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Teaching students with EAL: Collaboration and preparation in post-primary schools

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Teaching students with EAL: Collaboration and
preparation in post-primary schools

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Abstract

The following study explores the area of English as an additional language (EAL) and how much training teachers in a post-primary school in Ireland receive and to what extent they collaborate with each other when teaching students of EAL. Using thematic analysis from three long interviews from the same school, the findings suggest that teachers are not given the sufficient training in how to teach EAL and are given little encouragement to collaborate with one another on the topic by the Irish educational system. The findings also suggest the need for proper EAL training has become more relevant since the arrival of Ukrainian students in 2022.

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I would like to dedicate this to the person who was by my side and supported me all the way.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Approximately three quarters of children entering the Irish education system who do not come from an English- or Irish- speaking background are not proficient in English, and as a result experience a significant barrier to full participation in their education (Murtagh and Francis, 2012). At the core of this dissertation is the belief that by providing students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) with higher-quality instruction in English, it will allow for their greater access for all to the Irish education system. This study will investigate the collaboration between teachers regarding EAL provision in post-primary schools in Ireland, as well as the type of training they receive as language teachers. Data will be gathered from three long interviews from teachers in a mixed-gender secondary school in an urban location in Ireland. This study aims to build on the literature regarding EAL provision in Ireland, with a specific focus on teacher collaboration and teacher training.

1.2 Background to the Project

Ireland, once a country more recognised for its emigration rather than immigration, has developed into a multi-cultural society where a large variety of nationalities and languages are now ubiquitous. Indeed, in post-primary schools alone, there are about 150 different languages being spoken by students from 160 nationalities (Lyons, 2010b). This relatively recent large-scale immigration to Ireland has seen a heterogenous mix of nationals of both EU countries and non-EU countries, as well as refugees and asylum seekers (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019). This change in society has meant that key societal institutions, such as the education system, have had to readjust their policies in order to cater to this changing cultural landscape to integrate these immigrants into Irish society.

1.3 Rationale

Language barriers can pose a significant barrier to the integration of immigrant students (OECD, 2009), and typically children from migrant backgrounds perform considerably less well on standardised tests of academic knowledge and skills compared to native students (OECD, 2009; Lyons, 2010a). When students lack the language of instruction, it prevents them from accessing the language required for higher-order thinking, interpretation, and

the nuances of language use in the school setting, and also prevents the adequate teaching of society's values, curriculum content, and skills, which limits the possibility of achieving social and economic mobility (Lyons, 2010a). Given that education and language skills are strongly correlated with integration and job security for those from a migrant background (McGinnity et al., 2020), adequate provision of English as an additional language (EAL) should be imperative. The provision of EAL became all the more relevant in 2022 with the war in Ukraine prompting the Irish government to integrate 2,238 pupils in post-primary schools as of July 2022 (Department of Education, 2022). However, despite this, a study from 2010 showed that only 9% of language support teachers in Ireland were fully qualified to provide EAL (Lyons, 2010a), which could point to the lack of adequate attention to EAL in the post-primary school system. Collaboration between teachers has also been shown to have positive effects on language acquisition of students with EAL (Lo, 2015), and could be central to providing higher-quality EAL to migrant students going forward.

1.4 Dissertation Layout

Building on this introduction, the literature review intends to provide greater context to the provision of EAL in Ireland by exploring education integration policy in Europe. The literature review will also focus on the work on collaboration between teachers in education as well as looking closer at teacher training policies. The focus will gradually narrow to contextualise the more specific issues that post-primary school teachers in Ireland experience while providing EAL and the research questions will develop on this. The methodology will then be explained, including the selection criterion and qualitative collection process. The data gathered will then be discussed and any emerging trends and insights will be explored further. The research questions will then be evaluated against the data, and the key findings will be framed within the relevant literature.

1.5 Conclusion

This dissertation will build on the literature on EAL provision in Ireland by focusing on the quality of collaboration between teachers when teaching students with EAL. Collaboration could be between content-focused teachers themselves or with content-focused teachers and teachers trained to provide EAL. This dissertation will also look at the amount of training that teachers receive on EAL and get a better understanding of the teachers' language awareness when teaching.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Education and Integration

The profile of migrants coming to Ireland in terms of their heterogeneous ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds is varied and reflects a larger trend present throughout Europe (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019). Educational attainment among migrants often varies, especially for those coming from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. Education can act as the great equaliser, with its meritocratic ideals. However, the reality is that the educational attainment and success in the labour market of young people from migrant backgrounds in particular largely depends on how well these students can be integrated into their new education system (Smyth et al., 2009). This process of integration into the education system poses a number of challenges. Proficiency in the language of instruction has been shown to be significant in terms of closing the achievement gap with native students (Kristen et al., 2011), mainly through factors such as the quality of interactions between students and teachers (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019). Migrant children who do not speak the language of instruction well also fail to reach their potential and experience barriers to full participation in education policy (Murtagh and Francis, 2012) and are much more likely to drop out of school early (European Commission, 2015). Given that as many as 75% of newcomer children to Ireland are not proficient in English (Smyth et al., 2009), it is perhaps not surprising that schools cite language difficulties among new students as the biggest barrier to settling in (Smyth et al., 2009; Murtagh and Francis, 2012). In Ireland, this may be exacerbated even further by the presence of more than one official language and the relatively homogenous ethnic and linguistic background of teachers (Merike, 2011; Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019). Due to the variety of approaches taken across schools to integrate these students, their experiences can differ significantly. With this in mind, the gap in achievement between migrant and native children narrows when there are well-established language-support programmes that have clearly defined aims and goals (OECD, 2006; Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019). In Ireland, the key service provided to migrant children in Irish schools is the provision of additional English-language tuition and has been since the establishment of the Language Support Service in 1999 (Ireland. Department of Education and Science 2007, 2009). This is primarily done in

post-primary school by withdrawing these students from subject classes such as Irish or Religious Education (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019). The provision of English as an Additional Language (EAL) to these migrant students is provided mainly by Language Support Teachers (LSTs) (Murtagh and Francis, 2012); however there have been some concerns regarding the adequacy of the preparation that teachers are given to provide EAL to migrant students (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019). However, before delving into the specifics of education integration policy in Ireland, it might be useful to frame Ireland within its European context.

2.2 Integration in Irish Education

While the EU does have programs that complement national-level initiatives such as the Open Method Coordination (OMC), which broadly identifies best practices and common challenges among member states, each EU country has a large amount of autonomy in the field of education (Faas et al., 2014). Ireland, like Germany and Greece, opts for an intercultural approach to education (Faas et al., 2014). The interculturalist approach stresses the importance of the creation of a third space between the overlap of cultural boundaries, where teachers and students are encouraged to be empathetic and respectful of different perspectives (Faas et al., 2014). While Ireland has established exciting initiatives like the Migrant Teacher Project as well as guides for migrant parents and training for teachers, the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX, 2020) ranks Ireland as halfway favourable in terms of integration policy regarding education. What is notable about this finding is that overall Ireland ranks among the top ten best countries for integration policy (MIPEX, 2020), so why then does it do less well on education? Perhaps the biggest factor is the timing of the economic crisis in the late 2000s. Between 2006 and 2011 the number of non-Irish nationals living in Ireland increased by 30% (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019), but due to the fallout of the Great Recession in 2008 there was a significant cut in public spending which resulted in a major reduction in investment for education and migrant integration (McGinnity et al., 2013). This would have had a significant impact on the funding available for educational integration, and we may still be experiencing the after-effects of this. However, the economic recovery in Ireland during the mid-2010s (McQuinn and Varthalitis, 2018) has meant there is cause for optimism. The following paragraphs will

therefore try to get a better understanding of how EAL can play an important role in the integration of migrant children into Irish society.

2.3 Methods of Teaching EAL

In order to get a better understanding of EAL teaching, it is important to look at the theory which supports its use in the classroom. The first term of interest when discussing EAL is content-based instruction (CBI). CBI is used to describe learning environments where students learn content subjects through a language that they are learning as an additional language (Lo, 2015). The key principle of CBI centres on the idea that content subjects provide an authentic and communicative context through which the student can learn an additional language (Coyle et al., 2010). Central to this concept is the recognition by the teacher that language constructs knowledge and that language and content are inextricably linked (Lo, 2015). CBI sees all teachers as language teachers to a certain degree and suggests that they should provide corrective feedback (Lo, 2015) but also should enhance language learning without interfering with the subject content being taught (Creese, 2010). This requires teachers to provide scaffolding for their students and to systematically integrate content and language teaching (Lo, 2015). CBI could be seen as a kind of umbrella term for any approach to teaching EAL that combines language learning and content learning aims (Cenoz, 2015). The use of the term content and language integrated learning (CLIL) by Coyle et al. (2010) would very much fall under this umbrella, with the meaning of the term seen to be essentially the same as CBI and can be considered 'two labels for the same reality' (Cenoz, 2015, p.12). The European Commission (2015) recommends establishing an initial training curriculum for teachers in order to prepare them for multilingual classrooms as well as establishing a curriculum for second language learning of the language of instruction among many others (European Commission, 2015). The concepts of CBI and CLIL would therefore be at the centre of such recommendations and would require a structured training procedure for teachers providing EAL. However, as has already been mentioned, there have been concerns regarding the preparation of teachers providing educational support for migrant children in Ireland (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019). The Teaching Council in Ireland has also not established specific policy that would support teachers who teach migrant students (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019), leaving a great amount of autonomy to individual schools and teachers and perhaps playing a role in

Ireland's 'halfway favourable' description in the MIPEx (2019) integration ranking. It would therefore be useful now to pay more attention to policies regarding EAL provision in Irish post-primary education to get a better understanding of how this autonomy plays out in reality.

2.4 School Policies for EAL

Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody (2019) in their review of language support policy in Ireland found that integration policies in Ireland are generally embedded in government policies. Educational support for migrant children was also seen to be more reactive than proactive, with a rather one-dimensional focus on language acquisition that perhaps does not account for differences in students' own linguistic backgrounds. Given that language was seen as the biggest barrier to the integration of migrant students, then EAL support should understandably be given a lot of attention, but the means by which it is provided in a school setting is also crucial. Immersion in mainstream classrooms with the support of specialists that have adequate training in teaching EAL has been outlined as crucial to successful integration of migrant students by the European Commission's publication on language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms (2015). The use of simplified and modified language for instructions and tests was also highlighted by the publication. Interestingly they also state the importance of networking between and within schools in harnessing non-formal learning between teachers on teaching migrant students. These findings are supported by the literature, with Lo (2015) suggesting that cross-curricular collaboration between teachers contributed to a greater understanding of grammatical terms among EAL students due to a greater adaptability to and awareness of students' needs. Creese (2010) also suggests that teachers need to collaborate with those more qualified in teaching EAL in order to better respond to the needs of EAL students. Specifically looking at EAL provision in Ireland, Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody (2019) surmise that in order to improve outcomes for migrant students learning EAL, mainstream teachers and EAL support teachers need to engage in closer collaboration. They further add that each subject teacher must accept the responsibility that they are language teachers as well as teachers of subject content. Given the importance of the teachers in this process, it is necessary to look at the literature to better understand their perspective.

2.5 The Teachers' Perspective

Some of the best practices for policy with regard to EAL teacher training and teacher collaboration have been explored, but it is also of interest to look at the literature to see the teachers' perspective on EAL provision to migrant students. Creese (2010) looks at teachers' perspectives on collaboration when teaching EAL in secondary schools in the UK and finds that language teachers are undermined by content teachers, as the more 'language for learning approach' (Coyle et al., 2010) of EAL specialised teachers is seen to have less value compared to the more 'language of learning' needed for exam-oriented subject content teachers. Creese goes on to say that EAL teachers will continue to be marginalised until their input is given equal precedence, which echoes Lo's (2015) point regarding the need for constant negotiation and collaboration between groups of teachers when teaching an additional language. Mulholland and O'Connor (2016) outline the main challenges of collaboration between teachers in Ireland, with time constraints and limited professional development opportunities cited as the biggest barriers to greater collaboration between members of staff. As a result of limited spare time, much collaboration was done on an ad hoc basis. Similarly, Creese (2010) found that teachers in England were struggling to keep up with the increased skill set required of teachers in classrooms where language and CBI were becoming more central. Despite these difficulties, Mulholland and O'Connor (2016) found that teachers increasingly see the benefit of collaboration; however it is the implementation which is described as aspirational. Possible solutions mentioned by teachers from their study identified more dedicated collaboration slots in timetables, and monthly planning meetings facilitated by formal rather than informal meeting times. By doing so, teachers could work together to better assess students' language needs and tailor a curriculum which would better suit their needs (Lo, 2015), and in doing so integrate them more quickly and more efficiently into the education system.

2.6 Research Questions

The intention of this research will be to expand on the findings from Mulholland and O'Connor (2016) where they found the implementation of collaboration in secondary schools in Ireland was lacking, even though they have good intentions. While their research focused on the collaboration between teachers in a more general sense, the focus here will be on collaboration between teachers in providing EAL to students from migrant

backgrounds. Furthermore, collaborative teaching in this sense shall refer to the collaboration between any teacher of students with EAL, whether they are a mainstream teacher or an EAL specific teacher. This could be done by comparing notes, sharing resources, or tracking progress. Also, given the importance of adequate training in EAL and language awareness, this dissertation will also look to build on the level of training provided to teachers on EAL and their own capabilities as EAL providers. Therefore, the research questions will be the following:

1. Are teachers well prepared to teach students with EAL?
2. What structures are in place (if any) that allow for the collaboration between teachers of students with EAL in post-primary schools?
3. What are the preferred methods of collaboration between teachers when working with students with EAL requirements?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study will explore the adequacy of training given to teachers on providing EAL as well as the collaboration between teachers of EAL. These areas are explored using a qualitative approach via three long interviews with teachers of varying experience. In this chapter the research design and the selection of methods is explained. The process of data collection is outlined, and the use of sampling methods is discussed. Further information is also provided regarding the approach to data analysis used, as well as an acknowledgement of any limitations to the research and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm chosen for this study was for an interpretive approach. Considering the decision to do three long interviews and using no quantitative methods, the findings would not align with a positivist paradigm. The decision to use it was also based on the strengths of the interpretive paradigm, where natural forms of communication are used so as to get a better understanding of the complex social worlds we inhabit (Phothongsunan, 2010). Considering the intention of the study is to explore how EAL is taught on an individual and school-wide basis, the more nuanced aspect of an interpretive paradigm seemed appropriate.

3.3 Selection of Methods & Research Design

The use of qualitative interviews was chosen due to the nature of the research questions. As they cover subjective opinions on topics related to individual experiences within a school system, the use of three long interviews was seen as optimal. The interviews were face-to-face with the teachers, and questions were composed in a semi-structured manner. The decision to use semi-structured interviews was informed by the willingness to have a pre-determined set of questions but to have the ability to be flexible to explore certain subjects in greater depth or new areas which may arise organically (Patton, 2002). The use of an unstructured interview would have been unsatisfactory due to the overemphasis on spontaneity and the hope that points would arise naturally during the interview (Hannan, 2007). In contrast, a structured interview was seen to be too rigid as it would not have

allowed for enough scope for the participant to steer the agenda at all (Hannan, 2007). An interview guide with questions was therefore developed which provided a framework for the topics to be discussed. The participants were then free to expand on or refine the theories and concepts being analysed (Devers and Frankel, 2000). Rapport between the researcher and the participants had been developed prior to the commencement of the study, and this allowed for more effective sampling and greater credibility of the research (Devers and Frankel, 2000). Having rapport with the participants should also in theory allow for more candid responses on the topics discussed (Brayda and Boyce, 2014), and this logic also informed the use of long interviews for the study.

3.4 Data Collection

All three of the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, therefore it was seen as essential that the interviews would be audio recorded so as to capture all of the information provided. The logic behind this decision was that by having as much detail as possible would allow for a more accurate and detailed data analysis once the interviews had been completed. Hepburn and Potter (2004) noted that professionals can feel particularly wary when being researched. They suggest this could be due to the feeling that they are not living up to the ideal standards of their professions which are presented in training materials. Therefore the setting of the interview and the promise of confidentiality was seen as vital in the gathering of quality data (McDermid et al., 2014). Establishing a comfortable environment for the interview by ensuring trust through confidentiality measures and having developed rapport was done in the hope that participants would be more open and share more information about themselves (Josselson 2007). With rapport already established prior to the interviews, care was also taken not to be over-familiar when asking questions and to ensure that vague comments or incomplete sentences were avoided and responses were expanded on where possible (McDermid et al., 2014). Reflexivity and the awareness of the researcher's own assumptions and values and an understanding of how this could affect the interview were also considered both prior to and during the interviews themselves to ensure the quality of the data being gathered (McDermid et al., 2014).

The interviews were recorded using the Voice Recorder application on the researcher's Android smartphone. The mp3 files were then promptly transferred to the researcher's laptop and encrypted prior to further analysis. The participants were given a research

information sheet and consent form explaining the format and purpose of the interview to the participants as per the guidelines listed in the British Educational Research Association (2018). Consent forms were then signed, dated, and returned to the researcher. The participants were not aware of the questions prior the interviews, although they were aware that the topic being discussed would be EAL provision in the school. The questionnaire for the interviews was also piloted with another teacher from the same school before beginning the interviews that were used in this study.

