

**The Experiences of Migrant Job Seekers, Looking for
Work Online**

Denise de Pauw, B. A. Hons., M. A.

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Lancaster University

Department of Linguistics and English Language

November 2021

The Experiences of Migrant Job Seekers, Looking for Work Online

Denise de Pauw

Abstract

Employment is acknowledged as an important mechanism for migrant integration, yet finding work can be difficult, even for highly skilled professionals. Substantial research exists on employment, recruitment, migrant workers, inclusion, and work-related language and literacy skills, yet little of this is directly concerned with job-seeking literacy practices, and specifically, online job applications. This study contributes to the literature on employment support for migrants by focusing on online mediated job applications, and would be relevant to those supporting any jobseekers, not only migrants.

Using an ethnographic approach, three case studies were conducted, concerning migrant jobseekers in England from different age groups, linguistic and educational backgrounds. Video recordings, job-seeking texts and field notes were collected, and semi-scripted interviews were conducted. The data was analysed using mediated discourse analysis, drawing on literacy practices and activity theory.

This study identifies how digital mediation structures online recruitment by privileging the literacy practices associated with globally networked sophisticated digital information managers. It contributes job search literacies as an addition to other employability literacies, such as self-promotion (e.g. Bhatia, 1993) and reading the market (Del Percio, 2018), necessary for online jobseekers. It theorises online job-seeking as a recursive self-appraisal cycle, which begins with searching, and during which career identity is continually adjusted in relation to perceptions of the job criteria and motivation, as the application progresses. Accurate self-appraisal and formulating a credible career identity require the development of employability literacies underpinned by specialised advice, from the relevant field of employment, and the study concludes that this is where employability support should be focused. This support is vital for highly educated and low educated migrants alike, looking for paid and unpaid work.

Contents

Abstract.....	1
List of Tables	8
List of Illustrations.....	9
Accompanying Material	12
Acknowledgements	13
Author’s declaration.....	14
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	15
Chapter 2 Policy Background	18
2. 1 “Active” Employment Policies.....	18
2. 2 “Digital by Default”	20
Effects of Online Job Searching on Access to Job Opportunities	22
2. 3 Access to Adult Language, Literacy and IT courses	23
2. 4 Migrants and Employability	24
The Concept of “Employability”	24
Unclear Role of Language in Employability	25
The Content of Employability Courses Targeted at Migrants.....	26
2. 5 Job Seeking Genres and Migrants With EAL.....	29
2. 6 Summary of Policy Background.....	34
Chapter 3 Theoretical Frameworks for Literacy, Discourse and Genre	36
3. 1 A Social Model of Literacy.....	36
3. 2 Propositions for NLS and Key Terms.....	37
Literacy Events	38
Domains	39
Literacy Practices.....	40
3. 3 Discourse.....	43

Discourse and Discourses	43
Primary and Secondary Discourses	45
Languages as Discourse Repertoires	46
3. 4 Text and Genre.....	49
Genre Systems and Genre Sets	50
Genre Stability and Genre Hybridisation.....	52
Genres and Online Mediation	54
Chapter 4 Theoretical Frameworks for Investigating Literacy	
Practices as Mediated Activity.....	57
4. 1 Principles of Activity Theory	57
Activity Is Social	57
Motivation.....	58
Mediation	59
4. 2 Structure of Activity	60
Activity	60
Operations.....	61
Action.....	63
4. 3 Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA).....	65
Mediated Action	66
Site of Engagement and Site of Attention	67
Space.....	68
Mediational Means	70
Practice and Social Structure	72
Nexus of Practice	72
4. 4 Summary of Theoretical Frameworks.....	74
Chapter 5 Methodology	77
5. 1 Methodological Approach to Research Questions.....	77
5. 2 Research Design	77
Participant Observation.....	77
Towards an Exploratory and Explanatory Multicase Study	78
Recruiting Participants and Informants and Ethical Behaviour.....	80

5. 3 Case study 1	83
Research Site: the Charity Work Club.....	83
Participants.....	84
5. 4 Case study 2.....	85
Research Site and Participant	85
5. 5 Case study 3.....	86
Research Site: ESOL Centre Job Club	86
Participants.....	86
5. 6 Specific Data Collection Methods - What and Why	87
5. 7 Data Collection Procedures - How and Why.....	91
5. 8 Preliminary Data Analysis	95
5. 9 Transcription Methods and Analysis.....	96
Transcription of Talk	96
Labelling Practical Actions and Texts	98
5. 10 The Research Questions	103
5. 11 A Multimodal Transcription for Analysis.....	104
An Intermediate Transcript for Reflecting on Preliminary Findings....	108
A Transcript for Presentation.....	108
Meta-Analysis	112
Chapter 6 Case Study 1	116
6. 1 Spaces.....	117
Physical Space	117
Relational Spaces.....	118
Third Spaces	119
Virtual Spaces	122
6. 2 The Glass Collector (Transcript A).....	127
Analysis	128
6. 3 Cradle Work (Transcript B).....	135
Analysis	135
6. 4 The Bus Station Night Cleaner (Transcript C).....	140

Analysis	140
6. 5 Are You Fit? (Transcript D).....	147
Analysis	148
6. 6 Conclusion to Case study 1	152
Chapter 7 Case study 2	155
7. 1 Spaces.....	156
Physical Space	156
Third Spaces	157
Relational Spaces.....	158
Virtual Spaces	160
Screen Space	161
7. 2 The Level 2 Apprenticeship (Transcript F).....	161
Analysis	164
7. 3 Email job alerts 1 (Transcript G).....	181
Analysis	182
7. 4 Email job alerts 2: (Transcript H).....	192
Analysis	193
7. 5 Conclusion to Case study 2	202
Chapter 8 Case study 3	204
8.1 Spaces.....	205
Physical Space	205
Virtual Spaces:.....	205
Screen Spaces	206
Relational Spaces.....	207
Third Spaces	208
8. 2 Fernando and Robina- “Searching” (Transcript J)	208
Analysis	209
Conclusion to “Searching”.....	225
8. 3 Fernando and Mehran: “You'd be filling shelves” (Transcript K).....	226
Analysis	227

8. 4 Fernando and Mehran: Cleaning at Asda (Transcript L)	237
Analysis	237
8. 5 Conclusion to Case Study 3	248
Chapter 9 Discussion of the Quintain	251
9. 1 RQ 1: What Constitutes the Level of Operations in an Online Job	
Search?	251
Physical Space (Including Relations Between People in the Room)....	252
Screen Space	253
Virtual Space.....	253
Third Spaces	254
Relational Space	254
Summary of RQ1	257
9. 2 RQ 2: How Do Operations Affect the Goals in an Online Job	
Application?	257
A Recursive Self-Appraisal Cycle	257
Opacity of Staging in Text Trajectories.....	260
Attention in Physical and Relational Spaces	261
9. 3 RQ 3: How Do Operations Affect the Activity in an Online Job	
Application?	263
Attention, Identities, and Activity in CS 1.....	263
Attention, Identities, and Activity in CS 2.....	264
Attention, Identities, and Activity in CS 3.....	265
9. 4 Summary of RQs 2-3	266
9. 5 RQ 4 : What Broader Practices and Discourses of Identity Intersect	
Within the Activity System of Online Recruitment?	268
The Five Broader Discourses of Identity in Recruitment	269
9. 6 RQ5 How Do These Practices and Discourses of Identity Affect	
Employability Literacies?	272
Stage 1: Searching	273
Stage 2: Reading and Evaluating Job Advertisements	277
Stage 3: Deciding To Apply	279

Stage 4: Applying	280
9. 7 Conclusion to RQs 4 and 5.....	282
Chapter 10 Conclusion	285
10. 1 Connections Between Case Studies	285
10. 2 Summary of Findings From the Case Studies.....	286
Case Study 1	286
Case Study 2	286
Case Study 3	287
10. 3 Summary of research questions.....	287
RQ 1: What Constitutes the Level Of Operations in an Online Job Search?	287
RQ 2: How Do Operations Affect the Goals in an Online Job Application?	287
RQ 3: How Do Operations Affect the Activity an Online Job Application?	288
RQ 4 : What Broader Practices and Discourses of Identity Intersect Within the Activity System of Online Recruitment?.....	288
RQ 5: How Do These Practices and Discourses of Identity Affect “Employability” Literacies?	289
10. 4 Limitations.....	289
10. 5 Recommendations.....	289
Further Research	291
10. 6 Summary.....	292
Appendix I. Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form.....	294
Appendix II. Follow-up Interview Topic Guide.....	300
Appendix III. Action trajectories- CS1.....	302

List of Tables

Table 1: Types of Data Collected	90
Table 2: List of Video and Audio Recordings in Case Study 1.....	93
Table 3: List of Video and Audio Recordings in Case Study 2.....	94
Table 4: List of Video, Audio and Other Recordings in Case Study 3.....	95
Table 5: Conventions for Transcription of Talk	97
Table 6: Sites of Engagement in Case Study 1	116
Table 7: Sites of Engagement In Case Study 2.....	155
Table 8: Sites of Engagement in Case Study 3	204
Table 9: Application stages and employability discourses	272

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: NVivo transcript and video with coding/action labels	99
Figure 2: Screenshot of coding showing higher level actions, e.g. B writes an email job application; B types activity history into UJM	100
Figure 3: Screenshot showing intermediate and lower-level actions, e.g. B types in employer's address; B types in subject line.....	101
Figure 4: Screenshot showing function blocks becoming conscious actions, e.g. B highlights entire email text with mouse; B clicks to change text colour	102
Figure 5: Example of multimodal transcript used for analysis.....	107
Figure 6: Simplified transcript 1	109
Figure 7: Simplified transcript 2.....	110
Figure 8: Transcript for presentation	111
Figure 9: Mind map for RQs1-3, based on 3 levels of activity (Bedny et al., 2000; Leontev 1981) and showing Jones' (2005) spaces of CMC	113
Figure 10: Mind map showing primary discourses of identity intersecting in job searches/applications (RQ 4-5).....	115
Figure 11: The charity work club	116
Figure 12: Selden's job centre booklet	121
Figure 13: UJM webpage.....	123
Figure 14: Activity history on UJM.....	124
Figure 15: Indeed recruitment website	125
Figure 16: Participants' seating arrangements	127
Figure 17: The monitor, with the glass collector job advertisement on the screen	128
Figure 18: The main body text of the glass collector advert	128
Figure 19: Brian submits the application.....	132
Figure 20: The confirmation email from the recruiter.....	133
Figure 21: "Cradle work" seating arrangement	135
Figure 22: Window cleaning vacancy on UJM	136
Figure 23: "Cradle work" image search on Google	136
Figure 24: The night cleaner advertisement hosted on UJM.....	140
Figure 25: Email with a colourful automatic signature for JK	142
Figure 26: Gmail formatting menu	144
Figure 27: Gmail colour formatting palette	144

Figure 28: The email after formatting.....	145
Figure 29: Participant seating for "Are you fit?"	147
Figure 30: Indeed recruitment website with embedded advert on the right	148
Figure 31: Shona recontextualises the job advert for JK	149
Figure 32: The job advertisement for the level 2 apprenticeship vacancy	163
Figure 33: Teaching posts only question – (print version from application pack)	164
Figure 34: "Unable to continue"	166
Figure 35: The green supporting statement text box	171
Figure 36: The same instructions on the paper application form	171
Figure 37: Job description p. 1.....	172
Figure 38: Job description p. 2-3	173
Figure 39: Person specification.....	174
Figure 40: Parastou's CV, which she copied and pasted into the supporting statement.....	176
Figure 41: “Please provide 2 referees from your most recent employment”	178
Figure 42: Total Jobs email with job alerts.....	181
Figure 43: The third vacancy from Total Jobs.....	182
Figure 44: “Key skills/experience - qualified to degree standard...”	183
Figure 45: Required skills.....	186
Figure 46: Time spent on tasks in the Reed application.....	187
Figure 47: Adding key words in a job search	193
Figure 48: Back to Total Jobs again	194
Figure 49: HR assistant advert (annotated).....	197
Figure 50: "Let's build you a quick profile"	199
Figure 51: "Almost Done!"	201
Figure 52: “Putting them on the shelves”	211
Figure 53: Total Jobs search for “part time shelf stacker” jobs.....	212
Figure 54: “Yeah what you're getting is packer jobs”	213
Figure 55: “Engineer?!”	214
Figure 56: Tesco advert 1	215
Figure 57: Noticing the difference between "am" and "pm"	216
Figure 58: Tesco profile builder p. 1	221
Figure 59: Tesco profile builder p. 2	222
Figure 60:Robina advising on phone numbers: “take away the ‘plus 44’”	223

Figure 62: Robina advising on education history: “Do you know what ‘ESOL’ means?”	225
Figure 62: Find a Job application history	227
Figure 63: Find a Job search boxes.....	231
Figure 64: The search box on Find a Job.....	233
Figure 65: The search results	233
Figure 66: Refined search result	233
Figure 67: “It will just take you to the third party”	236
Figure 68: Asda cleaning vacancy on Find a Job	237
Figure 69: Time spent on actions in the Asda cleaning application.....	239
Figure 70: About to paste the cover letter.....	243
Figure 71: Fernando's template cover letter.....	244
Figure 72: Tailoring the cover letter	246
Figure 73: The level of "operation"	252
Figure 74: Recursive self-appraisal cycle of looking for a job.....	259

Accompanying Material

The transcripts listed below are stored in a OneDrive folder, that can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

Case study 1

- Transcript A Glass collector
- Transcript B Cradle work
- Transcript C Bus station night cleaner
- Transcript D Are you fit?
- Transcript E JK_S_M Interview

Case study 2

- Transcript F The level 2 apprenticeship
- Transcript G Email job alerts
- Transcript H Candidate Point
- Transcript I Parastou interview

Case study 3

- Transcript J Searching
- Transcript K Filling shelves
- Transcript L. Cleaning at Asda
- Transcript M Fernando interview

Acknowledgements

I extend my gratitude firstly, to the participants of this study, to whose stories I hope I do justice. I am also enormously grateful for the unstinting support, warmth and sagacious guidance of my supervisor, Professor Karin Tusting, whose patience never flagged. Finally, thank you to my husband, for providing the practical support behind the scenes that oiled the wheels of this endeavour.

Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted in for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

The word-length (77 265) conforms to the permitted maximum (80 000).

Denise de Pauw, November 2021

Chapter 1 Introduction

This is an exploratory study into the experience of migrant jobseekers in England, who are non-expert speakers of English as an additional language and are applying for jobs online. It is about the quest for an employable identity, and how this is formed during an unfolding online job search. As such, it is concerned with the everyday literacies which mediate online job-seeking. The extension of technology into daily life has been well documented by applied linguists, discourse analysts and researchers from many other disciplines. Online job applications are an unremarkable feature of daily life for many people and with the introduction of the 2012 Welfare Reform Act as part of the “digital by default” policy (Lane Fox, 2010), “technological compulsion” has also become a feature of job-seeking for benefit claimants (Clayton & Macdonald, 2013; Fuertes & Lindsay, 2016).

As the digital by default policy reaches its goal of government services and transactions becoming online only (Lane Fox, 2010), those most in need of help with job-seeking are compelled to manage their job centre interactions online, while, as the literature review will show, the availability of face to face appointments has been drastically reduced by the closure of local job centres and the standardisation of advice from employability programmes has constrained genuinely tailored support. In addition, many migrant jobseekers of all professional and educational levels are directed to the voluntary sector, which a number of studies have found far too inadequately resourced to address their needs (e.g. Calò et al., 2021; Willott & Stevenson, 2013). This is particularly the case for who are least “job ready”, i.e. who need help with literacy, language or IT (Crisp, 2015).

There have been studies from many countries into migrant experiences in looking for employment: Giulietti et al. (2013) look at the importance of social capital in finding employment; Fleay et al. (2016), Miller et al. (2013) and Marangozov (2014) consider the effects of government policies and public discourses on migrant employment. Some studies consider the content of employability courses and allocation of resources in relation to migrants’ perceived linguistic competence (Allan, 2013; Del Percio, 2018; Flubacher et al., 2017). Alam and Imran (2015) write about the impact digital spaces for social networking have on the social inclusion of migrants in a host community, including finding employment. Other studies have investigated claims that

narrowing the “digital divide” produces more social inclusion and upward mobility amongst disadvantaged groups (Clayton & Macdonald, 2013) and the response of clients to online welfare applications (Hetling et al., 2014). Roberts and Campbell (2006) examined the experiences of non-native English speakers in job interviews, while Roberts (2010, 2011) scrutinised how language and literacy practices in the workplace are used by institutions as a broad means of standardisation, control and ultimately, gatekeeping. Miller et al (2013) reported on barriers to accessing English classes of low-paid low-skilled migrant workers in London, with a view to informing the targeting of funding English classes for employment. More recently, Green et al. (2013; 2017) reported on the effects of ICTS on employability and inclusion in the UK while Piercy and Lee (2018) considered the use of ICTs as part of job search practices in the US.

There is, therefore, a substantial body of research concerned with the overlapping areas of employment, recruitment, migrant workers, social and digital inclusion, social capital, and workplace language and literacy skills. Much of this research refers to the use of digital media, either overtly or by implication, but there is still a paucity of research into the processes of applying for jobs online, that is specifically concerned with language and literacy practices. My research, then, addresses this, in connection with the experience of migrants whose expert language is not English. Identity is implicated in employability: employers seek “ideal candidates” and candidates “tailor” applications to appeal to an employer. Interpreting and producing employable identities is a social process that must be difficult as a newcomer, not only in terms of language. This study attempts to deepen understanding of what barriers migrants might face in forming employable identities in a new local cultural and employment context, and what role literacies and discourses play in the formation of such an identity.

Chapter 2 will first provide some necessary background on the contemporary UK policy context, concerning employment support, digitisation, and adult education provision, as these are relevant to many migrant jobseekers. This is followed by a review of the literature on migrants and employability that discusses the unclear role that language plays in perceptions of employability and consequently employability provision for migrants. The chapter concludes with a section on studies into job-seeking genres, as these tend to form the basis of employability training for migrant jobseekers.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss theoretical frameworks for understanding how migrants with English as an additional language (EAL) might experience the processes of searching for and applying for work online. Chapter 3 presents frameworks for literacy, discourse and genre, conceptualising literacy as a set of social practices constituted through and by socially accepted ways of using texts. It makes the connection between discourses and identities, which are of central concern in this study about the formulation of a textually mediated employable identity in a new environment.

Chapter 4 outlines activity theory (AT) and mediated discourse analysis (MDA), which offer an additional lens, that of action as a form of discourse, particularly important when analysing what could be largely silent digitally mediated interactions with the world. These theoretical frameworks culminate in the definition of online job-seeking as a literacy event involving a nexus of practices from various activity systems, comprised of mediated actions, in which mediational means themselves are associated with broader discourses of identity. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary of definitions and units of analysis that will be used to explore a complex set of interactions across temporal, physical and virtual spaces, in the rest of the study.

Chapter 5, Methodology, explains the research questions, study design, and data collection and analysis methods. This is a multi-case study which is presented as a “quintain” (Stake, 2005, p. 6), a collection of case studies through which a common phenomenon is explored, and which culminates in an exploration of the relations between individual cases. Analyses of the three case studies are presented in Chapters 6-8 and a discussion of the research questions, drawn from findings across the quintain, is presented in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 concludes the thesis with a summary of key findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for policy and further research. Full transcripts are stored in a supplementary materials folder on OneDrive and can be accessed via the hyperlink on page 12.

Chapter 2 Policy Background

2.1 “Active” Employment Policies

When people are involuntarily displaced to a new country for economic or political reasons, they quickly have to adapt to a new local cultural and employment context, sometimes with very reduced social, linguistic and financial resources, all of which are regarded as key to employability success. It is this group who often rely on state support while looking for work, which might include accessing employment services, or language classes. As in many OECD countries, from 1997 the UK government has pursued active employment policies, which reaffirm unemployment as an individual responsibility (Rees et al., 2014).

The Freud Report (2007) provided the blueprint for subsequent employment policy: contracting out employment services to private providers, conditionality, payment by results and an attempt to provide more nuanced personalised support to reach 'harder to help' groups. This report expressed the virtue of being employed and the dishonesty associated with being unemployed, an attitude which, according to Wells (2000), long predates the existence of state welfare and has always existed alongside unemployment benefits entitlement. What has changed in Britain is the gradual intensification of those discourses (McEnhill & Taylor Gooby, 2018; Rees et al., 2014) and the extension of sanctions since the introduction of the 2012 Welfare Reform Act, which lists claimants' responsibilities and varying levels of benefit sanctions in respect of these. At the same time, to reduce state spending on public services, UK government policy has distanced the state from the responsibility of providing employment services directly (Department for Work and Pensions & Department of Health, 2017). This has been pursued by several methods likely to affect those with less self-efficacy: the contracting out of employment support services via the Work Programme; increasing reliance on the third sector to support those most in need through volunteer led work clubs; and finally, digitisation. These three strategies, outlined in the next section, have created an intricate web of agencies involved in employment support.

The UK's mandatory “Work Programme” was introduced in 2011. This offers jobseekers, after six months of unemployment, short term interventions, such as help with writing CVs, job interview skills or other education or training deemed appropriate, and contracts are subject to competitive tendering (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012a). In acknowledgement of its remit to provide support for very

disparate needs, the Work Programme gives contractors complete flexibility as to what support to provide, and how. Many studies (e.g. Fuertes et al., 2014; Fuertes & Lindsay, 2016; Rees et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2016) suggest this has resulted in the development of a highly complex supply chain of first and second tier providers and sub-contractors which lacks overall accountability. Other studies (Andersen et al., 2017; Fuertes et al., 2014; Rees et al., 2014) refer to a widespread experience across developed countries of “creaming and parking” when services are funded through payment by results. Rees et al. (2014) note that although the funding mechanism for the Work Programme is differentiated according to the level of support needed and length of time taken to reach sustained employment, the ratio of the three staged payments is vastly weighted towards outcomes. This encourages providers to “cream off” clients who are most likely to gain and remain in sustainable employment and “park” the rest on less well-resourced providers, such as the work clubs described below. Fuertes and Lindsay (2016) also concluded that such contracting out of the UK Work Programme works against the provision of personalised support that the programme was supposed to deliver. They found that “work first” policies, which push jobseekers into any employment, constrain street level bureaucrats from using their discretion in how best to support a jobseeker, because of the need to achieve targets.

In 2010, the “work club” initiative was established, to target unemployed people before referral to the Work Programme. Contrary to the Work Programme, attendance is not mandatory and claimant attendance is not monitored. Work clubs are free to develop their own delivery models and aim to encourage local initiatives through collaboration between different community groups. Unlike the Work Programme, work clubs are not contracted to provide services, but a small amount of start-up funding was made available. Much of the advice in the government’s advisory pamphlet “Could you run a work club?” (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012b) appeared to be pitched at the idealised jobseeker with existing critical reflection skills, and seemed to draw on notions of transformative self-directed adult learning (e.g. Knowles et al., 2014; Kolb, 2014; Mezirow, 1997). It presupposed that work club clients had the prerequisite repertoire of knowledge and skills, as well as desire, to run a work club voluntarily when there were no tangible rewards for doing so. Suggestions about the possible structure of meetings was furthermore idealistic, when attendance was not mandatory and by its very nature, the structure of the group could only ever be fluid. The only

mention of IT lacked consideration for what online job-seeking might entail, given the complexity of managing large quantities of digital information, variations in hardware, software, online accounts, data security and privacy, to name just some potential issues.

Crisp (2015) conducted a study into work clubs in a large city in northern England. Contrary to the aspirations expressed by the Department of Work and Pensions [DWP] (2011, para 13), he found that most clients were not already in possession of work skills, but were often people in need of extended assistance, such as the homeless, former substance abusers or ex-offenders. Although work clubs were valued, their humane and patient approach being perceived as the opposite of “work first” initiatives, many clients felt that the training offered would not help them to move out of casual unskilled work or unemployment. Work club leaders themselves acknowledged the challenges to providing a good quality service, posed by insufficient funds, lack of skills or expertise amongst staff, inconsistent availability of volunteers and poor IT equipment.

2. 2 “Digital by Default”

Another radical change in government employment services is digitisation. Having identified a significant potential for cost reduction, in 2010 the UK adopted a policy of integrating all government transactions and information into one online portal, replacing much of their physical presence, to be completed by 2015 (Transform Innovation Ltd, 2010). In 2013, the “digital by default” policy was implemented (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012c) to drastically reduce the amount of face to face or telephone contact between job centre staff and claimants. Claimants would be required to create an online account on the government’s GOV.uk website to apply for any benefits, manage their job-seeking activities and maintain eligibility for work related benefits.

The initial DWP Digital Strategy (2012) justified the digital by default policy as an opportunity to upskill jobseekers, citing the government’s Digital Champion: “For the most disadvantaged people in the country, government digital services are such a massive lever (to help them get online)” (Lane Fox, in Department for Work and Pensions, 2012c, p. 22). Moving services online delivers them direct to the consumer, so in this sense, is aligned with the aim of making services available to the client, wherever they are (Lane Fox, 2010). However, from the perspective of the client, the digitally mediated service may be less accessible than the one mediated in person.

As the digital by default policy has unrolled, subsequent reports have attempted to identify and redress particular barriers to uptake of online government services, including for jobseekers. The Basic Digital Skills UK Report (IPSOS MORI, 2015) conducted a survey of 4000 randomly selected adults over 15 all over the UK, to establish the level of basic digital skills. These included the “online skills” of: managing information, communicating, transacting, and creating, which together with problem solving, formed the five basic digital skills. The key finding was that 23% of the population lack basic digital skills, with a significant disparity between the higher and lower socio-economic groups. In fact, of the skilled manual, semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, unemployed and lowest grade occupations, which form around 47 % of the general population, 35% reported they do not have basic digital skills, by this measure.

A subsequent government report, “Digital skills and inclusion” (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2017), acknowledged the problem, and promised to focus on “root causes” of digital exclusion. The policy mentioned an intention to conduct a feasibility study into using “outcome commissioning frameworks” (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport & Bradley, 2017 n.p.) to incentivise potential delivery partners. As described in the section on Work Programme funding, this has already been shown to be ineffective in helping the most disadvantaged, when weighted heavily in favour of outcomes.

While the policy contained some suggestions about partnership work, it did not address the needs of those urgently needing help with online job-seeking, at risk of facing benefit sanctions. There was mention of “publicly funded specified digital skills training, free of charge”, that would be offered in the same way as adult numeracy and literacy, subject to ongoing consultation in 2019. However, as with Work Programme funding, there have been many critics (Bolton & Foster, 2018; Cooke et al., 2008; Deyes & Snelson, 2016; Gwynt, 2015; Hillier, 2009; Knight, 2012) of how adult numeracy, literacy and language programmes funding has been tied to accreditation and outcomes, whose arguments will be outlined in the section about access to skills development.

The DWP service is listed in a separate Assisted Digital policy as “Digital Service B” (Cabinet Office & Government Digital Service, 2013). The uptake of this service, used to claim benefits, was 16% in 2013, projected to reach 50% by the time

the digital by default service would be achieved in 2015 (Transform Innovation Ltd, 2010) with those unable to use the digital service offered limited telephone assistance and direct help only as a last resort. The DWP used the successfully increased uptake of online employment services to justify a rolling programme of Job Centre closures, starting in 2017: “These changes reflect the fact that more people access their benefits online resulting in many of our buildings being underused” (Department for Work and Pensions & Hinds, 2018 n.p.). Juxtaposed with this increased uptake, various surveys and studies have found a preference amongst those with the least self-efficacy in job searching for in-person meetings with advisors, rather than telephone or online (Cheesbrough et al., 2018; Green et al., 2011; Marangozov, 2014). Unfortunately, job centre closures have reduced the capacity for face to face interactions with job centre staff, to support jobseekers to develop online job-seeking skills or learn to use the job portal.

Effects of Online Job Searching on Access to Job Opportunities

Literacy practices as theory will be discussed fully in Chapter 3, but it is important to state here that some literacy practices are more dominant and powerful than others because of their imposition in people’s lives and their ensuing consequences. In this study, the DWP is extremely powerful and an important sponsor of a type of literacy that arguably disempowers those it seeks to serve, i.e. digital employment services for the unemployed, 35% of whom identify as having no basic digital skills (IPSOS MORI, 2015).

The motivation for mandating literacy practices such as online job searches through a government portal invites questions about who values such systems, and thus for and by whom such systems are designed. Horrocks (2009) claims that decisions to provide government services digitally are heavily influenced by technology service consultants, so that in effect, the latter are driving the discourse about technological solutions while simultaneously profiting from contracts to provide them. The power of the state is then transferred to technology consultancies and the resulting product no longer necessarily serves or even considers the end user, the jobseeker or employer. Several subsequent studies into online job searches (e.g. Green, 2017; Green et al., 2012; Rieucan, 2015) have found that mostly the young and educated used online applications and a global audience of such recruits effectively crowded out local, less privileged, but perhaps adequately skilled applicants. Green (2017) notes an increasing

expectation that applications will be closely tailored to each vacancy, given the proliferation of information about companies available online. In this situation, educated, networked and digitally skilled information managers have a significant advantage.

At the other end of the scale of privilege, Clayton and MacDonald (2013) looked at patterns of engagement with ICT in the most disadvantaged wards of Sunderland in the north of England. They found that access to technology may enhance quality of life, but not in the realm of social inclusion, education or employment and could not tackle inequality. They concluded it was mainly professional and managerial workers who thought that ICT skills enhanced their employability and that even online social networking only served to reinforce existing social networks. Clayton and MacDonald found claims for the efficacy of ICT skills in increasing inclusion were very exaggerated and that access to technology could not be disengaged from everyday practices and their relations to socioeconomic factors. It is within this context that the impact of ICT skills varied and in itself, technology did not provide any kind of solution. A government policy, then, that uses social inclusion as a justification for technological compulsion appears to be ideologically rather than evidence driven.

2.3 Access to Adult Language, Literacy and IT courses

There are acknowledgements in the literature that low language, literacy and IT competences present key barriers to applying for jobs (Crisp, 2015; Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2017; Department for Work and Pensions, 2012c), as well as evidence of poor coordination of efforts to surmount this by relying on patchy adult education and training provision, particularly for migrants in England (Bolton & Foster, 2018; Gwynt, 2015; Knight, 2012; Marangozov, 2014; NATECLA, 2016). Unfortunately, UK Adult education spending since 2010 has dropped by 54% (Foster, 2019), as governments sought to reduce the budget deficit. Although how the funding is spent varies between UK nations, what remains of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL provision in England has been marketized in a similar way to employment support, with funding tied to accreditation, skewing provision in favour of the already advantaged who can most reliably contribute to achievement targets (Bolton & Foster, 2018; Deyes & Snelson, 2016; NATECLA, 2016; NIACE, 2012).

Many studies into the acquisition of literacy by adults with English as an additional language (e.g. Bigelow & Vinogradov, 2011; Bigelow & Watson, 2011;

Ollerhead, 2016; Young-Scholten, 2013) stress the length of time needed for low educated adult learners to acquire the mechanics of reading and writing, and furthermore, familiarisation with classroom education practices. While the (still unfinalised) Draft ESOL Strategy for England (NATECLA, 2016) clearly identified the need for pre-entry language courses for adults with emerging literacy, a group that NIACE (2012, p. 7) identified as among the most disadvantaged by the 2011 funding cuts, many migrants in need of such classes rely on the third sector, which has grown by 71% since 2000 and suffers from significant underinvestment (Calò et al., 2021).

2. 4 Migrants and Employability

Learning to apply for a job successfully is not a straightforward matter of learning new skills, or trying harder. There is a body of research that shows why a skills-based approach to employability is inadequate, and more so for a migrant new to a host culture. These can broadly be categorised into the following mutually influential issues: the vagueness of the concept of employability; the unclear role of language in employability; and the content of employability courses targeted at migrants.

The Concept of “Employability”

Employability can be viewed as an individual responsibility (e.g. Fugate et al., 2004) or in interaction with the socio-economic environment (Green, 2017; Green et al., 2013; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). The OECD report “Good jobs for all” (Beyeler, 2018) makes recommendations that address both these aspects of employability, but individual responsibility for employment, as explained earlier, is the approach emphasised by the DWP’s work activation policies.

Williams et al. (2016) conducted a systematic literature review of individual employability frameworks and identified 88 components contributing to 16 conceptualisations, from which they extrapolated three interactive and overarching dimensions. The first of these is “capital”, derived from Bourdieu’s (1986) social and cultural capital, with the addition of another concept, “psychological capital” (p. 890), which refers to individual attitude and affect in relation to motivation. The second is “career management” (p. 892), which is a combination of individual career identity and how effectively the match between the offer and the candidate’s identity is signalled through the recruitment process. The final dimension is “context” (p. 896), such as labour market integration, age, health and status. Any combination of these may be used

to evaluate an individual's employability.

Unclear Role of Language in Employability

Although speaking the host country language is highly desired by jobseekers and employers alike, research from different disciplines and countries disagrees on the extent to which language competence enhances employability: Del Percio (2018) found that in practice, perceptions of language competence, as with employability itself, are highly individual and it does not necessarily help or hinder the move into employment. In contrast, Gazzola (2017) found that better language proficiency increased migrants' tendency towards being in employment. Hebbani and Preece (2015) found that only oral competence increased likelihood of transitioning to any kind of employment among refugees in Australia, noting that other studies did not differentiate between oral or written proficiency. Other research shows that language courses offered to enhance employability often fail to do so (Allan, 2013; Del Percio, 2018; Flubacher et al., 2017). Regardless of the lack of evidence for the precise role played by language competence, there is a consensus that it is important and it is frequently cited as key to employability. This is unarguably the case for those managing online job searches through the GOV.uk portal. We will return to the notion of language competence in Chapter 3, but let us next examine how language competence is used as an indicator of employability.

Flubacher et al. (2017) studied how a Swiss unemployment agency made decisions about the allocations of places on language courses to individual jobseekers. They found that perceptions of linguistic competence for employability were highly varied. Employment service staff showed a tendency to allocate resources more readily to highly qualified jobseekers' language development, and investment in non-professionals' language development was less common. Instead, this group were directed towards their personal social networks for work, which pushed them further to the margins of employment. Staff made decisions under pressure of time, and according to prescribed procedures and processes, including the categorisation of jobseekers according to language competence, on which basis funding was perversely allocated to the already competent. This situation reflected an earlier Swedish study: Mäkitalo & Säljö (2009) found that the neediest jobseekers were placed in a "residual" category because they were potentially in danger of becoming long term unemployed and would therefore reduce the institution's performance targets. Paradoxically, this meant they were not prioritised and therefore were very likely to become severed from the job

market. The clients discussed in the study were all perceived as lacking language or literacy skills and were placed in the residual category because the staff had no idea how to help them, within the constraints of their programmes. In both these studies, street level bureaucrats used language competence to filter clients for “creaming and parking”.

Several interconnected issues emerged from these studies: firstly, there remained a large degree of vagueness about what "language" for employability really might be and why some jobseekers, and not others, were awarded places on language courses, even when they specifically demonstrated the desire and capacity to improve their language. In addition, social networks are undeniably important for all kinds of work, but there seemed to be an overreliance on this for low-skilled jobseekers. Finally, those categorised as most needy, based on their perceived employability profiles, were frequently locked into precarity, for example by their inability to gain access to training which could lead to better employment.

In the UK, the situation is similarly dire, as those who are least “job ready”, i.e. who need help with literacy, language or IT continue to be directed to the voluntary sector, which Crisp (2015) and Calò et al. (2021) both found far too inadequately resourced to address the needs of the most marginalised long-term unemployed, including migrants.

The Content of Employability Courses Targeted at Migrants

Employability support for low educated adults

Finding work is a much longer-term aspiration for adults learning a new language and literacy for the first time. Studying the needs of low educated refugees to New Zealand, Benseman (2014) found participants wanted much more than just job search English; they wanted to be able to manage daily life independently. In his cohort, progress was extremely slow, despite substantial investment and cooperation. Benseman described a necessary process of learning to learn; learning language and literacy; acquiring skills, attitudes and knowledge about the new environment outside the classroom; building confidence and increasing motivation. Bigelow and Watson (2011, p. 464) described this as a series of chasms which must be crossed, with the biggest of all being the transition from “traditional orality to codified literacy to the digitacy of technologized culture”. Not surprisingly, some jobseekers withdraw themselves from employment service support if they feel the help provided does not

meet their needs. Del Percio (2018) found that jobseekers with low Italian expertise were overwhelmed by the literacy demands placed on them by their employability trainers, and this often deterred those with emergent language and/or literacy skills from using the services, further entrenching them in the margins of the informal work sector where they could use social contacts.

Although ESOL in England remains free up to Level 2, for eligible unemployed people in receipt of certain benefits, Bolton and Foster (2018) warn that the concentration of ESOL funding towards Job Centre Plus (the UK government's employment and benefits agency) provision is often problematic, as it can result in courses as short as a few weeks. Furthermore, the criteria for providers are stringent which disincentivises risk. It is therefore unlikely that employability-focused short courses would achieve much impact on migrants' employability, who are beginners in English and literacy, as they would provide scant opportunity for the kind of language and literacy development described by Benseman (2014) or Bigelow and Watson (2011).

Employability Support for Professionals

Many studies found that professional migrants' language and/or employability needs were also unmet, for various reasons. In the UK, the difficulties already highlighted in the short termism and underfunding of services has long resulted in a lack of opportunities for migrants to shape their own career paths or access specialist advice (Gateley, 2014; Marangozov, 2014; Willott & Stevenson, 2013). For example, in a study centred on migrant jobseekers in London, Marangozov (2014) found that personal advisors lacked the knowledge to recognise migrants' foreign qualifications and experience, and would signpost clients onto inappropriate employability courses.

Willott and Stevenson's (2013) UK study of professional qualified refugees grouped jobseekers into four categories between which participants circulated at different points: those willing to take any job; those determined to work on their specialism; those resigned to retraining or using transferable skills; and the completely disillusioned. All groups experienced a range of difficulties and emotions around job-seeking experiences: those prepared to take any work needed help with searching, rights and entitlements, and writing CVs and application forms. Those wishing to work in their professions knew where to look for work, but also needed help with applications, obtaining IELTS certificates, financial support, UK work experience and references.

Those prepared to retrain struggled to move beyond refugee networks and were the least strategic, most unfocused in their job searches; they also experienced the greatest difficulty with applications, especially personal statements. Those who had struggled the most and longest became disillusioned at points, and were seemingly unaware of the usefulness of volunteering, the specifics of the UK job market and how to "market" themselves. Overall, a lack of awareness of application processes and the work culture in the UK held them back, as did a failure to request feedback, the inability to sell themselves or respond to questions about "soft skills", such as teamwork.

Soft skills training itself is not sufficient for professionals' employability and in a Canadian study, Allan (2013) found employability training was used to "commodify" workers as people who "identify with work, as part of a construction of personal growth and self-worth" (Allan, 2013, p. 63). He found that the sole emphasis in employability training on soft skills can even reinforce the myth that language and indeed soft skills deficiencies are the reasons for professional underemployment, rather than structural disadvantages, such as the lack of value attributed to international qualifications and experience (Allan, 2013). What is needed is a bridge between the returning professionals and the professional entry point (Allan, 2013; Willott & Stevenson, 2013). Willott and Stevenson (2013) claim that although the DWP recognised the importance of professional social networks to resolve migrants' underemployment, its policy was ineffective for professionals in sectors such as health or engineering. This policy, aimed at refugees, offered 12 months support into employment but required the jobseeker to take any kind of job and relied on volunteer mentors who were not equipped with specialist knowledge. They concluded that underemployment of highly skilled refugees is a waste of talent that could be addressed by professional organisations independent of employers, stepping up to actively support refugees to reintegrate into their professions. Fritz and Donat (2017), in a study of young migrants in three European cities, make similar conclusions and stress the importance of social and professional networks for creating stability in the lives of migrants, which itself fosters a sense of belonging.

Opportunities to build social networks are one of the most positive outcomes of the UK reliance on third sector for migrant employability services, as they do provide welcome social spaces and serve as information hubs (Calò et al., 2021; Crisp, 2015). Giuliatti et al.'s (2013) comparative study into the use of social networks for employment found no difference in incidence of gaining employment this way between

“white British” participants and migrants; however, the group who tended to rely most on personal contacts for employment were the lower skilled. In a London-based study (Miller et al., 2013), this is also the group who most wanted to improve their long term employment prospects, but could not because of their personal financial situation and difficulties attending language courses, valued as social as well as academic spaces, around working patterns.

In summary, there are many constraints on access to employability support for migrants, from both the migrants’ viewpoint and in terms of political decisions. Firstly, there are the pressures which result from the individual’s situation and affect their motivation, such as the need to find work very quickly, however low paid or precarious; often such work does not require extensive host language competence, especially when working in groups who share languages (Del Percio, 2018; Flubacher et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2013). This is connected to the significant literacy demands placed by jobseekers on employability courses (Del Percio, 2018), compared with what they might really be ready to learn (Benseman, 2014; Bigelow & Watson, 2011) and difficulties with finding a course at the right time, place, level and with relevant content (Allan, 2013; Marangozov, 2014; Miller et al., 2013). Finally, decisions about funding seem to be made on idealised notions of language competence and how it may or may not constitute a worthwhile investment, on a case by case basis (Del Percio, 2018), or at policy level, as in the UK funding situation (Bolton & Foster, 2018). It is extremely difficult to measure active employment policy outcomes in terms of transition to sustained employment, especially when underemployment is factored in. Target setting and sanctions in combination with digital compulsion have been shown to be counterproductive (Green, 2017). In reality, what might be more practically useful, would be to increase support for the development of social networks for long term employability, which could take any form, and would benefit all jobseekers (Fritz & Donat, 2017; Giulietti et al., 2013; Willott & Stevenson, 2013). In addition, there is evidence that both less- and very well-educated migrants need specialised support with the literacy demands of job searches and applications, in understanding how to market themselves through job-seeking texts, and being able to “read” the job market, and it is to these texts that we turn in the next section.

2. 5 Job Seeking Genres and Migrants With EAL

Several studies have been conducted into job-seeking genres, which argue that

they are a subset of marketing genres. A full consideration of genre and discourse appears in Chapter 3, but for now, I define genre as a particular repertoire of ways of interacting, not limited to reading and writing, used in specific areas of activity (e.g. Fairclough, 2003; Halliday, 2014; Martin, 2009), in this case, in recruitment. Bhatia (1993, 2004) argues that generic advertising features are very prominent in recruitment genres, in part because of their proximity to information genres. This is true of advertisements and applications and is reflected in Del Percio (2018) and Allan's (2013) findings that marketing discourses formed, rather inadequately, the sole basis of employability training for migrant jobseekers in their studies.

Łacka-Badura (2013, 2015) describes the roles of recruiters and jobseekers as sellers and buyers in a market. She investigated a corpus of online job adverts from major UK newspapers and recruitment platforms, and using genre analysis, found that job advertisements strongly resemble marketing advertisements in their move structure and register, serving not only to market jobs to candidates, but also as a means for companies to market their own brands. In a later study, Bhatia explored the use of templates and "boilerplates" (2016, p. 48), in respect of company branding in press releases, in a public relations company. "Boilerplate" is text from a client that is included in a template, with minimal alteration. Bhatia suggested that templates provided the means of controlling branding and also facilitated the readership's recognition of the author and ability to locate specific information when the press release was published. Branding, as Łacka-Badura (2013, 2015) found, is a key function of recruitment, and template and boiler plate texts can therefore be expected to be extremely prevalent in recruitment.

Łacka-Badura (2013, 2015) found that the typical moves in a job advert are: 1) announcing the vacancy; 2) providing information about the organisation; 3) describing the candidate specifications and responsibilities of the role; 4) offering benefits; and 5) soliciting an application and providing instructions (Łacka-Badura, 2015, p. 93). The dual functions of persuading the candidate to apply and marketing the brand were accomplished in all of these moves, in a casual conversational register that evoked a sense of "familiarity and solidarity" (Łacka-Badura, 2013, p. 101) between potential applicants and employers.

In Del Percio's (2018) study, the less expert Italian speakers, who were deterred from using the service, were especially taxed by learning how to "read" the jobs market.

This involved familiarising themselves with the structure, technical terminology and content of job advertisements. They were expected to learn to differentiate between the seriousness of job offers, as well as understand specific tasks and operations and identify the characteristics, skills and qualifications for each kind of job. Del Percio concluded that such complex literacy demands required the jobseeker to be an “entrepreneur of the self” (2018, p. 246). Yet the evidence discussed previously, and what follows, suggests that not only low skilled migrant jobseekers, but also professionals struggle to become this.

Online mediation has increased the rapidity with which genres can be hybridised and repurposed in new contexts. For example, a set of job advertisements on a recruitment website may range from a photograph of a simple “help wanted” notice in a shop window, with a telephone number, to a formal multi-document application pack and any of these may contain a blend of discourses and media from a range of practices. Łacka-Badura (2013) sees job advertisements as part of an ongoing dialogue, in an intertextual multimodal genre chain, with other job search texts. She found that the main difference between printed and online adverts was that “the dialogic potential reached its peak” (Łacka-Badura, 2013, p. 94) in the latter, through the multiplicity of interactional affordances of hyperlinks, sharing and “apply now” buttons. Genre hybridisation and intertextuality will be discussed in the next chapter.

Turning now to the texts produced by applicants, these are the means through which the “career management” dimension of employability, i.e. the match between the offer and the candidate’s identity, is signalled (Williams et al., 2016, p. 892), yet this is challenging to accomplish. Bhatia (1993) and Scollon et al. (2002) identified cover letters and CVs as simultaneously self-promotional and modest, and emphasised the difficulty of producing such a finely balanced text, especially as there is no consensus on the “right” way of doing it. Bhatia (1993) describes the main function of cover letters as persuasion of an employer of the applicant’s suitability for a vacancy. To do this, the candidate has to establish a positive, favourable and relevant impression of their abilities in relation to job description.

Cover letters include the same functional moves as promotional letters: establishing credentials, introducing candidature, offering incentives, enclosing documents, soliciting response, using pressure tactics and ending politely (Bhatia, 1993, pp. 63–67). Bhatia divides “establishing credentials” and “introducing candidature” into

three parts: offering the candidature; essential detailing of the candidature; and indicating the value of the candidature. These involve representing an ideal candidate identity, which Bhatia calls a "relevant self" (1993, p. 66), by selectively representing some aspects of the self while concealing others.

Establishing a credible potential working relationship is one of the most difficult aspects of the cover letter genre, not least because of the cultural influence on the generic ways this is accomplished. Typically in northern European and North American cultures, it is done through candidate "self-appraisal". As with other types of promotional letters, this means providing an "adequately relevant, positive and credible description of the product or service and a good indication of its potential value to its intended audience" (Bhatia, 1989 in 1993, p. 66). Bhatia (1993) stresses the mutually reinforcing nature of CVs and covering letters, stating that a CV is meant as documentary evidence for claims made in a covering letter and cannot replace it. The purpose of the CV is to demonstrate the candidate's relevance to the position and it must contain self-appraisal, no matter if the "real self" is barely represented in the "relevant self". It is the successful portrayal of the "relevant self" that is more important in job applications and "self-appraisal is its most important feature" (Bhatia 1993, p. 74).

As an example of sociocultural differences, Bhatia (1989 in Bhatia 1993) found that candidates in South Asia did not engage in self-appraisal and therefore did not provide clear persuasion for the reader, but rather, based their appropriacy on emotional appeals. Sometimes they used application letters simply to explain the attachment of a CV, over-relying on their documents to speak for themselves. In other cases, he noted a tendency towards "self-glorification", i.e. making baseless claims rather than demonstrating aptitude through evidence of experience or qualifications. Such applicants also often employed flattery of the potential employer or organisation to an extreme degree, or "self-degradation" (1993, p. 72), possibly to highlight their future ambitions vis à vis their current situations. These strategies conform to the move of pressure tactics, but not to the expectations of how the move should be realised in the European or North American sociohistorical context.

Lipovsky (2013) provides examples of how writers achieve a finely balanced modestly self-promotional CV through linguistic devices. In a study of successful CVs in France, she found that they hinted at other genres, through the inclusion of additional

information. What the candidates included about themselves was not always directly relevant to the job, yet the information about these positive qualities contributed to the overall value of the applicant. The writers in Lipovsky's (2013) study included indirectly relevant content that expressed their judgement, in relation to assessing behaviour; and appreciation, in relation to evaluating a product or performance. However, they did not directly express affect. Lipovsky argues that judgment and appreciation are both more institutional in orientation, rather than personal, unlike affect, and she found that this helped to position the writers as distant and objective commentators on their lives. This is not to say that affect was not present, but that it was invoked in the reader by the inclusion of extra information in relation to judgements and appreciations, for example through attitudinal lexis: "fluent English speaker", worked for a "major distributor", "BA with distinction at a British University" (Lipovsky, 2013, p. 320).

Templates for CVs and cover letters are widely available, bundled together with office software, or on recruitment websites or accessed via a search. In Del Percio's (2018) Italian study into a migrant employability course, job coaches used templates provided by the EU, designed to enhance migrants' transnational employability. The templates were accompanied by genre and discourse suggestions, to enable migrants to "entextualise" themselves appropriately as "bundles of skills" (p. 248). Del Percio argues that the CV functioned as "a hypertext that points to each element in a 'bundle of skills' and creates the conditions for reselling the bundle on a given labour market" (p. 249), something which, although voluntary, and realistically, in the marketplace of work, unavoidable, nevertheless positioned jobseekers as commodities. Furthermore, he found that the linguistic ways in which the CV illustrated the commodifiable worker emphasised "styling" (p. 255), which he describes as simply learning to do something in an accepted way. Overall, the employability courses did little to provide the much promised "upskilling" of migrant jobseekers, with the attendant acquisition of practical and cognitive knowledge that implies. In the same study, the insistent belief in the CV as the only vehicle for promoting a professional self also contributed to the marginalisation of those with less developed Italian proficiency, as those jobseekers struggled to independently construct the right kind of self. Even when the jobseeker's Italian was very good, job coaches laboured to collaboratively produce an appropriate CV. This was partly because of disagreements about the nature of work and what

constituted employment, as opposed to perhaps just “lending a hand” in a family business. Working out how to select from a nonlinear employment trajectory to produce a coherent employment narrative was also difficult and seemed to contradict the requirement to show a personal discourse of flexibility. Apparently, only certain kinds of flexibility were valued.

Selection and sequencing of information also plays an important role in personal statements: Brown and Barton (2004) found that this section of the application form was the only place where the candidate could illustrate “character in action” (2004, p. 1). They argued that the most effective way of doing this was through narratives, which they regarded as autobiographical stories that enable access to institutions and opportunities. They suggest that narrative is effective because of its easily comprehensible structure (Swales et al., 2004), important to consider in the context of a potential recruiter reading numerous applications from very similarly educated or experienced candidates.

2. 6 Summary of Policy Background

So far, this literature review has established that in the UK, government policy leaves job-seeking support for migrants mainly to the underfunded third sector. Similarly the digital strategy has not been accompanied by a coherent accessible programme of adult IT education, to assist the 35% of employment benefit claimants who need this to develop their self-efficacy in managing online job applications.

The third sector and short funded courses may also lack the capacity to help low educated non expert speakers of English acquire the language and literacy they need for employment. Furthermore, non-expert speakers of English may be regarded by employability providers as unemployable because of the way that language and literacy competence is used as a proxy for the ability to integrate quickly into the jobs market. Such jobseekers may then be forced to rely on existing social networks or the third sector, thus entrenching their tendency to access the least secure kinds of employment, if any. The third sector’s reliance on volunteers who frequently lack specialist knowledge of professional discourses means it can often only provide very generic advice to well-educated jobseekers, and this group also suffers underemployment.

The above section on job-seeking genres clearly demonstrates the importance of selling oneself to employers, and the complex literacy demands this makes on

applicants and those who support them. A picture emerges of online recruitment texts in complex relations with one another, organised around a marketplace of jobseekers and recruiters. The texts are goal focused, the stakes are high, and there seem to be frictions in the collaborative production of texts that are rooted in differing orientations to the job market. The next chapter considers a theoretical framework for conceptualising literacy, which foregrounds the literacy demands alluded to here, by considering the relations between texts and between the individuals and groups using those texts.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Frameworks for Literacy, Discourse and Genre

Several ideas contribute to understanding an online job application as a set of digitally mediated social practices which involve literacy. I will begin with a social model of literacy, outlining the six propositions of new literacy studies and defining key terms. This is followed by a section on discourse, in which I outline an understanding of discourse and the relations between discourse and identity. This section also includes the concept of language as a discourse repertoire. The final section, Text and Genre, introduces a definition of text and a model of genre for this study, and develops the ideas of genre systems, genre stability and the effects of online mediation on genre.

3. 1 A Social Model of Literacy

A popular “taken for granted” model of literacy, often adopted by education policy makers, assumes it refers to a discrete set of autonomous decoding skills, concerned with reading and writing, and often seen as completely independent of context (Barton, 2009; Ivanič, 2009; Street, 2001). As evinced in the section on UK government adult literacy policy, this “skills” view of literacy does not take account of people’s needs or wants, connected with the world in which their literacy aims are directed. It does not account for the roles literacy plays in people’s lives, aside from, perhaps, an undefined relation to social mobility. Research into literacy as social practice has established the importance of an alternative approach, grounded in people's literacy life worlds: one such approach is “new literacy studies” (NLS) (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 2001). NLS contrasts an autonomous view of literacy with one that works on two principles: that literacies are social and language is dialogic (Street, 2001), which are derived in part from the work of Bakhtin (1935/1994) and Vološinov (1929/1994).

The Bakhtinian school conceptualises language as a way of communicating consciousness. Language, in the view of Vološinov (1929/1994), is comprised at its base level of signs, which represent ideas. Signs can be words, colours, images, sounds or physical objects. However, in being used to communicate, they represent more than just their physical selves, they also signify meaning. In this way, semiosis is fundamentally intertwined with ideology (in its simplest definition as “thought”) which, according to Vološinov (1929/1994), requires a dialogue for meaning making. This is

why semiotic signs, including written words, become sites of ideological struggle, as meaning is inherently socially constructed and not simply the work of the author. Consequently, literacy cannot be "autonomous" but is always ideological (Street, 2001, p. 17) and can be regarded as a kind of social practice, often involving consequences. Street (2001) argues that the danger of accepting an autonomous model of literacy is that it becomes the only model, the universal standard, which leaves no room for questioning of ideological underpinnings, as choices about and workings of literacy are thus obscured.

By foregrounding literacy as practice, NLS can enable critique of the individual local experience, in respect of what is imposed from a distance, as it is able to address the intersections of local and bureaucratic practices (Gee, 2000). It enables the examination of what people are doing with literacy in their everyday lives, dispelling the myth of texts as neutral artefacts and literacy skills as autonomous from ways of being and knowing. NLS can be used to identify practices, by scrutinising situation, talk, actions, purposes, places, times, people and also culturally recognisable behaviour, often including the texts themselves. By looking simultaneously beyond and inside the text (Tusting et al., 2000), NLS can be used to interrogate change and examine power structures.

3. 2 Propositions for NLS and Key Terms

Barton and Hamilton (2000) note six propositions for literacy as social practice: practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others; social practices can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts; there are different literacies associated with different domains of life; literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and purposes; literacy practices are historically situated; literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making (p. 8).

According to NLS, literacy is socially embedded and helps to structure social events. The focus in NLS is on people and their interaction with texts in specific social contexts. The units of analysis and other key terms used in NLS: "literacy practices", "events", "domains", and "texts", vary in interpretation, and it is probably impossible to arrive at a definitive explanation that would be specific enough for all contexts of study. Nevertheless, they represent useful concepts. In the next sections, I will clarify my

understanding of the terms just mentioned, and consider the propositions of NLS in more detail.

Literacy Events

According to NLS, social practices can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts, and at its simplest, an “event” is an occasion in which literacy is used (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Yet there are difficulties in delineating literacy events. Barton (2009) refers to “micro and macro events” and notes how these are “nested” inside each other, and sequenced in entrainments across different contexts (p. 40). Similarly, Baynham and Prinsloo (2009, p. 11) contend an event implies a "distinct and structured set of activities" around which, in reality, it is difficult to draw boundaries. They argue that in addition, local small scale literacy activities are characteristic of our "text saturated world" (p. 12) and these could well be overlooked as events, as they are often small links in chains of interaction.

Returning to the principle that practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others, it seems that a definition of a particular event is dependent on whose viewpoint is adopted. Street maintains it is not enough to just observe, researchers have to talk and find out about experience, knowledge and other activities (i.e. use ethnographic methods):

We have to start talking to people, listening to them and linking their immediate experience out to other things they do as well....because what might give meaning to this event may actually be something that is not in the first place thought of in terms of literacy (Street, 2001, p. 11).

In applying for a job, an event might be logging into a recruitment account, or reading a job advertisement, or writing an email, or it might be all of these. It might even be providing evidence of job-seeking through a written record, that constitutes the event. There may be simultaneous unrelated or branching literacy events taking place, such as texting a friend, which would pass unnoticed, but may form some of the unseen work without which the main event would not happen. “Event”, for me, could broadly equate to a conscious goal that participants might voice, if asked, “What are you doing?”, although the act of asking could foreground the event which might have been

unconscious otherwise. I will return to the notion of conscious goals in the section on activity theory but want simply to clarify that literacy events are not necessarily simple, bounded and identifiable.

Domains

Practices are socially situated within domains, however, the term “domain”, has no prespecified boundaries, nor does it need to be located in physical space. The meaning can be as general as discussing the characteristics of being online in terms of “public or private domains” (Domingo et al., 2015, p. 260), or could mean an area of everyday life, e.g. “home domain” (Yamada Rice, 2015, p. 318), or area of knowledge, “social innovation design domain” (Lemke & Van Helden, 2015, p. 327), and so on. It is more precise, then, to say that domains relate to practices and social relations, some of which have been historically spatialised, but no longer necessarily remain so. They can be thought of as systems of social relations and attendant practices within a sphere of activity, e.g. home, work, school, study. This is a concept used in activity theory, to which I will return in Chapter 4.

Barton (2009) exemplifies how literacy practices vary between domains by contrasting a workplace domain, where writing practices such as using boilerplates and templates prevail, with academia, which forbids the unattributed copying and pasting normal in many workplaces, regarding this as plagiarism. Furthermore Baynham (1995) indicates how literacy practices within domains may differ between languages and cultures. He argues for a social practice view of language, that acknowledges the social or discursive elements, beyond lexis, grammar and phonology, that must be mastered in the transition from one language to another. The NLS view of literacy as historically situated argues that context is not only about words, but includes emotions, perceptions and attitudes, which require knowledge of both past and present. By implication, then, understanding a text in an unfamiliar domain requires sociocultural knowledge, as Baynham (1995) proposes.

Social relations between actors in domains affect the norms of what and how messages are communicated, in other words, what literacy practices are favoured, and this is the focus of the next section, which considers the meaning and scale of “literacy practice”.

Literacy Practices

Barton and Hamilton (2000) emphasise that “literacy practice” does not mean learning to do something by repetition, nor does it refer to common or typical activities. NLS describes “practices” as the culturally recognisable ways in which people use literacy in their daily lives, including their internal feelings about, as well as outwardly observable ways of doing things with texts (Maybin, 2000). Nor are literacy practices just contained in what individuals do, but refer to socially accepted ways of doing things: they cross the boundary between the social and the individual. Because of the fundamentally social nature of their historicity, literacy practices reside in relations between people, and according to Street (2001), cannot be predicted in any given event.

Barton (2009) describes how literacy practices relate to the interpretation or production of the texts required by the literacy events; it is concerned with who does what, using what store of cultural knowledge. The NLS definition of “practice” implies a knowledge of cultural norms, which can be transferred from one situation to another similar one. Thus, different literacy practices are associated with different social contexts, or domains of life.

Literacy practices can be seen to operate on different scales, on the smaller scale of what people are doing in an event, and the broader scale of how the practices in that event are influenced at a distance by the practices of institutions or organisations. Smaller and larger scale practices are the results of social processes that are historically formed. As mentioned above, this sociohistorical formation of practices is important for considering what might be the vital contextual knowledge within specific domains, and how it is acquired in the process of acculturation. Barton and Hamilton assert the historically situated nature of practices means they “...cannot wholly be contained in observable activities and tasks” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8) because they reside partly internally, in individual feelings, beliefs and attitudes towards and about literacy, and also partly in social processes during which “shared cognitions represented in ideologies and social identities” are formed (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8). An NLS view of “practice” therefore connects observable literacy events (which may be defined by the researcher during analysis) with internal, socially formed and culturally recognisable beliefs about, and ways of using, literacy in different contexts. It is because literacy practices themselves may not be observable, that Street (2001) maintains these need to be explored through questioning of individuals.

The proposition that literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals is highlighted by Tusting et al. (2000), who provide two ways of thinking about literacy practices: firstly, the ethnographic details which go beyond the text itself, for example of situation, talk, actions, purposes, places, times, or people; and secondly, practice as culturally recognisable behaviours, that often includes the texts themselves. The latter are referred to as “textual practices”, which are defined as “the culturally recognisable patterns for constructing texts” (Tusting et al., 2000, p. 210). Going beyond the text allows it to be seen as a mediator of information between individuals and external agencies. Textual practices highlight the ways in which texts are brought to life, for a specific purpose, through design and interpretation, by both readers and writers. The ways in which textual practices signal goals and social relations will be considered further in Genre.

The dynamism of literacy practices is another proposition of NLS. Literacies continue to grow and incorporate technological changes, as does literacies research, acknowledging the intertwining of modes, such as moving image and writing, and the compression and complexities of time and space that technological advances so easily afford (Barton, 2009; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009; Cazden et al., 1996; Gillen, 2015; Jones, 2015; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Lotherington & Jenson, 2011).

Bloome and Greene (2015) provide a definition of practices as holistic, multimodal, real-time, interactive and unique, that are always adapted in situ, and always materially embodied through some sort of semiotic means. They emphasise how literacy practices emerge as an event unfolds:

“Literacy practices, therefore, are realized in literacy events, as the actual embodiment, engagement, and interaction among people in real time as they make their everyday lives within institutional, social, cultural, and economic contexts” (Bloome & Greene, 2015, pp. 20–21).

The expedient adoption and adaptation of practices described here seems to conceptualise literacy practices as directly observable. In scale, Bloome and Greene’s idea of literacy practices here is closely aligned to the idea of “nexus of practice” (R. Scollon, 2001b), to which I will return in Chapter 4.

Street (2012) argues that the relations between local and global practices are the

focus of NLS; however, Baynham and Prinsloo (2009) indicate this switching of attention may cause some variation of the scale in which “literacy practice” can be located. They conclude that “practice” mainly occupies an intermediate level “with some slippage” (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009, p. 6). “Slippage” almost sounds accidental, but alternating attention inside and outside texts can avoid an overly local focus on practices, that might neglect the influences of broader institutional practices.

By contrast, Ivanič (2009) contends that the analytical term “practice” is attempting to do too much work in NLS. She argues for a more precise definition of “practice”, that does not overlap so much with either texts or events. She prefers to adopt Scollon's term “nexus of practice” (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 106) to describe what takes place in events, and use Scollon's more limited definition of practice as “narrowly defined, concrete and specific”(R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 148) to refer to the “micro practices” which are the elements of larger practices. She argues that Scollon's terminology affords greater precision for analysing lower level “micro practices”, avoids the potential oversimplification wrought by terminology such as “skill set”, and so can answer specifically what elements of a practice might be transferable to another domain. From the viewpoint of this study, identifying micro practices may help to clarify not just what is transferable, but what the elements of practice are in the domain of job-seeking. I will return to analytical levels of practice in Chapter 4.

To summarise terminology about literacy practices, then, I will use “textual practices” (Tusting et al., 2000) to refer to practices related to written texts, which necessarily have concerns with genre conventions. To refer to larger scale practices in events, this study uses “nexus of practices” and for constituent parts of a nexus of practices, it uses Scollon's narrow understanding of “practice”, as suggested by Ivanič.

Languages as social practices

It is worth clarifying languages terminology, from a social practice perspective, as this study is concerned with migrants who are acquiring English as adults. What constitutes a “native speaker of English”, or whose varieties of English are considered “native”, are hard to define, as are such terms as “first” and “second” language, as well as “mother tongue”, which do not encompass the realities of societies where multiple languages are in use alongside one another and also blended together in conversation (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, 2015). Nevertheless, labelling language familiarity enables the language elements of those practices to be identified and Blommaert and

Rampton (2011) suggest the following terms: “expert language” refers to a language in which the user identifies as proficient in one or many domains of life. “Heritage language” recognises that people may inherit a language, but removes the territorial aspect associated with “native” language. It also recognises language shift, the process in which old languages are replaced over generations, which may be the result of language policies or migration. “Additional language” refers to languages acquired with varying degrees of proficiency, in recognition that there is a continuum from emerging to fluent competence, all of which is useful.

3.3 Discourse

Constructing a theory of how discourse operates in relation to both textual practices and nexus of practices is important for understanding how discourse(s) can permeate society through texts and be agentive of social change. In the following section, I will consider two views of discourse, firstly from Fairclough and secondly, from Gee, that explain how discourse works simultaneously at micro and macro levels, being a matter of individual choices located within a macro level of discourse constrained by social expectations. This will be followed by a section on language as discourse repertoires.

Discourse and Discourses

Fairclough (2003, 2012) defines “discourses” as “ways of representing aspects of the world”, common and relatively stable attitudes, communicated via language or semiosis, which affect social behaviours (2003, p. 124). His definition of discourse has three aspects. The first is “action”: acting and interacting through speaking, writing and other modes, we use different genres to interact with others, according to accepted social practices. The second aspect is “representation” which operates on two levels: differing representations of reality, or collective ways of thinking are represented in large scale “discourses” (countable). Large scale discourses are instantiated through language in use, or “discourse” (uncountable). The third aspect is identity: individual semiotic representation of discourse, i.e. in choices about actions, representation and identities, are regulated by larger scale recognisable socially patterned “discourses”. Fairclough calls this use of certain discourses along with certain behaviours “style” (2003, p. 26).

Networks of practices can be viewed through what Fairclough terms “the order

of discourse” (2000, 2003):

An order of discourse is a network of social practices in its language aspect. The elements of orders of discourse are not things like nouns and sentences (elements of linguistic structures), but discourses, genres and styles ... These elements select certain possibilities defined by languages and exclude others— they control linguistic variability for particular areas of social life. So orders of discourse can be seen as the social organization and control of linguistic variation (Fairclough, 2003, p. 24).

The order of discourse thus describes the ways that language or other semiotic modes are organised and controlled by social norms, and also themselves work to organise and control the same: ideas influenced by Halliday’s theory of language as a social semiotic system, developed from the 1960s onwards (Halliday, 1989, 2014; Martin, 2016). The order of discourse is a particular assemblage of genres, discourses and styles, within a certain system, used within a specific network of social practices, for example in an institution such as the Department of Work and Pensions. Genres, discourses and styles are interdependent. Fairclough describes the order of discourse as the “semiotic constitution” of a network of practice (2012, pp. 11–12), and he uses “semiosis” to emphasise that language is only one of the modes of discourse through which larger discourses can be materialised. Semiosis concerns how actions, representations and identities are constituted (Fairclough, 2012, p. 12).

Gee’s (1989, 2011) definitions of discourse are similar to Fairclough’s: he distinguishes “Big ‘D’”, the collective representations of the world, from “little ‘d’”:
how these are instantiated: "Little ‘d’ is language in use or connected stretches of language that make sense like conversations, stories, reports..."(Gee, 2011, p. 151). He expands on Fairclough’s notion of identity: “In socially situated language use, one must simultaneously say the ‘right’ thing, do the ‘right’ thing and in such saying and doing also express the ‘right’ beliefs, values and attitudes” (Gee, 2011, p. 148). This is what Gee refers to as “Big D”. Gee examines how two job interviewees expressing beliefs, values and attitudes in their answers, are able, to varying degrees, to conform to the employer’s discourse of being *the right candidate*. This ability to express the right values, or attitudes, is strongly dependent on discourse knowledge, which may well significantly disadvantage a newly arrived migrant jobseeker without relevant social

ties.

Gee includes the use of material resources in his definition of “Big ‘D’”: “We need to be appropriately in synch with various objects, tools, places, technologies and other people” (Gee, 2011, p. 152). This synchronicity between people and material resources is also particularly salient when applying for jobs online under welfare conditionality and “digital compulsion” more broadly, a condition which since 2020 has become more or less universal. Thus, discourses of identity are about “who you are, what you do and how you do it” and about all of these being necessary for the recognition of that identity. According to Gee (2011), identity, being constituted through action, is never fixed, but negotiated continually through social practices and shared histories, in an infinite process of becoming. In terms of career identities, these may then only be considered valid when in employment; being unemployed, or forced to change field of employment may cause a questioning of identity.

Primary and Secondary Discourses

Gee categorises discourses into primary and secondary, as a way of explaining how individuals gradually expand their discourse knowledge. Primary discourses are acquired in early years amongst intimates, and are “the basic culturally distinctive ways of being an ‘everyday person’ - that is a non specialised and non professional person” (Gee, 2011, p. 153). “Secondary” discourses are acquired in public domains, as social life extends to new activities. Gee (1989) divides secondary discourses into dominant and non-dominant types. Dominant discourses bring social and material advantage. Non dominant discourses produce “solidarity with a particular social network” (Gee, 1989, p. 8) but without material advantage. Taking on a new discourse does not mean substituting it for an old one, but rather, being able to use it with complete flexibility. Multiple discourses and identities can be assumed, depending on situation. Gee (2011) actually defines literacy through primary and secondary discourses: literacies are plural because discourses are plural, and literacy is “mastery of a secondary Discourse” (p. 173). Mastery can only be achieved through a combination of both acquisition and learning. Learning applied to a partly acquired discourse allows the development of meta discourses, which enable critique and counter discourse. Learning alone may only lead to superficial reproduction rather than a critical literacy that allows the user to freely borrow from and repurpose other discourses, as will be discussed in Genre. Mastery of more powerful discourses bestows more powerful kinds of literacy. If this

notion of mastery is applied to synchronicity between people and material resources, Gee's position seems to be closely aligned with Scollon (R. Scollon, 2001b), as we will see in Chapter 4.

Languages as Discourse Repertoires

Blommaert and Rampton (2011, p. 4) describe the rise in sociolinguistic research of the term “linguistic repertoire”, to more accurately reflect the ways linguistic resources develop over lifetimes. Subsequently, various terms have emerged to describe this phenomenon, such as “translanguaging” (e.g. Conteh, 2018; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Garcia et al., 2012), and “plurilingualism” (Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2012). Such terms vary slightly in emphasis but commonly view language as one system, socially constructed into separate linguistic codes (Pennycook, 2017). Canagarajah and Liyanage (2012) use the definition of plurilingualism in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: “...to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural action, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures” (in Canagarajah & Liyanage, 2012, p. 49). They note that varying degrees of proficiency are valued in plurilingualism: being able to use language for a distinct purpose counts as competence, and goes hand in hand with intercultural competence. The repertoire of languages is seen as valuable, in contributing to overall communicative competence.

The choice between a conceptualisation of languages as repertoires from which meanings are “intersubjectively constructed”, or languages as “multiple but compartmentalised” (Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2012, p. 50), is related to language ideology. According to Cook and Simpson (2012), in UK public domains, a monolingual ideology prevails. As an example, they argue that the prominence of language in the UK Citizenship agenda plays into a belief that by not speaking English well enough, migrants somehow lack the linguistic resources necessary for integration into the UK and especially, that: “...only if they learn English will they increase their opportunities for work, education and social mobility” (Cook & Simpson, 2012 p. 126). A similar conclusion has been made about migrants' competence in the host country languages in Canada (Allan, 2013) and Italy (Del Percio, 2018). Del Percio (2018) states: “... a candidate's capacity to speak the language is perceived by the employers as a sign of social integration and adaptability, and as an indication of the candidate's

general aptitude to follow specific rules and norms” (Del Percio, 2018, p. 256). Evidence of how language competence is used, somewhat paradoxically, as a proxy for individual employability training investment decisions, and employment training policies, was discussed in Chapter 2. Monolingual ideologies ignore the reality of how people, using their existing linguistic repertoires, are integrated into diverse neighbourhoods, where many workplaces and communities thrive through plurilingual practices (e.g. Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Nevertheless, despite compelling evidence of how people actually use all their linguistic resources to live their full repertoire of identities, the examples above demonstrate that the prevailing monolingual ideology in the UK is likely to require a migrant job applicant to somehow demonstrate monolingual English language competence framed in socially acceptable ways, for example in the job-seeking genres discussed in Chapter 2.

