Teachers' and Roma students' experiences of the ESOL classroom in Yorkshire

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Abstract

This research is concerned with exploring teachers' and Roma students' experiences of the ESOL classroom within a further education institute in Yorkshire. Since teaching ESOL to teenagers, I began to realise that what influenced students' language development and learning the most was the practice and conduct of the teacher, a finding that was initially surprising. This, I noticed, was pertinent amongst the Roma students, therefore, what I did not notice then, but have come to recognise as increasingly problematic, is the extent to which the teacher's attitudes, interactions and communication with these students impacts on their attainment in class. I soon began searching for signs, clues and indications that would lead me to uncover the gap that evidently existed between the teacher and the students and how, if possible, this could be closed.

This paper draws upon literature and various sources that focus on teachers' attitudes, experiences, interactions and relationships as well as students' barriers to learning, both in and out of the ESOL classroom. This study adopts a qualitative inquiry that focuses on inductive rather than deductive analytical approaches, utilising observations and focus groups to explore both teachers' and students' views.

It is hoped that this study will provide a broad insight into the role and relationships of teachers and students in the ESOL classroom, and contribute to the relatively new discussion about the ways in which Roma students can be best supported, and to raise the awareness and skills of teachers working with these students.

The results reveal that a greater understanding of students' backgrounds and their individual barriers to learning has a more positive effect on the outcome of the relationships and interactions that exist, not solely between Roma students and the teacher, but also between ESOL students in general.

I would like to acknowledge the support of my family in completing this work. I would also like to thank Diana Ridley for providing guidance through the course of this research. My greatest appreciation goes out to all my ESOL students, without whom this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Karen Grainger for dedicating time to support me whilst providing feedback throughout my research.

He who knows and knows that he knows,
He is wise, follow him.
He who knows and knows not that he knows,
He is asleep, awaken him.
He who knows not and knows not that he knows not,
He is a fool, shun him.
He who knows not and knows that he knows not,
He is a child, teach him.

Proverb

I confirm that the contents of the permanently bound thesis are identical with the version submitted for examination, except the binding and the incorporation of any required amendments.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Adult education, in particular language development and language acquisition, is an area that has always fascinated me. Nevertheless, I am grateful for the opportunity I was presented with, in working with teenagers for the very first time, in my previous year as a PGCE student; they will be the focus of my research. Since teaching teenagers, I soon realised that what influenced students' language development and learning the most was the practice and conduct of their teacher, an area that unexpectedly captivated me. What I did not notice then, but have come to recognise as slightly problematic, is the extent to which the teacher's performance and personal communication with his/her students impacts on their English language acquisition (Goldberg 1998). In their study on the attitudes of teachers in a language learning classroom study Byrnes, Kiger and Manning (1997) exposed that such attitudes play a major role in the ESOL classroom. Their study revealed that teachers' negative attitudes stemmed from a chronic lack of time to address English language learners' unique classroom needs, as well as a feeling of profession inadequacy to understand the cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds of English language learners. Furthermore they also found that this was prevalent amongst mono-lingual and mono-cultural teachers (Byrnes, Kiger and Manning 1997).

My desire to select this focus stems from my passion for teaching. I have for a very long time been riveted by the process of learning English as a second language, and love to observe learners' progression of grasping this language and how they develop as English language speakers. However what truly entranced me the most and what led to this research title was my observation of the needs of Roma students not being addressed as effectively as they could be. As a multilingual teacher, I feel that I have a number of skills that allow me to appreciate and successfully bond with such learners based on cultural awareness and understanding. This therefore leads to more effective teaching strategies and higher student achievement (Fensham 2011). Students can also benefit from the learning experience by being open to the English language whilst maintaining their heritage language. Students also learn much more effectively if they have a teacher who uses their native language to aid in the language learning process (ibid).

With the rise of eastern European Roma families arriving in the UK, there is a significant gap in much needed research in this field. Therefore by conducting this study, this will provide teachers, managers and learners with systematically obtained information that will help to improve the

significance of carrying out research is that the effects of the intervention (in my case focus groups with the students and staff) are seen and assessed on the educators and their students. Furthermore this topic is one which arises constantly and is incessantly debated amongst staff at the institution I currently work at. There is ample research on the impact teachers may have on the English language development of learners. However, with Roma students it has been extremely limited. I would therefore like to unfold and reveal the ways in which professionals can support their students using proven evidence. For some it is curiosity, for others it is a desire to help people, however mine was a mixture of both. My inspiration and motivation to conduct this research stemmed from listening to and taking part in staff discussions on Roma students, their behaviour and what are the real barriers to learning and how can these be overcome.

Brief history of the Roma People and Roma Community in Sheffield

There are an estimated 225,000 Roma in the UK (Sheffield City Council 2014). In Yorkshire, the vast majority of Roma are Slovak or Czech Roma. Local and national studies estimate there are around 2,100 Slovak Roma people in Sheffield. Around 1,500 live in Fir Vale/Page Hall and 550-600 in Tinsley/Darnall (Sheffield City Council 2014). Romani people are an ethnic group originating from India, migrating around 1,000 years ago (Matras, 2014). Many historians claim that Gypsies hailed from Egypt, this belief may have existed due the origin of the name "Gypsy," from the Middle English "gypcian," which was short for "Egipcien" however there has been very little evidence to prove this. They have suffered heavy persecution and discrimination, having been enslaved in the Balkans until 1851 and more recently an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 Roma lost their lives in the holocaust (Glennie and Pennington 2013). Following the fall of the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall in 1989, there was a larger amount of migration, with many Roma coming to the UK to claim asylum (Fremlova 2009). In 2004 the expansion of the EU included A8 countries, including Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia etc., and countries with relatively high Roma populations. Current patterns of migration see most Roma settling in areas which already have established communities (Craig 2011). With regards to language Romani is the language most widely spoken in the Roma community, although there are different dialects and varieties (Matras, 2011). Romani is also predominantly an oral one and not widely written down, and evidence suggests literacy levels are relatively low (Hodge, 2011).

The majority of Roma students studying at the college and the ones that will be part of this research have been living in the UK for 1 to 4 years. The main reason for migration is due to the discrimination faced in their home countries. The majority of Roma came to the UK to seek asylum in order to escape persecution and many live in sub-standard accommodation, shared with

children. Furthermore, evidence suggests that their main priority is survival, and in order to survive they must work (Scullion and Brown, 2013). Therefore education and studying are not often supported in the Roma community; instead children are encouraged to work in order to support their families.

It is important to note that although I will my research will focus on Roma gypsies, I will also refer to other travellers, since they all have some commonalities, and linked histories. They are also now classified as one ethnic minority group, which means they are protected against racism and discrimination under the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000.

Research suggests that if there was more equality in their home countries, they would not have left, despite the appealing 'benefits' of living in the UK. This brings us to the assumption that the Roma movement to the UK is primarily due to discrimination and to find work, there is no real interest in learning English or integrating in to British society. Furthermore, due to increasing adolescent pregnancy amongst the Roma, there is a stronger emphasis on work and having an income, which makes studying and education a lesser priority. Facing social and economic exclusion from mainstream society and pressures within their communities, Roma girls often have no choice but to follow tradition, leave school and get married with the onset of adolescence, thus perpetuating a cycle of lack of education, poverty and early child birth. According to Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA Executive Director (2013) *"When a girl becomes pregnant, her present and future change radically, and rarely for the better. Her education may end, her job prospects evaporate, and her vulnerabilities to poverty, exclusion and dependency multiply."* UNFPA Executive Director (2013). Europe's Roma are often associated, through public and media discourse, with negative stereotypes which draw upon notions of for example, an alien and nomadic culture; criminality; anti-social behaviour; benefit dependency; a lack of work ethic; and promiscuity. Such perceptions have negative affected their integration in the UK, in that they do not feel the society to be welcoming to their traditions and lifestyle (Ryder and Solly 2007). Mayall (2009) explores in his book on *Gypsy Identities*, the major facets of 'Gypsyness'. He uses a theoretical flashlight to negotiate the subtle shades of difference in Gypsy identity that stretch through time and across geographical space, from their place of origin to their current location. He discovers that 'Outsiders fail to agree on every aspect of Gypsy identity, boundaries, labels, and characteristics' (2009: 278). Hence it is important for 'outsiders' (non gypsies) to be aware of such implications.

Qualitative evidence, when rigorously analysed, makes it possible for teams to uncover, expose, and consider the complexities within their community. While no scientist would endeavor to measure a situation with an infinite number of variables, this is precisely what school leaders do when investigating educational issues. This study is a qualitative study which began on Monday 5th March 2015 and lasted approximately three weeks. I observed students in their Entry-Two ESOL class twice in the week and subsequently carried out focus groups on Friday 19th April 2013 at 1 pm. I then carried out a focus group with fellow colleagues the following week. Both focus groups lasted thirty minutes each. The full process of research collection took approximately three weeks. As the researcher, it is my responsibility in ensuring that the participants are not harmed, privacy is maintained, and the participants have provided informed consent (BERA 2011). Of all the principles associated with research ethics, 'doing no harm' is the cornerstone of ethical conduct. Those whom will be participating in the research study will not be involved in any situation in which they might be harmed. This admonition will be the core ethical principal of my research; after all, the goal is to benefit the participants and institution whilst doing no harm. It is also of paramount importance that no identifying information about the individual are revealed. Furthermore, I aim to ensure that my conduct will not be excessively intrusive as the topic is rather sensitive. Intrusiveness can mean intruding on their time, intruding on their space, and intruding on their personal lives. I also aim to ensure that the focus group does not last longer than 30 minutes and is done with their complete authorisation.

The context and the setting

The research setting can be seen as the physical, social, and cultural site in which the researcher conducts the study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011).The context for this research is the heart of the city. The institution is an FE college based in a culturally and ethnically diverse area of Sheffield, where it is located in an average to low socio-economic area, with a ward Multiple Deprivation Index (MDI) score of 16.80 ranking 12th in relation to the 28 Wards in the city, a ranking of 1 being the most deprived (West, 2008). It is therefore classed as being amongst the more deprived areas in the city (The English Indices of Deprivation, 2016). The college was founded in 1989 as the amalgamation of a number of local community colleges. However it is now an associate college of Sheffield Hallam University. It offers foundation and diploma courses and has just undergone a £60 million rebuilding program. According to the setting, their aim is to provide students with the very best education and training opportunities. They hope to improve

life and work.

I have been teaching at the institution for two years and have taught students from various backgrounds, nevertheless, the majority stem from the Roma- Slovak community. Furthermore as a result of first-hand experience working with such students, I am able to directly offer recommendations to the department on how to best support these students and perhaps other minority students, as well as provide staff with methods on how to best manage such students.

Potential benefits or limitations of the study

Hopefully I will be benefiting the students, staff and the setting by explaining to them what I found and providing them with a better understanding on to how to successfully support Roma students learning ESOL as well as providing teachers with suggestions on how to build positive and stronger relationships with ethnic minority students in particularly the Roma. This research may also benefit the organisation as it may identify possible areas for course development and pedagogy that will hopefully aim to solve the current issues amongst the Roma students and perhaps other ethnic minority students, whilst maintaining and upholding positive principals. Furthermore, as I was limited with regards to the time allocation in gathering the data, this may have affected the results being obtained as I could have gathered more data that could have potentially steered the research in a totally different direction revealing very different results. Control of the above is necessary to increase the confidence the researcher has in the results (Paltridge and Phakiti 2010). Dornyei (2007) emphasises the importance of generalisation, and that a small scale study that is conducted in one place cannot be used to extrapolate to larger studies (Dörnyei 2007). Therefore it would be difficult for me to extrapolate, since this study took place in one further education institute, in one particular area of the region.

Literature Review

In order to focus the objectives of this research, I have devised three key themes to underpin the purpose of my research:

- Theme 1: ***Teachers' attitudes to and experiences of teaching Roma ESOL students.***

- Theme 2: ***Classroom interactions between teachers and Roma students.***

- Theme 3: ***Barriers to learning***

Background

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of the current state of play in the fields of teachers' attitudes and experiences of teaching ESOL Roma students, classroom interactions between teachers and Roma students, and the attitudes and experiences of these students learning ESOL. Given the lack of substantial literature on Roma students in the context of ESOL, I have decided to review and critique the main pieces of literature that I felt encompassed the themes above and therefore created a premise for discussion.

In writing this literature review, I found that very few texts directly related to my research focus were available. When research abstracts were examined, it was evident that a number of sources were focused predominantly on issues relating to social and educational disadvantage, mobility and vulnerable groups, though not in relation to Roma students' experiences of the ESOL classroom. My exploration of this field began with a search of electronic journal databases using the keywords: Roma ESOL students, teacher attitudes of teaching ESOL, classroom interactions between teachers and students, ethnic minorities learning ESOL. This literature review is concerned with contributing to our understanding of teachers and Roma students' experiences of the ESOL classroom.

Terminology

In this review I will be using the term ESOL to refer to 'English for Speakers of Other Languages' I will also be using the term 'minority students' to denote students of different ethnic minority backgrounds, including Roma students. Roma is an ethnicity of Indian origin, living mostly in Europe and the Americas. Roma are widely known among English-speaking people by the

research will be the Roma of Slovakia.

Throughout this literature review, I will be discussing terms such as attitudes, experiences, and classroom interactions. 'Attitudes' will refer to teachers' thoughts and behaviour towards Roma students in the ESOL classroom. 'Experiences' will mean their previous knowledge of and familiarities with working with Roma students, and 'classroom interactions' will mean the way in which the teacher interacts with the students in terms of behaviour, responses, feedback, criticism and praise. In addition, throughout this literature review I will be referring to bilingualism and bilingual students, thus pertaining to those who know one language other than English.

Teachers' attitudes and experiences of teaching ESOL Roma students

I will begin by explaining the definition of attitudes and experiences and the context in which they will be used. According to Hogg and Vaughan (2005), an attitude is "a relatively enduring organisation of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols" (Hogg, and Vaughan 2005:150). In this particular situation, I will be examining the attitudes of teachers towards Roma ESOL students, with reference to other ethnic minorities in Britain. 'Attitude' is also how we react to stimuli or input. For example, whether the teacher has a positive or negative reaction towards Roma ESOL students and how they judge them and the ways in which this affects them. Such attitudes develop through experience and observation, and attitudes change according to experiences. 'Experience', on the other hand, refers to teachers' knowledge and awareness of teaching, interacting and engaging with Roma students and other ethnic minorities.

The impact of teacher attitudes and expectations is emphasised repeatedly in the literature. A study conducted by McIntyre (2011) examined teachers' attitudes in the classroom, and found that when teachers were more encouraging and displayed a visibly fairer attitude towards black students, students responded much more enthusiastically and performed better in exams. Stiefel, Schwartz and Ellen (2007) when studying teachers attitudes towards ethnic minorities, found that teachers had varied experiences, but what they shared was their experiences of a strong positive attitude towards minorities, in turn creating positive reactions.

Nevertheless, this is not always the case. Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) carried out similar research on students of various ethnicities and found that students' negative experiences of home and school meant there were no real improvements in attainment, effort and progress. What Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) did notice, however, was a significant increase in confidence levels.

learning English. Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) put forth the postulation that if the study had been a longitudinal one, participants' attainment, achievement and progression may well have been affected, but time is needed to testify and affirm the result.

There have been very few studies of Roma students, but Lloyd and McCluskey (2008) suggest that Roma families have varying experiences of school-based education and thus may have very different perspectives on its relevance. Kiddle (2009) argues that positive teacher attitudes are considered crucial to the achievement of Traveller children, although even the most sympathetic teacher can sometimes inadvertently exclude these pupils (Kiddle, 2009). This literature therefore indicates that an understanding of, and respect for, Traveller culture is vital to accurately interpret what influences the educational participation of Traveller pupils and to avoid labelling minority ethnic groups as different from the norm (Kiddle 2009).

Conversely, Powell, (2011) argues that regardless of the way Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) students are treated, their culture and lifestyle renders education insignificant. According to Ofsted (2014), Gypsy/Roma pupils have had the poorest outcomes of any ethnic group in England in terms of attainment, attendance and exclusions. They also found that Roma parents spoken to by inspectors consistently said that they were reluctant to state their children's ethnicity for fear of discrimination (Ofsted 2014). This leads us to the assumption that there may be some forms of discrimination towards Roma students, thus leading to under-reporting of Roma pupil numbers, which, in turn, makes it difficult to target resources effectively. Furthermore, grants to support minority ethnic pupils (including Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils) that had previously been ring-fenced were mainstreamed in 2010. This therefore led to some local authorities disbanding and cutting specialist support services (Ofsted 2014). According to Ofsted (2014), teacher expectations of Roma pupils were reported to be unreasonably low, and raising those expectations was identified as an urgent priority.