3.5 Population and Sampling Methods

The study took place in a mixed-gender secondary school in an urban area, with a total of three teachers taking part. Three separate semi-structured interviews took place with each individual participant, with each interview lasting between 50 and 60 minutes in length. The selection of participants was given careful attention, with Hannan (2007) considering it to be important for ensuring that the sample is credible and representative. The principal inclusion criteria were the years of experience working as a teacher, and whether they taught EAL as a subject. This was done in order to get a representative sample of teachers who have different levels of experience working with EAL students. The sampling for this study was purposive, which is a non-random technique. This allowed for the selection of information rich cases that concentrate on candidates who are best able to assist with the research (Etikan and Alkassim, 2016), and who can provide the best insight into the research questions (Devers and Frankel, 2000). The reason for choosing three different types of teachers was to try to make the data as representative as possible. The variation of purposive sampling, also called maximum variation sampling, has been shown to be an effective form of qualitative research (Van Hoeven et al., 2015) and allows for a topic to be explored from multiple angles in order to achieve a greater grasp of the concepts being explored (Etikan and Alkassim, 2016). In this study there were two principal selection criteria: Experience as a teacher and if they taught EAL specifically as a subject. Experience as a teacher was categorised as experienced (over five years) and inexperienced (less than two years). The reason for choosing a teacher who has significant experience working as a teacher is that they should have had the opportunity to work with many students who study EAL and therefore have developed strategies for teaching them. They should also be more aware of the support structures in place not just in the school, but also by the Department

of Education. Conversely, the decision to select a more inexperienced teacher was to get a better understanding of how newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are equipped to teach students with EAL. The logic behind selecting a teacher with over five years' experience working as a teacher and who is established in the school is that while they should have a good understanding of school policies and practices, they may lack the experience in dealing with students with EAL requirements. Finally, it was also important to get the insight from a teacher who teaches EAL as a subject, as they would offer a more qualified and specific perspective on how EAL is taught.

3.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used on the collected data, which is defined as 'a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pg. 6). The identification of themes from the data reflected patterned responses from the respondents, with discretion and flexibility used by the researcher when determining what a theme was (Braun and Clarke, 2006). An inductive bottom-up approach was used when identifying these themes, with the thematic analysis being data-driven as opposed to trying to make the data fit any theoretical frameworks.

3.7 Ethical Consideration and Limitations

Ensuring the confidentiality of the participants was one of the most difficult aspects of this study as the school size is relatively small for an urban school. The participants were promised that they would not be able to be identified in the research (Bell, 2018). However, McDermid et al. (2014) noted that issues regarding confidentiality can be particularly challenging when interviewing colleagues in the workplace as certain information may be used to deduce the identity of those involved. Therefore besides the use of pseudonyms, contextual material and details were limited in the findings.

The sample size of this study is also a clear limitation on the findings, and it is difficult to draw to strong a conclusion from the data despite the use of maximum variation sampling.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Emergent Themes

This chapter will explore the key themes which emerged from the three long interviews conducted qualitatively. As the interviews were semi-structured, there also emerged interesting opinions and areas which were unplanned. While it is not possible to present all of the topics which arose, the intention will be to single out the most important findings using thematic analysis. The themes which will be explored are the training teachers receive to teach EAL, the structures in place in the school to facilitate the teaching EAL, and the barriers to collaboration between teachers when teaching EAL. Finally, the impact of the arrival of Ukrainian students to the school will also be analysed.

4.2 Teacher Preparation

The school where the interviews took place was described as relatively multi-national, with all teachers saying that they have regular contact with students of EAL, whether in their mainstream lessons or when working with a student specifically with EAL. However all three teachers stated that they had little to no formal training on how to teach EAL.

4.2.1 Teacher Training

It should be made clear that there was no EAL specialist teacher in the school. The one EAL teacher interviewed worked primarily as an English teacher, and only had one EAL lesson per week. This teacher did not have any formal training on how to teach EAL but was an experienced teacher who had worked abroad for many years and had experience teaching EAL. The two other teachers interviewed taught History and Geography, and Irish and German respectively. While all teachers had no formal training in EAL or in teaching EAL as a subject, they did understand the importance of the English language in their subjects, with one stating:

“Everyone is a teacher of literacy. Everyone is a teacher of EAL because there’s going to be at least one student in most people’s classes who are not native English speakers.”

But despite this, there seemed to be the perception that teachers were ill-equipped to teach EAL. The most inexperienced teacher interviewed, who was an NQT in their first year of teaching full-time, admitted it was difficult to adjust to the amount of differentiation that was required for student with EAL:

“That was tough. And to be honest, I don't know, like if I coped with it very well in the beginning.”

They stated that in a previous school it was even worse, and that they were essentially left to their own accord to work with students with EAL in a completely unstructured way. Interestingly, they stated that his teaching qualification did not cover EAL in any great detail:

“We did have one module...It didn't make much of an impression on me... There wasn't a big emphasis on it.”

Another teacher interviewed stated that they would have had less need to teach EAL as they were an Irish and MFL teacher, meaning there was less of an emphasis on English in their classroom. Despite this, they also received no formal training on how to teach EAL.

4.2.2 Training at the School

Each teacher said that they were provided with some training to teach EAL at the induction given by the senior management team at the beginning of the school year. Additional resources are given on request by the teacher who looks after SEN, but there is no specialised EAL practitioner in the school. The interviewed teacher who taught EAL said the resources and tips provided to them at the beginning of the year were very helpful:

“There were some very useful language things... I had to look through the different resources that were offered, sort of picked and chose the ones that I felt her best.”

Benchmarking data on the students was also provided to the EAL teacher, but from that point on they were given independence to work with the student and they didn't follow any programme laid out by the school. The NQT teacher interviewed also stated that they were given useful tools on how to deal with student with EAL such as translating worksheets and using a translator on PowerPoint. However, during was a feeling that after the induction there was very little focus on teaching EAL:

“...the induction where we went through all of these things, but it wasn't really revisited at all throughout the year.”

4.2.3 Government Provisions

A complaint or area of concern was the lack of proper direction given by the government regarding the provision of EAL, especially with the arrival of Ukrainian students. One teacher said that in order to upskill, they would have to do it of their own volition:

“I have to take the initiative to go to that. I had to persuade my principal and deputy principal that I should go to this, and they had to sort out my cover for my classes.”

It was explained by two of the teachers that the government provided placemats with translations of key words to Ukrainian. While these were appreciated by the teachers, one key aspect was overlooked:

“They (the government) hadn't realised like a lot of them, particularly those near the border, were more fluent in Russian...”

4.3 School Structures

4.3.1 The Need for a Designated EAL Teacher

In order to alleviate the expectations on EAL teachers and mainstream teachers, all of the interviewed teachers were of the opinion that having a designated EAL teacher in the school would be a good solution:

“But I do think if we had one EAL person that you could go to. You know, you are linking with if you're unsure then you know, this person is the expert, this person is the person I can ask. That would really help.”

This role would allow teachers to link in with the specialised or coordinating teacher, and they would then be able to provide guidance and a more expert opinion:

“...like maybe somebody could be the coordinator, who looking after, um, EAL just to give like another layer of, you know, attention to it.”

Team teaching was also mentioned, where you would have one teacher in a classroom who focussed more on the EAL aspect of the lesson. However, there was an acceptance that

staffing may be an issue. In any case, having a more specialised teacher who was coordinating what students of EAL required was definitely welcomed, as there was a feeling that currently the situation is not dealt with efficiently or effectively:

“Because there should be, because at the moment we're all just kind... everybody feels they have to do everything, and nothing is really getting done.”

4.3.2 Structures of Collaboration

There are very limited structures in place that allow for collaborative teaching between mainstream teachers and between EAL teachers. The key structure that allows for collaboration is contacting the senior management team or the head teacher on SEN. All three teachers stated that they felt they could speak to them if they had an issue or an area they wanted help with. The two teachers who don't teach EAL as a subject also said they would feel comfortable asking the students' EAL teacher if they had an issue. However, while there is an open and receptive atmosphere in the school, collaborating with other teachers, both mainstream teachers and EAL teachers, barely featured for the teachers interviewed:

“To be honest, I've checked in with other teachers to see how they were getting on with students, but I didn't really honestly go looking for more tips.”

One teacher, who was considerably experienced, felt like there could be more guidance from the school management:

“So we have these meetings where we're informed. But there's nothing practical happening to help us implement it. It's all on us.”

But there was an appreciation from all of the teachers that more collaboration between teachers would be a good thing:

“...the more collaboration and the more context you get from the student, the better.”

All three teachers were also receptive to the idea of having a shared online file with information on the students, which already exists for students with SEN:

“So if there was a little area in there where I could, you know, the day before I could go what might he need this week.”

4.4 Barriers to collaboration

4.4.1 Time

While there was a clear desire from the three teachers interviewed to have more collaboration between both teachers and specialised EAL practitioners, time was quoted as the biggest barrier to achieving it:

“Time is just sort of precious when teaching.”

There was an understanding that coordinating with other teachers and taking the time to learn more about what methodologies might be most effective for their students was part of their responsibilities as a teacher, but that with so much else going on it was hard to prioritise it:

“I suppose teachers' lives are very, very busy now. There's so much going on, it can be hard to prioritise it, but I think we just need to prioritise it a little bit more.”

4.4.2 Workload

Part of not having sufficient time is due to the workloads that teachers have, and being a teacher of EAL in a mainstream lesson is perceived as being one more thing for teachers to be expected to do:

“Every teacher is a teacher of literacy and EAL, there is like an argument to say it's, it's like another thing being put on teachers.”

Another teacher felt that every single student in their lesson felt like their responsibility, and it simply wasn't feasible to take this on. It was interesting to note that blame was not necessarily levelled at the school, but at the system in general. It seemed like the frustrations lied at the government level. This frustration left teachers feeling that they could not feasibly fulfil all of the expectations placed on them to a high standard, especially if their concerns are not listened to:

“I still teach in 22 hours, even though I seem to have a million extra things to do. Nor have they cut the class sizes down so that you can facilitate this.”

4.5 The Integration of Ukrainian Students

Finally, a theme which was quite clear from each of the three interviews was that the arrival of Ukrainian students since the beginning of 2022 has put EAL under greater focus. Teachers felt that while they were given tools on how to cope with students with little English, overall they weren't given enough guidance:

"No, I think everybody just got such a shock. Of course, it was coming after the pandemic as well."

The NQT said that it was a steep learning curve, and that he had to develop the skills as the year went along, mostly by himself:

"I was put into my class one morning, and I didn't really know what I was supposed to do with them you know, like we had that induction, so at least I had a few tools that I knew I could go to them and see how they work..."

For the experienced Irish and MFL teacher, initial excitement was short-lived as they realised that they were left to try to figure out how to integrate them into their classrooms. The situation was seen as complex as no one student was coming in with the same level of English.

"Yeah, we were very excited at the beginning, you know, and like enough in a good way, you know, that we'll look after them, you know. But actually. It's been tough because we're trying to figure out how do we overcome some of the issues."

4.6 Conclusion

The emergent themes from the three long interviews with the teachers reveal a system which puts teachers under pressure to cater for students with EAL. There was relative uniformity in the responses from the teachers, with the overall sense being that they feel that there is support from the school, but with so much expected of them already it is hard to prioritise EAL. What compounds this is the lack of formal training they receive in their initial teacher training and in subsequent CPD courses. The arrival of Ukrainian students into the Irish education system has only served to highlight these points even further. While the government and system at large were identified as the key culprits, there was a sense that by having more of an emphasis on EAL provision in the school there could be significant

improvements. This could be facilitated by having a designated EAL teacher that would help coordinate a program that would allow for the tracking of students' progress. The themes that have been discussed will now be explored with relation to the research questions of this study along with the relevant literature on the areas.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Framing the research questions into the literature

The findings from the interviews will be discussed and compared with the research questions formulated previously in this study, and they will then be contextualised and contrasted with the relevant literature on the areas of focus.

Firstly, the literature on the topic of EAL and integration finds that migrant students' integration into the education system of the countries they reside has a strong impact on educational attainment and future success in the labour market (Smyth et al., 2009; Murtagh and Francis, 2012). This integration into the education system is significantly improved if the students have proficiency in the language of instruction and could help narrow the achievement gap with students who don't have EAL (Kristen et al., 2011). This was an area of concern for the teacher interviewed in this study. They feared that without the proper attention being given to students of EAL, the gap between them and their fellow students would broaden:

"...some students might fall under the radar a little bit sometimes, because they are generally quieter than the rest of the students."

However, in order for teachers to cater for EAL students, they must be equipped to do so. That brings the first research question into light, which was, are teachers well prepared to teach students with EAL? The findings from the three interviews would suggest that the teachers lack any form of proper training in how to teach students with EAL. While all of them mentioned the school providing strategies and resources at the induction at the beginning of the school year, there was no follow up on the topic, and teachers were left to navigate the topic themselves. While all of them spoke positively about the open and supportive spirit among the senior management and staff at the school, there was a sense that they were somewhat ill-equipped to deal with students with EAL, and the arrival of Ukrainian students highlighted this even further. The NQT interviewed stated that there was little attention given to EAL during his teacher training, and the two more experienced teachers said they relied on their experience of dealing with students of EAL as they had no

formal training in it. Therefore, the conclusion to be drawn from the first research question is that teachers are not sufficiently prepared to teach students with EAL. This finding supports the claims made by Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody (2019), who found that teachers in Ireland are not given adequate training on how to provide EAL to migrant students. This is perhaps where the Department of Education could make a significant difference but prioritising and standardising EAL training and curriculums. The findings from the literature would suggest that the gap between students from migrant and non-migrant backgrounds significantly narrows when there are well established language-support programmes that have a clear focus (OECD, 2006; Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019).

The second research question developed from the literature review centred on the structures in the school which allow for the collaboration between teachers in the post-primary school. The findings from the interviews show that teachers would like to see a designated EAL role established in the school. That way they would be able to refer to them and get proper guidance and best practices from them. The impression from the interviews was that providing EAL was part of their job but considering the lack of training and plethora of other responsibilities they have; it was easy to lose focus on EAL. Therefore, having a teacher who was able to oversee how EAL is provided in the school would alleviate the weight of expectation on them. The teachers were supportive of the creation of an online file for students with EAL, where teachers would be able to input information and get a read on how the students are progressing. This was already in place for students with SEN, but that is overseen by a designated teacher. But the findings suggest that collaboration does occur between teachers, but it is done sporadically and on an ad hoc basis. There did not seem to be a focus on EAL from the senior management team, and therefore teachers had less of a reason to prioritise collaboration with fellow teachers, as one teacher stated:

“At the beginning of the year I was told that they were being taken out and I just had to go through the timetable with them. Since then I haven't really had any contact about them with their teacher.”

The findings would therefore suggest that there are very limited structures in place in the school which allow for the collaboration on teaching EAL between teachers. While the school did address the area and provided resources at the beginning of the year, there is no designated EAL teacher or online software available to the teachers for them to formally

collaborate with each other. Any collaboration that takes place is done on an ad hoc basis, however all teachers said they would feel comfortable speaking to the senior management team if they had any queries on the topic. This suggests that while EAL and collaboration between teachers is not prioritised, there are some limited structures in place. Reflecting on the literature, the European Commission (2015) recommends the establishment of a curriculum for EAL instruction and an initial training curriculum. However this has yet to be done in Ireland, as the Teaching Council in Ireland has yet to make specific policies that would support teachers providing EAL (Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody, 2019). The findings from Lo (2015) suggest that on top of teacher training, cross curricular collaboration among teachers helps to improve the language acquisition of the students. Creese (2010) adds to this by stating that collaboration with teachers experienced in providing EAL would mean that teachers would be better able to respond to the needs of the students. Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody (2019) also support the increased collaboration between teachers and EAL support teachers, suggesting it would lead to better outcomes for the students. Therefore, the findings are somewhat unsurprising given the lack of direction given by the Teaching Council, however, there appears to be sufficient evidence to suggest that structures that would facilitate greater collaboration should be put in place to allow for greater student outcomes.

One of these structures could be the presence of a designated EAL teacher in the school. And this relates to the final research questions, which was what are the preferred methods of collaboration between teachers when working with students with EAL requirements? The responses from the teachers interviewed would suggest that having a designated EAL teacher in the school, someone who they could refer to for advice and direction, would be a big help to them. Another method of collaboration mentioned was the use of an online software that teachers could input information on. This would allow teachers to build a profile of the students of EAL, under the guidance and instruction of the EAL teacher. The teachers would be able to get a better understanding of where the students are struggling and where they are improving. A similar software already exists in the school for students with SEN, therefore the teachers interviewed were confident it could be utilised effectively. One teacher said that it would be useful to be able to have a method of keeping track of the students on a consistent basis:

“It doesn't have to be very formal all the time. Just get a general sense of how they're getting on in that class... you're kind of just thinking about it all the time, you're revisiting that together, I think that would be a big help for them.”

Having these structures in place would allow for teachers to use their time and resources more effectively, as the literature on the area highlights how stretched some teachers are, with Creese (2010) suggesting teachers in England were struggling to keep up with the growing expectations of being a language teacher on top of their subject. Mulholland and O'Connor (2016) point to time constraints and limited professional development as the greatest barriers to more collaboration between teachers, and this was certainly supported by the findings from this study. Given that different teachers' subjects provide authentic contexts through which students of EAL can learn (Coyle et al., 2010), it is little wonder that teachers understand the benefit of collaboration (Mulholland and O'Connor, 2016). The findings from Mulholland and O'Connor (2016) found that having a more formal method of collaboration between teachers was supported by the teachers, and that is supported somewhat by the findings from this study.

5.2 Limitations

There are of course limitations to the findings from this study, especially given how small the sample size was. Care was given to ensure that the sample of teachers was reflective of differences in experience levels both as a teacher and as a teacher of EAL, however for more robust conclusions a larger sample should be used. This would be possible by employing a mixed-methods approach, where quantitative data obtained via a survey would allow for a broader insight from a larger number of teachers. The subjects taught by the teachers. The possible outcomes of this study would support the literature done on the area relating to EAL provision in Europe, more specifically in the UK and Ireland. The purpose of this study was to add to the literature on how collaboration between teachers on EAL provision in post-primary schools in Ireland, and although there were limitations to the interviews, the findings would seem to support the perspective that post-primary school teachers in Ireland are not given sufficient training or structures in their schools to teach students of EAL properly and effectively.