Language as repertoire emphasises the acquisition of new elements of language for express purposes, alongside broader discourses, and relates back to Baynham’s (1995) underscoring of the importance of sociocultural and linguistic knowledge necessary when crossing cultures but not domains. Repertoires are acquired over a lifetime of interaction in specific areas of activity (Duff, 2008; Duff & Talmy, 2011; Piller, 2011, p. 201; Roberts, 2010, p. 201). Duff and Talmy (2011) conceptualise the acquisition of work-related linguistic repertoires as the learning of “interactional or sociolinguistic routines ... that become part of language learners’ and users’ communicative repertoires” (p. 96) and which encompass culture, social knowledge, ideologies, epistemologies, identities and subjectivities, and affect. These may be explicit or implicit, acquired formally and through casual conversation with family or friends (Duff, 2008; Roberts, 2010). Repertoires are acquired through relations and experiences, rather than in specific places, but the physicality of place contributes its own affordances or limitations (Hunter, 2012). All of these points are important to bear in mind for the development of the language repertoire for the “career management” of a migrant jobseeker, perhaps directed to inappropriate employability courses or reliant on narrow social networks.

Emphasising the social construction of work identity, Roberts (2010) identified three aspects to workplace discourse: corporate, professional and social or personal discourses, all of which serve in the collaborative achievement of a work or career identity. Corporate socialisation is based on training packages derived from and

constitutive of western management models, and as such, are hegemonic discourses which can be applied in any large institution. Examples of these are the discourses of the eminently commodifiable ideal worker citizen (Allan, 2013; Del Percio, 2018; Gee & Lankshear, 1995) who “identify with work as part of a construction of personal growth and self-worth” (Allan, 2013, p. 63). Roberts (2010) described professional socialisation as metacommunication, demonstrated in particular ways of talking about work in certain professions, and personal discourses as the use of a communicative repertoire appropriate to carrying out a role. She emphasises that pragmatic aspects of language predominate in these personal repertoires, for example, use of humour or affect. The studies summarised in Chapter 2 (e.g. Del Percio, 2018) demonstrate the challenges for job coaches and migrants with EAL to familiarise themselves with corporate and professional discourses and to satisfactorily reproduce them, without direct access to professional networks. What is important for this study, is to consider what affordances exist, in terms of beginning to acquire a particular discourse repertoire, as participants are in the process of applying for work.

The above discussion views discourse as operating at different levels: at textual level, as semiotic meaning making and on a broad scale, as collectively recognisable ways of thinking, being and doing. Knowledge of discourses is multiple, mediated through actions, tools, talk and text, and socially acquired, as part of a repertoire of multiple discourses and identities, related to different social systems which vary in proximity to a “primary” discourse. Having mastery of certain discourses is important for identity, social or professional acceptance and navigating one’s way along cultural pathways towards private goals that are always situated within the social world, yet the extent to which discourses are mastered may be a matter of both individual choice and external constraints. Perceptions of mastery also depend on the ideological viewpoint of those at the centre of a particular activity system, strongly implicating power relations in identity formation. Language as a repertoire of contingent sociolinguistic practices within particular activity systems offers recognition of how adult migrant jobseekers’ language repertoires may develop.

Genre knowledge is a vital component of participation in literacy practices, as we have seen in the section on job-seeking genres, which demands of jobseekers their entextualisation as ideal candidates. The next section begins with a definition of text, and provides an overview of how genres are constructed, how they are clustered

together into genre systems to accomplish work in institutional activity systems, and how genres work as interdiscursive hybrids on the move.

3.4 Text and Genre

The theories discussed so far have in common a “multiliteracies” (Cazden et al., 1996) approach to literacy, one that sees literacies as plural and multimodal and that therefore does not confine the definition of a text to words and sentences. Instead, a definition such as Halliday’s (2014), who defines a text as a “semantic unit, it is the basic unit of the semantic process” (p. 265), orients the concept towards the social emergent co-construction of meaning and this is the definition of text I will be using in this study. The “semantic process” emphasises that users of a text may only realise its meaning by drawing on shared “text external” (Bhatia, 2010, p. 35) references. Halliday (2014) explains this need for a text to be read correctly as a need to understand all the contextual elements of the situation. A situation broadly means everything in the social context within which the text is being used, and in this respect, a text is intertextual and interdiscursive: it rests on some prior historical knowledge and is future oriented, towards its recipient and its communicative purpose. Context, according to Halliday, is a “semiotic structure” (Halliday, 2014, p. 265); it is what configures the meaning making possibilities and thus ensures the achievement of its communicative purpose.

Regardless of modes, the text is composed; it is not a random assortment of signs. Producing a coherent text can be seen as a process of design (Cazden et al., 1996), “mid-way between content and expression” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2011, p. 4) a matter of choosing “what is meant” from the available options, to produce “actualised meaning potential” (Halliday, 2014, p. 265). A successful composer of a text should be able to draw upon and manipulate available “designs” for private intentions, without transgressing from accepted discourses (Bhatia, 2016; Cazden et al., 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2011). Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (2011) argue that digital technology has blurred the distinctions between discourse, genres and modes, and provided the tools, and thus the expectation, by foregrounding the question of design, that people will be multiskilled in various modes and can “integrate... the various practices of a group of professionals into one coherent performance” (p. 43) in text production.

To be effective, texts need to appear in routine structures or genres, and so genres can be described as particular repertoires of interacting, not limited to speaking

or writing, in a specific activity system (e.g. Fairclough, 2000, 2003; Gee, 1989, 2011; Halliday, 2014; Martin, 2009, 2016). Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (e.g. Halliday, 1989, 2014; Martin, 2009, 2016) emphasises the functional aspect of genres within society. It describes genre as the ways that texts are organised according to the social goals they are intended to achieve, to manage the flow of information in stages, so that by the end of the interaction “we have ended up ...where we wanted to be” (Martin, 2009, p. 12).

Martin (2009) defines genre thus:

(i) staged: because it usually takes us more than one phase of meaning to work through a genre,

(ii) goal oriented: because unfolding phases are designed to accomplish something and we feel a sense of frustration or incompleteness if we are stopped,

(iii) social: because we undertake genres interactively with others (Martin, 2009, p. 13).

The SFL model of genre (Halliday, 2014; Martin, 2009, 2016) deconstructs the social practice aspect of genre into the purpose of the text and the relations between audience and writer, which govern what are considered to be appropriate choices, or preferred patterns, of lexical, grammatical, and organisational features, such as selection of content and sequencing of information. In Halliday’s words “the social system is not just an ornamental background to linguistic interaction” (Halliday, 2014, p. 271) but rather, it is the social system which gives texts and genres meaning.

Genre Systems and Genre Sets

The SFL genre model implicitly connects discourse with action through the work done by genres. US Writing Studies (e.g. Bazerman, 2004b; Prior, 2009; Prior & Shipka, 2003) however, is less concerned with how genres are constructed, and more concerned with how genres are used to accomplish work in society, and thus, like NLS (e.g. Street 2001), with the consequences of texts. Focusing on extended sequences of interconnected texts, Bazerman (2004, p. 318) describes collections of all the texts an actor must read or write, to be able to carry out a certain role within a particular activity system as “genre sets”. “Genre systems” are collections of interrelated “genre sets”, which in a school, for example, might include sets of student writing, teacher texts, and administrative texts such as assessment regulations. “Activity systems” are the larger

systems to which “genre systems” belong.

Bazerman expounds on what Fairclough (1992, p. 271) refers to as the “horizontal intertextuality” of texts, regarding them as speech acts in the Bakhtinian sense, that respond to previous texts and anticipate next moves. He considers written texts, even very long ones, as chains of utterances which contain dominant speech acts. He describes how these are clustered around certain activities, or practices, and patterned in recognisable ways, “typification” (Bazerman, 2004, p. 316). In these respects, his notion of genre is similar to that of SFL and those that are informed by studies into professional or academic genres (e.g. Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990). However, Bazerman argues that genres do not only need to conform to be successful, but that this success is necessary in order for certain activities to take place, shifting the emphasis towards the role of texts as actions.

Bazerman believes that focusing on activity systems allows scrutiny of the efficacy of texts in achieving their purpose, for example how texts support learning in education, and how students are assessed. Bazerman describes a “social fact” (p. 311) as a belief in the legitimacy of authority, stemming from a text, that makes people behave as though something is true, although it may not be. He states: “Each successful text creates for its readers a social fact” (Bazerman, 2004, p. 311), thus legitimising the individual’s progress through institutional gateways. Institutional activity systems are shaped by genre sets and genre systems. Not being able to provide a text in a certain genre delegitimises the individual’s right to participate in certain activities.

Bazerman argues that genres only exist if they are recognised by the groups using them and that this recognition is underpinned by users’ beliefs in “social facts about the kind of speech acts people can make and the ways they can make them” (Bazerman, 2004, p. 317). For a job-seeker, the social fact of their suitability must be legitimised through the coherence of a mutually recognised genre set: a cover letter, a CV and /or personal statement. As discussed in Chapter 2, these should be used in tandem, to project a snapshot of a credible, relevant (Bhatia, 1993) and commodifiable self (Del Percio, 2018), with allusions to positive judgements and appreciations from others (Lipovsky, 2013). The belief in the power of a CV to illustrate the character and potential behaviour of an employee creates the social fact that an individual is unemployable without one. Importantly, all the texts in the recruitment/application systems are in dialogue with each other and, as Lipovsky (2013) shows, with discourses

in other indirectly related activity systems. At the same time, they must also demonstrate the individual employability discourse of a flexible, adaptable, ideal worker citizens (Allan, 2013; Del Percio, 2018).

Genre Stability and Genre Hybridisation

A functional view of genre may also imply that genres are well defined, albeit socially situated. However, Fairclough (1992, 2000, 2003) and Bhatia (2004, 2010, 2016) consider fluidity to be the most prominent feature of genres. Fairclough (2003) argues that unless used for a very particular strategic purpose, texts rarely conform to a pure genre; they are almost always hybrids, drawn from a network of genres within an activity system. Bhatia and Fairclough are both concerned with how genre change is effected by the practices of the groups that use them. One such tendency is “conversationalisation” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 76) of communication, that can obscure social relations between participants: for example, strategic marketing communication, masked as social.

Fairclough conceptualises genre stability in three “levels of abstraction” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 68), which depend on how “disembedded” from particular social practices a genre is, while remaining recognisable. “Pre-genre” is the most abstract and is not associated with a specific network of practices, for example, narrative. “Disembedded” genres, such as an interview, are less abstract and more recognisably generic, and may be used by distinct networks of practices for very different purposes, for example job interviews or news interviews. Finally, the least abstract are situated genres, which are specific to certain networks of practices; for example legal genres, such as wills or property deeds.

The disembedding of genres from their original social contexts makes them a type of “social technology” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 67) available for anyone to use and Fairclough views this as a feature of the rescaling and restructuring of social practices in globalised capitalism. Online recruitment massively rescales the geographic and temporal reach of job advertisements and responses. The CV is arguably a genre disembedded from its original networks of professional practice, partly as a result of the move to online job applications, to be something routinely demanded now by all recruiters for all kinds of work. As it is a disembedded genre, there may be no consensus on its specific conventions (Bhatia, 1993; Scollon et al., 2002), and in any case, such texts may require a literacy relatively distant from the discourses of manual

work.

Both Fairclough and Bhatia argue that social systems do not rigidly prescribe genres, so much as delimit the range of choices thereof, and suggest that power relations are evident in the levels of agency available to text producers, in the extent to which they can hybridise texts across the order of discourse. Bhatia (2004) argues that genre integrity (Fairclough's "stability") is not only about linguistic resources, but also about "procedures and processes of genre participation" (p. 112) which are dependent on "discursive competence and the notion of professional expertise" (p. 113) which he sees as a combination of discourse competence, knowledge of professional practices and disciplinary knowledge. Acquisition of such expertise, he suggests, takes time and is a matter of education, training and participation in professional practices.

Both Fairclough and Bhatia refer to the hybridisation of genres from other activity systems as "interdiscursivity". For Bhatia (2010, p. 35) interdiscursivity is "text external": it entails using resources or conventions from other genres and professional practices, often in innovative ways, potentially providing more agency to the creator of the text. Interdiscursivity allows the examination of the plurality of "discourses, actions and voices" (Bhatia, 2010, p. 35) that help to form particular institutional or organisational discourse practices within the activity systems posited by Bazerman (2004). Discursive practices attend professional practices and include choices about genre use and mixing. They also include collaboration practices (Bhatia, 2004): the extent to which each participant can contribute to the process, with what authority and at what stage; these relate to the management of discursive spaces where communication takes place. In the context of job-seeking, collaboration practices could be discussions about what a job advertisement means or how to write a cover letter.

Fairclough discusses interdiscursivity with respect to how hybridised texts are used in conjunction in "genre chains" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 66). Moving along the genre chain links geographically and temporally dispersed social practices and involves transformation of language in particular ways. This transformation of language is partly a product of the reconstitution of one text into another, a "vertical intertextuality" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 271), something made much easier in online texts, and which Łacka-Badura (2013) noted as a prominent feature of online job advertisements. Hyperlinks are manifestly intertextual (they are often underlined or a different colour) and interdiscursive, in the way that they cluster texts together in genre chains. It can

therefore be argued that the rapidity of technological advances has increased literacy demands not only in terms of technological competence, but also in the mastery of ever shifting registers in what were formerly perhaps regarded as quite stable genres, for example a “formal” job application. Fairclough identified this as the challenge of hybridised genres: how to manage the “struggle over the structuring of orders of discourse” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 281).

The studies summarised in *Job-seeking Genres* demonstrate how intertextuality and interdiscursivity are achieved by appropriating words or phrases from other texts, and thus incorporating other voices. Such are the ways in which a candidate can provide both a cover letter and a CV that use relevant terminology from the job description, to produce a profile that subtly alludes to the employers’ imagined candidate, as voiced in recruitment texts (Łacka-Badura, 2013, 2015) and employability discourses (Allan, 2013; Del Percio, 2018). In an application form, the personal statement sections also offer a discursive space for the projection of the right candidate, if structured in a comprehensible narrative form (Brown & Barton, 2004). For an applicant to respond in writing to a job advertisement, such lexico-grammatical and functional information-staging features of genre would need to be learned, complex enough even for a highly educated applicant with English as an additional language, as Bhatia (1993) showed. In fact, in Del Percio’s (2018) study, this was one of the main reasons why low educated migrants stopped using the job support service, preferring instead to resort to word of mouth contacts, a faster, if in the long term, less advantageous, strategy for finding work.

Genres and Online Mediation

Fairclough (2003) calls textual choice about how information is disseminated “mediation”. He describes how genres are mediated in chains related to social practices, which cross time, mode, domain, social groups and borders. Technology facilitates the speed and scale of this, but concentrates the ability to control it in ever fewer hands. Fairclough notes “the capacity to influence or control processes of mediation is an important aspect of power in contemporary societies” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 31) and this has become ever more salient since the implementation of the “digital by default” policy. Technology can be regarded as an enabler and is creating new challenges to power, authority and authorship, as individuals move from being consumers to critics to creators of information (Kress, 2009; Warschauer, 2009). However, as discussed in

Chapter 2, such participatory behaviour can be constrained by social factors such as age, gender, education, region or class and so technology can entrench exclusion.

Fairclough also emphasises how institutions rely on texts to maintain control; in this sense, organisational or institutional practices are regulated by certain “genres of governance” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 32), which spread their influence into new areas of social practice, as they are recontextualised along the genre chain in a process of “colonisation” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 33). Because of their scale, genres of governance always involve mediation, which entails the selection of parts of the discourse which are more broadly relevant and the omission of details that may only pertain to specific contexts. A genre shift occurs as the scale of influence increases, from local to institutional to national to global. Thus genres of governance are connected with a wider scale of governance and are mediated to enable “action at a distance” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 32). Similarly, Kress (2012) argues that texts help to create and maintain institutions and serve as conduits for their aims and concerns. In this way, the interests of institutions can be read in those same texts.

Online recruitment massively rescales the geographic and temporal reach of job advertisements and this can be used as a justification for the “technological compulsion” noted by Clayton & Macdonald (2013, p. 947). There are thousands of vacancies advertised online, therefore a jobseeker without an online presence feeds into identity discourses of “welfare scrounger” or “not trying hard enough”. At the same time, a narrow skills focus on IT or Literacy, that ignores the social practice aspects of genres and texts, and their fluidity, does not serve the jobseeker well. Bazerman’s (2004) conceptualisation of genres as tools for accomplishing social facts emphasises the power of texts in everyday life, as individuals strive to achieve their goals. Similarly, Bhatia’s (2004, 2016) and Fairclough’s (2000; 2003) consideration of genre, hybridity and discursive practices in relation to individual agency, governance and control is very useful for considering how government policies and recruitment practices around mediation affect jobseekers.

The next chapter continues several threads from this discussion of literacies, discourses and genres: the concepts of discourse, mediation, practices and activity systems; tools or resources beyond genres, and their relations with goals and motivation; and the issue of tracing trajectories of texts and talk across time and space, and looks at them from the perspectives of activity theory and mediated discourse

analysis.

Chapter 4 Theoretical Frameworks for Investigating Literacy Practices as Mediated Activity

Activity theory provides a framework for understanding the individual jobseeker's goal-oriented, multiply mediated interactions with recruiters, that does not rely principally on texts. It permits the observation of silent interactions to be incorporated into the data, by encompassing the notion of discourse discussed previously, that includes behaviour, style (Fairclough, 2003) and being in synch with material resources (Gee, 2011).

The first parts of the chapter outline the principles of activity theory and consider the levels of analysis offered by psychological activity theory: activity, operations and actions, in relation to my research aims. The chapter continues with an outline of mediated discourse analysis, which draws on both NLS and activity theory, in an attempt to investigate connections between discourse and mediated actions in everyday situations, in trajectories that stretch across boundaries. In this regard, I hope it will present an appropriate methodology to resolve the challenges in exploring online job applications as an intra- and intersubjective process. The chapter concludes with a summary of what elements of each theoretical framework will be used in this study.

4.1 Principles of Activity Theory

Activity Is Social

Activity theory (AT) began as a Soviet psychological theory that grew from Vygotsky's (1978a) position that higher mental development is only possible through social processes, and involves three elements: person, tools/signs, and society. Activity is purposeful interaction with the world, mediated by signs and tools. Leont'ev (1981) describes activity as "the actual process of living"(1981, p. 46) and life itself as "an aggregation of successive activities" (1981, p. 46). Bedny & Karwowski (2004) describe activity as an "...object-oriented, artefact-mediated and socially formed system" (2004, p. 138). A fundamental principle of AT, therefore, is that all activity is social, mediated, organised around specific objectives, and without social relations, does not exist:

" ...with all its varied forms, the human individual's activity is a system in the system of social relations. It does not exist without these relations. The specific form in which it exists is determined by the forms and means of material and mental social interaction (Verkehr) that are created by the development of production and cannot be realised in any other way than in the activity of concrete people." (Leont'ev, 1981, p. 47).

Bedny et al. (2000) emphasise the activity system as a social structure in which an individual is part of a system of "interdependent elements that is organised and mobilised around a specific purpose or goal" (Bedny et al., 2000, p. 187). AT is interested in studying the system from two perspectives: individual and cultural historical behaviour. Regardless of whether an individual is acting alone or in a group, activity is social because of this connection with cultural and historical behaviour. It is this notion on which the concept of genre as a means of action draws, to study the way institutional encounters are mediated through certain privileged genres within specific activity systems (e.g. Bazerman, 2004b outlined in Chapter 3); "activity system" broadly equates to the NLS concept of "domain" which similarly refers to a system of social relations organised around an area of occupation or interest, for example schools, which have particular literacy practices.

Motivation

A second principle of AT is that activity, or participation in life itself, requires both thought and practical activity. However, it is the capacity for thought that provides the source of motivation for activity through "the act of objectifying the desire [...] filling it with content drawn from the surrounding world" (Leont'ev, 1981, p. 50). Motivation is both culturally historically derived and future oriented, and depends on individual needs, wants, desires and circumstances: "It turns out that the activity of separate individuals depends on their place in society, on the condition that falls to their lot and on idiosyncratic, individual factors" (Leont'ev, 1981, p. 47).

Wertsch (1985) conducted an experiment to test this, on dyads of children and teachers and children and parents in rural Brazil, whose task was to copy a model farmyard. The experiment showed how the parents used labour as a motivation, reproducing the model as efficiently as possible, and this shaped the activities, goals and the tasks given to the children. The teachers used education as the motivation, allowing the children a wider range of more demanding tasks, in which errors were not

a disadvantage. Wertsch's experiment demonstrated a link between motivation and how goals were envisaged and carried out as tasks. It also affirmed that motivation is derived from prior experience, so is a result of previous social institutional "interpsychological functioning" (Wertsch, 1985, p. 211) and this is why motivation is often hidden from the subjects.

Mediation

A third principle is that all actions are mediated by signs or tools: signs mediate between people and also between the past and present (Vygotsky, 1978). Language involves the mental manipulation of signs and Leont'ev (1981) regards language as the main way in which social and individual consciousness is developed: "In the process of material production, people also produce language which serves not only as a means of social interaction but also as a carrier of ... socially elaborated meanings" (1981, p. 56). AT conceptualises tools as external and internal: external tools are physical artefacts, and internal tools are "signs and symbols used in internal mental activity" (Bedny & Karwowski, 2004, p. 142), i.e. language and thought. So language, as a verbal expression of thought, can be a type of mental action, or it can be used in conjunction with external tools, to take action. Thought can also be expressed in practical actions, mediated by non-linguistic tools, for example, silently laying the table for a meal. Tools of any kind carry those "socially elaborated meanings" (Leont'ev, 1981, p. 56), and so provide the connection between the individual and society. AT uses this to account for the assimilation of human experience, through social activity:

The tool mediates activity and thus connects humans not only with the world of objects, but also with other people. Because of this, humans' activity assimilates the experience of humankind. This means that humans' mental processes (their higher psychological functions) acquire a structure necessarily tied to the sociohistorically formed means and methods transmitted to them by others in the process of cooperative labour and social interaction (Leont'ev, 1981, p. 56).

There are normative cultural historical expectations and requirements for activity. AT posits that "to establish effective interactions, the individual must develop standardised actions. Expectations are formed and predictions are made about how different people will act in different situations" (Bedny et al., 2000, p. 172). AT thus argues that through their verbal and practical participation in society, individuals subconsciously absorb what in NLS terms are communicative and discursive repertoires

(Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2014; Roberts, 2010) and these norms also structure activity. Wertsch (1993) describes how mediational means are organised in a hierarchy of dominance: he refers to this as the “privileging” (1993, p. 124) of mediational means, by which some tools are perceived as more appropriate, while not ruling out others entirely. He maintains that “privileged” is a less static way of conceptualising the normative use of tools than terms such as “dominant”. Thus, he argues that the norms associated with mediational means structure activity less rigidly than might otherwise be perceived.

A fundamental question for AT is “what an individual or group is doing in a particular setting” (Eckensberger and Meacham 1984 in Wertsch 1985, p. 211). AT uses observation of actions as a window onto discourses. Since the 1980s it has developed into several versions, and is still evolving (Blunden, 2010), with slightly different terminology and loci of interest, although Leont’ev’s (1981) basic three level structure, outlined below, remains the same. Engeström’s (1987, 1990) networked activity theory is concerned with ergonomics: identifying areas of tension, inconsistency or conflict within groups working towards a common goal, with the intention of effecting organisational change. Another iteration of AT is concerned with human computer interaction design (Kaptelinin, 1996; Kaptelinin et al., 2006; Kuutti, 1996), from the perspective of people’s interactions with the world, through the computer interface, rather than people’s interaction with the computer as an artefact. Others have continued to develop AT as a psychological theory (Bedny et al., 2000; Bedny & Harris, 2005; Bedny & Karwowski, 2004; Bedny & Meister, 1999), which, faithful to Leont’ev’s original formulation, is concerned primarily with the individual’s activity in the social environment. I believe psychological AT is relevant to this study, as it provides a structure that can account for an online job application as a purposeful individual activity, mediated by tools and signs, within the social world of job-seeking. My focus is not interaction design, nor do I aim to change a particular institution or organisation, but I do hope to identify opportunities or constraints on individual agency, around job search or job application decisions.

4. 2 Structure of Activity

Activity

Leont’ev (1981) divides activity into three parts: activity, operation and action; these parts are necessarily separate for analysis, but fundamentally, no parts of the

theoretical framework are independent. As Wertsch (1985) describes it, AT unites intellect, affect and action through one physical body in a social environment. “Activity” refers to the overall orientation of the participants, which is what provides its “motivation”, for example work, play or education, as demonstrated in Wertsch’s example earlier. Motivation is shaped by prior experience and influences the overall shape of the activity, while not being entirely responsible for it. Bedny et al. (2000) differentiate between initial, perhaps institutional, motivation for an activity, and ongoing individual motivation towards the achievement of conscious goals. They define “motive” as “needs that induce human activity and are directed towards certain goals” (Bedny et al., 2000, p. 177). A need without a specific goal or “object” is directionless and so according to Bedny et al., the originating impetus for an activity does not of itself provide continuing motivation.

According to Leont'ev, it is motivation that distinguishes activity types. If there appears to be none, this is because it is “subjectively and objectively concealed” (Leont'ev, 1981, p. 59), as may happen when individuals work in a large institution, such as a university, and are only conscious of their own area of activity. Bedny et al. (2000) state that motivation may only become apparent once the result or object of an activity is evaluated. Wertsch (1985) also noted that the subjects in his experiments were unaware of the effects of social institutional experience on their motivations for an activity and this is something they were not conscious of choosing and might have difficulty describing. Furthermore, the motivations of the participants were more important than the physical environment. A question arising from this observation, relevant to a jobseeker, might be how different motivations, not always clear to the subjects, affect job search behaviour, or perceptions and articulations of employability, particularly as motivation is mentioned as an important factor in the “psychological capital” dimension of individual employability (Williams et al., 2016, p. 96).

Operations

Leont'ev (1981) describes the level of operations as “the means by which an action is carried out” (p. 63). Instead of “operation”, later AT (Bedny et al., 2000; Bedny & Karwowski, 2004) refers to “methods” or “procedures”: how the task is done, using the available tools (physical or mental resources available, including language). AT is a dynamic framework that does not categorise activity, operations and actions permanently, but frames them as moveable. Leont'ev (1981) explains that methods can

initially form sub-goals themselves, but be transformed into operations as they are automatised, after which they become subconscious and subordinated to conscious goals. Here, it may be appropriate to refer to “skills”, as this implies the ability to do something without effort. For an online jobseeker, “good computer skills” could be categorised as operations, as these involve both mental and practical resources. Routine operations, when unexpectedly not functioning, become conscious actions, and move to a different conceptual level. In addition, more complex action sequences can become activities, when subdivided into many goals.

Operations is the level at which I believe socially constructed normative knowledge is located, as a resource on which subjects unconsciously draw. The role of “subject”, or people in the activity, is critical, as relations between people affect the resources available to various subjects, and the formulation and evaluation of tasks.

Bedny et al. (2000) describe a self-regulation process which models how subjects interpret and adjust goals. They define a goal as the imagined product of actions, which are influenced by needs, motives and emotions. Goals are open to individual interpretation "complex and dynamic" (2000, p. 177), some aspects of which subjects are always aware. In striving towards a goal, subjects undergo a process of self-regulation, adjusting their actions in relation to performance and expectations. Bedny et al. (2000) describe four sequential stages of directional motivation involved in self-regulation: the first is goal formation and acceptance, which provides the initiating impetus. The second is evaluation of difficulty and significance, which they suggest can lead to paralysis. The next is task performance and planning; at this stage, they note that sustaining motivation by recognising proximity to goal accomplishment is important. The final stage is evaluating the results of performance, which is modulated by self-esteem (Bedny et al., 2000, pp. 200–201). This self-regulation process takes place at the intersections between subjects, tools and objects, modulated by socially constructed normative knowledge. This could provide a way of conceptualising what is happening during an unfolding job search or application.

Bedny et al. (2000) describe goal formation as a recursive iterative process, requiring reflection. When intrinsically motivated, it is a process of goal formation, goal selection and goal acceptance. When extrinsically motivated, it is a process of goal recognition, goal interpretation and goal acceptance. Because goals can be interpreted differently depending on individual situation and circumstances, they are always

socially situated and specific; therefore, different actions will be undertaken to achieve the same goal. The level of “operations” is the most complex and difficult to define, as it is completely dependent on “idiosyncratic individual factors”(Leont’ev, 1981, p. 47). However, it is useful for capturing, in a discrete level of analysis, the potential complexity of everything that might pertain here: tools, people, relations, prior experiences, expectations, emotions, needs, wants and goals, which can later be refined in relation to the data.

Action

Once a conscious goal has been set, it is formulated into tasks subdivided into actions. A “task” is conscious and so might represent the boundaries of a literacy “event”. “Action” is the lowest level of analysis in the AT framework, and refers to what people do to carry out tasks and achieve conscious goals. Bedny et al. (2000) divide action into two methods: object practical action and mental action. Examples of object practical actions are motor operations, such as reaching for a glass to get a drink of water. Mental (cognitive) actions are sensory, perceptual or thought actions and can be further subdivided into “function blocks” (Bedny & Karwowski, 2004, p. 148), which are measured in milliseconds and do not involve conscious thought: these are operational resources that enable actions to be done, and revert to being actions only when they fail. Mental action emerges as "a complex structure subjective to fine tuning to a particular situation"(Bedny et al., 2000, p. 175, and function blocks, as analytical units which can enable micro-structural analysis. In terms of observing human computer interactions, much of which is likely to be non-verbal and consist of very small-scale interlinked actions, terminology for levels and components of activity, such as function blocks, offer precise means for capturing what might otherwise be overlooked in a literacy event.

Bedny and Karwowski (2004) emphasise the socio-historical relationship of actions to practices, and claim that actions cannot be regarded as isolated because they can be classified according to function and purpose. They describe how the organisation of actions into a system provides them with syntax, while semantic and pragmatic meaning can be read through the relations of actions to objects or other actions, in other words, pragmatic meaning can be uncovered once the object has been achieved and the result evaluated. Similarly, talk can be regarded not only as tool, but also action, as it has relational systems of organisation which can be used to interpret deeper meaning:

Between actions and words a similarity exists. Actions possess semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features analogous to words. Syntactic features of actions are determined by their rules of organization into a system. Semantic features of action may be discovered through the relationship of an action to its object or to other actions. Pragmatic features of actions can be determined by their role for the subject and particularly in their relation to motivation (Zhuravlev 1981 in Bedny & Karwowski, 2004, p. 145). This conceptualisation of actions as semantic units in a larger system of meaning making is one that Scollon (2001a) adopts for mediated discourse analysis, and which he calls the “syntagmatism” (R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 30) of actions.

To summarise my understanding of AT, when a decision to act is made, a goal or conscious objective is set. A goal may be extrinsically or intrinsically motivated, or indeed both, and this is a point at which the subjects’ will and affect could be strongly influential. The level of operations relates to the means with which a goal is achieved. It is affected by the tools available, both mental and practical resources, as well as the circumstances in which subjects find themselves. All of this combines with perceived difficulty, to sustain or hamper directional motivation. Mental tools include language and literacies repertoires, with associated knowledge of normative expectations, attitudes and identities. For jobseekers, specific professional or workplace social networks could provide a resource for access to such knowledge.

Actions are the bottom level of analysis and are the results of tasks, for example writing an application email, in relation to achievement of a goal. Activity refers to the overarching and often unconscious motivation which frames the process of goal setting and self-regulation in relation to the task. This may only be clear once the goal is completed, and can result in a conscious goal being at variance with the actual activity. In this study, the research topic of online job applications constitutes the activity, and it takes place within the wider institutional framework of the DWP. There are differing motivations for the activity: ostensibly, migrant employment is desirable on all sides because it helps economic and social integration. However, this has been translated into a policy whose goal is to move people off benefits as quickly as possible. It is accompanied by the digital by default policy, framed as an opportunity for upskilling, but the actual motivation for which could be interpreted as reducing expenditure. For benefit claimants, their motivation may be fear of benefit sanctions, while the goal, extrinsically set, is to apply for a target number of jobs per week.

The overarching activity of “applying for a job online” seems to be enmeshed in conflicting goals and motives of applicants, recruiters, employers and job centres, and the operational conditions of being mediated by asynchronous online communication adds another layer of complexity. Online mediated job applications are dynamic, with endless opportunities for interruptions to the “flow” and recursive trial and error actions towards goals. AT allows for that dynamism between action, operation and activity and, looking for subjects’ moments of hesitation, at the points where operations become conscious actions, could indicate where connections between actions, tools and subjects are unfamiliar.

Difficulties are posed, however, in the practicalities of how to investigate what is done partly in private or through internal cognitive processes, across different places, times and mediational means. Prior & Shipka (2003) used AT to investigate how student writers in higher education experience the composition process. However, they suggested that because “methodologically, private and public acts, meaning and sense, affect and motivation, tools and spaces, all need to be woven together into a single story of productive activity” (Prior & Shipka, 2003, p. 232) AT did not provide a comprehensive methodological approach for conducting literacies research into what may be a dispersed and “fuzzy” process. In the next section, I will outline the framework of mediated discourse analysis, which adopts and refines many of the principles of both NLS and AT and provides some additional ways of encapsulating dispersed literacy activity. This section concludes with a summary of units of analysis for the study, adapted from the three theoretical frameworks.

4. 3 Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA)

MDA takes its three basic principles from the Vygotsky school and so shares much with AT: the principle of action as social and a manifestation of discourses; the principle of communication, that all action is social, reliant on shared systems of meaning mediated by any semiotic means; the principle of history, that shared meaning is derived from common history, and is intertextual and interdiscursive (R. Scollon, 2001b, pp. 13–14) . MDA shares with NLS an interest in power, ideology and discourse, and is similarly concerned with the everyday, the local and the small scale or micro, and combined with ethnographic methods, taking what might be viewed as an inside out approach to understanding small scale events and tracing outwards to broader discourses. Its contribution to NLS is the technologisation of social practice (R. Scollon,

2001b). It focuses on connections between discourse and action in social situations and seeks to theorise how they are linked, asking, “What is the action?” and “What is the role of discourse?”. To answer these questions, MDA focuses not on texts or discourse, but “on actors as they are acting” (R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 9). MDA incorporates from the frameworks of NLS that literacy is a form of practice, and counts literacy and language among many other mediational means through which discourses are instantiated. In addition, it extends to other mediational means the privilege and power that NLS gives to literacy practices, and Fairclough’s (2003) discursive dimensions of action, representation and identity, using “action” as a unit of analysis (R. Scollon, 2001b; S. W. Scollon & de Saint-Georges, 2013). MDA is fundamentally concerned with social change and is frequently used to illuminate links between discourse and action when discourses fail to make connections with social actors and therefore intended actions or outcomes are not achieved (e.g. Rish, 2015).

There are three constituent elements of MDA (R. Scollon & S. W. Scollon, 2003): the “historical body” of the social actor(s) engaged in the mediated action, the “interaction order” and “discourses in place”. “Historical body” is the aggregation of experience and knowledge over a lifetime, contained in the individual. The “interaction order” is about the social relations between the actors; and “discourses in place” relates to “the complex set of discourses at the intersection of which the social action is carried out” (S. W. Scollon & de Saint-Georges, 2013, p. 74) and the ways in which we selectively attend to these in an action (Jones & Hafner, 2012). Below is an outline of key concepts in MDA, some of which are taken from NLS and some from AT, but with some important nuances which need clarification.

Mediated Action

As with AT, action is the unit of analysis: all action is social and all action is mediated, mainly by discourse or language, but also by other material or semiotic means. The focus in MDT is on action being carried out, at the moment in which discourses are “instantiated in the social world as social action, not simply as material objects” (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 11).

Scollon (2001a) conceives of actions as high, mid and low level. Actions take place in chains, or trajectories, and higher level actions are constituted by lower level actions. For example, the higher level action of ordering a coffee involves a chain of lower level actions such as choosing from a menu, queuing, placing the order and so on.

Scollon's lower level actions are not necessarily conscious, and appear to correspond with AT's "function blocks" (Bedny & Karwowski, 2004). As in AT, actions do not make sense in isolation, but only when correctly ordered as parts of a sequence that constitutes a higher level action, "syntagmatism" (R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 30). Therefore, there is never a single action on which MDA focuses, but rather, it is concerned with the vertical and horizontal relations between actions in trajectories, and the "broad social issue with which we are concerned" (R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 163).

Scollon states that actions are linked by "anticipatory and narrative discourses" (R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 165). Anticipatory discourses are internal preparatory conversations about future actions and narrative discourses are retrospective reconstructive discourses (R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 170). An action sequence begins, based on anticipatory discourses, with many opportunities for reversal or resetting. As the action sequence unfolds, the actor enters a "funnel of commitment" (R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 169) that narrows along the trajectory towards the most significant action, one that the actor perceives as difficult to undo. This notion of anticipatory and narrative, or retrospective discourses, in my view, arguably parallels Bedny et al.'s (2000) recursive reflective cycle of goal setting, self-regulation and appraisal in relation to tasks, perhaps implicating a perception of "commitment", in the extent to which the subject sees the task through to its conclusion. Scollon (2001a) acknowledges the difficulty of researching anticipatory discourses which contribute to an action trajectory.

Site of Engagement and Site of Attention

Scollon describes this as the social space where mediated action occurs; it is a window that opens when particular social practices, discourses and mediational means intersect always in "a unique moment in history" (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 12), in a linkage of actions never to be precisely repeated. Jones (2005) refers instead to a "site of attention" to emphasise that it is attention that signals a site of engagement, and the attention may not be shared by all participants.

In a site of engagement, the attention of subjects is focused on actions, as the entrainment unfolds. This corresponds with the AT perspective of actions being conscious because they are not yet fully incorporated into practices. Consciousness of mediated actions in the site of engagement is key; without the subject's awareness, there is no site of engagement. Jones (2005) emphasises that, for this reason, actions are themselves the sites of engagement, which unfold into trajectories that "determine how

we strategize future actions and how we remember past ones” (Jones, 2005, p. 143).

Jones (2005; 2011) distinguishes two kinds of attention in a site of engagement: social attention, the way in which participants display and pay attention to others, and cognitive attention, how participants distribute their attention to various actions. He introduces the notion of “attention structures” that are part of discourse structures embedded in the interaction order, discourses in place and historical bodies of the actors or subjects. Paying attention to one thing more than another demonstrates the power relations between different discourses, and this can be seen in actions as well as words. He claims that in this way, a single action in a trajectory can reveal power relations and larger discourses.

In digital communication, attention is drawn in a multitude of directions, which Jones and Hafner problematise as the “polyfocality” (2012, p. 83) of attention structures. They argue that digital media is designed to “help” manage users’ attention across different spaces, but not always appropriately. They claim that problems arise in attention structures because mediational means constrain how users pay attention: they are often poorly aligned with the attention structures brought to the task via individual circumstances, relationships, and, I would add, goals. The volume of information unleashed in the information age results in substantial competition for attention, in which Jones and Hafner identify an emerging “attention economy” based on attempts at originality, that promotes a different way of thinking, oriented towards different literacy practices of “strategically managing, getting and giving attention” (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 96). This recalls Łacka-Badura’s point about the peak interdiscursivity apparent in online recruitment, as well as the Del Percio’s (2018) literacy demands of reading the jobs market in general. A site of social or cognitive attention, then, signals the point at which an actor is conscious of their actions because the linkage between these is somehow not intuitive. For consistency, and because the notion of attention is key to both AT and MDA, Jones’s terminology, “site of attention”, will be used in the rest of this thesis.

Space

Jones (2011; R. Jones & Hafner, 2012) argues that “space” is socially constructed during interaction, by attention to discourses which are spread across the three constituent elements of MDA introduced above: discourses embodied in place, the interaction order, and the historical body.

The layout of a contemporary UK job centre can be used to exemplify the way that spaces are socially constructed: at the door are security staff to screen entrants, inside the door is a waiting area, and on an elevated open plan platform, there are rows of numbered partitioned cubicles where pre-booked interviews between job seekers and job coaches take place. The relations between job coach and job seeker can be seen as partly structured through the online appointment booking system, the security staff and the physical separation between levels of admission to the appointment. Finally, there is a perspex barrier across the interview desk. This is reinforced by the central position of the desktop monitor which faces the job coach, and to which the job coach constantly draws the job seeker's attention by tilting it slightly, to point at "to do lists" and "agreements", themselves examples of discourses of benefits obligations and compliance on which benefits entitlement is premised.

This brief sketch illustrates Jones's point that space is also ideological, designed to structure attention in certain ways that permit some actions and restrict others. Alongside actions are identities or social positions, in this case, those of street level bureaucrat and benefit claimant. The three elements of discourses in place, interaction order and historical body channel attention, but not necessarily without friction. Where these three discourses are out of synch with each other, a struggle over attention in different spaces emerges, which Jones sees as "sites of struggle in which people reproduce or resist particular social positions" (2011, p.165). The concept of socially constructed spaces offers a way of tracing the attention to multiple discourses which may intersect in this struggle for attention and social position.

In computer mediated communication, attention is likely to be distributed across multiple timescales and spaces as people routinely multitask, and Jones (2005) argues that sites of engagement are much more useful for understanding action and identity, if this reality is acknowledged. Jones lists five common kinds of space in computer mediated communication, which might become locations of "sites of attention" (2005, p. 161), noting that there are many more:

- The physical spaces in which they are operating their computers (such as offices, homes, cybercafés), both in terms of the immediate built environments and the geographical coordinates of these spaces;
- Virtual spaces created by the interfaces they are using to communicate (chat rooms, ICQ contact lists, web pages);

- Relational space created by the ‘state of talk’ between participants;
- Screen space – the actual space of users’ screens upon which they arrange various elements (windows, toolbars, writing spaces, video screens);
- Third spaces – spaces inhabited by neither participant but rather referred to in the course of interaction (bars, saunas, classrooms, shopping centers) (Jones, 2005, p. 145).

It is the interdependence of these spaces, and how they interact, that shape the actions and identities of the users, a point illustrated in Jones (2011) study of teenagers’ attention structures in an IT classroom, and one that can also be seen in the brief job centre sketch above. Although in reality these spaces cannot be strictly separated, momentarily doing so allows a multitude of data to be systematically organised and interrogated, offering a way in this study, of examining what could constitute the data in the AT level of operations. The data could provide insight into the discourses inherent in all mediational means, those embodied in the physical environment, other places, relations between actors and other people they know, and all the attendant beliefs, values, needs, wants and circumstances that affect overall orientation to activities, and in turn goals, tasks and actions. As people proceed through entrainments of actions, discourses in different spaces structure their attention. Sites of attention and the spaces of computer mediated communication offer a useful framework for following these trajectories, to analyse precisely what discourses could intersect in the “idiosyncratic” level of operations in each site of attention, and which ones exert most power.

Mediational Means

NLS views literacy as always ideological, and MDA, like AT, sees all mediational means (not only texts) in this way. MDA understands mediational means themselves as embedded in practices: as with AT, and definitions of discourse, it is the correct use of tools to mediate action that allows an individual to lay claim to identity. For the purposes of this study, I use “mediational means” and “tools” interchangeably, as they both refer in the AT sense to internal or external resources in use to take action. MDA (Jones & Norris, 2005; R. Scollon, 2001b) takes the idea of mediation and develops the argument that the following characteristics of mediational means or tools enable them to structure actions, through their use, their history and their affordances.

The first characteristic of tools is that they only become mediational means,

when used to take action. Scollon distinguishes between “use” and “appropriation” of tools: “use” is the “unique, irreversible and concrete object as used in real time action” (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 116). “Appropriation” refers to the “development of a mediational means over time” (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 116) as part of its incorporation into practice. Scollon argues that this distinction parallels the difference between social practice and social action. “Appropriation” leads to social practice, over time, and “use” enables a unique social action to take place, for example using a coffee cup as a begging cup.

The second characteristic is that tools have an individual and social historicity that “brings [...] history to the action” (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 121). According to Scollon, appropriation leads to “technologization of practice”, which can have a tendency towards “rigidity, objectivisation, or standardisation” (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 116), thus conformity in using mediational means can signal group membership, or exclusion when used inappropriately. This seems slightly at odds with Wertsch’s (1993, p. 124) view that mediational means can be “privileged” and so appropriation need not tend so strongly to rigidity. Norris and Jones (2005) describe mediational means as “carriers of social, cultural and historical formations [...] that amplify certain social actions and limit others” (2005, p. 50). While tools can be used for any individual purpose, normative expectations based on appropriation into practices impose social constraints, much like those discussed in Genre. Similarly, Scollon argues that power structures are embedded in mediation and certain mediational practices can be valorised for ideological reasons. It is worth emphasising again the contribution that social relations make to social historicity of mediational means, as it is salient to the difficulties faced by migrants who do not have access to appropriate social networks for entry into their desired fields of employment.

The third characteristic is that tools are “partial”: only certain affordances of a tool are used, needed or available for a particular task, so selection or availability transforms actions uniquely each time. This characteristic is likely to be prominent in digital mediation, when the users’ attention is guided or restricted by the design of the interaction space, as noted by Jones and Hafner (2012).

The fourth characteristic is connectivity: tools connect multiple people and purposes, and are used differently in each instantiation, rendering them multifunctional and polysemous; there is a generalisable idea of a tool being used for a particular

purpose, for example a coffee cup for drinking coffee, which in another situation might be repurposed for something else (Jones & Norris, 2005).

Finally, tools are a class of objects that can be appropriated within a practice (Jones & Norris, 2005). In this sense they are representational, rather than specific to a particular action. For example a coffee cup represents a socio-cultural historical meaning. Because of their historicity, tools thus carry certain affordances and constraints, yet each time a tool is used, the mediated action will be different; mediational means are thus always multiple, “polyvocal, intertextual, and interdiscursive” (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 12), a point also made earlier about texts and genres.

Practice and Social Structure

MDA views practice as plural, “narrowly defined, concrete and specific - handing an object, greeting, paying for an item” (R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 148); this also includes discursive practices (saying the right thing) and spatial practices (where to order or pick up) (R. Scollon, 2001b). MDA conceives of the social world as constructed by countless such practices. For Scollon (2001a), a practice is “a historical accumulation” of mediated actions and appropriated mediational means, taken over a lifetime, “recognisable to other social actors as ‘the same’ social action” (p. 149). As in AT, actions are linked together to achieve an objective; these linkages follow systematic rules of organisation, without which they lose their meaning and cannot be interpreted as the constituents of recognisable practices (Bedny et al., 2000). Scollon elaborates that syntagmatic order can be unexpected, and that disruptions to the syntagmatic order between actions can highlight group membership or otherness. It is these dynamic relations between actions that are salient to identity recognition. Practices are constituted through mediated actions at the “intersection of social practices and mediation, which in themselves reproduce social groups, histories and identities” (R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 148). In MDA and AT, actions can only make sense in relation to other actions or objectives and through the lens of practice; it is mediated actions which make practices and social structures visible.

Nexus of Practice

Practices are bound together or intersect in a “nexus of practice”. They are historically formed and recognisable and can be transferred from one situation to

another similar one, but the nexus of practices is unique to each site of attention; in this sense nexus of practice is aligned with the broader “practice” of NLS (e.g. Street, 2001). MDA contends that it is the “constellation of linked practices which makes for the uniqueness of the site of engagement and the identities thus produced, not necessarily the specific practices and actions themselves” (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 12).

Scollon (2001a, p. 179) explains the nexus of practice “is the regular, smoothly working set of linkages and sequences among practices that can be recognised by someone else in the vague sense of ‘doing the right thing’”. These linkages are loose, and a nexus of practices could be regarded as a group of people engaged in a particular type of activity, using “an archive of mediational means” (R. Scollon, 2001a, p. 179). According to Scollon, nexus of practices contribute to a group identity, in that connections between people are partly achieved through links between their practices, although not as strongly as the “technologised”(R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 116), i.e. more formalised, rules and regulations, that might define a community of practice (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 2006). In MDA, the nexus of practice can be dissected at the level of action, to show what constituents of a practice are not recognisable as “doing the right thing”, and why. For this reason, Jones (2015) defines discourse analysis as:

the study of the ways different ‘technologies of entextualisation’ (Jones 2009) (including semiotic systems like languages, as well as media like televisions and computers) affect the kinds of meanings people can make in different situations, the kinds of actions they can perform, the kinds of relationships they can form, and the kinds of people they can be (Jones, 2015, p. 4).

MDA makes possible, therefore, the study of language and literacies as technologies of entextualisation, alongside other technologies, on which subjects can unconsciously draw to take action, technologies which constrain as well as afford possibilities. It provides a methodology for identifying and tracing practices and discourses in empirical research, at the micro scale of understanding what individuals are doing, as they go about a literacy endeavour. The notion of spaces of computer mediated communication contributes a method for tracing overlapping actions and discourses embodied in place, interaction order or historical body that may otherwise be overlooked. It offers a way of directly observing literacy practices, in Bloome and Green’s (2015) words, as “the actual embodiment, engagement and interaction in the event”, at the level of “micropractice”, to be able to analyse what is really implicated in

the acquisition of a “skill set” (Ivanič, 2009) for online job-seeking.

4. 4 Summary of Theoretical Frameworks

Chapter 3 introduced the concept of literacy as social practice, that includes talk around texts and attitudes towards them, to understand what people are trying to do in their everyday lives with texts. It also established the importance of will and affect in literacy and writing studies (e.g. Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Prior & Shipka, 2003) and these also contribute to the psychological dimension of employability mentioned in Chapter 2 (Williams et al., 2016). It makes six propositions, that literacy practices are socially patterned, contain power relations, are historically informed, purposeful, organised into domains and dynamic. These ideas and propositions are aligned with the principles of AT and MDA, but differ in the locus of interest, which in NLS is centred on interactions with texts in events, from which practices can be inferred. Chapter 3 also provided a definition of discourse, as collective ways of representing the world, instantiated by individuals, selecting from a repertoire of behaviours, styles, and mediational means. Drawing on these notions, language is seen in this study as part of a discourse repertoire, used to take action. Discourse repertoires in relation to access, privilege and power, are considered in each case study and are the specific focus in Chapter 9, in the discussion of RQs 4-5.

Chapter 4 has established that AT and MDA share the notion of mediated actions that connect individuals with each other and with past and present, through the use of tools. Both theories use the lens of practice to make sense of actions. They view all actions as social and mediated, all actions as manifestations of discourses, and constituents of practices. Drawing on MDA, practices in this study are observable, constructed of trajectories of actions that happen syntagmatically, which gives them the semantic and pragmatic meaning that makes them recognisable as practices. These concrete practices are the building blocks of broader social practices. Synthesising NLS, AT and MDA, participating in a practice according to the conventions signals identity, and an important element of that participation is being in synch with mediational means, be they verbal or otherwise.

In this study, I use the AT definition of action, which refers to what people do to carry out tasks. I use a combination of AT and MDA to subdivide actions further, from the micro analytic scale of function block as a microsecond long unconscious action (Bedny & Karwowski, 2004), to low and intermediate level actions which combine to

constitute higher level actions and practices (Scollon, 2001). How these are used for analysis is illustrated in Chapter 5, Methodology.

Returning once again to the problems of researching will and affect, MDA does not include the concept of motivation very explicitly, while in AT, collective and individual motivations are key concepts. In AT, individuals take action and participate in practices to achieve conscious goals that contribute to collective activity. Actions and practices are networked together in activity systems, which are systems of social relations organised around an area of occupation or interest, for example a workplace, which have particular practices, so are similar to the NLS term “domain”. The analytical unit of activity refers to the overarching motivation for goals, that influences the shaping of tasks, often somewhat obscured from the consciousness of the individual, and structured by previous social experience. While MDA offers the concept of the accumulation of prior experiences in the historical body, it does not explicitly focus on how this affects subconscious motivation. The emphasis in AT is on the interaction between goals, tasks and mediational means with individual needs, wants, circumstances, and obligations and it investigates how these interact with the organisational or institutional motivations that flow from activity systems.

In AT, attention to action signals consciousness of a goal, and the formulation of a task, what needs to be done to achieve the goal. The formulation of the task depends on both collective motivation and individual resources and circumstances, and the latter two form the analytical level of operations. This unit of analysis is where the discourse repertoires associated with practices can be considered. AT’s three level framework of actions (what is done), operations (how it is done) and activity (why it is done in this way) provides a very clear way of connecting goals with the discourses associated with all mediational means, circumstances and individual and collective motivations. How the three level framework of AT is used in the analysis is explained further in the transcription methods and research questions sections of Chapter 5, and provides the framework for the discussion of the research questions in Chapter 9, in particular RQs 1-3.

In MDA, rather than signalling consciousness of a goal, attention to action signals the opening of a site of attention, which is a trajectory of observable actions that are constitutive of practices. Where practices intersect, discourses also intersect. The unfolding site of attention can be analysed to identify the particular nexus or

combination of practices within it, and the role of discourse, tracing outwards from actions to broader discourses and examining the power relations that are inherent in all mediational means. Looking at the same phenomenon of attention, from the viewpoint of AT, actions, goals and motivations can be explored, and using MDA, the analytical lens can be refocused on relations between actions, practices and discourses.

According to Jones (2005, 2011), in a digitally mediated world, a site of attention is structured by the discourses in the spaces of computer mediated communication. Attention is used firstly to pinpoint specific sequences of actions in the preliminary analysis, as explained in Methodology. The analytical level of operations from AT relates to the means with which a goal is achieved, and is affected by the tools available, both mental and practical resources, as well as the circumstances in which subjects find themselves. It is therefore connected with the discourse repertoires that are thereby automatically instantiated. Spaces are used to trace actions and discourses in the level of operations in all the analytical stages. Case study Chapters 6-8 will begin with summaries of physical, third, relational, virtual and screen spaces which contribute to the overall discussion of operational spaces in Chapter 9. Chapter 5, next, introduces the study design, the methodology and methods, and the research questions in detail.

Chapter 5 Methodology

The following chapter summarises the methodological approach, research design and recruitment of participants, providing a rationale and addressing ethical issues. These are followed by a description of the research sites and participants in each case study. The next section then describes and explains data collection methods and procedures in each site. This is followed by an explanation of the preliminary data analysis procedures and transcription methods, showing how development of the analysis led from provisional to final research questions. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the methods used for meta-analysis.

5. 1 Methodological Approach to Research Questions

I have chosen an ethnographic approach, as little has been written about my topic. According to Heigham and Sakui (2009), ethnography is suited to exploring the unknown, in particular, in uncovering what people do in their everyday settings and is therefore aligned with the framing of my study by the theories of NLS (e.g. Barton & Hamilton, 2000), AT (e.g. Bedny et al., 2000) and MDA (e.g. R. Scollon, 2001a). Ethnography allows some dynamism and reflexivity in response to developing understanding (Mackey & Gass, 2015) and thus enables research questions and methods to be refined as the topic becomes more familiar (Heigham & Sakui, 2009).

My research questions concern the interaction of the individual with the social world of recruitment. I take a job application as an instantiation of a literacy event (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). This takes place as an entrainment of actions and texts (Jones & Hafner, 2012; R. Scollon, 2001b), a conceptualisation that takes account of the speed and proliferation of online textual encounters. Job applications are multipally mediated by participants and the tools they use, technological or otherwise, thus they take place in complex overlapping physical, virtual, relational, temporal and spatial planes (Jones, 2005). An ethnographic approach allows me to observe the talk and actions around the literacy events of online job searches and applications, without needing to define precisely what I want to find out beforehand.

5. 2 Research Design

Participant Observation

I used participant observation, as this would allow me to see and experience at first hand what was happening in the field. Papen (2020, p. 141) defines participant

observation in laymen's terms as linguistic ethnographers "hanging out" with the people in their research sites, in other words, observing, participating in and reflecting on their perceptions of the sites. In her study on the use of phonics with primary school children learning to read, Papen became a parent classroom assistant. I had approached a charity that offered community ESOL and became a volunteer in the charity work club used predominantly by migrants. The charity had strong links with my university and so informants were already accustomed to researchers doing participant observation, which removed many potential gate-keeping obstacles. Furthermore, being an ESOL teacher, I was able to gain access and become accepted by carving out a customary position in the setting (Papen, 2020). I used findings from an earlier study and relations with the charity, for the initial plan of this study. One of the limitations of my previous study had been not collecting video data, so I could not analyse the ephemera of digital text trajectories, nor the nonverbal interactions. Completing that study provoked many additional questions relating to identity, actions and activity systems in job-seeking, which I felt needed richer data.

Towards an Exploratory and Explanatory Multicase Study

Yin (2017, p. 48) defines case study as "an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident." Yin further emphasises that research questions need to match the research methods, and the specific advantage of case studies is the "niche ...when a 'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which a researcher has little or no control" (Yin, 2017, p. 46).

Yin (2017) and Stake (2005) agree that there are different kinds of case study, and both state that case studies cannot be categorised definitively. Yin (2017) argues for an inclusive approach that recognises that case studies can be "exploratory, descriptive and explanatory" (p. 40), rather than attempting to draw strong distinctions. Stake (2005, p. 8) regards case studies as "intrinsic", where the interest remains within a particular case, or "instrumental", where interest extends outside the case, possibly to arrive at some kind of theoretical generalisation. He considers that multicase studies are usually also instrumental because of the interest in the broader understanding provided by the "quintain" (p. 83), a group of case studies used to study a common phenomenon, that includes a survey of relations between cases and across the whole project.

My questions are both “what” and “how”, so what Yin considers exploratory and explanatory. Combining this with Stake’s alternative framework, my study can be viewed as both exploratory, as not much is known about the topic; instrumental, as it attempts to illuminate a particular issue; and multicase, because I use more than one case to reach a better understanding of the issue.

Case studies can be viewed as bounded systems in which the boundaries may not be apparent (Hood, 2009; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2017), and so require definition by the researcher. Thus boundaries may change throughout the research process and this is appropriate from the perspective of the exploratory approach afforded by ethnography and participant observation. My study is centred on three intersecting but quite loose topics: being a migrant; being a non-expert user of English; and looking for work online. These formed the initial guidance for defining the boundaries of a multiple case study.

Stake (2005, p. 90) states the advantage of multicase studies is they can show both “the common and the unusual “ and these are “... portrayed and [...] situated against a local and diverse background”. I wanted to look at the experiences of migrant jobseekers, with a range of education levels and discourse repertoires. Although, according to Stake, case studies are not designed for generalisations or direct comparisons, examining the topic from several different perspectives could provide some interesting contrasts about the role of education level and discourse repertoire in job-seeking efficacy, given the assumptions about the importance of literacy, language and more recently, digital skills qualifications for functioning in daily life (Hillier, 2009). I could exploit local connections through my ESOL teaching work, and academic connections through my old university to access additional research sites where I could credibly, and with integrity, position myself as a valid participant observer (Papen, 2020). Having initially rekindled relations with the charity, I was invited to a different work club, where the manager felt there would be more diversity of potential research participants and where I attended as a volunteer, “hanging out” before I started to recruit jobseeker participants.

Papen (2020) notes that participant observation is often a matter of feeling for a way forward. As I began the first case study, I realised that the charity work club clients who attended most regularly and were willing to engage in my research were the most vulnerable, having the most obvious need for work club support for job-seeking and

sharing a very low educated background. I therefore decided to look outside to recruit participants from other backgrounds. The research design thus took shape as a multicase study across different sites. I was teaching in an ESOL centre which also had strong ties to my old university, so the centre culture was supportive of research. One of my students here suggested his wife might be interested. She became my second case study. Later on, the ESOL centre manager suggested I approach their ESOL job club, and this became my final case study.

Recruiting Participants and Informants and Ethical Behaviour

I frequently encountered a positive response to my research topic, with many potential informants feeling that supporting people with or doing online job applications was difficult and mostly unseen work that ought to be recognised. This resonates with the instrumentalism of the case study design and the social change agenda of MDA, which aspires not only to illuminate, but also to “change the nexus of practice” (S. W. Scollon & de Saint-Georges, 2013, p. 81). However, I found access to research sites could still be difficult as being allowed onto a research site is different from being able to access situations and people (Heigham & Sakui, 2009; Reeves, 2009). It was sometimes unclear who the “gate-keepers” were (Heigham & Sakui, 2009, p. 78) and whose consent was more valid- the jobseekers and volunteers themselves, or managers, or the charity board of trustees, especially when working with charities who must comply with a particular interpretation of safeguarding legislation. Access was thus negotiated slightly differently and by degrees, each time. For example, in the ESOL centre, initially access was granted by the centre manager, then by the jobseeker participants, and then by those working with them. In Case Study 3, Mehran, the job club leader, was first unwilling to be a participant but after observing me for one session, consented to participate in another.

Recruiting people who have emerging language and literacy skills poses some additional difficulties with gaining informed consent. Bigelow and Pettitt (2015, p. 66) argue that ethics intersect with methodological and theoretical concerns, in particular working with this group. Truly informed consent has to go beyond a mere translation or audio recording of participant information, particularly as it may be very difficult for participants to express reluctance, bearing in mind an often implicit desire to please the researcher or teacher (Thomas & Pettitt, 2017), both of which were the positions I was assigned.

Hoping to reduce the need for translations, and in recognition that research practices are not everyday practices for the majority, I designed a more accessible participant information sheet and consent form (see Appendix I), by simplifying the language, including pictures, focusing on the practicalities of the participants' involvement and safeguarding (Thomas & Pettitt, 2017) and following which ethical approval was granted. I was also looking for participants who were plurilingually competent (Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2012) so that I could exploit our combined linguistic repertoires. Mala, the careers advisor attached to the charity work club, was my first contact and informant there, and agreed to help explain my research to the work club clients, if interpretation were needed. Mala was among a number of plurilingual people available at the work club who also had experience of conducting and being involved in research, so could act as a go-between to explain and reassure potential participants before they signed the consent form.

Another ethical concern was the potential for emotional distress. Unemployed jobseekers on welfare, or people from a refugee background, as some of my participants were, could likely be economically disadvantaged and discussing anything related to historical experiences or job-seeking benefits could be sensitive. Therefore, negotiation of consent was necessarily ongoing in all the research sites (Bigelow & Pettitt, 2015; Bondy, 2013). Both jobseeker and volunteer had to agree initially to me making either audio or audio-visual recordings. As is perhaps typical in a case study site, it proved difficult to decide in the moment or predict in advance, who would be volunteering, or indeed, job-seeking, due to the drop-in style of the sessions, so participants were ultimately a convenience sample and I accepted any willing participant for data gathering. Mala and other community interpreters leading the work club were instrumental in reassuring work club clients about my intentions and their ability to withdraw. As the study progressed, I negotiated moment by moment when I wanted to take photos, hard copies of documents or later, conduct follow up interviews. This frequently positioned me quite centrally in the data, and the participants as collaborators in constructing the shape of the data, as some of them identified what they thought was salient to record. Nonverbal consent was given, or retracted, in such ways, and also by participants moving aside to let me take screenshots, or systematically failing to attend sessions after promising they would. Bigelow and Pettitt (2015, p. 68) describe these as "ethically important moments". They describe the process of negotiating consent in

such groups as “much more interpersonal, intercultural, and in-the-moment than research in mainstream SLA/education contexts” and note that maintaining participants’ “comfort, trust, or dignity” may likely require adaptations and compromises to planned methods or procedures. I was aware, from speaking to Mala and the charity manager, that the charity housed a wide range of support services specifically for migrants, to which I could signpost participants, should they disclose any distress; this was on the participant information sheet but also could be set up on the spot with help from the senior charity staff.

Parastou, the participant in case study 2, had been a postgraduate student and had written her dissertation on the topic of international graduate employability; we also had a personal connection - I had been her husband's ESOL teacher. Thus, she had a good understanding of what being a participant would entail, what the topic was, and who I was. Nevertheless, there were times when she seemed to be “performing” the role of jobseeker for my benefit, perhaps not wanting to disappoint me. I found myself negotiating her continued engagement where she had initially showed very little motivation by providing her with strategies for unpacking the meanings in job advertisements.

In case study 3, I had less control over the recruitment of the participant. This was a much more formalised procedure, as the site was a student job club in a large ESOL centre where I had previously worked. My contact was Mehran, the job club leader and acting as a local institutional gatekeeper, he controlled how much time I could spend there and the extent to which I could participate. He screened his job club users for somebody who met my criterion of language proficiency around ESOL entry 3/ level 1 and thus, to a large extent, he shaped this case study.

A key ethical consideration identified by Duff (2007) is reciprocity and from a practical point of view, it is also an important way of building the relations with participants that will help the project progress (Norris et al., 2014). I donated numerous teaching resources to the charity, that were very useful to the volunteers, many of whom had little prior ESOL teaching experience. To all the participants, I offered my services as an ESOL teacher. This was taken up informally on an ad hoc basis during my visits to the first two sites. During the work club sessions, I shared IT knowledge with volunteers and coached jobseekers in reading and lexis. In case study 2, I shared my knowledge about university careers services and alumni societies with Parastou. During

data gathering, we were collaborators in the literacy events and so I shared cultural knowledge and my language “toolbox” to help her with her job searches. In reciprocity, I offered Fernando, in case study 3, support with university applications, as I was at this point an EAP teacher in a university language centre and he wished to study civil engineering.

I later reviewed the video recordings and field notes to help me select segments of data for analysis. These preliminary data reviews guided the defining and setting of boundaries for the cases (Hood, 2009), in terms of who and what to include or exclude from the study and in determining my role as participant observer. In case studies 1 and 2, instances of reciprocity were also examples of mental and practical actions (Bedny & Harris, 2005; Bedny & Karwowski, 2004) involved in the tasks and so formed part of the data eventually analysed more closely. As S. Scollon and de Saint Georges (2013) point out, MDA requires the researcher to accept their presence in the nexus of practices and the probable transformation this causes. It makes absolutely no sense to use MDA and activity theory, which take actions, tasks and goals as units of analysis, while hoping not to form part of the data. Bigelow and Pettitt (2015) also note that negotiating access by being a perceived expert in the room means being drawn into the action by requests for help, to which an ethical stance demands a “yes”.

5.3 Case study 1

Research Site: the Charity Work Club

The work club was part of a number of support services, for example benefits, housing and immigration advice, offered by the local hub of a large national charity, that works to alleviate the impacts of poverty. Their volunteer staff run community enterprises, offer IT and other classes and were the largest provider of ESOL in the city.

The diversity of cultural, educational and professional backgrounds of the people who used the work club was striking, yet they all had the same issue of long-term joblessness and claimed the work club was the only place where they felt supported. One of the postgraduates I met stated it was the only place where he could meet people of a similar background. One of the volunteers, reflecting on his own failure to secure employment, had finally identified a fault in the system: all work club clients were stuck in joblessness because there were not enough jobs, and there was a total lack of support from the job centre. “What are they for? They have a duty to help

people find jobs” (field notes, 7th & 14th November 2017), a sentiment echoed by many other volunteers.

Despite the aging donated equipment and perhaps to counteract the reality that people were there just to tick the boxes to get their jobseekers allowance, the work club welcomed and valued all comers and offered a sense of community. People who dropped in were invited into other events alongside, for example, to form an impromptu audience for a drama performance, regardless of how little they might understand. There was an atmosphere of tolerance, managed chaos and conviviality, fuelled by plenty of strong tea, biscuits and banter, much of which took place plurilingually, in Hindi and Urdu alongside English.

Participants

JK and Selden - Job Seekers Claiming “Job Seeker Allowance”.

JK and Selden were a married couple, originally from Bhutan, who spent 20 years in Nepal as refugees, before coming to the UK 6 years earlier with their children. They lived with their 19-year-old daughter, who sometimes helped them call about jobs. Their expert languages were Dzhonka and Nepali, as well as Hindi and Urdu as additional languages, which they used for recreation, in the work club and locally when out shopping. They spoke a little English, too. JK could communicate enough to initiate conversation and small talk with me, and talk about his life in Bhutan, Nepal and his opinions about life here. Selden never had the opportunity to attend school, while JK’s education was extremely brief. Nevertheless, they could both read and write the Roman script well enough to read job adverts and complete simple forms with their contact details. They both had smart phones and could use the keyboard and mouse on the work club computers.

They had both worked as subsistence farmers, then JK worked as a labourer in road construction in Nepal. Selden had severe asthma and JK had an old shoulder injury. Nevertheless, they were looking for manual work such as cleaning or packing, as these jobs usually have no formal educational requirements. They attended the work club together, but if one of them were ill, the other attended and brought both of their jobseeker notebooks, for the volunteers to complete.

Brian - Volunteer.

Brian was in his 50s and unemployed for health reasons. He volunteered in

multiple roles for this charity, including as a novice ESOL teacher and at two work clubs. He was an expert English speaker and used British Sign Language as an additional language, previously working as a learning support assistant with hearing impaired children. He had been a professional singer, and sometimes provided musical entertainment in local care homes for the elderly. He quite often played “golden oldies” on YouTube at the work club, to which he sang along, and he had a talent for creating a convivial atmosphere. He managed the multiple calls on his attention from some of the more disruptive work club users with good humour and tolerance, often diffusing what might have become tension. He was, by virtue of his long experience, a “senior” volunteer and was usually the person who inducted new volunteers into how to support jobseekers.

Shona - Novice Volunteer.

Shona was about 30 and originally from Zimbabwe. She was a Health and Social Care undergraduate, doing an 11-week placement at the charity as part of her course. She was an expert speaker of English and languages spoken in Zimbabwe. Brian explained the role of work club volunteer and supervised her, as she supported the clients. She took notes for her course while she volunteered.

Mala - Careers Advisor.

Mala was originally from India and an expert speaker of Hindi, Urdu and English. She had a master’s degree and was interested in the research project. She worked for a national careers organisation and visited several charity work clubs in the area every week. She supported the volunteers and clients with interpreting and writing CVs and covering letters, which could later be uploaded to recruitment accounts. She also often helped jobseekers with applications when there were insufficient work club volunteers, or provided a sympathetic ear.

5. 4 Case study 2

Research Site and Participant

Parastou: Job Seeker Claiming “Job Seeker Allowance”.

Parastou was a jobseeker, originally from Iran, aged around 40. She had an MSc in International Business from a UK university, and was looking for professional work. Having originally come to the UK to join her postgraduate programme, intending to return home and take up a promotion, she and her family were forced to claim asylum

before she completed her studies. The family had subsequently been relocated while she had only recently been granted permission to work, and she and her husband were meanwhile claiming benefits. She was highly proficient in the use of IT and had a very high level of English as an additional language, as well as Farsi as an expert language and some Turkish. She was studying GCSE English and Maths part-time and taking driving lessons, while looking for a job. She was involved in the activities of a local church, helping to run their preschoolers' Sunday school. She did her job searches at home, by herself, using her mobile phone and this is where I collected the data.

5.5 Case study 3

Research Site: ESOL Centre Job Club

The specialist ESOL centre was part of a larger Further Education college. The centre had around 2000 students a year and offered ESOL, Numeracy, Literacy, IT, Employability and GCSE qualifications. It ran full-time courses for 16-19 year olds and part-time courses for adults, starting at beginner level. This job club was for students at the ESOL centre and was run by two learning support assistants, in a well-equipped IT classroom, in the hiatus between classes. As a class started promptly in the room at 4.30pm, time was very short. Sessions only lasted one hour and job club tutors usually worked with a student for around 15 minutes. Compared with the charity work club, the environment was very calm, with no interruptions. The computer suite was tidy with a large group of tables as a study space in the centre of the room, as well as computers around the sides of the room. Only English was spoken during the sessions observed.

Participants

Fernando: Job Seeker

Fernando arrived in the UK from Italy in December 2018, to join his mother, three months before I met him. Previously, he was living with an older sister in Italy after their parents separated and his father went to Germany. He was an expert speaker of Italian and one of the Ghanaian languages. Although he learned German in high school, he felt he knew more English, having grown up around English as a heritage language in the Ghanaian community. However, he only began learning English formally after arriving in the UK.

He was studying ESOL full time at level 1, alongside Maths/IT/Science at pre-GCSE level. He planned to start full time GCSE in September 2019. He did not

complete further high school education in Italy because of family migration. Eventually, he wanted to study civil engineering and believed there were more opportunities for youths in UK than in Italy. He was looking for any part time work to contribute to family finances, as his mother was the only wage earner. He used his college job club to apply for jobs, in addition to applying online at home or visiting places near his home.

Robina And Mehran: Job Club Organisers.

The job club organisers were professionally qualified teaching and learning assistants in the ESOL centre, who provided in-class learning support for students with additional needs, as well as running the job club.

Robina had a degree in psychology, but her vocational background was in social care. English was her expert language. Prior to joining the college, she had worked with adults with learning disabilities and older adults with care needs. She said,

I am not flustered by the idea of ‘different’ (in fact, I’m interested in and stimulated by it) and can communicate with people on their level, adapt information to make it easier to understand, and accommodate their needs even if they are not at all like me. It also means that I can be relaxed in the face of difference which helps people to feel comfortable and that I am on their side. I believe that a person feeling comfortable and heard is very necessary for them to try something that they struggle with; it has to feel safe to fail (Email exchange, 2020).

