of sending
participants their individual themes, this time I sent the synthesised themes
which I felt could apply to them all (again, I took each participant’s
exemplifying data to the interviews). My purpose here was to give
participants an opportunity to consider whether any of the experiences or
perceptions of the others also applied to them, and to add another reflective
layer to their own experiences. This was an attempt to bring together the
‘living dialogic threads’ (Bakhtin 1981: 266) of these six people, explicitly
engaging them together in the co-construction of social dialogue. As with
the second interviews, this process of engaging (albeit to only a small
extent) with what others had said was of great interest to the participants,
with these interviews again lasting for around two hours, and once more
prompting further reflection on their experience. Again, this reflection is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

4.3.6 Fourth interviews: (Re)Presenting dialogues
After transcribing the third interviews, I constructed a dialogic narrative of each participant’s language learning history and experience, based on the data from the three interviews. I then sent the participants their individual dialogues, explaining that for the final interview I would like to discuss their responses to these. This stage of the research design is perhaps the closest to the member-checking described above; still, this final stage of the process allowed participants another opportunity for reflection on their experience based on an overview of our discussions over the research period. The participants’ responses to the narratives I constructed were very positive on the whole.

4.3.7 Discovering themselves through their stories
This research design facilitated space for actively co-constructed interviews in which all speakers listened and responded to the utterances of the others in a process of ‘polyphonic meaning-making’ (Vitanova 2004: 155), highlighting the nature of narratives as multivoiced and intertextual spaces, and representing ‘independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses … with equal rights and each with its own world’, which ‘combine but are not merged in the unity of the event’ (Bakhtin 1984a: 6). Through entering into active dialogue with myself and with each other and thereby revealing themselves ‘for another, through another, and with the help of another’ (Bakhtin 1984b: 287), the participants came to know and discover themselves through their stories (Lieblich et al. 1998: 7). Stories of the participants’ self-discovery are presented in Chapters 5 and 8.

4.4 Summary: Towards a Bakhtinian methodological framework
I began this chapter by locating this study in a methodological tradition, having drawn on qualitative LL motivation studies and narrative theory in the early stages of the project. While a narrative focus dovetailed with my Bakhtinian theoretical framework and the concept of ideological becoming,
it did not offer me a specific research procedure. However, my disenchantment with institutional definitions of research ethics and with issues associated with ‘trustworthiness’ such as member-checking, along with my developing understanding of Bakhtin, enabled me to develop a research design which acknowledged and accounted for co-construction and co-theorisation, and for more honest and ethical relations with the six participants. In this procedure, rather than sending a ‘final’ interpretation for participants to member-check, each macro-stage of interpretation was the basis of the next encounter. This allowed for the engagement and reflection appropriate to my aims of acknowledging learners as agentive, responsible theorists of their own experience, and of representing their experience and voices in a way that balances their recognition and ownership of their experience with the demands and expectations of academic criteria and the rigours of research. In this way, the participants and I were ideologically becoming through our encounters with each other, in a cyclical and unfinalisable process of creative understanding and response to the event/activity of being\(^2\) - a process I exemplify in Chapter 8. In Chapters 6 and 7, I also demonstrate how this procedure generated narratives that reflect how language learning motivation is socially constructed and negotiated.

Before presenting the participant dialogues it is necessary first to demonstrate how these were constructed, and this analytical process is the subject of the next chapter.

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\(^2\) According to Caryl Emerson, in her editorial footnote in Bakhtin (1984: 6), the Russian word sobytie (‘event’) is a crucial one in Bakhtin: at its root lies ‘the Russian word for “existence” or “being” (bytie), and … so-byte can be read both in its ordinary meaning of “event”, and in a more literal rendering as “co-existing, co-being, shared existence or being with another”. An event can only occur among interacting consciousnesses; there can be no isolated or solipsistic events\(^2\).
Chapter 5: Data analysis

or, Lingering attentively over the other

5.1 Introduction
This chapter details my approach, rationale, and procedures for analysing my data. Like the previous chapter, in which I presented my research design, this chapter addresses my aim of theorising a definition and interpretation of LL motivation which integrate the language learner and their social context in ways that foreground learners’ own voices and perspectives.

I first outline my broad approach to data analysis, before presenting my procedures for analysis of the first interview. Parallel to my considerations of how to move forward with my research design, as related in the previous chapter, I then discuss the theoretical concerns that arose for me when faced with the data from the first interview, and illustrate how I recalibrated my thinking around my analytical approach. Following this, I present my procedures for the following three interviews, offering reflections on each interview which illustrate how my theoretical rationale played out in practice. This chapter therefore demonstrates how I constructed the dialogues I present in Chapter 6, and foregrounds the interpretation I offer in Chapter 7.

5.2 Analytical approach
This is a study which aims to foreground the voices of learners. From its genesis, then, I proposed a data-driven analysis, aiming to construct theory from participants’ data. Consequently, my analysis drew upon the traditions of inductive thematic analysis (Gibbs 2007; Richards 2003) and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Strauss and Corbin 1998). More specifically, I adopted a ‘contextualist’ approach (Madill, Jordan, and Shirley 2000), in order to account for the relationship between the context – my own interests and positions as researcher, the decisions and
circumstances leading up to and during data generation – and the text. In this way, I have attempted to account for myself in the data, and my researcher subjectivity is part of the ‘overall intertextual product’ (Sullivan 2012: 147).

This broad approach remained throughout the analytical process. However, my methodology and analysis developed in tandem, and just as I began to find Bakhtin’s ideas applicable to my research design, so were they also practically appropriate to my data analysis. In a similar style to the previous chapter, I relate my analytical procedure chronologically, and describe this process of development as it occurred throughout the analysis.

5.2.1 A bureaucratic analysis
Following Sullivan (2012: 64, drawing on Weber 1947), this chapter details my ‘bureaucratic analysis’ – my procedures for data preparation and analysis that might otherwise be described as an audit trail. I exemplify these procedures with reference to Federica, the first participant whose data I analysed: the process notes I made at the time refer chiefly to her, and decisions I took during analysis of her data are grooved a little deeper in my memory. The procedure I established with Federica’s data I then followed with the other five participants.

5.2.2 A charismatic analysis
As well as presenting a bureaucratic analysis, this chapter also offers insights into my ‘charismatic analysis’ (Sullivan 2012: 64, 78). This element of the analysis includes the way in which procedures were theorised and then actualised; the judgments I made about how to present the data and what to include; and the ways in which my own beliefs and positions affected my engagement with the data. Throughout this thesis I have striven for transparency about how I arrived at my decisions. However, at some point the audit trail necessarily tails off, and though the procedures may be replicable, the motivation behind some of the decisions is not. There are points at which I was guided by a sense of emotional connection, of things ‘making sense’ on a visceral level: interpretations which only I, from my
own specific experience, could generate. I hope, therefore, that through my honesty in the text, the reader will trust in my honesty with myself: that my ‘charisma’ confers as much authority on my analysis as the bureaucracy, and that my analysis adheres to expectations for good grounded theory, being ‘rigorous, coherent, and grounded in the participants’ accounts’ (Sullivan 2012: 147).

5.2.3 A note on terminology
Despite drawing on well-established traditions to theorise my analytical approach, these were of only limited use in offering tools appropriate to my methodology and research design, particularly as the data generation went on, and so some extemporising was necessary. One outcome of my research design was that the analytical procedure was complicated, necessarily involving a number of different stages. It is therefore particularly important that my terminology is clear and consistent. I hope that it is clearly defined throughout this chapter, but for extra clarity and ease of reference, I gloss it here also.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Utterance</strong></th>
<th>A conversational turn in an interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data</strong></td>
<td>Umbrella term referring to a) what was said in interviews, and b) to the conceptual themes I constructed after interviews for participants to respond to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Notes</strong></td>
<td>Comments I made on transcripts in the early stages of analysis, similar to codes in grounded theory/thematic analysis, but usually longer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Categories</strong></td>
<td>Descriptive groups derived from notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Themes (or individual themes)</strong></td>
<td>Conceptual groups derived from individual participants’ categories. Each participant had three to five individual themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesised themes</strong></td>
<td>Conceptual themes derived from all participants’ individual themes. There are five of these themes in total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogues</strong></td>
<td>My representation of the participants’ English-language learning stories, constructed from the data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Analysis of Interview 1

5.3.1 Stage 1: Transcription

I transcribed the interviews into Microsoft Word, added numbers for each utterance, and question marks and timing for unclear/inaudible sections, for example [??28.50]. For every interview, I sent participants the transcripts to check for accuracy, to try to fill in parts I had been unable to hear, and to make any other changes they wished. Federica’s and Dmitry’s interviews were the first to be transcribed, and in these transcriptions I included all the fillers and repetitions we both uttered. Although Federica made no comment on my transcription style, Dmitry’s response was one of humorous disbelief, calling his speech ‘messed up’ and offering to edit it for me so it was ‘more refined’. This led me to reflect that perhaps I should transcribe less ‘faithfully’, omitting the fillers, repetitions and other non-content information which was not necessary to my research purpose, and may only have served to disillusion participants regarding the fluency of their speech – Dmitry was one of the older participants and had a fairly robust confidence in his communicative ability, but I did not know this to be the case with the others. I included question marks but did not add any further punctuation, with the exception of indicating pauses with ellipsis; I felt structuring the transcripts into graphic sentences would be an inappropriate imposition of meaning onto participants’ utterances. I left participants’ original grammar and syntax intact, as I felt this would most appropriately reflect their own particular English voices. (See Image 1 below for an extract from a transcribed interview.) Naturally I became very familiar with the interview data as both written and spoken text throughout the transcription process, and whenever I read the transcripts subsequently I also listened to the interviews, in order to constantly refresh my awareness of the aurally-conveyed elements of meaning, such as stress and intonation – elements which I had not included in the transcript in order to maximise readability for the participants.
5.3.2 Stage 2: Making notes

5.3.2.1 Epistemological friction and problematising ‘coding’

Entering this stage of the analysis was difficult, as I encountered epistemological friction between the analytical traditions I was drawing upon and my dialogic theoretical framework. The idea of coding for the ‘content’ of the participants’ experience felt problematic to me; through my engagement with dialogism, I was becoming aware of the assumption inherent in this approach, namely that the content of the participants’ talk offered straightforward access to the content of their experience. As Sullivan (2012) points out, traditional grounded approaches to data analysis tend to reveal ‘uncomplicated subjectivity’ (40); the data is the gateway to participants’ experience. On the one hand, this accounts for participants’ consciousness, allowing them the capacity for awareness of their own experiences and to be active in their creation and articulation (ibid.) – and it addresses my aim of foregrounding participants’ voices. On the other hand, in such approaches, the participants are ‘already given’ (Sullivan 2012: 40, citing Parker 1997); they are ‘finalised’, taken for granted as whole, complete individuals with previous experiences to be related, rather than interpreting those experiences through their interaction with me.

Understanding, then, that these approaches did not adequately account for the complex and ongoing relationships between self, other and social context, I decided to try and keep my initial procedures as open and contextually-grounded as possible. I did this by making notes, often two or three lines long and at times a little unwieldy, in an attempt to maintain as much context, nuance and caveat as possible. An example of my notes can be seen in Image 1.

5.3.2.2 Procedure

I began analysis by opening the transcribed interview (in MS Word) and opening a blank document next to it, viewing the two documents side by side. I read through the transcript making initial notes on anything that struck me, but with particular attention to recurring words, ideas, feelings, and noting when I had emotional memories from the interview, times when Federica had seemed particularly happy or sad, for example. I followed
Charmaz’s suggestion of trying to see actions and to notate with words which reflect action, such as *-ing* gerund verb forms, as coding data as actions may ‘[curb] our tendencies to make conceptual leaps and to adopt extant theories *before* we have done the necessary analytic work’ (2006: 48, original emphasis). This had been helpful to me in my previous research as a way to get started, and just as then, I found the immediacy of gerunds a useful way in to the data, helping me to rediscover the feeling of being part of the construction of the data myself. Adopting something of a systematic approach to notation also enabled me to balance openness towards the data with the more interpretative notes I was making, keeping me aware of the possible tensions in the process ‘between analytic insights and described events’ (47). Again following Charmaz, I worked quickly to begin with, as speed and spontaneity encourage a freshness also useful for keeping a balance between interpretation and new insights (ibid.), following this with repeated readings and listenings to check the fit and appropriacy of my notes. Inevitably, my perspective could only be partial, but through repeated readings of and listenings to the data, in order that I might glean any nuances of meaning not communicated or communicable through written text alone, I was able to create comprehensive notes. An example of my notes can be seen in Image 1 below.

In the interests of demonstrating my procedure as clearly as possible, the two documents in the screenshot are not aligned, as to do so would have necessitated a very long interview extract (on the left) with comparatively few notes (on the right). Rather, I have condensed the space between the notes in order to present more of them. Notes are followed by the number of the utterance to which they relate in square brackets.
5.3.3 Stage 3: Creating categories

My next step was to organise my notes into categories based on commonly occurring terms. I was aware of having encountered the words real/reality, the world, and different several times in Federica’s data, and on highlighting these it was clear that, with the exception of English and language (which I discounted on account of their being generic to the topic rather than specific to Federica), and along with Italy/Italian, these were the most frequent content words, and these became my categories. Having identified these categories, I then examined what kind of terms appeared with or around them, collocated with them, or what they described. Once again, I felt that maintaining elements of context would help me to strike a balance between managing the data, and preventing the process from becoming a rather reductive content analysis. The categories and their related terms were:

Real/Reality: fiction, world, language, life

World: real, different, connect to, my, another, place

Different: things, experience, world, accent [from other Italians], [Italy] from the UK, education [between UK/Italy], from parents

I then listed all the notes I had made involving each of these terms under the category headings, including the number of the utterance/s they came from, and keeping a category called Other for notes and thoughts that did not immediately appear to fit into these three. Making these connections gave me a broad overview of what I understood to be Federica’s main concerns. An example of the lists I made is given in Image 2.
"REAL/REALITY"

Language as ‘real’ when visiting UK – doesn’t ‘exist’ in own country – but can’t communicate without it in UK; differences between learning/speaking English in it then going to UK [2]

‘real’ or the language, through music, movies, language became ‘real’ [8, 10]

only being able to really ‘speak’ English when you go to UK/US etc. – ‘real’ only part of those situations? Language only becomes ‘real’ when you go to one of these countries [12]

pen pals in particular/learning in general as opportunity to ‘discover the real world outside of it’;
‘keeping everything about the English/real world’ [52, 58]

lack of ‘realness’ connected with lit. way of learning/teaching? Focus on grammar in classroom [64]


Learning as a ‘bridge’ between fiction and reality; imagined an ‘English planet’, but not at a ‘real’ level until coming to UK [200, 206]

Pen pal experience – they were not ‘mature’ in the language, unable to have a ‘real’ relationship – not much to say because of language limitation/but also because of age (immature re. language and age) – not much to say about life at 12/13 – the pen pals wanted ‘to have conversation’ not ‘be your teacher’ – unequal, non-reciprocal relationship – world around you ‘very small’ when you’re 12/13 [36]

"DIFFERENT"

Pictures of UK – squirrels, urban parks etc. – attracted by difference from Italy – visually attractive; room full of posters of London [20, 118]

Proud of Scottish/Glaswegian accent – ‘more particular’ than English accent – made her different in Italy [122, 124]
5.3.3.1 Refining categories

My next stage was a process of constant comparison among my notes and the data to which they referred. Taking each category in turn, I compared each note and the utterances to which they referred (in this context, each conversational turn) within the category to the notes/utterances already within it, and then to each note/utterance within each other category. This systematic approach allowed me to look for links and contradictions with a relatively clear mind - although the previous stages had chiefly been a means of organising the data, I had been making connections and having ideas about what was occurring, and although I naturally wanted to keep these thoughts in mind I also wanted to avoid simply following my initial hunches. I used the categories at this stage as an organisational framework mainly in order to effectively manage the task, rather than as early themes or concepts into which I wanted data to fit. This process led to the formulation of more refined categories, namely:

‘Realness’/reality
Choice/desire to learn English
Learning as a process of maturation
Attraction to UK/British spaces
Oppositional identities

Within these refined categories I listed my notes, but instead of the particular utterances of Federica’s from which I had drawn the idea, I listed the page numbers where those utterances appeared. This forced me to read much more of the conversation in order to locate a specific utterance, offering more contextual information and enabling me to make further links and connections between the categories. An example of this stage can be seen in Image 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Worked well better in (oppositional clime)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 11   | ward space, comfortable |...
| 10   | areas of light |...
| 9    | raised by |...
| 12   | Learning a culture of... |
| 5    | Learning a culture of... |...
5.3.4 Stage 4: Creating conceptual themes

By this point I was beginning to find the whole analytical process rather difficult to manage; my notes were often fairly lengthy and I was constantly reading through whole pages of data rather than shorter, more isolated utterances, as I was concerned that if I dealt in isolated utterances or extracts of utterances, I would not be engaging as fully as possible with the complexity of the data. I found myself, therefore, somewhat stuck and unsure of what to do next, and decided to do a stock-take in order to summarise where I was up to and hopefully kick-start my thinking. I decided to write a few short paragraphs outlining what I saw as the categories’ meaning and how they fitted together, so as to clearly link my ideas. This explication of my thoughts helped me to see connections between some of the ideas in the categories, and created the basis for broader conceptual themes. These were fairly similar to the five refined categories, and are listed here in descending order of prevalence and most supporting data:

*Oppositional identities*
*Reality/fiction*
*Choice/desire to learn English*
*Learning as a process of maturation*
*Perception of different worlds*

It was around this time that my concerns regarding participant voice, representation, relationships and my authorial voice related in Chapter 4 were coalescing around my readings of Bakhtin and the concept of talking *with* rather than talking *to* participants. This led to a clearer articulation of my aims for the analysis, and consequently of how to proceed.

5.3.4.1 Talking *with* participants (2): In practice

Through my meditations on talking *with* participants, I was able to more clearly understand my view of the participants as *knowers* trying to make sense of their own experience, as well as the potential *known*. Consistent with my discomfort around the epistemology of the grounded theory
tradition, this reiterated that I was not seeking truth, but rather participants’ 
stake in their beliefs; my interest was in how participants reflexively 
understood their own experience, and what value they gave to ideas and 
concepts. My focus was therefore on truth as *istina*, or lived experience and 
complex truth, rather than *pravda*, abstract truth (Bakhtin 1993: 37). These 
concerns, coalescing at a point of the analysis when I was not sure how to 
proceed, led me to the realisation that I could make the analysis part of the 
participants’ lived experience: I could explicitly share the interpretive 
process with them, and ask them what they thought. As I had written these 
theme-paragraphs in order to clarify my own thinking, I felt they could just 
as well serve to clarify my thinking for the participants. This would then be 
much more consistent with my aims for the study and my theoretical 
framework, as my lines of thinking at the time demonstrate. I reasoned that 
sending the themes to the participants would:

a) offer them an artefact through which they could see they ways in 
which I had constructed them as others. They would therefore 
engage with this artefact from a perspective of outsideness to 
themselves, seeing themselves given form as ‘other’. Such a 
perspective may stimulate a deeper and more engaged level of 
reflection;

b) make explicit my understanding of the participants as conscious 
others; people who respond, anticipate, judge and theorise for 
themselves. By not waiting until the ‘final’ interpretation, a polished 
product to send them, my analysis would recognise and reflect their 
unfinalisability;

c) account for my own participation in the data by being the other 
through which the participants would view themselves. As further 
data would then be generated from this process, building towards a 
more complete interpretation, my voice would become explicitly 
dialogically interwoven with theirs;
d) offer a more honest research procedure, being an attempt to share
with the participants the ways in which I had constructed them as
others and to engage in dialogue with them about it, as consistent
with a talking *with* perspective.

See Appendix 4 for Federica’s themes as I sent them to her in preparation
for the second interview, and Appendix 5 for corresponding documents for
the other five participants.

### 5.3.5 Reflection on second interview: Federica: ‘I guess I was telling the
narrative of myself’

My approach was well received by the participants and appeared to be
fruitful in terms of data generated: they were all very engaged by their
themes and wanted to discuss them at some length, with the second
interviews taking up to two hours. On the whole, participants said that they
found the themes meaningful and relevant; although there were some
clarifications and changes, only one theme for one participant was discarded
based on disagreement in interpretation. The themes prompted significant
reflective engagement among all the participants and led to further
theorisation of their experience, as demonstrated by the following example.

During the second interview, Federica made the following observation:

**Federica:** I also realised that... the first bit is the main part
and then all these other paragraphs are just part of... this
main argument of the oppositional identities... so it was nice
for me to read it because I didn’t really know what I gave you
in terms of... content and it was nice to explore it more and
more so that we can... even more

**Lou:** that’s interesting so you thought the oppositional
identities was the main one... and the other four were... did
you say part of that or?
F: yeah part… it’s just… different probably sides but in the end of the day they all go to the main… idea of these oppositional identities

Here, Federica is commenting on the themes I constructed and their organisation; for her, the concept of ‘oppositional identities’ is an overarching one, in which the other four themes are a lesser part. Thus she has taken the themes I constructed from her experience as she related it to me, and (re)applied them to her experience, using what I had constructed to reconstruct her own understanding. She elaborates thus (bolded phrases my emphasis):

L: can you explain that to me then?

F: yeah because… for example here when you write that I divide Scottish and English accent and then we are not English because we are Italian and then there is a sentence about me being an English speaker in Italy and me being an Italian speaking English in the UK and then I realised that actually they are just my… some different stages in life… so it all comes with this process of maturation as well as it was personal growth… so it was a change but also when you say the bridge well I mentioned the bridge… yeah it’s a bridge… but I realised it was not a conscious idea that I had before actually getting to this point and then looking backwards that’s what happened… for example here you say that… ‘all this seems to be in keeping with your understanding of yourself as having two sides… I also wonder if it shows an explicit kind of self-authoring’… I guess so I guess I was telling the narrative of myself the story of myself… since I am a lot into literature… sometimes I really… mess [laughter] literature and life… which is nice… also this second choice/desire… it was self-motivation at the beginning… and then it is obviously connected to the first topic of oppositional identities… so… obviously the motivation grew more and more as I was going along through my life

Federica can be seen here not only to be making connections between the themes I had constructed and her own experience, but also, as evidenced by
the highlighted phrases, to be reflecting on my themes to make further, previously unrealised connections which enhance her self-understanding. From a position of outsideness to herself – engaging with herself as other through the themes I constructed about her experience – she was able to see a way in which she had related her experience, which led her to deeper insights about that experience. Thus our voices were in dialogue, co-constructing meaning through each utterance in the immediate conversation, and through our responses to the larger utterances of the research texts – the first interview and the themes I had generated from it.

5.4 Analysis of Interview 2
5.4.1 Stage 1: Transcription
I transcribed the second interviews almost in full, only omitting asides where I judged the conversations to have moved off-topic – this happened more in the second interviews than in the first, as the participants and I were more relaxed and chatty with each other, and the interviews were longer. I indicated these omissions in the transcript with a note of what we had talked about and the time at which we went back on-topic, for example

Dmitry: [discussion of Russian political parties til 1.21.30]

so that there would be a record of what was talked about should any of those subjects seem to be of significance at a later stage of the analysis.

5.4.2 Stage 2: Revisiting themes
I then revisited the themes I had created after the first interviews, in order to see firstly how participants had responded to these in the second interviews, and secondly, whether explanations of the themes could be rewritten after the second interviews, i.e. if participants had expressed strong agreement or disagreement with aspects of the themes, or had expanded or elaborated upon them. I decided to keep the original themes intact as far as possible at this stage, for three reasons:
a) with the exception of one of Raluca’s themes, which we decided to discard completely, all the participants had recognised the themes as meaningful interpretations of their language learning histories and experiences, and so I saw no reason to significantly change them;

b) I was planning the third interview to be a discussion of themes as synthesised across participants, in order that participants may see their experience as shared by others, and that they may see experiences of others that they might not share, but which might prompt further reflection. Thus, as participants were going to be presented with some themes that they may not recognise or may not be relevant to them in the third interview, I wanted reference points for each participant that they could recognise, so that for the themes I presented in the third interview, I could say to each participant *this corresponds to your theme X or you may recognise this from theme Y*. I felt that in this way, participants would feel a sense of continuity from the previous interviews, and thus have a more solid foundation for building upon what we had already discussed;

c) time/financial constraints: Federica had by this time moved from Manchester to Lancaster, and so I had to factor train fares into our next meeting. In the longer term, I also wanted to finish all four interviews by mid-June 2012, when the two undergraduates would be leaving Manchester for the summer holidays (though it happened that these interviews did not take place until September 2012, when they had returned for their final year). Therefore I needed to have the third round of interviews completed by the end of March 2012.

I reasoned that the themes for each individual participant could be deconstructed and/or reinterpreted after the third interview, when I would be constructing the dialogues that would represent their stories. This could then include data from the third interview, in which participants would reflect upon themes that may not previously have been part of their stories; thus I would have the richest possible data for constructing the dialogues.
For each participant, I began by pasting the original themes (i.e. as I had sent them to participants for discussion) into a new document, and displaying this alongside the transcript of the second interview. I then read the themes and read and listened to the interview several times, making notes in a similar procedure as for the first interview which directly related to and/or developed the themes. These are shown in Image 4 in green text. I then added to, or rewrote (depending on the participant’s responses to the themes – in Federica’s case, added to) the theme-paragraphs, incorporating my notes on the second interviews – these additions are in red, as I wanted them to be distinguishable as having come from the second interview. The themes were now as developed as they could be at this stage, I felt, and I was ready to proceed to an active synthesis across the six participants.
Image 4: Screenshots of notes from Federica Interview 2, added to (in green) and integrated into (in red) Federica’s themes from Interview 1.
5.4.3 Stage 3: Synthesising themes

I began by listing all the themes for each participant from the first round of analysis (as shown in Image 5) and looking for any immediately obvious similarities/semantic connections among them.

[Image 5: Screenshot of all participant themes from Interview 1]
I organised these individual themes into five broad groups: I felt I knew the data well enough to see emergent patterns and connections, and there were some clear conceptual links between the themes I had created for the individual participants. My initial thoughts were that the connections fell roughly into the following groups. The titles here were not definitive, indicating only my early thoughts based on the analysis so far, and, as indicated in Image 6, the groups were organised by colour so as to avoid arranging them in any kind of hierarchy.
Image 6: Screenshots of individual-theme-groupings for synthesised themes

1. Family: Bourgeoisie.
   - Identity: Seeking meaning in your perception of English.
     - Resisting: Going native & locating yourself in your perception of English.
     - Resisting: Finding your voice as English offers professional opportunities.

2. Family: Bourgeoisie.
   - Identity: Seeking meaning in your perception of English.
     - Resisting: Going native & locating yourself in your perception of English.
     - Resisting: Finding your voice as English offers professional opportunities.

3. Family: Bourgeoisie.
   - Identity: Seeking meaning in your perception of English.
     - Resisting: Going native & locating yourself in your perception of English.
     - Resisting: Finding your voice as English offers professional opportunities.
5.4.3.1 Constant comparison

I followed this with constant comparison, in order to examine whether the data-in-context could be seen to thematically relate to other data. My aim in this was to create overarching conceptual themes, more general to the participants as a group of English-language learners and less specific to each individual. To facilitate the constant comparison, I opened a new document, and for each colour group above, I pasted my notes from each individual theme in columns. So, for the burgundy group, I had five columns of notes: Dmitry’s *Positive attitude to learning*, Raluca’s *English for self-fulfilment*, Raj’s *Academic achievement*, Federica’s *Choice/desire to learn* and Weijian’s *Perception of external barriers*. I pasted in my notes from these themes from interviews 1 and 2, as illustrated in Image 7.
Image 7: Screenshot of notes from individual themes in Burgundy Group
Numbers in square brackets represent [interview number: utterance number]. This gave me a concise list of line-number references to the data, and from here I was able to go straight to the utterances in the interview transcripts to carry out comparison. I felt that pasting utterances into columns would have led to an unmanageably large document and removed the data too far from its context. I compared each note to each other note, making comments as I went along on experiences and attitudes among the participants. Where there was divergence, I looked for reasons for the divergence: for example, in the burgundy group, Weijian was the only participant who had had significant negative learning experiences, which was because the teaching he had received had been very focused on test performance rather than communication. This highlighted the importance of communication for Weijian, and gave me something to explore in the other participants, leading me to the realisation that for Dmitry, Raluca and Federica, communication had played a significant role in their positive attitudes to learning. Thus the difference in experience between participants led to the identification of a common point among them.

I decided then to try and summarise notes and thoughts for each participant to create an overall impression of their experience. To do this I consulted the theme-paragraphs I had sent to each participant in preparation for the second interview, now with interpretations from the second interviews added (see Image 4); as these had been the result of the first round of analysis and the basis of the second interviews, they now had the status of data themselves and I felt they had an important role to play in constructing synthesised themes, as part of the ongoing dialogue. I then compared all my latest notes to the utterances in the interviews to which they referred, and then I compared them to the individual themes, to look for anything I may have missed and to check my interpretations. This allowed me to be as thorough as possible within the short timeframe – had I started out comparing utterances rather than notes, the process would have consumed more time than I had available. In this way, my interpretation was grounded in all the data that was available: the utterances from the interviews, and the
interpretation I had already carried out for each participant after the first and second interviews.

5.4.3.2 Five synthesised themes
After this process, the five colour groups were synthesised themes representing my suggestions, based on the analysis so far, of influences on the motivation of this group of learners. The themes were as follows:

- Positive early learning experience
- Personal growth and development
- Navigating English voices
- Relationship between English and your home country
- Dynamics of choice and control

Throughout the process I changed the order in which I looked at different participants’ themes, so I was not always starting or finishing with the same people; I also alternated between reading the themes from top to bottom, and from bottom to top. I am certain also that organising the groups by colour helped me to keep a more open mind during the analysis, as it prevented me from naming, and thus hierarchising and/or entrenching, the themes at an early stage.

5.4.4 Stage 4: Articulating synthesised themes
As I had for the first interview, I now wrote a text explicating each of the themes in an attempt to make my thinking clear to the participants. My procedure was to preface each theme-paragraph with an overview of what the theme meant, and then provided at least one paraphrased example of data from each participant, so that participants would recognise their own experiences and have access to aspects of the others’ experiences, even if they did not agree with or understand my interpretation. In order to maintain confidentiality, I referenced only general experiences and omitted potential identifying markers such as country of origin. I wrote the theme in the second person so that each participant was being directly addressed, and I constructed the sentences in terms of possibility, using phrases such as
Perhaps you were..., Maybe you felt..., and You may have had..., in order to try to avoid making overly leading statements or assumptions and to frame statements in such a way that participants might be led to reflect on their possibility and applicability to their experience. I then concluded each theme with two open questions, to prompt participants to reflect further on what they had read, whilst also acknowledging the possibility that they may not find much to engage with in a particular theme. See Appendix 6 for the themes as they were sent to the participants.

5.4.5 Reflection on Interview 3: Bringing together the ‘living dialogic threads’

5.4.5.1 Eli and Dmitry: ‘A Russian speaker of English’

This was an attempt to bring together the ‘living dialogic threads’ (Bakhtin 1981: 266) of the six participants, explicitly engaging them together in the co-construction of social dialogue. To exemplify this dialogue, after the first interview with Eli, I created a theme for her called Connecting English and Farsi. I constructed this theme to reflect her comparative (to the other participants) comfort with being a foreign speaker of English, and her desire to use her position as an Iranian living in the UK to help other Iranians, by helping them to learn the language or access services or, more broadly, by showing them through her example that it is possible for an Iranian person to be successful (by which Eli meant economically successful) in the UK.

When I came to construct the theme Navigating English voices for Interview 3, I aimed to reflect Eli’s budding perception of herself in the following statement:

Perhaps your engagement with these voices has helped you to develop your own English voice, and you are becoming comfortable with being an Iranian, Italian, Romanian, Indian, Chinese, or Russian speaker of English.

Dmitry’s response to this was:
there’s an interesting phrase here… you are becoming comfortable with being… a Russian speaker of English… that’s an interesting thing as well… it would be nice to become comfortable… as a… foreign person who is a good speaker of English because… I’ve realised that I can’t… go beyond a certain point I think you know no matter how hard you try… you’re still going to… have certain boundaries… even accent-wise you can’t just remove that… completely so… so I think it’s just accepting that … trying to be your best but then… accepting that why… that’s the stage where I’ve reached when I come to… go beyond I’m a Russian speaker of English… I think accepting that would be… great… so I’m working on that [laughs]

The phrase ‘an X speaker of English’, which I had constructed from Eli’s data, chimed with Dmitry’s perception of himself and became meaningful to him as a potential means of reconciling his Russian and English/UK identities. Recognising himself in the words of the other, he assessed and evaluated those words, words I had uttered and through which Eli’s voice resonated, and responded to them in his own emotional-volitional tone. Thus, through the dialogic interview, Dmitry came to greater self-awareness and understanding.

5.4.5.2 Weijian and Federica: ‘I realised that I had a negative learning experience’

Another example comes from Weijian and Federica. In the theme of Positive early learning experience, I referred to Weijian’s negative learning experiences later in his education thus:

I would also suggest that even if you had negative learning experiences later in your education, these positive experiences from your early learning continued to be a source of motivation for you when you encountered difficulties communicating when you first came to the UK.

This resonated with Federica, and prompted her reflection on the nature of narrating her language learning experience:
you actually remember the positive experience because the positive experience led you where you are now… and then when I read at some point you mention negative learning experience somewhere… I realised that I had a negative learning experience but I never mentioned it to you… and probably because at the end of this… journey to… learn the language… then you realise that it doesn’t count any more… if you had a negative experience because no matter what… you got to the point where you wanted to get so… kind of maybe you put it aside and said okay… this was something that… was distracting you to go… to where you wanted to go… but still maybe you cannot just take it out of your story… but maybe tell it in your confidence now maybe tell it in the positive experience… like… it’s something very philosophical there is good and there is bad… and you cannot have good without having bad… so both helped obviously… but I then I realised that I didn’t tell you about this experience and… this morning I said ah this is strange maybe… after all I remember the good experience

This reflection illustrates Federica’s awareness of the different possible stories available to her and the contingency of the particular story she told me. Had the themes I had constructed been different, or differently framed, the whole notion of positive or negative learning experiences may not have been developed at all, and the story Federica told me, shaped in part by the concept of positive early learning experience, may have been different. Federica’s narrative of her experience, then, came out of a particular dialogic interweaving of voices taking place in a particular time and place. This is not to say that if her story had been different, it would definitely have been less positive. Rather, it demonstrates her awareness that her positivity was constructed, at least in part, by her retrospective construction of her learning experiences as positive; further co-constructed through her engagement with the Positive early learning experience theme which I constructed; and partially deconstructed (or perhaps reconstructed?) by the introduction of another participant’s voice, specifically Weijian’s negative learning experience, as part of that theme’s construction. The ‘living dialogic threads’ thus clearly interweave, bringing participants to enhanced reflection and self-awareness.
5.5 Analysis of Interview 3

5.5.1 Stage 1: Transcription
As for the second interviews, I transcribed the third interviews almost in full, omitting only asides where I judged the conversations to have moved off-topic, but keeping a note in the transcript of where this had happened and what we had talked about. Participants were sent the transcripts. The same procedure was followed for Interview 4.

5.5.2 Stage 2: Revisiting synthesised themes
I then revisited the themes I had created after the second interviews, in order to see firstly how participants had responded to these in the third interviews, and secondly whether explanations of the themes could be rewritten after the third interviews, i.e. if participants had expressed strong agreement or disagreement with aspects of the themes, or expanded/elaborated upon them. I decided to keep the original synthesised themes intact as far as possible at this stage, for the following reasons:

a) they would provide a useful kind of benchmark for the next stage of analysis – as all six participants had been given the same set of themes, to begin the analysis by documenting their particular responses to aspects of these themes seemed to be a procedure I could apply consistently to all six in a way that built upon the analysis already undertaken (i.e. the analysis from which I had constructed the synthesised themes);

b) this process would also highlight the extent to which participants recognised their own experience in the themes, and the extent to which the experience of others applied to them;

c) all the participants had found the themes meaningful and relevant overall, and so I saw no reason to significantly change them at this stage.
For each participant, I began by pasting the original synthesised themes (i.e. as I had sent them to participants for discussion) into a new document, and displayed this in turn alongside each third interview transcript. I then read the themes and read and listened to the interview several times, adding ideas in note form and quotes from the second interview which directly related to and/or developed the themes. These are shown in Image 8 in red text above each theme paragraph, and are then integrated into the theme paragraph with the statements to which they refer in green highlight.
Positive early learning experiences
synthesised themes from Interview 2, with statement to which one specific note refers highlighted in green

How do you think this theme might relate to your experience? What other aspects of your experience does it make you think of?

Personal growth and development

 espaço where the boundaries and borders are not that defined, [28]: [8]
actually help you in your personal growth? [28]: [8] she says, ‘I am Italian, but I’ve learned English through an exchange project, I’ve been studying a Language Course in England. The idea of playing boundaries – wants to challenge the idea that there is anything strange about studying Italian in the UK, or Europe. Studying

Assess your early positive experiences of learning English? Even if you had negative learning experiences later in your schooling, I will develop this

assess whether the themes of choice and control. themes below

_image 8: Screenshots of notes from Federica Interview 3 added to (in red) synthesised themes from Interview 2, with statement to which one specific note refers highlighted in green
5.5.3 Stage 3: (Re)Constructing participants’ stories

The next stage was to construct the participants’ stories from the three interviews so far. Returning to Federica as my example, I began by revisiting the first interview transcript to construct the skeleton of her story, using the chronological and factual details of her life to build a basic narrative framework. I did this by using a combination of paraphrase and direct quotation of data: paraphrase to recount the facts of her life, and direct quotes for illustrative anecdotes and passages that were significant in highlighting the themes I had previously constructed. The use of a combination of direct quotation and paraphrasing represented ‘an active intermixing of intonations’ (Sullivan 2012: 16) between author and hero/researcher and participant, situating my writing on the boundary between self and other and thus representing its dialogic nature. I was aware that this system of revisiting previous documents, if applied to all the interviews and themes that I had so far, would make the dialogue an excessively long document, but I wanted to include as much as possible at this stage until I had created a coherent story – then I could go back and cut or paraphrase some of the longer quotes.