There were two interesting findings from the three interviews which were unforeseen at the beginning of the study. Firstly, it was interesting to note how the different subjects the teachers taught affected how they viewed EAL. The Irish and MFL teacher interviewed stated that English had less of a role to play in her lessons, and therefore teaching EAL was less important to them. The EAL and English teacher noted how difficult it was to differentiate between language attainment and critical analysis of texts and pointed to the British system where these two aspects of English were split into separate subjects in that curriculum. It was also interesting to note how English played a key role in the subjects of History and Geography, where being able to comprehend and write responses was essential to succeeding in the subject. The impact of the arrival of Ukrainian students to the school has also made teaching the subject of EAL more pertinent, and it was interesting to note how little direction was given by the government in terms of their integration. It would appear that schools and teacher were given some resources, but that this has not been followed up by proper training in the area.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

To conclude, this study has sought to add further insight into how post-primary teachers in Ireland are prepared to teach students of EAL. The purpose of the study was also to explore how teachers work collaboratively to better improve the quality of their teaching. The literature on the topic suggested that collaborative teaching between teachers who have students with EAL can improve their outcomes, and that teacher training on how to provide EAL should be provided to teachers. However, the literature also suggested that Ireland does not have the infrastructure in place to provide EAL training to teachers and does little to encourage the upskilling of the teachers in the area. The findings from this study support these claims, but workable suggestions were provided by the three teachers interviewed, and if implemented would go some way to improve the quality of EAL teaching in the given school.

It would be interesting to delve deeper into this analysis, and perhaps explore the effectiveness and success of the introduction of a designated EAL teacher and the prioritising of an online software that would track the progress of students with EAL. For now, it seems that any advancements and improvements in the short-term will have to be driven by individual post-primary schools, as there seems to be very little direction from the Department for Education in Ireland. Building background knowledge on students is essential in the integration of migrant children (Arnot et al., 2014), and considering that Ireland has the second highest enrolment of Ukrainian students in their education system at 92% (EACEA, 2022), more needs to be done to ensure there are better structures in place. The findings also suggest that teachers are under a lot of pressure to provide students with EAL, however they do not have the correct training or direction to do so. There was a noticeable level of frustration among the teacher interviewed, as they understood it was their responsibility but felt somewhat overwhelmed by the enormity and breadth of the task. This is supported by the findings from Nielsen (2016), who suggested that teachers although teachers might be aware of certain strategies of how to teach EAL, few of them are actually used. The lack of structure on how to teach and support teachers could be one of the reasons for this. That same study also finds that teachers cite a lack of time and preparation to properly incorporate differentiated methodologies into their classroom.

However, given the fact that the students with EAL are likely to continue to be grow in the Irish education system, more focus and research needs to be done in the area to ensure that there are improvements. For the integration of students from migrant backgrounds with EAL is essential in their development and to ensure that there doesn't exist an achievement gap between those from a migrant background, and those from a non-migrant background. The relatively recent arrival of Ukrainian students into the Irish education system is testament to this, and shows that actions should be proactive as opposed to reactive.

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Appendix A

Question Schedule

Overview

1. Please give a brief description of your experience working as a post-primary school teacher
2. Please describe what experience you have teaching EAL

Teaching EAL

3. What formal training, if any, have you received in order to teach EAL?
4. How many students do you teach that have EAL requirements? Would they be spread out across different classes and year groups or concentrated into a few classes?
5. How do you approach EAL in your classroom? Is it something you think about?
6. What are the biggest challenges of an EAL teacher?
7. What strategies have you used as an EAL teacher?
8. Do you communicate with the parents?
9. Does the background of the student make a difference?

Collaboration in the school

10. If and when you've had an issue teaching EAL, what did you do? Who did you approach?
11. What structures are in place to assist you in teaching EAL?
12. How do you collaborate with your colleagues (if at all)?
13. What are the main barriers to teaching EAL?

Barriers to success

14. What are the main barriers to working collaboratively when teaching EAL?
15. What suggestions do you have to improve teaching EAL, either collaboratively or otherwise?
16. Do you communicate with the other teachers for students?

Appendix B

Research Information Sheet

Dear Principal,

I am writing to you in relation to a research study I will be undertaking in fulfilment of my Professional master's in education degree. It would like to provide you with information about my study and seek your consent to conduct the research with members of your teaching staff.

Language barriers can be the most difficult hurdle in the integration of immigrant students (Taguma et al., 2009), and typically children from migrant backgrounds perform considerably less on standardised tests of academic knowledge and skills compared to native students (Lyons, 2010a; Taguma et al., 2009). EAL as a subject is acutely connected to the concept of an inclusive learning environment and the subject has become all the more relevant in 2022 with the war in Ukraine prompting the Irish government to integrate 2,238 pupils in post-primary schools as of July 2022 (Department of Education, 2022). Therefore, the aim of the research is to get a greater understanding of the collaboration between teachers with regards the teaching of EAL in post-primary schools in Ireland.

The objectives of my research are to: Document the structures that are in place in the school to cater for students with EAL requirements, document the type of cooperation that takes place between teachers regarding teaching EAL, and try to establish a preferred method of collaboration between teachers for improving the quality of EAL taught to students.

To address these areas, I propose to conduct three long (40 to 50 minute) semi structured interviews with post-primary school teachers working in an urban public secondary school. My project has received ethical approval from the Hibernia College Ethics Committee.

Interviews would be held at the convenience of the school and of the teachers concerned on school premises. With their written consent, interviews will be recorded for transcription and dissemination purposes. Participation in the study is voluntary. Interviewees may refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. No school, teacher or student will be identified specifically in any publication of the work.

I am writing to you to gain your informed consent that I may request an interview with three members of your teaching staff and that I may hold the interview in your school in January 2023 at a time convenient for the school and the teachers concerned. Confirmation of your consent can be sent either to me directly via email (40024800@hcstudent.ie) or by signature of the attached consent form posted to - 109 Baileys Court, Portland Row, Summerhill, Dublin 1.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone 0873609564 or at the abovementioned email address.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Hibernia Student

Appendix C

Consent Form

I, _____ have read and understood the Letter of Information provided to me by the Hibernia College student and I agree that in order to conduct research about collaborative practices used in my school regarding EAL. He may request an interview with three teachers and upon receipt of their consent may conduct interviews on school premises at times convenient for the teachers and the school. I understand that participation is voluntary and that there are no physical or psychological risks associated with the study. I know that all answers provided during the interview will be used for the purposes of the study only and that all responses will identify no individual or the school itself.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview 1

Researcher: Right there. So, yeah, if you could give us just maybe a brief description of your experience working as a teacher, both primary school teacher.

Interviewee 1: I'm a teacher in my first year, I'm an NQT. I've been teaching history and geography, CSPE, SPHE, and Ethical Education. I had two years of PME working full time teaching mainly just history and geography, and I'm teaching in a mixed school now but last year in a single sex school, girls.

Researcher: Girls.

Interviewee 1: And Educate Together this year.

Researcher: So how do you find the difference between the two.

Interviewee 1: Big yeah, it's a big difference. It was a fairly big emphasis on religion. You know when I was in (the school last year).

Researcher: And were you teaching Religion as well?

Interviewee 1: I was. Yeah. So I was kind of drafted in to teach a few religion classes alright. You'd have been encouraged to say a prayer before classes start. Wouldn't be my cup of tea now, but I'd say it's a lot more open and inclusive here (Educate Together).

Researcher: More inclusive?

Interviewee 1: Even teaching Ethical Education like you discussed things like religion, but you wouldn't really delve into it too much. It's more kind of, you know, ethical dilemmas and that kind of thing.

Researcher: Would there be much preparation needed for the curriculum of Ethical Education?

Interviewee 1: I would say, quite a bit at the start because honestly, I didn't even know what Ethical Ed involved. But once you kind of get into a bit of a routine, it's actually quite easy to plan the classes. Yeah, like we don't have a textbook, but. For want of a better word, you can almost make it up as you go along because there might be different events happening. Like, say, we had Ramadan last month, so you could spend two or three classes on that.

Researcher: That's pretty cool yeah. And you were saying geography and history are your main subjects?

Interviewee 1: Geography and history yeah would be my two PME subjects.

Researcher: And would there be one you'd prefer teaching to the other?

Interviewee 1: Strangely enough I would have always preferred history but this year I don't know what has changed in me, I'm preferring geography. I always prefer to learn about history, but I think I prefer teaching geography.

Researcher: Yeah.

Interviewee 1: I think it's a little bit more practical. I think students can kind of get involved in a little bit more. Even just things as simple as drawing diagrams. Like I tend to kind of enjoy that a bit more...

Researcher: There are more visual elements to it.

Interviewee 1: Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. And you can the screen more and video and things like that kind of thing. It keeps students a bit more interested rather than having to write a few essays and stuff for history, so nobody likes that really.

Researcher: Well, I was going to say, actually, that's very writing oriented, history. . And would you notice... what year groups have at the moment?

Interviewee 1: First to third year.

Researcher: First to third year alright, which would you notice a big difference in like punctuation, writing spelling mistakes among the students? If so more so in first years or less so in third year?

Interviewee 1: Yeah so first year anyway there's actually like a surprising amount of students, I was surprised by it anyway, who are like dyslexic or have any sort of writing, you know, issues.

Researcher: Yeah.

Interviewee 1: And that's not even including EAL students like you than try to find a way for them to get the information down, whether it's on their iPods or whether it's on paper. Yeah, like it can be difficult sometimes. And even at geography class this morning, there's three students who are dyslexic there. So you do have to kind of tailor the lessons a little bit to try and suit that, but you would notice that in first year, particularly this year. As you go through the years, it's not as bad as then. I do it in third year. In one of my 3rd year Geography classes there's three students who use iPods instead of copies. They have their digital copies. Actually, it's good for them to know, it helps a lot.

Researcher: And would you notice if there is more of an emphasis on kids with SEN (special educational needs) in an educate together school compared to the more Catholic voluntary schools?

Interviewee 1: I think so, yeah. We had an induction, we had a three-year induction at the beginning of the year, and as part of that we went through sort of a list of any student who had AEN (additional educational needs) and we had all of their documents on OneNote and we went through each one individually. Whereas the previous two schools I was in, we didn't do that at all. I wasn't really given any information on students there. It's on VSWare generally so you can find it yourself. But it wasn't really highlighted to the teachers, whereas we had 2 hours I think going through each student individually. And even like I'm a tutor now for a first-year class, especially with tutors that would have new students come into a school, you were really given like a profile of their abilities, I suppose.

Researcher: Okay. And that was before the school year started?

Interviewee 1: Yeah before the students even came in. So we were well aware of what you had in front of you.

Researcher: And as you said there, you'd have a pretty widespread in terms of dyslexia, ASD...

Interviewee 1: Yeah, absolutely. And I suppose on the opposite end there are some students who are underchallenged at times. The issue would be trying to give them extra writing sometimes just to keep them busy. And there's other students where you're just trying to get them along to do the bare minimum sometimes.

Researcher: Because classroom sizes would be big?

Interviewee 1: Yeah big enough, for first year geography we have 32 in here, and we don't have 32 seats.

Researcher: How does that work then?

Interviewee 1: Poor teacher A loses a chair.

Researcher: Fair enough. Yeah, that's the thing it's it can be difficult I suppose, with the big classroom sizes. And people could fall through the cracks I suppose with that then.

Interviewee 1: 100%. Absolutely. Like actually just the class I had here before was 3rd year history and there was between 20 and 25 in that class. I do have teacher B in with me on a Monday team teaching so that that is good. She would kind of focus on, say if there's a written task, she would go around to a couple of students who might struggle a bit with the writing.

Researcher: Brilliant.

Interviewee 1: And she's definitely given them a bit of a push if they needed it, or sometimes she even actually writes for them to kind of transcribe what they're saying. Which is like a massive help. Then it's the only class in the week where I have a team teacher. So the rest of the time you're trying to get around to everybody yourself. Yeah, it can be tough.

Researcher: Yeah. And would teacher B have your subjects as one of her main subjects? History and Geography?

Interviewee 1: No. And I suppose another thing, like the idea with team teaching is that you'd have two subject teachers, and you can kind of take different bits, whereas with teacher B they teach a different subject, she hasn't taught history before. So she's mainly helping with like written tasks and stuff like that rather than subject content.

Researcher: Yeah. And would you have many students then that would be coming from a non-English background, English speaking background where English isn't their first language?

Interviewee 1: I have a few. Yeah. So even in my tutor group I have two Ukrainian students. And my tutor group is very multicultural actually, I've an Italian student, a couple of Polish. There are a few others then who aren't from Ireland, but they've been speaking English their whole lives. And there's one student from Argentina. So her first few years she was speaking just Spanish before, but her English is pretty much perfect. It's the two Ukrainian students that would be the main ones. So they had just sat next to no English when they came originally. So that was...

Researcher: How did you cope with that?

Interviewee 1: That was tough. And to be honest, I don't know, like if I coped with it very well in the beginning. Like they've improved massively, so obviously in school we're doing something right. But at the beginning, I don't know how much information was going through. So it's a lot of differentiation. Say if I had a PowerPoint there I'd translate that whole thing interview into Ukrainian and put it up on OneNote so they'd have their iPads there in front of them so that they should be able to read that, things like worksheets I'd always give them translated worksheets and things like that. Yeah. And I suppose even just in kind of trying to talk to them a little bit, like I remember one of them the first day he came in, we were going on a trip with first years to Zip It and he hadn't notion what was going on. Like he was just he's in school and suddenly he's on a bus and then he's in the forest and he had no idea what was going on at all. But now you come in and he'll ask me about soccer and stuff like that. So every morning I make a point of talking to the two of them or just asking them, how's your weekend, what do you do? And things like that. I think that little kind of conversational English kind of comes on a little bit.

Researcher: Absolutely. And they're probably more inclined to join in then when they feel more welcome as well.

Interviewee 1: Absolutely. And even you mentioned joining in like trying to get them... So like the first few weeks, they sat on their own together in the corner. I tried to integrate them into like a bit of group work. And it's not even the task really, that's important. What they're doing is just that they're getting involved is going to help with their English a lot, even if they're just, you know, they're not speaking much they're hearing other people talking and yeah, you know, surely some of that is going to, you know go in.

Researcher: Absolutely. And you were saying there you were differentiating, you were translating stuff, did you do out of your own accord then, or was it kind of like schoolwide? They kind of sit you down and say...

Interviewee 1: Yeah, so that was actually that was mentioned in our induction as well. The first couple of days we were here that we were going to have Ukrainian students and other EAL students as well. Yeah, teacher C actually went through a few different kinds of tactics that he would use, and one of them was just simply translating worksheets and things like that. Another way actually was with PowerPoint and you can kind of turn on a translator. So when you're speaking, it's translating on screen. But the only thing is it's not compatible with iPads, so I haven't really been able to do that. Now you can connect your laptop to the screen and do it, but it just wasn't working for me. So I actually haven't done that. But I know some other teachers have been doing it.

Researcher: I suppose if you have multiple languages as well it can be tricky.

Interviewee 1: But I suppose even like, we mentioned videos as well as like for geography and even history as well we'd be able to show quite a few visuals, few videos and stuff like that. So simply turning on translations for that is handy as well. Even like even if they're English translations, like with the Ukrainian students for the first few weeks, or first couple of months really, I had Ukrainian subtitles on videos and stuff like that.

Researcher: Where they hard to source?

Interviewee 1: You just know, like in lots of YouTube videos you can just turn on the captions and you can choose the language and it just works all of that. I don't know how accurate those translations are, but I have to trust like they seem to be understanding.

Interviewee 1 But as we went on then I just started turning on the subtitles in English, you know, you're trying to wean them off a little bit, for want of a better word. But they seem to be understanding because, you know, you're asking questions about the video after, and they'd be able to answer those questions. So it seems to be working. I'm hoping anyway.

Researcher: And would you know let's say if you had a question about something, would there be a particular member of staff you'd go to in terms of just saying I'm kind of struggling here with this aspect of teaching EAL or is it kind of mix of you taking it on your own and doing the translation work.

Interviewee 1: Yeah, I don't know if there's a specific teacher you would talk to like I suppose any of the language department would be good for that. Teacher C is the tech Wizards you know, anything we can help technology-wise he's the man to go to for that. What I would say is any of the language department would have those tricks up their sleeve.

Researcher: And did you ever at any points like after induction, after you got those tools, did you go back and say, or did you check in with anyone even and see how everyone else was getting on?

Interviewee 1: To be honest, I've checked in with other teachers to see how they were getting on with students, but I didn't really honestly go looking for more tips. I've kind of been using the same things really from what we did in the induction. But I suppose it is important just to talk to the staff about how they're getting on and if there is anything that's working for them. But I kind of found it was it was kind of the same things that everybody was using and seemed to be working.

Researcher: And would you have any experience then teaching EAL? I know what you're saying. History obviously is very writing oriented, so you need a decent knowledge of punctuation, grammar. Would you have any experience actually teaching English as an additional subject like that?

Interviewee 1: No, I did in my school last year I had one kind of learning support more or less. It was kind of, I suppose, based on literacy and numeracy, more so really, but I was kind of interested in reading as well as do little written projects, but it was really like... I was just left my own accord to just get them writing basically so it wasn't too structured really.

Researcher: And you wouldn't be, like, daunted or you wouldn't be like what'll I do now with this do they do know this, or would there be more learning you could do on it do you reckon? Or do you feel like it's fine?

Interviewee 1: I think. I would love to do some sort of CPD on it. Like I think I have been getting on okay. One can always improve though do you know?

Researcher: Because it can be tricky. It's kind of like knowing how to drive a car and then you don't know how to fix it if there's a mistake. I remember someone saying that for us because like, you know, superlatives, imperatives, like some people might have heard those before, but I know just from chatting with people. But it hasn't been too bad anyway?