Nevertheless, although the expectations of the teacher are vital to the achievement of the students, it is important to note that the expectations of the parents are also key to understanding their child's aspirations and achievement in schools. Bhopal (2006) suggests that many Roma parents perceived education as a 'stepping stone' to enable their children to gain more respect in society, particularly in a world where traditional Gypsy means of making a living were less viable. However, as Padfield and Jordan (2004) point out, attitudinal differences exist even within families.

Levinson and Sparkes (2006) observed conflicting responses from some individuals who, whilst recognising the value of education, remained obstructive in terms of involvement in an education

'Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Minority Ethnic pupils' (DfES, 2003a), which offered further advice and guidance on improving the attendance and achievement of Traveller pupils, and in the same year produced a specific set of guidance in relation to this group of pupils (DfES, 2003b). This was of significance as it demonstrated a conscious effort to promote achievement in a population that may otherwise have been disadvantaged.

Lloyd et al. (1999) found some evidence of teacher expectations that were stereotyped and grounded in the assumption that Roma pupils were inherently disadvantaged by their cultural background. Stereotyped beliefs have often been found to depress teacher expectations in relation to attainment (Lloyd et al., 1999). Ofsted (2014) noted that teacher expectations in relation to Gypsy Traveller pupils were unreasonably low, and that even in schools where teacher under-expectation was recognised as an issue, there were rarely any strategies in place to address this. However, according to Alexiadou and Norberg (2013), there may be a number of reasons why those from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritages tend to underachieve. These include disrupted educational experiences, different educational experiences, the educational disadvantage of their parents, and lack of cultural sensitivity within the education system (Alexiadou and Norberg (2013).

In their study on *Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes towards English Language Learners*, Ajzen and Fishbein (2003) found that teachers who were more accepting of ELLs (English language learners) in their classes were more likely to view their first language proficiency and culture as an asset to their second language learning experience. 'More accepting' here refers to a teacher who is more understanding of and supportive towards ELLs, and does not view ELLs as a threat to class performance in general class work (education) and achievement. In fact, they found that bilingualism and bilingual education were beneficial. Although there is a common misconception that ELLs consume additional teacher time and district resources, the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008) argue otherwise, asserting that bilingual students bring a wealth of skills and experiences to the ESOL classroom. This is of significance for the practical language classroom as it sheds light on the benefits of teachers viewing their bilingual students (those who know one language other than English) in a more positive light.

Nevertheless, there has also been an assumption that students' first language and identity have an adverse effect on their ability to acquire English. However Pajares (2006) carried out research on the effects of bilingualism on learning English and found that the very opposite was true. Evidence revealed that when the students' first language was welcomed and embedded in the learning, their performances improved. He also found that teachers who explicitly taught students the culture of

higher proficiency levels amongst students and an increase in confidence (Pajares, 2006). Zeichner (1993), in his study on teachers' experiences teaching ethnic- and language-minority students, discovered that 80% of the teachers had a clear sense of their own ethnic and cultural identities. However, he found that only 60% of teachers had high expectations for the success of all students and communicated this belief to the students. This issue has serious implications for learning, as students are generally perceptive of the expectations their teachers have of them. If a learner knows that his or her teacher does not expect them to achieve a good grade or understand a particular concept, there no longer exists any incentive for the learner to reach for his or her potential, let alone exceed it. Moreover, whilst the teacher may have good intentions in not wishing to place on these students expectations above and beyond what they are perceived to be capable of, having such unchallenging expectations can actually be demoralising for the learner, as it illustrates how the teacher regards them and what they think of their academic abilities.

Regarding the curriculum, Ladson-Billings (2005) argues that when the curriculum is inclusive of the contributions and perspectives of the different ethno-cultural groups that make up the class, students are more likely to contribute towards class discussions, are respected which in turn will make them more respectful to others and provides students with self-worth.

Furthermore, when students are provided with an academically challenging curriculum that includes the development of higher level cognitive skills, they are more likely to achieve their goals and improve their overall proficiency levels resulting in higher grades. Stigler and Hiebert (2009) contest this, however; finding that when ethnic minority students were over-challenged, they often showed signs of frustration and, as a result, fell behind (Stigler and Hiebert, 2009). It is therefore important to find a balance between a curriculum that is academically challenging and inclusive and one that does not alienate students (Stigler and Hiebert 2009). However, they also noticed that when 'scaffolding' was used (when teachers modified their language to match the language level of students), a link was made between the academically challenging and inclusive curriculum and the cultural resources the students brought to the school (Stigler and Hiebert, 2009).

Parker-Jenkins and Hartas (2002), in their study of the social inclusion of ethnic minority teenagers, found the teachers that were the least encouraging received the most negative reactions, and saw poorer efforts made to complete the work set, as well as a lack of drive and motivation to participate in classroom tasks. In contrast, Knipe (2003) in his study on *Traveller culture and lifestyle factors influencing children's integration into mainstream secondary schools,* found that those teachers that entered the classroom with either a neutral or positive perception of Traveller

achievement (Knipe, 2003).

McCarten (2008) found that culturally aware teachers respected students' cultural differences and believed that those students from culturally diverse backgrounds were capable of meeting high learning standards. They also actively promoted this by challenging students and ensuring that they demanded enough from them, without being too strict or too indulgent. This was in contrast to White (2009), who looked at improving educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils. She found that those teachers who displayed cultural sensitivity and were aware of students' cultural backgrounds had an adverse effect. The students became wary of the teachers and this lead to a lack of trust between them. This, according to Foster (2013), can often be due to overfamiliarity. When some students sense that their teacher is very aware of their cultural background, it can cause them to be rather cautious when interacting with him/her, especially if they are not used to teachers that are culturally sensitive. Once teachers became aware of their attitudes towards students, they realised that they could balance and thus perfect them. Paying attention to their attitudes can also enable them to achieve better teaching results. By recognising their own ways of communicating, as well as those of their partner in a conversation, teachers come control their communication, learn to adjust to the student and respond in the most appropriate manner (Foster, 2013).

Richardson (1996), in *The roles of attitudes and beliefs in teaching,* discerned that teachers' attitudes towards their students significantly shaped the expectations they held for their students' learning, how they treated their students and what students ultimately learnt (Richardson, 1996). They expressed their affirming attitudes by holding all students to high learning standards, as well as allowing students to draw on their cultural practices, home languages and communicative styles in the classroom. Nevertheless, Van den Bergh (2014), in *The Implicit Prejudiced Attitudes of Teachers Relations to Teacher Expectations and the Ethnic Achievement Gap*, noted that students often enter the classroom with a lot of 'baggage' that affects their behaviour, performance and motivation inside the class.

Conclusion

After much critical analysis and examination, it is clear that developing an affirming attitude towards students from culturally diverse backgrounds may require considerable reflection and self-assessment. All teachers, regardless of their social background or amount of experience, must evaluate their attitudes towards their students and how these attitudes affect their students'

culturally aware teaching practice.

Classroom interactions between teachers and Roma students

Classrooms are social settings: teaching and learning occur through social interaction between teachers and students. Classroom interactions include the relationships between students and teachers, the exchanges between—and reactions to—each other and how these affect student learning. The interactions and relationships between teachers and students, and among students as they work side by side, constitute the group processes of the classroom. Teacher-student relationships provide an essential foundation for effective classroom management—and classroom management is a key to high student achievement. A sizable body of literature provides evidence that strong and supportive relationships between teachers and students are fundamental to the healthy development of all students in schools (Hamre and Pianta, 2011). Positive student–teacher relationships serve as a resource for students at risk of school failure, whereas conflict or disconnection between students and adults may compound that risk (Hamre and Pianta, 2011). Wubbels and Levy (2005) argue that teacher-student relationships should not be left to chance or dictated by the personalities of those involved. Instead, by using strategies supported by research, teachers can influence the dynamics of their classrooms and build strong teacher-student relationships that will support student learning. Smith (1990) states, "Teachers who love their students are of course by that very fact teaching their students the nature of love, although the course may in fact be chemistry or English" (Smith, 1990:45) . Teacher-student interactions have been studied by scholars for many years, and the findings generally indicate that teachers assign students to either high-expectation or low-expectation groups. Such groupings resulted in differential interactions between these teachers and students (Brophy, 1983).

However, after examining interactions between teachers and minority college students, Clifton's (2012) study on teacher-student relationships found that the higher the expectation the teacher had for the student, the more interaction and praise they received from the teacher, and the larger the amounts of valuable feedback given. Despite this being the case for most students, Clifton (2012) found that teacher expectations did not affect the amount of interaction, feedback and praise for non-minority students. In a recent study, self-report surveys of minority students were analysed by Morlock (2013), which showed that many minority students possess a feeling of discontent in their relationships with staff members and with their college experience in general (Morlock, 2013). For example, some minority students indicated that they do not feel that they are treated equally by teachers and do not receive oral feedback as often as non-minorities. Others felt that lecturers did not inspire them to do better work and avoided interaction with them. A study

they were not all true. For example, they found that lecturers spent roughly the same time answering questions asked by minority students as by non-minority students. However, they did find that lecturers directed more complex questions to non-minority students. Much research lends credence to the supposition that teachers derive their academic expectations from school records, class participation and student behaviour (Brophy, 1983).

Larsen (2011) highlights the importance of emotional support in the classroom and even more so in the ESOL classroom. This is due to the vulnerability of the students in terms of their status, age, background and possible trauma experienced (Larsen, 2011). Emotional support refers to the ways in which teachers help children to develop warm, supportive relationships, experience enjoyment and excitement about learning, feel comfortable in the classroom, and experience appropriate levels of autonomy or independence. This includes the enjoyment and emotional connection that teachers have with students, as well as the nature of peer interactions (Muller, 2001).

A study by Murray and Malmgren (2005) looked at the interactions between young Eastern European learners and their teacher in a class in an East London school. She found that students were generally quite disruptive and unused to classroom protocols. However, she also noticed that when praised by the teacher for their progress, there was a significant improvement in terms of behaviour and effort, with students becoming more enthusiastic. This has serious implications as it suggests a need for more praise in the classroom.

Muntner (2008) noted, after thorough analysis, that teacher sensitivity and responsiveness to students' academic and emotional needs are vital for success both inside and outside the class (Muntner, 2008). Furthermore, on his research on teacher-student relationships, Hugh Mehan (2014) found that a positive relationship between a teacher and a student was a determining factor in the student's success. A positive student-teacher relationship had an even greater impact on those students in low performing schools, particularly low-income students and students of colour (Mehan, 2014). Mehan (2014) also emphasises that classroom management and how well teachers monitor and prevent misbehaviour are the determining factors in effective teacher-student relationships; though Myers (2011) challenges this, stressing that regard for student perspectives, and the degree to which teachers' interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view are much more important (Myers 2011). "The key factor in teaching these students how to succeed is sensitive teachers and counsellors who will encourage students to do well academically" (ibid: 35).

relationship for at-risk students, high levels of emotional support were found to be one of the major causes of growth in reading and math achievement from reception through to secondary school. This view is supported by Liu (2007) who studied the emotional bond between teachers and students, and found that the interactions most linked to future achievement seem to cluster around an emphasis on tailoring a classroom experience to be most emotionally and intellectually engaging to adolescents (Liu, 2007). It is therefore pivotal for instructors to be aware of such findings and ensure that they embed these in their everyday practice. However, not all instructors have the necessary knowledge, ability or training to create emotionally engaging classrooms. Additionally, as funding is currently being cut in the ESOL sector, this is difficult to achieve as it requires both time and money.

Lee's (2007) article on the links between the student-teacher trust relationship and school argues that solely improving students' relationships with their teachers did not produce gains in achievement. However, what they did notice was that those students who had close positive and supportive relationships with their teachers accomplished higher levels of achievement than those with more conflict in their relationships. This was challenged by Baker (2010), however, who stresses the importance of such relationships and argues that these are often sufficient to promote student achievement. Furthermore, with a conflict-free environment, students are more likely to feel encouraged to study. A combination of influences was found to affect student achievement, such as strong relationships with the tutor and with peers, and encouragement and support from the family. For instance with regards to learning English according to Gardner and Lambert (1979) age plays an important role, the younger the person the quicker he/she is able to acquire the language (English) another factor is the setting/environment. Munoz (2010) heavily favours the natural setting and points out the negative elements of instructed setting (classrooms and sessions). Furthermore, she also puts forth the notion that students will pick up the language quicker and more native-like learning the language in the natural way such as when they participate in the community rather than in the classroom (Gardner 2000). This demonstrates a considerable amount of significance as it provides an insight into the many factors that affect not only student achievement and but also students ability to acquire English. It also has substantial implications for educators, as it is provides us with ample detail on how to incorporate different factors to best support students in attaining their full potential and ensuring that learning opportunities are maximised.

Cappella and McClowry (2012), in *Teacher-child relationships and academic achievement*, suggest that some teachers have an easier time developing positive relationships with students, as personality, feelings towards students and their own relationship histories may all play a role. It is

has found that primary teachers are more likely to develop close relationships with students who share their same ethnic background (Kesner, 2000). In contrast, it was found that White teachers working in their ten-week field placement sites perceived African and Asian students (Pakistani and Bangladeshi) as more dependent than White students (Kesner, 2000). However, Asian teachers perceived African students as more dependent on them than the Asian students were (Kesner, 2000). This is of significance in the ESOL sector because when teachers form positive bonds with students, classrooms ultimately become more supportive spaces in which students can engage in academically and socially productive ways (Jacobson, 2000).

Positive teacher-student relationships are classified as having the qualities of closeness, warmth, and positivity (Jacobson, 2000). Furthermore, students who have positive relationships with their teachers use them as a secure base from which they can explore the classroom and school setting both academically and socially, to take on academic challenges and work on social-emotional development. This includes relationships with peers, developing self-esteem and enhancing self-concept (Jacobson, 2000). Through this secure relationship, students learn about socially appropriate behaviours as well as academic expectations and how to achieve these expectations (Jacobson, 2000). This is significant for the ESOL classroom because students can often express hesitancy in asking for clarification or contributing to class discussions for fear of making mistakes. Learning in a supportive environment, as prescribed by Jacobson (2000), therefore has the potential to remove several of these emotional barriers to learning, in turn promoting student progression and encouraging a healthy approach to interaction and engagement.

According to Manke (2007), students in high-poverty urban schools may benefit from positive teacher-student relationships even more than students in high-income schools because of the risks associated with poverty. These risks include high rates of secondary school dropout, lower rates of university applications, low self-efficacy and low self-confidence (ibid). Manke's study illustrated that several factors can protect against the negative outcomes often associated with low-income schooling, one of which was a positive and supportive relationship with an adult, most often a teacher. Low-income students with strong teacher-student relationships saw higher academic achievement and a more positive social-emotional adjustment. This is significant because many, if not most, ESOL classes take place in urban areas, often associated with lower educational achievement. Securing an effective relationship between the teacher and students is therefore one way of establishing a safe learning environment where students have the confidence to access the education and support they need in order to achieve.

Overall, there is consistent evidence to suggest that improving students' academic achievement and social skills development requires a focus on the nature and quality of teacher-student interactions. This could then create opportunities to promote them through teacher education, professional development, monitoring, and evaluation. This will, in turn, lead to enhanced outcomes for students, with student teachers learning more and teachers becoming more effective.

Barriers to Learning

One of the key themes I will look at is the barriers to learning in an ESOL classroom. In his article on barriers in the language learning classroom, Wiseman (2009) demonstrates that learners may not fully participate in classroom tasks due to a sense of 'detachment' from their culture. Students frequently undergo psychological changes when in a foreign environment, due to the pressure imposed on them by the obligation to learn the language of that environment. This can become a barrier to learning (Beder and Valentine 1990). This may be in contrast to what many previous researchers have suggested. For example, Malicky and Norman (2004) show that many learners are not particularly concerned with having their culture identified in the classroom, as they are there to learn the culture and language of that environment. They conclude that the greater barriers to learning were closely related to past school and home experiences. This is confirmed, and yet simultaneously challenged, by Skilton-Sylvester, (2002), who found that such barriers may exist because of the students' past experiences at home and at school, but also found that a lack of prior education as a younger child did indeed have an effect in this area.