Having followed this procedure with the first interview, I then turned to the individual themes I had constructed for Federica. I had constructed these after the first interview and then fleshed them out with data from the second interview, and it was to these fuller, fleshed-out themes I now turned. Having organised Federica’s story into a chronological order from the first interview, I had to consider how and where her five themes fitted into this, also bearing in mind that I wanted to send participants something new, not something which essentially repeated the individual themes they had already engaged with. My next move was to weave the themes into the chronological story, sometimes quoting the themes verbatim and sometimes paraphrasing. I then turned to the second interview transcript, again to add more flesh to the story and to identify direct quotations from Federica; I repeated this process with the synthesised themes, with the third interview transcript, and with the synthesised themes I had elaborated on after the third interview. In this way, although I was no longer overtly following the
theme structure, the themes became reintegrated into Federica’s story, and the interweaving of conceptual themes and chronological structure were very helpful in creating a coherent text demonstrating the factors influencing Federica’s motivation, in a way that indicated how these factors built upon each other. Releasing myself and the story from the boundaries of the five themes, which were structurally if not always conceptually discrete, enabled me to see greater connections between them and how dialogism as a theoretical framework could inform and support them.

I gave each participant’s story a title from that participant’s own words, involving a self-descriptive statement that I considered important in describing their motivation for learning English. I sent the dialogues to participants for their responses, as the basis for the fourth and final interview.

5.5.3.1 Participants’ stories as ‘dialogues’

In relating their stories I have intermixed my intonations with those of the participants, whose individual voices are already shot through with the intonations of the other five. I have therefore created six new utterances in which our voices resonate in dialogic interaction: these dialogues are presented in the following chapter. In the creation of these dialogues I have attempted to account for the participants’ presence and for my own, an approach which resonates with Denzin’s (2009) ‘performative’ understanding of qualitative analysis, in which ‘the writer’s task is not to reproduce what is real, but to actively create an experiential (emotional, moral, subjective) text that facilitates understanding of what and who is being studied’ (Sullivan 2012: 119, citing Denzin 2009). The dialogues therefore represent dialogues on at least four different levels:

a) participants’ dialogues with each other as learners of English;
b) participants’ dialogues with me as researcher;
c) participants’ dialogues with the reader/examiner, through experiential texts that facilitate understanding of their experience;
d) my dialogue as researcher with the reader/examiner, who will evaluate the study on the grounds of its scholarliness, credibility, trustworthiness and rigor.

I hope and expect that the both the credibility and the emotional resonance of these dialogues – these experiential texts - are enhanced through the understanding of their construction, as related in this chapter.

5.5.4 Reflection on Interview 4: Raluca: ‘I think I sounded a bit mean’
Once more, the participants were broadly satisfied with their dialogues. Raluca, however, was dissatisfied with an element of her dialogue, specifically the way in which I had portrayed her attitude to her home country of Romania, a portrayal which she considered to be excessively negative. I responded by apologising and offering to show her the data on which I had based my interpretation, in order that we could discuss whence my misinterpretation had arisen and what she might have wanted to say instead. On reading the first interview transcript and being reminded of this event, Raluca remembered her state of mind and realised that it may have affected what she said:

**Raluca:** I think my first interview was right after my exams… I think that may have had something to do with it [laughs]

**Lou:** so… how you mean you kind of felt stressed out or?

**R:** well I read the transcript afterwards and… I think I sounded a bit mean… I exaggerated [laughs] somewhere

**L:** okay… why would your exams have had an effect on that?

**R:** I get really stressed out… I sometimes take things… too seriously… don’t let any breathing space and… [laughs]
L: so maybe it was a day where everything was just sort of… on top of you and

R: maybe maybe

Raluca and I agreed that I would alter this aspect of her narrative. This exchange draws further attention to the contingency of her story; having been told to me in particular, on a particular day, a particular interpretation was constructed, an interpretation in need of reconstruction because it was not commensurate with the way in which Raluca narrated her story to me in subsequent interviews. Raluca became aware of how her psychological and emotional state affected the way in which she told, and I heard, her story: of how her emotional-volitional tone could convey different emotions and volitions, and thus lead to the construction of different meanings. I became aware that her story, and every participant story, can never be finalised, and is always being reconstructed in a dialogic tension between the past and the present. The co-construction, therefore, is ongoing.

Consequently, although the experience of outsideness that this research design afforded the participants led to greater reflection and self-awareness, it was not always in itself a pleasant experience for them – indeed, it could at times be painful. This is a discussion to which I return in Chapter 8.

5.5 Analysis of Interview 4

These were much shorter interviews and there was little new data – some factual errors and misunderstandings were corrected, and some theoretical points that participants found opaque were clarified to their satisfaction. The ‘content’-related data was built into the dialogues, and in the cases of Raj and Weijian, we did this orally together during the interviews. For Raluca a little more work was involved, as indicated above. The participants were then sent their dialogues again, to check that they were satisfied with the product to be presented in the thesis. The only changes that have been made to the dialogues since the final interviews are chronological ‘facts’ or
corrections about the participants’ lives, and the addition of structuring headings to organise the dialogues according to phases of their lives.

5.5.1 A different type of data
The fourth interviews also generated reflections on the interview process and the participants’ experience of viewing themselves through the perspective of the themes and dialogues I had constructed from our experiences together. I return to this reflective data in Chapter 8.

5.6 Summary
This chapter has presented the rationale behind my data analysis procedures, and has illustrated the processes which led to the building of my interpretation. The construction of such a chapter is something of a task in artifice, documenting a process which is by nature messy, complex, and iterative, with writing, analysis and interpretation always closely intertwined and often indistinguishable. In the interests of coherent presentation, I have presented what Sullivan (2012: 64) calls a bureaucratic analysis, documenting the procedures followed in the preparation, analysis and presentation of data, and a charismatic analysis (ibid.), detailing my judgments, beliefs, philosophical positions, and applications of theory to analytic practice. I have therefore striven for both procedural transparency and emotional honesty, in the expectation that this combination confers authority and trustworthiness on my analysis. My analysis thus adheres to the expectations for good grounded theory articulated by Sullivan, being ‘rigorous, coherent, and grounded in the participants’ accounts’ (147).

In addition to meeting the criteria for good grounded theory, I have begun to develop a dialogical analysis, in an attempt to reconcile my epistemological approach with my ontological outlook. In some of the early stages in particular, I did not always fully understand the implications of some of my decisions, encountering epistemological friction and the need to extemporise in the absence of any appropriate prior procedure. However, I may say that the best, or the least, I have done here is to follow Sullivan’s counsel for data analysis: to ‘linger over otherness attentively so that the personality we
“bestow” upon the other emerges out of a deep understanding of their particularity’ (2012: 4, citing Hicks 2000). The personalities of the others in this study, the six participants, will emerge from the six dialogues presented in the next chapter.

According to Sullivan (2012: 150), a good dialogical analysis strives to be polyphonic. By putting distinct participants’ voices into contact with one another through my own interpreting, authorial voice, I too have striven for polyphony. I have done this from a position of outsideness to the text, actively shaping the intertextual weaving of voices with my own voice, from my own authorial point of view. In the following chapter I present, through my own authorial intonation, my dialogues with the six participants, and invite the reader also to establish a dialogue with them through engagement with their voices, evaluating their own lived and complex ‘truths’ as these pass through the different voices. By doing so, I hope the reader gains not only a cognitive understanding of the participants’ experience, but also an emotional, experiential understanding of the ways in which they have constructed what Sullivan calls their ‘world of meaning’ (153).
Chapter 6: Dialogues with six English-language learners

or, Engaging with the voices of others

6.1 Introduction

Having detailed my research design and the methodological and analytical procedures I followed, in this chapter I present the six dialogues describing each participant’s English-language learning histories and experiences. This chapter therefore foregrounds the voices of the participants, intertextually woven with my own authorial voice and chiming with my own authorial intonation. I invite the reader also to establish a dialogue with the participants through engagement with their voices, in order to gain both cognitive and experiential understanding of the ways in which they have created their worlds of meaning (Sullivan 2012: 153).

Participants are presented in alphabetical name order, and I have attempted to represent the participants’ own priorities in telling their stories, adding extra background or chronological information only insofar as either the participants or I thought it necessary to support or clarify the story. Each dialogue presents the participant’s individual story, then summarises their English-language learning motivation.
6.2 ‘A work in progress’: Dmitry
6.2.1 Early English-language learning
6.2.1.1 Importance of learning English
Dmitry was born in Russia in 1982 in a Moscow satellite town of 100,000 people, an aviation town with a large scientific research community, and into a scientific family who understood the English language as central to the future of their profession. Growing up in such a family and community meant that there was more focus on the importance of English-language learning than might have been the case in other towns of similar size, and as a result of this background, he grew up with the thought ‘in the back of my mind that if I want opportunities to be available… then I should be able to have a certain standard of English’.

6.2.1.2 Success in the classroom
From the age of seven, he was sent to a school in the town which specialised in English language; his experience was very positive, and he developed an early confidence with the language:

well I mean it was great it was… just exciting I suppose … it was nice … it was really natural … I suppose everything is natural at that age… but I remember it was exciting genuinely exciting and I remember I never had any problems at all I mean I was… kind of like on top of my group without realising that I suppose… the main thing I wasn’t having I was always saying even if I didn’t know the words… in English because at the beginning of my study I didn’t have the vocabulary… I was saying the Russian word [laughs] … at the start of course you know we didn’t speak in the… first year… you don’t speak straightaway you know but… I remember it was never a problem… it was always pleasurable… and my teacher was actually was actually saying… to my parents that… he just doesn’t have any problems just goes straight… sort of he speaks his mind and… uses Russian words if he doesn’t know the English ones [laughs]
6.2.1.3 Connection and communication

Another memorable experience gave him a sense of connection to a wider world through English:

there was another thing when we were having an exchange with some school in the US … in Salt Lake City or somewhere in America … and we were… creating … kind of like a big painting with little sections so every student had to make a little section … it wasn’t even a painting it was just like more of a textile sort of thing … so I remember doing that as well it was quite exciting… again similar age… so… didn’t have too much English at that point yet still quite basic things basic sort of wishes and then we got something from them… but of course it was their language they didn’t do it in Russian [laughs] so it’s not… reciprocal exactly… but it was stimulating … and because you were thinking of somebody at that end of the ocean or whatever who will presumably try to read what you said and think about you and that was kind of nice… especially after the bloody Cold War and things like that

Apart from occasional American and Australian exchange student visitors, there was no opportunity for Dmitry to use English outside of the classroom environment – there were no tourists or foreigners, nor English-language television or media. However, when the rare opportunity to speak English did present itself, Dmitry was confident enough to take it, and chatted with American visitors to the school without inhibition:

I remember in the second form or in the third form pretty much sort of couple of years into my learning of English we had American visitors… one of them mentioned that he likes to play tennis one guy and also I was playing tennis I was training in the tennis academy… at that time and I just came to him and said I like to play tennis too [laughter] you know and I was sort of nine years old or eight years old so I felt like I don’t have any problems with … I just didn’t think that I didn’t know how you say things and what if they start saying something back you know and then I just came and I said I like playing tennis too… he said oh that’s great it’s such a
lovely game it’s nice to see that you play tennis and … so that’s another nice experience I remember

Thus the little social interaction he had experienced outside the classroom had been positive. This was reinforced on a high school skiing trip to Hungary and the Czech Republic, where he found interaction with other international speakers of English very easy, feeling that they were ‘in the same shoes’:

I think there [Hungary and Czech Republic] I mean it’s just perfect because… they are all they’re not English speakers and it’s so easy to interact with those who knew the language there and I felt like I’m really comfortable with this… it’s always easier when it’s not their first language you know you are in the same shoes … they didn’t have any problems with us… just really great… curiosity… you know like… imagine the kids from the country where you couldn’t go anywhere ten years before … so it was exciting

Thus his positive attitude towards English was connected to a perception that English would be useful and relevant to his future, his success within the classroom, and his ability to communicate with people outside the classroom and in the wider world.

6.2.2 Learning English at university

Dmitry’s confidence in his ability in English was reinforced at his technical university, where technical English was part of the curriculum. Because of his training and experience in English, Dmitry found himself significantly ahead of the class in terms of speaking, and was confident reading, presenting on and discussing scientific texts in English. Thus he was comfortable and confident in his ability, finding the work required of him easy, and had no particular need or curiosity for further interaction in English outside of this context. For Dmitry, English was a means of engaging in scientific academia and connecting with the world through that field. Given his family and community background and upbringing, this was a safe and comfortable context for him, in which he had mastered a degree
of proficiency and in which any communicative risk was professionally-rather than socially-based. His learning of English reinforced his view of himself as part of a professional elite, and he was thus able to develop a fearless attitude to communication.

6.2.2.1 Discomfort listening to English voices

Socially, however, his Russian context contained little opportunity for social engagement with other English-language voices. Consequently, he began to feel psychological discomfort when he became aware of the wider communicative contexts of English, and of the implications this would have for the secure English-speaking identity he had constructed for himself. This uncomfortable awareness of the multitude and complexity of English voices began to develop when Dmitry was watching English-language TV on satellite channels at a friend’s home in Russia. This led to a realisation that listening and understanding would require significantly more effort than he had been used to, and he became uncomfortable in the realisation that he was still some way from such understanding, particularly when he had considered himself so fluent and capable until that point:

[I felt] uncomfortable… uncomfortable so I felt like… of course we also have expectations and quite often they are too high… when you are pointed out in Russian that it’s not you know it’s not actually good enough or it’s not quite there or you have to… improve still it’s quite depressing… and actually I was quite disappointed I felt you know… I felt that you know why… I kind of put so much effort and I felt like… I’m fluent completely and then I realised no it’s not good enough yet

This was reinforced when he was preparing for the TOEFL exam that would enable him to come to the UK – he knew that listening was his weakest skill and did not put in much practice, and although he got a good score he was disheartened by his comparative struggle in this area. Because everything had come easily and naturally to him so far, he had not felt the need for particular practice; his attitude in Russia had always been ‘things will take care of themselves’.
6.2.3 Moving to the UK

Dmitry decided to come to the UK while he was studying for his Masters degree. The decision was taken on the advice of his supervisor, who impressed upon him the difficulties of being an academic scientist in Russia, where funding and salary would be unpredictable and limited. The idea was supported by his family, in particular his father, himself a scientist who could speak English and whose own plans to work abroad had not been realised, and his grandmother, who impressed upon him the value of seeing outside the country and learning to become more open-minded, particularly given the Russian ‘history of isolation’. Although Dmitry was quite happy in his university situation at this time, these influences led him to understand the value of such an opportunity. He now feels that perhaps he subconsciously saw coming to the UK as an escape from Russia, as a bid for freedom ‘in the back of my mind… and possibly it’s the case actually this idea is something that you inherit from your family… because of the conditions that were there in the past’. So, because of his ‘warm feelings’ towards Europe, and because his supervisor was able to recommend an academic supervisor for a PhD in Applied Mathematics in Manchester, he decided to come to the UK, moving to Manchester in 2005.

6.2.3.1 ‘I’m not sure what I’m saying’

Dmitry cites his uncertainty around different UK English accents when he first arrived, realising he had not been aware of them and wondering whether resulting misunderstandings were his fault. He compares this to getting used to one colour ‘and then being given a palate of colours and… trying to find yourself… on that spectrum’, which again would appear to represent his growing awareness of a matrix of English voices in the world that he had to negotiate:

I have this analogy in mind… say an animal is kept in the zoo yeah?… but then it’s time for them to go outside in the wild and it’s a completely different story because they have to… get their own food and everything and stuff like that and they just… in a way it’s a similar analogy because you pretty much have recipes for all sorts of situations before… but
whereas… since I moved here it’s a completely… different set of circumstances… and because the social thing is there… but without it I’m not great socially [laughs] I’m not particularly social that’s the issue that certainly I wasn’t prepared for

As a result, in the UK he began to find basic communicative transactions very difficult:

and again I had this feeling that I’ve done so much and I’m so good you know that… I shouldn’t have any problems well… turns out that… no it’s not quite like that … and when I came here actually… that’s when I got the barrier for the first time in my life pretty much… I got this sort of barrier which I had to get rid of for quite a while because… I suddenly realised I had problems going to a shop and asking a person there… for some help or some directions in the street… I suddenly got this sort of psychological feeling that you know I’m not sure actually what I’m doing or what I’m saying… and it’s interesting how it happened because I never had it before… all of a sudden… when I’m there actually and I have to deliver [laughs] you know I realised that it’s harder than I thought actually [laughs]

6.2.3.2 ‘It made me shut up completely’
More acute, however, were his difficulties with unexpected cultural differences in the UK; he had not encountered ‘small talk’ and ‘chatting’ in his Russian context, having been used to ‘either serious talk or no talk at all’. Moreover, he had formed an impression, based on Russian jokes and stereotypes, of British people as reserved and uncommunicative, and as a result he was surprised to find in those particular social phenomena a stark challenge to this impression. He elaborates on his confusion around British small talk by describing the discomfort he first felt in casual conversations in the UK as a result of it:

the small talk thing is definitely… in the centre here and I guess it’s just the… small talk and the difference in the humour that little bit ironic that’s the difference in the specific humour because a lot of humour is kind of…
universal… that’s what I found difficult… my particular conversation would be a bit more in depth and spending a bit more time on one thing before moving onto the other… so you can count that amount… five times of the time you spend actually before you jump and you cut off them … that’s what creates the problem so it’s not easy to… adjust when people ask you something you start answering… I noticed a few times that by the time I reach the top of my point they’re already looking somewhere else and they are about to… to ask something else or just losing… because they expect I think that’s my perception expect the amount of information that you should need should be… less because it’s small talk… generally… I think that’s how it works… so if you exceed that expected you know it’s like you’re given certain signs in someone else’s consciousness perception you know… if you go beyond that it’s like an awful and the person’s not going to be… can’t be happy about it

Because of this, he ‘felt quite uncomfortable straightaway and I think that it gave me… a long… uncomfortable feeling for quite a while’; he ‘felt like people weren’t interested in what I was saying’, and ‘it rather made me shut up completely and not say anything and not go anywhere’, becoming a ‘barrier’ for him.

6.2.3.3 ‘It was something that had to be dealt with’

He helped himself challenge this discomfort by creating opportunities to interact, by putting himself ‘in that situation time and time again’. This was helped by joining a choir and becoming involved in music in Manchester, so he had a common point of interest in conversations. In general, over the years he has put himself in more situations where he has to interact with British people:

I overcame that… it was something that had to be… dealt with just by… putting yourself in that situation time and time again and… there was no other way to… do that… I was trying… when I could I was trying to create opportunities to… interact… but I mean because when you live here you have so many things around you that you have to sort of take
care of and... and I think it’s just that... being in this environment... it’s sort of sorted itself... after a while just by... trying to... face the situation again so I... did spend a lot of time... with native people... mostly through this church choir because you know in the halls or in the uni we had so many foreigners I was put with all the foreigners they didn’t put any British for some reason in the flats for a couple of years actually and... so mostly it was the musical world where I had this interaction and I think it just took me practice and took me trying also to... right what are those guys doing differently why are they talking this way what does the conversation... shape in this way... and so I tried to analyse a little bit I think and say oh alright that’s how I should answer maybe that’s how I should behave that’s... irony that is familiar so maybe that’s what... so in a way it was a bit of a research actually kind of like informal... because my goal has been to try to adapt and to grasp and to integrate... if I’m here then I should obviously I should not separate myself I should not completely keep myself ... but I should try to absorb something I think and that was my ambition at the time because maybe that’s how I am... made... and that’s why I tried to figure out what’s going on there and... because I mean probably I sound like the most foreigner still as foreign as possible... to you but... I felt like after a while I could at least feel less... less alien

Dmitry feels that he has made some progress with this; he has since become more adept at, though not always comfortable with, social participation and small talk, and he is able to read contexts that make clear when more information is wanted. Thus he is learning how to navigate this variety of voices. Dmitry now feels that his ability to cope in this way may have been facilitated by his language learning experiences in Russia: not having faced too many challenges in his English learning in Russia may have meant he did not learn how to cope with difficulties, but the original confidence gained from overcoming the challenges he did face never completely left him, and gave him ‘a drive to actually try to overcome’. He remembers being nervous about his first oral English exam, but the good outcome made him feel ‘right it’s going to go right anyway next time’. Thus, feeling that
learning English was easy, he went ‘on autopilot… and possibly I could have done better if I had actually more worried… and maybe that’s undermined my future ability to stick it out in the real situations… I was underprepared actually without realising I was underprepared’.

Nevertheless, the confidence he developed from his communicative successes in Russia stayed with him, and he was able to call upon this confidence to support him in his communicative frustrations in the UK.

### 6.2.3.4 Comfort around other foreigners

During his early time in the UK, Dmitry also realised that he was more comfortable around other foreigners, both in the sense of foreign to him and foreign to the UK context – non-Russians and non-British. With non-British people, he felt a greater sense of shared culture and the ability to have more in-depth conversation, which created a feeling of ‘mutual advantage’ for him. People from these cultures felt ‘more comfortable’ and ‘more familiar’ to him, whereas interaction with British people ‘means more work effort to adjust and cope… means less enjoyment and less freedom in the sense of yourself… to be yourself’. He feels a particular connection to the European continent, seeing it as a kind of bridge between the Russian context (to which he felt Europe had certain cultural similarities, particularly in terms of styles of conversation and humour) and the UK.

### 6.2.3.5 Relationship with Russia

This sense of warmth and connection towards Europe contrasts starkly with his feelings towards Russia, which he perceives as isolated now and historically, and as conceptually ‘far away’ from him now. His relationship with other Russians in the UK (though he has not encountered many) has been one of deliberate distancing; he has ‘cut himself off’ from them, and does not see himself as being in the UK for ‘maintaining my identity’. He does not have ‘any connection at all with what’s going on [in Russia]’, and has felt increasingly isolated from Russia since living in the UK. This isolation is reflected in the narrative he perceives Russia as constructing for itself, as a centralised and powerful state that needs somehow to display its strength to the world. He started to perceive Russia’s isolation as a result of
the attitudes of his family and friends, which also shaped his early warm feelings towards Europe, and which prompted him to say ‘right I would actually like to see what’s out there’. Dmitry feels that in contrast to Russia, Britain gives him ‘freedom for [him]self’, and that people in the UK are aware of ‘whether they can influence things themselves’. Although he can imagine leaving Manchester for a completely different environment or country, he cannot see himself ever returning to Russia, feeling that he would find it confining and isolated, and would struggle with what he perceives as the closed, isolationist and narrow-minded ‘mentality’, the lack of freedom to grow and develop in the way that he might want to, the arrogance of the newly wealthy in a newly capitalist country, and the rise of Putinism and Russian superiority. He now sees Russia as a place for holidays and visits only, and is ‘trying to minimise the interaction … as much as possible’.

6.2.3.6 Dealing with attitudes towards Russia
Dmitry’s feeling that he was different from the Russian stereotype or general perceptions of Russia/Russians meant that he felt discomfort and ‘disappointment’ at being the butt of jokes about Russian people, although this has not been a very big problem for him. He was aware of negative Western attitudes towards Russia based on the past, on communism and the Cold War, and wanted very much to distance himself from current perceptions of Russians as ‘arrogant’ and ‘newly rich’. This created an element of conflict for him in that he would expect to be judged by British people in the same way as he judged Russian people, and so on the one hand he would not get too upset about jokes people made. On the other hand, he would be humiliated when people were joking and being ironic and he was ‘not able to support that’, recognising that it was a ‘one-way traffic’ and he was not equipped or sufficiently skilled to respond, regardless of whether he took the jokes very seriously. However, he is becoming increasingly aware of the power and role of his own voice in interaction, and of how he can adapt voices he previously found intimidating in order to assert control and agency, refusing to be positioned in ways that are unacceptable to him:
it’s hard to see people outside a country… you pick up sort of
the most obvious or … it’s harder to see new things … and
again when people generalising I feel like I’m… different… I
always felt like you know I’m different… when they try to
apply the same thing to me … and I think that was the main
response that… but then you know that happens maybe with
time I start to look at it more in a more humorous way…
people will joke about and I joke about them as well and…
that’s sort of like ironic… so in a way those British…
attitudes… I learnt it’s… acceptable more and more and more
and I think I’m getting more comfortable with it… I’m
enjoying it actually… I’m taking the piss out of anybody else
as well [laughter] and that’s just great [laughter]

He can now accept such joking with good humour and irony, saying ‘I wish
I were told about [ironic humour and ‘taking the piss’] before in Russia’.

6.2.4 Future in the UK
Dmitry enjoys the social informality of ‘chatting’ and of British culture,
finding an ‘easiness and fluency’ in the way that people socialise with each
other, and feels that taking part in such a culture has contributed to his
personal, social and professional development. Since finishing his PhD in
2009 he has taken a MMus in Voice and Opera, and at the time of our last
meeting he was working as a postdoctoral researcher in Mathematics.
However, while he appreciates the more public and professional freedom
and opportunities available to him living in the UK, and finds his
professional environment in the UK very fulfilling, the more private and
social aspects carry different feelings for him:

as a result of all those issues I am not feeling… very much…
a hundred percent or whatever at home and comfortable in
various aspects of life here… despite all that I’ve said that
you know it’s free it gives me opportunities it gives me…
feeling of comfort… but in other senses and socially in
particular that’s I have to say… I haven’t found a home… as
I would like it to be… without cancelling what I said about
Russia that I’m not comfortable with as well… so in a way it
leaves a question open I think for me at the moment what do I
want to do do I want to keep integrating… appreciating that I
might stay here forever or I will move somewhere else when
the time comes and the opportunity comes… and that’s the
open question I think… I can’t say that right I see myself…
for the rest of my life… I can’t see myself at least in the near
future going back… but… I know that I can still… live
here… for a while and I can still… so it’s just… it’s a work
in progress… it’s a bit boring after six years a work in
progress it’s a bit boring but… I should have been a bit more
clear by now but I think… I know maybe the next couple of
years that I will be here and… then who knows things may be
more clear… but I don’t have to put these things in the
picture as yet as well why change things you know?

However, he recognises that he is likely to feel different about it yet again in
another few years’ time, feeling that perhaps he will be able to call the UK
home in the sense of a ‘working home’.

6.2.5 Summary: Dmitry’s motivation
Dmitry’s motivation to learn English, then, stemmed initially from an early
awareness from his family and community that English was a useful and
necessary tool, positive learning experiences in his school both inside and
outside the classroom, and a recognition that English would facilitate and
enhance an academic scientific career. This awareness was motivating for
him both as a scientist and as a language learner. However, he faced
significant communicative challenges in his social interactions in the UK,
which proved at first to be psychologically distressing and at times
debilitating. His early communicative successes in learning English, his
professional success in English, and the confidence gained from these
motivated and supported him through his frustrations, and he has been
increasingly able to engage in, and enjoy, social participation. This
experience of facing and overcoming challenging, even frightening,
situations has been important to Dmitry, which he sees as an important
aspect of human development: ‘you want to go through situations that you
would not go through normally or allow yourself to go through… if you
survive you’re going to be better off’.
Dmitry’s motivation to learn English has been significantly influenced by his feelings and attitudes towards Russia, which he negatively perceives as a socio-politically isolated country. His motivation has been guided in part by his desire to distance himself from the Russian context, and by his desire to create an identity for himself as part of a context in which he feels personally and socially, as well as professionally, comfortable, ‘at home’, and engaged with the world.

The sense of lacking power in social interaction in his earlier UK experience has led to a motivation to try and take a ‘general social control’ for himself – a control that means he is no longer ‘on the weak side’, on the back foot. He now consciously tries not to be in this position by retaliating and fighting for himself, for example by ‘taking the piss’ in response to jokes he does not like. He is aware that relations may be harmed or destroyed as a result of his greater confidence in communication, but recognises also that this is a by-product of his being in greater control and in a stronger communicative position. These concerns around social acceptance seem to have led Dmitry to a realisation of the importance of self-acceptance, as his motivation now is based upon his feeling that he needs to accept himself as a Russian speaker of English:

it would be nice to become comfortable… as a… foreign person who is a good speaker of English because… I’ve realised that I can’t… go beyond a certain point I think no matter how hard you try… you’re still going to… have certain boundaries … even accent-wise you can’t just remove that… completely so… so I think it’s just accepting that… trying to be your best but then… accepting that why that’s… that’s the stage where I’ve reached when I come to… go beyond I’m a Russian speaker of English… I think accepting that would be… would be great… so I’m working on that
6.3 ‘I just want to speak’: Eli

6.3.1 Early English-language learning

Eli was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1985. Her mother and sister taught her a little English when she was small, and then her parents sent her to a private language school to learn English from the age of seven, which was common practice among many families Eli knew. Her parents thought learning English was necessary on account of being an international language, and that it would make sense for Eli to start learning English at the same time as she started learning to write Farsi at mainstream school. Eli was fascinated by the differences between the written forms of the two languages:

[English] seemed easier for me even… it was the second language but it was easier for me to write… I really liked alphabet it was like drawing… it was like exercise for us to learn how to write just the letters … and I remember that they were colourful… yeah it’s the first thing that I remember… they were really different [from Farsi]… I liked the alphabet more… I really liked it and it was easier… in Farsi you have lots of… some different shapes but in English it was like little lines and they get together and they make a little house [laughter]

6.3.1.1 ‘A luxury tool’

Eli felt at that time that English was ‘like a luxury tool’ that she might be able to use in another country. Living in a foreign country was something she very much wanted to do: ‘I wanted experience different cultures different language and I knew if I go to English environment I would learn English because I have to speak… and this is what’s happening my English is better now’. This desire was influenced in part by her brother’s attitude, and from a perception of certain constraints living in Iran:

I have older sister and older brother and I am the youngest… and my brother he always wanted to come abroad and he always talked about how free it is how beautiful it is how everything is good there… and I think it’s… from my childhood I had influence and… I came abroad even sooner than him… yeah and he was saying to me I wanted to go how
you did before me? he said… I think it was… from my childhood… I always wanted to… not having a scarf [Iran’s mandatory Islamic hijab] I hated a scarf and I always wanted to go out without a scarf [laughs] because I saw my mother’s picture and my aunty’s pictures that… when… before revolution they didn’t have to wear a scarf it was like a wish to go out without a scarf even just for one day… in the rain maybe in the sun how would it feel? to go without a scarf [laughs]… yeah… in the classroom how does it feel I sometimes we were naughty and sometimes we just… took the scarf out and… but you have to wear it… yeah

you know we had I think in Iran we had conflict for everything… for example in the house we had satellite but my parents made sure that we wouldn’t tell anybody that we have satellite and [laughs] they were saying if you go to the school they ask you you have satellite you say what is the satellite so [laughs]… in the school they would ask us no we don’t have everybody have but no we don’t have satellite… if they ask your mother… I don’t know… wear hijab you say yes she does… if they ask your father drink wine say no… okay… everything is different it is a different life in the house and there is a different life outside the house… completely different… people… get used to say lies because… people cannot see that how honesty works because they just get the way they want through lying and… through pretence pretending to be somebody else… when you are not… you get lost yeah… you get lost what do you want?

Although she did not have an overt urge at the time to escape these constraints, Eli wonders now if it was something that drove her subconsciously, saying ‘I didn’t think about that at that time but… maybe it was’. Still, from the earliest stages of her learning, Eli understood English as potentially enabling her to experience cultures and environments outside Iran.

6.3.1.2 Wanting to speak

From the beginning of her English-language learning life, Eli has wanted to speak:
I remember there was one girl [in the private English class] speaking English really good… and I wished that I was her [laughter] how can she speak that good and because she was living in America for a couple of years and then she came back to Iran she was like aaaah I was like in heaven… she could speak really good and easily and she didn’t have to study [laughs]

At her private school, there was plenty of opportunity to practise speaking. However, when she started learning English at mainstream school at the age of twelve, she found an unwelcome focus on grammar:

I remember that I hated grammar I didn’t like to study grammar at all… and I was searching for classes that they don’t teach grammar [laughter] my mother said ‘no this is necessary you need to learn grammar’ I said ‘no I just want to speak’… in school it was just grammar it was just like… like a geography class it was kind of just writing and just… remembering not really speaking and… it wasn’t fun at all in the school but in my private class every day it was good it was speaking and all the books were colourful and was encouraging… and our teacher they were really good… they were Iranian but they had really good accent

I liked to learn English but I just wanted to speak… I didn’t want to learn grammar as in Farsi I don’t know lots of grammar in Farsi I just I can speak… so I just wanted it happen to English as well… just to learn to speak fast not to spend time to learn the grammar

As well as her private classes, Eli’s family occasionally played host to a German friend of her brother-in-law, with whom Eli was able to make some basic English conversation. Although this was enjoyable for her, she also felt limited and frustrated, feeling that ‘I need to… learn more and I couldn’t say what I wanted to say’.

6.3.1.3 Connecting to the world

Her perception was that speaking English would give her advantages in Iran and access to culture and media from different parts of the world. She felt
that learning English would give her access to the world: ‘the latest news the latest… science the latest books I want to read… interest in more or less everything in fashion in science in everything is in English’. These perceptions and the urge for connection to the world they engendered were important to her as she was growing up:

Eli: I told you some of the students in my classroom they could speak English really well… I thought that they having something that I don’t have … it’s really important in Iran if you can speak English… it gives you more class and more prestige… and… I remember watching Friends on satellite and I couldn’t understand what they saying and I really wanted to understand what they said… in songs I remember I really wanted to know what they are saying these songs and… I can’t understand… and I was listening to some Arabic song Turkish song and I could understand some words because they were kind of similar words similar… culture I could understand them but I couldn’t understand English so

Lou: why was it so important to you to understand the English words?

E: they are really talking about all over the world and everybody when this song is hit in America or in Britain I’m sure in Iran it is hit as well… and I wanted to for example I remember Titanic [the 1997 film] it was really a big hit and the Titanic song and I really wanted to know what’s it saying? [laughter] really frustrating when you don’t know what it say and you want to know what [laughs]

Thus Eli was developing her early sense of English as a means of connection to the world outside Iran, and as a means of forging her own participation in that world through access to and understanding of English-language social and cultural activity.

6.3.2 Moving to the UK
The university admissions system in Iran allowed Eli various choices of degree major, of which she chose nursing, although she had no particular
interest in the field. She then came to the UK in 2008, in order to learn English in an English-language environment and because she had friends here who could help her get admission to a private language school.

6.3.2.1 Struggles with speaking

However, she found she struggled with speaking and lost a lot of confidence:

the first stage… my husband was trying to help me and he said some words that order and say this word… and I couldn’t because I thought okay I’m going and I’m saying for example please give me I don’t know glass of water… and if she says something to me and I don’t understand what I’m going to do? I’m just going to say will you please give me a glass of water and then [laughs] and I didn’t have the confident to go there… I think this is why because you need to try even if you’re wrong you need to try maybe they’re going to laugh at you but… you need to try to learn… a new language I mean to make mistakes you’re like a child really… for example now I think I’m like a four years child my speaking is better than that because I can go out and I read… but in terms of some words because I’ve never heard… or… at that time it was really scary because I didn’t know what I was saying… and you know what because it was my first… first time that I was far away from my family and far away from my country I was in a totally different country totally different culture… and all of them together and totally different language… and I think in couple of months that I lost my confidence and I couldn’t speak

For Eli, the (in)ability to speak was connected to being in control and being taken seriously; as a result of the fear engendered by not knowing what she was saying, she pushed herself to improve her speaking.

6.3.2.2 Listening to other voices

A week after moving to the UK she started English lessons at a private language school, and while she found the experience helpful, she still had to push herself to find ways to maximise her exposure to English and her
opportunities for speaking practice, which supported her growing confidence:

when I was in college it was run by an Iranian man and lots of Iranian people were there it was like… it was remind me of that private class that I went because in the class we were speaking English but after class we were speaking Farsi and it was the same happening to me because I have lots of Iranian friends in here… and… so I tried to go to places for example when we finished our class in the college we used to go to the centre to the museum somewhere even to speak a little bit just… just I remember when somebody was speaking beside me with themselves I was listening to see if I can caught some words even in the bus when somebody was speaking on the phone I was listening like you know crazy people [laughs] to see what they are saying… to see if I understand or not the real people like in the class because in the class teachers were speaking without harsh accent… slowly and words that we would know and… in real life I was really … now I’m not like this I don’t notice if somebody’s speaking… but at that time I remember that I was listening to them purposely to see if I can catch more the… what they’re speaking [laughs]… even in society if somebody is speaking with themselves this is help because what you're hearing is English

Eli would mimic these voices by listening to how they said words, and this became an important means of learning for her. Therefore, whether she herself was speaking or whether she was listening to others speak, speaking has always been important to her as both a means of learning, and as the purpose of learning: ‘the more you learn the more you want to learn and you know that you don’t know anything yet… and the more you can speak the more you can understand the more you want to know more… it’s just really… non-stop process’.