Interviewee 1: It hasn't been too bad, you know, but it really was daunting at the beginning. I remember sitting at home and even like with PowerPoints and stuff that we mentioned, I was like going through each sentence on a slide translating it and I didn't even know that you could just actually put that into the translation, and it'll do it for you. So I was thinking in the first couple of weeks like, how am I going to do this for a whole year? It's hard to see the end of the road, but then they just started improving. And even the Ukrainian students like they're working after school as well as they're doing their own schools, so their English is coming along a lot.

Researcher: Alright.

Interviewee 1: So I suppose it does get better.

Researcher: Definitely, yeah. Especially being an NQT, it's not easy like that.

Interviewee 1: Yeah, I know. And I think like, going forward next year, if there is a similar situation. I don't think I'd be too daunted. I think, what has happened this year has been successful. I would say like even not only their conversational English, I found like has improved a lot, it's talk to anyone now really to be honest, but even their written work is

actually generally quite good. Now I notice sometimes one of them whose English isn't quite as good as the other Ukrainian student in the class, and sometimes he well, if I had a slide that isn't translated, he might like to look at one word on Google Translate or something and you can see it clicking with him and it makes sense. But he's able to put it together.

Researcher: That's good going because I'd say at the start of the year...

Interviewee 1: At the start of the year it was just blank.

Researcher: That's incredible, too, seeing that development in a relatively short period time.

Interviewee 1: And its credit to them, like Jesus, I don't know how long it would take me to pick up a language. I mean I studied Irish for 14 years and I haven't a word and they've picked it up in 6 months.

Researcher: I know. And would they be mixing with the other kids at this point.

Interviewee 1: They do, probably not as much as you'd like, like say if there's group work and stuff, I always make sure they're separated, put them in different groups so that they nearly have to talk to the rest of them. You would notice though at lunch time they tend not to mix with Irish students that there's a couple more Ukrainian students in other classes and they tend to stick together. So you'd like if they'd mix a bit more, but you can't really force them either like, they're comfortable with them.

Researcher: Yeah they've been through a lot I suppose.

Interviewee 1: You want to make they're as happy as possible.

Researcher: Of course. And apart from the Ukrainian students then would you have many other nationalities? You mentioned a few like Italian.

Interviewee 1: Yes an Italian student in my tutor group as well.. And she's been in Ireland for a few years though, so her English is fine like, there are no issues with it. There will be sometimes maybe she might be trying to answer a question and be like one word she can't think of but she's quite clever so she can work it out herself. I've a Polish student in the tutor group as well, again now she's been here a couple of years and her English is good. Sometimes I think she's not really confident though, answering questions. She might be a little bit you know, not too confident with her English, that was at the beginning of the year. But now she's fine. Like there's no issues really. And to be honest, I guess I didn't do a massive amount with her. I think it just came naturally. And even just she's made quite a few friends since the start of the year. I think that's brought her English on a lot. The first few weeks, she kind of stuck to herself a little bit. But now she's in a big group of friends.

Researcher: That's good to see that.

Interviewee 1: She has that confidence now.

Researcher: It's nice to see you have the, you know, a few kids like that (with EAL) in your tutor group as well. So you can kind of see it not just this year, but years to come as a factor as well.

Interviewee 1: Yeah. And it's actually nice. You can see their progress. Like I'm looking at some of them there this morning and one of them wouldn't say boo to you at the start of the year and now you're trying to keep him quiet. But it is lovely like.

Researcher: And you have them every day as well of course. I was in a different school before and they didn't have it (tutor time in the morning) one day a week, so they didn't have an individual tutor, they just had a year group head teacher.

Interviewee 1: Sure you don't get to know them at all then.

Researcher: Well there's not the same pastoral care there then.

Interviewee 1: Yeah exactly. Well they're like a family here now. You come in going, how's the father?

Researcher: If you have them every day, I mean the school I went to we met them (tutors) three times a week. So, not that it was down to business, but it was a bit more kind of like, all right, does anyone need me to look at something? But if you have every day, that (admin/discipline issues) doesn't come up every day.

Interviewee 1: Exactly so you can kind of relax and have a bit of fun with them. Like we'd have a routine like on a Monday, I have to say their journals and just to kind of talk about the weekend news. Tuesday then, actually that's something that's kind of related to EAL, it's almost like their free day they're allowed to play games on their iPads would have to be educational games, so I'll give them a list of games that they're allowed.

Researcher: Oh that's cool.

Interviewee 1: And one is Duolingo. So I kind of really pushed Duolingo at the start of the year. I know it's only harmless, but it's a few words that say the Ukrainian students can pick up and even some of the students are from Ireland were doing a little bit of Ukrainian as well.

Researcher: Where they?

Interviewee 1: Try to welcome them in a bit. So that has worked kind of well. And say on Wednesday we'd have a reading class actually, as well. So yeah, everybody has to bring in a book and read for 15 minutes in the morning here, which again probably helps the EAL students a little bit.

Researcher: Definitely, yeah.

Interviewee 1: And Thursday, then there's assembly and they have to listen to teacher D for 15 minutes. Which helps, because if they not listening, he'll know.

Researcher: Yeah so they'd be clued in then.

Interviewee 1: And then Friday we'd do a Kahoot and I always do it in English, so I can kind of see and understand what's happening here. And again, at the beginning of the year, especially the Ukrainian students, I could tell they didn't really know, they'd always be down in the bottom of the leader board? But now actually one of them is actually top of the leader board.

Researcher: Really, that's great. And you're saying there like, it wouldn't be the main focus, obviously, but EAL would kind of come into your planning?

Interviewee 1: A little bit, it's kind of always in the back of your head.

Researcher: And in your PME course, would you have done anything with it?

Interviewee 1: We did have one module; I have to cast my mind back on what we actually did in it. It was a strange one because it was kind of mixed in with a few different things. It was mixed in with like creativity and digital media literacy. So it was about ways to reach EAL students, apart from the traditional ways of reading and writing and stuff like that. It didn't make much of an impression on me, which is interesting. It's unfair that they do cram a lot into those videos. We made a video or something, but to be honest I can't even remember what it was about. Right. Well, that kind of says it all, I suppose. There wasn't a big emphasis on it.

Researcher: Do you think there should be more of an emphasis on it?

Interviewee 1: I suppose, obviously we're talking about kids coming from Ukraine now, but there would be like significant from other countries I suppose and if not in this school, in other schools especially, but yeah do you think there should be more of an emphasis on... I think definitely, and even just, I know we're harping on about the Ukrainian students a lot, but like it's obviously very relevant, so yeah, I was put into my class one morning and I didn't really know what I was supposed to do with them you know, like we had that induction, so at least I had a few tools that I knew I could go to them and see how they work. But like, I'm sure a lot of schools wouldn't have that induction. And if you're coming as an NQT, I'm sure you wouldn't know where to start. I genuinely, I tried to talk to him that morning and he didn't know what I was saying. He understood the smile on your face and said yeah, yeah, yeah. How do you teach them about the Easter Rising then? So I think their ask after the evening needs to be a big reference. Even the way Ukrainian students are being treated when they come here, there's a few here in third year who are expected now to do the Junior Cert. Really? I just don't know how they're going to do that. Yeah, that's tough. Especially if it only arrives, let's say, maybe over a year maximum, but not much more than that. And I think, now I'm not 100% sure, but I think they're allowed to use a dictionary in the exam, which is a help, but I don't know how much of a help it's going to be, because it's actually a physical dictionary, you still have to look it up and everything. And the amount of time that's going to take them, I just don't know how they can do well on it. I know it's probably not a priority for them really, with all this going on, but I just think it's unfair the

way her grades came to it. For sure, yeah, because you're saying it's in the air, so they don't know if they're going to be here short term, mid-term, long term, you know, and I suppose if it was mid to long term, grades come into it for sure, yeah. And lots of them are still doing school in the evening as well. That's what I can't get my head around it. Some of them, I was chatting to one of them there, and she's preparing for her final exams, whatever it is.

Researcher: It's mad. But I was going to say, so you were saying, that if you had an issue with EAL, there's no, there's no real forum there, even though you would feel comfortable asking people?

Interviewee 1: There's no kind of cut out time in the agenda. Not as far as I'm aware anyway, I'm fairly confident in saying that. I'm not an official person to go to for it, but I would be confident in asking any of the teachers here, even the principal or deputy principal, they're very helpful with that. But I suppose it's not really going to be on the agenda really.

Researcher: As we were saying there about the PMEs, that's not coming from the school, that seems to come from the general wider curriculum. Because even like we say, you notice it with history, where it's really writing heavy, that like English, your ability to write in English, your ability to comprehend in English, it's massive, it has a big knock-on effect to a lot of subjects, nearly all of them but maths.

Interviewee 1: Yeah, I know, it must be so disheartening for them sometimes, like if one Ukrainian student in third year there for Geography, and you can tell he's very intelligent, and some of the answers he gives in these tests and stuff, he gives really detailed answers, but he may not have understood the question. Sometimes he doesn't pick up a lot of marks. He ends up failing a lot of tests then. You can see he's disappointed with that, but his language isn't as developed as his intelligence is. It's restrictive for sure, especially with his disability. I assume then the Ukrainian students, maybe a couple of the other students, have the EAL (being brought out from classes). They do, yes, they have learned it for a couple of years, but I'm not actually sure how many times a week, but I think it's when Irish is happening, they're taking out, and they have their own English class, which I'm sure is a big help for them.

Researcher: They're a big help, no doubt, yeah. And would you be in contact with that teacher at all, or would they be in contact with you? Maybe this is a better question.

Interviewee 1: Not regularly anyway. At the beginning of the year I was told that they were being taken out and I just had to go through the timetable with them. Since then I haven't really had any contact about them with their teacher, with their English teacher to be honest. Because no doubt, like we'll say, that's definitely helped them come on in leaps and bounds.

Researcher: But yeah, it's interesting. Do you reckon there should be more connection between the two, more collaboration? Because think about it, if you have them for the classes, then they can kind of help you with, I don't know, more subject-specific content.

Interviewee 1: Yeah, absolutely. It definitely couldn't be a bad thing anyway. Particularly, going back to the beginning of the year, I wasn't sure how differentiated worksheets should be. Do I translate everything, or should I challenge them a little bit more? Whereas I suppose if you're constantly in contact with their learning support teacher, you can know you can maybe push them a little bit more or maybe you need to ease off a bit. So, yeah, it couldn't be a bad thing anyway. I'd say even like, it'd be a suggestion for next year, if you're doing them through a weekly or fortnightly meetings, about them even if it's only for 10 minutes, just to talk about their progress, how they're getting on. I suppose with me being a tutor for them, I can kind of see the progress anyway, because I'm seeing them every day, but if I only had them twice a week, I'd probably still be translating everything for them at this stage.

Researcher: And would you be able to identify, not asking to say which exactly, but for any given student, would you have an idea, like, oh, they struggle with past tense, or they struggle with vocabulary, or is it more that you're just kind of broadly thinking, oh, I know they struggle, so I'll differentiate it, and you have some really good stuff there in terms of like subtitles and stuff. Or would you kind of leave the more specific nitty-gritty grammatical stuff, would you leave that more to the EAL teacher then?

Interviewee 1: Yeah, I think that's probably fair to say. Say, if I'm asking them a question verbally, like, if they mix up a tense, say past tense instead of a present tense, I generally wouldn't really correct that because I don't want to draw too much attention to them. Now maybe, probably should actually correct those things so that they don't fall into the habits of using it, but I suppose I'm just wary of highlighting it in front of everybody.

Researcher: But yeah, so I suppose it's easier to correct, or would it be easier to correct maybe even if it was written?

Interviewee 1: Definitely written, yeah. Yeah, so like if it was written, like say if they're making lots of errors, I don't want to put them down too much, but it might be even like just sort of from hand, like a text or something, just maybe have a look at that text there. I suppose I wouldn't do it very regularly. Yeah. And subconsciously, that's an English teacher.

Researcher: Of course, of course, yeah. So yeah, so basically, would you say there's not a lot of collaboration in with other teachers in terms of EAL or?

Interviewee 1: Yeah, it's probably fair to say. And to be honest, it's not a criticism, it's not something I've even thought about really, collaboration, but I suppose it's like, just looking back on the year, we haven't really had any reasons about it. So there probably is a lack of collaboration there.

Researcher: And what do you reckon the benefits would be then if, let's say for example, you had a teacher and he said, I'd say it could be a tenuous enough situation in terms of carving out even more time for extra stuff, but hypothetically you were able to get a slot in even once a month. What would the benefits of that be, do you reckon?

Interviewee 1: I think it's just keeping everybody up to speed. Because, yes, no matter what, you're probably going to have to differentiate some bit for EAL students, but some might be further along than others, so you don't want to be giving everybody the same type of work and have some people under-challenged and other people over-challenged. So you can tailor work a little bit more individually for them if everybody's kind of on the same page. I have a fair understanding of who's in my tutor group and all of that, but I'm sure their learning support teacher will understand more about the language skills that they have and that's what they're actually focusing on.

Researcher: And I suppose you have them as a tutor, some of them anyway, but you could be getting a better read on, oh, I don't know, they might be struggling with terms in geography or terms in, I don't know, maybe very specific English, that can be tough as well.

Interviewee 1: You need to combine all of those factors I suppose. Even just looking around the classroom, that differentiation basically, having that stuff like that definitely works. Even if you're not 100% conscious of it, it definitely does help. It's more visual aids I suppose.

Researcher: Yeah, all that stuff. So what would the main barrier be to teaching AL, even if it's a relatively minor aspect of teaching, if you were to come up with suggestions on how to do it better, not just you individually, but as a school or as a system, would you have any recommendations?

Interviewee 1: Yeah, it's a broad one.

Researcher: It's a very broad one, yeah. Well, we could look even just in the school, even. Would you have any suggestions?

Interviewee 1: I suppose, kind of going back to the same things, really. Like we had, obviously, the induction where we went through all of these things, but it wasn't really revisited at all throughout the year. So I think, even like you mentioned yourself, even like a monthly meeting or something like that, just to kind of keep on top of it, because sometimes I know for myself when I say most teachers are the same, like when you're planning your lessons, sometimes you might even forget about the EAL students in it, because there's so much to be doing. Whereas if you're kind of just thinking about it all the time, you're revisiting that together, I think that would be a big help for them. Now I know they have made massive progress for the year, but some students might fall under the radar a little bit sometimes, because they are generally quieter than the rest of the students. So you just want to keep an eye on that.

Researcher: Would you have any students that come from a non-European background, different language, like would it be very different in terms of language?

Interviewee 1: I have one student from Mongolia actually, but he has been in the school, he went to primary school, or at least the later years of primary school here, so his English is fine, so it didn't really cause any difficulties. He is very quiet, and I do wonder if that's maybe partly at least to do with the language, maybe if he's not too confident, kind of

conversant with it, but his written work is always immaculate, like there's never any issues with that.

Researcher: Oh really?

Interviewee 1: Yeah, I don't know how much of it is language related really, I mean he's just quite a chap in general.

Researcher: That's interesting. And like, would you, you would have had a parent-teacher meeting then, or at least one? How did you find that aspect in terms of...?

Interviewee 1: So with himself, I read the Mongolian student, I kind of highlighted to his mother that he's very quiet. And she said she was aware of it, and she said he's just shy. Now, I didn't want to push that too much. I do think it's a bit more than that. I think, I don't know if he had maybe a bit of anxiety or something, but he's very quiet, I think, more than just shy. Other students, one Ukrainian student's mother came.

Researcher: How was that?

Interviewee 1: It was good, actually. She was learning English herself, actually. It was quite good, like that was her main concern. She wasn't even too worried about actual work. I could hear her. But she was delighted because they are mixing, and they are making friends in fairness to them. That was her main concern, she was happy with that. It was actually lovely, she said something like, she's on... I'm on the seventh sky or something.

Researcher: That's very nice. She must have decent enough English then, I mean if there's a mistake a mistake, but if she's aware of it in the first place. So yeah, there was no issue then in terms of, I suppose you wouldn't have any behavioural issues with any of the students you'd interviewed, would you?

Interviewee 1: No, thank God, no. Like any student at all, really, the worst I've had is maybe just talking, no behavioural security at all. It would be interesting to know if there was really EAL students, how would you approach that? Because it's even more nuanced than if it was someone who didn't have EAL, because there's an actual instruction, there could be instructions that have been missed, and you alluded to early on the frustration then of not being able to grasp it. Well even like, there's a big emphasis on restorative practices here, like if you have to have that meeting with a student, an EAL student, they might not understand what you're asking them in the first place, and then it's, I don't know, it could open more issues. I suppose it maybe, probably is the way to go anyway if you do have issues if they don't understand what you're asking them then at least you might be able to see that that was the issue in the first place... just missing an instruction like you said.

Researcher: Yeah, it would be nice if it was that easy. Like it'll probably become more relevant or prevalent and it's not something that will pass anyway, like having kids with EAL, I suppose it's one of the reasons why it shows as a topic.

Interviewee 1: Absolutely, I don't know how long this Ukrainian situation is going to go on for but we're going to keep getting more students anyway and once that's over there's

always going to be more students in the school, so you'll always need the tools to reach them. We are quite well set up here but in a lot of schools I'd say maybe not like last year actually I was a tutor for a transition year group, and we got a Ukrainian student. It was towards the end of the year now in fairness, so probably didn't have a lot of time to plan for her back to school, but there were no instructions really. It was basically just made sure she feels safe in the class, you know, which is, that's fair enough, but academically I couldn't reach her, couldn't do anything about it really, you know.

Researcher: That's interesting, yeah. But because I suppose, yeah, that's low enough on the level of agenda, but it's interesting how there's so little of emphasis on it, isn't there? And in terms of, we mentioned school a little bit in terms of barriers to making it better or whatever, yeah like what would be the main thing do you reckon like this we kind of made a joke about it already about like oh like it teaches time and it's already kind of precious enough and you might get a few rolled eyes whatever yeah I guess there's already enough lobbying going on I suppose for different things but like it's obviously if we open school you'd feel comfortable chatting to someone about something but like how receptive would it be do you think? or would it be the main barriers to pushing the AL to have it as more or would it need to come from above?