She had worked at the centre since September 2016, having gained her level 5 ESOL teaching certificate but decided not to be a teacher: she felt that this job used her strengths better and allowed her to work with individuals, which she preferred.

Mehran was originally from Iran and worked as a teaching assistant at the centre, running the additional learning support team as well as the job club. Alongside working in the college, he ran his own restaurant. He was an expert speaker of English; I did not observe him using any other languages and he did not provide any additional information.

5. 6 Specific Data Collection Methods - What and Why

Heigham and Croker (2009, p. 69) describe case studies as bounded systems, comprised of an individual and a site, including all the “contextual features” such as people, paperwork, field notes and descriptions. People and their digital paperwork

practices, embedded in social activity, are the subject of my study. Jones (2014) lists the basic task list of discourse analysts, to examine four things: texts, contexts, actions and interactions, and power and ideology. To achieve this, I needed to capture texts, talk around texts, what people were trying to do with texts and their attitudes towards them (Fairclough, 2003; Street, 2001) as people worked through job searches and applications. I planned to collect “genre sets” and “genre systems” (Bazerman, 2004b, p. 318) to ensure I could trace textual relations. Genre sets in this study are comprised of all the mediating texts in the sites of engagement; this is perhaps somewhat different from Bazerman’s description of a genre set given in Chapter 3, which could be interpreted as all the texts needed to achieve a particular purpose. However, in a job search or job application, the purpose or motivation as framed by AT is not entirely clear and is, in fact, one of the things under investigation. Furthermore, the proliferation of texts and genres in the activity system of recruitment requires some boundaries to be set in order to manage the research project; the site of attention provides these. AT, MDA and NLS emphasise the historical nature of practices and discourses, so I planned semi-scripted follow-up interviews to explore individual participants’ histories.

Video recordings enabled me to capture the ephemeral and fluid interactions of participants in the multiple spaces of computer mediated communication simultaneously. I rejected collecting data through screen recordings, as I felt this would be too difficult to explain to and gain consent from participants, as well as presenting me with a further concern about data privacy, as I might record login details; in addition, the video camera could record the screen with mostly sufficient clarity while also including peripheral action between the participants.

Norris et al. (2014) emphasise that video recording is not sufficient for good ethnographic data collection, so, like Papen (2020), they recommend writing field notes to enrich the video data with information about mood, thought or feeling which may otherwise be missed. Filming is subjective and it is difficult to predict what will be important to record, so I positioned the camera behind participants’ backs, pointing with a wide angle at the monitor. Standing beside it, I could then decide when to zoom in or pan out, as well as step forward for a screenshot or photograph. Photographs of texts related to specific job searches were identified in the moment by myself or participants and supplemented by field notes written on site. Later, these field notes were reworked to form a more coherent record of thoughts and impressions, related to the events of the

visit and other pieces of data (Papen, 2020). These field notes then helped me to identify salient sections in the video data for closer analysis.

As my video recordings did not always capture the screen with sufficient clarity for text analysis, I used NVivo webpage captures for subsequent archiving, for example of recruitment websites visited in the data. Together with the video recordings, I could thus capture text trajectories for close observation: this enabled me to analyse the hybridisation of genres and genre chains (Bhatia, 1993, 2016; Fairclough, 2003), to find out which discourses and practices penetrate and shape job-seeking (Fairclough, 2000, 2010; R. Scollon, 2001a; S. W. Scollon & de Saint-Georges, 2013) and how the participants' management of discursive and relational spaces shaped the jobseekers' career identities in a site of attention (Bhatia, 2010, p. 201; Jones & Norris, 2005; R. Scollon, 2001b).

Interpreters were not required for the study proper as the subject of my study was different "technologies of entextualisation" including language (Jones, 2015, p. 4), however, I did ask Mala to interpret for the follow up interviews with JK and Selden, as the purpose of those was to gain insight into their "back stories", which form a main constituent of MDA (S. W. Scollon & de Saint-Georges, 2013). I did not interview Brian as he explained his approach to job-seeking support to me and the other volunteers over the course of my site visits. It was difficult to schedule follow up interviews with Robina and Mehran, so I emailed them a request for information about their approach to work at the job club. Mehran did not respond, but Robina replied with a full rationale for her choice of methods. I felt Mehran's lack of response was a tacit withdrawal from further involvement (Bigelow & Pettitt, 2015; Thomas & Pettitt, 2017), particularly as he had initially refused to be recorded, giving his consent in a subsequent visit. In addition, his thoughts and feelings about helping Fernando find a job formed much of the talk recorded during that visit. Table 1 below shows the data collected and follow-up interview questions are in Appendix II.

Table 1*Types of Data Collected*

Case study	Type of data	Collection methods
All	Chains of texts relating to specific job searches: adverts, application forms, recruitment accounts, meta texts e.g. pop up dialogue boxes	Screenshots, hard copies, web page pdfs, captured by NVivo; video recordings
All	Chains of texts generated by participants: Emails, covering letters, CVs, meta texts e.g. pop up dialogue boxes	Sent to me or, printed by participants; video recordings; screenshots
All	Other job-seeking related texts: Personal notebooks; jobseeker claimant booklets	Photographed on site
All	Talk/actions of participants during job searches and applications	Video recordings of participants during job searches
Case study 1: JK, Selden with Mala as interpreter; Case study 2: Parastou Case study 3: Fernando	Semi-structured follow-up interviews	Audio
All	Field notes	Noted while observing and written up shortly afterwards.
Case study 3: Robina (Mehran did not respond to request)	Personal statement with autobiographical information	Email exchange

The question of validity in qualitative research is considered by some to be an inappropriate demand, when qualitative research does not aim to discover a single immutable “truth” (J. D. Brown, 2008; Hood, 2009). Brown (2008, pp. 494–495) prefers concepts such as “dependability, conformability, credibility and transferability” which can be provided by triangulation throughout the research process and this is what I have attempted in the following ways: by collecting different kinds of data (field notes, video recordings, texts, follow up interviews); using different analytical frameworks to look at the same phenomenon; and making three case studies with a range of age and education backgrounds as distinguishing features.

5. 7 Data Collection Procedures - How and Why

The question of how to take part as participant observer, is one of negotiation and balance, in recognition that involvement helps to gain deeper, more holistic insight, as well as acceptance. This had to be balanced with the participant/informants’ views of my position in relation to theirs as an outsider and possibly someone who might judge or challenge their actions. I found that participants’ personalities and positions of authority meant that I had to adapt my data collection procedures to something amenable to each situation. For example, I set up my camera slightly differently on each site, adapting to what was acceptable for different participants. Sometimes I asked to take photos after a page had been closed, and had to revisit these later, when writing up my field notes. I was very aware that the participants were giving up a most precious commodity - time - and that their goals were very high stakes, compared with mine.

Croker (2009, p. 11) reminds of the importance of bias in qualitative research. The researcher is the data collection instrument and also the data interpreter, so needs to demonstrate sensitivity to their own (inescapable) world view in that analysis, by considering their own impact at each stage (e.g. Duff, 2007; Hood, 2009; Papen, 2020; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2017). This has to be in balance with the contribution they can claim to make through their subjectivity. As already mentioned, this acceptance of being in the data and also forming part of the data is unavoidable in MDA, but importantly, it also opens up new territory: reviewing recordings, I could see myself in the action, being drawn in by others, collaborating, contributing and not being able, in the moment, to avoid this without an ethical compromise. Most significantly, during the site visits, I had not always been aware of the extent of my involvement.

After an initial introductory meeting with gatekeepers, data was collected over a

series of visits to each site, although the preliminary “hanging out” stage grew shorter each time. Case study 1 research site, the charity work club, was a complex and dynamic environment used by very vulnerable people. It therefore took from early November 2017 to late January 2018, to explain my research and establish trust, before being able to recruit participants and finally start making video recordings. During that time, I took extensive field notes, and volunteered with jobseekers, which gave me inside knowledge about the experiences I planned to study. I spent around 2 hours there on each visit. Table 2-Table 4 below show the sessions recorded, case by case.

Table 2*List of Video and Audio Recordings in Case Study 1*

Date	Participants	Recording format and date
06/02/18	Selden and Brian	Video: 2 x 20 minutes 1 x 10 minutes
20/02/18	Selden and Brian JK and me	Video: 2 x 20 minutes
06/03/18	JK and Brian	Video: 2 x 20 minutes 1 x 3 minutes
13/03/2018	JK and Shona	Video: 1 x 20 minutes 1 x 17 minutes
11/07/2018	Selden, JK and Mala interview	Audio: 1 hour 8 minutes

The research site for case study 2 was Parastou's home, at the dining table where she normally did her job searches. I set up my camera on a tripod, to focus widely on the whole scene, sometimes zooming in to focus on her mobile phone screen. I made field notes during the recordings which I revised later. Where the recording was out of focus I revisited the site later for a screen capture on NVivo. She also took screenshots and emailed them to me.

Table 3*List of Video and Audio Recordings in Case Study 2*

Date	Participants	Recording format and date
08/05/2018	Parastou and me	Video: 1 x 20 minutes 1x 17 minutes 1 x 15 minutes
15/05/2018	Parastou and me	Video: 2 x 20 minutes 1 x 5 minutes
03/07/2018	Parastou and me	Video: 1 x 7 minutes 1 x 20 minutes
25/07/208	Parastou and me interview	Audio: 51 minutes

The research site for case study 3 was the classroom where the ESOL centre job club was held. I was introduced to Fernando by Mehran, the job club leader, and explained the participant information to him. Fernando and his learning support assistant, Robina, agreed to be recorded at our first meeting. I set up my camera on a tripod behind them, framing the two participants and the monitor within the shot. I was far more of an observer than a participant during these visits, as neither Fernando nor Robina needed my help and the classroom was empty apart from another staff member working quietly in a corner. I had little opportunity to speak to Mehran and Robina before or after the job club, as both were in a rush. However, this was my former workplace, so I was already familiar with the site, the institution and its practices, although not these participants. I made field notes during the sessions, visiting twice before the study was curtailed when Fernando was offered a job. On the final visit, we did a follow-up audio interview to conclude. I had spent less time on site with Robina and Mehran, compared with the other participants, so after the preliminary analysis, I asked for Robina and Mehran for further biographical information, which Robina supplied.

Table 4*List of Video, Audio and Other Recordings in Case Study 3*

Date	Participants	Recording format and date
04/03/2019	Fernando and Robina	Video: 1 x 20 minutes 1 x 15 minutes
06/03/2019	Fernando and Mehran	Video: 1 x 20 minutes 1 x 14 minutes
11/03/2019	Fernando and me interview	Audio: 38 minutes
22- 25/02/2020	Autobiographical information from Robina	email

5. 8 Preliminary Data Analysis

I began the study with the broad aim of finding out more about the experience of migrant jobseekers, looking for work online.

I divided this into two provisory questions for the preliminary analysis:

- Provisional RQ 1: What discourses and nexus of practices intersect in an online job application?
- Provisional RQ 2: How do the “operations” influence the goals and activity in an online job application?

As much of the interaction in online job-seeking is between participant and computer or device, I drew on NLS (e.g. Barton & Hamilton, 2000), activity theory (e.g. Leont’ev, 1981) and mediated discourse analysis (e.g. R. Scollon, 2001a) which are concerned with social relations and social practices and include the notion of action as a mode of discourse.

I use a NLS view of literacy to investigate the nexus of practices and discourses that are embedded in and constitutive of online job-seeking texts. Rather than viewing a job search or application as a single literacy event, drawing on MDA, I saw them as a series of unfolding actions, centred around the texts in use, forming trajectories of

actions and texts , within which I identified various sites of attention (Jones, 2005; Jones & Hafner, 2012), initially through moments of hesitation, for closer analysis. Action is the base unit of analysis, subdivided into mental and practical actions (Bedny et al., 2000). I used the three level framework of activity, operations and action to explore the role of individual and organisational discourses and practices in shaping goals, tasks, action and text trajectories and ultimately, individual nascent career identity. As discussed in Chapter 4, a key contribution of AT is the foregrounding of broader institutional motivation for activity, and how operations affect individual ongoing motivation towards goals. AT enables the examination of the relations between goals, tasks, social relations and mediational means in relation to individual needs, wants, affect, circumstances, and obligations. Separation of data into the three dynamic levels of actions, operations and activity provide a framework for granular analysis of what and how individual and broader discourses, manifested as conscious spoken or practical actions, interact in a site of attention.

5. 9 Transcription Methods and Analysis

Transcription is part of the analytical process which is reflected by the different stages through which it passes (Bezemer & Mavers, 2011; Duranti, 2006; Norris, 2004). Norris (2004, p. 61) explains that multiple transcripts are produced during analysis before one that is used to present findings; Duranti (2006) also emphasises that the temporal nature of transcriptions means that they are differently interpreted with each re-reading, in response to the researchers' changing preoccupations. This section is therefore ordered chronologically, and explains a series of approaches to transcription, each of which served a purpose at a different stage of the analysis and data presentation.

I used NVivo software to begin transcription, as I could import all modes of data into one project. I could then link the texts and field notes I had gathered to the respective video segments to facilitate initial transcription and analysis. I used NVivo to transcribe the talk and code the videos for actions (see Figure 1).

Transcription of Talk

NVivo enabled me to regulate the video playback speed and automatically time stamped each speaker turn I transcribed. I transcribed all utterances addressed to participants, including myself, as these interactions comprise the environment in which the job searches take place. In Case Study 1, other work club users were sometimes

very disruptive, involving me or the participants in “off stage” talk, and I included this only where we were directly addressed and omitted talk not directed at us. In Case Study 1, when participants spoke in their own languages, my justifications for not transcribing a translation of this are: it was private talk; it was very minimal; the prosody was clear and noted in the analysis; finally, it blended with English sufficiently for me to feel I understood the gist, which sufficed for the analysis. I used the transcription conventions shown in Table 5 below. This transcript was later exported as a Word document and adapted for the multimodal transcript.

Table 5
Conventions for Transcription of Talk

Convention followed	Meaning
Times New Roman	Talk in site of attention
Courier new	Parallel conversations between participants
[talk]	Other background conversations
(...)	extended pause, more than 3 seconds
...	Shorter pause in utterance
(cough)	Additional nonverbal vocalisations
bold	Very strong word stress
<i>Find a Job</i>	Name of platform, website, company
Quotation marks, e.g. “candidate”	Text read aloud
CAPITAL LETTERS	Spelling a word aloud
0.00	Minutes and seconds at the beginning/end of an utterance
Speaker name	Speaker changes
(inaudible)	Speaker talking/reading aloud to self/inaudible
[town]	Anonymised location
Punctuation	Reflects intonation not grammar

Note: Interpretation of prosody is noted on the transcript in the “operations” column.

Labelling Practical Actions and Texts

As MDA does not privilege discourse, but rather, examines the role of discourse in the action (Scollon, 2001) the first step in analysis was labelling practical actions at higher, intermediate, lower and function block levels (Bedny et al., 2000; R. Scollon, 2001a) in the video timeline; my purpose in micro analysing to this degree was that it would contribute to a macro analysis.

I selected segments of the video and “coded” (the terminology used in the software) them with action labels, represented as different coloured stripes, shown in Figure 1 to Figure 4 below:

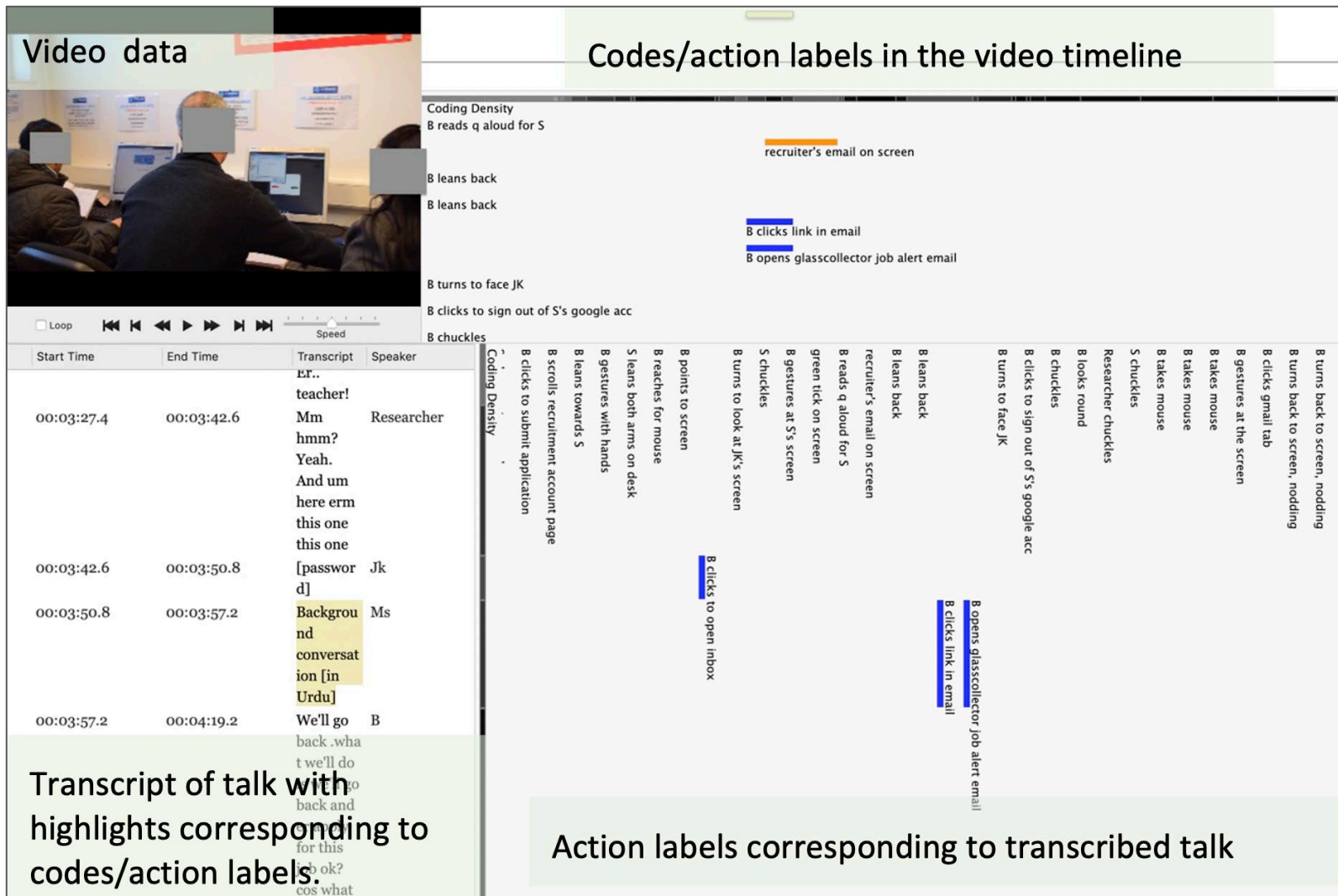


Figure 1: NVivo transcript and video with coding/action labels

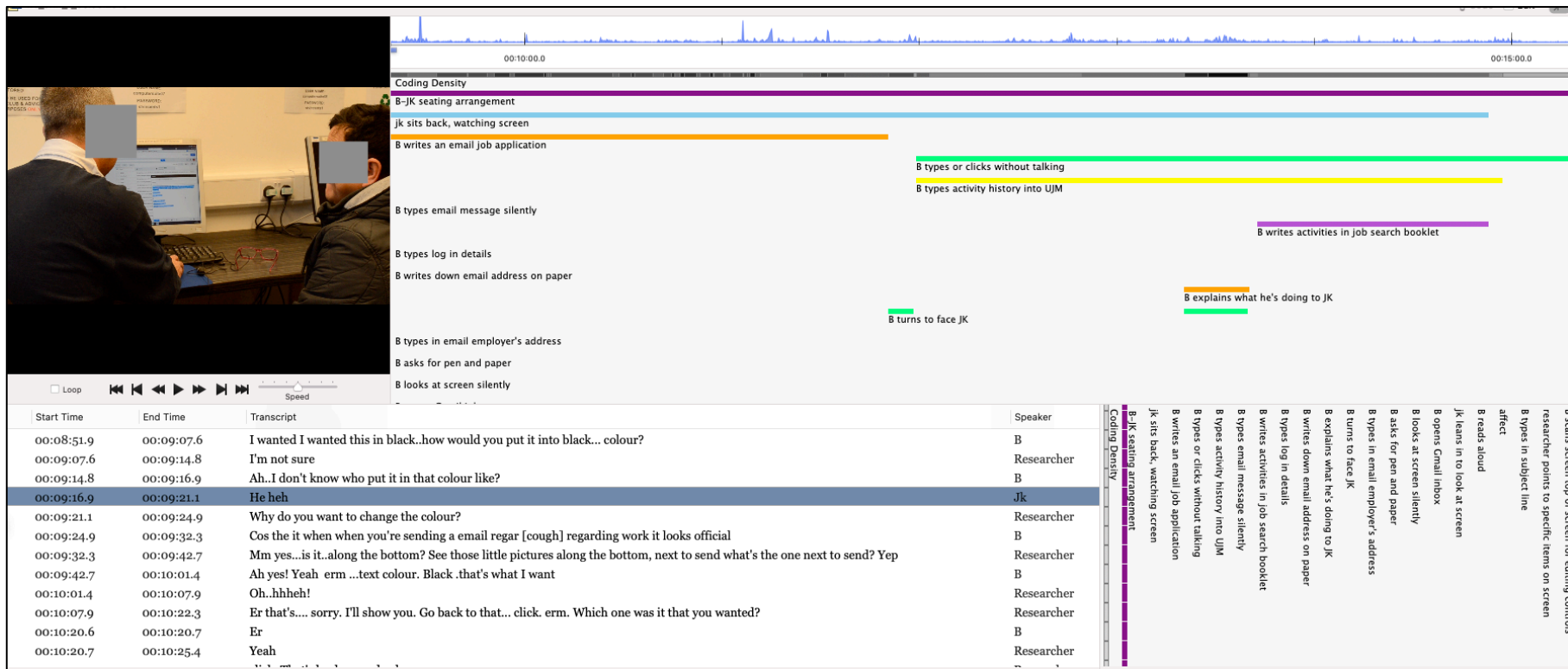


Figure 2: Screenshot of coding showing higher level actions, e.g. B writes an email job application; B types activity history into UJM

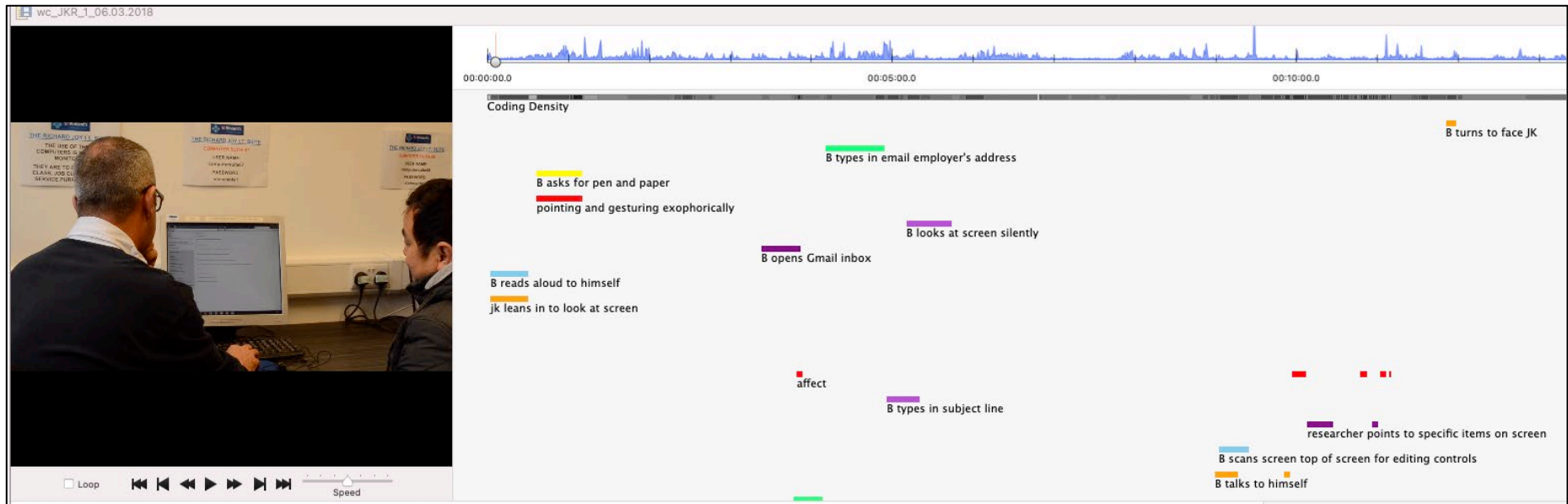


Figure 3: Screenshot showing intermediate and lower-level actions, e.g. B types in employer's address; B types in subject line.

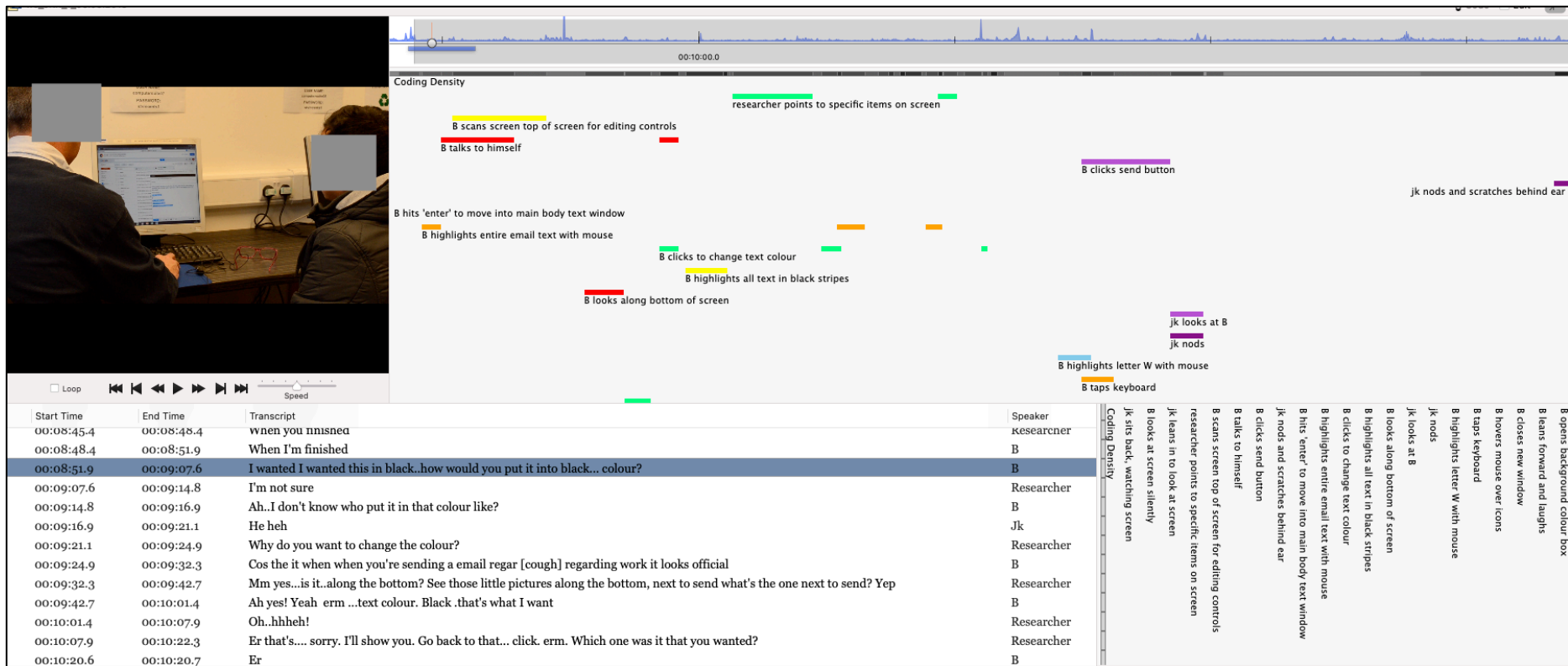


Figure 4: Screenshot showing function blocks becoming conscious actions, e.g. B highlights entire email text with mouse; B clicks to change text colour

This graphically represented the duration of actions, down to the micro level of function block. It showed the complexity of action sequences and the overlapping of activities. It also showed individual levels of participation in the events, shifts in prominence of different subjects, and indicated how these could be related to knowledge, power, agency and identity. By regulating the playback speed, I could more easily identify and annotate the timeline for actions, such as who controlled the mouse, who was leaning forward to the screen, who was looking around elsewhere, and could thus pinpoint sites of attention and sites of engagement primarily by looking at the video, rather than listening to the talk. The resulting coding stripes graphically illustrated job applications as sequences of lower and higher level actions, constituent of practices.

Next I labelled what was on the participants' monitors and what other texts were in use, for example the notebook, to more easily examine the texts that formed the basis of the interactions. The ability to regulate playback speed facilitated this, as I was able to freeze frame on ephemeral texts, such as pop-up dialogue boxes. After this, I labelled the transcript of the talk to correspond with the actions (see Figure 1 above).

Finally, I organised the labelled actions into sequences or action trajectories. These were subsequently grouped into chronological stages, according to the tasks undertaken to achieve conscious goals (Bedny and Karwowski, 2004) which I identified in the data, for example "searching"; "reading an advert"; "logging into a recruitment account"; "uploading a CV". Initially I did this in NVivo but attempts to drag action "codes" into "nodes" of branching sequences proved slow, laborious and somewhat imprecise in showing relations between actions, required by MDA, because of the limitations of the screen layout (in NVivo) or tabular (exported to MS Word) formats available (see Appendix III for examples of this in NVivo, exported to MS Word). Therefore, I subsequently did this by reviewing the videos and writing the actions directly into the multimodal transcript as I worked, alongside which, I could also correct errors in the transcribed talk.

5. 10 The Research Questions

The two provisory questions were looking at the same data, using two different analytical frameworks, that had in common the notion of individuals acting in a network of activity systems, using artefacts and texts to mediate the goal of getting a job. Text

trajectories that mediated actions towards goals provided the bridge between the two initial research questions. However, I could not discuss the level of operations without first defining what comprised it in this data. I therefore changed the sequence of the original questions, then reframed them, so that they were, by stages, exploratory, then explanatory. Therefore, the original research question 2, “How do the ‘operations’ influence the goals and activity in an online job application?” was subdivided into the three more focused questions below:

- RQ 1: What constitutes the level of operations in an online job search?
- RQ 2: How do operations affect the goals in an online job application?
- RQ 3: How do operations affect the activity in an online job application?

The level of operations is where the individual “historical body” (R. Scollon & Scollon, 2003, 2005) interacts with mediational means and the relational and physical environment. It contains the discourse repertoires available as embodied, socially constructed, normative knowledge on which actors can draw in the site of attention. Understanding the level of operations in each attention therefore was crucial to answering RQs 2 and 3.

Preliminary analysis revealed job-seeking genres were deeply embedded in other more abstract genres, for example CVs and application forms were integrated into recruitment accounts. Therefore, to find out why, the original first research question, “What discourses and practices intersect in an online job application?” was divided into the two questions below:

- RQ 4: What nexus of practices and discourses of identity intersect within the activity system of online recruitment?
- RQ 5: How Do These Practices and Discourses of Identity Affect “Employability” Literacies?

The resequencing of the research questions reflects that findings were traced outward from the emic to the etic perspective; the level of operations is tightly concerned with the emic perspective, whereas questions 3 and 4 are a broader level of analysis. RQ 5 attempts to bring together both perspectives.

5. 11 A Multimodal Transcription for Analysis

Bezemer and Mavers (2011) describe transcriptions as "transduced and edited representations through which analytical insights can be *gained* and certain details can

be *lost*" (p. 196), but that importantly, the details selected need to be justified by the research aims and facilitate professional vision. As with any mediational means, transcription, they maintain, is always partial, representative of the researcher's lens, rather than that of the original participants and also interpretative for both writer and reader. Moving on from the initial coding to analysis, I chose a multimodal approach (e.g. Jewitt, 2014; Norris, 2004) as befits MDA's concern with role of discourse alongside actions and text. NVivo does not support customised transcription, so I created a table in MS Word from the exported transcript of the talk, retaining the tabular layout to aid analysis. Temporality is vertical and the three levels of activity are horizontal. The selected texts are included alongside levels of activity to show how these relate to actions, as I am examining interaction with the social world via computer mediated texts.

Adapting an MDA transcription model from Rish (Goff & Rish, 2020; Rish, 2015) I made columns for: time, activity, discourses, texts, operations, actions and talk to conduct my analysis. An example from Case Study 1 is Figure 5 below.

The time and speaker columns corresponded to the transcribed talk, a legacy from NVivo, which was useful for keeping the actions and texts aligned with the talk. The activity column contained broader institutional, professional or organisational motivations to tasks; within the activity column I also noted goals, sub goals and tasks, reflecting AT's structuring of activity. Discourses were those observed in the talk, actions and texts in use; the operations column contained information about circumstances and conditions in which the activity took place, including needs and wants, informed by field notes and recordings outside of the site of attention under analysis; it also included my interpretation of prosody contained in the talk. Norris (2004) states that there are two aspects to interaction: expressing and perceiving.

While we do not – and cannot – know what others are experiencing, thinking, or feeling, we can perceive what a person in interaction is expressing; and people in interaction interpret what a person is expressing as a representation of their experiences, thoughts, and feelings (Norris, 2004, p. 151).

Based on this, it is only my perception of what the participants express that I can claim to understand in my transcription, which is based on what I observed through replaying the video at different speeds, and what I wrote in the field notes or found out in the follow up interviews. I interpret the whole, based on my perceptions of what I

observe is expressed.

The “Text” column refers to mediational means: I used a multimodal definition of “text” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2011), to include images of the screen, written texts, and gesture and gaze; the actions column contained observed practical actions; talk was mental action, i.e. the transcribed talk from the video data. Where both participants were doing something, I split the cells. For each speaking turn, I added the corresponding practical actions from the action trajectories, and images of mediating texts. In terms of horizontal sequencing in the table, during analysis I wanted to keep texts, talk and actions aligned and operations embedded in the middle of these, as this analytical level contained information closely related to them.

timeline	discourse	activity	texts	Actions in literacy event	Operation- tools, methods, resources, circs, affect	Talk		
	Employability discourse- flexible working			Brian sits back and releases mouse		Brian: "How many hours are you available to work and on which days o' the"... there you go...go there...		
	Brian's interpretation related to his knowledge of bar work	Gathering data for a PhD		I step forward to take photo				
00:07:08.2		completing the application form/meeting targets		Brian reads q aloud for Selden Brian traces words on screen with finger	Selden leans forward to look at screen	He reads this and then recasts, using rhetorical questions and open gestures and body position to establish permission in a non face threatening way.	Brian: How many hours are you available to work? And on which days...times of the week?	
	Selden's discourse – personal safety, well-being JK's discourse- same			Brian turns to face Selden	Selden looks at screen Selden glances at Brian directly		Brian: What's best time for you? Worth...	
				Selden shakes head		JK exclaims loudly in a disapproving tone, while Brian is doing this.	Brian: Shall we put both days and nights? Flexible? Selden: Night not no...	
00:07:23.8				Brian leans towards Selden	Selden faces forward and leans both arms on desk		Brian: D'you know flexible? D'you know what flexible means?	
07:30				Brian leans back Brian gestures with hands	JK exclaims loudly Selden turns to Brian Selden nods		Brian: Flexible hours? Means you can work any time between 11 till eleven o clock at night...yeah? JK: Long time! ... Brian: yeah? Selden: yeah	
		completing the application form		Brian smiles, nods and turns to face screen Brian reaches for mouse	JK talks audibly to himself and grumbles in own language		Brian: Flexible Selden: Mmm JK: long time nay...(...)	
		Looking after his wife			JK calls over to Selden	JK calls over very loudly in a warning voice	JK: Nay Selden... nay Flexible! (own language) flexible!	
	Brian's interpretation related to his knowledge of bar work	completing the application form			Brian lets go of mouse and puts hands on knees Brian turns fully round to face JK	Brian does this in an exaggerated way	Brian: Flexible hours?	
07:42	[more understanding of the work the text needs to do] JK's discourse related to prioritising his wife's well-being [not aware	completing the application form Looking after his wife			Brian turns back to screen with a nod	JK laughs loudly	JK backs down from his overt interruption	JK: He he he he he ah
07:47		completing the application form/ Looking after his wife			Selden leans forward to	Brian talks as he types JK talks to Selden in his own	JK's tone is grumbling and disapproving, not joking.	JK: ... (inaudible, own language) Brian: Flexible hours...? Selden: huh

Figure 5: Example of multimodal transcript used for analysis

An Intermediate Transcript for Reflecting on Preliminary Findings

I simplified the first transcript to highlight aspects of my preliminary findings. I eliminated the time stamps and combined talk and actions into a narrative format. I chose not to indicate overlapping talk or duration of pauses, as the study did not focus on the structure of conversation, so did not require that type of detail. I presented descriptions of most texts (Figure 6) but screenshots of selected trajectories to support findings, which I merged into single images (Figure 7). This simplification of transcribed talk and images allowed me to focus on each type of data in each stage of the sequence, and was a way of me further splitting the data then recombining in different ways, to make sense of it. The bold font in the main body text in Figure 6 signified salient observations from the video data. These transcripts are my understanding of the data: not a straightforward presentation of either data, analysis or findings but a combination that comprised a narrative thread, which I used to feed into a second cycle of analysis.

A Transcript for Presentation

In the final transcription for presentation (

Figure 8), to present a narrative thread, I re-ordered the sequence of columns so that horizontally, the reader moves left to right from observation (time, speaker, talk, action, text) to analysis (operations, activity, discourses). I only included images to illustrate my interpretation; to retain an appropriate level of detail, these are usually trajectories of rapidly loading sequences of texts on screen, or images of participant interaction. The images have been edited to maintain the participants' anonymity. I removed the split cells from the action column to reduce the visual complexity of the table and aligned actions with the relevant speaker. I also included both a speaker start and stop time to show the range within which the action happened.

Phase 1: Preparing to apply

Actions and talk: Brian clicks around **uncertainly**, first looking in different storage areas on the computer checking to see where he could store the downloaded CV, then searching through different menus on the Gmail sidebar. He finally opens Selden's Gmail inbox. His talk is mostly directed at himself:

Brian: What I'm looking for is her CV...

and **scrolls through eleven pages of old emails** before he locates an email with a CV attached. He clicks to open the email. Selden is slightly distracted and looks round to the door as more people arrive at the work club.

Brian: Ah just found something ...new CV

He clicks to download the CV, chooses a file name, scrolls storage space options and clicks to save the CV to the desktop. Selden turns around smiling and joins in with general laughter as other work club members are joking in Urdu. Brian returns to Selden's inbox, opens the recruiter's account verification email and clicks the hyperlink to open the job advert.

Operation: The Work Club runs on donated IT equipment without an internal network or personal user accounts on the public PCs. Two weeks earlier, I showed Brian how to download Selden's CV from an attachment in an old email, so here, Brian's decides to apply, by downloading the CV first. The first phase lasts four minutes. **Brian is almost entirely silent**, talking under his breath and facing screen while Selden watches him quietly with her hands folded. **He is not very familiar with the Gmail interface** and does not notice or perhaps does not know about the search box, so he does not use this to find the CV. The screen mostly has multiple windows nested inside each other, and multiple tabs open in the browser, which sits behind the other texts during phase one. **Many of the texts are almost ephemeral, for example pop-up dialogue boxes which Brian opens then cancels, as he searches for the CV.**

Texts: [USB flash drive sticker on monitor]; 'My Computer' dialogue boxes; Gmail tab with the recruiter's account verification email in the main dialogue box; Gmail side bar menu of hyperlinked icons which he opens and closes in his search; Gmail

inbox, which lists emails by date: email with a cv attached; the attachment icon; save as dialogue box; save to dialogue box; Gmail inbox; recruiter's account verification email; hyperlink to job advert; recruiter's website with job advert. **The CV is not opened at any stage. Disembedded?**

Discourses: There are stickers on each terminal, advising the use of USB flash drives for storage and posters prominently displayed with PC log in details and usage policies. All of these belong to a discourse of **IT governance** such as might appear in any **public space where safeguarding and data protection laws apply.**

The Google account, with its emphasis on integrated digital office and social media tools in the sidebar menu, and multiple options for downloading and sharing in the cloud, across devices or collaborating with others belongs to a **discourse about globally networked people who may want to use technology for professional and social purposes across, unfettered by time or space. The recruiter's job advert is similar, in that its methods of application are three major social media platforms, in addition to email, as well as offering an option to share the advert with friends. In addition, the job advert contains elements of marketing discourse, in the main body text and the social media features.**

Activities: The actions in this sequence form a sub goal, storing the CV, that will contribute to the next level goal of applying for the job.

Discussion:

As I began the analysis, it became increasingly difficult to decide which text was 'the one' from which all the other texts unfolded.

Brian had previously avoided applications that involved downloading and uploading documents because Selden and JK do not have USB flash devices with their CVs and cover letters.

So it seems, then, that the sticker on the monitor (in figure 5, overleaf) had directly influenced Brian's application practices as a volunteer.

Figure 6: Simplified transcript 1



Brian finishes the application form and submits it without any more talk, but his actions again show uncertainty, as he clicks and waits, moving in a cycle of pop-up screens that take him between the form and Selden's personal recruitment account (see figure 8 alongside). He clicks on the 'improve your profile' dialogue box to upload her CV, but this takes him to another page, with another hyperlink, which loads a blank page and he shakes his head in frustration, deciding to "come outta there" and clicking on the Gmail tab.

At this point, it is clear that he sees no value in spending more time on uploading the CV, and the priority has become recording the job application. The discourse of being a good volunteer, which shows itself in his patient and good-humoured manner, intersects with the benefit sanctions discourse, which is much more powerful as it has social and financial consequences and forms the activity in which Brian is engaged - working with Selden to avoid benefit sanctions, even when he has to tactfully override her husband's concerns.

Figure 8: Brian submits the application

Phase 3- recording the application

Actions and talk:

B: That's one job you've put in for

S: Mm yeah

Brian asks Selden for a pen and copies the job details from the list in the Gmail inbox into Selden's job seeker booklet.

Brian: There we go that's one job done

Brian glances at Selden as he hands her the jobseeker booklet.

Selden: ah yeah

Brian scrolls through the inbox to see if there are any other job alerts and notices a reply from the glass collector application. He points to the screen, "...there there you go", opens the email and reads it out.

Brian: "Thank you for your application for position as glass collector have received your details which will now be reviewed by our recruitment team
Brian traces the email with his finger on the screen.

Brian: "...you can review the track and progress of your application via candidate account your login details have been emailed to you. It is important to us that you have visited the site you are applying to work at and if this is not possible due to relocation that you have visited a similar site in our group.

B stops reading before the end of the email.

Brian: "...Find nearest go to [name] pubs." Ok?

Selden: Yeah

Operation: He talks to himself while he writes. There is quite a lot of background noise from me and JK discussing an application. When reading out the email, he does not paraphrase or interpret and does not read out or explain the end of the email, which advises the applicant to visit the pub and leave a review of their experience on a list of possible websites.

Figure 7: Simplified transcript 2

Start time	End time	Speaker	Talk	Actions	Text	Operation- tools, methods, resources, circumstances, affect	Activity, goals and tasks	Discourses
						as JK draws me in to help. JK and I talk quite loudly while Brian is searching for Selden's CV.	gathering data	
00:01:15.1	00:01:18.8	JK	Here					
00:01:16.4	00:01:16.5	Me	Universal job match?					
00:01:18.2	00:01:18.3	JK	Yeah?					
00:01:18.8	00:01:24.0		Yeah					
00:01:20.9	00:01:34.1	Me	No no sit it's here look here			JK moves to give me his seat at the monitor. I point to the monitor.		
00:01:24.0	00:01:24.1	JK	Yeah					
00:01:34.1	00:01:42.1	Me	You sit here that's ok I'm not then here your user id and your long number			I pat his chair and point to the details in his notebook	Me: gathering data/volunteering/teaching	Me & JK: Student /teacher
00:01:42.1	00:01:46.4	JK	Yeah					
00:01:45.0	00:01:55.7	Me	Use them					
00:01:55.7	00:02:23.2	Brian	What I'm looking for is her CV...refresh	Brian clicks "refresh" button on inbox			Brian: being a research participant/volunteer	CV as social fact of employability
00:02:23.2	00:02:35.4	JK	Inaudible [reading out pw/ID numbers)	Brian searches manually through 11 pages of old emails		Painstaking because Brian doesn't know all the complex features of the <i>Gmail</i> suite; doesn't ask me for help because he knows he can work it out himself, based on prior experience		Brian: in the process of learning to acquire this aspect of cloud computing practice
00:02:50.6	00:02:55.1	Naughty boy	Hello Barry ... [inaudible]					
00:02:55.1	00:03:03.5	Me	Erm here					

Figure 8: Transcript for presentation

Meta-Analysis

The purpose of this was to compare findings across cases. At this stage, each simplified transcript was scrutinised and highlighted for answers to my final research questions, and the video recordings and fieldnotes were frequently revisited.

For RQ 1-3 (on page 103), I used the three level AT framework (Leont'ev, 1981; Wertsch, 1985) to categorise the actions, operations and activity in the sites of engagement. I subdivided activity into goals and tasks (Bedny & Karwowski, 2004), and these formed the “stages” of the search and application processes. I related the goals and tasks to their broader motivations to conceptualise what activities were taking place and how these were shaped by mediation (included under “operations”).

I used Jones' (2005) conceptualisation of the main inter-related spaces in computer mediated communication to make sense of the level of “operations”, which is the most complex area of the data. The five spaces of screen space, virtual space, physical space, relational space and third space served as super-categories: these are shown in a mind map (Figure 9) created with Mindomo software and will be fully discussed in Chapter 9.

I created sub-categories within the relational spaces between participants and people referred to in the data, based on concepts taken from AT and MDA: individual circumstances, needs, wants and obligations; discourses, i.e. ways of thinking, being and doing; and social relations or potential networks. People referred to in the data represent historical relations which could be viewed as the influences on the participants' “historical bodies” (R. Scollon & Scollon, 2003, 2005). Therefore, I differentiate between these historical relational spaces, and the relational space between participants in the room, which I ordered under physical space. Physical space also includes additional information about the research sites. Tools, hardware and software platforms are categorised under virtual spaces. Screen space considers layout, writing spaces, toolbars and menus. Third spaces are places that participants mention in the data. Texts are categorised as artefacts, that sit between physical and virtual spaces.

I used Bedny et al.'s (2000, p. 196) model of self-regulation of activity to conceptualise the cognitive process during job searches, combined with the notion of distribution of attention (Jones, 2005; Jones & Hafner, 2012) to identify actions that required noticeable mental or practical effort.

emerged from analysis of activity, goals and tasks. Searching online, for example, involved evaluating search platforms, searching using key words, searching using filters, and managing different account log ins. From the job-hunting practices, I added the associated discourses identified in the preliminary analysis across all cases (“operations” in RQ1-3) and from these, created a superordinated category of “the right candidate”.

I then looked for linkages between practices, to trace the relations between practices and discourses of identity (R. Scollon, 2001a). For example, the practice of searching using key words, such as “administrator”, is related to career identity and values. These are connected to a number of other discourses, for example the DWP discourse of “welfare deservingness” and the practice of demanding evidence of job-seeking benefits compliance, or a monolingual discourse of language competence that informs interpretations of “suitable work”.

I traced outward from the practices to discourses of identity, considering how they intersected in the case studies. I created superordinated categories related to what appeared to be the most prominent discourses of identity that intersected in all the cases(Figure 10): benefits claimant; white collar worker; digital information manager; the right candidate; and marketing professional. Below each superordinated category, I listed practices and discourses that occurred in the data and traced these back to the job-hunting practices listed under “job hunter” (represented by dotted lines in Figure 10).

To answer RQ 5, I used the extrapolated nexus of practices, and sites of attention, to pinpoint the actions that constituted practices which limited or enhanced participants’ agency at different stages of the application process.

Findings from each case study will be presented in the next three chapters, followed by a discussion of the research questions across the quintain.

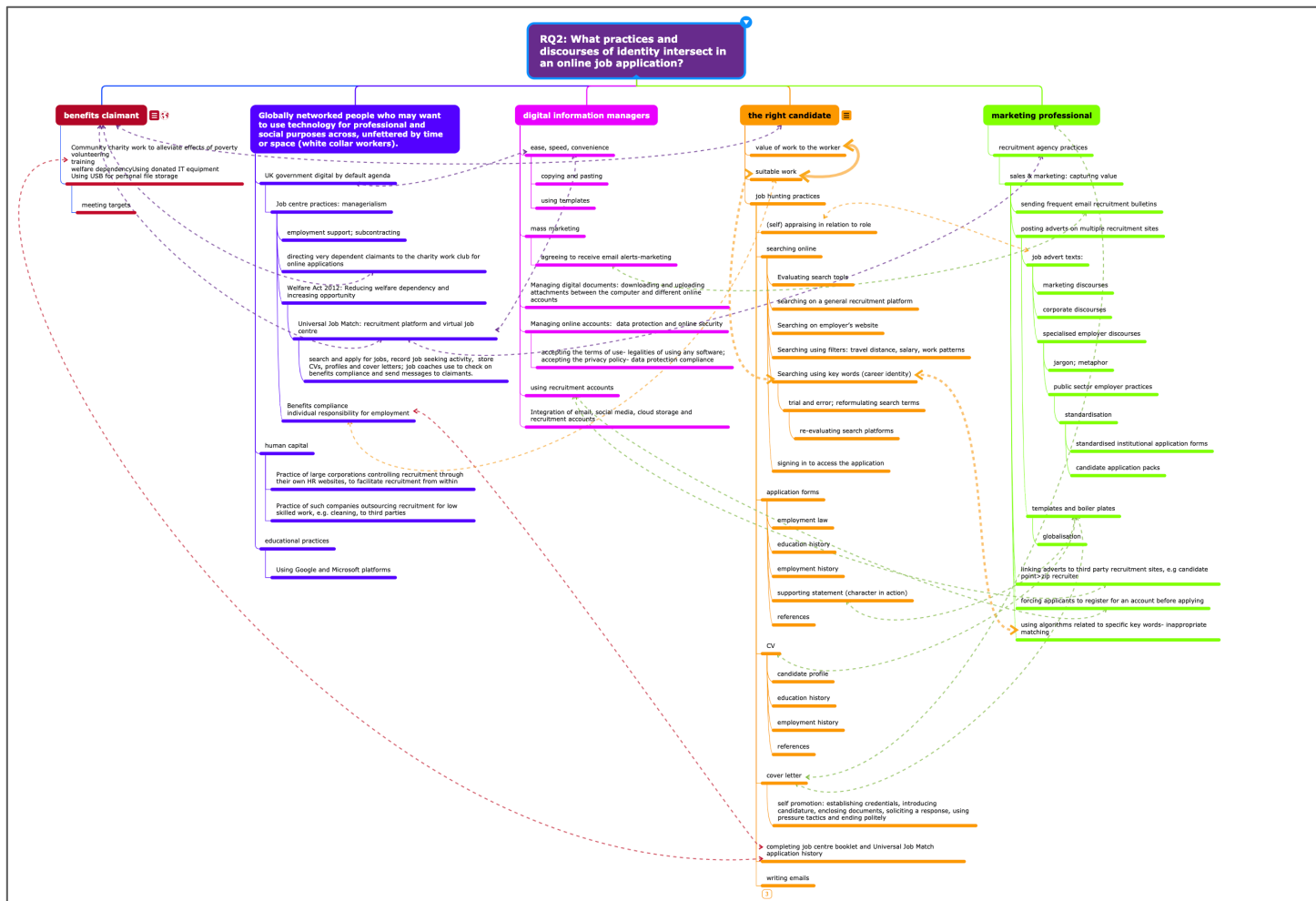


Figure 10: Mind map showing primary discourses of identity intersecting in job searches/applications (RQ 4-5)

Chapter 6 Case Study 1



Figure 11: The charity work club

This chapter concerns job applications done by volunteers at the charity work club, on behalf of Selden and JK. Participant biographies are in Methodology. Table 6 below shows the sites of engagement analysed, participants and corresponding transcripts.

Table 6

Sites of Engagement in Case Study 1

Site of attention	Participants	Corresponding transcript
The glass collector	Selden, Brian, JK	A
Cradle work	JK, Selden, me, Brian	B
The bus station night cleaner	JK, Brian, me	C
Are you fit?	JK, Shona, Brian	D

The chapter begins with a summary of analysis related to the participants' interactions around texts in physical, relational, third, virtual and screen spaces, and the discourses, practices and resources used to take action. Each site of attention is discussed in turn, to show how the process of evaluating and applying for jobs is shaped by attention, and differing discourses, with implications for identity and agency.

6. 1 Spaces

Physical Space

The work club (Figure 11) IT equipment is not internally networked, and there are no personal user accounts on the PCs. There are stickers on each terminal, advising the use of USB flash drives for storage, which Selden and JK do not have. Having CVs and cover letters, never mind digital storage of such genres, is very far removed from their life world and so they are completely reliant on others for managing their digitally stored private information. The effects of this will be shown in “The glass collector”, as Brian struggles to locate Selden’s CV, and “The bus station night cleaner”, when there is a problem with JK’s signature. It is the discourse about benefit eligibility, combined with the practice of applying online, imposed by the 2012 Welfare act, which forces JK and Selden to attend the work club each week, to which they were directed by the job centre.

Work club clients usually have two main job search accounts: *Universal Job Match (UJM)*, for benefits compliance, and *Indeed*, not government sponsored and in my data, generally preferred by work club volunteers, for ease of use. Brian’s usual application procedure is to use Selden and JK’s accounts on these websites. Once logged in, he can click “apply now”, and submit applications without sending a message or attaching additional documents, and so can sit between them and do both their job searches. In other words, he can do two 35 hours per week job searches in two hours: this is the DWP stipulated number of hours required for job hunting for Job Seeker’s Allowance claimants. He does not have time to do much IT coaching with JK and Selden, but does let them handle the mouse for guided scrolling and clicking, when time allows.

JK and Selden rely on the work club, as they are each required to apply for five jobs online per week, and several more using another approach, e.g. telephoning. Brian’s usual practices are closely linked to achieving these targets. Usually, Brian evaluates whether to apply or not based on several factors: the perceived difficulty for himself, or the client (for example, a follow up phone call) and how much time it might take; how many targets he has already met; how many interruptions he is experiencing from novice volunteers he is coaching and how much attention he can give to the application. Brian finds writing emails time consuming and avoids them unless he deems the job particularly worth applying for. Having met the job application targets,

which is often very challenging, he records these on the UJM website and in the JK and Selden's job centre booklets, which the couple take to their next appointments.

There is often intrusive background chatter, or repeated distractions from some clients. The work club enacts an ethos of being non-judgemental, compassionate and respectful towards all, and Brian, an experienced volunteer, demonstrates a tolerance towards distractions, balanced with diplomatic de-escalation techniques. Brian has seniority in the work club, by virtue of his long experience in two work clubs, so he often coaches and supervises novice volunteers, such as myself, into his own personal work club practices, described above.

JK and Selden are regulars at the charity, so know the long-term volunteers very well. JK attends for language classes as well (Selden goes elsewhere for this). Each visit, they routinely complete the fire safety register, and participate plurilingually in additional events, such as end of term feasts, social chat and banter. They are positioned as equals in such moments, and also in discussions summarising job application targets, in which agreement about goal achievement is established. Occasionally, they are also drawn into genuine discussions about workplace practices, but these are curtailed by the intersection of discourses from less familiar or more dominant practices, as will be shown in "The bus station night cleaner" and "Are you fit?".

Relational Spaces

These are the relations with others, present and past, that have influenced the participants' "historical bodies" (R. Scollon & Scollon, 2003). JK and Selden told me about their lives in Bhutan and Nepal (Transcript E, interview) where they picked up Hindi as a lingua franca from watching films, and conducting daily life on the border with India, and speak it well. They use it nowadays for joining in the banter at the work club, much to the surprise of some, and also out shopping locally. JK also reads and writes Hindi, which he told me he learned informally in Nepal, as the scripts used were the same. Their daughter lives with them and helps them with phone calls. They are regular church-goers at an inner city church. Friends there have told them they need to "learn English first" (Selden, Transcript E) before they can work.

They are stressed by the demands of their work coaches, some of whom request excessive details about each job they apply for (JK, Transcript E), and Selden has been sanctioned in the past, with no benefits for a month and many mandatory meetings

across the city. Brian empathises, and often talks about other people who have been harassed by job coaches, and about being unemployed himself in the 1980s. These narratives demonstrate a tangible fear of the consequences of benefit sanctions and are very influential in decisions about whether to apply, as will be shown in “The glass collector” and “Cradle work” when Selden’s and JK’s concerns are sidelined, and in “Are you fit?”, when JK is not asked for his opinion.

Third Spaces

The third spaces in this data are companies where the jobs are advertised, JK and Selden’s home, the other work club where Brian volunteers, and the job centre. Workplace discourses related to different jobs sometimes emerge during discussions about adverts, but less attention is given to discussing workplace practices than to the location and logistics of commuting, or the practical actions of navigating the text trajectories in the applications.

The job centre is mentioned constantly, as it is the rationale for the work club and has prompted Brian’s particular job search practices, attended by specific genres - the job centre booklet and the UJM website, as well as traditional recruitment genres of CV and cover letter. UJM and the jobseeker booklets are the mediational means that enable “action at a distance” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 32) and operate as genres of governance. JK and Selden were directed to the work club by the job centre, for help with these, and their job coach regularly checks their attendance. This introduces an element of compulsion which sits uncomfortably with the ethos of a charity work club, which aims to help alleviate poverty and promises confidentiality.

Selden and JK have two notebooks each, which are crucial for maintaining access to benefits and bookend the activity at the work club: a job centre one, for recording job searches, and a personal one, for login details for various online accounts. The personal notebooks mediate this information between volunteers at the work club, while the job centre booklet (see Figure 12) mediates between the work club and job centre staff, to provide evidence of work-related activities and thus comply with benefit conditions.

The job centre booklet is a hybrid of benefits compliance (the boxes for the work coach to initial; requests for evidence; a veiled threat that the evidence should be planned: “include how you will show what you have done”) and paternalistic individual

employability discourses (“planning the specific things you need to do can help you find work”). The demand for evidence of intentions and outcomes belongs to a discourse of suspicion and potential fraudulence around benefits claims. Mindfulness of this is shown in Brian’s practice of counting off how many jobs JK and Selden have applied for at the end of each session, e.g. in “The glass collector”.

work club

What I did and what was the result: (please provide the name of the company or organisation a job you apply for is with, and bring in any evidence to show what you have been doing to look for work)

APPLIED for on indeed
 Room Attendant Quebecs luxury APARTMENTS
 PART TIME cleaner minister cleaning [redacted]
 cleaner at servest Service

BN.

Completed
 Work coach initials

I will: (what I am going to do, including how, when and where)

Attending [redacted] work club.

What I did and what was the result: (please provide the name of the company or organisation a job you apply for is with, and bring in any evidence to show what you have been doing to look for work)

① Housekeeper - Springfield, [redacted] 2UB
 Aelborch trust

Completed
 Work coach initials

31

Figure 12: Selden's job centre booklet

Virtual Spaces

As discussed in Chapter 1, jobseekers claiming benefits are mandated to use the *UJM* website (Figure 13), which acts as a virtual job centre, where jobseekers can search and apply for jobs, record their job-seeking activity (Figure 14), and store CVs, profiles and cover letters, and which job coaches use to check benefits compliance and communicate with claimants. An individual employability discourse (Williams et al., 2016) is apparent in many features, e.g. in Figure 13, in the side-bar menu under: “Do you have the skills you need?” and under “apply”, “Or, tell us why you don’t wish to apply for this job”, which contains a menu of officially sanctioned reasons. Finally, there is the “activity history” tab, where jobseekers are required to report their applications each week (Figure 14). The features on the *UJM* website can be manipulated to fit a discourse of reducing welfare dependency and increasing opportunity, as long as structural barriers to those opportunities are disregarded.

Many volunteers and clients are unsure whether they should record their job searches on *UJM* or in the job centre booklet. Brian has developed his own practice of saving everything both on paper and online, on *UJM*, to be completely certain that his work club clients have the requisite evidence for the job centre, for example in this exchange in “The bus station night cleaner”:

Brian: Cos that's in activity history you see?

Me: mm

Brian: And you what you do is..

Brian clicks the red save button and lets go of the mouse.

Brian: save it. Anything you do, regarding looking for work, you save everything

(Transcript C, 00:13:30.7)

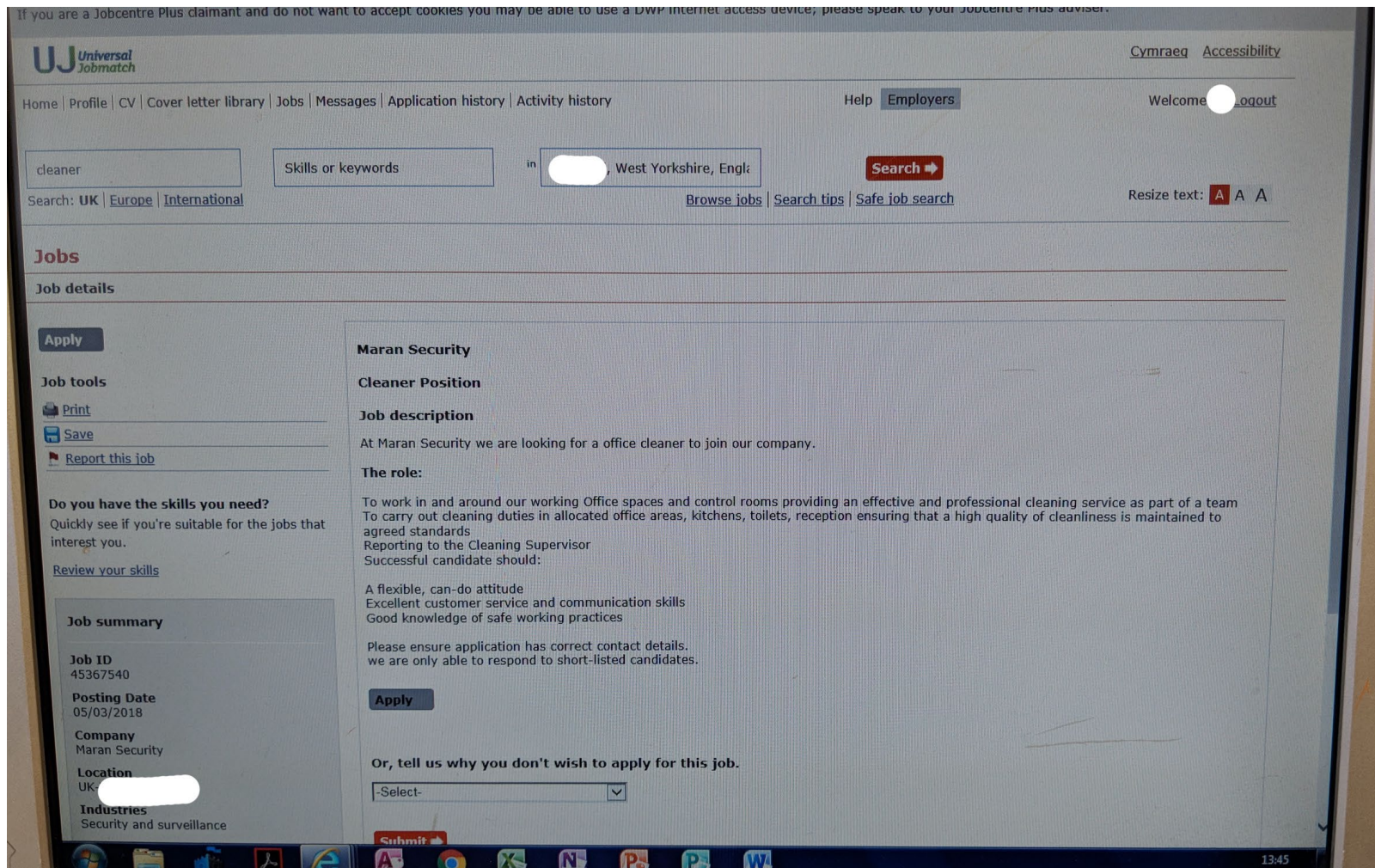


Figure 13: UJM webpage

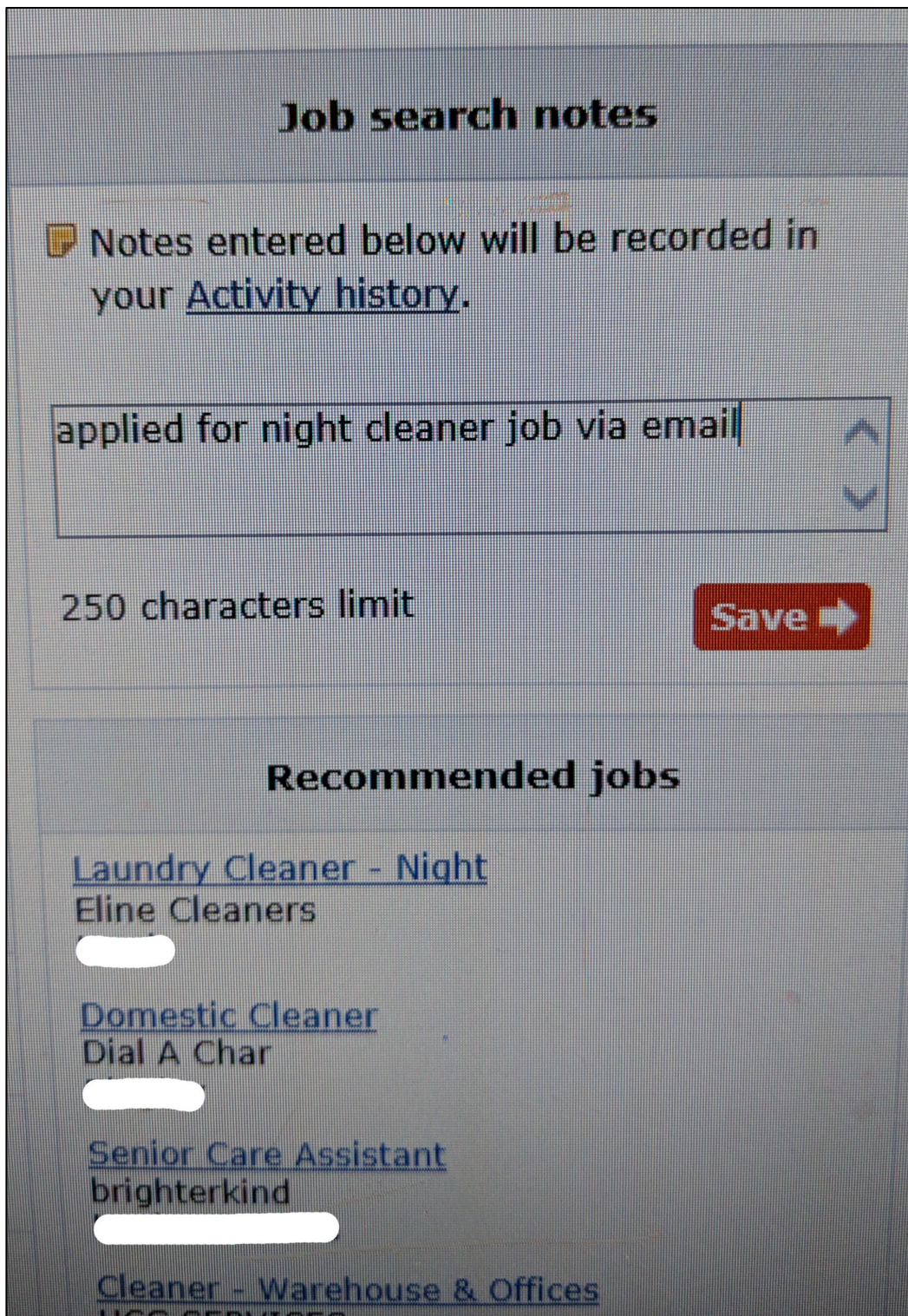


Figure 14: Activity history on UJM

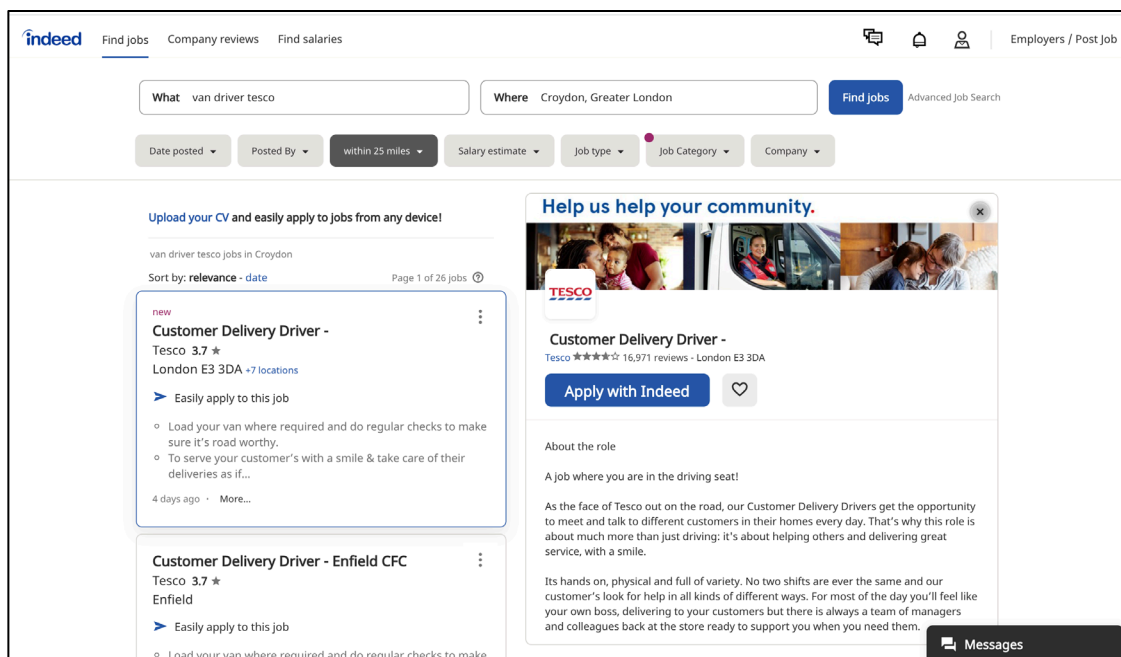


Figure 15: Indeed recruitment website

Indeed Recruitment Website

Adverts posted on *Indeed* (Figure 15) feature cloud computing, and social media and marketing discourses, e.g. star ratings for employers based on employee reviews; an integrated application button; a save button; functions for reviewing application progress, uploading CVs; and an integrated messaging service. *Indeed* users can also research companies and typical salaries. All of these functions belong to the practices of sophisticated digital information managers and promote a discourse of ease, speed and convenience. They combine in one place to afford the “peak” interdiscursivity of recruitment adverts noted by Łacka-Badura (2015). Proficient users of this platform would be able to research and tailor each application with ease, to produce a coherent narrative of Bhatia’s (1993) “credible relevant self”.

Various volunteers at the work club open and verify email, *UJM* and *Indeed* accounts for clients, and populate them with CVs which they also write. JK and Selden use their mobiles for watching YouTube and learning English (DuoLingo), but never for looking for work (Transcript E, interview) and it is unclear who may have set up their accounts. This causes problems when editing documents, as will be shown in “The bus station night cleaner”. Nevertheless, this preparatory work enables applications to be done within seconds, by clicking to confirm pre-populated dialogue boxes. Thus, volunteers can apply for many jobs in one session, enabling their clients to comply with

job application targets.

Indeed and *UJM* are used in combination to achieve job application targets. Brian's routine is to first check the client's Gmail for responses to the previous week's applications. Then he checks vacancies on *UJM* and *Indeed*. After applying for the target number of jobs (usually four or five), he completes the client's job centre booklet and the *UJM* activity history.

Google

The *Google* account, with its emphasis on integrated digital office and social media tools in the sidebar menu, and multiple options for downloading and sharing in the cloud, across devices or collaborating with others, belongs to a discourse about globally networked people who may want to use technology for professional and social purposes across, unfettered by time or space. It shares these features with the *Indeed* website.