6.3.2.3 Being recognised
Eli wanted to be accepted as someone who belonged in a particular communicative transaction, rather than being seen as helpless and childlike because she could not take part in communication. Perhaps more
significantly, speaking for Eli was a way to be herself and to have her identity recognised:

yeah in terms of going and speaking I pushed myself… because I didn’t want to embarrass myself in front of everybody just speaking and even now sometimes when I say something it’s oh… what are you saying and… because of my accent I think this is happening and this is normal because I’m not an English person… and at that time I didn’t want to lose that… how do you say… the social class that I was in Iran I didn’t want to go like crazy people and say something that people don’t understand and [laughs]… at that time I thought that… I went to school I went to university I was somebody in Iran… but all of a sudden I was nobody here and I couldn’t even speak it was like a child

Consequently, being unable to speak when she first came to the UK was like a loss of identity for Eli. She wanted to be part of the social voices that surrounded her, and in order to feel like herself, to be ‘somebody’ and to be taken seriously, she needed to engage with and be responded to by others. She realised that without being part of these voices, she was ‘nobody’ – because she could not speak, she was unable to tell people who she was, and was not recognised as herself by others. She realised that she had to get through this by asking for things and looking after her basic needs, and that she should not expect to learn the language fast – by giving herself time, she felt that ‘it is a rewarding process … you feel proud of yourself’. Doing nothing or staying at home ‘wasn’t a choice’ for her - she was motivated by the prospect of communication, even in very basic ways like ‘to just say hi to your neighbour’.

6.3.2.4 Boosting confidence
Now that her speaking has improved, she is more confident about becoming who and what she wants to become, and she is able to accept that sometimes she will be misunderstood:

I understand that there are some people who can’t speak English as good as… British people and this is okay in this
country if you can’t speak they don’t think that you’re crazy
they know that you are new to this language and it’s boost my
confident

Thus Eli’s desire to speak has motivated her to come to the UK and to push
through the barriers and fear she has encountered here, because she
recognises that if she is able to speak, she is able to be what she wants to be,
and become what she wants to become – she is able to be ‘somebody’, as
she was in Iran. In addition, speaking has led not only to increased
confidence in speaking, but to increased confidence in ‘every angle of life’ –
‘language helps other aspects of my life and other aspects of my life helps
language’, for example through the Chinese flower craft she is now learning
from her friend in exchange for English lessons.

6.3.2.5 Awareness of power relations
Eli is very conscious of the power relations involved in being a learner of
English in the UK, and of the ways in which she may have less power than
others. She is aware that her powerlessness to speak in English deprived her
of the power she would have had if her identity had been recognised. She is
also particularly sensitive to power relations in the workplace, being aware
that if she were in paid employment, the unequal relations between bosses
and employees would mean ‘they are paying me they are expecting me to do
what they’re saying’, which would make her ‘scared to go and ask them to
say again’, and which would not help her language development. In
recognition of this, Eli would have preferred to work as a volunteer,
recognising that the more equal power relations could also be beneficial for
her language development, as she could make a contribution to the
workplace and experience language in the workplace; ‘this is something that
I do for them and they do for me’. Thus her understanding of power in
relationships has influenced her choices in the UK, and, as a result,
influenced her language learning. She wants to put herself in situations
where she will benefit most from the language, which she recognises as
situations in which she has more equal power to other English speakers and
can therefore enter into more equal relationships with them. Eli is now in
paid employment, working as a cashier at a stall in a shopping centre; the owner and the other two employees are also from outside the UK, and so she feels comfortable in this context.

6.3.3 ‘An Iranian who lives in England’
Eli’s awareness of power relations has influenced her desire to work with and for Iranians in the UK. She has a powerful sense of connection between her UK and Iranian contexts and is conscious of her developing Farsi-English/Iranian-British identity, pointing out that ‘it’s not just the language it’s my life … I am Iranian who lives in England so… there is all of there is connection’. This sense of connection has been reinforced when she has returned to Iran for extended visits, finding that ‘when I was in Iran it was really helpful… because lots of businesses need me to help to speak English for them or maybe translate a letter or write a letter for them… lots of them they want somebody to speak English they want somebody who lived in England’. Furthermore, Eli feels that speaking English ‘helps me to help my friends as well… it’s not just myself and my life it’s my friends’ life as well’. Understanding how some of her Iranian friends might feel about their lives in the UK, she sees English as offering opportunity for her to help them forge connections between the two contexts:

maybe they make themselves too separated from… they are living here but they turn to their mother tongue and kept their traditions and… our personalities are different maybe they felt safe that way they felt… you know that because some people think that they… they abandoned their language… they feel like they’re making a crime… and they don’t enjoy that bonding they don’t enjoy that having this together they just left alone… because… well I don’t know… there’s nothing that you can feel bad about it you just came to the foreign and you’re living it’s not that you don’t want your country or you don’t love your country you love it… but you are living in this country and you need to learn the language you need to learn the traditions… yeah… they can see themselves after a couple of years… [my friend] has been here for three years she cannot speak she cannot… book an appointment she cannot go out… by herself because… she
doesn’t have the confidence… and her child I think when she goes to school she wants her Mummy to speak to the teachers to speak to her friends’ Mums and… I think it’s important… for communication for her confidence for her child… for everything it’s important… and her Mum was here and… she couldn’t speak English as well but she… she was in shock that she cannot speak English she was asking why you didn’t learn? and why you just staying at home and you’re not going to the college and… not doing anything to learn English and she asked me please help her to learn English [laughs]

6.3.3.1 Helping other Iranians
Eli also wants to help other Iranians develop a sense of connection between the different contexts they inhabit. Moreover, she attempts to challenge people’s perceptions of Iran and Iranians, feeling that ‘I cannot just change the whole picture about my country… but I can just change some… people’s idea… like my friends or people like you or people I can see at work’. She is often questioned by her customers at the stall where she works as to where she is from and what their perceptions of Iran are, and she takes these opportunities to challenge ideas and stereotypes: ‘I just move these moments to influence them… even as little as one or two person a day… I can change their mind about how they think as an Iranian person or about Iran in general’. Her ambition is to be able to do this on a larger scale; she is now in the process of applying to university to study Business, and aims to become a wealthy, successful and powerful businesswoman who can use her influence to help other Iranians and to further these connections:

how can I help them [other Iranians] if… if I’m even lower than them… no it’s same as anybody else I think in English society for yourself as well… if you are having big business and if you are earning a lot of money people would respect you more people would listen to you more and… I mean respect you more in that kind of way… for example… my cousin she got divorced in Iran… but now she doesn’t have enough money to cope with her children and cope with their house… but in England they would get the house when they have… they would get benefit… but in Iran they cannot so… if I had the… for example if I had some money I could bring
her here I could… give her good life I could… could really help her but… how can I help her now? it’s just… it’s just speaking to her… things that I can do now just speak with her it’s going to be good don’t worry just… this kind of thing I can help… but if I had power if I had money I could help her more… just give her better life… bring her here or maybe I could give her a house to live in Iran

Ultimately, Eli wants ‘every Iranian who live in UK… they know me as an Iranian person who is really successful in England’, and to show other Iranians that ‘if they want there is opportunity’. She sees having money, power and influence as a way to be able to help people, and to have people respect and listen to her in a way that they would not otherwise; she is particularly aware of the role of power in communication from having felt so disempowered herself when she first came to the UK.

6.3.4 ‘I had space to know myself’

Eli perceives herself, and women in general, as having more freedom and power in the UK; ‘there are lots of Iranian women who are successful and making lots of money… but I prefer here because I have more freedom here’. Having found this freedom has contributed significantly to her personal growth and development, and living in the UK has been important for her independence, self-knowledge and ambition. In addition, as a result of being able to participate socially through speaking, Eli has been able to learn about herself: she now thinks of herself as a businesswoman, has ‘found out’ that she wants to be a millionaire, and is looking for a way to become one. The independence of being in the UK and away from her family has given her space to ‘know herself’:

you know I didn’t know myself in Iran at all… I didn’t know myself at all… when I came here I didn’t have my friends I didn’t have my family my close… I didn’t have… I had space to know myself who I am what I want not what my parents want like my sister she couldn’t get in her life and she was… making it through my head that you should do it you need to be… it was what my sister wants what my mother wants it wasn’t me but when I came here I had the space to… search
for myself what I want what kind of person I am… it was really good and that… point of view that I found myself and I think lots of people in Iran they don’t know themselves… because they just they all… gaining what their parents expect from them to gain… that’s why they all… lots of them are upset lots of them have depression lots of them have because what society and your family expect from you is really high

Thus through coming to the UK, learning to speak English and to participate socially, Eli has developed self-awareness and self-knowledge, discovering ‘who I am really… who I want to be’. In turn, her self-awareness motivates her to continue trying to become what she wants to become - ‘I’m not going to change myself’ - and she does not have to ‘pretend to be somebody else’. English plays a significant part in the fulfilment of these dreams for Eli: ‘language is playing a big role here because if I cannot speak to somebody how can I be successful?’

6.3.5 Summary: Eli’s motivation

Eli’s motivation, then, has been driven by a powerful desire to speak. From the earliest stages of her English-language learning, she understood English to be a means of accessing culture and media in the world outside Iran. She also had a strong desire to live abroad, and saw English as a tool that would facilitate this. When she came to the UK, she struggled to speak and found communication difficult and disempowering; however, she realised that if she wanted her identity to be recognised and to be seen as ‘somebody’, she would have to be able to participate in social life. This motivated her to push herself to improve her speaking, initially by listening to as many English speakers as she could and mimicking their sounds, and then by actively taking opportunities to speak herself, with friends, with her employers, with customers at her workplace: ‘I try to make them speak to me I try to say… it’s good weather and how are you doing today and… you know’.

Through her experiences living in Iran and learning English in the UK, Eli has become sensitive to the role of power relations in language and, in particular, in speaking. She recognises that her language learning will
benefit from interaction within more equal power structures, which would be more conducive to cultivating equal relationships. As a result, Eli sees having power as an important way to communicate with and influence people, and wants to achieve such influence and power herself by becoming a wealthy businesswoman. She wants to use her power and influence to benefit other Iranians by helping them forge their own connections to the UK context; maybe by helping Iranians in Iran to find a better life here, or by helping Iranians already living here to learn English and thus participate socially in UK life. This urge to facilitate such connections for other Iranians is a corollary of her own developing British/Iranian identity; she feels comfortable in her identity as an Iranian English speaker and does not mind being seen as a foreign speaker, understanding that she will not sound like a mother-tongue speaker and that it is not necessary to speak English like one to be understood.

In learning to speak, and feeling more comfortable and confident about communicating in English (and recognising that learning is an ongoing process), and through the freedom available to her in the UK that she had not experienced in Iran, Eli has developed strong self-awareness and self-knowledge. This developing self-understanding, and her ever-increasing confidence in speaking English, motivates her to become the ‘somebody’ she wants to be, somebody who can ‘make my dreams come true’. This growth has led her to overcome social and linguistic challenges, to cultivate a British-Iranian identity which can be recognised by others, and to move towards self-actualisation. Like the girl who ‘just wanted to speak’, she recognises that ‘it’s all about communication’:

wherever I want to go now I’m not worried about… not being able to communicate with people because I know that everywhere people know English and they can speak to me… so I’m not worried… yeah… it’s like media… imagine like you just have a radio and not the television not the satellite and not going out just the radio… so I think that just knowing one language is like… that you are limiting yourself to just one thing… and I think learning English is… gives you the
ability to… just see the other worlds just… meet other groups and… English in particular because it is the language that everybody speaks
6.4 ‘I am Italian in the world’: Federica

6.4.1 Early English-language learning

6.4.1.1 Difference to Italy

Federica was born in Benevento, southern Italy, in 1982. She started learning English when she was six, in compulsory school lessons:

we had this English teacher was very basic like greetings and other stuff… then I really fell in love when we used to start saying things ‘things’ and using the th sound… and so I said okay I really want to learn this language I made this choice when I was six… I was saying thanks to everybody [laughter] it was funny I mean I came back home that day and I said ‘Mum I really like English because they say thanks’ [laughs]

Thus she was initially attracted to the sounds of English, and to the pictures of the UK her teacher would bring to school – pictures of squirrels and of green urban spaces in London, which she had not experienced in Italy. She was attracted to the UK because of its visual difference from Italy, and because she perceived the UK’s infrastructure, institutions and social systems as functioning well, ‘things that work things that are well done things that are structured’, in contrast with Italy, which was ‘just a mess’. Early on, therefore, she was associating English with something different to Italy, to a different world from the one she was used to.

6.4.1.2 Connecting to the world

She also liked the boy band Take That, in their first heyday of the early- to mid-1990s, which was an important point of connection to the wider world for her:

I think because I’m from a very small place so also songs and singers… we really wanted to understand what’s going on we were in love with Take That… we were translating the songs… we really wanted to hear how they were saying things… so that was another motivation like from the songs translating learning new words… not really learning grammar but new words new vocabulary… for us it was something to
connect us from a small place to the world… so every single song translated [laughs]

Thus Take That connected her to the wider world, not just by being a famous British group, but through her engagement with their actual words, with what they were singing. Another point of connection to the wider world was a pen pal exchange that was set up for her middle school class (at the age of 12 or 13), in which she wrote to an English student. However, her class was very grammar-focused, as in Italy ‘grammar is everything so no matter how many words you know the grammar is the most important thing’, and did little in the way of showing students the communicative purposes of the language. Consequently the project ran aground when their young age and limited language skills meant that they quickly ran out of things to say to each other and were unable to sustain a conversation. Although this was an important discovery of English in the world outside her experience, Federica is now aware of its limitations:

yeah well when I was there [writing letters to her pen pal at school] I liked it because for me it was an opportunity to learn… I mean when that was happening I took it as an opportunity for me to learn… I sort of discovered actually the real world outside Italy and outside learning a language… but if I see things now they seemed quite limited in terms of what a person can really learn and even in terms of a personal experience… I think I stopped writing to this person after maybe some months… yeah because I didn’t really know what to say and probably if I wanted to say something I didn’t know how to say it because nobody was supervising our teachers just they gave us these addresses and that was all

Although she had been given the address of a British pen pal, she had had no communicative preparation for this, nor was there any attempt to apply that communication to the classroom. As a result, communication was a struggle, and unsustainable in the long run - Federica was not equipped for it either in terms of the language she had available to her, nor in terms of the wider engagement in communication in her classroom. In her Italian learning context, then, although there had been some acknowledgement of
the wider English-speaking world and attempts to engage communicatively with it, the grammar-focused teaching and lack of communicative focus meant that Federica’s communicative ability was limited.

6.4.2 Visiting the UK: ‘The language became real’

6.4.2.1 First visit

Federica first visited the UK in 1998 at the age of fifteen as part of a school trip, which was a particularly memorable experience for her:

it’s then that I saw that the language I was learning was real it was part of a more I mean a broader thing of the society of the city of things to eat… because when you learn and you are in your country then you think yeah it’s something that doesn’t really exist but then when you go to the country you really see that everybody’s speaking the language and that you can’t speak with them unless you use the language that you’ve learnt… in the past

This visit had a significant impact on her motivation:

I really wanted to do better and better and better and better… I really want to make sure the next time that I go there I understand everything so it was helping me learn improving in I think this sense of… I want to improve the language that I’m learning… so yes it was important it was quite a watershed to go on and to actually learn it better and better… so through music movies I mean it became real the language became real… it’s a strange feeling… when you are in a place where they don’t understand you at all and that you really have to… in your mind you have to make up sentences that make sense for them then it’s different it’s another process I mean you can learn a language for forty years but never going to the country and for me you don’t really know and you don’t really speak the language… the language becomes real [laughs] at some point

She went on to study English and Spanish at university in Naples, and even at university, ‘it was kind of a distant relationship between a lecturer and the students we were not really using English at all… it was still… I mean
something… inside me’. During this time she was also working at the British consulate, ‘so obviously I was trying to improve’.

6.4.2.2 Second visit: ‘Point of no return’

In 2004 she went to London for three weeks, staying in a hostel with an Italian friend. Despite having previously visited the UK, it was this 2004 visit that really marked her first immersion in an English-language context. This was an important stage of awareness of other English voices, of speaking English as part of a matrix of social voices, and of her motivation and language learning:

**Federica:** what can we [my friend and I] do?... first of all we cannot do anything different I mean we cannot stop speaking English because we have to survive here we will meet people in the hostel and we have to ask them things… if we want to buy any ticket we have to speak with people so there was a point of no return to say ‘okay you have two choices either you survive or you learn from this’ and basically we were taking our degree in English or Spanish whatever so we thought that we couldn’t do anything differently I mean that we had that point of no return was actually a new starting point because we thought we have to speak anyway what can we do can we lock ourselves in our room and go out when it’s over… no way because it’s London no way because we paid to be here no way because this is the real opportunity to improve and to show to ourselves as well that our efforts in the university were paid… I was stubborn in learning English I really wanted to learn English… and there was no point only sitting just locked with us in the room and wait for my flight to leave

**Lou:** so you had a sense of you’re responsible for this yourself?

**F:** yeah yeah… obviously I mean there was something else I mean it was not a game… because I think that when you’re in Italy and you learn a foreign language you think it’s a kind of a game you don’t think that everything that happens to you happens to another person in English… so it’s a game it
seems fictional… I really think that this fiction reality thing… there is a bridge and you have to walk that bridge

Thus the visit to the UK was an important step in understanding two things: her responsibility for her learning, which she could put into practice by going out and speaking to people; and of the ‘reality’ of the language – that it is used by people in the way that she used Italian, and that things happen to people in English. Previously English had been ‘another world’:

because for me it was another world… speaking English… it’s a strange thing… but you have the perception that you have models… but those models are still fictional… unless you go in this country and you see them

6.4.2.3 Third visit: Learning to listen to others

In 2006-7, Federica spent six months in Glasgow as part of the ERASMUS programme. Scottish accents and dialects were a significant shock to her, especially after the confidence she had gained from her experiences in London. However, through her understanding of the ‘reality’ of the language, her own responsibility for her learning, and a developing understanding of her own Italian-speaker-of-English voice as a unique voice among many other English voices, she was able to experience her sojourn as a source of motivation and learning:

this is a motivation to… maybe not to learn yourself… but to learn how to listen to others… and to perceive the outside because… I mean you perceive something that is not you you’re not… necessarily involved in speaking but you are involved in listening and understanding and so put yourself in the situation of being in a place… imagine a situation where they are all Scottish and they all speak in very… strict Scottish accent and you’re there… there are two things you can do… either to push yourself and try to understand a bit of what they’re saying… or just leave the place… I mean there is no other choice you cannot say okay… you stop and now you talk the way I speak so that I can understand… you are in the position… that you have to do something you have to… make sense… but this is good I mean it’s motivation it
doesn’t mean that… after four years you have to talk like them… so like when they say ah you have an Italian accent… is alright can you understand me? and that’s the thing… I mean… and it’s a voice myself as well… I mean also these I mean yeah you can say… there are different voices in… the Scottish voice the Australian the US… the England… kind of way of speaking English… but then there is also my way of speaking English

6.4.3 Moving to the UK
After taking an MA in Linguistics at the University of Bologna in 2008, Federica moved to Manchester in 2009 to begin a PhD in Linguistics. She chose the UK because ‘I was not going to a country where I couldn’t speak the language… so I'll go there I feel safe… and where you have to be close to your home’. This feeling of safety and closeness to home, coupled with what she perceived as British organisational efficiency and British culture, meant that ‘I never thought about moving anywhere else honestly… I think there was the only option’. For Federica, living in the UK, particularly after her earlier experiences of visiting, led to an understanding that being an Italian English speaker in Italy was very different from being an Italian speaker of English in the UK. In Italy, she was an English speaker outside of an English-speaking world, which made the English-speaking world fictional; fictional because the language had no meaningful communicative function:

I was also thinking about this that there is a social pressure in Italy that I think changes the perception of the things… like the social pressure of knowing and speaking English… so you have to do it… so I think that this is a social pressure that I kind of analysed in myself… I mean in Italy you learn a language so you could say for example yeah I speak English because I’ve been studying for so long so I speak English… and then when you come here I can tell you I can swear you that you see that you don’t know anything about English that yeah… you know the grammar but you don’t know really know anything… so this challenge this self-discovering and this discovering of what the language can really mean… like for example in Italy you think that when somebody’s asking
you a question in English you just have to say yes or no… but then when you come here you realise that yes or no could actually prevent to have social communication with somebody or miscommunication because you realise that here they say yes please and no thanks for example if somebody in Italy is asking you a question in English like your teacher or for fun you speak with your friends and you just say yes… it’s alright so… [laughs] it’s kind of like the real communication doesn’t happen because here you also have to… this is why I’m talking of discovering… and motivation of really learning how other people perceive what you say… so it’s artificial it’s more likely artificial… and you don’t have feedback in terms of yourself as well… this is again an opposition because now I am an Italian who speaks English in the UK which was very different… I don’t think that they [in Italy] could really understand what it implies using the language it’s also how you present yourself… this is why I think that there is again this fiction and… real things… yeah… and it’s in a way again an opposition

This identification of having feedback in terms of herself is important, as it shows a recognition that there is something at stake for her in communication; there is a self-reflective element to communication, a recognition of a relationship to the other that reflects upon herself. The ‘reality’ of the language, therefore, is the social and communicative opportunities and relations at stake – the ‘motivation of really learning how other people perceive what you say’. The language she was speaking in Italy was artificial, and thus ‘fictional’, because as well as not being taken particularly seriously there, there was no meaningful communicative purpose to it.

6.4.3.1 Walking the bridge
Federica is aware that using language is not just about saying things in the language – it is ‘how you present yourself’. As a speaker of English in Italy, she did not have this awareness to the same extent. As a speaker of English in the UK, she came to realise that the fictional language was constructed on reality but did not make sense if she kept using it in the fictional world. She
therefore had to be able to move between those worlds, and this realisation was an important source of motivation:

**Federica:** I think that bridge [between fiction and reality] is the motivation… but you don’t realise that there is a bridge and that you have to walk that bridge until you analyse the maturation process you have gone through.

**Lou:** okay so the thing that’s joining fiction and reality is the learning

**F:** yeah… absolutely

**L:** the learning process and the motivation that makes you travel that learning process or the bridge… right okay

**F:** yeah this and I think that this is what teachers should actually give to students to say okay this is what you do in the classroom… this is what you could do outside school

**L:** so a sense of what’s on the other side of the bridge?

**F:** yeah… because the only tool to connect these two worlds these two opposite worlds is just you… it’s just you… it’s nothing else [teachers] have to make sure that [students] have basic grammar and blahblahblah… but then there’s more than grammar… and this more is actually the communication act that you have to make when you go abroad… so that is the bridge you have to walk

Thus she characterises the learning which takes place through the communication acts she performs and of which she is a part, as the ‘bridge’ that links the two sides: the fiction and the reality of the language; being an English speaker in Italy and an Italian speaker of English in the UK. The bridge represents both her understanding of language and communication, and her relationship between her Italian and UK contexts – so this metaphor is central to her learning, her motivation, and her identity.
6.4.3.2 ‘I have to adjust myself to this place’

This bridge is part of her maturation and personal growth and thus part of her learning, because with the discovery that language carries implications for communication and understanding comes the discovery that it can also lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding. Part of the reality of speaking English for Federica has been the growing understanding of her own responsibility for her communicative acts and outcomes: in the fictional language she was speaking in Italy, this responsibility did not exist. This responsibility is part of what makes the language real – the responsibility for social relationships and her place in the society in which she lives. As a result of this understanding, Federica’s learning and growth is now based on finding a place in society where she can be comprehensible and acceptable to other people:

other people sometimes and this could cause the miscommunication you don’t know that you are constructing your reality on the fiction… you have to adjust your fiction to the reality… that has been the state in their country for much longer than your fiction so… as I said before it’s the process of… I don’t know… of perceiving that there is something beyond you and beyond… your way of constructing things and among this the language… for example it was funny because… when my family came to visit me we were five people… and when we were getting off the bus there was kind of a choir thank you thank you thank you thank you [laughter]… and some point my Mum was like well you all say thank you I won’t say thank you anymore because you know [laughs] in a way it’s funny because we don’t do it in Italy so you see this is something that you have to learn… and you have to be mature enough to understand that you have to do it because this is how it works here… and then my Mum was like ‘but why should I say thanks to the bus driver because I mean we paid the ticket’ and blahblahblahblah… and then I think I tried to explain that it’s because probably you shouldn’t give the feeling to the person that he’s just a slave that is taking you around that you’re thankful to him because he or she actually sent you to the place where you wanted to be… but this is something I wouldn’t do in Italy so… you see that you need to put yourself in a thing like… I
am Italian so I am not doing it in Italy but I am living here now and I have to do it I have to learn I have to discover that this is what they do that this is the reality… so and then you kind of put yourself in the process of maturation and say okay… this is what I want to do because I want to be in this place and I have to kind of adjust myself to this place… so you see again the reality of things … you have to do it because you have to find your place in a society and you cannot just come here and fight and confront that society… you cannot say I won’t say it because in Italy we don’t say it so what?

This story demonstrates Federica’s awareness that thanking the bus driver represents her responsible social participation in the UK. She thanks the bus driver because she has learnt that this is what happens in the UK, and this learning entailed understanding that the act of thanking places her voice within a broader network of social voices, which say that it should be recognised when someone has helped you even though they may have been paid for doing so.

6.4.4 Taking responsibility for communication

Federica is now a linguistically proficient user of English. Her learning is now about developing her communicative competence in the sense of finding a place for her Italian-speaker-of-English voice, and accepting that if she is to have genuine agency when using that voice, she must also take responsibility for the communication she performs in that voice, as the following story illustrates:

the other day this was something that really made me think about how we use the language and how much trouble we could create and our difficulties to walk that bridge because I was watching a movie and at some point this friend of mine was laughing and then I said but why are you laughing? I mean… you contributing in deciding the movie and I don’t think there is anything to laugh apart if you want to mock it to make fun of it… so I said a sentence that in Italy would be totally accepted and people will laugh about the sentence that I said which was like you have a strange face … and she overreacted telling me that I shouldn’t say these things her
face is alright… and that she built confidence in herself and she doesn’t want anyone to tell this… and I was like shocked completely shocked because… I just said this sentence that honestly was completely like if I say it to my friend my friend said ah… yeah look at yours or… he or she wouldn’t have taken that seriously… and then I realised and I said… wow… I mean I’m a linguist and this is what I did I caused a kind of miscommunication because she came up with this philosophical thing that she built up her confidence and doesn’t want me to tell her that she has a strange face… and then I was like oh my god you know… and I realised that maybe I was walking one step more on that bridge

This story illustrates Federica’s awareness of her own responsibility in the communication process. She takes responsibility for her friend’s misunderstanding of what she said; rather than putting this down to her friend’s overreaction or misunderstanding, Federica realises that she has been an agent in this misunderstanding, by assuming that a phrase she would use in this context in Italian would translate into English and create a similar response. The ‘one step more’ on the bridge is the reinforcement of that responsibility. This also illustrates again her understanding of the relational nature of language. For her friend, Federica’s utterance raised issues of her confidence in her looks; for Federica, it related to playful exchanges with friends in Italy, and then to her status as an Italian speaker of English. For both, this statement was full of endlessly far-reaching echoes of past utterances, and both were responsible for their current interpretations. Realising this, Federica apologised but did not push the point, not wanting to make a big deal out of it; after all, her friend clearly had her own issues surrounding the exchange, which Federica understood were her friend’s own responsibility: ‘I also know that I didn’t do it that my intention were not what she perceived my intention to be so it’s like okay’.

6.4.5 ‘Being Italian with the English language’

Federica’s learning is now about finding a place for her Italian-speaker-of-English voice, and finding ways in which she can ‘still express … being Italian with the English language’. Having been an Italian in Italy, she felt
some safety in being defined as part of a group of Italian people in the UK; and now, through developing her English-Italian voice, she feels ready to move outside her ‘circle of… culture-related people like Italian people’, saying ‘I was Italian in Italy I was Italian in a group of Italian people [in the UK]… I am Italian in the world’. She sees nation as ‘the place that you have kind of been assigned to [laughs]… and then also the place you want to be to feel safe which is… again at the borders of your nation… outside the nation itself… and then it’s just you’. She is aware that she needs to try and understand others and move towards them, but also that this does not mean she has to speak English like them – ‘it’s a voice myself as well… there is also my way of speaking English’; through developing her ‘Italian way of speaking English’, she is ‘part of a big big project … I am… Italian in the world’. She thus characterises her language learning, and her personal development generally, as a process of widening borders:

I am Italian… but it’s good that you can actually move yourself from that space and go to other space where the boundaries and the borders are not that defined… you start off thinking… I left my country I left my borders because… I felt that they were kind of locking me in and they were limiting me… so maybe now there is the second step to go out of the borders that I constructed for myself abroad… and the third step which I think the one I am in… now is like borders do not exist anymore

6.4.6 Summary: Federica’s motivation

Federica’s motivation for learning English, then, began with an attraction to English and the UK in terms of their differences from Italian and Italy. It continued to develop through an early understanding of herself as an English speaker in Italy, a context in which there were few other English voices to negotiate and little at stake for English communication, and thus no need to take responsibility for the outcomes of her communicative acts. It burgeoned further as she began to develop an understanding of herself as an Italian speaker of English in the UK, with recognition of the multitude of different voices to negotiate, and a developing view of herself as a responsible agent of communication, with responsibility for being
recognised as such. She now characterises this Italian-English relationship thus:

I think [learning English] it’s very much related with the independence… it’s an inner reality it’s something mine… I don’t see the two countries now in opposition any more… but still obviously I’m still walking that bridge because the opposition with Italy is probably over but it goes the opposition with me and reaching the oh how can I say?... the status of a person that doesn’t get in trouble when she speaks… it’s still a bit … I mean I think that there is a long long walk… well I know that I walked lots of miles already… but I still think that there’s more to do

This is therefore a constant process of learning, motivated by the steps already taken along the bridge, the bridge leading towards ‘the status of a person that doesn’t get in trouble when she speaks’ – a speaker of English who is Italian, and will be recognised as both, and as all the identities that entails for her. Federica has re-storied her identity as a language learner: from learner of English in Italy, to speaker of English in Italy, to speaker of English in the UK, to someone working towards an understanding of her different identities through the development of her own unique voice.

Through her perception of widening, and ultimately dissolving, borders, she is now able to understand herself as Italian, as an English speaker, and as ‘Italian in the world’, while also being ‘just me’. This leads to a realm of new possibilities for communication and connection for her:

and then it’s you no matter with who… you talk and actually… you think ha this is me… who are you?... what can you bring… to this? and this is I mean you start with English… and then you perceive also other languages… as a way to grow more and more and more and more… I mean so I guess this is why… the motivation is really really important and then at the end maybe now… it’s not motivation it’s just a reason to say okay… yeah… I can improve in English… and I can understand… but… because through English you can understand also the cultures that I couldn’t understand… I mean I speak with somebody I don’t know from whatever country… and you don’t speak their language so the point of
communication the lingua franca is English… but you can
still express your… being Italian with the English language…
and I think this is really interesting… it’s a means it’s not the
end… of everything it’s actually the start of everything you
know
6.5 ‘I can just talk in this English all day’: Raj

6.5.1 Early English-language learning

Raj was born in 1992 into a family from West Bengal. He identifies Bengali as his mother tongue, and ‘the language I speak most fluently apart from English’. Raj himself was born in Assam, north-east India, and Assamese was the first language he learnt; it was here that he started learning English, at the age of five or six. In most Indian schools the learning of either Hindi or English would be strongly encouraged, and even had it not been, or if Raj had refused, his parents would have ‘almost forced me to learn’. The family then moved to Uttar Pradesh in north India, where the predominant language was Hindi. Raj attended local day schools until the age of eleven, where he developed an early love for English:

[the memory that] probably stand out the most for me when I actually realised that I have a passion for the subject for the language even though it’s not my native and even though it never has been any of my first languages… because you know earlier on we talked about how my first language has varied… depending on where we lived in India… no I think it was when I was in north India that time so I must have been about… eight nine ten… and at the risk of sounding extraordinarily arrogant for about three years running I got the highest in the class of hundred for English… so and I mean that was quite unprecedented at the school they ran out of… sort of things to say really and… it was at that point that it just came to me more clearly than anything ever has that this is just what I want to do for the rest of my life I want to go properly in and learn more about English and in fact the English culture and so on… and I don’t know if at that time it was just my sort of juvenile confidence you know when you think you can take on the world but it just seemed to me that I was just on a level much… almost higher than… any of my peers and classmates even… so yeah I suppose that could be a very… it wasn’t an actual physical event of somebody talking to me it was just this thought that I realised like bam in my head one day… and yeah that was it really

6.5.1.1 English ability and the importance of education

Early in his English-language learning life, Raj had an ‘epiphany’:
my English teacher she’s a lovely lady and very sort of motherly and sort of caring and all that… it was around the time of results day when parents had to go into the school and get the results from the teachers you know?... and… yeah and the English teacher just turned to my parents and said… [laughs] almost jokingly ‘there is nothing left to teach your son … please take him to a better school’ [laughter] so… and this is when I was what like nine ten eleven… and that kind of thing really you know affects you very deeply… yeah… when your teacher says that [laughs] there’s nothing left to teach you and so… and that was almost what spurred my parents on to send me to boarding school… as well… so… yeah I think that was probably the most important part of my life where somebody who had been important teaching me English or in me learning English actually played a major role in shaping my thoughts and life and English-speaking career so to speak

When Raj was twelve, on account of their frequent moves and his not having stayed at one school for more than three years, and because of their general focus on the importance of education, his parents sent him to a boarding school in south India, an ‘alternative’ school with an emphasis on holistic development. Here the predominant language was Telugu; however, on account of the international diversity of students and the comparative lack of Hindi spoken in south India, Raj would converse in English much of the time, which had a significant effect on his fluency and enabled him to start developing a sense of English as a wider tool of communication.

6.5.2 Moving to the UK
His parents then moved to Abu Dhabi, and Raj, after making a useful contact at a higher education fair where various UK universities were represented, won a scholarship to Ellesmere College, a public school in Shropshire, at the age of sixteen. He wanted to come to the UK to ‘learn how to speak proper English… and that’s a personal choice that I made… and that’s a conscious choice that I made’. It was here that he was immersed into a ‘fully English-speaking environment for the first time’. After his holistic Indian boarding-school education and having scored highly in the notoriously difficult ICSE exams (the Indian version of UK GCSEs), he
found himself to be quite advanced compared to his peers: ‘I did all my English language friends’ coursework for them it was ridiculous including their book studies and everything they were… I found it shocking almost how well-read they considered me’.

6.5.2.1 ‘I cannot say … because no-one will understand’

Still, academic prowess notwithstanding, Raj found his move to the UK something of a language shock, and ‘for like the first month almost I just nodded my head quietly to everybody that just said anything’. He also found English in the UK significantly different from the English to which he had been accustomed in India:

    when I went back home… I’d speak English with like Bengali accent which is completely different… completely different… and it’s speaking the same language but different it’s like… I’m talking about… going back home and speaking completely different way… even your sentence structure changes because there are certain phrases that you use in India that you would not use here… born and brought up… nobody ever says it here… when you go to India when you ask somebody hi what’s your name where are you from… my name is Raj I was born and brought up in India… it’s like when you ask somebody here hi… where are you from… it’s like… my name’s Lou… I live in Manchester… as simple as that… okay… all these little things are part of culture they are not part of English language… but by virtue of… being the medium in which you express culture… it becomes part of your English… it becomes part of the knowledge that is stored in your brain with regards to English… when I start talking in English in India all these little tidbits come up… I cannot say ‘got it’ I cannot say ‘mint’… I cannot say ‘taking the piss’… I cannot even say little things like ‘lad’ or little things like that… because no-one will understand

6.5.2.2 Developing an English accent

Consequently Raj found the variety of accents at the school difficult to understand:
also the school especially is located on the sort of western border of Shropshire between Shropshire and Wales… so and if you actually draw a triangle between Manchester Liverpool and Birmingham it’s pretty much in the centre… so it sort of works out to be yeah a lot of Scousers from the Wirral and then you get a load of like rugby scholars because it has one of the strongest rugby academies in the country from Wales… and then you have all these people from Ludlow and the Midlands sort of West Midlands coming in with all their Brummie accents… so with all the accents makes it really hard

Gradually, ‘it came to me and I developed this sort of hybrid accent’. Raj found this accent ‘extremely helpful in terms of communicating with the natives… like the cleaners and so on and the chefs and whatnot… but generally I decided maybe in the long run that would actually be harmful to overall growth’; he felt he ‘had to get rid of [it] as soon as I decided because it just made me sound like such a pauper so to speak [laughs]’.

6.5.2.3 Natives and nativeness

Thus, while to some extent Raj wanted to ‘blend in with the natives as much as possible’, he came also to want to distance himself from what they represented – parochialism and being a ‘pauper’, socially undesirable voices to emulate. He does not apply the term ‘native’ to his teachers or fellow students, rather describing his wealthy colleagues as trying to portray themselves as ‘poor and chavvy’ in defiance of the public school stereotype, which Raj found ‘incredible’. Raj’s success in adopting the local accent, however, and his response to it, illustrate a more complex attitude to ‘nativeness’:

by the end of my sixth form a lot of my friends at Ellesmere College refused to believe that I didn’t have British nationality… I was just amused you know I said ‘what on earth are you talking about I have to pay for flights nine times a year like here I have to pay two thousand pounds for my student visa to come here… I’m extremely international thank you very much’ and it was all a joke you know ha ha ha… but no I was… silently pleased with myself almost that
I’d managed to get them into that sort of mindset and get them out of the he's a foreigner mindset… and you know that was quite helpful

Thus there appears to be a more acceptable form of ‘nativeness’ for Raj, a ‘British’ rather than a ‘local’ nativeness. His response to his friends’ belief in his ‘Britishness’ was, on the one hand, to resist by emphasising his international student credentials, and on the other hand to feel ‘silently pleased’ with himself for having successfully created this belief – an acceptable definition of nativeness, but one he is more conflicted about in its relationship with his international (‘non-native’) identity.

**6.5.2.4 Developing a voice**

Raj’s feelings about nativeness were indicative of his desire to find a voice for himself that could both be taken seriously within a British context and recognised as an Indian, and thus international, voice; a voice that could reconcile and incorporate the different aspects of his identity, and the aspects of identity to which he aspired. Through his encounters with the different social voices he encountered in the UK, he was able to construct an English voice with which he could be accepted as ‘native’, but at this point, it was not a voice through which he could express both his Indian/international identity and his aspiring British identity. However, it was a step towards developing a voice with which he could be recognised on his own terms, a voice engaging and expressing a relationship between his British/‘native’ context and his Indian/international context.