Interviewee 1: I don't know. I suppose the main barrier is time, like you know yourself, they are fond of meetings in the school so trying to put more in there I don't think teachers will be delighted with that. But, I mean, you get in as a teacher to try and educate all the students you have. So, like, if you need a little meeting for that, so be it. Now there is a lot of other things. I think maybe it could be sacrifice to kind of push EAL up the agenda a little bit. Like, say, a two-hour subject matter meeting this Thursday. I don't think there's a need for that, really. Or for that, like, time, I mean, I'm sure in that two hours you could find time for this. So I think the time is there, it's just a matter of prioritising it a little bit more. But then even informally as well, it's very simple and I'm guilty of not doing it really, but 10.45 right there should be very easy for me to talk to the two students, the learning support teacher, over a coffee or something, just to see how we're getting on. It doesn't have to be very formal all the time. Just get a general sense of how they're getting on in that class, and then let them know how they're getting on socially and in the tutor group and stuff like that.

Researcher: It's a good point, actually, yeah. Informally chatting, but... You can find time in front of them. Having had this experience, would it be more... I know we're obviously chatting about it now, but up to this point would you be more aware of it like as an aspect of teaching?

Interviewee 1: Yeah absolutely. The biggest thing I noticed from my period is differentiation all the time and even here and in meetings and in interviews and everything it's differentiation that's brought up so much. But like it can't have a much more obvious differentiation than a student who doesn't speak English or is only learning English needs to be re-adjusted and planned to go forward.

Researcher: Definitely, yeah. And, yeah, so no real issues collaborating with other teachers on it?

Interviewee 1: No, no. Like, everyone here is very approachable and will give their time. It's just a matter of actually doing it. I suppose teachers' lives are very, very busy now. There's so much going on, it can be hard to prioritise it, but I think we just need to prioritise it a little bit more.

Researcher: If that means moving some things a little bit further down the list of priorities, then that would be the best way of doing it? Do you reckon, would it be more that like, you know, they'd report, not report to you, but they'd kind of give you an update on how actually so and so, they're struggling a little bit with this and that, or should it be through the EAL teacher, or what do you reckon?

Interviewee 1: Like, I suppose they have access to 10, maybe 11 different teachers in a given week, maybe less. Yeah, because they have a lot of contact with different teachers. Yeah, that's a really good point. We do have a system for them to lean in, lean out thing, so something like that can be incorporated into it. Not quite lean in, lean out, but like... So it's... If a student, say, has any additional needs or maybe there's something going on in their lives and updates his list every week, so leaning in is like a student maybe needs a bit more attention, you might need to help them with something, lean out is that maybe they're going through something, just give them a bit of space, don't put too much pressure on them basically for the week. Something like that with languages, now that's very broad again, but it would be an idea of incorporating something like that. So maybe this student is progressing really well, you could maybe push them a little bit more. This other student is kind of struggling with grammar or tenses or whatever. That's a good idea actually. Don't put too much pressure on them with that. And you know, work around it. We're aware of this and we're working to try and fix this.

Researcher: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, so like... That's interesting, yeah. That Lean In, Lean Out is on Teams, on StaffHub on Teams and the guidance counsellor updates that every week. So something like that, maybe they're learning to support a teacher, maybe a tutor, whoever, maybe someone can update that every week, but you know how. I know it's another thing for teachers to be doing, but... I suppose if it's in the regime, though, yeah. And does that Lean In, Lean Out, is it the guidance counsellor that does it? It's them yeah, they do it that, yeah. It is on Staff Pub on Teams. So you just log into that?

Interviewee 1: Yeah, so you just like, it's, anyone can look at it. It's just, it's simple, it's a word doc, and you have two columns, lean in and lean out, and the other column, and you just know, like I checked that on Monday, and just, just to be aware of what's happening in the footer, because you don't want to, say a student came in and you don't have their homework done, you don't want to go back to them and then find out later that jeez, their granddad died or something. So they actually find that really, really useful. It's the first time, I haven't heard of it being used in other schools, the first I heard of it this year, but I think that's been brilliant for that, and I think it could be used for a lot of other things really. Because it's kind of like, you don't have to have a meeting about it, but you can kind of quickly scan it.

Researcher: Save time, yeah. That's actually very good, actually, yeah. And yeah. Collaborative teaching then, I know you said you had a different teacher. Like, would that be, or you'd never have an actual EAL? Do they teach EAL, actually?

Interviewee 1: I don't think she does. No, I think she does learning support.

Researcher: Yeah, yeah, you're right. But what do you think about that, having a designated EAL teacher? I don't think we have that in the school, do we?

Interviewee 1: I don't think so, no. Not officially anyway. You might end up just having a team teacher if it happens to be EAL, but I think that would be a very good idea. In a class with maybe a core of students or whatever, if there's a big portion of them. Absolutely, yeah. If there's only maybe one or two EAL students in the class, maybe there's no need, but I do have, I mentioned the tutor group again, so there's four or five students in that that have English as an additional language. It might be no harm to have something like that, it would be a big help for them, I'd say. I'd say there's probably staffing issues with that though. Yeah. Like, if you don't want to call it, I'll be honest, we can't go over it. Or the deputy principal, he's got a timetable and everything. But yeah, it's a really good idea anyway, if there's good work around it. Like, there's been a good bit of learning support, so, like, extra teaching and extra hours of, well, yeah, personally. But, yeah, it's interesting.

Researcher: So basically, to kind of summarize it then, it's definitely compared to the lessons, you have a huge amount of training on it, and I suppose it's different from something like myself, I actually did a TEFL course and I taught EAL, or taught the language or whatever like that for a few years, so I can kind of lean on that but yeah you would see yeah but you would not that was you're definitely open to collaboration definitely yeah.

Interviewee 1: I'm not going to go and just make that up myself I need to get ideas for other teachers who are more experienced and have done things like this you know so otherwise the students are going to suffer so yeah that's interesting yeah and you mentioned a good suggestion there about the lean in and out. Yeah, I think we'll be good. I will follow it up.

Researcher: Yeah, I know what you're saying. Well, that was super, anyway. Appreciate that. Well, that was super, anyway. Appreciate that.

Interviewee 1: 100%. Yeah, sound.

Appendix D

Interview 2

Researcher: Hi, how's it going? So if you'd like to give us a description of your experience working as a post-primary school teacher.

Interviewee 2: Okay, so I qualified in 1999 and I taught for 20 years, 21 years actually. Firstly in an all-girls, fee-paying Catholic school in Dublin.

Researcher: How was that? Like very different to this school then?

Interviewee 2: Yeah I loved it there, and then I moved for a year to an all-boys school, another fee-paying school, and nearly two years ago now I've moved to this Educate Together (school).

Researcher: How do you find the difference from like boys' school and girls' school?

Interviewee 2: But you know what? Everything was similar in terms of it was a traditional school, they were very similar like from a teacher's perspective, somebody working there. But the lads were big messers. Yes, lovely.

Researcher: Was it an academic school?

Interviewee 2: Yeah. They're both they're both very, very similar. And so I just kind of transferred from one that was quite similar to my own, but this school, the school that I'm in now, Sandymount Park is a developing school. So I just, I was kind of midway through my career, I was like, I'm going to do something different, give myself a challenge.

Researcher: It's a mixed field, obviously, isn't it?

Interviewee 2: Yes. Multi-denominational, developing school. And in terms of your subject area (EAL), there's a lot of students who would require extra support in EAL. And other than that in my leadership capacity I had an AP1 in my previous school. I was involved in digital learning (too) and I led the digital learning in that school.

Researcher: In this school then and of course there's plenty of digital learning.

Interviewee 2: Yeah. And then I came here. And I'm a progress leader year head and I'm doing anti-bullying as well. And my subjects are Irish and German. Yes, I should say that.

Researcher: And how many years have you been in Sandymount Park?

Interviewee 2: It's my second. So I joined in September 2021.

Researcher: Has it flown by?

Interviewee 2: Yes and no. It's a very intense school. And so I feel sometimes like I'm fitting in three days of work in one day.

Researcher: And you have the extracurriculars as well. The language club you're involved with, of course.

Interviewee 2: Yeah, I run that language club, that's fine. Like I actually did the green committee in my old place, so I guess when you're teaching you'll always have something.

Researcher: When you're teaching languages then, you've obviously come in contact with EAL. Would you have in any capacity have had any experience like explicitly teaching EAL?

Interviewee 2: No. I'll tell you why because I'm predominantly an Irish teacher. Well, I'm qualified in Irish and German, but when you're teaching Irish, you generally end up teaching mostly Irish. You wouldn't necessarily be getting EAL students.

Researcher: Because they typically come out (during Irish)?

Interviewee 2: Yeah. So I have some in my German class now here, and there are students in my Irish classes here because in this school I'd say we have about 30% of students whose home languages are different to the language that we use to teach. But they've totally caught up. They've got a totally different perception...

Researcher: They problem don't have the stigma (with learning Irish), do they?

Interviewee 2: No, so I have two little ones in second year who came in at fourth class to Ireland, so they had no English. They, you know, they had some English and zero Irish and they managed to catch up just by doing what they're told!

Researcher: And great teaching I'm sure as well.

Interviewee 2: Yeah.

Researcher: And some of like the Native Irish students who would have Irish parents...

Interviewee 2: They're not you know, you, you will find sometimes that sense of well Irish is really hard.

Researcher: You can get that in MFL a little bit, maybe less so.

Interviewee 2: I suppose with MFL you've got the carrot of getting a job or even like go on holidays in an area whereas through Irish they know they could survive without it. Yeah, that would be my view generally on it. I mean, I've been in it a long time compared to other teachers at this school. Yeah.

Researcher: Oh, that's good. It's always good to get different perspectives. And then like, obviously you would have organically come across students (with EAL), not necessarily

teaching them one on one, but that would be in your class. And they would need that extra support.

Interviewee 2: And yes, I would particularly say so in my German classes. And I've a Ukrainian, he really struggles with that MFL paper. Some of the questions are asked through English, like, uh, yeah, you would. But it's not that obvious to me now in my general teaching day or in my role as a progress leader either.

Researcher: Really? Okay. Yeah. because as you said, there is like, a significant proportion of students in the school that will come from a non-ethnic Irish background.

Interviewee 2: Yeah. Unless they're kind of hiding, you know, not saying it, the other thing is the parents sometimes as well. I don't know if it's significant problem that they mightn't have English.

Researcher: And might lack knowledge of the system, knowledge of the college system.

Interviewee 2: That would be more of a problem. Or, not a problem, but more of an area that we need to work on. Yeah. That they might not even know, for example, that school finishes at the beginning of June.

Researcher: You know, it's probably different in different countries.

Interviewee 2: When the state exams.

Researcher: How to apply for college courses, the CAO.

Interviewee 2: Even like why are they doing all these 11 subjects? What does the CAO imply? Because it mightn't actually mean that much for them if they're transient visitors. Do they actually need the Leaving Cert or would they be better off having the IB (International Baccalaureate). That would work more European-wise, to get into the universities in Europe, which we don't offer in a lot of schools in Ireland.

Researcher: Okay, That's interesting. And then I know from some of the Ukrainian students I had contact with who I was teaching EAL with, you know, they were students last year and they weren't doing any of the exams here. And they were I think they were put into a TY group, 3 Ukrainian students and two of them haven't come back this year, but one of the sisters is still in the school here. So they actually just did the exams and then didn't have to worry about them here, they just did them online. I know there's another student now in fifth year and she's doing the exams concurrently with her final exams (in Ukraine).

Interviewee 2: Yeah. I know initially that the sense was that the parents were going that while they're here they might as well take advantage of the education system, but there's some of them doing the two.

Researcher: At same time. Yeah, which is crazy.

Interviewee 2: Now, I have one young fella in third year German, and he's very unmotivated, and he needs to be prompted a lot. And I do know that English is difficult for him, but I have the sense of I can teach you German because they might actually use that, you know. But I felt I had the sense all last year that he's just extremely tired. He couldn't access the language. And that's what the issue was. But this year, his sister is in first year and she's got a completely different approach. She's very intense and wants to know everything. Get it right. So I was putting it down to that last year. I mean, obviously the child is in whole new environment that he didn't expect to be, and he doesn't want to be in. But it was it was an innate thing really the motivation levels as opposed to anything else.

Researcher: It's tough to gauge that I suppose.

Interviewee 2: That's when you're taking the individual.

Researcher: And like everything, it was I guess such a relatively new experience as well that these families, kids coming over from a war-torn area.

Interviewee 2: Yeah, we were very excited at the beginning, you know, and like enough in a good way, you know, that we'll look after them, you know. But actually. It's been tough because we're trying to figure out how do we overcome some of the issues. Like I would find with the German paper... Actually, I do have another student for learning support that has significant issues with the English language. But they can't access our curriculum because it's too wordy and there's too many definitions...

Researcher: They almost have to learn the structure of the paper off.

Interviewee 2: Yeah. Or even. I know the knowledge is in there, but it's just the language is the barrier.

Researcher: That's tricky too. And I suppose when we were saying that the EAL students came over and there was excitement and maybe an element of not knowing what was going to happen. Did you feel like there was sufficient guidelines or help given not just in school, but maybe from the government?

Interviewee 2: No, I think everybody just got such a shock. Of course, it was coming after the pandemic as well. And we're in a really challenging situation now where we're trying to help those students but we're also trying to help students that have been in the Irish education system the whole way through the pandemic, trying to help them fill these gaps and to get everybody to access the curriculum at the same level. It's quite it's hard. It's difficult. Yeah. Because nobody is coming in from the same starting point.

Researcher: Even less so than if you speak a different language.

Interviewee 2: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Researcher: And what do you think, what could have been done?

Interviewee 2: Yeah, I was going to say, I might mention, the course that I went on, I went on that Erasmus course trying to help support students who have different home languages. And one lady and I forgot her name, I'm sorry. She was a principal in a school out in West Dublin, and she felt that in her primary school that she had a lot of students who used different home languages to the teaching language. And she felt they weren't accessing the curriculum. And there was a study done that said that if we insist that... Because we would have always thought, oh, immerse them and they'll be, you know, make sure they're using the target like the whole time or the teaching language the whole time. But actually that students were coming in with very small levels of English. They weren't accessing the curriculum for maybe two years or even more.

Researcher: Okay. And what age were they?

Interviewee 2: Well her students were primary school. She was principal of a primary school. But there was also another lady called X, and she's in the PDST I think, she was working in a school in Wexford or Waterford and the same thing was happening that these children weren't accessing the curriculum and they were taking the children out to learn English. So they were learning a specific type of language in the learning support classes. But in the meantime, they were missing out on everything that was happening in the geography, the history, the English literature. And then they would, two years later, their English might have caught up and they were able to join back with the curriculum but at that stage they didn't have... They missed out on two years of the curriculum, so they were way behind. So this lady if she encouraged like put in these steps, and that teacher X as well, if they brought in these steps where they allowed the children access the curriculum in their own language as much as they wanted. She had a PowerPoint and so she puts on a tool on PowerPoint where she puts it on at the beginning of each class and I could set my PowerPoint up and it listens to you talking in English, and it translates into whatever language I want, subtitling, you know. I'm not sure if I'm describing this very well.

Researcher: I think I understand what you mean.

Interviewee 2: So as teachers teaching those children can flick down and look. Now, I did it with one of my students. The little fella I have for learning support, and initially he's going that's not going to work for me because I'll be looking online. But actually, he found there were key words that when he flipped down a lot, he was able to go, oh, that's what that is. He's Chinese.

Researcher: Yeah.

Interviewee 2: And so while they couldn't be reading the whole time. If they if there were words coming up regularly, they were they'd be able to look down and access this. So that was a really good tool. and then the other thing they were doing was, say, for example, the students, if they had to present anything, which is so much of the work that they have to do nowadays with the CBAs, I guess the I don't know, the primary curriculum, do they do a bit of that as well? Yeah, but they were allowed present in their home language and the subtitles are coming up in English.

Researcher: Oh amazing, that's a really good idea.

Interviewee 2: Yeah. So the kids are accessing the curriculum. They've more of a drive to access it rather than just saying ah yeah sure you don't have to do it; we'll leave you go and do your extra EAL support class.

Researcher: It's almost like an untapped resource, is it? I remember having a student and I think their first language is Chinese or Mandarin, and just saying to them that's like a superpower. You can speak two languages. To kind of empower them. That sounds what that program was trying to do.

Interviewee 2: And it's important that their fellow students see that as well, that they understand that these children do have a superpower. They're sitting in another class in a second language the whole time. So it means that they have that kind of motivation maybe to even access the curriculum.

Researcher: But yes, then those are really good tactics to use. But what I grasp, though, is that you're using almost your own experience and your own knowledge, training yourself, almost getting anecdotal experiences from other people.

Interviewee 2: Who me as a professional?

Researcher: As a teacher and as opposed to and say getting training.

Interviewee 2: Oh, no like getting guidelines from the department.

Researcher: That's interesting.

Interviewee 2: Although in fairness. The conference that I went to was run by Léargas, which is funded by the government. But at the same time, I have to take the initiative to go to that. I had to persuade my principal and deputy principal that I should go to this, and they had to sort out my cover for my classes. So it's not only that, but actually our management are actually very open to us going down that road. I'm not sure I could have got that opportunity in the two previous schools I was in. So it is coming from people who are genuinely interested and are trying to find a way to support these students.

Researcher: And being an MFL and Irish teacher as well you're naturally more aware of the language learning process, you have a better understanding of that than other teachers.

Interviewee 2: Yeah, like I would say as well, it actually it was like a light bulb moment for me as well when they said that that, you know, just putting them in, immersing them isn't actually the answer to which, you know, they need other support, some other motivation like extrinsic motivation because they're not all intrinsically motivated. That child that I have in third year is an example of that. But you're trying to figure out how can we get them to make everything relevant to their own lives as opposed to this is the curriculum and we'll take you out two times a week or three times a week do your English classes with you. But I do think the school got rid of that, totally, taking them at one on one. But I think you could do with a little bit of both.