Windows

The MS Windows platform belongs to a discourse of generic office work, administration and filing and the version Brian was using was quite old, so did not feature integrated cloud computing.

Screen Space

Brian normally uses Windows for file management, but is less "in synch" (Gee, 2011) with Google's cloud-based integrated social media, email and office platform. He often clicks around searching for documents or functions and this is one of the reasons he gives for preferring applications through *UJM* and *Indeed*, where all documentation is already conveniently stored and does not need to be added or edited. The specific ways in which his unfamiliarity with the newer cloud-based tools affect his application practices will be shown particularly in "The glass collector" and "The bus station night cleaner".

In the rest of this chapter, I will look at how the interactions around texts in these different spaces affect goals, tasks and the evaluation of jobs and decisions to apply, in each site of attention analysed.

6.2 The Glass Collector (Transcript A)

Brian is working with Selden first, and will then attend to JK's job applications. Meanwhile, JK quietly tries to log into the PC by himself, as it is something he has done before. Figure 16 shows how the participants are seated during the session. Arrows indicate movement of participants during the session.

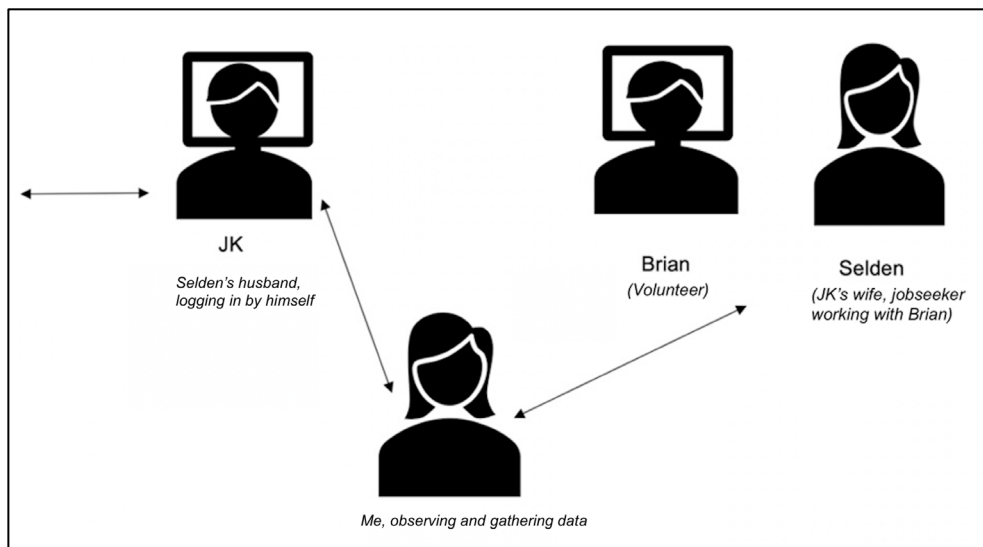


Figure 16: Participants' seating arrangements

Brian's conscious goal in this data is to apply for a glass collecting job in a pub (Figure 17). The site of attention opens when Brian, having clicked to apply by email for this vacancy, is steered into opening a recruitment account and downloading Selden's CV from an old email, which I had shown him the previous week. The application is divided into three stages, reflecting the goals and tasks observed: preparing to apply, completing the application and recording the activity to avoid benefit sanctions.

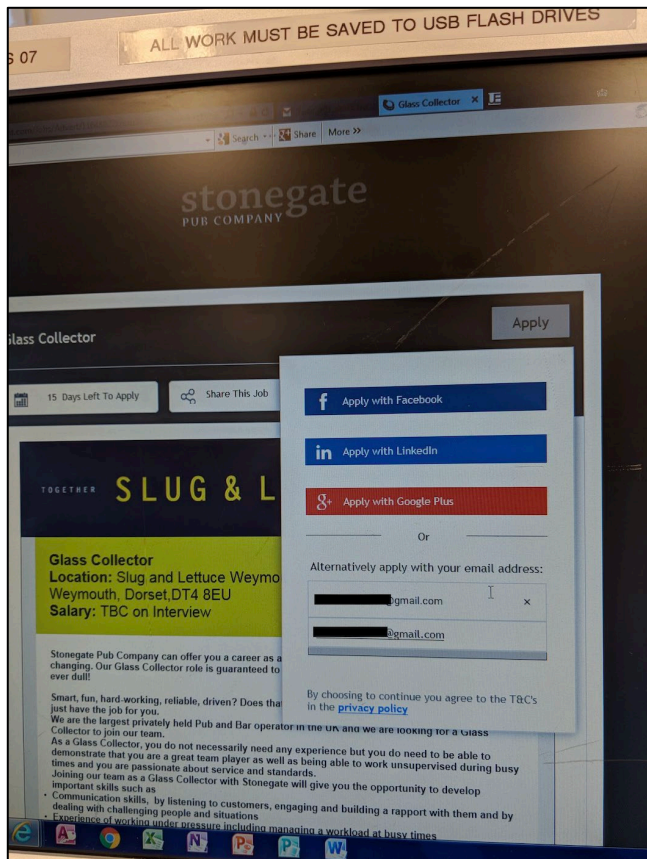


Figure 17: The monitor, with the glass collector job advertisement on the screen

Analysis

Stage 1: Preparing to Apply.

Typical of recruitment texts (Bhatia, 2004, 2016; Łącka-Badura, 2013) the job advert (Figure 17) is a boiler plate text, which mainly markets the company. The social media discourse in the advert, visible in the prominent LinkedIn, Facebook and Google icons as application methods, reflects the practices of globally networked people who may want to use technology for professional and social purposes across and unfettered by time or space. This intersects with the generic employability discourse in the advert (Figure 18), voiced in lexis such as “smart, fun, hard-working, reliable, driven”, that refer only to soft skills (Allan, 2013) and psychological capital (Williams et al., 2016).

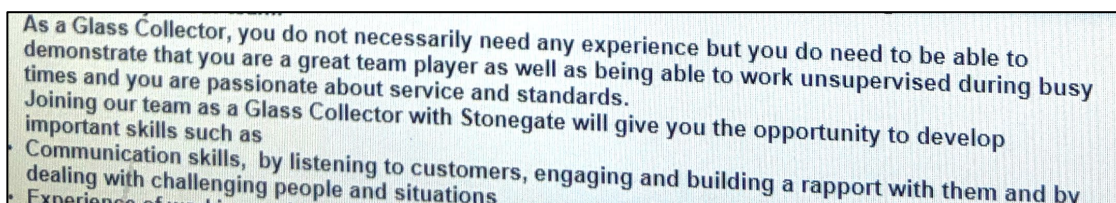


Figure 18: The main body text of the glass collector advert

This is part of its appeal, as Selden is structurally disbarred from many vacancies, through lack of UK experience and formal education. Cloud storage and social media are completely embedded into this application, and proficiency with these is assumed by recruiters, even when the jobs advertised are unskilled, such as this glass collector vacancy, which only refers to desirable personal qualities. Actually, JK and Selden use Facebook but not for job hunting and it is never mentioned for job searches at the work club.

As mentioned in Screen Space, Brian is unfamiliar with cloud computing and Selden and JK do not have their job-seeking documents on USB sticks. The nexus of practices in storage and application methods thus limit the number of jobs he can apply for.

This site of attention opens when Brian becomes conscious of a subgoal, uploading Selden's CV to the newly opened recruitment account with Stonegate Pubs. This was unanticipated, and diverts his attention to the tasks of finding the CV, downloading, saving, and then uploading it (Transcript A, 00.00- 00:03:27.4) before he is permitted to return to the job application. The text trajectory moves from advert, to Gmail account, to Selden's notebook and then a painstaking exploration of dialogue boxes, different hyperlinked icons and menus, scrolling through eleven pages of old emails to find the one with an attached CV. The actions are dominated by uncertainty, and it takes four minutes out of a total of eleven, before they are ready to start the application form. All Brian's attention here is drawn by the practices of cloud-based file management, positioning Selden as a passive bystander. Brian's explanation (below) to Selden about this process seems to demonstrate the alien nature of the nexus of practices:

Brian uses much gesturing and pointing, alternately looking at the screen and making eye contact with her, while she looks at him, concentrating on what he says.

Brian: We'll go back ...what we'll do is we'll go back and er apply for this job OK? Cos what we've had to do is we've had to go into your emails and find your CV. So I had to go all the way back to the beginning of your... email address and that's where your CV is and I've saved it onto the desktop for the time being. OK?

(Transcript A, 00:03:57.2).

Nevertheless, in attempting to do this, he is being a “good” volunteer, keeping the client involved and informed as far as possible.

Stage 2: Completing the Application.

Time taken by the practices in Stage 1 mean Brian is under pressure to do the application quickly; consequently he does tasks for Selden, in order to achieve his goal more quickly, even when she could do them with his help, for example filling in her contact details. The activity now becomes more focused on doing the application, ever more motivated by benefits compliance as it progresses.

In the beginning, Brian jokes with Selden as he fills in the form. The questions (Transcript A, figures 10-20), as he clicks through the dialogue boxes, relate to discourses about employment law, human resources management and marketing and are superficially innocuous, yet not straightforward to answer, e.g. “Are they EU citizens?” (Transcript A, 00:05:12.4). At different points, Brian negotiates cultural norms and voices employability discourses that position job applicants as socially conformist (Del Percio, 2018; Flubacher et al., 2017). Responding to the question “How will you travel to and from work”, Selden chuckles as she says “Walk”, acknowledging that walking everywhere is very unusual in the UK. Brian laughs, but types “Walking and public transport” (Transcript A, 00:06:20.2. Figure 13) which fits more with UK cultural norms. Selden comes from a walking culture and it is common, JK tells me, for people to traverse mountains on foot, making their own paths, for days. Walking remains JK and Selden’s mode of transport and they often spend the day walking across the city to appointments with the job centre, work club and education charities, despite Selden’s asthma. Brian, however, seems to think public transport fits better with an employer’s expectation of travelling to work.

He tries to explain fully again when he negotiates an answer to the next question: “How many hours are you available to work?” Although the question on the form appears neutral, in this instantiation “flexible” becomes a contested term. Selden initially rejects night work:

Brian: Shall we put both days and nights? Flexible?

Selden: Night not no[...]

(Transcript A, 00:07:08.2 -00:07:24.1)

The notion of “flexible working” belongs to both fair recruitment practices and individual employability and it may be the latter interpretation which Brian is thinking of here, in the way he recasts the concept with specific start and finish times. Brian’s body language, turning to face Selden, sitting back and using his hands to gesture about time, and the recasting of the question: “any time between 11 till eleven o clock at night...yeah?” culminate in him persuading Selden that “flexible” is a suitable answer, despite her original rebuttal of his suggestion to “put day and night”.

However, JK, who had been quietly observing, is very concerned when Brian mentions the time, and interrupts. JK switches to a blend of his own language and English to warn Selden against being “flexible”. His voice changes, from quite a high pitched upward intonation, when he is talking to me at the computer, to a downward intonation and low pitch, in this private talk. The change in pitch and language signify a private and serious concern.

<p>Selden: Mmm</p> <p>JK: long time nay...[...]</p> <p>JK calls over to Selden.</p> <p>JK: Nay Selden! (own language) flexible!</p> <p>Brian lets go of mouse and puts hands on knees, then turns fully round to face JK.</p> <p>Brian: Flexible hours?</p> <p>Brian turns back to screen with a nod while JK laughs loudly.</p> <p>JK: He he he he he ah...</p>
--

(Transcript A, 00:07:24.1-00:07:47.9).

Brian uses a mildly questioning intonation, but his body language, dropping his hands to his knees and turning round to look at JK, is perceived by JK as a warning to drop his objection, which JK immediately signals by laughing. However, he continues to grumble in his own language, and when he laughs off his intervention, the pitch of his laughter is again high and he continues laughing like this when he sits back down at his PC. JK’s laughter seems to cover embarrassment, and in the follow-up interview, he explains that he finds the whole circus of looking for work online futile. I am also uncomfortable with the glaring inequalities in the situation.

Switching to their own language indicates both seriousness and privacy, and belongs to a discourse of mutual concern for each other, as a couple. Selden is considerably older than her documents state and has been in hospital recently because of an asthma attack. In this sequence, the usually positive discourses around flexible working intersect with the discourse of being a caring spouse and the term “flexible” is perceived by JK as exploitative and threatening to his wife’s well-being. The dropping of JK’s objection, though, exposes his and Selden’s vulnerability to other people’s discourses, which may be well intentioned, but because of the language barrier and the transient nature of the volunteers at the work club, may very likely not be fully informed.

Brian finishes the application form and submits it without any more talk. As before, his actions show uncertainty, as he clicks and waits, moving in a cycle of pop-up screens that take him between the form and Selden’s personal recruitment account (Figure 19). At this point, it is clear that he sees no value in spending more time on uploading the CV, and the priority again becomes recording the job application. The discourse of being a good volunteer, which shows itself in his patient and good-humoured manner, intersects with the benefit sanctions discourse, which is much more powerful as it has social and financial consequences and forms the activity in which Brian is engaged - working with Selden to avoid benefit sanctions, even when he has to tactfully override her husband’s concerns.

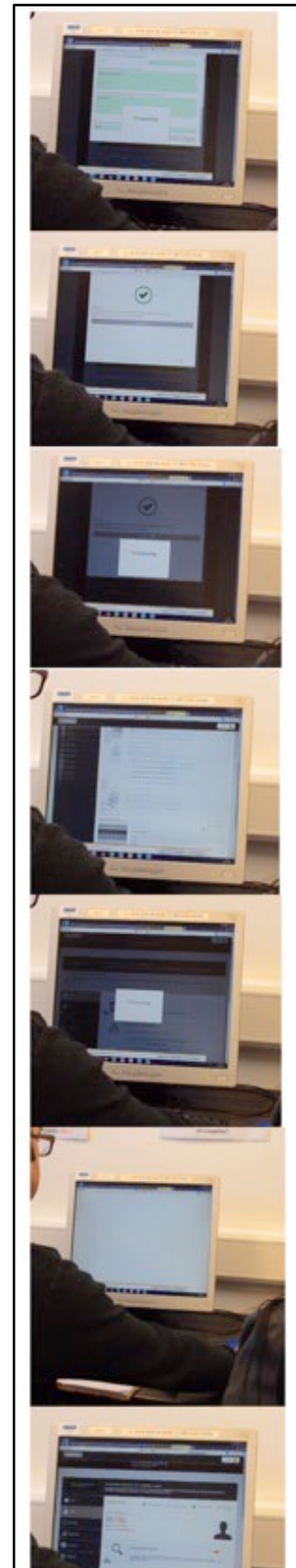


Figure 19: Brian submits the application

Stage 3 Recording the Application.

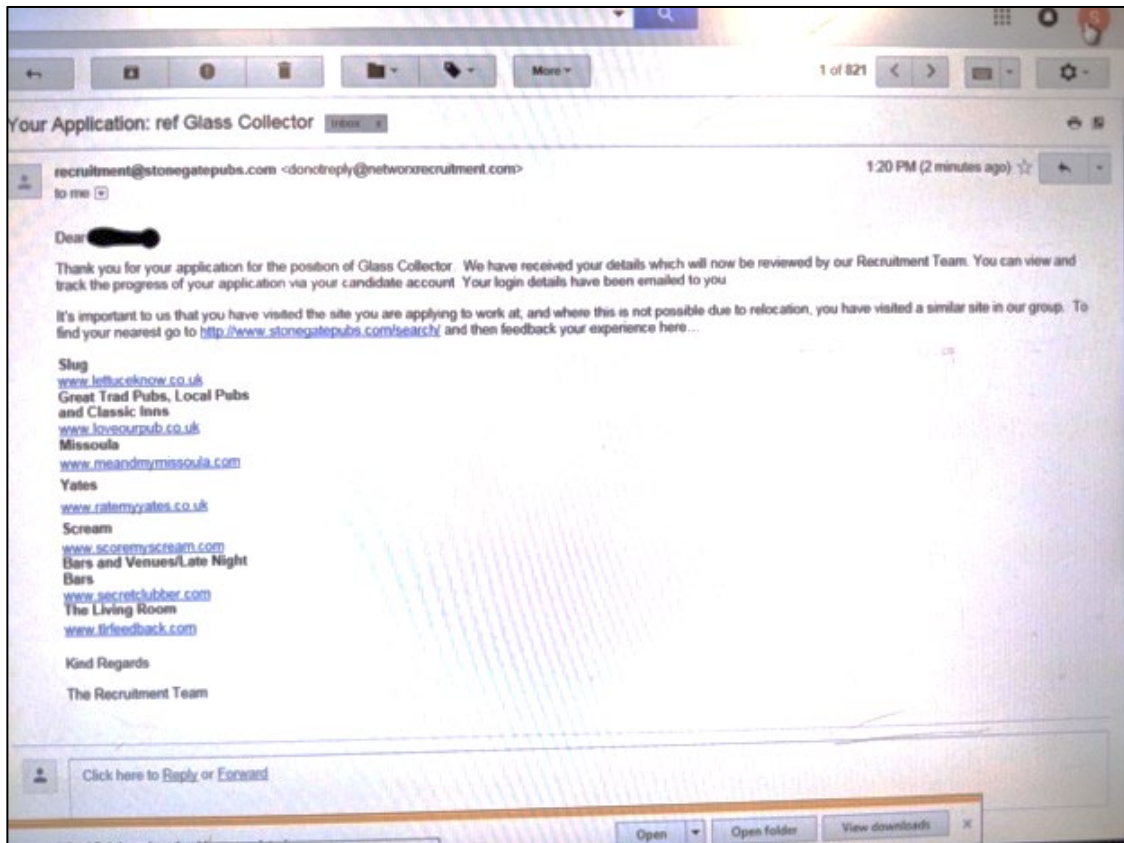


Figure 20: The confirmation email from the recruiter

In this final stage, the talk and action belong to a discourse of benefits compliance to avoid sanctions; the activity is motivated by the need to provide evidence to the job centre. The goal is to apply for x number of jobs in the session and the task is to complete the work related activity history with details of jobs applied for.

Brian mentions the job search tally twice, once after completing the application and once after recording it in the job centre booklet. His actions had shown a degree of uncertainty submitting the application, and so his utterance: "...there, there you go", when he sees the confirmation email from the recruiter arrive in Selden's inbox (Figure 20), appears to express relief. His next action, of reading the email aloud, appears to be directed at himself, as he does not paraphrase or read out the entire text, and ends his turn with a rhetorical "OK?", while facing the screen.

Brian: ...Find nearest go to [name] pubs." Ok?

Selden: Yeah

(Transcript A, 00:11:43.3).

He then writes up the details in Selden's job centre booklet.

The part of the email he does not read out is end of the final sentence: "...and then feedback your experience here..." (Figure 20) underneath which is a list of hyperlinks. This is an example of an embedded marketing discourse (Bhatia, 2016), strikingly different from the first part of the email, which belongs clearly to the anticipated text trajectory of written confirmation of an application. It implies another trajectory of texts and another event, although it is unclear what part they might play in the application. Brian ignores it, his overriding concern being that the application has been received and he knows that Selden will not be able to do what the email instructs.

On this occasion, he had made a conscious decision to try a new method of applying for a job on Selden's behalf, a departure from his usual practice of direct applications through *UJM* and *Indeed*, described above. His decision to apply is nested inside a nexus of practices and discourses, that cause uncertainty for Brian and, for JK, a threat.

The recruitment practice of setting up personal accounts before making an application, in combination with the work club's particular practice of using USB for personal documents, is behind the CV download and email trajectory that precedes the job application. When Brian received the email job alert, he probably did not anticipate the time-consuming trajectory of texts which he finally followed. As one of his overriding concerns is meeting the job-seeking targets set by Selden and JK's job coaches, in the end, even the CV does not matter, and it is unclear if it is ever uploaded, the most powerful text being the job application recorded in the job centre booklet. Brian has known people be sanctioned for not having applied for enough jobs, or not having evidence both online and in their paper booklets. As described in *Third Spaces*, these documents themselves represents a social fact (Bazerman, 2004b), in that without them, the jobseeker is deemed not to have applied for any work and so could very well face sanctions.

6.3 Cradle Work (Transcript B)

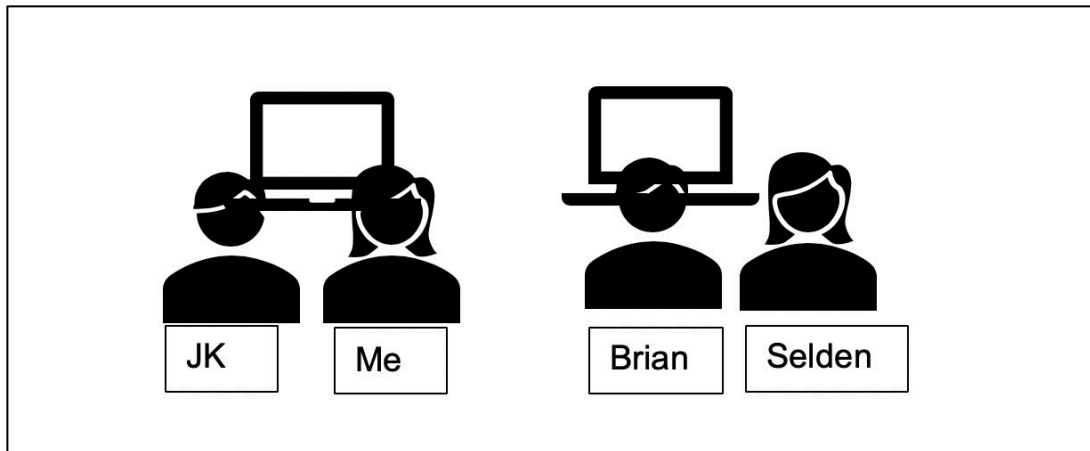


Figure 21: “Cradle work” seating arrangement

In this data, recorded just after Selden’s glass collector application, I sit with JK (Figure 21). Where a direct application is possible, the procedure is a straightforward matter of entering contact details and clicking to apply, and so I had coached him to send three simple application forms himself, though *UJM*. JK uses our shared understanding of window cleaning work and his situation as a non-driver to initiate a very funny joke about taking a taxi, or bus, with his ladders, to window cleaning jobs (Transcript B, 00:10:27.4- 00:10:49.4). Even with his limited lexical range he can evoke a complex and amusing narrative that enables him to be a full participant in evaluating the job vacancies in the list. The site of attention opens as we look at another window cleaning advert.

Analysis

Stage 2: Understanding the Window Cleaning Advert.

(Transcript B, 00:11:24.5-00:13:03.6)

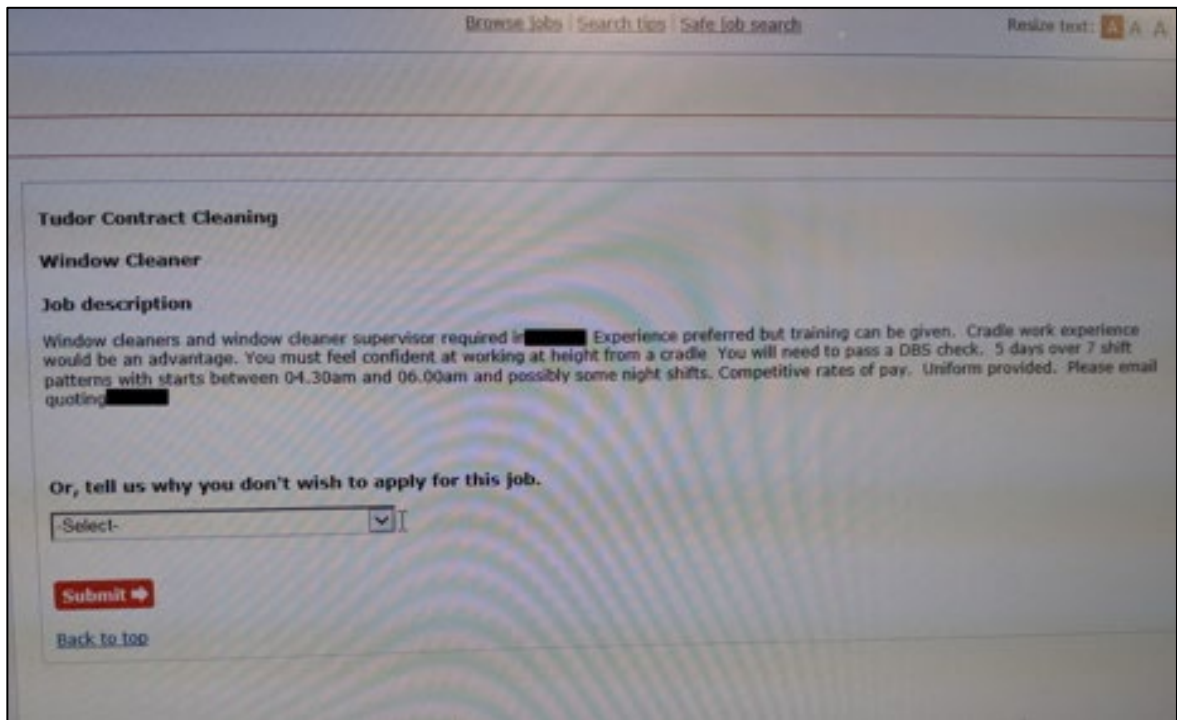


Figure 22: Window cleaning vacancy on UJM

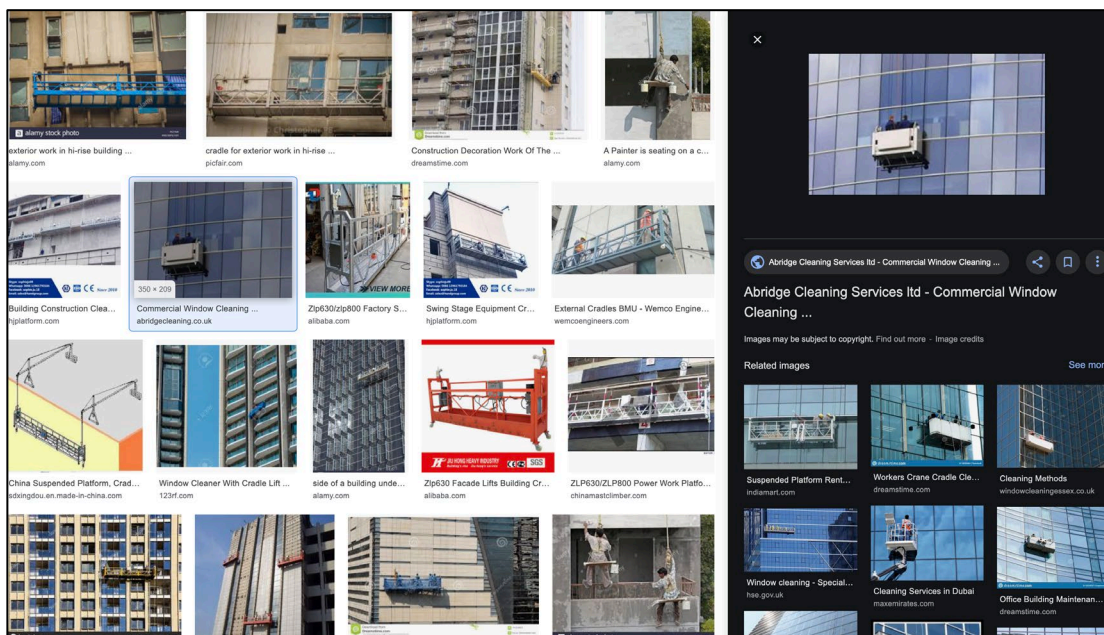


Figure 23: "Cradle work" image search on Google

We read down the UJM search results, methodically checking everything possible to meet JK's targets. When I start reading the advert (Figure 22), I hesitate about how to explain "cradle work". I use Google images (Figure 23) to show the meaning visually, drawing on my ESOL teaching experience and also to show JK the protective equipment, to reassure him about the safety of the work, which fits with my ethical framework as a teacher, volunteer and research student. I see the images of

cradle-work from a discourse of corporate cleaning service providers specialising in highly developed, densely built, urban environments, using high-tech safety equipment. However, JK has spent a lifetime in dangerous manual labour, road-building in Nepal and his response is immediately negative.

JK looks at the screen.
JK: Oh no good! Outside
Me: Yeah
JK: No good

(Transcript B, 00:12:15.9)

He laughs incredulously and Selden is immediately concerned that the work is “hard”; she talks over me to JK in her own language and English, in a warning voice, much like in JK’s interruption over “flexible” working:

Selden: (own language) building outside nah (own language) outside
Me: “Cradle cradle work experience will be an advantage”
Selden: Hard
Selden: Hard [...]?
Me: “You must feel confident at height working from a cradle”
JK: Hard

(Transcript B, 00:12:37.4 -00:12:45.8).

While I, as a language teacher, am interested in the euphemism of “cradle” to suggest safety, for JK and Selden, the images represent physical risk. Selden persists in warning JK, but in a softer tone. Brian uses black humour when he interjects, but does not take a stance on the suitability of the advert: “be alright on a windy night”

(Transcript B, 00:12:49.4).

JK expresses his reluctance three times as “hard”, but his voice becomes less insistent and he sounds resigned, and a little embarrassed, when I say that we can apply.

JK	Hard
Me	that's ok?
Brian	Be OK on a windy night haha !
Brian makes a rocking movement and turns back to Selden's screen	
JK	Hard
Me	Oh don't say that!
JK	Yes
Me	Right
JK	Ha ha

(Transcript B, 00:13:03.6 - 00:13:14.0).

I feel we can exploit the situation for learning, as earlier, I had been coaching JK through doing some simple applications and this, rather than finding JK a job, is my main goal.

This sample is a good illustration of how the different levels of action, operation and activity influence each other, tipping the balance of power in favour of the person with access to the most powerful discourses. My actions belong to a discourse of teaching, yet in part because my subconscious teaching orientation frames my activity so strongly, it impedes my awareness of JK and Selden's perceptions of cradle work as a threat. My decision to use Google images certainly clarified the meaning of cradle work, my conscious goal at that point being to explain word meaning, but JK's and Selden's interpretation of the images was of danger, while mine was of safety. My interpretation led to my action of showing more images, pursuing my goal of persuading JK that cradle work was relatively safe, so that he could claim to be "comfortable working at height", as stated in the advert (Figure 22). This prompted loud concern from Selden, taken up by JK. The concern stemmed from their orientation to the activity: not of being my students, but of JK being a genuine job applicant in a work club, and no matter how minimal the chance of his getting the job, he alone would be shouldering any risks. My focus on exploiting the situation for teaching coupled with my belief that this application would stand no chance of leading to a job offer, led me to override JK and Selden's concerns, while JK and Selden's position as work club clients under threat of benefit sanctions meant they had to comply. This is dishearteningly similar to the way in which JK's concerns about Selden working nights were dismissed in the glass collector application earlier.

Stage 3- Deciding to Apply.

(00:13:27.1- 00:17:20)

When I click on the “apply” button, I realise I will have to write an email. JK has been demonstrating some computer literacies that afternoon, however, he is very far from being an independent user who can write and send emails. These are familiar practices for me, therefore I can dash one off quickly and add another completed application to JK’s list. I silently compose and send the email on JK’s behalf, drawing on my own socially formed, unconscious assumption and use of technology in everyday practices. My activity has thus shifted by the end of the sequence, from teaching to work club volunteering, as a result of the medium of application: email. Simultaneously, JK is repositioned from being an active and equal participant in evaluating the vacancies, to being a completely dependent observer, forced into trusting me, based on the relationship we have built up over the preceding few months.

As Brian rightly points out, “It’s a long route... Yeah. For somebody like some of ..himself erm not computer literate means er he's er gotta go a long way” (00:14:03.2). Writing emails takes a long time for beginners of alphabetic literacy, as they must attend to multiple literacies at the same time, for example reading software icons, keyboard and mouse functions, and encoding thoughts and language into writing. In a sense, the routine applications such as the type I had been coaching JK through earlier, which involve reading navigation buttons and clicking, are “easy”, by comparison, as the more complex literacy work has already been done and stored as a resource available at a few clicks of the mouse. In this way, direct applications via online recruitment accounts speed up the process of meeting job application targets. However, the scarcity of suitable vacancies and the threat of benefit sanctions nevertheless prevent JK and Selden having any meaningful say in what jobs to apply for, and possibly the ease of certain types of application limits their ability to object even further. In this case my proficiency with email applications and certainty that the application will be rejected allow me to sweep aside JK and Selden’s legitimate concerns in my overweening aim to meet JK’s job targets, something of which I was only partly aware at the time, but which amply illustrates the imbalance of power inherent in access to the practices associated with mediational means, as well as other circumstances.

6. 4 The Bus Station Night Cleaner (Transcript C)

Brian is sitting with JK, as Selden is at home, unwell. This application is for a night cleaner in a bus station (Figure 24) and Brian has decided to do something unusual: write an application by email. The application process is presented in the following stages: 1. Deciding to apply; 2. Signing into Gmail; 3. Composing the email; 4. Formatting the signature. A new site of attention opens when Brian starts to compose the email and is faced with a formatting problem.

Analysis

Stage 1: Deciding to Apply

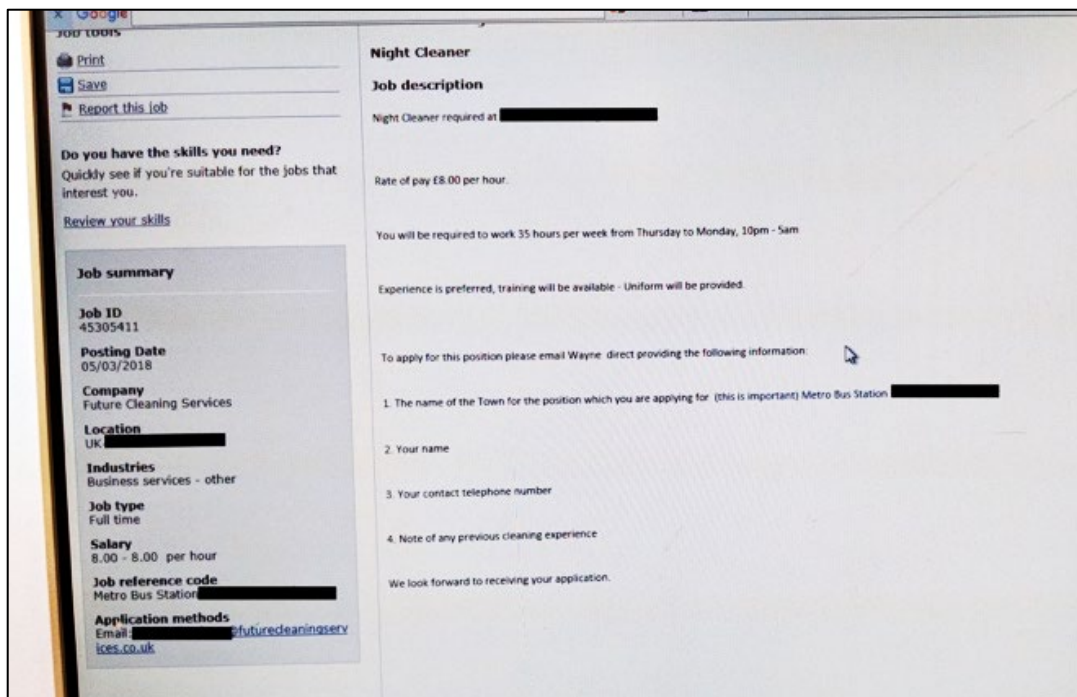


Figure 24: The night cleaner advertisement hosted on UJM.

Unusually, Brian's evaluation of the job as worth the effort of writing an email diverts the activity from one of time and sanctions-pressured benefits compliance to one of genuinely applying for a job. This results from his interpretation of the advertisement (Figure 24), which contrasts markedly to the glass collector vacancy above. Firstly, it has not been infiltrated by marketing and globalisation discourses and the vacancy is local. Applicants are instructed to "email Wayne direct" and the choice of organisation and wording, i.e. a numbered list of instructions about how to respond, makes meaning unambiguous and belongs to a genre of procedures, common in workplaces. The use of the passive voice maintains the focus of the text on the procedures of the job, rather than any company ethos or personal qualities, which might appear in a recruitment

agency template. The overall effect is clearly strategic rather than conversational in tone. In addition, his evaluation of the job as “good” may also come from Brian’s extensive experience of hunting for cleaning vacancies, which often require hazardous chemical handling certificates, particular duration or types of experience or a driving licence, but this one does not. Brian can identify the practices and discourses displayed in this text with both himself and JK, which leads to his action of deciding to write the email.

JK is ready to engage with the text, about to put his glasses on, and completely engaged in understanding what Brian says (Transcript C, 00:00:40.3-00:01:09.4). In this early stage, Brian is keen to enthuse and engage JK and both of them, evident in their posture and use of gesture as well as their talk, are engaged in the activity of applying for a job, not merely in benefit compliance.

Brian: Er ...we'll send an email off

JK: Oh

Brian : Cos this one looks good

JK: Yeah..that's good yeah?

(Transcript C, 00:00:40.3-00:00:48.5)

However, Brian does not read out the advert or mention that it is night work, to which JK may object. JK’s engagement belongs to a discourse of being a work club client, in which he is permitted some agency, but this is minimal because of the particular practices involved in achieving benefits compliance.

Stage 2: Signing Into Gmail.

(Transcript C, 00:02:43.- 00:04:07.2)

Once Brian begins to log into *Gmail*, JK becomes a passive observer, fully dependent on Brian's actions for basic survival. He folds his hat up and occasionally glances around the room. The government policy of forcing jobseekers online only increases JK's exclusion, by forcing him to use the work club volunteers to access benefits, as well as employment opportunities.

Brian's actions again show uncertainty with the practices of composing in *Gmail*, or perhaps the persistent interruptions from another work club regular (Transcript C, 00:01:45.7-00:05:01.9) make it harder for him to concentrate. Nevertheless he maintains his focus and motivation on writing the email.

Stage 3. Composing the Email.

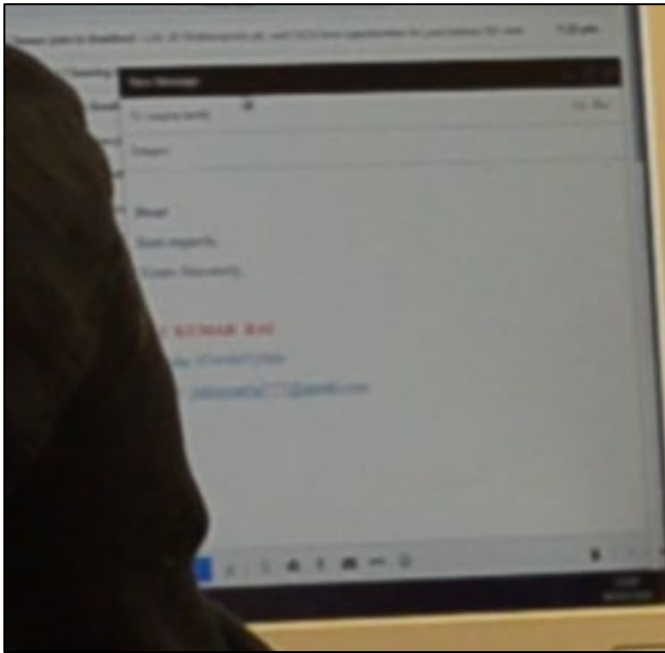


Figure 25: Email with a colourful automatic signature for JK

As mentioned in Screen Space, JK and Selden's complete reliance on anonymous others to manage their personal digital documentation has various consequences. As Brian opens the email and notices the signature (Figure 25), he hesitates markedly (Transcript C, 00:07:10.3). In the job advert text (Figure 24), the absence of marketing discourses was salient and arguably contributed to Brian's identification with the job and decision to apply. In the email signature in Figure 25, the bright colours signify a departure from formal writing conventions which Brian wants

to follow.

Brian: Ah...I don't know who put it in that colour like?

JK: He heh

(Transcript C, 00:09:14.8)

In my observations, some volunteers, such as teenagers from the local college, only visit once or twice, and might have sophisticated digital skills but lack nuanced genre specific knowledge, as here, setting up a digital signature in primary colours and bold cursive fonts. Brian's lack of familiarity with specific *Gmail* formatting practices interfere with his overall goal of sending the email. He becomes frustrated at his own inability to edit the colours: "I wanted this in black...how would you put it into black...colour?" (Transcript C, 00:08:51.9).

There is an intersection between his beliefs about job applications needing to look "official" and another volunteer's belief about signatures, or job applications, needing to "stand out", which might stem from a discourse about employability as self-promotion in a competitive marketplace, or lack of genre knowledge. JK appears to have had no input in the design and throughout this session, is not asked, so again, the practice of writing an email excludes him from participating even in writing his own signature, something he routinely does and something most people would consider integral to their identity. As we move to the next stage, the focus of the activity shifts from applying for a good job for JK, to a coaching session on formatting a signature in *Gmail*. This not only excludes JK, but also brings me into the action, as I try to reconcile data gathering with sharing expertise, in a way that will not upstage Brian's authority as the writer of the email.

Stage 4. Formatting the Signature.

(Transcript C, 00:09:14. 00:11:46.0)

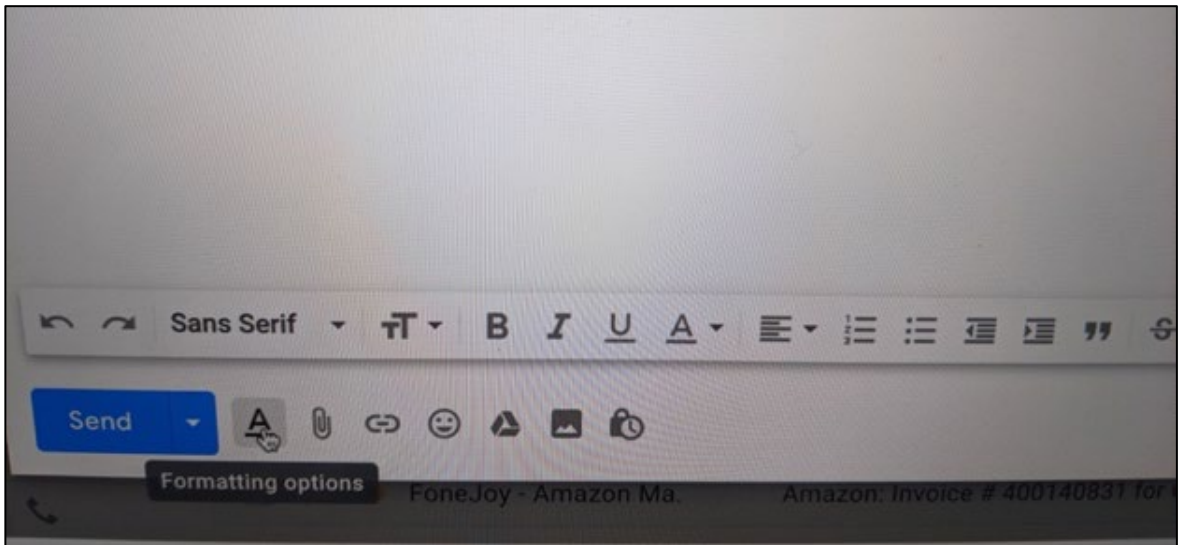


Figure 26: Gmail formatting menu

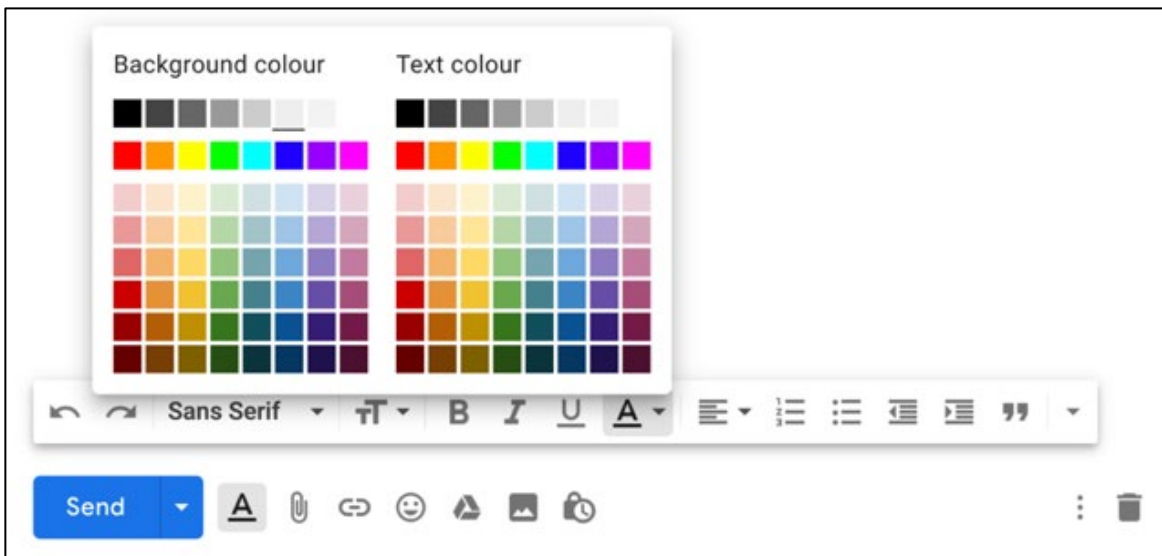


Figure 27: Gmail colour formatting palette

Brian's desire to format the email is connected with appearance, not content, as a means of expression, and thus belongs to the design side of textual practice, which Kress and van Leeuwen (2011, p. 43) claim is always a situated practice, in which the practices of different professional groups are brought together in "one coherent performance". The idea of this instantiation of a job application being "one coherent performance" is demonstrably not the case, since as a result of the volunteering

practices of the work club, the formatting has already been done by an unknown author, who may have had little understanding of the genre conventions of job application emails. Co-authoring is a routine workplace practice, but usually, the creation of such texts involves some kind of exchange between authors as the text is revised. Here, Brian has no idea who created the email template, why or how, and cannot ask JK, to whom it “belongs”, because he probably would not know.

The extensive array of design choices (Figure 26, Figure 27) stems from a marketing discourse that is concerned with unique branding and identity and the design of this function matches the practices of businesses that wish to embed their brand into email communications. While the job advert listed step by step simple procedural application instructions, the automatic email signature needs to be reformatted, using software designed for a group with quite different practices and therefore is both far more sophisticated than Brian needs, and is unfamiliar. This challenges his authority by limiting his agency in managing the discursive space (Bhatia, 2016) of the email, the “directness” of which had been part of its initial appeal and which appears progressively more difficult to accomplish.

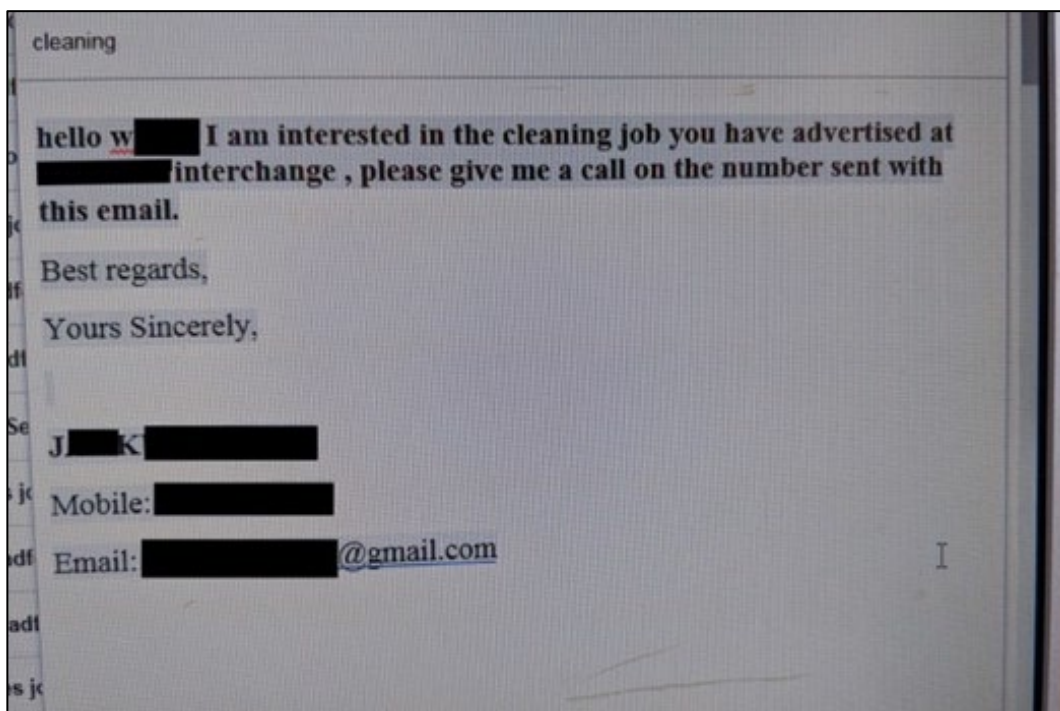


Figure 28: The email after formatting

His actions decrease in confidence as he moves through the necessary sequence and he becomes increasingly embarrassed (Transcript C, 00:09:42.- 00:11:06.3). I am

reluctant to display my expertise as it contrasts with Brian's inexperience, although he is the authority on the job application. I try my best to allow him to maintain his agency by not taking the mouse off him, but I am repeatedly drawn forwards to direct him precisely where to click, at the same time, blocking JK's view. I am also uncomfortable with this, hence a significant amount of stepping forwards and backwards. The actions in this stage focus entirely on the sub-goal of learning and teaching formatting, which accounts for half of the time Brian spends on the higher-level activity of writing the email (*Figure 28*). JK's line of vision is blocked, so he is physically and discursively excluded from the actions around the email.

It appeared to be straightforward to imagine the email text trajectory: it would be written and sent directly to the recipient, who might well be the cleaning supervisor at the bus station. However, Brian finds himself caught in an unanticipated trajectory of texts and actions related to design, which have to be mastered in order for him to accomplish his main goal, writing an email for a good job for JK.

The expectation that one person will be multiskilled in multiple modes and media often results in a misperception of the work involved as "easy", finally leading to the undervaluing of the work and an underappreciation of the time it takes to produce Kress and Van Leeuwen's "coherent performance" of practices. However, this sequence shows that Brian, a multiskilled person, needs help and time to learn how to operate this media for this situation. On a positive note, Brian learns a useful practice, that he can apply in another similar situation. On the negative side, this does nothing to directly increase JK's access to opportunity or reduce his dependency on benefits, as he has not been involved in any learning. The formatting displaces the activity, from applying for a good job for JK, to learning and teaching, between Brian and me. As with the other applications, it involved an unforeseen trajectory of actions accompanying texts, this time nested figuratively within the composition process, and actually as pop-ups within the composition window. I had to suspend my activity of observing, and JK was excluded from actively participating, even in making his own signature. The 10 minutes spent on this is an example of how JK is prevented from developing his own agency in applying for a job.

Before he sends the email, Brian does not read it out, and afterwards simply confirms it has been sent, so JK has no choice but to accept what he has written (00:11:46.0-00:11:58.7). Brian's focus on confirmation that the email has been sent

signals a return to the main activity of volunteering. As mentioned in Third and Virtual Spaces, as always, the session closes with recording the job application to avoid benefits sanctions. Yet despite all the difficulties, Brian prioritises this application and when JK leaves, he writes down Wayne’s email address, taking pains to emphasise that JK should expect a phone call or email, and that it “would be good if you got it”.

6.5 Are You Fit? (Transcript D)

Brian is sitting between Selden and a novice volunteer, Shona (Figure 29). Shona is working with JK, who sits to her left and Brian is working with Selden, while also coaching Shona on volunteering practices.

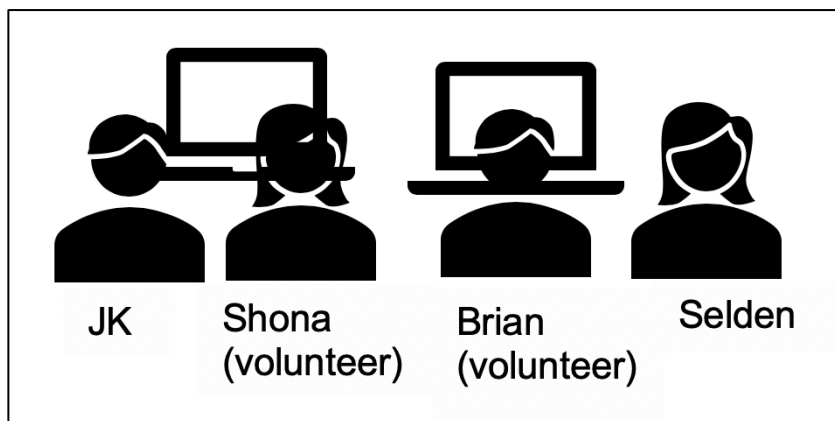


Figure 29: Participant seating for "Are you fit?"

Shona is using JK’s *Indeed* account. This is an application for a part-time cleaning job (Figure 30). The first site of attention opens as Shona is explaining a job description and negotiating with JK for permission to apply, followed by another in an intervention from Brian, inadvertently precipitating a discussion about the value of work. The analysis is presented in the following three stages: Stage 1- explaining the job; Stage 2 – “is it worth it?” and Stage 3 – filling in the job centre booklet.

Analysis

Stage 1: Explaining the Job.

(Transcript D, 00:10:21.7- 00:12:31.3)

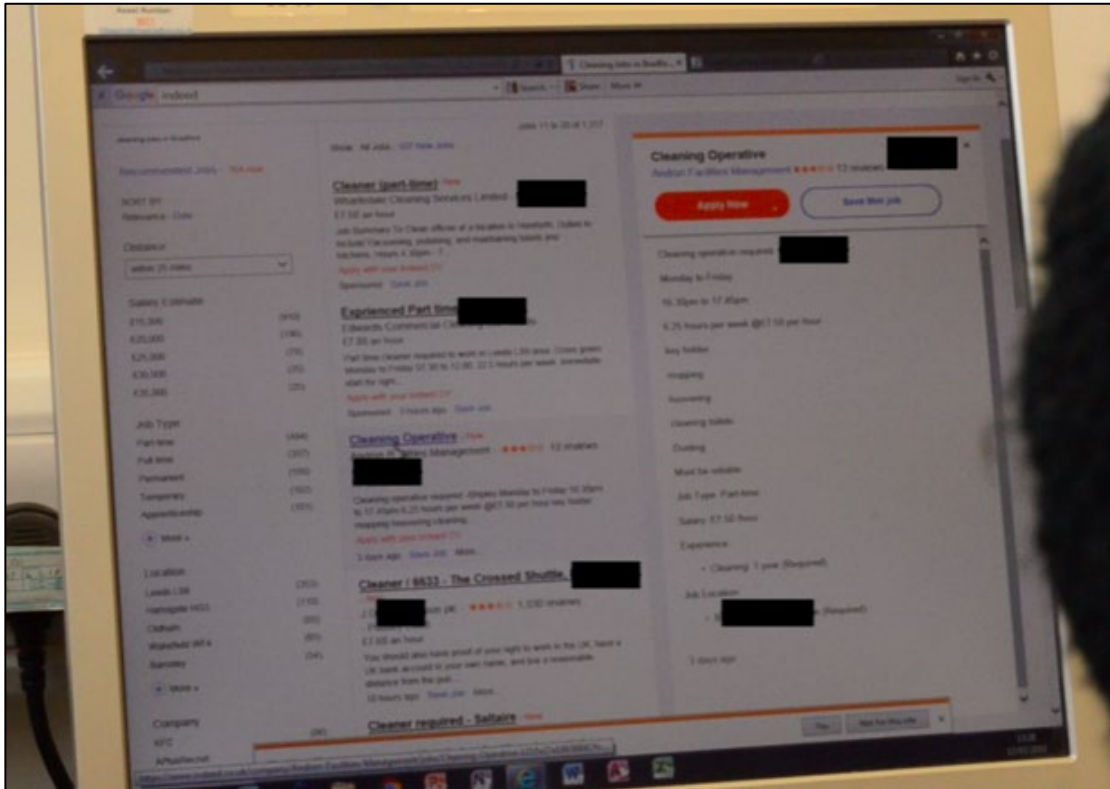
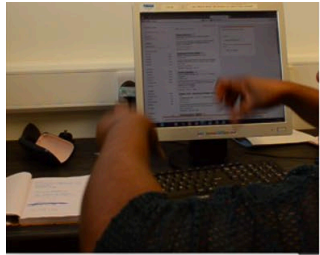
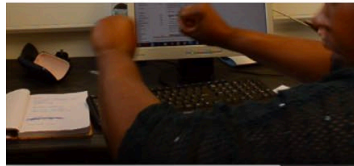


Figure 30: Indeed recruitment website with embedded advert on the right

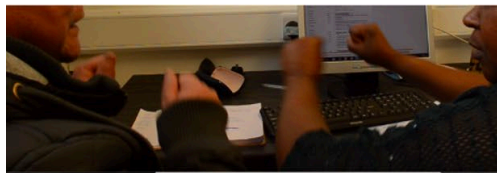
JK can read simple texts with familiar words, so is ready to participate fully in reading and understanding the job description. Shona's initial talk is based on establishing that the vacancy is suitable: hourly pay, job role and work pattern. She and JK live in the same city, so she is well informed about his local area (Transcript D, 00:10:31.7). Shona communicates the information from the advert (Figure 30), by re-textualising it for JK, using actions and words (Figure 31), rather than reading aloud. JK mirrors her gestures, somewhat hesitantly, perhaps to clarify understanding. Shona spontaneously reduces the grammatical and lexical complexity of her speech as she recasts the key points in the job description: as a fellow migrant with EAL, she can automatically draw on her plurilingual repertoire to communicate with interlocutors whose English is far less expert than hers.



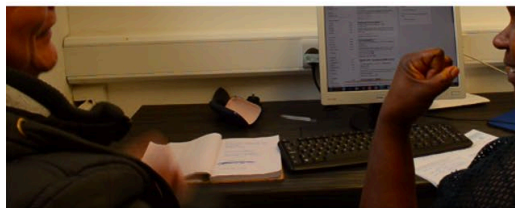
Hoovering



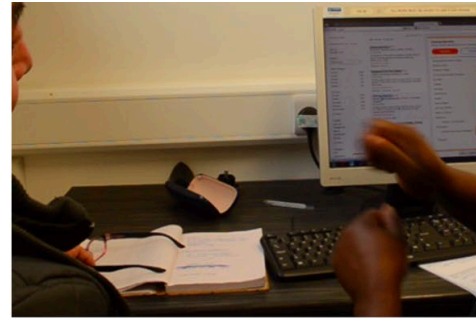
Heavy machines



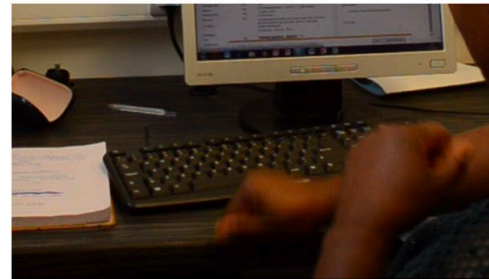
This one?



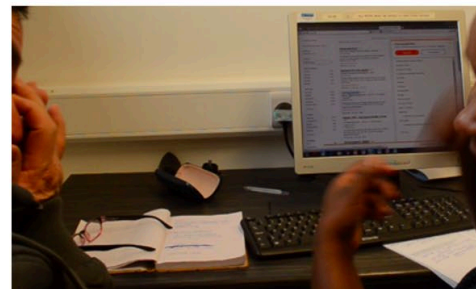
Strong man?



Keys



Dusting



Phoning sick

Figure 31: Shona recontextualises the job advert for JK

Shona and JK's actions, as well as their talk, show how they are both completely engrossed in the activity of understanding the job advert, to the extent that they are almost performing the job advert. The text (Figure 30) consists of factual information: days/hours of work/ rate of pay; a list of duties comprised of mostly single words in gerund form, from a discourse of cleaning work: dusting, hoovering, mopping, cleaning toilets. Such verbs lend themselves to mime. Shona's use of gesture, posture and eye movement also make JK laugh and there is a close collaboration between them, as they strive to understand one another, during these two minutes. There is also a brief exchange around norms of workplace behaviour and reliability, in the joking about phoning in sick:

<p>Shona: Must be reliable. Shona turns to JK, smiles and leans towards him conspiratorially JK: Reliable? JK does head wobble. Shona: No off sick JK and Shona look at each other and laugh. JK Hahahaha ah! JK puts his hands over his face, laughing</p>

(Transcript C, 00:11:53.7.- 0:12:03.7).

As mentioned in Physical Space, such moments of intense communication between JK, Selden and their volunteers tend to happen when volunteers are summarising at the end of the session how many job applications have been done, rather than what the jobs entail.

Stage 2: "Is It Worth It?"

(00:12:31.3- 00:13:41.7)

Brian has been quietly supervising Shona and JK, and interrupts just to point out her mistake about the hours of work. However, it transpires that Brian and Shona have differing ideas about "suitable work": Shona is concerned about time and money spent on travel, i.e. the economic value of work to the worker: "Is it worth travelling there?" (Transcript D, 00:12:41.6). Brian echoes job centre discourses about being prepared to travel a reasonable distance: "Yeah because it's in [town] he'll be still able to travel" (Transcript D, 00:13:01.9), again, a discourse of individual responsibility for employment, rather than acknowledging systemic barriers, such as poor transport networks or an inadequate supply of appropriate jobs, which demonstrably exist in the

exchange below:

Shona : I know but it's in [town] seven pound fifty how much is the day rider?

Brian Four pound ten

(Transcript D, 00:13:03.8 - 00:13:12.3)

Brian and Shona's different attitudes are conveyed as much in their intonation as in what they say. Brian intonation is upward and sounds reasonably optimistic, referring to the metropolitan district, rather than the specific job location "I know I know it looks very you know.. (town) ..it's just up the road actually" (Transcript D, 00:13:30.8) while Shona's voice has a downward intonation and sounds unconvinced: (sighing) "That's fine" (Transcript D, 00:13:41.7) as she considers the distance and expense of travel in relation to the working hours. Both are drawing on local knowledge, but Shona lives in the city, whereas Brian commutes from elsewhere.

Brian is very experienced at *Indeed* applications, so can very likely anticipate the simplicity of the text trajectory. As in the "Cradle work" application, Brian also knows there is only a slim chance of a response from the employer. Both of these inform his evaluation of the application as worthwhile, as it will contribute to meeting JK's targets. He also knows that JK and Selden's usual and preferred method of transport is walking, even quite long distances.

After Brian's interruption, Shona's focus on engaging with JK and negotiating permission to apply for the job with his full consent is dropped, as she is persuaded by Brian's repetition of the more dominant discourse, that any work experience is worthwhile, even when there is no economic benefit. In effect, JK would be working for free, yet in our interview (Transcript E), he expressed a strong rejection of doing unpaid work, for example as a volunteer. The concept of working for mere experience is completely alien to him and Selden, who have spent their working lives in hard manual jobs for very little money. JK is not consulted about the intricacies of his potential earnings vis a vis travel costs, and is relegated from being a co-participant in the application, to being totally dependent on the judgement of Brian and Shona. Shona's activity thus changes from genuinely applying for suitable work for JK, to helping him avoid benefit sanctions.

Stage 3: Applying.

(00:13:43.3- 00:14:47.8)

This application took 14 seconds, from Shona first clicking “apply” and is an example of the routine application practices used in the work club (Transcript D, figures 19-23). As with the other applications observed, Shona checks the contact details, but does not make any edits to the CV itself. The breath-taking speed of this application drives the discourse about online applications being ‘easier’, a discourse with which the government justifies digital compulsion for jobseeker benefits eligibility, and the use of job-seeking targets. However, very high targets, premised on speedy online applications, compel jobseekers such as JK and Selden to entrust work club volunteers with all key decisions, from what to write in their CVs, what to write in covering messages or emails, to what jobs to apply for, how far they would travel and what hours they would work. Volunteers can only try to do what they believe to be in the jobseekers’ best interests, but often, as here, that is disputed. What consolidates Brian’s position on the need to apply is the ever present threat of sanctions.

Brian: And he doesn't apply for any jobs whatsoever, the job centre'd be looking at him and saying why haven't you applied for that job? Even though it's six hours, you can always do something ..that's the way they look at it anyways

(Transcript D, 00:14:21.4).

6. 6 Conclusion to Case study 1

The frequent nexus of practices in these online job applications are an intersection between:

- Managing digital documents: downloading and uploading attachments between the computer and different online accounts; cloud computing
- Setting up and managing an online profile on a new recruitment website
- Filling in a basic application form
- Submitting the application but having to double check because the process is opaque
- Keeping a record of job applications for the job centre (benefits compliance)

The discourses and practices in use across different spaces in the four sites of engagement work to systematically disadvantage JK and Selden, by shifting attention away from their legitimate concerns. The third space of the job centre drives the activity at the work club, as can be seen in the overriding concern with avoiding benefits sanctions. Brian's attention is taken by overwhelmingly administrative practices, such as managing virtual paperwork, rather than writing or composing texts. A significant proportion of these are job centre governance practices which Brian does by proxy.

The digital by default agenda forces JK and Selden into virtual spaces, for which they depend on the work club. These virtual spaces appear designed with the practices of more privileged, educated, sophisticated digital information managers in mind, not necessarily aligned to the practices of work club users or volunteers. JK and Selden have little connection with the groups whose literacy practices are privileged in these applications, such as writing application forms or CVs. The practice of having a CV is one valorised for ideological reasons (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 116) by welfare policy and appropriated into general online recruitment practice from the practices of white-collar workers, such as recruitment workers themselves. In the work club data, CVs are never edited and only Shona reads JK's to check the content is accurate.

Specific practices required by online job applications, such as managing documents in the cloud are unfamiliar enough to divert Brian's attention away from JK and Selden, towards technical trouble-shooting, hampered furthermore by the variations in how tools are laid out on screen, as the complex formatting trajectory shows in "The bus station cleaner". Equally concerning, where a volunteer can fully subconsciously operationalise the necessary practices, the pressure to meet job targets means that there is no knowledge transfer to the jobseeker: work is done without JK or Selden's involvement, and they are not helped to articulate their own desires. Even when they do, the ease and speed of a click-through application on UJM or Indeed prevents this, e.g. me in "Cradle work", Brian in "The glass collector", and Shona, in "Are you fit?".

The displacement of attention onto technical support or meeting targets detracts from time that could be spent with JK and Selden, on discussing the actualities of the jobs beyond time and location, or on learning to read not just words, but learning about the practices inferred by the words, as happened between Shona and JK. Such learning is surely crucial for communicating an idea of a credible relevant self, even for the most basic work. It is impossible to overstate how the mandating of jobseekers to apply

online reduces countless people to dependency on charity not just for employment help, but also for access to benefits via proof of eligibility. At the same time, the data shows how it contributes nothing to their individual employability, reducing any help to simply technical support, and entrenching a culture of welfare dependency and fear.

Chapter 7 Case study 2

This chapter concerns job applications carried out by Parastou, who has a UK master's degree in Business Administration, as described in Methodology. As before, the chapter begins with a summary of analysis of physical, third, relational, virtual and screen spaces, and considers Parastou in relation to her "historical body", in synch with resources, discourses and practices, in her interactions around job-seeking texts. Table 7 below shows the sites of engagement analysed and corresponding transcripts.

Table 7

Sites of Engagement in Case Study 2

Transcript	Sites of engagement
Transcript F	<p>The Level 2 apprenticeship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1: Legal, educational and professional aspects of employability (rec. 1/ 00:06:12.5-rec 2/ 00:02:32.4) • Stage 2: Supporting statement (rec 2/00:02:32.4-00:08:24.0) • Stage 3: References (00:10:47.0-00:16:53.7)
Transcript G	<p>Email job alerts 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total Jobs 3 (00:03:06.80-00:06:27.9) • Reed (00:08:31.6-00:20:00.0)
Transcript H	<p>Email job alerts 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate Point -Total Jobs (0:02:12.0-00:05:36.6) • HR assistant in Ben Johnson (00:06:07.6-00:09:11.0) • Zip Recruiter application (00:09:31.6-00:13:37.2)

Note: Transcript J is the interview with Parastou (25.07.2018)

Each site of attention is discussed in turn, to show how the process of evaluating and applying for jobs is one of extended self-appraisal, marked by differing discourses that compete for Parastou's attention, with implications for identity and agency.

7. 1 Spaces

Physical Space

Parastou does her job searches on her mobile, at home, where it is quiet and comfortable, but where she has limited access to alternative hardware when her laptop breaks. We meet when her family is out, so there are no interruptions. I am aware of the privilege she gives me in allowing me to be in her home, and recording her. The effect of the mobile as mediational means is to create a focal point for our interactions, but one which I can only access by physically sitting closer to it, or asking to see, as it is so small. At no point do I pick up the mobile, so we appear to be operating on a shared understanding that it is a private device. Parastou shapes the data collection by taking and sharing screenshots, or, at times., shielding the mobile from my view. In these ways, she is sharing and controlling the data, first through allowing me access to her home, an intimate physical space, and then to see the contents of her mobile, the mediational means for the job searches and an intimate device.

Parastou and I have a similar education level, so we are in many respects peers and we also, coincidentally, share an initial interest in the topic of employability, which Parastou had researched for her MSc dissertation. This mutual academic interest in the research topic and methods adds a layer of collaboration to the data gathering, manifested in initial discussions of whether she should use her very faulty laptop so that I can film more easily, or her mobile, so she can do her job searches as normal. Parastou normally works by herself, a disadvantage, because there is nobody with whom to discuss the applications, but on these occasions, as we sit close to each other at her kitchen table, she often puts the mobile there between us, to show me what she is doing and so my camera can capture our interactions around the rather small screen more easily.

Although she is highly proficient in the technological aspects of online job searches, interpreting and self-appraising in relation to job descriptions is difficult and time-consuming. At such times, as she leans back, rests her chin on her hand and scrolls idly up and down the screen or leaves the mobile to go onto stand-by between us, Parastou appears demotivated. This will be shown in “Stage 3: references” at the end of the very long Level 2 apprenticeship application, as well as in “Candidate Point”, after repetitive searches. Her positioning of the mobile, at a distance, contrasts with moments when, genuinely engaged, she picks the phone up to read or write; this happens often

when we move into more nuanced discussions of job descriptions, when she also begins a revitalised self-appraisal in relation to these, as will be shown e.g. in the *Reed* application, in “Email job alerts 1”. In those moments, we both lean in to see the screen and I use a pencil to point to specific parts of texts, maintaining a slight physical distance as we read her personal device together.

Third Spaces

Third spaces represent past or potential connections to social practices. In addition to the job centre, college, university, and church, Parastou mentions her workplaces in Iran and various local places where she has been directed by the job centre, for example, the council.

Although she had only been permitted to work for three months, Parastou has been in the UK for four years. Waiting for permission to work has prevented her from focusing on developing her employability through her passive social connections at her UK university, GCSE studies at college and voluntary work. She has not yet realised the connections between these networks, her current situation, and her future goals. Parastou has not been advised to explore her connections for help with job-seeking, for example, to look at other people’s career trajectories through her university alumni society, approach her university careers service for advice, or volunteering coordinators for character references. Recognising and using these connections is part of the process of working out how to reposition oneself and probably would require a mentor, in addition to time away from other pressures. When I subsequently suggested joining her alumni network, she reminded me that she had only recently gained permission to work, had been learning to drive and sitting her GCSEs, had been experiencing dental problems and had to wait a very long time to see a dentist; for all of these reasons, she had not yet set up an alumni account. Her reminder emphasises the power of different discourses in third spaces to influence what is prioritised by a job seeker, i.e. the immediately relevant social facts represented by a U.K. driving licence and gatekeeping qualifications such as GCSEs, as opposed to the less obvious but equally relevant and pressing need for help understanding social practices.

One of these is the accepted social practice of using volunteering to enhance specific dimensions of individual employability, such as evidence of “soft skills”. Parastou’s difficulty with exploiting her voluntary work for such purposes will become apparent in the *Reed* application, in which she only superficially modifies her CV. From

the job centre, Parastou had some initial advice on how to write a CV but although her regular job coach makes suggestions about key words, this is restricted to including them or changing them to make her CV more easily searchable in databases. The advice does not extend to how to how she might use or interpret key words herself, which becomes a problem in “Candidate Point”. Furthermore, the job coach does not appear to have provided any other guidance about adapting a CV for particular jobs, particularly advice on selecting and blending discourses. A professional discourse uses certain language to describe work roles, and differs from an academic discourse, which uses certain language to discuss disciplinary knowledge. From her studies, Parastou has acquired some of the academic discourse, which helps with understanding some terminology (as will be shown in the *Reed* application) but possibly not the professional discourse in English, as will become evident in “The level 2 apprenticeship” and “Ben Johnson”, in the somewhat restricted repertoire she uses to describe her previous work.