**6.5.2.5 Choosing to fit in**

The notion of choice was very important in the development of this voice:

yeah I mean the main thing I suppose in explaining a situation like that… is… choosing whether I could fit if I wanted to or not… there’s this whole thing you know about… people just being sort of shunned out of a community because of the way they look and sound… and when you’re like say sixteen in a random school in the middle of Shropshire… and you’re sort of the only person who isn’t white there… you’re the only
person who doesn’t speak with a farmer’s accent… then it’s pretty hard to fit in… I think I had a breakdown after like at the end of one month… I was just in my room full on crying and… that’s when I decided that no you can’t sort of let them choose whether you fit in or not… and it’s much more important that you choose whether you can fit in or not… when I did open my mouth ultimately after the one or two months… it was always to you know… I would say necessarily imitate but sort of in an attempt to sort of settle in… and I sort of really would like to contrast that with… choosing to… completely… take up their lifestyle you know?… and sort of… say… it’s the basic difference between whether you can fit into a social group and whether you can sort of completely take on the lifestyle

It was therefore important to Raj that he, rather than others, chose the extent to which he fitted in at Ellesmere, and then to maintain a balance between fitting in and fully accepting their lifestyle for himself. As a result, Raj now chooses the extent to which he takes part in certain lifestyles – for example, he does not feel the need to always participate in what he sees as British social attitudes and activities, such as saving money only for the weekend, drinking and expensive music festivals. Instead, he wants to ‘see if I can really work like that… that way I can see whether I can maintain my individuality but then at the same time blend in… which is maintain my international nativeness and at the same time blend in with the good nativeness’. This desire to maintain and yet blend different types of ‘nativeness’ has been pivotal for Raj in finding his own voice, a voice that he would be able to use in any situation, a voice that he has chosen and developed for himself and with which he can be recognised as he wishes to be.

6.5.3 ‘Sacrificing short-term gain for long-term betterment’

Raj came to Manchester in 2010 to study for a BA in Economics, having chosen Manchester for the culture and nightlife with which he had become familiar during his time at Ellesmere, as well as for its academic reputation. His future ambitions are to study for a Masters degree in the US, as ‘for almost three generations now men in my family have regretted not doing a
Masters so [laughs] I want to get that’; he would also appreciate the value of a ‘tri-continental education’ for his CV. Being a high achiever is an important aspect of Raj’s identity, having grown up in a family with a committed focus on the importance of education. His confidence in his academic ability, justified by his record of achievement, has been a motivating force for him both for learning English and for academic study more generally. Raj also sees foresight as a necessary element of high achievement - ‘sacrificing short-term gain for long-term betterment’. He critically reflects on his experiences and choices through a lens of personal growth and development, with particular emphasis on holism, and often couches his experiences in terms of being ‘helpful’. This manifests itself in his decisions and his deliberations upon them: as well as feeling it would have helped him in the long run to have ‘taken a more holistic approach’ to his choice of A-levels, and adopting and discarding the local accent at Ellesmere according to its perceived communicative value, he chose to undertake work experience in a pet company in order to challenge his fear of dogs, and to learn Spanish because he did not know any European languages except English.

Furthermore, Raj is very clear that it is important for him to understand that he must balance enjoying himself in the present with preparing for the future, with having stability and financial security with a job he enjoys. In this he is significantly influenced by his late father, who had been unhappy in his job as an engineer and, though he worked hard and earned good money, regretted his career choice for the rest of his life. As a result, and as part of his definition of self-betterment and self-development, Raj now tries to take every opportunity he can get; his fear is of ‘not exploring enough opportunities to find the perfect field for myself’, of ‘declined opportunities… that could turn out to be fantastic’, and of regret that ‘I didn’t try a lot of things’.

6.5.4 Taking on aspects of different lifestyles

More broadly, growth and development for Raj have been about taking on the aspects of different lifestyles which he felt were ‘helpful’:
that’s what… lies at the heart of this whole thing… of whether… what values I want to take on and what values I don’t want to take on it’s quite simply… I find… there are certain parts of each place’s lifestyle… that I’ve been to… that have really stuck with me through the years… for example in India there’s this whole emphasis on… being cultured and being and having discussion and having discourse… in England it’s alcohol… and general bonding and socialising and… just give you an example… in India when say you achieve something… when you get an A on your test you go for a movie… at the end of the week on the weekend you go for a movie… at the beginning of the month when you get a salary you go for a film… when it’s your birthday you go for a film… over here at the end of the weekend on Friday night you drink on a Saturday night with all your friends you drink when it’s Christmas you drink when it’s payday you drink when you turn eighteen you drink… when you turn twenty-one you drink… so… it’s just that significant sort of shift… and it’s more like picking out… picking up on these things… as opposed to just dismissing… movies as a completely Indian craze and dismissing alcohol as a completely British thing that just doesn’t make sense anywhere else… it’s much more I feel for me personally… much more conducive to my overall education picking up on these strands making the most of them… and finding if I wanted to… could I really sort of use this… so rather than sort of you know… just letting the situation dictate I’d much rather have my way of looking at things and then see if I can really work like that

6.5.4.1 Perceptions of England and Englishness

A substantial influence on this attitude was Raj’s maternal grandfather, with whom he spent memorable summers in Darjeeling listening to how he admired the English and ‘how the English were the most civilised of all races’, and who was one of Raj’s major reasons for wanting to live in England; his time with him was ‘what really inspired me to aspire to be as I am now’. Because of the perceptions of England and the English he absorbed talking to his grandfather, he saw the English as ‘the most cultured people on earth’, whom he wished ‘to emulate… as an homage’. Consequently, Raj’s perceptions of England have not only been an
important factor in shaping his motivation for learning English and coming to the UK, but have also played a significant role in the ways in which he has attempted to locate himself in the UK socially and culturally. He cites a contrast between the perceptions of England he was brought up with in India, and what England is actually like – he feels that the principles of civilisation and civility he was told about are only desirable/present in ‘high society’, but he admires ‘middle-class British values’ compared to what he perceives as Indian morals and principles, and feels that the British mentality is more ‘analytical… more understanding of the situation than an Indian one’.

6.5.4.2 ‘In some ways British … in some ways Indian’
Given these perceived differences, he feels he must ‘pick up on a few of the good things while trying to stay away from most of the bad things’. This relates back to Raj’s struggles to find a voice for himself, struggles which have been tied up with his sense of the prestige of a British accent and with being taken seriously as himself. Because of his background of living in different parts of India, going to boarding schools and living in the UK, he is used to not belonging geographically, and thus feels he needs to show people that ‘there is a bit of you in me… I am… in some ways British I am in some ways Indian’ in order to help him fit in. He did not want a stereotypical Indian accent, but neither did he want to adapt his accent to sound hyper-English and ‘fake’, wanting rather to develop an accent that reflected his ability to fit into both contexts. For Raj, this is an important point of connection between English and his home country: ‘you want to make sure… you fit in here while you are here… you fit in there while you are there… without becoming too much like a schizophrenic… without having to change your accent too much’.

6.5.5 Creating an identity
Thus he feels his voice and accent have been, and are, important to his creation of an identity for himself:
the voice the accent is extremely important in helping you… okay because at boarding school you get picked on at college you don’t get understood and after college and university you don’t get a job… there’s like a million million million different ways in which… whether you have a British passport whether you have an Indian passport whether you have a British education… how that British education shows on you whether you talk like as if you’ve had a British education whether you have… a British sort of social frame of mind whether you have… a multinational frame of mind… all of that is very very very very very closely related to things like that… so… a very easy way to do that is to quite simply take a little of British take a little bit of Indian and mix them up and say right this is my voice this is my accent this is my identity… frankly… that’s… what it is for me… me running in the students’ union elections me talking… in front of a camera and being watched by thousands of students at Manchester… like… that is what… marks me out like… this guy… he’s international but he does not sound too international… he does not sound uncomfortably international… which is perhaps what most home students were thinking

He now has a sense of control over his voice, and feels he can mix with different groups of people without having to compromise his identity: ‘I can just talk in this English all day and I can talk to absolutely anybody else totally fine I don’t have to change’. He illustrates this by drawing attention to the contrast in his experience from when he first came to the UK and now:

[at Ellesmere] I just sat there in my room crying like… I don’t get on with anybody I… I don’t understand anybody nobody understands me like… what am I going to do if it was like living in a prison but like just inside my mouth [laughs]… it was very bad but then at the same time… now that I’ve had that… the rest of my experience has been extremely positive it’s almost like this accent sort of empowers me to go and talk to the Indian Society people in one evening and most of them are like people from Delhi you know and everywhere who are having this problem which is why they don’t mix with any of the local people here… and they always hang out in like their
own little groups… and then after that go door-knocking in my election campaign [for a Student Union office]… and knock on like Fallowfield doors which is like full… of like white kids from London… and just like talk to them normally about like where they’re going out and stuff like that and what they think the students’ union is doing for them… and… for me… the most important thing is that… I don’t have to change any part of who I am in each of those to fit into each of those experiences… because had that been me say… four or five years ago I would have like completely changed in both places… like right now it’s just very easy for me… and a big big part of that is all down to like my accent… because… and like the way I speak English… because like with both examples with both those groups… it’s so easy now

6.5.5.1 ‘All I can do is try and tell my story’

Having developed an English voice with which he is comfortable, Raj understands himself as being able to relate his experience on his own terms and within his own power, in relationships with a variety of social voices. He sees himself as perhaps being able to challenge what he perceives as white English narrative hegemony:

nobody listens to a story… in this day and age… unless someone approved by or unless someone… who is… white English speaker says it… and that’s extremely difficult… that’s extremely difficult… we hear nothing about certain issues unless it’s on BBC Worldwide… unless it’s on CNBC… unless it’s on National Geographic and Reader’s Digest… because god knows why but through some general human consensus we have agreed that these are the channels that we are going to trust for the rest of our known lives… and if that is the way… that news and word spreads… in the world… that’s not my choice that’s what… thousands of billions of people before me have selected… then… all I can do… is try… and tell… my story my people’s story… and perhaps more importantly… a story that relates to as many… wherever I go… I can talk about Indians I can talk about Arabs I can talk about British people… I can talk about Indians in Britain I can talk about people… such as yourself who… try to study Indians in British places or non-British
people in British places… once you… master your command and once you meet people… and once I meet people… anybody can be my crowd… but to be able to tell a story better than the crowd of which or the group of which you are telling the story is a very important responsibility… and that’s why I learned English

6.5.6 Summary: Raj’s motivation

Raj’s motivation, then, began with an early love of English and a high level of success learning it in his Indian schools, and a developing sense, through the use of English with a diverse and international body of students at his Indian boarding school, of English as offering connection to others and to the world. However, when he came to the UK for sixth form at the age of sixteen, he found the variety of accents and social voices overwhelming, and struggled to understand and participate in the life of the school. He overcame this by learning to develop a ‘hybrid accent’ for himself, though he ultimately decided that on account of its social undesirability, it would be a ‘harmful’ accent to cultivate in the long run. A particularly motivating factor was his success in the adoption of this accent, which was such that some of his schoolmates believed him to be British. His pleasure at this, and his contrasting wish to assert his international student status, was an important step in starting to develop a voice for himself with which he could express both his aspiring Britishness and his Indianness, and by extension his international-ness.

An important element of the development of his own voice has been Raj’s ability to make choices for himself – being able to choose the extent to which he fitted in at school, and choosing which aspects of his British colleagues’ attitudes, values and lifestyles to adopt. These choices were, and continue to be, motivated by his focus on personal development and self-betterment, and his philosophy of taking all the opportunities he can in order to learn and grow as much as possible. Through his attention to personal growth and the choices he has made, he has been able to develop an English voice through which he can express his aspirations towards Britishness, his Indianness, and the international identity that connects them; a voice in
which he is able to say ‘right… this is me’. This is a voice in which he feels comfortable interacting with a variety of others, Indian, British, and international, motivated by the connections between himself and them, and between his own international contexts and identities.

The development of this voice continues to motivate Raj in his desire to ‘create as much positive value as possible’. Ideally, this creation of ‘positive value’ would occur through socio-emotional and economic success: ‘to make as many people happy as possible’ and ‘to earn money while connecting people’. Raj hopes also to ‘give value to the community’ through English, by relating his experience in order to connect with others. Indeed, he cites this as a reason for participating in this study, which he feels may be of benefit to people coming to the UK under similar circumstances to his, and may ‘help the English community understand maybe to help the Indian community settle in’. Raj presents his continuing aim in learning English in terms of his understanding of the co-constructedness of experience, again through a lens of personal growth and development:

that whole sort of you know BBC Worldwide… phenomenon… the way you [as a learner of English] make it is when they validate you for them to validate you you have to do something noticeable to do something noticeable you have to convey the message to convey the message you have to know English well… to know English well you have to make sure that you know exactly what you are talking about and you also need to know exactly how you are talking about it… to learn how you are talking about it you need to talk to people… to talk to people you need to look at what kind of people are willing to talk to you… to look at what kind of people are willing to talk to you you need to look at PhD people… so that’s why I’m talking to you… you are one of the people who will help me understand how to talk to people and how to talk in English… without even trying… you are giving me a learning experience
6.6 ‘I wanted to become someone’: Raluca

6.6.1 Early English-language learning

Raluca was born in Bucharest in 1991, and her family moved to Constanta, Romania’s second city, when she was a few years old. She started learning English at kindergarten at the age of four because it was compulsory, but she was happy to do so ‘because it was the most popular language on earth… and it sounded very melodical’, and because ‘I just liked how it sounded… and mainly to be able to communicate with the entire world’. Raluca excelled at English, and was ‘the best in my group’.

As a young child Raluca enjoyed watching cartoons and playing computer games in English, at a time when Romania was experiencing an ‘explosion’ in foreign, particularly North American, media and entertainment after the 1989 revolution. These various media ‘pictured a different world… with cute little houses with dogs and… people that do a lot better… working a lot less than my Dad and… as I grew older I started to… investigate what my possibilities are’. As a result, ‘I just knew that I had to learn it because… I wanted to… become someone… and let’s just say not… Romania my… native country… someone big… to have a successful career… travel a lot’.

Raluca also had an aunt who was an English teacher and who would speak in English with her, and who told her that although her speaking was very good, she still had some difficulties with her tenses and pronunciation. This realisation, in particular that she needed to study grammar, was the first and only obstacle in her otherwise positive early learning experiences, the only ‘thing that interfered with my passion for English’.

6.6.1.1 Connecting to the world

In order to help herself improve in the language, Raluca started using computer social networks to chat in English with people around the world, which offered her a sense of connection to the world as well as a language learning experience:
in the beginning I admit I used the Internet just to not to make friends to improve my English because everyone told me if you want to learn English you either go to England or America and stay there for a couple of months and you’re going to be a perfect English speaker… or try and chat… and I did but then I made a lot of friends and they were very interesting with all those traditions and customs and especially those from Asia… my Pakistan friend… he told me a lot about his traditions and the Ramadan and how he got married and all those rituals and wow wow we’re so different [laughs]… I was thankful for being born in this day and age

She found that her motivation and learning were enhanced and developed through this interaction, claiming that although she found formal studying dull, ‘when I came to talk to someone from a different country or… even British or American… yay yay can’t wait to go’.

She also spoke some English at home with her father, who travelled a lot owing to his work in the Navy and enrolled himself in an English class when Raluca was seven. When she was a teenager, she would attend Navy cocktail parties with her Dad, at which she enjoyed the opportunity to speak English with people from different countries, ‘Russian French Italian’, and felt ‘superior… because they were very bad at English… I knew… a bit more English’. Her school experiences of learning English were also very positive – although she did not do as well as she would have liked in the grammar section of her Cambridge First Certificate, she still scored highly, and went on to score similarly well in the Advanced Certificate; she also participated and won an honourable mention in her high school English Olympiad. From an early age, then, she developed an understanding of herself as a clever person, and in particular a capable and confident language learner.

6.6.2 Choosing to move abroad
Ralуча decided to come to the UK to study when she was seventeen, a year or so before graduating from high school; various friends of hers in the year above were planning to study in the UK, leading her to think ‘why not are
they cleverer than me or what? [laughs]. She chose Manchester on account of its strong reputation in her chosen subject of computer science. Her family, in particular her father, were a significant influence both on her choice of discipline and her decision to study abroad:

I think it was my Dad’s fault one way or another… because he wanted to become an engineer when he was my age and my grandfather wouldn’t let him… my grandfather was in the Navy spent four years of his life in the Navy and knew that would ensure my father a consistent salary and a good lifestyle so he forced him into going to the military university… and I guess this was my Dad’s number one frustration and even though he told me since I was little he’s not going to influence me on… any path I choose… but when I was sixteen at the beginning of the high school and I told him I want to be a surgeon… ‘no you’re not’… ‘why?’ [laughs]… ‘because you’re not going to make money it takes a lot of time for you to get noticed in anything related to the medical area’… and ‘no you say you’re not going to influence me’… ‘well I lied’ [laughter] and… he wanted me to do something that’s more close to mathematics and physics because he has always loved physics… I didn’t… and I grew accustomed to programming at the beginning of the high school when I started it… so I told him… in my 11th grade so one year before graduation ‘I think I’m going to do computer science’… [whispers] ‘that’s better’ [laughs]

6.6.2.1 Relationship with parents

Her father’s struggle to work hard and earn little has been key to Raluca’s own career ambitions and her determination to leave Romania:

my parents weren’t poor but we’re not rich either we’re like… the…middle class or something… and I feel for how much they… they’ve studied and… for how much they’ve worked for example my father doesn’t have any weekends… he’s at work… always… they did deserve better… because they’ve really struggled and they’re really smart people… but… this isn’t what the society values and… I felt England would… get me better [laughs]
The relationship with her parents was not entirely unproblematic; she does feel her Dad ‘imposed a certain career on me… it was coincidental that I grew to like but… that’s not the way he should have done it’, and she oscillates between this feeling and understanding that he was playing to her strengths in his suggestions for her career: ‘he saw that when I was little I liked maths a lot… and then when I started programming in high school I was very fond of it’. In addition, her mother would push her in high school to be top of her class and score full marks on her reports, which Raluca recognises as being to some extent damaging, yet also productive; she disagrees ‘with her saying that you have to be a role model and stuff like that but… on the other hand this can be… motivational as well’. However, overall she is very close to her parents and feels they have played an important role in her attitude to English and her motivation for learning it – speaking English with her Dad and feeling she was better at English than him was very motivating, and he now asks her to proofread articles he has written, which pleases her and helps her learning. She is also very grateful for the emotional and financial support her parents have provided during her time in the UK, making her feel ‘very lucky that they’ve brought me to stay here’.

6.6.2.2 Dissatisfaction with Romanian values

Raluca’s dissatisfaction with what she perceives as Romanian ‘values’ has also played an important part in her motivation to learn English. Although she feels that geographically and aesthetically the country, what she calls ‘the empty glass’, is very beautiful, and despite admiring Romanians for being ‘clever’, she feels some anger and resentment towards the social situation she perceives there:

usually Romanians are very smart people and very clever… some of them are clever in the right way… that is… they use their brains for something productive… but… another big part of the country is clever in the wrong way that is stealing and lying and corruption and… I think we’re one of the first countries for taking into consideration the rate of corruption in Europe and that’s a fact and maybe that’s why we’re not so
She believes that cleverness ‘in the right way’ is not valued in Romanian society, that ‘everything revolves around money and power’, people only want to ‘show off’ their wealth, and that ‘you don’t have to be smart’ to be successful, just rich. This cleverness seems to be an aspect of Romania with which she identifies, as she recognises herself as a clever and capable person, and a confident language learner - and she has left the country, as this is the path she perceives for Romanians like her who want to ‘use their brains for something productive’, especially in the field of computer science. This seems to be reflected when she says ‘I will try to talk to others and convince them not to give up their hopes for studying abroad’ – because she sees leaving the country as the path for similarly clever Romanians, she wants to make sure others also know this path is available to them. Raluca also feels that she deserves recognition and success, but for being clever rather than for being rich: when she was at high school ‘I thought I deserved better than being in the same place with those kind of people’. She wants to be ‘someone very important’, and has ‘bigger expectations than anything Romania can offer’. Her move to the UK was motivated by her desire to go where her abilities are appreciated and where she can achieve the recognition and success she feels she deserves, as in Romania ‘brains are not valued at all… and I really want to be appreciated as much as I’ve worked… unlike my father’. Thus, although she wants to be recognised as a clever person herself, she wants to reject the perceived emphasis on wealth and power over brains in Romanian society. These perceived values have influenced her to the extent that she, too, wants to be ‘someone important’, but she wants to fulfil this goal in a social context in which her own voice, as someone with brains and ambition, can be heard.
6.6.3 Moving to the UK
6.6.3.1 Encountering Romanian stereotypes

Raluca is conscious in the UK of being stereotyped as ‘Romanian’, which, in her experience, is often conflated with ‘gypsy’ and negative connotations to Roma people. This consciousness was particularly acute in her first year or so at university, in the attitudes she encountered towards her Romanian classmates:

Morgan Stanley… they came in our building with some internship opportunities for programmers… and you know if you have a presentation you have to give away free stuff such as notepads pens Rubix cubes… memory sticks and something like that… and I was with my British groupmate [name] we were chatting and two Romanian friends came to me and said ‘hey look did you see they give away free memory sticks?’ and they were like full with free stuff in their hands… and I said ‘yeah okay they give away Rubix cubes in there’ ‘[gasp] oh really where? oh my god let’s run’ and [British friend] looked at me ‘do you know them?’ ‘yeah they’re Romanians’ ‘Jews’ [said British friend] and I felt so stupid and… I told him it’s not widespread but it is… [I felt] ashamed for being Romanian and I guess… I’m sure he thought I was… I am like them more or less but I just don’t want to show it… but I’m not

She accepted her friend’s racial slur and hoped that he did not include her in it, as she feels she is not like her Romanian colleagues, whom she herself describes as lazy, boastful and behaving inappropriately, and from whom she wishes to distance herself. She feels ‘this is how I’m perceived that’s bothering me’, and that if it were not for people’s perceptions of Romania in terms of gypsies and corruption ‘I would be very proud to be Romanian’.

6.6.4 Developing a voice

Raluca thus felt herself stereotyped by the voices of others, and by the perceived Romanian social voices associated with the acquisitiveness that she wanted to reject; and she had no voice of her own to be able to resist being stereotyped in this way herself.
6.6.4.1 ‘I forgot all my English’

This inability to find her own voice is evidenced by her struggles in communication when she came to the UK, particularly with ‘native’ English speakers:

I did not like it here that much at first mainly because it was a huge step for me I was overwhelmed… change of lifestyle university… not to mention… hearing English everywhere… I was just to English at TV not people talking directly to me or chat forums but… that’s when you reply back and you have time to think about what you’re going to say… [laughs] and they’re not looking directly ‘yeah so what do you think about this?’ ‘er er er er er’ [laughter]… and I thought it would be wiser to not say something even though I wanted to say it… but if… if it came out wrong… I’d look dumb and I don’t want to look dumb… but I came across as shy or… I don’t know without any opinions

The competence and confidence in English she had had in Romania initially ‘became blocked’ and she ‘forgot all my English’ when she came to the UK and spoke to British people face-to-face, rather than chatting online. This stems from a recognition that ‘maybe I don’t want people to make me realise I’m not as good as I thought I was’, meaning that if she does not speak, she does not need to challenge her perceptions of herself by seeing herself as others may see her. She also feels ‘my reluctancy to speak… could be correlated with my fear of being considered not as capable in any field including language… not only English speaker… anything possible’. She had no particular problems relating to ‘native’ British people, but felt as a consequence of the ‘language barrier’ that her relationships with them could only be cordial without being close:

we get on very good we always talk we always sit together… we… share a meal together maybe but… in the long run it wouldn’t last because… they never invited me out or something just… I initiated it once… and it would be harder because I come from a different background I… grew up with different TV shows I maybe wouldn’t have that much in common with them… in a way… and I have this language
barrier again… because maybe I want to say something at times but… the words don’t come out right now… and… I end up not speaking at all and I come out as shy… which I’m not at all [laughs]… I come across as shy

6.6.4.2 ‘Speaking no matter what’

Partly as a result of her positive early learning experience, Raluca has been able to push through these communication difficulties, feeling ‘I’m pretty sure that if I… wasn’t fond of English… I would have hated here [laughs]’. It has been particularly important to her not to be perceived as ‘dumb’ or ‘shy’, as this does not fit into the perception she has of herself – she realises that she needs to take some responsibility for how others perceive her, and that she can start to do this by taking steps to make her voice heard. To this end, she has challenged herself to take on activities and responsibilities around her university department:

I needed more contact with English… and these open days… they were held two times a week I guess… I had to talk a lot a lot a lot and even if they didn’t ask me questions I just started talking about myself… I had a speech of mine [laughs] prepared… and I did not only talk to students I talked to their parents which was even more frightening [laughs]oh dear god help me [laughter]… same as with the peer-assisted study sessions… it’s a thing my faculty does for first years get more accommodated with university… once a week they have an hour session called PASS… and… basically you have two tutorial groups from the first year so twelve students… co-ordinated by two second years… and they just need to say what problems they had and maybe they didn’t get something from the lectures and we help them find a solution we’re not allowed to teach or just give them the answers… mentoring… yeah… and this is based on communication as well… and even more intricate work… tactics of… and tips on how to do it better… regarding speech and… stuff like that… I had a twelve-hour training course for this… and… that’s helped me too… so yeah even though at first it sounded very scary… no I can’t talk to people like that to… parents and kids that… I bet they have a lot of questions and… but still… what can go wrong?… there are people that… are worse than me at… speaking
Although she found these experiences intimidating at first, they were preferable to the alternative:

I saw that by not talking I… come across as shy and a bit dumb or something… and I said that’s even worse and at least I could try saying stuff and then maybe… get used to… speaking no matter what… and… it felt good [laughs]… and taking part in these activities have helped… of course

She has been helped in this by encouragement from her university teachers, one of whom commented on the complexity of her ideas in essays and suggested that she share these ideas in tutorials, thus reinforcing her understanding of herself as clever and the importance to her of ‘standing out’ and making a contribution. While she wants to improve her transferable skills and build her CV for future employment prospects, she also wants to actively participate in university life: ‘I volunteered because I wanted to help and do something for the university because I didn’t want to be some exchange student who came here and studied… I wanted to be someone who helped’. Through having a participatory outlet for her voice and having her voice heard, she has been able to confront, and start to surmount, her fears of speaking. Now, she says, ‘I think I’m more relaxed when I talk to people… it used to be an adventure… what word am I going to say next… oh my god [laughs]’, and she is less worried about not being ‘native’: ‘it’s better to try and say it rather than stay there and have no opinion or something because they’ll think that you’re stupid you have nothing to say or… that’s not true’. She no longer feels that people are constantly judging her as a ‘non-native’ speaker, and is finding that she is learning, and her English developing, through her interactions: ‘the more I talk to people the more I… find my ideas and… it comes easier for me’.

6.6.4.3 Challenging Romanian stereotypes
In addition, she now realises that the negative views of Romania/ns people may hold are just first impressions, and she feels she can ‘convince people otherwise’ by taking her work seriously and doing well in class. By getting involved in different projects, such as school representative and class leader,
she challenges perceived stereotypes: ‘I managed to show people that we’re not all the same’. In this way, Raluca has found a voice for herself through which she can be recognised as the clever and confident person she understands herself to be; she has developed this voice through social participation and dialogue with others, and has increased her participation and her ability to engage in dialogue through her budding confidence in her voice. As a result, she believes she has been able not only to defy the Romanian stereotypes by which she feels oppressed, but also to actively challenge and change them.

6.6.4.4 Overcoming fear
Thus Raluca has been motivated to overcome her fears by her desire not to appear shy or lacking in opinions, and is very proud of having done so, feeling that if she wanted to be an active participant in social life and to be recognised as such, she did not have a choice:

I think this experience with English has changed me as an individual too… because… with this thing in particular by… choosing to not speak… not to sound stupid… and doing this… everything I’ve done so far with the PASS sessions and open days to overcome my fear face your fears to overcome them… I’m pretty proud of myself I wouldn’t have done anything else… but… I felt I didn’t have a choice in here… I want to be valued for my opinions… I don’t just want to be a zombie that came to this school and… graduated somehow sometime and… it’s mainly because I used to stand out in my high school as well… and… I don’t just want to be one of the crowd… or at least try even though I’m not that bright at something in particular but… not be sorry for not doing it later… now my only concern is… mobile systems [laughs]… a course I’m taking… to stress the fact that I’m not that terrified about speaking English any more

6.6.4.5 Connecting with British people
Raluca now has a British boyfriend, as a result of which she is feeling much more positive about life in the UK and her relationships with British people. This is part of a general trajectory, however, as ‘even before I started going
out with him… I was very pleased with myself and… me fitting in rather well’. She also feels more connected to British people as a result of her relationship:

it’s helped a lot… it made me see that… we’re not that different as nations and… I could fit in… rather well… and I think my childhood has a lot of… things to do with this because… I watched a lot of English and American cartoons we watched the same cartoons and we have something to talk about it and those cartoons made me fall in love with language… so… yeah… [British people are] not that different… they’re not that different… at first they seemed wow wow no no no nothing in common but… now I got to know them… better… I saw they’re not that… they’re actually interested in finding out more about you… and I was the one with negative opinions and so… it ended… I know that if I want to become friends with someone… if I try a bit harder it will happen eventually… they’re not that racist or anything

6.6.4.6 A voice of her own
Thus Raluca felt that her Romanian identity, in which she understood herself as clever, capable, confident and talkative, came under threat through the way others may have perceived her when she first came to the UK because of her difficulty in speaking. At the same time, she felt stereotyped into a more negative Romanian identity which, because of her inability to speak, she was unable to resist. Her strong desire not to be thought stupid and lacking in opinions, coupled with her confidence in her abilities from her learning in Romania, enabled her to conquer her fears of speaking by taking part in social life through university-related activities, through which she feels she is not only developing her language and her transferable skills but is also making an active contribution to her department and engaging more fully in university life. Consequently, her confidence in speaking has grown substantially, enabling her to develop a voice of her own through which she can cultivate closer relationships with British ‘native’ English speakers, and challenge both the preconceptions she held about them and the perceived preconceptions she felt they had held
about her as a Romanian. Her voice has enabled her to ‘become someone’ she wants to be, someone recognised as an active participant in social life. She now believes that ‘coming here was the best choice I’ve ever made’, that it has made her ‘a lot more mature and independent’, and is becoming increasingly comfortable socially, professionally and personally with her life in the UK:

I moved here just for… a brighter future than I would have back home and I don’t know if this is the case… of course it’s one of my goals but… I know that… as I said before… now I feel I have a lot in common with… British… and… I know that… the country is much more… well-organised than mine… and… it doesn’t bother me I don’t even feel homesick any more… and… of course it’s much more easier to… have a brilliant career here… but it’s not just it… I feel more safe in here… my country it’s a mess at this time… in here it’s so quiet… everyone is polite… every lecturer knows my name [laughs]… everyone is so friendly

6.6.5 Summary: Raluca’s motivation
Raluca’s motivation, then, began with an early enthusiasm for English and a high level of confidence and success in learning and communicating in it in both face-to-face and online contexts, and she developed a strong identity as a clever person and a confident language learner. As she grew older, she was increasingly motivated to learn English through her dissatisfaction with the Romanian social values she perceived, in which wealth and influence, rather than intellectual ability and hard work, were valued. She viewed English as a way to ‘become someone’, someone who would receive acknowledgement and reward for her work ‘because I don’t want to work all my life to be a little bit above medium quality of life’. While she wanted to reject the perceived Romanian social values of wealth and influence, these values also hold sway over her in her desire to be ‘someone important’; however, she wants to fulfil this ambition in a social context that will value her ability, one in which she feels her voice can be heard.
When she came to the UK she struggled with communication, finding herself unable to speak to ‘native’ English speakers in particular, and preferring to stay silent for fear of sounding stupid. However, she came to realise that by staying silent she would be more likely to appear ‘dumb’ and ‘shy’, qualities which conflicted with her understanding of herself as a clever and talkative person. Furthermore, owing to her lack of voice, she was also unable to resist perceived negative stereotypes of Romanians. This realisation, along with the confidence and self-belief she had gained from her language learning success in Romania, enabled her to challenge herself to speak and to find her voice. She did this through participating in various activities in her university department, engaging in social dialogue through which she feels she is making a contribution to the department, and developing important employability potential while also developing her English voice. As a result of finding her voice she has also been able to enrich her relationships with ‘native’ English speakers, and to challenge preconceptions on both sides. Although Raluca still stutters over English at times and feels she sometimes lacks fluency, she understands that she is starting to ‘get past it’ and that ‘by the time I graduate I won’t have any problems’. This change was reflected in my own encounters with Raluca; when we first met at the end of her first year she was feeling somewhat negative about her experiences in the UK, whereas in our subsequent meetings throughout her second year, she was increasingly relaxed and positive.

The development of this voice continues to motivate Raluca as she moves closer to her desire to become what she wants to be ‘in terms of working in a huge corporation somewhere in England or America’, where ‘the reward… would be considerably better’ than in Romania. She sees her early and continuing enjoyment of English as significantly influencing her motivation to engage with and participate in social life, and to make progress in her learning as a result, saying ‘I sometimes think that if I didn’t like English and I came here just to study… I would have found it very hard to fit in… and university’s hard as it is anyway and the English and being in Britain… I don’t think I could have done it’. Raluca now feels encouraged
about her ability in English through her interaction with the voices around her, and, having developed a voice in which she can communicate and be recognised as she wants to be, is feeling more confident and relaxed about learning and speaking English, and starting to understand that she excels in her field regardless of her ability in English. Still, she remains connected to her positive childhood experiences, returning to cite these as a significantly motivating factor in her ability to overcome the obstacles she has faced:

a lot of the interviews [for summer internships] I had so far… phone interviews… they kept saying that professional English is a requirement and no-one complained about it that I stutter sometimes or… need support… and being told that… I’m not that bad with English… it’s kind of a good thing… okay you’re doing right… keep it that way… okay [laughs]… [at university] almost no-one gets over seventy percent… it’s very subjective… and I scored eighty percent two times… more than my British tutorial colleagues… so felt so good [laughs]… so all in all I’m very pleased with myself… and I try not to think of… me learning English as being a huge thing… it’s just something I need to do but… I still think that if I… hadn’t been fond of it when I was a child… it would have been pretty difficult for me right now
6.7 ‘I totally lost the way to learn English’: Weijian

6.7.1 Early English-language learning

6.7.1.1 Extra-curriculum school

Weijian was born in Beijing in 1984. He started learning English at the age of ten, at an extra-curriculum school which he attended during evenings and weekends before he was old enough to learn English in mainstream school. A friend had recommended it to him and his family, and his parents were willing to send him because they recognised the widespread use and importance of English. Having been enrolled by his parents for a trial period, with no pressure from them to continue if he did not like it, Weijian enjoyed the course so much that he completed it over the full five years. His experiences at this school were particularly formative, enjoyable and memorable for him:

the most important moment I think is I attended an extra curriculum school that particularly teaching English that school… and… from that time I was really interested in learning English… I think that the way they are teaching is quite different from other school… or from… primary school… it’s a little bit different… they teach us… they put us in situations… they are using dialogues something like that and not… in school the teachers in common school teachers just force us to memorise the words… a for apple b for boy… and it’s a little bit boring… but that extra curriculum school… you know we always… play some drama or something like that… very interesting… beside… there the teacher is very beautiful [laughs]… and at that time… the most important they focus on is our speech… especially the accent so after class they let us to record some texts or their words… and let us compare with the recordings and then we record and then hand in the tapes to the teacher and they will take comments… so… yeah I think that first school really helped for me to learn English… it made me think it’s a really useful thing for the extra curriculum school… the main reason I think… to learn English is that I think it’s fun… it’s really fun with the nice teacher and… every lesson is just like a game and… yeah it’s kind of… I don’t feel any stress or… like score or
mark something like this… it’s just fun and I’m really willing to learn English this way… what I learned I read I can use next course or next lessons

This school provided his first significant exposure to English; it was fun, with role-plays, listening, speaking and pronunciation activities, no tests or exams, and ‘gradually I just love to go to that school’. Thus the extra-curriculum school was overall a very positive experience for him, and he particularly appreciated the situational, contextual style of teaching and learning, finding it active and enjoyable. By learning this way, the language had a connection to the real world for him – he was able to imagine it being used in situations in which he might find himself, and had a sense of himself as being an active agent in those situations. Therefore, Weijian was able to understand and indeed hear his English voice interacting with and influencing other voices, and was motivated by, and learnt through, a sense of his English voice as part of a matrix of other voices, both real and imagined.