Researcher: To supplement it a bit?

Interviewee 2: Yeah. Maybe just even like that they'd have one or two. So they had a space there to ask the questions and then probably they need their timetable to be reduced as well. So they can focus on maybe three or four subjects as opposed to expecting them to follow all 11 subjects.

Researcher: Yeah to prioritize Key ones almost. And even like taking that third student into consideration. When you say it probably isn't something innately in his character or personality, and that's a factor that maybe might have limited his integration. But do you see him one plus years in now... not that the school or the department has failed them, but like what areas? Like, how could it be better for him to think? It's a tough question, I guess.

Interviewee 2: I think that he should have the option to just maybe focus on three subjects or something like that, because you see him there, say he's doing geography or history or even German, where some of the questions have to be answered in English. He needs some time to kind of translate them.

Researcher: Yeah.

Interviewee 2: And he's not getting that necessarily in our hour-long class.

Researcher: Yeah, I think he would have done German previously.

Interviewee 2: He did a bit, but he wasn't actually at the same level as mine. That was really tough. We made that decision to put him in with his peer age group, and that is correct. But he had a bit to catch up on, which he did, in fairness to him. But he's good at to the receptive skills. But he'd be not that great at speaking. But I think he's possibly like, he would have probably been like that anyway.

Researcher: You obviously know or would have an idea of who his tutor. Or would there be contact, or would you have ever spoken to their tutor or to maybe the teacher that gives them EAL?

Interviewee 2: No. It's just time, actually.

Researcher: To carve out more time?

Interviewee 2: Yeah, I know a lot's being done on him, but I haven't tried to make that link between what I'm doing and what's been done.

Researcher: Well, there's so much expected of you as a teacher in a new development school, it's difficult to fit that in.

Interviewee 2: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I know it's our responsibility as classroom teachers, but then you have to find the person who's doing the SEN with them.

Researcher: I don't think you should expect every teacher to do that of their own volition. Like, do you think there should be a system in place there, like you would have maybe with SEN or there's like a file on teams that you can log in and put key words in?

Interviewee 2: I suppose we are asked to, to produce keywords at the end of every topic covered. Like, realistically, I do have a child for learning support, and what I do with him in an hour would possibly only take ten, twenty minutes (in a mainstream class), like it takes me a whole class to go through a reading comprehension for geography with him. Because that's his level, it's not that it's just English, he needs additional support anyway. The curriculum is fine, but the exams are tough.

Researcher: Okey.

Interviewee 2: That puts everybody under pressure. Yes, we're kind of moving away from the EAL I guess.

Researcher: No, but I guess it kind of correlates back to...

Interviewee 2: Like we understand that we should be supporting them more maybe, but we're, it's very hard to find the, the facility to do that when our ultimate goal everywhere is to get them to these state exams. That's maybe what's holding it back a bit.

Researcher: Definitely, because like you're saying that the pressure and the focus on the exams and then you could have students come from different backgrounds where they're not even familiar with the process of that or the format. And then you also have I suppose, ten, twenty, thirty other things to draw your attention to. So, I don't know. Do you think there should be? Do you think it should be easier for teachers to access? Let's say if you could click on to somewhere on teams and you say this is where this student X that their EAL teachers has said they're struggling with grammar syntax.

Interviewee 2: It is there but it's quite generic at this stage because it takes a long time to build those profiles up. Like you don't just go in there and meet a kid and figure out how they're getting on, it takes time. Like a whole year probably to establish, first of all, that relationship with them and then to figure out where they're at, because you need to measure where they're at. You need to teach them, remeasure, and see what their capacity is to learn. So there are profiles there but sometimes when I look at them, they're quite generic. They might say something like he needs to sit up the front. And you're there going like oh he's not up the front I hope nobody sees that.

Researcher: Nothing specific for EAL then? You teach Irish and German? You don't teach geography do you?

Interviewee 2: No, it's just with the learning support of that child. I haven't a clue what I'm doing.

Researcher: But even if something like would say, if you know that like that student is struggling with the instruction in the German lesson...

Interviewee 2: Or questions or whatever.

Researcher: That you could put into some kind of system online that the EAL teacher could access are good access...

Interviewee 2: Questions.

Researcher: Yeah. Question words. Yeah these keywords and that give you an idea of how they're getting on.

Interviewee 2: Yeah that would be a great idea. Yeah. Because even as I suppose on the other shoe I am doing the learning support so I'm sometimes I'm not really sure what I'm going to do with the student from week to week. So if there was a little area in there where I could, you know, the day before I could go what might he need this week.

Researcher: Because their (EAL teachers) are probably looking at a broader perspective in terms of like doing comprehension or listening like grammar and vocabulary but do you think it would be more beneficial to have it more specific and then you know then going into an exam, he's a bit more prepared for what's going to be specifically asked of him.

Interviewee 2: Yeah, but should we be teaching them for an exam? Is, is the problem as well. Like I would have a real issue with that that this child has so much knowledge and wants to stop and discuss whatever we've just learned. But I'm like no get on with the task here, and you need to write this specifically to get three marks. I just don't know if that's the correct way to help a student who needs extra support with English. I just I feel our whole system is so exam oriented and focused that we lose sight of what the children actually need.

Researcher: Yes, it's a good point.

Interviewee 2: But people like that teacher and the principal who just kind of said, right, I'm going for it and took a risk and came out with great results. The primary school teacher or principal said we're not going to focus on Irish. And she took that risk. But she did it for the students who were in her class with all these wonderful languages. But I told you that the fact that she asked all the students when they were doing their projects to do them in their home language, and they got up and talked about them, and then the little Irish ones who didn't have much Irish were going, well, we have a language too. And then they wanted to learn more Irish. And they realized that they were they were all going that this was where the level playing field was where their level of Irish was. But she had to take that risk and go, you know what? If the department comes in here, they're going to tell me, Where's your Irish? What do you do if you're Irish here? But what she did was raise the profile of languages and then just and she didn't expect this to happen. It actually raised the value of Irish as well.

Researcher: Which is amazing in itself, the unintended consequences of it.

Interviewee 2: But people, I think in the Irish system were so afraid to try anything because we're just afraid of that slap on the hand. You know, you didn't do this or you're not you

know that there's very little autonomy that way. We'd be told, yeah, you can start learning, you know, you do learn intentions, you do this activity and that activity, there's a million things, just too many resources for your head to take in. But if you wanted to do something really different, we can't. Well, we can, but you know... I think most educators would appreciate it. But we do have this sense of, the inspector might call us out.

Researcher: And in terms of the organization of how EAL is taught here would it have been similar in the different schools that you were in?

Interviewee 2: I wouldn't have been involved in EAL in any other school, um, because I'm coming from... Like the whole how it's integrated into classroom teaching and everything the responsibility of the classroom teacher that was not always the way. I think the students were taken out and they were like taught by a learning resource teacher. But it's putting us under huge pressure, huge expectations. It's like every single student in your class is your responsibility. No matter what happens, you have to make sure they learn. And that's, I find that really challenging. But it's a better system. But they haven't changed our timetables. So I still teach in 22 hours, even though I seem to have a million extra things to do. Nor have they cut the class sizes down so that you can facilitate this.

Researcher: What would your average class size be, or would it depend on the year would depend on the year?

Interviewee 2: About twenty.

Researcher: Have you taught bigger classes in different schools?

Interviewee 2: I've taught, yeah. I've 29 and one class their first year. I've taught 31 at one stage, but that was fine. We streamed them with Irish, well we banded them actually. No, I do think what's been asked of us, it makes so much sense to the child. But for the teacher you can't possibly have the energy or the, you know, the right to do absolutely everything that is expected of us. So sometimes I wonder. Are all these expectations of us. Which we can't do. Does that mean we're not doing great? We're doing half jobs. Yeah, that's maybe a loophole as well that needs to be considered. Because if I want to give that child who, you know, my full attention I'm lacking elsewhere.

Researcher: Does that mean like having a team teaching or co-teaching or having an EAL teacher even in the classroom with you?

Interviewee 2: Yeah, I haven't thought about that, actually. Smaller numbers. No, I don't. I would say team-teaching... I mean we're getting a language assistant next year. And that would really help, an extra teacher would really help me actually. Because when he's down there not understanding the English that teacher could help them. I cannot be over one child the whole class, or even for 40% of it.

Researcher: When there's 19 other students there. Did you say there is a language teacher coming next year?

Interviewee 2: Well for German? Yeah, I don't know how we got that. Thank you department if this ever goes out!

Researcher: So what will their role be? Are they just an extra language teacher, or?

Interviewee 2: They will assist me and the German teachers with the teaching of the language.

Researcher: Oh, amazing.

Interviewee 2: They will actually, like, help me but also the cultural aspect of things and help with... I'm going to do a course on it on Thursday. I can't think of how they help you, but I've had them before and I kind of did it like, I taught for about a month in September and the teacher, she was a student teacher from Germany. She'd observe me, but also she used to organize, say if there was a cultural festival or something in the target language country, she's had a PowerPoint to tell them how it's actually done.

Researcher: And how often would she be coming in?

Interviewee 2: I think I had her once a week, but it depends on how we timetable it. And she'd also be more aware because I'm not living in the target language country, nor have I for a long time. So we had Austrian exchange students, and I was asking those students will you tell them what the popular music is and what the modern stuff is that you watch on TV. Because I haven't a clue, I'm too old.

Researcher: It can be hard to keep up to date.

Interviewee 2: Yeah, I saw one of my own students then get really upset that I said I was old, but I am, so a language system would really help me there. I will be using my German the whole time with the language assistant, and the students are going to see the language being used. Yeah, I guess now we're going into a little bit of MFL...

Researcher: No, but I suppose it shows that there's scope there. Like it's, it's, that's having another person with more expertise in the classroom.

Interviewee 2: But even I'd be able to keep an eye on him, she sometimes needs a little bit of extra help, you know. but that's I suppose an extra person with the language. But an extra teacher would help me.

Researcher: And do you, in terms of EAL, even informally like, was there ever any staff meeting or one of these training days? Were there any modules on that?

Interviewee 2: No. And I guess everything that I'm doing is coming from, I'm just interested in this. I feel really honoured to have students from different backgrounds in my class, and yeah the language and culture club, I could see how much they want to and really need to tell us all about themselves.

Researcher: There is this wealth of information on culture

Interviewee 2: You just want to celebrate that and give them some kind niche to do it. But that's happening in the language and culture club on a Thursday at lunchtime. So the ones who are actually genuinely interested in it all and have other languages are coming to that club. But I really want to bring this into the classroom because we need the ones who aren't interested in this to see that this is this is life. The people who sit beside you in history, there's more going on for them than you. In a way, because they have that extra challenge of not going home and having these conversations with their parents.

Researcher: And would you find that those students who do the cultural language club. They'd be academically strong anyway?

Interviewee 2: Pretty much. One or two of them wouldn't do so well, but it's because English is a barrier for them and that's why.

Researcher: But are they outgoing people?

Interviewee 2: No, not really. About 3 or 4 of them just sit there. About five of them actually. They still come but they won't present. But it's the same gang who present. But they'll ask questions like, you know, but they're comfortable to come. And maybe someday they will present. Like I am trying to get Erasmus funding for these kinds of projects. But I'm doing other projects at the moment.

Researcher: Right, so you've got plenty of stuff going on. And so then, in order to make the lives of the students easier and the teachers who are EAL in their lessons, even as a Maths teacher, as a science teacher, as an English teacher, Irish teacher, you're kind of explicitly teaching EAL, whether directly or indirectly. Because you're teaching, even if they're writing their homework, maybe less on maths, but let's say if it's geography or history, they'll have to be using the target language English. And so you will be coming across it (EAL), as in every teacher is almost an EAL teacher in the sense that they're correcting homework and, they mightn't be able to see that something is grammatically incorrectly if they don't have a lot of experience in English.

Interviewee 2: Yeah.

Researcher: Grammatically they mightn't be able to identify where the issue is, but I suppose that's where maybe the idea of having a stronger line of communication with the EAL teacher comes in.

Interviewee 2: So if they are taken out that what they're doing is relevant to what's happening in their class.

Researcher: And you made a good point earlier on of not making it to exam focused. We said that about the student learning German, but I mean, you could make the case that it could just be for general skills. You could say that this student really struggles between the present perfect and the past simple or that they don't know where to use prepositions. They don't know which one or where to put them. And do you think something like that would be beneficial?

Interviewee 2: Yeah. I just don't know how it would work in my subjects though because I'm looking at their German or Irish. So to me, like sometimes they'll ask me how to spell something in English and I wouldn't really prioritise it. And I kind of feel even as a language teacher, that it's okay. Like, I would always encourage them to make mistakes, but I'd never pick that up if they weren't using the passive or whatever.

Researcher: Yeah. Okay. So that's less relevant for language teachers.

Interviewee 2: Possibly. I should be aware of it because if they don't know it well, then I'm teaching German.

Researcher: So you'd be teaching them a third or fourth language at that point.

Interviewee 2: God, it's hard for them. I suppose you know what? Even signs are very helpful as well. Visually, in the classroom, you can look at that, focus on those. Uh, the key words are good. Check in with them, have a little mentor, I suppose.

Researcher: Who should be checking in with them, do you think? Like, who should have the biggest responsibility?

Interviewee 2: The teacher, I should be checking in with them.

Researcher: But as in if they have 11 teachers, should there be one? Is it too much to ask for or should there be like their tutor or their English teacher?

Interviewee 2: Should there be like a post of responsibility, like, you know, specifically looks after it? To check in with them. Mhm.

Researcher: And should it be their responsibility to check in on them?

Interviewee 2: Because there should be, because at the moment we're all just kind... everybody feels they have to do everything, and nothing is really getting done. So if there was one person focusing on that and you know putting out a plan for the year, reviewing it, and then checking in with those particular children. If the department gave us the money, we could try to do that. But if they're serious about it because actually it really upsets me when I see the newspapers and the Minister for Education and you know, and we've integrated all these Ukrainian students into the systems. Well they're sitting in our classrooms but we're on our own trying to figure out how to.

Researcher: That's interesting, so there's no directive and no resources were made available.

Interviewee 2: We got one of these things

Researcher: Yeah, placemats.

Interviewee 2: For Ukrainian English, the placemats from the PPLI. But like I showed my Ukrainians students, and they didn't really use them.

Researcher: Okay.

Interviewee 2: Because I'm not talking or using these sentences the whole time know. So that was something. It was good. I do like these little placemats, but they're not... We need more support.

Researcher: Yeah, I mean, it's not something that's going to go away anytime soon, I don't think, in terms of not just Ukraine, but immigration, but net migration to Ireland.

Interviewee 2: But also for our own students, just like if we do it properly are. When I say Irish students that sounds terrible, but students who've been going through the Irish education system the whole way up who aren't EAL students. That they understand and can see that multilingualism they will be able to... They must look at this and maybe go, I'd be fearful of going to another country because my friend beside me isn't getting that much support. So what would happen to me? But we have this kind of culture that's all languages. We look after each other. We help each other and there's always a more dominant language, but you should always have this sense that you're learning another one so that if you do end up moving to another country or being in a situation where another language is used, it'll be okay. As opposed to seeing EAL as a problem or an issue.

Researcher: And what I gather then, this seems like a school where if there was the right directive or if there was the right framework in place that it's seen as a positive or it's a very positive environment for inclusivity and equity. You as a teacher, I suppose, in the classroom. As you said maybe it's less relevant for an MFL teacher, but do you think then you'd prefer that a directive should come from the EAL teacher? Or it should come from the government or from the management, senior management in the school?

Interviewee 2: Well, no, I think it has to go from the top down, with that I mean the government. But our students, our Ukrainian students and our wherever they come from students can access our curriculum through their own language that they don't have to rely on learning English, this proficiency of English that they can sit the exam through English, the geography exam, the history exam. You know, within two years they're expected to do their Junior Cert. But that's not fair. But that they could do it through their mother tongue. And they're not going to end up living in Ireland and not using it, it'll come in time, but that we're putting them under pressure to do it by a certain time is restricting them. It's really limiting them, so that if they have the option of using their mother tongue in our curriculum review. And , if they don't, then they're restricting themselves and they're making that choice.

Researcher: And parents, actually. Would you ever have any communication with them? How do you find the communication? Have you had to have many parent teacher meetings?

Interviewee 2: Yeah, I would, but I. It's. We can get everything across that needs to be across.. The only issue I have maybe is you assume that they know our system and then you realize like... I have a mother who may have asked me if I'm the Ukrainian students' progress leader? What's he going to do for June? You know, after the tests were finished, you know, So, they didn't realize that, and we don't have anything in place to let them

understand that. Another issue is that some of the countries that they come from, if they don't, if they don't pass the exams, they have to repeat the year. So they're getting themselves really anxious, thinking they're going to have to repeat the year. But then we explain to them that that's not going to happen, you can do as badly as you want! But they're putting themselves under an awful lot of pressure then and their parents are as well because they think that they have to repeat the year, and that's something that we didn't even think we'd have to explain to anybody because it's really changed so much, the system. With the amount of immigration that's in Ireland at the moment, that kind of thing, maybe even holidays.

Researcher: Holidays like?

Interviewee 2: You know, they probably know about St Patricks day, but not to assume that they know that. Some of the questions you'd get are very valid, but you wouldn't have thought they'd come up as questions, so maybe we need an EAL person on our team to kind of gather all this information so that we have a document for anybody who's moving to our country. Where can the kids go during the summer? Do they know that there's a thing called the Gaeltacht if they wanted to improve their Irish, do they know there are summer camps, you know, give the parents that kind of information.

Researcher: Yeah. Because it does go beyond the schools, the classroom.