Finally, Parastou is under pressure to find work quickly, as she is reliant on benefits and must therefore justify her lack of employment to the job centre, whose policies, described in Case Study 1, do not recognise why a skilled migrant, with good English and IT skills, may find it difficult to find work.

Relational Spaces

Parastou’s life changed radically as her immigration status shifted from international student to refugee. Her original reason for coming, to pursue a Master’s in International Business, placed her in the very privileged category of highly educated and skilled global citizen, who could return home to contribute to resolving her country’s economic stagnation. This is in stark contrast with her present situation of unemployed refugee, who cannot return, a person in crisis and potential economic drain on the host nation. Parastou is frustrated by her inability to find work quickly, which is related to the dilemma of how to position herself in the job market:

Parastou: Yeah I I'm really tired of er not working ha ha...Because I used to work ha ha every day about 10 years[...] And it's very hard for me er I think I need to mm experience but I er qualified for work what I studied for

(Transcript F, 00:03:39.8-00:03:50.6)

Parastou had previously been told during a pre-interview screening call for another job, that her application would not be progressed because she had no UK employment experience. She had also been advised by the job centre to look for low level administrative work as an entry into employment. She is therefore positioned here by job coaches and recruiters as a “person with no experience” and is wary about applying for professional work.

Parastou: Erm and some coach work said er you have to apply for higher level jobs some other says er you have to apply for low level jobs [...]And yesterday the in city council they other man said you er you cannot apply for apprenticeship job for trainee [...] Er or entry level job or something [...] And er I don't know exactly what should I do it's very complicated

(Data from 03.07.2018, 00:04:22.3-00:04:58.3)

In our interview, she identifies herself how much of her difficulty can be traced back to not being familiar with particular practices and discourses. On the one hand, she says:

It's easy to apply online because you can er you can read and understand everything er that you want about the er workplace about the salary about the er what they expected ...er from me er from their employees er...

(Interview with Parastou, 00:17:29.1)

On the other hand, she explains, in reference to her apprenticeship application:

Er most of the time I I can fill the forms and apply online easily, but sometimes I need to understand not the word, not the sentence...Sometimes I I don't know about some rules in UK ...That's why I need help. For example I it take it took a long time to fill the application for college apprenticeship works and after after finishing and applying I found out I found out that I not allowed to apply for apprenticeship job because I have high qualification ...If I knew that before ha ha it's better

(Interview with Parastou, 00:32:53.4)

Studying at a UK university did not provide her with easy access to careers guidance, partly because she lacked permission to work until two years after graduating, but also because she was unaware of the employability discourses that are assumed to be so pervasive by institutions. Specialised career support might have facilitated her ability to create a more coherent and credible career identity, at a more appropriate career level. She may have been able to access training in how to evaluate job advertisements, application questions, write supporting statements, or a professional CV, all of these informed by self-appraisal based on a deeper understanding of specific employment hierarchies, discourses and practices, in her words, the “rules” she should follow in her job hunt.

Virtual Spaces

Parastou uses various general recruitment platforms, found through *Google* and word of mouth. From these, she receives countless job alerts by email, which she regularly reviews. As a recent postgraduate and professional white collar worker, Parastou’s use of technology for job-seeking is part of her “historical body”. Throughout the data, Parastou interacts fluently with all the apps on her mobile, never mentioning anything related to the device, operating system, or platforms.

Several things do, sometimes, cause hesitation or even abandonment of a goal, however: one of these is how to skip mandatory questions in application forms, which will be shown in “The Level 2 apprenticeship”. Another frequent source of frustration is trying to unpick social, institutional and sector specific practices referred to in recruitment genres, as will be seen in her difficulties with many of the initial questions in “The Level 2 apprenticeship” and in “Total Jobs 3” and “Reed”. Many institutional and sector specific practices are marked by abbreviations, acronyms, or jargon specific to those workplace discourses and when unfamiliar, these act as a deterrent to self-appraisal. She has been encouraged to look for volunteering opportunities, but finds it just as difficult to relate volunteering roles to the skills she can offer or wishes to develop, as she perceives the search results to show highly skilled occupations, such as “school governor” or “librarian” which she feels ill equipped to attempt. The quantity of information to be processed, to understand an advert and self-appraise, is extremely tiring, as will be exemplified, in the *Reed* application, when we work out a metaphor together.

Finally, searching online takes Parastou across many densely hyperlinked virtual

spaces, which she manages with technical ease. However, the hyperlinking of recruitment emails and adverts in long unanticipated and even circular trajectories, is demotivating, and even leads to uncertainty for both of us, for example about her search terms, and if she has actually applied, which will become clear, for example in “Candidate Point” and “ZipRecruiter”.

Screen Space

Parastou uses her mobile for job searches, and the small screen perhaps limits the amount of editing she might do, but she does not mention this as a reason for writing avoidance. Writing avoidance seems to be more linked to the mental effort involved, as expressed in her relief at not needing to include a cover letter, (“Reed”) or disbelief at a suggested personal statement word count of up to 4000 words (“The Level 2 apprenticeship”). What is even more problematic is understanding the purpose of different questions, that often demand the same information in different genres, as will be shown next. The small screen space also limits what I can see when she is holding the device, but Parastou often reads aloud, either to me, or under her breath, as she is thinking.

The rest of this chapter presents the analysis of the specific sites of engagement mentioned above, to demonstrate how Parastou’s goals, tasks and overall activity of applying are moderated by the socially elaborated meanings inherent in the online application texts and her milieu.

7. 2 The Level 2 Apprenticeship (Transcript F)

This is an application for a Level 2 Apprenticeship in administration (Figure 32) at the large FE college where Parastou also studies GCSE English and Maths. In this site of attention, the identity and discourses associated with administrative work in general and apprenticeships in particular are unfamiliar to Parastou. Moving into a new field of work requires intense research about what kind of identity needs to be assumed, which can be challenging without access to insider knowledge, for example through different kinds of social capital (Barbulescu, 2015). Parastou does actually have a connection through being a student at this particular college, but does not use this in her appraisal of the application. Like many jobseekers, she relies on small intimate networks, such as the personal friend who recommended the recruitment website, rather

than weaker but potentially much more useful ties, such as being a student at the institution where she wants to work.

She had started the online form earlier, and the site of attention opens with Parastou returning to complete it, and so is centred on that entire literacy event, as almost each question draws her conscious attention. The data is divided according to type of questions in the application form and will be presented in the following order:

- Stage 1: Legal, educational and professional aspects of employability
- Stage 2: supporting statement
- Stage 3: references

APPLY NOW

Location: [Redacted] and [Redacted] Campus
Salary: Level 2 Apprenticeship Rates
Closing Date: Sunday 13 May 2018

[Redacted] College is one of the UK's largest FE establishments with around 1200 employees and over 35,000 students. Offering a diverse curriculum within a vibrant and multicultural learning environment, our goal is to deliver excellent and innovative education which supports and inspires every student to achieve their ambitions.

16-17 yrs £4.36 per hour equivalent to a salary of £8,411 pa
 18-20 yrs £6.06 per hour equivalent to a salary of £11,691 pa
 21-24 yrs £7.54 per hour equivalent to a salary of £14,546 pa
 25+ yrs £7.83 per hour equivalent to a salary of £15,105 pa

There are two apprenticeships available. One based at our [Redacted] campus and the other at [Redacted]

This is an excellent opportunity to obtain valuable work experience whilst working towards an accredited qualification. You will work closely with the Student Recruitment and Marketing team to provide an efficient, effective and compliant service. A key part of this role is to provide assistance and support for admissions and student records maintenance for the College. The main focus of this role will be around providing excellent customer service and front of house duties.

Employees of [Redacted] College enjoy a wide range of benefits. To find out more about what we offer click on the following link: [http://\[Redacted\].ac.uk/the-college/jobs-and-careers/benefits/](http://[Redacted].ac.uk/the-college/jobs-and-careers/benefits/)

[Redacted] College is committed to Equality of Opportunity (ensuring everyone is treated fairly) and safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All successful applicants are required to complete an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check as well as mandatory pre-employment checks which may also include checking social media profiles. We positively welcome applications from all sections of the community.

[Redacted]

Figure 32: The job advertisement for the level 2 apprenticeship vacancy

Analysis

Stage 1: Legal, Educational and Professional Aspects of Employability.

(Transcript F, 00:03:34.7-00:12:10.2)

Despite her substantial experience and level of education, Parastou’s main reason for applying for the vacancy is her belief that the recruiters will not penalise her lack of UK experience:

Parastou: Er I found this job... And they are er hiring people with no experience...that's why I decided to do this

(Transcript F, 00:03:39.3)

“People with no experience” belongs to a dominant discourse of migrants having nothing to contribute to society and therefore needing to restart their professional lives from the very beginning, a discourse she appears, from the above explanation, to have accepted. The phrase “Level 2 apprenticeship” relies on implicit knowledge that the target group is primarily the 16-19 age group, and specifically, those without higher qualifications, something not mentioned in the advert (Figure 32), which lists salaries for all age groups, and which also mentions customer service, sales and marketing, appealing to Parastou as they are business related. Thus, Parastou’s initial motivation for applying is founded on her interpretation of the job as appropriate for her level of UK experience and a good match for her interests. I was a little surprised that Parastou was applying for an apprenticeship, given her qualification level, but did not comment, as it was our first meeting, she was keen to proceed with it and I was uncertain, from the advert, if she would be excluded from applying. Therefore, despite my “gut instinct”, I did not intervene.

G - Teaching Posts Only			
DfEE Ref no.		IfL membership number	

Figure 33: Teaching posts only question – (print version from application pack)

The college uses a universal application form for all vacancies, with questions from a variety of occupational discourses within the organisation, e.g. teaching (Figure 33), or management, rather than apprenticeships. These preliminary questions only

require a formulaic listing of how Parastou meets the criteria in the supporting documents (Figure 37-Figure 39). However, she does not appreciate the position of an apprentice within the institutional hierarchy, and so struggles with self-appraisal over sometimes irrelevant questions. For example, to a question about “membership of professional bodies, societies or institutions” her response, “job centre” is not an appropriate institution of which to claim membership, being associated with negative discourses of unemployment and benefits. Nor can she see the mismatch between the question and the apprenticeship, as she does not really understand the socially elaborated meaning to the question (Transcript F, 00:10:24.4-00:10:34.7), which I immediately recognise from my FE teaching background, belongs to a discourse of professional identity, status and career progression, not expected of an apprentice. I use examples from the teaching profession to explain the meaning of this question, which Parastou relates to her professional memberships in Iran, and thus we make connections between the professional discourses in the question and their irrelevance to this post.

Additionally, the form’s linear design of start/end date and reason for leaving embeds expectations about an educational and employment trajectory, a notable difficulty for migrants (Del Percio, 2018), especially in terms of selecting only what is relevant. Even listing qualifications by levels and dates implies that only completed ones are expected. Parastou is very concerned about how to enter her incomplete GCSE qualifications accurately, also underlining her misreading of the apprenticeship “market”. A problem with questions such as these, which the online form prevents her from skipping (Figure 34) are resolved when I suggest phrases such as “results pending”. Parastou has not yet acquired these and in fact, despite my background as a language teacher, their nuance of meaning is also quite difficult to explain, as shown in the extract below.

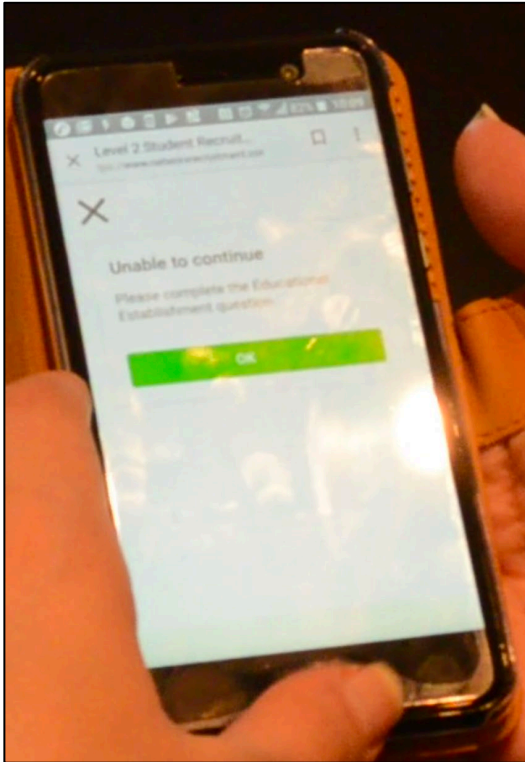


Figure 34: "Unable to continue"

Me: Well N A not applicable means I I'm I it means I don't erm need to give that information but it's asking you to give that information so

She rubs her thumb then rests her left hand on her cheek. I point to the screen with my pen.

Parastou: Yeah

Me: Er er it's not quite the same meaning?

Parastou: Mmm

Me: What what can we put? Pending

Parastou: Pending what's that?

She puts her left hand back on the mobile.

Me: Pending means that it's

Parastou: It's proceeding

She taps on the "results" field

Me: Yeah it's in process it's not finished yet haven't taken the exam yet yeh that's it

She types in "pending".

(Transcript F, 00:15:25.2-00:16:03.7)

Parastou's career identity crisis becomes increasingly apparent while she completes the professional qualifications and training section. She has been a senior professional, but believes she has no transferable knowledge or skills, as becomes clear from her responses.

Parastou: Yeah it's it's about my professional training I haven't had yeah just I I'm just studying GCSE. She scrolls down the form, then back up to the professional training field.

(Transcript F, 00:16:20.1-00:16:55.2).

By not referring to administrative responsibilities when she explains her previous work, she does not explicitly make connections between herself and the job description, perhaps because she herself cannot see any direct relevance from her previous employment. It seems her administrative duties may well have formed part of her technological unconscious, again emphasising the disparity between her former career identity and an administrative apprentice.

Me: What kind of erm administration experience have you got?

Parastou: I was a project manager when I been in Iran it was about er agriculture projects contracts

Me: Mmhmm

Parastou: Er I was er how to say I was examining that contracts we have er some contractors in er area (...) they were doing some er agriculture and and landscape things and I've just examined their f function and er... some er mmm arranging some contracts and er renewing contracts for every p contractor and er er something like this er

(Transcript F, rec. 1/00:12:32.- 00:13:22.0)

In addition, she does not have the linguistic repertoire to explain her work easily, and has to concentrate on searching for words while explaining. Her description of professional duties is somewhat disjointed, containing words from different registers which do not consistently blend into a recognisable professional discourse, e.g. “agriculture and landscape things”, or do not collocate: “examined their function”. This

repertoire appears again, almost word for word, when she talks about her work, and also in her CV, later.

Parastou: they were doing some er agriculture and and landscape things and I 've just examined their f function and er... some er mmm arranging some contracts and er renewing contracts for

Me: Mmhmm

Parastou: every contractor and er er something like this er

(Transcript F, 00:12:59.5-00:13:22.0)

Not being able to articulate her professional work identity in the recognised “style” (Fairclough, 2003) is a recurring problem in this application, aside from the additional problems incurred by not understanding the role of apprentice.

She has further difficulty transferring any of her considerable embodied knowledge into this application, partly because of her belief in the power of certificates as social facts (Bazerman, 2004b) of employability, a belief also embedded in the design of the form itself. Under training, a list of dates and organising bodies is requested, implying, as Parastou surmises, that only “courses” are valid here and as before, the question cannot be skipped. Drawing on my experience of the recognition of informal professional development, I think this is a space to write about any relevant but uncertified courses or training events attended, providing the positive qualities that add to the overall value judgement of the candidate (Lipovsky, 2013). However, Parastou does not recognise an opportunity for agency in this discursive space.

Parastou: It's er “date organisation body”

Me: Organising organising body could just be your employer!

(Transcript F, 00:17:04.0-00:17:06.9)

I am also working out my own role as researcher and co-participant, helping her to understand the questions on the form, but not wishing to directly contradict her strongly held convictions about the value of different aspects of her previous professional experience. Despite me asking about her administration experience, as she

does not tell me very much about it and I also do not feel qualified to comment on administration work, I struggle to make practical suggestions here. I also recognise that the question fits with the professional expectation of continuing professional development, a prevalent FE college practice that would not be expected of an apprentice, and so is irrelevant to this particular post, which again, Parastou does not realise.

As with the membership of professional bodies, her eventual example of working with automation is from her senior professional life which she cannot relate to the role, and the reduction in volume and falling intonation of her voice signify a closing down of the topic (Transcript F, 00:17:14.1-00:17:43.6). This has involved much prompting from me, and she is working hard at marrying her previous career identity with a new one, which she does not fully understand. Thus the questions and design of the form, her own beliefs and both our lack of specific administration apprentice workplace discourses influence her self-appraisal in relation to the post, and her motivation, negatively.

For the employment history question, once again, Parastou faces a challenge of making hers fit the prescribed linear trajectory. She talks far more about dates and reasons for leaving than she does about her responsibilities and in particular, those that relate to the application, which she glosses simply as “administration works” (see below), again indicating the difficulty of self-appraising in relation to the vacancy.

Parastou: No and and it's was about my role what did I do er handling the projects and contracts, adminis er

She taps the screen and corrects a typing mistake [administration] and continues to read out loud.

Parastou: sorry he he administration works, examining contractors' functions considering payments

Me: Mhmm?

Parastou: This was my role there

(Transcript F, 00:18:17.2).

It is also hard to explain her working arrangement of having two employers simultaneously, which she summarises as “ I didn't leave completely....yeah I have a cooperation I think with this company...besides [...] company” (Transcript F,

00:00:36.0-00:01:37.4). The long recession in Iran, as a result of political and economic sanctions, has forced many professionals to take on additional employment, in order to survive, and Parastou's employment pattern is not unusual there. She recognises that it requires an explanation, but her reasons for leaving are also difficult to summarise, as she had not intended to leave.

Parastou at first explains her reason for leaving as "coming to the UK"; I ask, "To start your Master's?" and this prompts her to type this (Transcript F, 00:18:45.8- 00:18:53.8) and acts as a reminder that she had ambitions for her career, a positive value-added statement to make on the form. During this discussion, as we attempt to co-construct a coherent recognisable career narrative that fits the script prescribed by the form, Parastou is engaged in extensive self-appraisal, not in relation to this particular role, but of herself and her long term aims and ambitions. By the end, she articulates this repositioning very strongly, when she says, "The truth is ...I haven't left my last job. I wanted to just continue my education er in international business ...to come back to that job again"(Transcript F, 00:02:14.0). This statement contains the germ of her professional identity and career narrative, in which she is articulating something of her "character in action" (Brown and Barton, 2004, p. 1), but instead of that being helpful, it is a problem because she does not know where to write it in the application.

As we will see in Stage 2, the college provides substantial information to help candidates understand the role, but this itself is so situated to working in the FE sector that for an outsider, it may be difficult to understand.

Stage 2: Supporting Statement.

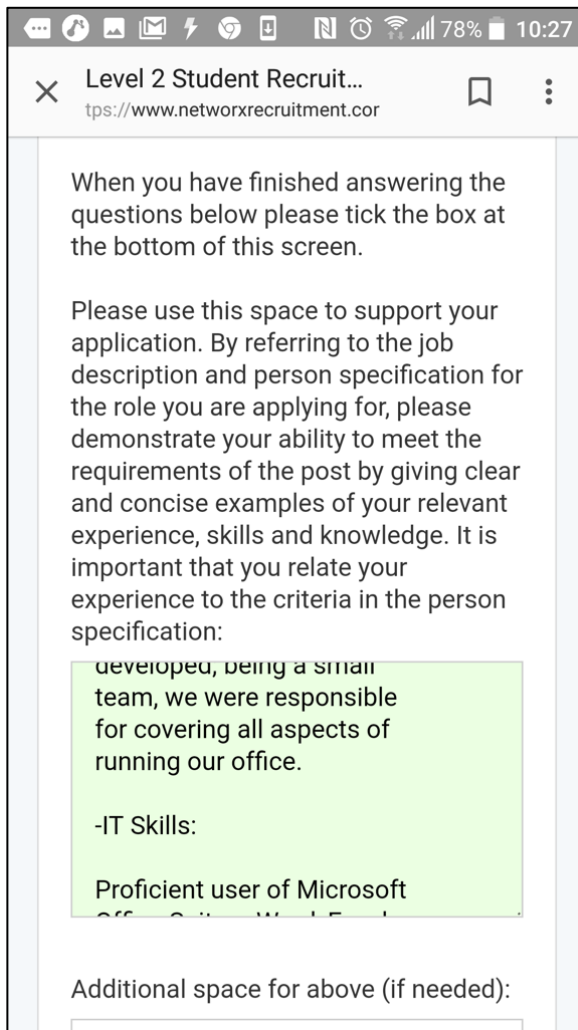


Figure 35: The green supporting statement text box

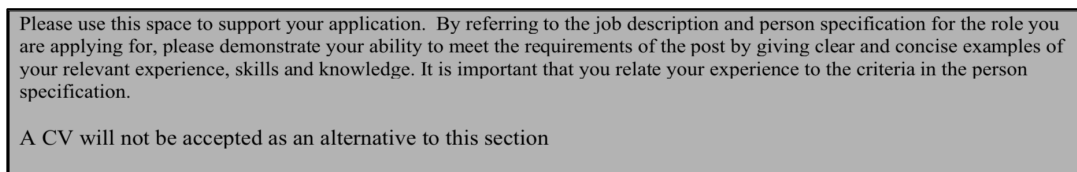


Figure 36: The same instructions on the paper application form

The preceding parts of the form are related to legal, educational and professional aspects of employability, structured as a series of tables to be completed in chronological order. By contrast, this section, the personal statement (Figure 35- Figure 36) is an open text box where the candidate can freely demonstrate their suitability to the various duties of the job, assisted by the supporting documents (Figure 37- Figure 39).

Job Description

Job Title:	School and Customer Service Apprentice
Location:	██████████ College
Grade/Salary	Apprentice Level 2

SUMMARY OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Report to the School Administration and Customer Service Leader and work closely with the Student Recruitment and Marketing team to provide an efficient, effective and compliant service.

Provide assistance and support to deliver curriculum administration and student records maintenance for the College.

To support an effective and high quality first point of contact service at the CIPs

REPORTS TO:

School Administration and Customer Services Leader

STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR:

None

MAIN DUTIES:

1. To provide curriculum administration and student records data for ██████████ College
2. To maintain student records data for the College including registers, ULNs, destinations/job outcomes, change requests and other reporting requests.
3. To provide all aspects of curriculum administration such as production of letters, stock control, dealing face to face or other communicated queries including those for the CIPs.
4. To support the absence monitoring, recording and chasing of relevant students
5. To support student enrolments and work with the central MIS/Marketing teams throughout main enrolment.
6. To support relevant elements of the admissions process as identified including interviews, offers and taster days.
7. To support the on-going (keep warm) communication to applicants and to support the production of promotional content for the College.
8. To support the processing of DSATs, other data queries and regular data accuracy checks on a timely basis and corrections are compliant with funding rules.
9. Ensure filing (electronic and paper) is accurate and easily accessible.

V1

Figure 37: Job description p. 1

10. To support with Curriculum Planning, timetabling, rooming, staff/room utilisation, course profiling/approvals and course file.
11. To carry out regular accuracy checks of all data as directed by the School Administration Leader and maintain data standards including adherence to the Data Protection Act.
12. To create requisitions for approval and onward submission to suppliers in accordance with procurement policy and procedures, and accurately record the receipt of goods in a timely and accurate manner.
13. To assist in the remittance of receipts from students are in accordance with the college cash handling policy and procedure, including compliance with PCIDSS (Purchase Card Industry Data Security Standard)
14. To support the College to ensure examinations and registrations with awarding bodies are accurately submitted via the central examinations teams and to invigilate exams within the College when required
15. To liaise with the events facilitator to support College events including parents evenings, open evening, and awards event
16. To provide an effective first point of contact for all Internal and external stakeholders within the CIPS
17. To provide information, data and advice as required by stakeholders
18. To ensure relevant queries have an appropriately managed handover and post query resolution
19. To ensure queries and other information is updated on the relevant college systems
20. To report on the required information and data as needed
21. To attend any training as part of the apprenticeship framework
22. To complete all coursework, examinations and assessments as required by the apprenticeship framework in a timely manner

General

1. To co-operate in any staff development activities required to effectively carry out the duties of the post and to participate in College staff review and development schemes.
2. Prompt resolution, in a positive and pro-active manner, of any queries raised by internal and external customers.
3. Maintain a pro-active and diligent approach to fraud awareness at all times.
4. Actively promote a College wide culture of compliance with LCC Group Financial Regulations and challenge and support actions and/or behaviours inconsistent with those Regulations.
5. To exercise absolute integrity in respect of confidential matters, and endeavour to ensure that any specified procedures for ensuring the security and confidentiality of information are always maintained.
6. Compliance with all College policies and procedures.
7. To comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements.
8. To promote a positive image of the College.

V1

NOTES:

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

College has a statutory and moral duty to ensure that the College functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people studying at the College. The post holder will be required to commit to the College child protection policy and promote a safe environment for children and young people learning within the College. All posts are subject to enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. However, having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us this will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of your offences.

Equality and Diversity

All employees of College are required to promote equality and diversity in all aspects of the job. Specifically the job holder will be required to support the College to meet the General Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The protected characteristics are: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage/Civil Partnership, Pregnancy/Maternity Leave, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation.

Health and Safety

It is the responsibility of all employees to co-operate with the College management in meeting the objectives of providing a healthy and safe place of work. Therefore all staff must carry out their work with reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and other people. Accidents or near misses must be reported and safe working procedures must always be followed.

1. Duties will inevitably develop and change as the work of the College changes to meet the needs of our service. Employees should therefore expect periodic variations to job descriptions, College reserves this right. This job description will be supplemented on a regular basis by individual objectives derived from College strategies.
2. Where an applicant or existing employee is, or becomes, disabled (as defined by the DDA) and informs the College fully of their requirements, reasonable adjustments will be made to the job description wherever possible.

GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF POST	
Working Hours:	37 hours per week; Monday to Friday
Probation Period:	6 Months subject to periodic reviews
Special Conditions of the Post:	Fixed Term Contract
	Annual leave may not be taken during the busy enrolment and induction period.
	This job description outlines a range of main duties. It is not exhaustive and can be varied in consultation with the post holder in order to reflect changes in the job or the organisation.
	As the College is a multi-campus site, flexibility and willingness to work across all sites is required.

V1

Figure 38: Job description p. 2-3

Job Description		
Compiled By:	██████████ College	
Compilation Date:	September 2015	

Person Specification

Job Title:	School and Customer Service Apprentice
Department	Student Recruitment and Marketing

The specific qualifications, experience, skills and values that are required for the role are outlined below. You should demonstrate your ability to meet these requirements by providing clear and concise examples on the application form. Each criteria is marked with whether it an essential or desirable requirement and at which point in the recruitment process it will be assessed.

Methods of Assessment:
A = Application Form, I = Interview, T = Test or Assessment, P = Presentation

Qualifications & Attainments		
Essential (E) Desirable (D)	Criteria	Method of assessment
D	Q1.Literacy and numeracy at Level 2 or above	A
E	Q2. Work Towards the Relevant Customer Service qualification at level 2 or above	A

Experience & Knowledge		
Essential (E) Desirable (D)	Criteria	Method of assessment
E	EK1. Good knowledge of Microsoft office/google applications	A /I/T
D	EK2. Experience of working in a service environment	A / I
D	EK3. Experience of administrative duties	A / I
D	EK4. Knowledge of data protection and confidentiality requirements	A / I

D	EK5. Experience of cash/card handling	A / I
---	---------------------------------------	-------

Skills & Competencies		
Essential (E) Desirable (D)	Criteria	Method of assessment
E	SC1. Ability to work flexibly across a number of tasks	A / I
E	SC2.Good communication skills	A / I
D	SC3. Good customer service focus	A / I
E	SC4. Good IT Skills	A / I / T
E	SC5.Good attention to detail and accuracy	A / I / T

Behavioural, Values & Ethos		
Essential (E) Desirable (D)	Criteria	Method of assessment
E	B1. Commitment to the College's support and promotion of Equality and Diversity.	I
D	B2. Committed to child protection and the promotion of a safe environment for children and young people to learn in.	I
D	B3. Customer centred approach to dealing with queries	I
E	B4. An understanding and commitment to the PREVENT agenda	I

V1

Figure 39: Person specification

These documents are a recruitment genre set, aimed at assisting candidates' self-appraisal in relation to the job, and represent a discourse of inclusivity and transparency in public sector recruitment. However, like the application form, they also contain intersecting discourses from other areas of practice. For example, in the job description, the public sector discourse of compliance with government legislation is apparent in the notes (Figure 38), in references to topics such as "safeguarding". Another example is the mention in the person specification (Figure 39) of an "understanding of and commitment to PREVENT", which is the government's anti-radicalisation programme in response to the "war on terror". There are also many unexplained acronyms under the list of main duties (Figure 37) for example "CIPS" and "ULNs", which refer to the college's own policies and practices, and so constitute a very specific institutional discourse. These unfamiliar discourses probably make the supporting documents less useful to Parastou, who does not have inside knowledge of either the UK public sector or the college's back office administration practices.

In the text box instructions (Figure 35- Figure 36), the discursive expectation is that the candidate should articulate the "career management" dimension of employability (Williams et al., 2016, p. 892) as a series of achievements accomplished through personal strengths and unique contributions that closely match the job profile, in a narrative form, of up to 4000 words. Parastou assured me in a subsequent interview that she had read the documents in the application pack and used them to help her understand the questions, because:

Parastou: it was sometimes ... difficult to understand what the question wants and most of the question are similar and I er sometimes I don't know exactly what they want and er what should I answer

(Interview, 00:24:11.2-00:25:37.4).

However, Parastou's repeated use of the same phrases to talk or write about her professional work, indicates that she does not recognise the purpose of different sections of the form, or my questions, and she interprets some questions literally, rather than drawing inference from a knowledge of social practice. Her interpretation of the supporting statement is a concrete example of this. In reference to interviews, Roberts (2010) notes that projecting a credible identity, requires "blending institutional, professional and personal modes of discourse into a standard narrative structure"

(Roberts, 2010, p. 9). In other job-seeking related studies (Bhatia, 1993; Lipovsky, 2013) the most successful candidates are those who can blend attitudinal and work discourses to form persuasive and consistent answers. As mentioned earlier, in Third and Relational Spaces, Parastou has had very limited support with job application genres.

[REDACTED]

Profile

A highly organised, personable and flexible professional with comprehensive administrative experience gained through work and academic environments. Excellent interpersonal, communicative (written and verbal) and rapport building skills utilised to develop trustworthy relationships at all levels. Able to work intuitively to pre-empt issues and generate solutions. Responds enthusiastically to tight timeframes and deadlines whilst maintaining close attention to detail and adherence to all protocols. Working with diplomacy, tact and confidentiality, juggling multiple demands and prioritising work accordingly whilst remaining friendly, approachable and positive at all times.

Core Competencies

- Project Management Experience
- Data Analysis
- Reception Cover
- Report Writing
- Financial Administration
- Excellent IT Skills
- Contractor Liaison
- Relationship Management
- Report Generation

Education, Training and Qualifications

M.A. International Business **University of [REDACTED] UK** **Sept 2014 – Jan 2016**
 Completed a Master's Degree encompassing a wide-ranging focus on several business topics including: Marketing, Human Resources, and Accounting. Final thesis was an HR focus project in which I examined the employment opportunities of international students at Lincoln University. I created a survey and collated the data to create a campus-wide report and presentation with my results.

B.A. Agricultural Engineering **[REDACTED] University, Iran** **Sept 1998 – Sept 2002**
 Completed a degree which enabled me to work with both government and private companies in my home country of Iran.

IELTS **Iran** **2013**
 Passed English proficiency test with overall score of 6.

Career Summary

Mother **[REDACTED]** **Jan 2016 - Present**

- Since completing my coursework, I have been looking after my young child while awaiting Right to Work status as an asylum seeker in the UK. During this time, I have been unable to seek gainful employment. I have spent this time studying to receive accredited Maths and English GCSE's.

Voluntary activities

- Taking part in several different voluntary activities in our local church, such as signing cards, service to toddlers' group and helping Sunday school teachers to manage kids classes.

Project Manager **[REDACTED] Iran** **2006 – 2012**

- Pivotal role in the setting up the office and putting systems in place upon opening as an Agriculture Division of [REDACTED]
- Liaised and collaborated with a private agricultural company (2003 – 2014 part time and full time) to help bolster the industry by discovering ways to sell and export agricultural products of Iran internationally.
- Managed a small team who assisted in conducting research on agricultural industries current financial state.
- Gathered data, reporting back to Management Directors on our findings; created and ran presentations on our found information.
- General day-to-day administrative duties developed; being a small team, we were responsible for covering all aspects of running our office.

IT Skills

Proficient user of Microsoft Office Suite – Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, Outlook and Explorer

Figure 40: Parastou's CV, which she copied and pasted into the supporting statement

Parastou's goal is to provide evidence of her suitability for the job, but for many reasons, this is impeded. Perhaps faithfully following the instruction to be "clear and concise" (Figure 39, para 1), she copies and pastes her CV (Figure 35 and Figure 40) as a supporting statement, despite the instruction that a CV will not be accepted. She seems to interpret the meaning of "CV" as a digitised artefact, rather than a genre used for a specific practice. I ask her several times, to check my understanding that she has copied and pasted the CV, and she shows me the supporting statement on her mobile. Her concern is that she has included all relevant and up to date information, as well as the potential length of the text, as the extracts below show:

Parastou: Erm anything that I did and any skills that I had and er some skills like er computer skills And er some volunteer works that I'm doing now I add this ok.... And and I it was er at my er qualifications and er explaining rest exactly

(Transcript F, 00:07:00.4-00:07:28.4)

Parastou: Because in there lots of place er I could wrote four thousands words here
She scrolls very quickly through the dialogue box again, and speaks with a downward intonation, stressing "four thousand words".

(Transcript F, 00:07:53.4-00:08:02.4)

Her intonation, actions and word stress appear to indicate her disbelief at the prospect of writing 4000 words in English for a job application. This form is used for all posts, however, so 4000 words may be necessary for more senior positions; she is unaware that expectations could be different of an apprenticeship application. At the time of recording, there are several reasons why I do not suggest she rewrite this section. I am reluctant to change her goal, because our relationship is new, I feel unconfident about my role as participant researcher, and I do not feel I can claim authoritative knowledge about apprenticeship applications. She is also keen to apply and has already expended substantial time and effort. In the moment, I am also very

conscious that rewriting this section together would be difficult using the mediational means of her mobile and within the time constraints. As mentioned earlier in Screen Space, Parastou never refers to the constraints of the small window for writing on her mobile, so it is unclear if this contributes to her practice of copying and pasting. In good faith, Parastou is trying to do as she has been advised: she does ensure that she includes her volunteering work, and key words from the person specification, but this is limited to “styling” (Del Percio, 2018), as opposed to “style”, the individual semiotic choices that represent an aspect of identity (Fairclough, 2003, p. 24) and she does not weave these into a narrative genre demanded by the practice of writing supporting statements (R. M. Brown & Barton, 2004; Swales et al., 2004). Neither do key phrases such as “IT skills” form the effective focal points supported by evidence, mentioned by Lipovsky (2013).

As when describing her work, Parastou’s CV contains disparate and jarring discourses, even within the same section, such as under the “core competencies” heading, she includes both “reception cover”, which belongs to an administration discourse which fits point 16 of the job description, and “relationship management” which evokes a much more senior management discourse and is difficult to relate to any of the application criteria. Her repositioning by a recruiter during the pre-interview screening call for a different job, described earlier, as a person “with no experience”, creates an identity crisis that is then refracted through her CV and supporting statement, to subsequent recruiters.

Stage 3: References.

(00:10:44.7-00:16:53.7)

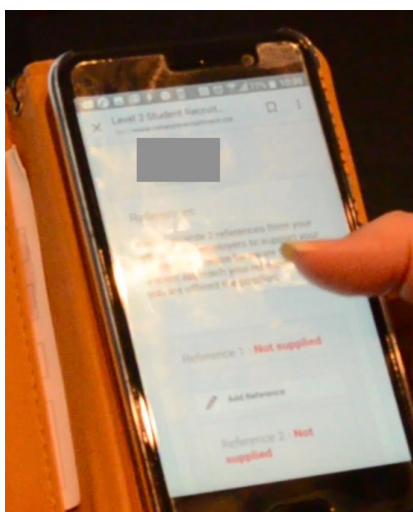


Figure 41: “Please provide 2 referees from your most recent employment”

Parastou is extremely worried by the need to provide two references from her most recent employment (Figure 41), because of her lack of UK employment history, and her Iranian employers' likely difficulty in providing references in English. She puts her phone back down on the table and turns to me, as we begin an extended discussion about the conventions of obtaining references. The popular discourse of voluntary work as a "stepping-stone to further a career", either to gain specific experience or as a substitute for employer references is unknown to her (Transcript F, 00:14:11.5-00:14:41.1). She is also perhaps unaware of the legal requirement for references to be fair, and that employers often comply with this by writing to templates which address generic performance such as attendance, rather than personal qualities. Both these prevent her from seeing the bridging capital voluntary work provides, to overcome the need for employer references.

As I explain the practices of using voluntary work in this way, we are drawn into a self-appraisal cycle in relation to the goal of obtaining work references. She begins by rejecting the goal as too difficult, as her previous employers are in Iran. I reformulate the task, by suggesting she use her voluntary work coordinators. She rejects this as "not a job exactly". I reformulate the task as obtaining a character reference, rather than one of professional competence. She still prevaricates, mentioning problems with obtaining contact details, yet is keen not to miss the opportunity to work in an educational environment. By the end of the session, her phone has faded onto stand-by, but she has tentatively accepted the goal of approaching her voluntary work contacts for a reference, if not this time, perhaps in the future.

Level 2 Apprenticeship: Conclusions.

If a site of attention or engagement is both a social space where mediated actions take place, and a meeting of practices which enable the mediated action to take place (R. Scollon, 2001a), the social space which Parastou occupies is contested: is she a global citizen with a Master's degree in International Business, staying on in the UK after graduation or an unemployed migrant "with no experience"? This dilemma is at the heart of her motivation for applying for an apprenticeship, a job for which she later finds she is overqualified.

Her own professional identity is very far removed from that of a person "with no experience", which further contributes to her difficulty. This becomes increasingly apparent when, as we progress through the questions, I consistently unpick her reasons

for prevaricating and propose alternatives, which Bedny et al. (2000) frame as providing directional motivation, through appraisal of resources and difficulty in relation to the task, followed by task acceptance/rejection and task modification in relation to the goal. The task is to answer the questions. I unconsciously suggest new tasks, in the form of how or whether to answer the questions, and Parastou then reappraises herself, accepts and executes the answers. In other words, we are in a recursive goal adjustment cycle.

However, in terms of achieving her goal of submitting this application, Parastou's self-appraisal in relation to the questions is frequently negative, which reduces her directional motivation. It is negative because her anticipatory dialogue (R. Scollon, 2001a) in response to the questions is limited by her lack of familiarity with the college's practices and apprenticeship qualifications. The application form and guidance documents contain multiple conflicting and sometimes opaque discourses, brought together in a generic hybridised set of documents that serves the entire spectrum of job types within the college, and appear to have been written for an audience already at least partly institutionalised. Using my FE teaching background in particular, I understand the practices and discourses on which the application form is premised and am able to explain them, but this itself is challenging, as I had never had to articulate them before. Parastou read the guidance by herself. The form and the guidance are thus onerous for Parastou to understand, even with my subsequent input, reducing her overall motivation. Her attention is diverted to spending time on irrelevant sections, which disadvantages her, because it is both time consuming and stressful and shifts her attention away from what she should be focusing on, writing the supporting statement, to give a clear account in narrative form, as to how she matches the candidate profile.

7.3 Email job alerts 1 (Transcript G)

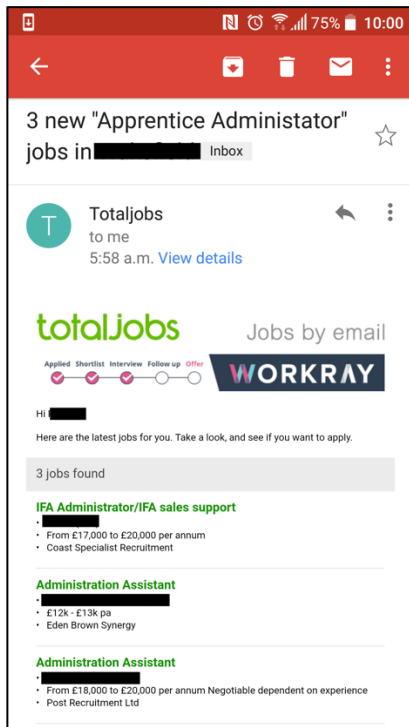


Figure 42: Total Jobs email with job alerts

In this section, and the next, Parastou is reading email job alerts for administration assistants (Figure 42). She begins here with an alert from *Total Jobs*, which has three vacancies that she systematically evaluates. The analysis finishes with her applying for a job from another recruiter, *Reed*. The sites of engagement arise when she is deciding whether or not to apply for the vacancies. Sometimes this decision is reached swiftly, and sometimes it is more prolonged and involves additional conscious goals and actions. Two of the four jobs under consideration are presented:

1. Total Jobs 3 (Transcript G, 00:03:06.80-00:06:27.9)
2. Reed (Transcript G, 00:08:31.6-00:20:00.0)

Total Jobs 3.

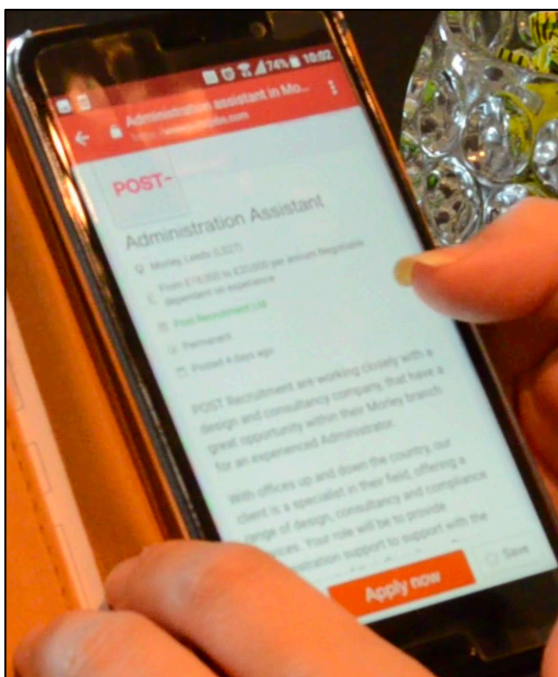


Figure 43: The third vacancy from Total Jobs

Analysis

There are three salient discourses intersecting in this site of attention, as Parastou evaluates this administration assistant job (Figure 43): the value of qualifications, the status of the job and language proficiency. The particular way in which Parastou interprets these, as they jostle for priority in the interaction, ultimately results in a negative self-appraisal. She initially takes this third vacancy more seriously than the previous two, based on the salary which matches her needs, and we start to read and interpret the advert together, she holding the device tilted towards me, scrolling as we each read out salient details.

<p>Parastou: Mmm “administration assistant again from eighteen thousand to twenty thousand”</p> <p>She scrolls down</p> <p>Me: Mmhmm</p> <p>I lean forwards</p> <p>Me: And then it says “negotiable”</p> <p>I point to the screen</p> <p>Parastou: Mm</p> <p>Parastou pauses</p> <p>Me: “Dependent on experience” so...they're a bit flexible</p> <p>She scrolls down slightly</p> <p>Parastou: Mm yeah... it couldn't be.. twelve thousand ha ha ha</p>
--

(Transcript G, 00:03:13.0-00:03:27.3)

As with the apprenticeship, she is unsure of how to place this administration assistant job in a company hierarchy. By picking out the potential for experience to be a point of negotiation, I provide ongoing motivation for Parastou, apparent as she immediately starts to read the day to day responsibilities with concentration.

As we read the list of duties (Figure 44), Parastou and I both laugh at “review engineer reports daily checking for grammar, punctuation, spelling”. This phrase in the advert demonstrates how language proficiency is evaluated differently in different activity systems. Here, engineers’ specialist knowledge is implicitly valued above their language accuracy, responsibility for which is transferred to the activity of administration. Correspondingly, in the activity system of administrative support, written language accuracy is highly important, as it is a key medium through which the image of the organisation is projected. Our laughter tacitly acknowledges that proof-reading could be difficult for her (Transcript G, 00:04:22.9): the linguistic demands of this workplace are unknown. However, she is a highly proficient user of office software, the other main prerequisite of the role.

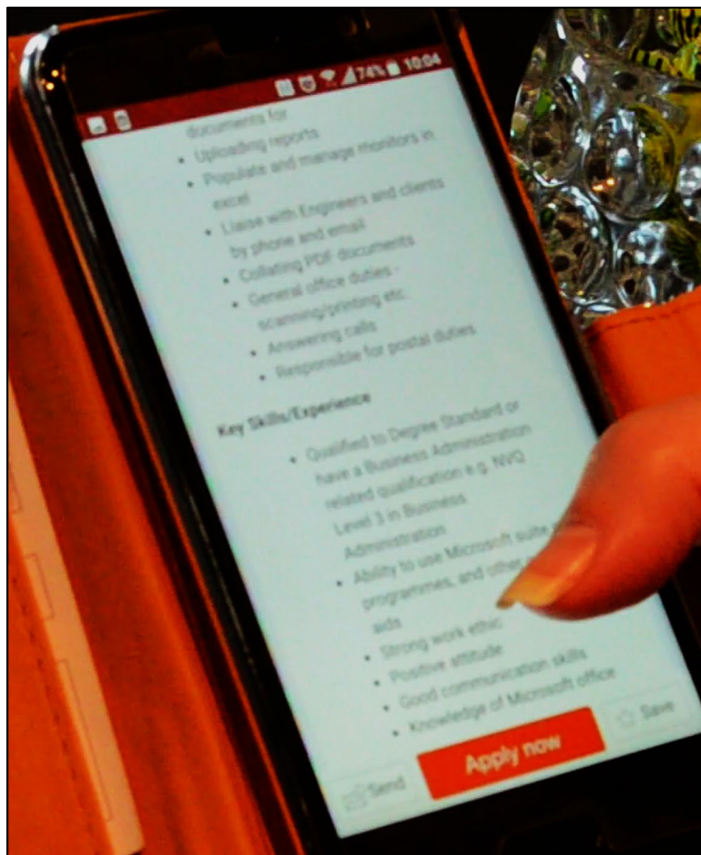


Figure 44: “Key skills/experience - qualified to degree standard...”

We now enter into a cycle of self-appraisal and goal adjustment and resetting, in which, as we read, each time Parastou expresses doubt, I reinterpret the advert in light of the position of the vacancy in the workplace hierarchy, and the requisite qualifications and skills, which I believe she exceeds. I refer to her success as a postgraduate from an English university in relation to her language proficiency, and remind her about the routine practices of using spelling and grammar checkers in Microsoft Word. She remains modest about the transfer of skills from self-correction to correcting others: “It’s not bad but...I dunno can I check other person’s grammar ha ha and punctuation and spelling”(Transcript G, 00:04:39.8). In my experience of in-session international master’s students’ writing at university, grammar, punctuation and spelling do not need to be perfect, as long as they communicate the writer’s thoughts clearly, which of course, is a matter of degree and opinion.

Even while acknowledging the practice of using proof-reading software, Parastou continues to privilege innate language proficiency, thus assigning the task of checking spelling and grammar a much higher cognitive demand than perhaps it deserves. She transfers this high-demand value of one aspect of the job to the entire role, so that even though she understands it to be “something like secretary” (Transcript G, 00:04:59.2), which is considerably lower status than her previous employment, she nevertheless appraises herself as unsuitable: “Unfortunately I have to start from low grade works”(Transcript G, 00:05:44.1). As I remind her insistently again of her qualifications, I point to the screen. Parastou scrolls back up to the qualifications then puts the phone on the table quite decisively and turns to me. She rests her elbow on the table. Her action and posture indicate she is tired of trying to work out where to position herself in the job market:

Me: You've got a postgraduate

Parastou: Yeah

Me: Degree, so it is lower than your qualification level isn't it? I don't know what do you think?

Parastou: Yeah I think so

She sounds very unconvinced and there's a pause.

Me: Are you going to consider applying for that one then or...?

Parastou: I'll consider about that

(Transcript G, 00:06:06.6-00:06:27.9)

As she puts the phone on the table, Parastou's tone of voice and actions have changed from relatively interested to very non-committal, showing perhaps resignation at the difficulties in trying to self-appraise when so uncertain about where to position herself. Her concern with her perceived language deficiency overrides the value of the specialist knowledge symbolised by her post-graduate qualification, and the relative ease of the other duties listed in the advert, such as uploading reports, handling post, and printing (Figure 44), not to mention her ten year experience of managing contractors. Proof-reading for language errors may be an undemanding task for many, but Parastou views this as a high demand aspect of the work, because she believes herself to be linguistically deficient. Her rejection of the vacancy seems based on her uncertainty about the grade of this work and her ability to carry out grammar and spelling work.

Reed.

In this site of attention, Parastou can initially relate to the human resources discourse in the advertisement (Figure 45), drawing on her academic knowledge, which motivates her to read further. She recognises the CIPD qualification and identifies strongly with human resources discourses -"I did lots of HR". After checking the salary, her priorities are the qualifications and experience. The application lasts ten minutes, from opening the advert to receiving confirmation of the application. In that time, Parastou handles long sequences of information related to the different tasks of which the activity is comprised. The most difficult and also time-consuming task is understanding the metaphor of "employee life cycle" (Figure 45) listed under "required skills": 50% of time is spent on this, as Figure 46 shows. The metaphor, borrowed from the life sciences, makes an implicit analogy between living organisms and in this case,

human resources management. The particular difficulties lie in recognising the phrase is a metaphor, understanding what it means, then interpreting this in relation to its appearance as a “skill” in the job description. In so doing, Parastou unconsciously draws on her digital information management skills and consciously on her academic knowledge, and English. Yet these alone are insufficient for the task of understanding the advert.

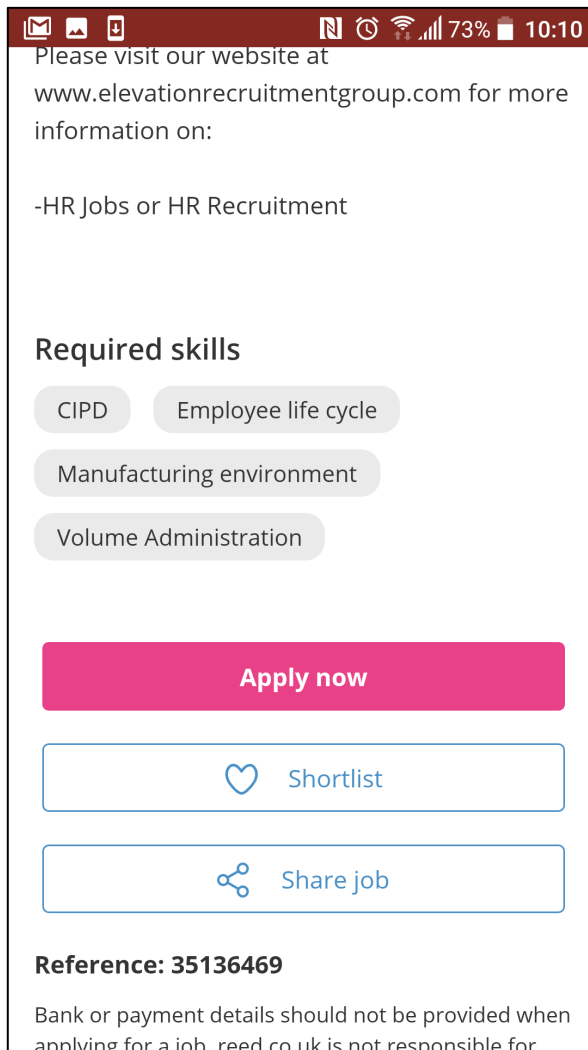


Figure 45: Required skills

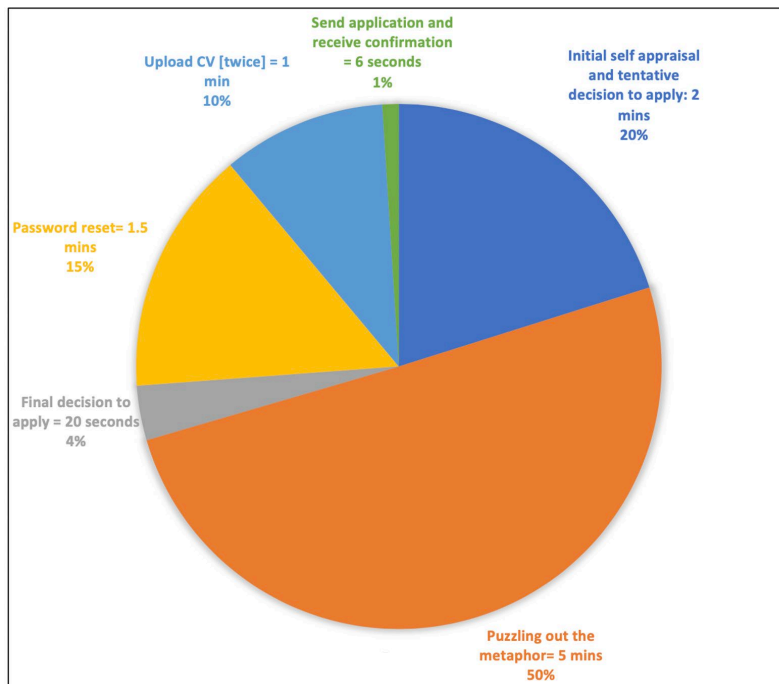


Figure 46: Time spent on tasks in the Reed application

Although the whole application takes only 10 minutes of time, very intense work is being done, not least by me on maintaining her directional motivation, by contributing from unconsciously accumulated discourse repertoires. I can guess what “life cycle” means, by drawing on my cultural knowledge and recognition that this is a metaphor. Automatically reverting to a language teaching orientation, I suggest Parastou check Google rather than a dictionary, as she needs to understand the human resources concept, not the literal meaning.

The phrase appears as a very common search term, reinforcing its existence as a recognised concept in human resources, but the appearance of the first search result, filled with banner advertisements, a discourse of marketing junk, deters her from reading further. I intervene before she rejects the goal of working out the meaning. I attempt to expand on the definition, drawing on my intuitive understanding of the metaphor but my layperson’s discourse does not help Parastou to understand the connection with the job advert:

Me: So life cycle if you think about biology if you think about the life cycle it's from birth to death

She scrolls back to the top and taps to return to the search results

Parastou: Yeah

She puts the phone on the table

Me: If you look thinking about an employee it's from when they start with your organisation to when they leave its about

She leans on the table and looks at me.

Parastou: Ah they want their history employee or maybe something

She makes a little circle motion with her fingers

(Transcript G, 00:13:10.2-00:13:32.1)

I try again, this time again trying to relate the metaphor to my somewhat hazy anticipatory discourse of the workplace practices of an administration assistant in an HR company. I ask her to reopen the advert, and focus her attention on the job title:

She scrolls up and points to the job title.

Me: Yeah so if you're working in HR even as an administrator they want you to have an understanding of all the processes that HR departments need to

She rubs her fingers while I talk, then scrolls back down the advert

Parastou: Ok

She says this slowly, and sounds measured and thoughtful

Me: Go through when they recruit people?

Parastou: It it something a skills!

She points to the screen with a sharp intake of breath

Me: This is a skill that you need to know about... erm different stages of looking after employees cos look in HR it it's not just about recruitment is it?

I point to the screen as well, with my pen

Parastou: Mm yeah

She taps the screen and returns to the google search results.

Me: So I think that's what that's about but because I don't work in HR I'm not precisely sure

(Transcript G, 00:13:10.2-00:14:18.5)

This connection I suggest between the administration role and its rather distant and passive familiarity with the professional HR discourse enables Parastou to self-appraise positively enough to open another explanation of the employee lifecycle metaphor, which is now much easier for her to understand:

Parastou: Mm yes “attraction recruitment and [...]working” yeah! I remember!
She skims through the text, reading out the subheadings
Me: Haha is it coming back to you?
Parastou: Development yeah [...]

(Transcript G, 00:14:45.8-00:15:04.5)

She now has to work out why the metaphor is being used in the advert, under the heading of “skills”, itself an ill-defined term. Parastou seems to interpret “skill” as an ability to do something, whereas my interpretation relates to my perception of the job grade, based on the responsibilities and pay. An expert English user, with knowledge of the employment field, could make an informed judgement about this, but we could only make an educated guess. We pooled her academic knowledge with my expert linguistic knowledge and cultural awareness of the position of low paid administrators in an employment hierarchy, to understand the metaphor use in the job advert, that despite its categorisation under “skills” (Figure 45) it was more a matter of “knowing about” than “doing”:

Parastou: Ok they want just I know about this?
She stops scrolling and looks at me
Me: The job's administrator isn't it so
She scrolls down to the further reading at the bottom of the web page
Parastou: Mm
Me: They just want you to know about it but not that you'll be running it
Parastou: Yeah yeah She taps to return to her emails
Me: I think...as an administrator at that pay at that salary level
The email job alert opens
Parastou: Yeah OK
She scrolls back to the top and rubs her chin
Parastou: I can apply it
She taps the “apply” button

(Transcript G, 00:15:15.0-00:15:46.3)

This collaborative interpretation of “employee life cycle skill” as “knowing about” results in a positive self-appraisal from Parastou, motivating her to research the meaning of the term further, and as she skims through a very detailed explanation of the concept, her confidence that she “knows about” it grows. Her final decision to “just apply”, in the excerpt above, is thus made very quickly.

The last stages of the job application: signing into the recruitment account, recovering a password, uploading a CV and submitting the application take around two and half minutes and are “easy peasy” for Parastou: “No covering letters! Send application” (Transcript G, 00:18:56.1-00:20:00.0). We shared unconscious discursive expectations about providing a cover letter and Parastou is visibly relieved at avoiding this. The CV is the one used previously in the apprenticeship application (Figure 40), not adapted for this vacancy. Both the unadapted CV and the relief at avoiding a cover letter reinforce earlier findings about her difficulty in blending the professional discourse with her own experience.

Although she has identified strongly with the required skills, it is again evident that she does not recognise the importance of providing a cover letter or tailoring her CV to emphasise her knowledge of the core elements of the role and thus provide a recognisable employability narrative for this recruiter. When I asked her later if she adapted her CV for this job, she said she had included her volunteering work, but explained that her profile and experience remained the same, and that she only changed key words (Transcript G, 00:03:47.5). This also shows her unawareness of how voluntary work can be used to explicitly demonstrate individual employability qualities, such as perhaps “teamwork”.

Email Job Alerts 1: Conclusions.

In the process of checking through email job alerts to find an appropriate vacancy, Parastou starts with “red lines” between what she will and will not consider. These relate to financial circumstances, and also her unclear career identity, and bring her into conflict with the position of the job centre. In the other data, she told me that although her regular job coach was understanding and supportive, she had recently been interviewed by a different job coach who accused her of not applying enough and being too choosy about the kind of work she wanted.

Parastou: She said you're it in your situation you have to do something like this and I said no I don't have to do

(Transcript G, 00:00:53.0 -00:01:58.8)

What this demonstrates is the lack of awareness about where the real challenges lie, which the data above clearly shows, and which Parastou clearly voices in her retort, “I can’t apply without thinking!”. As in the apprenticeship data, there are difficulties understanding acronyms and specific domain-related terminology. In the *Reed* application, these may be further obscured when used as key words under a subheading of “skills”, with the assumption that the reader can interpret the purpose of the key word in relation to the key duties of the role.

Parastou’s motivation to engage in the demands of “thinking” is much higher when she can identify with something familiar in the advert. Her lack of motivation for finding out more about “IFA” which she does not understand, even though she has an academic background in finance, “I did international business finance”, leads to her swift rejection of the first vacancy (Transcript G, 00:01:14.8), and contrasts with her keenness to continue with the final application, when she recognises the term “CIPD”. Despite her academic English and technological repertoires, she nevertheless needs further input to successfully unpick workplace hierarchies and self-appraise in relation to job descriptions. Not understanding acronyms or references to concepts in relation to the job descriptions interferes with her understanding of the roles and ultimately her nascent career identity.

Parastou voices concerns about aspects of language proficiency such as spelling and grammar accuracy that, ironically, may not be as important in higher level professional roles. However, she constantly repeats the message from others, that she should be aiming low and taking whatever work she can. This shows a lack of appreciation for the real working environment obliquely referred to in the advert, where professionals in a different activity system, engineers, are not required to be fully proficient in all aspects of written English. This constantly reinforced misperception of the roles that language and literacies might play in the workplace contributes to Parastou’s decision to apply for low grade administration work, as a compromise between her previous status as a highly experienced and qualified professional and her repositioning in the UK as a “person with no experience”.

7. 4 Email job alerts 2: (Transcript H)

This is a continuation of the previous session, in which Parastou is still checking her emails. *Candidate Point* is another recruitment agency which has sent her a bulletin. She receives so many of these unsolicited, they can be regarded as “spam” (Information Commissioner’s Office, 2019). The volume of emails makes it difficult to evaluate which are worth pursuing, which recruitment companies are legitimate, and with which ones she has actually registered. The site of attention opens when Parastou has clicked on a vacancy and been funnelled into a job search, instead of an application, her anticipatory discourse. Parastou’s attention is then focussed on refining the key words in the search field, in which she has had no training; evaluating the search results; and applying. The data is divided according to the recruitment websites through which she is transported and will be presented in the following order:

- Candidate Point -Total Jobs
- HR assistant in Ben Johnson
- Zip Recruiter application

Analysis

Candidate Point – Total Jobs.

(Transcript H, 00:02:12.0- 00:05:39.3)

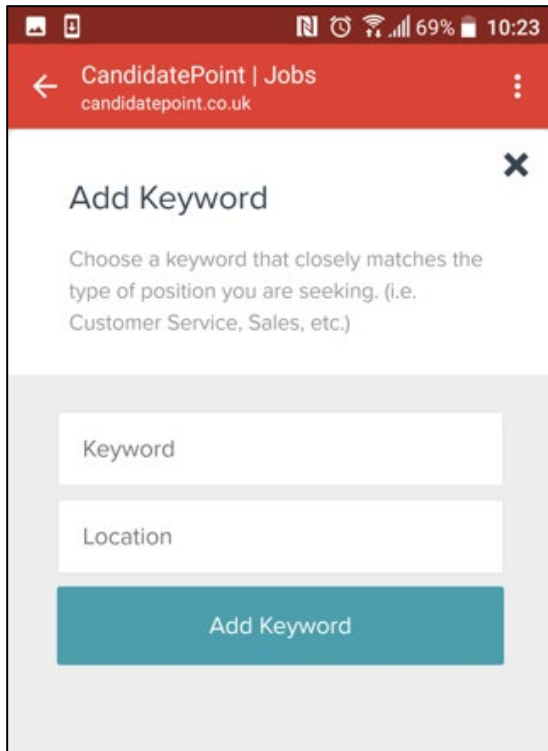


Figure 47: Adding key words in a job search

Parastou has just submitted the employee lifecycle application. Her downward intonation, slight sigh “I dunno” and physical stance, resting her head on her hand and elbow on the table, as she scrolls her mobile, which is on the table between us, show that she is perhaps tired now, and also maybe that she anticipates the next application will be just as difficult.

The interface on *Candidate Point* (Figure 47) contains a key word field; an open type-in text box, which permits agency, and which makes automated suggestions, providing support in articulating a career identity.

Parastou: “HR assistant, HR manager, HR helpdesk support advisor HR training and development officer”. I did er test this kind of jobs lots of times before and they didn't answer me

She scrolls slowly down the screen, reading out the suggested key words.

(Transcript H, 00:01:12.4-00:01:36.7)

However, her dilemma is how to position herself as an “inexperienced” person

who actually does have a substantial amount of experience which is unfortunately, not valued in this context. To express such a complex identity in one or two key words would challenge anybody. A key word represents, in Bakhtinian terms, an “utterance”, a completed thought, formulated with an audience, a prospective employer, in mind. It is therefore doubly difficult to achieve for Parastou: she needs both to construct an employable identity, then to have the linguistic repertoire to express it very succinctly.

Parastou: Ok I haven't er ...write. Can I write ...unexperienced ...jobs or something?

She rubs her thumb as she thinks about what she is saying, then turns to me questioningly and shrugs.

(Transcript H, 00:02:41.9-00:03:01.5I)

I evaluate this suggestion as negative, suggestive even of a discourse of incompetence; I propose “entry level”, which I evaluate as a positive spin on her situation as somebody wanting to gain experience. In doing this, I am helping her to project a relevant credible self, by feeding her with key words in the discourse of recruitment. In the apprenticeship application. Parastou faced the hurdle of writing a supporting statement in a narrative form. Here, in this search, Parastou needs to distil this imaginary narrative further, into key words. Roberts (2010) notes that the absorption and blending of discourses is intrinsic to the development of a workplace identity, and that this new identity is formed collaboratively. Parastou, however, is not yet in the workforce, therefore must construct, absorb, and express the essence of her new identity alone, being unaware of potential help from her passive social networks. Unfortunately, the search term I suggest unexpectedly redirects Parastou back to *Total Jobs* visited a few minutes previously (Figure 48).

Figure 48: Back to Total Jobs again

Parastou: Yeah it's went back to *Total Jobs* again

Parastou leans forwards and taps back to the *Candidate Point* page with the key words.

Me: That you were just looking at

Parastou: I think they are linked together

She shrugs doubtfully.

(Transcript H, 00:05:29.6-00:05:36.6)

Our talk and Parastou's actions belong to a common discourse of frustration

with automated IT systems, especially when search results do not match expectations. The search reveals how limited the vacancies are, and that these are endlessly marketed via different routes. The results contest the discourse that there are thousands of vacancies suited to each candidate, which the email bulletins and interface design suggest. Being unwittingly caught in a loop drains Parastou's motivation. Neither of us has any idea how the websites are linked or what we could do to avoid getting into such a loop. The effect is dispiriting. Regardless of whether the looped search arises from a poor choice of key words, or a badly designed algorithm, the experience of being sent in circles undermines the validity of her nascent career identity as an 'entry level administrator' and thus her confidence in how to express what she wants. She therefore abandons the use of "entry level administrator" as a search term.

HR Assistant in Ben Johnson.

(00:06:07.6-00:09:11.0) The next advert she reads (Figure 49) is extremely persuasive, not only because of the salary range, which would suit Parastou's domestic situation, but also because of the promises of wider career opportunities. Her voice shows enthusiasm as she reads out the salary, then the rest of the advert.

Parastou: "Up to twenty-one thousand depending on experience". OK "join a (inaudible) based business during an exciting new (inaudible)"

She leans forward and picks up her mobile, smiling as she continues to read.

Parastou: "Expansion HR function our current (inaudible)HR division to enable the business, attract motivate and retain true talent" erm. It is er "this is great opportunity for an experienced HR assistant (inaudible)" erm... "responsibilities (inaudible)"

She scrolls back up and rereads the beginning of the advert.

(Transcript G, 00:06:15.5-00:07:33.8)

Now she is genuinely interested in the job and rereads the advert to evaluate the need for experience, as this is a recurring barrier. Although she initially does not identify herself as suitable when she sees the reference to an "experienced" HR assistant (Figure 49, highlight a): "it's more experience wanted here" (Transcript H, 00:08:16.8), she immediately identifies herself as a person who is "looking to get involved and expand their knowledge" (Figure 49, highlight b) when I point this out on the screen and paraphrase it:

I point to the screen.

Me: No they say that you're going to have the opportunity to get experience there

Parastou: Ah yeah

She rereads the section. She scrolls quickly up to *key responsibilities* and down to *apply*.

Parastou: It sounds nice

(Transcript H, 00:08:22.9-00-00:08:32.3).

The job description uses familiar lexis, and the combination of confident understanding of the job advert, and positive self-appraisal after my prompting with a paraphrase, changes Parastou's activity from being a compliant research participant at the opening of the site of attention, to applying for an appropriate job. Neither of us notices the tiny print at the bottom of the screen (Figure 49, highlight c) about the terms of use, when Parastou clicks "apply", neither do we notice that the advert is from yet another recruitment website, Zip Recruiter, not Candidate Point, where we started.

Posted on ZipRecruiter

HR Assistant

Ben Johnson EN UK

Compensation **£18,000 to £21,000 Annually**
 Employment Type **Full-Time**

HR Assistant

Up to £21k depending on experience

Ben Johnson Ltd are currently recruiting an HR assistant to join a well-recognised based business during an exciting period of expansion. The HR function are currently re-mapping their HR strategy to enable the business to attract, motivate and retain key talent. **This is a great opportunity for an experienced HR Assistant to join the team and contribute to the development of a customer centric HR function.**

Key responsibilities:

- Support the recruitment process by being first line of contact i.e placing adverts, scheduling interviews, dealing with agency partners
- Provide HR admin support to operational managers on all their HR issues ensuring compliance with company policy and best practice
- Support the administration of employees TUPE in and out of the organisation
- Provide HR administration support for all performance management issues, absence management and disciplinary and grievance procedures

By using this site, you agree with our use of cookies. [I consent to](#) [Want to know more](#)

- Support the co-ordination of inductions and deliver training sessions to the managers
- Produce employee MI and reports
- Co-ordinate the employee benefit scheme
- Ensure all documentation for starters and leaves is up to date

This is a role that will suit an HR Assistant who is looking to get involved and expand their knowledge within a values driven organisation. Reporting directly into the Senior HR adviser, you will have the opportunity for calibre mentorship and coaching in a business that will have wider career opportunities.

As a well-known name within the Yorkshire Market. Ben Johnson Recruitment is professional and consultative with a focus on delivering bespoke, quality-driven recruitment solutions to clients and candidates

Posted date: 5 days ago
[View all Jobs at Ben Johnson](#)

Enter your email

Apply Now

By clicking the button above, I accept the ZipRecruiter [Terms of Use](#), acknowledge I have read the [Privacy Policy](#) and agree to receive email job alerts.

(a)

(b)

(c)

Figure 49: HR assistant advert (annotated)

By conflating acceptance of its privacy policy with an agreement to receive marketing emails as part of the conditions for applying, *Zip Recruiter* is forcing candidates into accepting potentially overwhelming amounts of spam emails. The text underneath the “apply now” button relates to data protection law, yet guidelines on GDPR (Information Commissioner’s Office, 2019) warn against combining consent to a privacy policy with consent for other uses of data, e.g. receiving email alerts. Such emails contribute to the ebbing of confidence in digital recruitment platforms voiced earlier by Parastou, and also in the literature, by employers (e.g. in Green, 2017) who are increasingly returning to using word of mouth and their own websites in an effort to control the volume and quality of applicants.

Zip Recruiter Application

After clicking on the apply link, the website begins a registration process, masked as an online chat dialogue, formatted in speech bubbles. Parastou is prompted to answer questions as the form takes her through all the stages of building an online account. This is a surprise to Parastou, who says in response to “building a quick profile to send on to the hiring manager” (Figure 50): “Oh it’s started again ha ha” (Transcript H, 00:10:46.2).

Companies routinely employ artificial intelligence in the form of chatbots to interact with customers, e.g. for troubleshooting. Anthropomorphic design features such as names and characters are a recognised way in which chatbots can successfully achieve a social presence. However, here, social presence, and thus, user engagement, is achieved solely through the informal conversational lexico-grammatical style and staged question-response presentation on the screen, as in an online chat conversation. This format allows little agency to the applicant in managing the interaction.