6.7.1.2 Connecting with the world: Pen pals and travel

At the extra-curriculum school, when he was thirteen, Weijian’s class were given the opportunity to write to pen pals in various countries in English; he wrote letters twice a month to one pen pal in Sweden and one in Russia, describing his school life and life in China. He felt that his pen pals’ level of English was much better than his, but found it ‘really a kind of motivation for me to learning English at the time… it’s really exciting to receive letters’. He was in touch with his Russian pen pal for about two years and with the Swedish pen pal for more than five years, and he particularly enjoyed the experience, finding his curiosity and excitement about other countries and languages piqued: ‘I never get in touch with things foreign and the things happen in other countries and… big exciting communicating in another language’. This curiosity and excitement was engaged further through Weijian’s interest in travel as a teenager; having seen a TV programme about youth hostels when he was fourteen, and learning that there were several hostels in China, he would devise an itinerary, have it
approved by his parents, and go travelling for anything from three days to one month:

in China I like to maybe… travelling because when I was young I really liked to travel by myself… maybe from Beijing to a very far city… just myself when I was a child… and I liked being in a totally different city or… I never felt worried or… nervous or something… and I liked stay at the youth hostel… and there always been a very lot of foreigners… and… that’s a kind of reason I like travelling because I like to meet people and… especially from western who could speak English… it’s quite… the feeling is that… there’s so many people in the world and you met this guy from western and if you use the same language to share your thoughts and the culture it’s exchange… and that thing is quite amazing for me… and… I just like this feeling

6.7.1.3 Connecting with the world: Talking to foreigners

Weijian’s family played a significant role in shaping his early English learning, in particular his parents, who ‘encouraged me… to do everything related to English’. In addition to his parents suggesting he attend the extra-curriculum school, he had an admired older cousin who taught him some English words, which he enjoyed. A particularly important formative experience first occurred when he was twelve, when his father, who was working in a hotel frequented by (often Western) foreigners, would take Weijian with him to give him opportunities to speak English:

I was you know always ask my father to take me to that café and when I met foreigners I was so eager to practise to talk to them… yeah… I made some friends at that time [laughs] yeah yeah… and this is quite… so this made me… how to say… have more interest in learning English… so… when I talk to them I feel really sense of success [laughs] yeah… I just you know walked to them and said oh can I… how to say… can I talk to you for a moment or something like that yeah

These were people from all over the world, ‘from America… Brazil… Australia… as long as they looks like a foreigner’. Some of them would
arrange to meet Weijian again when they were passing through Beijing later on their travels, and he would ‘feel a very big success because… I will meet this person again… and the whole… speaking progress is quite enjoyable’. As well as a sense of connection to the world, talking to these people gave him a feeling of pride in his ability and achievement:

in that café… it’s all Chinese and… just few people can… speak English… and I was… that young and can speak to a foreigner… and everyone just stare at me and… admire… watching me… like… so… it’s kind of… proud

Consequently, through his engagement with his pen pals and foreign visitors on his travels and in the hotel, Weijian formed an understanding of his English voice as one of many in interaction, influencing the people he met, and by extension the wider world to which they were all connected, through the exchange of culture and experience. These experiences were highly motivating for Weijian, stimulating curiosity and excitement, and leading to an understanding of himself as a successful language learner.

6.7.2 Junior high school
Although Weijian was almost of high school age when he finished the course at the extra-curriculum school, his English was ‘more or less around… the university English level’ – very advanced for his age. Consequently, when he started lessons at junior high school at the age of thirteen, he was significantly ahead of the rest of his class, who were all fairly new to English.

6.7.2.1 Focus on grammar
However, the teaching and learning context of junior high school was very different to that of the extra-curriculum school, with teaching focusing heavily on grammar through decontextualised exercises and tests, with little apparent communicative purpose. This context, and its contrast with the way Weijian had previously been learning, had a significant impact on his motivation:
yeah when I started to learn English… we always learning as kind of situations or conditions and did some drama or conversation something like that… and I liked to talk to foreigners where I met… and then when come to the high school and… yeah… the only thing I should focus on is the score the mark… so… you don’t need to talk to anybody you just… memorise the words the grammar and… you need to get a good score and… yeah… that’s kind of… barrier to me… and… that’s yeah and another thing is… like I said I’m… in English course I’m always in the top… and so it’s kind of like a… I don’t like to use the word motivation [laughs] to… because I know what I will be tested or examed so… I just couldn’t find a reason to learn… because why I should learn more? or I should take more time to other course or other… exercises or… yeah

during junior high school I didn’t speak to anybody I don’t have chance for practise… and when I finished extra curriculum school… it’s nearly the time I finished junior high school… so when I step in high school senior high school I totally lost… yeah… the way to learn English

The little speaking that did take place was practised in the context of inflexible set phrases:

one lesson conversation I think everyone in China know because when they started to learn English it always goes like this how are you? I’m fine thank you and you? I’m fine too [laughter]… so when somebody… when you ask a Chinese student… and you say how are you?… it always like this… I’m fine… thank you and you? [laughs]… always like this [laughs]

6.7.2.2 Waning sense of agency and connection

Thus as students they were not taught, and therefore did not think, to say anything else or to manipulate the language for their own purposes or contexts. In high school, English was ‘not like a tool for communication… it’s like chemistry or physics… you just memorise something and then you write them down in the paper… and then you get a good score… and after the examinations oh it’s gone all gone’. Consequently, Weijian began to
lose sight of the sense of agency and connection he had developed – he lacked communicative purpose and opportunity and was unable to use the language for his own intentions, and thus his motivation diminished. This is reflected in his confusion over the frequent multiple-choice tests with which he and many others struggled, because ‘maybe before you never thought you have to use other words or there’s other choices’; the teaching context meant the students were unaware of the possibility of different linguistic options, having been so rigorously trained in ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ answers, and so they floundered when presented with the need to make such decisions for themselves. The sense of agency and success that Weijian had felt when using the language communicatively, and the accompanying motivation, was waning; however, despite not enjoying the style of teaching and learning, he still did well in his English exams.

6.7.3 Senior high school
Senior high school, which he attended from the age of sixteen, therefore became a ‘barrier’ to Weijian’s learning and motivation, partly because he could no longer imagine the purpose for learning as he could in the extra-curriculum school, and partly because he had no sense of his own control over the learning context, as he had had in the communicative situations presented in the extra-curriculum school. There was no longer any connection to the world in the language, and as a result Weijian became a passive, rather than an active learner.

6.7.4 University
6.7.4.1 ‘I think I still not learn English at all’
This meant that his learning came to a standstill by the time he went to university, and he no longer felt successful compared to other students, although his speaking and pronunciation was always better than that of his peers. He thus went from being an advanced student in the extra-curriculum school, to gradually equalising to the level of his peers at high school, to being ‘just like other students… my English was not good any more’ at university. Indeed, being advanced was itself a barrier for Weijian, ‘because after that I kind of don’t have motivation to work in English because I’m
always the top… in class… so before university I think I never spent much
time on learning English’. At university the learning experience continued
to be unsatisfactory, and during this time in particular Weijian feels that his
English learning stagnated:

during these five years I think I still not learn English at all…
I have to say the English course in our university is really
really bad it’s… I think that the teacher’s not… it seems the
teacher not willing to teach this it’s kind of just a work… just
you know… reading the books and then finish the class and
students just will maybe read novels or comics during the
class… when I was in the first year in university… our
university tried to change this situation… of maybe… how to
say… they want to make a… revolution? something like
that… there was three English classes during a week…
maybe one or two class in computer classroom… and they
use multimedia methods… maybe to watch a video or some
English songs or… yeah they tried to change this situation to
improve students’ interest in learning English but… it ended
up everybody just used to computer to you know… playing
games or… social networks [laughs]… yeah… it made things
worse

6.7.4.2 ‘I was not that willing to speak’

In particular, the learning experiences of high school and university
combined to inhibit his English speaking:

I was not that willing to speak English in university… I think
it had been a while [laughs] you know… it’s ten years since I
started to learn English… especially after high school I think
high school is really a barrier for me… and I was not that
interested in English after high school and… I did have a lot
of chance to practise English at university for example like I
was a volunteer guide at the Second World War Memorial in
Shanghai… you know you show this memorial and explain to
the tourists… tour guide yeah… there are two groups one
group is in Chinese and another group is in English and yeah
I did have chance but… I just chose Chinese one… I just
think speaking English is a little bit embarrassing at that time
[laughs]… because I feel I’m not fluently speaking so… yeah
[university] put me off… maybe I… I think I was not
confident any more at that time… it had been a long time not practise… so… even for myself I don’t know… to what extent I could communicate with others with foreigners and… mmm

Therefore the barrier created at high school directly affected his later language-learning motivation. Although he did not perceive the other tour guides as having better English than him, his embarrassment about speaking English was too much of a barrier to overcome, and he now feels ‘a little bit regret [laughs] not to do that… I thought the English must be very good… but it turned out it’s okay actually and I lose the chance to… practise’. Thus the barriers created by Weijian’s negative language learning experiences have prevented him from taking opportunities to speak English, and have constrained his ability to become as fluent an English speaker as he would like to be.

Weijian’s early sense of agency and his subsequent loss of it are reflected in his experience of and attitude to communicating in English. He was eager and enthusiastic about talking to people when visiting his father’s hotel, but now finds the idea of this ‘quite embarrassing’ and would worry that people would think it ‘strange’:

I would not do it now… I didn’t… I wasn’t fear about making mistakes at the time… I was just talking talking… but after high school and especially the examinations in English because the school put more on the grammar words things… so… it make me when I say a sentence I must go over in my mind… yeah… so it slowed down the… so now when I… speak English it’s not that fluent… [laughs] even compared to when I first learned English… at that time

Having ‘totally lost… the way to learn English’, he was no longer able to see himself as an agent, an active user of the language, who would have an effect on the world by using the language. Finding his university English classes boring and useless, Weijian made no particular effort to improve, feeling that ‘it’s just four or five years left… I can take it easy’.
6.7.4.3 ‘I suddenly realised it’s not enough’

Weijian had decided some time previously to come to the UK after a month’s summer English camp in Oxford when he was fifteen, a decision influenced in part by what he perceived as a Chinese trend of seeking higher education abroad, especially in the US and UK, on account of its perceived value in the job market. Furthermore, Weijian was studying Western medicine at university, and felt that it would be more useful to further his education in a Western country. He chose the University of Manchester for his PhD in Biological Physics on account of its high ranking in the subject, and then had to take an IELTS test as part of his university admission process before arrival. Having previously thought that he had enough English to ‘live well’ in the UK and being confident in his early conversational experience, his performance in the test came as a significant shock to him:

but when I came to the… IELTS test… at the end of the university the year of university and… I suddenly realised oh… it’s totally… not enough… especially for the academic writing… and speaking… I didn’t realise oh I was so regret then… I wasted so many years in university… yeah… and… how to say… in university there’s nobody… there’s no-one encourage me to learn or there’s nothing to… stimulate me to learn it… if I take the IELTS test in the first year… yeah that maybe change the thing yeah… [laughs]

He also realised that having no-one at university to encourage him to learn had been an important factor in his lack of interest and learning, having always had the feeling that he needed ‘some external forces’ to help him learn; in extra-curriculum school ‘every week I have to go to that school… and I had to hand in some coursework a tape… and prepare for the maybe drama things… it’s kind of… force for me to learn… yeah to learn English’. This would appear to be recognition of the importance of social interaction in his learning – his motivation was constructed in interaction with both real and imagined others, without which he has been unable to sustain his learning.
6.7.5 Moving to the UK

Weijian moved to Manchester in 2009 to begin his PhD, which is ongoing. Although he had some difficulty understanding British accents and found them ‘a big shock’, he became used to them. Professionally, he has difficulty with academic speaking (such as conference presentations) because of what he perceives as its comparative lack of interactivity. Personally, he feels he can ‘live well’ in the UK, meaning that he can meet a basic level of daily communication by which his immediate needs are satisfied; he feels his comparatively ease with daily communication is a direct result of the practice and confidence gained at the extra-curriculum school. However, this confidence does not extend to deeper social interaction:

**Weijian:** ah yeah… I found one occasion… in my previous apartment… my flatmate when I just move in and I think one weekend he and his friends invite me to a pub… and… oh it’s a horrible night for me [laughs]… it’s not their fault because my… understanding and… English understanding is horrible… I thought… in terms of daily communication it’s not big problem for me… but I didn’t realise oh… that is kind of daily communication… in a pub… I think… I couldn’t understand… more than three sentences… especially the humour… the way oh it’s really hard… it’s quite awkward… people at the table all laugh but you didn’t know what they… what the point yeah so… oh [laughs]… yes so… I think this… I don’t know how to improve this

**Lou:** how did you feel… in that sort of situation?

**W:** ah… maybe… it just feel awkward… and… quickly leave those situations… and… I wanted to find a way to… know how to improve or… to enhance or… because those situations is not often for me… so in those situations… maybe I had a strong desire to… learn or improve… but… back to life I… I just lose those desire to… I think it’s okay… maybe next time I won’t go with him… it’s a slight dilemma [laughs] sometimes I want to… I know I should… I should to learn… but… but sometimes I think it’s okay… you don’t have to… if you can live well [laughs]
6.7.5.1 Barriers and conflict
Weijian felt, and continues to feel, conflicted about his English learning and the amount of effort he is prepared to make. On the one hand, he wants to help himself improve by engaging with English-language media and socialising; one step he took in this direction was to move in with the British flatmate who took him to the pub, in the hope of more English conversation at home. However, although he found the relationship helpful in terms of learning about British customs and traditions, the conversation was not as plentiful as Weijian would have liked, on account of their both being busy and having different timetables. On the other hand, he feels he does not put the effort into learning that he should do; he has often felt too tired to watch English-language television and films, and although he feels he should not, he usually turns to Chinese media and entertainment to relax after work. He also finds socialising difficult, feeling that he is not very talkative or sociable, and feels this is a barrier to wider social interaction.

6.7.5.2 A collaborative project
However, he has recently become involved in a collaborative project to establish an agency for linking people in China with schools who will run business and leadership courses for them in the UK, and to help Chinese graduates in the UK find funding and investment to develop their own business ideas. He is liaising between these groups in a way that plays to his strengths as an English speaker, his considerable IT skills (his major hobby) and his travel experience, and that may offer him future career advantages, as well as giving him experience in English that he has never before had. This project has renewed his sense of connection to the world, particularly his sense of connection between the UK and China:

they find out they find me… the guys in Cambridge… they find my IT skills… and it helps them to… promote yeah… and… they thought my English is… fairly good… because when we were in Iceland [at Christmas 2011]… some arrangement for deal with the agent the travel agencies… I did it all yeah [laughter]… and… back from Iceland… I think about these things and I think… it’s a chance of… future
career for me maybe… and another chance for… I know I may have… engaged in many works… in English… like proposal… I did a lot these things… and letters all in English… I think this experience I think I never had… and if I don’t start this organisation maybe in future I won’t… have this… so… yeah… it’s a lot of advantages for me… except taking up time [laughs]… I think the main points attract me is China and UK… development organisation… you know it’s a matter of… it will have matter of… English… British side… you will benefit from this… okay?... if it’s just a few Chinese things… I think I don’t bother it… yeah

Thus, although the project is very new, it may offer Weijian new possibilities for interaction with, and influence on, the wider world in English.

6.7.5.3 Future plans

Weijian’s longer-term plans apart from this project are to stay in the west, possibly Germany (which has a particularly strong reputation in his research field), and to find a stable job which will ‘fulfil my dream’, and which will provide him with the resources to pursue his desire to travel the world. He therefore feels he is ‘full of reasons to improve my English’, as English is and will be important for all areas of his life.

6.7.6 Summary: Weijian’s motivation

Weijian’s motivation to learn English, then, developed through his experiences at extra-curriculum school and his interactions with English speakers in travel contexts. Through these experiences, he developed an understanding of himself as an active, successful language learner, with a sense that the language he was using was connected to the wider world. However, the very different learning context he faced at junior and senior high school became a barrier to him, inhibiting his confidence and fluency in communication, his ability to see a purpose to his learning, and consequently his motivation to learn. From having been an active learner, he became a passive learner. As a result he made little progress in English.
during high school and university, and has been further inhibited by the
level of academic English, particularly academic speaking, he feels he needs
for his academic life in the UK.

Weijian also feels that his learning experience in China did not prepare him
for the professional communication expected of him in the UK university
context. Academic presentations are a particular struggle for him, not least
because he cannot conceive of them as interactive, and he finds them
unmotivating and uncomfortable. Even social communication, although he
feels he is adept enough to get by and to ‘live well’, is very difficult for him
when it requires deeper engagement than basic daily transactions require.
He certainly no longer feels as confident talking to people as he did on his
travels in China or at his Dad’s hotel, and would be too inhibited and
embarrassed to approach people in this way now. Weijian is conflicted
about this, feeling on the one hand that he ought to try harder to engage and
improve socially in English, but on the other hand, if he can manage daily
life comfortably, he need not bother: ‘although sometimes I felt… I should
have learned more… the result is always always okay’. Overall, these
barriers are a result of the waning of his early sense of agency and
connection, the psychological conflict they cause for him stemming from his
recognition of the fundamental communicative purpose of language: ‘I think
that speaking is the most important in the language learning… you have to
communicate with others’.

However, Weijian feels that his positive learning experiences at the extra-
curriculum school continue to influence him in that they remind him that
English can be enjoyable, which encourages him to push himself to study
and practise. He is gradually reaching a level at which he is able to follow
his interests, such as reading an article or story that interests him, which is
reminiscent of the way he started learning English. It would seem, then, that
through the continuing influence of these positive experiences, he may be
able to tap back into that early motivation, feeling that he has reached a
stage where he can use what he learns and gain an immediate sense of
success:
I just want that the English to be you know... enjoyable stuff... so... it’s not like before because when I take English exam I have to ... push myself to memorise a hundred or two hundred words per day... and that quite stressful... and now it’s just like... reading a newspaper or reading a funny story on some English website... the most important one is... I learnt something maybe yesterday or last week... and maybe today I... I just read what I learned... and I... it’s kind of a sense of successful... it’s hard to describe that feeling because... you know you just use what you learned... it’s quite like in that [extra-curriculum] school... we learned and we used what we learned... immediately... just follow my interest... so... it’s kind of... recall the way I started the English yeah so... I want to... at least mean to... stay improve in English
6.8 Summary: Foregrounding the voices of learners
This chapter has presented six dialogues describing each participant’s language learning history and experience. It addresses my aim of foregrounding the voices of learners, and has done so through intertextually weaving their voices with my own authorial voice. I now move on to interpret the participants’ language learning motivation as processes of developing orientation towards others, illustrating how their motivation was socially constructed and became part of broader motivation for learning to be in the world.
Chapter 7: Language learning motivation as ideological becoming

or, Towards creative understanding

7.1 Introduction
This chapter presents my interpretation of the dialogues presented in Chapter 6. Using the Bakhtinian dialogic framework presented in Chapters 2 and 3, I draw together the three elements of this thesis discussed in the first three chapters – motivation, language and learning – to create an understanding of LL motivation as a dialogic process of ideological becoming, the central tenet of this thesis. This contributes to my aims of accounting more fully for the role of others in LL motivation, and of conceptualising LL motivation as part of broader motivational processes. Furthermore, the role of participants’ voices in methodological terms is explicated and represented respectively in Chapters 4 and 6; this chapter expands on that discussion by theorising participant voice in order to posit it as conceptually, as well as methodologically, fundamental to a person-in-context relational view of motivation. The theorisation presented in this chapter therefore contributes further to my aim of foregrounding the voices of participants.

The participants’ English-learning experiences are stories of their motivation developing as they became increasingly aware of, and able to operate in, conditions of English-medium heteroglossia. My interpretation of this development unfolds throughout this chapter. This chapter therefore addresses my research question: How can I characterise LL motivation for my participants?

7.2 Early language learning: Seeing the world through the other’s eyes
By early language learning, I refer to the participants’ learning before they moved to the UK. Although the participants were all different ages when they moved to the UK, I have characterised the period before the move as
early language learning for all of them, as for all of them except Weijian, this move and the concomitant challenge of English-medium heteroglossia represented the first major challenge to their motivation.

7.2.1 Authoritative discourse: The importance of English

Because the role of English in the world was such an unquestioned fact for these participants when they started learning the language, the importance of learning English was an authoritative discourse, an unchallenged fact in their worlds. The authoritative discourse of the importance of learning English is manifest in the participants’ experiences.

Dmitry

Dmitry’s scientific family, and his wider community, were aware of the importance of English to their profession, and when he was very young Dmitry understood that opportunities would become available if he had ‘a certain standard of English’. He was sent to a specialist language school, and learnt English from the age of seven. Thus he received the message, from his family, community and school, that English was necessary to his future.

Eli

Eli’s parents thought that it was necessary to learn English because it was an international language, and she herself felt that being able to speak English would give her more prestige in Iran. They therefore sent Eli to a private language school from the age of seven, where Eli herself began to view English as a ‘luxury tool’ which could enable her to travel and escape the constraints of her home context.

Federica

Federica’s school started compulsory English at the age of six. Because she enjoyed it and wanted to learn, she was not consciously aware of the importance of learning English until later in her life, citing ‘the social pressure of knowing and speaking English … so you have to do it’. In Federica’s understanding, this social pressure meant that the language
tended to be viewed in Italy as a kind of tool to be used, rather than living and meaningful to people’s lives.

*Raj*
For Raj, learning English was strongly encouraged in school, and even if it had not been, his parents would have ‘almost forced’ him to learn. Unlike the others, Raj does not directly cite the importance of English for his future in terms of its international reach and influence. However, also unlike the others, he is from a context where the colonial influence of English played a substantial role in his attitude towards the language, and such colonial attitudes, as mediated through his grandfather, conveyed and reinforced the authority of English.

*Raluca*
For Raluca, English was compulsory in kindergarten, from the age of four, and she was aware even then of the communicative opportunities and potential for future success knowledge of English would furnish. She knew that she ‘had to learn it because … I wanted to … become someone’, and that the someone she could become would be ‘someone big’ if she had English – someone who could ‘have a successful career’ and ‘travel a lot’.

*Weijian*
Weijian’s parents recognised the importance of English, and sent him to his extra-curriculum school at the age of eleven. Weijian himself felt the force of this authoritative discourse when he started high school, and learning English became about passing tests. In such a learning environment, being already at the top of the class meant he had ‘obeyed’ the authoritative discourse (Morson 2004: 318) and there was no internally persuasive reason to learn more: ‘I know what I will be tested or examined so… I just couldn’t find a reason to learn’.

The participants therefore all grew up in contexts where the importance of learning English was widely socially and institutionally accepted. Learning English was compulsory in their schooling at some level, and they were
aware of familial and/or wider social pressure to learn the language. The participants indicated no space for discussion of the importance of English in their early contexts: the discourse had ‘its authority already fused to it’ (Bakhtin 1981: 342), demanding their ‘unconditional allegiance’ (343) and ‘setting the tone’ for the social worlds in which they lived (1986: 88).

Although some of the participants learnt other languages too, it is the compulsory nature of English that connects them, in their different geographical and social contexts; just as one cannot choose an authoritative discourse from others that are its equal, they were unable to choose languages equal in global status to English. Similarly, they were unable to not choose English: even if they had personally rejected its authority, they would still have had to take classes in it at some point in their mainstream education.

However, the authoritative discourse of the importance of English was not in itself motivating: they had to learn English, but they did not have to be motivated. Still, these participants all enjoyed learning, and their enjoyment led to a desire and motivation to learn. Their enjoyment was engendered by classes that they attended, classes that existed, because of the unquestioned social acceptance of the importance of English. So, although the authoritative discourse was not in itself motivating, there is clearly a relationship between the participants’ motivation to learn English and the authoritative discourse of its importance. I posit that this relationship can be understood by examining the participants’ early learning experience: their enjoyment and desire to learn, and thus their motivation, was constructed through their learning experience. Even though their learning of English was a consequence of the authoritative discourse of its importance, their learning experiences were of course unique, and happened to be motivating for them. And their learning experience involved various others: real, concrete others who spoke English or were connected with it in some way for the participants; and the imagined other of the world of English itself, which represented the ways in which the participants interpreted the authoritative discourse. I now theorise the construction of the participants’ motivation through their learning experience, demonstrating firstly how the imagined
other of English represented the authoritative discourse of the importance of English, and how this imagined other motivated the participants.

7.2.2 Construction of motivation through the learning experience

7.2.2.1 The imagined other: English

The participants were learning English in contexts where it was not, for the most part, a major social language, and so English did not exist in any very real sense for them: it was separate from its heteroglossic contexts. Therefore, English existed chiefly in their imaginations. And the way in which the participants imagined English was shaped by the authoritative discourse of the importance of English: because their awareness of English had come from the authoritative discourse, they saw an imagined world of English in which they would be successful and fulfilled. This imagined world was ‘other’, because it was not part of the participants, not part of their identities; they could not yet specifically locate themselves in this world, and so it had no meaningful reality for them. This imagined other, then, was inextricably bound to the authoritative discourse of the importance of English: the imagined other was shaped by the authoritative discourse, and the authority of the authoritative discourse was reinforced by the imagined nature of the other, for without any meaningful reality, it could not be anything but authoritative.

However, the imagined other of English, though not part of the participants or meaningful for their identities, offered them the possibility of ‘seeing the world through its eyes’ (Bakhtin 1986: 6-7). Before expanding on this interpretation, I briefly summarise the ways in which each participant created the imagined other of English, and saw the world through the eyes of this imagined other - which I characterise as ‘the world through English eyes’ - in their early learning.

Dmitry

Dmitry’s upbringing in a scientific family and local academic research community meant that from an early age he developed a sense of a wider world beyond his own. His family understood the need to connect with this
world in order to access academic and professional opportunities, and this connection was understood as being able to take place through English. Through English, Dmitry was able to forge a connection with the twin school in the USA, which, in the post-Soviet political context of having recently opened to the world economically and socially after a long period of isolation, was a particularly memorable experience for him. The world through English eyes for Dmitry, then, was one in which he could attain academic and professional success, and engage with the world beyond his Russian context.

Eli

Eli remembers her earliest experience of English as an explicit recognition of its otherness, in its visual difference from Farsi. Her brother’s talk about the difference between Iran and ‘abroad’, by which he meant the UK and USA, and her knowledge of what life was like before the Iranian Revolution, made ‘abroad’ desirable in its perceived contrast to the constraints in her life, although she did not at that point have a conscious desire to escape them. Her interest in English-language television and music motivated her to keep learning and practising English in order to connect with and participate in the world. In addition, she was aware of the symbolic value of English in Iran and the prestige attached to it, making her aware that the students in her class who had English had something that she did not. The world through English eyes for Eli, then, was a world in which she could access music and culture, engage with people outside her Iranian context, and gain some prestige within that context.

Federica

Federica’s earliest memory of English was also an aesthetic one which explicitly recognised its otherness, namely her love of the /th/ sound, which did not exist in Italian. Her perceptions of the UK, and pictures of the UK her teacher would bring to school, represented a world which contrasted significantly, and favourably, with Italy. Her love of the pop group Take That offered her a means of connection with the world, and participation through translation of their lyrics was a source of motivation. The world
through English eyes for Federica, then, was one in which things looked and functioned differently from Italy, in which she could access music and culture, and engage with the world beyond her Italian context.

*Raj*

Many of Raj’s perceptions about English were developed during the summers with his grandfather, whose admiration of England and what he perceived as Englishness was a very important influence on his grandson. These conversations led Raj to fashion an imagined other out of England and the English on which he based his future aspirations and behaviours. The world through English eyes for Raj, then, was one in which he could develop himself personally as well as professionally, which would offer him access to a desirable level of civilisation and culture.

*Raluca*

At a time when Romania was beginning to open to the world after the 1989 revolution, Raluca engaged with English-language cartoons and games, an engagement which served as a point of connection to the wider world. She also saw English as a means to ‘become someone’, to have a successful career and to travel widely. The world through English eyes for Raluca, then, was one in which she could connect with and participate in the wider world beyond her Romanian context, and one in which she could access educational and career opportunities which would not be available to her in Romania.

*Weijian*

In his early English learning at his extra-curriculum school, with its focus on speaking and drama, Weijian saw his English voice as part of a network of other voices, which he could interact with and influence. However, as his high school and university career continued, with its very communicatively limited approach to English learning and teaching, he lost his sense of agency and connection and became demotivated. The world through English eyes for Weijian, then, narrowed from one in which he could be an active
agent of communication, to one in which English was simply a tool for academic advancement.

The participants’ motivation was therefore constructed through their engagement with this imagined other, English. The world through the eyes of English was a world of future success, achievement and fulfilment, opening up opportunities to other people and places, other ideas and ways of being, opening up access, or the prospect of access, to a world beyond their classrooms and their home contexts. Their imagining of English in this way was shaped by the authoritative discourse of the importance of English; they all understood that English was important for their futures. However, they could not yet specifically locate themselves in the imagined English world of their futures: their futures were distant and vague, not yet involving specific plans nor concrete others, nor with anything at stake for the participants’ own identities. They could not yet see themselves through English eyes; the authoritative discourse of the importance of English had not yet become internally persuasive.

The imagined English world was not meaningful in any specific, concrete or realistic way – only in an abstract way. They knew they needed to understand the language in order to enter the imagined world, but at this stage they did not question the need to understand beyond linguistic forms. English was therefore ‘other’, because it was not yet part of them: it was a tool for use, rather than a ‘tool for living’. It was a motivating tool, but their motivation was still bound up with the authoritative discourse of the importance of English, and this discourse had not yet become internally persuasive to them.

However, as well as engaging with the imagined other, the participants also had interactions with real, embodied others in English. These interactions laid the foundations for managing the conditions of heteroglossia they would later discover, management which would lead to the imagined other of English gradually becoming real and the authoritative discourse of the
importance of English becoming internally persuasive. In other words, they marked a stage in their ideological becoming, as I now relate.

7.2.2.2 The real other: Concrete addressees
In their early learning, English for the participants was not connected to a heteroglossic context and was constructed as an imagined other based on the authoritative discourse of its importance. However, they did have interactions with real, embodied others who were connected with English. These concrete addressees may have existed in their direct learning environments as English teachers, or outwith their language classrooms as other speakers of English, and it was through their interaction with these real others that participants began to get their first glimpses of the communicative, heteroglossic contexts of English. These glimpses laid the foundation for their future ability to manage heteroglossic conditions, their motivation to learn and speak, and for the authoritative discourse of the importance of English becoming internally persuasive. I now summarise the participants’ interactions with these real others in their early language learning.

Dmitry
Dmitry was very good at English at school and university, and has an early memory of praise from his schoolteacher about his confidence in English, a real other who contributed to his motivation by enabling him to understand himself as a good learner. His encounter with an American visitor and his discovery of their shared interest in tennis was motivating for him because of the sense of connection with a real other that had been created through his use of the language. In addition, his feelings of being ‘in the same shoes’ as other international speakers of English in Hungary and Czech Republic involved a recognition of shared-ness with English-speaking others.

Eli
Eli enjoyed her private language school classes because she did so much speaking, especially in contrast to her mainstream school. She enjoyed listening to a classmate who had spent time in the US and wished that she
could be her; she also liked her teachers, whom she felt were very good. Her interaction with these others, then, contributed further to her motivation to speak. Similarly, the conversations with her German family friend motivated her to keep learning and practising English in order to connect with and participate in the world.

_Federica_
Although she loved learning English, Federica makes no mention of any specific others in her schooling or early language learning life. Her school experience with the pen pal exchange is the only interaction with a concrete addressee she refers to, which, despite ultimately finding it communicatively meaningless and unsustainable, offered her a sense of connection with the ‘real world’ outside of her language learning experience.

_Raj_
Raj did exceptionally well in English at school, scoring the highest in his class for three years running and earning a great accolade from his teacher, an event which he cites as one in which somebody had ‘played a major role’ in shaping his English-speaking career. In addition, when he went to boarding school in India, with all its linguistic diversity, he began to develop a stronger sense of English as a wider communicative tool; the interaction with so many different others in this overtly heteroglossic context motivated him to use English in a different way.

_Raluca_
Raluca was very good at English at school, performing well in her class and in the school Olympiad, and this recognition from real others enabled her to form an understanding of herself as clever and a good language learner. In addition, Raluca regularly used computer social networks to chat in English to people around the world, which led her to start to reflect on herself and her position in the world: her discussion with her Pakistani friend led her to consider herself grateful ‘for being born in this day and age’. She also attended her father’s Navy cocktail parties, where she spoke English with
people of different nationalities, motivated by the awareness that she spoke English better than many others there.

**Weijian**

Weijian was able to connect with a variety of others in English through his pen pal experiences, meeting people on his travels, and meeting people at the café of the hotel where his father worked. These encounters were very motivating for him, leading him to feel communicatively successful and able to connect with people from different parts of the world. The ways in which the language was taught at high school and university, however, meant that he gradually lost motivation and confidence to interact with others in English.

The participants’ motivation was therefore also constructed through their interactions with real, embodied others. The ‘other’ inherent in the production and understanding of their utterances became concrete and explicit to the participants through these interactions, and this awareness was motivating for them. These interactions therefore represented their first awareness of the active role of the other in shaping communication, creating their first burgeoning understandings that their utterances, and those of others, were two-sided acts, determined ‘by whose word it is and for whom it is meant’ (Voloshinov 1986: 86). These interactions, though brief or limited or few, facilitated their orientation towards the English-speaking other, and the orientation of that other towards them.

Their responses to these others also engaged their voices. Although participants’ perceptions of communicative success in these interactions varied, they all had a sense of a developing voice in English through them, with a burgeoning emotional-volitional tone. The motivating power of speaking is reflected in the importance the participants attach to speaking, either implicitly or explicitly: Dmitry, Eli, and Weijian all cite interest and/or success in speaking; Raj and Raluca cite events in which they were speaking as important to their learning and motivation; Federica ‘fell in love’ with the language from making the sounds, and became aware on her
early visits to the UK that she had not really learnt to speak English. The interactions were brief or limited or few, but they demonstrate the participants beginning to express their own consciousness through their English voices. An early sense of agency developed for the participants through the active addressing and responding to others that took place through these interactions, and starting to establish their voices in English became important to their motivation. These interactions with real others represent the participants’ first, budding awareness of their own role and the role of the others as ‘active participants in speech communication’ (Bakhtin 1986: 94). Engaging with the real other offered motivating glimpses of the communicative potential of English: it was therefore an important step towards the imagined other of English becoming real for them, of the authoritative discourse of the importance of English becoming internally persuasive, and a stage of their ideological becoming.

7.2.3 Towards creative understanding: Seeing through the other’s eyes
Their engagement with the imagined other of English was motivating for the participants, allowing them to see an imagined future of success and fulfilment through this other’s eyes. Similarly, their engagement with real others was largely positive and motivating, and laid important foundations for managing in the heteroglossic context they would later encounter. However, their engagement with both the imagined and real others was limited and safe: as their engagement was not taking place within a heteroglossic English context, there was little risk involved, and little at stake for the participants’ identities. The participants and their others were fairly equal in terms of the power dynamics involved: if ‘a word is a bridge thrown between myself and another’ (Voloshinov 1986: 86), there was little need for negotiation between participants and their interlocutors for territory on their communicative bridges. Simply put, it might be said that they met in the middle and then returned to their respective sides. As long as linguistic understanding occurred, communication could be understood to have taken place and/or the encounter could be understood to have been successful. If linguistic understanding had not occurred, there would have been little threat to the participants’ identities. As understanding was not a
significant struggle, it did not destabilise, unsettle, or lead them to question themselves, or otherwise change them.

Their interactions with both the imagined other and real others were not sufficient for significant enrichment and deepening through the viewpoint of the other to take place (Gardiner 1992: 97) – ‘new elements’ were not introduced into their discourse (Bakhtin 1981: 282). The process of seeing the world through the other’s eyes is, of course, part of the process of understanding it – but it is only part of the process. At this stage, this was the only aspect of their understanding, and was so far ‘merely … duplication’, not entailing ‘anything new or enriching’ (Bakhtin 1986: 6-7). The participants were not yet able to see themselves through the other’s eyes, to ‘evaluate [themselves] from the standpoint of others … to take into account the value of [their] own outward appearance from the standpoint of the possible impression it may produce on the other’ (Bakhtin 1990: 15). They were able to see a future through English eyes, but they were not yet able to see themselves within that future; they were not yet able to see themselves through English eyes. The participants therefore interacted with these others without achieving the outsideness which inhabits the border between the self and the other; no border crossing took place.

7.2.4 Motivation: The awareness of possibilities
Still, motivation was constructed and language learning occurred through their interaction with these real others; although the language did not go far beyond being a tool for use, the ‘beyond’ had been glimpsed. Their interactions with real others afforded glimpses of the beginnings of agency, communicative potential, and the prospect of future engagement, all of which were highly motivating. The participants were beginning to use the resources of the language they were learning, adapting the language for their own purposes, experimenting with it. They began to develop their English voices by speaking and being heard and understood, and they became motivated to engage further in the future. This was an early stage in appropriating the language, a stage in their becoming speaking subjects in English. Even though their experience led to no great change in their
outlooks and identities, it made them aware of possibilities for further engagement with others. These interactions with real others represented a step towards the imagined other of English becoming real and part of them, of the authoritative discourse of the importance of English becoming internally persuasive; a stage in their ideological becoming. And these experiences laid the foundations for the ways in which they would cope with the conditions of heteroglossia when they moved to the UK, as I now discuss.

7.3 Moving to the UK: Finding the other in themselves

7.3.1 The shock of heteroglossia

When the participants first came to the UK, the shock of heteroglossia was, to varying degrees, uncomfortable and destabilising for them. The shock arose from their sudden awareness of the many voices with their different accents, the individual perspectives on the world they represented, and the far greater range of utterances in English than they had previously been used to. The destabilisation resulting from this shock led them to feel they lacked the voice and confidence to speak and engage with these other voices. For most of the participants, these reactions were not in keeping with how they had seen themselves previously: as good language learners, as communicatively capable, or a person with a voice who could be heard and recognised by others. Unlike their interactions with real others in English in their home contexts, engagement now involved risk, destabilisation, and change. I now summarise each participant’s experiences of the shock of heteroglossia, which began for the most part when they came to the UK.

Dmitry

Dmitry had already had a brief sense, in Russia, of heteroglossia in English, when he had encountered English-language television and radio, and became aware of more of a struggle to understand than he had previously had. When he came to the UK he felt very uncomfortable, particularly because of the wide variety of accents in English, and found psychological barriers to speaking that were in complete contrast to the ease and comfort he had felt using English in Russia; he became very uncertain of himself in
social interactions, feeling that people did not hear him or did not want to listen to him.