Beder and Valentine (1990) looked at the motivational factors of engaging in classroom activities. They put forward the idea that being schooled as a child made the adult intrinsically motivated to participate in adult education programs. However, this area was not critically analysed in my study; and when evaluating the results, I did not find anything to support this view. Although I was subconsciously aware of the impact this may have on the students, for ethical reasons I did not want to pursue the area. However, in future, when ethically permissible, this may be an aspect which could be studied and further developed.

Although it may be overlooked by many teachers and authors, the intimidation of young ESOL learners in the classroom as a result of not being able to 'pick up the language' can cause some students to become withdrawn. As a result, learners begin to lose interest and this therefore acts a barrier to their learning (Knox and Sjogren, 2002). Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis (2009)

hypothesis proposes that an individual's emotions can directly interfere with—or assist in—their learning of a new language. According to Krashen (2009), learning a new language is different from learning other subjects because it requires public practice. Speaking out in a new language can result in anxiety, embarrassment or anger. These negative emotions can create a kind of filter that blocks the learner's ability to process new or difficult words. Classrooms that are fully engaging, non-intimidating, and affirming of a learner's native language and cultural heritage can have a direct effect on the student's ability to learn by increasing motivation and encouraging risk taking and hence increasing their attendance of the classes (Krashen, 2009). Thus, the safety that is provided in the ESOL classroom on a regular basis becomes the foremost strategy for helping an ESOL student be successful in the academic world at large, and should be repeated in other classrooms to the fullest extent. If these are resolved, the issue of overcoming barriers will also be resolved.

Niall (2014) discovered that Romanian Roma students in mainstream schools were often ostracised and discouraged from attending school. Instead, they were placed in settings such as special needs schools, regardless of whether they had a relevant need. Niall further states that it is quite common for children from this community to begin with a feeling of not being accepted. As a result, this acts as a potential barrier to learning, with students likely to be on the defensive, thus preventing them from fully concentrating and focusing. Roma children may also have a particular language barrier, as "they may speak Romanian but they also have their own Roma language which is difficult to translate and interpret" (Niall 2014: 20), and "these factors can lead to gaps in a child's learning, and this is the main barrier to learning for children from these communities". This supports Ward's (2011) study which found, that for refugee ESOL learners, such barriers are all too often compounded by cultural dislocation, emotional distress and trauma at being resettled in a strange country. This view is challenged by Gilbert (2012), who studied the effects of dislocation on deprived children. He found that, in fact, those who had experienced such cultural dislocation and distress, and who had experienced very tough situations were the ones who had progressed the most and whose attainment was the greatest.

Wilkin (2009) found that of the Roma attending school, many suffered from three distinct forms of physical segregation, all of which limited the quality of their education and acted as a barrier to learning and accessing education, and encouraged higher drop-out rates. Mainstreamed Roma students were often segregated at the back of the classroom or in Roma-only classes, with some also funnelled into 'special schools' for the mentally disabled. According to Richardson, Robin and Berenice's (2008) work, on overcoming barriers and raising achievement, many students drop out or are 'pushed out' before completing primary and lower secondary education. These barriers,

learning, all of which push Roma children out of the education system. Additionally, Roma children are largely overrepresented in special educational facilities and residential institutions intended for children with disabilities. This is largely due to ill-designed assessment procedures, discrimination and a lack of quality, inclusive school environments (Richardson, Robin and Berenice 2008).

Rees (2009) found that the ultimate issue was a lack of parental involvement. In his study on *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements*, (Desforges, 2003) found that parents of minority or low-income children were less likely to be involved in their children's education than parents of non-disadvantaged children. However, after receiving adequate training and encouragement, these same parents became more effective contributors to their children's academic success. Equally, Oakes (1990) argues that parental engagement is positively influenced by the child's level of attainment: the higher the level of attainment, the more parents get involved. Rees (2009) agrees with Desforges (2003) asserting that parents have the greatest influence on the achievement of pupils through supporting their learning in the home, rather than supporting activities in the school. He suggests that it is their support for learning within the home environment that makes the most significant difference to achievement. Nevertheless, recent research from Bristol University revealed that pupils from ethnic minorities were more ambitious and committed to education than white British pupils, who made slower progress (Burgess, 2010).

Lastly, it is important that teachers learn concepts of tolerance as these will allow them to be more accepting of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Villegas-Reimers (2003) advocates for team based, teacher-led and context-specific teacher-training programmes as an effective way for teachers to learn new skills for the classroom, which will aid students in overcoming classroom barriers to learning. The 'Edinstvo Club' was designed by UNICEF as part of the Desegregation Project. This is a peer-teacher group designed to allow teachers to support each other in dealing with struggling Roma children (UNICEF, 2008), though more focus on social justice instruction for teachers is needed.

It is important to note the significance of racism and racial prejudice when researching a topic like this and the literature around racism and language highlights several key elements that lead to the issues not only the Roma but other minority ethnics encounter. This is also an aspect that has and continues to affect Roma integration in to society. From the time they entered Europe from India a thousand years ago, the Roma have been targets of discrimination. Many countries passed laws to suppress their culture and keep them out of the mainstream. Roma were enslaved in Hungary and Romania in the 15th century and targeted for extermination by Nazi Germany 500 years later. The Roma population have also been associated with many negative stereotypes for instance an alien and nomadic culture; criminality; anti-social behaviour; benefit dependency; a lack of work ethic; and promiscuity as well as health issues relating to Consanguinity (Sheffield City Council 2014).

Such stereotypes have transpired from mass media, discourse, and educational institutes. This is the case for not only ordinary citizens but also for the elites themselves, the mass media are today the primary source of "ethnic" knowledge and opinion in society (van Dijk, 1998). The discriminatory practices of members of dominant groups and institutions form the visible and manifestations of everyday racism, such practices also have a basis consisting of biased models of ethnic events and interactions (van Dijk, 1998). This may not necessarily mean that discriminatory practices are always intentional, but only that they presuppose socially shared representations of the Roma people (van Dijk, 1998). Such representations have negative effects on their ability and desire to integrate in the UK and whether the public/society would like them integrated. It is not surprising therefore that the representation of minorities in the media such as television, newspapers, and movies has been extensively investigated (Dates and Barlow, 1990). According to van Dijk, (1998) after the mass media, educational discourse is most influential in society. Nevertheless the language used and the denial of racism and prejudice is so universal that this denial itself is treated by researchers as proof of the existence of underlying prejudice in the speaker (Wetherell and Potter 1992).

Conclusion

The review of the literature has shown that although there is considerable research in the fields of attitudes, experiences, and barriers to learning, there is little research on Roma ESOL students. It has further illuminated the key themes that I have chosen to explore in my research and revealed that in fact non ethnic minority students often face the same barriers to learning as EMB students; however these may not be documented or viewed as significant due to the fact that there have be no language barrier. Furthermore, it has provided me with a greater insight in to the breadth of general research of ethnic minority pupils in the UK however what I did feel was missing was more specific research on classroom issues related to Roma students and the ways in which the best deal with them. Nevertheless, after critiquing several pieces of literature, I found there to be a gap regarding research on pedagogy development for teachers that teach students from diverse backgrounds with a stronger emphasis on Roma students in the UK. Thus, creating room for potential research in the field that could best serve many communities and institutions such as; schools and colleges that work with Roma students as well as the city council that deal directly with the allocation of funding available for such institutions.

Methodology

In order to conduct this piece of research I set out a key purpose as well as identifying aims which would underpin the purpose of my research. After reviewing my proposal, and revising the purpose of my research and what I hoped to gain from the study, I decided to update my research title to *"Teachers' and Roma students' experiences of the ESOL classroom in Yorkshire"*.
In order to narrow the objectives of this research, I have devised three key themes to underpin the purpose of my research:

- ***Theme 1: Teachers' attitudes to and experiences of teaching Roma ESOL Students.***
- ***Theme 2: Classroom interactions between teachers and Roma Students.***
- ***Theme 3: Barriers to learning.***

Methodological approach

The data collected will be analysed to address my themes. I aim to utilise an inductive approach or what LeCompte and Schensul (1999) called "analysis from the bottom-up" (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:23). This method provides the researcher with a clear path for engaging in analysis of substantial amounts of data in a way that is both challenging and illuminating (LeCompte and Schensul 1999).Through the inductive approach, plans are made for data collection, after which the data are analysed to see if any patterns emerge that suggest relationships between variables. From the observations made I aim to construct relationships and theories. As I intend to use an inductive approach, I, as the researcher will move towards discovering a binding principle, ensuring that I do not jump to hasty inferences or conclusions on the basis of the data. However it is vital to bear in mind that there may be some factors in conducting the research which may impact on the data in both the observations and focus groups. It is important to note that the focus of the research is practice - oriented (hoping to influence teaching practice) not on the theoretical development although my work does refer to theory in the area. I have also been overtly clear that this is an exploratory piece of research and that this is not action research. Furthermore, action research involves carrying out changes with participants and reflecting on the changes that have been made this was not the case in my research. This was not the case in this research place nor was it the purpose of the research.

formulated towards the end of the research and as a result of observations (Goddard and Melville, 2004). Inductive research "involves the search for pattern from observation and the development of explanations – theories – for those patterns through series of hypotheses" (Bernard, 2011, p.7). In other words, no theories would apply in inductive studies at the beginning of the research and the researcher is free in terms of altering the direction for the study after the research process had commenced. I simply wanted to find out how these particular Roma students experience formal ESOL education in the UK and how their teachers experience teaching them.

I began by observing Roma students twice in two different Entry-two classes taught by two different teachers. An Entry-two level class is aimed at learners who can do things such as listen and respond appropriately in formal contexts, engage in discussion to reach a shared goal and narrate a chronological event (Trinity 2012). It is for those who want to improve their understanding of straightforward instructions, statements and questions, as well as have the confidence to speak or write to more than one person. There were approximately 22 students in each class. Approximately 10 of these students were Roma Slovak. The rest of the students were from Yemen, Eritrea, Vietnam, Poland, Iraq and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The ESOL students at the college are expected to be prepared and pass their speaking and listening exam by December and pass their reading writing exams by June. Students must successfully complete all three parts to progress onto the next level. Students would normally progress through the levels until they reach entry 3 (where students can read write speak and listen at a competent level) when they will have the opportunity to progress on to a vocational course.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) define observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (1989:79). I will make notes on what I will observe for example, how much work they complete in their classes. This will be measured by how many worksheets and tasks students complete in the class. For instance if teachers provide students with 3 worksheets in one hour and students complete all three, then to me, this demonstrates that students have completed , their understanding of the English language, how they react when spoken to by the teacher, their relationship with the teacher and other students and their attitude when praised and criticised by the teacher. I also intend on making notes on how the teacher communicates with these students, their rapport and interaction, their expressiveness or how animated they are as presenters. Research suggests that, amongst other factors, teachers matter most. When it comes to student performance, a teacher is estimated to have two to three times the impact of any other school factor, including services, facilities, and even leadership (Simmons, 2014). Furthermore, as observations produce a strong emotional

ethnic groups onto the situation (Simmons 2014).

In doing this I aim to take notes of what is not directly related to my research such as discussions and conversations between other students on personal opinions, family background, culture and religion. These are topics that may not directly be related to my research but may be very interesting to listen to and may provide me with some insight to the root causes regarding their learning and language development. The observation will also help determine the foundations of my interview. The objective of this method is to gain some insight from the participants on their progress on the course and identifying anything that would take me closer to finding answers to my research questions. When conducting the research I aim to be systematic and non-discriminatory. This study will be grounded in an interpretive method to investigate Roma ESOL students' who are participants in ESOL classes. This paradigm according to Burton and Bartlett (2009:21) "does not see society as having a fixed structure, hidden or otherwise, because the social world is created by the interactions of individuals". The main role as an interpretivist is to discover and explore. Walsham (1993) states that "Interpretive methods of research start from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors and that this applies equally to researchers. Thus there is no objective reality which can be discovered by researchers and replicated by others, in contrast to the assumptions of positivist science" p34. I have decided to choose this particular approach because it is the most suitable for my research questions as it supports and backs my belief system and epistemological position- where my aim is to deduce and comprehend the specific meanings behind the actions of the teachers and students as well as the causes (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2011). The interpretivist approach is also the most practical for my study as it focuses on the individual, rather than society and the social system. The data collected through the observations and focus groups will be qualitative.

Qualitative researchers' have come to accept their involvement and role within the research, therefore as a qualitative researcher, I aim be very much involved in the research process at one time, for instance in the focus group, but detach myself from it during the observation for example. Therefore in order to conduct an investigation that would fulfil the aims and objectives of my research, methods needed to be suitable and practical. As a result I will conduct observations and focus groups with students and then a separate focus group with the teachers. The aim of this is to see the correlation between the responses made by students and those by the staff.

Sampling refers to the selection of individuals, units, and settings to be studied (Dörnyei 2007). As this is a qualitative study, a purposeful and criterion-based sampling, will be used, and one where the characteristics are relevant to the themes. Such criteria will comprise of teenagers, Roma students learning ESOL displaying particular characteristics that indicate there may be possible barriers to learning and the displayed interactions between Roma students. Therefore as my sample size will be relatively small, the concept of representativeness is neither pertinent nor applicable. Nevertheless, it is vital that the sample size represents the variation within the target population (Bell and Waters (2014). Therefore I will try to ensure that sample is large enough in order to assess that which I aimed to assess and that it is represented in the population of interest. I decided to adopt a purposive sampling technique. This is often employed in qualitative investigation. With a purposive non-random sample the number of people interviewed is less important than the criteria used to select them (Bernard, 1994). The characteristics of individuals were used as the basis of selection; these are often chosen to reflect the diversity and breadth of the sample population (Bernard 1994). I decided to select students based on the fact that they were Roma, teenagers, learning ESOL and because they were able to speak at a level that could be understood by me. In addition I also used 5 participants, and a common feature of qualitative sampling is that the number of cases sampled is often small (Ritchie and Lewis 2003).

First, the researcher might select person or persons to investigate because of efficiency or convenience. Evidence is collected from people who are easily available to support the researcher's arguments. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise that the guiding principle of sampling in qualitative research is one of convenience. An important consideration in sampling is whether there are people available who will allow the researcher to collect data about them.
I, as a qualitative researcher must also have high tolerance for ambiguity. As I did not start with a set of hypotheses, I do not know what will be uncovered revealed or learnt. I began with preconceived notions of what I will find based on literature and my experience of teaching Roma students such as lack of progression with regards to learning ESOL, enthusiasm completing work set, the relationship between the teacher and the Roma students, but it is imperative that I am willing to overturn or dismantle such assumptions as the data comes to light (Dörnyei 2007).

As a teacher who is a multilingual speaker working with both bilingual and multilingual learners, I have a vested interest in exploring both teachers and Roma students experiences of the ESOL classroom and it was this that motivated me to pursue this research. Therefore as an engaged researcher, my positionality in the research could not be totally neutral. "Positionality is thus

Ntseane, and Muhamad, 2001:411)

This setting was ideal for my research investigation for a number of reasons. Firstly, because there has been an influx of Roma students, many issues have risen for the staff in terms of understanding their needs etc. therefore there was a need for research in the area. Secondly, they are ESOL students therefore this will provide me with an insight in to how their language needs are met and thirdly, I work directly with these students and so access is easy. Nevertheless this will no doubt have an effect on my positionality within the research (Heigham and Croker 2009). Critical research takes a political stance. The issue of bias, and the associated issues of perspective, position and reflexivity, is relevant to understanding and carrying out critical research. My positionality cannot be totally neutral as most of the data will be how I interpret it. It may indicate ideology or value systems (e.g. feminist, socialist, anti-racist and post-colonial) and it may indicate positionality which refers, more narrowly, to the social and political landscape inhabited by a researcher (e.g. gender, nationality, race, religion, sexuality, (dis)abilities, social class and social status) (Griffith, 1998).

I first began observing the students in their lessons in the Entry -Two class. I made notes on what I observed for example, how they reacted when spoken to by the teacher, how enthusiastic they were in completing worksheets, their relationship with fellow classmates and their attitude when praised and disapproved of by the teacher and other students. These were then recorded in a table **(see appendix 1)**. Nevertheless, in doing this, I also took notes of what was not directly related to my research such as discussions and conversations between other students on personal opinions, family background, culture, learning English as well as education in general. These were topics not directly related to my research but were very interesting to listen to and in fact were the root causes of some of the responses given in the interviews regarding their behaviour. An example of an observation, was when Mario made a comment about favouritism practiced amongst teachers, he said *"I don't respect teachers that only listen to some students in the class and ignore others"*. I later found out from the focus group that his teacher, back home in Slovakia, never addressed him during class- he was merely ignored. Another example was when Akos made an interesting comment about the work studied. He stated "why are we in class if we're not doing any work". This statement was made whilst students were watching a YouTube video. This observation therefore helped me to determine the foundations of my focus group. When conducting the research I was systematic and non-discriminatory.

questions and objectives. When using this method, the researcher observes the "classroom interactions and events, as they actually occur" (Burns, 1999: 80). Flick (2006,:219) also contends that observation "is an attempt to observe events as they naturally occur." More importantly, observation enables the researcher to combine it with other methods, in this case, focus groups, to collect "relatively objective firsthand information" (Johnson and Turner, 2003,:314).