Interviewee 2: Yeah. The education is... That they don't just think to do your education in the school and then it stops there. Because I think you know, that could be a problem in other countries that they live in there you know areas where everybody from say... American where you just speak one language. They go to school, and they just use the one language, I think this happens in Great Britain as well. Then they're home and their native language and they're not integrating necessarily, but that we have a responsibility to make sure that doesn't happen in Dublin or Ireland. But how do we do that? Because we can do whatever we do in school, but maybe to let them know that these things are available for them outside of school as well so that they integrate outside.

Researcher: It's a great idea.

Interviewee 2: I agree.

Researcher: And just quickly run through a couple of things here. So collaboration with colleagues regarding EAL formally or informally would that ever come up?

Interviewee 2: No the only things we do discuss are in the MFL department a bit. I'll tell you; I have a little bit of a link with the EAL department because I have one learning support child because I have him once a week, but other than that we don't have meetings or anything. We maybe do have maybe three times a year with the staff, but that's just information telling us what we legally have to do. And it's more like, oh my God if I don't do this... Whereas not giving us kind of that, this is how it's going to be done. It's just it's adding more and more so we're being told this has to be done for the children who need extra help with their English. We're being told this needs to be done with the children with dyslexia,

the things for children with ADHD, just, you know, and it's all these different things. So we have these meetings where we're informed. But there's nothing practical happening to help us implement it. It's all on us. I'm beginning to think I need to leave teaching. That's why we've not enough teachers!

Researcher: So, like, indirectly answering my other question would be, what are the main barriers to teaching EAL or to improving EAL provision in the school? From what you're saying your agenda is already saturated.

Interviewee 2: There's a lot going on. Yeah.

Researcher: So what would be your suggestion, or not necessarily a suggestion but what do you think is the way to combat that then. Is it by having a clear someone where that's the role who says you need to do this you to just need to pop that information in here or is it having meetings or is it time?

Interviewee 2: If we could get a meeting to get us to come and train us to do it, but again, that's just more meetings for us. And, um. I actually genuinely think our timetables shouldn't be as loaded as they are. But in order to prepare for all of this. But I do think if we had one EAL person that you could go to. You know, you are linking with if you're unsure then you know, this person is the expert, this person is the person I can ask. That would really help.

Researcher: Because it could be both ways then, you could tell them what they're struggling with, but they could also let you know that they're aware of this, so you don't need to..

Interviewee 2: Yeah, because sometimes I think we might be doubling up on stuff as well. You know, if we're all doing key words, you know, you go into these meetings, and they say you have to do keywords and then we're all doing keywords. And then there's just too many keywords going on and something's not developing there. If we're just focusing on keywords.

Researcher: Yeah, so collaboration is important.

Interviewee 2: But it is important. We don't always have the time. Yeah, I know. That's so frustrating. So we have to kind of figure out, how do we do this? I liked that idea that you could input into an area. Have you seen that in other schools? No, just the software. Every time we come up with these ideas we're waiting on the software people who haven't developed it yet.

Researcher: Any entrepreneurs out there? No, it reminds me of SEN. And it's all a team. And that's all on Teams. So there's a file to it, and I don't know if it's perfect, but at least...

Interviewee 2: You could have an EAL section, I suppose within SEN couldn't you? The women we did the course with didn't like calling it EAL, she liked to call it multilinguals. She had a lot of models to show, and she had a lot of great ideas I have to say.

Researcher: But yeah, so you're basically saying like time, lack of expertise or overabundance of things that are happening.

Interviewee 2: Yeah, an assumption that we know what we're doing because we don't. You know, and it's like nearly well this was in this circular and it was... and we don't (have the knowledge). And to allow us say that I don't know, and I find that across the board that I have to go look, I trained as an Irish and German teacher, so everything else is extra. And I'd love to know it, but yeah, it's just all these extra things that you end up doing at night-time.

Researcher: Off the clock.

Interviewee 2: And then you're just working, you're working from eight in the morning until sometimes seven in the morning, I mean I'm sometimes in at about half 6 doing stuff. And I might have a webinar in the evening. So it's too much. But there are resources out there, but when are they allowing us access them is quite another thing.

Researcher: That's all the questions I wanted to ask anyway. Any final comments or anything you want to say?

Interviewee 2: I feel like I went totally off (track).

Researcher: No, no, no. It was good. We went on a few tangents, but I think they were all connected to the same branch, if that makes sense.

Interviewee 2: That's your job to figure that out. Did you meet other people in school?

Researcher: I've met one other person, yeah.

Interviewee 2: Okay. And would it have been similar? Or they came from a different background to me I'd say.

Researcher: Not that dissimilar. Obviously the different subjects that you teach has an impact on it. So definitely getting your language perspective was interesting.

Interviewee 2: That's why it's interesting is because you can see that we're all coming from different aspects. So how do we actually... When there's one child involved, we can't all be doing the same thing. But one child, I mean, because we all teach about 200 of them in an individual day.

Researcher: Yeah, that's fine. So, yeah, essentially you don't necessarily teach EAL.

Interviewee 2: Yes. Sorry I have one student.

Researcher: No, I just wanted to double check that question there, but that you have experience teaching it indirectly as well. That's perfect. So thanks so much for your time.

Appendix E

Interview 3

Researcher: Hi. So yeah, basically, uh, just to start off then, maybe if you want to give a quick description of your working, your experience working as a post-primary teacher.

Interviewee 3: Okay. So I started in 2001 in the UK, Northern Ireland, Italy, and Istanbul. And then now in Ireland.

Researcher: Oh, brilliant. Were you teaching in post primary school in Italy as well? How'd you find that?

Interviewee 3: Really good. Yeah, really

Researcher: What was another country you said there?

Interviewee 3: Istanbul?

Researcher: Istanbul. Oh, class. Were there many big cultural differences or like in terms of the education systems?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, there were. Like, well, so for example, in the UK and Northern Ireland there, there was a real trend away from using textbooks. So it was meant to be that, you know, you would be making your lessons and your schemes of work very bespoke for the classes and the area in which they were. Whereas in Italy it's very much textbook. So you see kids going to primary school with, you know, the little suitcases for a weekend away. So then all you'd have like kids going to school with these trolleys. So when, so it was teaching the IB in Italy and a lot of the parents found it very unsettling that the kids weren't given you a big thick book for each subject. Because that's not, like, that's very much the culture in Italy where you get a really thick book, and it is jam full of questions and then you fill it in. Yeah. You fill it into its tiny little space for the answer. You fill it all in and then you would think that you can give it then to your little brother or little sister. But they change it every year very slightly, publishers, so that like, so the parents were very sort of unsettled with the fact that that like, that's not how we do it, you know? You know what I mean? You wouldn't walk into; well it would be unusual to walk into class here and you've just got a textbook and you sort of work your way through.

Researcher: Yeah. Even now with iPads and everything.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. Or even before iPads like do you know, I don't know, so that was a big change.

Researcher: Then IBS International Bachelorette, is it?

Interviewee 3: Bachelorette.

Researcher: Yeah. That's interesting. I heard that as well from universities in Italy that it's very academic focused, like very like rote learning, almost. And have you been teaching in Ireland for long then?

Interviewee 3: So this is my second-year teaching

Researcher: Okay. And is there a big difference from where you were working in like public sector or private sector in the UK?

Interviewee 3: Um, public sector in the UK. Well, I suppose the way that it's organised there, it's like you work towards, so you've got Key stage three exams which are more for the school to keep a check on the progress of the students. So it's like to map. So say for example, if they were at level five, which would be your average at the end of primary school at Key stage three, they should be nearing towards level six. And then you've got the GCSE exams at 16. And then that would be the ones that you know, would either get you work, if you're going to leave education, or, um, will help you then go into doing your A levels and that would be at 18 and then it's the three subjects you choose. Whereas here it's, you know, the junior cert and leaving cert. So I think, so the organisation of it is a bit different, definitely the, so say teaching English, English language, English literature are two different things in the UK. Whereas here it's joined as well.

Researcher: There one and the same. That's interesting. So English language would be more like syntax and grammar or?

Interviewee 3: It, it would be, um, so you would have like a non-fiction and then a fiction one. So, so English language would be things like you'd study spoken language. . So say it could be a politician speech or an interview. So it would be, um, looking at examples of nonfiction and testing it on your ability to understand and pick up different devices that are being used to manipulate the language. And then your ability to be able to write. So in an exam you might be asked to like read a speech that was given by Churchill and then you need to set, you be able to identify and what we're talking devices are being used like how he is using the in language to persuade the listeners. And then you might be asked to write a letter or write a speech , so that's functional writing, I suppose. And then the literature part is your poetry and prose and drama. So I don't know. In some ways I think it makes it more accessible, particularly for those students who are not gonna do, you know, they find English really tough. So focusing just on those skills, a functional language. Um, so I don't know, but from looking at the junior certificate, it doesn't seem to be like, you don't need to know it in the kind of depth that you would do, say for GCSE. Um, so I don't know, like, I'm gonna be marking the junior cert this year cause I, I just don't have, I don't feel confident about how, I don't know if you know what I mean?

Researcher: I understand exactly what you mean. As an NQT, I know exactly what you mean, yeah.

Interviewee 3: I know. And I think it's whenever something's new because you've got in the back of your head what you used to and what you know from that course. And then of course you're getting used to something else.

Researcher: Um, I'd say yeah, I like that skills are transferrable, obviously, but then it's a different route.

Interviewee 3: Well this is it. Yeah.

Researcher: Yeah. Um, and you teach a bit of EAL, don't you? In this school? Did you teach EAL previously?

Interviewee 3: So let me see. Whenever I was in Northern Ireland was whenever we would've got like, people starting to come over for jobs and things. . So there would've been to say I would've had a kid who was Japanese in the class. Or a kid, um, like Philippines as well. So you, you started having one or two kids within your class whose first language was, or English. And then I would've done a bit of one-to-one work or small group work. Um, then when I was in Italy, it was, the kids were all, like, some of them were bilingual, some of them less so, you know, and were less, you know, English was not easy for them.

Researcher: Even though they were in a like...

Interviewee 3: International, private. Yeah. I mean, so the majority would've been very good. But there were, some of them were, you know, they find it difficult, particularly the ones who had gotten the, the primary school and as they outside were only in the high school, but for the kids who were just coming in, sometimes they weren't quite fluent enough. And then Istanbul would've been the same. Like, they all had to have, I think it was an IELTS of six or seven, but even then you, you, you know, in the writing sometimes, you know, it's just not quite, yeah. It's not quite fluent enough. Um, and then here as being my first time with Ukrainian students, which has been different because I think the Ukrainian language is just completely different to European.

Researcher: Completely different alphabet and everything. And so you just work with one student? Okay. One student. How have you found that?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, it's been good. Yeah.

Researcher: Yeah. Do you have that student in any of your mainstream classes as well?

Interviewee 3: Um, I'm in once a week in the, their English class, the fifth-year class. So I see her in there.

Researcher: Okay. Um, that probably helps then. Is it in terms of, you only have English once a week? Or is it

Interviewee 3: I'm only in with them once a week. So they have Oh yes. And I've got two Ukrainian kids in first year English, and one in SPHE (social, personal, and health education).

Researcher: Oh, that's right. So you joined the school last this year even?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, this year.

Researcher: I suppose them coming over from Ukraine, the students that have come over that, not exactly overlaps with it, but it would've been I suppose like spring summer last year when they would've come over. So like, your time here is kind of very similar to, not that they've been Ireland, but, uh, do you feel like you were like well-equipped by that? Or did you get any support from the government or from the school or any guidelines on, on how to teach them?

Interviewee 3: Just from what, say the senior staff and so on would've shared with us. Um, so there were some very useful language things and I think some things from the government as well, they would've got what I think, um, one of the things was whenever the government was releasing posters for the wall in Ukraine.

Researcher: What the expressions, right?

Interviewee 3: They hadn't realised like a lot of them, particularly those near the border, were more fluent to Russian, so I think, I think it's the nature of it, just as you were saying that they had only come in that summer. I think it's been very difficult for the government and skills to get ahead of it. So I think a lot of it's been learning as to go in terms of the Ukrainian students, and we were actually as well in first year is time, first language. She's just been over here for about a year.

Researcher: Okay. And is that...

Interviewee 3: No, that's in, that's in the class setting.

Researcher: But yeah. So you'd have in that English first year group, how many students you would you have? That wouldn't have English as their first language.

Interviewee 3: Two students from Ukraine, and one from Mongolia. And, but to be honest, he's too quiet. Like I haven't even found out if he has an accent or not.

Researcher: No, I know what you mean. Yeah. Like is his writing skills strong?

Interviewee 3: His writing skills brilliant. And then

Researcher: It would make you think, yeah.

Interviewee 3: His verb tenses nine again, like in verb tenses. And I think that's something that's really difficult for EAL kids to master.

Researcher: Yeah. I even was working with the first years there, and by all intents and purposes you'd think that they're completely fluent on that kind stuff, but tenses when,

when they were writing and flick. Um, okay. And then, yeah. So how did you find that? Did you, so did you have those, or let's say that one student that you have fifth year student? Did you have her from the get-go from the start of year? So were, were you able to get some information, let's say from whatever, limited information from the government or resources and then get some resources from the team here? Or were you able to, were you given like a structure to work with? Or maybe talk through that process.

Interviewee 3: Um, yeah. Well I got the, so they had benchmarking data from one of the teachers and the student counsellor. So then, so they, one of the Ukrainian students would've been, I think it was like a B2. Um, and I had to look through the different resources that were offered, sort of picked and chose the ones that I felt her best. And then, um, so the resources that I've got that I've been using with her are ones that, I mean, because she's a teenager, been trying to choose things that she's interested in.

Researcher: Yeah. It's always tough.

Interviewee 3: It's ones that, like, it starts off vocabulary. And it's just like questions that you talk about, and you discussed, you say it was like TikTok, and so then it was like general questions about, so it's like vocabulary first, then listening, then answering questions, then like watching something, answering questions. So just trying to cover like giving some speaking practise, listening, um, common vocabulary. So each lesson I've tried to have a different topic, and then just following that structure. So you have like a five-minute chat at the start. Then you look at some key vocabulary. Like she tries to fit the vocabulary in sentences that I can show you the classes. And then I've been using the thing on teams, which is called Reading Progress. I don't know if you've seen that or not. It's really, really good. So I pick a passage of hers, raise it, and if there's any word she finds difficult, it'll ask her to repeat them, and she'll repeat them. And then at the end they'll send me a result. So perhaps it's like 67% accurate or 70%. So she's been doing that at home.

Researcher: So yeah. She doesn't need to be there with her.

Interviewee 3: It's really, really good. Yeah.

Researcher: And that kind of takes away the maybe awkwardness of it or like shyness.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. And also like, so she's practising it at home cause she's living with her mom and her brother, and you know, she's speaking in Ukraine, you know, so it gives her a chance to suppose that she can practise speaking in English.

Researcher: That's really good. Do you think there would've been a big difference, I suppose if you haven't done it as much before teaching, but like one-on-one as is kind, has a real freedom with that? Cause you can really cater to them. If it was a bigger group, do you think it would've been different?

Interviewee 3: Um, yeah, I've got words because I mean, I don't know. Sometimes one-on-one, it can lose the momentum sometimes when you've got a group. So I think there's pros and cons of both. Um, but I think if the group is any bigger than four, you miss that

opportunity as you say, to be able to cater directly to that individual and make it a wee bit more bespoke.

Researcher: Because I remember last year I had a number of students just over from Ukraine and they hadn't done any placement of their level yet. So you had someone who had maybe a two level with B2, C1 level and that was literally the situation. It was just developing. I worked with you a little bit already with the first years, you seem to have some really good resources for teaching EAL to a mainstream class. Remember there was, you were translating or something like that into Ukrainian for some of the students?

Interviewee 3: Yeah. You know, I, I started just that it was just Google translate. So it translated some of the PowerPoints and some of the worksheets. But one of the teachers had showed me there's a new thing on Google where you literally just show it the and it translates.

Researcher: Wow.

Interviewee 3: And the other thing I tried was, I think if you show a PowerPoint through your laptop, you can press a thing which says subtitles and then you can choose Ukrainian. However, I tried that, and the kids just said it's just not accurate. So I think if even the translations I was doing, you know, its Google translation, so they have find, being able to use, whether it's Google or another thing, I think they've, you know, they've got to be a bit more agency being able to control it themselves.

Researcher: Do you think that the fact that they have the iPad there first probably helps? Or what do you think?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, I thought, God, I think it definitely helps. Yeah. But you know, you know yourself. It does make them reliant on it, but I think that I, I don't know what it's gonna be like if or when they get to Junior Cert, but I don't think they would be able to have like an iPad as a form of translation in particular in English, because part of it is reading.

Researcher: Okay. Yeah. That's tough. And like, have you felt that you've used different, resources or has their level developed throughout the year? Or is it something that you're always conscious of when you're planning your lessons?

Interviewee 3: Um, I've used, so there's some really good resources for Cambridge, and IELTS where it's a very quick online test and that gives you like a basic level, but it's only one overall level. It wouldn't give you a separate one, one for writing and staking and listening, so on. So I'd have a sense of an overall level.

Researcher: Would you do that at the beginning of the year or?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, so, so that would be taken like whatever benchmarking data was given by the student counsellor. And then through the year. That's why I used that as a guide. Isn't that however, in terms of in my English lessons, it would just be using the curriculum. And I think, you know, you can see, I suppose it's easier saying like the progressive with writing,

not necessarily with speaking because I mean, you can walk around and hear how they're doing, but I suppose there's no like real black and white. It's not quantitative, you know, it's more just what you're picking up. Um, but I think it's really difficult for them. And one of things is because of the English language and literature is together here.

Researcher: Yeah.

Interviewee 3: You know, if, if so in learning support or in two first year Ukrainian students' lessons outside of English, they're focusing on basics, in grammar and so on like this. But in English class, like a lot of it has to do with like analysing language and connotations in particular words. It's really, really tough.

Researcher: They're new on some of it.

Interviewee 3: Exactly. Yeah. So, so for their exam, I've tried just to give them more language-based material. But I think, you know, it's, it is, it is tough for them.