_Eli_

When Eli first came to the UK, her first time away from her country and family, she found speaking a particular struggle, fearing she would not be understood by or understand others, and she lost a lot of her confidence. She likened this experience to being a child, in the sense of learning from a very basic level and making mistakes, but also in the sense of not being taken seriously as an adult, being seen as someone who cannot fully participate in adult communication. She felt unable to communicate to people who she was.

_Federica_

Federica’s first visit to the UK, when she was fifteen, was a major turning point in terms of how she saw her relationship to English and its speakers: the language became ‘real’ to her, her encounter with its speakers giving her insights into the implications of communication, of the aspects of life and identity that might be at stake for others and for herself. Her next visit, when she was twenty, was also a critical incident in her language learning: being there with only her friend and being the only ones responsible for themselves, she realised that if they wanted to manage, materially and socially, they would have to speak to people. Her next experience in the UK, in Glasgow, was a significant shock to her because of the contrast in accent and dialect to London.

_Raj_

When Raj first came to the UK, at the age of sixteen, he found the English accents and dialects spoken at his school very different to the English he had spoken in India, found it very difficult to fit in, and spent his first few weeks too nervous to speak. He felt that he could not speak because no-one would understand, saying ‘it was like living in a prison but like just inside my mouth’.
Raluca

Raluca found life in Manchester difficult socially at first, struggling to talk in English in case she said something wrong and sounded stupid, particularly in front of British people. As a result, she lost her confidence and ‘forgot all [her] English’. However, she had a painful awareness that if she did not speak, she would not be able to communicate the kind of person she perceived herself to be – a clever person with opinions. Raluca was also conscious in the UK of being stereotyped as ‘Romanian’, as she perceived negative connotations attached to this identity.

Weijian

When Weijian moved to Manchester, he found what he perceived as ‘the accent’ a shock, though he grew used to it fairly quickly. Most of his interactions took place at university, which, although he had some difficulty with academic speaking, particularly giving presentations, was a fairly comfortable environment for him. He felt that he could ‘live well’, getting by with enough communication to meet his daily needs, and had no difficulties with everyday communication. However, when he came to spend an evening in the pub with his flatmate and his friends, the extent of his lack of understanding and ability to engage was a shock to him. His response to this situation, as to others in which he had felt similar discomfort, was to leave, and to avoid similar situations in the future. He felt the absence of this kind of engagement in his life, feeling that he should learn, but that his life was comfortable enough that he did not need to.

The shock of heteroglossia, then, represented the participants’ first conscious awareness that the social context of English differed from English as the imagined other, the worlds of English they had constructed in their early learning. Having felt that they had acquired sufficient understanding of linguistic forms, they soon realised that this was not sufficient for understanding the ‘living language’, with all its social, cultural and historical accents and intonations. The language, or the imagined other, became bound up with real others: it involved constant engagement with speaking consciousnesses, with real, embodied and specific others, with
unique voices and distinct emotional-volitional tones. This realisation was, to varying degrees, demotivating. And their understanding of English-medium heteroglossia came into sharper focus as their awareness of the role of others grew: they began to develop understanding of the full implications of the active participation of others in communication. This became an important stage in the task of ‘finding the other in themselves’.

**7.3.2 Demotivation**

**7.3.2.1 Evaluating themselves through others**

Part of the shock of heteroglossia for the participants was their growing awareness of the role of others as ‘active participants in speech communication’ (Bakhtin 1986: 94). The participants began to understand that they were dependent on others, and that the active participation of the others with whom they spoke shaped the communicative process and shaped how they saw themselves: they were becoming aware that the ‘living language’ lay on the border between the self and the other. Their anxiety stemmed from their taking into account ‘possible responsive reactions’ (ibid.) in the construction of their utterances, their awareness of how others might respond to what they say. Their listeners were always ‘active participants’, of course, but the participants were now more consciously aware of their listeners’ active participation, aware that their listeners’ participation mattered in order for communication to take place. They began to realise that they were reliant on the other’s position outside them, and that they could only see themselves in what the other reflected back to them. They began to ‘take into account the value of [their] outward appearance from the standpoint of the possible impression it may produce on the other’ (Bakhtin 1990: 15) in a way they had not needed to do before, when they had been in far more comfortable positions; when they had had their side of the bridge to retreat back to.

Seeing themselves in what these real others reflected back to them was uncomfortable for them. Dmitry, Eli and Raj saw themselves as people who were not understood, and as a result felt unable to speak: Dmitry felt that people did not want to listen to him, Eli felt ‘like a child’, and Raj felt
people would see him as ‘foreign’. Federica saw herself as someone who could not speak the language, and became aware of the limitations of her English learning in Italy; she realised she would have to learn to listen as well as to speak. Raluca worried that she would be a negatively-stereotyped Romanian who would speak English wrong and sound stupid, leading her to ‘forget all her English’; and Weijian saw himself as someone unable to understand, and consequently withdrew from similar social interactions. The demotivating effect of evaluating themselves through the perspectives of others became manifest in their loss of voice, which happened to all of them to some extent when first confronted with these conditions.

The evaluation of themselves from the perspective of others and their consequent demotivation represented the participants’ entry into border territory: when they moved along the bridge, they could no longer return fully to their side. The ‘task of understanding’ the other’s word (Bakhtin 1986: 143) had been set.

7.3.2.2 The task of understanding

Another reason for the participants’ demotivation at this stage was their awareness of this ‘task of understanding’: their awareness, generated from seeing themselves reflected back through others, of the amount of work that would be needed to reach a stage at which they could participate in the heteroglossic context of English in which they were living. They were learning that they lived ‘in a world of others’ words’, and that the other’s word set them ‘the special task of understanding this word’ (Bakhtin 1986: 143).

For some, there was also a nascent realisation that this may be an ongoing process, that there would be no ‘end’. For Dmitry, for whom things had always taken ‘care of themselves’, it was necessary to start taking care of things himself. He indirectly cites the kind of effort needed in his new UK context when he says interaction ‘means more work effort to adjust and cope… means less enjoyment and less freedom in the sense of yourself… to be yourself’. Eli demonstrates awareness of the extent of this learning when
she says ‘the more you learn the more you want to learn and you know that you don’t know anything yet… and the more you can speak the more you can understand the more you want to know more… it’s just really… non-stop process’. Federica references the ‘bridge’ between ‘fictional’ English and its heteroglossic ‘reality’, stating that ‘you don’t realise that there is a bridge and that you have to walk that bridge until you analyse the maturation process you have gone through’. Raj appears to frame his awareness of heteroglossia in terms of setting a task for himself: he wants to ‘see if I can really work like that… see whether I can maintain my individuality but then at the same time blend in’. Raluca explicitly states her recognition of the destabilising potential of engagement with the other in her understanding that ‘maybe I don’t want people to make me realise I’m not as good as I thought I was’, knowing that if she did not speak, she would not need to challenge her perceptions of herself by seeing herself as others saw her. Weijian knows that he needs to put effort into his learning, but does not know how to improve in social situations – so his response is to ‘quickly leave those situations’, about which he feels conflicted: ‘I know I should to learn… but sometimes I think it’s okay… you don’t have to… if you can live well’.

These experiences illustrate the participants’ burgeoning awareness of their active and productive role in dialogue, their recognition of the burden of work upon them. They were beginning to understand that they must change and be changed, that they must perform identity work, in order to reach the level of language competence and engagement they desired – in order to participate fully in the heteroglossic context. They were learning that they needed to orientate towards the words of others, real others, in order to reach a condition of creative understanding. This learning was another important step towards the imagined other of English becoming real and meaningful to them, and towards the authoritative discourse of the importance of English becoming internally persuasive: another stage in their ideological becoming.
7.3.2.3 The imagined other becoming real

Through facing the challenge of heteroglossia in English, the participants became aware of the active role of others in communication, and of the ‘task of understanding’ that they faced. Through this engagement with real others, the imagined other of English - the world of English they had constructed in their early learning which would facilitate their successful futures – started to become real. They started to understand the language as being bound up with real others, real people and their real lives, expressed through their real, embodied voices with their emotional-volitional tones. The language still remained ‘other’ – the participants had not yet found ownership of English, not yet made it part of their own identities – but, through the interactions with others that made English now part of their everyday lives, they were beginning to see English itself becoming real. Thus, understanding the language as meaningful to others was an important stage in English becoming meaningful to the participants themselves. The development of this understanding was another stage in their ideological becoming: the imagined other of English, which represented the authoritative discourse of the importance of English, was becoming increasingly real, and thus the authoritative discourse was becoming increasingly persuasive.

Having begun to learn English in their home contexts, with people close to their social purview, and having found themselves understood in English in those contexts and thus motivated to learn, the shock of heteroglossia was painful and demotivating. However, it was a necessary stage in their language learning. When they were faced with heteroglossia, a ‘critical interanimation’ of languages began to occur for them: different meanings began to interact and compete, shaping and influencing each other. The participants, therefore, in order to manage their demotivation, had to ‘actively orient’ themselves amid heteroglossia, to ‘move in and occupy a position’ for themselves and choose a ‘language’ (Bakhtin 1981: 295). The choice of language, taking place as it does at the moment of the utterance (Voloshinov 1986: 40-1), necessitates being able to speak. The ways in which the participants managed this active orientation, in which they learnt
to speak amid the conditions of heteroglossia, is the subject of the next section.

7.3.3 Learning to speak: Orienting themselves amid heteroglossia

7.3.3.1 Motivation to choose a language

The participants’ active orientation amid heteroglossia was a process motivated by their interactions with real others in their early learning, and by the ways in which they understood their identities as a result of these interactions. As a result, most of them were able eventually to push through the barriers facing them in order to find, and further develop, their own English voices. I now summarise each participant’s experiences of dealing with these barriers in English.

*Dmitry*

Dmitry challenged and overcame his discomfort by repeatedly putting himself in situations where he would have to communicate, and by observing the conventions of conversation and interaction in the UK and trying to adapt himself to them. He was motivated to do this partly by finding a choir to sing in and thus a shared interest with others, and partly by his earlier positive interactions with others in English in Russia. As a result, he has become increasingly adept at and comfortable with social interaction in the UK.

*Eli*

Eli challenged herself to overcome her barriers by literally listening to as many different voices as she could, so that she could learn to understand what people were saying, and by pushing herself to speak as much as possible, motivated by the prospect of being able to tell people who she was, and being recognised as ‘somebody’ – an adult with a social status, as she had been in Iran. Realising that it would be a gradual process, she allowed herself time to do this, starting with basic, communicatively instrumental situations such as asking for things she needed in service contexts.
Federica
After her first visit to the UK, Federica was motivated to improve and practise her English further when she returned to Italy, by studying English at university and working at the British consulate. During her second visit, she pushed herself and her friend to speak to people, aware that they needed to do this if they wanted to learn, rather than just survive. She then managed the shock of her next experience, in Glasgow, by making an effort to listen to and understand people as well as speak to them. All the learning from these experiences contributed to her motivation to move to the UK for her PhD, where she came to understand more fully the social and communicative opportunities at stake in the ‘reality’ of the language, what she calls the ‘motivation of really learning how other people perceive what you say’.

Raj
Raj was motivated to start speaking by coming to the awareness that he himself was responsible for trying to fit in at his school, and that he could choose the extent to which he fitted in himself. Through imitating the people around him, he developed a kind of hybrid accent based on the accents surrounding him. However, the social undesirability of this non-standard local accent motivated him to get rid of it, in favour of one which his school colleagues could take seriously, one that would ultimately help him pass as British himself, though without being recognised as particularly Indian or ‘international’. He reached, at the time, a level of British ‘nativeness’ in his accent that was acceptable, even desirable, for him. Raj, then, felt he needed to change the ways in which people perceived his identity - from ‘foreigner’ to ‘British’ - and was successful in this.

Raluca
Raluca performed very well in her university course, reinforcing her understanding of herself as clever, and able to stand out as she had done at high school in Romania. She also came to understand that if she did not speak at all, she would come across as someone shy and ‘dumb’, without opinions, and that it would be better to at least speak, even if she made
mistakes. This realisation and the encouragement from her university teachers motivated her to speak, enabling her to feel she had things to say and would be understood. As a result, she was able to take some responsibility for how others perceived her by speaking and trying to make herself heard, which she did by challenging herself to take on activities and responsibilities at university. By doing this, she was able to counter her worries about coming across as shy or stupid.

Weijian
After the evening in the pub with his flatmate’s friends, Weijian avoided situations where he would have to engage socially in English. These situations were demotivating for Weijian, and his desire to improve his English diminished through awareness of the effort it would take him to engage, especially as he did not consider himself a particularly sociable or talkative person.

Dmitry, Eli, Federica, Raj and Raluca were therefore motivated to speak in different ways: they chose different languages, languages that represented themselves as communicatively able in English, adults with something to say, good language learners, able to pass as ‘British’, or clever people. These languages were chosen when the participants responded to the utterances of others: responses motivated by their understanding of their identities, their senses of who they were which had been formed through their interactions with real others in their early learning. Consequently, this marked another important step in the imagined other of English becoming real to them, and in the authoritative discourse of the importance of English becoming internally persuasive: another stage in their ideological becoming.

7.3.3.2 The motivated response
The participants’ motivation to speak in conditions of heteroglossia is closely bound to their awareness of the social contexts of English, and of the previously imagined other of English becoming real to them. The ‘concrete act of understanding’ that occurred at the point of the responsive utterance, the responses participants made when they began to be motivated to speak,
was crucial to English becoming meaningful to them and part of them, to
the authoritative discourse becoming internally persuasive, and to their
ideological becoming. As Bakhtin points out, motivation is fundamental to
this understanding:

In the actual life of speech, every concrete act of
understanding is active; it assimilates the word to be
understood into its own conceptual system … and is
indissolubly merged with the response, with a *motivated*
agreement or disagreement. (1981: 282, my emphasis)

Dmitry, Eli, Federica, Raj and Raluca’s motivated responses were active
and engaged, and it was at the point of this response that their motivation
towards English started to become active, engaged, and personally
significant. At the point of the response, in their English voices, their
reasons for learning became meaningful in the ‘concrete act of
understanding’ generated. These motivated responses marked the
participants beginning to establish their English voices, communicating their
conceptual horizons in their own emotional-volitional tones through active,
engaged, responsive understanding with the other. The motivated response
marked the beginning of the participants’ move from mastery of linguistic
forms in English to ownership of the ‘living language’ of English. This is
the point where participants felt that their confidence and competence in
English developed the most, in the interactions which were most difficult
for them, the interactions they cite in their stories: those where
understanding was the greatest struggle, and thus those which stimulated the
most learning and growth.

Weijian, however, felt unable to fully embrace these challenges owing
chiefly to the barriers he still faced from his high school and university
language learning, and consequently did not feel that his English improved
particularly after he came to the UK. Weijian had not felt significantly
demotivated when he first came to the UK; although he had experienced
some shock, he recovered quickly once he had become accustomed to his
new surroundings, and did not experience the psychological debilitation that
the others did. However, the initial demotivation that the others felt resulted from their realisation of the extent of the ‘living language’, a realisation which occurred much earlier in their UK sojourns than it did for Weijian. When he did experience the shock of heteroglossia, he too became demotivated, although not to the same extent as the others: situations requiring engagement with others engendered fear and apprehension in him, but he was able to reassure himself that the English he had already was adequate for his life. He was able to do this because, as a result of his demotivation at high school and university, he was still motivated only by the imagined other, the English that would be adequate for a successful future as based on the authoritative discourse of its importance. Because he felt he could ‘live well’, socially engaging enough to meet his immediate needs and to be successful in his work - and thus sufficiently obeying the authoritative discourse - he did not see the value of appropriating others’ words and discourses to the extent that the other participants did. He lacked the willingness, confidence, and voice in English to engage to any meaningful extent with others - he was unable to assimilate the words of others into his context (Bakhtin 1981: 294). This lack of willingness, confidence and voice both sprang from and reinforced the motivational power of the imagined other, based on the authoritative discourse of the importance of English.

7.3.3.3 Developing voice and agency
When they first encountered heteroglossia in English, Dmitry, Eli, Federica, Raj and Raluca suffered a shock to, and even temporarily lost, their English voices, on account of the sudden awareness of the impression they may be producing on others: they began to understand ‘the degree to which [they were] externally determined’ (Bakhtin 1986: 139). However, being motivated to speak, they began to orientate towards these others, developing their English voices, and using their voices to position themselves socially, in their own emotional-volitional tones. They started to ask to be recognised, to create themselves through speaking. They began to learn that ‘To be means to communicate’, and that non-being ‘is the state of being unheard, unrecognized’ (Bakhtin 1984b: 287). To be meant having a voice,
in which they could be heard, addressed and responded to (Vitanova 2004),
their emotional-volitional tones communicating their own ways of being as
it chimed through their words. The development of their voices was also
important in the development of their agency, as the more they began to
understand themselves as determined by others, ‘the closer to home [they
came] to understanding and exercising [their] real freedom’ in their
responses (Bakhtin 1986: 139).

The creative understanding they were moving towards was another stage in
the way they viewed the importance of, and thus their motivation for,
learning English. Through their engagement with real English-speaking
others, and developing their voices through their responses to concrete
addressees in the heteroglossic context, the imagined other of English began
to take on new meaning for them. English and its importance became
increasingly personally meaningful to them, increasingly bound up with
who they were and they ways in which they wished to express themselves in
the world. By interacting and engaging with real others and orientating to
their words, the purpose of learning English became more meaningful to
them; the imagined other of English became increasingly real, and the
authoritative discourse of the importance of English, now expressing a
meaningful reality, started to become internally persuasive. Their
engagement with others facilitated the orientation of others towards them in
a story of persons-in-relation, representing another stage in their ideological
becoming.

7.3.4 Towards creative understanding: Finding the other in themselves
Having begun to challenge the barriers facing them and to develop their
voices in the conditions of heteroglossia in English, Dmitry, Eli, Federica,
Raj and Raluca’s motivation became increasingly personally significant and
meaningful. Through their responses to others, they created ‘concrete acts of
understanding’ (Bakhtin 1981: 282) through which their voices became
active and engaged, and through which they became further motivated to
speak. This motivation to speak, and speaking itself, represented a further
step towards outsideness and creative understanding. They moved closer to
an understanding of the imagined other of English that was also new and enriching to the self, beginning to find the imagined other in themselves. Through speaking to real others, Dmitry was better able to participate socially; Eli, Raj and Raluca were recognised by others as they saw themselves; Federica was increasingly able to understand and be understood. Through engaging with the language in a heteroglossic context and seeing themselves through the eyes of real others, the imagined other of English began to become real to them, and they began to see themselves through this previously imagined other. They began to see themselves through English eyes: rather than simply seeing their imagined futures through the eyes of English, they were now beginning to see themselves in those futures, to see how those imagined futures might look in a heteroglossic context.

For Dmitry, Eli, Federica, Raj and Raluca, meeting the challenge of speaking in conditions of heteroglossia, entering border territory and beginning to see themselves through the eyes of English, created optimal conditions for language learning (Emerson 1997: 223-224), and they felt that their English improved significantly. Weijian, having lost at university his early sense of himself as an able and agentive speaker of English, continued to be demotivated by the prospect of deeper social engagement, and continued to get by with socially instrumental or academic communication. At this stage, there was no significant move into border territory for him, and he did not start to see himself through the eyes of the other: the imagined world of English remained an imagined other, and did not become significantly more real to him. As a result, he did not feel any particular improvement in his English.

Dmitry, Eli, Federica, Raj and Raluca therefore underwent a transformation: through their learning, their identities - how they saw themselves - changed. In order to achieve dialogic, creative understanding, however, the potential for transformation for all participants in communication needed to be realised. They needed to both creatively understand and be creatively understood, in order for ‘mutual change and enrichment’ to occur (Bakhtin
The participants now had to learn to maintain outsideness: to maintain their unique selves in English by learning to use English to express their own unique identities. They had to learn to live ‘on the boundary’ (Bakhtin 1984b: 287), both entering and remaining outside the language and the culture, retaining the distinctiveness necessary to achieve the meaningful dialogue of outsideness and creative understanding.

7.4 Living in the UK: Learning to live on the boundary

7.4.1 Developing their chosen language: Selectively assimilating the words of others

Having found the other in themselves and become motivated to develop a more personally meaningful relationship with English, the participants began to interact more widely, entering into dialogue with an increasing variety of different others, and thereby enhancing their understanding of and participation in social life. For Dmitry, Eli, Federica, Raj and Raluca, motivation developed as they began to respond to others as such participation demanded, and they became further motivated to speak. As a result of this burgeoning development of their voices, they began to selectively assimilate the words of others – to use English to communicate their own worldviews, populating it with their own intentions and accenting their voices with their own emotional-volitional tones. This development was engendered by, and engendered, their motivation, which continued to evolve as the imagined other of English continued to become real and personally meaningful for them - as the authoritative discourse of the importance of English became increasingly internally persuasive. The process for Weijian was slower, but the trajectory was similar, as the following summaries of the participants’ experience illustrate.

_Dmitry_

Having challenged his social discomfort by putting himself in interactive situations and creating opportunities to interact, Dmitry began to feel ‘less alien’. At times he encountered stereotypical judgments about Russians, but was not too upset by these as although he had deliberately maintained very few connections with Russia beyond his immediate family, he recognised
that other people might not be aware of his attitudes towards his home country. However, even though he did not take such jokes or judgments very seriously, he wanted to be able to respond in kind, and began to selectively assimilate the words of others, words through which he could assert his own agency through joking about and ‘taking the piss’ out of others. He became aware that this may not always be beneficial for relationships, but also accepted that this would be a necessary corollary of being in greater communicative control – he learnt to accept responsibility for his words, to see himself as a communicative agent who had an effect on the world. He thus reached a stage where he could try to accept himself as a Russian speaker of English, aware too that this was an ongoing process of development.

**Eli**

Being aware that her inability to speak in English deprived her of the power she could accrue from being recognised as an equal in conversation, Eli wanted to put herself in situations where she was equal to other English speakers, rather than situations involving asymmetrical power relations in which, she recognised, she would not have the same opportunities to speak English. She found employment in a business with other international English speakers, which helped her to further build her confidence speaking and interacting. She saw speaking English as a means of expressing her Iranian as well as her English-speaking identity; she was not only comfortable with being recognised as a non-native or Iranian speaker of English, but also used English to enhance and challenge people’s perceptions, ideas and stereotypes about Iran. Eli thus selectively assimilated English words in order to be able to express her identity as an Iranian speaker of English. Through her growing freedom to develop her voice, Eli was able to gain enhanced self-awareness and self-knowledge, and became increasingly able to recognise her own needs and desires. She also felt a sense of responsibility towards other Iranians, perhaps less successful English learners whom she could help with their various social needs, or by showing by example what opportunities could be possible for
them. She thus wanted to be able to help other Iranians, wanting them to recognise her as ‘an Iranian person who is really successful in England’.

_Federica_

After the shock of realising the ‘reality’ of English on her earlier visits to the UK, Federica understood that she was responsible for her learning: she was responsible both for taking the action of speaking to people, and for the social consequences of speaking to them. The difficulty understanding people that she had encountered in Glasgow became an opportunity for her to learn to listen as well as to speak, and this was an important stage in the development of her own voice as an Italian speaker of English; she became aware of the role and responsibility of the listener, as well as the speaker, in understanding. This was reinforced and further developed when she came to live in the UK, and engaged more deeply and extensively with the social and communicative opportunities and relations at stake when she spoke. She came to learn that she needed to assimilate the words of others in order to function communicatively in society, but that she did not need to speak English in the same way as others; she could assimilate selectively, developing her own way of speaking English as an Italian, and developing an identity as an Italian in the world. Her burgeoning comfort with expressing her Italianness in English led Federica to view herself and the next stage of her development as being without borders: she was learning to be, and becoming comfortable with being, in the world.

_Raj_

Having passed as a British student in his school, Raj had successfully appropriated the voices of others. However, while he felt pleased to have successfully created this belief and achieved the competence in English it entailed, he was conflicted in the lack of acknowledgment of his identity as an Indian and as an international student. In order to develop a voice with which he could be recognised on his own terms, Raj made various active and deliberate choices about the extent to which he participated in certain activities. The ability to make these choices was very important to him, representing him taking control of the extent to which he could be
recognised in the desirable identity of the British English ‘native’ speaker, but also recognised as a speaker of an English with which he felt comfortable, an English in which he could also be acknowledged as Indian and international. These choices represented his selective assimilation of the words of others, leading to the development of a voice and accent which reflected his ability to fit into UK, Indian and global contexts, a voice in which he could mix comfortably with many different others. Having developed such a voice, he felt a responsibility to use it to tell his story and those of the people and communities he knows, in a challenge to white English-speaking hegemony.

_Raluca_

The encouragement of her university teachers and her own anxiety not to be thought shy and stupid motivated Raluca to speak, and she began to develop her English voice through participation in various university activities. Her engagement in these activities stemmed from, and in turn nurtured, her growing sense of herself as a responsible agent of communication, enabling her to take some responsibility for the ways in which others perceived her. As a result, she made more and closer British friends, and began to understand her own responsibility for some of her earlier negative opinions about British people; she knew now that if she tried ‘a bit harder it [would] happen eventually’. Consequently, she was able to challenge the stereotypes she perceived among her peers about Romanians, and through her participation in university and social life, enabled by and enabling the development of her English voice, she was able to cultivate a different kind of Romanian identity for herself, one with which she could be comfortable and an active social participant. Through selectively assimilating the words of others, she was able to challenge both her own preconceptions and those of others, in a social context in which she felt she could express herself with increasing confidence.

_Weijian_

As a consequence of the demotivation he experienced in high school and university, which came about as a result of the decoupling of the language
from any meaningful communicative purpose, Weijian was unable to find
the motivation to engage with others in the UK to the extent that the other
five participants did. This demotivation and lack of confidence in speaking
remained powerful for his first few years of living in the UK. For some
time, he remained caught in a cycle of being motivated only by the
imagined other, representing the authoritative discourse of the importance of
English; he was motivated by the understanding that ‘getting by’ in English
was sufficient. Because he was consequently unmotivated towards
engagement with real others, the imagined other did not become any more
real, and his motivation did not develop. However, latterly Weijian became
involved in a project which engaged his major interests of IT and travel, and
which necessitated knowledge of both English and Mandarin. The sense that
both the UK and China would benefit from this project was motivating for
him, rejuvenating his early sense of connection to the world through
English, and enabling him to feel again that English was enjoyable. Through
engagement with real others on the project in both Mandarin and English,
Weijian once more began to develop a sense of himself as an agentive
learner who could exert some influence on the world. Consequently, his
motivation began to develop, and he found renewed interest in learning
English. So, although Weijian did not go through the same process or the
same pace of learning and development that the others did, his motivation
began to develop through the selective assimilation of Chinese and English-
speaking identities, and the promise of engagement with others that it
offered.

The participants were now using language creatively, reflectively,
reflexively and dynamically in response to specific social situations
(Voloshinov 1986). The languages they had chosen at the point of the
motivated response – when they had become motivated to speak – were now
becoming their languages, their own Englishes, communicating their
worldviews, perspectives, and conceptual horizons in accents imbued with
their own emotional-volitional tones. The motivation generated from their
engagement with concrete others, and their awareness of the extent to which
they were positioned as ‘foreign’ or ‘other’ through this engagement,
enabled Dmitry, Eli, Federica, Raj and Raluca to create new opportunities to establish their voices (Vitanova 2004: 152), taking steps towards becoming autonomous beings and assuming greater responsibility for their utterances and their social effects. By putting their signatures to their utterance-acts, they began to transcend some of the positions in which they perceived themselves being placed by others, were able to reject some of the words of those others, and began to populate their own English words with their own intentions. By broadening their experience and scope, then - by taking on the task of understanding others’ words, risking engagement with a variety of others and forging a productive role for themselves in dialogue - the participants created optimal conditions for language learning (Emerson 1997: 223-224), and were transformed and enriched. By populating their words with their own intentions, the participants were able to influence others’ perceptions of them, and a ‘bridge of reciprocal influence’ (Emerson 1997: 223) became possible. This forged the conditions for creative understanding: increased flexibility, openness, variety, multi-languagedness and unfinalisability, and resulted in ‘mutual change and enrichment’ (Bakhtin 1986: 142).

7.4.2 Towards creative understanding: Recognising unfinalisability
The conditions of creative understanding were such that participants began to learn to be ‘always and wholly on the boundary’ (Bakhtin 1984b: 287). The imagined other was now a real other: real because they could see themselves through its eyes. They were becoming Russian, Iranian, Italian, Indian, Romanian and Chinese speakers of English: all at different stages of becoming, of course, but all recognising the continuous, unfinalisable nature of the process. English was now a ‘tool for living’, intimately, inextricably bound to their futures: they could now locate themselves in the futures that had previously been imagined through English eyes, by seeing themselves through English eyes. In the expression of their Russian, Iranian, Italian, Indian, Romanian, and (gradually) Chinese identities through English, they maintained their unique selves and remained different from others. By maintaining and expressing this distinctiveness, by populating English with their own intentions, they maintained outsideness and further developed
creative understanding and mutual enrichment: they were transformed, and found the potential to transform others. They became increasingly aware of their own unfinalisability and that of others, beginning to understand themselves as constantly becoming: as ‘a work in progress’ for Dmitry, as discovering ‘who I want to be’ for Eli, as ‘the start of everything’ for Federica, ‘a learning experience’ for Raj, wanting to ‘become someone’ for Raluca, and to ‘stay improve in English’ for Weijian. Not only did the participants formally improve their English, but they came to a sense of responsibility for their communicative acts, authoring themselves and maturing in a shared story, a story of persons-in-relation all in their own unique events of being.

7.5 Motivation constructed through interaction with others
At every stage of the participants’ learning, their motivation was constructed through interaction and engagement with others, both imagined and real. At the very beginning of their English-language learning, the participants were motivated by the imagined other of English, which represented the authoritative discourse of the importance of learning English. This imagined other was itself socially constructed, through the message of the authoritative discourse conveyed by family, community and school: that learning English was important. They were also motivated through their positive interactions with real others in their early learning contexts, and by the sense of communicative success and being good at English these created.

When the participants encountered many more real others in English, in the heteroglossic context of the UK, they became demotivated: therefore their demotivation too was constructed through (less positive and successful) interaction with others. However, for Dmitry, Eli, Federica, Raj and Raluca, their early positive experiences with real others and the identities they constructed from these then motivated them to speak to real others in the UK. For Weijian, who had been motivated but became demotivated in his early learning experience because of the lack of others in the learning context, motivation to speak developed later in his UK career, when he
found a context in which his English-speaking and Chinese contexts and identities could be mutually beneficial. This motivation, too, was constructed through interaction with real others: with the colleagues with whom he established the agency, and with the clients with whom he was communicating.

The voice and agency the participants developed through speaking to others motivated them to keep speaking, and to speak with a wider array of people. Through this, they were able to locate themselves in the heteroglossic context by selectively assimilating the words of these others, deciding which words they would assimilate and which they would reject. This enabled them to develop understandings of themselves as agents of communication whose utterances had effects on the others around them. This in turn motivated them to keep learning, to keep developing and becoming - to continue ideologically becoming, or learning to be in the world.

7.6 Learning to be in the world

Through becoming active and productive in dialogue, the participants came to creative understanding, becoming transformed and having the potential to transform others. Coming to a condition of creative understanding began with the participants’ early engagement with the imagined other of English, a constructed world of future success, achievement and fulfilment. This world was initially imagined because it was not directly meaningful to them: they saw the world through the eyes of English, but they did not see themselves. However, through a process of engagement with real others in their home contexts which then motivated them to engage with real others in the heteroglossic context, this constructed world gradually became real: the participants became able to see themselves through the eyes of English, and able to locate themselves in the ‘real’, heteroglossic English world. Through their motivated learning of English, therefore, the world of English moved from being imagined to being real and meaningful. The participants’ learning continued, and continues, in their ongoing management of their own identities within the heteroglossic world of English. The participants’ language learning, then, has been a process of learning to be in the world:
learning that has been motivated by their engagement with others. This is the process of their ideological becoming: a process in which language, learning and motivation are inextricably bound.

7.7 Language learning motivation as ideological becoming

The participants’ process of ideological becoming was one in which language, learning and motivation became indissolubly connected through engagement with others. In the beginning, learning the English language meant mastering English linguistic forms. The participants believed that mastering these forms would bring them success and fulfilment in the future, and thus constructed in imagination a world of English in which this future would come to be. This imagined world, representing the authoritative discourse of the importance of English, was motivating to them, but remained ‘other’. They were motivated further in their learning through interaction with real others, but in their early learning, their understandings of language and learning did not significantly change: learning the English language continued to mean mastering its linguistic forms.

When the participants moved to the UK and were faced with a heteroglossic English context, they began to understand the language as ‘real’, dialogic, and living in myriad embodied others – as far more than the sum of its linguistic forms. As they had previously understood learning as the mastery of these forms, this realisation was destabilising. They had to redefine ‘language’ and ‘learning’: the linguistic competence they had thought would be adequate became bound up with complex social and cultural awareness and understanding, and so their conceptualisations of language and learning had to expand. The interactions they had had with real others in their home contexts motivated them to speak, and the concrete acts of understanding generated through their spoken utterances motivated them to speak more. Through speaking with an ever-widening array of real others and selectively assimilating these others’ words, they began to develop their English voices, through which they became able to express their own identities and construct their own ‘ideologically mediated perspective on the world’
Through this process they developed an understanding of language as heteroglossic, and of learning as a process of developing their own voices within a heteroglossic context. This development took place through choosing their own language, and developing their language by selectively assimilating the words of others.

Through this engagement with real others, which led to these new understandings of language and learning, the imagined other of English which had motivated them, and which represented the authoritative discourse of the importance of learning English, became increasingly real and meaningful to them; the authoritative discourse became internally persuasive. The process occurred through the participants’ learning how they were bound and connected to the world, the world which comprised real, embodied others. They learnt how the world and the others in it were meaningful to their identities; how it was a world in which they were influenced and in turn exerted influence, with their own ideologically mediated perspectives producing real, material social effects. Their motivation therefore developed through the learning experience of active social participation, of selectively assimilating the words of others in order to develop their own voices. The participants learnt that they were embraced in a mutually dependent cycle with the others of heteroglossia, fostering and nurturing one another in a relationship which, for the participants, was increasingly internally persuasive and motivating.

Through the motivation constructed through their interactions with others, the participants’ developing understandings of language and learning became simultaneously more individual and more social. As their understanding of heteroglossia developed, so too did their understanding of the need to locate themselves within these conditions, to choose their own language. In this way, their language learning became part of their learning to be in the world: the development of an ideological self within the ‘ideological environment’ (Medvedev 1978: 14). This mutually dependent, dialogic process itself became motivating, motivating the participants to become responsible authors, putting their signature to their utterances,
answering to the voices in the world around them in a lifelong process of development and maturation. This was, and continues to be, the participants’ process of ideological becoming: a process in which language, learning and motivation dialogically interweave.

7.8 Summary: A new interpretation of LL motivation
In this chapter, I have used the Bakhtinian dialogic framework presented in Chapters 2 and 3 to draw together the three elements of this thesis: motivation, language and learning. In so doing, I have addressed my research question:

How can I characterise LL motivation for my participants?

I have addressed this question by demonstrating that for these participants, language learning motivation is, and continues to be, a dialogic process of ideological becoming. Such an understanding of LL motivation is a major contribution to the field: specifically, in that it accounts for the elemental role of others in LL motivation; in that it theorises learner voice as fundamental to motivational processes; and in that it conceptualises LL motivation as part of a broader motivational trajectory towards learning, growth and development. Explication of these different aspects of my contribution is the subject of the following and final chapter.
Chapter 8: Contributions
or, Accounting for others in LL motivation

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Thesis review
This study has defined and interpreted language learning motivation as ideological becoming through dialogues with six English-language learners. From my engagement with the LL motivation literature, as outlined in Chapter 1, I articulated my research aim as follows: to theorise a definition and interpretation of LL motivation which integrate the language learner and their social context in ways that

- understand LL motivation as socially constructed, involving relations with many different others;
- understand LL motivation as part of motivation towards broader personal and social growth and development;
- foreground learners’ own voices and perspectives.

In keeping with these aims, I constructed a research question which allowed me to conceptualise the nature of LL motivation whilst allowing such a conceptualisation to be learner-voice-centred and data-driven. My specific research question was:

*How can I characterise LL motivation for my participants?*

Having discussed my engagement with the LL motivation field in Chapter 1, I presented a Bakhtinian dialogic understanding of language in Chapter 2, followed by an interpretation of learning as a process of ‘selectively assimilating the words of others’ in Chapter 3. These first three chapters, then, addressed my engagement with and conceptualisations of motivation, language, and learning respectively.
In Chapter 4 I detailed the dialogic interview methodology I developed, followed by an exposition of the ways in which I handled and analysed the data in Chapter 5. These two chapters laid the foundation for the foregrounding of participants’ voices relating their language learning experience, demonstrating how I constructed the dialogues with English-language learners presented in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 7 I interpreted the participants’ language learning experience through the Bakhtinian frameworks for language and learning outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, demonstrating how their developing relational understandings of language and learning became inseparably linked to their motivation to learn it. Chapter 7 therefore knitted together the three strands of motivation, language and learning in order to address my research question, characterising motivation for my participants as a process of ideological becoming. This final chapter now summarises the study in terms of the contributions it represents.

8.1.2 Chapter structure
By way of a finale to this thesis, this chapter articulates the significant contribution this characterisation of motivation represents, its implications for teaching practice, and the ways in which the dialogical framework might be extended. I hope the study represents a four-fold contribution: conceptual, methodological, practical, and political. The chapter is structured around these levels of contribution.