A particular strength of employing observations is that it offers a flavour for what is happening and provides an insight into the bigger picture (Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011). However the moment participants are aware that they are being observed they can change their behaviour. This is known as the Hawthorne effect (McBride, 2013). This is an unavoidable bias that must be taken into account when analysing the results (Ibid, 2013). Furthermore, although this observation may be accurate, it is still only a 'snap shot' view of a whole situation. In addition, whilst observing one particular participant I may miss something which could offer great insight into the behaviours of others. The main strength of observations is that it provides direct access to the social phenomena under consideration. Instead of relying on self-reports, such as asking people what they would do in a certain situation, I as the researcher am able to actually observe and record participants' behaviour in that situation. This, in principle at least, avoids the wide range of problems associated with self-report. Participant observation is a beginning step in ethnographic studies.

Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999) suggest that such observations help the researcher get the feel for how things are organised and prioritised, how people interrelate, and what are the cultural parameters. For example the observation provided me with an insight as to how the classroom was organised, the relationship between the teacher and Roma students, the reactions of the students to the teacher and of the teacher to the students. It also offered some understanding on the expectations of teacher and their attitudes to students especially the Roma. The observation also revealed what the cultural members deem to be important in manners, leadership, politics, social interaction, and taboos. Such observations also allowed me to gain access to the "backstage culture" (1999:43); it allows for richly detailed description, which they interpret to mean that one's goal of describing "behaviors, intentions, situations, and events as understood by one's informants" is highlighted (p1999:43); and it provides opportunities for viewing or participating in unscheduled events. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) add that it improves the quality of data collection and interpretation and facilitates the "development of new research questions or hypotheses" (2002:8).

observations there lies the susceptibility to observer bias which is subjective bias on the part of the observer. This as a result undermines the reliability and hence the validity of the data gathered. This may be due to the observer recording not what actually happened, but what they either wanted to see, expected to see, or merely thought they saw. For instance there is a general assumption that Roma students do not value education and have no real intention of studying therefore as a researcher who is observing such students in a class, it is vital that if students are not completing work set during the time of my observation that I interpret it as they do not want to learn it may have just meant that they were not motivated to study at that particular moment in time. Therefore, it is imperative that the observers try hard to remain nonjudgmental and "control their biases" (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003: 453). This is a fundamental weakness of utilising observations. This issue of reactivity that is, the students react differently because of the researcher's presence in the classroom could be overcome as Johnson and Turner (2003: 312) suggest that reactivity may "decrease significantly after the researcher has been observing for a while."

As I observed them twice in two different classes and teach them on a weekly basis, the students may not have felt that they were in a study or being researched. In order to encourage a decrease in reactivity I decided to make physical written notes approximately 15 minutes after entering the classroom. However I took mental notes immediately, and noted these down after 15 minutes of the lesson had started. Although this may carry potential dangers of inaccuracy, I ensured that, what was worth noting during the first 15 minutes was noted as soon as the 15 minutes had passed. Furthermore it is important to remember that first and foremost I am a teacher. Meaning that what is important to me is the well-being and safety of my students and ensuring that this research does not cause any distress or feelings of being 'watched' or 'spied on' especially as there is already a sense of marginalisation amongst the students. It is crucial that the researcher allows time for the "the students to become accustomed to their presence and go about their usual activities" (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003: 453). Therefore, it is preferable that the observers begin to focus on the classroom, students and instructors activities and behaviours from the second and third sessions onwards (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003). Furthermore, another disadvantage is that although observations may be a very desirable strategy to explore certain research questions, it may simply not be feasible for the researcher with limited time and resources to carry out a series of observations which may mean alternative strategies would have to be pursued. In addition although it is a very useful research tool, it does not necessarily increase ones understanding of why people behave as they do.

observation, the observer only watches and records the classroom activities without any involvement. Burns (1999: 82) expresses that the inquirer's goal "is to remain aloof and distant and to have little or no contact with the subjects of the research". Also, Fraenkel and Wallen (2003:451) confirm that "researchers do not participate in the activity being observed but rather sit on the sidelines and watch." I therefore did not speak to the students or the teacher nor did I interact with them. The reason I did not choose to be a participant observer was because I wanted to gain semi independence from the social structure and act totally as a researcher rather than a teacher. Furthermore I also wanted to avoid losing sight of the students and their activities and becoming involved in the classroom process will hinder my ability to concentrate on behaviours, (Merriam 1998). The reason I did not assume the role of a participant observer is because as their teacher I feel that I observe them on a weekly basis and furthermore such a role also requires a certain amount of deception and impression management both of which I wanted to avoid (Bernard 1994). The main strength of observation is that it provides direct access to the social phenomena under consideration (Bell and Waters 2014).

My methods of gathering data also allowed me to semi-triangulate utilising observations and focus groups. Triangulation is defined as the mixing of data methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic (Ashcroft and Palacio, 1996). Triangulation is often thought to help in validating the claims that might arise from an initial study, in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings. Gliner (1994) described triangulation as a method of highest priority in determining internal validity in qualitative research (Gilner 1994). Nevertheless, even though a triangulation exercise may yield convergent findings, it is important to be wary of concluding that this means that the findings are unquestionable (Ashcroft and Palacio1996). Using more than one technique of data collection through a process of triangulation is seen as highly desirable as an overarching research strategy. Therefore a further strength of observation is that it can effectively complement other approaches and thus enhance the quality of evidence available to the researcher. Patton (2001) advocates the use of triangulation by stating "triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods"(Patton 2001:45).The final issue in the observation process is the recording of information: "This written account of the observation constitutes field notes" (Merriam, 1998:104). Therefore, the observers should attempt to write down their observations either during or soon after the end of the class, i.e. the sooner the better. The researchers had better "take extensive field notes during and after the observation sessions" (Johnson and Turner 2003:313). The inquirers should prepare an appropriate form and put the information in it. In this regard, Nation (1997: 279) adheres to "designing a suitable data sheet." Nevertheless it also of paramount importance that I take in to consideration that what I observed is only an interpretation of what I

lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity'. Therefore no observation can be objective since it is socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed, (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

During the observation I took the role of an overt researcher, this involved me being open about the reason for my presence in the field of study since I have been given permission by the group to conduct this research (Harvey, 2000). Such an advantage of utilising this approach is that I am adhering to the ethical principles of research as the participants are aware of my role. An advantage is that I am in close familiarity with the context and therefore there is a better understanding and more trust between the participants and myself which will reduce observer-effect. However, the disadvantage of occupying such a role is that chances of observer effect, where the behaviour of those under study may alter due to the presence of the researcher will be increased (Harvey, 2000).

Throughout the research I also had a peripheral membership role, (Adler and Adler, 1987). This role consists of near-daily contact, as well as interactions with members that vary from acquaintanceship to close friendship with key informants. As I am a teacher at the college I am in contact with the students on a daily basis. Adler and Adler put forth that there are many reasons why a researcher may take up this particular role, such as the inherent conditions of the setting, in addition to the personal characteristics of the researcher, (Adler and Adler, 1987). Researchers, who assume this role, feel that some sort of membership is desirable to gain an accurate appraisal of human group life. They seek an insider's perspective on the people, activities, and structure of the social world, and feel that the best way to acquire this is through direct, first-hand experience. They interact closely, significantly, and frequently enough to acquire recognition by members as insiders. One of the principal reasons I was determined to use observations was because it allows one to identify and guide relationships. Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999) put forth the notion that helps the researcher get the feel for how things are organized and prioritized, how people interrelate, and what the cultural parameters are as well as helping the researcher become known to the cultural members, thereby easing facilitation of the research process (Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte 1999).

Nevertheless throughout the study all results were made confidential, and participants were kept anonymous and given pseudonyms. Students gave informed consent by signing a form (Bera 2004).

After observing the students twice in different entry two classes, taught by two different teachers and critically examining the notes made, I decided to choose five participants to be part of my focus group. These Roma ESOL learners who were males and females were selected based on my experiences of teaching them since September 2014, observations I made in the classroom as well as:

(a) their work ethic and enthusiasm in completing the work set.

(b) their different attitudes in class

(c) their experiences of learning English

In qualitative research, focus groups are usually set up with participants who are unfamiliar with each other and selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the research question/ themes (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). However I decided to select students who were familiar with each other as they were my participants from the observations made of them in the classroom.in a classroom. I also had to take in to consideration that English is not their first language and that they must be comfortable with each in order to feel at ease whilst discussing the topics. I therefore did what was best for the students as it is my responsibility to ensure that participants are not harmed.

With regards to the focus group with the students, I first began by explaining the purpose of the focus group to them and why they were selected. I also explained the ground rules to them, making them aware that they could at any point during the focus group withdraw from the research. I also began with aide memoires as well as a list of prompts in order to get the discussion going. I then began with a list of topics that I would like to cover during the focus group, and then picked out topics that arose from the discussion. **(See appendix 2)**. I started with asking them how their day was and then asked them how they felt in their classes. I then moved on to more specific questions such as *"How do you find learning English?" "What do you enjoy doing in the class and what don't you enjoy?" "What do your families think about learning English?"* This particular focus group was not audio recorded as students did not provide consent to this. Students explained to me that they did not feel comfortable at the thought of being recorded. There may have been several reasons for this. One may be that students may have felt that their speaking skills were being tested. I did, however, ensure them at the start that this was not the case.

Focus groups get closer to what people are really thinking and feeling, even though their responses may be harder or impossible to score on a scale (Strauss and Corbin 1990). A great advantage of

people's more personal, private and special understandings', as well as providing insight into 'the world of beliefs and meanings' (Arksey and Knight, 1999,:15). They also have capacity to produce concentrated data on precisely the topic of interest (Morgan 1997). I first began by explaining the purpose of my research and subsequently took them through the ground rules. Students then provided their informed consent and signed the form. This particular focus group was not recorded as students did not consent to this. I therefore decided to make notes during the focus group as well as rely on recall. Focus groups stimulate the participants so that one person's comment triggers additional spontaneous comments from others (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). They facilitate direct contact with the participants and help others to vicariously experience what the participants have experienced. Additional insights can also be obtained during a focus group by observing the participants' nonverbal behaviour (e.g., expression of anger, the way participants handle a product being evaluated). Focus groups also allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the complex issues facing the both the staff and students. It also provides one with valuable knowledge about why students hold their views and the reasons behind the reasons (Paltridge and Phakiti 2010). This focus group will also allow researcher to gain access to the words, phrases, and special language students use to talk about their experiences of the ESOL classroom which in turn makes it easier to communicate effectively about these topics (Bell and Waters (2005). Furthermore after a well-done focus group, the Roma students will hopefully fell more positive about learning ESOL, building stronger relationships with their teachers and overcoming barriers to learning because of the simple power of careful listening. In addition by involving students in the early stages of exploration around such a topic, there is a chance to build ownership for specific changes.

Nevertheless there are also disadvantages of using focus groups, for instance, although my participants were carefully selected, and though I heard from them in depth, the small number of participants (I used five) could be hard to defend to audiences more accustomed to larger sample size research. Moreover as students, teachers, and managers were engaged, this may increase their expectations (especially the Roma students) for change and these expectations may not be fulfilled. Ensuring that change occurs is also problematic as even the best focus group results do not produce change in any magical way (Cohen, Manion and Morrsion 2011). However they do produce very good information which can be used to promote change in the department. Real change still requires applying that information to strategies and actions that can only be approved of by a more senior member of staff such as the manager or the principal of the college. Furthermore my approach in asking and wording the question may have impacted greatly on the response given, for instance at the end of the focus group, one particular student asked how I

exam or a means to test their level of proficiency. Furthermore another issue is that some of the participants had a more dominant personality than others, for example, with the students, Mario spoke more than the others and on one occasion interrupted his peers for which he was warned. Therefore other participants may have felt intimidated and under pressure to agree with his view, similarly with the staff, as both the deputy and manager were present, staff may have felt pressurised to conform to a particular view point or to the view point held by the manager.

A particular ethical issue in the focus group was the fact that what participants told me, the researcher, was inherently shared with other group participants as well. This therefore raises invasion of privacy concerns and effectively limits the kinds of topics that the researcher can pursue. Such limitations are actually practical as well as ethical: It is not a productive use of focus groups to ask people to talk with discussion partners with whom they are not comfortable (Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011). Hence the reason I chose students who were comfortable with each other as well as staff who worked each other. However I ensured that all members of both focus groups felt their presence and opinions were not only valued but necessary for the success of the group. I ensured that this was established at the beginning of the focus group. This also reassured the reticent, less forward respondents and provided a basis for dealing with dominant members of the group (Heigham and Croker 2009).

Nevertheless, as shown in Table 1 below, this group of ESOL learners was the same in terms of ethnicity but quite different with regards to their attitudes, experiences and expectations in the context of ESOL. I therefore compiled a focus group with students that had been observed during lessons.

The main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods, for example, one-to-one interviewing or questionnaire surveys (McNamara, 1999). These attitudes, feelings and beliefs may be partially independent of a group or its social setting, but are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails. Compared to individual interviews, which aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context (Morgan and Kreuger 1993).

Name	Gender	Age	Observed Behaviour
Anna	Female	17	Lack of confidence. Often discusses the negative way in which she was treated in Slovakia. Compares herself to peers who are now expectant mothers.
Mario	Female	17	Talkative, Blames others for mishaps that happen. Discusses teachers and how they teach
Paulina	Female	18	Not engaged during lessons and does not disrupt others, rather introverted.
Mika	Male	17	Quiet. Does not like to take part in class activities.
Akos	Male	18	Disruptive, intelligent, works hard at times, but very opinionated especially on teaching.

It is important to emphasise here that the notes above (with respect to each student) are my own perceptions and interpretations of the students' characteristics. Emmett (2012) concedes that marking, imperfect as it is, is of value and that the only way of ensuring this is to have precise and appropriate criteria, so that it is possible to decide whether the purposes are achieved (Emmett 2012).

Part of the reason I was adamant at conducting focus groups more than any other method in collecting data, is that as Arksey and Knight (1999) state they 'get at what people say rather than at what they do'(1990:50). Some of these young ESOL learners, from my time at the setting, seemed open with regards to offering their opinions and views, which as a result made it very easy for me to gather data both directly and indirectly 'on understandings, opinions, attitudes and feelings (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Also as I am looking at a particular group of students that emanate from one particular ethnicity this focus provided me with a prodigious insight into Roma students' attitudes. Furthermore it allowed me to obtain detailed information about perceptions and opinions as well as saving time as this took place during lunch hour. It also allowed me to recruit people based on certain discriminating criteria e.g. ethnic group (Bell and Waters (2005). However due to the language barrier, I was having to reword the questions and alter the sequence of questions which could have potentially impacted on the nature of responses each participant gave (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011).

Focus group participants (Staff)

Name	Gender	Role	Length of time teaching ESOL at the College
Shahnaz	Female	Manager	4 years
Maria	Female	Deputy Head of Department	2 years
Sam	Male	ESOL Teacher	15 years
Rabiya	Female	ESOL Teacher	15 years
Fiona	Female	Tutorial Mentor	4 years
Irena	Female	Assistant/Interpreter	3 years

My determination in ensuring that this focus group materialised was based on my desire to gain an insight in to the teachers' perceptions and experiences of teaching Roma students ESOL, as well as their relationship with them, their progression and perceived barriers to learning. Nevertheless, one of the main reasons was to see where the gap was between the staff and Roma students in the ESOL classroom. The orchestration of this particular focus group began from four members of staff agreeing to participate to eventually six. Both the Head and Deputy of the Department decided to be part of the focus group, despite only offering the opportunity to one. However as an employee at the College, who is in direct contact with these members, I felt to deny one of them the opportunity to be part of the focus group, would negatively affect my relationship with them. After all, my aim was to benefit the department and the staff whilst protecting my positon as a colleague and employee.