Researcher: And like, there's so much as well, I suppose asked of teachers in terms of like extra meetings and training days and stuff like that. Like do you, was there, do you think there should be more of an emphasis, let's say from boards of management or from the government to, to upscale teachers? I don't know if you have any formal training in EAL? No. Okay.

Interviewee 3: So yeah. Although I think that would be really helpful. I think also, you know, there's students who are EAL and we've also got Ukrainian students who not only have EAL but also whatever trauma and issues and you know, don't have a sense of permanency, you know, even in terms of like where they're living. So I think those two different situations are there within Ukrainians. Like there needs to be, a wee bit of sensitive, so not just, you know, being able to speak the language, but also the context in which there are point actually. Were there any trends? Really? Good. And suppose more and more students are gonna be coming. You have EAL so...

Researcher: That's the thing. It's not gonna go away necessarily.

Interviewee 3: I mean it would be interesting like, like there's places in London where pretty much all of the students are EAL really. And that's been difficult right. For teachers. And part of it is if you've got some students say coming from North Africa and some students coming from parts of Eastern Europe, they're going to be picking up language in different ways because of, so I think, you know, it would be useful. It would've been useful and things such as like there was some stuff on government websites about the differences of someone who is a native Russian or native Ukrainian speaker. What tips for them to pick up. English rather than say a European speaker. Um, but as you say, it's like time.

Researcher: There's a lot. Yeah. Um, and like, would it be something that you'd ever speak to other teachers about or staff about? Like even, it doesn't necessarily have to be in a formal setting or informally in the staffroom. Would it be something that you'd do?

Interviewee 3: As like sharing ideas?

Researcher: Sharing ideas or I know that so-and-so struggles with certain things.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. And it's been good actually being in her English class because I've been able to talk to teachers about what's, you know, areas that she's finding really difficult. And one of the things is just the noise in the classroom. So she's much better and much stronger when she's in a small group. Because the noise is less, but she just, she finds the language so difficult. Yeah. It's a classroom of noise. It's impossible. So, although she looks totally lost, it's more to do with the noise, do you know, you know.

Researcher: Um, do you share that English group with that teacher?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, so I'm, I'm only in with them on Monday. And then the other teacher has them the rest.

Researcher: That's interesting. What have you been focusing on with them?

Interviewee 3: So the composing bit of the leaving cert.

Researcher: Oh, that's pretty, actually it's probably one more fun.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. Yeah,

Researcher: It's tough when you think that, you know, you're preparing her to do the leaving cert exam and you know, it's tough. Do you think there should be more of a, like going forward, let's say hypothetically if you are teaching more EAL as an EAL teacher, do you think there should be more of an emphasis on collaboration or, I don't know, do you teach the student language skills for life or do you teach them language skills to focus on the exams and stuff like that? So, I don't know. Do you think it would be beneficial to speak with her geography teacher, her maths teacher or, and then they might let you know, oh, she's really struggling with, I don't know, the exam questions or like, uh, you know, questions related or like reviewing this kind of grammatical expressions? Do you think, like how, do you have any idea how that would feasibly work?

Interviewee 3: Um, well I suppose it could just be an email or, you know, as you say, like just a quick chat. Um, but yeah, absolutely. And like the more collaboration and the more context you get from the student, the better.

Researcher: Yeah. And, and like it's tough though, right? Finding the time.

Interviewee 3: Yeah.

Researcher: Uh, because some of other things we focus on, SEN I suppose like is, is a massive one. Bullying and all that kind of stuff. But like, um, is there any system in place now that you think, oh, if we use that for EAL really quick streamline kind of way of doing it?

Interviewee 3: Yeah, well they have, for SEN for the learning support, they have something that is on teams where the learning support teacher goes in and fills.

Researcher: Oh yeah?

Interviewee 3: The strategies are being used and so on. Yeah. So something like that maybe.

Researcher: Yeah. And it doesn't, wouldn't necessarily have to be detailed, right? Yeah,

Interviewee 3: Yeah, yeah.

Researcher: Because like we were saying with one student, you can probably get a grasp of that anyway, right? But if you have a bigger group like that. And have you any, had any communication with the parents of any of the EL students?

Interviewee 3: No. And during the, um, parent evening it was just, and one student's brother, he came in and I think the difficulty there is that, that the parents don't speak English.

Researcher: He was in the school last year actually I was teaching him as well.

Interviewee 3: Oh that's right. Yeah.

Researcher: He was acting as the proxy parent. That's interesting.

Interviewee 3: <laugh>, like another first year EAL students' parents I've met. But yeah, I think that can be, you know, if it's someone who's only arrived in the country and the parents you know, they themselves aren't, don't have a secure grasp of the language.

Researcher: Because it's like you said, it's not just a language. Well it's, it's a cultural aspect as well, how the school system works. Filling out forms and stuff like that can be tricky. What would you say then, like the biggest challenges are of, of being EAL teacher? I guess it's, you probably don't even see yourself as an EAL teacher because you have some, like you're mainly an English teacher.

Interviewee 3: I think because of the way things are going, I think everyone, it's like they say everyone is a teacher of literacy. Everyone is a teacher of EAL because they're gonna be at least one student in most people's class who are not native English speakers. So, um, so I think like things like being very careful when you introduce vocabulary, um, giving, letting pre-reading activities you sort of given, you know, something you were doing more, giving it to them before so they can have a look at it. Things like, whenever we were reading the Outsiders in first year, so with the EAL students, I mean loads of it was beyond the kids, but there were some cultural details that had to be explained and gone over just so they got it. So I think that, and these are things that can benefit all children as well. So I think sometimes it's like, you know, the things that can help someone with dyslexia or that can help someone with you know, other sort of educational needs. A lot of it is just, it's just really a good thoughtful teaching. And those things can help the students who have EAL as

well. Um, but there's like particular things to say for Italians. Like hard is a really difficult thing.

Researcher: Okay.

Interviewee 3: And I noticed it in the Italian student. So there's, so there's, I think the more that you do it, the more that you pick up on particular things that are, um, that, that often are common mistakes, I suppose with different cultures. And I think that like that would be great. A collaboration like that, you know, even if it was something, you know, like a, I dunno, like some kind of shared Padlet between different schools where they could jot down helpful resources. Something like anything to do with collaboration. It's important particularly around schools. Cause there's so much good stuff going on and it's only when you're on a training day. And you get to speak to other schools. Cause often it's not the subject of the training day that's the most useful. It's what you pick up from other schools.

Researcher: Yeah. And what do you think would be the biggest barrier then? But what would be the biggest barrier do you think then people's taking this on board because it's, it seems intuitive that you would try and develop more literacy skills and being aware of it. Um, or having this collaboration between teachers. But I suppose if you were to bring it sort of, not you, but if, if it was to be brought to the school, there should be more collaboration, there should be more of an emphasis in literacy. Why do you think would be the main kind of barriers or reasons why it wouldn't work out?

Interviewee 3: Um, well I think, right, so being an EAL student isn't like an SEN thing, you know, you know, however, the same way that that's organised as in you've got a, um, you know, if you've got an SEN delegate teacher. And the teachers know, you know, they, they're able to check, you know, I can see that. I've got two kids who's, you know, there're, they're like a B2 in the, in English language. So you already know, and you've got a shape which gives like tips and so on of what to do. So that's really good that you've got someone that you can go to. You've got any questions or anything.

Researcher: For SEN?

Interviewee 3: Yeah. For SEN and then, you know, under that umbrella is EAL. Um, so I don't know whether or not there was a particular teacher in charge of EAL, do you know what I mean? That sort of worked under the SEN umbrella.

Researcher: A great point. Yeah. Almost. Because I'd suppose you as an English teacher, I'd suppose you could almost take it for granted, or people might take it for granted that you've got such an extensive knowledge of English that goes beyond just literature and composing. But also to like the same syntax, the, the nitty gritty of the grammar or vocabulary. Then it probably might be easier for you than someone teaching mathematics or science maybe.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. I mean and they have like apart from the first-year class, there's people in, so say for example with the TYs this year I had a teacher in the support with two of the Ukrainian students.. I mean you would sort of think that with English, but I mean I suppose like in a way, like the same with history and geography and particularly cause

there's so much to read there. Yeah. Um, I don't know with anything like time is just sort of precious when teaching. But I think like this is nice and clear how you've got it set up here.

Researcher: What, what's clear about it?

Interviewee 3: Just how, you know, we say how it's marked in the VSWare, you've got the underline, you've got very easily accessible IEPs for the kids. You know who the students are, you know what their sort of benchmark is. Um, you know who to go to if you need any help with 'em.

Researcher: For SEN is it?

Interviewee 3: Well, for SEN yeah. Like say for the older Ukrainian student plus the ones I've got in the class and that's not always the case for all schools. You know, so this is very clear. Like this is well done. I suppose one of the big things is like some people make a mistake that just cause the student is all, they're not getting it, whereas they can't really get it. In a really solid way, but they just don't have the ability to express it at that moment. But as I say, like it's gonna be more and more a big topic for many kids coming from different places in first year. So it is something that's time will have to be made.

Researcher: And you said there that you'd know who to go to for EAL? That would be the school counsellor? You'd go to her for...

Interviewee 3: Resources or advice or, um, just whatever's needed.

Researcher: Super. I think the point I was referring to early on was that someone like yourself or even myself teaching who have some sort of background in EAL, or obviously teaching English. But someone who, like you said, like teaching geography or history where there is quite a lot of writing involved, but they mightn't have that same background in, in English as an additional...

Interviewee 3: Language. I mean it is like, it's such a different thing. I got a friend who did the C1 course, I can remember. And she had a knowledge of grammar that was way mine like way beyond mine

Researcher: <laugh>

Interviewee 3: And like last year, um, of this school I was in, so they did the IB, but they also offered the Cambridge test too so. And it's just, it is just like a completely different kettle of fish. In that and like the IELTSs as well. So I've done the IELTSs as well for a bit. So it is like, it's a different type of teaching. Like I wouldn't have been able to pass those exams. It is a very particular type. Um, so yeah, I think as you say, having teachers with that experience can be great. And even if they can give input and advice for people like myself who's, you know, I wouldn't have the same, I've got experience like English teaching and, you know, um, I suppose like different students to whom English is not their first language, but I wouldn't have, I don't consider myself to have a vast knowledge.

Researcher: I understand. Because it's a specific skillset like you were saying. But that's interesting you're saying that there is a, there is a good framework here and it probably only would be one or two more steps until it's really, or like interpreted, right? Like there is a good framework for monitoring students and being aware.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. I, I think there is, I mean, with anything I suppose um, I suppose if, I don't know, like maybe somebody could be the coordinator, who looking after, um, EAL just to give like another layer of, you know, attention to it. Because there's a, you know, that's lot's a big, there's a lot of students who are already, you know, under this sort of like SEN thing. But, um, yeah, it's been an, it's been a really interesting experience having had the students, I feel that you know, they just weren't able to access a lot of the things. So as I said, definitely something I'm gonna be taking on board, but I think in terms of overall it's difficult when English literature and English language is together. You know, so say for the leaving cert they'll be starting off looking at a Shakespeare play.

Researcher: Yeah.

Interviewee 3: You know, so the composing element isn't necessarily that big and that's, it's like stumbling blocked before them.

Researcher: How did you find, you didn't do any Shakespeare with him first year this year, did you?

Interviewee 3: We did it like towards the end. Well, I mean it was, it was a real like introduction to it, and they find it really difficult. You know, like the Ukrainian kids, I mean are ones that you noticed of course.

Researcher: Yeah.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. And so for the exam, they didn't do that section. So yeah, that's what I think.

Researcher: So the exam was catered a bit. It's important. I think that's pretty much everything. Suggestions to improve EAL teaching. We kind of covered that, but is there anything else?

Interviewee 3: Yeah. Um, I don't mean, there's the other thing, like when I first say like, every teacher is a teacher of literacy and EAL, there is like an argument to say it's, it's like another thing being put on teachers, another thing being put on. And to be honest, I think 30 kids, which is standard here, isn't it?

Researcher: For first years. Yeah, it's a massive class size then really,

Interviewee 3: Really huge. Um, so yeah.

Researcher: Yeah. I, I understand.

Interviewee 3: So individuals, like you've got a kid who's got very supportive parents who's speaking English to them at home, who's really working on, it's gonna be different to a kid who's just moved into the country does not like the country does not want to speak the speak, you know, so it's very, very individual I suppose like all additional needs are.

Researcher: Which would then maybe lead you to say that maybe there should, you said before there should be or might be beneficial if there was one?

Interviewee 3: Maybe like a link person. Who's working with those kids and the SEN coordinator possibly.

Researcher: So it's more, yeah, I guess what you want probably to avoid is that you probably could have teachers that have all the best attentions and they're giving them all resources, but like they could be getting similar resources in, in from a bunch of different teachers.

Interviewee 3: There used to be this thing whenever, when I was saying in teaching Northern Ireland, and I think remember 2007, 2008, so whatever was happening there was many different people, different nationalities coming. And so there was this thing called newcomer pupils and someone from the department would be taken and trained by the educational authority all for newcomer pupils. And it was like a big thing all about exactly what to do to these students who were coming in from different countries. Because the way that it had been different schools were doing different things and they wanted something that was a more sort of coherent around the different educational boards. And I can't remember exactly what it was, but it was things such as having all of the different welcome sign and different languages. Um, so that would've been one particular person in the SCM who was in charge of that. So yes. It was like Newcomer Pupils it was called. And I think they weren't using E at that point. Okay. And then those students were particularly good after, by that teacher, he would've been on the liaison between the parents, the students, and the SEN. And then senior management,

Researcher: When would that have been?

Interviewee 3: I'm pretty sure it was 2007, 2008 I think. Do you know, it could have been after, do you know the Good Friday agreement? Because after that there's definitely more people right? Newcomer Pupils. Yeah. So the term newcomer is used to refer to people who does not have satisfactory language skills to participate fully and doesn't have a language in common with the teacher. So they're not saying English as an additional language. So October 2008, 7,000 newcomer pupils were recorded on school census over three times as many as in 2004. Yeah. So if you look that up.

Researcher: That's really interesting

Interviewee 3: Actually. And they seem to be saying pupils who do not have English or Irish as their first language and don't have satisfactory language skills yet rapid changes in Northern Ireland's demographic resulted in an increasing multicultural society. It might be worth looking up.

Researcher: Yeah, definitely. So that, that's from the government almost, isn't it? Like that supersedes the school level.

Interviewee 3: So this is it, yeah. Department of education and then, so it's the Department of Education and then here HR has like education library board.

Researcher: Yeah. Because you were kind of saying there, particularly for the students from Ukraine, it's, it kind of goes past just language or literacy skills.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. Like for some I mean. Yeah. Like I had a kid who was first generation Bangladesh, uh, who moved to an area in Northern Ireland where I wouldn't even walk through. Because of sectarian issues.

Researcher: Right, right.

Interviewee 3: And this kid was moved to this area. I mean, it had such bad sectarian issues. Can you imagine what attitudes towards tourists were? And it was just such a, like this kid was just, was... And it was really awful. Like it was really terrible. Ugh. And so not only was there like a massive, you know, there was a that so there was a significant language thing. It was, you know, the context which you moved here. This must be useful to yourself. I'll email it to you.

Researcher: Brilliant. And that's like an example, anecdotal example, but how many more other examples are there of students coming over just that don't have the cultural and that particular student sounds like they had a few things going against them there in terms of everything.

Interviewee 3: Um, so there's, so there's that, but like what one of the teachers does is amazing, like that language and culture club. Yeah. So where they do the PowerPoints of their different culture and language. Like that's, that's like a really amazing thing in terms of just empowering them and giving them like a space to talk about their experience.

Researcher: Absolutely. And it seems to be like relatively well attended as well.

Interviewee 3: Absolutely.

Researcher: Yeah. I've sat on a few of them. So like that does give you the sense that like there is a lot of potential for it almost. Or there's like, I don't want to say untapped, but yeah, there is a lot of students in this school anyway where English wouldn't be the language spoken at home.

Interviewee 3: And it's like one of the first-year students say, you grew up in Argentina. You know, so I don't know, I think it's like, you know, it's, I suppose it's like a little reflective of the demographic that they're like, they're real diverse kids. Peer respectful and interested in different cultures. So it's not a school where you get people like being really mean to the kid who like doesn't speak funny.

Researcher: Know? Absolutely.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. So I think so it's, it's an interesting skill I

Researcher: Suppose. Yeah. It wouldn't be, yeah.

Interviewee 3: Yeah. It wouldn't be the same demographic as

Researcher: Another school maybe in your city Dublin or something like that. But it's interesting getting your perspective anyway because I was chatting to two other teachers, and they would've both been at different stages of their careers. Yeah. And they would've both taught different subjects as well. Yeah. And it's interesting to get the different perspective from different subject teachers as well because their knowledge or their willingness to use English literacy skills in the classroom changed depending on the Yeah. But English then it's, it's so you couldn't have it more inherently built into the subject, you know?

Interviewee 3: I know. I just, I just feel like I was, whenever I was doing a poem with two Ukrainian students...

Researcher: Yeah. A lot of it probably goes over the head. Right.

Interviewee 3: And it's, you can see them sort of <laugh> the big way done was Joyce like the, it's just like, but we had already sort of like, there was bits and I tried to put it as much as I could where it was more kind of like the English piece. Yeah. Instead of literature. But it's, I'm just really surprised that they saw that English language in literature

Researcher: Together. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Do you know what, that was really interesting to hear that they, they don't have that in the UK It's different again.

Interviewee 3: And in a way like, it's good because it promotes, I suppose importance of literature. But it's, but like most kids do it, like most kids will do like English language and English literature. But I think and like for the IB be together, kids do the IB at a certain level.

Researcher: No, no, that's fine.

Interviewee 3: I've got class here.

Researcher: No, that's super. That's fantastic. Thank you so much for your time.