8.2 Conceptual contribution: Accounting for others in LL motivation
8.2.1 A definition and an interpretation
I have stated that the overarching aim of my study is to theorise a definition and interpretation of LL motivation. The interpretation has been presented in Chapter 7, and is constructed from the experience of learners of English who would be considered highly proficient in the language and have been learning it for a long time. The definition, however, is applicable to learners of any language, at any stage of learning.
The definition acknowledges that whatever stage of language learning a person is at, if that person is motivated, they are ideologically becoming. Language learning motivation is ultimately about why we want to learn a language. As stated in the Introduction, motivation derives from the Latin verb movere, ‘to move’, and so ‘simply defined, we might say that motivation concerns what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, and to persist in action’ (Ushioda 2008: 19). Motivation for language learning therefore represents a move towards an other, a move which itself represents a stage of growth and development, of learning to be in the world. Although the concept of learning to be in the world may seem most immediately applicable to English, given its global reach and influence, this is a learner-centred definition of LL motivation, and so motivation for learning any language represents a move towards another. Even if we want to learn a language for the most basic and ephemeral of reasons, language learning involves communication. Even if we are learning an ancient language, and/or never do anything more than silently read to ourselves in that language, communication is still taking place; a dialogic interaction of utterance and response is being played out. Wanting to participate in and through a language represents an urge to reach out to another, to dialogically relate to another’s words, even before understanding the implications of what that relation to another might mean. In representing a move towards an other, language learning motivation represents a stage in ideological becoming: for before selectively assimilating the words of others, we have to want to engage with those words. Motivation to learn a language is itself, therefore, a stage in ideological becoming. Language learning motivation is ideological becoming.

8.2.2 Addressing my ontological concerns

In Chapter 1, I articulated the following ontological/conceptual concerns which had arisen from my engagement with the LL motivation literature:

How does LL motivation develop from contact with other speakers? How can I engage with the ‘otherness’ inherent in identity?
How can I account for the role of others in LL motivation without becoming entangled in a power-resistance binary?
How do learners develop agency?
How is motivation co-constructed with others?
How can I theorise LL motivation as part of a broader trajectory of learning motivation?

I have developed a theorisation of LL motivation which addresses these ontological issues, illustrating the fundamentally social nature of language, learning and motivation: that self and other ‘constitute the main theoretical axis of language’ (Sullivan 2012: 168). I have articulated a theory of LL motivation that is at once individual and social, offering a new person-in-context relational view. In theorising LL motivation as ideological becoming, I have demonstrated how participants’ motivation was fundamentally socially constructed, being generated by, and generating, engagement with others. This interpretation builds on previous work in the field in which the importance of others was understood and at times explicitly stated, but never fully theorised. This interpretation does not exactly ‘reconcile the individual with the social’ (Pittaway 2004: 215, cited in Ryan 2006: 24; my emphasis), the connotations of reconcile being to bring differing parties to a shared understanding, as a power/resistance binary interpretation might appear to do. Rather, in characterising the individual and the social as dialogically related, it acknowledges their mutual dependence.

8.2.2.1 An ontological contribution

By articulating the issues that ‘bothered’ me in the LL motivation field and addressing them in my theorisation, I have demonstrated how this work develops and builds upon existing research, taking it theoretically further. In addition, by formulating my own ontological assumptions through the process of expressing my ‘botherment’, I have made a contribution towards moving the field into more reflective and subjective territory, territory that recognises not only learner-participants but also researchers as complex beings, constantly negotiating intricate and multifaceted relationships with
other complex beings, both in person and through the research text; as both real and imagined others. I elaborate further on this below in the discussion of my practical contribution.

8.2.2 Bridging ontology and epistemology: The centrality of voice
The central concept in my theorisation – the concept which most robustly ties together these concerns – is that of voice. The participants’ ideological becoming took place through the development of their voice, which itself took place through their engagement with and response to other voices, and led in turn to a growing sense of agency. I have stated that one of my aims in this study is to foreground learners’ own voices and perspectives, an aim which I originally conceived as chiefly methodological – which indeed it is, as I go on to discuss. However, the foregrounding of learners’ voices is also a major aspect of my conceptual contribution; a conceptual fulcrum on which my theorisation of LL motivation rests.

8.3 Methodological contribution
8.3.1 Contribution to LL motivation: Addressing my epistemological concerns
In Chapter 1, I articulated the following epistemological concerns which arose from my engagement with the LL motivation literature:

How can I know how LL motivation develops?
How can I ‘understand how people give meaning to their experiences and to their relations with the world around them’ (Molden and Dweck 2006: 192)?
How can I hear learners’ own theorisations of their own experience?

Through the development of a dialogic interview methodology, I have addressed these epistemological issues. My methodology therefore makes a contribution to the LL motivation field. However, in offering a foundation for a more collaborative and ethical approach to research interviews, my methodology also contributes to the field of qualitative research more broadly, as I now elaborate.
8.3.2 Contribution to qualitative research
Honan et al. state: ‘Conducting research that is ethical is, above all else, being honest in the negotiation of relations between the researcher and researched’ (2013: 396). I posit that my Bakhtinian methodological framework goes some way towards facilitating such honesty, offering as it does a means by which participants can theorise their own experience. Moreover, as Preissle (2006: 687) points out, theory and practice in qualitative research are ‘interactive and independent’: by making interpretation a ‘shared event’ through which participants ‘may evolve new levels of understanding and meaning-making about their lives’ (Josselson 2004: 7), my dialogic research design enables me to practise what I theorise. I therefore suggest that this design offers a foundation for a more collaborative, more ethical approach to qualitative research interviews; an approach which may be seen as ‘a process to engage with the other, and not create, order and code the other’ (Mercieca and Mercieca 2013: 230). If research is to ‘enable human flourishing’ (Phipps 2013: 11), it needs to be genuinely dialogic and polyphonic. This research design marks the beginning of the development of such a methodology, a project which I suspect will become an enduring one for me.

8.3.3 Researching ‘on the boundary’
Articulating the assumptions underpinning our research is an important responsibility for researchers, challenging us to consider how we come to know what we think we know, and to consider our perspectives on the world, on truth and reality. Through such interrogation, the boundaries between researcher and researched may be renegotiated, in a move towards researching ‘on the boundary’, each seeing themselves through the other’s eyes. Such a move is a necessary if we are to speak truth unto power, if the pursuit of social justice is to be meaningful. My dialogic methodology is a step in this direction, and has generated a practical as well as a methodological contribution: a contribution which demonstrates the ways in which participating in this research has enhanced the participants’ lives, and thus in which ‘human flourishing’ has taken place.
8.4 Practical contribution: Ideological becoming through the interviews

8.4.1 ‘With the assistance of your story’: Impact on participants

For the participants, seeing themselves through the themes and dialogues I constructed as part of the dialogic research design entailed seeing themselves through my eyes and, to a lesser extent, the eyes of the other participants also. In their engagement with the themes and dialogues I constructed, the participants selectively assimilated some of my words, assimilating some and rejecting others. The participants were therefore ideologically becoming through the interview process, and for the most part, this was a positive process which made a positive contribution to their lives. Raj, for example, felt that the ‘big picture’ he perceived his narrative as portraying enabled him to look more precisely at what he wanted to do with his life:

what experiences do I hope to gain where do I see myself in five years … that kind of thing … what kind of career do I want really I mean not in terms of do I want to go into finance or… retail or whatever… but whether I really want to achieve some qualitative goals rather than some quantitative goals… and… a lot of that obviously is tied in with my identity now… with the assistance of your… story… it was almost crystal clear to me where I stood on the identity bit

For Federica, engaging through her dialogue with her characterisation of the English world as moving from ‘fictional’ to ‘real’ over the course of her learning led her to reflect on this process from her perspective as an Italian teacher:

I honestly now I can see the… the other way I can see… that obviously for me was natural that the Italian world was real and the English world was fictional… but now I can see also the other way round that we make… an Italian fictional… world

Reading her dialogue reminded Eli of how she had felt at times in her life, and it stimulated curiosity about the other participants:
I kind of forgot how did I feel so it reminded me … it made me… wanted to know how other people do that how they cope when they come here what they feel and why they want to learn English… I was thinking about other candidates [participants]… I wanted to know about them as well

However, the experience of seeing themselves through others’ eyes was not always an entirely positive one, as this exchange with Raluca demonstrates:

**Lou:** so are there any particular bits of this story that you’d like me to change or

**Raluca:** no… no no no it was just … I sounded a bit… too… materialistic maybe… I know I… this is how this… financial motivation… topic during the last interviews but… I think this initially came from… me not liking what I see back home

**L:** so okay so does that mean that you don’t like reading that about yourself… but maybe you do read it and you think okay I can see where that came from like

**R:** of course of course

**L:** okay… so you don’t want it changed because you don’t feel like it’s wrong… it’s just that you don’t like… it’s like being faced with something that you don’t like about yourself I suppose

**R:** yeah… exactly

**L:** okay… so you don’t want me to change anything or

**R:** no no no don’t

Raluca does not like the self that she sees in the dialogue, but she recognises this as her own emotional response to the way she might have expressed herself in an earlier interview. Rather than ask me to correct this to fit the way she understands herself to be now, she acknowledges that it came from her, but in a different time and place. So, while Raluca’s response to her
dialogue does not represent a directly positive impact on her life, it does reflect her awareness that perhaps she now feels more positive towards her experience.

8.4.2 ‘I realised to my shock’: Impact on myself

During the interviews, there were moments in which I too saw myself reflected through the eyes of others. There were occasions when Dmitry and Federica, the two participants I had known previously, made references which alluded to their knowledge of my life and interests as they saw them: as a fellow singer for Dmitry, and a fellow language researcher for Federica. These references were not uncomfortable for me, but did reinforce for me that I was not only researcher to them, but friend and colleague, and so their stories were mediated through those relationships. However, slightly more uncomfortable experiences did arise. Raj and I had both been to boarding school, and at times Raj gave me to believe that I was making more of this common experience than he would like, giving me reminders that our experiences may have been in common, but not necessarily similar.

Likewise, Raluca once alluded to feeling negatively judged by me because an element of financial success was important to her. These uncomfortable glimpses of myself through their eyes reinforced for me the need for conscious awareness of the tension between foregrounding their voices and accounting for my own.

Perhaps my most significant view of myself through the eyes of the other, however, occurred with Eli. Our discussion of her feeling like a child and not being heard when she first came to the UK prompted me to reflect on a recent experience of my own:

Lou: a few weeks ago I was proofreading some work by a student… I didn’t know her and I was reading her work and she said she wanted to phone me to discuss some of the problems in her work… and she phoned me and her English was really really good… really good and her accent was really clear… and I realised to my shock and I was quite horrified with myself… that I was being more respectful to her… because her English was so much better [than I’d
expected it to be] and I was thinking to myself when I put the phone down oh my god if she'd been… if her English had been more poor and she’d been a bit hesitant… I wouldn’t have had the patience and I would have thought oh god… you know because I think of myself as quite an enlightened person you know I’m a teacher I’ve got lots of experience… and now I realise I have this kind of… prejudice you know so

**Eli:** they don’t realise… but everybody had it in their own language… I think if I was in your place and somebody couldn’t speak Farsi… I don’t know… I might just laugh or … it’s not your fault and it’s not their fault but… it’s a difficult position for them to be

From Eli’s description of feeling like a child, I saw myself through the eyes of the other: other learners to whom I might unconsciously have spoken differently because of the level of English I perceived them to have, and who might have felt infantilised and unrecognised as a result.

Thus I, too, was ideologically becoming through the interviews. My dialogic methodology had a practical impact on the participants and on myself, leading us all to greater reflection upon and learning about ourselves, and in some cases leading us to challenge ourselves.

**8.5 Political contribution**

**8.5.1 Language and ideology**

To characterise language learning motivation as ideological becoming is, perhaps obviously, to acknowledge that language learning motivation is ideological. To understand LL motivation as inherently and inextricably connected to others is an explicit politicisation, acknowledging it as bound up in personal, social, cultural, economic relations, all constructed between selves and others. LL motivation is part of motivation for learning to be in the world, which entails the development of an ideological self within the ‘ideological environment’ (Medvedev 1978: 14). This in itself represents a significant political contribution. However, such a heteroglossic understanding of LL motivation lays the foundation for a further
contribution, having as it does significant implications for the ownership of language – in this case, English.

8.5.2 Ownership of English
A heteroglossic conceptualisation of LL motivation renders the task of identifying particular languages with particular social groups infinitely complex. Moving far beyond identifying languages with national, ethnic or cultural groups, such a conceptualisation understands language as dynamic and constantly evolving with its speakers as they negotiate their identities. In developing voices in English and expressing themselves through those voices, the participants came to own English: it became part of them, and they became part of it, through their motivated development of voice in a heteroglossic context. Through understanding language learning motivation as ideological becoming, then, this work also makes a political contribution: even within the linguistic hegemony of English, learners can find agency, and become owners of English.

8.6 Implications for teaching practice
The centrality of learner voice has implications for their learning in formal as well as informal contexts. Although it was through their engagement with heteroglossia that the participants’ voices began to develop more substantially and agentively, the motivation to speak that enabled the development of their voices was constructed initially in their classrooms. The participants all, in different ways and at different stages of their learning, considered themselves to be good language learners because of their experiences in the formal learning environment.

8.6.1 Language as a ‘tool for living’
This study has demonstrated that engagement with a range of different others led to the participants understanding English as a ‘tool for living’. This happened as a result of the authoritative discourse of the importance of English becoming gradually internally persuasive. This process is thrown into particularly sharp relief for language learners, as language is always and fundamentally the vehicle of learning. The increasing diversity of
populations both within and outwith the language classroom mean that the interactions and tensions between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses are manifold, offering a wide variety of discourses for learners to orient to and providing both challenges and opportunities for learners and teachers. Learners and teachers will come to the classroom, and engage with the wider world, with a body of internally persuasive discourses shaped by various authoritative discourses. In the process of learning a language, learners may experience challenges to their internally persuasive discourses that may lead them into conflict with the authoritative discourses through which the former have been shaped. They also come into contact with, and negotiate, the internally persuasive discourses of others – their classmates, teachers, and other speakers of the language. In this way, language learning and broader processes of ‘life’ learning are inextricably linked: the impact of these encounters on learners, and the changes wrought by them, are part of their ideological becoming. Teachers therefore have a role to play in helping learners to understand the language as a ‘tool for living’ and, as far as possible, to engage with it as such. How teachers put this into practice will, of course, always depend on their particular contexts; but given the centrality of learner voice to language, learning and motivation, encouraging the development of learner voice would appear to be central to building such an understanding through their classroom learning.

8.6.2 Developing learner voice
The development of learner voice may indeed be central to motivation and learning, but the extent to which learners are able and willing to engage with other voices in the classroom may be a complicated issue. The participants in this study related their experiences from a perspective of being increasingly successful and proficient language users. As my quote from Federica in 5.4.5.2 indicates, negative learning experiences may be easily forgotten in these particular stories of their experience. For some learners, interactions with imagined and real others may lead to an understanding that ‘[n]ot all words for just anyone submit easily to … appropriation; many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign’ and ‘cannot be assimilated into [their] context’ (Bakhtin 1981: 294). If the words cannot be
assimilated to the learner’s context, perhaps a shift of focus from the words to the context would be more appropriate: to let the learner focus on what they know and what is important to them, in order to develop a sense of how the language may be able to work for them. A role of the teacher, then, may be to enable learners to ‘speak as themselves’ (Ushioda 2011).

8.6.3 Enabling learners to ‘speak as themselves’
As this study has demonstrated, when learner voice is enabled, learners’ identities and motivations become engaged, are given expression and are allowed to develop (Ushioda 2011: 21). If teachers can create and encourage an environment where learners feel supported to ‘speak as themselves’, using the language to engage and communicate their own preferred meanings, interests and identities, learners are more likely to ‘feel involved and motivated to communicate and thus to engage themselves in the process of learning and using the language’ (17). By speaking as themselves, and engaging their lives and interests in the world outside the classroom, learners may begin to ‘bridge’ this world with the world of the classroom (Ushioda 2011: 17, citing Legenhausen 1999). The implications for learners’ motivation, and by extension their ideological becoming, are clear: this would be an important step towards awareness of, and by extension their ability to operate in and manage, the heteroglossic contexts of language, with all the potential for learning, growth and development that entails.

8.7 Expanding the dialogical framework
8.7.1 Conceptually: ‘Some voices are louder than others’
The interpretation of LL motivation I have presented in this thesis does, of course, have its limitations. In it I have theorised and positioned voice as central to the ontological and epistemological stances this interpretation represents. However, it does not fully account for the power relations and structural inequalities language learners must negotiate. As Hirschkop writes:
As we all know too well, the picking and choosing of language forms takes place not on a level playing field, but in an unevenly structured linguistic world, in which some speakers and institutions have a great deal more influence than others. And that is why historical becoming, in actuality as opposed to Bakhtin’s philosophy, consists of violent struggle as much as verbal give and take: because its narratives, pace Bakhtin, are made by turning points and decisions which are often enforced on others by fiat rather than presented to them as a gift. (1999: 263)

Such power relations and structural inequalities derive from linguistic hegemony, in this case the hegemony of English, and the concomitant authoritative discourse of its importance: a discourse which, in different ways and to varying degrees, necessarily shapes the lives and futures of any number of people in the world. This authoritative discourse may have become internally persuasive for these participants, but there are many for whom it has not and will not. And for the authoritative discourse to become internally persuasive is not the same as to challenge it: even through the development of their English voices, through which they developed agency and influence in the language, the participants were not able to challenge the authoritative discourse. To paraphrase Sullivan (2012: 167), the capacity of the participants to dialogue the authoritative discourse of the importance of English out of existence is severely limited. Future expansion of the dialogical framework, then, should involve fuller consideration of the wider implications of this authoritative discourse: fuller theorising of how ‘some voices are louder than others’ (Shepherd 1989: 146). This connects to another aspect of expanding the dialogical framework: listening to the voices of other groups of language learners.

8.7.2 Research participants: Engaging with a variety of learners
The participants in this study may be considered, in broad global terms, to be reasonably privileged: they all came from families in which their aspirations were nurtured and supported, they all had higher education, and they all had access to further or higher education in the UK. They can also be considered successful English-language learners: although it was not
always an easy process, they overcame their barriers, and reached, or had in sight, a level of proficiency with which they were satisfied. In other words, their backgrounds facilitated the experiences through which they developed their language proficiency: the authoritative discourse of the importance of learning English was comparatively unchallenging and unthreatening to them. Indeed, it is likely that their willingness to take part in this study was a result of their success and their comfort discussing their experiences. For other learners of English, however, this authoritative discourse may pose a significant challenge, or even threat. For some learners, developing internally persuasive discourses may mean real and sometimes dangerous engagement with authoritative discourses (Pollard 2008). Such learners may be more acutely aware of the voices which are louder than others, and of the struggle to speak and be heard in the midst of such voices. Engagement with the experience of a variety of learners, then, is imperative to expanding the dialogical framework and developing further understanding of language learning motivation.

8.7.3 Methodologically: Towards a dialogical analysis
As discussed above, the research design I constructed for this study represents a significant contribution both to the LL motivation research field and to qualitative research more broadly. However, the application of theory to practice evident in the research design was not similarly represented in my analysis. The dialogical framework could therefore be expanded methodologically through the development of dialogical approaches to data analysis, building on work by Sullivan (2012). Such analytical approaches could involve elements of discourse analysis or voice-centred relational analysis, in order to examine how ideological becoming takes place at the micro, discoursal level.

8.8 Conclusion - but not finalisation…
In this thesis, I have articulated my response to my engagement with the field of language learning motivation research and the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. This response offers a definition and interpretation of LL motivation as ideological becoming, a process of learning to be in the world.
I have endeavoured throughout to be transparent about my philosophical position and research procedures, in the recognition that this definition and interpretation was generated from a particular perspective. The process of dialogical engagement with the many voices in this thesis, and the development of my own voice that has taken place throughout, represents my own ideological becoming: for, like the participants in their engagement with heteroglossia, I too have changed and been changed through my engagement with these voices. This thesis represents my own responsive utterance, anticipating reply in a spirit of creative understanding; it is meant not to finalise, but to generate further dialogue as the language learning research field, the research community and all the individuals who comprise it, continue to become. I look forward to continuing to participate in the dialogue.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant recruitment advertisement

This is the advertisement which appeared on the Research Volunteering page of the University of Manchester, and in recruitment emails to the University Language Centre and other institutions I approached.

International Students Needed for a Study of Motivation to Learn English

I am a PhD student and teacher of English as a Foreign Language, looking for international students to take part in an interview study about their motivation for learning English. My aim is to explore students’ motivation through their stories about their language learning experiences, perceptions and future goals.

You will be asked to take part in up to 4 interviews, over the course of one year. All interviews can be arranged at a time and place convenient for you. Each interview could last for up to two hours, though they may not take this long.

In the first interview I will ask you some general questions about your experience of learning English in the past and present, and about what your hopes are for the future.

In the following interviews I may ask you to talk in more depth about particular experiences you mentioned, and to talk about things you feel have been important for your motivation.

You can be any nationality, age, or gender, as long as you have learnt English as a second or foreign language and are currently a student (of any subject) in the UK. You should also be resident in Manchester for the academic year 2011-12.

Contact details:
If you would like to take part, or for further information, please contact Louise Harvey at l.t.harvey@gmail.com for more details.
Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

The social and pragmatic parameters of English-language learning motivation: A narrative study of six ESL learners

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a study as part of my PhD. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Do take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the study?

Lou Harvey
School of Education, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL

Title of the study

The social and pragmatic parameters of English-language learning motivation: A narrative study of six ESL learners.

In previous research I described second-language (L2) learning motivation according to certain social and pragmatic factors. This study will build upon my past work to investigate a larger number of learners in more depth.

What is the aim of the study?

My aim is to explore six learners’ motivation for learning English through their stories about their language learning experiences, perceptions and future goals.

Why have I been chosen?

I wish to conduct the research with people who have learnt English as a Second Language, and who are currently studying in the UK.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be asked to take part in up to 4 interviews. All interviews can be arranged at a time and place convenient for you. Each interview may last for up to two hours, though they may not take this long.

In the first interview I will ask you some general questions about your experience of learning English in the past and present, and about what your hopes are for the future. With your permission, I will record and transcribe
the interview, and ask you to read the transcript to check you agree with my account of what you said. If you do not agree, you may change or delete anything you wish to without giving a reason.

In the following interviews I may ask you to talk in more depth about particular experiences you mentioned, and to talk about things you feel have been important for your motivation. Again, with your permission, I will record and transcribe the interviews, and ask you to check the transcription.

You will not be asked to discuss any topic or answer any question you do not want to. You may also stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason.

What happens to the data collected?

I will upload the data to my personal computer at my home, to which no-one else has access. A transcript will be printed and used for analysis, which will be carried out at my home. When I am not working on them, all documents relating to the study will be stored in a locked cabinet.

How is confidentiality maintained?

No-one will have access to the data except for myself and my supervisor, and you if you request it. Where data is directly quoted in the text, names will be changed.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What is the duration of the study?

Your part in it would be up to four individual interviews with me, lasting no longer than two hours each, over a period of one year. Four interviews is the maximum number, so it may be fewer; two hours is also a maximum length of time, and the interviews may be shorter than this. The maximum amount of interview time would be eight hours over one year.

I would like the first interview to take place in May or June, and the following interviews at times convenient to you over the year.

Where will the study be conducted?

Interviews can take place at a location of your choice.

Will the outcomes of the study be published?

No, the study will not be published. It will, however, be publicly available in the University of Manchester library.
Contact for further information

If you would like to discuss the project further or ask any questions, please email me at l.t.harvey@gmail.com.

What if something goes wrong?

Please contact my supervisor Julian Edge at the School of Education at the above address, or on julian.edge@manchester.ac.uk.

If you want to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the study please contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.
Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

The social and pragmatic parameters of English-language learning motivation: A narrative study of six ESL learners

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below.

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.

I agree to take part in the above project.

Name of participant  Date  Signature

Name of participant  Date  Signature
Appendix 4: Themes for Federica Interview 2

Hi Fede,

These are the four themes I have constructed from my analysis so far of our first interview. They are organised around your own words/phrases, and I’ve included some of what I feel are the key quotes from you. They are not all of equal weighting, so I’ve presented them in order of the most supporting data – Oppositional identities and Reality/fiction are first, then Choice/desire to learn, Learning as a process of maturation, then Perception of different worlds. They are not necessarily discrete, and there are places where I have explored possible connections between some of the ideas in the different themes – you may see a lot more overlap. Most importantly, they are by no means fixed. This is simply the first stage of analysis, so if anything makes no sense to you, that’s fine – it’s something for us to discuss. There’ll be a lot more to do before we reach a ‘final’ interpretation!

I’d like the next interview to be an open discussion of the analysis so far, so I want to hear your thoughts on the ideas and themes I’m presenting here. I’ll bring the data exemplifying the themes to the interview, but for now, if you can read about the themes and think about them for when we meet, that would be great. Please feel free to ask me any questions beforehand too, if there’s anything you want clarification on – we don’t need to wait until the interview.

**Oppositional identities**

There are several occasions in which you construct yourself in opposition to something else, or are attracted by oppositions. You said you were attracted to the UK because of its visual difference from Italy, and because you perceived everything (infrastructure, social systems etc.) as functioning, in contrast with Italy. You described the British Consulate in Italy as ‘British space’, despite being in Italy. You were able to overcome apprehension about talking to people in the UK by telling yourself ‘we are not English so it’s alright’ – it didn’t matter if people laughed at you. You enjoyed your Scottish accent because you felt this made you different from other English-speaking Italians; however, you did not want to develop a Manchester accent as you did not want to ‘replace’ your Scottish accent, because the two experiences were very different and represented different things for you. You also appreciate your Italian accent more now that you live in the UK as you feel it keeps you connected to Italy, and, by extension,
differentiated as Italian in the UK. You also mention the two sides of you which love the UK and Cuba, or structuredness/unstructuredness. What I find particularly interesting is your perception of yourself as an English user in terms of your Italian identity in Italy: you say that learning English was a ‘starting point from my life beyond [my parents]’, that your parents supported your language learning so that you did not feel so different from them, and that you were constructing an individual/independent world through English, ‘building my life apart from [my parents]’. All this seems to be in keeping with your understanding of yourself as having ‘two sides’; I also wonder if it shows an explicit kind of self-authoring, deliberately differentiating yourself in order to define yourself? What do you think about this?

**Reality/fiction**

You use the terms ‘real’ and ‘reality’ several times to describe how your attitude to English developed: the language became ‘real’ through music, movies, and visiting the UK. You feel that people can only ‘really’ speak English if they visit and speak English in an English-speaking country, and you talk about the ‘English real world’ and wanting to discover it. This is contrasted with learning English in Italy, which is ‘like a game’ and ‘fictional’, and that in Italy speaking English is like ‘another world’. You also describe learning as a ‘bridge’ between fiction and reality. This seems to encapsulate my interpretation of your use of the term ‘real’: that in learning English, you perceived a world you could access, and the learning process allowed you that access. Because there was no everyday use of English in your Italian context, which was your reality, you could not perceive English as ‘real’ – until you became aware of, and put yourself into, a context in which English had everyday use. What are your thoughts on this?

**Choice/desire to learn**

You use the phrase ‘fell in love’ several times to describe your attitude to English and British culture, and you state that you ‘chose’ to learn from the age of six, even when you had a very tough teacher; you say you were ‘stubborn’ about learning English. You are clear about the fact that you chose to learn at the same time as you describe situations in which you lacked choice; you say it was compulsory to learn in Italy, then go on to describe your personal reasons for learning (such as liking Take That), and to state that it is still ‘up to you’ how much you engage with the language and/or in the classroom. You also mention that you had ‘no choice’ but to speak English in London, and that this lack of choice became a learning
opportunity; you took this lack of choice and turned it into an active opportunity to achieve your goal of learning English. Thus, by my interpretation, you had a strong desire to learn and you chose to learn, perceiving personal choice even when the context constrained your ability to choose. Does this interpretation make sense to you?

**Learning as a process of maturation**

‘Mature’ is also a word that crops up a few times in the interview – you talk about not being ‘mature’ enough in English to make the most of the pen pal experience, and about being immature in age too. Conversely, you say that after living in the UK you would be ‘mature’ enough to go anywhere, and that in knowing English, as a result of living in the UK, you would feel ‘confident in going more or less anywhere’. I would suggest that your uses of ‘mature’ in terms of language learning and living abroad are unusual enough to be of interest; language learning is usually described in terms of ability/proficiency, and living abroad perhaps more in terms of confidence (though you used this term too). I wonder if this indicates you equating maturing with learning – what do you think?

**Perception of different worlds**

The ‘world’ and different ‘worlds’ appear on several occasions in the interview. You talk about English as ‘my world’, as constructing an individual/independent world through English separate from your parents and family. You also describe the world of a 12 or 13 year old (in reference to your pen pal letter writing) as ‘very small’, even compared to the age of 16 when people have their first boyfriend, which is ‘another world’. You also see learning English as a point of connection to the wider world – you claim that Take That songs connected you ‘from a small place to the world’, and that learning language was important ‘if you wanted to have a place in the world’. This seems to move through a process of perceiving your small world as a young teenager and new language learner, to wanting to broaden your world by seeing the possibilities offered by the language, to constructing your own world in that language, to participating in the wider world in that language. What do you think – do you have anything to say about this?
Appendix 5: Other participants’ themes for Interview 2

5a: Dmitry

Isolation/connection
These seem to be ideas that occur frequently, and in relation to each other. An early experience of connection you talk about is making the textile collage for the American class; you were able to imagine the people you were doing this for and that it was a nice thing to do ‘especially after the Cold War’. You also talk about the ease of communicating in English as a tourist in Eastern Europe, that this offered a sense of similarity between you and that you were ‘in the same shoes’. Of particular importance seems to be your sense of connection to Europe; you describe yourself as having ‘warm feelings’ towards Europe and of feeling European. You also talk about Britain as ‘still part of Europe … despite all the efforts to separate itself’, and that you want to be in the UK because you have ‘so many connections with old Europe’, which makes me wonder if you see Europe as a kind of bridge between Russia and the UK, or Russia and the wider (English-speaking) world? This sense of warmth and connection is in stark contrast to your feelings towards Russia, which you perceive as isolated now and historically, and as conceptually ‘far away’ from you now. You ‘cut [yourself] off’ from other Russians in the UK, and do not see yourself as being in the UK for ‘maintaining [your] identity’ – you say you ‘don’t have any connection at all with what’s going on [in Russia]’. This isolation is reflected in the narrative you perceive Russia as constructing for itself, as a centralised and powerful state that needs to somehow display its strength to the world. It seems to me, then, that you have in turn isolated yourself from Russia and connected instead to Europe and the UK – what is not very clear is whether you moved towards Europe because of your sense of Russian isolation, or whether you only perceived Russia’s isolation because you started to feel a connection to Europe. What do you think about this?

I think this theme may run even deeper in your narrative, though it is more surmise than evidence-based at the moment. You say that Britain gives you ‘freedom to be yourself’ and that people here are aware of ‘whether they can influence things themselves’, which suggests to me that you perceive more room for personal agency in the UK, and that people in the UK are less overpowered by structures/institutions (such as the Church). This makes me wonder if your sense of connection to Europe and/or leaving Russia was a kind of bid for freedom; or, if you did not have this awareness of greater freedom and agency before you came to the UK, whether
*distancing* yourself from Russia is a bid for freedom. What are your thoughts?

**In/ability to communicate**
As your language learning in Russia lacked any wider communicative context, I wonder if as a result

a) you were able to develop a fearless attitude to communication (e.g. talking to your examiner and to the American visitor about tennis), as it was a safe and closed environment containing no risk for communication; and

b) you started to feel ‘uncomfortable’ and put up psychological ‘barriers’ when you became aware of the wider communicative contexts.

You became ‘uncomfortable’ about your ability to listen and understand when you were first exposed to the BBC and CNN; you also talk about the ‘shock’ of coming to the UK and it being ‘altogether different’ in an English-speaking country. I find it interesting that your discomfort seems to come partly from the awareness of different accents: you found the TOEFL listening test hard because of the American accent, and on the plane to the UK you were confronted with a Manchester accent you found difficult to understand. It seems to me that this represents your growing awareness of a matrix of English voices in the world that you had to negotiate, rather than the comparatively communicatively-isolated voices of English tests and science journals. This becomes particularly acute when you come to the UK and find previously basic communicative transactions very difficult – you say ‘I suddenly got this sort of psychological feeling that you know I’m not sure actually what I’m doing or what I’m saying’. What are your thoughts on this?

There also appears to be a link to Russia here in that you had formed an impression, based on Russian jokes and stereotypes, of British people as reserved and uncommunicative, and as a result you were surprised to find a stark contrast in small talk and chatting, which you had not really experienced in Russia – and which leads me to wonder if the jokes you told me are more of a reflection of Russian attitudes to communication? Do you think the contrast between your experience of the UK in this regard and your expectations from Russia was something that also hindered your speaking confidence in the UK?
Finally, you talk about being ‘more comfortable with foreigners’ (i.e. non-Russians, non-British) in the UK, because there is ‘mutual advantage’ and you find it easier to ‘relate’ to them, and I wonder if this might result from

a) a shared sense of not always knowing the rules of communication; and/or

b) because there is more freedom to create your own rules (I wondered if by ‘mutual advantage’ you meant something like this)?

**Positive attitude to learning**

This came through strongly in the words you used to describe much of your learning in general, and your language learning in particular: ‘great’, ‘exciting’, ‘never had any problems’, ‘top of the group’, ‘pleasurable’. You talk about the straightforwardness of your RNCM audition and interview, saying you ‘always got through straightaway’ in these situations, and in general you give the impression of low anxiety about your learning path, with the attitude that ‘things will take care of themselves’. ‘Excitement’ seems to be a recurring feeling – you found learning English exciting, you get more excitement from the music world than from the academic world, and in the future you may need something more exciting. Similarly, ‘natural’ is a recurring term – you learnt English naturally when you were very young, it was natural to be in the Russian environment learning English, and you want things in your life/career to happen naturally. You felt insecure about the difficulty of the TOEFL exam, but you still got a good score quite easily, justifying your ‘things will take care of themselves’ attitude. You also have positive (though few) English communication experiences in Russia, in the opportunities you had at school and presenting your work at university. However, when you discovered English-language TV and then later when you came to the UK, you realised that using English would be more difficult than you first thought, and that your English was ‘not good enough yet’. Despite the painful situation in which you found yourself in the UK, you acted agentively, trying to create opportunities to interact and dealing with your insecurity by putting yourself ‘in that situation time and time again’. A question this raises for me is about this realisation that it might be more difficult than first thought: is the realisation hard to cope with because things have always been fairly easy, or is it fairly easy to cope with because knowing things have always been easy gives you the confidence to believe they can be overcome? How do you think you were able to keep putting yourself in
situations which forced you to interact? What are your general thoughts on this theme?

**English offering professional opportunity**

There seems to me to be a connection in your life between English and the science professions, whether generally or for you personally in terms of your profession. You grew up in a town with a strong intellectual community where much scientific research took place, and as a result of which there was a well-established language school. Your father, as a scientist who could speak English, and whose own plans to work abroad had not been realised, wanted you to learn ‘because science or any ... professional thing involved communication with pretty much everybody around the world’ – from which I read that from the very beginning of your life you had an understanding that learning English would offer you professional opportunity. There also seems to be a sense that your professional future may have been under threat if you’d stayed in Russia, and that English was a kind of gateway to the opportunities, success and fulfilment perceived by your supervisor to be unavailable in Russia. Does this make sense to you?

I would take this further to speculate that this sense of English as a professional tool might be one of the reasons for your lack of inhibition as a young learner; although you clearly perceived English as a communicative tool, the context in which you would engage in communication – the world of science academia, journals, conferences and so on - would be a very safe and familiar one, one in which you had grown up as a member of a scientific family and scientific community. Thus you perhaps felt safe and confident communicating in English. What do you think? If you think this could be meaningful, could it also be a factor in

a) your ‘shock’ and being ‘brought down to earth’ when you moved to the UK and the reality of English as an everyday language hit you; and/or

b) your subsequent determination and ability to push through your communication barriers?
5b: Eli

*Desire to speak*
All through your English-language learning life, you have wanted to speak. At school you didn’t enjoy your lessons because there wasn’t much speaking; you were jealous of your classmate who spoke very good English; you enjoyed your private school lessons more because you did speaking. In general, you found learning English in Iran inadequate because ‘just having English in your mind’ is what matters – ‘you can’t really speak English with what they learn you in the classroom in the school’. The times at which you have felt unable to speak have been frustrating for you – with your brother-in-law’s friend from Germany, you felt you couldn’t say what you wanted to say, and when you first came to the UK you lost a lot of confidence in speaking because you were afraid you would not understand people’s response. An important way of learning for you was to go to places where you could hear people speaking English, and listen to them – so whether you yourself were speaking or whether you were listening to others speak, speaking has always been important to you as a) a means of learning, and b) the purpose of learning.

It seems that for you, the ability to speak is connected to being in control and being taken seriously: you say that when you first came to Manchester ‘it was really scary because I didn’t know what I was saying’, and you pushed yourself to improve your speaking because you didn’t want to embarrass yourself in front of people. Perhaps more significantly, I feel that speaking for you may also be a way to be yourself and to have your identity recognised: you say that when you were misunderstood when speaking in the UK, you didn’t want to be seen as ‘crazy’ like someone whom people don’t understand – you didn’t want to lose the ‘social class’ that you were in Iran. Being unable to speak when you first came to the UK was like a loss of identity for you, and a couple of times you mention being like a child: ‘I was somebody in Iran… but all of a sudden I was nobody here and I couldn’t even speak it was like a child’. Because you couldn’t speak, you were unable to tell people who you were, and thus you felt like ‘nobody’. Now that your speaking has improved, you are more confident about becoming what you want to become (see Personal growth below), and you are able to accept that sometimes you will be misunderstood (‘this is normal because I am not an English person’) and that people will not think you’re crazy if you can’t speak – ‘they know that you are new to this language’. Therefore I would suggest that for you, your desire to speak has motivated you to a) come to the UK; and b) push through your fear and
barriers in the UK, because you recognise that if you are able to speak, you are able to be what you want to be, and become what you want to become – you are able to be ‘somebody’, like you were in Iran. What do you think about this?