I first began with a list of themes to cover such as *issues faced when teaching Roma students,* I then asked the staff questions that emerged from their discussion **(See appendix 3)**. The focus group used here, truly showed its utmost strength in that it helped me to gain a real insight into their view points and provided reasons behind their responses. It provided the "why?" behind their responses. This was accomplished using open-ended questioning, such as *"when you think of Roma students, what things come to mind?" "What kind of strategies do you use when teaching such students that could potentially aid them in grasping the language quicker" "do you face any issues when teaching such students and if sowhat issues are common?"* Participants are usually more willing to express their opinions amidst the security of other people who share some of their concerns and interests. Participants disagreed with each other on a few occasions however not as much as expected in a focus group. However this provided the benefit of providing anonymity and security for the participants which in turn help to facilitate candor in participants' comments. This focus group lasted approximately thirty minutes. Nevertheless I hoped it would last longer,

questions.

It important to note that as a qualitative researcher, there must be an enormous tolerance for ambiguity. Tolerance for ambiguity means the ability to tolerate or accept inconsistencies and uncertainties. Therefore if the results indicate that, in fact, there is a greater shortage of effort on behalf of the teachers than the students or vice versa then I must accept this. In qualitative research, there are no set procedures or guidelines to be followed step by step. From the design stage to the data collection and data analysis stages the researcher has to be prepared to face unforeseen events and change in direction. Merriam (1998) compares the role of the qualitative researcher to that of a detective who looks for clues, finds the missing clues and puts the pieces together. Third, as a qualitative researcher, personal biases should be able to be detected. It should also be remembered that there is a likelihood that my values might creep into the observations and focus groups conducted. Some scholars have argued that this is unavoidable and will to accept this as part and parcel of qualitative research. Furthermore an aspect which I feel worked very well was my role as a communicator. "A good communicator empathises with respondents, establishes rapport, asks good questions, and listens intently" (Merriam, 1998: 23). This allowed me to understand the situation in which the participants were in and ability to communicate well without evoking negative emotions. It also allowed me to form good relationships with my participants and encouraged more open communication. The extent to which qualitative researchers are able to communicate warmth and empathy often marks them as good or not-so-good data collectors (Guba and Lincoln, 1981)

'The dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants must be the primary consideration in any research study' (University statement on the ethical conduct of research 2015). Norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error. For example, prohibitions against fabricating, falsifying, or misrepresenting research data promote the truth and avoid error (BERA 2011). The reason I carried out such research was based on my desire to problem solve using a systematic approach, together with a desire to collect evidence of effectiveness/impact (Gurung and Schwartz 2009). In order to adhere to the ethical guidelines, I obtained ethical approval from the placement setting for this research; I did this by briefing my manager on the research and subsequently gaining informed consent **(see appendix 4)**. I explained the purpose of the research to her as well as what I hoped to gain as a result of the research, and how this could potentially benefit the staff, students and institution, thus eliminating any form of deception. I was fortunate to have already been known by my manager as a research student and this paved the way for me to conduct my study. Having this prior knowledge allowed them to be more comfortable with the process provided as it provided them with an insight as to what my role truly entailed. However it is also made them explicitly aware of my responsibilities and duties as both an employee and a researcher.

In order to gain consent from the staff (participants) I provided adequate information on the purpose of the research and provided them with an insight as to what their participation in the study would involve and what my aims and objectives were. **(See appendix 5)**. I also made them aware that pseudonyms were to be employed and that all information will be anonymised and that they will not be identified by the information they provide. I allowed sufficient time for clarifications to be made and any questions to be asked. This was so they could grant their informed consent and were completely aware of the procedures involved for the focus group. Nevertheless, when gaining students' permission, both myself and the assistant/interpreter, Irena explained the purpose and conditions of the research. Irena's presence as an interpreter facilitated better under for the students enabled a more efficient process of gaining consent as English was not their first language. We also explained to them that they could withdraw at any time during the research. Students mentioned that they would not like to be audio recorded. I then gave them ample time to ask questions and illuminated anything that was not understood. Finally I asked them to sign the consent form (see appendix 6). Informing and consent protected the participants (both the students and staff) as it involved informing them of what the research entailed as well as making them aware of any possible detriments, and inviting them to withdraw if they so desired (BERA 2011). It also released the institution of liability by giving me as the researcher control of

ensure that I uniformly opposed deception of any kind. Informed consent is an important principle that addresses, in particular, the issue of respecting people's autonomy.

Mertens and Ginsberg (2008) provides clear definitions for two terms central to the protection of participants in qualitative research: Anonymity means that no uniquely identifying information is attached to the data and thus no one, not even the researcher, can trace the data back to the individual providing them. Confidentiality means that the privacy of individuals will be protected in that the data they provide will be handled and reported in such a way that they cannot be associated with them personally (Mertens and Ginsberg 2008). Confidentiality was ensured as the primary defense against unwanted exposure. Pseudonyms (giving false names) also guaranteed the anonymity of the research participants. The obligation to protect the anonymity of the research participants and to keep research data confidential is all inclusive, (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992, cited Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). My DBS check also granted me the authorization to carry out such research as some students may have come from traumatic backgrounds and so I took care in my approach throughout the data collection (BERA, 2011).

I also ensured that both principles of beneficence and non-maleficence were applied. Beneficence is the ethical principle of 'doing good'. This was implemented by briefing participants of the study, keeping them informed of my progress, asking them if they were satisfied with the research process, and updating them of anything I found. Furthermore this was also addressed by making them aware of the potential benefits of the research and how the recommendations could be used to benefit the institution, staff and students. However Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) argue that whilst the practitioner, the organisation or the funding body may gain from the outcomes, the participant or population may remain untouched, underprivileged, unsupported, and with no further improvements in their quality of life (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). Non-maleficence on the other hand is the principle of 'doing no harm' and minimising the risk of psychological, emotional, professional and personal damage (Cohen et al., 2011). This is also known as the 'costs/benefits ratio' dilemma which is defined as the balancing of likely social benefits accrued from the research against the personal costs to the individuals taking part (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992, in Cohen et al., 2011). This was achieved by gaining informed consent from all parties, anonymising them, whilst also making it very explicit that they could withdraw at any time if they wished. Autonomy refers to the research participant's freedom of action and freedom of choice to take part in a study without coercion (McLeod, 2015).

The nature of pedagogic research may present a risk to research participation because the distinction between practice development and the research itself is not always clear (Hammersley

students must participate in as part of the programme of study, versus what they can choose to participate in. The fact that I as the pedagogic researcher am often occupying dual roles of both researcher and teacher can exacerbate this problem, along with the fact that I was collecting data (observations) during a teacher's teaching time. Such confusion may also influence the students' decision to participate. This, in turn, could impact on the validity of consent. In addition, although there was no risk of harm it is vital that I was cognisant of this potential risk and took measures to reduce the likelihood of it occurring (Hammersley and Traianou 2012).

To conclude, from the discussion so far it is clear that ethical issues have been an integral part of this research and considerations for ethics have been run throughout the course of the research process, including identification of research problem, engagement in the inquiry and dissemination of results. In addition, the ethical principles are also closely connected with assuring the quality of the study, its rigour, its dependability and credibility.

With my data now collected the next stage was to discuss and analyse this data. Before being able to do this, there were certain factors I needed to take into consideration. The first was to take into account the validity of the data. By this, I meant the extent to which a claim made by a participant seemed likely to be true, given its relationship to what I based on the literature held to be knowledge beyond doubt (Creswell and Miller 2000). Particularly since I was asked, regarding the focus groups, by some students, if it had anything to do with their English proficiency, whilst others asked if it had anything to do with their benefits/ money. Others mentioned to me that they felt a sense of relief after the focus group as they said that they felt they were able to talk about their feelings and have someone listen to them. Students also expressed that they were very happy that 'someone' was interested in researching Roma students and were keen to know the outcome of the study. Therefore students may not have been completely honest in their claims. This is perhaps more so with the staff as there will be conflict of interest and the need to protect the reputation of themselves and the institution. Another factor taken into account was the credibility of the data. This meant assessing whether the claims could be judged as being likely to be true based on how the research was carried out (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006).

The findings will be presented and critically analysed in the themes that emerged from the literature review.

Theme 1: *Teachers' attitudes to and experiences of teaching Roma ESOL Students*

Teachers' attitudes towards teaching Roma students

Attitude is determined by the individual's beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behaviour, weighted by evaluations of those outcomes or attributes (McNergney and Keller, 1999). Thus, a person who holds strong beliefs that a positive outcome will result from performing the behaviour will have a positive attitude toward the behaviour. (McNergney and Keller, 1999). Conversely, a person who holds strong beliefs that negatively valued outcomes will result from the behaviour will have a negative attitude. The general attitude to Roma ESOL students by the staff was rather sympathetic and understanding, despite the very contrasting attitudes displayed in the staffroom. This was in contrast to the general attitude of the Roma students. Their responses made in the focus group were very interesting. For instance in the focus group with the staff, Shahnaz stated *"you know it's important that we make students' learning experiences our first priority - especially the Roma students"*, this immediately caused an exchange of looks amongst

teachers face when teaching students especially the Roma students, you know because of their behavioural issues". From this, I noticed that the staff may not be receiving as much support as expected. The non-verbal communications also revealed that the staff may be lacking in appreciation by their superiors. According to (Owens, Broadhurst and Keats, 2009) it is becoming more and more difficult for head teachers to support staff, while satisfying an Ofsted schedule of paperwork on improvements. He also adds that teachers have little trust in management to protect them.

Nevertheless another interesting comment that was made was when I asked what, if any, issues do you face when teaching Roma students? Maria immediately responded, *"There aren't any real issues because they're not bad students".* Although I did not ask, whether or not they thought the students were bad, Maria automatically seemed to have interpreted this as such. According to Nelson (1999) when discussing a topic that may be sensitive or controversial, participants may sense a feeling of discomfort and in order to create an exit for strategy, they often try to close the topic immediately. Such comments and views expressed by the staff provided me with a greater awareness of how the teachers feel and what their inner thoughts are on teaching Roma students. It also provided me with a deeper perspective of the various issues teachers in a college may face and that what may be viewed as discomfort may well be inner fear.

Nevertheless, what is commonly known as a 'text book' response or a 'diplomatic' response was the first that sprung to mind when listening to their views on their experiences of teaching Roma students. There may have been numerous reasons for this: one, as I am a colleague and work with such staff on a daily basis, they may have felt that providing the 'safest' answer would be most suitable and would be less likely to receive criticism. Freidman (2014) discusses the concept of 'conflict of interest'- when participants don't necessarily provide the answer they think the researcher is looking for but the answer/response that is socially more acceptable with regards to the social context the research is taking place in (Freidman 2014). Another reason may be that they do not want to reveal that there is in fact an issue and that this issue is could be ignored/over-looked.

When discussing Roma students during the focus group, and proposing suggestions as to why they behave in certain ways, such as why they disrupt themselves and other students in the classroom, avoiding completing the work set, lack of drive to engage in the lesson and their (at times negative attitude towards learning. Rabiya stated: *"They behave like that I think, because they have faced a lot of racism in the past".* Antaki, (1988) in his study found that people often use 'racism' as a

this form of social labelling as a way to give it a name (Antaki, (1988). Whereas Powell (2011) suggests that in fact certain ethnic groups have cultural and lifestyle factors that both directly and indirectly affect the way they behave and these determine their characteristics. Nonverbal communications and group interactions were also observed of both the staff and the students and these proved to be rather useful as they helped me to understand some of the behaviour of the staff and how they reacted to the prompts and to each other. For example, when asked about strategies employed that could potentially aid Roma students in progressing, I received a perplexed look from Sam as he responded *"Well I don't treat them differently, because that would be inferring that they are different from everyone else. I just treat them the same"*. Although I did not ask if they treated Roma students contrarily in class, Sam seemed to have interpreted this as such. Abraham (2012) on his study of The Observer Effect found that a participant can be trying his/her utmost to avoid displaying any form of discrimination that this has adversaries and instead they often display the characteristics they are trying to avoid. This often occurs when discussing topics that are sensitive and complex such as ethnicity/gender/class (Abraham 2012). Furthermore Sam may have also provided the answer he thought I was searching for and the one thought to be the most appropriate and a safe answer it was, despite its lack of affiliation to the question. Furthermore, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, and the awareness of the negative representations and evaluations of the Roma people, are commonly preceded by pervasive disclaimers such as 'I'm not racist but' or 'I have nothing against.... but...'(Wetherell and Potter 1992). Nevertheless the language used and the denial of the existence of prejudice is so obvious that this in itself is sometimes treated by analysts as evidence of the existence of underlying prejudice in the speaker (Wetherell and Potter 1992).

Also it is vital to note that both the deputy and head of department were present during the focus group and this may have had an effect on the responses made by the staff. Piwinger and Ebert (2001) suggested that when discussing sensitive topics such as race, religion, gender and class in any type of research the investigator should expect levels of deception and impression management (Piwinger and Ebert 2001). Impression management is a goal-directed conscious or subconscious process in which people attempt to influence the perceptions of other people about a person, object or event; they do so by regulating and controlling information in social interaction (Piwinger and Ebert 2001).

Teachers' experiences teaching Roma students

In addition, I noticed from my observations that the Roma students performed much better when the teacher was more encouraging and this as result produced a more positive reaction. For

of ten. Keep it up!" Paulina's face lit up and she immediately asked for the next worksheet and completed this without distracting others. Another example was when the teacher asked the students to list 10 adjectives on a piece of paper, Mario, who often does not contribute much in class discussions said *"an adjective is a describing word, it describes nouns and that"* the teacher then responded *"Wow! See you know it, now write down 10 adjectives for me"*. When marking his work, the teacher saw that he had listed 20 adjectives instead of 10. *"You've done some really good work today and I'm really happy"* Mario then asked *"Miss shall I do task 3 now?"* Issac (2010) in his study on *Teacher attitudes towards ethnic minorities* found that many teachers had varied experiences; however, what they all shared in common was that a more positive attitude towards such minorities in turn created a more positive reaction. However this was not always the case, when asked about their experiences teaching Roma students, Maria explained that she is generally very positive towards students especially towards the Roma *"because I know they've had a hard time"* but she found there to be no significant difference in attainment and progression. However what she did find was a calmer attitude from the students as compared to being stricter with them. Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) found that due to the negative experiences of home and society there was no significant difference in achievement or effort. What they did notice was that there was a significant difference in students' levels of confidence (Tenenbaum and Ruck 2007). The teacher who exhibited more a positive and encouraging approach to students received a more positive outlook on learning English. Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) put forth the postulation that if the study had been a longitudinal one, participants' attainment, may have been increased. When discussing the nature of the issues that staff commonly faces, the first disagreement began between the staff. Rabiya stated that *"getting them to sit quietly and complete the work set"* whereas Shahnaz the Manager of ESOL reported that the biggest issue was attendance and ensuring that students continue the course instead of withdrawing. Sam then interjected and explained that the Colleges' main priority is funding as the department loses money if a student withdraws, whereas the teacher's priority is students' progression. Rabiya explained that because they (teachers) spend most of their time managing Roma students' behaviour they have less time and energy to make lessons creative, fun and exciting.

Theme 2: *Classroom interactions between teachers and Roma Students.*

Extensive research provides evidence that strong and supportive relationships between teachers and students are fundamental to the healthy development of all students in schools (Hamre and Pianta, 2011). Positive student–teacher relationships serve as a resource for students at risk of school failure, whereas conflict or disconnection between students and adults may compound that

the teacher and Roma students. The general communication was not very effective and as a result students continued to react negatively. When asked about this in the focus group, Irena explained that students often feel that the teachers don't 'understand' them. Sam elucidated that *"sometimes no matter how hard we try; the students make it difficult for us to build strong and supportive relationships with them because they can be rather defensive"*. Maria, on the other hand, explains that students can often be defensive because of their past experiences and that *"the key is with the teacher"*. Howard (2010) in his study on the relationships between teachers and students puts forth the notion that communication between the student and the teacher serves as a connection between the two, which provides a better atmosphere for a classroom environment. He also stresses the importance of the role of the teacher and often when the relationship is not at its best it is often due to the teacher's lack of understanding of the students. Whereas Martin (2012) disagrees and argues that at times no matter how much effort a teacher puts in, if the students have internal issues they are struggling to deal with, they will not react positively to his/hers efforts (Martin 2012).