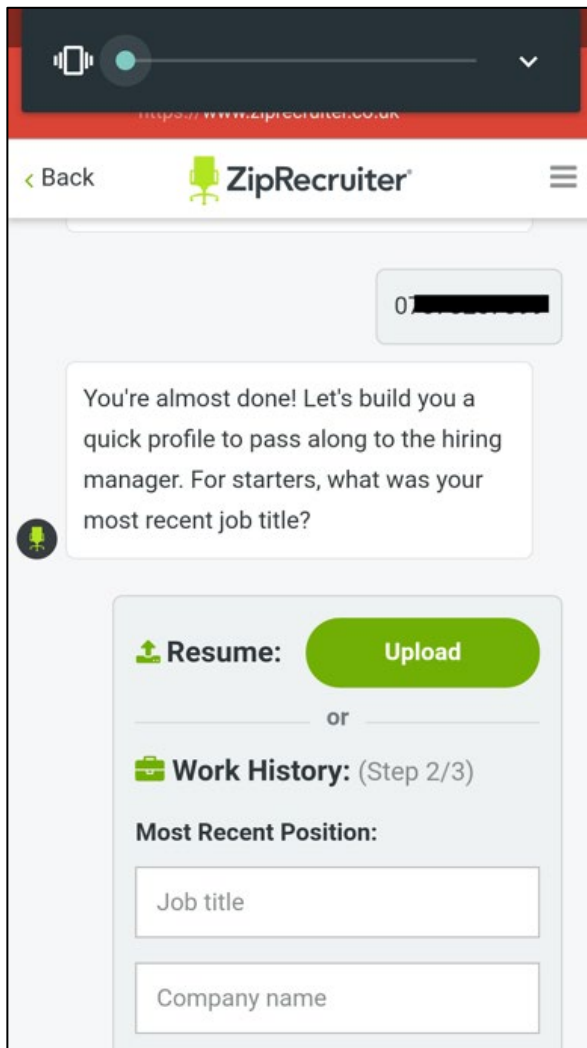


Figure 50: "Let's build you a quick profile"

Scollon (2001, p. 148) describes how the syntagmatic sequence of mediated actions in a practice contribute to the recognition of the practice, that is also connected with identity and belonging. In this data, Parastou does follow all the sequential actions required by the practice of uploading her CV, yet still the software redirects her to the beginning of the application sequence, with no explanation. Instead a breezily conversational message suggests “Something went wrong. Let’s start over”, followed by an automated return through various screens, lasting 10 seconds, to the beginning of the application process, during which she can do nothing:

Parastou: CV..submit application...

The chat screen loads and an error message appears. She sees the error message.

Parastou: What's happened?

The screen automatically loads several new pages, taking Parastou back to the advert.

Parastou: it's not on it it's went back again

She scrolls down and up again and taps again to apply.

Parastou: What's happened? It's went back again...apply...Here my email...email..

(Transcript H, 00:11:42.6. -0:11.53)

In the previous chapter, Shona's application for JK on *Indeed* took just 14 seconds to complete, so to wait 10 seconds to be returned to a start screen is comparatively time consuming and irritating, particularly on the heels of a frustratingly repetitious job search. However, there is a level of trust when engaging with automated processes; even when they fail, we assume the failure is genuine. The conversational style in this recruitment dialogue is beguiling and successfully entreats Parastou to indulge the requests, to the extent of entering all the information again.

The nexus of practices involved in opening a recruitment account, providing personal details, uploading a CV and allowing "hiring managers" to view it, is recognisable. However, the text trajectory and overall activity system behind this remains somewhat opaque, as Parastou had not intended to set up yet another recruitment account. When the error message appears, the screens load in rapid succession, without Parastou tapping anything. No reason was given for the failure of the submission. At the end (Figure 51), there is no confirmation that the application had been submitted, or when Parastou might get a response. There is no information on the hiring managers or how the CV database is managed. There is an invitation to give feedback on a recruitment platform, but not a contact to enquire further about the roles advertised (Figure 51).

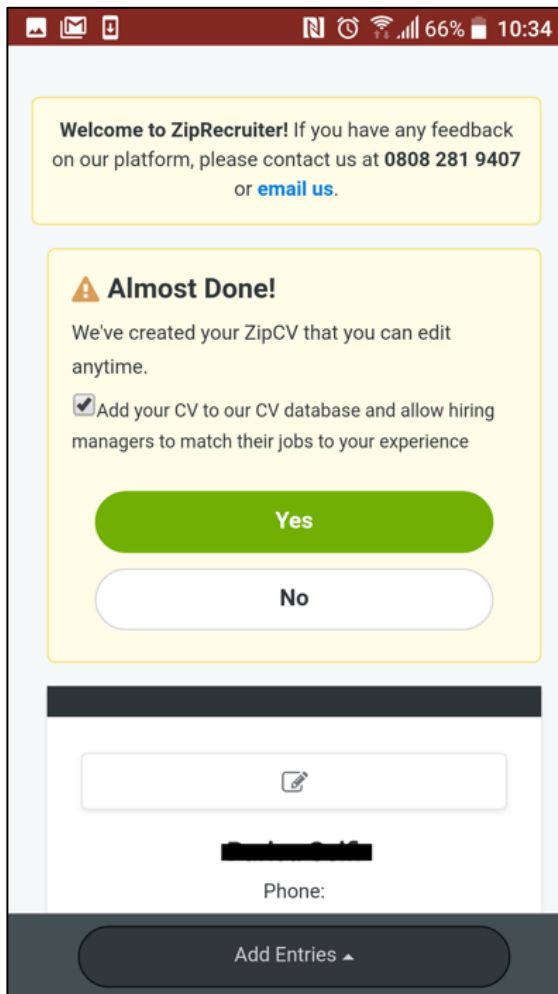


Figure 51: "Almost Done!"

This contrasts somewhat negatively with the altogether more transparent *Reed* application earlier, in which she clicked on an advert, appraised herself in relation to the role, submitted updated CV and received confirmation of her application and next steps. Then, unlike with the *Candidate Point* application, there were no redirections through third parties or diversions from the goal of the application itself, which *Candidate Point* consistently does. It is impossible for her, in real time, to notice this and in the case of the HR Assistant advert hosted by *ZipRecruiter*, do more than respond to requests for information to complete the application. She cannot stand back and appraise the validity of the platform or the requests. The impossibility of this seems to result from a combination of the speed with which she interacts with the *ZipRecruiter* platform, the disarming persuasiveness of its chatty conversational interaction style and the limited agency it permits her in directing the “conversation”. In the end, it is not clear if she has applied for the HR assistant job, or simply added her CV to *ZipRecruiter’s* database, yet

in real time, neither Parastou nor I noticed the lack of transparency in *ZipRecruiter's* practice.

7.5 Conclusion to Case study 2

This chapter shows some of the problems with online recruitment which are easily intuited but not defined, unless scrutinised deeply. Roberts (2010) emphasises the collaborative way in which a professional identity is constructed at work. This notion can be extended to the preceding stage, where the candidate without a clear career identity struggles with the initial problem of where and how to search, followed by how to self-appraise and write a “reader oriented” application (Bhatia, 1993). In terms of third and relational spaces, Parastou does not belong to a group of colleagues, institution, or professional body on which she can draw for this identity formation, who could advise her about specialist recruitment agencies. Neither is she aware of her existing social networks as potential sources for specific dimensions of employability support, for example, as discussed in Third and Relational Spaces, university alumni careers services for application form checking, or volunteer coordinators as character references.

Instead she relies on conflicting advice from various organisations with differing motivations from hers. Rather than focusing on her long-term orientation of finding an entry into a professional business role, the job centre advisors’ short-term orientation is on her finding any job as quickly as possible, and some recruiters have rejected her as she lacks UK experience, advising her to apply for very basic level work. Interpreting vacancies in relation to organisational hierarchies is made difficult by the use of universal application forms (“Level 2 apprenticeship”), or acronyms and metaphors that relate to employer or sector specific practices (“Total Jobs” and “Reed”). In the apprenticeship application, her attention is directed by irrelevant questions which cannot be skipped, instead of focusing on articulating her suitability in the personal statement.

In addition to appraising herself, it is hard for her to produce the required “style” aspect of the order of discourse (Fairclough, 2003), the knowledge of how to represent her career identity through individual semiotic choices, because she is by herself and has no awareness of the social contacts she could use to develop the particular blend of personal and workplace discourses she needs. As her collaborator, I intuitively support

her with these choices, but often find myself unsure or relying on guesswork, as I do not have access to specialised administration or HR professional or workplace discourses.

Secondly, in terms of virtual spaces, Parastou receives a sustained barrage of email job alerts from generalist recruiters, the effect of which is to devalue these as a genuine channel of recruitment. This compounds her difficulties in self-appraising in relation to job adverts and, indeed, recruitment agencies. Nevertheless, genuinely wanting to find a job, she prefers to follow up these emails, despite expressing little faith in receiving a response.

Virtual spaces pose other difficulties, even for a sophisticated digital information manager like Parastou, in the subtle ways in which they limit user agency. *Candidate Point* prompts Parastou to search for better vacancies using key words. Trying to simultaneously form and articulate an identity, using key words, however, makes sophisticated linguistic demands on Parastou; moreover, being directed to a third party website she has previously visited results in her abandoning an appropriate search term, when in fact, the problem lay perhaps not with the expression of her identity, so much as the supply of jobs in the area and *Candidate Point's* practice of covertly marketing third party vacancies.

This leads to the third problem: the emails do not always connect the recipient directly with the job advert, instead, sending the applicant off on unanticipated text and action trajectories across multiple convoluted virtual spaces. The *ZipRecruiter* platform works to direct her attention away from a job application towards creating another speculative online profile with her personal information, thus probably compounding her problem with spam emails, from where she originally started that trajectory. Even though handling these diversions poses no technological challenge, responding to online job alerts creates digressions from Parastou's main activity of applying for a job, in the form of many inconclusive or divergent tasks, which take her further from her goal and result in demotivation. In many ways, her experience of poor recourse to specialist advice matches that of other professional migrants, who also struggle to find direction, after abandoning their original career ambitions (Calò et al., 2021; Willott & Stevenson, 2013). This case study shows the value of particular specialist advice for professionals wishing to enter the job market, and precisely where it could contribute.

Chapter 8 Case study 3

This case study concerns the job searches of teenager Fernando, who attends his ESOL centre job club, run by Mehran and Robina. The table below shows the relevant participants, transcripts, and sites of engagement. The chapter begins once again with a summary of the resources used to take action in the physical, virtual, screen, relational and thirds spaces, thus structuring the activity, and is followed by analyses of the sites of engagement in the order presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Sites of Engagement in Case Study 3

Transcript	Sites of engagement
Transcript J	<u>Searching</u>
Fernando and Robina	Stage 1- “shelf stacker” (00: 00:14:07.8- 00:16:46.8) Stage 2- comparing Tesco customer service adverts (00:16:46.8 - 00:04:07.6) Stage 3- “welcome to Tesco careers” (00:04:27.2 - 00:12:42.8)
Transcript K	<u>You'd be filling shelves</u>
Fernando and Mehran	Stage 1: Fernando’s application history (00:04:42.4- 00:12:06.5) Stage 2: searching for a kitchen porter job (00:12:07.7- 00:19:54.9)
Transcript L	<u>Cleaning at Asda</u>
Fernando and Mehran	Stage 1: initial decision to apply (00.00-00:04:24.6) Stage 2: applying (00:04:25.0-00:10:49.6)

8.1 Spaces

Physical Space

This is a college classroom, and the job club takes place in the hour between other classes. The college has a zero tolerance policy towards disruptive behaviour, which enables a calm atmosphere in the room, without interruptions. Although the equipment is somewhat dated, the computer suite is well maintained and resourced, tidy with a large group of tables in the centre of the room, and computers around the sides. The room is decorated with posters illustrating language for IT and login instructions. The work club assistants in this ESOL centre are professionally trained at working with learners of English and modulate their use of English accordingly. No other languages are used in the session. Mehran leads the job club drop-in with Robina's help. Students who need help usually make appointments in advance and attend for 15 or 20 minutes, for very targeted advice. In Fernando's case, he spends much longer, around 45 minutes, although that may also have been to facilitate my data collection. When both Robina and Mehran work with Fernando, he sits at one of the terminals at the edge of the room, and manipulates the tools, while they sit to his side, a physical manifestation of a mentoring relationship. The college ethos is to help all students achieve their potential; ambition and willingness to work hard are implicit expectations which are actively expressed by all participants many times in the data, as will be shown. Unlike in the other data, my help is never requested here, so my role is strictly observer. I put my camera on the large table behind the participants, so I can film the screen and their interactions as unobtrusively as possible.

Virtual Spaces:

Mehran and Robina use *Find a job*, *Totaljobs* and *Tesco Careers* for searching, sharing their expertise and cultural knowledge with Fernando about where and how to search. Mehran explains and reminds Fernando about "smart ways" of applying (Transcript K, 00:01:39.0), in which he includes how to manage large volumes of very similar applications, by a combination of copying and pasting from a template document, with a few "tweaks" to make them compatible with the job. He recommends this because "finding a job is not an easy process sometimes people apply for thousand jobs until they get one and that's what makes it quite difficult" (Transcript K, 00:01:51.0).

All of the recruitment platforms offer simple search functions of “what” and “where”, that belong to a basic job search genre, with the results organised from very general to more particular by the use of filtering; Robina and Mehran both share advanced tips on how to use these more effectively. However, filtering relies on the expectation that an individual will have a clear career identity from the outset, and so does not produce relevant results without the user having additional knowledge, such as the names of specific job titles. Without expertise, searching can be fruitless and demotivating, as will be shown in “Searching”. Even with expertise, this can still happen, as precise searches often illuminate how illusory the abundance of adverts is, as will be shown at the end of “You'd be filling shelves”.

Find A Job has replaced the previous DWP website *Universal Job Match*, but is similarly designed for benefits compliance, as a virtual job centre. It arguably also facilitates the jobseeker’s ability to manage and track applications, although other platforms do this better. In “You'd be filling shelves”, Mehran, however, uses it for his own purposes, aligned with his vision of how to help Fernando. As noted in the previous case studies, all the recruitment platforms emphasise integrated digital office tools and social media, appealing to digitally networked candidates familiar with these and recruitment genres. This combination of mediational means forms a discourse of globally networked digitally enabled enhanced productivity, that serves those for whom such practices form part of their “historical body” (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 13) including Fernando, Mehran and Robina. This will be shown particularly in “Welcome to *Tesco Careers*”, when Robina encourages Fernando to “upload your CV and create your profile automatically”, but also in the ways that Mehran and Fernando collaborate to complete an application form.

The complex trajectory of texts involved in applications that integrate various recruitment agencies, storage and social media accounts, adds pressure by being time consuming and sometimes involving much backtracking to return to the original application, as will be shown in “Cleaning at Asda”. In addition, as was the case with Parastou, the data show that job application discourses become ever more specialised, as the applicant progresses through the stages of searching, evaluating and applying. They also show that job search practices differ, depending on the field of work.

Screen Spaces

The college uses the *Google* education platform, for staff and students, so

Fernando is familiar with all the cloud based tools it offers. He also has a personal *Google* account and switches easily between the two, which he has open in separate tabs. Mehran refers to the college's intranet spaces in addition to this, but locating and managing files across platforms, although complex, never causes any difficulties. Throughout the sessions, Fernando keeps multiple tabs open between which he flits with ease, amply demonstrating how these are part of his usual practices. The analysis of the sites of engagement will show how his facility in virtual and screen spaces allows his tutors to focus on other aspects of his employability, which seems to increase their personal investment in helping him.

Relational Spaces

Fernando was born and grew up in Italy, of Ghanaian heritage, which has given him a multilingual repertoire from childhood, that includes exposure to English as a diaspora community language, as well as films and music. However, he has only lived in the UK for six months, joining his mother here, as they felt there would be more opportunities for him here than in Italy, by himself or in Germany, with his father. His older sister, whom he asks for advice about work, lives elsewhere in the UK and sends him links about jobs near to her. She disagrees with him about the kinds of work he should consider, advising him that kitchen and cleaning work was unsuitable for him as a man (Transcript M, 00:25:47.7-00:26:49.8). He is a full-time ESOL student in a large FE college, in its dedicated ESOL centre. The staff here are specialists in the language and literacy development of English language learners and design progression routes into vocational courses and employment, as well as accredited ESOL programmes.

He has made a few friends in his ESOL class, with whom he discusses part time work and one of them directed him to the college job club. He is very keen to progress onto GCSEs in the next academic year, and eventually apply to university to study architecture. His cousin, who also migrated to the UK from Italy after high school, successfully applied to university, and this provides him with an example. Fernando does not mind what sort of work he does, as he has no previous work experience and is looking for something part time that fits around his studies. In his own words: "I'm not sure what job I want to do but I'm sure that I want a job" (Transcript K, 00:09:44). Fernando's relations with family and the wider college, as well as his job club mentors, thus support him in nurturing his ambitions through a shared discourse of "making good", although their advice about specific work is sometimes contradictory.

Third Spaces

Third spaces mentioned in this data are the various potential workplaces: in “Searching”, discussion of retail work as Robina and Fernando sift through adverts leads onto rich discussions of workplace practices. In “You'd be filling shelves”, Mehran talks Fernando through his own career trajectory from kitchen porter to restaurateur, something he had also talked about previously. Mehran also mentions employers’ expectations of applicants being proactive about asking for job offers post interview, and that employers may secretly test applicants to see how competitive they are. He relates this to Fernando’s recent visit to drop off a CV at an Italian restaurant.

In our follow up interview (11/03/2019), Fernando had succeeded in getting the job at the Italian restaurant as a kitchen porter. This direct approach worked, he thought, because handing a CV to somebody meant that they at least looked at it. In addition, the restaurant staff already included a full time student, who was bar manager, and the chef was Italian, so they switched to this for his job interview. This success then, was a combination of his own resourcefulness, for thinking of the idea and noticing the Italian restaurants on his bus journeys, but also Mehran’s promotion of restaurant work, the reason for his choice. Fernando also thought it could be that the restaurant was willing to give him a chance because of their good experience of hiring students, and that Fernando could exploit his plurilingualism.

The next sections present the analysis of particular sites of engagement, beginning with Fernando and Robina.

8. 2 Fernando and Robina- “Searching” (Transcript J)

In this data, Fernando and Robina are searching for a part time job. Fernando has never worked before and is very unsure what he wants, so Robina suggests they log in to a recruitment site, *Total Jobs*, where he has an account, and conduct a search based on location, working hours and salary, rather than job title. She guides him through this, discussing the suitability of the various results and ways of narrowing them down to a manageable volume. The first site of attention opens when, after more than ten minutes of skimming through the results of this progressively more filtered job search, supermarket work catches his eye. The data has been divided into the following phases and are presented in this order: Stage 1- “shelf stacker”; Stage 2- “comparing Tesco customer service adverts” and Stage 3- “welcome to Tesco careers”.

Analysis

Stage 1 “Shelf Stacker”.

In this site of attention, Robina and Fernando’s activity is one of exploratory, collaborative learning, embedded in the conscious goal of searching for a job. What they are exploring is a possible career identity for Fernando. This is evident in the encouragement provided by Robina, whose motivating activity is not to find Fernando a job, but to help him to explore possible vacancies. Therefore, the activity centres first around Robina helping Fernando to access the search discourse.

Fernando’s cursor hovers on the job title “sales assistant” and his questioning intonation as he says, “This one is sales assist,” signals uncertainty but also potential interest in an area of work (Transcript J, 00:14:07.8). Throughout this part of the search, Robina draws on her ability to adapt information to make it easier to understand, relating the somewhat abstract job title “sales assistant” to the concrete observable practices of serving customers in a shop:

<p>Robina: Assistant sales assistant means you work erm behind the counter or in a shop and you sell things to people so it’s like shop assistant</p>
--

(Transcript J, 00:14:10.6)

Fernando then adopts the same strategy as Robina, of describing the practices of the role, to begin to define his career identity, even though he lacks the precise vocabulary that would enable him to express this more fluently. He does this both with words and gestures, miming the actions of picking up products and putting them down elsewhere (Figure 52).

Fernando: I would like to erm find a job ah like erm supermarket but their jobs
the job that you can like plan the when the products came in the er in the shop
He drops the mouse again and looks at the screen, then upwards, in concentration. He turns
to Robina , using his hands to mime picking something up and placing it, while he explains

Robina : Yeah

Fernando: You would put the products in the shelves

Robina : On the shelves

Fernando: On the shelves

He repeats the mime.

Robina : Ok

Fernando: I think is good

Robina : Ok

Fernando: And that kind of jobs

He turns back to face Robina .

Robina : Ok so that job erm is called shelf stacker

(Transcript J, 00:14:22.8-00:14:53.8)

In so doing, Fernando refines and communicates his real goal for a specific kind of shop work, one which he has appraised himself as capable of achieving.

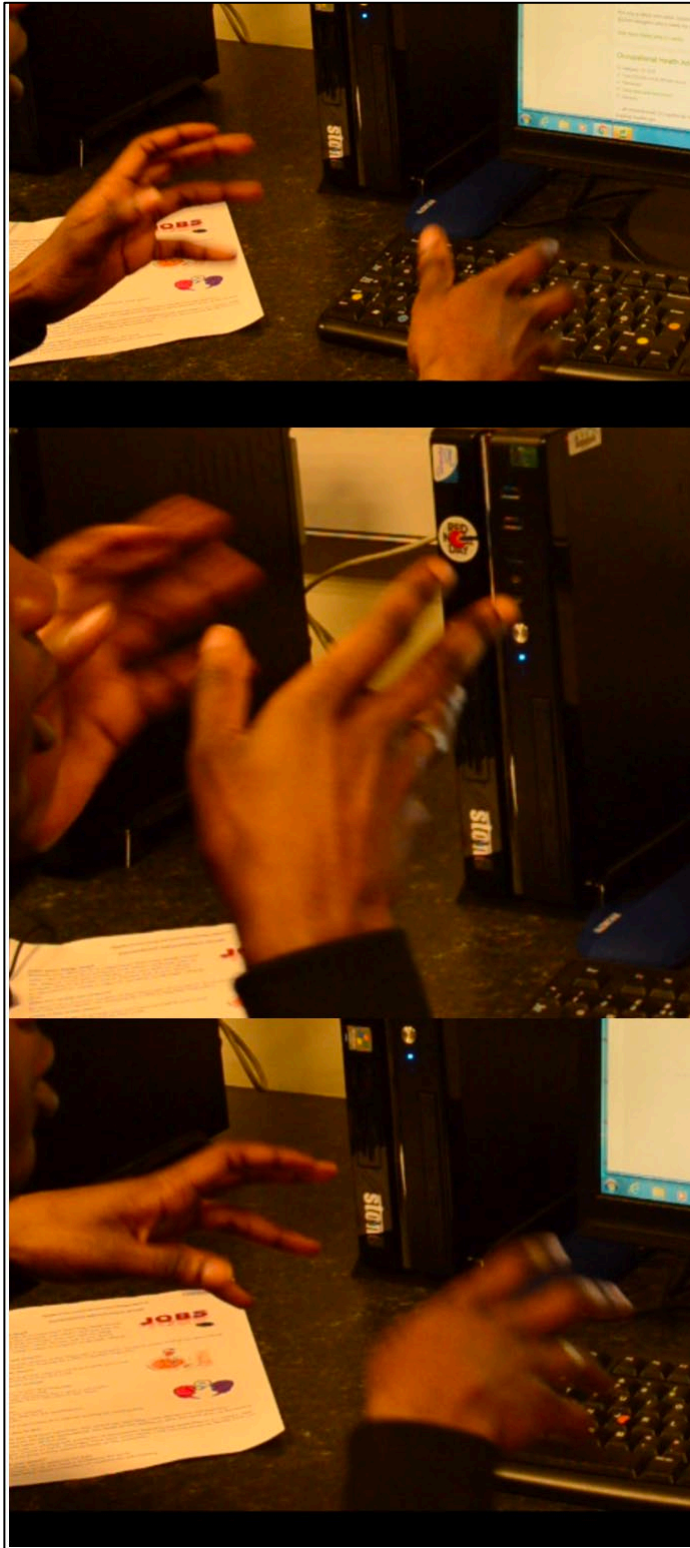


Figure 52: “Putting them on the shelves”

Robina does not know the recruitment terminology but Fernando’s description of his nascent career identity leads to the coproduction of the search term “shelf stacker” which they then trial (Figure 53).

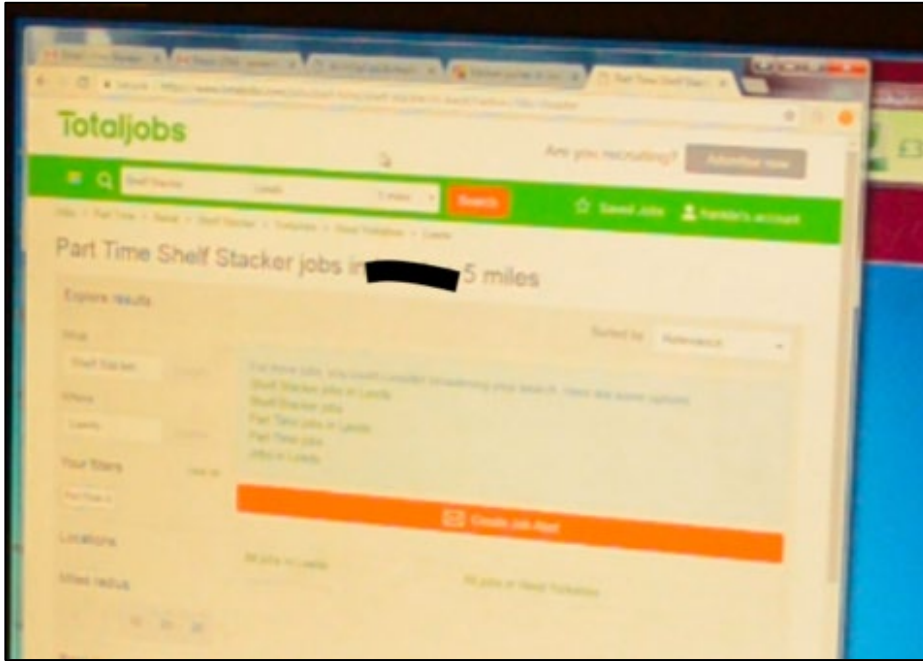


Figure 53: Total Jobs search for “part time shelf stacker” jobs

As intimated in Virtual Spaces, Robina contributes nuggets of cultural knowledge throughout this application. She uses it to explain the practices of supermarket roles, implicitly acknowledging that a vacancy as “shelf stacker” is unlikely to exist. In saying “let’s just be curious” (Transcript J, 00:14:59.0-00:15:06.6), Robina encourages an experimental approach to searching, creating the opportunity for trial and error with different key word combinations, a process in which the goals are constantly revised in relation to the overall conscious objective of “applying for a job”.

Robina : Ha ha people in supermarkets often do many jobs so sometimes they stack the shelves and sometimes they work on the till
 She waves her hand from side to side.

Fernando: Ah

Robina : And sometimes they do different things erm OK if you want you can search for shelf stacker and let's see just be curious and see if it exists
 She waves at the screen and Fernando picks up the mouse again.

(Transcript J, 00:14:59.0-00:15:06.6)

This search term “shelf stacker”, as predicted by Robina, does not reflect the true practices of working in a shop and so fails to produce appropriate results though the

Total Jobs website, which is designed for more industry specific job titles, such as “pick and packer” or “engineer” (Figure 54, Figure 55).

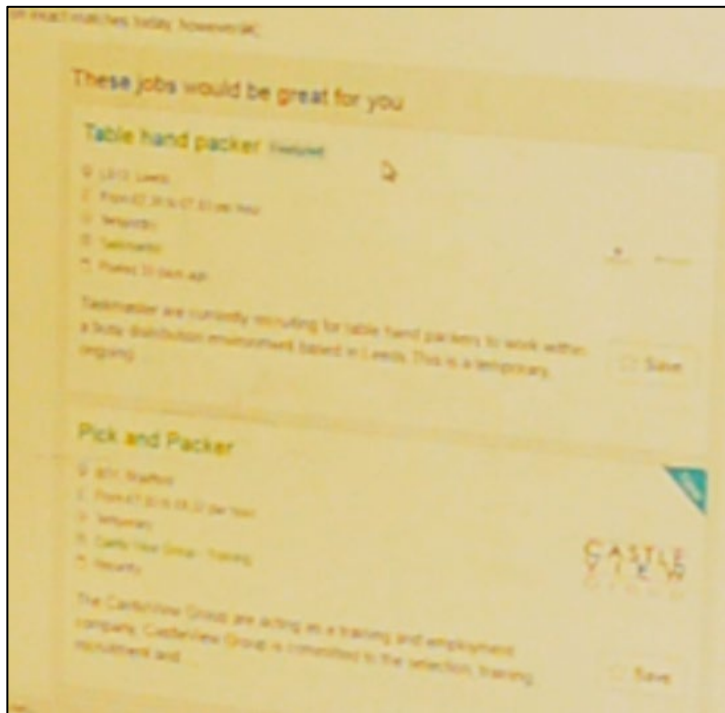


Figure 54: “Yeah what you're getting is packer jobs”

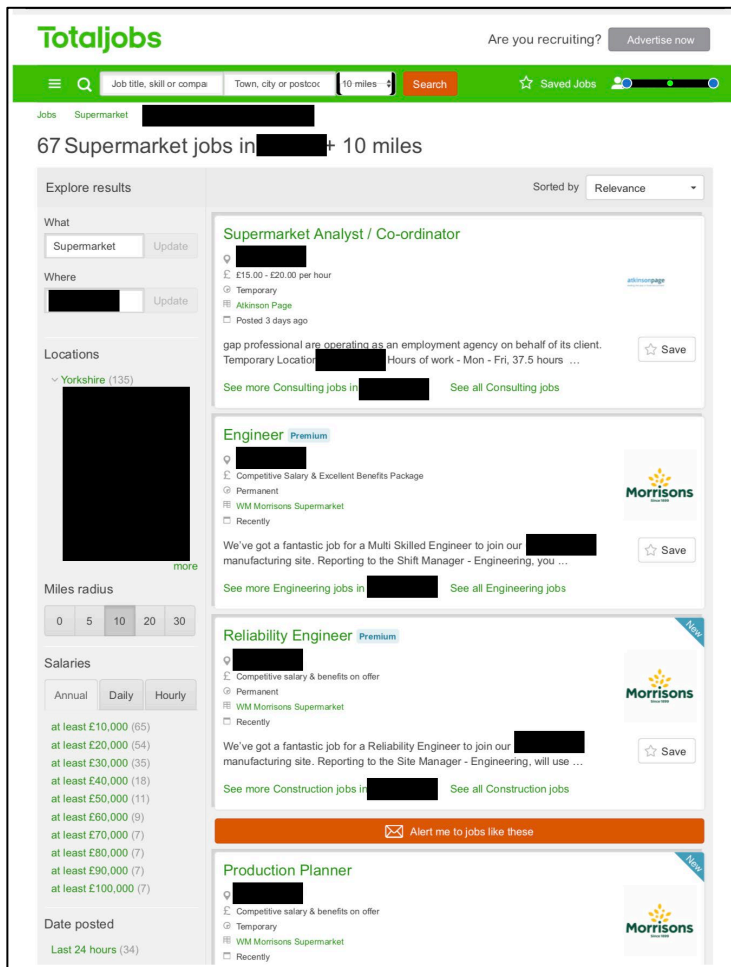


Figure 55: “Engineer?!”

Nevertheless, there is no external pressure to find a job, and Robina’s own belief is that: “...a person feeling comfortable and heard is very necessary for them to try something that they struggle with; it has to feel safe to fail” (quote from email exchange, 22-25/02/2020).

As this site of attention unfolds, it is shaped by Robina’s willingness to let Fernando experiment with failure, as part of the process of achieving his goal of finding a suitable vacancy. This experimentation also permits her time to reflect on alternative ways to achieve his goal, based on personal experience, cultural knowledge that contributes significant efficiency to the search. Fernando’s default search tool is Google, and while he experiments with this, Robina remembers that supermarkets, as national and global operators, often have their own recruitment websites. She asks Fernando what supermarket is nearest to his home, using this to narrow the choice. Fernando’s conscious goal of finding a job is somewhat different from his activity, which is unconsciously learning language and the social practices of shop work, and

appraising himself in relation to these. In other words, he is simultaneously developing a career identity and the language with which this is expressed. From a literacies as social practice viewpoint, responsive deep language teaching and learning must be communicative and always involves understanding situated practices and discourses – here, this takes place around the actions of looking for work in supermarkets. In the next phase, they abandon *Total Jobs* and search through Tesco’s Careers website.

Stage 2: Comparing Tesco Customer Service Adverts.

During this phase, Robina and Fernando are consciously evaluating the job advert and appraising Fernando in relation to the basic criteria of shift patterns. There is a subconscious mentor/mentee relationship that underpins this, resulting in a continued overall activity of collaborative teaching and learning of language and workplace practices.

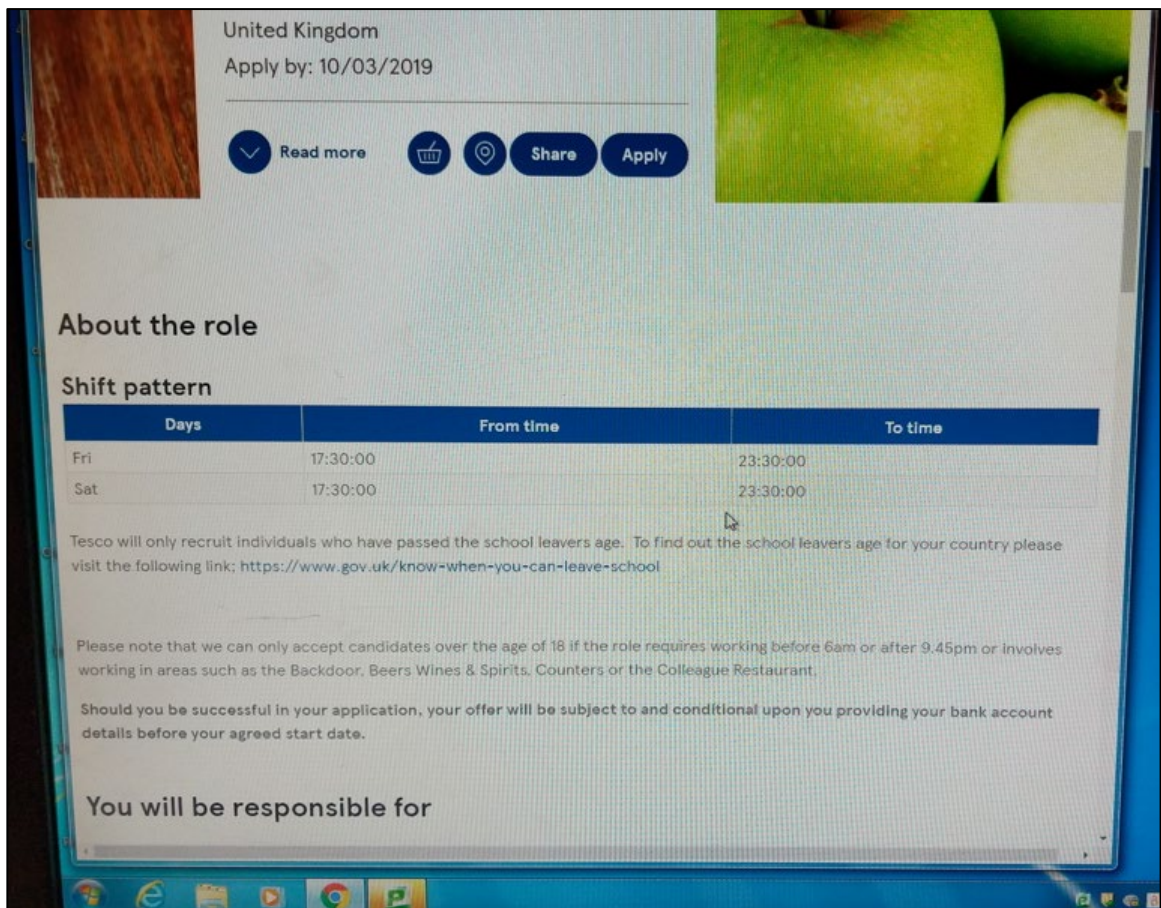


Figure 56: Tesco advert 1

There are eleven tabs open from various searches and Fernando clicks between them expertly, to locate, compare or transfer information. Fernando never refers to his digital literacy skills, which appear to be part of his “technological unconscious”. He

moves between four different Tesco job adverts which are boiler plate texts that contain a mix of local discourses for example about location, and global discourses, for example about employment laws in “your country” (Figure 56).

Fernando has no work experience, so confines his comparisons between the adverts to personally relevant basic aspects of the roles: shift time, location and his college schedule. Even the very basic texts about shift patterns (Figure 56) are enriched, for example by a reminder of the UK conventions of using am/pm, which Robina does with a “noticing” strategy for drawing attention to the language point (Figure 57), that allows Fernando to make sense of it, aided by interlocution and context. This fits broadly with a literacy as social practice approach, one that situates learning in the learner’s life world and attends to less visible literacy practices, and is apparent throughout Robina and Fernando’s interaction in the data.

Robina: No this is five **AM**

Robina points at the screen. She pinches her index and thumb together and moves her hand up and down, as she stresses “AM”.

Fernando: Ah 5 **AM**?

He looks at the screen.

Robina: Yeah 5 till 8.30 am and then **after** work come to college...mmmm!

He he he he yes you can many many other people

Robina leans forward and points to the time on the screen. She leans back. Fernando studies the screen and clicks another tab. He scrolls down the advert, leans forward and reads the start finish times.

(Transcript J, 00:00:44.3-00:00:46.9)

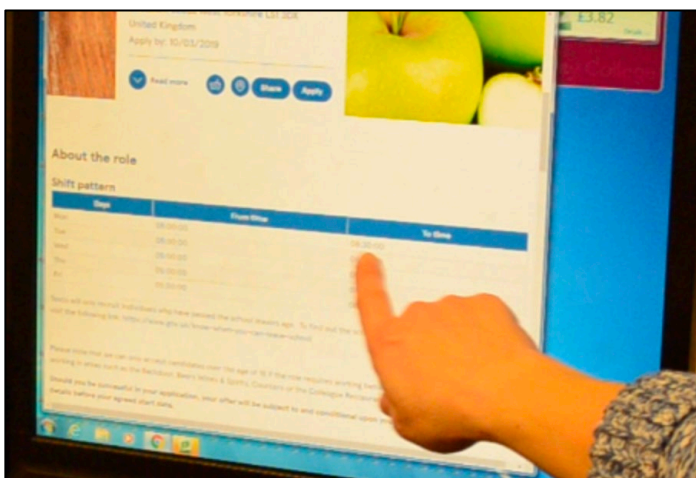


Figure 57: Noticing the difference between “am” and “pm”

Robina mentors Fernando in the complexities of achieving a work/study balance. In the latter discussion about studying and working, Robina explains employer expectations about reliability and availability, and employee expectations of rewards for compliant behaviour. Fernando is a proactive collaborator, asking Robina's advice about general employment practices, and so using her as a source of informal advice and knowledge, despite some hesitation and searching for words.

Fernando: like they can give you a job

He turns back to the screen and scrolls along in the start/finish times section.

Fernando: erm you can decide like if you talk to them

He gestures palm up towards the screen, on the word talk.

Fernando: like that like on Mondays this time you have college or you have er another things to do

He leans towards the screen and traces with the mouse along the start times.

Robina: Mmmm?

Robina sounds dubious.

Fernando: no you have college

Fernando shakes his head as he says no. He turns to face Robina.

Fernando: then they can change er they can change it or?

(Transcript J, 00:01:32.1)

In response to Fernando's question about negotiating shift patterns, Robina digresses to explain the broader working practices, to help Fernando interpret the role and self-appraise, alongside advising from her own much longer life and work experience:

Robina: but they need somebody to do this job so you would change if somebody else wanted also wanted to change into your job if you see ...and I think if you are if you're a brand new member of staff you don't want to start a new job

She gestures towards Fernando, as he nods understanding.

Robina: saying right I can't work this I can't work this I cannot work this

Robina counts out on her fingers as she says 'this'. He nods and turns back to the screen.

Robina: so I would say choose the hours that you definitely can do

He clicks on another open tab.

Robina: be reliable get a good reputation so they like you and then later if you want to change you can ask them

He turns back to Robina nodding as she makes circular motions with her hands.

(Transcript J, 00:02:11.3)

She guides him to consider social relations in his future employment, with an extended explanation of imagined employer expectations about reliability and availability, as well as potential employee expectations of rewards for compliant behaviour, such as extra shifts:

Robina: but I would start well, first

He looks at the screen and clicks back to advert 1.

Robina: and remember if you start with small hours there's always overtime because people go on holiday and people get sick so you will get asked to do extra hours you can always do more

(Transcript J, 00:02:12.4)

The appraisal of Fernando in relation to the simple criteria of shift patterns thus becomes a rich life lesson, instigated by Fernando, on how to ingratiate oneself with a potential employer, important practical knowledge for an inexperienced newcomer.

In their final appraisal, Robina checks that Fernando is aware of the limitations of the work pattern, joking about him missing his social life:

Fernando smiles and looks at the advert. He turns to Robina as he explains.

Fernando: I take it this one but like I'm just since 4 December of 2018 and I don't have much friend here like Saturday I'm all day at home

(Transcript J, 00:03:28.8-00:04:06.0)

Asking him to justify himself in this gently humorous way gives him an opportunity to articulate his reasons aloud: this is also an important part of developing a credible relevant self, to project to an employer. Their collaborative exploration of the application process “let’s find out what happens” (Robina, Transcript J, 00:04:07.6) continues in the next phase, as they begin the application process.

Stage 3- “Welcome to Tesco Careers”.

The site of attention opens with the Tesco careers landing page, which contains the option to register with a social media account or an email address, and the invitation to create a profile by uploading a CV. As mentioned in Virtual Spaces at the beginning of the chapter, these practices are very familiar to Fernando from college and his everyday life, something which Robina has been observing and appraising throughout the session, so that when she says: “...and then it's very quick because when another job comes up it's just bang bang bang so I think this is worth doing”, she is recognising him as a person for whom this kind of application system was designed (Transcript J, 00:04:29.9). In mentioning how the online profile will provide Fernando with future agency, Robina shows she has a long-term orientation and similarly, asking if he has a computer at home, she is appraising Fernando’s physical and mental resources in relation to completing this and future applications, which she regards as problematic for many people, but not for him:

Robina: They're incredibly complicated job websites and it's just opaque for so many people it really is it's the trouble with digitising it all

(Transcript J, 00:06:48.5- 00:07:10.3)

It takes him under a minute to attach his CV, which he does without talking, while Robina observes:

Robina: Have you got your computer skills on your CV?

He looks at Robina.

Fernando: No

(Transcript J, 00:05:09.3 -00:06:01.0)

His actions are syntagmatically sequenced and unconsciously automatised. His smooth participation in the practice further identifies him as belonging to the group for whom this application method was designed and Fernando does not regard his computing

skills as out of the ordinary; in his milieu, they are not. Fernando now begins to complete the Tesco profile builder (Figures 58-59).

Profile Builder

Personal Information

Title:

First name: *

Last name: *

Contact details

Please provide at least one telephone number. If you provide a mobile number then we may be able to update you on your applications using SMS.

Mobile Number:

Alternative Telephone Number:

Email: *

Website:

Address

Building name / number:

Street address: *

City: *

Postcode:

Country: *

Required salary

Please let us know your salary expectations, including amount, frequency and currency. Please note, you cannot input a salary range, you must detail the upper expectation.

Salary: *

About You

About You:

Interests & Hobbies

Figure 58: Tesco profile builder p. 1

Interests & Hobbies:

X Undo Redo Bold Italic Link List

My personal reference

Reference:

X Undo Redo Bold Italic Link List

Career History

Are you currently employed by Tesco or a subsidiary, e.g. Tesco Bank, One Stop, Tesco Maintenance? No Yes

[Add more career history](#)

Education History

[Add more education history](#)

Skills

Skill:

[Add a skill](#)

Additional Information (Optional) - This information will help us identify and suggest roles for you in the future.

Distance willing to travel/relocate:	<input style="width: 80%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="20 miles"/>
Notice period:	<input style="width: 80%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="Please select"/>
Willing to relocate:	<input style="width: 80%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="Please select"/>
Candidate status:	<input style="width: 80%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="Please select"/>
Career level:	<input style="width: 80%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="Please select"/>
Career Specialism:	<input style="width: 80%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="Please select"/>

Disability status

Tesco operate a guaranteed interview scheme for people with disabilities that also pass our pre-screening criteria. Please indicate your disability status below.

Figure 59: Tesco profile builder p. 2

As before, Robina’s advice contains a brief life lesson on the practices of how to appeal to a potential employer. Earlier, the lesson was about when and how to lay the groundwork before negotiating working patterns; this time, it concerns how to appear “less foreign”. They are still completing the form with seemingly innocuous basic contact details (Figure 58) but now, Robina produces an extended and very directive interjection, in which she urges Fernando to change the prefix on his mobile number to “look more English” (Figure 60).

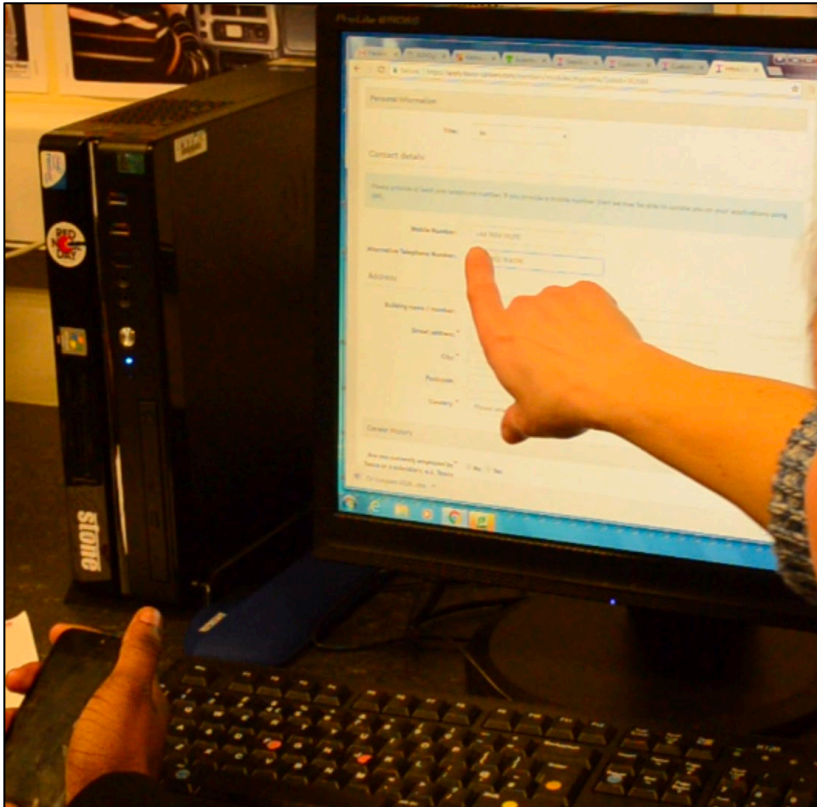


Figure 60: Robina advising on phone numbers: “take away the ‘plus 44’”

A comment on the telephone number becomes a mini literacy/culture lesson on how to appear “less foreign”, implying that this is important for job applicants without any further explanation needed. This suggestion may well stem from an awareness about the prevalence of discrimination against migrants, an awareness justified by resurgent anti-immigrant discourses openly circulating at policy level in the UK in recent times, and the concurrent need to “pass for English” in anticipation of hostility. Discrimination is illegal but impossible to prevent.

He clicks on the phone number and highlights the first few digits.

Robina: in front there take away the plus 44

He deletes the numbers with the keyboard and turns to Robina as she nods emphatically.

Robina: so it's zero oh 7459 and that's a domestic UK mobile number

She leans forward and points to his mum's mobile number.

Robina: Alright and do the same with your mum's

He highlights and deletes the +44. She drops her hand,

Robina: and then and then you're not so foreign...

then points towards the screen again.

Robina: ...there

He replaces the digits with 0.

Robina: yeah a little bit more English that's better

(Transcript J, 00:07:22.1-00:07:42.0)

Similarly, when Fernando starts to complete his education history (Figure 59), Robina draws on her knowledge of the relative marginalisation of Further Education qualifications, compared with well recognised school qualifications such as GCSEs. Robina also uses cultural knowledge to evaluate importance of explaining ESOL to potential employer; she recognises that the “summary” box, which appears when he adds to his education history, creates a space for Fernando to do this, and asks him for a definition (Figure 61), so that he can experience the difficulty of guessing what the abbreviation means.

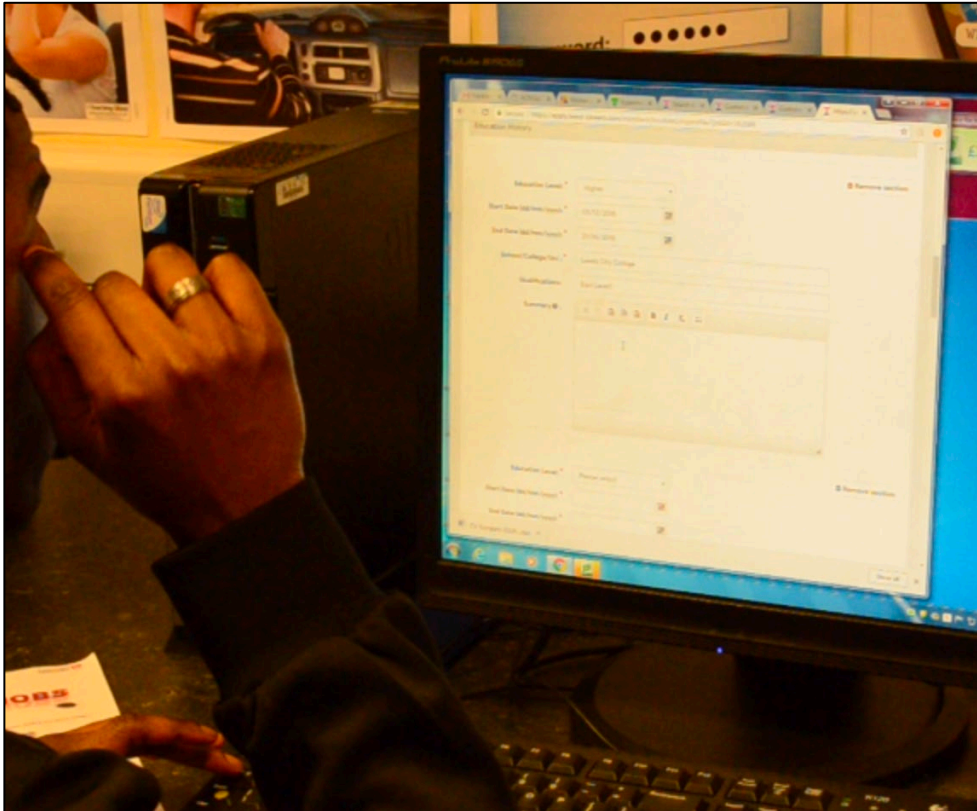


Figure 61: Robina advising on education history: “Do you know what ‘ESOL’ means?”

Robina: erm if you put in the summary erm because some people don't know what ESOL means

She leans back and turns to Fernando. He looks at her and rubs his eye.

Robina: Do you know what ESOL means?

He looks up in concentration and gestures with his palm up.

Fernando: It's English for erm some foreigners that do not have English for first language

(Transcript J, 00:12:26.1-00:12:42.8)

She directs him to write a simple explanatory sentence in the dialogue box, “Level 1 ESOL is an advanced course”, that focuses on the level, “advanced”, rather than the content, “English for some foreigners”, which possibly also indicates her desire to hide his status as a migrant, to avoid potential discrimination.

Conclusion to “Searching”

The atmosphere in the job club is calm, there are no interruptions and there is no external pressure to find a job, which foster a serious and thoughtful atmosphere in the physical space. The site of attention is further shaped by Robina and Fernando’s relation

to each other, which is best described as mentor/mentee. Robina has UK cultural knowledge and substantial employment experience, whereas Fernando has far less of these. However, Robina uses a collaborative exploratory approach to supporting Fernando in his job search. Fernando is given the time and space to think before he articulates his objectives; Robina facilitates this additionally by moderating her use of English, for example, explaining any idiomatic phrases through examples. She observes and appraises his strengths in relation to his objectives and focuses at each stage on explaining the social practices related to applying for jobs, to help him first refine his ideal job, then to search for a vacancy, and finally, to start the application. The way she formulates and carries out the tasks of achieving their objective demonstrates the important contributions of both mentoring, and knowledge of social practices, to shaping a career identity and beginning to apply for appropriate work.

8. 3 Fernando and Mehran: “You'd be filling shelves” (Transcript K)

Mehran and Fernando are sitting side by side in the classroom, both logged into computer terminals. Prior to this, they had been discussing the *Tesco* shelf stacker application, which Fernando had started in the previous job club session, with Robina. Mehran is sympathetic when he learns that the vacancy had been withdrawn from the website before Fernando could complete it and advises him, as described in *Virtual Spaces*, on “smart” ways of handling long and time-consuming online application forms. His attention now turns to searching for a job for Fernando. The data is divided into two stages: Stage 1, Fernando’s application history, and Stage 2, searching for a kitchen porter job. In Stage 1, Mehran directs Fernando to the *Find a Job* website, where Mehran uses Fernando’s application history to question his career identity. In Stage 2, Mehran persuades Fernando to search for kitchen portering vacancies, using himself as a role model of success.

Analysis

Stage 1: Fernando's Application History.

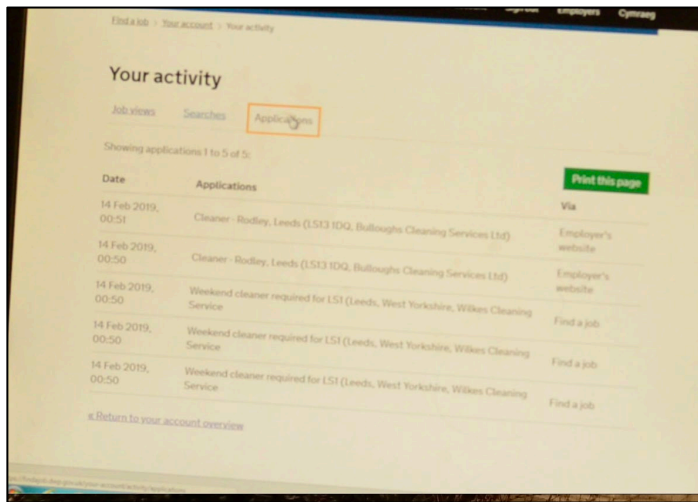


Figure 62: Find a Job application history

This site of attention begins with Mehran's slight irritation at Fernando's lack of focus in his job search, and he uses the virtual space of the *Find A Job* application history page (Figure 62) to illustrate this, reading out the list of different jobs Fernando has applied for, before confronting him about their inconsistency:

He turns to face Fernando, who looks at him.

Mehran: every session you you've been coming here you've been thinking about different jobs yeah so the first time you came to our job club you said I wanna do a cleaning job

Fernando: Yes

Mehran: And then I talked to you and said are you sure you want to do a cleaning job and we discussed the cleaning job and then you decided no the cleaning job is not for you ...you changed your mind and you said I wanna be a kitchen porter

Fernando: Yes

Mehran: Right? So we talked about kitchen porters and about the potential er er possibilities and where you can work and how the job is ...and last session you came and said no I wanna work for Tesco I wanna be a shelf filler

Fernando: Yeah because

(Transcript K, 00:05:12.4- 00:06:22.1)

It becomes clear as the conversation progresses, that questioning the consistency

and appropriacy of Fernando's career identity appears to stem from Mehran's own beliefs about suitable employment and the value of different types of employment. This contrasts with the underlying discourse of the *Find a Job* "activity history" page, that the applicant should apply for the target number of jobs, regardless of role. Mehran's actions, then, are a subversion of the purpose for which the page was designed, benefits compliance, rather than evaluating the consistency, appropriateness or quality of prospects of the vacancies applied for, which is how Mehran uses it. Fernando's lack of a strong career identity is problematised by Mehran and his stance, at the end of the exchange above, is almost accusing. Unlike Robina, who supported Fernando to take the initiative in exploring different job search terms, Mehran's approach is premised on the notion that Fernando should know what his goal is and be focused on it.

Increasingly impatient with Fernando's lack of career identity, Mehran steps in to supply one, using his own life as an exemplar. In doing this, Mehran draws on many discourses and his prevailing activity shifts from being a somewhat interested yet professionally distant job club tutor, to providing a role model for Fernando. In his *LinkedIn* profile, Mehran describes himself as an entrepreneur, and he has had several businesses. He is justly proud of having worked his way up from being a kitchen porter to owning his own restaurant, as well as working as a teaching assistant at the college.

Firstly, Mehran is very emphatic about the need to find a job with learning opportunities and promotion prospects, and expresses this several times in the talk, for example in the two extracts below:

Mehran: But this is the ah we we talked about this before. OK fair enough you you have some future plans you want to be a civil engineer but at the same time when you spend time on working on a job right you should think am I learning anything from this job?

(Transcript K, 00:06:44.1)

Mehran: Where would this job lead me to yeah?

Fernando: yes

Mehran: So I mean by the time you go to the university you finish university become a civil engineer get job... it will take years

Fernando: Yeah

Mehran: Yeah but you need a job now right

Fernando: Yes

(Transcript K, 00:08:15.2-00:08:34.9)

When challenged again about his work aims, Fernando responds in a way that satisfies Mehran's implicit expectations about demonstrating a willingness to work hard.

Mehran: But this is important and still what I see in your face is uncertainty yeah?

You're not sure what job you want to do

Fernando: Yeah but like I'm not sure what job I want to do but I'm sure that I want a job

Mehran: Mm

Fernando: So basically if they told to me that you have to clean the toilet I will. In my mind I will say

Mehran: Mm

Fernando: ..no but I will do it because it's a job

Mehran: Yeah it yeah well done that's how it works

(Transcript K, 00:09:35.4-0:10:04.2)

Being willing to work hard and make the most of any opening belongs to a very recognisable migrant discourse of “working one’s way up” and “making good” in some way, and both Mehran and Fernando are from migrant backgrounds. In addition, as mentioned in Physical space, these values of hard work and upward mobility are part of the college’s ethos.

When Mehran questions why Fernando has not focused on kitchen porter vacancies, Fernando has to defend the strength of his work ethic very robustly. As mentioned previously, Fernando has a shallow network of peers, so that although he claims to have no social life outside of college, he nevertheless does talk to his peers about job opportunities, although perhaps this adds to his confusion:

Fernando: like er erm a lot of persons told me that a kitchen porter is quite difficult

Mehran: It is a difficult job yes

(Transcript K, 00:06:24.7)

Fernando and Mehran implicitly acknowledge the mutual discourse about the need to “make good”, as Mehran subsequently promotes kitchen portering as a job with promotion prospects, and Fernando replies several times with a double affirmative and serious nodding:

Mehran: Yeah but when you work a kitchen porter, you get on top of what you do washing dishes, moving things around, cleaning here and there and then you get eventually get promoted. Do you know what I mean?

Fernando: Yes yes

Mehran: Then they would ask oh can you peel these potatoes can you peel this er onions can you chop these vegetables and eventually you become as a sort of like a kitchen assistant or a chef assistant. Do you know what I mean?

Fernando: Yes yes

Mehran: It leads somewhere but fill er filling the shelves do you know what I mean? You'd be filling shelves and just just taking em from the packs and you put em on the shelves so we talked about these things and you need to think about it yeah?

Fernando: Yeah

(Transcript K, 00:07:19.2 -00:07:53.1)

During the exchange above, Mehran uses very specific examples of tasks, such as “washing dishes” and “peeling potatoes” to explain the hierarchy of kitchen work, from porter to kitchen assistant, drawing extensively on his own personal experience. Mehran is now overtly steering Fernando towards kitchen portering, and takes a tangibly persuasive stance, evident in his frequent use of rhetorical questions and the repeated emphatic “do you know what I mean?”.

Both restaurant and shop work are traditional types of migrant employment, yet Mehran’s personal experience of becoming a successful restaurateur leads him to value the former much more highly. His views of kitchen portering come from his inside knowledge of restaurant working practices, which enables him to connect kitchen

portering to a recognisable discourse about jobs with prospects, which goes beyond immediate economic value to recognise long-term opportunities for learning and promotion. Thus Mehran’s beliefs about what constitutes appropriate work privileges the quality of employment over short term benefits, and is also in contrast to the DWP whose policy, as described in Case Studies 1 and 2, is “Work First”. Conversely, Mehran’s very simplistic evaluation of supermarket work as a “shelf-filler”- “just open the packages you put them on the shelves!” demonstrates little inside knowledge of actual working practices and belongs to popular discourse of supermarket work as “dead-end”.

There is very little practical action in this excerpt, beyond the occasional gesture to the screen from Mehran, or mouse click from Fernando, as the talk digresses from the immediate job search and both participants face each other. In fact, so intent is Mehran on conveying his message, that the first mouse click does not happen until three and a half minutes of talk (Transcript K, 00:08:30.5), at the point where Mehran signals the end of the topic and activity of providing Fernando with a career identity, pointing to the screen (Figure 63):

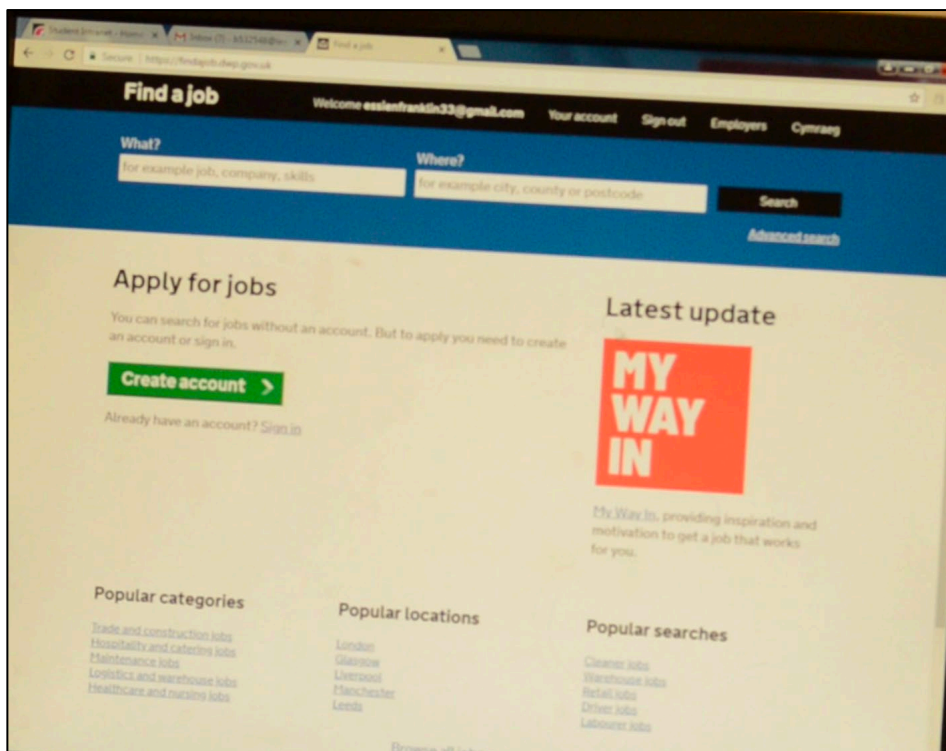


Figure 63: Find a Job search boxes

As they turn back to the Find a Job search menu, Mehran has already set Fernando up to answer the question of what to search for and Fernando complies, like the respectful and obedient student that he is:

Mehran: Right so do you want to type cleaner job or kitchen porter job?

Fernando: Let's say kitchen porter

(Transcript K, 00:12:06.5)

He has been thoroughly primed to search for kitchen porter roles, despite his initial tentative appraisal of it as “difficult”. This is a direct contrast with the previous data with Fernando and Robina, in which Fernando provided the steer for the job search. In the next stage, Mehran reverts back to the activity of more professionally distant job club tutor, before returning to promoting himself further as a role model. Unfortunately, though, the subsequent job search produces no results.

Stage 2: Searching for a Kitchen Porter Job.

At the start of this stage, Mehran is stepping back from the migrant mentoring role he has just performed. He is concerned with explaining the practicalities of how to refine search results by location. He draws on personal knowledge of Fernando’s circumstances as a full time student reliant on public transport. The search functions on *Find a Job* allow users to filter from general to very particular types of information, in a similar way to how other recruitment platforms are organised. As mentioned in Virtual Spaces, Mehran has a wealth of expertise in exploiting these affordances, and so advises Fernando with complete precision to enter his postcode, rather than town, as a search term, as well as why he should do this. He spends the next few minutes coaching Fernando through the other filters: posting date and type of employment (Figure 64- Figure 66).

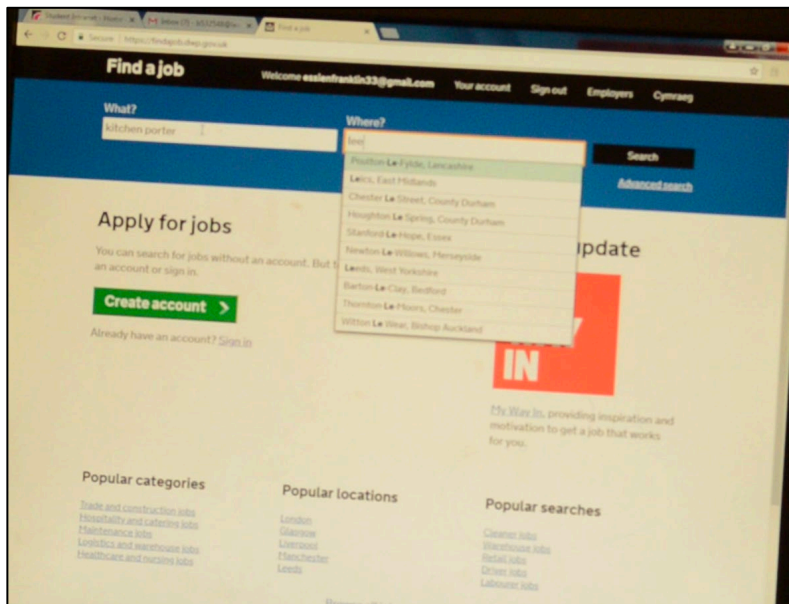


Figure 64: The search box on Find a Job

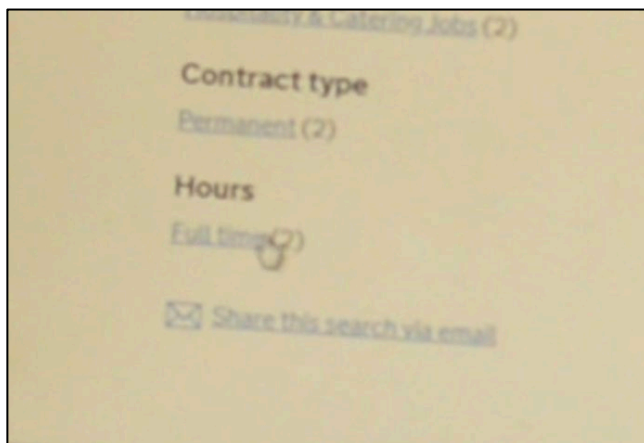


Figure 65: The search results

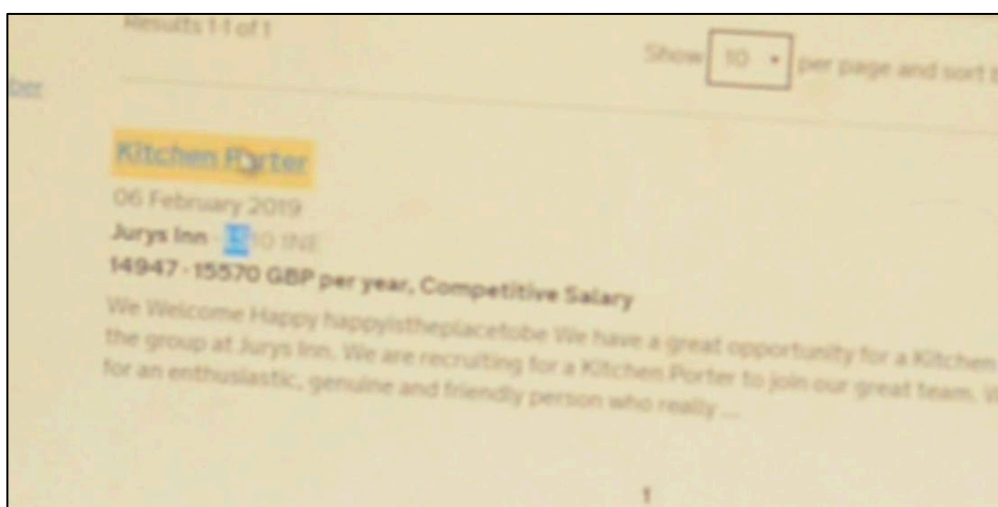


Figure 66: Refined search result

Unfortunately, this narrows the results to just one vacancy, which is full time

(Figure 66). Here again, Mehran draws on another area of expertise: restaurant work. He is able to disclose that “full-time” in the restaurant trade may be understood much more flexibly than in other industries:

Mehran: I mean some of these jobs sort of like er negotiable so when you apply for a job then you can mention it in your cover letter that you like to work part time or you like to work 30 hours for example yeah

(Transcript K, 00:15:25.4)

It is at this juncture that he once again steps from being the Job Club tutor in a college, sharing search tips, into providing a more overt role model. In his next turn, Mehran implicitly draws a parallel between his circumstances and Fernando’s, i.e. a young migrant, studying full time and looking for a job. His attitude is avuncular, more than teacherly, in the way he presents his personal story as a linear career narrative that Fernando could easily follow. Again, Fernando appears to share Mehran’s belief in the value of unskilled work that provides opportunities for progression, facing him as he talks, and nodding and interjecting with the occasional “yes”.

Mehran: Yeah and plus remember I mean kitchen working as a kitchen porter I worked as a kitchen porter while I was studying it it wasn't a kitchen porter job it was more like a kitchen assistant job but why I choose to work in restaurants er while I was studying it was simply because restaurants are open in the evenings so I could study during the day and the evening I used to got to work and er er and er as I said the experience that you get from these jobs are more important than the money you receive jobs are not only about money is about what you become in the future

Fernando: Yes

Mehran: Yeah so I I remember I went work I went and work as a kitchen porter kitchen assistant and then I became a chef right and then I opened my own restaurant do you know what I mean?

Fernando: Yes yes

(Transcript K, 00:16:13.0- 00:17:12.2)

Perhaps in response to Fernando's acceptance of his model, Mehran continues to develop his success story, connecting it also to the migrant dream of "becoming something", by referring to his change in status at the restaurant:

Mehran: Yeah? so think about the future I'm doing my job still I'm working for
L____ college but I have a restaurant as well in the evening still I go to the
restaurant ...I don't wash the dishes now I sit there and eat yeah
Fernando: Yeah

(Transcript K, 00:17:26.2)

In the above exchanges, it is possible to observe how Mehran and Fernando share a belief in the virtue of work beyond economic value, in other words, they have a long term orientation in their evaluation of employment that relates to potential to access wider opportunities. Acknowledging that his message has been successfully delivered, Mehran switches back to a less personal depth of interaction, focusing on the text on the screen:

Mehran leans forward as he changes topic.
Mehran: Right so ... this one kitchen porter is that something close to your
house L__1?
Fernando: I think so

(Transcript K, 00:17:39.9-00:17:50.4)

Mehran is extremely knowledgeable about the ways in which recruiters distribute adverts across many platforms and explains to these practices to Fernando, taking care to paraphrase key terms to ensure understanding, which comes from his background as an ESOL learning support teacher. Here, they are looking at the advert for a kitchen porter at Jury's Inn, a hotel chain that operates in the UK and Ireland (Figure 67).

Mehran: ... and some of those jobs like this one it will just take you to the third party. The third party can be an agency an agency for employment right a job agency so this is what you get right and when you go to these websites right so what you have to do what you have to do apart from applying for these jobs right when you apply for this job if I click here on apply ...

He scrolls to the bottom of the page and tries another apply button.