**Connecting English and Farsi**

You started learning English when you were learning to write Farsi at school, and your early descriptions of learning English are often compared to your experiences of learning Farsi – you say that the alphabet was ‘easier’ and ‘different’, and that you liked the lines and shapes because it felt like drawing, and that the differences between English and Farsi were ‘really interesting’ for you. Thus, your early English-learning experiences are related to your experiences of Farsi. You also connect English and Farsi when you say that in Iran, ‘you need to speak English with Farsi accent’ in order to be a socially acceptable English speaker, otherwise people will think you are showing off. As I described in *Desire to speak* above, in the UK you are able to accept that sometimes you will be misunderstood ‘because I am not an English person’, and that it is not necessary to speak English like British people to be understood. This suggests to me that you are fairly comfortable with your Farsi identity as an English speaker – although you feel that ‘mother tongue’ English speakers are better at English than learner-speakers, you do not mind being seen as a foreign speaker yourself, and you understand that you will not sound like a mother-tongue speaker. What would you say about this?

I would take this even further to say that you actively want to use your Farsi/Iranian identity in the UK in order to help other Iranians living in the UK: you wanted to work for the Red Cross translating for refugees; you wanted to ask for an Iranian section in the Pankhurst house, as you have seen nothing for Iranian women in Manchester and you ‘can understand them I’m from the same culture’; you are also aware of Iranian women in Manchester who are trapped at home with their family because their English is not very good, even though they may be university graduates in Iran. I would suggest that you want to work towards connecting Iranians’ experience with the UK, which perhaps stems from your own developing Farsi/English/Iranian/British identity, which in turn may spring from having learnt English alongside learning to write in Farsi when you were young, and having a constant sense of connection and comparison between the two. What are your thoughts on this?
**Awareness of power relations**

You appear to be very aware of the social power relations involved in being an Iranian speaker of English in the UK, and you are conscious of the ways in which you may have less power than others. Perhaps the most clear example of this is the way you felt when you first came to the UK, when you felt like a child and did not know how to use the language you had – ‘it was really scary because I didn’t know what I was saying’. You were aware that in Iran you had been ‘somebody’ from a particular ‘social class’, and when you came to the UK you were unable to communicate this identity because you felt powerless to speak in English. This then deprived you of the power you would have had if this identity had been recognised. You are particularly aware of power relations in the workplace, as you know that managers ‘speak really fast and they don’t tolerate if you don’t understand’, and that if you have to ask something several times in order to understand this will be perceived as your ‘weakness’. You are aware that if you were employed, ‘they are paying me they are expecting to do what they’re saying’, and this would make you ‘scared to go and ask them to say again’, which would not help your language. However, if you worked as a volunteer, the relationships would be more equal, as you can make a contribution to them and experience language in the workplace – ‘this is something that I do for them and they do for me’. I would suggest, then, that your understanding of power in relationships has been an influence on your choices in the UK, and, as a result, on your language learning. You want to put yourself in situations where you will benefit most from the language, and these are situations in which you have equal power to other English speakers, as you would in a volunteering context. What would you say?

I think this awareness of power relations may also be an influence on your desire to work with and for Iranians in the UK, especially refugees and women, who are particularly disempowered groups. Do you have any thoughts about this?

**Personal growth**

I feel you have found a strong sense of personal growth and development since coming to the UK, and that being here has been important for your sense of independence, self-knowledge and ambition. You were determined to push yourself to speak, and so you put yourself in situations where you were listening to people speak, and learnt from this not only to speak yourself, but that you would be accepted as an English speaker and would not be laughed at or thought ‘crazy’. As a result of being in a
position to participate through speaking, you have been able to learn about yourself: you now think of yourself as a businesswoman, and have enrolled on a business course; you ‘found out’ that you want to be a millionaire, and are looking for a way to become one. The independence of being in the UK and away from your family has given you ‘space to know myself who I am what I want’: twice you say ‘I didn’t know myself at all [in Iran]’ and twice you say that in the UK you had ‘space’ to learn about yourself. On the seminar you went to in London, you gained new insights into yourself, your motives and reasons for choices you made (such as why you studied nursing), and ‘it was like an eye-opening experience’ for you. So I wonder if you feel that English too has enabled you to grow and develop in this way – more than just coming to the UK, it was through being able to speak English and participate socially (the London seminar was in English, for example) that you have developed this strong sense of personal growth? In turn, does this sense of personal growth motivate you to continue trying to become what you want to become - whether that is a businesswoman, a millionaire, a worker for refugees/women’s rights, or whatever? What do you think?
5c: Raj

(Resisting) Going native
Your use of the term native, and specifically the people you indicate when you talk about natives, is very interesting. You use this term most when describing school administrative and maintenance staff (not teachers) at Ellesmere College, and people living in the surrounding area not connected with the school (not students). So, while to some extent you want to ‘blend in with’ and communicate with the natives, you come also to want to distance yourself from what they represent; you say that your ‘hybrid’ local accent made you ‘sound like such a pauper’ or ‘villager’, and that the surrounding accents, such as Dudley and Ludlow, are ‘horrible’, ‘nasty’ and ‘grim’. Although you describe the Shrewsbury accent as ‘marvellous’, ‘elegant’ and ‘refined’, this was not part of the hybrid accent you developed. By this definition, native appears to be an undesirable quality, connected with parochialism and perhaps lack of education – you do not, after all, apply the term to any of your teachers or fellow students. In fact, you describe your rich fellow students as trying to come across as ‘poor and chavvy’ in defiance of the public-school stereotype, which you call ‘ridiculous’, and which I interpret as another indicator of wanting to distance yourself from this particular version of nativeness. What do you think?

However, there appears also to be an acceptable (and, for you, more complex) form of nativeness. You say that by the end of your time at Ellesmere, your friends ‘refused to believe that I didn’t have British nationality’, because you spoke the local dialect so fluently. Your response to this was, on the one hand, to resist this by emphasising your international student credentials, and on the other hand to feel ‘silently pleased’ with yourself for have made people believe you were British and not foreign, suggesting acceptance of your friends’ beliefs in your British nationality – an acceptable definition of nativeness, but one that you are more conflicted about, as it jars with your international (non-native) identity. I would suggest, then, that you aspire to ‘go native’, but only within a particular definition of ‘nativeness’, and only as long as your international/Indian identity can be reconciled within it. Quite what this definition is, I am not yet sure. What would you say to this? Does it make sense to you?
**Academic achievement**

It seems that being a high achiever is an important aspect of your identity, and you describe yourself both in the past and the present as someone very academically capable, particularly in English. You were affected ‘very deeply’ by your English teacher joking that there was ‘nothing left to teach’ you; you say that after boarding school in India you ‘had to move on to the higher next level and … push and push and push’; you passed your scholarship exam to Ellesmere ‘easily’; you had taken the ICSE exams, which are notoriously difficult, more difficult than A-levels and your university exams, and you scored 91% (you think!), which meant you were ‘set for life’. Much, though not all, of your description of your achievement is expressed in comparison to your friends and peers: you were always ahead of your peers and classmates in English; for three years you were top of your class of 100 in English, which was ‘unprecedented’ at your school; you did your friends’ coursework at Ellesmere and they considered you very well read; three generations of men in your family have failed for various reasons to do a Masters degree, and you want to overcome this. It seems clear to me, then, that your confidence in your academic ability, justified by your record of high achievement, has been a motivating force for you both for learning English and for academic study more generally – what do you think? I wonder also whether this could be expanded to something like *Differentiation through achievement*, characterising your high achievement as something you feel sets you apart from your peers? I don’t think there is so much evidence for this, so it is something of a surmise, but I do think it might be worth exploring with you – not least because you seem quite comfortable differentiating yourself in other ways, such as getting on better with older people and being content to ‘join the rat race’ and be a ‘corporate sellout’, in contrast to many of your fellow students. What are your thoughts?

**Holism and personal growth**

You often critically reflect on your experiences and choices through a lens of personal growth and development, with particular emphasis on holism, and you often couch your experiences in terms of being ‘helpful’. You appreciated your holistic education at boarding school in India, with no exams until the ICSEs. You feel it would have helped you in the long run if you had ‘taken a more holistic approach’ to your choice of A-levels, choosing subjects that might have better prepared you for university, as you perceive your essay writing as a comparative weakness. You say that as a result of your boarding school experience you only experienced a sense of stability and identity later in your life, whereas if you had had this earlier
'maybe I could have taken some time off to... grow and progress in other ways’. You decided that the hybrid local accent you developed at Ellesmere would ‘in the long run ... actually be harmful to overall growth’. Moreover, you are critical about your career choice, saying that although you would be comfortable ‘earning money’, ‘wearing a tie’ and ‘going to a job’, you are very clear that it is important for you to understand that that is what you are doing, and that you are ‘not going to make any silly promises like my father did’. Thus, although your life as you have described it to me has been geared towards educational (and ultimately economic) success, you have also seen this as a meaningful process of personal growth and development. What would you say about this?

**Locating yourself in your perception of England**

You have had, and continue to have, a very strong influence on your perceptions of England and Englishness from your maternal grandfather, with whom you spent memorable summers in Darjeeling listening to how he admired the English and ‘how the British were the most civilised of all races’, and who was one of the major reasons for wanting to live in England; your time with him was ‘what really inspired me to aspire to be as I am now’. Having come to the UK with these perceptions, then, you have had to socially and culturally locate yourself; and here we can relate back to the first theme, *(Resisting) Going native.* Because of the perceptions of England and the English you developed talking to your grandfather, you have an idea of the English as ‘the most cultured people on earth’, whom you wish ‘to emulate ... as an homage’. You also perceive Britain as ‘the Rome of today’, and ‘almost like the ideal model’. I wonder, then, if as a result of these ideas you have absorbed a kind of imperial/colonial attitude towards England and certain social groups, which is conjured for me in no small part by your evocation of Rome and your use of terms like ‘civilised’, ‘refined’, ‘elegant’, ‘pauper’, ‘villager’, and ‘natives’ (as discussed above). All these terms, to me, carry connotations of class inferiority/superiority and evoke the rhetoric of Britain’s colonial days. I do admit that this is a personal response which may not occur in another reader of/listener to your story; but similarly, I’m willing to bet I wouldn’t be the only one with such an interpretation. Even if you disagree with the colonial argument, it still seems very clear to me that your perceptions of England have not only been an important factor in shaping your motivation for learning English and coming to the UK, but have also played a significant role in the ways in which you have attempted to locate yourself in the UK socially and culturally (as outlined in the first theme). What would your response to this be?
Dis/Identification with Romania

By far the most prevalent theme in our interview was the extent to which you dis-identify with, and wish to disassociate yourself from, Romania. You constantly contrast Romania unfavourably with the UK, and express anger at the social situation you perceive there – that ‘everything revolves around money and power’, people only want to ‘show off’ their wealth, and that ‘you don’t need to be smart’ to be successful, you just need to be rich. You also talk about English often coming to you more easily than Romanian when you are in Romania, that sometimes you almost forget how to speak Romanian, that your friends think you ‘nuts’ for this, and I wonder if this indicates your wish to distance yourself from Romania and what it represents to you – what do you think? You say you ‘want to leave it all behind’, and that if you can get your parents to move to the UK you’ll have no reason to go back; indeed you say that the UK is now your home, and Romania just for holidays. In general, you depict Romania as an old-fashioned, narrow-minded and insular country, not developing alongside the modern (i.e. English-speaking) world, and you say that getting out of Romania was your main motivation for learning English.

However, alongside this, there seem to be aspects of Romania and Romanians that you admire. You describe Romanians as ‘clever’ (though you do go on to say in ‘right’ and ‘wrong ways’), and you describe your father as ‘very clever and ambitious’; you explain that there are many Romanians working for Microsoft and that they have to pass very difficult tests; you also say that Romanian high school is very difficult, and that you were able to solve US SAT maths problems when you were 11.

You also claim that Romanians with ‘good intentions ... don’t stay there’. This seems to be an aspect of Romania with which you identify, as you recognise yourself as a very clever and capable person, and a confident language learner – and, like other well-intentioned Romanians, you also will leave/have left the country, as this is the path for Romanians like you. This seems to be reflected when you say ‘I will try and talk to others and convince them not to give up their hopes for studying abroad’ – because you perceive leaving the country as the path for clever and well-intentioned Romanians, you want to make sure others also know this path is available to them. Does this make sense? What are your thoughts?
I have the impression that you may have absorbed the Romanian emphasis on wealth and power for success, in that you feel you deserve recognition and success, but because you are clever rather than because you are rich. This sense of deserving recognition and success comes through in your language – you say of your high school ‘I thought I deserved better than being in the same place with those kind of people’; you want to be ‘someone very important’; and you have ‘bigger expectations than anything Romania can offer’. Therefore, you want to go somewhere where your abilities are appreciated, and where you can achieve the recognition and success you feel you deserve. What would you say about this?

**Negative sense of identity**

You repeatedly define yourself in the interview as what you are not, or what you do not want to be. You are acutely conscious, particularly in the UK, of being stereotyped as ‘Romanian’, which is often thought of as the same as ‘gypsy’. You describe your Romanian colleagues in the UK as lazy, boastful, and behaving inappropriately; when your friend describes some of your Romanian colleagues as ‘Jews’, you accept his racial stereotype and racist language and feel ‘ashamed for being Romanian’ – rather than challenging his racism, you hope that he does not include you in it, as you know you are not like that. This acceptance is reflected in your own racial and social stereotyping of different groups: you do not want to be perceived as a ‘gypsy’ because you see them as troublemaking criminals; you claim that ‘Russians and Romanians are not friends by definition’; Indians have a bad reputation, for being ‘not civilised’. You also feel that Romania is ‘not so popular’, perhaps because of the level of corruption, which gives me the impression that you are ashamed of Romania in the eyes of the world. When you told me the story of how your website was plagiarised, you defined the success of having achieved something you could not do before negatively, saying ‘I had no idea how to create websites I had no idea about what design and I spent like… a lot of sleepless nights trying to pull that website’. You differentiate yourself from your rich peers from high school by saying ‘I know I don’t want to become like that’, but you do not say what you do want to become; you also say you knew you had to learn English because you wanted to ‘become someone… not in Romania’, without saying where you would like to become someone. As discussed above, you do appear to have a positive identity as a clever and competent person, particularly in language learning; however, when you talk about what meaning this has to you, it is phrased in terms of not being Romanian or not staying in Romania. I also discussed the fact that you sometimes forget Romanian and remember
English, or ‘accidentally’ talk in English, and again, this seems to be more of an assertion of a non-Romanian identity rather than an assertion of an English-speaking identity. How would you respond to this – does it make sense to you?

**English for self-fulfilment**

The ways in which you talk about English lead me to think that you felt learning it would offer, or lead to, self-fulfilment. You say that as a child you ‘knew’ you were going to live in the UK or the US, and get out of Romania, and that ‘I knew I had to learn it because... I wanted to... become someone... not in Romania’. From this, it seems to me that you saw English as a way to construct an identity separate from Romania. From an early age you were constructing an identity as a clever person who was very good at English, and so you were disappointed to get a low FCE score and frustrated to just miss an A-grade at CAE. You also started using social networking sites to improve your English, as this was one of the very few opportunities to speak with other English speakers; this then developed for you into an interest in the people you were chatting with, and their lives and customs. You enjoyed playing games and watching movies in English, which were readily available to you in the post-Communist period; you also enjoyed going to cocktail parties with your Dad and meeting international people from his work, feeling superior when your English was better than many of the adults’. You say that going to study in the UK was a kind of trend, and that lots of your friends were planning to go; so when considering going yourself you said ‘why not are they cleverer than me or what?’ This suggests to me a wish to keep up and be as good as your peers, which may have been part of the reason you wanted to go so much – what do you think? You say also that movies helped you learn what to expect when you came to the UK, and that when you did come you had very few problems understanding people, apart from some confusion with the Manchester accent. I wonder if your lack of language difficulty in the UK comes from your very strong understanding of yourself as a highly competent and confident English speaker, using English to get to where you wanted to go both geographically and in terms of your career. English was, therefore, a means of self-fulfilment for you. What are your thoughts on this?

**Family as a site of conflict**

Your family, particularly your father, figure as a strong influence in your story. You say that your family, and again your father in particular, were very supportive of your English learning, and earlier in the interview you
portray your father as a firm-but-loving kind of figure who wants a better life for you than he had for himself, who wants you to make money and ‘get noticed’. You are very aware of your father’s struggle of working hard and earning little, and this seems to have been key to your career ambitions and your determination to leave Romania. Later in the interview you say that he has never told you he is proud of you, and that you find this frustrating, yet there had been no hint of this frustration when you talked about him before. You appear to feel bitterness and anger towards your mother for being so critical of you while bragging to others about your success, and you found high school very stressful because of her high expectations. It then seems to me contradictory that you want so much to bring them to the UK, even though, as you say yourself, they are not likely to be very keen. Likewise, it seems contradictory to me that you perceive yourself as ‘spoiled’, when you also perceive your parents as having been fairly hard on you at times. I also feel there is conflict in terms of the role your parents played in your coming to the UK, and the extent to which it was your choice or your parents’ influence. You said that you always knew you would live in the US or UK and that you knew you wanted to leave Romania; then you ‘thank my Dad for not letting me stay there’ and say ‘I’m very lucky that my parents brought me to stay here’. Perhaps you are talking about their emotional and financial support, but I am not sure from these statements whether you might not always have been sure about coming to the UK and your parents made more of an active push for you to come. In general, your feelings towards your parents seem to be conflicted at various points. What would you say about this?

**Finding your voice**

I am less certain about this theme, but I think it’s worth telling you about it anyway to see if it makes any sense to you, even if it might not seem very coherent! When we were talking and when I was transcribing our interview, I was fascinated by the number of times you used other people’s voices when you were relating conversations you had had with them – rather than saying ‘I said/he said/she said’ and so on, you actually re-enacted the conversation, just saying directly what you said and then what the other person said. You were speaking in their voice, if that makes sense. You also said that you speak much more slowly and stutteringly in English than in Romanian, and that you find writing in English easier than speaking. So I wonder if there is something going on here regarding finding your own voice in English? You said that most of your interaction in English took place in internet chat sites, so face-to-face speaking in English in a communicative context may not have been something you were very used
to? You also say you don’t practise speaking English very often in the UK, as your flatmate is Romanian. Perhaps most tellingly, you said a couple of times during the interview that you wanted to speak but you didn’t know what to say. Given also what I wondered about above, that your identity is more non-Romanian than positively English-speaking, I wonder if you are still developing your English-speaking ‘voice’, or a positive English-speaking identity? I apologise if my theorising isn’t very coherent, but does this make any sense to you? What do you think?
5e: Weijian

Sense/loss of agency

You had very positive teaching and learning experiences in your extra curriculum school, where you learnt English by being placed in particular situations and being taught the language appropriate to the situation. You found this focus on speaking and context an active and enjoyable way to learn; you compare it to ‘learning your language when you was just started to learn your language’. Thus it seems to me that, at the extra curriculum school, which you chose to go to and loved, the language you learned had a connection to the real world – you could imagine it being used in situations in which you might find yourself, and you had a sense of yourself as being an active agent in those situations.

However, at high school and university, you were taught through decontextualized grammar exercises and tests, which you found less enjoyable and were less successful at, scoring average or below average on grammar questions. These English lessons were compulsory, the teachers and many of the other students were uninterested, and I would suggest you lost interest because

a) you could no longer imagine the purpose for learning as you could in the extra curriculum school, and

b) you had no sense of your own control over the learning context, as you did in the language situations presented in the extra-curriculum school – you were a passive, rather than an active learner.

This meant that your learning came to a standstill by the time you went to university – you say ‘I think I still not... learn English at all’ – and you no longer felt successful compared to other students, although your speaking and pronunciation was always better than that of your peers. You thus went from being an advanced student in the extra curriculum school, to gradually equalising to the level of your peers in high school, to being ‘just like other students ... my English was not good any more’ at university.

Although you say you were not motivated to work at English because you were always top of the class, I wonder if no longer standing out from other students for your ability also felt like a loss of agency – perhaps you felt less individual, or that you no longer had something that you felt had made you different?
This sense of agency and your loss of it is also reflected in your experience of communicating in English. When you were younger, you took active opportunities to speak English by going to the bar with your Dad to talk to foreign people; you were ‘eager to practise to talk to them’, and you ‘made some friends at that time’ which made you ‘have more interest in learning English’ and gave you a ‘sense of success’ talking to them. You now find the idea of this ‘quite embarrassing’, and you would worry more about people thinking it was ‘strange’, saying ‘I would not do it now’. It seems to me that not wanting to do it now is a result of your loss of confidence in your ability to learn and speak English: you ‘totally lost … the way to learn English’, which, for you, had been learning with an awareness of the way the language worked in the world and of the role you played using the language in the world. When you were no longer taught in a situational and contextualised way, you were no longer able to see yourself as an agent, an active user of the language, who would have an effect on the world by using the language; the language you were taught in high school had no connection to the world. Does this make sense to you? What do you think?

**Perception of external barriers**

Your high school and university learning experiences seem to have presented what you call a ‘barrier’ to your later confidence and ability to learn English. As a result of the high school emphasis on grammar and exams, you lost interest in learning English and became more inhibited about speaking in English – ‘when I say a sentence I must go over in my mind’ – and as a result your English is less fluent now. You were eager and willing to talk to people in the bar with your Dad, but you say you ‘wouldn’t do it now’. Because high school was a ‘barrier’ for you, you were ‘not that willing to speak English in university’; even though you had ‘a lot of chance to practise English at university’, like being a library tour guide, you did not take them. You found speaking English ‘a little bit embarrassing’ because of your lack of fluency, even though others doing the job were no better at speaking English than you. You had thought your English needed to be much better, and you realised your level would have been sufficient. You now regret not doing this, as you ‘lose the chance to… practise’ – thus this high-school barrier directly affected your later language learning motivation. Your high school learning experiences have also created a barrier to speaking for you in that you often conceptualise speaking as writing – you say that speaking now is ‘like writing in my mind’, and that ‘sometimes I have to type letters in my mind’. Thus the external barriers created by your negative language learning experiences have prevented
you from taking opportunities to speak English, and have constrained your ability to become a fluent English speaker as you would like to be. What are your thoughts about this?

**Perception of internal barriers**
As well as high school and university, which were external barriers to you, you appear to have created internal barriers for yourself. When you first visited the UK, for a month in 1999, your English improved greatly and you marvelled at how good you could be if you could spend more time here; now you have that chance and in two years you feel you have not improved at all, perceiving that the length of time available to you has been a barrier and made you complacent. Most notable is your perception of yourself as ‘lazy’: you see this as a barrier to your natural interest and motivation for learning languages, which you had when you were a child – you have lost a lot of interest in English and in engaging with English through TV programmes, movies and so on, preferring to do these things in Chinese. You also say that before you went to university you didn’t spend much time on learning English - do you think realising you now had to work hard at it was a factor in making you feel you were ‘lazy’? You talk about having wanted to learn Spanish, but you find that your age and your own behaviour is a barrier to learning: you say ‘It’s kind of hard for me now to learn another language compared to that age … I could always find excuse not to learning or review what I’ve learned’. You also want to socialise, but as well as considering yourself too lazy to take the social opportunities that come your way, you feel you are not very talkative or sociable – which you also feel is a barrier to doing conference presentations. Thus you have created internal barriers which, as well as the external barriers, constrain what you would like to do and what you would like to be. Do you have any thoughts on this?
Appendix 6: Synthesised themes for Interview 3 (sent to all participants)

Hi [name],

These are the themes I have constructed from my analysis of all the interviews so far. They are based on both interviews with each of the six participants, and they are my first attempt to build ideas on what has motivated you all as a group, based on what you have all told me about your individual English-learning experiences. You can read these themes, then, as factors that I think have motivated you throughout your language learning lives. There are five themes: Positive early learning experience, Personal growth and development, Navigating English voices, Relationship between English and your home country, and Dynamics of choice and control.

Although I have presented them as separate themes, you may see them differently: you may see a lot more overlap between them, or you may see one or two as particularly important, or you may see one theme as being the main one and the others as smaller branches connected to it. The themes and the way I have presented them here are by no means fixed, so any way you want to read or interpret them is absolutely fine. I hope you will recognise your own experience in them, as all of you have contributed to them in some way. However, if you do not recognise your own experience or if anything makes no sense to you, that’s fine too, and will be something for us to discuss. As with the previous stage, there’ll be a lot more to do before we reach a ‘final’ interpretation!

As for the second interview, I’d like the third interview to be an open discussion of the analysis so far, so I want to hear your thoughts on the ideas and themes I’m presenting here. I’d particularly like to know the extent to which you feel they relate to your own experience, and whether they stimulate any further memories or reflections for you. Part of my purpose in this stage of the study is to give you access to what other participants have said, and to see if what others have said also holds any meaning for you. All the examples I give come from what you and all the other participants have told me, so as well as (hopefully) recognising your own experience, you will be reading about the experiences of the other participants. You may find that some of these also apply to you, and/or stimulate ideas or thoughts that had not
previously occurred to you. On the other hand, you may not find this. Either way, your responses will be the starting point for our next interview.

Please read the themes and think about them for when we meet, and perhaps make a note of anything you’d particularly like to talk about. Please feel free to ask me any questions beforehand too, if there’s anything you want clarification on – we don’t need to wait until the interview.

Positive early learning experience
All of you had positive experiences of starting to learn English, and for some of you these positive experiences continued. You share a clear enjoyment of English and you all wanted to learn. For some of you, these early positive feelings were linked to your ability to communicate in English with people outside the classroom: this was very motivating for you, whether face-to-face or online. Maybe, when English classes began to focus on grammar tests and exam results rather than communication, you lost motivation. Maybe you did not have much opportunity to communicate with people outside the classroom, but the idea of being able to communicate was motivating, and it was something you wanted to do. You may have had the sense that the use of English was connected to the world in some way, and that speaking it was connecting you to the world (perhaps through interests like music, films and games); you may have felt that English was going to be of use to you in your future career; you may have felt that simply being able to speak English was something to aspire to. Perhaps you were aesthetically attracted to English, enjoying the way it looked and sounded.

I would suggest that for all of you, these early positive experiences were fundamental to some of the choices you made later in your lives. Maybe you chose to continue studying English. Maybe continuing to study English was compulsory and so did not involve making a choice; but you were still able to choose the extent of your engagement with it. However, all of you chose as young adults to come to the UK, and this decision either came from, or was made easier by, your early positive experiences of learning English, even if you had had negative learning experiences later in your schooling. I will develop this idea further in the Dynamics of choice and control theme below.
I would also suggest that even if you had negative learning experiences later in your education, these positive experiences from your early learning continued to be a source of motivation for you when you encountered difficulties communicating when you first came to the UK. Perhaps this was because you had confidence that you could overcome these difficulties eventually, having already been a successful learner and met various learning challenges in your home countries; and/or because your positive attitude was so strong, or you wanted to overcome so much, that you pushed yourself to keep trying and ultimately succeed. I would suggest that even when you were finding communication very difficult, which may have been creating psychological barriers for you, your early ability and/or desire to communicate helped you find the strength to get through these difficulties.

How do you think this theme might relate to your experience? What other aspects of your experience does it make you think of?

**Personal growth and development**

You all see English as contributing to your growth and development as individuals. This relates to your views of English as a professional tool which would be important for your future career. It also relates to a broader understanding that English will help you to grow in ways you feel will be personally fulfilling. This may mean that you are able to fulfil your intellectual, social, emotional and/or creative potential, perhaps by working in career fields and places you would not have been able to without knowledge of English, or by being offered opportunities that would not otherwise have been available. It may mean that you are finding learning a process of self-discovery, coming to greater self-knowledge and self-understanding through communicative mistakes and misunderstandings; it may mean that you are broadening your world and your understanding of the world. Perhaps you felt stifled in your home country, and you now have greater independence, freedom and potential to become the person you want to be become; perhaps you felt English offered you access to different lifestyles, elements of which you could pick and choose to adopt yourself. Perhaps you have developed insights into your life, enhancing your understanding of your past as well as your present and future. You may have found that English has helped you learn new skills in areas apparently unrelated to language learning. Whatever your personal experience, I think that you all see English as offering ways to grow and develop personally, and that this has contributed to your motivation to learn it.
This awareness of the potential for growth and development may also have created negative feelings: perhaps you have not learned English to the level that you would like and feel that certain opportunities are closed to you. Maybe you feel that your English needs to be better in order for you to be able to grow and develop in the ways that you would like to. Furthermore, perhaps you used to see the potential for growth and development when your learning experience was positive and enjoyable, but were no longer able to when you had negative learning experiences later on. However, I think that in negative cases too, the belief that English will contribute to your personal growth and development has been a source of motivation to learn it, even if that motivation has encountered other, perhaps stronger, barriers.

I think this is an interesting theme in terms of the ways in which the wider world often perceives motivation to learn English: so many times I’ve told people that I’m researching what motivates people to learn English, to be met with the reply ‘Well, it’s to get a job, innit?’ What this shows is that for you six learners, your view of learning English is much broader than the potential job opportunities it offers. Even where potential job and career considerations are a significant motivation for your learning, these considerations are inextricably tied to your fulfilment as an individual. Some of you want to be successful in terms of earning money and having a good quality of life, and some of you want to be successful in terms of being well-known and respected in your fields – but all of you want a life in which you are (at least one or all of) happy, fulfilled, self-aware, making the most of your talents and potential, and making a contribution to the world in some way. Your motivation to learn English, I would suggest, has been sustained by these desires, and your motivation to learn English has been driven by work and career considerations only insofar as your career would contribute to your overall growth and development.

In what ways is this theme meaningful to you? What further memories or experiences does it prompt?

**Navigating English voices**

For most of you, engaging with other English voices was a source of motivation in your home countries. By voices, I mean literal, physical voices, of real English speakers from contexts outside your classroom: perhaps you spoke English with foreign visitors, in online chatrooms, or enjoyed English-language films, TV and music. However, there came a point for all of you when you became aware of a huge variety of English voices.
voices, which you had to navigate and respond to. For most of you, the first and most dramatic awareness of these voices was when you first came to the UK. Although you had had different levels of experience with communication outside the classroom and with English-language TV, films, games and other media, the variety and complexity of English you faced in the UK was a shock to all of you: suddenly you were surrounded by more English-speaking people than you had ever been before, with different, unfamiliar accents and dialects.

This awareness has been motivating and demotivating for you, in different complex ways. Perhaps you felt that in your language learning in your home country you had not had much contact with different English voices and you were surprised at the number of English varieties and accents that existed, and you found this interesting or intimidating. Perhaps you felt that being amid all these voices was an exciting opportunity for learning, and made the language real and alive to you in ways you had not experienced before. Perhaps by actively listening to different voices, you were able to improve your own listening and speaking, and improve your own social interaction by picking up on the nuances of others’ interaction. Perhaps some voices were desirable or undesirable to you in what they represented (in terms of social class or level of education, for example), and you were able to decide what you wanted to project about yourself by adopting or rejecting certain ways of speaking. Perhaps your engagement with these voices has helped you to develop your own English voice, and you are becoming comfortable with being an Iranian, Italian, Romanian, Indian, Chinese, or Russian speaker of English.

Perhaps your engagement with these voices stifled your own voice, making you feel intimidated or shy about speaking in front of other speakers. Maybe you worried that if you spoke and made mistakes or said something wrong, you would feel that you were not as good at English as you thought you were; maybe you felt unsure about what you were saying and that it would be easier to stay quiet. Maybe, if you had had negative language learning experiences in your home country, you found it difficult to maintain interest in the different English voices surrounding you – maybe you lacked interest in socialising, or in watching English-language films and TV. Maybe you felt some of these voices were negative or hostile: maybe when you came to the UK you felt that people from your country were seen in a particular way, and you became aware of people’s perceptions and prejudices about you as a Romanian, Russian, Chinese, Iranian, Italian, or Indian person. Whatever your individual experience, I think that for all of
you, the realisation that this variety of voices existed, and that you had to find your way through them and find a place within them, had a significant psychological impact on you and played a considerable role in your motivation to continue learning and speaking English.

What further aspects of your own experience can you find in this theme? What comes to mind when you read it?

**Relationship between English and your home country**

The way that English relates to your home country has, for most of you, been significant in shaping your motivation to learn it. Some of you, either early in your language learning or later since coming to the UK, have developed a strong sense of connection between your home country and your English-language context in the UK. This connection may have come from an early appreciation of English and your perceptions of English culture. It may have come from an understanding of the ways in which knowledge of English may be of benefit to others from your country, and wanting to help people from your country living in the UK to have better lives and see the opportunities that are available to them if they want them. You may have experienced the benefits of speaking English and living in the UK in your home country – perhaps you have found it easier to find jobs in your home country, for example. Maybe you feel that your home country has a negative reputation in the UK, and you want to challenge this by showing people, through your behaviour and attitudes, that their perceptions are wrong. It may have also have come from wanting to connect or reconcile different identities from your home country and from your UK context; for example, the difference between being an Italian, Indian, Chinese, Russian, Romanian or Iranian speaker of English in your home countries and being one in the UK. Some of you have actively forged such a connection, and see it as fundamental to who you are and what you want to do in the future.

Alternatively, learning English may have been a means of, and offered opportunities to, distance yourself from your home country. It may have offered professional opportunity which would not otherwise have been available to you; more broadly, you may have seen in English a means of fulfilling your personal and professional potential in ways that simply might not exist in your home country. It may have offered you a way to connect to the world in a way that may not have been possible or socially desirable in your home country. Perhaps you have negative feelings towards your home country, and English offers you ways to escape that context and
explore other possibilities for living, or will enable you to find an alternative home. Perhaps you feel that there is greater personal and social freedom and flexibility in the UK, to help you to develop in the way that you want to. Perhaps the way in which you were taught English in your home country was unsatisfactory or even damaging to your confidence and ability, and maybe this is connected to the educational culture in general. Maybe you found the attitude towards language learning unsatisfactory in your home country – maybe it was not taken seriously, or was not considered to have the value that you perceived it as having.

For most of you, family have played an important role in your attitude to English and your motivation for learning it. This may have taken the form of support for your decision to learn and your enjoyment of learning, or your family may have actively encouraged you to learn English and influenced your perceptions of the benefits and possibilities this would open up. Maybe your family instilled in you an admiration of what they perceived as English culture and values; maybe they felt that their own opportunities had been limited by their home context and they saw English as a way for you to maximise your prospects by studying or working elsewhere. Perhaps they even pushed you a little too hard in this direction, and you sometimes feel resentful of this. I would suggest, though, that whether the connections are broadly positive or broadly negative, you have all been motivated to learn English in some way by your perceptions of the relationship between your home country and English.

What can you see in this theme to apply to your own experience? What other thoughts does it bring to mind?

**Dynamics of choice and control**

This theme has a slightly different status to the others, and has been a little harder for me to capture. I think this is because it encapsulates much of what I have already said in the previous four themes, and takes them to a higher reflective level. So I’m a little less sure of my ground here, but I think there’s enough evidence from all of your interviews to justify it, so I’m going to have a go, and you can tell me your thoughts about it.

I would suggest that for all of you, your motivation has been significantly influenced by the amount of choice and control you have perceived yourselves as having at different points in your language learning. This is most apparent when you first came to the UK: because you were confronted with a mass of new and unfamiliar voices which you found
difficult to understand, you felt that you lacked control over the communicative situations you found yourselves in. For most of you, this was a very disturbing and disruptive, even frightening, experience. Perhaps you found that you were not aware of what you were doing or saying, and how it could be interpreted; perhaps you had no idea what you were going to say next, and conversations became a kind of adventure for you; perhaps you felt childlike and powerless, as if the person you had been in your home country could no longer be recognised. Perhaps you chose to stay silent; perhaps you felt unable to participate in social situations. Perhaps you worried that if you spoke, people would not think you as good at English as you thought you were; perhaps you did not speak because you were afraid you would not understand others’ responses. For some of you, there may have been even more complex issues than understanding the language: perhaps the characteristics of interaction among British people, such as small talk and ironic humour, were also unfamiliar and a source of confusion for you. Perhaps comments you made, which would have been innocent and perhaps humorous in your home language, caused people offence in English. Perhaps you felt you lacked control of communication as a result of non-communicative teaching, which inhibited your view of yourself as a capable and creative user of the language.

However, although this lack of control affected your motivation in that it was a negative feeling and disrupted your previously positive attitudes, it did not ultimately hinder it, as you all then found some way to develop control over your communicative interactions. This control came from choices you made to put yourselves in situations you knew would help you to develop your communicative abilities. Perhaps you found an English-speaking flatmate to live with; perhaps you started to participate more in university or extra-curricular activities and hobbies, such as music or becoming a class representative. Perhaps you made a deliberate effort to listen to how people interacted so that you were able to follow their lead; perhaps you took on certain aspects of speech, behaviour or lifestyle that would enable you to blend in to your context; perhaps you had to push yourself to engage in communication in different situations. Perhaps you sought out situations in which you knew you would be on an equal footing with other English speakers – a volunteering position, for example, rather than a paid job in which you would be under the authority of a boss. Maybe these choices were made easier by the fact that you had all chosen to come to the UK, and so you wanted to get the most out of the experience. Also, as I discussed in the Positive early learning experience theme above, maybe they were also made easier by your early perceptions.
of yourselves as good language learners, which gave you the strength to overcome your difficulties. My central point is that your motivation enabled these choices, and these choices reinforced your motivation; for all of you, your English-language learning has increased and your UK experience enhanced as a result, even if only a little.

I have used the term *dynamics* in this title to represent the fluctuations in your perceptions of your choice and control, and to indicate that both the ups and the downs have played an important role in your motivation. How might this theme be relevant to you? What experiences from your life does it conjure up?