Nevertheless, from the observations, what I did notice was that when students received more praise from the teacher such as 'well done' and 'good work' students repeated the action and made stronger effort to complete the work set. Clifton (2012) in his study on teacher - students relationships between teachers and minority college students, found that the higher the expectation the teacher had for the student, the more interactions and praise they received from the teacher, as well as larger amounts of valuable feedback given. Despite this being the case for most students, Clifton (2012) found that teacher expectations did not affect the amount of interaction, feedback and praise for non-minority students. Furthermore, I also noticed throughout the observations, that some teachers were rather 'friendly' with the students. For example, some of the students in the class began telling the teacher, about their personal issues and their relationships with their partners, and these discussions were being listened to. Other students then joined the conversation and this lasted approximately twelve minutes. This in turn, provides a platform for students to become even more familiar and friendlier. When asked about their relationship with these students, Rabiya explained that she is friendly with them in the hope that they feel comfortable in the class and not as defensive.

Hughes, Cavell and Willson (2001) found in his study on issues relating to teacher-students relationships that the teachers, who were too friendly with the students in order to gain their acceptance and approval struggled the most with bad behaviour and managing such behaviour Hughes, Cavell and Willson (2001). Gillborn, and Mirza, (2000) supports this by emphasising its

and control, low student attainment levels, and eventual disrespect from the same students. Nevertheless, Sam explained that even when he is friendly with these students there is no form of reciprocation or enthusiasm to complete the work set.

Bamburg and Andrews (1990) elucidate that particular groups in society have no intention and no interest of progressing in the field of education as other fields such as employment deem to be more favourable. This became apparent throughout the discussions during the focus group, as several students expressed that they did not, want to pursue further education and in fact they wanted to work as soon as possible. Therefore this may lead one to the assumption that regardless of any interventions or any efforts made by the institution, the staff, the curriculum, the Roma students do not want to engage in any educational venture, although they may in fact want to engage in learning English. Whereas Raffini (1993) strongly opposes this view and puts forth the notion that there are situations where students are convinced, rightly or wrongly, that teachers do not care about them and have no interest in whether they pass or fail their examinations. It is vital to bear in mind that although the students may not be motivated to go on to further education this does not necessarily mean they are not motivated to learn English or progress in second language development. Such students may disengage from the subjects taught by these teachers and become uncooperative in the classroom. Raffini (1993) explains that students respond much better when teachers show care and concern for them on a daily basis and treat them like real persons, within the accepted professional boundaries (Raffini 1993). Akos in the focus group stated that *"they think we're stupid, and don't understand"*, Anna stated *"miss how come sometimes we get different work not the same as other students in class"* Although this maybe the teacher exhibiting differentiation within the lesson and is in fact a pedagogical strength, students may not necessarily comprehend this strategy. James (2007) found that students tend to internalise the beliefs teachers have about their ability. He also reported that they "rise or fall to the level of expectation of their teachers" (James 2007:25). Teachers' expectations for students-whether high or low-can often become a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, students tend to give to teachers as much or as little as teachers expect of them (James 2007).

Cooper (2003) suggests that expectations teachers have for their students and the assumptions they make about their potential have a tangible effect on student achievement (Cooper 2003). According to Jerry (2009) research "clearly establishes that teacher expectations do play a significant role in determining how well and how much students learn" (Jerry 2009:22). Nevertheless Feng (2004) carried out a study on Latino students in the United States and found that teacher's expectations and assumptions about Latino students did not affect their academic

and not for all ethnic groups. Therefore the results may differ to those from the Roma community.

During the focus group Anna stated *"They don't talk to me with respect, even when I haven't done anything wrong"*. When asked why she felt like this, she responded: *"probably because they don't like us"*. When discussing this with the students during the focus group, they all explained that they would like teachers to speak to them more politely. A teacher's behaviour, language and teaching style can greatly affect students' outlook on education and schooling. Klem and Connell (2004) suggest that speaking softly as well as the tone and pitch of a teacher's voice often has a lasting impact on a student, whereas a teacher with a screeching habit is less likely to help calm down a situation. Furthermore, Anna's comment about the teachers not liking them also raises some importance. If a student feels that the teacher does not like them or assumes that the teacher does not like them then he or she will more likely behave in a way that reflects this. However when asked how they feel about the way they speak to their teachers, all the students stayed quiet and replied *"not good, not all the time"*. Therefore it is important to stress the implication of giving respect to get respect and that students do not use particular platforms such as bad experiences of school to flex their own intellectual muscle or to gain popularity. When discussing this particular topic with the staff, Irena explained that *"they can sometimes be very rude to me and say things in their language -which I understand- that are very bad, you know they are not really taught manners and etiquettes because they are constantly moving from one place to another so there is no time to teach their children about these things"*. As Irena can both speak and understand the Roma Slovak language (Romani), the Roma students initially were quite wary of her. When she first arrived at the College, they were quite cautious of her and felt a sense of 'being watched' as they felt that she had been placed there to watch them and report them to the manager. However despite the negative behaviour towards Irena during the class, she still manages to understand the premise for their behaviour and this has significantly reduced.

According to Comer (1999), one common reason people act disrespectfully is that they feel disrespected themselves. As Comer (1999) said, "emotions are contagious" (1999:56).Often when people feel listened to, taken seriously, appreciated, and respected, we tend to *"pay it forward"*. He also puts forth that respect is a crucial component of successful classrooms and that respect must be embedded in every aspect of the classroom in order for the classroom to run successfully. Whereas Miller (2006) in his study on teachers' roles in the classroom suggests that in fact it is the duty of the teacher to promote such values in the class (Miller 2006). The consideration of teachers promoting respect seems to be a burgeoning trend, and although it is neither new nor unreasonable to ask teachers to foster respect, the expectations of respect can be behavioural,

teachers to model and maintain respect presents an intriguing challenge to teachers and students alike. Shahnaz stated that *"it is important for teachers to not take students misbehaviour personally"*. Watkins (2013) in his study on students behaviour and strategies for dealing with difficult behaviour found that the teachers whom took poor student behaviour personally sent the message to their students that they could push their buttons and allowed them to disrupt their lessons. This shifted control over to the students and ultimately weakened their ability to manage your classroom. Whereas the teachers who did not show that they were affected by negative student behaviour, managed their classroom more effectively and this caused students to be more engaged and as a result they performed better

Nevertheless, I noticed, from my observations that the Roma students would often indulge in conversations with the teacher as well as with each other, instead of completing the work set. Skinner et al (2005) suggest that students often behave in such a manner in order to avoid completing classwork because they may feel that they are incapable of performing. Jacobs, et al (2002) also supports this by explaining that when students are viewed as lacking in ability or motivation and are not expected to make significant progress, they tend to adopt this perception of themselves (Jacobs, et al (2002). This is in contrast to Curby (2014), who found that it was the teachers' lack of effort to challenge students that caused them to be distracted and distract others. Omatoni and Omatoni (1996) also support this view by proposing that "many students may feel insulted at the minimal demands placed upon them. Students would work harder if more were expected of them" (1996:88). Similarly, when 200 middle school students in Englewood, Colorado, were surveyed about their most memorable work in school, they repeatedly equated hard work with success and satisfaction. Moreover, they suggested that challenge is "the essence of engagement" (Wasserstein 1995:45). To accommodate differences among students and help all students achieve mastery without resorting to watering down standards and expectations, teachers can manipulate various techniques that aid students to achieve their potential. Darling-Hammond (2000) in their study on *Teacher quality and student achievement* suggest that students, particularly those from certain social, economic, or ethnic groups, often discover during their schooling that their teachers consider them "incapable of handling demanding work" (2000:23). This is in contrast to Bhattacharyya, Ison and Blair (2003) who found that students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) perform, on average, less well than pupils whose first language is English. However, EAL pupils generally make better progress between Key Stages. Nonetheless, performance of EAL pupils varies by ethnic group, (Bhattacharyya, Ison and Blair 2003).

there attainment levels and performance were not directly influenced by the teacher's low level of engagement with students. However Haring et al (1978) found that some groups possess internal factors that stimulate them to be hard working that provides them with the capability to complete an academic task because of academic-enabling skills. During the focus groups, I asked students how they prefer to learn, students mentioned that they preferred speaking to writing. Recent research has shown that ESOL students who emanate from the Far East tend to have stronger writing skills due to spending long hours in the library, this is in contrast to Middle-Eastern students who proved to be stronger in speaking as they often derive from a collectivist culture that highly values verbal communication and this is represented as group work (Haring 1978).

Conclusion

Nevertheless, after much analysis and investigation it is clear that teacher-student relationships are of paramount importance when presenting students with a great learning experience approachable and inviting the students to learn. A positive and effective relationship between teachers and students creates active learners not only in the classroom but in the community. Such relationships also have positive and long-lasting implications for both students' academic and social development. High-quality teacher-student relationships are a key factor in determining student engagement (Fredricks, 2014), especially in the case of difficult students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. When students form close and caring relationships with their teachers, they are fulfilling their developmental need for a connection to others and a sense of belonging in society (Scales, 1991). This is supported by both Wubbels and Levy (2005) who state that "teacher-student relationships should not be left to chance or dictated by the personalities of those involved". (Wubbels and Levy 200:67). Instead, by using strategies supported by research, teachers can influence the dynamics of their classrooms and build strong teacher-student relationships that will support student learning. Smith (1990) states, "Teachers who love their students are of course by that very fact teaching their students the nature of love, although the course may in fact be chemistry or English" (Smith 1990:43).

Theme 3: *Barriers to learning*

Cultural barriers

After observing the Roma students in two different classes I noticed that they repeated the same behaviour. For example, during the lesson, one particular teacher played the students a video from YouTube; this video was about what the speaking and listening exam entailed and what students

in the students and instilled boredom within them. Students were disengaged, however what was noticeable was those of other ethnicities such as Iranian, Spanish and African entertained themselves by either listening to music, using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, whereas, the Roma students often entertained the teacher by asking questions and conversing with the tutor, as well as talking amongst themselves in their native language. As this behaviour was repeated in two different classes with two different teachers it may bring one to the supposition that this may be in fact the way they behave. Silverman (2013), in his study of ethnic minority students, put forth the idea that the external environment can only affect the behaviour of individuals to a certain extent; some cultural groups will display their natural selves/behaviour regardless of external influences (Silverman 2013). This is in contrast to Bauer (2013) who suggests, that, in fact external social factors have a stronger effect on individuals at a young age in language learning contexts, as they spend most of their time communicating in these contexts.

The responses amongst the students varied quite significantly despite the close friendship between the participants. For example, Akos stated that *"We didn't come here to learn English we came because we're treated badly in Slovakia"*. This particular statement echoes the views of many migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who left their countries unwillingly due to war, poverty, economic distress or discrimination. Therefore this may not be subjective to Roma students only but to ethnic minorities in general. Hall (2012) suggests that such factors can act as a barrier to learning where students see little value in the course or its content due to external issues. When discussing barriers to learning and how these may be overcome, Shahnaz stated that *"a lack of prior education and them not used to being in a classroom"* is a big factor that affects learning and teaching in the classroom *"Sitting in a classroom for three hours is tiring for them"*. Previous research confirms that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils have lower levels of achievement than other ethnic groups' at all key stages (Foster and Norton 2012). This is due to a complex range of factors, including barriers that prevent them from fully accessing the curriculum, such as lack of engagement, interrupted education and negative experiences of school. Historically, Roma pupils have had the poorest outcomes of any ethnic group in England in terms of attainment, attendance and exclusions (Foster and Norton 2012). This, therefore signifies, that although there is historical evidence on their attainment levels, most of these are a result of the many barriers face by students. These therefore must be taken in to consideration when searching for and applying ways to further enhance teaching and learning in the classroom.

Another issue that I came across, as a result of conducting the research, is the issue of geographic relocation. Mika stated *"It was hard to come here and leave our house in Slovakia and learn*

resettled in a strange country affect student learning and hinder their ability to pick up the language. Whereas Armstrong (2006) in his article on refugees in the UK found that in fact those who had been geographically dislocated were the ones that demonstrated the most effort to learn the English language and found work almost immediately upon entering the country (Stanley 2006). Furthermore, Akos also stated *"I'm going back to Slovakia anyway so I'm gonna forget everything anyway so I don't care"*. He then added that *"we go to Slovakia and come back to England again and again so we forget spelling and that"*. Continuous dislocation amongst the Roma community has had and continues to have detrimental effects on the schooling of their children. Students begin to forget how to read, write and spell due to stopping and starting continuously. As a result participation in secondary education is extremely low according to Ofsted (2014).

Lesson content

When discussing lesson content with the students, Paulina who is generally rather quiet and introverted during class, explained that she felt the work studied was *"sometimes boring and not interesting"* Fredricks, (2014) found that students can be demotivated by the structure and allocation of rewards and students do not perceive the classroom climate as supportive. In aiming for full engagement, it is essential that students perceive activities as being meaningful. Research has shown that if students do not consider a learning activity worthy of their time and effort, they might not engage in a satisfactory way, or even disengage in response (Blumenfeld, Paris and Fredricks 2004). However she also stated that if they had set goals and *"something like a present at the end"* for the work they complete, they would *"like it more"*. Nevertheless, Jackson and May (2008) suggests that regardless of how engaging some teachers make their lessons, if a students is intrinsically unengaged and demotivated to learn and study in the class, then there is very little hope. Furthermore another factor that was mentioned in focus group was by Paulina who mentioned that it would be *"nice if we can talk about Roma stuff and put pictures on the wall about Roma culture"*. When asked what difference it would make if the following were applied, she responded *"miss it would make the class, you know, friendlier and good and same as everyone"*.

According to Ofsted (2014) embedding equality and diversity into everyday practice in further education and work-based learning provision is extremely important. Not only is it 'a good thing', but more and more it is becoming a requirement. Factors of social and cultural diversity are of paramount importance in the demographic profile of the learners in my institution. It is of great significance to gain an understanding of all students' unique academic, emotional, and cultural differences in order to help them on their academic and life journeys (Gravells and Simpson,

implement lessons that address all students' academic needs, learning styles, and multiple intelligences (Access for All, 2002). Failure to recognize and address students' unique backgrounds could result in a large portion of the future adult population of this country who cannot participate successfully as global citizens. Nevertheless, this is in contrast to Kinzer (2003) who argues that, as students are in the classroom to learn English, embedding aspects of their culture or other cultures that students are already familiar with, is of very little relevance as students are there to learn the culture of that classroom and of that environment (Kinzer 2003). However this perception is not common, most educationalists and educators feel that embedding equality and diversity is necessary in order for students to be prepared to live and work in the real world. Such encouragement in the classroom empower communities to promote their own culture through partnership work in schools, establishing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller museums and engaging positively with the media (Marks 2006).

Although this may be overlooked by many teachers and authors, the intimidation of young ESOL learners in the class as a result of not being able to 'pick up the language ' can cause some students to be withdrawn. As a result learners begin to lose interest and this therefore acts a barrier to their learning (Knox and Sjogren 2002). Looking at Krashen's *Affective Filter Hypothesis,* (2009) this concept has found wide acceptance with both researchers and ELL instructors (Krashen 2009). They suggest that an individual's emotions can directly interfere or assist in the learning of a new language. Classrooms that are fully engaging, non-intimidating, and affirming of a learner's native language and cultural heritage can have a direct effect on the student's ability to learn by increasing motivation and encouraging risk taking and hence increasing their attendance of the classes (Krashen 2009). Thus, the safety that is provided in the ESOL classroom on a regular basis becomes the first and foremost strategy to helping an ESOL student be successful in the academic world at large and needs to be repeated in other classrooms to whatever extent it can. If these are solved then the issue of overcoming barriers will also be solved.

Employment

Furthermore, another factor that arose during the focus group was the issue of employment. Mario stated that he wants to work as a mechanic and that *"learning English is not important"* if he wants to *"fix cars"*. Reeve and Jang, (2006) found that those students who did not see a direct relationship between the course content and their desired goal performed the poorest (Reeve and Jang, 2006). Reeve and Jang also suggest that improving learning tactics for students and encouraging effective teaching practices by teachers are vital in order to make students aware of

mechanic. Ofsted (2014) have made it very explicit that they would like educators and institutions to take positive action to encourage applications from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds for employment. There is a solid body of empirical work supporting the view that educational level is strongly related to occupational attainment (Büchel and Mertens 2004). Similarly, research on type of education (i.e., vocational, college shows some of the expected relationships to employment, wages, and so forth. Maria also stated "Miss I want to be a hairdresser, so I don't need to know about verbs". There are many individuals that emanate from particular communities that that perceive employment and earning money far more important than studying. This has a great impact on such individuals' learning since education is perceived as 'secondary' in comparison to securing employment.