Mehran: which I cannot at the moment somehow

(Transcript K, 00:01:30.4-00:02:52.8)

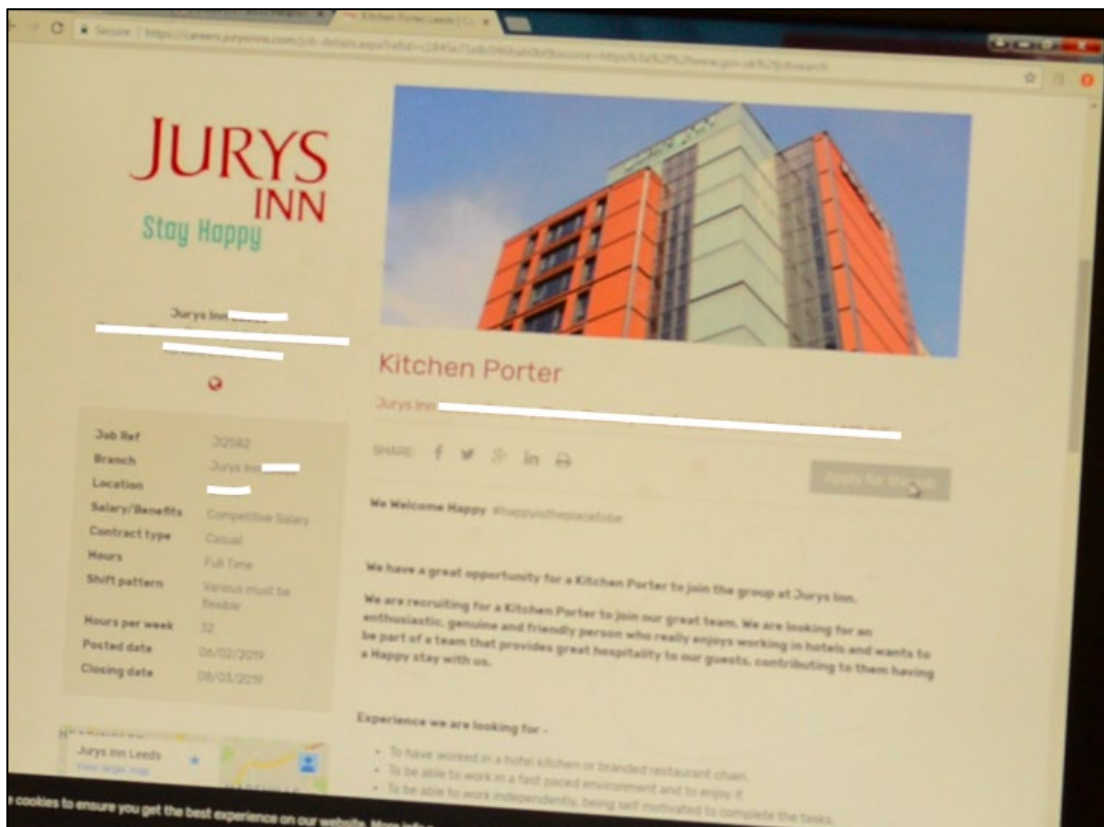


Figure 67: “It will just take you to the third party”

Mehran’s sharing of knowledge about recruitment practices contributes to the interweaving of overall activities throughout this site of attention, in which Mehran switches from being a job club tutor, coaching Fernando through specific actions, such as filtering his search, to acting as a role model, by sharing his restaurant work success story and back to being a job club tutor again. This switching of activity is mirrored by his switching of attention from the screen to Fernando, then back to the screen with

concomitant focus on actions towards their overt objective, such as directing Fernando on how to filter the search results. Fernando, meanwhile, demonstrates his IT proficiency throughout by pre-empting Mehran’s instructions and below, by realising before Mehran that the job is no longer available.

He scrolls back to the top of the advert.

Mehran: when you go to these yeah

Fernando: I think it's no longer available I think

Mehran reads aloud from the screen.

Mehran: Yeah so sorry “this position is no longer available” so if this was available if this was available then you had to create an account with this agency and then you could apply for it do you know what I mean?

(Transcript K, 00:17:51.6- 00:19:17.7)

In the second half of this session, “Cleaning at Asda”, Mehran and Fernando try broadening their job search, as there are no current kitchen porter vacancies in the locality. The motivation for the activity also changes, as they have already now spent 20 minutes of their allocated time on a fruitless search.

8. 4 Fernando and Mehran: Cleaning at Asda (Transcript L)

In the following data, an application for a cleaning job at Asda takes place, involving a trajectory of texts to arrive at the application website and once there, to navigate through an exceedingly complex but poorly connected network of texts, to return to the original advertisement and complete the application form. The sites of engagement are Stage 1: the initial decision to apply, and Stage 2: applying, presented below.

Analysis

Stage 1: Initial Decision to Apply.

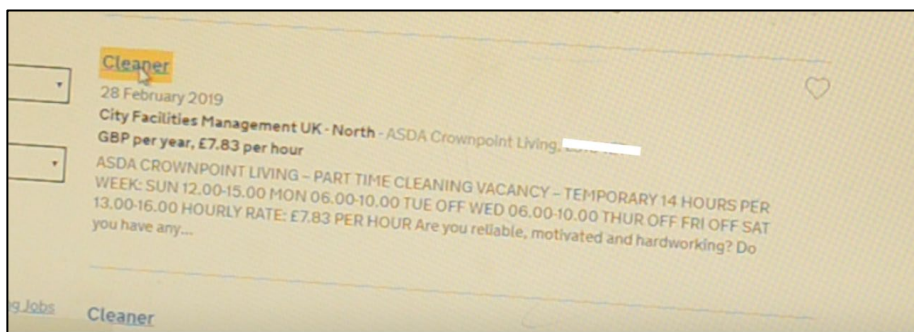


Figure 68: Asda cleaning vacancy on Find a Job

In this data, Mehran is keen for Fernando to submit at least one application, as they are nearing the end of the session and Fernando has not yet submitted anything. Mehran's intonation is very encouraging, and his positive evaluation of the cleaning at Asda job (Figure 68), despite his description of cleaning work as "messy", is consistent with his earlier concern about the value of long term progression through work:

Fernando clicks to open the advert.

Mehran leans in to look at it more closely as Fernando scrolls down slightly.

Mehran: Yeah an I'm surprised Asda put the job there normally they have their own and it's part time and that is just working with a big company it's once you're in the payroll right the process of applying for another job becomes easier yeah? Do you want to click on apply? and I think it's a good job that is

Fernando clicks the "apply" button.

(Transcript L, 00:00:02.6).

At the same time, his promotion of this job, on the basis of working for a big supermarket, Asda, directly contradicts what he said earlier, about "shelf stacking" in supermarkets.

Fernando needs no help with navigating through the initial sequence of platforms from clicking "apply" to arriving on the company website. However, once he clicks to start the application, as seen frequently in all the other data, he is taken from the hosting website via a choice of integrated social media platforms- in this case, two separate Google accounts, to eventually arrive at what Mehran refers to as a "third party" recruitment agency website. Fernando again interacts seamlessly with the long trajectory of texts before Mehran has time to prompt him. It is worth noting the contrast between the popular discourse of cleaning as low skilled and of low value, and the complexity of the digital and literacy skills needed to manage the online portals through which Fernando travels with such ease.

The interactions between physical, screen and virtual spaces become more salient once they land on the recruitment website, when Mehran's voice is slightly frustrated, because he has experience of completing such applications and is aware they are time consuming. His action of taking the mouse indicates his desire to find the original vacancy quickly, so they can submit the application. As previously mentioned, college job club sessions are usually very short and are restricted by bookings for other

classes. Mehran now spends considerable time clicking rapidly between tabs and then back to the City recruitment platform scrolling through the long list of advertisements before using the back button on the browser to navigate all the way back through Fernando’s browsing history to the advertisement on *Find a Job*, where they started. Figure 69 shows that he spends nearly a quarter of the 11 minutes and 25 seconds of the entire sequence on finding the advertisement again, after Fernando has signed into the recruitment website (Transcript L, 00:01:30.4-00:04:24.6).

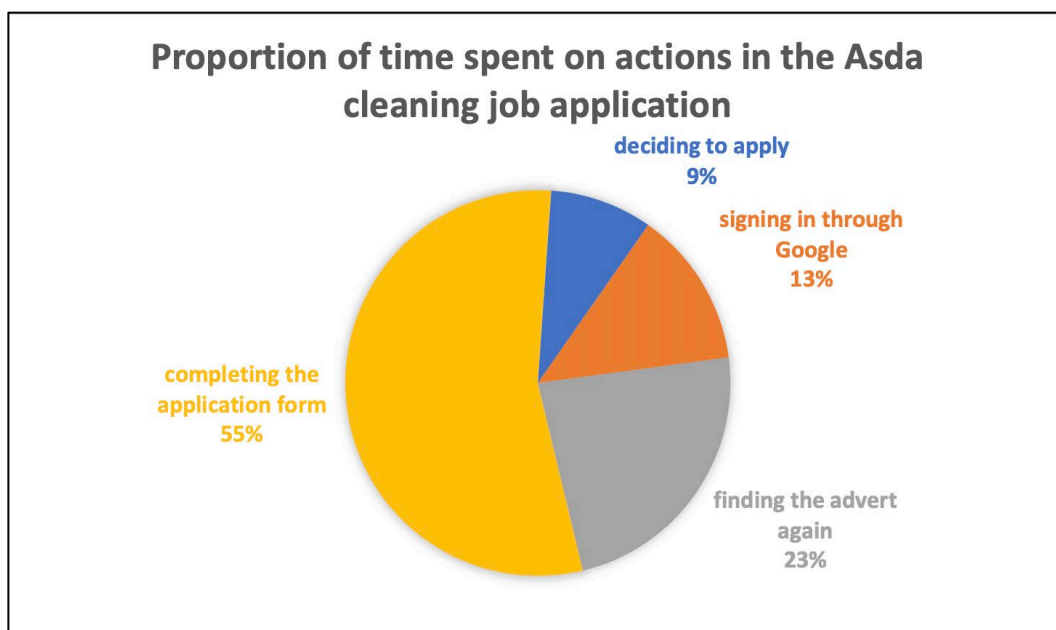


Figure 69: Time spent on actions in the Asda cleaning application

Both Fernando and Mehran are very practised at using the platforms with which the advertisement is networked: Fernando, his two Google accounts which he used to arrive at the recruitment website, and Mehran, recruitment websites as a genre. Nevertheless, so complex is the network between the original advertisement on *Find a job* and its location on the *City* recruitment website, that it is rendered impenetrable and results in the very unusual action of Mehran taking control of the tools.

Another reason why it may be difficult to find that particular vacancy, is that all of the advertisements use the same template and so look identical, apart from locations. “Boiler plate” texts such as these are a feature of professional discourses, according to Bhatia (1993, 2016) and recruitment discourses can be included among these. Templates facilitate compliance with standardisation and control, but also enable mass distribution, which produces the distancing effect noted by Fairclough (2000). It could

be argued the *City* advertisements are distant in discourse, as none of them refer to local workplace practices and discourses about cleaning, for example about specific premises using specific equipment. They are furthermore distant from the website of origin, as a result of having been distributed through a somewhat poorly connected complex network of hyperlinks, that reflects the real life networks of outsourcing and subcontracting between corporations, in this case *Asda*, *City Recruitment*, *Find a Job* and *Google* and possibly others. The next section investigates how, having arrived back at the advertisement, they decide to continue with the application.

Stage 2: Applying.

Bedny et al. (2000) propose that activity passes through five stages, all of which can be observed in this data: beginning with goal setting and acceptance, there is a concurrent formulation of the task and evaluation of this, which influence Mehran and Fernando's orientation and strategies. At the beginning of this stage, Mehran is under pressure because the job club session will soon have to end. He assesses Fernando's linguistic, print and digital literacy skills in relation to his perception of the time needed to complete the form, or the task and the resources available. In the exchange below, he is checking Fernando's acceptance of the goal while retaining the possibility of adjusting it, "Quickly and let's see how it goes, yeah?", by altering their tasks or methods.

Mehran: er can you see it's quite a long application...do you want to complete this
Fernando: Yes
Mehran: Yeah?
Fernando completes his contact details
Mehran: Quickly and let's see how it goes yeah? So start with your address

(Transcript L, 00:04:24.6-00:04:25.0)

Mehran immediately adopts a highly directive orientation, which increases as they proceed through the next few questions on the form. His talk and actions show his impatience, for example the repetition of "quickly" and the offer, made twice, to retrieve Fernando's phone number from the staff intranet, rather than wait for him to copy it from his mobile phone.

Mehran:	West west [place]] you can put yeah West [place] yeah. Quickly put your mobile number
Fernando:	I don't know my mobile number
Mehran:	You don't remember your mobile number?
Fernando	No
Mehran	I'm quite surprised but you need to put a mobile number let me tell you your mobile number erm

(Transcript L, 00:04:55.2 - 00:05:40.9)

Judging by his, and earlier, Robina's evaluation of Fernando's digital skills, it is unlikely Mehran would have made this offer, but for the pressure to end the session very soon. Thus, their entitlement to use the physical space is a limited and limiting resource for which Mehran compensates by becoming increasingly directive, in order to achieve the objective- to submit the application form. The overall activity here is Mehran being a job club tutor in a college, teaching Fernando, a student job applicant, rather than being mentor/mentee, as previously. Their conscious goal is also shared: to complete a job application by the end of the session.

This is again evident in how Mehran reads out the questions in the application form and dictates the answers, while Fernando types. This strategy allows them both to draw on their expertise in the mediational means employed: Fernando is highly proficient at using the keyboard and Mehran draws on his expertise in job application discourses. Both participants defer to each other's expertise through the coordination of their actions. Fernando's deference can be seen in his actions of scrolling to the next question and waiting for instructions. He does not question what Mehran dictates, and Mehran does not direct Fernando about how to navigate the application form.

However, in dictating the answers, Mehran also expresses a popular layperson's discourse of cleaning work as unskilled and undemanding and so perhaps not worthy of detailed explication:

Mehran: Yeah yeah “are you authorised to work” yes “employment details please write the name your most recent employer” you can put student yeah again you can put student er “do you have any cleaning experience yes or no”

Fernando: Yes in my house

Mehran: Yeah that's it yeah everyone has a bit of experience in cleaning yeah “please provide details “yeah? “I like cleaning I clean my room I clean my house every week”. Yeah.

(Transcript L, 00:06:22.6 - 00:06:51.8)

Mehran’s dictated text in response to the request “please provide details” conforms to the bare minimum expectations of the genre, in that it refers to generic cleaning experience. This method is simply to achieve the goal of submitting the application, again largely due to the time pressure, but perhaps also because of his own evaluation of cleaning work as not genuinely offering scope for long term development. The simple sentence structure of his dictated answer also belies Fernando’s position in the ESOL centre: “ESOL level 1 is an advanced level course”, from Robina, earlier.

The next question asks Fernando to provide additional information and Mehran instructs Fernando to copy and paste a template cover letter, saved earlier, into the text box (Figure 70- Figure 71).

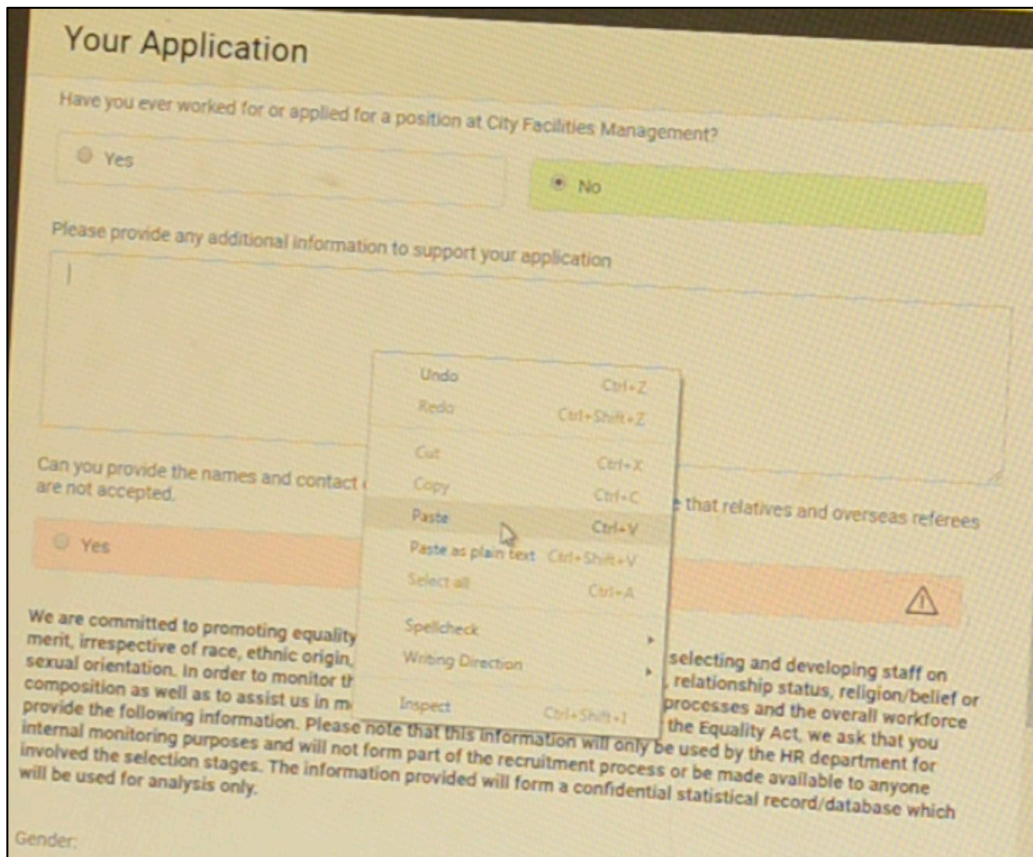


Figure 70: About to paste the cover letter

COVER LETTER:

Dear Sir/Madam,

Whilst browsing the job adverts on the (name of the website), I came across your vacancy for a (job title) and I would like to put myself forward as a candidate for the position. I feel that I have all of the skills that you are looking for in a candidate.

On a personal level, I have no problem working independently in the absence of supervision, and always have a good attitude toward customers, fellow team members and management. I am a bright, energetic person who is looking to join a company like yours that fully supports its employees and assists them in their training and career development needs. I am available for interview at your convenience and look forward to hearing from you.

Please find my CV attached for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Figure 71: Fernando's template cover letter

The tools that Fernando uses to access his template cover letter are *Gmail* and *Windows* with which he is very familiar. Again, Mehran defers to his expertise as he watches him navigate between platforms to locate, copy and then paste the text into the application form .

The digital tools, and the practice of copying and pasting from one text to another, belong to a discourse of sophisticated information management on which online recruitment depends, if users are to benefit from its promised ease and convenience. Mehran has drawn on his discourse and genre knowledge of recruitment, to create a template text (Figure 71) that can be copied and pasted with minimal alteration for different audiences, and that will satisfy the discursive expectations of any employer. Recruiters and applicants both routinely use templates of job-seeking genres. Recruiters use templates to achieve efficiencies of scale in mass advertising while Mehran regards using template answers as a “smart” way of applying, and modifying a cover letter or supporting statement belongs to an accepted job application discourse of “tailoring” the application. Mehran’s “smart” application method thus draws on both discourse knowledge and technological practices to save time and labour, necessary in a competitive job market, in which Mehran claims applicants sometimes need to apply for “thousands” of jobs , as mentioned in Virtual spaces.

In the dialogue below, he assesses how much adaptation is necessary, in order to achieve their objective of submitting the application before the end of the session, which constitutes Bedny et al.’s (2000) task evaluation and strategy development. Once again, he adopts the dictation method to direct Fernando as to the level of editing required. This can also be seen in Figure 72 below.

Mehran: and you need to make some changes to that cover letter do you remember?

Mehran leans forwards as he instructs Fernando.

Mehran: so name of website *Find a Job* no just put *Find a Job* website *Find... A... Job... website...*

Fernando deletes “name of website” and types in *Find a Job*. Mehran dictates the text with suggested modifications.

Mehran: *came across your vacancy for a cleaner* yeah we're making those amendments yeah *cleaners cleaner job and I would like to ...position* yeah

Fernando types the job title amendments.

Mehran: er yeah we explain all those things yeah fantastic

(Transcript L, 00:09:02.0 - 00:10:44.8)

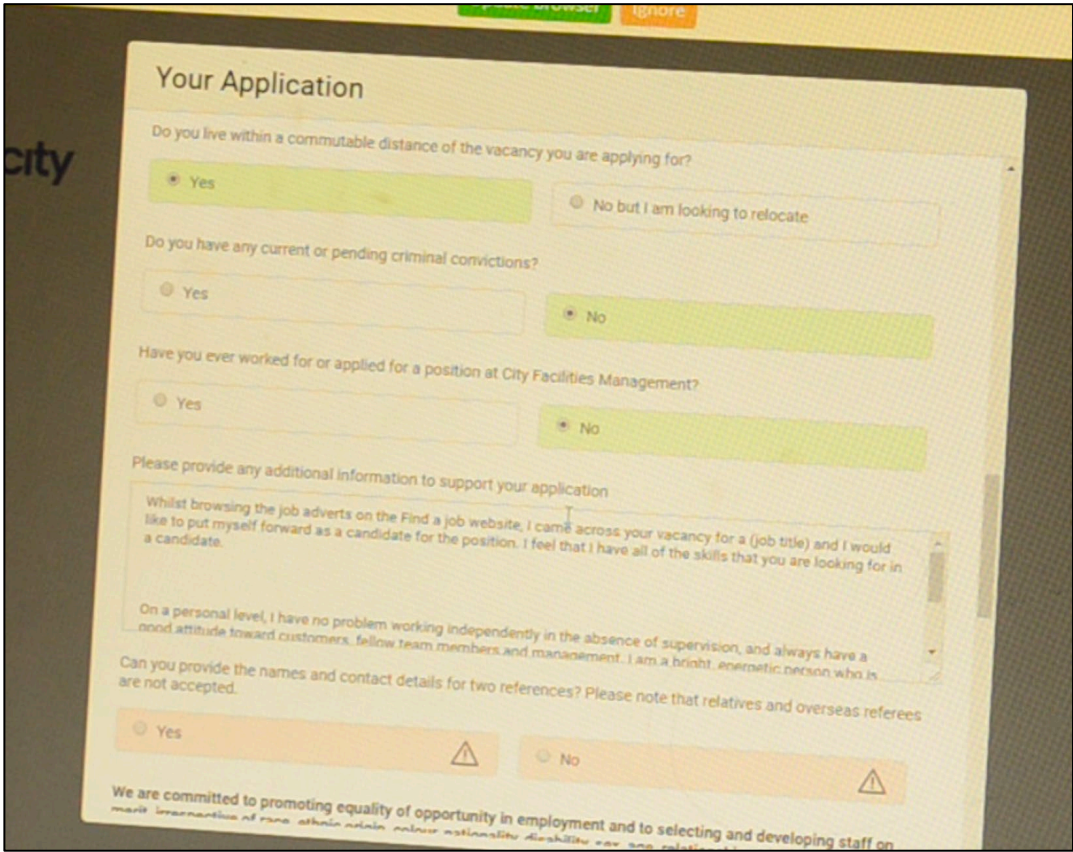


Figure 72: Tailoring the cover letter

Bhatia (2016) refers to interdiscursivity as the appropriation of one set of

conventions or practices to use in another. The interdiscursivity in this instantiation is the adaptation of the template text, i.e. the cover letter, to the discourses of a specific job, and also to fit in the slightly different genre of “additional information in a job application form”. At the same time, this adaptation could also be considered as “intertextuality”- the creation of a new text that involves knowledge of other texts or genres. In other words, Mehran knows that the cover letter that can be appropriated for the application form, in fact, he designed it with that purpose in mind, having extensive knowledge of what a recruiter might wish to hear from a candidate.

The generic content of the cover letter (Figure 71) comprises the bulk of the text and conforms to the modestly self-promotional discourse of recruitment described by Bhatia (1993). It contains the expected moves of an application letter as a promotional sub-genre (Bhatia 1993; 2004), of establishing credentials, introducing candidature, enclosing documents, soliciting a response, using pressure tactics and ending politely. The moves are formulated so that the text refers to desirable personal qualities both in what the candidate claims to possess and what he is seeking to develop through employment. Thus the applicant makes claims about his suitability while appearing to refer to positive attributes of the company, in a convincing text

The statement “...that fully supports its employees and assists them in their training and career development needs” is also clearly informed by Mehran’s orientation towards long term achievement. Contrast this text with Parastou’s personal statement in Case Study 2: a pasted CV, which displayed no notion of the discursive expectations of specific parts of an application form.

In terms of overall activity, in this final part of the session, Mehran and Fernando are fully focussed on completing the application before the end of the session. Their actions coordinate to achieve this common objective, and they are both conforming to the roles of job club tutor in a college and student job applicant. Mehran tacitly recognises Fernando’s areas of expertise, as does Fernando in regard to Mehran. The activity is conducted nevertheless in an overwhelmingly directive manner, which permits Fernando no opportunity to reflect on what he is writing in response to the questions about his cleaning experience, or additional information in support of the application. Mehran dictates what Fernando should write, rather than allowing him to make his own suggestions. His talk is full of discourse markers that move the conversation along promptly, to proceed through the form, e.g. “next one”; “anyway

yeah”; “just put...”; “just fill in...” and the suggested modifications are minimal.

There appear to be two contributing factors which strongly influence the activity: the time constraints on the use of the classroom, and Mehran’s somewhat ambivalent evaluation of the vacancy. If a breakdown of the constituent parts of the whole event is considered, it is possible to see how the significant proportion of time, almost a quarter, is spent on trying to find their way back to the advertisement, after being taken through to the recruitment website, which itself took 13% of the time. Altogether, almost half of the time in this event was spent signing into the recruitment account and re-finding the advertisement, despite the considerable expertise on which both participants could draw.

Mehran’s attitude towards the cleaning job can be described as ambivalent, because despite his initial positive appraisal: “Asda ...that's a good one!” he subsequently takes a less interested stance. In comparison with the earlier part of the session, in which he advocated kitchen portering as a job with excellent learning opportunities and which he illustrated with his personal success story, he makes no attempt to persuade Fernando of the value of the work. The lack of persuasion combined with the pressure to quickly complete the application form make the activity one motivated by the need to achieve an outcome in a job club session, rather than finding a good job for Fernando. This need is not a requirement of the college, but perhaps comes from Mehran’s own teaching practice, of setting achievable goals within the constraints of the resources and circumstances.

8.5 Conclusion to Case Study 3

The discourses in these sites of engagement are clearly not anything that might be regarded as ‘pure’ job application discourses. Both Robina and Mehran’s contributions are heavily influenced by their life stories and their work as learning support assistants in an ESOL centre. In Robina’s interactions with Fernando, she is reflective, exploratory and enables spaces for Fernando to express his own ideas. She draws on her own cultural knowledge about where to search, and about how to manage a working relationship with other employees or management. These are woven into explanations around a simple timetable of shift patterns. She also helps Fernando to entextualise himself in the Tesco profile builder, as an advanced level student, removing all evidence of his “foreigner” status, and suggesting he add his IT skills to his CV,

pointing out that these are saleable. During the entire process of searching and applying, she is appraising him in relation to their goal and setting tasks accordingly. This is why, at some moments, they are collaborators and Robina focuses more on these rich explanations of social practices, and at other times, she is very directive, such as in what words to use in the application form. Even in these examples of directiveness, however, she provides a space for experiential learning, such as “Do you know what ESOL means?”.

Mehran uses his life experience much more explicitly than Robina, to furnish Fernando with directional motivation towards a specific goal, that also has a shared long term objective, “making good” that is aligned with the college’s ethos and Fernando’s own ambitions. Mehran also appraises Fernando, but in addition to appraising his technological skills, he also appraises his values and beliefs about work. As with Robina, Fernando and Mehran collaborate to complete the application and Mehran becomes directive about what Fernando should write in different sections, sharing expertise about how to tailor an application with minimum changes. Additionally in this case, the dictation of sentences about cleaning experience belie Mehran’s own beliefs in the value of the work, despite his statement that the job may offer prospects.

Although the methods they use to approach their goal are very different, Mehran and Robina’s relationship to Fernando is one of trust and shared objective: to find a part time job that fits in around Fernando’s college course, and this remains constant throughout, while a nexus of practices associated with a supportive teaching and learning orientation means that the activity is always one of learning about the situated real life practices of finding work. Although only English is used, Mehran and Robina are highly expert at mediating meaning for Fernando, for example through exemplification and paraphrasing. Similarly, they are patient with his hesitation while searching for words, and use of gesture, as he seeks to articulate his questions. This provides him with opportunities for agency. This case study illustrates that where there is a shared objective and orientation, in various physical, relational and third spaces, prescribing precisely how tasks are carried out is perhaps less important than exploiting tasks, such as reading adverts or filling in application forms, for additional learning opportunities. It underlines the importance of access to expertise in particular areas of work, in forming a career identity, working out how and where to search in virtual spaces, and how to entextualise a credible relevant self, avoiding the social pitfalls that

might entail.

Chapter 9 Discussion of the Quintain

This chapter will discuss the findings across the three case studies, in relation to the research questions. Findings for RQs 1-3 are summarised, before moving to a discussion of RQs 4-5. The first three research questions are concerned with individual identity and how this is represented or shaped in interaction. RQ1 sets out what, if any, commonalities exist across the five spaces of computer mediated communication outlined in the case studies. RQ2 then explores how participants' goals are shaped by the nexus of practices intersecting in job applications, and RQ3 examines the ways in which activity is either in tune or at variance with conscious goals and how the overall orientation of participants structures their activity. It tries to summarise, in other words, on what normative knowledge, practices and discourses subjects draw, as they make decisions around job applications. RQ4 attempts to define the broader discourses of identity that structure online recruitment and RQ5 discusses how these broad discourses of identity affect literacies of employability.

9.1 RQ 1: What Constitutes the Level of Operations in an Online Job Search?

Operations is the layer of analysis in which sedimented, socially constructed normative discourses reside and whence anticipatory discourses (R. Scollon, 2001b) are drawn forth, to inform preliminary formulations of goals and tasks, i.e. what job to apply for and where to search. Operational actions, i.e. those that are smoothly linked and recognisable as practices (Bedny & Karwowski, 2004; R. Scollon, 2001a) take place within the five spaces of computer mediated communication (Jones, 2005), which were summarised in each case study and are shown in Figure 73. As Jones emphasised, these spaces are neither distinct nor a finite list, but present a useful and quite necessary way of separating out the compression of time and space for the purpose of analysis. The additional mention of artefacts in the figure refers to texts, printed or digital, which may be located in physical or virtual space and could themselves be conceptualised as a kind of space.

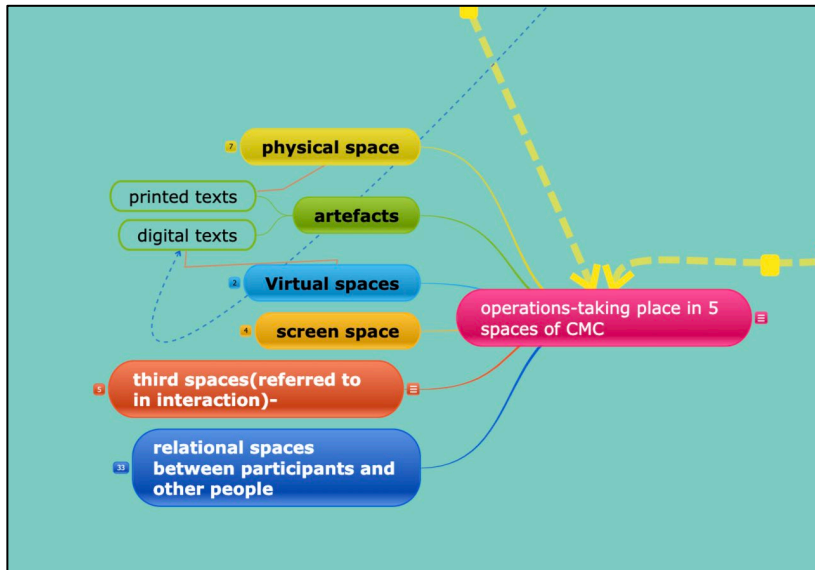


Figure 73: The level of "operation"

In the following sections, I outline in more detail the resources, relations and needs, wants and circumstances afforded by each operational space, which are used by my participants to formulate and carry out the tasks they envisage, bearing in mind that these spaces are dynamic and interact with one another.

Physical Space (Including Relations Between People in the Room)

Use of physical space is connected with the practices of different groups of people. In CS 1, this is the charity work club. The atmosphere is noisy, convivial and somewhat chaotic. Everyone is under pressure to meet job-seeking targets and this means often Brian sits between JK and Selden and supervises other volunteers working with them. He usually controls the mouse and keyboard, particularly if time is short. This often results in JK and Selden sitting back from the computers when reading or writing is done; on occasion they do read, or scroll down search results, but in the data, volunteers pay little attention to this, as their focus is the higher level goal of submitting job applications.

In CS 2, the physical space is Parastou's living room, which is calm and quiet, but does not provide her with alternative devices when her laptop breaks. She usually does her job searches alone at home, but in the data, I participate in the conversations around her job applications, inadvertently providing much needed opportunity to ask about the social practices obliquely referred to in many job-seeking texts. Like JK and Selden, but for different reasons, she normally has no opportunity to talk in depth about particular work with anybody, while reading adverts or doing applications.

In CS 3, the physical space is the college IT classroom, which is calm and regulated. There are no unauthorised interruptions during the sessions, which are by appointment. The relations between Mehran, Robina and Fernando are mainly tutor/student or mentor/mentee and there is a shared understanding of what they are doing: supporting Fernando with what I will call the “employability literacies” he needs, to apply for a part time job. These literacies will be discussed in depth in RQ5. Timetable pressure on use of room for other sessions contributes to both Mehran’s and Robina’s level of directiveness towards the end of the sessions.

Screen Space

This refers to arrangements of items on the screen, such as writing space, toolbars, menus and tabs. A key tenet of AT and MDA is that all mediational means are ideological and embedded in practices, both personal and institutional (Bedny & Karwowski, 2004; Jones & Norris, 2005; Leont’ev, 1981; R. Scollon, 2001b), and this has direct implications for how hardware and software structure participants’ actions. Parastou uses a mobile phone for her job searches, and is fully “in synch” (Gee, 2011) with all the tools it offers, as is Fernando, with his college PC. Neither Parastou nor Fernando ever mentions the technological aspects of what they are doing. Brian, very conscious of his difficulties with file storage and retrieval, includes this in his appraisal of job applications and preferring those without the need to upload or attach new documents. Neither JK nor Selden writes anything in the applications, although work club volunteers sometimes coach them to type their own log-in details, scroll webpages and click on various buttons.

Virtual Space

These are the spaces where adverts or application forms are hosted, such as the recruitment websites, *Indeed* and *Universal Job Match*. Just as Łacka-Badura (2013, p. 94) described, virtual recruitment spaces are at “peak” dialogic potential. Moreover, this study found that applications are an unpredictable aggregation of texts, the variety of which is a vivid illustration of the dynamism of literacy practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) in recruitment. In all of the case studies, the unpredictability of the aggregation of texts meant that anticipatory discourses used to inform goal setting were frequently oversimplified, and participants thus became irritated, stressed or demoralised when unanticipated complications arose. These emotions fed into an iterative self-appraisal and goal adjustment process which will be discussed in RQ 2 and relates to the bodies

of knowledge used during interpretation and production (Barton, 2009; Maybin, 2000) of application texts, to which I will return in RQ5.

Third Spaces

These are places referred to by participants, such as the job centre, college, university or learning centre, home countries and previous or potential workplaces. Third spaces in the data are mentioned alongside relational space, when participants talk about work or educational experiences, describing practices and invoking expectations about, for example, a potential employer's attitude towards a new employee asking for specific shifts. Examples of this from the data are Robina explaining supermarket work or Mehran explaining kitchen work to Fernando; and Shona miming and joking with JK about calling in sick.

Parastou referred to her previous workplaces, college, university, and local volunteering workplace, but did not explicitly connect any of these with relational spaces, where she might have access to useful social capital, which could have helped with strategizing her job searches, something Willott and Stevenson (2013) highlighted as a common difficulty for professional migrants. There were many examples in the work club and from Parastou, of references to pressure from the job centre to apply for more jobs and to be seen to be trying. This contributed a sense of fear, exposing the participants' vulnerability to individual bureaucrats' perceptions of what constituted reasonable efforts to find work, and in a social practice model of literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 2001), this sense of fear can be understood as one of the roles that employability literacies play in many people's lives.

Relational Space

This exists between participants, and other people they know. This space is occupied by friends, work or college connections, as well as representatives of agencies such as job centre work coaches or recruiters. Giulietti et al. (2013) found that it was the less educated group who enduringly relied on social networks for work. Other studies that concern support for migrant jobseekers have shown that the social spaces provided by the third sector are welcome (Calò et al., 2021; Crisp, 2015) but they also showed that, like in my data, they do not allow access to broadly distributed social capital that might help with career identity. Relying simply on a small friendship network and a charity work club alone is unlikely to suffice for migrant jobseekers, regardless of

education level.

The participants' individual circumstances, needs, wants, and obligations, as well as individual career identities are perceived differently by others in their relational space, depending on the discourses on which they draw, which may differ significantly from the participant's own. Participants frequently refer to what others have told them, to justify their feelings about appropriate kinds of employment. Fernando's friends and family confuse him, his sister telling him that kitchen work is for women, while Mehran advises him that it offers possibilities for future development. Parastou mentions her previous work and the contradictory advice she receives from different organisations such as the job centre and the council, while JK and Selden are told by their friends at church that they are not really fit for work, because of their limited English. This belief is particularly influential in career identity formation.

Discourses in the Level of Operations.

The discourses used in the interpretation and production of application texts are related to:

- the local area, such as location of workplaces, travel considerations;
- the field of employment;
- and an action discourse of being "in synch" with mediational means (Gee, 2011), or having the requisite repertoire of digital skills.

These three discourses are closely connected to having an appropriate communicative repertoire, that includes textual practices (Tusting et al., 2000, p. 210). The interdiscursivity of job application texts requires genre knowledge that extends beyond simplified assumptions of what constitutes a job advertisement, in order to understand a job description, as does producing a well written application. Furthermore, the nexus of practices in job applications, of using specific digital tools, which are tied to particular activity systems and discourses of identity, draw participants into text and action trajectories in virtual space, intrinsically influencing their goals and motivations. The analytical layer of action locates the moment that an operation becomes an action that belongs to a not yet mastered discourse (Gee, 1998), for example when Brian wanted to format JK's signature; when Robina and Fernando were testing out search terms, and when Parastou was puzzling out the meaning of the "lifecycle" metaphor. The data show how much effort is needed to coordinate receptive and productive knowledge into appropriate and convincing applications, and that textual and

mediational practices are thus part of broader knowledge of national and local activity systems of work, welfare and education.

Participants' feelings about work contribute to an individual career identity discourse, founded on the value of work, willingness to work, and what constitutes appropriate work; this includes beliefs about volunteering, and also job-seeking, in relation to how and where to look for work. Career identity is also informed by participants' circumstances, needs, wants and obligations, and participants commonly commented on the following, which influenced their beliefs about work, or career identities, in very varied ways:

- Qualifications and educational background
- English competence
- Length of time in the UK
- Family situation
- Transport
- Benefits compliance
- Work expectations
- Work history
- Health and age

A final important discourse is “English first”, a belief that a certain degree of English competence is necessary before the candidate can succeed in finding work, which is woven into anticipatory discourses around many recruitment texts. JK, Selden and Parastou all doubted their English competence. “English first” fails to recognise the informal ways in which people are socialised into linguistic practices through participation. JK and Selden’s plurilingual repertoires enabled them to actively participate in church, the work club, and the charities where they attended classes and where they had acquired the necessary practices through informal participation and sense making, practices which could transfer to the beginnings of employability literacies. The “English first” discourse also ignores how different aspects of linguistic repertoire are valued in different types of employment: an example of this is Parastou’s concern with spelling for administration work. The lack of awareness of language as discourse repertoire adds power to the welfare scrounger discourse, by muddying the reasons why people may or may not be able to find work and contributes to confusion about what work may be appropriate.

Summary of RQ1

Relational space, then, is where the participants and their third space contacts' historical bodies meet, to generate an identity which emerges from the surface of this space into the physical one occupied in the site of attention. Here, this identity encounters the discourses of the participants in the room, and in the screen and virtual spaces of the present moment. This can be seen, for example, in how work club volunteers discuss and evaluate various jobs for JK and Selden, or the confusion Parastou experiences in self-appraising for the HR administrator role, that required her to proofread reports.

Operations take place simultaneously across multiple spaces, mediated by texts, talk and digital technology. The level of "operations" contains many discursive undercurrents of individual and social history at work, interacting with the present, to shape decisions during a job application and I will look at how that happens and its influence on motivation, to answer RQ2, next.

9. 2 RQ 2: How Do Operations Affect the Goals in an Online Job Application?

The analysis illustrates how the dynamism and interactivity between operational spaces influence the overall goals. Through observations of actions, clearly defined stages in the application process emerged. These are:

- Searching
- Evaluating,
- Deciding to apply
- Applying, with a coda being some kind of confirmation that the application has been submitted.

In activity theory terms, these stages can be conceptualised as higher level actions, that are the results of tasks undertaken to achieve a specific conscious goal – to apply for a job. As the candidate works through all the stages of applying, the interactions between the discourses in different spaces provide the connection between anticipatory discourses and goal setting, which I believe produces an increasingly focused self-appraisal cycle.

A Recursive Self-Appraisal Cycle

Bhatia (1993) regards self-appraisal as the most important feature of job

applications, and emphasises that successful cover letters and CVs coordinate to project a credible relevant self, only if the candidate explicitly relates that self-appraisal to the employer's expectations. However, he does not elaborate on what a self-appraisal process might be, referring to it only as an element of writing an application. In my data, I found that self-appraisal happens in all the stages of finding work, and that it is cyclical rather than linear, although it does have finite potential.

I am drawing on Bedny et al.'s (2000) definition of a goal as the imaginary product of one's actions and Scollon's (2001a, p. 165) notion of anticipatory and narrative discourses. The imagined product of one's actions is evoked through an anticipatory discourse which provides the motivation for goal formation, selection and acceptance. In my data, this anticipatory discourse continuously shapes job application decisions, and arises within relational space, interacts with discourses in other operational spaces, to coalesce into concrete observable actions towards applying for a job. All of these actions are equally influenced by needs, wants, circumstances and emotions. These are what I see as the constituents of a process of self-appraisal in relation to a job.

I have adapted Bedny et al.'s (2000) model of self-regulation (p. 196) to conceptualise this (Figure 74) as a *recursive self-appraisal cycle*. Once a candidate starts looking for a job, they begin an iterative process that involves repeated self-appraisal in relation to the jobs under consideration, constantly readjusting the goals, or sub goals and thus the tasks involved in the application. The first step is goal formation or acceptance, which necessitates some kind of career identity involving initial self-appraisal; this provides directional motive. The next step is to formulate key words for the search. If that fails, the candidate tries alternative search terms; if successful, they scan the search results and begin to self-appraise more deeply. Self-appraisal in relation to the role is partly reliant on an understanding of professional or workplace practices. Deciding whether or not to apply depends on an interpretation of the job as both suitable and worthwhile. Jobseekers constantly reappraise themselves, as they move from searching to scanning results, to reading adverts and job descriptions for more detailed understanding, and finally writing applications. In doing this, they are formulating their own perceptions of their employability and eventually, entextualising this for the employer. At any point, where the self-appraisal is negative, they may stop and return to the beginning, or to an earlier stage.

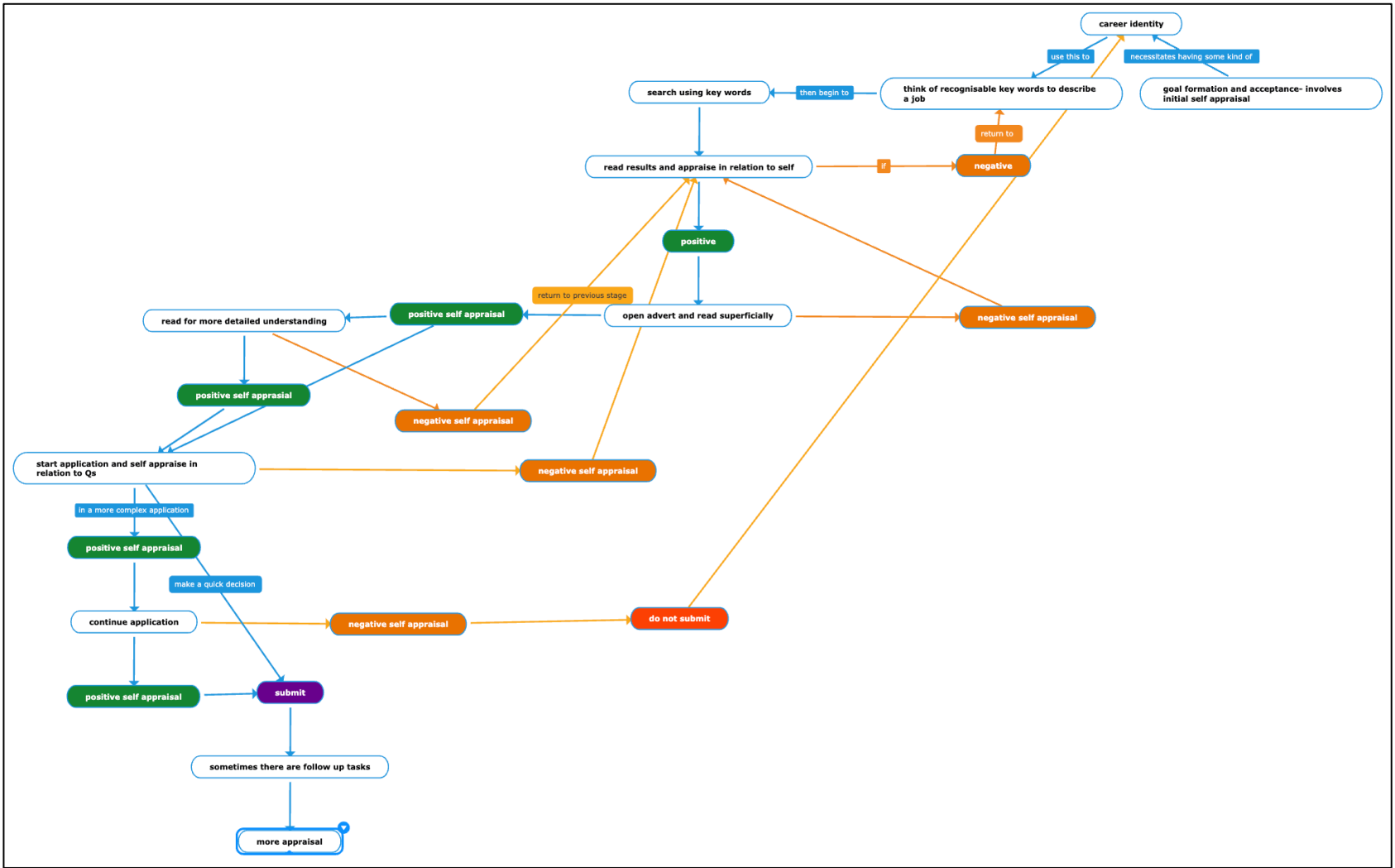


Figure 74: Recursive self-appraisal cycle of looking for a job

Goal Adjustment, Anticipatory Discourses and Operational Spaces.

As shown in Figure 74, there are countless instantiations of goal setting and goal adjustment during such a self-appraisal cycle, depending on how deeply the data is penetrated. As an example, the setting and acceptance of the goal could be deciding to look for work in a certain field, just as Fernando and Robina decided to look for first shelf stacking, then customer services at Tesco. The orientation in the situation would derive from individual needs, wants and circumstances, in other words from the participants' historical body in relational space. The formulation of the task could be what key words to use in a search. The evaluation of the task arises after initiating the first step or two; this might be evaluating search terms after looking at search results, or it could be at a later stage, reading and interpreting a job description and self-appraising in relation to the role.

Bedny et al. (2000) explain that because goals can be interpreted differently depending on individual situation and circumstances, they are always socially situated and specific; therefore, different actions will be undertaken to achieve the same goal. The data support this, showing that the conceptualisation and operationalisation of tasks to achieve the goal depends on the participants' orientation and that, furthermore, this changes during the event. Spontaneously, participants may become experimental and collaborative, as is the case with Fernando and Robina, and also initially, JK and Shona in "Are you fit?". Conversely, they may also become very directive, as happened subsequently between Shona and Brian in "Are you fit?". They may draw on their own resources or they may be unaware of these, like Parastou, and lose motivation. Bedny et al. (2000) describe how participants are conscious of different aspects of their goals, as they approach them, and in the data, this consciousness, or anticipatory discourse, is constantly in flux with the self-appraisal cycle, as candidates decide whether or not, and how to apply for certain jobs. The "how" of the mediational means is an important part of the anticipatory discourses in all of the data, as participants appraise themselves in relation to the multiliteracy demands of each application, envisaging action and text trajectories.

Opacity of Staging in Text Trajectories

Consciousness of actions towards goals can be seen in the distribution of participants' attention as a site of attention opens, which often happens when the anticipated discourse - the one that helped with the formation and acceptance of the goal

- does not materialise, and suddenly, the participant is funnelled into an unanticipated action and text trajectory. This is somewhat similar to Scollon's "funnel of commitment" (2001, p. 169), the point at which enough has been invested for the applicant to want to continue, yet also the point at which the difficulty of achieving the goal becomes apparent. Proximity to the goal of submitting an application increases overall motivation and engagement. Conversely, distancing from a goal, by an unanticipated and unwanted action and text trajectory, may decrease or even totally obstruct the participants' motivation and engagement, as observed in their subsequent talk and actions.

Fairclough (2003) points out that generic structure or staging of individual texts varies, depending on the level of control of the communication. His example is call centre scripts which are very rigid, because of their very strategic purpose for communication. As mentioned in *Virtual Spaces*, while staging of the wider activity of applying for a job is clear, the staging of the multiplicity of texts through which a goal is achieved is often unpredictable. This unpredictability of what texts will be aggregated to comprise any particular instantiation of the recruitment genre set makes it impossible to accurately picture how an application might proceed. I will refer to this as *opacity of staging*. An example of opacity of staging is Parastou's ZipRecruiter's application in which it was unclear if she had even managed to make an application. Here the extreme "conversationalisation" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 35) of the automated chatbot interactions masked its strategic intent and the technical design of the automated chat structured the actions that Parastou could take.

These and other examples show how attention is systematically diverted from an original goal, steered by the demands of texts that only appear after a mouse click and so cannot be anticipated. This is what I mean by opacity of staging in text trajectories. In the data, its effect of distancing the candidate from the goal can systematically sap their directional motivation, so that what is done is superficial and does not completely meet the original objective.

Attention in Physical and Relational Spaces

Fairclough (2012) and Gee (2011) both argue that identity is partly constructed through actions. This is why identity is connected with goals, because actions are what is done to achieve goals and I would argue that achieving a goal is part of an expression of values or beliefs that also contribute to identity. Therefore, the identities of

participants in multiple relational spaces are connected to the nexus of practices intersecting in the sites of engagement, and also to whether or not they achieve their goals. In all of the case studies, physical space and time constraints create observable pressure to act, so that having become aware that they have deviated from their intended goals, there is a palpable note of urgency in the way participants, especially volunteers or staff, take hold of the IT tools to achieve the goal, or choose to disregard subsequent action and text trajectories and so sometimes change the activity.

Both Mehran's and Robina's consciousness of the distance from the goal becomes apparent in the way their interactions with Fernando change from collaborative to directive, subtly altering the relationship between them from mentor/mentee to teacher/pupil. Brian's goal of "emailing Wayne direct", provides another example of shifting goals and identities. His inability to predict the entrainment of actions displaces his position from initiator to follower of directions, while JK, initially engaged and motivated, is outside the action of signing his name altogether and the digression also consumes the time within which JK must meet his job application targets. "Low level" actions such as those in the formatting trajectory, or the relocation of the Fernando's cleaning advert, did not figure in the anticipated discourses of applying for those particular jobs, nor could they have, realistically.

The opportunities for digressions from an intended goal are boundless in virtual space, and are tightly connected to the discourses, and practices of everyone else in the relational and physical spaces. By following the action and text trajectories that unfolded in sites of engagement, I saw how the focus of attention, seen in actions, was connected to identity shifts, in the literacy event. In the self-appraisal and goal adjustment cycle, different discourses of identity become more prominent as participants interact with texts, that are aggregated into unpredictable trajectories. These texts frequently distance the participants from their goal and thus affect motivation. The moving focus of attention subtly alters the roles of participants in the event and it is the roles people play that provide the clues to the overall activity. RQ 3 looks at how, as participants appraise goals and reframe tasks, their overall orientation to the activity changes, resulting from the interplay between goals, tasks, texts and discourses in operational spaces.

9. 3 RQ 3: How Do Operations Affect the Activity in an Online Job Application?

Attention, Identities, and Activity in CS 1

Shifts in attention, identities and activity are clearly visible through observable actions in Case study 1 and demonstrate the dynamism in these complex relational spaces. For example, in “Are you fit?” Shona and Brian are respectively mentee and mentor, while in the same data, they are both volunteers working with different welfare claimants. In “The bus station night cleaner”, I am a researcher observing my research participants, Brian and JK, who are volunteer and welfare claimant. Later, I am drawn into being an IT instructor with Brian as my student. In “Cradle work”, JK asks me for help and I stop being an observer and become an ESOL teacher and he a student, and as we start looking for jobs, Brian and I become mentor and mentee, while I at the same time become a volunteer to JK, as Brian volunteers with Selden. This is accompanied by much repositioning in the physical space, with JK standing up and vacating his place at the keyboard insistently, or Brian turning from the screen to face whomever he is addressing, or me stepping forwards to actively participate when asked for help.

The powerful effects of benefits compliance discourses dominate Case Study 1. Unfailingly, volunteers’ initial motivations, to help either JK or Selden to apply for a suitable job, are compromised, to the extent that the latter’s concerns are dismissed and applications are submitted against their wishes. It is benefits compliance that provides volunteer Brian with his orientation to their job applications and his supervision of novice volunteers. For example, in “Are you fit?” Brian is acting on the powerful discourse of “welfare deservingness”, carrying out benefits compliance governance at a distance (Fairclough, 2003): “As long as they’re seen to be applying”. His intervention also marks an identity shift at the same time as an activity shift: Shona and JK from volunteer and jobseeker to mentee and welfare dependent respectively, and the activity for Shona, from finding a good job for JK to ensuring benefits compliance.

Similarly, in the glass collecting job, Brian does not allow JK’s conjugal concern over Selden working nights to stop him submitting the application, in which his activity changes from finding a reasonable job for Selden, to applying to demonstrate benefits compliance. This and other examples of shifts in identity, such as myself from observer to ESOL teacher to work club volunteer, in “Cradle work”, show how individual activity, not just goals, may differ during the same event and discussing the

same text, and also change as a result of one discourse dominating others.

As in all the data, much attention is also diverted away from talking about specific workplace practices by the unfamiliar digital practices of the very volatile digital recruitment landscape, by which I mean the increasing use of random, ever more challenging stages to the application process. An example is Selden's invitation to visit a pub and upload a review of the experience, in order to complete her application for a glass collecting job. These influence the activity as profoundly as the benefits compliance discourse, despite Brian's attempts to stick with what he knows, or anticipates, to be more straightforward application methods and thus more predictable, less time consuming text trajectories. Thus very little time is spent on helping JK and Selden to genuinely develop an understanding of what a job could potentially be like, and appraisal in relation to any job remains very superficial.

Attention, Identities, and Activity in CS 2

In CS 2, at times, Parastou, her phone lying on the table at a distance from us both, is a research participant demonstrating her search practices, rather than genuinely engaged in looking for a job. In the data, this happens when she is up against the powerful discourses of "Work First", welfare deservingness and the identity of "someone with no experience" assigned her by some recruiters. These discourses voiced by job coaches, friends, and even herself, conflict with her needs and wants, as well as her professional identity. This uncertainty profoundly influences her goals and ultimately the activity of developing a new career identity and finding a suitable job. In addition to these competing discourses of identity, she herself finds it extremely difficult to self-appraise in relation to job descriptions, which often refer implicitly to unfamiliar practices and discourses. This happens most obviously with the long level 2 apprenticeship application, but also in the other advertisements she considers. According to AT (e.g. Leont'ev, 1981), it is the combination of goal with circumstances that provides the initial motive for an activity, but working out if the goal is appropriate or attainable is precisely one of the difficulties Parastou has.

Unpacking the discourses in even relatively short job descriptions requires significant mental effort and drains her motivation, especially when a tentatively positive self-appraisal is in conflict with the deficit discourses and identities of not having experience or not speaking like a native. She does not lack "skills" to use tools and artefacts to find information, but pays much attention to terminology in adverts

where she lacks knowledge of both the “big” and “little” discourses to interpret them confidently. She refutes the expectation from the job centre that she should apply for more jobs each week, telling me: “I can’t apply without thinking”, making it clear that she expends significant time, energy and attention on her applications.

Not surprisingly, once she does understand the discourses alluded to in the job descriptions well, she is able to identify more strongly with the roles and this does increase her motivation. In such instances, she changes from being a slightly disengaged but obliging research participant, to being an interested job candidate. For example in Ch 6 “Email job alerts”, she goes through an extended process of goal adjustment, with me facilitating each subsequent readjustment of the goals, before she finally decides to apply for one of the jobs. The difficulty lies in doing this by herself, with nobody to help with understanding the social organisation of the kind of workplaces where she wants to work, or the practices alluded to, sometimes obliquely, in the advertisements and job descriptions.

Attention, Identities, and Activity in CS 3

At the start of the sessions, both Robina and Mehran actively collaborate with Fernando to help him form a career identity. They provide him with the cultural, linguistic and literacy resources to accomplish his job applications and they both, in very different ways, mentor him. Nevertheless, the text and action trajectories in both events transform their goals into a degree of compromise between what they intended to do and what they finally accomplished, and they both become far more directive by the end, as they hurry to complete the applications. In particular, the opacity of staging in the long aggregations of loosely hyperlinked texts in the cleaning application, has a powerful effect on the mental and practical actions needed to achieve a goal, even when participants can draw on and pool ample resources.

In CS3 Searching, the activity remains principally one of mentoring, as Robina draws on adult education and ESOL pedagogy to support Fernando. The physical and relational spaces between them permit an exploratory reflexive approach. Robina’s philosophy lets Fernando experiment with a nascent career identity, by helping him to access the increasingly specialised search discourses of searching, evaluating and applying. She helps him to reset the trajectory towards his goal, applying for a supermarket job, at each dead end, despite the frustrations, such as unrecognised search terms or irrelevant search results. She can quickly evaluate the latter and draw on

experience to suggest new key words or alternative recruitment platforms. She can appraise Fernando's ability to fill in the Tesco application, another anticipatory discourse, based on her observation of his proficiency with information management. In this way, neither of them is disempowered by the information age practices of the recruitment platform mediating the application, because they are both familiar with complementary elements of this: Robina with the mental actions- understanding the social practices that underly the form; Fernando with the practical actions- switching between cloud storage platforms to retrieve and share his CV. Thus, the motive to achieve the goal remains strong and attention is not diverted from the main objective.

In "Cleaning at Asda", so much of Mehran's attention is diverted, that the activity in the subsequent application is completely different from Mehran's initiating motivation of building a potential career identity. By the end, the activity is conducted in such an overwhelmingly directive manner, that Fernando has no opportunity to reflect on what he is writing in response to the questions, or additional information in support of the application. In contrast with the construction of his life as a kitchen porter, Fernando thus loses any opportunity to discuss what cleaning work at Asda might be like in practice. Mehran steps back from being a role model, using his identity of "successful restaurateur", to being a learning support assistant and the activity changes from providing Fernando with a potential long term career, to submitting at least one job application, no matter what.

9. 4 Summary of RQs 2-3

The data in all three cases show consistently that there is a need for candidates to be familiar with the kind of work, in order to identify with it and make an informed evaluation. However, the task of understanding an advert or job description requires a substantial amount of effort and may therefore be too remote from an unconscious objective of building an employable identity. In CS 3, Fernando has extensive help from both Robina and Mehran in unpacking potential workplace practices and discourses, as they discuss vacancies. Even JK and Selden benefit somewhat from this, for example when Brian explains about the bus station job to JK or Shona mimes the cleaning duties for him. Parastou's circumstance of searching by herself and not being aware of the potential support networks on which she could draw in her relational spaces with her university or college, or volunteering work, limits her opportunities for discovering

what she does not know and this is where the contest arises, between her status as a highly skilled and educated professional, yet simultaneously someone with no experience. Of course she has decades of working experience, but lacks the ways in which to draw out what might be relevant and to recognisably articulate this.

Bedny et al. (2000, p. 177) stress that goals are open to individual interpretation, and thus “complex and dynamic” and this can be seen in the way that a job search or application may begin as a collaborative undertaking, but end in an extremely directive way. Participants’ attention to actions shows where an unfamiliar nexus of practices lies and the role of discourse in the site of attention (R. Scollon, 2001a). The practices observed stemmed from many disparate discourses, not only employability or recruitment, surfacing in different spaces. The multiple and sometimes conflicting demands on participants’ attention are part of the complexity and dynamism of job applications.

Practices from different discourses draw the attention of participants at different points, and shape their decisions around job applications, during the self-appraisal cycle. This is an example of Jones and Hafner’s (2012, p. 83) “polyfocality” of attention structures, in which the steering of users’ attention in certain directions, that is designed into mediational means, results in the diminishing of individual agency. This is also related to the partiality of mediational means (Jones & Norris, 2005; R. Scollon, 2001b), that in enabling some possibilities, they foreclose others. In my data, partiality and polyfocality are not only designed into interaction spaces, such as texts, but also the convoluted automated connections between them. Recurrent examples of this are the key words suggestions and search results that rely on algorithms, the results often unhelpfully diverting the jobseekers from their original goals. This is where the power relations between dominant discourses, and those that challenge them, can be seen.

My analysis shows how these practices and texts engender entrainments of actions sometimes only tangentially meet the conscious objectives of the participants. The goalposts seem to shift in the sands as they strive towards their objectives, underlining the frustration, when this process is thwarted, embedded in the notion of a text as a staged goal oriented social process that takes us, by the end of the interaction “where we wanted to be” (Martin, 2009, p. 12). It is, in fact, discourses inherent in mediational means that often railroad the activity, and this may not be apparent, until the task is completed. Despite the best of intentions, an initiating motivation may thus

eventually be dropped and an activity transmuted, as a result of the distribution of power amongst the discourses at play in the site of attention.

The research questions discussed above relate to how actions and activity relate operationally, to practices and individual identity discourses. There, identities relate to the participants' roles in the event and the career identities that support staff or jobseekers create in the (self)-appraisal cycle. They become visible at the analytical level of actions. RQs 4 and 5 are concerned with the broader identity discourses and practices that structure the recruitment activity system, the ones that RQ3 has shown sometimes force a redirection of activity, and their effects on what might be called "employability literacies" for online jobseekers.

9.5 RQ 4 : What Broader Practices and Discourses of Identity Intersect Within the Activity System of Online Recruitment?

We now return to the analytical level of activity, and consider the relations between the nexus of practices and broader identity discourses in online recruitment. Drawing on Bedny and Karwowski's definition of activity as "an object-oriented, artefact-mediated and socially formed system" (2004, p. 138), I regard a candidate doing an online job application as an actor within a system formed by recruiters, employers and government policy. In each site of attention, there are prominent discourses of identity associated with particular constellations of practices and "archives of mediational means" (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 179). These mediational means contain expectations of behaviour, competence and values (Bedny et al., 2000; Leont'ev, 1981), which limit or shape the direction of the activity. Thus, the identity discourses and practices of powerful groups structure online recruitment and define for jobseekers "...the kinds of actions they can perform[...]the kinds of people they can be" (Jones, 2015, p. 4) and can be considered as "privileged" (Wertsch, 1993, p. 124). Below, by summarising what drew the attention of participants most during the activity, I outline what I found to be the most powerful discourses of identity in online recruitment. RQ 5 then considers how these broader identity discourses structured the search and application process through the use of employability literacies associated with "privileged" mediational means.

The Five Broader Discourses of Identity in Recruitment

The Right Candidate.

This employability or career identity is shaped by everybody involved in the job search, either for themselves or on behalf of someone else, and by the actions taken during each application stage. It takes shape at the level of operations discussed in RQ 1, during the self-appraisal cycle outlined in RQ2. Being the right candidate was not necessarily about conforming to an employer's expectations, in this data, but related more strongly to the candidates' historical bodies and positioning by volunteers and support or job centre staff. For example, JK and Selden had very little opportunity to assert their own views on the suitability of jobs for which volunteers applied on their behalf; Parastou appeared to have more agency but contradictory advice and unfamiliar workplace discourses interfered with her self-appraisal. Fernando benefited from a strong alignment between his own ambitions and the values and beliefs of his learning support mentors, in the importance of achieving those.

Globally Networked White Collar Worker.

These are people who use technology for professional and social purposes, unfettered by time or space, and can be thought of as modern day white collar workers. Recruitment platforms are designed to be used by such groups, as can be seen in the way they integrate many social media icons such as Facebook or Twitter, and cloud computing accounts such as Google or Microsoft, routinely used in office workplaces and educational institutions. Recruitment platforms typically have an application button which offers options to apply using Facebook, Google or an email address linked to the recruitment account. A recruitment company may integrate Facebook or Google because of their popularity, and so these have become normalised ways of applying for jobs, eventually perhaps, because of their ubiquity, becoming *the* ways of applying. However, my data shows that not everybody can or wants to use these for job-seeking, and offering the option only opens the opportunity of speed, ease and convenience to groups that do, as the next discourse of identity shows.

Digital Information Manager.

Online recruitment accounts have many attractive features: there is often a *save* button so the applicant can return to the advertisement later; and functions that enable jobseekers to post CVs, exchange messages with potential employers, search for jobs and research companies. All of these features draw on what might be considered

information age practices, and an attendant discourse of ease, speed and convenience that speaks to a particular group of intended users, those who are comfortable with these information age practices. Although JK and Selden both used Facebook and YouTube socially, so could be considered as socially globally networked, online recruitment further assumes that globally networked people are also highly skilled digital information managers. However, not all candidates are, and yet, regardless of the vacancy, recruiters use the same “archive of mediational means”(R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 179), that employ literacy practices designed for those who can manage multiple simultaneous sources of digital information with ease. The practice of using highly complex digital recruitment platforms to recruit for low paid, low valued work such as cleaning or glass collecting, is distanced from the reality of who the candidates for particular jobs might actually be, based on the duties of such jobs.

The DWP’s digital strategy aimed to provide “basic IT skills training” for those without email addresses while “those with an email address will be supported to build an electronic CV and set up job searches on *Universal Job Match*” (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012c, p. 22) as if this might simply be a matter of technical knowledge. This study shows precisely how the digital strategy has neglected the demands of “reading the market”(Del Percio, 2018), and the production of job application texts, which will be discussed in more detail in RQ5. It shows how the strategy has ignored the importance of developing digital and linguistic repertoires simultaneously, not only for people with English as an additional language, and moreover, the need to situate this in the activity system of job-seeking to foster self-efficacy as part of employability. Automation is an inefficient magic wand, even for skilled digital information managers.

Marketer.

Much as Łacka-Badura (2015) found, professional marketing practices, such as those used in sales, distribution, public relations and commerce, are a forceful element both on the supply and demand sides of recruitment. The industry profits from creating a desire for a product, which is the desire to apply for, or advertise a job, or promote oneself as a candidate, and recruitment websites are thus designed for marketing practices. An ideology that regards everybody as a potential marketing agent is immediately visible in the design of recruitment landing pages, which facilitate promotion and distribution of content and the recruiter brand through sharing of

advertisements on social media. However, in my data, this marketing discourse presents a challenge that is directly related to the scale, volume and power of text trajectories.

Green (2013) noted that the proliferation of responses to online advertisements decreased the level of interest by employers in such recruitment channels, and in my data, the proliferation of advertisements themselves had a similar effect on job-seekers. Marketing practices, such as sending unsolicited and frequent email bulletins, posting repeated advertisements on multiple third party sites, using templates and boiler plates and forcing applicants to establish accounts before allowing them to apply, shape every stage of the application process and this makes them very powerful.

In terms of scale and volume, while searching, filtering or reading, participants anticipate complex text trajectories, and have developed what Mehran referred to as “smart ways of applying”, which might include simply avoiding certain types of application, or not paying attention to certain aspects of texts. The marketing practice of advertising in multiple online channels also inflates perceptions of the availability of jobs, perpetuating a discourse of thousands of opportunities being available to those who can apply online, which appears to justify the use of job application targets for benefit compliance. JK and Selden are routinely set targets of nine or 10 applications a week based on an arbitrary notion of how many vacancies might really exist. These practices also help to structure the illusions that firstly, applicants for any vacancy are sophisticated digital information managers and secondly, that all vacancies should be advertised on as large a scale as possible. Such practices are familiar to the corporate world, and so “look professional” which perhaps further establishes their credibility and power.

Welfare Dependent.

This is the final identity that features strongly, in its absence as much as its presence. It is an identity that that is not applied to Fernando and is one that Parastou, JK and Selden try to resist, but to which they frequently have to concede. As explained in Case Study 1, the mission of the charity work club is to alleviate the effects of long-term unemployment through education and training. However, in reality, the discourse of benefits compliance dominates, all text and action trajectories are bookended by the very powerful benefits compliance texts, without which no job-seeking is deemed to have taken place. The “social fact” (Bazerman, 2004b, p. 311) of welfare deservingness requires textual evidence in the jobseekers’ UJM accounts, so the work club exists to

provide this. It indirectly alleviates poverty, by mitigating the threat of benefit sanctions through the provision of the technical support needed to achieve weekly online job-seeking targets. Volunteers are strongly motivated to help but are not necessarily familiar with all the information age practices of online recruitment, and they are further hampered by old equipment and limited training. Thus, under pressure of time to help clients avoid sanctions, their focus on managing mediational means for themselves causes them to entrench the welfare dependent identity of the work club clients even further.

Parastou resists the identity of welfare dependent and challenges one of her work coaches at the job centre about the need to apply for any job, even cleaning work. She reluctantly concedes that she needs to attend certain volunteer matching activities for benefits compliance, “If I don't go...er I can't get er the tax credit”, although she finds them futile, “Every obligated thing is not good”.

The next question returns to the discussion of operational discourses raised in RQ1-3, but viewed through the lens of textual practices; it is concerned with how privileged archives of mediational means are used to accomplish work (Bazerman, 2004a) and the consequences for individuals (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 2001), so necessarily shuttling between the local and institutional scales, between the text internal and text external discourses (Tusting et al., 2000).

9. 6 RQ5 How Do These Practices and Discourses of Identity Affect Employability Literacies?

From my observations of actions as constituents of practices, three important discourses have emerged that might contribute to an understanding of the elements of literacies for “employability”, which may help to move the concept of employability beyond the vague notions of “transferable skills” (Ivanič, 2009, p. 111) such as “basic IT” or “soft skills” training discussed in Chapter 2, towards something more specific and potentially more useful. These are shown in the table below, and broadly correspond with the stages of the application process identified in RQ2:

Table 9

Application stages and employability discourses

Application stages	Employability discourses
Searching	Job search discourses
Reading and evaluating; deciding to apply	Recruitment discourses
Applying	Self-promotion discourses

Recruitment discourses feature in the literacies of “reading the market” identified by Del Percio (2018). Bhatia’s (1993) self-promotion discourse appears in the writing stages of an application, as the candidates entextualise themselves as the right candidate. I also argue for the inclusion of search discourses, as I see these as a vital first step in the process of online job-seeking, the most time consuming part of the job application process in my data, as it involves much testing of goals in action (Bedny et al., 2000; Leont’ev, 1981), by trialling different combinations of key words, sifting through and filtering masses of search results, and re-evaluating search platforms, i.e. recruitment websites.

Conceptualising “employability” as literacies in these three discourses could enable a better understanding of how the five basic digital skills of: managing information, communicating, transacting, creating, and problem solving (IPSOS MORI, 2015) are operationalised in online job-seeking. Managing information is woven into the process, partly as a result of the infiltration of marketing. Communication and creation are vital components of self-promotion and self-identification as the right candidate; problem solving, for example with digital information management, is dependent on identification with the recruitment practices of globally networked sophisticated digital information managers; the discourse of the right candidate is threaded through these discourses in the interpretation and production of job-seeking genres. This final research question discusses what opportunities exist, in terms of beginning to acquire a discourse repertoire, one of “employability literacies”, as participants interact with these genres. These will be presented in order of the application stages outlined above.

Stage 1: Searching

Knowing Where, How and What to Search for.

The first text in the “genre set” (Bazerman, 2004b, p. 318) of an online job

search is typically a blank search box, awaiting a key word. This seems unproblematic, yet the choice of key words is really a distillation of what the jobseeker considers a suitable career identity or valued kind of work. From a NLS (Street, 2001) or AT (Leont'ev, 1981) viewpoint, it can be considered in dialogic terms, as an utterance, or socially formed completed thought, expressed in one or two words. Without insider knowledge of working practices in particular trades or professions, even expert language users, like Robina, may be unable to conceptualise a role in the appropriate discourse. Often, algorithms relate to key words in ways that generate completely inappropriate job matches. This can challenge the candidate's own articulation of their career identity and even discourage them from looking for the kind of work they really want, as happened to Parastou. Such discouragement might be one of the reasons why Willott and Stevenson (2013) found that migrant professionals wanting to retrain for a new field of employment were least strategic and most unfocused in their job searches.