Expectations

When discussing teachers expectations of students Fiona, the tutorial mentor, stated that *"I feel like the students who are probably the most misbehaved strangely feel like teachers are not interested in them doing when I know that's not true"*. When asked how she arrived to such a conclusion, she explained *"well because of things they say things like "oh there's no point anyway, the teacher doesn't help me, I'm going to fail miss", even when it's not true"*. Sixson and Tinzmann, (2009) deduce that once students are categorised as "at-risk," and students are aware of this categorisation, they as well as teachers have lower expectations for them (2009:55). According to Felner, Aber Primavera and Cauce (1985) teachers tend to treat high-expectancy students differently and often pay more attention to them; however this is in contrast to Babad and Taylor (1992) who found that in fact there is a larger proportion of teachers that engage in "compensatory" behaviors, focusing more on low-expectancy students (Babad and Taylor 56:1992). However Babad and Taylor (1992) found that teachers often displayed negative emotions (e.g., hostility, tenseness, anxiety, condescension), while they invested greater time and attention to relatively low-achieving students. Research has also demonstrated that teachers tend to have lower expectations for minority and low income students than for other students (Hale-Benson, 1986). Consequently, minority students may not be identified as either gifted or underachieving. I also noticed from the observations that when the Roma students would give up in the class, the teacher would not challenge this, they would simply move on to the next student. Research on teacher and school effectiveness indicates that higher expectations for student achievement are part of a pattern of differential attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors characterising teachers and schools that are effective in maximizing their students' learning gains. The effect of negative teacher behaviours is that low-expectation students are given fewer opportunities to

participate in classroom activities, and as a result make less effort to get the teacher's attention, gradually withdrawing psychologically from learning in the classroom setting (Smey-Richamn, 1989). While many of these issues are indeed quantifiable and much has been written about them, they work together to convey a dominant message in academic and public discourse pertaining to Black male students: they don't care about education. Kunjufu (1995) noted that Black boys effectively stop caring about school around the end of elementary school. He contended that teachers halt their efforts to nurture and promote achievement among Black males as early as 10 years old, thus inciting apathy and disengagement among those students. Whereas Cecil, (1998) found that when expectations for them were high and content was challenging, minority students excelled (Cecil 1998). Although Kunjufu's study is not in direct relation to learning English, it provides one with an insight in to students inner determination in taking education further, however it cannot be used to alone to determine students' drive to learn English.

According to Broecke and Nicholls (2007) poor performance in school is often attributed to low ability, and ability is viewed as being immune to alteration. Therefore, poorly performing students often come to believe that no matter how much effort they put forth, it will not be reflected in improved performance. This view contrasts sharply with the predominant perspective in many other cultures, where hard work and effort are considered key to students' academic achievement. In these cultures, high expectations are maintained for all students, and if a student is not succeeding, it is attributed to lack of effort and hard work, not to insufficient intellectual ability (Clotfelter, Ladd and Vigdor 2004).

Parental/family involvement

When asked about family in the focus group and how they feel about them learning ESOL, most students responded that their parents "didn't really care". Extensive research has shown that students achieve more in school when their parents are involved in their education. Vincent (2001) in his study on The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements found that parents of minority or low-income children were less likely to be involved in their children's education than parents of non-disadvantaged children. However after receiving adequate training and encouragement, those same parents became more effective in contributing to their children's academic success (Vincent 2001). Whereas Oakes (1990) argues that parental engagement is positively influenced by the child's level of attainment: the higher the level of attainment, the more parents get involved.

"errm not really, they don't tell us". McNeal (2001) stresses the importance of parental involvement in the form of 'at-home good parenting' and suggests that it has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation. Furthermore Desforges (2003) supports this view and asserts that parents have the greatest influence on the achievement of pupils through supporting their learning in the home rather than supporting activities in the school. He suggests that it is their support of learning within the home environment that makes the maximum difference to achievement (Desforges 2003). Whereas researchers from Bristol University recently discovered that pupils from ethnic minorities were more ambitious and committed to education than white British pupils who made slower progress (Burgess 2013). Fuligni (2001) in his study on Asian migrants found that because immigrant families had suffered and sacrificed to get where they are, and their children were exposed to harsher realities and insecurities than the native Californians who were more comfortable, they made a greater effort to ensure that they achieved a better standard of living than before. He also noticed that immigrant parents would sacrifice their material desires so that their children would get extra tutoring (e.g. English language) and they were disciplined about doing homework (Fulgini 2001). Such findings are also in consistency with reports of several ethnographic studies which suggests that many immigrant children cite a sense of responsibility and indebtedness to their families as being a critical reason they work hard and want to do well in school (Lindstrom and Van Sant1986).

Domestic issues

Nevertheless, Anna also stated that *"we've got a lot of problems at home miss, because my mum is ill and my sister is disabled"*. Adelman and Taylor (1999) found that at some time or another, most students bring problems with them to school that affect their learning and perhaps interfere with the teacher's efforts to teach (Adelman and Taylor 1999). In particular, family members and peers can be a significant obstacle to engaging in learning. McDonald (2014) found that young people who had 'applied for a course' were most likely to cite health or health in the family as a barrier (McDonald 2014). In some geographic areas, many young learners bring a wide range of problems stemming from restricted opportunities associated with poverty and low income, difficult and diverse family circumstances, high rates of mobility, lack of English language skills, violent neighborhoods, and problems related to substance abuse, inadequate health care, and lack of enrichment opportunities (Taylor 2010). The obstacles cited by potential ESOL students as preventing them from participating in learning are similar to those mentioned by other adult non-learners. These include insufficient time as a result of family or work commitments, inadequate

provision locally, inadequate transport or lack of affordable childcare (Klein 2008).

Feedback from staff

When asked about feedback from staff, Mario stated *"teachers say wrong, not good but some of them say good"* Anna also stated *"I don't really want to do the work when they say things like that"*.

With regards to feedback, Atkins (2009) found in his study that those students who faced the most criticism from teacher, friends and family were the ones who tried the least in class. She also puts forth that students are often afraid of the criticism they will receive from their teachers, classmates or parents if they do not do a good job or get high marks in school. For some students, this fear is so great that they would rather not try to succeed than risk having to take this criticism Atkins (2009). In addition researchers surmise from this breakdown that teachers' right-or-wrong feedback can, in effect impair the work of "high-knowledge learners," possibly by distracting them or drawing attention to their self-image or performance (2009:65). A related counter-intuitive finding concerns the effect of praise. In some circumstances there appear to be negative side effects of praise, at least for older children and adults. Praise for successful performance on an easy task can be interpreted by a student as evidence that the teacher has a low perception of his or her ability. As a consequence, it can actually lower rather than enhance self-confidence. Whereas Peltz (2014) argues this and suggests that in fact criticism can often encourage positive outcomes and that it brings balance into students' lives, whilst bringing truth, honesty, and intimacy. Criticism can also help to monitor student's deeds and often can, under some circumstances, following poor performance be interpreted as an indication of the teacher's high perception of the student's ability. Researchers also suggest that well-chosen criticism can convey as much positive information as praise.

During my observations I noticed that there was a lack of ambition to complete work or to engage in the topic studied, and when asked about their future, the female participants stated that they would like to get married and have children. This in itself is very interesting as it demonstrates that adhering to their cultural norms is the main priority and that pursuing higher education is of no real significance to them. According to Kim Ann Zimmermann (2014) Romani typically marry young - often in their teens - and have children and this is society's expectation of them .Mika explained that learning ESOL *"doesn't matter"* as she has no intentions of working. However Mikos explained that he felt that, at times, the classroom environment is not very welcoming. When asked what he meant, he stated *"not very fun"*. Previous research has shown that the

(2008) suggest that warmth, respect, enjoyment, enthusiasm, teacher sensitivity to student needs, regard for student perspectives, respect for student autonomy are all factors that contribute to the success of a classroom (Pianta, La Paro and Hamre 2008). Nevertheless, researchers have argued that effectively performing an activity can positively impact subsequent engagement (Bandura and Schunk, 1981).

Institutional support

When asked about general support in the department, student's general response was quite positive. Anna stated *"Irena is helpful in the class because, you know miss, she translates for and that"*, Paulina also stated that *"Yeah miss, she understands us and if we don't understand she helps"*.

According to Issa and Öztürk (2007) an aspect that often is a great help in multilingual classrooms are bilingual teachers. This often is a hindrance to effective ESOL provision and insufficient language support within that provision. However Levine (2011) opposes this form of assistance as he implies that this may hinder students progressing in grasping the English language. Furthermore it is neither practical nor feasible to train teachers to learn languages in order to make students learning experiences easier due to the shortage of funding available.

According to Banks and Banks (1993) the education of minority students is impacted by the level of education teachers receive in language and multicultural issues. Teachers come with many culturally driven values that shape the instruction in the classroom. If those values are not congruent with the learning styles and needs of minority students, then there is a greater likelihood that minority students may not be able to achieve at the same level of the majority group. During the focus group with the staff, when asked about the learning environment and if they felt that students are comfortable, most of them responded positively, however Irena the assistant stated that *"maybe we could embed Roma culture in the work studied in the class, students may feel more welcomed"*. According to Curtis (1998) learning environments can often feel hostile with a culturally insensitive curriculum. There are cultural differences too which may be encountered as barriers.

Prior to conducting to this research, I did not anticipate that it would be as challenging as it was in practice to obtain qualitative data on discrimination. The core reason for this was due to the fact that it seemed too sensitive a topic to yield accurate and totally open responses to the questions I posed in the interviews and focus group. I ensured non-malfeasance by strictly conforming to all ethical guidelines and guaranteed the safety and well-being of all participants by maintaining privacy and anonymity. The sensitive nature of the study required a polite and effective style of questioning; one that neither offended nor caused discomfort for the participants. For example, ensuring that I used 'please' and 'thank you' as well as 'can you' and 'would you like to' rather than 'tell me'. This was useful in ensuring that I avoided any conflict and any stress.

Topics such as discrimination are often approached from a quantitative paradigm, therefore employing a qualitative design to explore such a topic naturally necessitated a more sensitive approach to the both the participants and the research methods adopted. To effectively capture processes and experiences of discrimination and exclusion, innovative tools were required (Pollack, 2003), and these were not available to me. Longitudinal studies are often favoured when researching ethnic inequalities as they frequently imply working across languages and cultural contexts for a long period of time, requiring careful attention to measurement validity and rigorous translation procedures (Behling and Law, 2000). Since inequality was not the primary focus of my research, an exploratory study as this was advantageous for providing an insight into the practical implications of classroom practice with minority ethnic learners.

Furthermore, the sensitive, and generally discreet, nature of this research topic made it difficult to judge whether participants (staff and students) were responding to the questions and discussions openly and honestly. However, this may have simply been the consequence of participation in a focus group, whereby members "spark" off each other and avoid voices conflicting views.
During data collection, it appeared that the staff participants in particular may have been providing "socially correct answers" (Sieber and Stanley, 1988: 49). It is argued that sensitive studies are those in which "there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research" (ibid). In turn, participants are more likely to exert caution and be guarded in their responses, and this may have also affected the results methodologically or pragmatically- as in how they affect people involved in the research. If participants foresee that there may be a chance of a negative consequence, this will generate less truthful responses. Raymond (1993: 4) additionally suggests that sensitive research has the potential to "pose a substantial threat to those who are or have been

under absolute voluntary and informed consent and willingness, their responses implied that they were apprehensive about voicing opinions that may place them at a disadvantage in their workplace. After all, their participation in this is research was temporary and short-term, whilst their presence and statuses at the institution represented employment and stability, neither of which they wished to endanger.

The above evaluations are not restricted to the interviewees in this study, nor do they define the nature of this risk to all the participants in the research process. Previous research has shown that a significant proportion of participants are more likely to give more honest answers to questions on sensitive topics if they are responding electronically, on a computer, as opposed to verbalising responses face-to-face or writing their answers on paper (Cobanoglu and Cobanoglu 2003). It may be that participants regarded face-to-face communication about sensitive topics as discrimination as too personal, or that noting down responses on paper denoted an element of permanency. Conducting a focus group, therefore, may have been the reason participants may have not wanted to reveal their true opinions.

Nevertheless, according to Ceglowski (2000), qualitative researchers must initiate a rapport-building process from their first encounter with a participant in order to build a research relationship that will allow the researcher access to that person's story. As participants at the institution already knew me, however, this provided an element of comfort for the students and ease of communication. Part of the role of the qualitative researcher is also to facilitate participant disclosure. This disclosure can be heightened if there is a level of rapport between researcher and participant. I felt that the act of listening to the story often validated the experiences of the participants by giving them the time to talk about them (Ceglowski, 2000).

Another challenge I was faced with was ensuring the protection of participants with regards to their responses and reactions to the topics discussed. As the topics discussed during the focus group contained sensitive content, it was imperative that the students felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and views with the assurance that these would not be revealed to anyone outside of the research.

As I was known by the participants, there was mutual familiarity, and this may have reduced fear, nervousness and defensiveness amongst them. It also made them more at ease with me, which, in turn, encouraged them to speak more freely. As I had already built rapport with both staff and students, this, I felt, allowed them to be comfortable during the focus group. I felt that I was able

This relationship developed as a result of the connection established previously as their teacher, and the positive rapport was expressed by offering trust and respect for the participants and their stories, and by providing a safe and comfortable setting in which students could "open-up". Participants then feel the researcher is really listening to them and understanding their individual stories, in turn allowing them to feel more secure and confident in responding. As highlighted by FitzGerald (1995), paramount to the participant opening up and sharing their experiences is trust and an understanding of their situation. He suggests that when the researcher and participant have a pre-existing relationship, the stages of rapport building are rapidly accelerated. In some cases, the participation phase may be entered upon commencement of the focus group (FitzGerald, 1995). Conversely, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) disagree, asserting that maintaining a stance of detached concern is preferable during data generation. Moreover, they argue that the researcher should aim to develop an empathetic rapport with the participant while concurrently preserving social and intellectual distance (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983)

Nonetheless, an aspect that did not work so well was during the focus group with the staff, I sensed the staff were not as comfortable expressing their views on topics openly, and there may have been numerous reasons for this. The first may be due to the presence of both the manager and the deputy, which could have potentially caused the rest of the staff to be cautious in offering their views and opinions on the topics. Such a challenge was difficult to minimise however I adapted to the situation by respecting this issue and not causing further discomfort through questioning.

Currently, much social research does not include minority ethnic communities and does not engage meaningfully with issues of ethnic diversity and inequality. Therefore, carrying out such research on a topic that has not been researched extensively before can yield important implications pertaining to researching ethnic minorities. However, it could also potentially cause discomfort if participants have not been through a research process before. Increasing the quality and quantity of social research that addresses ethnicity will require particular knowledge, skills and competencies among researchers and research commissioners, as well as a commitment to ethical and scientific rigour in such work. As the Roma students had never taken part in research before and this was their first experience of taking part in a study, it was my responsibility to ease them into this by being supportive and offer clarifications where necessary, which yielded detailed responses that, enabled me to produce a valuable research study.

Nevertheless, as research addressing ethnic inequality increases, so too do concerns about the ethical rigour of such research. I took heed in avoiding any form of inappropriate representations

minority ethnic people has potential for group harm that can ensue from research into ethnic inequalities. In addition ensuring that adequate consideration of social, dimensions were also addressed was also challenging as I needed to maintain critical reflexivity and assumes a cautious approach. This was in order to improve the quality of the research and the usefulness of findings (Gunaratnam and Kalra, 2006). These challenges, although unique to qualitative research, they are often compounded when researching sensitive or difficult topics, such as ethnicity and in this particular case Roma students (Alty and Rodham 1998).

Regarding the focus groups, I encountered a few issues with both the staff and the students. Such issues may have arisen due to perhaps the sensitive nature of the research. For instance I felt that staff were not able to truly be comfortable offering their thoughts on the topics, especially in the presence of the Manager and other members that may not have shared the same thoughts. This was manifest in the short responses the staff gave and the minimal information offered on what their views were and for instance what they thought were the causes of Roma students behaviour in the classroom and why they are not as engaged in the work as they would like etc. Therefore a possible solution to this could be to use individual interviews with each member of staff rather than a focus group that may have caused participants to feel fearful of being judged or ridiculed by others in the group.(Hennink 2007: 6). A focus group researcher, Janet Smithson (2008), contends that some research topics are unsuitable for focus group environments. For example, topics which are seen as too personal, sexuality, infertility, financial status, divorce, domestic violence and Racism may be better carried out by other methods such as individual interviews. However there were elements such as, interactions and non-verbal communications that were observed during the focus group that were of great insight and that is an advantage that cannot be gained from an individual interview.