Another issue in online searches was understanding how and where employers in particular fields might recruit, for example through their own websites or on general websites such as *Indeed*. JK and Selden relied on their volunteers' knowledge, and were compelled to use the DWP's *Universal Job Match* website. This, like all online recruitment websites, used texts and practices appropriated from the life worlds of digital information managers, globally networked people or marketing professionals, who can exploit the ease, speed and convenience they offer. These are an ill fit for JK and Selden, and the volunteer, Brian, who helps them

Robina and Mehran could evaluate the usefulness of a range of recruitment websites, unlike Parastou, whose experience reflected findings from earlier studies into the employment market integration of professional migrants (Gateley, 2014; Marangozov, 2014; Willott & Stevenson, 2013). It was never suggested to JK and Selden, nor Parastou, that they could sign up with a specialist employment agency as a way of finding work quickly. This latter method is how many migrants find their first job in the UK, and is often done through word of mouth (Barbulescu, 2015), followed by visiting a recruitment office, and is also JK's own preference, expressed in our interview.

Barbulescu (2015) found searching to be the stage where broadly distributed social capital, networks of supportive, knowledgeable others who might support their job searches, is most important in terms of forming notional career ideas. Williams et al.

(2016, p. 890) refer to the influence of such networks on individual “psychological capital” which is closely linked to motivation. Neither JK, Selden, nor Parastou had access to such networks and they did struggle with motivation. Fernando had the advantage of being able to access support through his ESOL centre, which had evolved the practice of supporting students in job searches, as part of their general language and literacies development. Moreover, Mehran, the learning support assistant, supplied Fernando with a fully formed career identity, which he subsequently successfully achieved using his own initiative. Parastou relied on well-known general recruitment companies, found “from internet... they are offering me lots of jobs ... and I apply but most of the time they are no response”.

The collaborative aspect of work identity (Roberts, 2010), of being able to conceptualise oneself as the right candidate, and the role that language plays therein is a prominent aspect of searching for work online. It is already influential at the very beginning of the job search process, in which the job hunter needs access to discourses about likely places to search, and what to search for, in order to provide some directional motivation. In AT terms, a search is about “objectifying a desire [...and] filling it with content from the outside world” (Leont’ev, 1981, p. 47). Without access to knowledgeable others from the outside world, without collaborators to make these search practices explicit, it is much more difficult to start.

Different Search Practices.

The data show how the online job search practices of JK and Selden’s work club volunteers and Fernando’s ESOL centre tutors differed, even when they were ostensibly doing the same thing, looking for an entry level kitchen or cleaning job. Job search results can be filtered by salary, distance from home and working hours. In the work club, the decision to apply was made largely by filtering in this superficial way, while scant attention was paid to the roles themselves.

The intersecting data protection discourse added to the incremental ways in which time and attention was diverted away from the main goal of doing an application. Managing multiple logins for online recruitment combined with job application targets reinforced JK and Selden’s dependency by removing opportunities for JK and Selden to learn any search skills themselves, as they were relegated to passively observing Brian, while he hurried to achieve their job search targets in the allotted time. In their particular literacy practice of handing over their notebooks, JK and Selden entrusted

volunteers with grave responsibilities for their basic survival and were also identifiable as completely dependent. One of the reasons JK and Selden have notebooks with login details is because of the number of different accounts they use, in “maintaining an online profile” (Welfare Reform Act 2012, 2012, p. 8). This is how they meet benefits compliance, and fulfil the DWP’s vision for its digital strategy as “a massive lever (to help them [the most disadvantaged in society] get online)”(Department for Work and Pensions, 2012c, p. 22). It is a rich illustration of the power relations and constraints on individual agency accomplished by genres of governance (Bhatia, 2004, 2016; Fairclough, 2000, 2003).

This contrasts strongly with Fernando’s search experiences; for example, his and Robina and Fernando’s experimentation with search terms: “let’s see just be curious and see if it exists”, enabled the gradual acquisition of secondary discourses (Gee, 1998, 2011), a notional career identity discourse, intertwined with a search discourse. Thus they searched successfully, proceeding through a self-appraisal cycle, mediated by a chain of actions and texts related to searching: using key words to articulate career identity in a recognisable discourse through trial and error; reformulating search terms and finally, re-evaluating search platforms. Importantly, Fernando was “in synch” with the material resources (Gee, 2011; R. Scollon, 2001b) in that he could unconsciously participate in the information age practices of retrieving and manipulating digital information, and it is also this that allowed their attention to focus on discussing work.

Like Fernando, Parastou is a skilled digital information manager and a globally networked white collar worker. Like JK and Selden, she had registered with several general recruitment agencies, and so had also evolved a search practice of responding to email alerts from such companies, but this did not simplify the process of searching, to a significant extent because of the difficulties caused by the frequency and repetitiveness of notifications, in other words, a bombardment of mass marketing. The effects of this on searching are discussed next.

Marketing Practices And Proliferation.

Covert marketing forms a significant part of online recruitment agency practice, such as requiring candidates to both register and accept email alerts, thus unavoidably inviting a deluge of unsolicited emails. The resulting sustained barrage of job alerts makes it impossible to differentiate one vacancy from another and adds to the opacity of

staging identified in RQ2, which in turn repeatedly redirects searches in unanticipated directions. Mehran, Robina, Fernando, and Parastou, all of whom were sophisticated information managers, were frustrated by this sense of being funnelled into, rather than leading searches, and Brian's experiences led him to restrict himself to *Indeed* and *UJM*. Funneling visitors towards third party recruiters compromises jobseekers' agency in other ways, possibly with implications for personal data vulnerability, as, for example, in the Zip recruiter analysis. This is another illustration of attention structures that structure individual actions (Jones & Hafner, 2012), embedded into online recruitment practices.

Search practices, then, commonly require sophisticated information age skills to manage the data security aspects of multiple online recruitment accounts, and to handle the digressions of mass marketing, such as navigating through repetitive search results or unsolicited third party recruiter emails. Knowing where best to search requires a degree of access to workplace discourses, as does the choice of key words, to use as search terms. Both of these can emerge through conversations that take place during even failed job searches, as part of the process of refining the search. Where there is no discussion, the jobseeker misses an opportunity to start the process of formulating an interactive career identity and the discourse repertoire with which this may be expressed, that responds to the realities of workplace experiences shared by interlocutors. This disparity continues and even intensifies as the jobseeker begins to open and read job adverts.

Stage 2: Reading and Evaluating Job Advertisements

There is no such thing as a pure "recruitment" discourse. There are intersecting "discourses, actions and voices" (Bhatia, 2010, p. 35) in job advertisements which reflect the institutional or organisational practices of various interconnected activity systems. To highly variable degrees job adverts are porous texts, that contain discourses from marketing, recruitment, corporate and public sector employers, and general employability discourses of "flexibility" and "soft skills" (Allan, 2013; Del Percio, 2018). These discourses operate on different scales, and some can be traced back to compliance with broader frequently associated regulatory frameworks, such as employment law, safeguarding, or immigration. Templates and boiler plates are used to enable wide distribution while controlling the integrity (Bhatia, 2004) of all of these hybrid discourses within the texts.

In all cases, when the text was understood, the candidate could make an informed self-appraisal, positively or negatively, in relation to the role. For example, in “Are you fit?” JK was able to exercise some agency over his choice of work and to show his understanding of some cultural behaviours around employer expectations, such as “being reliable”. Shona and JK’s collaborative reading of the cleaning advert is similar to Fernando and Robina’s exchanges. However, such moments of collaborative reading did not lead to more agency for Selden and JK, as the intersecting benefits compliance discourse always dominated the evaluation of vacancies. My attempt to reassure JK about cradle work showed how volunteers find themselves in a moral dilemma when evaluating jobs, of either applying for inappropriate jobs, or, by choosing to honour the client’s wishes, inviting the threat of benefit sanctions. As previously mentioned, the mass marketing of advertisements produces the illusion that there are hundreds of suitable vacancies every week, but in reality, JK and Selden’s volunteers struggled to find even a handful online, each week, often applying for the same jobs for both of them.

For Parastou, self-appraisal in relation to the more specialised corporate or institutional discourses was most problematic. Her unfamiliarity with where vacancies fitted inside organisational hierarchies led to uncertainty about the core responsibilities in job descriptions. Like the professional migrants in Willot and Stevenson’s (2013) study, she expended great effort to unpack specialist jargon related to generic recruitment discourses as well as to particular sector work practices, such as the “employee life cycle” metaphor and apprenticeship vacancy. These findings show the contribution of implicit knowledge to self-appraisal, including at the initial point of perusing job adverts and deciding to apply. Del Percio (2018, p. 245) showed the difficulties less educated migrants had in “reading the market” and this study shows how this applies even to somebody with a postgraduate degree from the host country.

By contrast, Fernando was the fortunate beneficiary of his ESOL centre teachers’ collaborative practices (Bhatia, 2004), which recognised his authority, i.e. over his digital information management practices, and permitted time and space for collaborative career identity work. His case shows that reaching a sufficient level of understanding for informed self-appraisal depends on having open-ended access to insider discourses, a luxury he could enjoy by virtue of not being pressured by lack of linguistic resources or benefits conditionality.

Stage 3: Deciding To Apply

The *Apply* Button.

As mentioned earlier, decisions to apply are heavily influenced by the perceived ease of application methods. Many adverts on recruitment platforms have *apply* buttons which integrate major social media accounts, as well as email. This type of application promises convenience for globally networked, highly skilled digital information managers, a profile which Parastou and Fernando both fitted to an extent. Even so, both were covertly diverted to register for an account for some applications, which required “building a profile”; this involves completing a general application form, as well as uploading a CV and, sometimes, cover letter. This is frustrating and repetitive, when the candidate has already done this on the original host recruiter’s webpage, as well as problematic for technical reasons, if, like Brian, the applicant is not a skilled digital information manager. Even for Parastou, Fernando and Mehran, it often diverted significant proportions of time and attention away from writing specific applications, which is where the “career management” (Williams et al., 2016) work signalling the match between candidate and vacancy, the representation of the “credible relevant self” (Bhatia, 1993), is required.

Direct Applications.

“Direct” applications were favoured for speed by all the participants. In a work club, time is a critical part of the decision about applying, so that clients can meet their benefits conditions, and they are relieved to be able to achieve this in one session. However, behind these applications is a complex text trajectory involving many often anonymous actors, work that is rendered invisible by the popular discourse of online applications as “quick”, as is the time spent on searching, discussed earlier.

Direct applications often did not require a covering message or letter, one of the reasons they can be done so quickly. Parastou expressed relief in CS6 “Total Jobs”, that the application was “easy peasy” because she had not needed to compose a covering message. In this, she is similar to the professional migrant jobseekers in Willot and Stevenson’s (2013) study, who lacked awareness of application processes. Unfortunately, as Green (2017) found, such click-through applications are unlikely to be well received by employers; as other studies emphasised (Allan, 2013; Bhatia, 1993; Del Percio, 2018; Łącka-Badura, 2013, 2015) there is an expectation that a credible applicant would supply a covering message that alludes to the attributes of the

employer's imagined ideal candidate, in tandem with other texts, such as the CV.

Stage 4: Applying

Application Forms.

Like advertisements, application forms reflect cultural norms or practices from different activity systems in each section, depending on the employment sector; regardless of how they are mediated, they share generic features. Each section is strategically staged, to provide a profile of the candidate through a series of increasingly more open questions. Typical stages are contact details, residency status, education history, employment history, supporting statement and references. This is in contrast to the unpredictable linkages between the texts that take the applicant to the application form. In each section, applicants are expected to demonstrate through their career management (Williams et al., 2016) that they conform to the expected cultural norm, which should typically fit a linear narrative (Allan, 2013; R. M. Brown & Barton, 2004; Del Percio, 2018), as well as meet other requirements of the vacancy; in other words, this is where they project themselves as the right candidate (Bhatia, 1993; Lipovsky, 2013; R. Scollon et al., 2002). At the same time, as has been noted in relation to discursive spaces in general (Bhatia, 2010; Fairclough, 1992), the design of application forms limits the agency of the people using them, and therefore there are power relations embedded in them.

The case studies show that signalling conformity to norms, and a match between individual career management and being the right candidate was complex and problematic, not only in the genres of CV and cover letter (Bhatia, 1993; Lipovsky, 2013; R. Scollon et al., 2002) but also within the constraints of application forms, even those with supporting documents for candidates. Parastou's concerns in the apprenticeship application about chronological listing of education and employment history, and writing supporting statements show the importance of understanding how these different genres work together within the same document, to provide an overarching discursive space in which to represent the self as an ideal candidate. Mehran is expert at "tailoring an application" and shared with Fernando the interdiscursive use of cover letters and supporting statements, treated as templates, which can be readily dropped into any application with minor adaptations for content and genre conventions. He trained Fernando to deploy this mass marketing practice, which is also an information age practice, and as such posed no problem for Fernando.

Parastou's experience contrasts with Fernando's because she has nobody to help her understand what appropriate mass marketing practices she can use in self-promotional texts.

The masking of foreignness, and how to manage references, show how important implicit cultural knowledge is, particularly in understanding the intersecting discourses that are not necessarily apparent in the forms, but which play a strong part in interpretation. In the case studies, even the simple questions and routine requests could consume a significant amount of mental work, and Parastou's attempts at this without expert help, took time away from developing the modest self-promotion discourses (Bhatia, 1993) that should appear in the open text boxes of the supporting statements, designed to afford this.

Attaching a CV.

Candidate profiles in recruitment accounts can be generated from existing texts, e.g. Fernando's CV uploaded to *Tesco*. Alternatively, these texts can simply be stored, e.g. on *Indeed* and *Total Jobs*, to be updated as required. Again, information age practices are assumed by recruiters, regardless of the requirements of the jobs advertised. The editing affordances carry the expectation that candidates will tailor the contents to specific applications, but in practice, this was rarely done, with a mostly generic mailshot approach being taken by all applicants. CVs appeared to be treated almost as reified objects, which were downloaded, uploaded, copied and pasted, sometimes at great pains, but the contents of which were not read, discussed or edited with a particular audience or purpose in mind. As a mediational means, they were not used strategically, but only as a way of representing conformity to the practice of having a CV. They have been "disembedded" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 68) from their original international professional work context and appropriated (R. Scollon, 2001b, p. 116) in online recruitment for all kinds of work, where, as Scollon et al. (2002) noted, previously personal contacts and reputation would have sufficed.

Emails and Cover Messages.

Recruitment platforms offer an integrated messaging service, which applicants can use to send a digital covering letter. Alternatively, some advertisements invite the applicant to apply by email, which follows similar genre conventions.

Parastou consistently avoided writing in narrative form, rejecting the

opportunity to attach covering messages to her applications and relying on her CV to suffice. The expected moves in a cover letter (Bhatia, 1993, pp. 63–67), on the other hand, are amply demonstrated in Fernando’s application for cleaning at Asda, in which he is coached by Mehran. Both Parastou and Fernando are highly proficient digital information managers, skilled in information age practices and confident about working out how to resolve technical problems, unlike Brian. However, both Brian, and with the support of Mehran, Fernando, have the additional discourse knowledge of what a cover letter is for and what it should look like, which Parastou sorely lacks. JK and Selden are not invited to participate in writing emails, which Brian finds time consuming.

9. 7 Conclusion to RQs 4 and 5

Let us now return to some of the propositions of NLS, (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8) where the theoretical framework for this thesis started. Firstly, that practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships: the power relationships between the state and benefits claimants are made very clear. Parastou embodied the globally networked, highly educated international business professional, but practices through which “Work activation” policies are carried out, disempowered her, JK and Selden: Parastou, because the assumption that her education level and English should make it easy for her to find a job meant she was more or less left to her own devices and so could not find relevant advice about her preferred field of work; and JK and Selden, because they were relegated to using the third sector on which the focus is solely to maintain benefits compliance, not helping people into work. This is not to argue that JK and Selden learn nothing by attending the work club, but to stress that what they do learn, could be far better done in a setting of their choice, without the threat of being forced into destitution.

Returning to the notion that some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others, information literacies are dominant in online job-seeking. The colonisation of recruitment by marketing, sales, public relations and distribution practices and discourses applies to both recruiter and applicant, and so requires both to be highly skilled information managers who can handle applications at an unprecedented scale and volume. The market is more than “wrapped around the claimants” (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012c, p. 22), it is in danger of strangling them. Information management practices are necessary at every stage: in search discourses, applicants need to manage the proliferation of platforms and

advertisements and data security. Search discourses also require some evaluation of information, which is more than simply manipulating files: knowing where to search and creating appropriate search terms are, in fact, intertwined with developing knowledge of a repertoire of workplace roles and practices necessary to self-appraisal. Discussion of this research question has shown the dominance of information management practices, which are privileged by powerful groups: professional white collar workers, such as marketers, recruiters and the UK government. It has also made the constituent elements of search practices visible and shown their importance, which seem to have been overlooked by earlier studies into employability.

The dominance of digital information management skills gave Fernando and Parastou a significant degree of advantage. Both were skilful information multitaskers, practised at using technology for work, education and leisure, and as such, online recruitment has been designed for them. On the principle that literacy practices are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8) however, it was the "procedures and processes of genre participation" (Bhatia, 2004, p. 112) in the form of "text external" (Bhatia, 2010, p. 35) discussions around work in Fernando's ESOL job club that provided him with additional advantages in formulating and articulating a career identity, and in entextualising this in his applications. JK and Selden's volunteers, however, were often not familiar with the ever-changing information age practices demanded by online recruitment, which further limited the applications methods chosen and the amount of time for discussion around jobs.

The acquisition of new discourses is connected with another NLS proposition, that social practices can be inferred from events mediated by texts. Access to specific discursive knowledge is necessary for this inference to occur, yet opportunities for informal acquisition of secondary oral or written discourses were either curtailed or unavailable to JK, Selden and Parastou. Very little time was spent in these, compared with Fernando's experiences. In the work club this was partly because of the difficulties posed by mediational means, for example the opacity of staging in multiply hyperlinked application text chains, and partly because of the focus on achieving targets for welfare compliance. In Parastou's case, she had nobody to help her gain insight into the social world of, for example, junior administration work, and so she consistently struggled to answer formulaic questions and signal her career match with the routine

practices of an administrative assistant which would be desired by employers.

The proposition that literacies are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals is clearly the case for job seekers. RQs 2 and 3 have already shown how these broader social goals, when not aligned with the individual's goals, for example in the cases of Parastou, Selden and JK, marginalise the immediate needs and concerns of the job seekers. RQ 5 shows how this misalignment also caused the neglect of critical aspects employability literacies development. In fact, these need to be treated like other specialised literacies and could be explicitly developed during identifiable moments in the self-appraisal cycle, preferably with support from somebody with relevant knowledge of the field of work. Specific literacy interventions could include oracy development through discussion as well as encoding into text. Such small conversations about searching for and reading job adverts, and work practices, are how Fernando started to develop an employable identity. Returning to the basic Vygotskian principle that learning is a social process, for different reasons, JK Selden and Parastou are excluded from the social formation of a career identity, through lack of support in developing appropriate and specific employability literacies needed during each stage of searching, reading and evaluating, and writing applications for work.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

This thesis follows the literacy experiences of migrant jobseekers with EAL as they are searching for and applying for jobs online, which does not appear to have been studied previously. Online job-seeking is an unremarkable feature of daily life across the global north where many migrants wish to integrate into the employment market and so the findings of this study could be relevant to employability providers outside the UK, e.g. in Australia, the United States or EU countries. Earlier studies noted the difficulties migrants are faced with, interpreting recruitment texts (Del Percio, 2018) and writing job-seeking genres (Bhatia, 1993; Lipovsky, 2013). This study contributes additional detail about employability literacies, by focusing on the role of discourses and practices inherent in mediational means. Furthermore, the locus of interest is a site of attention in an unfolding job-seeking literacy event, in the moment by moment actions that constitute search and application practices. It has made visible much of the previously overlooked literacy practices in online recruitment, and found that searching online and self-appraising also presented particular challenges for migrants with EAL.

10. 1 Connections Between Case Studies

Three contrasting exploratory case studies were presented: Case Study 1 explored the experiences of JK and Selden, a couple in late middle age, who had had no formal education and had been resettled in the UK for six years. Case study 2 concerned Parastou, a highly educated professional with a UK master's degree in Business Administration, who had been given indefinite leave to remain during her studies, and had recently been granted permission to work. She was also claiming benefits, but could draw on her own material resources for job applications. Case study 3 was about Fernando, a 19 year old student who had completed high school in his home country, and was looking for part time work, with help from the learning support assistants at his ESOL college centre.

JK, Selden and Parastou (Case studies 1& 2) were affected directly by “active employment” policies. As explained in Chapter 2, these policies were enacted through the strategies of the Work Programme, the third sector work clubs, and digitisation, underpinned by a market funding structure and benefit conditionality. The introduction of active employment policies reaffirmed individual responsibility for employment and

aimed to provide tailored support to “hard to reach” groups (Freud, 2007; Rees et al., 2014). Case study 3 contrasts with this, as Fernando was not claiming benefits, and so was not affected by these policies.

10. 2 Summary of Findings From the Case Studies

Case Study 1

This demonstrated that the overarching activity at the work club was benefits compliance, rather than the work club policy’s stated aim of the development of individual employability or finding employment. Furthermore, online recruitment involved sophisticated digital information management that also challenged the volunteers and therefore limited the application methods they used, the time they could spend on each, the attention they could pay to their clients’ expressed wishes and informal opportunities for learning about work. Not only do work first policies prevent street level bureaucrats from using discretion to help jobseekers (Fuertes & Lindsay, 2016), the same can be said here of the third sector volunteers. This chimes with findings from other studies into employment support offered by the third sector (Calò et al., 2021; Crisp, 2015) and contributes a precise understanding of why relying on volunteers to provide job-seeking support to low educated migrants is ineffective. Overall, mandating jobseekers with low levels of language and literacy expertise, to apply for work online, coupled with the use of sanctions for not meeting targets, seemed to entrench their welfare dependency by curtailing or removing any opportunities for developing or exercising agency about job-seeking in terms of developing a discourse repertoire for discussing work routines, responsibilities or expectations.

Case Study 2

This contributed more clarity to the process of searching for and evaluating vacancies, because, in contrast with Case study 1, this took place at length and was facilitated by my own participation. Analysis revealed that the activity of applying for a job was comprised of a recursive goal-setting and evaluation cycle of self-appraisal in relation to a job, and that this began at the search stage, in the formulation of key words and choice of platform for searching. It also supported the findings from Case Study 1 about the contribution of mass marketing to the difficulties of managing information, with respect to keeping track of recruitment accounts and the frustrations of being led, rather than leading searches. Finally, it revealed very explicitly the effects of job-seeking in isolation, when attempting to form an employable career identity, which is

essentially a social construct.

Case Study 3

This supported the findings from Case study 2, with more evidence for the existence of a self-appraisal cycle. Moreover, it showed that the search process could be exploited for employability literacies development, if the jobseeker is supported to experiment with articulating their wishes, and consciously evaluating search platforms and recruitment agencies. It demonstrated that collaborative reading of even very simple adverts could provide opportunities for rich open-ended discussions about working practices in different types of employment, and it appeared that this is what socialised Fernando into potential employment. This contrasted with Case study 1, in which such opportunities were rarely taken. Case study 3 also supported findings from Case studies 1 & 2 about the frustrations caused by marketing of vacancies through multiple third parties, and that anticipatory discourses frequently fail to factor in the variety and complexity of online job-seeking text trajectories.

10. 3 Summary of research questions

RQ 1: What Constitutes the Level Of Operations in an Online Job Search?

This question deconstructed the “context” of online job-seeking, examining the interactions of historical body, physical space and mediational means at the analytical level of operations. Previous work has focused on recruitment genres such as cover letters or CVs, or broader experiences of job-seeking. This question contributed information about the discourses that intersect in searching for, discussing and evaluating vacancies and how these contribute to the formation of a career identity, in job searches and applications. In particular, it connected discourses about social systems of work, education and welfare with individual beliefs about work, and career identity, and a discourse used to take action, one of being in synch with the archive of mediational means.

RQ 2: How Do Operations Affect the Goals in an Online Job Application?

I analysed how individual discourses affected the goals in an online application, and found a connection between goal setting, anticipatory discourses and operational spaces. I theorised this as a recursive self-appraisal cycle, which begins with searching,

and during which career identity is continually adjusted in relation to perceptions of achievability of the conscious goal. This cycle is related to motivation: the more the candidate can identify with the role, the closer they feel to achieving the conscious goal of applying for a job. Accurate self-appraisal requires access to the intersecting discourses identified in RQ1. Other research (Bhatia, 1993; Lipovsky, 2013) has discussed the critical importance of self-appraisal in the production of job application genres, but has not theorised it as a recursive goal setting cycle, influenced by individual and broader discourses, nor has it made a connection with motivation.

RQ 3: How Do Operations Affect the Activity an Online Job Application?

Jones and Hafner note the polyfocality (2012, p. 83) of attention structures, and I also found that attention shifted during the events, as different aspects of mediation became salient. I found that polyfocality and the partiality of mediational means seemed to be a feature of not only texts, but also the automatised text trajectories which funnel users away from their intended goals, for example search result algorithms. Attention was distributed across texts, tools, and historical bodies, in which discourses intersected with varying degrees of power. It seemed that attention was ultimately steered by the more privileged or powerful discourses, which sometimes changed the entire orientation of an activity. This seemed to happen when anticipated text trajectories failed to materialise, applicants were funnelled in unanticipated directions and then had to hurry to finish an application which may have initially begun as a collaborative exploratory endeavour, but ended up being a performative matter of “getting it done”. Almost behind the backs of the actors, the power dynamics of the discourses in the site of attention could change an activity from one of learning, to one of compliance.

RQ 4 : What Broader Practices and Discourses of Identity Intersect Within the Activity System of Online Recruitment?

There appeared to be five broader discourses of identity which structured online recruitment: the right candidate, globally networked white collar workers, digital information managers, marketers and welfare dependents. I found that these discourses of identity privileged certain literacies associated with archives of mediational means, and that these privileged literacies are enshrined in benefits compliance through digital compulsion and could be aligned with the basic digital skills of managing information, communicating, problem solving, creating and transacting mentioned in the UK basic digital skills report (IPSOS MORI, 2015).

RQ 5: How Do These Practices and Discourses of Identity Affect “Employability” Literacies?

I examined participants’ interactions with job-seeking genres as they moved through the stages of searching and applying online, through a literacy practices lens. I tentatively summarised the demands of interpreting and producing these texts as “employability” literacies, which are comprised of two existing ideas: “reading the market” (Del Percio, 2018, p. 246) or interpreting specialist and general recruitment discourses, and using self-promotion discourses to produce job-seeking genres (Bhatia, 1993; Lipovsky, 2013). To these, I contribute job search literacies, which I found to be a complex and time consuming nexus of practices that require insider knowledge to be effective, knowledge that was frequently lacking and therefore limited the agency of participants to meet or evaluate their objectives adequately.

10. 4 Limitations

Using action as the primary unit of analysis was appropriate to the research questions, but necessarily limits the breadth of data that could be analysed in detail. Only three case studies were made, and these were limited to two neighbouring northern UK cities. The experiences of people in other places could have produced very different instantiations of job searches. Analysis at another level and using other methods, such as focus group interviews, could also have provided very different results. However, the findings do align with other studies about migrants looking for work, and add further weight to the recommendations they made.

In the transcription and analysis process (Norris, 2004, p. 151) I was aware of my role in perceiving what I understood to be participants’ expressions of intent or affect and this is another possible limitation of moment by moment observational analysis, as it is probably impossible, even for the participants, to get at the “truth” if subsequently asked. However, my observations took place over several visits and analysis of sites of engagement was supported by analysis of the rest of the data. In addition, my inclusion in the data enabled me to reflect on my own actions as a work club volunteer, and contributed to the findings in Case study 1.

10. 5 Recommendations

1. There was already strong evidence that digital compulsion for jobseekers should be discontinued as it does not promote labour market inclusion (e.g. Clayton &

Macdonald, 2013; Green, 2017; Green et al., 2012). Green (2017) also found it disincentivised employers from advertising online because of the large amounts of applications received as a result of benefits compliance. I would add that the people in my study were learning how to use technology for everyday life without the need for it being written into law. Digital compulsion prevents people from exercising their full agency about when, where and how to manage their job searches and forces work club volunteers to complete job applications by proxy, so that no time is left for meaningful employability literacies development. I recommend removing the requirement for jobseekers to maintain an online job-seeking account.

2. Because of digital compulsion and job-seeking targets, the third sector work club appeared only able to support performative benefits compliance. My evidence also shows consistently that there are limited available and appropriate vacancies, frequently reposted on multiple websites, and targets are artificial and arbitrary. It seems quite clear that, in combination with digital compulsion, sanctions orient job-seeking towards compliance and away from employability. Therefore, I would recommend removing benefit sanctions for not meeting job-seeking targets.
3. Employability literacies are varied and my study, like many others (e.g. Allan, 2013; Duff & Talmy, 2011; Roberts, 2010; Willott & Stevenson, 2013), shows that they should be situated in the discourses of particular fields and roles of work, rather than focusing on only on superficial generic advice about CVs. Employability literacies support should include speaking about work, given the difficulties all of my participants had with this, the relative importance of this for employability (Hebbani & Preece, 2015) and the frustrated desire of many jobseekers to learn English (Bolton & Foster, 2018; Miller et al., 2013).
4. As other have also said (Fritz & Donat, 2017; Giulietti et al., 2013; Willott & Stevenson, 2013), it might be more practically useful to increase support for the development of social networks, where employability identity discourses could be acquired and which could take any form appropriate to the level of readiness (Benseman, 2014; Bigelow & Watson, 2011; Ollerhead, 2016), and would benefit all jobseekers.
5. As Willot and Stevenson (2013) suggested, businesses or organisations could mentor, for example, underemployed professionals. It would require consistent long term funding and sustained promotion to potential mentors through incentives such

as exemplifying how mentoring could address particular skills gaps in the work force.

6. Rather than offering spaces for unemployed people to perform benefits compliance, work clubs could offer a space where jobseekers could meet working people, to find out more about what they do and how they entered their fields. Conversations like these are extremely important for people finding their first jobs in a new country, particularly people with very reduced social networks. Potential exists, as some work clubs I visited already have connections with large employers, e.g. British Gas, who release staff to volunteer as part of their corporate social responsibility policies.
7. Case studies 1 & 2 demonstrated the pernicious effects of “Work first” and “English first” ideologies on people at manual and executive ends of the career spectrum. I believe investment in adult employability needs to be a broad offering, encompassing the full gamut of career level and not be age restricted. This is important in the context of longer working lives and the integration of mature adult migrants into the workforce. Therefore, I would also suggest paid work placements or internships not only for professionals, but also to manual workers, regardless of age and career level. Individual choice is important, as it would enable people to draw on existing skills and genuinely self-appraise in relation to a role. JK and Selden in Case study 1 were in their late 50s and early 60s, with some health problems but suggested that they would like to be put directly in touch with an employer and shown the work.

Further Research

- I would recommend researching existing mentoring initiatives in the UK as well as those in other countries such as Australia, to explore potential for scaling up regionally or nationally, as sustainable projects.
- Volunteering is also often promoted as an entry into employment, but for the migrants in my study, it was as alien a concept as it was for the professionals in Willott and Stevenson (2013). Parastou found it as hard to identify with the volunteering roles advertised on a national volunteering website as with a paid role: many of these were unknown to her outside of professionally qualified employment, e.g. librarian or school governor. While volunteering could provide an entry to employability literacies, volunteering websites themselves

required those literacies. Possibly the specific benefits would also need to be made much more explicit, for example which aspects of volunteering could contribute to different stages of job search and application. Further study into volunteering, from an employability literacies perspective, could be a fruitful area for further research, especially as many people, not only migrants, whom I met at the work club, felt “trapped” in volunteer roles.

10. 6 Summary

As Chapter 2 described, there is already substantial evidence that low levels of language, literacy and ICT expertise are key barriers to employment and that the existing patchwork of adult education does little to address this, particularly for migrants. Previous studies have shown that finding work more generally is influenced by social networks (e.g. Barbulescu, 2015; Giulietti et al., 2013); other studies have argued that it is by talking to others in the workplace that we can learn about the practices and discourses of specific workplaces and specific roles (Duff & Talmy, 2011; Roberts, 2010). Several previous studies found a preference for face to face meetings for employment support (e.g. Cheesbrough et al., 2018; Green et al., 2011).

My study has found how digital compulsion itself constrains the development of job-seeking self-efficacy which it purports to support. It has also identified three literacies that are necessary for online jobseekers:

- Job search literacies
- Reading the market
- Self-promotion

The development of all of these literacies needs to be underpinned by specialised advice, as they require access to specific bodies of knowledge. This applies to highly educated and low educated migrants alike, and paid and unpaid work.

At every stage of the application process, the influence of broader recruitment practices and discourses of identity on individual career identity can be seen. The identity of the right candidate emerges through a recursive self-appraisal cycle, that begins with formulating and refining searches, reading and interpreting job adverts and descriptions, deciding to apply and finally, writing the applications. Self-appraisal as the right candidate is more successful when the candidate has support through relational

spaces even at the very beginning of the search, and so can explore the social worlds of work that exist alongside recruitment texts.

Recruitment texts are designed by people with particular socially conditioned dispositions. These dispositions are deeply embedded into digital recruitment practices. Online recruitment appears to be designed for the skillset of globally networked sophisticated digital information managers, within an activity system of marketing. Its additional enshrinement in government policy can create devastating consequences for welfare dependent applicants who do not fit this profile. Even for those who do, additional support for language socialisation into discourse repertoires is necessary to successfully articulate the identity of the right candidate.

Appendix I. Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form



Can you help me?

I'm a researcher. Before you decide it is important that you understand why I am doing this project. It is important that you understand what I will ask you to do. Please read this carefully. You can talk to other people about it if you want. Please ask if you don't understand or need a copy in another language. Thank you.

Why am I doing this project?

Because I'm a research student at the University of Lancaster. Research means finding out about things and why they happen. I'm studying for a PhD in Applied Linguistics.

What is the study about?

This project is about people who are learning English and using computers at the work club to find a job.

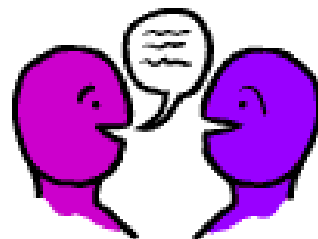


Why have you been invited?

Because:

- English is not your first language
- You visit the work club
- You use the computers there with a volunteer.

I will be very grateful if you take part in this study.



Appendix I Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (continued)

I'm interested in:

- Languages
- Reading and writing
- Computer skills for job applications

I want to find out about the experience of a migrant looking for work online

What will I ask you to do?

I'll watch you and your volunteer and record you and take notes during your job searches

I'll talk to you about job applications. We could do this before or after the work club, at the centre. It normally takes 30 minutes.

I'd like to copy or photograph examples of documents related to job applications: CV, letters, SMS messages, emails or other messages from your work coach. I will not use personal details from any of these and they will be stored securely at the university.

What will I ask you about?

- your feelings about applying for jobs
- your previous work and future ambitions for work
- your experience using computers or mobiles for seeking



job-

Will I record you? Yes!

I'll use a voice or video recorder, a notebook and pen. You

can

choose to be either voice recorded or video recorded.

Afterwards I'll send you a copy of the transcript. If you want to add or change anything you can. I'll come to the work club and you can tell me what to change.

I'll use a screen recorder to record how you use the computer – what web pages you visit or different tasks you need to do.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

I'll will be happy to help you with your English. My research could make it easier for other people to look for work online.

Appendix I Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (continued)

Are there any disadvantages?

An interview will take around 30 minutes. None of your personal information will be shared. If you want advice about any of the topics talked about in the interview, e.g. benefits, please ask a member of staff.

Do you have to take part?

No. You decide for yourself.

If you change your mind, you can stop at any time during this study and for up to two weeks after we finish your interview. If you want to stop, please tell me and I will delete your information.

Will I keep your information private?

Yes. If you take part, only I and my supervisor, Dr Karin Tusting, will know what you say. In the report, I will not use your real name or anything else to identify you or the centre. Audio and video recordings will not be published and substitute names will be used from transcribing onwards. Personal information will be removed from copies of any written correspondence before it is stored in the university database.

What will the researcher do with the findings?

I'll use it to write a PhD thesis. I'll talk about the findings with other work clubs, ESOL colleges, PhD students, academics or politicians. I won't give your name or any other personal information about you.

If you say something in the interview or work club sessions that makes me concerned about somebody's safety, I must give this information to my supervisor, Dr Karin Tusting. If possible I will tell you about this.

Appendix I Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (continued)

How your data will be stored

Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). In accordance with University guidelines, the data will be stored securely for a minimum of ten years.

Lancaster University expects researchers to make their data available for future use by other researchers. I will exclude all personal data such from archiving. I intend to archive/share the data, not including video recordings, via PURE, a university research database.

If you want to ask any questions, please contact me:

Mrs Denise de Pauw

Tel: 07528910375

Email: d.depauw@lancaster.ac.uk

Postal address:

**PhD Applied Linguistics
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
FASS Building
Lancaster University
Lancaster
LA1 4YD**

If you are not happy and want to complain, you can also contact:

Professor Elena Semino,

Head of Department: Linguistics and English Language,

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,

FASS Building

Lancaster University

Lancaster

LA1 4YD

Tel: +44 (0)1524 594176

e.semino@lancaster.ac.uk

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for considering your participation in this project

Appendix I Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (continued)

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: The Experience of a Migrant Looking For Work Online

Name of Researchers: Denise de Pauw

Email: d.depauw@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study and within 2 weeks after I took part in the study, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 2 weeks of taking part in the study my data will be removed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included and I will not be identifiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I understand that fully anonymised data will be offered to PURE and will be made available to genuine research for re-use (secondary analysis).	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I understand that my name/my organisation's name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I am willing to be audio recorded . I understand that any interviews or work club sessions will be audio-recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• or• I am willing to be video recorded. I understand that any interviews or work club sessions that are video recorded will be transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure. I also understand the video	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

recordings will <u>not</u> be offered to PURE and will not be made available to other researchers.	
7. I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I agree to take part in the above study.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent

Date

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University

Appendix II. Follow-up Interview Topic Guide

Explore educational background, language and digital literacies:

What languages do you speak?

Where do you use these languages?

Tell me about your education.

Do you have a computer or mobile phone/tablet/laptop at home?

What do you use it for?

What apps or websites do you use?

Explore history of working and job applications

Tell me about your working life.

What work would you like in the future? Why?

What jobs do you apply for? Why?

Have you had any job interviews here?

What other ways do you look for work?

Who else helps you look for work?

What else do you think you need, to help you get a job?

Explore feelings about what is easy/difficult about looking for a job online.

How does applying for jobs online make it easier or harder for you?

What do you think about the number of jobs you must apply for?

What else do you find easy or difficult about finding a job (not online) ? [tel calls, direct approach]

Additional questions from the data

CS1 JK and Selden

Explore how they use the work club

How did you find out about the work club?

How often do you come?

How long have you been coming?

What's your main reason for coming?

What have you learned since coming to the work club?

Who do you mostly talk to at the work club?

What other things do you attend at this venue? [classes, parties, job fairs]

How would you describe the atmosphere at the work club?

How do you feel about the jobs you apply for?

Do you visit any other work clubs?

Appendix II Follow-up Interview topic guide (continued)

CS 2 Parastou

Have you been anywhere for 1:1 careers advice?

What advice did you get and how do you feel about it?

If it's a job by online application form (like the Leeds city college apprenticeship), what do you use to help you complete the application? If so, how?

What's your preferred type of application?

Do you consider the experience you had at back home gave you any skills that carry over into work in the UK? What about at university here?

Your study was about employability and you recommended that universities could help students with this...do you use your university careers portal? If so, how? [apart from the opportunities in China]

Do you use social media for job searching?

Have you joined any specialist recruitment agencies for your field?

CS3 Fernando

Getting a job

Tell me about how you got your job

What was your experience of looking online and applying online?

You said it was a long and difficult -what was difficult about it?

Why was it that you just decided to just take your cv to different Italian restaurants

Why did you decide to do that instead of searching online?

You had some help from Mehran and Robina, was there anybody else you asked advice?

What ideas did you have about what kind of job you wanted?

General education background

Tell me a bit more broadly about your education: you've finished school and come to England -e.g. what level did you finish school at in Italy

Appendix III. Action trajectories- CS1

The bus station cleaner job

Actions	Description
1 The bus station cleaner ad on screen (text)	Evaluating the advert and deciding to apply
Brian reads aloud to himself	
Brian takes his glasses off	
Brian points to screen	
Brian makes writing gesture to SI	
Brian turns to JK	
JK looks at Brian	
pointing and gesturing exophorically	
JK does head wobble	
JK glances at screen	
pointing and gesturing exophorically	
Brian glances at screen	
Brian looks at JK	

Actions	Description
Brian puts his glasses on	
Brian takes the pen	
Brian writes down email address on paper	
Brian exits UJM web page	
Brian clicks browser icon	
Brian clicks google home page window	
Brian taps keyboard	
Brian clears search box	
Brian clicks Gmail hyperlink	
JK leans in to look at screen	
JK watches Brian	
I take photo	
JK looks at Brian	
JK looks around elsewhere	JK is disengaged from job search
JK looks at screen	
JK leans in to look at screen	

Actions	Description
JK stands up	
JK picks his hat up	
JK sits down at pc again	
2 Gmail sign in page on screen (text)	Signing into Gmail
Brian copies details from JK's notebook	
Brian clicks 'next '	
JK looks up	
Brian clicks Google acc icon	
Brian clicks Gmail icon	
Gmail inbox on screen	
Brian scrolls inbox page	
JK looks round	
JK looks at screen	
JK folds hat up	
3 Brian opens a window to compose an email (text)	Starting to write the email
Brian types in email employer's address	

Actions	Description
Brian looks at email template	
Brian clicks in subject line	
Brian types in subject line	
Brian looks at screen silently	
Brian hits 'enter' to move into main body text window	
Brian types email message silently	
Brian hesitates	
Brian opens a new windows dialogue box	
Brian closes windows dialogue box	
Brian types email silently	
Brian stops typing	
Brian takes mouse	
Brian clicks on body text	
Brian looks at email template	
Brian stops typing	
4 formatting the email (text)	Formatting the email

Actions	Description
Brian highlights entire email text with mouse	
Brian shakes his head	
Brian talks to himself	
Brian scans screen top of screen for editing controls	
Brian turns to me	
Brian lets go of mouse	
Brian coughs	
Brian turns to the screen	
Brian looks along bottom of screen	
Brian clicks formatting options icon	
Brian hovers mouse over icons	
Brian clicks to change text colour	
Brian clicks background colour menu	
Brian highlights all text in black stripes	
Brian tries to click the highlighting off	
Brian laughs sl shamefacedly	

Actions	Description
Brian opens and closes colour dialogue boxes	
I step forward and points at screen	
I step back	
I step forward	
I point to formatting options icon	
Brian clicks formatting options icon	
Brian hovers mouse over icons	
Brian clicks text colour icon	
I point to dialogue box labels	
Brian clicks to change text colour	
Brian looks at black stripes on email	
Brian clicks twice to deselect highlights	
Brian highlights entire email text with mouse	
Brian clicks text colour icon	
I step forward and points at screen	
Brian clicks to change background colour	

Actions	Description
I step forward	
Brian leans forward towards screen	
Brian laughs shamefacedly	
Brian straightens up	
Brian highlights entire email text with mouse	
I point to text colour icon	
Brian clicks text colour icon	
I point to text colour palette	
I step back	
Brian hovers mouse over icons	
Brian clicks to change text colour	
Brian clicks to de-highlight	
Brian pushes chair back slightly	
I step forward	
b clicks the mouse	

Actions	Description
	I take photo
	Brian reads the email
	Brian clicks on the W
	Brian taps keyboard
	Brian reads email
	Brian hovers mouse over send button
	Brian clicks send button
	JK shuffles and looks around elsewhere
	I step back
	I step back
	JK looks at screen
	Brian gestures with hands
	JK looks at Brian
	JK laughs
	JK looks at Brian

Actions	Description
JK glances at me	
5 Gmail inbox on screen (text)	Sending the email
sending pop-up	
your message has been sent pop up	
Brian turns to face JK	
JK looks at Brian	
JK does slow head wobble	
Brian turns back to screen	
Brian clicks Google user acc icon	
Brian clicks sign out button	
Brian clicks browser icon	
preview open webpages pop-up on screen	
JK leans forward	
JK looks at screen	
6 Brian clicks to open UJM page (text)	Completing the activity history
Brian scans page	

Actions	Description
Brian clicks on application history	
Brian clicks on save job	
UJM search results page on screen	
Brian clicks on activity history dialogue box	
Brian takes a deep breath and rolls shoulders back	
Brian types activity history into UJM	
JK shuffles further back	
JK looks around elsewhere	
JK watches Brian	
I step forward to take photo	
Brian sits back	
I step back	
Brian takes mouse	
Brian glances at me and back to screen	
Brian clicks red save button	
Brian lets go of mouse	

Actions	Description
Brian sits back, gestures at computer and looks at me	
Brian turns and reaches for Job centre booklet	
Brian writes activities in job search booklet	
Brian talks as he writes	
JK watches Brian and shuffles around on chair	
JK rubs his face and looks around elsewhere	
UJM advert on screen (text)	

References

- Allan, K. (2013). Chapter 3. Skilling the self: The communicability of immigrants as flexible labour. In A. Duchêne, M. Moyer, & C. Roberts (Eds.), *Language, migration and social inequalities* (pp. 55–81). Multilingual Matters.
<https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783091010-004>
- Andersen, N. A., Caswell, D., & Larsen, F. (2017). A new approach to helping the hard-to-place unemployed: The promise of developing new knowledge in an interactive and collaborative process. *European Journal of Social Security*, *19*(4), 335–352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1388262717745193>
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1994). From M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*. In P. Morris (Ed.), & M. Holquist & C. Emerson (Trans.), *The Bakhtin Reader* (4th ed., pp. 73–79). Edward Arnold. (Original work published 1935)
- Barbulescu, R. (2015). The strength of many kinds of ties: Unpacking the role of social contacts across stages of the job search process. *Organization Science*, *26*(4), 1040–1058. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2015.0978>
- Barton, D. (2009). Understanding textual practices in a changing world. In M. Baynham & M. Prinsloo (Eds.), *The Future of Literacy Studies* (pp. 38–53). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (2000). Chapter 1: Literacy practices. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanič (Eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context* (pp. 7–15). Routledge.
- Baynham, M. (1995). *Literacy Practices*. Longman.
- Baynham, M., & Prinsloo, M. (2009). *The Future of Literacy Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Bazerman, C. (2004a). Intertextualities. In A. F. Ball, S. Warschauer Freedman, & R. Pea (Eds.), *Bakhtinian perspectives on language, literacy and learning* (pp. 53–66). Cambridge University Press.
- Bazerman, C. (2004b). Speech acts, genres and activity systems: How texts organize activity and people. In C. Bazerman & P. Prior (Eds.), *What writing does and how it does it: An introduction to analyzing texts and textual practices* (pp. 309–340). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Bedny, G., & Harris, S. R. (2005). The systemic-structural theory of activity: Applications to the study of human work. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 12*(2), 128–147. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327884mca1202_4
- Bedny, G., & Karwowski, W. (2004). Activity theory as a basis for the study of work. *Ergonomics, 47*(2), 134–153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00140130310001617921>
- Bedny, G., & Meister, D. (1999). Theory of activity and situation awareness. *International Journal of Cognitive Ergonomics, 3*(1), 63. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327566ijce0301_5
- Bedny, G., Seglin, M. H., & Meister, D. (2000). Activity theory: History, research and application. *Theoretical Issues in Ergonomics Science, 1*(2), 168–206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14639220050171324>
- Benseman, J. (2014). Adult refugee learners with limited literacy: Needs and effective responses. *Refuge, 30*(1), 93–103.
- Beyeler, B. (2018). *Good jobs for all in a changing world of work: The OECD jobs strategy* (p. 73). OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/mcm/documents/C-MIN-2018-7-EN.pdf>
- Bezemer, J., & Mavers, D. (2011). Multimodal transcription as academic practice: A social semiotic perspective. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 14*(3), 191–206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2011.563616>
- Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing genre: Language use in professional settings*. Routledge.
- Bhatia, V. K. (2004). *Worlds of written discourse*. Continuum.
- Bhatia, V. K. (2010). Interdiscursivity in professional communication. *Discourse & Communication, 4*(1), 32–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481309351208>
- Bhatia, V. K. (2016). *Critical genre analysis: Investigating interdiscursive performance in professional practice*. Routledge.
- Bigelow, M., & Pettitt, N. (2015). Narrative of ethical dilemmas in research with immigrants with limited formal schooling. In P. I. De Costa (Ed.), *Ethics in applied linguistics research* (1st ed., pp. 66–82). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315816937-5

- Bigelow, M., & Vinogradov, P. (2011). Teaching adult second language learners who are emergent readers. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, 120–136.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190511000109>
- Bigelow, M., & Watson, J. (2011). The role of educational level, literacy and orality in L2 learning. In S. M. Gass & A. Mackey (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 461–475).
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203808184.ch28>
- Bloome, D., & Greene, J. (2015). The social and linguistic turns in studying language and literacy. In J. Rowsell & K. Pahl (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of literacy studies* (pp. 19–34). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Blunden, A. (2010). *An interdisciplinary theory of Activity*. Brill.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004184060.i-344>
- Bolton, P. , & Foster, D. (2018). *Briefing report: Adult ESOL in England* (No. 7905). House of Commons Library.
<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7905/CBP-7905.pdf>
- Bondy, C. (2013). How did I get here? The social process of accessing field sites. *Qualitative Research*, 13(5), 578–590.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112442524>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). Chapter 9: The forms of Capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–260). Greenwood Press.
- Brown, J. D. (2008). Chapter 19- Research methods for applied linguistics: Scope, characteristics and standards. In *The handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 476–500). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Brown, R. M., & Barton, E. (2004). From the Editors: Special Issue on Personal Statements. *Issues in Writing*, 15(1), 1–4.
- Cabinet Office, & Government Digital Service. (2013). *Government approach to assisted digital* [Online policy document]. GOV.UK.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-approach-to-assisted-digital/government-approach-to-assisted-digital>

- Calò, F., Montgomery, T., & Baglioni, S. (2021). Marginal players? The third sector and employability services for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-020-00306-6>
- Cazden, C., Cope, B., Fairclough, N., Gee, J. P. , Kalantzis, M., Kress, G., Luke, A., Luke, C., Michaels, S., & Nakata, M. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60.
- Cheesbrough, S., Coutinho, S., Xu, D., Webster, H., & Edsger, S. (2018). *Claimant Service and Experience Survey 2016/17* [Annual]. Kantar Public UK/ Department for Work and Pensions.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-claimant-service-and-experience-survey-2016-to-2017>
- Clayton, J., & Macdonald, S. J. (2013). The Limits Of Technology: Social class, occupation and digital inclusion in the city of Sunderland, England. *Information Communication and Society*, 16(6), 945–966.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.748817>
- Conteh, J. (2018). Translanguaging. *ELT Journal*, 72(4), 445–447.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccy034>
- Cooke, M., & Simpson, J. (2012). Chapter 6-Discourses about linguistic diversity. In M. Martin-Jones, A. Blackledge, & A. Creese (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of multilingualism* (pp. 116–130). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Cooke, M., Simpson, J., & Sunderland, H. (2008). Adult ESOL in the UK: perspectives on policy, practice and research. In M. Young-Scholten (Ed.), *Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition Proceedings of the Third Annual Forum* (pp. 25–32). Roundtuit Publishing.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009). “Multiliteracies”: New literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 4(3), 164–195.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15544800903076044>
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the multilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(1), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00986.x>

- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2015). Translanguaging and identity in educational settings. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 20–35.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190514000233>
- Crisp, R. (2015). Work clubs and the big society: Reflections on the potential for ‘progressive localism’ in the ‘cracks and fissures’ of neoliberalism. *People, Place and Policy*, 9(1), 1–16.
- Croker, R. A. (2009). An introduction to qualitative research. In J. Heigham & R. A. Croker (Eds.), *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction* (pp. 3–24). Palgrave Macmillan. DOI 10.1057/9780230239517
- Welfare Reform Act 2012, § c. 5. (2012).
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/5/contents/enacted/data.htm>
- Del Percio, A. (2018). Engineering commodifiable workers: Language, migration and the governmentality of the self. *Language Policy*, 17(2), 239–259.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-017-9436-4>
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. (2017). *Digital skills and inclusion— Giving everyone access to the digital skills they need* (Government Consultation No. 2). Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy/2-digital-skills-and-inclusion-giving-everyone-access-to-the-digital-skills-they-need>
- Department for Work and Pensions. (2011). *Work Clubs Equality Impact Assessment*. Department for Work and Pensions.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220309/eia-work-clubs.pdf
- Department for Work and Pensions. (2012a). *The Work Programme*.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49884/the-work-programme.pdf
- Department for Work and Pensions. (2012b). *Could you run a Work Club?*
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/734128/work-club-guide.pdf
- Department for Work and Pensions. (2012c). *Digital Strategy*. Department of Work and Pensions.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/193901/dwp-digital-strategy.pdf

Department for Work and Pensions, & Department of Health. (2017). *Improving Lives: The future of work, health and disability*.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/663399/improving-lives-the-future-of-work-health-and-disability.PDF

Department for Work and Pensions, & Hinds, D. (2018, May 16). *Update on the future of DWP jobcentres*. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-on-the-future-of-dwp-jobcentres>

Deyes, K., & Snelson, S. (2016). *Understanding the Further Education Market in England* (BIS Research Paper No. 296). Department for Business, Innovation and Skills;

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544310/bis-16-360-fe-market-england.pdf.

Domingo, M., Jewitt, C., & Kress, G. (2015). Multimodal social semiotics. In J. Rowsell & K. Pahl (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of literacy studies* (pp. 251–265). Taylor & Francis Group.

Duff, P. A. (2007). *Second language acquisition research series: Case study research in applied linguistics*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Duff, P. A. (2008). Language socialization, higher education, and work. In N. H. Hornberger (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (pp. 2818–2831). Springer US. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-30424-3_211

Duff, P. A., & Talmy, S. (2011). Language socialization approaches to second language acquisition. In D. Atkinson (Ed.), *Alternative approaches to second language acquisition* (1st ed., pp. 95–116). Taylor & Francis Group.

Duranti, A. (2006). Transcripts, like shadows on a wall. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 13(4), 301–310. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327884mca1304_3

Engeström, Y. (1987). The Emergence of Learning Activity as a Historical Form of Human Learning. In *Learning by Expanding: An Activity-Theoretical Approach to Developmental Research* (pp. 25–108). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139814744.004>

- Engeström, Y. (1990). Activity theory and individual and social transformation. In Y. Engeström, R. Miettinen, & R. Punamäki (Eds.), *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 19–38). Cambridge University Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). Intertextuality in critical discourse analysis. *Linguistics and Education*, 4(3–4), 269–293.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). Multiliteracies and language: Order of discourse and intertextuality. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies* (pp. 162–181). Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.). Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2012). Critical discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 9–20). Routledge.
- Flubacher, M.-C., Duchêne, A., & Coray, R. (2017). *Language investment and employability: The uneven distribution of resources in the Public Employment Service*. Springer International. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-60873-0_5
- Foster, D. (2019). *Adult further education funding in England since 2010* (Briefing No. 7708; p. 24). House of Commons Library. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7708/CBP-7708.pdf>
- Freud, D. (2007). *Reducing dependency, increasing opportunity: Options for the future of welfare to work*. Department for Work and Pensions. <https://www.base-uk.org/sites/default/files/%5Buser-raw%5D/11-07/welfarereview.pdf>
- Fritz, T., & Donat, D. (2017). What migrant learners need. In J.-C. Beacco, H.-J. Krumm, D. Little, & P. Thalgott (Eds.), *The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants / L'intégration linguistique des migrants adultes* (pp. 163–168). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110477498>
- Fuertes, V., Jantz, B., Klenk, T., & McQuaid, R. (2014). Between cooperation and competition: The organisation of employment service delivery in the UK and

- Germany. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 23, 71–86.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12100>
- Fuertes, V., & Lindsay, C. (2016). Personalization and street-level practice in activation: The case of the UK's Work Programme. *Public Administration*, 94(2), 526–541. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12234>
- Fugate, M., Kinicki, A., & Ashforth, B. (2004). Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65, 14–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2003.10.005>
- Garcia, O., Zakharia, Z., & Otcu, B. (2012). Bilingual community education: Beyond heritage language education and bilingual education in New York. In O. Garcia, Z. Zakharia, & B. Otcu (Eds.), *Bilingual community education and multilingualism: Beyond heritage languages in a global city*. Channel View Publications.
- Gateley, D. E. (2014). Becoming actors of their lives: A relational autonomy approach to employment and education choices of refugee young people in London, UK. *Social Work*, 12(2), 14.
- Gazzola, M. (2017). Language skills and employment status of adult migrants in Europe. In J.-C. Beacco, H.-J. Krumm, D. Little, & P. Thalgott (Eds.), *The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants / L'intégration linguistique des migrants adultes* (pp. 297–202). De Gruyter Mouton.
<http://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110477498/html>
- Gee, J. P. (1989). Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: Introduction. *The Journal of Education*, 171(1), 5–176.
- Gee, J. P. (1998). What is literacy? In V. Zamel (Ed.), *Teaching and learning across languages and cultures* (pp. 51–60). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gee, J. P. (2000). The new literacy studies: From 'socially situated' to the work of the social. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanič (Eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context* (pp. 180–196). Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. (2011). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses*. Taylor & Francis Group.

- Gee, J. P. (2014). Language as saying, doing and being. In J. Angermüller, D. Maingueneau, & R. Wodak (Eds.), *The Discourse Studies reader: Main currents in theory and analysis* (pp. 234–243). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Gee, J. P. , & Lankshear, C. (1995). The New Work Order: Critical language awareness and ‘fast capitalism’ texts. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 16(1), 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630950160102>
- Gillen, J. (2015). Virtual spaces in Literacy Studies. In K. Pahl & J. Rowsell (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies* (pp. 369–382). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Giulietti, C., Schluter, C., & Wahba, J. (2013). With a lot of help from my friends: Social networks and immigrants in the UK. *Population, Space and Place*, 19(6), 657–670. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1787>
- Goff, B., & Rish, R. (2020). What’s brought along and brought about: Negotiating writing practices in two high school classrooms. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 24, 100291. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2019.02.016>
- Green, A. E. (2017). Implications of technological change and austerity for employability in urban labour markets. *Urban Studies*, 54(7), 1638–1654. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098016631906>
- Green, A. E., de Hoyos, M., Barnes, S.-A., Owen, D., Baldauf, B., & Behle, H. (2013). *Literature review on employability, inclusion and ICT, report 1: The concept of employability with a specific focus on young people, older workers and migrants* (JRC Technical Report Series, EUR 25794 EN). Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, Joint Research Centre, European Commission. <https://doi.org/10.2791/7536>
- Green, A. E., de Hoyos, M., Li, Y., & Owen, D. (2011). *Job Search Study: Literature review and analysis of the Labour Force Survey* (No. 726; p. 118). Department for Work and Pensions. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/264917/rrep726.pdf
- Green, A. E., Li, Y., Owen, D., & de Hoyos, M. (2012). Inequalities in use of the internet for job search: Similarities and contrasts by economic status in Great

- Britain. *Environment and Planning A*, 44(10), 2344–2358.
<https://doi.org/10.1068/a452>
- Gwynt, E. (2015). The effects of policy changes on ESOL. *Language Issues: The ESOL Journal*, 26(2).
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1989). *Spoken and written language*. Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (2014). Language as social semiotic. In J. Angermuller, D. Maingueneau, & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Discourse studies reader: Main currents in theory and analysis*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Hebbani, A., & Preece, M. (2015). Spoken English does matter: Findings from an exploratory study to identify predictors of employment among African refugees in Brisbane. *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 36, 110–130.
- Heigham, J., & Croker, R. (2009). *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan. DOI 10.1057/9780230239517
- Heigham, J., & Sakui, K. (2009). Chapter 5: Ethnography. In J. Heigham & R. Croker (Eds.), *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hillier, Y. (2009). The changing faces of adult literacy, language and numeracy: Literacy policy and implementation in the UK. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 39(4), 535–550.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920902833412>
- Hood, M. (2009). Chapter 4: Case study. In J. Heigham & R. Coker (Eds.), *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Horrocks, I. (2009). 'Experts' and e-government: Power, influence and the capture of a policy domain in the UK. *Information, Communication & Society*, 12(1), 110–127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691180802109030>
- Hunter, J. (2012). Chapter 10: Transnational migrants in the workplace: Agency and opportunity. In L. Tett, M. Hamilton, & J. Crowther (Eds.), *More Powerful Literacies*. NIACE.
- Information Commissioner's Office. (2019, October 8). *Spam emails*.
<https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/online/spam-emails/>

- IPSOS MORI. (2015). *Basic Digital Skills UK Report*. Go ON UK, in association with Lloyds Banking Group. http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/digitalbirmingham/resources/Basic-Digital-Skills_UK-Report-2015_131015_FINAL.pdf
- Ivanič, R. (2009). Bringing literacies into research on learning across the curriculum. In M. Baynham & M. Prinsloo (Eds.), *The future of literacy studies* (pp. 100–122). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jewitt, C. (2014). Part 3: Conducting multimodal research. In S. Norris & C. D. Maier (Eds.), *Interactions, images and texts: A reader in multimodality* (pp. 125–242). de Gruyter Mouton.
- Jones, R. (2005). Sites of engagement as sites of attention. In R. Jones & S. Norris (Eds.), *Discourse in action: Introducing mediated discourse analysis* (pp. 141–154). Taylor & Francis Group. 10.4324/9780203018767
- Jones, R. (2011). Cyberspace and physical space: Attention structures in computer mediated communication. In A. Jaworski & C. Thurlow (Eds.), *Semiotic landscapes: Language, image, space*. (pp. 151–167). Bloomsbury.
- Jones, R. (2014). Mediated discourse analysis. In S. Norris & C. D. Maier (Eds.), *Interactions, images and texts: A reader in multimodality*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH.
- Jones, R. (2015). Introduction: Discourse analysis and digital practices. In R. Jones, A. Chik, C. A. Hafner, & D. Barton (Eds.), *Discourse and digital practices: Doing discourse analysis in the digital age*. (pp. 2–17). Routledge.
- Jones, R., & Hafner, C. A. (2012). *Understanding digital literacies: A practical introduction*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Jones, R., & Norris, S. (2005). Chapter 5: Introducing mediational means/cultural tools. In R. Jones & S. Norris (Eds.), *Discourse in action: Introducing mediated discourse analysis* (pp. 49–52). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Kaptelinin, V. (1996). Activity theory: Implications for human-computer interaction. In B. Narden (Ed.), *Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction* (pp. 103–116). MIT Press.
- Kaptelinin, V., Nardi, B. A., & Foot, K. A. (2006). *Acting with technology: Activity theory and interaction design*. MIT Press.

- Knight, E. (2012). A life in ESOL: ESOL and employability. *Language Issues: The ESOL Journal*, 23(2), 46–55.
- Knobel, M., & Lankshear, C. (2007). Chapter 2: Literacies' purposes, literacies, new learning. In *The New Literacies Sampler* (pp. 2–17). Peter Lang.
- Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2014). *The adult Learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development*. Routledge.
- Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education Inc.
- Kress, G. (2012). Multimodal discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 35–50). Routledge.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2011). *Multimodal discourse: The modes of contemporary communication*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Kuutti, K. (1996). Chapter 5-Activity theory as a potential framework for human computer interaction research. In B. A. Nardi (Ed.), *Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction*. (pp. 103–116).
- Łącka-Badura, J. (2013). Hungry for success? Some comments on the linguistic structures reflecting the “dialogic” nature of job advertising discourse. *Anglica Wratislaviensis*, 51, 89–103.
- Łącka-Badura, J. (2015). *Recruitment advertising as an instrument of employer branding: A linguistic perspective*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Lane Fox, M. (2010, October 14). *Directgov 2010 and beyond: Revolution not evolution* [Official Letter]. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/directgov-2010-and-beyond-revolution-not-evolution-a-report-by-martha-lane-fox>
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (2006). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* (15th ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Lemke, J., & Van Helden, C. (2015). Social design literacies. In J. Rowsell & K. Pahl (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies* (pp. 322–336). Taylor & Francis Group.

- Leont'ev, A. N. (1981). The problem of activity in Soviet psychology. In J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *The concept of activity in Soviet psychology* (pp. 37–71). M.E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Lipovsky, C. (2013). Negotiating one's expertise through appraisal in CVs. *Linguistics and the Human Sciences*, 8(3), 303–337. <https://doi.org/10.1558/lhs.v8i3.307>
- Liyanae, I., & Canagarajah, S. (2012). Chapter 2-Lessons from pre-colonial multilingualism. In M. Martin-Jones, A. Blackledge, & A. Creese (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of multilingualism* (pp. 49–65). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Lotherington, H., & Jenson, J. (2011). Teaching multimodal and digital literacy in L2 settings: New literacies, new basics, new pedagogies. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, 226–246. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190511000110>
- Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2015). *Second language research: Methodology and design*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Mäkitalo, Å., & Säljö, R. (2009). Invisible people: Institutional reasoning and reflexivity in the production of services and 'social facts' in public employment agencies. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 9(3), 160–178.
- Marangozov, R. (2014). *Benign Neglect? Policies to support upward mobility for immigrants in the United Kingdom* (A Series on the Labor Market Integration of New Arrivals in Europe: Assessing Policy Effectiveness). Migration Policy Institute. www.migrationpolicy.org
- Martin, J. R. (2009). Genre and language learning: A social semiotic perspective. *Linguistics and Education*, 20(1), 10–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2009.01.003>
- Martin, J. R. (2016). Meaning matters: A short history of systemic functional linguistics. *Word*, 62(1), 35–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00437956.2016.1141939>
- Maybin, J. (2000). The new literacy studies: Context, intertextuality and discourse. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanič (Eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context* (pp. 197–209). Routledge.

- McEnhill, L., & Taylor Gooby, P. (2018). Beyond Continuity? Understanding change in the UK welfare state since 2010. *Social Policy & Administration*, 52(1), 252–270. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12310>
- McQuaid, R., & Lindsay, C. (2005). The concept of employability. *Urban Studies*, 42(2), 197–219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000316100>
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education*, Summer(74), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401>
- Miller, L., Braddell, A., & Marangozov, R. (2013). *Migrants in low-paid low-skilled work in London: Research into barriers and solutions to learning English*. Institute for Employment Studies. www.employment-studies.co.uk
- NATECLA. (2016). *Towards an ESOL strategy for England*. NATECLA. <http://natecla.org.uk/uploads/media/208/16482.pdf>
- NIACE. (2012). *English Language for All*. Greater London Authority. https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/english_language_for_all.pdf
- Norris, S. (2004). *Analyzing multimodal interaction: A methodological framework*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Norris, S., Geenen, J., Metten, T., & Pirini, J. (2014). Collecting video data: Role of the researcher. In S. & M. Norris Carmen Daniela (Ed.), *Interactions, images and texts: A reader in multimodality*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH.
- Ollerhead, S. (2016). Ch.5. ‘Basically, I need help’. In *Beyond economic interests: Critical perspectives on adult literacy and numeracy in a globalised world* (pp. 77–94). Sense Publishers.
- Papen, U. (2020). Ch. 11 Participant observation and field notes. In K. Tusting (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of linguistic ethnography* (pp. 141–153). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Pennycook, A. (2017). Translanguaging and semiotic assemblages. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 14(3), 269–282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2017.1315810>
- Pennycook, A., & Otsuji, E. (2015). *Metrolingualism: Language in the city*. Taylor & Francis Group.

- Piller, I. (2011). *Intercultural Communication: A Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Prior, P. (2009). From speech acts to mediated multimodal genre systems: Bakhtin, Voloshinov and the question of writing. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini, & D. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a changing world* (pp. 17–34). The WAC Clearing House. DOI 10.37514/PER-B.2009.2324
- Prior, P. , & Shipka, J. (2003). Chronotopic lamination: Tracing the contours of literate activity. In C. Bazerman & D. R. Russell (Eds.), *Writing selves/Writing societies: Research from Activity perspectives* (pp. 181–239). The WAC Clearinghouse; Mind, Culture, and Activity. <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2003.2317.2.06>
- Rees, J., Whitworth, A., & Carter, E. (2014). Support for all in the UK work programme? Differential payments, same old problem. *Social Policy & Administration*, 48(2), 221–239. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12058>
- Reeves, J. (2009). A sociocultural perspective on ESOL teachers' linguistic knowledge for teaching. *Linguistics and Education*, 20(2), 109–125. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2008.11.001>
- Rieucan, G. (2015). Getting a low-paid job in French and UK supermarkets: From walk-in to online application? *Employee Relations*, 37(1), 141–156. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-03-2014-0022>
- Rish, R. M. (2015). Researching writing events: Using mediated discourse analysis to explore how students write together. *Literacy*, 49(1), 12–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12052>
- Roberts, C. (2010). Language socialization in the workplace. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 30, 211–227. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190510000127>
- Scollon, R. (2001a). Chapter 7: Action and text: Towards an integrated understanding of the place of text in social (inter)action, mediated discourse analysis and the problem of social action. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 139–183). Sage Publications.
- Scollon, R. (2001b). *Mediated discourse: The nexus of practice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203420065>

- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2003). *Discourses in place: Language in the material world*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2005). Lighting the stove: Why habitus isn't enough for critical discourse analysis. In P. Chilton & R. Wodak (Eds.), *A new agenda in (critical) discourse analysis: Theory, methodology and interdisciplinarity*. (pp. 101–117). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Scollon, R., Scollon, S. W., & Pan, Y. (2002). *Professional communication international settings*. Blackwell.
- Scollon, S. W., & de Saint-Georges, I. (2013). Mediated discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 66–78). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203809068>
- Stake, R. E. (2005). *Multiple case study analysis*. The Guildford Press.
- Street, B. (2001). Introduction. In B. Street (Ed.), *Literacy and development: Ethnographic perspectives* (pp. 1–18). Routledge.
- Street, B. (2012). Chapter 1: Contexts for literacy work: New Literacy Studies, multimodality, and the 'local and the global'. In L. Tett, M. Hamilton, & J. Crowther (Eds.), *More powerful literacies* (pp. 15–30). NIACE.
- Swales, J. M., Feak, C., Barton, E., & Brown, R. (2004). Personal statements: A conversation with John Swales and Chris Feak. *Issues in Writing*, 15(1), 5–30.
- Taylor, R., Rees, J., & Damm, C. (2016). UK employment services: Understanding provider strategies in a dynamic strategic action field. *Policy & Politics*, 44(2), 253–267. <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557314X14079275800414>
- Thomas, M., & Pettitt, N. (2017). Informed consent in research on second language acquisition. *Second Language Research*, 33(2), 271–288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658316670206>
- Transform Innovation Ltd. (2010). *Directgov Strategic Review Executive Summary*. Transform Innovation Ltd. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60995/Directgov_20Executive_20Sum_20FINAL.pdf

- Tusting, K., Ivanič, R., & Wilson, A. (2000). New literacy studies at the interchange. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanič (Eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context* (pp. 210–218). Routledge.
- Vološinov, V. N. (1994). From V.N. Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 1929. In P. Morris (Ed.), & L. Matejka & I. R. Titunik (Trans.), *The Bakhtin Reader* (4th ed., pp. 48–60). Edward Arnold. (Original work published 1929)
- Vygotsky, L. (1978a). Internalisation of higher psychological functions. In M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman (Eds.), *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes* (pp. 52–57). Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978b). Mastery of memory and thinking. In M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman (Eds.), *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes* (2nd ed., pp. 39–51). Harvard University Press.
- Wells, W. (2000). *Labour market policies and the public employment service: Lessons from recent experience and directions for the future*. DEELSA/ELSA/PES. <http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments>
- Wertsch, J. V. (1985). *Vygotsky and the social formation of mind*. Harvard University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. (1993). *Voices of the mind: Sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Harvard University Press.
- Williams, S., Dodd, L. J., Steele, C., & Randall, R. (2016). A systematic review of current understandings of employability. *Journal of Education and Work*, 29(8), 877–901. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2015.1102210>
- Willott, J., & Stevenson, J. (2013). Attitudes to employment of professionally qualified refugees in the United Kingdom. *International Migration*, 51(5), 120–132. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12038>
- Yamada Rice, D. (2015). Cultural affordances of visual mode texts in and of Japanese landscapes and young children's emerging comprehension of semiotic texts. In J. Rowsell & K. Pahl (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of literacy studies* (pp. 308–321). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Young-Scholten, M. (2013). Low-educated immigrants and the social relevance of second language acquisition research. *Second Language Research*, 29(4), 441–454. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658313491266>