The focus group here didn't allow me to gain as much in depth information on teachers' thoughts and views on Roma students as hoped. In a focus group discussion, personal information and experiences are difficult to discuss. Peter Hopkins' (2007) own qualitative research project about the life and times of young Muslim men living in Scotland showed that they revealed personal experiences of racism during individual interviews far more than they did in focus group discussions. Therefore by conducting individual interviews I would have gained more personal data from the participants that would have allowed me to draw more conclusions accurate

Another issue was participants (staff) invitation to take part in the focus group. In future I would send individual emails to members I wanted to be part of the group, rather than ask staff whilst in

sat with the Manager, the Manager offered her assistance and became part of the group despite me not asking nor wanting her to be part of the focus group. Therefore in order to avoid this issue, I would ask members individually.

At the start of the focus group with the students, I asked Irena, the assistant/interpreter to explain the purpose of the research to the students after I had explained it in English to ensure that they were fully aware of what was going to happen. Irena's presence at the start as an interpreter facilitated better for the students as it enabled a more efficient process of gaining consent as English was not their first language. We also explained to them that they could withdraw at any time during the research. It is important to note that the interpreter was only present at the start to explain the purpose of the research and the conditions. She was not part of the focus group.

Using a focus group with the students was a good decision and proved to be very useful as it allowed students to be comfortable with each other. Such focus groups are used to 'give a voice' to marginalised groups such as ethnic minority groups. In addition, they enable researchers, policy-makers and others to 'listen' to people who may have little chance otherwise to express their viewpoints about their needs (Liamputtong, 2007).

Validity

At its most rudimentary, validity refers to the reasons we have for believing truth claims (Phillips, 1987). Regarding the validity of my data, Sapsford and Jupp (2006), describe these as whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure and how truthful the research results are. Hammersley, (1990:57) describes this as the truth, interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers. This also meant assessing whether the claims could be judged as being likely to be true based on how the research was carried out. Since it is not every day that these students' are observed and take part of in a focus group they may have conformed to the study and provided responses they 'thought' I was expecting, and so displaying signs of demand characteristics, thus possibly reducing the validity of the research (Sapsford and Jupp 2006). For example during the observations, Mario said *"Miss look the teacher didn't mark my work, can you check it"*. I thought this was quite an interesting statement, as although I made it absolutely explicit that I was merely observing the students for my university project, they still seemed to think that I was team0teching or assisting in some way. Furthermore, I felt there to be some ambiguity with regards to the responses made by the staff during the focus group when discussing issues such as racism. For example I asked the staff if

from the Roma Slovak community they did not disclose any such incidents or examples. During my own time teaching at the college, I had heard instances where Roma students directed racially charged comments towards other ethnicities. This is an example of when my positionality as a researcher has directly affected the results.

It's important to highlight the issue reliability. As in this particular study, the extent to which responses made by both the students and teacher can be questionable. Joppe (2000) defines reliability as: The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. (2000:1). The common phrase 'forked tongues' can often be applied in such situations as students are often suspect of doing so. Hammersley (1990:50–1) suggests that validity in qualitative research replaces certainty with confidence in our results, and that, as reality is independent of the claims made for it by researchers, our accounts will only be representations of that reality rather than reproductions of it.

It would not be true to say that the inductive process takes absolutely no note of pre-existing theories or ideas when approaching a problem. The very fact that this topic on Roma students has been selected for research implies judgments about what is an important subject for research, and these choices are dependent on values and concepts. This, this far, has helped to formulate the overall purpose of my research. However it is important to note that the inductive approached used does not set out to corroborate or falsify a theory. Instead, through this research process of gathering data, I aim to establish patterns, consistencies and meanings. Hammersley (1990) suggests that there is great confusion between criteria of rigorous research and the means by which the criteria may be evaluated in qualitative research.

Trustworthiness

To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. Seale (1999), while establishing good quality studies through reliability and validity in qualitative research, states that the "trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability" (p. 266). The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.290). Trustworthiness has become an important concept because it allows researchers to describe the virtues of qualitative terms outside of the parameters

trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worth. Trustworthiness involves establishing credibility - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings, transferability - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts, dependability - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated, and confirmability which refers to the degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. To ensure these were implemented throughout my research I discussed and confirmed my interpretations of the observation notes with participants to ensure that were authentic (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). In order to ensure dependability I discussed the findings with my participants' (students and staff) and explained to them the implications of the study are. I demonstrated my recommendations for the institution to them and asked what their thoughts and opinions were of them. This is perceived to enhance study credibility and participant involvement. However I needed to be cautious in placing exclusive store on respondents as Hammeslery and Atkinson (1983, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) suggest they are not in a privileged position to be sole commentators of their actions. Throughout the research I maintained self-awareness and "critical self-reflection" on my potential biases and predispositions as these may have affected the research process and conclusions. This was to ensure reflexivity on the research process (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). In addition, when writing up my data I placed it into an accurate analytical context where I copied notes made in the class and placed them into tables and charts. This was done in order to ensure authenticity of the results and of the voices and opinions of the participants (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). Patton (2001) puts forth that validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study.

Response Bias

Response bias is a type of bias where the subject consciously, or subconsciously, gives response that they think that the interviewer wants to hear Cohen, Manion and Morrsion (2011). The subject may also believe that they understand the study and are aware of the expected findings, so adapt their responses to suit. An example of this was when Paulina stated *"I don't think all the teachers care about us Roma students, Miss".* This may have been an indication of response bias; as students were aware that I was researching Roma students, they may have thought that this was an opportunity for them to critique the staff and the college. Again, this type of bias must be factored into the research. However the only way this could be avoided was to restrict the amount of information given to the subject or to prevent them from understanding the full extent of the research which was not applied.

Inclusive bias occurs when samples are selected for convenience (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). The participants selected to take part in this research were easily accessible and were happy to be part of the research. This type of bias is often a result of convenience where, for example, volunteers are the only group available, and they tend to fit a narrow demographic range (Dornyei 2007). This therefore means that I cannot extrapolate the results to fit the wider ESOL population. However the sample may be of value to those studying Roma students and ethnic minority students' experiences of learning ESOL in the UK.

Appraisal of the relevance of the research to the context

This research has identified good practices at the setting such as the availability of tutorial mentors and has highlighted positive aspects which the setting was not even aware of. When reporting these back to the setting, they were very appreciative to gain feedback on what they were doing successfully as this was not always clear to them.

Reflexivity

I maintained in 'flexible' dialogue with my research subjects and contexts, in order to preserve a sense of my own subjectivity within the process. This allowed me to avoid the tendency to become 'absent' from the research contexts. Therefore throughout the study I continually reflected on my research plans and progress. Throughout my research project there were certain issues I had to contend with due to my positionality. May (2001, p41) suggests that positionality is 'our place within the research and the construction of our fields of inquiry themselves'. Furthermore Holliday (2007, p60) views positionality as: 'Your age, your gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, political views, personal experiences, your professional lived experiences might all be of importance and relevance'. McDowell (1992) noted that researchers must especially take account of their own position in relation to the research participants and research setting. In particular, the reconstructing of insider/outsider status in terms of one's positionality in respect of education, class, race, gender, culture and other factors, offer us better tools for understanding the dynamics of researching within and across one's culture (England, 1994; Merriam et al., 2001; Rose, 1997). The fact that I am bilingual may have worked as an advantage as it may have made the students to be more at ease with me as they may have identified with bilingual. Since they all mentioned that they enjoyed speaking to me and felt comfortable throughout the process. Nevertheless, this did not affect the data in terms of consistency as I did not use my second language, Arabic. Some

proved to be very useful to me. Many students voluntarily provided me with deep, rich information about their past which has in turn provided me with a great insight in to why they exhibit such behaviours in the class. However I also did not want to prejudge the data that I received and I wanted to be open to other's view. As Holliday (2007:53) states 'researchers should be open to the values and viewpoints of all concerned with the research and be willing to engage in dialogue'.

Furthermore, the fact that I am a young female teacher (only four years older than my students) may have also impacted some of the data gained, in that they may have felt they could relate to me. In addition as I placed myself in the paradigm of the interpretivist, my epistemological view was to find the reasons behind the actions of the participants and try to comprehend what made them act in such ways. Moreover Bell (2005:8) describes this position as being 'more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of the world'. Ultimately, my research evaluated the micro-concepts such as the subjective meanings that people bring to their situation (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002). It is also important to note that I did not enter the setting in order to find 'truths' as according to Usher and Edwards (1994) there is no complete truth in social situations (Usher and Edwards, 1994:20 cited in Wellington, 2008:72). A researcher who argues that his or her findings are derived from many different kinds of people across many different situations will be more convincing than another researcher whose conclusions are based observations of one person in one setting (Potter, 1996).Therefore in my discourse I decided to explore not only Roma ESOL students but other minority students also.

One of the main issues with the validity of qualitative research is the likelihood of the researcher's values creeping into the interpretation of data. In order to minimise this happening I critically examined myself to detect any potential bias and inclination that may influence the conclusions I made about the data. However, although no data can be hundred percent value free and objective, I ensured that the level of objectivity of my study has been maintained.

Aspects I have learned about the research

As a researcher I felt that I was gaining a greater understanding of the research process at each stage. The opportunity has allowed me to comprehend the complexity of research as a whole as well as the ethical implications that are needed to be taken into account at each stage of the research. It has also made me more aware of the roles and responsibilities of qualitative researchers as well as what being a qualitative researcher entails. In addition I also learned to

Denzin (2009) asserts that qualitative research is not an innocent practice: quite the opposite, qualitative research is replete with the researcher's ideological assumptions and moral criticisms (Denzin, 2009).

Recommendations

- The manager of the department could set up workshops and training events for staff to attend on raising awareness of the struggles faced by Roma learning ESOL as well as minority ethnic students, and how these can be overcome in the classroom. Such workshops could also be used to provide teachers with various ways on how to communicate more effectively with such students. A professional in the field could also lead seminars on how to be more inclusive of ethnic minority students within ESOL such as Roma students as well as provide staff with various techniques that could be in classrooms to keep students active in classwork.

- Teachers should try and improve the content of the work being studied by asking students what topics they would like to cover, whilst embedding the Curriculum. By making this more personalised and relevant for the students they would feel more stimulated and motivated to learn. For instance, there are many students from the Roma community that would like to be mechanics; therefore teachers could tailor lessons so that they cover elements of employability, for example labelling the different parts of the vehicle, interview skills that are specific for particular occupations.

- The suggestions and recommendations should be put on paper by the Deputy Head of Department and distributed to members of staff so that they can be referred to when needed.

- More one-to-one tutorials could be set up (as opposed to once a week) with learners by the tutorial mentor. These tutorials may benefit the staff as the information that staff need to be informed of as a result of the tutorial is sent via email.

- In order to maintain privacy, a classroom should also be used instead of the staffroom (for the tutorials) so that students feel comfortable discussing their personal issues with the mentor. This will hopefully provide students with a 'safer' and more 'comfortable' place to communicate whilst also keeping staff updated on the student's progress, achievement and

feel that staff care about them and this will in turn help staff understand such students.

- The deputy could arrange for students to attend cultural events/museums around the country that would increase awareness of different cultures and histories. Teachers could then embed such events in the classroom and in the curriculum. Develop more cultural diversity activities in order to celebrate diversity and so that students of differing ethnicities are included and welcomed.

- The Sheffield city council could also be notified of such research as this could potentially aid them in knowing where to allocate more funding to and to set up more classes in particular areas etc.

Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, the principal aim of this research was to explore teachers' and Roma students' experiences of the ESOL classroom, examining closely the interactions between them, the attitudes and expectations of Roma students and their barriers to learning. I believe that this aim has been achieved as various factors that impacted on students' learning were investigated and analysed.

Further to the standard point of view towards Roma learners, the findings of this research have illustrated the different ways that the experiences, interactions and expectations of the students and the teachers need to be a key element of curriculum development, pedagogy and further research on Roma students in the context of ESOL. As this study has shown, the dynamic relationship between the language learner and the language learning context in shaping ESOL students' experiences requires a deeper understanding, not only of students' experiences of the ESOL classroom and their barriers to learning, but also of the commitment to developing theory and research that addresses the day-to-day complexities of ESOL language learning contexts.

Overall this study into the experiences of teachers and Roma students in the ESOL classroom, the interactions and relationships between them and the teachers' attitudes towards Roma ESOL learners produced ample data that responded to the research aims and objectives. The focus groups were useful particularly for gaining access to rich, in-depth data, much of which offered reasons for the actions that could be seen in the observations. While it is hoped that the knowledge that emerges from this thesis makes a contribution to the field, the greater lessons that have emerged thus far pertain to the invaluable research experience itself, particularly for the student participants.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Observation Table

Appendix 2: Focus group Students

Appendix 3: Focus group Staff

Appendix 4: Information form for the Manager

Appendix 5: Research Participant form

Observation Table

Date: **Time:** **Teacher:**

Student	Field Notes

Focus group -Students

Introduction

1. Welcome

2. Overview of topic ***"Teachers' and Roma students' experiences of the ESOL classroom in Yorkshire".***

- *Theme 1: Teachers' attitudes to and experiences of teaching Roma ESOL students.*

- *Theme 2: Classroom interactions between teachers and Roma students.*

- *Theme 3: Attitudes of Roma students learning ESOL.*

You were selected because based on my knowledge of you as your teacher as well as my observations of you. Names will be anonymised.

Guidelines

- No right or wrong answers, only differing points of view
- One person speaking at a time
- You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views.
- My role will be to guide the discussion
- Keep in mind that I'm just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.
- You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

Prompts

How are you all today?

How do you feel in the classroom?

What do you enjoy and why?

How do you find learning English?

Focus group -Staff

Introduction

1. Welcome

2. Overview of topic ***"Teachers' and Roma students' experiences of the ESOL classroom in Yorkshire".***

- Theme 1: Teachers' attitudes to and experiences of teaching Roma ESOL students.

- Theme 2: Classroom interactions between teachers and Roma students.

- Theme 3: Attitudes of Roma students learning ESOL.

You were selected because you teach Roma students.

Names will be anonymised.

Guidelines

- No right or wrong answers, only differing points of view
- I'm recording because I don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and I can't write fast enough to get them all down.
- One person speaking at a time
- You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views.
- My role will be to guide the discussion
- Keep in mind that I'm just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.
- You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

Prompts

How many Roma students do you each teach?

When you think of Roma ESOL students, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?

What strategies do you use?

What issues do you commonly face when teaching Roma students?

Are there any patterns you've noticed?

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Information Form

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24th February 2015

Dear Michelle,

As part of my MA course at Sheffield Hallam University I am conducting a research project. The main purpose of my research is to examine teachers' and Roma students' experiences of the ESOL classroom in an FE College in Yorkshire. My data collection methods will include observations in classes, interviews as well as focus groups. I will collect field notes from observations and may record the interviews and focus groups and will keep you informed of my progress.

I guarantee that I will observe good ethical conduct throughout, observing the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence. I aim to do no harm and hope to benefit the department by providing practitioners with innovative ways in improving their practices and strategies in the classroom. This research could potentially highlight positive aspects of their teaching and encourage methods in order to build on existing skills. Nevertheless, an immediate benefit is that students may feel valued, as the study is ultimately about them and providing them with the opportunity to voice their beliefs and opinions.

I promise that I will not reveal the names of the students or any other individuals involved without prior consent. I will also ensure the anonymity of the establishment.

Yours sincerely

Amina Alzouebi

(MA Student at Sheffield Hallam University)

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RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title: Teachers' and Roma students' experiences of the ESOL classroom in Yorkshire.

Researcher's name: Amina Alzouebi

Supervisor's name: Dr Karen Grainger

- I have read the Research Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part in the project.

- I understand that this research will not affect my grades now or in the future.

- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

- I understand that both principles of beneficence and non-maleficence will be applied. Beneficence is the ethical principle of 'doing good'. Non-maleficence is the principle of 'not doing harm'.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any point from the 9th March 2015 to the 27th March 2015 and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

- I understand that I may be audio taped during focus groups.

- I understand that notes will be taken during observations.

- I understand that the information gathered in the research project may be published but that my personal details, such as my name will remain confidential and I will not be identified in any published material without my prior consent.

- I understand that data will be stored in hard and electronic form at Sheffield Hallam University. This data will include any audiotapes and field notes. I understand that I may have access to the data that concerns me if I give adequate notice (normally one week) to the researcher.

- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research.

Signed..... (Research Participant)

Print Name..... **Date** .....

Researcher's Contact Details:

- Researcher: Amina Alzouebi Email: a.alzouebi@shu.ac.uk

- Academic Research Student at Sheffield Hallam University